

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 246

New Deal for Disabled People: An in-depth study of Job Broker service delivery

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A report of research carried out by the Centre for Research in Social Policy, Social Policy Research Unit and the National Centre for Social Research on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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2.3.5	<i>Funding and contractual arrangements</i>	40
2.4	Conclusion	44
3	NDDP participation and the impact on clients' movement towards and into work	47
3.1	Introduction	47
3.2	Exploring clients' needs	48
3.2.1	<i>Client circumstances at the point of contact with the service</i>	48
3.2.2	<i>Types of support offered by Job Brokers</i>	51
3.2.3	<i>Choosing a Job Broker</i>	51
3.2.4	<i>Identifying and discussing clients' needs</i>	53
3.3	Changes in clients' circumstances since registering with the Job Broker service	55
3.3.1	<i>Moved into work – with the help of a Job Broker service</i>	55
3.3.2	<i>Moved towards work – with the help of a Job Broker service</i>	56
3.3.3	<i>Moved towards, or into, work – without the help of a Job Broker service</i>	56
3.3.4	<i>No movement toward work – despite contact with the Job Broker service</i>	57
3.4	Factors impacting on clients' movement towards work	59
3.4.1	<i>Service components and the extent of their impact on moves into, or towards, work</i>	59
3.4.2	<i>Impact of the nature of contact between Job Broker advisers and their clients</i>	67
3.4.3	<i>Other factors that impact on clients' movement toward work</i>	69
3.5	Conclusion	69
4	Longer-term outcomes of participation in NDDP	71
4.1	Introduction	71
4.2	Movements towards work and the longer-term impact of the Job Broker service	72
4.2.1	<i>Clients who had moved into work at Wave One – with the help of the Job Broker service</i>	72
4.2.2	<i>Clients who had moved towards work at Wave One – with the help of the Job Broker service</i>	73
4.2.3	<i>Clients who had moved into work at Wave One – without the help of the Job Broker service</i>	74
4.2.4	<i>Clients who had not moved towards work at Wave One – despite contacting the Job Broker service</i>	75

4.3	Explaining outcomes: the role of the Job Broker service	78
4.3.1	<i>The pace and intensity of the Job Broker service</i>	78
4.3.2	<i>The relationship with the Job Broker adviser</i>	79
4.3.3	<i>Training and work placements</i>	80
4.3.4	<i>Motivation and confidence building</i>	80
4.3.5	<i>Financial advice</i>	80
4.3.6	<i>Vocational advice</i>	81
4.3.7	<i>Job search and application support</i>	81
4.3.8	<i>The Job Broker perspective on working with clients in the longer-term</i>	82
4.4	Other influences on longer-term outcomes	83
4.4.1	<i>Accessing additional or alternative sources of support</i>	83
4.4.2	<i>Health</i>	84
4.4.3	<i>Employer behaviour</i>	84
4.5	Conclusion	85
5	Job retention and sustainability	89
5.1	Introduction	89
5.2	Type of work undertaken	90
5.2.1	<i>Type of job</i>	90
5.2.2	<i>Hours of work</i>	90
5.3	The transition into work	91
5.4	Longer-term experiences of work	92
5.4.1	<i>Clients who were no longer in employment by the Wave Two interview</i>	92
5.4.2	<i>Clients who were in employment at the Wave Two interview, but had doubts about whether it would continue</i>	93
5.4.3	<i>Clients who were in employment at the Wave Two interview, and anticipated continuing in work</i>	94
5.5	Factors undermining or supporting work	95
5.5.1	<i>Suitability of the job and type of work</i>	96
5.5.2	<i>Job satisfaction</i>	97
5.5.3	<i>Employment environment, working conditions and employer behaviour</i>	97
5.5.4	<i>Health</i>	97
5.5.5	<i>Financial issues</i>	98

5.6	Clients' views and experiences of post-employment contact with Job Brokers	99
5.6.1	<i>Reasons for in-work support and contact being limited ...</i>	99
5.6.2	<i>Experiences of receiving in-work support</i>	101
5.7	Job Broker provision of in-work support	102
5.8	Conclusion	104
6	Relationships between Job Brokers and staff in Jobcentre Plus offices	107
6.1	Introduction	107
6.2	Awareness and understanding of aims and ways of working	108
6.2.1	<i>Jobcentre Plus staff understanding of the aims of the Job Broker services</i>	108
6.2.2	<i>Awareness of local Job Broker services among Jobcentre Plus staff.....</i>	108
6.2.3	<i>Jobcentre Plus staff understanding of Job Broker practice</i>	109
6.2.4	<i>How awareness and understanding was achieved.....</i>	109
6.2.5	<i>Views on how well Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff understood one another</i>	113
6.3	Jobcentre Plus staff role in enabling access to Job Brokers.....	115
6.3.1	<i>The approach taken in work-focused interviews</i>	115
6.3.2	<i>Which people Jobcentre Plus staff told about Job Broker services</i>	115
6.3.3	<i>How Jobcentre Plus staff explained Job Broker services</i>	119
6.3.4	<i>Managing choice and direction</i>	121
6.4	Client-centred working.....	124
6.4.1	<i>Accessing services.....</i>	124
6.4.2	<i>Pooling expertise</i>	125
6.5	What motivates and discourages effective working relationships	127
6.5.1	<i>Positive influences.....</i>	127
6.5.2	<i>Constraining factors</i>	129
6.6	How Job Broker and Jobcentre Plus provision fit together	130
6.6.1	<i>Differences in services.....</i>	130
6.6.2	<i>Complementarity or duplication?</i>	132
6.7	Conclusion	134

7	Features associated with Job Broker effectiveness	137
7.1	Introduction	137
7.2	Definitions of effectiveness	137
7.2.1	<i>Performance as measured by the evaluation database ...</i>	138
7.2.2	<i>Adjustments to reflect differences in client profiles</i>	138
7.3	Groups based on effectiveness	140
7.4	Patterns in performance and practices	141
7.4.1	<i>The parent organisation</i>	143
7.4.2	<i>Funding arrangements</i>	145
7.4.3	<i>The management of the Job Broker contract</i>	146
7.4.4	<i>The organisation of staffing</i>	148
7.4.5	<i>Links with Jobcentre Plus and external organisations</i>	150
7.4.6	<i>Pre-work services</i>	152
7.4.7	<i>In-work services</i>	154
7.5	Conclusion	155
8	Conclusions and implications for policy	157
8.1	Introduction	157
8.2	Putting NDDP policy development into context	158
8.2.1	<i>NDDP in context</i>	158
8.2.2	<i>Changes within the Department</i>	158
8.3	What works for NDDP clients?	159
8.3.1	<i>Identifying needs in moving towards work</i>	159
8.3.2	<i>Matching provision to needs</i>	160
8.3.3	<i>Maintaining communications in moving towards work</i>	161
8.3.4	<i>Identifying in-work needs</i>	161
8.3.5	<i>Matching provision to in-work needs</i>	162
8.3.6	<i>Maintaining communication in work</i>	162
8.3.7	<i>Longer-term effects for clients of NDDP</i>	163
8.3.8	<i>Overview of the 'what works' question</i>	164
8.4	What makes Job Broker organisations effective?	164
8.5	Relations between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus	166
8.6	Funding and targets	168
8.7	Implications for policy	170
8.7.1	<i>How can incapacity benefits recipients best be helped to move towards and into work?</i>	171
8.7.2	<i>What role should Job Brokers play?</i>	172
8.7.3	<i>What structural and financial arrangements can support Job Brokers?</i>	174
8.7.4	<i>Final comments</i>	174

Appendix A	Published NDDP evaluation reports	177
Appendix B	Full methodological and sampling details	179
Appendix C	Research materials and interview guides	201
References	241

List of tables

Table 7.1	Summary of the four Job Broker performance groups.....	141
Table B.1	Wave One achieved sample composition	187
Table B.2	Wave One follow-up interviews: achieved sample composition	190
Table B.3	Wave Two 'new' clients: achieved sample composition	192

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Abbreviations and acronyms

DEA	Disability Employment Adviser
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DSS	Department of Social Security
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ES	Employment Service
IBIS	A computerised system used to calculate whether clients would be 'better off' in work
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
NDDP	New Deal for Disabled People
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification

Summary

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 1 provides a brief description of the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) and of the research reported here. NDDP was introduced in 1998 and 1999 as a series of pilots to help disabled people move into, or stay in, paid employment. The 'national extension' of NDDP, introduced in 2001, aims to support and test innovative ways of helping people on incapacity benefits move into sustained employment. NDDP services are delivered by a range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations known as 'Job Brokers'.

This report presents findings from the second wave of qualitative research carried out in late 2003/early 2004. This element of the research forms part of a larger programme aimed at providing the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with a comprehensive evaluation of NDDP. The report of findings from Wave One of the qualitative work was published in 2003 (Corden *et al.*). The overall aim of the qualitative research was to explore the organisation, operation and impacts of the Job Broker service from the perspective of key stakeholders, including users and providers of Job Broker services, and staff of Jobcentre Plus offices. This second report uses a longitudinal approach to concentrate on the longer-term impact of using the service, and developments in the delivery of Job Broker services and relationships with Jobcentre Plus.

The Wave One research (summer/autumn 2002) focused on 18 Job Brokers; and a further six Job Brokers were included in Wave Two (winter 2003/spring 2004), to ensure that the research included a sufficient number of Job Brokers who achieve higher job entry and sustained work levels according to monitoring data. The Wave Two research consisted of:

- 23 in-depth interviews with Job Broker managers;
- 17 group discussions with Job Broker staff;
- 45 telephone interviews with clients selected from those who were interviewed at Wave One (to focus on the longer-term outcomes of NDDP participation);

- 45 face-to-face interviews with 'new' clients who had recently registered for NDDP services;
- 23 in-depth interviews with Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs), including repeat interviews with Wave One respondents where possible; and
- 14 group discussions with Jobcentre Plus advisers.

Chapter 2 – The service delivery context

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the service delivery context for the rest of the report. Jobcentre Plus staff play an important role in signposting Job Broker services to potential clients and working alongside Job Brokers. In Jobcentre Plus, the continued roll-out of the Pathfinder model with a work-focused interview following an appointment with a financial assessor provided an opportunity for advisers to tell customers about Job Broker services. In the Incapacity Benefit Reforms pilot areas, a new system involving a series of mandatory interviews, a wider range of support and an expectation of more contact with Jobcentre Plus staff, was being trialled. Other important changes which affected how Jobcentre Plus staff interact with Job Brokers are the introduction of targets to encourage working with people on incapacity benefits, and new guidance about how Jobcentre Plus staff should inform customers about local Job Broker services and support them in making an informed choice.

There had been changes in the profile of the Job Broker services in the organisations which deliver them, with examples both of Job Broker services becoming more and less prominent within the wider organisation in which they were set. Some staff also described greater integration of Job Broker services at a management level and in terms of the use of other resources or services within the organisation, either alongside work on the Job Broker contract or prior to registration. In terms of staffing arrangements, there had been movements in both directions between dedicated staff working only on job broking, and non-dedicated staff working on different contracts. There had also been shifts between generic staffing (where one adviser works with a client throughout their contact with the service) and specialist roles, with more use of specialist staff. Caseloads had generally risen and there was more active management and prioritisation of case work. The routes by which clients approached services are varied but some services reported more clients coming from Jobcentre Plus. A range of marketing methods were used but none were seen as necessarily superior: repeated and cumulative activity was seen as important.

There was diversity among the Job Brokers in the type of help provided and in the extent to which they made active decisions about whether to register people as clients. Some services reported more targeting than previously, influenced by an emphasis on outcome levels and particularly the requirement for at least 25 per cent of registrations to result in a job outcome. Other changes in ways of working

reported by Job Broker staff include more use of team or personal staff targets, more use of external services including Jobcentre Plus, and more use of financial incentives for clients. In their contacts with employers, most activity appeared to be what was seen as '*client-led*', where advisers contacted employers to seek specific vacancies or in support of an application. There was less conviction about the value of what were seen as '*employer-led*' approaches involving asking employers to notify Job Brokers of vacancies and more general marketing and awareness-raising.

Changes to the funding and contractual arrangements (the increase in the registration payment and reduction in the period of work required for the sustained work payment) were seen as helpful. Although there was support for the principle of outcome-related funding, the funding arrangements were reported to have some negative implications: a requirement for more use of internal services and internal subsidy to make the contract viable, and constraints on staffing complement and the range of services and intensity of support that could be provided. Suggestions were made to alter the balance between registration and outcome in the funding structure, to provide start-up funding, to reward part-time work entry at the same rate as full-time jobs, and to provide funding based on particular activities rather than just on outcomes.

Chapter 3 – NDDP participation and the impact on clients' movement towards and into work

Chapter 3 looks at clients' experiences of using Job Broker services, the approaches or components they found more or less effective and the impacts on their movement into or towards work, how Job Brokers go about delivering services, and how this might explain clients' experiences.

Clients came to the Job Broker service from a range of circumstances and with a range of needs to be met if they were to move into work. Some had very work-focused needs, reflecting immediate barriers to work, such as those related to job search or applying for a job. Others had more complex and extensive needs related to more personal barriers, such as a lack of confidence or fluctuating mental health conditions. Variety also existed between Job Brokers in terms of the type of support they provided and, therefore, the types of needs they felt well placed to meet. However, there did not tend to be a match made between a client's needs and the type of support a particular service offered before a person registered with a service. This was because clients were often unclear about what different services offered and registration tended to happen before they had accessed more detailed information on the service, and Job Brokers had a clear idea of what clients required of the service. Some people reported being with a Job Broker service that they felt was well-equipped to meet their needs, while others did not.

A range of specific service components were identified as being provided by some Job Brokers and helping people move into work. Those identified were: general careers guidance and direction; providing access to voluntary work, work placements

or Permitted Work; training; job search support; help with applying for jobs; financial support and advice and confidence building. In its simplest terms, where the type of support offered by a particular Job Broker was able to meet clients' needs this helped them move towards work, where it did not, they did not progress toward work or did so without the help of the Job Broker service.

Clear dialogue between clients and their advisers about what they needed from the service to move into work, and what the particular service could provide was needed to provide effective help. Key to this was the nature of the relationship established between a client and their adviser. People spoke about needing to develop trust and rapport with their advisers over time so that they could get a clear picture of their needs and that a tailored service could be delivered. This required regular contact between the two and an on-going assessment of a client's, possibly changing, needs. Where advisers were not in a position to deliver the frequency of contact required, this was seen as having a negative impact on a client's movement toward work.

Job Broker staff, and occasionally clients, noted that the need to achieve outcomes and specifically to meet the 25 per cent conversion target, impacted on their ability to meet the needs of all clients. Some clients and staff felt that it impacted on the level of contact advisers had with clients, and staff on the extent to which they provided the various service components. In some cases, staff felt it prohibited them from providing the particular component at all (for example, access to voluntary work, work placements, Permitted Work, training), while in other cases, it meant they could only provide limited support in an area (for example, less intensive job search support, confidence building). While services varied, it would appear that it was the support (in terms of type and level) required by these clients who were furthest from work that was neglected where choices about allocation of resources had to be made.

Chapter 4 – Longer-term outcomes of participation in NDDP

Chapter 4 explores the longer-term experiences of NDDP clients, drawing on data from 45 clients who were interviewed at Wave One (in summer/autumn 2002) and again in Wave Two (late 2003/early 2004). By the time of the Wave Two interview, some clients had moved towards or into work with the help of the Job Broker service, whilst others had not moved any further towards work despite contact with the service, or had moved into, or closer to, work without the help of the Job Broker.

Clients' views on the extent to which the Job Broker service had helped them to move forwards in the longer-term were mixed. People who were in work which they felt the service had helped them to get at Wave One, were generally still in work at Wave Two. Some had moved to what they saw as better jobs, sometimes saying they had drawn on skills and confidence they had acquired from their earlier contact with the Job Broker. The experience of work itself, had also helped to enhance confidence and labour market skills. Where people at Wave One felt they had moved

towards work with the help of the Job Broker, some had now got jobs and others were continuing to make progress; the Job Broker support was sometimes seen as instrumental in this although others felt other services had helped them more. But some felt they had not moved on, and some had ended contact with the Job Broker. People who had moved into work by Wave One but without any apparent role of the Job Broker service were in a variety of circumstances, some in the same job, others whose Wave One job had ended were now out of work or in temporary employment. They tended to have the same view about the minimal impact the Job Broker service had had, or to see more gaps in the help they had received. Finally, where clients felt they had not made progress at Wave One, some were now in work, others felt they had moved forward, and others felt things had not really changed. Some of those in work or closer to work, felt the Job Broker service had now been instrumental, and that the longer-term support they had received had proved its value. Others, however, had stopped being in contact and sometimes felt more negatively about the Job Broker service, especially if they had since received help from another organisation.

Overall, clients were now more positive about the Job Broker service where the service had worked with them over the longer-term to address their needs, where a change in personnel meant that they were now getting the help they needed, where outstanding support needs had been addressed elsewhere and they thought the Job Broker service might now be right for them, and where the longer-term benefits of the services were now becoming apparent. Their views became more negative where they had not received the help they needed, where there was a general lack of contact from the Job Broker, and where they had found alternative sources of support which they felt were better.

Aspects of the Job Broker service which emerged as being particularly important to clients' longer-term progress were: providing support at the appropriate pace and intensity for clients, strong relationships with advisers, and maintenance of contact by advisers. Key elements of the service for clients who needed longer-term help were: support for confidence and motivation, vocational guidance, training and work placements, and in-depth support with looking for, and applying for, jobs. Whilst some got the help they needed from Job Brokers, others had to go elsewhere, and in some cases described receiving the same type of support that other clients had received from Job Brokers. This longitudinal element of the research highlights the diversity of the needs of NDDP clients, and the fact that whilst some people may enter work relatively quickly, progress will be gradual for others. However, it is clear that the services can be effective in providing both long-term support to clients, and also support which remains valuable to them and on which they continue to draw.

Chapter 5 – Job retention and sustainability

Chapter 5 reports on the experiences of people who had undertaken work since registering for NDDP, focusing on issues relating to job retention and sustainability. It draws primarily on the experiences of Wave One clients who were interviewed

again at Wave Two, to provide an insight into their longer-term experiences of work and the role of the Job Broker service. The chapter also includes the provision of in-work support from the perspective of the Job Brokers.

Clients' experiences of work were varied, but some did experience difficulties in work which sometimes lead to them leaving a job, or leaving work altogether. Problems were encountered during the early transition to work as well as over the longer-term. The range of issues that affected job retention included being financially better off in work, the suitability of working hours and job tasks, job satisfaction, the working environment and workplace relationships with colleagues and managers as well as changes to working conditions. Deteriorating health and the ending of short-term contracts and Permitted Work could also lead to people leaving employment. Some clients were able to resolve difficulties themselves or with family support, and some received help from the Job Broker service (or other organisations). However, there were also people who had difficulties in work but did not contact the Job Broker service for help even though on reflection they thought that it might have helped them to do so. Reasons for not contacting the service were varied, but clients generally did not see in-work support as a particularly salient part of the Job Broker service.

The importance of the quality of 'fit' between the job and the client is highlighted in the research, as well as the benefits of continued contact between the client and the Job Broker during the period around job entry, insofar as clients who had more contact with the service before they entered work were more likely to have continued contact in work. Nevertheless, in-work support from the Job Broker service does appear to be under-used by clients, suggesting that the availability of such provision may need to be emphasised by Job Brokers.

Chapter 6 – Relationships between Job Brokers and staff in Jobcentre Plus offices

Chapter 6 looks at developments in relations between Jobcentre Plus staff and Job Brokers. Job Brokers generally reported feeling that Jobcentre Plus staff had better understanding of their services than previously. Jobcentre Plus staff felt this awareness was based on written information provided by Job Brokers, existing contacts, Job Broker websites, visits and presentations between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff, and Job Brokers having a presence in Jobcentre Plus offices.

Jobcentre Plus staff described varied approaches to signposting Job Broker services to clients. There was some selectivity about who was told about the services based on assessments of the client's interest in work and whether Jobcentre Plus provision was appropriate, and some work-focused interview advisers referred potential clients to DEAs rather than signposting Job Broker services themselves. DEAs tended to see Job Broker services as being more appropriate for people who were relatively work-ready. Staff generally provided a broad explanation and some information about specific elements of Job Broker provision, but found it hard to give a detailed

overview especially where there were several local services. Not all knew of the changed guidance around supporting clients' choice of Job Broker and there were different approaches, some giving subtle or more direct indications about which might be best for the client and particularly including those which they regarded positively, which provided services they felt were most relevant to the client, which were better at giving feedback to DEAs, or which were on-site.

Job Brokers described accessing various Jobcentre Plus services: Work Preparation, Work Based Learning for Adults, WORKSTEP, the Adviser Discretionary Fund, Job Introduction Scheme, Job Grants, Return to Work Credits, better-off calculations and job search support. There were some instances of Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff pooling expertise or working together with a client and this was seen as beneficial all round.

Positive influences on relationships between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff which were noted were: direct personal contact, demonstration of quality of service provision (important if Jobcentre Plus staff were to trust Job Brokers by suggesting customers contact them), structural changes, particularly the roll-out of the Jobcentre Plus model and the Incapacity Benefit Reforms, Jobcentre Plus targets for working with people on incapacity benefits, and Job Brokers providing feedback about clients referred to them by Jobcentre Plus both so that Jobcentre Plus staff were kept up to date and so that they could claim relevant 'points'. Other factors, though, were felt to constrain relationships: Job Brokers felt DEAs sometimes saw them as competitors, some Jobcentre Plus staff had negative attitudes to Job Broker services, Job Brokers were not always proactive or responsive in providing staff with information about their services, and over-rigid interpretations of the requirement for impartiality were felt to be unhelpful.

Job Brokers felt that, compared to Jobcentre Plus, they were able to spend more time with clients, provide a more in-depth service, work more flexibly, and were free from association with government and the benefits system. There was some support for this among Jobcentre Plus staff, although not all agreed. Overall, however, there was a recurrent view on both sides that the work of Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff was complementary, to the benefit of each of them and of the client.

Chapter 7 – Features associated with Job Broker effectiveness

Chapter 7 uses an innovative analysis to draw out the features of Job Broker service organisation and practice, which are associated with effective performance. Local level performance data were derived from the evaluation database to look at levels of job entry and sustained jobs among the in-depth study of Job Brokers. A combination of evaluation database data (showing the proportion of clients whose most recent incapacity benefits claim lasted for two years or longer) and qualitative data about Job Broker practices was used to distinguish between Job Brokers tending to work more with clients likely to be closer to work, and those tending to work more with clients likely to be further from work. Caveats surrounding the analysis are noted.

The resulting analysis identified four groups. First, *highest performers* with a high rate of job entries (compared with registrations) and high or medium levels of sustained employment. Two worked with clients with specific impairments likely to be further from work, the remainder with clients likely to be closer to work. Second, *middle performers*, with high job entry rates but low sustained work rates, or medium job entry rates and high or medium sustained rates. All worked with clients likely to be closer to work. Third, *in-depth Job Brokers* with low job entry rates but high sustained employment rates, working with clients likely to be furthest from work and providing particularly intensive services. Finally, *lower performing Job Brokers* with low or medium rates for job entries and sustained work, or with low job entries among people closer to work, albeit with high sustained employment rates.

The analysis then looked at patterns in organisation, staffing, funding, services and ways of working across the four groups, based on the views of Job Broker managers and staff, and of Jobcentre Plus staff and clients, as to what might make services more or less successful. The findings are necessarily tentative. They show that there is no single model of organisation or delivery, which is associated with effectiveness. However, they suggest a link between high performance (in terms of job entry levels and sustainable job levels taking into account different client profiles) and:

- strong organisational support for the Job Broker service;
- existing resources and expertise which provide a foundation and support for the Job Broker service;
- strong management of the Job Broker service, with a more involved manager of the service and with active use of management information;
- higher payments within the Job Broker contract for job placements and sustained work;
- staff either working on the Job Broker contract alone, or not differentiating between the Job Broker contract and their other work;
- a core adviser working with each client throughout their contact with the service, either providing all the support or drawing on specialist staff to complement their own role;
- team working and strong team support;
- an outward facing approach with proactive marketing, good links with other external services, and strong relationships with Jobcentre Plus, but not more 'employer-led' contacts with employers;
- possibly wider ranging and more in-depth support; and
- a more proactive approach to maintaining contact with clients, and more intensive and tightly managed approaches to contacting clients in work and providing in-work support.

Chapter 8 – Conclusions and implications for policy

Chapter 8 reviews the evidence reported in previous chapters and draws out implications for the development of the NDDP programme. The evidence suggests that 'what works' for clients is very varied, because of their varied circumstances and needs. However, ultimately what works lies in the ability of Job Broker services to identify the needs of clients, for them to be matched with an appropriate Job Broker service and with the right types and levels of support, and to maintain effective relations and communication with clients. None of this is straightforward or easy, and the report highlights both successes and shortcomings in meeting clients' needs. But the diversity of clients' needs suggests that a single type of organisation will never be sufficient.

Matching clients' needs with provision is made more complicated because of the different ways in which people can come into contact with Job Broker services, and because Job Brokers are just one part of a diverse network of provision. The aim of the Department must be that incapacity benefits recipients are aware that work is legitimate, and that they are directed to the best help regardless of where they start. It is clear that Jobcentre Plus will play a pivotal role in this process. The evidence in this report suggests that client choice is not working particularly effectively. Clients are not always aware of more than one Job Broker and if they are, tend to exercise their choice based on very little detailed information. This is not to suggest that choice should be removed, but it does underline the need for better advice and guidance, from within Jobcentre Plus and more widely. Given the diversity of client needs, it is difficult to see how the Department's aim of comprehensive provision for people on incapacity benefits can be met without the continued contribution of Job Broker organisations, and the fact that Jobcentre Plus services and Job Broker services are seen as complementary, by both sides, is obviously beneficial.

The current funding structure does, however, have implications for Job Brokers' ability to continue to contribute to comprehensive provision. There are risks that Job Broker services continue to become more concentrated on job-ready people at the expense of those further from the labour market; that services which are not self-sufficient are vulnerable; that Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff collude to secure outcomes payments and points, at the expense of people further from work; and that financial inducements to clients do not support informed choice and lead to clients 'churning' through the system. There do not appear to be strong arguments in favour of restricting Job Broker services to some types of clients only, but there are strong arguments that encouraging provision for people who are further from work will require changes to funding arrangements, with more earlier funding and more reward for intermediate outcomes and Job Broker inputs.

Funding structures and level, targets and contract management are aspects of Job Broker operation which it is within the power of the Department policy makers and managers to change. So too, although perhaps less directly, are relationships between Jobcentre Plus and Job Brokers. It is clear that whatever form NDDP takes

in the future, it will need to be compatible with the process model of work-focused interviews. Relationships between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus are likely to be key to the success of NDDP, and as well as drawing on the professionalism of Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff, might be supported by dissemination of examples of good and effective practice. However, there is also perhaps a need for the highest tiers of management to promulgate and reinforce the message that collaboration at all levels is necessary for the future success of NDDP. Collectively, Job Brokers have established themselves as important contributors to the aims of NDDP through the provision of services that can complement and add capacity to what is provided through existing Jobcentre Plus programmes and contracts.

1 Introduction

The New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) was introduced in 1998 and 1999 by the Department for Work and Pensions (the Department) as a series of pilots designed to evaluate services based on the use of personal advisers to help people with health conditions and disabilities move into, or stay in, paid employment (Loumidis *et al.*, 2001). The pilots were wound up in 2001 and superseded by what is known as the '*national extension*' of NDDP, the aim of which is to '*support and test innovative ways of helping people on incapacity benefits move from economic inactivity into sustained employment*' (DSS, ES, DfEE research specification, April, 2001).

The main features of the NDDP extension are:

- it is voluntary. There is no compulsion for potential clients to participate and no sanctions are imposed on those who choose not to take part or who subsequently drop out;
- its target population is people on one of a number of incapacity benefits (including Disability Living Allowance) or National Insurance credits who, because of disability, impairment or long-term health condition have been out of the paid labour force for an extended period, or are working fewer than 16 hours a week;
- it is delivered through individual Job Broker organisations, and not exclusively through existing government agencies. Organisations awarded contracts include voluntary and other not-for-profit bodies, commercial companies, and public sector organisations.¹ There is some consortia or partnership working. There is diversity in terms of the specialisms of the organisations. Some work intensively with people with a specific type of impairment, particularly more enduring mental health or learning disabilities. Some are organisations with extensive histories as providers of services to disabled people, whilst this is a new or newer direction for others;

¹ The NDDP website contains details of all Job Broker organisations. See <http://www.jobbrokersearch.co.uk/>

- it aims to offer potential clients a choice of Job Brokers. Job Brokers had begun operating in all local authority areas by January 2002, and most areas were covered by at least two Job Broker services;
- there is diversity among Job Brokers in terms of the size of operation: some have a single team of staff and operate in a small local area; others have several or many teams and operate across a wider area of number areas or provide national or UK-wide coverage; and
- funding for Job Brokers from government is largely outcome-related, with a £300 payment for registration of a client, and much larger payments (which vary by Job Broker) on their entry into a job, and on sustaining work for 13 weeks. (This aspect of NDDP is discussed in more detail below.)

Individual Job Broker organisations are given a high degree of discretion and flexibility in the type of services they provide and in how they organise service provision, although their contracts are based on an agreed level of job outcomes. The core services they provide are vocational guidance, financial advice, help with job search, and in-work support although some also provide training or access to training and work placements, and the overall balance and focus of their activities varies. They work to varying degrees with external agencies and Jobcentre Plus. A small number provide their services by telephone.

The NDDP extension began officially in July 2001, though some Job Broker services started operations later over a period of months up to September 2001. The Department also awarded further contracts in 2002 to extend coverage of Job Broker services in some areas where coverage was limited. In the autumn of 2003, Job Brokers were invited to bid for contract extensions (that is, beyond the contracted end date of March 2004), and extension awards were announced in the early part of 2004. Also, in October 2003 further changes were made to the Job Broker service including reducing the 'sustained employment' period at which Job Brokers could claim an outcome payment to 13 weeks (from 26 weeks), and an increase in the registration fee from £100 to £300.²

The number of organisations providing Job Broker services has, therefore, varied, but in early 2004 stood at around 60. The national extension is due to run until March 2006.

This report presents findings from two waves of qualitative research (the first carried out in 2002 and the second in late 2003/early 2004), which form part of a larger programme of work aimed at providing the Department with a comprehensive evaluation of the NDDP extension. This programme of work includes:

- surveys of the eligible population of benefit recipients;
- surveys of people registered with a Job Broker organisation;

² For Job Brokers who were successful in securing extended contracts.

- surveys of Job Brokers;
- a cost analysis;
- qualitative in-depth studies of the experience of Job Broker services from the perspectives of key actors;
- surveys of employers;
- qualitative work with employers; and
- analysis of administrative data.

Details of the NDDP evaluation published reports are listed in Appendix A. The consortium carrying out this work consists of Centre for Research in Social Policy, Social Policy Research Unit, National Centre for Social Research, Institute of Employment Studies, Urban Institute and Abt Associates.

The original research design included an impact analysis and cost benefit analysis based on random assignment techniques, but this element of the design was removed in December 2001. Alternative methods for analysing impact are being explored by colleagues at the Urban Institute and Abt Associates in the United States.

1.1 Aim and objectives of the qualitative research

The overall aim of the qualitative research was to explore the organisation, operation and impacts of the Job Broker service from the perspective of all key stakeholders, including users and providers of Job Broker services, and staff of Jobcentre Plus offices.³ Specifically, the research was designed to focus on:

- the factors affecting participation in NDDP;
- clients' understanding and experiences of NDDP;
- the role and operation of Job Brokers; and
- the role and operation of the Jobcentre Plus staff who can provide people with information about Job Broker services.

Early in the research programme, a set of more specific research questions was agreed in discussion between the research team and the Department. These were:

- What do key players want or need from the Job Broker service?
- How do clients become participants in the NDDP extension?
- What services are provided, how and why? What do Job Brokers do in practice?

³ Work to explore employers' perspectives and experiences is being undertaken by colleagues at the Institute for Employment Studies at Brighton.

- What are the outcomes and how are these achieved?
- What does the service add to existing provision?
- What can we learn in terms of 'good' or 'effective' practice?
- How do services and their impacts change over time, and why?

The first report of findings from Wave One of the qualitative work was published in 2003 (Corden *et al.*, 2003). At the time of the fieldwork reported there, the Job Broker services were still at a relatively early stage in operation and generally did not see themselves as operating a fixed and established model of delivery. Among the clients interviewed, some were still in touch with the Job Broker services; others had relatively recently started work, were trying to move towards work in different ways, or had decided work was not currently for them. It was, therefore, important that the research programme involved a second wave of research through which it would be possible to explore the experiences of clients who are engaged with Job Broker services for longer, the longer-term impacts of using the service, and developments in the delivery of Job Broker services (from the point of view of Job Brokers, clients and Jobcentre Plus staff). This second report concentrates particularly on these issues drawing on insights gained from the two waves of qualitative data with clients, Jobcentre Plus staff and Job Broker staff, but particularly from the second wave.

The Wave Two research focused on specific themes, agreed with the Department, which were seen as key issues to explore to understand how the programme can meet clients' needs, and the circumstances and practices which affect its effectiveness. These themes are:

- developments in implementation;
- which clients the service works well for, and in-work circumstances;
- long-term impacts of participation for clients;
- enhancing job retention;
- relations between Jobcentre Plus and Job Brokers; and
- effective models of provision.

These key themes have thus formed the basis for the chapters contained in this report. A further theme – the influence of funding – is explored throughout the report.

1.2 Research design and methods

A research design was adopted that aimed to gather data using a range of qualitative research techniques from key actors associated with Job Broker services operating in different areas across England, Scotland and Wales. Data collection was in two waves (the summer/autumn of 2002 and winter 2003/spring 2004).

At Wave One, 18 Job Brokers were selected, to ensure diversity in a number of important characteristics including:

- size of Job Broker service area (based on the number of local authority areas covered by Job Brokers);
- type of organisation (public, private, or voluntary sector, and including some partnerships or consortia of organisations);
- previous experience of providing employment-related services for disabled people and main types of activities;
- geographical location (including some areas covered by more than one of the Job Brokers in the study); and
- principal mode of delivery (to ensure inclusion of telephone-based services).

By the second wave of research, one of the Wave One Job Brokers had ceased to operate and there had been some reduction in partnership set-ups. In addition, to ensure that full insight was gained into the working practices of the more successful Job Brokers, the research team was asked to ensure that the Wave Two sample included sufficient numbers of Job Brokers who appeared, from the Department monitoring data, to be performing relatively strongly in terms of employment outcomes for clients. Therefore, the second wave of fieldwork included a small number of additional Job Brokers who appeared to be operating most effectively, and reduced the fieldwork among a small number of Wave One Job Brokers who appeared not to be among the strongest performers nationally. Five new Job Brokers were included at this stage, and with six of the existing Wave One Job Brokers, fieldwork was limited to an interview with the Job Broker manager and did not involve a group discussion with staff (see later). The additional and reduced fieldwork Job Brokers were selected on the basis of their job entry and sustainable job rates as recorded in the evaluation database. However, the selection also took account of:

- specialisms in client group, to ensure inclusion of Job Brokers who were achieving high or relatively high performance levels with clients with more severe and enduring mental health conditions and learning disabilities;
- payment levels, to ensure representation of Job Brokers who were achieving relatively high performance levels with lower payment levels (within the structure under which the Department funds Job Broker services);
- Job Broker performance levels in terms of employment outcomes both for clients who had recently claimed incapacity benefits and those who had been on an incapacity benefit for at least six months, to ensure the sample was not unduly biased towards those who work with clients expected to be closer to work and to have fewer needs of the service; and
- size of area of operation, sector, and type of organisation, to ensure that the diversity sought at Wave One was maintained.

The report of the first wave of research provides details of the approach adopted for Wave One.

For this second wave of research, the research programme was broadly similar to that adopted at Wave One and involved:

- qualitative telephone interviews with 45 of the original 90 respondents who had registered with the Job Broker service in 2002;
- face-to-face depth interviews with 45 new clients, who had registered for NDDP at least three months before the research interview in late 2003;
- a depth interview with a Job Broker manager in all of the selected Job Broker organisations (23 in total);
- a group discussion with frontline staff in most of the original Wave One Job Brokers and the additional Wave Two Job Brokers (a total of 17);
- 15 group discussions with a total of 38 Jobcentre Plus advisers who provide information about Job Broker services to potential clients; and
- 23 depth interviews with Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs), including repeat interviews with those DEAs who were interviewed at Wave One, where possible.

Fieldwork was largely focused on the geographic areas of operation of the selected Job Broker teams.

A further group included in this wave of the research was people who had sought further information about the NDDP programme but had not subsequently registered. In-depth interviews were conducted by telephone during May 2004, and the findings of this element of the qualitative research will be reported on separately (Kazimirski *et al.*, 2005 forthcoming).

A full account of the methodological approach taken for both waves of the research is provided in Appendix B.

Appendix C contains copies of the research materials and interview guides.

1.2.1 Research with clients of Job Brokers

The research with Job Broker clients covered two groups of people. The first group comprised clients who had registered for the Job Broker service in 2002, and were interviewed during the first wave of the research in autumn of 2002. At the time of the Wave One interview, respondents were asked whether they would be willing to be interviewed again at a later date, to discuss their longer-term experiences. A sub-sample of respondents from Wave One were, thus, contacted again in Wave Two, and 45 people were interviewed for a second time. The interviews, which were conducted by telephone unless a face-to-face interview was requested, were designed to explore the impact of participation in New Deal for Disabled People over

the longer-term, looking particularly at any experiences of work or other work-related activities. The interviewees were purposively selected from the existing sample to ensure that a range of experiences and circumstances were represented. In particular, attempts were made to interview people who had had some experience of work since the Wave One interview and/or who had had some contact with a Job Broker after the Wave One interview, to enable exploration of the impact that participation in NDDP had had on their move to work. Of the 45 respondents, 29 are male, 16 female, and their ages ranged from early 20s to aged 50 and over.

A second group of clients were also interviewed at Wave Two. This group consisted of 'new' clients who had registered for NDDP up to three months prior to the fieldwork in 2003 (according to the Department's database of registrations) and who, therefore, used Job Broker services at later stages of their evolution and development. These clients were selected to achieve diversity (as in Wave One) in the following characteristics:

- age;
- gender;
- main type of disability or health condition;
- length of time on benefit, according to the Department database⁴; and
- employment status (in work or out of work).

Letters were sent to all potential interviewees offering them the option of opting out of the research. Those who did not opt-out were contacted by a member of the research consortium and agreement to take part in a research interview sought. Face-to-face depth interviews were arranged in convenient locations for the respondents, usually their own home. Interviews typically lasted around an hour.

As in Wave One, the focus of the interviews was on how people learned about the Job Broker service, their views and experiences of making contact, registering and working with their chosen Job Broker, and the outcomes of their involvement. Information was also collected about the respondent's personal and household circumstances, health and employment background.

A total of 45 interviews were conducted with new Wave Two clients. Twenty-two are men, and 23 women, with a broad spread of age from early 20s to over 50. Over half of this sample had been on benefits for two years or more. They were selected to ensure they included people with a range of health conditions and disabilities.

⁴ People already in receipt of a qualifying benefit in September 2001 are defined as existing recipients for the purposes of the NDDP extension. People who began their period of receipt after then are defined as 'new'. This distinction is also used in the surveys of the eligible population and Job Broker registrants.

1.2.2 Interviews with Job Broker managers and frontline staff

The fieldwork conducted with Job Broker representatives involved a total of 23 interviews with service managers and 17 group discussions with staff. The managers interviewed varied in their responsibilities but included those who managed or led individual Job Broker teams, people with managerial responsibility for the Job Broker service at one or more location, and people with overall strategic responsibility for the NDDP contract within the organisation. They also included people who were responsible for other Job Broker teams as well as those selected for the in-depth study, and people who combined management of the Job Broker service with other responsibilities. Some also had their own NDDP caseload.

The aim of the focus groups with staff was to involve frontline staff who have direct dealings with clients. Managers were asked to suggest potential participants for the group discussion so that a range of experience and backgrounds were represented, including some who had participated in the Wave One group discussions, where relevant. The number of staff involved in the focus groups varied. In one case, seven took part, in another an interview was conducted with one member of staff only, but typically four or five members of staff took part. Most were consultants, advisers or employment officers, but some had specialist responsibility for particular elements of the service such as in-work support, job search support, training, job coaching, or marketing. Interviews with managers focused on strategic issues behind the organisation and operation of the services; group discussions with frontline staff focused on the organisation of the Job Broker service at the local level and on ways of working with clients and with Jobcentre Plus.

Because of the breadth of issues to be covered with Job Brokers, a series of core themes and additional themes were identified. Core themes were explored with all Job Broker services; additional themes were explored with a subset of between nine and 14 Job Brokers. The allocation of theme to individual Job Broker was designed carefully to ensure that each theme was explored with a diverse set of Job Brokers, taking into account the factors that informed the selection of Job Brokers.

With Job Broker managers, the core themes explored were:

- the staffing and organisation of service provision;
- registration practices and particularly any selection of clients;
- an overview of developments in provision; and
- decisions about continuing with, or withdrawing from, the service.

The additional themes were:

- marketing;
- relationships with Jobcentre Plus;
- in-work support;

- relationships with employers;
- funding; and
- developments in implementation, covering specific issues such as the use of 'better-off' calculations, action plans and basic skills assessments.

Among Job Broker staff the core themes were:

- the organisation of staffing; and
- registration practices.

The additional themes were:

- identifying and meeting clients needs;
- funding and targets;
- in-work support;
- relations with employers;
- relations with Jobcentre Plus;
- developments in implementation; and
- non-participation, where eligible potential clients approach the service but do not register.

1.2.3 Research with Jobcentre Plus staff

In Wave One, the aim was to hold an interview with a DEA and a group discussion with other Jobcentre Plus staff who came into contact with benefit claimants and recipients who might be potential clients of the Job Broker service, in all of the study areas. In Wave Two, the aims were to conduct an interview with a DEA and a group discussion with Jobcentre Plus advisers carrying out work-focused interviews with incapacity benefits customers, in each study area. Where possible, staff who had taken part in Wave One were invited to take part again in Wave Two, with a view to exploring change. Where that was not possible, and in the additional Wave Two study sites, the aim was to recruit new participants.

To assist with recruitment of DEAs in Wave One, each Job Broker organisation was asked to complete a proforma listing the names and addresses of all the DEAs with whom the Job Broker had had contact and to give an indication of the nature of that contact. The aim was to generate a study group of DEAs across all 18 Job Broker services in Wave One that included some who had had some form of general contact with the Job Broker (for example, around marketing activity), some who were known to have suggested potential NDDP clients, and some who had arranged disability services for Job Broker clients. To avoid over-burdening Job Brokers with research-related requests, a simpler approach was taken in Wave Two. Where DEAs who had taken part in Wave One were still in-post, they were invited to take part in

a follow-up interview. The rest were selected to give a spread of DEAs whom Job Broker staff in Wave Two interviews identified as having a good relationship with them and those not so identified. Twenty-three DEAs were interviewed in Wave Two, the same number as Job Broker organisations participating. This included 11 DEAs who also took part in the Wave One research.

In Wave One, Jobcentre Plus managers were asked to help identify non-DEA staff who could contribute to the discussion groups. This method of recruitment led to the inclusion of a range of staff with wide differences in experience of NDDP. The Jobcentre Plus offices covered in Wave One included 'Pathfinder' offices in which new incapacity benefits claimants were required to attend a mandatory work-focused interview with a Personal Adviser, and non-Pathfinder offices, where no such requirement was placed on new claimants or existing recipients although a voluntary gateway to NDDP services was available. In the second wave it was decided to focus recruitment on staff with experience of carrying out work-focused interviews with recipients of incapacity benefits and who worked in the study areas. Jobcentre Plus managers again helped to identify appropriate people.

Not all study areas contained an integrated Jobcentre Plus office; it was not always possible to convene the required groups. A total of 14 discussion groups were conducted in Wave Two. Staff taking part came from offices at different stages in the national roll out of the integrated Jobcentre Plus model. Included were offices with well-established Pathfinder models; offices taking part in the recently set up Incapacity Benefit Reform Pilot; offices which had established Jobcentre Plus more recently and offices in which integrated employment services and social security offices had not yet been instituted. A majority of DEAs were attached to the same Jobcentre Plus offices as the work-focused interview advisers who took part.

Among the 23 DEAs interviewed were two people who also managed a team of DEAs. Experience as a DEA ranged from six months to almost 30 years. Almost half of the DEAs taking part worked in integrated Jobcentre Plus offices, including Incapacity Benefit Reform Pilot areas, and two carried out some work-focused interviews in addition to their DEA role.

Participants in the group discussions included specialist Incapacity Benefit Personal Advisers (some also working within an Incapacity Benefit Reform pilot); generic advisers (working across Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and non-JSA customer groups); non-JSA advisers (working also with Income Support and Carer's Allowance customers); and some managerial and supervisory staff who also conducted work-focused interviews. Some of the generic advisers were currently training in order to specialise on work with incapacity benefits recipients. Also taking part were some staff currently working as advisers with other groups (lone parents, under-18s and 25 plus) and some new claims advisers. They had joined discussions because they had done work-focused interviews with incapacity benefits recipients during the past year, or because they sometimes helped with incapacity benefits work when designated staff were busy. The group discussions varied in size: most involved three or four people. On two occasions, only one of those invited was able to attend, and the topic guide was used to interview these people on their own.

At both waves, the group discussions and the interviews with DEAs focused on their understanding of how Job Brokers worked, understanding ways in which Jobcentre Plus staff worked with Job Brokers, how Jobcentre Plus staff influenced incapacity benefits recipients' participation in NDDP, staff views on what Job Brokers added to existing provision, and views about effective practice and lessons for the future.

1.3 A note on the use of terms

In the course of the study, different ways of referring to people who registered with Job Brokers (or who might be eligible to register) were used by the various groups of research participants. References were made for example, to '*clients*' and to '*customers*'. The same people could also be referred to as '*claimants*' or '*recipients*' in some circumstances. In this report, the terms '*client*' and '*potential client*' are used solely to refer to people's relationship (or possible future relationship) with a Job Broker organisation. In their relations with Jobcentre Plus staff (including DEAs), people are referred to as '*customers*' (where this term is used by the staff themselves in the research interviews), '*claimants*' (referring to people in the process of making a claim) or '*recipients*' (to denote people in receipt of a social security benefit). The authors acknowledge that some people to whom these terms refer might not recognise themselves or even disagree with the term.

1.4 Analysis

Interviews and group discussions were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Analysis was carried out using Framework, a thematic approach to analysing qualitative data (see Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). The first stage of analysis involves identification of emerging issues to inform the development of a thematic framework. This comprises a series of thematic matrices or charts. Each matrix covers one key theme: the columns represent key sub-topics, and the rows individual respondents. Data from each case are summarised in the appropriate cell. The context of the information is retained and the page of the transcript from which it comes is noted, so that it is possible to return to a transcript to explore a point in more detail. The charts are stored in spreadsheet format in Microsoft Excel. Organising the data in this way enables themes to be explored within a common analytical framework which is grounded in respondents' own accounts. The final stage involves classificatory and interpretative analysis of the charted data in order to identify patterns, explanations and hypotheses.

1.5 Structure of the report

The remainder of this report is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter 2 provides background information about the organisation and operation of Jobcentre Plus and key policy changes, as context for later discussion of how the work of Jobcentre Plus sits alongside that of Job Brokers. It then provides an

overview of the organisation and operation of the Job Broker services, drawing out changes since the Wave One research, looking at the impacts of the funding regime, and highlighting other key developments in the way in which Job Brokers operate.

Chapter 3 focuses on the experiences of the Wave Two clients in terms of their participation in the Job Broker service. It examines clients' needs from the service, describes how they are met, looks at clients' perceptions of the quality and appropriateness of the help they received, and explores the factors which help and hinder meeting clients' needs. The chapter also describes the range of impacts of the service, particularly in terms of progression to work, and highlights the factors which influence whether or not clients move towards, or into, work following their use of the service.

Chapter 4 focuses on longer-term client experiences and the impact of the service, drawing on the two waves of data with clients who were interviewed in 2002 and again in 2003/4. The chapter focuses on how clients' circumstances changed since the Wave One interview, what impact NDDP (and other factors) had on those changes, and how their assessment of the service they received changed.

Chapter 5 looks specifically at the experiences of work. It examines issues around job retention and sustainability amongst clients who had worked since using a Job Broker service, looking particularly at the difficulties people encountered in work. The chapter explores how in-work support is approached by Job Brokers, clients' experiences of receiving help and their views about its impact. The chapter also looks at how far clients use or see Job Brokers as a source of support once they are in work, and the factors which might explain why they do not always turn to the Job Broker services to help them overcome difficulties.

Chapter 6 uses data from fieldwork with Jobcentre Plus and Job Broker staff to explore the way in which relationships between Jobcentre Plus staff and Job Brokers were developing and being maintained. It looks at understanding and awareness of the other service from the perspective of Job Brokers and of Jobcentre Plus staff, how this is shaped and where there remain gaps. It explores how Jobcentre Plus staff enable people to access Job Broker services, and how the Job Broker and Jobcentre Plus services operate alongside each other in providing help to clients.

Chapter 7 draws out the features of Job Broker service organisation and practice which are associated with effective performance. It begins by identifying four groups of Job Brokers in terms of their performance and then explores the association between these groups and seven aspects of Job Broker organisation and practice: the nature of the parent organisation; funding arrangements; the management of the Job Broker contract; how staffing is organised; links with Jobcentre Plus and other external organisations; and the nature of the pre-work and in-work services provided.

The final chapter (Chapter 8) reviews the findings of the report to consider how they might inform the future development of the programme. The chapter reviews the

evidence about what works for clients in terms of helping them move towards work and into sustained employment, and what attributes contribute to making Job Brokers 'effective' in terms of their internal organisation and practices, funding and contractual arrangements and external relationships. The policy implications and key issues for consideration by the Department are highlighted.

Where words or phrases are shown in italics, these are verbatim extracts to illustrate the language used by people who took part in the interviews and discussions.

2 The service delivery context

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe the broad service delivery context within which the issues discussed in subsequent chapters arise. NDDP is part of a range of strategies introduced to help incapacity benefits recipients to move into, or towards, work. Jobcentre Plus policy and operations thus provide an important background to the operation of Job Broker services. Specifically, Jobcentre Plus staff play a role in signposting Job Broker services to potential clients. They also work alongside Job Brokers in supporting people on incapacity benefits, providing discrete types of support to complement what Job Brokers provide and dealing with referrals to other Jobcentre Plus services. More broadly, structural and strategic developments within Jobcentre Plus mean that there are changes in the context within which Job Broker services operate.

This chapter, therefore, begins by describing key changes in the focus and operation of Jobcentre Plus (Section 2.2). It also highlights contextual changes in the way in which Jobcentre Plus interacts with NDDP, which are discussed in much more detail in Chapter 6. The chapter then turns to the Job Broker services (Section 2.3). It provides a detailed overview of the organisation and operation of the Job Broker services (Sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.4) and of funding and contractual arrangements (Section 2.3.5). It describes ways in which these changed over the period of operation of both the Wave One and the new Wave Two Job Brokers, and the changes since the Wave One interviews noted by Job Brokers who were interviewed at both stages (Section 2.3.3). Where relevant, the views and experiences of clients are also reported, although these are mostly covered in later chapters.

2.2 Jobcentre Plus context

This study was conducted during a time of major structural and administrative change within Jobcentre Plus. At the same time, Jobcentre Plus policy in working with incapacity benefits customers continued to develop, with increasing focus on supporting customers who want to return to work.

2.2.1 Structural change

Jobcentre Plus is a key part of the Government's strategy for welfare reform. It brings together the services of the former Employment Service and Benefits Agency to provide a single point of delivery for jobs, benefits advice and support for people of working age. The first 56 Jobcentre Plus Pathfinder offices were established in 17 clusters across the UK in October 2001, offering a fully integrated work and benefits service.

A key feature of the new integrated way of working is the work-focused interview. In the Jobcentre Plus process model (see Davies *et al.*, 2003) new and repeat claimants make initial contact through a telephone call to a contact centre, during which information is sought and arrangements made for the customer to attend a work-focused interview. This takes place at a local Jobcentre Plus public office, after an appointment with a financial assessor who checks the claim and answers any questions about financial aspects. Customers then meet their personal adviser who explains Jobcentre Plus services, identifies barriers to work and help that might be needed, and agrees future contact and activity. This process model has been rolling out since 2001 and the network of integrated offices is due for completion by 2006.

In the first wave of qualitative work in this study, some of the Jobcentre Plus staff who took part were working in Pathfinder offices and other Jobcentre Plus offices which had gone some way towards the fully integrated service, as explained in the earlier report⁵. Some of the Job Broker service clients who took part also had experience of the new arrangements. By the time of the second wave of research, the integrated model had been implemented in many more areas and had extended further into areas covered by the Job Brokers studied. As Chapter 1 explained, it was decided by the researchers to concentrate Wave Two fieldwork, as far as possible, on advisers within integrated offices who were carrying out work-focused interviews, in addition to interviews with DEAs.

2.2.2 Developments in policy

NDDP was one of the strategies adopted by the Government to provide active help and encouragement to incapacity benefits recipients to enter, re-enter or remain in employment. Despite the extension of the Job Broker services, and a range of other strategies including reform of the tax and benefit system, the number of incapacity benefits recipients has continued to increase slowly, and they make up the largest group of economically inactive people of working age in Great Britain. One explanation for this slight growth is that people are staying on benefits for longer.

Government saw a need for wider reform of incapacity benefits. The Green Paper, *Pathways to Work: Helping People into Employment* (2002), puts forward proposals for reform perceived to be a more coherent way of supporting people moving onto incapacity benefits. Reforms based around increasing financial incentives to return

⁵ Corden, A., Harries, T., Hill, K., Kellard, K., Lewis, J., Sainsbury, R and Thornton, P. (2003), *New Deal For Disabled people National Extension: Findings From The First Wave Of Qualitative Research With Clients, Job Brokers And Jobcentre Plus Staff*. DWP Report No.169.

to work, a better support and referral framework via Jobcentre Plus, innovative rehabilitation programmes and more support to people who have to move from incapacity benefits to JSA were introduced in three initial pilot areas in October 2003, and extended to four more areas in April 2004.

The new package of support within Jobcentre Plus pilot areas includes:

- a mandatory work-focused interview, as in Jobcentre Plus elsewhere but eight weeks into a new claim for incapacity benefits rather than at the start of the claim;
- a requirement to attend a further five monthly mandatory interviews with an adviser, unless identified via a screening tool as likely to return to work without extra help in which case, participation can proceed on a voluntary basis;
- new specialist adviser teams of Incapacity Benefit Personal Advisers, DEAs and Occupational Psychologists;
- linking of the timing of the medical assessment process for new claims with the work-focused interviews;
- interventions (Choices package) to support return to work, including existing Jobcentre Plus services and programmes, and work-focused condition management programmes (developed by Jobcentre Plus and local NHS providers); and
- a Return to Work Credit, of £40 per week for up to 52 weeks for people where their gross earnings are less than £15,000.

All incapacity benefits customers in Incapacity Benefit Reform pilot areas have equal voluntary access to the Choices package, the Return to Work Credit and the Adviser Discretion Fund. Jobcentre Plus staff in the Incapacity Benefit reform areas are also encouraged to build on the existing range of provision available to help customers claiming incapacity benefits, in relation to providing access to a comprehensive range of support. Included here are NDDP Job Brokers, Work Preparation and WORKSTEP, and staff are encouraged to look first to NDDP.

The introduction of the Incapacity Benefit Reform Pilot in 2003 meant that by the time of the second wave of qualitative research, some of the Job Brokers studied in-depth were operating in local areas in which Jobcentre Plus staff had new responsibilities and roles, and some of their clients (and potential clients) were beginning to experience the new series of mandatory interviews designed to focus their thoughts on future employment (for further information on the early experiences of the Incapacity Benefit Reforms, see Dickens *et al.*, 2004).

2.2.3 Contextual changes to interactions between Jobcentre Plus and Job Broker services

Alongside the increasing focus on more direct encouragement for incapacity benefits customers to move towards work, and provision of greater support and intervention, there was growing emphasis on achieving employment outcomes

with targets for individual Jobcentre Plus staff and overall 'points' targets. By the time of the second wave of qualitative research, Jobcentre Plus staff were increasingly talking about the way they worked in terms of 'hitting targets' and 'getting points' in relation to their work with incapacity benefits customers. As Chapter 6 discusses, views were emerging about local Job Brokers and ways of working with them that reflected their increasingly target-directed approach.

As noted earlier, Jobcentre Plus staff play a role in signposting Job Broker services to potential clients. An important change was implemented between the two waves of research in the guidance issued to Jobcentre Plus staff in relation to helping customers choose a local Job Broker. At the time of the Wave One interviews, Jobcentre Plus expected staff to be impartial and not promote one Job Broker over another, with the expectation that equal amounts of information about each local Job Broker would be imparted. By the time of the second wave of the research, revised guidance had been introduced which allowed advisers to identify features of Job Broker services best suited to a customer's needs. Guidance was that the customer should always make the final choice of Job Broker. However, following discussion of all local Job Brokers, the adviser could help the customer make a full and informed choice by matching their needs with services available, and could indicate which Job Broker might be most suitable. At the time of the first wave of research, emphasis in the guidance on the need for impartiality suggested that staff should carefully avoid pointing customers towards particular Job Brokers.

Structural changes within Jobcentre Plus and developments in policy have both had a major influence on the role of the DEA. The NDDP Job Broker services, and the pilots that preceded them, allowed incapacity benefits recipients to enter the services directly. With traditional Jobcentre Plus disability services programmes, notably Work Preparation and WORKSTEP, DEAs have had a formal gate-keeping role that has involved them in checking eligibility, assessing needs and directing people to the programme that seemed most appropriate for them. For established DEAs in particular, the advent of the NDDP represented a major break from accepted ways of referring customers to Jobcentre Plus programmes. Changes in staff approaches to helping clients choose Job Brokers, and the influence of the new guidance, are discussed in Chapter 6.

A further area of interaction between Jobcentre Plus and Job Brokers is the provision of complementary support via the two sets of services. Since 1997, there has been a growing trend in Jobcentre Plus provision towards individually tailored support from a personal adviser who draws in contracted practical services as appropriate. In such arrangements, advisers to differing degrees work alongside the service provider to meet a customer's employment-related needs. As explained in Chapter 6, this sometimes did apply with the Job Broker services, but typically the case management role was handed over to the Job Broker. It is also possible for any service provider, including Job Brokers, to refer a client to Jobcentre Plus so that the person might access a Jobcentre Plus service. A DEA or other adviser typically assesses eligibility in

such cases.

Finally, there has also been an increasing opening up of Jobcentre Plus offices to allow other service providers much more of a presence on the premises. At both waves of research there were accounts of Job Broker staff having arranged with Jobcentre Plus managers to be available at the public offices at prearranged times for customers interested in learning more about their Job Broker services.

2.3 Job Broker contexts

2.3.1 Organisation of Job Broker services

Wider organisational settings

As noted in the Wave One report (Corden *et al.*, 2003), the Job Broker organisations chosen for in-depth study included voluntary, public and private sector organisations. Those subsequently added at Wave Two similarly spanned these three sectors. The new organisations also included one partnership. Among the partnerships included at Wave One, in two cases partner organisations had withdrawn by the time of Wave Two leaving the lead organisation working solo, and in one case the partnership had expanded.

The range of other activities of the Job Broker organisations remained varied, and included other Department disability services; other government work preparation and skills acquisition contracts; employment and training-related activities funded by central and local government and other sources; and non-employment activities. Note that the in-house Jobcentre Plus Job Brokers are viewed as independent and separate organisations for the purposes of this analysis, reflecting the fact that they are managed and operated separately and do not have access to Jobcentre Plus services for disabled clients in ways which are different from other Job Brokers.

There had been some changes in the profile of Job Broker services within the wider organisations which provide them, and in their relationship to the other services provided by the organisation. In some organisations the profile of NDDP had risen and organisational commitment to it was thought by managers to be firmer, influenced it was said by rising numbers of clients and improved financial performance. In others, however, the profile of the service had decreased, with a reduction in staff, reports of weakened organisational commitment to the Job Broker service, and sometimes the decision not to bid for a contract extension (see below). There were also organisations where NDDP activity had become more integrated with other services. This was demonstrated in integration at a management level, use of other services or activities within the organisation to support the Job Broker team's work with registered clients, and use of other services or contracts for early work with potential NDDP clients prior to registration.

Staffing

There had also been changes to staffing. There were reports of expanded management teams and of managers reducing, or moving away from, having their own caseloads so they could concentrate on managing the Job Broker team. Some organisations reported expanded staffing within Job Broker teams, while others as noted above had reduced staffing levels.

The Wave One report described different staffing models. In some organisations the Job Broker contract had dedicated staffing, while in others, staff combined Job Broking with other similar activities or contracts. There were also differences in whether Job Broker staff had generic roles working with the same client throughout their contact with the service, or whether they had specialist roles. By Wave Two there had been some shifts, in both directions, between dedicated and non-dedicated staff, but neither was consistently thought to be a more effective way of organising staffing. Dedicated staffing was thought to allow staff to build up in-depth experience and specialist knowledge; non-dedicated staffing was thought helpful to avoid isolation or marginalisation of NDDP, to maintain flexibility if caseloads changed, to provide cover during staff absences, and, in one organisation, to avoid becoming over-focused on what was seen as a more '*commercial*' contract, because of payment structures and the emphasis on outcomes, than the other work of the organisation.

In terms of generic and specialist staffing there had also been changes – in both directions, but generally with more use of specialist staff roles. In particular, more services were making a distinction between job searching support and earlier work with clients up to the point of job readiness; and between pre-work support and in-work support. The greater use of staff specialising in in-work support was sometimes prompted by the time required to keep in touch with clients in work, and particularly to gather evidence of sustained work.

As in Wave One, there were different views about the relative advantages of generic and specialised staffing. Generic staffing was thought to be useful to build rapport with clients, to provide continuity of service and avoid a feeling of clients being '*passed around*', to gain more insight into clients which would help with job matching, for greater staff satisfaction, to balance work loads and provide flexibility, and for team building. On the other hand there were strong views that the range of skills and types of activity required in Job Broking were best delivered by specialist staff. It was said that this prevented too much focus on outcomes and clients who were closer to work, and that discontinuity of contact can be avoided by having one designated adviser who coordinates the team's work and is responsible for contact with the client throughout.

Caseloads and case management

Finally in this section, there were also changes in the size and management of caseloads. It was noted in the Wave One report that caseloads varied with the highest being 70-100 cases for full-time Job Broker staff, a level that was felt to be

too high. By Wave Two, caseloads for several Job Brokers had risen, sometimes very considerably, with Job Brokers reporting caseloads of up to around 150 and higher. The new Job Brokers interviewed at Wave Two only also reported rising caseloads, with the highest reported being 300-400. Such high levels were generally seen as difficult to manage and as undermining the quality of the service provided to clients. There was more discussion than at Wave One about distinguishing between active and inactive cases (the latter being people who were not actively looking for, or moving towards, work, people who were on longer training courses and people who had lost contact with the service), and about focusing on clients who were already job-ready or likely to become so more quickly. Although this was often not welcomed by Job Broker staff, it was seen as otherwise impossible to manage high caseloads. The number of cases had also sometimes prompted the decision to have separate staff members responsible for in-work contact with clients. Clients sometimes observed that they felt their Job Broker adviser was overloaded with work, and reported dwindling contact which may have arisen from Job Brokers' practices in managing heavy caseloads. This issue is explored further in Chapter 3.

2.3.2 Marketing activity and clients' routes to the services

Clients' routes to the services

The same range of routes by which clients were thought to have come to the service were noted by Job Broker staff as at Wave One, namely:

- Jobcentre Plus staff;
- DWP letters sent at intervals to people on incapacity benefits to tell them about services to help people who want to move into work;
- Job Brokers' own marketing or promotion (see further below);
- word of mouth;
- local community groups and services which for some Job Broker organisations included health, mental health and learning disability services or the probation service; and
- networks and 'partnerships' with other local service providers.

The key change here was the increased role of referrals from Jobcentre Plus reported by some Job Brokers, an issue explored in Chapter 6.

The methods used in Job Broker organisations' promotion and marketing encompassed:

- advertising and promotional stories in newspapers (mainly local and regional press) and on radio and television;
- marketing literature such as posters and leaflets: some Job Brokers had leafleted residential addresses, and posters and leaflets were sent to employers and local

organisations and left at venues such as GPs' surgeries, hospitals, colleges and libraries;

- items such as mugs, coasters, fridge magnets and desk accessories;
- roadshows and stalls at job fairs, shopping centres and local events; and
- personal visits and networking.

These activities were directed to a range of different groups: directly to potential clients; to groups and organisations which were in contact with people who might be potential clients; to venues used by potential clients; and to local employers (see further below). They were used in different combinations by different Job Brokers, and some Job Brokers appeared to be much more active in marketing than others. There were also differences among Job Brokers in whether they used specialist marketing agencies, had specialist marketing staff within the organisation, had Job Broker advisers who were also responsible for marketing or involved the adviser team more widely in marketing. For some teams the use of external or internal marketing specialists was a new development since Wave One. Among the Job Broker representatives there were different views about and experiences of the effectiveness of different marketing methods, but no individual methods were consistently seen as more effective than others. There was a view that effective marketing is cumulative, and that repeated contacts and reminders are necessary.

The Department was felt to have an important role to play in promoting Job Broker services. Some Job Brokers noted the positive impact on the number of potential clients coming forward as a result of the letters sent at regular intervals to people on incapacity benefits. There remained, as at Wave One, some concern about the language of the letter and it was felt to lead to contact by people who chose not to register for Job Broker services once reassured that participation was voluntary and that if they chose not to use the service, their benefits would not be affected. A national advertising campaign promoting all the New Deal programmes was run by the Department in autumn 2003 involving television and newspaper advertising as well as posters. Again, there were mixed views about this but none of the Job Brokers had perceived an impact on contact by potential clients. There were different views about the strategy used in the campaign of promoting NDDP alongside other New Deal programmes. Some Job Broker staff and managers interviewed felt it was helpful to give NDDP the same status and branding and commented that it was less well known than other New Deals; others felt it might have been more effective to promote NDDP in a more distinctive way.

As at Wave One, there was also a view that the NDDP branding, and particularly the use of the word 'disabled', was unhelpful since few clients were thought to warm to the label of disability or to see themselves as disabled.

National television advertising for NDDP had been a direct draw to the service for some clients. Others said that they recalled seeing television advertisements, but had not responded, and took action only after receiving information from another

source such as a Jobcentre Plus adviser, DEA, or a friend. One person commented that they did not connect the advertising for NDDP with themselves as they did not consider themselves as disabled, but for others this was the feature that drew them towards the programme. Clients had less often learnt of the Job Broker though the marketing of individual Job Brokers, but where this did occur, advertisements in local newspapers and staff's promotion of the service at a supermarket were successful methods described.

Clients in the second wave of the research also reported having been told about the services by Jobcentre Plus advisers and DEAs, some having been given information about several Job Brokers and others directed towards one service. Where they had heard about a Job Broker organisation from a Community Psychiatric Nurse, social worker, back to work organisation, or friend, they were generally told about a particular organisation, rather than NDDP as a whole. DWP letters or mailshots were also mentioned as ways in which people found out about the service.

There was a general feeling amongst clients that both NDDP as a programme and individual Job Broker services were poorly marketed, and some said that they might have engaged with the service earlier had they known about it.

2.3.3 The services provided

An overview of services

There is, in broad terms, a fair amount of similarity in the main types of help provided by the Job Broker services, although differences in emphasis, breadth and the ways in which different kinds of help are given. The range of services provided are:

- advice about vocational direction and whether work is an appropriate objective;
- in-house training or support with accessing external training; work experience and placements;
- advice about the financial implications of working and help with tax credit applications;
- advice about job search approaches and information about vacancies;
- help with interviews, CVs and job applications;
- financial support on entry into work; and
- in-work support.

As discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, some Job Broker organisations appear to focus their activity around the more immediate labour market barriers such as vocational direction, financial support and job search skills. Others place more emphasis on barriers such as confidence and self-esteem or on other personal capacity building activities and provided structured help to address these through, for example, in-house courses or specialist services. A third group provide particularly

intensive in-depth help sometimes using the supported employment model.

A range of changes were reported to the services provided and to delivery approaches. These arise from general comments about changes to the service across its period of operation by both Wave One and new Wave Two Job Brokers, and from changes that those interviewed at both stages reported in the second interview.

More focused registration

First, funding and contractual arrangements (discussed in more detail in Section 2.3.5), had by the time of the Wave Two fieldwork led a number of services to focus more on clients who were seen as closer to work. This was demonstrated in their registration practices, with more active consideration of the likely support needs of clients, more active consideration of whether other services provided by the organisation might be more appropriate, more signposting of appropriate external services, and in some cases, delays in recording a client as being registered while support was given through the Job Broker service. The services appeared not to use formalised or systematic approaches to assessing proximity to work. Staff formed their own judgements of how likely the client was to find work, based on factors such as how motivated the client appeared to be, how realistic their work goals were, their previous work experience, skills and qualifications, the severity of their disability, their personal presentation, and whether they were likely to be better off in work than on benefits.

The Job Broker services varied in whom they perceived their service was well placed to work with and could best help to get into work, in terms of clients' proximity to work or 'job readiness'. This reflected the type of organisation they were and the services they provided. In addition, services were to varying extents influenced by the fact that, with initial contracts due to expire in March 2004, the Department, from autumn 2003, began to set targets for job entries of 25 per cent of all registered clients. Contracts with those organisations which had not reached this level were not expected to be extended. This was, for some organisations, an additional factor to consider very carefully in decisions about registration. In its simplest terms, where Job Broker staff felt the service provided by their particular organisation could help clients overcome the barriers they faced in getting into work, they felt well placed to work with them.

While all the Job Brokers were clearly focused on helping clients to attain paid work, some took a broader definition than others of the barriers to work they could address. There were three broad approaches in terms of how they made decisions about whether or not to register a potential client, but Job Brokers also observed the Department's requirements that an eligible person who wanted to register could not be refused the service.

The first approach was to register any client who it was felt was motivated to work and saw work as their goal. The emphasis was not on how close someone was to

work, but on whether they wanted to work. They felt their services could help clients address a broad range of barriers both immediate and more personal, with one describing theirs as a *'holistic service'*. They emphasised the flexibility of their services and that they used other internal or external services and local networks to meet clients' needs. While these Job Broker staff did not report targeting their marketing at any specific group, they tended not to use avenues such as mental health services or other medical services which might generate approaches from less 'job-ready' clients, and they tended to refer people with more severe specific impairments to other specialist providers.

The second group also took a broad definition of who they would work with, but delayed registering clients on NDDP until they were perceived to be broadly 'job-ready'. They worked with clients who faced a broad range of immediate and more personal barriers to work. They used a range of internal, and sometimes external, services in their work with clients and registered clients for NDDP at the point when they felt they were broadly 'job-ready' – likely to be in work within a couple of months or so, or ready to begin job searching. These practices were based on a perceived pressure to improve outcome ratios, and particularly to achieve the 25 per cent conversion target. They varied in the marketing strategies used and attracted a range of clients. Some were specialists working with a high proportion of clients with mental health issues or learning disabilities, while others provided a service to a wider client group.

Third were those Job Brokers who assessed a client's proximity to work and if they did not feel they were 'reasonably job-ready' (generally seen as being likely to be in a job within the next six months), would not register them. Job Broker staff explained that this was because they did not feel that it would be in the client's interest to register with their particular service. While they did not refuse to register these clients, they would talk to them about the service and give them *'guidance'* that in their view the service was not suitable for their needs. Job Broker staff said they would *'signpost'* people on to other services. They varied in how they managed this, some making an appointment with another organisation or a DEA, for example, others just giving the relevant contact details. There were two reasons given for steering people away from registering. First, some Job Broker services were geared to addressing immediate barriers into work, and where clients faced other underlying barriers staff felt they did not have the skills or resources to meet their needs. Second was the impact of the Department's 25 per cent conversion target as described earlier. Some Job Broker staff reported that their more restrictive registration practice had been adopted in response to this target. Even where they felt their service could help a client in the long run, the duration of support likely to be needed meant they were disinclined to register them. Where this happened, concerns were expressed that the needs of those furthest away from work and in need of the most support would not be met by NDDP.

An increased focus on clients who were closer to work was also demonstrated in the nature of the service provided (see further below). There were also reports of more active prioritising between clients, with services prioritising spending time on clients

who were job-ready or likely to become so more quickly.

Staff targets for job entries

The second development was a wider use of targets set for adviser staff, and in one case, a bonus payment scheme, for the number of job entries achieved. Targets were already being used by some services in the Wave One research; by the time of the Wave Two data collection, more organisations were using them. Targets were set for either individual staff or the team as a whole, or sometimes both. There were different responses to them among staff, influenced, in part, by how much emphasis was placed on them by management and the wider organisation and, in part, by how achievable they were. Some staff found them helpful, encouraging a constructive focus on helping clients to achieve work and boosting staff motivation and morale. Others paid little attention to them and did not seem to have strong views about them either way. A third group found them unhelpful and felt they risked putting pressure on staff to encourage clients into work which might not be in their best interests – a pressure that they tried to withstand.

Use of external provision

It was noted earlier that some Job Broker services were making more use of other internal provision by the time of the Wave Two fieldwork. A further change reported by Job Broker managers and staff was much more use of external services too, both Jobcentre Plus provision and provision by other local organisations. This was thought to reflect Job Broker advisers' greater knowledge of local provision, financial pressures (see further below), the need to find supplementary sources of help for clients who were further from work, and an increased flow of clients which meant that Job Brokers were able to develop more active relationships with other providers. More Job Brokers appeared to have access to on-line Jobcentre Plus vacancy information, and to be aware of it, than at the Wave One research.

Financial incentives and support

A fourth development was an increased use of direct and indirect financial support for clients, both from the resources of Job Broker organisations and from external sources mainly in the form of the Jobcentre Plus Adviser Discretionary Fund. At the time of the Wave One research some Job Brokers were providing financial incentives or rewards to clients who took up work or who provided evidence of job entry and sustained work. By the Wave Two fieldwork, more Job Brokers were doing so, sometimes because other local Job Brokers used financial incentives and they thought that, without them, their ability to attract clients was sharply reduced. Here they were sometimes not comfortable with the concept of financial incentives. The level of payment varied from around £25 to £200 for job entry, with a further payment at 13 weeks of sustained work.

In addition, to varying degrees, Job Broker services also had discretion to provide further direct financial support at the point when clients started work, for example, paying a weekly amount to cover the period between coming off benefit and

receiving the first pay packet, covering travel to work costs, or paying for equipment or clothing. They were also able to pay for training courses, or to cover expenses associated with attending them. Some Job Broker advisers provided financial support only through the Jobcentre Plus Adviser Discretionary Fund; others had access to funds from their own organisation.

Types of support and ways of working

There had also been changes to the types of services provided. Some organisations now provided new services or types of help, such as in-house courses or, in the case of one Job Broker, a range of approaches to building confidence and self-esteem such as gym membership, involvement in an allotment gardening scheme and vouchers for hairdressing. Others were reducing their use of some kinds of help such as work experience placements and training and other broader support, because they felt they were not significant in helping clients to get jobs, that the costs outweighed the gains to the organisation, and reflecting the decision to focus more on clients who were closer to work.

Some Job Brokers had begun carrying out basic skills assessments, an intervention required by the Department for which a small additional sum (£4 per customer assessment) is paid and which not all Job Brokers were carrying out at the time of the Wave One fieldwork. Approaches to carrying out assessments varied. One approach was to use fairly detailed standardised screening instruments, either with all clients or just with those who they thought might have basic skills difficulties. A more informal or '*subtle*' approach was also described. This involved avoiding asking direct questions about literacy skills and instead observing whether a potential client seemed able to read and complete the registration form, making assumptions about their literacy based on their education and qualifications, or using indirect questioning about school and work to ascertain whether there might be a problem or a need for a fuller assessment. Advisers took this approach because of a degree of discomfort about asking directly about basic skills. They felt the stigma associated with basic skills gaps meant that clients would be embarrassed or annoyed to be asked about basic skills, both if their skills were limited and if they were not. There were also different views about the usefulness of screening. Although there was a view that it was helpful, some advisers felt it was just '*more paperwork*', and that basic skills gaps were not a particularly significant barrier to work among their clients – either because few clients had basic skills gaps, or because those who did could still find employment which did not involve reading or writing. There were also different views about the adequacy of local basic skills provision, and it was noted that clients are often reluctant to attend.

A further change in practice, at least for some Job Broker services, was the use of Action Plans. Action Plans were introduced by the Department as a condition for payment of the registration fee, although some services had already been using them. There appeared to be some variation among organisations in the amount of detail recorded and in how Action Plans were used: some advisers appeared not to use them actively in their work with clients, but others reviewed them regularly with

the client and used them as a case management aid. There were also different views about their value. They were seen as useful, especially if they are reasonably specific and detailed, to ensure that information is collected systematically, to set and monitor goals, as a joint record of what has been agreed between adviser and client and of their respective roles and responsibilities, and as a transparent check on the service provided. However, other advisers felt that they did not add anything useful (in one case because they replaced what had been more detailed recording of actions and decisions), and that they were just another administrative burden. As discussed in Chapter 3, there was only limited recollection of action plans among clients.

Finally in this section, some Job Broker services had, since Wave One, begun providing '*better-off*' calculations using IBIS software (which calculates income from employment based on actual or hypothetical hours and wages). There were comments from staff about feeling more confident in using it. Again, however, practices were varied. In some Job Broker organisations, either all adviser staff or a specialist team used the IBIS software to provide calculations, although they sometimes said they stressed to clients that this was an estimate only. One organisation did their own calculation only if Jobcentre Plus staff were not willing to do one, or could not do so quickly enough. Other organisations were not providing better-off calculations, and in some cases did not have the IBIS software. Their reasons here were that staff did not feel confident in providing specific financial guidance, that the calculation would not be '*official*' and, thus, a Jobcentre Plus calculation would anyway need to be done, that this was properly the role of Jobcentre Plus and not of Job Brokers, and because of the time and resources required to train staff. Their approach, instead, was to give general information about the financial implications of work and the financial support available but to refer clients elsewhere for help – usually to Jobcentre Plus or '*the Benefits Agency*' or, in the case of one Job Broker team, to Citizens' Advice Bureaux.

2.3.4 Job Brokers' contacts with employers

The Wave One report found four different forms of contact with employers were described by Job Brokers:

- contact to support a client's application for a vacancy – such as a covering letter sent with a job application or a telephone call to support or follow up on the application;
- contact to ascertain whether an employer had a vacancy, for either a permanent post or a placement, in relation to a specific client;
- on-going contact with employers and attempts to develop relationships with a view to finding out about employers' vacancies, or setting up systems for early notification of them, so that appropriate clients could be told about them; and
- more general contact with employers to raise awareness of the Job Broker service or the wider organisation, or promote the employment of disabled people more

generally, by cold-calling, attending job fairs, sending leaflets and letters, and general networking.

All four types of contact were found among Job Brokers in the Wave Two research. As at Wave One, there was also sometimes contact with the employer once a client had started work, but this is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

The first two approaches, which Job Brokers described as '*client-led*', were used in occasional cases by a wide range of Job Brokers. Job Brokers noted that many clients did not want or need the Job Broker to front their contact with the employer, but that they were always happy to do so and that it could be important where a client might not do themselves justice in an application or an interview. Some were able to offer to subsidise salaries or training costs (either through the Job Introduction Scheme or from their own funds), and saw contact in support of an application as a useful way of communicating this. Incentives were also thought to be useful in relation to the second type of contact – investigating vacancies with a specific client or clients in mind – although it was thought that they might be more useful to smaller employer organisations. Among the Job Brokers were some which had extensive employers' databases, generally a resource for the organisation as a whole rather than specifically developed by the Job Broker team, and these were used to select employers to approach.

There were more mixed views about the value of the third and fourth types of contact, which were seen as '*employer-led*' approaches. Some Job Brokers contact employers to find out about vacancies in the expectation that they might have clients for whom they would be appropriate, and others were planning to do more of this in the future. They also reported that they were sometimes approached by employers asking whether the service had any clients who might be appropriate for specific vacancies. However, other organisations did not use this form of contact, or had in the past but no longer did. There were recurrent concerns that it would lead to '*fitting the client to the employer*' rather than finding an employer appropriate to a specific client. There were also concerns that it would raise false expectations among employers which could not be met: some Job Brokers who had used this approach had found they had few or no clients who could fill the employer's vacancies. Finally, the approach was not liked because it smacked, to some, of asking '*favours*' of employers rather than identifying '*real jobs*'.

There were also mixed views about more general marketing and awareness raising. It was seen as a resource-intensive activity which generated little tangible reward. Job Broker staff felt the task was made more difficult by frequent changes in personnel among employers, by pressures on employers' time, by employers' reluctance to put time into meeting with Job Brokers, and by ignorance or prejudicial attitudes on the part of employers. Although it was seen as essential that this is tackled, a common view was that a government-led initiative would be more effective to tackle employer discrimination than the piecemeal approach of Job Brokers. However, there were other Job Brokers who continued to carry out this

general marketing activity and felt it was useful, in some cases citing specific job entries which had arisen from it. One Job Broker organisation now placed more emphasis on employer-led approaches and another was planning to move in this direction, but there were also examples of Job Brokers who had moved away from general approaches and now placed more emphasis on client-led contacts.

2.3.5 Funding and contractual arrangements

Financial performance

As noted in the Wave One report, Job Broker contracts involved targets for numbers of registered clients, job entries and sustained jobs. A small part of the total funding is through the payment per registration, with the remainder being payments per job entry and per sustained job. The registration payment was originally £100 but was increased to £300 per registration from October 2003. The levels of job entry and sustained job payments were set by organisations at the point when they tendered competitively for Job Broker contracts. For most, job entry and sustained job payments⁶ are equal, or roughly equal, and a payment at half the level is made for part-time jobs. Entitlement for the sustained job payment was originally at 26 weeks. This was reduced to 13 weeks from October 2003, but with a requirement to offer in-work support to the client for the original 26 week period.

Financial performance was discussed with managers at both the Wave One and Wave Two interviews. It is important to bear in mind here that the study did not involve any detailed analysis of financial performance – this is being carried out through a separate cost analysis (Davis and Greenberg, forthcoming) – and that the Job Broker managers interviewed did not always have responsibility for, or detailed knowledge of, financial performance.

At the point of Wave One data collection, only one of the Job Broker organisations in the in-depth study reported that the Job Broker service was self-funding. By Wave Two, the situation had changed somewhat. Some services were still being subsidised by the Job Broker organisation. This was sometimes a stable arrangement which seemed not to cause particular concern if the provision of the Job Broker service was seen to meet the organisation's objectives in other ways. For other organisations, however, it meant that the future of the Job Broker service was uncertain, or had led to the decision to withdraw from providing the service. Other organisations reported that the service was now breaking even or was self-funding, or that it was beginning to generate small surpluses. The information they provided was somewhat hazy, however, and it was not always clear, for example, whether all overheads were included in the Job Broker budgets, or whether managers were reporting on costs being covered cumulatively across the history of the contract, or in recent months

⁶ Defined by the DWP as 8-16 hours per week.

only. Nonetheless, the perception of a number of managers was that the financial performance of the Job Broker service had improved since Wave One.

Impacts of the funding regime

The funding regime was, however, as at Wave One, reported to have a number of consequences for the delivery of the Job Broker services. In particular, some managers reported that financial realities had forced the service to become more focused on clients who were closer to work. This trend was also strongly influenced by a sharpening focus in the Department's contract management on the ratio of clients who entered work, and by the introduction of the 25 per cent conversion rate target.

The funding and contractual regime was reported to have influenced Job Broker services in other ways too. As noted earlier, Job Broker staff and managers reported more use of other internal services to prepare clients for registration on NDDP. Funding had sometimes constrained staffing complements, resulting in waiting lists for registration and higher caseloads, which in turn had consequences for the level of client contact and the time staff had available for activities such as job matching. There were also reports of constraints on the resources available for marketing the service to either clients or employers, although in the case of employers there were, as discussed above, other reasons why this was not seen as a primary activity.

The extent to which the funding and contractual regime had influenced Job Broker services was, however, very varied. Some representatives said it had not influenced the design and delivery of the service at all. There were organisations which had not changed their registration practices and were continuing to make the service available very widely, and organisations which continued to provide a very in-depth service to clients including an emphasis on training, placements and confidence building.

Three factors, in particular, appeared to mediate the impact of the funding and contractual arrangements. First, there were organisations where there was not a devolved budget for the Job Broker service and where performance seemed not to be closely monitored. Second, there were organisations where other sources of funding covered part of the costs of the Job Broker service, for example, where a partnership arrangement meant the service was not funded purely on the basis of performance, or where staff salaries were covered by other funding. Third, as already noted, some organisations subsidised the costs of the Job Broker service, either directly, or indirectly through making other internal services funded from other sources available to Job Broker staff and clients. The researchers were not able to investigate differences in the resources of the parent organisations, which would influence their ability to subsidise or co-fund the Job Broker services.

Views about the funding regime

In general, Job Broker staff and managers were broadly in agreement with the

principle of having some outcome funding for the Job Broker service, and there was some support for the encouragement it gave to focusing on outcomes if it improved the quality of service to clients. However, the funding structure was felt to place all the risk on the shoulders of providers, to increase the time required in managing the contract and the stress this involved, and to make it more difficult, because of funding uncertainties, to work in partnership with other organisations. For many organisations the Job Broker contract was manageable only because other activities were funded in what were seen as more secure, and less '*commercial*' ways, and this was seen as important both for financial stability but also to preserve the ethos and client-focus of the organisation.

Whilst the principle of having some outcome funding was, then, largely supported, there was as at Wave One a recurrent view that the balance and the levels of funding overall were inappropriate, particularly for the NDDP client group. Set-up funding, a higher proportion of payment being attached to registration, and funding triggered by intermediate outcomes or by specific types of Job Broker activity funding (such as training, job coaching or the amount of time spent with a client) were all suggested as improvements. It was also felt inappropriate that part-time jobs attract only half the payments attracted by full-time jobs since it was said they do not require substantially less input from the service. The fact that Job Brokers had to bid competitively to set payment levels, and that payments thus vary markedly for what was seen as '*the same service*', was also widely seen as unfair.

Among clients, there was a general belief that the programme was government-funded but little awareness of the outcome-related funding mechanism. Where they knew or later became aware of it, they had mixed views on the principle of outcome-related funding. There were observations that this funding method could focus Job Brokers on job entries, which might be of benefit to clients wanting to move into work fairly quickly. Clients also commented that Job Brokers could be unfairly financially penalised if a client did not enter or sustain work despite a Job Brokers' support, as '*not all can be a success*'. But there were also concerns that payment for job entries could be an incentive to push people towards work and to narrow the help provided to maximise profit.

Whether outcome-related funding was felt to have had any implications for the service clients themselves had received, tended to depend on their experience and opinions about the Job Broker service. Where people felt that the Job Broker service had helped them progress into, or towards, work the funding mechanism was not seen to have adversely affected the service they experienced. This was particularly the case where people had direct help moving into work, or regular or longer-term contact and support. One client whose Job Broker had encouraged her to take her time before finding work '*however long it takes*' was '*quite surprised*' when she learnt that the programme was funded on outcomes. However, for other clients who had found the service less satisfactory, it was thought that outcome-based funding could have influenced Job Brokers. For example, where a client felt steered towards employment rather than working from home and where a Job Broker had not maintained contact, clients wondered whether this was, in part, influenced by

the funding mechanism.

Clients who had moved into work and did not attribute this to the Job Broker service questioned whether the Job Broker had earned the outcome funding. One client thought it 'cheeky' of her Job Broker to claim payment for a job entry after just one meeting which occurred after she had already secured employment.

Among Jobcentre Plus staff, work-focused interview advisers were generally uncertain about the funding structure, and there was some lack of awareness that Job Brokers were funded by the Department, but DEAs showed greater awareness of funding sources and the link to outcomes. As with clients, there were mixed views about the possible effects of the funding regime. DEAs who saw the purpose of the NDDP as getting people quickly into work sometimes felt the outcome funding would help Job Brokers to focus their activities, and a work-focused interview adviser felt it would make Job Brokers more productive in working with customers. But there were also concerns that it could lead to clients being pushed towards work, and that outcome funding disadvantaged people who needed long-term pre-employment support. There was a view among DEAs that customers' complaints that Job Brokers did not listen to them were attributable to the Job Broker focusing on job entry payments, but it was also said that Job Brokers were genuinely supportive and put in time despite the focus on achieving job entries.

Amongst DEAs there were some negative views about registration payments, sometimes based on misconceptions about the size of payments. There were suspicions, derived from complaints from customers, that the payments encouraged Job Brokers to register clients and then ignore them. At the level of principle there was some opposition to the idea of rewarding Job Brokers when they had, as yet, done nothing for the client. There was some support among Jobcentre Plus staff for the principle of the sustained work payment, though there were no reports of its impact on how Job Brokers worked, and some concerns that with the new 13 week payment point Job Brokers had no incentive to provide support for longer.

Changes to funding arrangements and extension of contracts

As noted earlier, there had been some changes to the funding arrangements with an increase in the registration payment and reduction in the period of work required to trigger a sustained job payment. Both changes were welcomed and were seen to have helped cash flow. Some Job Brokers used the increased registration fee for specific purposes such as introducing a payment for sustained work evidence, contributing to the costs involved in starting work or paying expenses incurred on training courses. It had contributed to the decision by one service to abandon a short-lived experiment in targeting registration at more job-ready people. The shortened sustained payment period was also felt to make it easier to get evidence of sustained work since contact with the client was more easily maintained for the shorter period. However, these changes were generally not seen by managers or staff as having eased financial pressures particularly significantly. Collecting evidence

of sustained work also continued to be seen as problematic by many Job Brokers, who were concerned not to 'hassle' clients and were reluctant to go directly to employers.

Finally, as already noted, Job Broker organisations' original contracts with the Department were due to end in March 2004, and the Department, therefore, organised a re-contracting initiative from autumn 2003. Organisations were invited to apply for a renewal of their contract in the existing areas they covered (with the same financial arrangements), or to bid competitively for new or existing areas with a revised price. Among the Job Broker organisations studied in-depth, some bid for additional areas, or for increased registration and job entry targets in existing areas; some bid in some of their existing areas but decided to withdraw from others; some opted to bid competitively in existing areas because they felt their current agreed prices were untenable, and some decided not to bid to continue providing the Job Broker service. These bids were not always successful. Only one organisation submitted proposals for substantial changes to the service: in other cases it was felt that the current service design, with some changes, was appropriate.

2.4 Conclusion

By the time of the Wave Two fieldwork, there had been important changes in the organisation and priorities of Jobcentre Plus, particularly with the continued roll-out of Pathfinder offices, the introduction of Incapacity Benefit reforms and the introduction of targets to encourage working with people on incapacity benefits. There had also been changes in the guidance which give DEAs and frontline staff more scope to help clients to choose an individual Job Broker, continued emphasis in the DEA role on accessing other provision through external providers, and more shared use of Jobcentre Plus office space. These changes provide an important context to the interactions between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

There had also been some changes in the organisation and focus of Job Broker services. Their profile within the organisations that provide job broking had changed, sometimes favourably and sometimes not, and in some there was more use of other internal services to support job broking. There had been changes in staffing, with some Job Brokers moving to more use of specialist staff particularly for providing in-work support and contact, and with changes in both directions between having staff dedicated to job broking and staff who combine job broking with work on other contracts. Management and staff pointed to various advantages and disadvantages of different ways of organising staffing. It remained the case that clients approach Job Broker services via a variety of routes. Job Brokers reported an increase in the use of internal or external marketing specialists, but no single form of marketing activity emerged as superior to others and the general view was that cumulative activity and contacts with potential clients are required.

Rising caseloads were reported and there was more active 'management' of

caseloads. Some services had become more focused in the decisions they make about registering clients and were now working more with clients who were closer to work, responding to a growing emphasis on outcomes which was also reflected in a wider use of targets set for adviser staff. There was more use of external services, and also more use of incentives for clients particularly at job entry and the completion of 13 weeks in work, although there are some concerns about using them. In terms of the Job Brokers' work with employers, a variety of approaches were used but most emphasis was placed on what were seen as 'client-led' approaches with Job Brokers contacting employers to support a client's application or 'cold calling' to see whether there were vacancies or placement opportunities that might suit individual clients. There was more doubt about the value of what were seen as 'employer-led' approaches involving being notified by employers about vacancies in the hope that Job Brokers had clients they could put forward, or more general awareness raising activity with employers.

Although the changes in the funding regime were welcomed, there remain concerns about the heavy weighting of funding towards outcomes and about the impact this has on the service provided. Job Brokers reported that the funding structure had, in some cases, led to a focus on people who were closer to work, constraints on staff complements and on the types of services provided, and use of internal services or resources to subsidise the Job Broker contract. A range of modifications were introduced to shift the balance in the funding structure and to recognise the costs of providing in-depth support to clients who are further from work.

3 NDDP participation and the impact on clients' movement towards and into work

3.1 Introduction

For the Job Broker service to provide effective help it is reasonable to assume that three components were needed in the contact between clients and their Job Broker:

- an identification of clients' needs of the service;
- a match between these needs and the help the Job Broker service could and did provide;
- effective on-going communication between clients and their Job Broker adviser.

This chapter explores each of these components. Section 3.2 explores what clients need from the service and how effectively these needs were identified. Section 3.3 looks at clients' assessments of the impacts of participation on their movement towards or into work. Section 3.4 explores why people arrive at different circumstances following involvement with NDDP, some of the reasons for which are related to the Job Broker service and others to particular aspects of the individual client's circumstances.

In exploring these issues, this chapter focuses on the experiences of those clients interviewed only in the second wave of research – that is, people who had registered for NDDP at least three months before the research interview in early 2004. The views of Job Brokers are also reported here. The experiences of clients who had been in touch with Job Broker services at the time of the first round of fieldwork in 2002, and who were interviewed again in early 2004, are discussed in Chapter 4.

3.2 Exploring clients' needs

To be able to meet clients' needs these had to be effectively identified and clear to both the client and their Job Broker adviser. This section begins by describing where people were in relation to work when they first came in contact with the Job Broker service, including an overview of the range of needs they had from the service at this point. It then looks at how clients handle choosing a particular Job Broker and whether this is based on a match between what they perceive their needs to be and the type of support the service offers. Finally, it explores how what they require from the service to move into work is assessed.

3.2.1 Client circumstances at the point of contact with the service

Employment history

As with clients interviewed in the first wave of research, the Wave Two clients came to NDDP from a diversity of circumstances (Corden *et al.*, 2003). Their work histories varied in the type and stability of employment experiences, as well as the length of time since they had last been in paid work and the reasons they gave for leaving their jobs. All had some form of work experience, although for a couple of people this had been on an informal basis within family businesses.

The type and nature of work experience varied. Previous jobs ranged from low-skilled jobs through to professional or management roles in sectors including manufacturing, industrial, IT, healthcare, retail, service and hospitality. Some people had been in regular employment throughout their working life, sometimes in the same job for many years. Others had had more intermittent employment experiences with varying periods of time out of the labour market between jobs, or limited recent experience of paid work. The time since people had last worked before coming into contact with a Job Broker ranged from around 20 years to a few months. Some people were undertaking Permitted Work when they made contact with NDDP.

Attitude to work

Across the sample people expressed strong desires to move either directly into work or to take steps towards it, for example through training or voluntary work to gain skills or enhance confidence in preparation for paid employment. For some, the motivation to work was to get out and do something rather than '*stay at home and just vegetate*'. This sentiment was common amongst those who had more stable work histories, and issues of independence and not relying on the Government were mentioned. However, the feeling that work would increase self-worth was also expressed by those with more limited work experience. Some, particularly people with depression, felt that working could be beneficial to their health. Where clients felt they were struggling to '*survive*' or manage on benefits or had built up debts, the financial incentive to work was important.

The extent to which people were clear about the type of work they wanted varied considerably. Generally, people had some idea of the hours they would like or felt

able to work (this could be determined by the Permitted Work rules of not exceeding 16 hours, or related to their health). However, while some had definite ideas about the type of job they were looking for, others were less certain. Health was often a key factor determining the type of work thought suitable or not, and sometimes whilst people were aware of what they could *not* do, they were uncertain about alternative areas of work. Past work (or training) experience could also relate to how clear clients were about the type of work required. Whilst some people wanted to use existing skills or resume a past line of employment, others wished to avoid a previous type of job generally due to the detrimental effect on their health. This may have been because they could no longer physically carry out the same type of work, or where a previous job had contributed towards stress and depression. In these instances, people tended to be less clear about the type of work they should look for.

Job searching before NDDP

Clients varied in the extent to which they had been looking for work when they first came in contact with the service. Those who had been actively job searching had used newspapers, the Internet, Jobcentre Plus, or had made speculative applications to employers. For some, the experience was seen as *'doing something positive towards finding work'*. However, repeated rejections or non-response from employers were felt to be *'very demoralising and dispiriting'*.

Among those who were not actively job searching, some had started looking at vacancies to get a feel for the types of jobs available, whereas others found the job search process itself to be *'a bit scary'*. This was put down to a lack of confidence, particularly for those who had been out of the labour market for some time, and concerns about the implications of work on their health or benefits.

Health as a barrier to work

Health problems presented people with barriers to work both in the past and in their current situation. Some people had to give up jobs they had and others had to change jobs, for example, from full- to part-time hours or to a different kind of work because of their health. Previous work was sometimes said by clients to have caused or contributed to their health condition, either through physical injury in the workplace or through stress or long hours affecting their mental health. Health problems presented limitations in physical ability such as standing, lifting and use of hands, which restricted involvement in certain types of work, work environments and hours worked. As mentioned above, moving into work after being away from the labour market for some time was seen as *'daunting'*, particularly where health fluctuated or people were concerned about the possible impact of work on their mental health. Some people felt that a move into part-time or voluntary work could be a way of easing back into employment and would help them develop their confidence.

A further issue was employers' attitudes to health conditions. People were concerned that having periods of time out of work through ill-health, would put them at a

disadvantage in a competitive labour market. They felt employers would be reluctant to employ them for fear that they would *'go off sick'*. A lack of understanding of, and the stigma attached to, mental health conditions were also thought to inhibit employment opportunities. For these clients, there were concerns about how to handle explaining periods of ill-health when they applied for jobs, and concerns about how to go about finding an employer willing to give them *'a chance'*.

Other barriers to work

Across people's backgrounds, there were barriers to work that were unrelated to health. These included experience or anticipation of age discrimination (mentioned as problematic from around age 50), lack of transport, and childcare needs. Gaps in employment history and outdated skills or a sense of having to start *'from scratch'* in a new field of employment were also seen as problematic.

Clients' needs from the service

Both clients and Job Broker staff described people presenting to the service with a range of needs to get into work. Clients varied in how clear they were about what they needed from the Job Broker service when they first made contact with it. While some knew exactly what help they wanted, others were less clear, both about what they required, and what was available from the Job Broker service.

One set of needs identified by clients and staff related to the more immediate barriers to finding work. These included help with job searching, filling in an application form, constructing or updating a CV and developing interview skills. People who had not worked for some time and lacked confidence identified these as potentially being particularly useful. Some people also hoped that the Job Broker would put them in touch with employers who would be sympathetic to someone who had been off work through ill-health as a way to bridge discrimination. Clients and staff also noted needs in relation to financial support, either in terms of grants or more general advice on the implications of going into work. This was particularly noted where people already had a job/interview lined up when they approached the service.

Clients also said that they wanted support from the Job Broker service related to training, moving into voluntary work, self-employment, or working from home. More general support such as guidance on vocational direction was sought by clients who were not sure what type of work they wanted or were able to do. Some people who were uncertain about the implications of work on their health or who had not worked for some time, wanted support with making a gradual transition into work.

Clients and staff also referred to a broader set of needs that related to the more personal barriers they faced to getting into work. These included issues such as a lack of confidence and fluctuating mental health conditions. Clients' financial debt was also mentioned by some staff. They required extensive support with all aspects of becoming *'job-ready'* and securing a job.

3.2.2 Types of support offered by Job Brokers

Chapter 7 of the Wave One report explored the various components of support offered by Job Brokers to their clients. Job Brokers varied in the extent to which they provided them and the way in which they were delivered. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there was a fair amount of consistency in the types of help provided by the Job Broker services. However, they differed in the emphasis they placed on the various aspects of their service. This was reflected in the focus of the service they offered. Job Brokers fell into three broad groups in relation to this. First were those Job Brokers whose services focused on the immediate barriers to employment. Where more personal barriers, such as lack of confidence, were addressed, this was in an unstructured way and took the form of informal support from the individual client's adviser. The second group provided a service with a broader focus that addressed both the immediate and more personal barriers. While the former were addressed in a similar way to the previous group, the more personal or underlying barriers were dealt with in a more structured and formalised manner. Programmes and courses were specifically developed to help build clients' confidence and develop increased motivation for entering work. The third group also addressed both sets of barriers. However, they provided a more intensive type of support, sometimes using the supported employment model. Some also dealt with specialist groups of clients who generally were perceived to be further away from work, e.g. those with severe and enduring mental health conditions or learning difficulties.

Pressure to achieve outcomes and specifically to meet the 25 per cent conversion target was also seen as making some needs harder to meet. Some Job Broker staff felt pressured to spend less time with their more 'needy' clients who were further away from work and focus on those who were more job-ready. The areas of the service that focused on addressing the more personal barriers some clients faced to entering work were often the most time consuming, and to meet the targets they had to ration their time, which could mean neglecting this area.

As discussed above, Job Broker staff varied in the barriers faced by clients that they felt their service could address. As a result some client requirements were seen by Job Broker staff to be beyond the scope of their role and that of their service. These included health related needs (e.g. mental health needs), issues around drug/alcohol use and housing. Where Job Brokers did not feel qualified to meet these needs, they sometimes signposted clients to relevant services, but expressed some concern that these needs were not being met. One Job Broker spoke of the 'fuzzy' nature of the adviser's role and felt there needed to be more clarity on the parameters of needs that they could be expected to address.

3.2.3 Choosing a Job Broker

An element of the NDDP programme is that people have a choice of Job Brokers with which to register. As mentioned in the introduction, it may be reasonable to assume that because different services provide different types of support (as discussed in Section 3.2.2), this would mean a match being made between an individual client's needs and a particular service. This section explores how people handled making this choice.

The clients interviewed in Wave Two of the research made initial contact with the Job Broker service through similar routes to those outlined in the Wave One report. These included correspondence from the Department, Jobcentre Plus contact (see Chapter 6), Job Broker marketing or direct referral from another source such as a social worker, Community Psychiatric Nurse or word-of-mouth recommendation. Again as in Wave One, the degree to which clients actively selected a Job Broker service varied: some people were directed to, or knew about, a single Job Broker service, while others were presented with a choice of Job Broker organisations.

The range or type of support offered by different Job Brokers was not always clear to clients. Where people knew of only one Job Broker service, for example, through a television or newspaper advertisement, some only had limited information about it before making contact. Where people knew more about a particular service, either they had been told about it by an individual such as a support worker or DEA, or they were already familiar with the Job Broker organisation.

Even where clients were aware there was more than one Job Broker in their area and that they could choose from them, there was little understanding that different Job Brokers offered different types of services. There was limited evidence of informed decision making or that clients 'shopped around' to compare services, with 'choice' generally being based on the (perceived) location of the Job Broker rather than the actual service offered. As one client explained after being given a list of numbers from the NDDP helpline: *'I just thought they were all the same, they just dealt with different areas, ... they [the chosen Job Broker] look local, I will phone them'*.

Even where clients contacted more than one Job Broker, their selection tended to be based either on location or on their satisfaction with the initial contact they had with the Job Broker. For example, where a Job Broker appeared disorganised, *'did not seem to know what she was doing'* or failed to keep an appointment, clients chose another Job Broker. Conversely, others made their choice based on positive impressions, such as how *'professional'* or *'friendly'* a Job Broker appeared compared to others, and whether they had a *'personal approach'*, *'empathy'* or *'understanding'* as well as time to discuss clients' past experiences. Again, decisions were not based on what services particular organisations offered. Indeed, in one case a client who had been unaware that his Job Broker was telephone-based and would have preferred face-to-face contact, reflected on the process as being like a *'lottery'* whereby he had randomly picked the *'wrong one'*. Where choices had been made, clients were generally aware that it was only possible to register with one organisation, although it was sometimes mentioned that it would have been preferable to use more than one service at once.

The timing of registration may also be relevant here. Where clients recalled registering for the NDDP service, registration had generally taken place at the first meeting (or through the post with telephone brokers). It may be difficult at this early stage for clients to have a clear view of what services are available and form a view about whether it was the right Job Broker for them.

Clients reported that the type of provision offered was generally outlined at their first meeting (or telephone call) with a Job Broker adviser. For some clients, mentions of training opportunities, help with finding work, CVs, applications and interviews or funding (for example, for clothes or travel costs to a job interview) were influential on decisions to register. However, others described signing up even where they doubted that a service would be able to match their expectations, for example, through a lack of provision of training opportunities or lists of vacancies. Other clients reported that this initial discussion centred on finding a job although what they wanted was help related to training, self-employment or home work. Some clients registered despite early doubts because they had felt *'a bit bulldozed'* or had been *'persuaded'* by an adviser, or that they thought it was the only way of getting onto a certain training course, or just considered it worth a try as *'what can I lose by signing up'*.

3.2.4 Identifying and discussing clients' needs

As discussed in Section 3.2.1, people required different types of support to move into work. This section explores how effectively these needs were identified and assessed. Clients had mixed views on how well they thought their needs were identified by the Job Broker service. Where they felt the Job Broker understood their needs, this was generally through comprehensive discussions with Job Broker advisers where they felt that advisers took time to listen and fully explore their circumstances and what they required to move toward work. Advisers' understanding and empathy were seen as important, as was working at the right pace for people. This was noted, in particular, where people had enduring mental health conditions or lacked confidence about moving into work.

Some clients reported that their needs had not been identified effectively by their Job Broker. This emerged where they had not been offered the type of help they wanted or needed and felt *'pushed'* towards a type of employment or training that did not suit them. An ineffective exploration of clients' needs was seen to have resulted from not having had enough contact with an adviser. There were examples of ten minute interviews, follow-up appointments cancelled by the Job Broker, or clients left *'in limbo'* where a relationship with an adviser had not got off the ground. In some cases, people felt that this was because advisers had wanted to make the *'figures look better'*, thereby trying to get people into jobs as quickly as possible irrespective of their individual needs. Others felt that advisers could not make an effective assessment of what they needed to get into work – they lacked an understanding of some fluctuating health conditions and that while advisers may see clients *on 'good days'*, they did not understand the impact on a client's ability to work on a *'bad day'*.

Overall, clients emphasised that the key to a Job Broker service identifying their needs was the individual adviser, the relationship they had with them and being able to talk to them openly. Some even gave examples of how they felt different staff members from within the same organisation had different understandings of what

they needed to move into work. Regular contact with an adviser, particularly over the longer-term, was helpful for some clients with multiple barriers to work, though again a key issue was the attitude and understanding of a particular adviser. For example, personal issues were discussed with an adviser and counselling suggested where contact had been over a period of time, but the importance of having an adviser who *'listened'* and seemed *'genuinely interested'* was stressed.

Job Brokers also emphasised the importance of clear dialogue between them and their clients in assessing a person's needs of the service, but they varied in how they approached this. When people contacted the service (either by telephone or in person) initially, their eligibility (in terms of qualifying benefits) was assessed and varying levels of information on what the service offered was given. Some Job Broker staff began making a more detailed assessment of the clients' requirements of the service at this stage, others waited until a subsequent meeting but began it before registration, while others waited until after registration. Where it happened after registration, some reported that they used the Action Plan as a tool to assess and monitor clients' requirements of the service. While some found the requirement to complete an Action Plan for each client *'onerous'*, it was commented that they could be *'revelatory'* in identifying what would help a client move towards work. Tools such as the Action Plan or other assessment forms to facilitate clients in discussing their needs were seen as particularly helpful where clients were unclear about what these were and what they wanted from the service. There was limited awareness of Action Plans among clients and from their perspectives, did not seem to be a particularly significant part of the process of assessing their needs.

Irrespective of the stage at which assessments were made, Job Broker staff explored issues such as clients' qualifications, work experience and health status. They also explored what clients' expectations of the service were, their motivation for looking for work and general mindset in relation to work.

Job Broker staff emphasised that some requirements did not become apparent in their early meetings with clients. This was related to the types of needs involved, how forthcoming the client was in talking about the barriers to work they faced, the extent to which clients recognised their needs and a Job Broker's ability to assess them. Issues that were identified as only emerging after a longer period of time were mental and physical health conditions, criminal convictions, alcohol and drug misuse, debt, personal relationships, and poor basic skills. Some Job Broker staff said that trust and rapport were essential before clients would talk about issues faced in these areas. Clients did not specifically report holding back on discussing these issues, but their emphasis on developing a good relationship with their adviser may suggest the need to develop trust and rapport before feeling comfortable to discuss issues such as these.

3.3 Changes in clients' circumstances since registering with the Job Broker service

Clients described where they were in relation to any move into/towards work and the impact they felt their participation on NDDP had on any movement. Broadly speaking, people reported four situations in relation to their position *vis a vis* work and the role they felt the Job Broker service had on their circumstances. Membership of these 'groups' however was not static and people reported movement between them in the past, with further fluidity between them possible in the future:

- moved into work – with the help of the Job Broker service;
- moved towards work – with the help of the Job Broker service;
- moved into/towards work – but without the help of the Job Broker service;
- did not move forward – despite contact with the Job Broker service.

This section describes the four groups and some of the broad issues related to them. Section 3.4 looks at specific service components and how they could help or be deficient in having a positive impact on clients' movement towards work.

3.3.1 Moved into work – with the help of a Job Broker service

Clients in the first group were in work at the time of the research interview and perceived the Job Broker service to have made a positive impact on their entry into paid employment. (The nature and suitability of their work is discussed fully in Chapter 5). The group varied in terms of the length of time they had been away from the labour market (from a few months to ten or more years) and included clients with a range of physical and mental health conditions. The extent of contact with the Job Broker service before job entry varied and generally reflected the different stages clients were at in progressing towards work when they made contact with the service. At one extreme were those who had approached the Job Broker service for specific support immediately before starting work, for example, where a job interview had already been secured. Others had felt ready to move into work, some already applying for jobs but without success, and needed practical and motivational support with job search or the application process. At the other extreme were those whose entry into work followed a lengthier period of Job Broker support and entailed gradual movement towards job search and then employment.

The ways in which the Job Broker service positively impacted on the move into employment varied, perhaps unsurprisingly given the diversity in clients' circumstances and closeness to the labour market. Some were quite certain that they would not have entered employment without the support of the job service. Others thought that they would eventually have found work without NDDP participation but felt that the Job Broker service had helped accelerate the process of moving toward work or had made it smoother.

3.3.2 Moved towards work – with the help of a Job Broker service

Clients in this group were not in work at the time of the research interview but felt that the Job Broker service had had a positive impact on their progress towards employment. People within this group had both stable and intermittent work histories, with periods away from the labour market (prior to contacting the Job Broker service) ranging from two to 18 years. Health conditions were varied, but respondents in this group often mentioned experiencing mental health conditions. At the time of contacting the Job Broker service, some clients in this group were just starting to think about work. For some there remained concerns about gaps in CVs, employer discrimination, lack of skills and low confidence about returning to work. Unsuccessful job searching could make it difficult for them to sustain their motivation.

However, by the time of the research interview people in this group were feeling more confident and optimistic about future work, or could *'see a bit of a light at the end of the tunnel'* and had progressed into job searching or training. Even if they felt that work may still be some way off, clients in this group felt they were moving forward. One client who had not worked for 18 years had previously felt resigned to life on benefits, but had now written up a CV with her Job Broker and reflected *'before I wasn't close at all to work, I was nowhere near ... Whereas this has made me think I am edging a bit closer to getting work'*. Another had started a course that would lead to an NVQ.

One client had entered employment with the support of his Job Broker, but had been made redundant by the time of the research interview. He saw the experience of being in contact with the Job Broker as a positive one as he had gained work experience and felt that *'the chances of getting another job are a lot higher now'*. This also demonstrates the fluidity between these four groups.

Clients in this group were still in regular contact with the Job Broker service and typically were confident that the Job Broker service would continue to play a key role in any movement towards and into work.

3.3.3 Moved towards, or into, work – without the help of a Job Broker service

In this group, clients were working (either in their first job since using the service or having changed jobs), looking for work, doing training or doing voluntary work. They tended to describe themselves as being highly motivated to work at the time they made contact with the Job Broker, though the extent to which they were actively job searching at that point varied. The key difference between this group and the two groups already outlined is that clients felt that their progress had been through their own initiative or with the support of Jobcentre Plus or a DEA.

For some clients, the lack of influence of the Job Broker was related to the fact that they had needed limited contact before getting a job. However, others expressed disappointment with the Job Broker service and felt that it had failed to meet their

needs or expectations. This was generally in relation to practical provision – particular aspects mentioned were employer contacts, vocational guidance, training or work placements and job search support. Sometimes it was felt that the Job Broker did not understand their needs; for example among a few of the clients who had mental health conditions it was felt that the level of practical support they had received had been inadequate: *'they are leaving it to me and that's what I'm struggling with'*. They wondered whether the Job Broker adviser fully understood mental ill-health, or appreciated what a big step moving into work would be for them. Another had registered with a telephone-based Job Broker but felt she could communicate better face-to-face and received more practical help from a Jobcentre Plus adviser. Some people concluded that the service could add nothing to what they could do themselves; others had approached other agencies for help instead. For example, people who were able to job search themselves but had wanted employer contacts, training, or work placements that the Job Broker service did not provide. Sometimes clients had subsequently approached a Jobcentre (either on their own volition or Job Broker suggestion), where training had been arranged, for example in IT or business start-up training.

Although people had sometimes found some aspects of the Job Broker useful, they were not seen as playing a significant part in people starting work or moving towards it. For example, where clients had found a job themselves, help such as benefit advice or a back-to-work bonus was welcomed but not viewed as being a factor in the move into work. However, even where the service provision itself was not seen as having an impact, some people felt that taking the first step of contacting a Job Broker had helped them to build momentum to find another source of help, or given them *'that push'* to start looking for work themselves.

There were mixed opinions as to whether they would return to the Job Broker, but where other sources of support had been more helpful, these were seen as preferable to the Job Broker service. In a couple of cases, clients reported being signposted by their Job Broker adviser to a Jobcentre for job search support. Clients' contact with the Job Broker service in this group had generally dwindled by the time of the research interview.

3.3.4 No movement toward work – despite contact with the Job Broker service

At the time of the research interview, this group of clients felt they were no closer to work than when they came into contact with the Job Broker service. People in this group were generally no longer in contact with the Job Broker service, with some concluding that Job Brokers could add nothing to what they could do themselves. Contact had generally petered out with neither the Job Broker nor the person instigating further contact.

In some cases, engagement with the Job Broker did not continue beyond an initial interview, and in others it dwindled after a period of activity. People were disappointed where they had expected the Job Broker to get in touch, and felt let

down when they had made efforts to contact the service which had not been reciprocated. In other cases, people felt that the service had not been helpful, and let contact tail off or chose not to use the service further. Deregistration was seldom mentioned. Only one person in this group had agreed with her Job Broker adviser to suspend contact because her health had deteriorated.

Some people who were job searching when they contacted the service were still doing so, either alone or using Jobcentre Plus. Others had stopped, sometimes because of a relapse in health and a couple were embarking on educational courses – in one case the client was hoping that his participation on the course would lead to full-time work. There were examples of people who had started work and, despite having strong desires to move into or toward work, had since left, and who now felt they were no further forwards, or even set back by the experience. For example, one respondent reported that she had been placed in an unsuitable job through the Job Broker that she had not managed to sustain. She had wanted to build on her confidence to work but when she had not managed to stay in this job it had made her feel *'really inadequate ... a failure'*.

Where the lack of positive impact was due to the needs of clients not being met, reasons reflected those mentioned by the previous group who moved towards, or into, work without the help of a Job Broker service. For some people, the main issue appeared to be lack of contact and cancelled appointments. Others questioned the extent to which a service was tailored to individual needs, feeling they had been directed in certain ways, despite discussing their backgrounds with advisers. There was a suggestion that some Job Broker services had a narrow focus, and could not cater for those who fell outside the perceived 'norm' of what an NDDP client was. This included people who had professional backgrounds, wanted to work in a self-employed capacity or were interested in voluntary work as a first step toward paid employment. Others felt more generally that the service has not taken on board their individual circumstances. As in the previous group, there was also criticism where it was felt that advisers did not understand the implications of a client's health (both physical and mental) on work.

It is difficult to identify the degree to which clients articulated their needs to Job Broker advisers and the extent to which advisers took on board needs. However, there was a feeling among clients that limited contact and a lack of understanding or response on the part of the Job Broker, inhibited a full exploration of these needs and how they could be met. A further possibility is that Job Broker advisers may not have entirely concurred with clients about their needs and aspirations or the appropriateness of the NDDP programme for them.

There was some evidence to suggest that, in a small number of cases, clients reported feeling demotivated or experiencing decreased confidence after contact with the Job Broker service, particularly where they felt that the service had not met their needs. This group of clients generally did not expect to return to the (same) Job Broker service in the future.

3.4 Factors impacting on clients' movement towards work

3.4.1 Service components and the extent of their impact on moves into, or towards, work

As discussed in Section 3.2.2, Job Broker services varied in the types of support they offered and the emphasis they put on the provision of different components. The existence of such variation in focus will inevitably impact on clients' experiences of the service. This section explores which aspects of the particular forms of support clients most valued and any gaps they identified in the support they received from their Job Broker. It will consider the various forms of support Job Brokers offered clients and how these experiences related to their movement towards work, or lack thereof. It will also explore Job Brokers' perspectives on the delivery of the various components, where relevant.

General careers guidance and direction

Some clients said they came to the Job Broker service without a clear idea of the work direction they wanted to follow. This was particularly the case for those who had never worked, or had not worked for many years and so had outdated skills. For others, their health condition meant that they needed a complete change of direction but they had not been able to identify one before coming to the Job Broker service. Here, the Job Broker guidance and advice was found to be important in helping them to identify their strengths, and how these could be channelled into new types of work. They talked about this being addressed in various ways, for example, by Job Brokers working with people to explore their circumstances and whether they could utilise their experiences in considering employment options (such as drug and alcohol counselling or working with disabled people). Others found benefit from the Job Broker's encouragement to be confident enough to make their own career choices. In some cases, Job Brokers talked through clients' aspirations with them, which helped clients to be clearer about the kind of work they thought would best suit them.

Among those clients who had moved into work with the help of the Job Broker service, some attributed this, at least in part, to the provision of vocational guidance. Even where they thought that they would eventually have found work by themselves, they felt that the support received by the Job Broker service had accelerated the process or resulted in getting a job that was preferable or more appropriate than might otherwise have been achieved. This type of support had helped them develop a clearer idea about the type of work they were aiming for. Some had amended their initial intentions, for example, from full- to part-time, or from low-level paid work to a voluntary work placement. In these cases, more thought had been given to the ideal work environment and pace of movement into work. One client recognised that this might be seen '*as if it's gone backwards*', but felt that he had made '*a fair bit of progress*' as he was now aiming for something that he really wanted to do.

Among clients who had not moved forwards despite using the Job Broker service, people reported that they either had limited (if any) discussions with the adviser about the type of work they could do, or already had some ideas about what work they wanted and the advisers did not explore this further. There were also examples of advisers suggesting work that clients felt was unsuitable or inappropriate to their needs (for example, shop work for a client who felt nervous around lots of people). Here, some clients still felt unsure about the type of work that would be best for them.

Job Brokers varied in the extent to which, and how, they provided this kind of guidance. Some delivered it in a structured way and saw it as a central part of their service, while others provided it in a more informal manner. Some carried out forms of '*vocational profiling*' which explored clients' likes and dislikes and used this to build up a picture of what job they would like to do and explore new areas. Some Job Brokers provided access to a specialist vocational guidance service, either internally or externally although none of the clients interviewed reported having been referred to such a specialist. Specialist staff mentioned by Job Brokers included an occupational psychologist and a careers adviser. Others used the Adult Directions computer package with clients to provide guidance. Clients' experiences of this package varied. One client questioned whether the job it had come up with for him was appropriate, and another that it would have been more helpful for a broader employment area to have been the outcome rather than one specific job. However another client had with the help of the Job Broker gone on to enter the type of job suggested, which was quite different to her previous experience, and was very positive about the help received identifying this change in direction.

Where vocational guidance was provided less formally, Job Broker advisers talked to clients about what they would like to do and made suggestions about what they might consider or suggested looking at vacancies to see what appealed to them. Where it was provided, it was felt by Job Brokers to help clients '*take the blinkers off*' and develop realistic expectations of what job they could do. From the clients' perspective, what was key was that advisers took the time to explore their skills and needs thoroughly and based guidance upon this.

Undertaking voluntary work or work placements

Some clients and staff thought that providing opportunities for undertaking voluntary work or work placements were a useful taster for different types of work, as well as providing the opportunity for the client to find their feet in a job, build confidence or generally adjust to being in work. Access to these opportunities was provided by some Job Brokers but not others. Where respondents had done an unpaid work placement, this had occasionally led to further work with that employer, either as Permitted Work or paid employment. Other people reported that they did not look to undertake such work as they did not want to do unpaid work. In some cases, despite having discussed the possibility of doing voluntary work or undertaking a work placement with their adviser, this had yet to be arranged.

Where Job Brokers did not provide opportunities for clients to undertake voluntary work or secure work placements, some clients identified this as a gap in the services. It was felt that they would have been useful alongside other forms of support. This was particularly noted among those who were venturing into a new area of work, or who were anxious about starting to work again.

While some Job Brokers saw the provision of access to voluntary work or work placements as an important part of the service they offered, others felt it was beyond their remit and was not suited to the contractual or funding regime of NDDP. Their focus was on getting people into paid employment so that they could secure their outcome payment.

Training

Some clients who had moved into or towards work with the support of the service had undertaken courses that were provided by the Job Broker, and which they felt had helped prepare them for returning to work. These courses covered subjects such as applying for a job, assertiveness and anger management. These were felt to have helped build their confidence and develop skills that would help them cope with returning to the work environment and deal with any possible anxiety that might arise. These clients had been out of the labour market for some time (up to 16 years) or had a mental health condition.

In addition to training that prepared clients to look for a job, more job specific training had also been received by some. This had helped them obtain a specific certificate or qualification that enabled them to do a certain job, or in areas such as IT training and health and safety. The Job Broker had contributed to the financial cost of undertaking the training, without which clients felt it would have been very difficult for them to participate.

However, in other cases where (access to) training was provided, it was not always perceived by clients to be appropriate to their needs. This was the case where people already had a fairly clear idea of what they wanted to do or already had the relevant skills and were able to move forward towards or into work without undertaking training. There were also examples amongst people who had not moved forward, of asking advisers about training, and being given contact information or leaflets for them to seek further information themselves, when they had hoped that the Job Broker themselves would be able to provide more information and help.

In other cases, clients had not discussed or been offered training through the Job Broker service. Amongst those who had not moved forward despite contacting the service, there was a view that training '*could be useful*' to refresh or learn new skills but such training had not been sought from or offered by the Job Broker service.

While some Job Brokers saw themselves as having a role to play in providing (access to) training others did not. Again, seeing it as incompatible with a funding or contractual regime which focused on job entry outcomes. Providing access to short training courses that were specifically aimed at developing work-related skills (e.g. IT

skills or driving) was seen as valuable by some Job Broker staff. Some Job Brokers also provided training in-house (e.g. IT skills, basic skills training, doing job interviews). In some cases where this was provided, advisers reported a lack of clarity about clients' eligibility to access particular programmes, for example, those linked to Work Preparation.

Job search support

Knowing how and where to search for jobs was recognised as important by clients, and an area where the Job Broker could provide significant advice. Help that clients highlighted as particularly beneficial included accompanying clients to the Jobcentre, providing guidance on using the internet to search for jobs, providing specific web site addresses for job vacancies or more generally providing an environment for conducting job searches (such as a job club, or somewhere with Internet access and local papers).

Among both those who had moved into work and those who had moved towards work, job search support received from their Job Broker was reported to have been beneficial, particularly when combined with the help they provided in applying for jobs (see the section opposite). Job search support from advisers had provided an impetus to start searching for work in earnest, as well as working to improve previously unsuccessful approaches to job searching. Some people also reported that the Job Broker had identified the job for them by bringing their attention to a vacancy that they might not have considered previously. People who had not known how to go about job searching or who had felt unconfident now felt more assured and were now making applications and getting interviews alone: *'I never really knew how to find a job before'*. Another had found job searching difficult but was now confident about the quality of his applications and had attended an interview which he could not have imagined doing six months earlier.

However, there were instances where people felt that they had been given inappropriate details of vacancies. In some cases, this was because the job was unsuitable, while in others it was because they were out of date or were too far away to travel to.

As with other aspects of the Job Broker service, some respondents appeared to be unsure of what job search support they could expect from the Job Broker service. In some cases, clients were of the view that the Job Broker would be able to access or 'broker' jobs for them by, for example, providing them with lists of vacancies (that may not be available from other sources) or lists of potential employers' names. In such cases, surprise was expressed that they did not have their own list of jobs but relied on searching through newspapers which clients felt *'I could have done'*. In other cases, clients had expected a Job Broker to be more proactive in finding work for the client, for example job searching on their behalf rather than just giving advice. This suggests that some clients may not have had a clear understanding of what the Job Broker service could offer to them, or there may have been a mismatch between the service clients expected and what was actually available from the service.

Job Broker staff saw job search support as a key component of their service. They continued to access job vacancies from a range of sources including national and local newspapers, internet sites, through direct contact with employers, employment agencies, Jobcentre Plus vacancies database and from Job Points. Some Job Brokers reported that they continued to experience problems in accessing Jobcentre Plus vacancies, and one reported that he had to give his own National Insurance number to be able to get any details about vacancies for his clients. Some also reported that they had generated vacancies for clients through their general contact with employers. Where they had developed good relationships with an employer that employer might create vacancies specifically for certain clients (see Chapter 2).

However, Job Broker staff varied in what they perceived to be the appropriate level of involvement they should have in a client's job search. Some offered guidance and support but felt the onus should be on the client to carry out the job search. This was perceived to show a certain level of commitment to finding a job, helped clients develop the appropriate skills for the future, and meant Job Broker staff had more time to spend either on other aspects of the service or in working with other clients. Other Job Broker staff took a more active role by providing clients with a list of suitable vacancies; but this was said to be time-consuming which prevented some Job Brokers from doing it.

Help with applying for jobs

A frequently mentioned concern by clients was about filling out application forms. There were anxieties expressed about what to put in an application form, particularly with regard to health and gaps in employment history. This was evident amongst all four groups of clients. Respondents who had moved towards or into work since contacting the Job Broker service included those who had sought and received help in completing job application forms and thought that this had increased their chances of being offered interviews. Following the Job Broker adviser's guidance, they said they filled out job applications '*completely differently*' and felt that the advice received helped them to pitch applications at the right level and make the best of their experience and qualifications. Some felt that this resulted in the offer of a job interview which they would have not otherwise got. Other examples of help in applying for jobs included advice in writing a covering letter to employers, running '*mock*' interviews, and creating different versions of a CV to suit different types of jobs.

Where Job Broker staff liaised with the employer on a client's behalf (at the client's request) in the job application process, this was perceived as beneficial to the client. Examples of such intervention included accompanying the client to an interview, and discussions with a potential employer beforehand about the client's circumstances.

Also cited as important by clients was how to anticipate and prepare for the types of questions a prospective employer might ask at interview stage and how to highlight skills in an interview setting. Here, it was particularly beneficial for the person to be

able to access their adviser on an ad-hoc basis to answer specific queries. There were few reports from clients of seeking out job application support from advisers and not receiving it, although some would have used more help, for example receiving help in compiling a CV, but were also expecting help in terms of the next job search steps to take. These criticisms tended to be amongst those who felt that the Job Broker service had not helped them to move forward.

Some Job Brokers reported that they provided clients with extensive help when completing application forms, while others took a less active role. As with the job search support they offered, Job Broker staff varied in what they perceived to be the appropriate level of involvement they should have in helping people apply for a job. Some gave the same reasons as discussed in the previous section for why the onus should be on the client to complete the application form.

With all activities related to applying for a job (including job searching), this aspect of the service tended to be offered on a one-to-one basis with an adviser. Where it was part of a more structured group activity or training programme, this was seen by staff to work well. For example, the parent organisation of one Job Broker service ran a job search club for all its clients, irrespective of whether they were on NDDP or another contract. This was seen to offer a mutually supportive environment in which clients could exchange ideas and build confidence.

Financial support and advice

Where clients had been unaware of tax credits prior to contacting the Job Broker, finding out about them sometimes strongly supported their decision to take a job. Where people had previously, but unsuccessfully, sought advice about tax credits and other in-work benefits they might have been eligible for, they welcomed this advice from the Job Broker. In some cases, this had lessened concerns that they had about starting work and losing benefits.

Some clients received direct financial support from the Job Broker, which they sometimes saw as instrumental in helping them to move towards or into work. This included grants to assist in training, paying for a medical assessment and HGV driving licence application, or payments when people started work such as covering benefits or wages before the first pay packet or assistance with mortgage payments during the early stages of entry to work. There were also examples of clients receiving a small grant (around £100) from the Job Broker when they moved into work. While the grant was felt to be very useful while they were waiting for their first wages, it did not appear to be directly associated with their decision to take a job. Generally clients gave more salience to these financial incentives where there had been fairly minimal support into job entry, for example where a client had already secured a job interview at the time of engagement with the Job Broker service. Where clients had received more intensive support, whilst the financial incentive was appreciated as useful, it was a less important aspect of the provision, with more emphasis placed on the impact of the practical or motivational support received.

Indeed one client had not received the financial job entry bonus promised but this had not dampened his satisfaction with the training and personal support received as the financial bonus was not viewed as an incentive to work or impact on job entry.

Clients reported that discussions about the effect of working on benefits had tended to take place within the context of being informed about Permitted Work (see below) and the 52-week linking rule. Although most clients did not specifically mention receiving Better-off Calculations, where they did it had generally related to a particular job. This was considered very helpful in predicting the financial implications of taking a job and ensuring relevant benefits and tax credits were claimed, particularly where earnings were of prime importance. Advice on the 52-week linking rule could serve as an incentive to take up work, particularly if the respondent had concerns that the job may not work out and that they could lose their benefits.

Clients did not specifically identify any gaps in the financial support and advice they received, although some had clearly sought out financial advice and information from other sources (such as a Citizens' Advice Bureau) prior to contacting the Job Broker service. This was particularly the case amongst those who had already made progress towards work.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Job Brokers varied in the extent to which they provided direct financial support to clients in terms of incentives or payments for items like clothes for the workplace. Some had started offering this support only because other local Job Brokers did, but not all could afford to. There was some concern about the unfair disadvantage this gave them. They also varied in the extent to which they provided advice on tax credits and did better-off calculations. While some felt confident about their ability to provide such advice, others felt less qualified to do so and referred clients on to relevant services. Despite this, Job Broker staff saw the provision of, or access to, financial advice as an important feature of the service. A key barrier to accessing work for clients was identified to be concerns about finances and they felt they had a role to play in helping them address this issue and access the relevant information.

Advice about Permitted Work

There were instances where clients reported that Job Broker advice about Permitted Work had led them to taking up work that they may not have originally considered, by alleviating concerns that they may have had about losing benefits and being worse off if they took up a job. One person said that they would not have considered applying for a job advertised as full-time until the Job Broker suggested that they ask whether it could be done as Permitted Work. Other clients who had been unaware of Permitted Work, were able to undertake employment within their capabilities, without the financial pressure of needing to work more hours than they were capable of.

Among those who had only made limited, if any, progress toward work there were examples of clients who had been in part-time work for some time and been advised by Jobcentre Plus to approach the Job Broker service to extend a period of Permitted Work. Here, contact with the Job Broker service was generally viewed as a one-off formality, and clients did not generally report receiving any other help, or discussing with the Job Broker their concerns about what would happen at the end of the Permitted Work.

Job Brokers did not focus on facilitation of Permitted Work as a key part of their service and not all provided it (although part-time outcome payments can be claimed for Permitted Work). Where it was provided, difficulties were mentioned by Job Broker staff in finding employers who were willing to take people on for Permitted Work. In some cases, it was mentioned that to achieve outcomes and receive the relevant full payments, Job Brokers had to get people into full-time employment. Pressure to do this may have inhibited some from spending time helping clients access Permitted Work.

Confidence building

Where clients spoke about having developed confidence in the course of their contact with the Job Broker, this tended to be more of an overall outcome from having accessed the various components of the service discussed above and the nature of their relationship with their adviser, than a specific separate component of the service. Among those who had moved into, or towards, work with the help of the Job Broker service, an increase in confidence was often mentioned, which had been brought about through a variety of ways, including the adviser's encouragement and 'belief' in them and their ability to get work, mixing with other people of similar circumstances in small group settings, or simply as a result of making an appointment and attending the Job Broker meetings. Specific elements of the service that clients reported as increasing their confidence were job interview preparation techniques such as mock interviews. Such increases in confidence were reported as particularly important for those who had not worked for some time and contributed to them feeling generally more positive and less daunted by the prospect of moving into work.

Where progress had clearly not been made despite contact with the Job Broker service, people's disappointment was sometimes linked to a decrease in confidence and feeling anxious, particularly when they initially had had high hopes of the service.

Unlike clients, some Job Brokers identified more specific elements of the service that they felt helped build clients' confidence. Some of the Job Broker services were seen by staff to have a broader focus and addressed the more personal barriers faced by clients, offered a service that focused on building clients' confidence. This included paying for clients' gym membership, courses in personal effectiveness and assertiveness training. Job Broker staff reported that where they were encouraged by management to be flexible and inventive with the service they could offer clients,

they were able to tailor it to the needs of the individual client and provide forms of support that helped build their confidence. Some Job Brokers also mentioned how by having general contact with clients and developing a good relationship with them, they were able to build their confidence by being on hand to give general advice and support, by being *'someone to talk to'*.

3.4.2 Impact of the nature of contact between Job Broker advisers and their clients

The relationship which developed between clients and their advisers, and the nature of the contact between the two was perceived by clients to influence their experiences of the service and, in some cases, the progress they made towards work. Among those who had either moved into, or towards, work with the help of the service, clients placed a lot of emphasis on the value of the relationship they had developed with their adviser. These relationships were built up through continued regular contact with the same adviser over time. On the other hand, among those who did not see the service as having influenced changes in their situation, there was less mention of building relationships with Job Broker staff.

Clients cited the importance of maintaining regular contact with the Job Broker in helping them to move forward: where they had not moved forward, contact with the adviser was often either not regular, or not maintained. Amongst those who had moved forward, contact with an adviser was often reported in positive terms, and had been instrumental in increasing respondents' confidence and *'pride'*, and subsequent self-belief and motivation to find work. Such contact made them feel as if the Job Broker was interested in their well being and progress and for some the adviser became a *'bit of a lifeline'*. Knowing that they were *'at the end of the phone'* if clients needed to speak to them was important. For example, a client who *'panicked'* when offered a job interview found it reassuring to be able to get advice from the Job Broker. Strong emphasis was placed on the positive impact of the support provided by Job Broker staff, with praise for professionalism, empathy and understanding. The importance of being treated with *'respect'* and feeling that an adviser was *'genuinely interested'* was also mentioned but a resounding key factor for this group was encouragement and motivation *'you can hear the enthusiasm in his voice for you'* which it was felt had contributed to improving clients' confidence.

On the other hand, there were instances where contact with the client had declined, or had been very irregular. This could cause concern for people, particularly if they felt that their confidence was such that they need to maintain some regularity and consistency in terms of whom they saw and when. This was raised particularly by those with enduring mental health conditions and included those who did not appear to have made much progress despite having been in contact with the Job Broker service. Where people had found it a challenge to attend the initial appointment and discuss their circumstances with the adviser, it was a particular disappointment when contact dwindled. It was also felt that contact needed to be fairly frequent – *'not being in touch for a month, that hasn't been too good'*. This included being told that the Job Broker would get in touch but the contact never

materialised. Also reports of advisers cancelling meetings or just not attending them and of messages and phone calls not being returned. Where this dwindling contact occurred, people reported being demotivated and demoralised, and it could lead to *'dreadful inertia'*. Among those who had not moved toward work despite being in contact with the service, their contact with their adviser had been limited. People sometimes found it difficult to take the initiative in maintaining contact, particularly if they were anxious or unconfident and if they felt that the Job Broker was *'not bothered'*. In some cases, this led to them falling away from the service through disappointment or loss of momentum as *'it feels you're not wanted'*.

It was also important that the pace of work with an adviser was right for the client. Not feeling *'rushed'* or *'pushed into anything'* was associated with raising confidence and self-esteem – themselves a key positive outcome of involvement with a Job Broker. Clients within this group included those who had progressed with the Job Broker, including progression into work.

On the other hand, some clients felt that the pace of the service was not suited to their needs. These concerns were generally because they felt that the emphasis on paid work at the outset was too premature for them. Among those who had not moved toward work since being in contact with the service, some reported being steered or even *'pressurised'* towards work too quickly. Conversely, there were cases where the client felt that they were ready to move into work and were seeking assistance from the Job Broker to move into paid work relatively quickly but this did not happen. In both these situations, it was felt that advisers did not listen, understand or respond to clients' wants and needs. One person reported that she had been placed into a job very quickly after completing a short training course with the Job Broker, but that her adviser had not taken into account the nature of the work in relation to both her physical and mental health conditions and she was unable to sustain the job. This had left her lacking in confidence and feeling like *'a failure'*.

The variation in relations with Job Broker advisers reported by clients might be explained, at least in part, by the different ways that Job Brokers organised their contact with clients – this variation occurred both within and between services. Broadly speaking they fell into three groups: First were those who had very intensive contact with clients where it was described as an *'on-going conversation'*. Both adviser and client would initiate contact which would happen on a very frequent basis, up to a few times a week. The service was very tailored to the individual client's needs and the advisers worked flexibly to meet a range of needs. Where this occurred, advisers tended to have a relatively small caseload and considered the intensity of contact as an important feature of their service. Some were providing a specialised service to those who were considered *'further from work'*. One Job Broker manager highlighted that this way of working with clients was incompatible with NDDP's funding structure and had contributed to their decision to withdraw from the programme.

Second were Job Broker staff who reported that their contact with clients was both client and adviser led and that it was relatively frequent. However, some felt pressured to meet the 25 per cent target and others the financial imperatives of the wider organisation, so they tended to focus on maintaining contact with their 'active' clients and not necessarily all their clients, as with the first group of Job Brokers. Some had a structure in place for contacting inactive clients at defined intervals (e.g. every three months), while others would only resume contact if the client re-contacted the service. Job Broker staff expressed concern that this meant the most needy clients' requirements were not being met and that they were being left in *'the bottom drawer'*.

A third group of Job Brokers reported that their contact with clients was virtually all client-led. They had caseloads (up to 300-400) which they felt prohibited them from being proactive in contacting clients but could only be reactive to those who initiated contact. They also expressed concerns that this meant they were not meeting the needs of some clients.

3.4.3 Other factors that impact on clients' movement toward work

Clients' movement in relation to work did not just depend on the Job Broker service. A key factor influencing whether or not people were able to move forward was their health. Some clients said their health had deteriorated to the extent that they were not able to consider working, and had withdrawn from the Job Broker service. Equally, however, improvements in health could accelerate progress towards work.

Lack of access to transport, poor local public transport networks and lack of a driving licence were also mentioned as having an impact on clients' progress to work. Furthermore, where respondents were caring for dependants, this was also a factor that influenced clients' work-related progress.

3.5 Conclusion

Clients came to the Job Broker service from a range of circumstances and with a range of needs that had to be met if they were to move into work. While variety also exists among Job Brokers in terms of the type of support they provided and the focus of their service, there did not tend to be a match made between the two before a person chose which service to register with. This was because clients were often unclear about what different services offered and registration tended to happen before they had accessed more detailed information on the service, and before Job Brokers had a clear idea of what clients required of the service. Therefore, some people may end up with Job Brokers who are less well equipped to meet their particular needs by virtue of the type of service they provide than others.

Meeting needs effectively also depended on clear dialogue between clients and their Job Broker advisers about what they needed from the service to move into work and what the particular service could provide. Key to this was the nature of the relationship established between a client and their adviser. People spoke about

needing to develop trust and rapport with their advisers over time so that they could get a clear picture of their needs and that a tailored service could be delivered. This required regular contact between the two and an on-going assessment of a client's possibly changing needs. Where advisers were not in a position to deliver the frequency of contact required, this was seen as preventing a client's participation in NDDP from having a positive impact on their movement toward work. Where clients lacked confidence, lack of adviser-initiated contact may be read as suggesting that they do not feel that the client is suited to work.

A range of specific service components were identified as being provided by Job Brokers and as helping people move into work. Those identified were: general careers guidance and direction, providing access to voluntary work/work placements or Permitted Work, training, job search support, help with applying for jobs, financial support and advice and confidence building. As the needs of clients varied, so did the types of support they required to progress. Where services were not available to clients directly from the Job Broker to meet their requirements, they needed to be signposted on to other appropriate services. While it was reported that this happened in some cases, it did not in others, and, therefore, seemed not to be effectively meeting the needs of all clients.

Job Broker staff, and occasionally cases clients, noted that the need to achieve outcomes and specifically, for some, to meet the 25 per cent conversion target, impacted on their ability to meet the needs of all clients. It was seen to impact on the level of contact advisers had with clients, and the extent to which they provided the various service components. In some cases, they felt it prohibited them from providing the particular component at all (for example, access to voluntary work/work placements, Permitted Work, training), while in others, it meant they could only provide limited support in an area (for example, less intensive job search support or confidence building). While services varied and some clearly did provide intensive support over a longer period, it would appear that it was the support (in terms of type and level) required by clients who were furthest from work that was neglected where choices about allocation of resources had to be made.

4 Longer-term outcomes of participation in NDDP

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the longer-term experiences of clients who registered for NDDP services, using longitudinal data from two waves of client interviews. The first interviews were conducted with clients in 2002, shortly after they registered for NDDP (see Corden *et al.*, 2003). Repeat interviews were conducted with a subgroup of those clients towards the end of 2003 and in early 2004. The sample for the repeat interview was purposively selected to maintain a range of circumstances and experiences, but with a particular attempt to include those who had had experience of work and/or contact with the Job Broker service since the Wave One interview. The findings in this chapter relate to interviews with 45 clients spread (unevenly) across eighteen Job Broker services. It follows, therefore, that some of the subgroups discussed in this chapter consist of a relatively small number of clients.

The aim of this chapter is to identify the trajectories taken by clients since the initial interview, examining particularly their movement towards, or into, work. The chapter begins by describing the changes in people's circumstances between the first and second interviews, and describing their contact with Job Broker services (Section 4.2). This includes changes in people's circumstances where they had relatively short-lived contact with the services, and changes where people were in touch with the services for longer. The chapter then focuses on elements of the Job Broker service that could be particularly important to people over the longer-term (Section 4.3), looking at the pace and intensity of the service, relationship with the Job Broker and maintenance of contact, as well as specific components of the service. Other factors which may have influenced movement towards work in the longer-term are also discussed (Section 4.4). Although some of the issues discussed reflect those raised in Chapter 3, here the longer-term relevance is the central focus.

4.2 Movements towards work and the longer-term impact of the Job Broker service

This section reviews client circumstances in relation to work and the perceived impact of NDDP participation at the Wave One interview, and examines what changes there had been during the period up to the second interview. From the Wave One data, four main groups (reflecting those outlined in Chapter 3) were identified:

- clients who had moved into work – with the help of the Job Broker service;
- clients who had moved towards work – with the help of the Job Broker service;
- clients who had moved into work – but without the help of the Job Broker service; and
- clients who appeared not to have moved towards work – despite contact with the Job Broker service.

Each group is considered in turn to review whether their work-related circumstances had changed during the period leading up to the second interview, focusing particularly on the impact of clients' involvement in the Job Broker service.

4.2.1 Clients who had moved into work at Wave One – with the help of the Job Broker service

Circumstances at the Wave One interview

Clients who had moved into paid employment by the time of the first interview had had varying levels of contact and support from the Job Broker service. Regardless of whether the job they moved to had been found by the Job Broker or by the client themselves, the practical and motivational support of the Job Broker was often considered instrumental in the process and strong positive views expressed by clients on the impact of the service at the Wave One interview.

Changes between Wave One and Wave Two interview

By the Wave Two interview, clients in this group had generally remained in relatively stable employment. There had been some movement between jobs (with only one spell of short-term unemployment) and periods of health-related time off sick. However, by the time of the second interview, all clients in this group were still in employment, either in the same job as at Wave One or in a new (and preferred) position.

Clients who had remained in the same job since the first interview were generally happy in that job, which was reported to *'suit'* them (although they may have had some minor changes in their job role, primarily for health reasons). Others were, however, thinking about a change to other sorts of employment or self-employment. Reasons for considering a change were a desire to find a work environment which

better suited their health or work that paid more. Whilst some were actively job searching, there was very little mention of using the Job Broker to help with any transition to another job. Some people did not feel that they needed further help, or had leads for help from another source. Others reflected that the service may be useful, yet it had not always occurred to them to contact the Job Broker again, another pointed out that it was difficult to contact the service when he was working full-time hours. However there was some mention of getting in touch in the future, for example if a work situation became unstable or future plans became more concrete. These issues are explored in more depth in Chapter 5.

A few clients had changed jobs since the Wave One interview and felt they were now in a job that was preferable in terms of the type of work and working conditions, the suitability for their health, better money or the chance to progress. Here, Job Brokers were not reported to be involved in the change of job, as it had arisen through contacts made in a previous job, or clients reported that they had gained enough confidence and experience to handle finding and moving to another job themselves. However, the continued impact of the Job Broker service was evident where, despite having no further contact with the Job Broker service, they were drawing on CV preparation and job application skills which they had learnt prior to the Wave One interview and thought were influential in getting the new job.

Among people in this group, there was little mention of in-work support between the two research interviews. Again, in-work support is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Views about the impact of the Job Broker service at the time of the second interview generally reflected the views clients had at the first interview. They felt that the Job Broker service had been influential both on their initial move into work and, where relevant, on moving on to other jobs.

4.2.2 Clients who had moved towards work at Wave One – with the help of the Job Broker service

Circumstances at the Wave One interview

Whilst people in this group had not entered work at the point of the Wave One interview, they had expressed positive views about the Job Broker service and felt it had helped them to move towards work. At the Wave One interview, people described high levels of regular Job Broker support including advice about work, CVs and applications, job search, and access to training courses. Although these clients were at various distances from the labour market at Wave One, they generally, at that stage, viewed contact with the Job Broker service as ongoing.

Changes between Wave One and Wave Two interview

During the period between the Wave One and Wave Two interview, clients in this group had generally continued to move towards, and into, work albeit at different paces, with or without continued Job Broker support.

Where people had continued to have regular contact with a Job Broker after the first interview, some felt it was influential in helping them move towards work. People described having got jobs after intensive job search and support with applications and interviews and felt that without this help it was unlikely that they would have got work. Training undertaken via the Job Broker service had also been helpful: people described having moved into work, or into activities such as a work placement or a college course, and felt the training had not only increased their employment credentials but also enhanced their confidence.

However, other clients had now ended contact with the Wave One Job Broker (including de-registering) due to their disappointment with the lack of progress they had made. Within this small group, some had subsequently received support from other sources (such as another Job Broker, or a DEA), and secured Permitted Work jobs. Here the optimistic view of the service at Wave One had generally declined.

Finally, for one client in this group contact with the Job Broker service had ended where her health had deteriorated to the extent that she no longer considered employment as an option. However, this client thought she may return to the Job Broker if the situation changed, which reflected the positive views of the service she expressed at the first interview.

4.2.3 Clients who had moved into work at Wave One – without the help of the Job Broker service

Circumstances at the Wave One interview

At the time of the Wave One interview, this group of clients had started work but, although they had been in contact with the Job Broker service, they did not attribute their job to the help they had received from the Job Broker service. Typically clients had found the vacancy themselves, or through a Jobcentre Plus source, and had had few (if any) contacts with the Job Broker before starting work. Whilst some talked about the Job Broker enhancing their confidence or providing practical advice (for example, about tax credits), clients felt that the limited service they had received had not made any difference to them entering work. Often, they had secured the job prior to contacting the Job Broker. By the time of the Wave One interview, clients in this group were, typically, no longer in touch with the Job Broker organisation.

Changes between Wave One and Wave Two interview

During the period between the Wave One and Wave Two research interviews, these clients had mostly either remained in the same job, or had left work. None had resumed contact with the Job Broker, other than receiving a one off general letter or telephone call from the Job Broker to check up on their situation. This was not considered particularly salient and did not lead to further contact.

Among those still in the same job at the time of the Wave Two interview, although their current position was considered satisfactory, some were thinking about moving to alternative employment or starting some form of training or education, though they had not yet made concrete plans.

Among clients whose Wave One job had ended by the time of the second research interview, reasons for leaving work were health difficulties, personal circumstances, a temporary job ending and a contract not being renewed (see also Chapter 5). Most of these clients were no longer in work, some had moved in and out of work several times since the Wave One interview, one had just started a temporary job and some were currently looking for work. They tended to be looking for work on their own, or with the support of Jobcentre Plus (including a DEA). In a few cases, people were now using a different Job Broker where they thought that the general limited involvement with the original Job Broker had not had any impact on their move into work.

Generally, within this group, clients held a fairly constant view about the minimal impact that the Job Broker service had had on their movement into work. Where people had changed their views, this was linked to specific circumstances. For example, one person's view of the service had become more positive when she reflected on the information received about tax credits of which she had been unaware. However, people had also become more critical of the service where they felt they had not been well informed about the implications of work on their benefits (see Section 4.3.5).

4.2.4 Clients who had not moved towards work at Wave One – despite contacting the Job Broker service

Circumstances at the Wave One interview

At the time of the Wave One interview, clients in this group generally felt that the Job Broker service had had little or no impact on enhancing their position with relation to work. Within this group were:

- clients whose initial contact had never been followed up or maintained;
- clients who were no longer engaged with the Job Broker service because they felt the service was inadequate or had not met their needs;
- clients who appeared to be in a state of 'limbo', and were waiting to hear from the Job Broker (for example, about training or job search); and
- clients who were receiving Job Broker services (such as job search support, training or workshops), but felt the help they had received was inappropriate or inadequate and felt they had not moved forward.

At Wave One, the general feeling among this group was that the Job Broker service had not helped them move forwards, and people felt disappointed, frustrated or despondent about the prospects of entering work. This view was particularly strong when they had come to the Job Broker service feeling that it was their last avenue to finding work.

Changes between Wave One and Wave Two interview

Since the first research interview, some clients in this group had moved towards or into work, whilst others did not feel they were any closer to work. There were differing accounts of the impact of the Job Broker service and other sources of support.

Entries into employment

Clients who had maintained or resumed contact with the Job Broker since the Wave One research interview and had entered employment, reported that they had found the job themselves. However, some felt that continued contact with the service had helped, for example, feeling their confidence had been increased through participation in a long-term work placement, or feeling more motivated to look for work through the ongoing encouragement of a Job Broker adviser. Some now felt their continued contact had been helpful, in contrast to their views at the Wave One interview when they were frustrated with their progress. However, others felt that despite continued contact, the Job Broker support had not played a key role in their job entry. An example of this is where Job Brokers had sent clients information on jobs which were inappropriate and they had found their jobs themselves.

Others who had moved into employment had not had contact with the Job Broker since the first research interview and had either never received services, or had been dissatisfied and contact had ended before the first research interview. These clients had progressed towards work either by themselves or using other agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and disability organisations (see Section 4.4.1) as well as personal contacts. Some had stayed in their first job; others had had several jobs, and some were now out of work again because of deteriorating health or having been made redundant.

Movement towards work

Other people who at Wave One, had not moved forward, by Wave Two felt they were now closer to work due to the support of the Job Broker service. In some cases, this had been through the continuation of the support they had described at Wave One. For example, after a series of work placements and regular Job Broker contact, one client who had not felt ready to work at Wave One and was unsure about the benefits of the Job Broker service, was now clearer about the type of work he wanted and was now doing voluntary work as a next step towards paid work. In other cases, clients had been in limbo at Wave One, but contact with the Job Broker had resumed after they had received a letter informing them of changes to the service. In these cases, there had been a change in either the Job Broker adviser or in the approach of the service, and needs unmet at the first research interview were now being addressed. In one example, a client who had wanted paid employment had been unhappy with the original focus of the Job Broker service which had centred around a work placement. The focus had later changed to supported job search which he felt was more appropriate. Another person had originally been steered towards voluntary work but was happier with a later focus on helping him to

access a full-time one year course which he hoped would lead to work. Whilst neither client was working by the time of the Wave Two interview, they felt that they were now getting help which was appropriate and which would help them to move towards work.

Other clients had moved closer to work without any Job Broker contact. This had occurred through voluntary work, training or educational courses either arranged themselves or through other organisations or agencies (see Section 4.4.1).

Limited or no movement towards work

Where clients did not feel they had moved towards work since the first research interview, this was sometimes despite subsequent contact with the Job Broker. This group included people who at the time of the first research interview were still waiting for a Job Broker to follow up after an initial meeting. Some reported being sent details of unsuitable jobs or getting no follow up after they were unable to continue with a work placement. Other Job Brokers failed to keep appointments, or had not provided a replacement after an adviser had been made redundant, which meant that clients were again waiting to hear from the Job Broker service.

Where clients had had no contact with the Job Broker, some had continued to job search themselves, and with the support of other organisations or agencies (see Section 4.4.1). However whilst some had been successful (as already described) others had become despondent after repeated rejections, or had suspended plans to move into work because of poor health. Here, views about the service generally reflected those expressed in the first research interview, although views could become more negative in comparison with alternative support services which had proved helpful. However, in a few instances people who had received more useful and intensive support from other agencies contemplated the possibility of returning to a Job Broker for specific help now that they felt more prepared for work, for example, to find a work placement or for help with job search (see Section 4.3.1).

Overall, then, there were diverse patterns in terms of whether people felt they had moved on since the Wave One interview, and whether they had continued to be in touch with the services. People who were in work at Wave One and felt the help they had received was influential were all still in work in Wave Two, some having drawn on skills they had sharpened with the help of Job Brokers in moving on to a better job. People who, at Wave One, had moved towards work and felt the Job Broker service was influential, had generally continued to move forwards, or into work, although this was not always with continued help from the service. Where people were in work at Wave One but did not feel the Job Broker service had contributed to this, some had since had to leave work, and some identified new gaps in the help they had received. Among those who, at Wave One, did not feel they had moved forward, some were now in work and others continuing to move forward, and some here felt the Job Broker service had played a role. Others, however, had stopped being in touch and felt any progress was the result of their own endeavours or the help of another agency, and some felt they had still not moved forwards at all.

4.3 Explaining outcomes: the role of the Job Broker service

This section examines the role of the Job Broker service in clients' movement towards work over the longer-term, within the context of the varied circumstances already described. Many of the issues raised by clients reflect the views reported in-depth in Chapter 3, and again highlight the importance of clients' needs being identified, being able to access a service which is appropriate to their needs, and receiving the help which is necessary given their circumstances. However, three issues emerged as being particularly important to clients' longer-term progress. The first is providing support at the appropriate pace and intensity for clients. The second is the establishment of strong relationships with advisers. The third issue is the elements of the service that are particularly relevant to clients' longer-term progress. In this section, Job Broker approaches to working with clients with longer-term needs of the service are also discussed.

4.3.1 The pace and intensity of the Job Broker service

Having a Job Broker service that works at an appropriate level for clients' needs was important for clients. Access to a more extensive type of service, provided over a longer period of time was necessary, particularly for clients who had more severe mental health conditions or other more complex needs, people without recent work experience and people with little confidence about work. Some clients felt that the service had focused on job search before they had been ready for this, and felt what they had needed was to take things '*step by step*' with more in-depth preparation. One client had subsequently made more progress with extensive work preparation support including training, work placement and personal development support from another provider. Another client (prior to Wave One) had been placed on a Job Broker computer course with little support which she felt was not addressing her concerns about moving into work; she had subsequently gained the confidence she had lacked through a local organisation providing job application, CV preparation and interview skills. At the initial contact, these clients had been unclear of their needs, for example, what types of work they could do, and the Job Broker service had either not identified or responded to their needs.

A few clients who had not moved forward with the Job Broker at Wave One and had since progressed with the help of other organisations, by the time of the second research interview, felt that the type of support originally offered by the Job Broker might be more appropriate now that they had gained confidence and felt better prepared for work. However, there was little evidence of Job Brokers signposting registered clients to alternative providers for this early preparation and maintaining contact with a view to resuming engagement Job Broker once they were in a position to move forwards.

By contrast, there were people who had moved forward with the help of the Job Broker after more intensive support provided at a pace they felt was appropriate.

Some had, by the time of the Wave Two interview, started work; others had not but felt they were now *'getting there'* and felt more confident and positive about paid work as their goal. Their progress had followed a gradual process including elements such as training, work placements or voluntary work and intensive one-to-one contact with the Job Broker, which had helped clients to *'move up the ladder a little bit'*. The step-by-step approach of the service was felt to have played a key role. Clients stressed the importance of not being pushed into work and appreciated being able to progress at a pace that was right for them. For example, one client had moved from being at some distance from work at Wave One, to being in part-time work by Wave Two, and about to move into full-time work.

Chapter 3 noted the importance of regular contact with advisers and it was often a key factor in the progress of clients who moved forward with intensive Job Broker support between the first and second research interview, helping them to sustain motivation and to keep up the momentum of progress. However, where people felt that a lack of contact was predominantly the fault of the Job Broker organisation, it was *'very frustrating'* and they could be left feeling *'quite disappointed'*. As noted in Chapter 3, people did not always feel able to initiate contact themselves particularly if their confidence was low; some just accepted the lack of contact as disinterest on the part of the Job Broker, *'I just thought, it wasn't really meant to be'*. Occasionally, people who had lost contact with the Job Broker at Wave One had resumed contact, (initiated either by them or by the Job Broker). One client, however, was *'disappointed'* when contact was again dropped by the Job Broker after a brief period of activity.

4.3.2 The relationship with the Job Broker adviser

Developing an ongoing positive relationship with a specific Job Broker adviser was, as outlined in Chapter 3, important to all clients but appeared to be particularly relevant in longer-term movement forward. An adviser's understanding and empathy towards clients' health conditions and personal circumstances was particularly important to those with mental health conditions or more complex needs and was often mentioned as vital to the progress of those for whom movement into, or towards, work happened over a longer period. A long-term relationship was seen by clients to enhance advisers' understanding about individual needs, in terms of the pace of movement towards work, barriers to work and the type of work required. Some clients also noted that where advisers were based in specialist organisations or had personal experiences of disability, this facilitated better understanding. Understanding the implications of a client's health condition on work was viewed as critical for an adviser to liaise effectively with prospective employers on behalf of the client.

As discussed in Chapter 3, clients tended not to maintain contact with services if they felt that Job Broker advisers had not understood or been responsive to their needs. Some found alternative sources of support more effective, for example specialist organisations or DEAs who it was felt had more knowledge and experience about disability issues.

4.3.3 Training and work placements

Training and work placements also emerged as particularly important to clients' longer-term progress, and clients who had used them tended to feel much closer to work and more optimistic about finding a job at the second research interview than at Wave One. Long-term vocational training courses (lasting up to a year) were particularly helpful when clients were looking to change occupations after limited (or narrow) work experience or had had some considerable time away from the labour market. These courses provided qualifications for a specific area of employment such as computer design or care work and could also include a period of work placement. Clients found them useful not only as a source of new or updated skills but also adjusting to the regular routine of full-time attendance was considered useful preparation for returning to work.

Opinions about the benefit of work placements could also change over the longer-term. A client who at Wave One had questioned the value of the work experience he was doing with the Job Broker, felt by the second research interview, that it may have been of benefit in the long run as it '*built*' his confidence back up to the extent that he was '*ready to go back into work*'.

Increased self-confidence and a sense of achievement were important benefits of both training and work placements as one client said '*it shows that you can do it*'. However, as outlined in Chapter 3, matching the level and content of training or placement to a client's needs was important. One client felt he had been put on too basic a course, and another thought the work placement he had done had not been useful and felt the job search help he was now receiving was more relevant to his needs.

4.3.4 Motivation and confidence building

Chapter 3 noted the ways in which a Job Broker service can develop peoples' confidence, and this was particularly important to clients whose movement forward happened over a longer-term. For those who had moved forward with the help of the Job Broker between the two research interviews, a recurring comment was how participation in the Job Broker service had increased their confidence. This had been achieved in two ways: Firstly, they felt their confidence had increased through the skills they had acquired, such as for job searching and application techniques or through training and work placements. Secondly, they felt their confidence and motivation had increased through the continued support and encouragement of the Job Broker advisers which had fostered in clients the right '*frame of mind*' to pursue work as a realistic option.

4.3.5 Financial advice

As discussed in Chapter 3, Job Broker advice about in-work financial assistance was important. For clients who moved forward over a longer period of time, too, learning about financial support could be critical. The value of being provided with in-depth and accurate advice was stressed by some clients reflecting on their experiences

between the two research interviews. For example, people who had, by Wave One, been advised about (and helped to claim) tax credits by the Job Broker, often reiterated the benefits of this advice in the Wave Two research interview. However, it was also evident from accounts of experiences over the longer-term that some clients felt they had not been well informed about the impact of work on benefits. In one case, a client's deteriorating health meant they had left work after a little over a year. However, they had not been told about the 52-week link rule by their Job Broker. They were now receiving less benefit than before starting work and felt that, had they known about the rule, they would have left work within the 52-week period. Another client had not understood the implications of earnings within Permitted Work rules and jeopardised her benefits by working overtime. This highlights the need for clear advice about the effects of working on benefit and the important role Job Broker advice imparted at the outset of employment could have in the longer-term.

4.3.6 Vocational advice

Chapter 3 noted the importance of vocational advice, and again, looking at longer-term progression it was clear it could be key for some people. Particularly if people did not have recent work experience, support from Job Brokers to identify possible job directions could be very important, and some found it helpful when training or work placements had been set up to help them to explore the appropriateness of a particular direction. However, others were less satisfied with the vocational advice they had received, where either they had had no discussions with the Job Broker, or it was felt that the Job Broker had not provided appropriate guidance, and some clients were still unsure about what kind of work they could realistically pursue.

4.3.7 Job search and application support

Ongoing help with job search and job applications was important over the longer-term particularly for people who were moving towards work with the Job Broker help at Wave One, and who had initially found it difficult to search for jobs on their own (related to issues of confidence, motivation and ability). The kind of support clients reported was regular one-to-one contact with a Job Broker adviser who provided guidance in identifying suitable vacancies, accompanied a client to the Jobcentre, helped with application forms and interview techniques, and occasionally supported the client during a job interview or liaised with an employer, but in particular the importance of continued encouragement was stressed. Clients highlighted the value of not being '*pushed*' into taking any job, and of advisers understanding the needs of the client as an individual.

It was also clear that some clients who had moved into, or towards, work with the help of the Job Broker at the time of the Wave One interview, subsequently drew on this support even where contact with the Job Broker had not continued, and found the skills acquired useful when they later changed jobs or applied for a college course.

As noted in Chapter 3, however, these longer-term clients also had criticisms about lack of proactivity on the part of the Job Broker, and being sent details of, or encouraged to apply for, jobs that they thought were inappropriate. When this occurred, clients questioned whether an adviser completely understood their position or health condition, and had sometimes ended contact with the Job Broker and continued job searching themselves or with the help of another Job Broker service, Jobcentre Plus or a DEA.

4.3.8 The Job Broker perspective on working with clients in the longer-term

Job Broker staff varied in the extent to which they felt their service was geared to working with clients on a longer-term basis and reflected the overall service they offered. As discussed in Chapter 3, some Job Brokers worked with clients who could be considered further from work and who they expected to need more support. They provided a service that addressed both the immediate labour market barriers and more personal barriers and expected to work with some clients over a long period of time. They provided services such as more in-depth personal development or confidence building courses, more in-depth vocational guidance, work placements, support with finding voluntary work, and more intensive services once clients were in work such as job coaching. Some worked with people with specific impairments. As long as clients were motivated and active in progressing toward work, then they continue to work with them. Other services were not specifically targeted at working with clients in the longer-term, but had the resources with which to do so when required. They offered clients the same range of services but over a prolonged period, sometimes also using external services where necessary.

Where a Job Broker service was focused on addressing the more immediate barriers to work, they tended to expect this to require a shorter-term input. They saw working with clients who faced more personal barriers and required longer-term support as more problematic. Two sets of barriers were identified: Firstly, some did not provide the types of services they felt these clients needed (such as training and work placements), and they felt that providing such services went beyond the scope of their service. Secondly, where they felt they provide services which could meet these needs, they felt they were not resourced to provide the intensity of support necessary and were inhibited from doing so by the demands on them to focus on quicker outcomes to sustain the service or to meet their 25 per cent conversion targets. Where Job Brokers did not feel as well placed to meet clients' longer-term needs, this was also reflected in some of their practices around maintaining contact with these clients. Where clients were not as active in seeking work or were perceived to be further away from entering work, some Job Brokers let contact dwindle, putting the onus on clients to sustain contact or categorising clients as 'inactive'.

4.4 Other influences on longer-term outcomes

Other factors may contribute to clients' movement towards work in the longer-term. These can relate to support services accessed beyond the Job Broker service, changes in clients' health and employer behaviour. In many cases, these factors are similar to those described in other parts of this report, including exploring the experiences of Job Broker services (Chapter 3) and issues around job retention (Chapter 5).

4.4.1 Accessing additional or alternative sources of support

There were a few examples of clients accessing additional support through the Job Broker organisation, either by the Job Broker working jointly with another organisation, or by them signposting to other services. Examples were: Jobcentre Plus for job search or financial assistance through New Deal 50+, enrolment on a training course or the use of another organisation for continued post-employment support. These services were generally welcomed and felt to complement the Job Broker provision.

However, as already mentioned, where some clients perceived a lack of appropriate help or lack of progress, they turned to alternative services, including specialist organisations, Jobcentre Plus services and other Job Brokers. This occurred where people were dissatisfied with the appropriateness or quality of the service provided, where contact with a Job Broker had not been maintained, or where clients had not become engaged with the service (and contact generally ended before the first research interview).

For clients with specific or specialist needs, the use of specialist organisations (who were already known to clients) was mentioned, in particular by clients with visual impairments, although it should be noted that this is based on only a few client experiences. The ability to respond to clients' needs with specialist equipment and support had helped clients move forward and this specialist knowledge and provision was seen as a key aspect lacking in the Job Broker service at Wave One.

Other clients used alternative provision in the form of local organisations offering back-to-work services. The types of support provided included vocational advice and help with job search, CVs, applications and interview skills, and Job Broker clients particularly stressed the importance of accessibility and regular contact. Clients felt these other sources had actually delivered the type of service that they had wanted but did not receive from the Job Broker and felt it had restored confidence about returning to work.

Where clients had received support from other sources after making no progress towards work with the Job Broker service, there was little evidence of signposting by the Job Broker. Although, Job Brokers reported that they signposted clients to other sources of support where relevant, among clients the alternative sources of help had generally been identified themselves or through a DEA.

Clients had also progressed since the first interview with the help of Jobcentre Plus, although some were reluctant to use Jobcentre Plus services. In some cases, clients who had been in touch with a DEA prior to contacting a Job Broker continued to receive support from them. The help involved was either support with job search, or referrals to other programmes such as WORKSTEP or New Deal Gateway to Work. Experiences of the Jobcentre Plus service were mixed. It was sometimes compared favourably to the Job Broker service, particularly where little movement forward had been made with the latter. However there were also less positive views, particularly relating to lack of time Jobcentre Plus staff had to invest in clients, or being unforthcoming with advice (for example, about setting up a business).

There were also examples of clients who had re-registered with another Job Broker service. Clients who had moved straight from one Job Broker to another were aware of the de/re-registration process and no difficulties were mentioned, though one respondent who had discussed this with both Job Brokers commented on the '*petty competitiveness*' he had sensed at the time. Others who had been out of touch with their original Job Broker for some time, and had not made a conscious decision to move from one Job Broker service to another. They had not actively deregistered from the original service and registration with the new Job Broker was seen as unrelated to previous NDDP participation or not '*worth mentioning*'.

Where people registered with a new Job Broker they had been dissatisfied with the lack of progress they made with the original Job Broker and were critical of lack of proactivity on the part of the Job Broker in finding work, not understanding a client's needs and difficulty in accessing the service when an adviser was sick. There were mixed views about the impact of the new Job Broker service. Some people still experienced problems; others got the help they needed and moved forward, particularly where an adviser was thought to be more responsive to need and more knowledgeable and understanding about a disability or health condition. However, many clients appeared not to have known about other Job Brokers, as Chapter 3 noted.

4.4.2 Health

As noted in Chapter 3, changes in clients' health have a significant impact on progress to, and within, work and continued engagement with the Job Broker service. Improved health could also be key to people being able to move forward in the longer-term but, similarly, deteriorating health meant they were not able to do so.

4.4.3 Employer behaviour

Fear or actual experiences of employer discrimination emerged particularly strongly as an issue among clients who had longer-term needs of Job Broker services. Clients who had not found work or who had continued job searching since the first interview stage, saw the attitude of employers towards employing people with health conditions and disabilities as a severe obstacle to employment. This view was

sometimes expressed as a general concern and sometimes based on experiences of job searching over the longer-term but meeting repeated rejections which were thought to be a response to both physical and mental health conditions. Where people had reached the interview stage there were reports of employers' lack of understanding of the implications of a health condition. Examples given by clients included where a potential employer had raised concerns about the safety of others in relation to schizophrenia, and where a client with a physical impairment felt the prospective employer had not considered the possibility of workplace adaptations and had been inflexible in their response. There was concern among some clients about how (or whether) to present their health condition when applying for jobs. Furthermore, issues of age (where people were around the age of 50), and fragmented employment histories were thought to put people at a further disadvantage with employers, with concern expressed that the problem would compound over time with longer periods of unemployment and more difficulty providing up to date references. Repeated rejections from employers over this period between the research interviews could lead to the abandonment of job search entirely. However, people who had moved into work sometimes spoke very positively of the help they had had from employers and particularly of their flexibility and understanding of people's health conditions, discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.5 Conclusion

Whilst the backgrounds and experiences of this subset of clients varied widely, the importance of the Job Broker service identifying and responding to their needs, as highlighted in Chapter 3, is central to the impact of the service.

Overall, clients had mixed views on the extent to which the Job Broker service had helped them to move forwards in the longer-term. Where clients' reflective views of the impact of their involvement in the Job Broker service had remained (or become) generally positive, this was explained by a number of factors:

- Job Brokers continuing to work with the client over the longer-term to address their needs;
- a change in personnel meaning that the service was now moving the client forward;
- outstanding support needs being addressed elsewhere (so that the client felt they would now return to Job Broker service to find work); and
- the longer-term benefits of services now becoming apparent (for example, the merits of attending a workshop seen, on reflection, as contributing to clients' increased confidence, subsequent use of job search and application skills acquired at Wave One).

Positive views were expressed by those who had been helped into, or towards, work at Wave One, and who attributed their sustained employment, subsequent movement into work or continued progress to the Job Broker service.

Longer-term engagement with the Job Broker service could be particularly helpful for clients who had been out of the labour market for some time, or who had mental health conditions, especially where lack of confidence or motivation was an issue. The long-term impact of the service depended on a combination of factors such as the appropriateness of the focus and pace, as well as continued maintenance of contact and the relationship with advisers. Key elements of the service for longer-term clients who had moved forward with the Job Broker were: in-depth support with job searching and job applications, training and work placements and vocational guidance. Contact with advisers and specific services which boosted confidence and sustained motivation were also very important, indeed increased confidence was often associated with continued participation and could be seen by clients as essential to their progress.

Although some of these clients needed intensive support, some had moved into work and others felt they had made clear progress towards work with the help of the Job Broker service. However, even after receiving intensive help and more than 18 months after registration, if people had not moved into work, their progress was not measurable in NDDP terms of job entry and sustained employment.

Where clients' views of the longer-term impact of the Job Broker service had remained negative, or become more negative over time, the following factors were thought to contribute:

- general lack of contact from the Job Broker organisation;
- expected service not being provided;
- lack of progress being made with the Job Broker service;
- a view that Job Brokers had not been sufficiently proactive in searching for work for the client; and
- alternative sources of support proving to be more beneficial for the client.

As reported in Chapter 3, it is difficult to be clear in cases where the client felt their needs weren't met, whether people's needs were not properly identified, whether they approached a Job Broker service that was not the most appropriate for their needs, or why their needs were not met. However, whether or not the services required were unavailable or just not offered through the Job Broker, it is clear from these respondents' actions that *for them* the Job Broker service was lacking.

Few clients were still in contact with the Job Broker organisation by the time of the Wave Two interview and even where people were uncertain about their current and future employment plans, few intended to return although there were some mentions of possibly returning at some point in the future particularly for help with job searching. In part, this may be explained by the limited involvement at the outset with the service, but even where people had had positive experiences of the service but had, for various reasons, stopped being in touch, it appeared as though there was a general lack of consideration about returning to the service – an issue discussed further in Chapter 5.

This longitudinal element of the research highlights the diversity of the client group and the fact that whilst some people may enter work relatively quickly, progress will be gradual for others. As noted in Chapter 3, what was critical for the services to be effective was that clients' needs are identified, they access the right service to meet those needs, and the help they receive is appropriate to their circumstances. Whilst some got the help they needed from Job Brokers, others had to go elsewhere, and in some cases described receiving the same type of support that other clients did receive from Job Brokers. Overall it is clear that the Job Broker can be effective in helping clients with longer-term needs to move into work, or to make progress towards work that they see as significant. It can also provide support which clients see as of long-term benefit, and on which they continue to draw after they have stopped using the service.

5 Job retention and sustainability

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the experiences of people who had undertaken work since registering for NDDP. In particular, it focuses on issues relating to job retention and the '*sustainability*' of work. Job retention is a key element of the NDDP programme and the funding regime is designed to encourage and facilitate retention through the outcome payments to Job Brokers, which are linked to 13 weeks in sustained work.⁷ To this end, Job Brokers are required to work with and support participants (and employers, if appropriate) when they start a job and for the first 26 weeks in work. Whilst this definition is a useful starting point in considering issues relating to retention, this chapter moves beyond discussions around reaching specific retention milestones by focusing more generally on issues affecting whether someone stays in work, either within a specific job, or within the labour market more generally.

The chapter begins by describing the types of work undertaken by clients (Section 5.2). Section 5.3 looks specifically at difficulties people encountered during the early weeks of employment, and the next section then examines the longer-term stability of employment by identifying and exploring the experiences of those who, by the time of the research interview had left work (Section 5.4.1); were in work that they thought they might not be able to sustain (Section 5.4.2); or were in work that they thought was likely to continue (Section 5.4.3). Section 5.5 identifies the factors that supported or undermined clients' ability to remain in work, looking at the suitability of the job, job satisfaction, employer behaviour, health and financial issues. Clients' needs for, and experiences of, in-work support are explored in Section 5.6 and in Section 5.7, Job Broker perspectives on providing in-work support are presented. The chapter ends with a summary of key findings (Section 5.8).

⁶ This sustained work outcome period was originally 26 weeks but was reduced in October 2003 to 13 weeks in line with other labour market programmes.

The chapter reports on both 'new' Wave Two clients interviewed once only, and Wave One clients who were interviewed again at Wave Two. However, the most relevant information is gained from the latter group, who were first interviewed shortly after registration in 2002 and again in late 2003/early 2004. This longitudinal perspective provides some insight into their longer-term experiences of work since originally registering for Job Broker services. The chapter also includes data from the Job Broker interviews, to describe and explain issues around job retention from the perspective of those delivering the services.

5.2 Type of work undertaken

The type of work undertaken by clients provides a useful foundation to understanding the issues for clients as they moved into work.

5.2.1 Type of job

Jobs taken by clients were varied. They included bar work, cleaning, caring, factory and retail work, driving, security and call centre work, and road crossing assistants. Jobs were generally unskilled or semi-skilled. Where the work was more highly skilled (for example, teaching), this was related to their previous employment rather than being a new venture. In other cases, the type of work taken was similar but often at a lower level to that undertaken previously. Where the type of work undertaken was a new direction for people, this could be because their health condition limited their inclination or ability to return to their original 'usual' work, or because they had not worked before (typically younger people). In such cases, the Job Broker had often encouraged them to consider these new directions, or had arranged a period of voluntary work to 'test' the job out.

5.2.2 Hours of work

People who had experience of working since registering for the programme generally tended to work for less than full-time hours (that is, less than around 35 hours a week). Where people worked full-time, this was because: the employer had expected or demanded full-time employment, the individual felt that their health had improved to the extent that they were able to take a job that was full-time or increase their hours once they were in work, or, less commonly, because of household financial pressures. Part-time work was often taken because of health limitations. In some cases, their own doctor had advised them not to work full-time or not to put themselves under undue pressure. In other cases, people themselves knew the amount of work they were able to undertake before it became detrimental to their health or they became unable to manage. People also chose to work part-time to fit around childcare, or to ensure that the hours worked were within the Permitted Work rules so that their benefits would not be affected.

5.3 The transition into work

The first few days and weeks in work were, in some cases, difficult for clients. Difficulties reported were associated with learning the job, adjusting to the pattern of working (including coping with shift work) and general concerns about fitting into the workplace or being able to do the job. Where people returned to jobs that were similar to the type of work they had previously done, they appeared to find it easier to adjust back into work.

At this stage, clients who had contact with their Job Broker within the first few weeks of work tended to be people who had been in relatively regular contact with the Job Broker prior to getting a job. Job Brokers were able to help with issues such as relationships with colleagues as well as general contact with clients to ensure that there were no immediate difficulties. For example, one client who had had relatively high levels of support and regular contact before they started work spoke of particular difficulties with another employee in the early stages of work, which were resolved when, at their request, the Job Broker met with both the employer and the client. Other clients reported receiving visits or contacts from the Job Broker to ensure that the environment was suitable for them or simply to review how the client was settling into the early weeks of work. However, there were other clients who experienced difficulties in the early days of work but who did not approach their Job Broker for help. Reasons for this included wanting to be able to resolve any difficulties themselves, or finding help from other sources. For example, one person who experienced panic attacks during the first few weeks of work did not seek support from the Job Broker because she felt that the support from family and friends, as well as medication from her doctor, helped her to manage. The issue of in-work contact and support from Job Brokers is explored in-depth in Section 5.5.

Few clients recalled experiencing financial difficulties in the early weeks of work, though there were examples of a Job Broker being able to assist a client with mortgage payments or an advance in wages, which appeared to negate any further financial difficulties. Some people described accessing grants to ease the transition to work, either from the Jobcentre or from the Job Broker organisation. These appeared to be important to help them to buy equipment or work clothes and may also have assisted to limit any immediate financial difficulties.

Job Broker staff reported similar issues arising among clients who contacted them once they had secured a job. They reported clients having concerns about their ability to do the job, re-enter the workplace, mix with other employees and cope with any job-related stress. Job Broker advisers felt that clients often just needed general encouragement and reassurances that support was available to them from the Job Broker. Job Brokers also described accessing funding either within their organisation or from the Advisors Discretionary Fund for equipment or clothing required for the job, to support people until their first wages were paid, or in some cases, to fund a haircut to help boost clients' confidence when starting work.

5.4 Longer-term experiences of work

In addition to any early difficulties during the transitional period into work (see Section 5.3), there were a number of factors that could contribute to whether employment was sustained. These factors could affect both the likelihood of staying in a particular job (job suitability, job satisfaction and employer behaviour were particularly relevant here) and the likelihood of remaining in the labour market more generally (which was more commonly affected by people's health). These factors are discussed in more detail in Section 5.5. This section, however, first describes the circumstances under which clients stayed in jobs or moved into new jobs or out of work altogether.

This section is mostly based on the longitudinal evidence gathered from Wave One clients who were interviewed again some 18 months later, which gives a longer-term view of their experiences of work. New Wave Two clients tended to have had little experience of work by the time of the interview, but, where relevant, their experiences are included. Within both the Wave One and the Wave Two samples, there were also people who had undertaken Permitted Work but had come to (or were approaching) the end of the Permitted Work twelve-month period. The experiences of these clients are also highlighted below.

Based on clients' descriptions of their employment circumstances and plans at the time of the Wave Two interview, three groups of people were identified, in terms of their employment situation by the time of the Wave Two interview:

- those who had worked at some point since registering for NDDP, but who were no longer in employment by the time of the research interview;
- those who were working at the time of the interview, but were unsure or doubtful about whether they could continue; and
- those who were in work at the time of the interview, and were planning to continue to work for the foreseeable future.

The following sections look at each of these groups in turn and describe their circumstances. What is striking is that, where difficulties were encountered, it was rare for people to have contacted a Job Broker for help. Section 5.6 explores the reasons why clients did not make contact with the Job Broker service, and what their experiences were when they did receive help from the service.

5.4.1 Clients who were no longer in employment by the Wave Two interview

Clients in this group were no longer in work by the time of the Wave Two interview for three main reasons: health problems, contract of employment ending, and the end of a Permitted Work period.

A common theme in this group was health deteriorating, to the extent that people were no longer able to continue working and had had to resign from their job. They

were not usually looking for paid work at the time of the Wave Two interview, although some were doing or looking for voluntary work, for example, if they felt it better suited a fluctuating mental health condition. Some people hoped to return to work at some point, particularly where leaving a job had created considerable financial pressures (for example, in meeting mortgage payments).

In other cases, work had ended because of redundancy or because a short-term contract had come to an end. Here, people generally continued to look for work, in some cases with a change in direction. This included looking for part-time work after finding full-time work very difficult, or considering becoming self-employed.

This group also included both Wave One and Wave Two clients who had been doing Permitted Work but had either come to the end of the 12 month 'permitted' period by the time of the research interview, or come to the end of the employment contract with the employer. These people had been unable to find suitable work by the time of the research interview, and expressed disappointment about not being able to continue with Permitted Work.

5.4.2 Clients who were in employment at the Wave Two interview, but had doubts about whether it would continue

There were two main groups of clients who were in work at the time of the Wave Two interview, but anticipated that they might not continue in the job (beyond any early transitional difficulties – see Section 5.3). The first group were in jobs that were known to be short-term or temporary (including Permitted Work and agency work). The second group were in jobs that were not known to be temporary but who for some reason, often related to the suitability of the job or their health, reported that they were unlikely to remain in the job for much longer, or were making plans to leave. Of particular interest here is the experiences of people who wanted to continue in work, but for reasons (other than a job being short-term) were finding it difficult to.

Some clients within this group had had a succession of fairly unfruitful employment experiences since the Wave One interview. Here, clients may have obtained work through an agency or of their own volition but found the work to be of low quality or unsuitable for their health (often because the number of hours they were working were too high for them to cope with).

Others in this group had been in work for some time, but were only recently experiencing difficulties. Where this was the case, the difficulties related primarily to the longer-term effect of working on their health (for example, the effects of prolonged periods of standing or repeated heavy physical work). The difficulties here could make people reluctant to seek similar employment again and, on occasion, people were considering no longer working at all. There were also occasions where a change in manager at work had resulted in less support from the employer than previously or where people experienced difficulties with colleagues.

This group also included Wave Two clients who were coming to the end of a 12 month period of Permitted Work and expecting to have to leave work. These people did not have plans for when their Permitted Work period came to an end, and this was a cause of concern to them, particularly where they felt that they would not be able to cope with increasing their hours of work, but wanted to continue to do some kind of paid work. Giving up work would, they thought, be a significant step backwards as it would involve a decline in income, as well as having to leave work which they enjoyed which enhanced their skills and which fitted in with their health circumstances.

5.4.3 Clients who were in employment at the Wave Two interview, and anticipated continuing in work

Here, people had either not encountered significant problems or had felt the problems had been resolved, sometimes with the help of a Job Broker (see Section 5.6). This group included people who by the time of the Wave Two interview, were still in the same job that they had in the first wave of interviews, as well as people who had moved on to second or subsequent jobs.

People in this group tended to be those who were closer to work when they first made contact with the Job Broker service. They had work-related skills and more recent work experience. Some were already job searching when they registered and some had already found a job at that point. Some said that they had benefited from the support and advice of the Job Broker, for example in helping them to develop their job-search and job application skills. There were also clients who said they got their job without the assistance of the Job Broker organisation, either on their own or with the help of another agency such as Jobcentre Plus. Others in this group included those who had received a lot of support from the Job Broker in preparing them for work.

Some in this group had moved on to new jobs, especially if they had found the first one unsuitable, drawing on the skills they had when they first contacted the Job Broker service, skills which had been enhanced through the service (such as job searching techniques) as well as ones which were developed through their subsequent experience of work. There were also instances of contacts made whilst in the initial job leading to job opportunities elsewhere. For example, one client had been offered a job similar to the one he had originally taken, but with more sociable hours and a more regular wage. He now had identified possible progression opportunities with his current employer, which he planned to pursue.

Other people had stayed in the same job. They said they were happy in their job, and found it satisfying, enjoyable and rewarding, and compatible with their health condition. Some people also wanted to stay in their job until they felt that their health had stabilised, or did not want to move to another job because of concerns about placing themselves under undue pressure – a particular concern among those with enduring mental health or heart conditions.

Where people had stayed in the same job, some said that the job had developed by the time of the Wave Two interview, with increasing hours or a widening of work tasks and responsibilities (and associated wage increases). Such progress was generally welcomed and people felt that they would continue to develop or increase their work responsibilities. Opportunities for advancement had also arisen where a voluntary placement had led to a paid job with the same employer, and where a temporary contract had been made permanent.

In general, people found it much easier to move around the labour market once they had gained an initial job. A common theme among this group was the increased confidence which followed being successful in getting the first job and, as noted already, people also felt they acquired skills and experiences from working which helped them to move on. They felt this helped them to make successful application for better or more suitable jobs. Whilst the second or subsequent job was generally obtained without the assistance of the Job Broker, people felt the Job Broker had been instrumental in obtaining the *first* job. They also felt that the encouragement and support received from the Job Broker in the period leading up to starting work had increased their self-confidence, enabled them to widen their employment horizons, and improved their job-search and job application skills which had helped them to move on.

As noted already, one factor that appeared to be relevant to job sustainability for this group was the fact that some were relatively close to the labour market at the point of initial registration. Another important factor was people having relatively stable health conditions, or experiencing an improvement in their health. The support people received in the workplace was also relevant. More generally, people talked about feeling intrinsically happier and more confident when in work, feeling a generally improved '*well-being*' and enhanced self-esteem, having something to '*do*' (which in some cases could distract from feeling unwell or in pain), and enjoying the social interaction that one could get at work. In particular, clients valued being able to interact socially with colleagues in the workplace, especially if they had been away from work for some time, or had had experienced severe health problems in the past. Being financially better off was a further factor that contributed to people feeling that it was likely they would stay in their jobs.

5.5 Factors undermining or supporting work

Clients who had experienced work since first registering for the Job Broker service spoke about a number of factors that may have helped them to stay in work, or conversely, made it difficult for them to stay in work. These relate to the suitability of the job, job satisfaction, employer flexibility, health and financial issues. The following sections discuss the kinds of difficulties clients encountered, and how the Job Brokers reported that they address such difficulties. Section 5.6 then explores clients' experiences of accessing support.

5.5.1 Suitability of the job and type of work

There were a number of factors associated with the suitability of jobs: Firstly, hours were an important aspect. Some people who did full-time work found it difficult to cope with the long hours, particularly if it involved shift work, overtime, or long travelling time. Clients appeared not to have anticipated these difficulties before taking the job, and it was not clear whether they had discussed them with Job Brokers. When people had attempted to negotiate a reduction or adjustment in hours with their employer, the employer was unwilling. A second way in which jobs could be unsuitable was in terms of the work involved. Examples here were where employers asked people to do jobs or tasks that they were not qualified or experienced enough to do (for example, certain types of care work), or tasks that they had not expected to be asked to do (for example, cleaning toilets). Often these difficulties were not apparent or did not occur until after the early weeks in work and, thus, it may have been difficult for a Job Broker or client to predict them. The demands work placed on people was also relevant to job suitability. For example heavy physical work could take its toll on people and lead to them leaving a job. Conversely, where job tasks were within what people felt they were able to cope with, they were more likely to stay in work.

As described in Chapter 3, Job Broker organisations provided job matching and vocational guidance to varying degrees as part of their service. Helping manage clients' expectations and guide them toward what were considered realistic employment goals were felt by Job Brokers to be important in ensuring clients found a suitable job that they could sustain. Job Brokers saw a suitable job as one that clients would enjoy and be able to cope with. Some Job Broker staff expressed concerns about clients having unrealistic expectations of the kind of work they were able to do and recognised that not being able to sustain a job would have a negative impact on their confidence. Although they said they responded to this by trying to help the client to see the ways in which a vacancy might not be optimal for a client, they recognised that, ultimately, clients made their own choices. If clients found vacancies themselves, the Job Broker might not be aware of them until after the client had decided to or had actually applied. Discussing possible vocational directions with clients and carrying out job matching were seen as time consuming although Job Brokers said that investing time and effort at this stage reduced the need for further support at a later stage. Work placements and job 'tasters' were also seen as helpful for clients to develop an understanding of the realities of a particular type of work.

Some Job Broker organisations also provided job coaching which supported clients' induction and learning and helped to identify, as early as possible, any training needs or any aspects of the job that may be unsuitable. Such services required significant input from the Job Broker and were only provided where in-work support was considered a key aspect of the Job Broker service. However, visits to the workplace and other contact with clients was also felt to be helpful here.

5.5.2 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction was also a reason for staying in work and developing positive relations with colleagues and working in a friendly environment were important aspects. People also valued doing '*something*' and being out of the house, even if they had not been able to stay in work. It was also important to some people that their work contributed something and had an intrinsic value, noted, for example, by people working in a residential care home, in a nursery or school, or assisting children to and from school.

Job satisfaction generally helped to increase confidence although it could take time for people's confidence to be built up. However, where people had been less satisfied with their job, for example, because it was unsuitable (as discussed already) or because of difficult workplace relationships, confidence had not generally increased and they could be disappointed with their apparent lack of progress.

5.5.3 Employment environment, working conditions and employer behaviour

The support and flexibility of employers was also important in job sustainability. This included employers gradually increasing the hours at the request of the client to enable them to adapt to the job; being flexible in the hours worked over a period of ill-health; and generally being understanding about the consequences or implications of a health condition. For example, one person who took up factory work after heart problems subsequently suffered a heart attack, but was able to stay in work because the employer changed his work to lighter duties.

By contrast, where employment had ended, or appeared to be at risk of ending, people reported specific difficulties with employers increasing the number of hours they were expected to work and increasing their workload without apparent consideration of the impact it may have on the employee. Few people said they had raised these issues with their employer and, as discussed in Section 5.6, even fewer said they had asked a Job Broker to help.

However, Job Brokers said that clients did sometimes contact them when they found that their job or work environment had become unsuitable. In some cases, employers appeared to have changed the terms or conditions of the job and while clients could do the original job, they found the new role too much. Where clients wanted it, Job Brokers offered to act as an advocate and negotiate with the employer, or advised clients on how they might respond. However, among the clients interviewed, there were only a few instances where the Job Broker had been in touch with the employers.

5.5.4 Health

As might be expected, health frequently emerged as a contributory factor affecting the likelihood of people staying in work. People had left jobs when they had become too physically demanding for them or where they became '*stressed*' by work.

Difficulties in travelling to work could also exacerbate health problems. For example, one person had reluctantly left a job because she could not manage the combination of high volumes of work and a long walk and bus journey to and from work. She had not been informed of the availability of any assistance with transport prior to starting work. Another had also struggled with the length and cost of his journey to work until he had moved closer to his workplace.

Some clients whose contract had not been renewed or who had been laid off felt that this may have been linked to their health. For example, one client's contract was terminated on the grounds of his sickness record and failure to reach targets, both of which he disputed. Another was concerned that her contract had not been extended because of the limitations her health placed on the hours she could work. Again, people did not generally report seeking advice or support from their Job Brokers in these instances (see Section 5.6).

Job Broker staff reported that some clients' health conditions deteriorated after entering work or that secondary health problems had arisen. Some advisers had clients who had left their jobs as a result of these health problems. Some Job Broker staff said that if they were aware of the problems they would offer to approach the employer on the client's behalf to negotiate some time off or renegotiate the conditions of the job. They also described helping some clients to obtain special equipment through Access to Work. However, providing this support was difficult or impossible where employers were unaware of the person's involvement with NDDP, and if the client did not wish them to be made aware.

5.5.5 Financial issues

Financial issues did not generally emerge as a very strong factor affecting job retention although the increase in income from working was certainly valued. However, this could lead to people feeling under pressure to stay in work, and to work full-time hours, because of financial commitments, and some felt quite concerned about this. This was typically the case where the client was the main earner in their household and less so where there were other earners in the home or where they lived at home with parents. Similarly, a decline in income once someone was in work could lead to doubt about staying, for example in the case of one client when they lost the employment credit paid under New Deal for 50 Plus.

There was also concern about the financial impact of the Permitted Work period ending. For example, one client had returned to professional work using Permitted Work but was concerned that, once the period ended, she would be unable to find other work that paid enough for her to come off benefits, and was worried she would end up in a worse position than while she was doing Permitted Work.

Financial advice from Job Brokers and the in-work tax credits they received were both important. Receiving grants or other financial assistance in the early days of work (see Section 5.3) also helped during the transitional period in work. As the findings from the first wave of this research highlighted, pre-employment concerns

about being better or worse off once in work were common among clients. The fact that financial issues did not generally emerge as an influence on leaving jobs suggests that financial support needs were largely addressed by tax credits and other in-work financial support, and by the help of Job Brokers in setting them up and resolving any issues, although as Chapter 4 noted, there were sometimes some difficulties.

People also occasionally received a payment (or vouchers) from the Job Broker when they had stayed in work for 13 weeks (or six months), which they found helpful. These payments were mentioned more often by people interviewed for the first time at the Wave Two stage of the research than those followed up from Wave One. Although this corresponds with Job Broker outcome funding payment timescales, clients seldom mentioned being asked by Job Brokers for evidence of employment, and the payments did not seem to be associated with anything other than a 'bonus' for clients. On the other hand, some Job Brokers said they offered this payment to encourage clients to provide them with the evidence Job Brokers needed to claim their sustained outcome payment.

According to the Job Brokers, moving into work raised a number of financial issues for clients. Job Broker staff reported that clients were concerned about whether they would be better or worse off financially in employment. As described in Chapter 2, some Job Brokers carried out better-off calculations, while others referred clients to other services where this could be done. Some also helped clients apply for tax credits, and they saw these as important in making work pay for people. As noted earlier, they also provided clients with financial support to bridge the gap between moving off benefits and receiving their first pay cheque as well as using their own and Jobcentre Plus resources to pay for equipment, clothes and training.

5.6 Clients' views and experiences of post-employment contact with Job Brokers

5.6.1 Reasons for in-work support and contact being limited

Overall, among both the Wave One and Wave Two clients who got jobs, there were few examples of people receiving in-work support or contact from Job Brokers, and those who did, had not generally received intensive support. Of course, not all clients would have encountered problems for which the Job Broker might have been a useful source of support. However, there were clients who encountered the type of problems which Job Brokers say they can help clients with, but who did not make contact with their Job Broker and who were sometimes unable to resolve the problem themselves. There were also people who felt, on reflection in the Wave Two research interview, that contact with the Job Broker might have been helpful. In some cases clients had said, at the Wave One interview, that they *might* go back to the service should their job end, but by the Wave Two interview had not actually done so despite the fact that the job had indeed ended. For example, one client's

temporary job was not extended, and she said that she would have welcomed the intervention of the Job Broker to explore the reasons why and to try to negotiate a contract extension but did not make contact herself. Another said she found it difficult to deal with people in work and was concerned about losing control in the work place, but again did not contact the Job Broker. There were also examples of clients who had had several periods of short-term unsatisfactory employment and might thus have benefited from more ongoing or intensive Job Broker support. Similarly, where clients were coming to the end of their Permitted Work period, they rarely spoke of contacting the Job Broker service about what to do next despite the concerns about this noted in the previous section.

There are a number of reasons why clients did not access support from Job Brokers:

Firstly, for some, by the time problems arose it was some time since they had been in touch with the Job Broker, particularly if they were no longer in contact at the time they actually found the job. Some had had relatively little contact with their Job Broker, and this was particularly the case where they had approached the Job Broker only for an extension of Permitted Work. By contrast, where people did look for or receive more extensive in-work support, they had generally had relatively high levels of contact and support before starting work.

More generally, the notion of receiving in-work support services from a Job Broker organisation was often not particularly salient to clients. Where clients talked in the research interview about issues that may have affected the stability of their employment, they did not readily consider returning to the Job Broker for support. When this was explored during the research interviews, clients often did not have particular reasons for not making contact: it simply did not appear to have occurred to them. This may have been because clients associated Job Brokers with pre-work support rather than support that extended into employment. When they were asked in the research interview whether their Job Broker had said anything about in-work support, clients did sometimes recall their adviser telling them that they were *'there'* to help with difficulties in work or that they would be in touch to see how the client was getting on, but not all recalled being told this and even those who did had still, generally, not made contact when they encountered difficulties.

Generally, people welcomed the offers of follow-up contact at the time they were made, if they recalled them, particularly where they were from advisers with whom they had worked with individually and built up a relationship. They appreciated the fact that the Job Broker *'took an interest'* in them, and were encouraged, and occasionally pleasantly surprised, by the Job Broker's contact. Some recalled receiving occasional telephone calls or letters or a Christmas card from the Job Broker to check how everything was progressing, and a reminder that the Job Broker was there if they were needed. Nevertheless, the onus was very much on clients themselves to seek help if they needed it. If the problem was not current at that time they did not always think to go back to the Job Broker when it later arose. However, not all clients said they actually were contacted by a Job Broker once they were in

work. Some people doing Permitted Work had expected contact from the Job Broker during the Permitted Work period and were surprised and disappointed not to have received any. However, others doing Permitted Work did not say that they had expected the Job Broker to help them find further work.

There were also more specific reasons for not accepting offers of help or contacting Job Brokers. Some people were concerned that it would draw attention to their disability if they asked a Job Broker to intervene directly with the employer, or that it would stigmatise them, particularly if the employer or colleagues were not aware of their health condition. One person, who subsequently left work because of poor working conditions and an unhappy atmosphere, felt it would have exacerbated the situation to have involved the Job Broker. Other people said they would not have contacted a Job Broker because they felt able to resolve the situation themselves, or they wanted to be able to stand on their own two feet and thought it was important to be able to be independent in work. Some people felt there would be little that the Job Broker could do, said they did not have the self-confidence to ask for help, or were reluctant to return because they had had unsatisfactory experiences of the Job Broker service.

Finally, other people did not get in touch with the Job Broker because they chose to access support from elsewhere, generally returning to a service that they felt had been more instrumental in them getting the job. For example, one man had received very little help from the Job Broker and subsequently been moved on to Jobseeker's Allowance. He had found his job through the Jobcentre Plus office and said he would have returned there if he needed further help rather than to the Job Broker. Other people were getting help from family members, from social services, through regular counselling sessions or from local voluntary resource or information centres. Such support was typically in place for some time prior to NDDP registration, and was, on occasion, part of a general 'care plan'.

5.6.2 Experiences of receiving in-work support

Clients who did report receiving post-employment support from their Job Broker adviser were those who had had higher levels of contact and support from the Job Broker prior to the job entry, and people who needed more intensive support in work were also those who had had higher levels of support before starting work.

They included clients with learning difficulties and enduring mental health conditions as well as younger people who had little (if any) previous work experience. The most intensive support reported by people was work shadowing or job coaching, where the Job Broker accompanied the client in work for the first few days or weeks of working, to help them learn the job and to ensure that the environment was suitable. This sometimes followed intensive contact between the employer and Job Broker immediately before the job started to provide the most suitable work environment for the client. This type of support was particularly important during the initial transition to work and clients who received this type of support found it very helpful.

Other people had received regular phone calls and visits to the workplace. Generally, people welcomed this contact, although there was one exception where the client found regular visits from the Job Broker to the workplace intrusive and an unwanted reminder to them of their health condition.

Sometimes people were aware that the Job Broker had been in touch with, or visited, their employer to try to mediate if a problem arose or to explain the person's health condition. In one case, the employer had made changes to working practices, which affected the client's ability to do the job. The client asked the Job Broker to intervene, and the Job Broker discussed the issue with the employer who subsequently revised the changes. There was a similar case involving a proposed increase in hours which the client felt they would not be able to manage. There were also a few examples of Job Brokers being in touch with other employees to raise awareness of disability issues (especially where clients had more severe impairments). In one case, for example, co-workers had been resentful about workplace adaptations made for a client and the Job Broker visited the workplace to explain the issues directly.

In other cases, the Job Broker had had contact only with the client and had given them advice about how to handle a workplace issue that was causing them concern, or had provided more general reassurance and encouragement. Examples included seeking advice from a Job Broker when an employer was refusing to give holiday pay, or about how to discuss a proposed change in hours or in work tasks with the employer. People had also sought advice from the Job Broker about the financial implications (presumably for tax credits) of an increase in wages, or about a possible change to self-employment, and found this type of advice very valuable.

Overall, where people did have contact with Job Brokers and received help of different levels of intensity, they valued what the Job Broker had done. In some cases, people had still left jobs, but there were a number of instances where clients felt that the help of the Job Broker had been critical in enabling them to stay in work. As noted above, some people were disappointed not to have been contacted when they were in work. However, where people did receive help, they were rarely critical of it, although this may reflect their low expectations of in-work support as well as the impact of the help they received.

5.7 Job Broker provision of in-work support

From the Job Broker data, it was evident that there was much diversity in the priority given to in-work support within their service provision profile, in whether they were proactive or reactive in making contact with clients who were in work and whether they had a standardised approach to this, and in what help they provided.

Where Job Brokers gave in-work support, the highest priority their services involved job coaching and intensive in-work contact with both employers and clients, and it was expected that all or most clients would receive this help. For example, in one Job Broker organisation working within a supported employment model, clients were

provided with intensive support for their first six weeks in employment and for longer if necessary, the Job Broker working closely with both the client and employer to ensure that all their needs were addressed.

Other Job Brokers had a proactive approach although the intensity of support given to most clients fell short of the supported employment model. Designated staff (either generic or specialist advisers) contacted clients on a regular basis to help identify any needs that may arise and provide the relevant support. In some organisations there were standardised procedures for keeping in touch. Some agreed with clients before they entered work the form (telephone, letter, email or face-to-face) and frequency of contact the client wanted, others had expectations of the frequency of contact, and some monitored in-work contacts very carefully to ensure that contact was always being made as required. Having specialist staff take responsibility for in-work contact was seen as helpful, both because those staff could give it a high priority and because it freed other staff to focus on pre-work support. In other cases making contact was left to the judgement of individual advisers, but in-work support was seen as a priority by advisers. The types of support provided included job coaching, providing access to an occupational psychologist, visits to the client and more general telephone contact. Some were willing to visit employers, but others but did not directly intervene between employer and employee, seeing this as the responsibility of the client themselves, although they did provide clients with support and advice about how to handle discussions with the employer. One service provided access to an external 24-hour telephone counselling service for issues that either their adviser could not address or which clients felt uncomfortable discussing with them. In-work contact was seen as important not only to address issues that arose in the workplace but also to help with the collection of evidence of sustained work. Despite this some staff said they did not always manage to collect the required evidence.

Job Brokers who provided in-work support also said they sometimes signposted clients on to other relevant services if they could not meet their needs themselves or if the client needed more in-work support than had been expected. This included referrals to WORKSTEP, health care specialists or other relevant services such as counselling.

There was also, however, a group of Job Brokers who appeared to provide very little in the way of in-work support or contact. Some reported that they were unable to provide more support because of finite resources (both financial and personnel) and the need to concentrate resources on achieving the 25 per cent conversion target; others said it was not necessary since the clients they worked with generally had little need for support once in work. Here, advisers assumed clients would get in touch if they needed to or had contacted clients themselves '*on rare occasions*' to see if their help was required. But generally, such contact as took place was primarily to secure evidence of sustained work, which they were not always successful in doing. There were also concerns that it would be '*intrusive*' to contact clients once they were in work, at least beyond an early courtesy call or letter.

Job Brokers noted some particular constraints on contacting employers of clients. Again, approaches to this varied, and where contact was made it was always with the knowledge of the client. Some Job Brokers had made contact with employers in few if any cases, often because of clients' decision not to disclose their involvement with NDDP as they did not want their employer to know about their health condition or disability. Job Brokers felt that this was particularly an issue for clients with mental health conditions, who were concerned about the stigma associated with mental illness and assumptions about its impact on their ability to do the job. Job Brokers who worked within the supported employment model said that employers would always know of the client's condition and of the Job Broker's involvement and saw this as critical to the way they worked. In these cases, the Job Brokers' involvement in providing in-work support *in collaboration* with the client and employer was seen as key. Others actively encouraged clients to be open about their involvement with NDDP to their employer. They felt it would be beneficial that the employer should know about the help Job Brokers could provide and that it was impossible for them to intervene or to act as an advocate for the client if the employer did not know of their role. However, Job Broker staff also recognised clients' concerns about being open about the fact that they had used NDDP, one saying that it can unnecessarily '*sow the seeds of doubt*' in the minds of employers, supervisors and colleagues about the person's ability to do their job.

5.8 Conclusion

Clients' experiences in work were very varied, but some did experience problems which led to them leaving jobs and sometimes leaving work altogether, or left them uncertain as to whether they would be able to stay in work. These problems were sometimes associated with the transition to work and the early days of work. Here, financial advice and direct financial support could be important, as well as more general advice, support and encouragement. In the longer-term, the range of issues that could affect job retention included the suitability of working hours and work tasks; job satisfaction; the working environment and workplace relationships with managers and colleagues; and changes to working conditions. Deteriorating health and the ending of short-term contracts or periods of Permitted Work could also lead to people giving up work.

Job Brokers describe providing varying degrees and types of in-work support. At one end of the spectrum, were those working in the supported employment model; at the other end, were those who had little or no contact with clients once they were in work, some not seeing in-work support as a high priority to their client group. Some clients received help and welcomed it, and of course not all clients encountered problems they could not resolve themselves. However, there were many instances where clients encountered more intractable problems but did not contact a Job Broker for help, and sometimes they later reflected that it might have been useful to do so. The reasons were varied, but, overall, in-work support seemed not to be seen as a particularly salient part of the Job Broker service by these clients. Some people

had had limited contact with a Job Broker, at least by the time they started work or encountered problems. Some recalled being told in-work support was available, but from their accounts it appeared to be given little emphasis by Job Brokers. Some clients did receive some in-work contact but not at a time when they were having difficulties, and not with sufficient emphasis to encourage them to seek help later. There were also concerns about the stigma of getting outside help, especially where it came with a disability 'label', and some people chose to look elsewhere for help.

People who received more help were those who had had more contact with their Job Broker, including people with higher support needs before they started work. Some people described receiving more intensive support including job coaching; in other cases Job Brokers had contacted employers, or provided advice and reassurance to clients. Where they received it, it was warmly welcomed and could be seen as very influential on people's ability to continue to work.

The findings highlight the importance of the quality of *'fit'* between job and client for work to be sustainable. They also highlight the value of continued contact between clients and Job Brokers, since in-work support seems less likely to be accessed if there is little or no contact in the period around job entry. Overall, it appears that the available in-work support is under-used, and that it needs to be given more emphasis by Job Brokers in their contact with clients both before and after they start work if it is to be a more salient aspect of the service to clients. It is also striking that, as with other aspects of support discussed in Chapter 3, there is a lot of diversity in how, and how much, in-work support is provided by Job Brokers. This again highlights the importance of the identification of clients' needs, match with an appropriate Job Broker, provision of the required support, and the quality of the relationship between the adviser and the client for helping people to stay in work.

6 Relationships between Job Brokers and staff in Jobcentre Plus offices

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 explained how NDDP fitted into the programmes and services available through Jobcentre Plus, and the new approach to customers claiming incapacity benefits, with a focus on rehabilitation and returning to work. It explained how the reorganisation of Jobcentre Plus offices continued to be rolled out during the research, with the introduction of mandatory work-focused interviews for people making new claims for incapacity benefits. It also briefly described the Incapacity Benefit Reform pilot, which began in three areas in autumn 2003.

The second wave of qualitative evaluation of the Job Broker services was, thus, conducted during a period of major structural change within Jobcentre Plus offices, when staff were adapting to new roles and responsibilities. The NDDP Job Brokers were part of the changing service environment, and were themselves undergoing change. How relationships between Jobcentre Plus staff and Job Brokers were developing and being maintained was, therefore, of key importance. This chapter shows what Jobcentre Plus staff and Job Brokers understood about each other's aims and ways of working, and how that understanding had been gained (Section 6.2) and presents findings about the role of Jobcentre Plus staff in enabling access to Job Brokers (Section 6.3). It then reflects on what facilitated and hindered working relationships (Sections 6.4 and 6.5) and how Job Broker and Jobcentre Plus provision fit together (Section 6.6).

The chapter draws on interviews with 23 DEAs and on 14 group discussions with Jobcentre Plus advisers conducting work-focused interviews with incapacity benefits customers, all of whom worked in offices in the Wave Two in-depth study areas. Selection details are in Chapter 1. The offices represented were at different stages in

the roll out of the Jobcentre Plus model. As a result, work-focused interview advisers who took part in Wave Two had a wide range of experience and brought perspectives from different roles. Comparisons of their experiences with those of non-DEA staff who took part in Wave One has often not been possible, as selection criteria were different.

The chapter also draws on interviews and groups discussions with Job Broker managers and staff, and where relevant, from client interviews.

6.2 Awareness and understanding of aims and ways of working

6.2.1 Jobcentre Plus staff understanding of the aims of the Job Broker services

Most Jobcentre Plus staff taking part in Wave Two spoke of the general aim of Job Broker services as supporting people claiming incapacity benefits into work. Some staff saw helping people keep jobs as one of the aims but this element was not prominent in their understanding. Reducing numbers claiming incapacity benefits also was suggested as an aim. Work-focused interview advisers least certain about the aims of the service were those who spent only a small proportion of their time working with incapacity benefits customers. Most work-focused interview advisers understood that Job Brokers helped people less job-ready to move towards work, for example by helping them gain confidence and reducing anxiety. While some DEAs emphasised movement towards work, the prevailing view among DEAs was that Job Broker services were aimed at people who were *'work-ready'*.

6.2.2 Awareness of local Job Broker services among Jobcentre Plus staff

In all discussions, work-focused interview advisers were able to list names of Job Brokers serving their area. As group participants pooled their knowledge, some were surprised to hear about local Job Brokers they had not known about. In some discussions, work-focused interview advisers knew how many Job Brokers served their area, although they could not name them all, especially where there were more than four local services. Some of their suggestions were not entirely accurate, for example, names of Job Brokers were sometimes remembered wrongly, or less well-known Job Brokers were sometimes identified as being part of the larger organisations. They did not always mention telephone services serving the area, although they sometimes recognised the name when prompted.

In comparison, DEAs had a greater awareness of which Job Brokers served their area, although where there were large numbers, they sometimes struggled to remember names of all Job Brokers and had to refer to printed lists. Some DEAs mentioned telephone services as an afterthought and some said they knew there were other, unnamed, Job Brokers they had never *'used'*. Occasionally a DEA had

not heard of a Job Broker known to the researchers to cover the area. Overall, DEAs had a better overview than work-focused interview advisers of chronological changes in the pattern of local provision.

6.2.3 Jobcentre Plus staff understanding of Job Broker practice

Work-focused interview advisers generally understood that Job Brokers assessed individual needs and then offered service components accordingly, working with the person towards getting and keeping a job. Core elements of the services were reported as including help to increase confidence, advice with CVs, help with job search and developing interview techniques. Beyond this, knowledge of individual Job Brokers varied considerably.

There were some views among work-focused interview advisers that there was a lack of formal guidance for Jobcentre Plus staff about what their local Job Brokers were contracted to do and limited initial training about how to find and use Job Brokers.

DEAs had more detailed information about what Job Brokers did. While some felt there was little to distinguish one Job Broker from another, most could point to specialisms such as working with people with certain impairments or a focus on job search and interview preparation for more '*job-ready*' people. Other differences cited were: providing a telephone-only service, willingness to see clients in their own homes or other local venues, group techniques for confidence building, a focus on work-placements or IT training, intensive in-work support for people with learning difficulties, and availability of back-to-work grants or payments to bridge the gap until the first month's salary was paid. In-work support was seldom mentioned. Some DEAs distinguished Job Brokers by the manner in which they were perceived to work with clients, for example describing them as '*gentle*' or '*pushy*'.

6.2.4 How awareness and understanding was achieved

There was much variation among Job Broker services in their 'marketing' contacts with Jobcentre Plus offices. Some described more intensive contact and said it was made a priority in Job Broker staff roles, others described bursts of activity, and some described having had very little contact. Jobcentre Plus staff described fluctuations in their contacts with Job Broker staff and in their own initiatives to reach out to them. For both Job Broker and Jobcentre Plus staff, demands on their time and changes in staffing levels influenced levels of activity.

Ways of promoting understanding generally mirrored those found at Wave One: Job Brokers' written promotional material; visits and presentations by Job Broker staff to Jobcentre Plus staff; visits by Jobcentre Plus staff to Job Brokers' premises; and Job Brokers using Jobcentre Plus premises to see clients. In Wave Two, there were new mentions of Job Brokers' own websites as useful sources of information for some work-focused interview advisers. Experience gained through working together to support people who had registered with a Job Broker, also served to increase understanding, and this is considered further in Section 6.4.

Written information

In some Jobcentre Plus offices, the staff maintained an up-to-date list of Job Brokers that summarised the services each offered. Work-focused interview advisers often relied heavily on Job Brokers' promotional material for their own knowledge, as well as for passing to prospective clients. Some said they had initially tried hard to get basic information from all Job Brokers serving their area but there had been a mixed response. Job Brokers who took the initiative in maintaining good supplies of promotional material in Jobcentre Plus, made an impact on work-focused interview advisers and were compared favourably with others who ignored requests for material. However, in terms of content, advisers often thought Job Brokers' leaflets were designed mainly for potential clients. As a result, work-focused interview advisers said they often needed more detailed information, although leaflets produced by some Job Brokers provided basic useful information, for example, specialisms in serving clients with mental health conditions or learning disabilities. It was sometimes hard to '*pin Job Brokers down*' to what they could do, especially on a range of training options. Overall, DEAs were less dependent than work-focused interview advisers on promotional material to aid their understanding. Leaflets were thought useful by DEAs who did not have personal contacts with all Job Brokers, but there were also some reported problems in getting details of what local Job Brokers did. One DEA who had many Job Brokers to keep track of found the NDDP '*Intranet*' helpful.

Building on previous knowledge and experience

As found in Wave One, in some local areas, Job Brokers' parent organisations were already well known to Jobcentre Plus staff, as providers of other services and programmes. Where the organisations were small, and where their staff worked across programmes used by DEAs, it was easier for established DEAs to understand what they did as Job Brokers. If DEAs were not impressed by the organisations' performance in mainstream programmes some were less open to learning about their Job Broker services.

Job Brokers' websites

Some work-focused interview advisers were finding that websites created by Job Brokers provided quick and easy access to the more detailed information they needed. For example, staff in one group discussion who relied on this source of information found it easy to make distinctions between local services in terms of which Job Brokers only wanted job-ready clients, which provided training and which provided services specifically for people with mental health conditions. They also distinguished between Job Brokers in terms of the kinds of training and work placements offered, and had some views as to which of these was more appropriate to the aims of NDDP.

Job Broker visits and presentations to Jobcentre Plus staff

Job Broker managers and staff as well as Jobcentre Plus staff described Job Broker visits and formal presentations to Jobcentre Plus, for example, in Jobcentre Plus communications meetings, DEA meetings and Jobcentre Plus staff meetings. The presentations had been helpful for several work-focused interview advisers, providing opportunities for meeting Job Broker personnel and asking questions about how they worked and what they were offering. The advisers said Job Brokers who visited Jobcentre Plus offices became better known to individual Jobcentre Plus staff who then felt more confident in talking to customers about that Job Broker, and felt that the visits helped to educate Job Brokers about the roles and responsibilities of Jobcentre Plus staff. Some DEAs spoke of efforts by managers, or themselves, to engage Job Brokers in such meetings.

Strong impressions could build from the Job Broker presentations. Examples given by DEAs included being influenced by a very positive impression of one Job Broker to 'use' that service for the first time, and discovering that Job Brokers based outside the area could travel to meet clients and were not less accessible to customers as previously perceived. DEAs also emphasised the importance of what Job Broker staff themselves learned through visits to Jobcentre Plus. One said she made a point of making Job Broker staff understand the DEA role when they came to give a presentation.

There were some negative experiences of Job Broker presentations. Several Jobcentre Plus offices had experience of making appointments for Job Broker visits that were broken, causing inconvenience and disruption of work diaries. There were also some views amongst work-focused interview advisers that such visits and presentations were now becoming less useful. Where several Job Brokers were competing for clients, they felt that presentations had turned into occasions when Job Brokers were just 'selling their wares' and trying to get referrals. Some offices had started to refuse further presentations. There could be a fine balance between keeping up-to-date and well informed and spending too much time enabling Job Brokers' access to staff. There was some cynicism about current activity among local competing Job Brokers looking for referrals from Jobcentre Plus staff, for example, recent presenters had given out chocolates to staff in some offices. Most DEAs, on the other hand, welcomed any effort by Job Broker staff to engage with them.

Visits to Job Brokers by Jobcentre Plus staff

Job Brokers described inviting Jobcentre Plus staff to visit their premises to see them 'at work', or in the case of one Job Broker to attend partnership meetings. Work-focused interview advisers valued such invitations. Those who had been on visits said they gained useful information; for example, seeing for themselves the nature and location of premises, when access could be a key issue for some customers, and seeing what Job Brokers actually did, such as how a personalised service could be offered to clients in groups. DEAs also described visits to Job Broker premises. In some areas, they said Job Brokers had been very proactive in issuing invitations. One

example was a Job Broker arranging breakfast meetings, and get-togethers involving clients so that DEAs could learn at first hand how people experienced the Job Broker services.

Not all Job Brokers were so proactive. Jobcentre Plus staff who had not received invitations from Job Brokers had sometimes taken initiatives themselves and asked for visits to be arranged, and some DEAs referred to their managers having a rolling programme. It was not always easy to get invitations from some Job Brokers, and this was frustrating when the Job Brokers concerned were among those least well known to work-focused interview advisers. On their part, some Job Broker services had found it hard to encourage Jobcentre Plus staff to accept their invitations to visit and had found it more effective for Job Broker staff to go to them. This ties in with reports from some work-focused interview advisers that they had insufficient time to make visits to Job Brokers, although many DEAs in the study put time aside to learn more about how Job Brokers worked and promote client-centred joint working.

Job Brokers using Jobcentre Plus premises

The extent to which Job Brokers used Jobcentre Plus premises to meet clients varied. Among Job Brokers who worked in this way, using Jobcentre Plus offices was seen as helpful in maintaining the organisation's profile and building personal relationships, and an opportunity to talk to existing Jobcentre Plus staff members and make early contact with new staff. One group of work-focused interview advisers said that when contacts of this kind within the Jobcentre had become regular and easy, and the Job Brokers concerned were perceived as providing an adequate service with feedback, they no longer felt a need to know much about any other Job Brokers serving their area. Work-focused interview advisers reported some disadvantages. If several Job Brokers used the same Jobcentre Plus office, systematic overall booking systems became necessary, requiring Jobcentre Plus resources. There were also resource issues for Jobcentre Plus offices that were heavily used by Job Brokers. In one metropolitan office, one Job Broker came in every day, and used the premises to see clients from other Jobcentre Plus offices and clients who had learned about them from direct marketing. Equity issues also arose, for example, Jobcentre Plus feeling a responsibility to invite other local Job Brokers to use their premises, once one had made arrangements to do this.

As in Wave One, some Job Broker staff talked of '*floor walking*' in Jobcentre Plus offices to make informal contact with staff. Work-focused interview advisers who had experience of such contacts saw benefits both in building their confidence in the Job Brokers as they got to know them, and in increasing Job Brokers' understanding of how Jobcentre Plus worked with customers. However, some Jobcentre Plus staff said they disliked unannounced visits from Job Broker staff when they disrupted working routines.

6.2.5 Views on how well Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff understood one another

In Wave One some non-DEA Jobcentre Plus staff said they had little understanding of ways in which Job Brokers worked and Job Brokers emphasised the need to establish better mutual understanding of roles. The Wave Two discussions explored whether this kind of understanding of each other's roles had been developing.

Jobcentre Plus staff believed that staff belonging to Jobcentre Plus broker organisations (often termed *'in-house'*), and Job Broker staff who were previously Employment Service (ES) employees, had a good working knowledge about the range of services available to incapacity benefits recipients at Jobcentre Plus and about the way Jobcentre Plus staff were currently working. One perceived advantage of such working knowledge was the readiness of some in-house brokers and ex-ES staff to provide information about clients for insertion on the Jobcentre Plus computer system, to help staff achieve formal 'outcomes'. There was some frustration that other Job Brokers did not understand how they could work with Jobcentre Plus staff in this way so that both could achieve outcomes, although some DEAs reported excellent co-operation in this respect. The importance of feedback on outcomes as an aspect of good relationships is discussed in Section 6.5.1.

Work-focused interview advisers were unsure how far Job Brokers who were not *'in-house'*, understood what they did, although there was a feeling that Job Brokers who visited Jobcentre Plus were better equipped in this respect. There was concern that customers could miss out if Job Brokers did not understand the range of services Jobcentre Plus offered and failed to refer people back when appropriate, for example, to use the Adviser Discretionary Fund. Experience among some work-focused interview advisers of Job Brokers who expected instant response to requests for information, suggested to them that those Job Brokers did not understand how work was managed in Jobcentre Plus. However, particular Job Brokers who appeared to have a good overall picture of Jobcentre Plus and the services offered had impressed some work-focused interview advisers.

Some DEAs believed that Job Brokers who provided Work Preparation or WORKSTEP programmes had a better understanding of how DEAs worked than Job Brokers who had historically provided only mainstream programmes. There were some doubts that Job Brokers, with whom the DEA did not work regularly, knew about the Job Introduction Scheme, Access to Work or the role of occupational psychologists. The appropriateness of referrals from Job Brokers for Jobcentre Plus services was seen as an indicator of their understanding.

Among the Job Brokers, there was a recurrent view that the understanding that Jobcentre Plus staff had of Job Broker organisations and the services they provide had improved since Wave One. Job Broker managers and staff generally felt this was the result of more communication between the two services, and particularly the result of their own organisation's efforts to engage with Jobcentre Plus staff. Other contacts described by Job Brokers as helpful in increasing mutual understanding, as

well as in building relationships, included joint training days, such as one focusing on recent changes in benefit regulations. However, it was felt that there remained some confusion about the role of NDDP and of Job Broker services. One Jobcentre Plus Job Broker service felt that Jobcentre Plus staff were sometimes particularly unclear about where the 'in-house' Job Broker service sat. Job Broker staff also felt that Jobcentre Plus staff often did not know, in detail, what the Job Broker services provided. Some Job Broker staff felt that understanding was generally weaker among non-specialist frontline staff than among DEAs and other specialist staff. In the group discussions with work-focused interview advisers however, specialist Incapacity Benefits Personal Advisers were not always more knowledgeable than other staff about local Job Brokers.

The overall picture in Wave Two discussions with work-focused interview advisers was of broader awareness and deeper understanding about Job Brokers and their roles than were found in Wave One. In Wave Two, work-focused interview advisers were generally more confident about naming local Job Brokers, more knowledgeable about some of the differences between Job Brokers, and had more understanding about the ways in which some of them worked. On the whole, they were more likely than staff in the first wave to say they based some of their knowledge and understanding on first-hand experience of meeting Job Brokers. Care is needed when considering this finding, however: the roles of staff recruited to the Wave One and Wave Two discussion groups were different; and staff conducting work-focused interviews with incapacity benefits recipients at Wave Two are likely to have been more knowledgeable about Job Brokers than some of the Wave One participants who had been engaged on general reception duties or working mainly on non-NDDP New Deals.

Gaps in knowledge about Job Brokers identified by work-focused interview advisers in Wave Two, often came from Jobcentre Plus offices where it had proved harder to arrange meetings with Job Brokers. In addition, some work-focused interview advisers working in areas where there were larger numbers of Job Brokers (eight or nine) were no longer trying to retain knowledge about all. It had proved time consuming and hard work for Jobcentre Plus staff to try to maintain up-to-date information about so many Job Brokers, especially when some were not responsive to requests and when they were not located in the area. These staff chose instead to deal mainly with a small number of Job Brokers from their list, usually including those who made regular visits to the Jobcentre Plus office.

DEAs interviewed at Wave Two generally had more Job Brokers operating in their area than those interviewed at Wave One. The Wave Two DEAs' understanding of what Job Broker services were meant to provide was, generally, better than that of Wave One participants but familiarity with the full range of local Job Brokers was sometimes patchy, especially among less well-established DEAs. Like some work-focused interview advisers, DEAs had found it hard to keep up with Job Brokers that had not taken the initiative to inform DEAs of their practices.

6.3 Jobcentre Plus staff role in enabling access to Job Brokers

6.3.1 The approach taken in work-focused interviews

Chapter 1 explained that the Jobcentre Plus offices represented were at different stages in Jobcentre Plus roll out and incapacity benefit reform. There were, thus, procedural differences in relation to conducting work-focused interviews, for example, in arrangements for follow-up interviews and case loading customers who were interested in taking part. There were also differences in approach related to preferences in ways of working of individual staff. Within this diversity, the following general points are made. Staff working in offices which were part of the Incapacity Benefit Reform pilot described an approach which was clearly strongly work-focused, guiding all customers towards thinking about a job goal at an early stage in discussion. Staff working in non-pilot offices, however, generally expected to be less directive and they talked about their approach more in terms of trying to raise interest among customers than in trying to encourage strong commitment. Some non-specialist advisers, especially those who saw relatively few incapacity benefits customers, felt less confident in dealing with this customer group.

The pace and focus in work-focused interviews differed, depending on structural aspects in Jobcentre Plus and according to customers' circumstances and levels of interest. How far work-focused interview advisers went in describing any services depended on customers' response. Some advisers in non-Incapacity Benefit Reform pilot offices, said that some people were agitated and got upset; some appeared too ill to take part in much discussion; and some were still thinking mainly about securing their benefit income. Some interviews were waived, or the adviser decided to wait until a follow-up discussion or second interview with people who returned before giving much further detailed information.

6.3.2 Which people Jobcentre Plus staff told about Job Broker services

Work-focused interview advisers' approaches

Personal Advisers in Incapacity Benefit Reform pilot offices felt they were expected to mention Job Brokers to everyone in the first interview, as part of the emphasis on information giving and encouragement to consider options in moving towards a job goal. However, there was a general feeling that there was too much information for people to take in at this stage, and advisers chose to be more selective. One adviser explained that she would mention Job Brokers if it appeared that a person could return to work with a bit of help, but if somebody was depressed or ill there would be no point and it was more appropriate to mention the health condition management programme. In another pilot office, an adviser said he would only introduce Job Brokers into discussion in later work-focused interviews and, again, only if they were relevant. One personal adviser's approach was to mention Job Brokers only if it seemed that there would be something extra for the person that the

Jobcentre Plus adviser could not offer. A colleague in a linked Jobcentre Plus office felt differently, as it seemed to her that Job Brokers had more time to spend with customers even if they offered similar services.

There were also differing approaches among work-focused interview advisers in non-pilot offices. Some felt that it was often better to keep discussion at a more general level, to gain rapport and reduce anxieties, and encourage people to think towards the future, leaving discussion about specific services until a second interview or follow-up. However, some advisers in non-pilot offices said they tried to tell all eligible customers about a full range of services and options in the initial interview, including Permitted Work rules, better-off calculations, benefit run-ons and linking rules, financial support such as tax credits and back to work grants, training opportunities, the possibility of help with CVs and interview techniques, as well as Job Broker services. They felt that they should not assume that people were not interested, or that particular information was not relevant, as people's circumstances could change. They were reluctant to withhold any information that might be useful in the future.

Where work-focused interview advisers said there were some groups of people to whom they might not mention Job Brokers, these were people with short-term illness, those still employed, people with severe mental health conditions, people who were 'teary' in the interview, some people with learning difficulties, some people whose first language was not English and those who said they were not interested in work. One adviser said that there were specific local services for customers with drugs or alcohol-related problems and such people would probably be told about these rather than Job Brokers. Other staff who said they were selective, said they thought more in terms of types of customer they definitely would tell (rather than those they would not). Included here were people who seemed interested in the idea of working and those considered closer to work. It was even worth telling people who already had a job to go to, as they might want to register with a Job Broker to get in-work support or extra funding.

The first research wave showed that DEAs had an important role in telling some customers about Job Brokers, especially in non-Pathfinder offices where DEAs were NDDP gateway advisers. By the time of the Wave Two interviews there had been some changes in routes to DEAs. In some Jobcentre Plus offices, advisers referred some customers directly to DEAs from work-focused interviews. People who might be so referred were said to be '*severely disabled*' or those with particular medical conditions such as severe mental health conditions. One adviser said that they would refer someone who had suddenly become disabled to the DEA. Some advisers said they would refer people who might need some form of specialist help such as counselling or referring on to a voluntary organisation, or those who might need in-work support, Access to Work, WORKSTEP, Work Preparation or residential training, but it was not clear how often this happened.

Some customers who were referred to a DEA, had already been told about Job Brokers in a work-focused interview. Some were referred at a relatively early stage,

however, and advisers said that DEAs knew about Job Brokers, and would be able to tell people about them if this had not been covered in the work-focused interview. Some work-focused interview advisers talked about referrals to a DEA as an alternative to encouraging a customer to use a Job Broker. In one discussion group, advisers thought that Job Brokers would do more to help a person into work than their DEA, and one participant said that since they believed Access to Work was now available through the Job Broker, there was little need to refer anyone to the DEA from work-focused interviews. One adviser said that a customer might be referred to the DEA if they were clearly not *'job-ready'*, or would receive more help from the DEA than from a Job Broker. However, staff doing relatively little work with incapacity benefits customers said they were unsure of the role of the DEA. There was also a feeling that DEAs were very busy, and customers might get help more quickly from a Job Broker.

DEAs' approaches

DEAs in integrated Jobcentre Plus offices were seeing changes to the kinds of people they worked with, as work-focused interview advisers took on to their caseloads *'more work-ready'* customers. Generally, DEAs expected that the roll out of Jobcentre Plus was likely to lead to them concentrating on working with incapacity benefits recipients with more serious impairments and more distant from the labour market. Overall, DEAs spoke of increasing demands on them as Jobcentre Plus promoted services for incapacity benefits recipients, though one DEA had experienced a big drop in her caseload as work-focused interview advisers referred customers to Job Brokers.

All DEAs knew that Jobcentre Plus expected them to tell customers in receipt of incapacity benefits that Job Brokers existed, but there was considerable variation in practice. Some DEAs told all eligible customers about Job Brokers, one mentioned Job Broker services only to people who asked specifically about them, and some gave information selectively. How much emphasis DEAs gave to Job Broker services could depend on the fit between what they thought customers wanted or needed, what DEAs knew about Job Broker provision and what Jobcentre Plus could offer. It was common practice for DEAs to tell customers about what the DEA could do and what services Jobcentre Plus could offer. DEAs often said they spoke about their own services before mentioning Job Brokers, although in the reverse order if someone had come asking specifically about Job Brokers. It appears that less stress was placed on Job Broker services where it seemed obvious to the DEA that someone's needs were best met by Jobcentre Plus. It was sometimes said that a customer would be directed to a Job Broker only where its provision was different from that available through Jobcentre Plus. Some DEAs identified other local service providers as more appropriate than Job Brokers. Mentioned here were a college providing IT training equivalent to that offered by Job Brokers and specialist employment support for people with sensory impairments.

Some DEAs talked about taking people on to their caseloads before suggesting Job Broker services. People with learning difficulties were mentioned here; it was felt

they could need to be eased gently into the idea of transferring to an unknown organisation. One DEA involved a Job Broker only once a customer had developed to the stage of taking up work with the DEAs help, in order to take advantage of the financial support on entering work offered by a broker.

DEAs quite commonly said that they steered towards Job Brokers people who were more 'work-ready' or 'closer to work', judged by short periods out of work, already preparing CVs, or appearing 'motivated to work'. A subgroup identified as suitable for Job Brokers was those who were keen on obtaining one of the job entry payments promoted by some Job Brokers. There were strong, but not universally held, views that people interested in work but needing a longer time to prepare for a move into employment were better served by DEAs. One DEA promoted Job Broker services to people who needed extra support such as job coaching, influenced by the availability of a specialist Job Broker. Another type of influence on whether or not DEAs told people about Job Broker services was the opportunity for the DEA to place someone quickly into employment without Job Broker involvement and so gain job entry points to help towards targets. Where workloads were especially heavy, however, DEAs opted instead to encourage people who could find a job quickly to go to a Job Broker.

Job Brokers' experiences

These different approaches in deciding who to tell about Job Brokers, as described by Jobcentre Plus staff, are reflected in the considerable variation in Job Brokers' experience of Jobcentre Plus as a route through which clients came to their service. Some Job Broker staff said that almost all their clients came via Jobcentre Plus, others that none, or very few, did. For reasons the Job Broker staff could not explain, some local offices signposted a lot of potential clients and others none. There was also diversity in whether they described signposting as being by DEAs, other specialist staff, or non-specialist frontline staff. In some Job Broker teams it was understood that frontline staff could refer only to DEAs, and that any signposting was subsequently done by the DEA: the distinction was drawn here between integrated and non-integrated Jobcentre Plus offices.

There were also differences among Job Brokers in the types of people they described Jobcentre Plus staff signposting to the service. Some reported that staff tended to refer people who were relatively close to work. This was generally welcomed, and sometimes said to be the result of explicit discussion with Job Broker staff. Although, in general, Job Broker staff felt that Jobcentre Plus staff did refer appropriate people to them, there were also comments about people who were seen as unsuitable. Job Broker staff referred here to people who were very distant from work or for whom work was not clearly a goal, such as those who wanted training only. Job Brokers also here described people who were, in the client's own view as well as their own, too ill to work; people who had what were seen as severe impairments, particularly mental health conditions such as schizophrenia, or, in the case of one Job Broker working specifically with people with a particular impairment, people who had other conditions. Among the DEAs interviewed, there was some awareness of Job

Broker complaints but feelings that Job Brokers' were disinclined to see as suitable those whom DEAs felt were work-ready. Some Job Brokers suspected, in relation to some potential clients, that the DEA had '*run out of ideas*' or, as one member of staff said, referred '*the ones they don't want*'. While DEAs could be tempted to suggest Job Brokers where they could do nothing more themselves, they also said they hoped for '*a new angle*' and a result from the Job Broker. Some managers and staff felt that, on reflection, they should have been clearer that they wanted Jobcentre Plus to refer people who were closer to work. There was a view that Jobcentre Plus frontline staff were less adept at identifying appropriate people than DEAs. There were also comments about people coming forward who it was felt had been coerced or pressurised into doing so: one Job Broker described people who said they had been told by the DEA to contact the Job Broker. It was also suspected that there were many more people seen by Jobcentre Plus for whom the Job Broker service might be relevant but who were not coming forward.

6.3.3 How Jobcentre Plus staff explained Job Broker services

Deciding what to tell customers about Job Brokers was closely linked with decisions about who to tell, as explained in the previous section. It is useful to look further in some detail at the kind of information that was being offered within Jobcentre Plus.

A range of printed information was being given to customers at initial work-focused interviews. This included packs centrally provided by the Department and literature and locally produced information sheets. Work-focused interview advisers generally thought that some printed information about Job Brokers was included, and sometimes Job Brokers' promotional material. DEAs handed out Job Brokers' leaflets, sometimes alongside their own leaflets. One DEA had created a leaflet for customers covering all Job Broker services serving the area.

Most work-focused interview advisers said that, initially, they gave a fairly broad explanation, for example, saying that Job Brokers were available locally to help people into work and support them in jobs, or help people find a more suitable job. More detailed discussions would depend on levels of interest among individuals, how much staff knew about the services and their views on the quality of local services. Some generic advisers could not remember any incapacity benefits customers being interested or wanting to hear more. Some work-focused interview advisers said they initially emphasised the help available with confidence building, or training, but not job search or in-work support, choosing to go '*one step at a time*'. Another way of explaining services was as providing support for people uncertain about what they wanted to do. Other advisers said it was practical aspects of getting work that they emphasised, such as interview preparation, help with CVs and in-work support, especially for people with mental health conditions. Yet other ways of describing Job Brokers were as specialists in health-related problems who could offer support, or stressing to customers who might be considering using a job agency that Job Brokers might give similar help but with greater understanding and compassion. If local Job Brokers offered financial incentives, work-focused interview advisers were often likely to mention this. It could be important to emphasise that

using a Job Broker service was quite voluntary, and would have no effect on benefits. One specialist adviser said it would be usual to tell customers that they could go on using Jobcentre Plus services alongside the Job Broker.

A small number of generic work-focused interview advisers said they were not confident about explaining Job Broker services because they did not have full knowledge, and one said that if a customer were interested they would be referred to the DEA.

As reported in Section 6.3.3, DEAs wished to explain to customers what they themselves could offer and, unless people expressly asked, talking about Job Broker services was not a primary concern. Exceptionally, a DEA who *'shared'* clients with Job Brokers gave prospective Job Broker clients examples of *'success stories'*. There is little evidence that DEAs gave in-depth explanations. They tended either to give a general description or to emphasise elements they felt might suit their customers, such as back-to-work grants, IT training or confidence-building courses. One DEA explained only the financial incentives offered by Job Brokers and another said he gave minimal information about Job Brokers. DEAs who expected people to stay with them sometimes explained Job Brokers as *'an extra pair of hands'*. Where there were large numbers of Job Brokers, as elaborated in Section 6.3.4, DEAs found it impractical in the time available to detail what each did.

DEAs in Wave Two reported higher levels of interest in Job Brokers among customers than DEAs who took part in Wave One. Some DEAs spoke of a positive response among people keen to work, though it sometimes could be hard to tell how people reacted, especially when there was a lot of information to take in. The response from customers in work-focused interviews appeared to be muted. Some customers, work-focused interview advisers in non-pilot offices thought, took in little information at the first interview, being mainly concerned about their medical treatment. There could be more interest at review meetings. DEAs and work-focused interview advisers noted that some customers checked out that benefits would be secure if they contacted a Job Broker, that some were attracted by the financial incentives offered and that some people wanted to know about locality of services. Work-focused interview advisers in one office had noticed that several customers checked out whether support would be offered on a personal basis or in groups with other people, the latter approach not being acceptable to some people.

Job Broker staff generally appeared to have little detailed knowledge about what Jobcentre Plus staff said to customers about Job Broker services. There were concerns that Jobcentre Plus staff sometimes placed too much emphasis on financial incentives available from the Job Broker, for instance naming higher amounts than were actually available or indicating that payments were automatic when they were only made at the discretion of the Job Broker service. Other staff assumed that potential clients had been told very little about the Job Broker service by Jobcentre Plus staff, since they seemed no more knowledgeable than those who came via other routes.

Where clients first interviewed at Wave Two had received information from staff at their Jobcentre Plus office, this was generally in the form of leaflets from the Job Broker organisations. Sometimes this was along with a 'bundle' of other leaflets about various services and support for people who were thinking about getting back to work. Such information was generally from a DEA. Clients rarely recalled a specific focus on the part of the Jobcentre Plus staff regarding what NDDP was and how a Job Broker service could help the client. Some clients remembered the DEA telling them about certain services that the researchers identified as Job Broker services, for example, to access a certain type of training course or to provide assistance with paying for prospective interview costs, but the clients did not understand that Job Brokers provided the services described.

6.3.4 Managing choice and direction

Work-focused interview advisers' practices

There was a wide spectrum in how work-focused interview advisers advised customers about choosing a Job Broker, if they were interested in going ahead. Not everybody had heard about the changed guidance (see Chapter 2) that allowed staff to provide information to enable customers to make informed choices. Thus, some work-focused interview advisers thought they should just issue lists and contact details. Not everybody was certain whether they should contact Job Brokers on customers' behalf; some thought this was fine if the people had made the choice themselves.

Some work-focused interview advisers had gone much further down the line of helping customers choose and get in touch with a Job Broker. Information offered to guide people included: explaining disabled access; emphasising a specialism such as mental health expertise; pointing to particular training provision; explaining that Job Brokers would do home visits or would meet clients in Jobcentre Plus; or explaining that a service was telephone based. In providing information to help people choose, Job Brokers' presumed knowledge of local services, personal contacts, any views they had of the quality of service, and the convenience of easy access all played a part. It was explained in Section 6.2.4 that some work-focused interview advisers had greater knowledge and better contacts with a small subset of their local Job Brokers, usually those with a presence in Jobcentre Plus, who had proved reliable and were thought to deliver good services. It was these Job Brokers that they generally told people about and to whom they pointed clients, often making personal introductions within Jobcentre Plus or managing Job Broker diaries. This kind of working arrangement meant that referrals could also be managed to fit Job Broker capacity – referrals were reduced for a time if one Job Broker appeared to have full caseloads. If customers chose Job Brokers who were not accessible on Jobcentre Plus premises, some work-focused interview advisers readily phoned for an appointment, but some were not sure if this was allowed and others felt that it was better for the customers if they were left to make contacts themselves.

DEAs' practices

Some DEAs said they were scrupulous in talking about all Job Brokers covering the area. Others avoided mentioning certain Job Brokers if they were dissatisfied with the quality of their service, if a Job Broker was based outside the locality and was assumed to be less accessible to potential clients, or if they had little or no information about them.

Some DEAs thought that they should limit their explanations strictly to factual information on the services offered by all Job Brokers. It was easier for DEAs to offer impartial information and present a full picture of every Job Broker where only a small number served the area, although it could be hard if there was an imbalance in available information about what they did. As at Wave One, it could be very frustrating for those DEAs wanting to remain impartial when they believed someone was best suited to a particular Job Broker, if they had a poor opinion of a Job Broker, or if the customer preferred the most accessible Job Broker regardless of whether it suited their needs. Where a small number of Job Brokers covered the area, some DEAs advised people to telephone them all but there were some concerns that it was impossible for people to contact a lot of Job Brokers to judge for themselves and that the DEA had an obligation to guide their selection. Some DEAs who believed they were not allowed to point out differences among Job Brokers, offered subtle pointers to influence customer choice such as identifying Job Brokers who came into the office where they had confidence in such brokers, talking about '*only a small organisation*' where they had negative views of it, and pointing out Job Brokers who were less keen on serving people with mental health conditions.

Other DEAs believed the guidance allowed them to '*give a bit more of a recommendation*' of available Job Brokers and to point out those that gave a good service. Where DEAs had good relations with all Job Brokers known to them it was felt sometimes that relationships might be jeopardised by recommending one over another. But some DEAs pointed out to customers what they saw as negative features, such as Job Brokers that were poor at keeping in touch with clients or at offering one-to-one support, or those that offered only telephone contact. Yet others believed they were allowed to steer people to the Job Broker most suited to their requirements, for example, to a Job Broker judged likely to best help people with specific impairments or to Job Brokers accessible by public transport.

It was clear that in some circumstances, DEAs were more directive and pointed customers to specific Job Brokers. Examples here were referring people to the next available Job Broker in the Jobcentre so that customers close to taking up a job could take swift advantage of financial incentives on offer, and directing people who wanted immediate help with job search to an on-site Job Broker. As did some work-focused interview advisers, some DEAs spoke of referring only to small subset of Job Brokers in whom they had confidence.

One strong influence on which Job Brokers DEAs emphasised or suggested to people was whether the Job Broker fed back to the DEA on what was happening

with clients, as it could be hard to enthuse about a Job Broker if there was no feedback. DEAs sometimes favoured Job Brokers that told them about job entries so that they could claim 'points' towards their targets. This is discussed in detail in Section 6.5.1.

Where DEAs commented on how people responded to the idea of choice of Job Broker, they variously said that people questioned why they had to choose, asked for the DEA's opinion or simply took away leaflets without further questions. There were accounts of people keen for more information about financial incentives offered by some Job Brokers – where back-to-work grants were widely advertised and people had come in specifically to ask about them – and of people asking if Job Brokers were easy to reach.

Clients' experiences

Where Job Broker clients recalled being given information at the Jobcentre about local Job Brokers, they said that Jobcentre Plus staff had informed them they could not provide advice about which Job Broker to contact, although there were examples of them telephoning the client's chosen Job Broker on their behalf. The clients who had received information at a Jobcentre Plus office tended to contact the organisation that appeared to be the nearest or most accessible to them, or one that they had – or knew others had – positive dealings with previously, and where they did exercise choice, this tended to be based on impressions from initial telephone contacts.

Job Brokers' views

In the interviews and focus groups with Job Broker managers and staff, no direct references were made to the change in guidance about how Jobcentre Plus staff should manage choice. The issue was generally discussed in similar terms in the second wave of research as in the first: Job Broker staff understood that Jobcentre Plus staff had to maintain impartiality and not supplement the information given in Job Broker leaflets or discuss their own views or perceptions of individual Job Broker services, and there were references to staff just giving people a list of local Job Brokers. Some individual Job Brokers noted a change towards more direct signposting of their service, but did not link this with any change in guidance.

In general, as at Wave One, Job Broker staff thought the emphasis on impartiality was unhelpful if it meant that Jobcentre Plus staff could give only very limited information. They thought being presented with an undifferentiated list of Job Broker organisations would be confusing for people, and that the Jobcentre Plus approach did not help customers to make informed choices. Some described having tried to address this by providing more information to DEAs and frontline staff about their services or inviting them to visit the Job Broker so that the Jobcentre Plus staff member could pass on information to customers. As already noted, there was a perception among some Job Broker staff that Jobcentre Plus staff had recently begun to signpost that Job Broker service in particular. They thought this was

because they had proved, through their performance, that they were the best local Job Broker, or that it was a reflection of their proactive work in informing Jobcentre Plus staff of the services they provide.

There was also concern among Job Broker managers and staff about whether the Jobcentre Plus Job Broker services were advantaged unfairly by Jobcentre Plus staff. There was sometimes an assumption that relationships were closer between Jobcentre Plus staff and these Job Brokers, and a view that these Job Brokers had a stronger presence in Jobcentre Plus offices. The Jobcentre Plus Job Brokers included in the in-depth study were aware of this criticism but did not feel it was justified. Their perception was either that Jobcentre Plus staff referred impartially or that Jobcentre Plus staff leaned in favour of non-Jobcentre Plus Job Brokers to avoid accusations of unfairness. DEAs in the study were keen to avoid being seen by other Job Brokers as biased by recommending an in-house Job Broker, and indeed some DEAs preferred non-Jobcentre Plus brokers, but there were tendencies amongst work-focused interview advisers, and occasionally among DEAs, to direct people to Job Brokers that had a presence in their offices, foremost among which were Jobcentre Plus Job Brokers.

6.4 Client-centred working

The research explored with Job Broker and Jobcentre Plus staff how they worked together to support people once they had registered with a Job Broker. Both Jobcentre Plus and Job Broker staff often reported this in terms of seeking access for clients to each other's programmes and services. Less commonly they talked about pooling expertise.

6.4.1 Accessing services

Job Brokers' use of Jobcentre Plus programmes varied considerably, in both range of provision and number of clients. Jobcentre Plus staff described Job Brokers accessing Work Preparation for Disabled People, Work Based Learning for Adults, WORKSTEP, the Job Introduction Scheme, the Adviser Discretionary Fund, Job Grants, the Return to Work Credit, better-off calculations and advice on tax credits, as well as job search support – particularly the use of the Jobcentre Plus website, the computer terminals in Jobcentres and Programme Centres. Some Job Brokers said they were using more frequently, or accessing a wider range, than previously and there were considerably more reports of this from Jobcentre Plus than at Wave One of the research, notably of use of the Adviser Discretionary Fund.

Job Broker staff said access was generally smooth. Occasional mentions of difficulties included forms mislaid in Jobcentre Plus offices, slow response on financial issues and finding it hard to get details of jobs identified on the website. Problems reported by Jobcentre Plus staff related mainly to the time involved in dealing with requests, particularly the time needed to help with on-line tax credit applications and some better-off calculations. It was particularly unhelpful when Job Brokers provided insufficient or wrong information, which made the process even lengthier. Some

Job Brokers expected immediate help, particularly if a client was about to attend an interview or start work, and did not seem to understand the pressures under which Jobcentre Plus staff worked.

Jobcentre Plus staff generally welcomed being able to help people make progress and get the financial support available to them. They spoke positively of the benefits to their customers if gaps in Job Broker provision could be filled by Jobcentre Plus programmes, and conversely, if Job Brokers could provide a service not available through Jobcentre Plus. There was seemingly more willingness to facilitate access at Wave Two than in the first wave. When Job Brokers sought access to services for clients, this raised confidence among work-focused interview advisers that Job Brokers were working on behalf of clients and using Jobcentre Plus to clients' advantage. This effect was increased when the individual clients involved were people known to Jobcentre Plus staff. It was helpful to Jobcentre Plus staff when responding to Job Broker requests to access services meant contributing to achieving formal outcomes and targets (for example, office targets for the Adviser Discretionary Fund). One DEA said that most of their 'points' had resulted from people being referred back to the DEA for services. There was, however, some resentment when Job Brokers were perceived to be maximising their '*profits*' rather than spending their NDDP funding on providing their own services; a feeling among DEAs that Jobcentre Plus was meeting deficiencies in Job Broker services; and some irritation that DEAs' workload was being increased, rather than lessened, as a result of referring customers to Job Brokers if Job Brokers expected them to arrange access to programmes. It may be for these reasons that Job Broker staff sometimes said they had found individual Jobcentre Plus staff members resistant and uncooperative.

Requests for access to programmes and services were not all one-way. Some Jobcentre Plus staff described getting in touch with Job Brokers on behalf of people with whom they were working themselves, in particular for funding not available through the Adviser Discretionary Fund or Work-based Learning for Adults, and also for help in contacting particular employers and for help for someone wanting to make use of the Permitted Work rules.

6.4.2 Pooling expertise

DEAs welcomed Job Broker staff keeping in touch to update them on clients' progress, though this did not necessarily involve joint working on a person's behalf. There were, however, some instances of DEAs speaking positively about how they and Job Broker staff pooled their expertise to benefit clients. DEAs described some relationships where they and Job Broker staff came together regularly to discuss how each could help a client and identify any gaps in support, and some instances of Job Broker staff consulting DEAs for ideas or advice where they were unsure how to proceed. These clients were typically people they had seen before the individuals became involved with Job Brokers. Occasionally, DEAs spoke of Job Brokers who consulted them about how to work with clients not known to DEAs, though such approaches were viewed less positively where DEAs felt Job Brokers were taking advantage of their greater experience.

DEAs also sometimes spoke of a Job Broker staff member and the DEA both actively supporting the client. The closeness of co-working varied here: some DEAs met with the client independently; some carried out job searches or contacted potential employers and fed back to the Job Broker staff member; and occasionally DEAs reported accompanying people on visits to the Job Broker, looking at job vacancies alongside the client and Job Broker, and going with the client and Job Broker to job interviews. In the interviews with Job Brokers there were few descriptions of extensive co-working with Jobcentre Plus staff. However, some Job Brokers described going with clients when they saw the DEA at least for the first time, and there were descriptions of DEAs notifying a Job Broker of a vacancy appropriate for a client whom the DEA regarded as a customer. DEAs said that certain Job Brokers encouraged clients to also register with a DEA, reported also by some Job Brokers, and one DEA estimated that more than half her customers were already registered with a Job Broker. Unusually, co-working was reported from both sides as a planned strategy with shared responsibility for job search and client support.

DEAs who described working in liaison with Job Brokers saw considerable advantages to Job Broker clients whom they saw as their customers too. They stressed the benefits of two people working on the case, combining two sets of expertise, so that people got extra help. There were also advantages to DEAs themselves. Helping their customers to progress and not *'fall into a black hole'*, contributed to job satisfaction. Moreover, a strong theme in interviews with DEAs was the spin off from keeping in touch with the progress of customers registered with Job Brokers, and helping them into work, in terms of *'points'* towards their targets (discussed further in Section 6.5.1).

Some work-focused interview advisers also spoke positively of *'working alongside'* or *'working in liaison with'* particular Job Brokers. This could mean introducing individuals personally to a particular Job Broker and then, in face-to-face or telephone discussions, talking about their needs and progress, with reporting back on both sides. When work-focused interview advisers reported this model of working, it was always from Jobcentre Plus offices in which the Job Broker concerned had a regular and formalised presence.

For clients, much of the liaison described above was behind the scenes and they were not necessarily aware of it. Where clients had contact with a DEA or other Jobcentre Plus staff member this was generally seen as a separate source of support rather than joint working on their behalf. This could be continued contact from before taking part in a Job Broker service or contact made during Job Broker engagement. That said, there were examples from clients of the Job Broker and the Jobcentre arranging workplace adaptations, a Jobcentre Plus staff member passing on relevant jobs to the Job Broker, and a Job Broker adviser discussing a particular job with a DEA.

6.5 What motivates and discourages effective working relationships

Job Broker managers and staff and Jobcentre Plus staff discussed what supported and hindered effective working relationships between them, and some commented on how relationships had improved. Positive influences and constraining factors are discussed in turn.

6.5.1 Positive influences

Section 6.2.5 commented on the importance attached by Job Broker and Jobcentre Plus staff to direct personal contact for increasing awareness and understanding of what the respective services did. Personal contact also influenced opportunities for incapacity benefits recipients to access Job Broker services and to take advantage of Jobcentre Plus as well as Job Broker services. Job Brokers felt that the time and effort they had put into meeting with Jobcentre Plus staff or spending time in Jobcentre Plus offices, explaining the Job Broker service and building personal relationships with individual staff had been influential in establishing the credibility of the Job Broker organisation. This was strongly endorsed by Jobcentre Plus staff. Meeting Job Brokers was said to improve communication, trust and confidence. Jobcentre Plus staff could judge for themselves whether Job Brokers were competent people to whom they could refer sensitive customers. In this respect, there was generally strong support among work-focused interview advisers, and some DEAs, for having a Job Broker presence in their office. Work-focused interview advisers saw benefits to customers in receiving a whole package of support under one roof: there was no need to make additional appointments and new contacts; they might be saved time and expense of travelling; and, some thought, there was more chance of customers following up NDDP when Job Brokers were on the premises.

Compared with Wave One, there appeared to be more personal contact and an increasing presence of Job Brokers in Jobcentre Plus offices. Sometimes relationships, and some friendships, were already established where DEAs had worked with the same Job Broker staff on other programmes or where Job Broker staff were ex-colleagues. Personalities were a factor in building good relationships, DEAs felt, and some work-focused interview advisers said it was helpful if Job Broker staff were friendly people.

Demonstration of quality of the Job Broker services was identified as of key importance in building and maintaining working relationships. Job Brokers felt that relationships had improved because they had been able to demonstrate quality. They noted here the importance of gaining the trust of Jobcentre Plus staff if they were to refer their customers to Job Broker services and said it was important to prove that a high quality service was given, to respond quickly to contact by Jobcentre Plus staff, and to demonstrate that, if they referred a client back to a DEA for a specific service, they would continue to work with the client and were not *'fobbing them off on the DEA'*. Jobcentre Plus staff also stressed the importance of

knowing that they were referring people to good quality services. Accessibility, speed of response and reliability were high priorities here. It was good to work with Job Brokers who demonstrated competence and were seen to be proactive on behalf of clients, and who tried to fit in with the general Jobcentre Plus approach.

Among Job Brokers interviewed, structural changes associated with the role of Jobcentre Plus roll-out offices and, in some areas, of the Incapacity Benefit Reform Pilots were felt to have improved working relationships. Job Broker staff saw staff in these Jobcentre Plus offices as being better informed about Job Broker services and more open to working with them. However, in one area both Job Broker and Jobcentre Plus staff referred to concerns about the introduction of a specialist team that had led to fewer customers being signposted to Job Broker services, although this was being addressed.

For Jobcentre Plus staff, getting reliable feedback about customers from Job Brokers was often identified as key to effective working relationships. In a working environment with an increasing focus on achieving personal and office 'targets', staff needed to know what happened to customers. It was very helpful when Job Brokers provided timely and reliable information about client progress and job entry, and relationships could be further strengthened when Job Brokers understood the Jobcentre Plus 'marker' system. Easy access to this kind of information removed uncertainties and frustrations, and saved time for Jobcentre Plus staff. Discussions about targets revealed that not all Incapacity Benefit Personal Advisers and DEAs were certain about the rules for claiming job entry outcomes for those customers involved with both Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff. As described in the previous section, the prospect of gaining 'points' when customers entered employment, as well as increased job satisfaction, was a significant incentive for DEAs to work together with effective Job Brokers to support individuals. Targets for the Adviser Discretionary Fund also encouraged staff to be open to requests from Job Brokers to access Jobcentre Plus services.

Among Job Brokers interviewed, there was somewhat varied understanding of the importance of feedback in relation to Jobcentre Plus targets. They were aware that changes within Jobcentre Plus included increased priority given to incapacity benefits customers and emphasis on achieving outcome targets. Levels of understanding of the points system varied, however, although it was felt to be influential on attitudes and practices of Jobcentre Plus staff, more noticeably DEAs. In some cases, managers or staff spoke about needing to give feedback *after* the client had started work. Some described being contacted by Jobcentre Plus staff for feedback but seemed less clear about why this should be important. These different levels of understanding were reflected in varied approaches to notifying Jobcentre Plus staff about job entries. Some Job Broker staff had systematic arrangements for regular feedback, either at the District level or to individual members of Jobcentre Plus staff. Others had more *ad hoc* or informal arrangements but said they tried to make a point of regularly giving feedback. Some Job Broker staff appeared not to initiate feedback themselves, and only described giving details of clients' progress

when they had been specifically asked by DEAs. There were sometimes differences between individual members of Job Broker teams within the focus groups, with one member of staff describing being in touch with Jobcentre Plus staff regularly to give feedback and others not doing so.

More generally, both Job Brokers and DEAs said that there had been a growing mutual understanding of how Jobcentre Plus and Job Broker staff could help each other to achieve job entries, encouraged by Jobcentre Plus targets. Certainly the salience of targets, and their effects on working relationships, was more pronounced in Wave Two than in Wave One, 18 months previously.

6.5.2 Constraining factors

To some extent factors thought to constrain effective working relationships represented the opposite side to the coin for the positive factors described in Section 6.5.1. For example, relations were strained, and the image of both NDDP and Jobcentre Plus damaged, when clients who felt neglected by Job Brokers complained to the DEA who had promoted the Job Broker service to them. The lack of feedback about what happened to individual clients seemed a major constraint on working well with Job Brokers for some Jobcentre Plus staff, both because of professional concern for customers and missed opportunities to help towards targets.

A key issue highlighted by Job Brokers was their perception that DEAs (rather more than non-specialist frontline staff) continued to see them as competitors. Among DEAs the fear that Job Brokers would take over their role and hostile attitudes were much less pronounced at Wave Two than at Wave One, as DEAs increasingly saw how the two services could help each other to achieve outcomes, though some negative feelings persisted where DEAs were unhappy with the quality of Job Broker services. Some Job Brokers felt that a competitive attitude among DEAs was exacerbated because the DEA post was generally under-resourced and under threat, and saw moves to encourage more engagement with customers on incapacity benefits by frontline staff as part of this. There were certainly new anxieties among DEAs that a combination of Job Broker services and the new Incapacity Benefits Personal Advisers would erode the DEA role. However, DEAs in the Wave Two research were apparently more reconciled to the existence of Job Brokers than those in the first wave. This was, in part, because of increased workloads among DEAs; some felt it would have been impossible to help every incapacity benefit recipient coming to them if Job Brokers had not existed.

There was some evidence of negative attitudes among Jobcentre Plus staff, for example, suspicions of profit-making organisations, beliefs that Job Brokers were less skilled but better rewarded for the same work as that done by Incapacity Benefit Personal Advisers or DEAs, and a criticism of Job Broker staff perceived to be trying to *'bribe'* the DEA to make referrals in return for information on which Job Broker clients had entered work. There was some evidence of initiatives taken by managerial staff to reduce attitudinal barriers, such as calling a meeting between Job Brokers and staff to encourage both sides to be *'less territorial'*.

In Section 6.2.2 it was observed that Jobcentre Plus staff were not all familiar with the full range of Job Brokers serving their area and that they could become discouraged from trying to obtain information about services if Job Brokers did not respond to requests for promotional material. Job Brokers who were unreliable in maintaining up-to-date supplies of information put themselves at a disadvantage in terms of Jobcentre Plus staff assessment of their reliability and standards of service. Other problems expressed by Jobcentre Plus staff included difficulties in getting in touch with some Job Brokers, especially those who worked across different sites. This was frustrating for Jobcentre Plus staff themselves, and introduced delays. It also reduced general confidence in the service offered by the Job Broker to the clients. Staff turnover on both sides meant that relationships had to be continually rebuilt.

Among Job Brokers, and some DEAs, over-rigid interpretation of impartiality was felt to constrain effective signposting of Job Broker services, and there was also a report from a Job Broker of Jobcentre Plus staff being initially reluctant to allow a Job Broker staff member to access Jobcentre Plus services because other Job Brokers were not making similar requests. It has already been shown that some Jobcentre Plus staff were concerned about equity issues in relation to Job Brokers' use of Jobcentre Plus premises.

6.6 How Job Broker and Jobcentre Plus provision fit together

This section considers how Job Broker and Jobcentre Plus provisions differ and whether they complement or duplicate each other. It should be noted that there were limited experiences among clients of both Job Broker and Jobcentre Plus services, and that Jobcentre Plus staff and Job Broker views were not always based on first hand knowledge of how each worked.

6.6.1 Differences in services

Job Broker managers and staff generally saw their service as qualitatively different from that of Jobcentre Plus in a number of ways. The differences they identified are compared with Jobcentre Plus staff and client views.

Job Brokers felt that they were able to spend more time with clients than either DEAs or frontline Jobcentre Plus staff, and that they could provide more intensive and in-depth help with more frequent contact so that they built up a fuller understanding of the client and their needs and aspirations. There was some agreement with this among work-focused interview advisers, who saw the extra time and more intensive help as beneficial to some people. Time was by far the most pronounced difference identified by DEAs, though it was thought that some Job Brokers, keen to maximise numbers of registrations, neglected some of their clients and that some Job Brokers were limited in the time they could give by high caseloads. DEAs felt, it was specifically in the areas of CV preparation, job search, job matching, and 'marketing'

people to employers that Job Brokers had the time advantage. There were some, less pronounced, views among DEAs that Job Brokers gave more time to getting to know a person.

There was a view among clients with experiences of both Job Broker and Jobcentre Plus that Job Brokers had more time to invest in individuals on a one-to-one basis, to work with them over time to understand their circumstances, or to work with them to develop their job search strategies. It was thought by clients that staff at Jobcentre Plus did not always have the time to listen to them, although this appeared to relate more to general Jobcentre Plus staff than to the specialist DEAs. There were some approving comments by DEAs on the time some Job Brokers were able to devote to helping people with other problems in their lives, such as accompanying clients to benefit tribunals or GP appointments.

Being able to respond more quickly was a further advantage over Jobcentre Plus in Job Brokers' eyes. DEAs with heavy caseloads acknowledged that this could be so but there were some strong criticisms of the time people had to wait for appointments with some Job Brokers and some accounts of '*angry*' people complaining to DEAs about Job Brokers that had not contacted them. Some Job Broker staff felt more able to work at the pace of the client without the client feeling pressurised or rushed. DEAs, on the other hand, saw this as a feature of their own service, often saying that they worked with people for as long as it took to help them prepare for taking up employment, though it was acknowledged that people might feel pressurised in the Jobcentre Plus environment. DEAs welcomed Job Brokers that did not '*push*' people, and they criticised Job Brokers whose pace with clients seemed to the DEA to be driven by the prospect of job entry payments.

In addition, Job Broker staff saw their service as being more flexible and less curtailed by '*red tape*'. Jobcentre Plus staff also saw advantages of greater flexibility in some cases, mentioning, in particular, the attraction to clients of home visits or meeting Job Brokers in community locations, and services offered to clients in group settings. DEAs commented, in particular, on how some Job Brokers accompanied people to job interviews, which most DEAs were not able to do. Clients said that there were fewer forms to fill out with a Job Broker than at the Jobcentre Plus, form filling clearly being an issue that could cause some concern.

A further advantage in the eyes of Job Broker staff was being free from association with government and the benefits system. It was said that this brought in a different part of the potential client group and meant that Job Broker services had more credibility among clients and were more trusted. The view that the Job Broker service was more informal and approachable was also expressed. Clients in the study could be reluctant to visit a local Jobcentre Plus office, and were much more comfortable visiting an alternative venue for support. Reluctance to visit Jobcentre Plus could be because they found it too formal or impersonal and did not seem '*friendly*', or a perception that it was '*institutionalised*' because it was a government body. DEAs who did not work in integrated Jobcentre Plus offices, or not in offices where Job Brokers had a presence, felt that people might talk more readily to a Job Broker

outside the Jobcentre Plus office environment and where discussion was not perceived as being associated with their benefit receipt. However, other DEAs felt that where people had already had an association with a Jobcentre Plus staff member they would be more comfortable continuing in the Jobcentre Plus environment. Some work-focused interview advisers saw advantages in a more relaxed environment offered by Job Brokers but for some staff a more important issue than independence and informality in a Job Broker service was whether such a service was effective and good quality, and not all were convinced.

Other qualitative differences between their and Job Broker services were mentioned by work-focused interview advisers and DEAs. Work-focused interview advisers, in particular those in generic posts, felt that some Job Brokers would be able to give more specialist advice than themselves to people with particular health conditions. This advantage was recognised by some Job Broker organisation representatives who said that they had more in-depth knowledge of disability and health issues than frontline staff and, it was sometimes said, than DEAs. It was unusual for a DEA to acknowledge greater disability expertise among Job Broker staff, however, though Job Broker staff with a track record of working with disabled people were often praised. Where clients mentioned DEAs, they were generally discussed favourably, particularly in terms of their understanding of disability as well as knowledge of the benefit system. This was particularly the case where clients had been in touch with a DEA over a long period of time and prior to getting in contact with a Job Broker.

Finally here, it should be noted that some DEAs saw no differences in the styles of their own and Job Broker ways of working with customers and clients.

Turning to service components, Job Broker staff said they had a wider range of interventions to draw on. They believed they could provide more in-work support than Jobcentre Plus staff. There was some agreement among work-focused interview advisers, who saw advantages in more in-work support being available, but DEAs rarely raised in-work support as a feature of Job Broker services. Where Job Brokers appeared to have strong links with employers this was cited as a difference by some Jobcentre Plus staff. Some Job Broker staff felt that Jobcentre Plus provided access to better-off calculations and faster tax credit information than they could offer.

6.6.2 Complementarity or duplication?

There was a recurrent view among Job Broker managers and staff that the work of Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff was complementary. They stressed that they worked toward the same goal, for what can be the same client group. Jobcentre Plus staff, for their part, identified some gaps that they thought Job Brokers filled.

However, some Job Broker managers and staff expressed the view that the services were very similar or were growing more so. Some work-focused interview advisers agreed with this, although they qualified their views by pointing to lack of knowledge about some Job Brokers and lack of feedback. They saw not much

difference between what they and the DEA were doing and what the Job Brokers apparently did. Among DEAs, and some work-focused interview advisers, there were some strong views that, if they had more resources and time, they had the skills to offer the same service as Job Brokers and that there was little advantage in the duplication they perceived.

Job Broker staff saw advantages to clients in their being able to draw on both sources of support: two systems and sometimes *'two minds'* in the form of the DEA and the Job Broker team member. DEAs agreed with this thinking where they saw themselves as working jointly with Job Brokers to support individuals or where, less precisely, they appreciated having *'someone else there to support your customer'*. They spoke of the benefits of wider packages of support services through pooling resources. On their part, Job Brokers saw benefits in sharing the work and saving them time. In the main, DEAs accepted the existence of Job Broker services because they felt that they otherwise could not cope with the increasing volume of incapacity benefit customers and, where systems were in place to capture job entries, because Job Brokers helped them to achieve their target outcomes. In these last respects Job Brokers also saw benefits to DEAs. Some work-focused interview advisers felt that the Job Brokers provided a second level of support for customers, who could always come back to Jobcentre Plus, and did relieve their own burden of work. However, there was some feeling of losing control in their work, when they signposted people to services which they did not fully understand and when they had no feedback about outcomes.

Both Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff saw advantages in complementary sources of funding for clients. For Job Brokers, Jobcentre Plus was seen to bring access to additional funding in the form of the Adviser Discretionary Fund. Being able to draw on both sources of help was thought to benefit clients by providing more financial resources. Jobcentre Plus staff, for their part, saw advantages to clients in the additional funding sources available to Job Broker organisations. The Adviser Discretionary Fund was useful, but could not be used for some items that clients needed. DEAs spoke of the value to their customers of accessing money for training not available through Work-based Learning for Adults and of the back-to-work grants some Job Broker organisations offered, but some DEAs questioned the efficiency of having pots of money in different hands. Some DEAs said that the only feature distinguishing Jobcentre Plus and Job Broker services was the differing availability of funding.

Whether Job Broker services can be seen as extending the range of provision available to the client group or duplicating what Jobcentre Plus provides hinges on how the respective target groups are demarcated. Among DEAs, there were clear assumptions that Job Broker services were aimed at people who were *'work-ready'* and beliefs that DEAs were better placed to work with people who needed long-term pre-employment support. Exceptionally, DEAs thought Job Broker services were aimed at the latter group of clients but only where Job Brokers specialised in serving this group. As explained in Section 6.2.1, some work-focused interview

advisers also thought that Job Broker services were aimed at people who needed more intensive, or specialist, help. Others felt that it was more work-ready people that Job Broker services worked best for.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at relationships between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus, drawing on information from Job Broker managers and staff; DEAs and work-focused interview advisers working in Jobcentre Plus offices in areas covered by Job Broker services studied in-depth in Wave Two, and some clients of Job Broker services.

There was a recurrent view among Job Broker managers and staff that levels of understanding about their services among Jobcentre Plus staff had increased. In Jobcentre Plus offices which took part, levels of understanding about local Job Brokers varied considerably among work-focused interview advisers, in relation to their components of service and ways of working with clients; DEAs generally had more detailed knowledge. Job Brokers' websites were emerging as helpful sources of information, and when Job Brokers worked within Jobcentre Plus premises, this generally increased understanding on both sides.

Job Broker staff often did not know which people were told about their services within Jobcentre Plus, or what kind of information was offered. Discussions with work-focused interview advisers and DEAs showed considerable diversity in approach here. Some of the differences were related to different roles and responsibilities, for example, different stages in roll out of the integrated office model. Selectivity in information provision was also related to the fit perceived between customers' perceived needs, what Jobcentre Plus staff knew about Job Brokers and, especially for DEAs, what Jobcentre Plus could offer. There was a wide spectrum in terms of how Jobcentre Plus staff helped customers choose a Job Broker.

It appeared that some Jobcentre Plus staff were working with only a subset of their local Job Brokers. Working relationships were often reported in terms of Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff seeking access to each other's services for individual clients, and there was an apparent increase in use by Job Brokers of Jobcentre Plus programmes and services linked in part to a larger presence of Job Brokers in Jobcentre Plus offices. DEAs, more than Job Broker staff, spoke of pooling expertise to actively support a client.

For Jobcentre Plus staff, reliable feedback about progress and job entry among customers who had registered with Job Brokers was often key to effective working relationships, especially where Job Brokers understood the Jobcentre Plus working environment with its focus on achieving personal and office targets. Other positive influences on relationships included personal contacts which demonstrated Job Broker competence, and evidence of good quality services.

In comparing the manner in which Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus delivered services, there was some agreement that Job Brokers had more time to work intensively with people and that they were less hampered by bureaucracy and set ways of working – views generally shared by clients. Whether Job Brokers had greater expertise in disability was disputed. How the two sets of services complemented one another was emphasised mainly in terms of access to each other’s funding and support services. While DEAs generally saw the Job Broker client group to be those people who are closer to taking up work, there were indications of work-focused interview advisers seeing Job Broker services to be appropriate also for those further from work.

7 Features associated with Job Broker effectiveness

7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to draw out the features of Job Broker service organisation and practice which are associated with effective performance, looking particularly at the proportion of registrations which result in a job entry, and the proportion of job entries which result in a sustained job payment. The chapter begins by outlining the approach taken to defining 'effectiveness' in Job Broker performance, using both the evaluation database and the in-depth qualitative data (Section 7.2). Four groups based on performance levels are then described (Section 7.3). The analysis in Section 7.4 then looks at approaches to, and features of, their services which Job Broker managers or staff see as explanations of their performance, and what they identify as key learning points over the course of the operation of their service. It also draws on the views of clients and of Jobcentre Plus staff about effective practices among Job Brokers. These views from Job Brokers, clients and Jobcentre Plus staff generate a range of hypotheses about the features of Job Broker practice which are associated with effectiveness. The analysis then takes each hypothesis and looks for evidence of different approaches or practices between the four performance groups, highlighting the approaches which are located among the higher or lower performing Job Brokers.

7.2 Definitions of effectiveness

The assessment of effectiveness, for this analysis, involved first looking at key performance measures (rates of job entry and sustained jobs) and then adjusting these to take into account the different client profiles of the Job Brokers. Rates of job entry and sustained jobs were derived from the NDDP evaluation database. Differences in client profiles were assessed through a combination of the evaluation database and the qualitative research data on Job Broker selection practices.

7.2.1 Performance as measured by the evaluation database

The NDDP evaluation database provides systematic information about performance, based on Job Broker services' claiming of job entry and sustained work payments. It was therefore used as a starting point in identifying different levels of effectiveness among the Job Brokers in the in-depth study.

Local level performance data were derived from the evaluation database. This involved defining geographic areas, based on the recorded home addresses of registered clients, which matched, as closely as possible, the service delivery area described by Job Broker managers and staff and reflected in the selection of clients and Jobcentre Plus staff. This was relatively straightforward where there was just one Job Broker team in the organisation covering either a prescribed area or operating at the national level, and where the discussion in the staff focus group reflected this coverage. Where the Job Broker organisation had a number of teams of which the in-depth study focused on only one, or a single national team which was not fully reflected in the composition of the staff focus group, the research team proceeded by selecting the local authority areas or Jobcentre Plus districts which matched the area of operation of the staff involved in the in-depth study.

The evaluation database does not distinguish between individual organisations which form part of a consortium or partnership to deliver Job Broker services. Data are available only at the level of the partnership as a whole. As a result, where the in-depth study had involved one partner only, it was not possible to match the performance data with that specific job organisation.

Data from the commencement of the Job Broker services (at various points in 2001) to November 2003 were used, partly because the more recent months' data are incomplete and partly because there are unusual patterns in job entry and registration around Christmas and New Year, which might have distorted the picture. It is important to note here that the Job Brokers in the in-depth study began operating at different times in 2001 and in 2002. The contractual arrangements changed over this period with, on 1 October 2003, the reduction of the in-work period required for a sustainable job payment from 26 to 13 weeks and the increase in the registration fee. The database records a job as sustained at the point when a sustained payment is claimed. This produces a difficulty in comparability, since for newer Job Brokers, more of their operation will have been during a period when the shorter definition of sustained work was used.

The evaluation database was used to look at job entry rates (ie the proportion of registrations which result in a job entry payment) and sustainable job rates (ie the proportion of job entries which result in a sustained job payment) for all Job Brokers. It was not possible to take into account the interval between registration and job entry. Since there are differences between Job Brokers in the types of clients with whom they work, and some use other services prior to registering clients on NDDP, this would not be very meaningful without complex further analysis. The total set of Job Brokers were grouped into three bands, based on their job entry performance,

with equal numbers of Job Brokers in each band. The local performance of the Job Brokers studied in-depth was then mapped against these groups, that is, identifying whether each Job Broker matched the performance of the highest, middle or lowest third of performers nationwide. The same process was carried out, separately, with local level performance of the in-depth study Job Brokers in terms of sustainable job rates.

7.2.2 Adjustments to reflect differences in client profiles

It was also necessary to recognise, however, that there are differences in the client profile of the Job Brokers in the in-depth study. These reflect the types of clients with whom organisations have historically worked, differences in the routes by which clients come to the Job Broker services, and differences in organisations' practices around registration, discussed in Chapter 2. It is clear that some Job Brokers work particularly with clients who might be expected to face more barriers to entering work, and it is important to take this into account in comparing performance.

The main information provided by the evaluation database about client profile is the duration of the benefit claim which preceded registration. The evaluation database was, therefore, used to identify, for all Job Brokers, the proportion of their clients whose latest benefit claim was of 24 months' duration or longer. (The analysis was repeated using a definition of five years-plus duration, but the eventual groupings of the in-depth study Job Brokers did not change.) Two equal-sized groups of national Job Brokers were then constructed, representing those with above and below average proportions of clients with 24 months' duration of benefit claim. Again, the local level performance of the in-depth study Job Brokers was mapped against these two groups.

However, the qualitative research data provides richer information about client profiles, and the grouping of the in-depth study Job Brokers was, therefore, adjusted in the light of what had been learned from the fieldwork with Job Broker managers and staff. This refined the evaluation database information in several ways:

- first, duration on benefit is a fairly crude proxy for the type of service a client is likely to need to move into work, and sustained work. And because the data are based on the duration of the most recent claim, it will under-record durations for clients who moved from a non-eligible benefit such as Jobseeker's Allowance to an incapacity benefit. It also does not reflect cumulative claim durations, where clients have a number of periods on incapacity benefits interspersed with intervals on another benefit or in work;
- second, the qualitative data allowed other indicators of the proximity of clients to work to be taken into account, such as whether the Job Broker specialised in working with people with more severe or enduring impairments, and whether clients came to the service through routes which might indicate more barriers to work (such as mental health service or learning disability services);

- third, it meant it was possible to look at registration practices, in particular whether other internal services are used to provide early work preparation prior to the client being registered on NDDP, and whether registrations are slanted, deliberately or not, towards clients who are perceived as being closer to work readiness; and
- finally, some Job Brokers begin working with clients but do not notify the Department of the client's registration until they feel more confident that the client will take up work, conscious of the Department's monitoring of the target of 25 per cent of registrations resulting in job entry.

The qualitative data were, therefore, used to adjust the initial categorisation of the in-depth study Job Brokers based on the proportion of clients with benefit claim durations of 24 months-plus. This produced two groups based on a broader set of indicators of clients' proximity to work – a further-from-work group and a closer-to-work group. This resulted in four Job Brokers changing groups, all from the further-from-work to the closer to work group. The judgements made here were not always clear cut, particularly because some Job Brokers had begun to change their registration practices only quite recently at the time of the Wave Two fieldwork.

It was not possible to reflect differences in local areas, in terms of labour markets or the provision of relevant services, in the analysis. It is also important to note that the number of sustained jobs, job entries and, less often, registered clients was below 100 for some Job Brokers, and sometimes below 50. This means that quite small changes in the number of clients, job entries or sustained jobs could change the groups to which an individual Job Broker was initially allocated on the basis of the database. The eventual allocation of Job Brokers between groups was, however, agreed across the research team.

7.3 Groups based on effectiveness

The resulting analysis produced four broad groups of Job Brokers:

The first is a group of Job Brokers who are in the highest performing third in terms of job entries, and in either the higher or the middle group in terms of sustainability of work. Two were organisations which worked intensively with clients and specialised in one type of impairment, with clients generally likely to face more barriers to work. The remainder were in the closer-to-work group, although there were clearly differences among them in terms of the types of clients with whom they work, and differences in the scope and depth of the service they described providing.

The second group broadly represented a middle band of performance. These were Job Brokers in the middle group in terms of job entries and either the high or middle group in terms of sustainable jobs, or with high job entry rates but low sustainability rates. All worked with clients who might be expected to be closer to work, although this was a recent change in emphasis for some, and again there were differences between them in the nature of the service provided.

The third was a small group of Job Brokers in the lower group in terms of job entries, but with high sustainable job entry rates, who worked with clients who might be expected to be further from work. These Job Brokers all provided a particularly in-depth service which was designed to meet the needs of clients who faced more barriers to work, and would need more contact with the service to move towards or into work. Although their job entry rates are relatively low, this might be expected given the nature of their client groups, and high sustainability rates were achieved with those who did move into work.

The fourth group were Job Brokers with generally lower performance levels encompassing:

- middle job entry rates and low sustainability rates; or
- low job entry rates and low or middle sustainability rates; or
- low job entries and high sustainability rates but with a closer-to-work client profile which distinguished them from the third group described above.

In other words, as a group, their performance compared less well with the three preceding groups even taking into account the fact that some worked with clients who might be expected to face more barriers to work.

These four groups are summarised in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Summary of the four Job Broker performance groups

Performance group	Performance measures	Client group
Highest performers	High job entries + high or medium sustained jobs	Mixed but mostly closer to work
Middle performers	Medium job entries + high or medium sustained jobs	All closer to work
In-depth service	Low job entries + high sustained jobs	All further from work – in-depth service provided
Lowest performers	Medium job entries + low sustained jobs	Mixed
	Low job entries + medium or low sustained jobs	Mixed
	Low job entries + high sustained jobs	Closer to work only

7.4 Patterns in performance and practices

The chapter now turns to different aspects of the organisation and practices of the in-depth study Job Brokers, looking at variations across the four performance groups identified above. It is important to bear in mind here that there was not

always consistent types of data from the qualitative research with all the Job Brokers, partly because of flexibility in the use of questions reflecting the different Job Broker settings and partly because of the decision to pursue some themes in-depth with only some Job Brokers. In addition, in some cases, only the manager was interviewed and not staff, as explained in Chapter 1. The total sample of Job Brokers (23) is small, and the numbers in each of the four performance groups varies from four to eight. It is not always possible to detect clear patterns in the behaviour, and the differences highlighted below are often shades of emphasis rather than clear-cut distinctions. In keeping with the nature of qualitative data, the analysis focuses on exploring differences in approaches within as well as between the groups, and the patterns described should be seen as hypotheses rather than as being statistically meaningful.

It is also impossible in this analysis to distinguish between cause and effect, in other words to identify whether a feature has helped to create effective performance or alternatively has resulted from it. A circular dynamic can be expected here. Job Brokers which have better job entry rates will generate more income, which may enable more investment in the service, supporting higher job entry rates and generating more income.

The following sections look at seven aspects of Job Broker organisation and practices:

- the nature of the parent organisation;
- funding arrangements;
- the management of the Job Broker contract;
- how staffing is organised;
- links with Jobcentre Plus and other external organisations; and
- the nature of the pre-work and in-work services provided.

Each section begins by drawing on the views of Job Broker managers and staff as to what might explain the relative success, or otherwise, of their service and key learning points during its operation, and on views from clients and Jobcentre Plus staff about effective performance. (It is important to note again that Jobcentre Plus staff comments relate to the Job Brokers with whom they work – a wider group than those studied in-depth here.) Thus, in each of the sections, under the heading ‘Views about features of effective practice’, hypotheses about features of effective practice are identified from the qualitative data across all Job Brokers. These hypotheses are then examined in relation to the four performance groups, under the heading ‘Analysis across the performance groups’ in each section. Here, the analysis looks for evidence of differences between the four groups in the approach taken, the emphasis given or the way in which services are organised. The chapter highlights the features of service and delivery which are associated with the better, and the worse, performing Job Brokers.

7.4.1 The parent organisation

Views about features of effective practice

The Job Broker managers and staff interviewed saw a number of aspects of the nature of the parent organisation and the role of the Job Broker contract within it as being relevant to their performance.

First, some commented on the importance of the Job Broker contract being backed by the organisation as a whole. In some organisations, involvement in the Job Broker contract had been questioned at a senior management level. Some managers described wider difficulties in the management of the organisation, beyond the Job Broker contract, which had affected morale and clarity about the direction of the Job Broker service.

The extent to which the Job Broker service was integrated within the organisation was also seen to be relevant to effectiveness. (As noted in Chapter 2, the Jobcentre Plus Job Brokers are viewed as individual and independent organisations in discussing the organisational context of the Job Broker service.) This was seen, variously, as involving integration at a management level, consistency with the principles and objectives of the organisation, and integration at the level of service delivery so that the Job Broker team was able to draw on other internal services for NDDP clients. Some organisation representatives also talked about the value of experience of providing similar services or working with similar clients in designing and delivering the NDDP service. They saw knowledge of the potential client group and the barriers they face to work as being very helpful, or felt it had been an advantage that the organisation already provided an established and high quality service on which the Job Broker service was built, or within which it was integrated.

Individual DEAs had some further comments to make here. One suspected that the fact that a Job Broker had what they viewed as too many contracts might explain why they were not very active on the NDDP contract. Another thought that organisations that provide only job broking were likely to be more effective than those operating a number of contracts. One DEA also considered well-established organisations which specialise in employment support for disabled people to be most effective.

Some clients too had views about the organisation providing the Job Broker service. They valued organisations which they felt showed an empathetic approach to disability and specialist understanding of their impairment. Some were positive about organisations where other clients were also disabled; others sometimes felt out of place, particularly if their condition was quite different from those of other clients.

Analysis across the performance groups

It was possible to look at some of these issues in more depth across the four performance groups. First, among the more effective performers, some Job Broker

managers or staff commented on the high profile of the Job Broker contract within the organisation as a whole. They highlighted, for example, the high proportion of the work of the organisation that it represented, describing it as an important or prestigious contract, talking about it being seen as a successful part of the organisation's activity, or one that made valued financial or other contributions to the organisation. Some felt that the perceived value of the Job Broker service had risen only as its financial performance improved. Among the Job Brokers with middling or lower performance levels, however, there were comments about job broking being only a small part of the organisation's activity, not being widely valued or seen as prestigious, or about management questioning the continuation of the service.

Across the different patterns of performance, there were managers who stressed that the service was very similar to, or built on, or was a natural extension of, other aspects of the organisation's activity. However, there were some organisations where a service aimed directly at people with health conditions and disabilities was a new direction. None of these organisations were among the higher performing Job Brokers or those which recorded high job sustainability among clients groups who might be expected to be further from work. Among the latter group, however, some organisations saw aspects of the funding and contractual arrangements, and particularly the focus on outcomes, as a way of working which did not fit well with the practices, values and ethos of the organisation. The importance of prior experience is perhaps also highlighted by the fact that the four Job Brokers in the study sample which had operated during the earlier Personal Adviser Service phase of NDDP (see Chapter 1) were all among the highest performing Job Brokers, and the two Jobcentre Plus Job Brokers were in the highest and middle performance groups. It is not possible to ascertain whether it is their experience of delivering similar services, of working with similar clients, or of a similar funding structure which is critical here, but all may be relevant.

There were also differences in how far different Job Broker teams were able to make use of other services or resources within the organisation to augment their own work with NDDP clients. (Again, note that the Jobcentre Plus Job Brokers are viewed as independent services here.) This arose where job broking was not seen as a distinctive service so that what was provided to clients was the same as that provided under another contract or in the organisation's work generally; where NDDP clients were on the caseload of another service as well, where other services were used for more intensive work with clients before they were registered on NDDP, or where there was other internal provision such as training, job search resources, information about vacancies or links with employers on which Job Brokers could call. These other resources were available to all but one of the better performing Job Brokers. The picture was more mixed among those with medium performance, where the Job Broker contract was sometimes completely separate and sometimes integrated with other services. Among the Job Brokers with lower job entry rates, there was again much cross-use of services. For some, this reflected the fact that NDDP was not a distinctive service; for others it may be a function of the relatively small scale of the

Job Broker work and the fact that it did not have dedicated resources. Only one of the Job Brokers with relatively low performance rates had other services which could be used for early work with clients prior to NDDP registration.

The picture then is a varied one. However, there does appear to be some association of effective performance with both strong organisational support for the Job Broker service and expertise and resources on which to build.

It is perhaps also worth noting that public, private and voluntary sector organisations were found across all the patterns of performance among the in-depth study Job Brokers; there seemed not to be any association between sector and effectiveness. Finally, there was some suggestion in the data that a local and regional scale of operation was associated with strong performance more than a UK-wide scale of operation.

7.4.2 Funding arrangements

Views about features of effective practice

The Job Broker managers and staff interviewed commented on the link between levels of funding and their performance. Some, particularly those who had lower job entry and sustainable work levels, felt that the organisation had underpriced their work in their bid for the Job Broker contract. They stressed the importance of being realistic, and of understanding the real costs of the work involved. Managers also sometimes commented on the need, as one put it, to speculate to accumulate, or on the importance of the organisation being able to subsidise the early months or years of the Job Broker service. One manager felt that the cautious approach of the organisation's management had held back investment in the Job Broker contract, to the detriment of performance. A circular dynamic might of course be expected here, so that organisations which are successful generate more income, which can be invested in the service to improve operation and effectiveness and increase the income generated. This issue perhaps supports the finding, reported in Section 7.4.1, of an association between stronger organisation support for the Job Broker service and more effective performance.

Jobcentre Plus staff did not have detailed knowledge of funding levels for individual Job Brokers, and clients, similarly, were unaware of funding levels although there was sometimes a view that their own Job Broker service's funds were limited.

Analysis across the performance groups

Different levels of funding were found across the performance groups. There did appear to be some concentration of the better-funded contracts among those with higher performance, although there were also Job Brokers with high job entry and sustainable job levels which were on lower payment contracts.

It was noted in Chapter 2, that in-depth material about financial performance was not collected. The issue was not discussed with all Job Broker managers, and where

it was, their knowledge was sometimes partial. However, there did seem to be a pattern of the services being described as broadly self-funding, or generating surpluses, among the more effective Job Brokers, with a more mixed picture among those with less strong performance. Among the Job Brokers which were on lower payment rates but providing an in-depth service, the service was generally described as running at a loss. The importance of the organisation's commitment to providing a quality service to disadvantaged clients, subsidising the Job Broker service from other activities, was stressed here. Information about the resources of the parent organisations was not collected, and this is likely to influence the extent to which the wider organisation is able to subsidise the Job Broker service.

The picture is mixed, then, but there appears to be an association between higher funding and more effective performance.

7.4.3 The management of the Job Broker contract

Views about features of effective practice

The Job Broker managers and staff interviewed made a number of comments about the linkage between the effectiveness of their service and the approach to managing the Job Broker contract.

First, they stressed the importance of recognising the realities of the funding structure and the importance of outcomes, and understanding this within the context of the likely client group, in designing and managing the service. Some of the better performing Job Brokers felt this had been done well in their organisation. Among those with low job entry and/or sustainability rates some felt that awareness of the need to manage the service actively within the realities of the contractual arrangements had come only recently. An active awareness of the realities of the contract did not necessarily mean more targeting in registration, although some felt that their higher performance levels were the result of thinking carefully about who the service was appropriate for and reflecting this in who they registered. Other issues that were seen as relevant were the importance of understanding the nature and extent of support that would be required to help clients, being clear with staff about the scope and focus of the service, good planning and budgeting, ensuring that staff understood the contractual arrangements and financial realities and were involved in planning the service, and using management information to monitor performance and adapt the service if necessary.

Some managers also stressed the importance of encouraging innovation, encouraging adaptation of the service and '*not stagnating*'. Staff also commented positively on management styles which involved praise, feedback and confidence-boosting, and which involved a focused and '*business-like*' approach without making staff feel pressurised or compromising the quality of the service.

Analysis across the performance groups

It was possible to look at three aspects of management across the different performance groups. The first is how far different services targeted registration in different ways. The highest performing Job Brokers were not, on the whole, more selective in their registration practices, although some were, and as noted earlier, some had other programmes which could be used for early intensive work before registration for NDDP. But there were also more effective Job Brokers which seemed not to target or select and which did not operate other contracts alongside job broking. There seemed to be more use of targeting registrations among the Job Brokers with less effective performance rates, some of whom also used other contracts pre-registration. In some cases, this reflected the recent push to achieve 25 per cent job entry rates in order to retain the Job Broking contract, but in others it was a practice of longer standing. However, among those with high sustainability rates working with relatively disadvantaged clients, selection in registration had either been avoided or was a more recent, and not warmly embraced, approach.

Second, there were some comments about the use of management information by different Job Brokers, although this was not consistently explored across the sample. Almost all the strongest performing Job Brokers were making active use of management information. They described circulating information about performance across the team, comparing the performance of different teams, having team or individual targets, regularly reviewing performance and adapting the service in the light of it, and using management information systems to chase progress, for example to ensure that evidence of sustained work was collected. Where they commented, staff were generally positive about these approaches and did not see them as adversely affecting the quality of the service provided to clients.

Although the picture among Job Brokers with lower performance levels was mixed, overall, they spoke less about using management data, or described it as a recent change in their approach often prompted by concern about meeting the 25 per cent job entry target. Some did have either individual or team targets but there were more mixed views about them among staff, who expressed some discomfort about them or said that little seemed to be made of not achieving them. Some Job Broker managers here said they were now making more active use of management data, and felt, on reflection, that it should have been used actively earlier.

The final issue on which there was some qualitative information is the role of managers themselves. Again the information is somewhat patchy. However, there appeared to be differences between Job Broker organisations in how directly involved the manager was in the local Job Broker service, how large a part of their role it was, and how much detailed knowledge they had of the practices of their team. For several of the Job Broker managers with lowest performance levels, the management of the Job Broker contract was only a small part of their work, while this was the case for only one of the most effective Job Brokers. Again there is likely to be some circularity here: the more effective the service, the more it is likely to be seen as an important aspect of a manager's roles.

Again, the picture is a mixed one. However, there are indications that strong management of the Job Broker contract is associated with effectiveness.

7.4.4 The organisation of staffing

Views about features of effective practice

Managers and staff among the Job Brokers interviewed, highlighted a number of aspects of staffing which they felt were relevant to their own relative success:

Firstly, they highlighted the importance of staff being enthusiastic and committed, and being willing to learn and to change or adapt their practice through experience. They valued staff who were insightful about people's situations, imaginative in finding ways to help them to address barriers to work, were friendly and approachable and were able to build good relationships with clients. Some also commented on the value of staff coming from different backgrounds. Different professional backgrounds were thought to be valuable for bringing different types of specialist knowledge to the team, and also to encourage staff to focus on clients as individuals rather than focusing on disability. Different personal backgrounds were valued where they meant that people brought different life skills and experiences. Some Job Broker teams said that the fact that staff had personal experience of issues such as living with an impairment, unemployment, claiming benefits, lone parenthood and being a former user of the Job Broker service helped clients to relate to them.

The second staffing issue highlighted by managers and Job Broker staff was the importance of a strong team focus, an issue raised both by people who felt there was strong teamwork in their own organisation and where it was noted as something of a gap. Having a team that worked closely together was seen as valuable for pooling knowledge, sharing ideas, discussing cases which raised more difficult issues, supporting each other and developing effective working practices. Formal structures such as team meetings, training and case review sessions were seen as helpful, but it was the value of regular informal exchange and support that was really emphasised.

There were, as noted in Chapter 2, different views about the advantages and disadvantages of having dedicated staff who worked only on the Job Broker service compared with staff who also work on other contracts. Some managers or staff felt that their dedicated staffing was instrumental in their successful performance; others had the same view about staff working on other services, although sometimes stressing that this was because of the complementarity of the programmes and the fact that both, or all, the contracts on which staff worked were focused on entering the labour market. There were similarly mixed views about the pros and cons of staff having generic roles (working with a client throughout their use of the service) or having specialist roles. Again, some managers and staff saw the fact that they had one or other model as being part of the explanation for their success.

Finally, managers also sometimes commented on understaffing as having been a feature of the organisation which had constrained the service and made it less effective than it might have been.

Clients similarly commented on the importance of Job Broker staff being informed about disability, being empathetic and understanding about how it affected individuals, and having personal experience of living with an impairment. Where clients had dealings with more than one member of staff, the approach of individual advisers was key to clients' views about this but a smooth handover between staff was also important. Conversely, engagement with the service could be threatened where staff left or went off sick if no follow-up was in place. Jobcentre Plus staff also thought it was important that staff are friendly and approachable. There were some comments about high staff turnover among Job Brokers and about perceived understaffing. In one area, having a single member of the Job Broker team who took responsibility for job search support was felt to be effective in helping the DEA and the Job Broker to work together on job search for the benefit of clients, but they otherwise did not comment on Job Broker staffing structures.

Analysis across the performance groups

It was possible to look at how some of these issues related to the four performance groups. There was not detailed information about the backgrounds of team members who did not take part in the staff focus groups, nor about team sizes. There was some discussion in the interviews and focus groups about how teams worked together although this needs to be treated with caution. This is partly because only a manager interview was carried out with some Job Brokers, and partly because the issue was not always raised in the staff groups. Sometimes it was mentioned by staff spontaneously, but it would be wrong to assume that where it was not there was an absence of good team relationships. With those caveats, there did seem to be a pronounced emphasis on the experience and value of close team working among the better performing Job Brokers who, with only one exception, described themselves as having strong teams. The closeness of the team was sometimes commented on by both managers and staff, who described good support for team members from within the team, sharing of information and discussion of ideas and ways forward. Although the quality of relationships cannot be gauged through a group discussion, it was noticeable that the Job Brokers in these staff groups appeared to have broadly similar approaches and not to be learning about each other's practice in the group discussion itself. Among the better performing Job Brokers were also some who emphasised the important role played by administrative staff in the team.

The picture was more mixed among other Job Brokers. Although some described strong team relationships in the way that the more effective Job Brokers had, others did not comment on team support, and there were also some where managers or staff felt they did not work particularly closely as a team, or where they said they did not feel they shared good practice or information enough. Differences in approaches were sometimes commented on explicitly by Job Broker staff, or they said they had

learnt something new during the focus group. One group of staff felt that the focus by the Department on job entry levels was leading to more monitoring by their organisation's management of the individual performance of team members, for the moment informally, and were concerned that this would make it more difficult to sustain a mutually supportive approach.

It was also possible to look at differences in staff roles between the four performance groups. First, in terms of whether staff worked uniquely on NDDP or not, among the better performers staff either worked exclusively on NDDP or worked across different contracts within which the Job Broker service was not set up as a separate or differentiated service. Among the others the picture was more mixed. Some Job Broker teams were dedicated staff; others worked across more than one differentiated contract; and others did not differentiate between job broking and the other contracts on which staff worked.

Second, in terms of whether staff were in generic or specialist roles, it was found that all the better performing Job Brokers either had completely generic staff roles, or designated only in-work support for a specialist role, with the exception of one where specialist roles were designed to complement the support provided by core advisers who maintained contact with their clients throughout. Again, the picture was more mixed among other Job Brokers with both completely generic, generic plus in-work support specialists, and wider specialist staffing structures.

The analysis suggests, then, that strong team work, a focus on the Job Broker contract or at least on services which prepare clients for work, and generic roles, at least for pre-work support, are associated with more effective performance.

7.4.5 Links with Jobcentre Plus and external organisations

Views about features of effective practice

In the fieldwork with Job Broker managers and staff, some stressed the importance of having good links with Jobcentre Plus and with other external services. They saw this as important as a source of potential clients, to access other services to augment the provision of the Job Broker service, and to raise or maintain the profile of the Job Broker organisation in the area generally. Jobcentre Plus staff also stressed the value of Job Brokers working with Jobcentre Plus to provide fuller support for clients (discussed fully in Chapter 6) and felt that more effective support could be given to clients where Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff work together. They stressed the importance of Job Brokers providing feedback about job entries and understanding the Jobcentre Plus targets system. Clients sometimes commented on the value of the Job Broker helping them to access Jobcentre Plus provision, particularly job search support and funding. A few had also found it helpful that a Job Broker had helped them to access services from other organisations alongside the Job Broker service.

Analysis across the performance groups

In terms of sources of clients and marketing, there was rather more emphasis on registrations being generated through Jobcentre Plus and letters from the Department to incapacity benefits claimants among the Job Brokers with poorer performance levels. Among the better performers, a wider range of sources of clients was described and there seemed to be less reliance, from the accounts of managers and staff, on Jobcentre Plus and the Department. The theme of marketing was not covered with all the in-depth study Job Brokers, but where it was, the best performing Job Brokers all described doing extensive marketing. They used multiple strategies and either had access to specialist advice or funding externally or within the organisation, or had made marketing a designated part of all or some Job Broker staff's responsibilities. There were some examples among the other Job Brokers of extensive marketing, and some said that they had enough registrations without doing much marketing. Others said that they were doing little or no marketing, in some cases reflecting a recent decision to suspend registrations or withdraw from the contract but elsewhere a longer standing practice.

In terms of relationships with non-Jobcentre Plus external organisations, there was much emphasis among the better performing Job Brokers on the importance of good links with other service providers. They commented on the quality of their own links with, for example, organisations providing career guidance, training or placements; voluntary sector disability organisations; and mental health, learning disability or other care support networks. Again, the picture was more mixed among other Job Brokers. There were examples of Job Brokers who described their links with other services as very strong, but others described few or no organisations with whom they had good relationships. Those that were mentioned were mostly local colleges or impairment-specific voluntary sector organisations.

There was a similar picture when it came to relationships with Jobcentre Plus. Generally, the Job Brokers with better performance levels had good relationships with at least some Jobcentre Plus staff, although, like others, they sometimes found differences between, and within, Jobcentre Plus offices. There was also more emphasis here on proactive approaches to Jobcentre Plus offices, with managers and staff describing having initiated presentations to Jobcentre Plus staff, setting up meetings, attending each other's regular meetings, using Jobcentre Plus premises to see clients or otherwise maintaining a visibility in Jobcentre Plus offices. Among the other Job Brokers, there were some who similarly described good relationships and proactive approaches, but others said their links were poor and described little or no activity on the part of Job Brokers to build relationships. There was also a difference in the extent to which Job Brokers were explicit about the significance of outcomes targets for Jobcentre Plus staff and provided feedback to staff about clients' job entries. Although across the performance groups there were Job Brokers with very good systems for feedback, and Job Brokers who seemed to have little or no awareness of Jobcentre Plus targets, giving regular feedback and understanding the significance of targets was more pronounced among the best performing Job Brokers.

Although there is some diversity, the data suggest that a more outward facing approach with good links with other local service providers and with Jobcentre Plus may be associated with higher levels of effectiveness.

7.4.6 Pre-work services

Views about the features of effective practice

Job Broker staff and managers highlighted aspects of their pre-work services which they thought contributed to their success or were particularly effective. Some specific elements of the service were mentioned here, particularly in-work support (discussed in the following section), but also vocational guidance, in-house courses, work placements and financial incentives.

However, more emphasis was placed on approaches to delivering the service than on specific types of help. Job Broker managers and staff stressed the importance of staff being innovative, flexible, *'working smart'* to find ways of helping clients to overcome barriers to work, and being empowered to make decisions about the best way forward for each client. They emphasised the importance of providing an in-depth service. This involved both providing a complete package of support which covered all relevant issues and left *'no black holes'*, but also ensuring that staff get to know their clients well, are good at listening, and elicit all the necessary information to build up an in-depth understanding of the client's circumstances and needs. They also stressed the importance of providing a tailored service in which clients are treated as individuals, and the importance of helping clients to find the job which would be right for them. High caseloads were sometimes thought to undermine these preferred ways of working. They described their own services as operating at the client's pace and not involving pressurising or rushing people. Some also talked about the support being client-led, with an emphasis on empowering people to make their own decisions.

As reported in Chapter 3, all elements of the service were of salience to at least some clients. They placed more emphasis on financial incentives where there had otherwise been fairly minimal support: although it was appreciated as useful where they had received more intensive support, they generally placed more emphasis on the impact of the practical or personal support they had received. More generally, they echoed the views of Job Brokers about the importance of support which addressed all their needs, staff building up an in-depth understanding of their individual needs, Job Brokers maintaining personal contact and taking an interest, and being able to set their own pace. They valued staff who took time to explore their individual circumstances and needs, and occasionally thought staff were overloaded, particularly if they were slow to follow up action, if there were long waits for appointments or if meetings were rushed.

Jobcentre Plus staff similarly emphasised these broader features of provision. The positive benefits of having a Job Broker adviser who was able to take time and who was seen to be doing all they could for a client were stressed. Some also observed

that clients were attracted towards Job Brokers who offered financial incentives. DEAs identified as effective Job Broker practice, the provision of confidence building; help with job applications and interview skills; intensive support including job coaching and attention to lifestyle areas where relevant; funding for training courses, and work placements and trials.

Analysis across the performance groups

Looking at patterns in service delivery across the performance groups is complicated, in part because of the range of types of help provided across the Job Brokers, and in part because where the Job Broker manager only was interviewed there is more limited data. It was noted in Chapter 3 that three broad groups of Job Brokers were evident in terms of the range of services provided. The first group appeared to focus on more immediately labour market barriers; the second appeared to have a broader focus with more structured support around confidence and other personal issues; and the third provided a particularly in-depth service, sometimes within the supported employment model and sometimes working with clients with more severe and enduring impairments. Looking at the performance groups, all three types of service were apparent among the highest performing group and among the middle group, with no obvious bias. The Job Brokers with lower entry levels but higher sustainability rates who worked with clients likely to be further from work all provided a broader and more in-depth service. Among the Job Brokers with lower performance levels, there was more focus on immediate labour market barriers. There was more explicit emphasis on vocational guidance among the highest performance group, and much less emphasis on providing in-house training or funding for external training, and on confidence and other personal barriers, among the poorest performing group.

As noted in Chapter 2, the use of financial payments to clients either as incentives or to cover costs such as clothing and equipment had generally increased since Wave One. Not all the best performing Job Brokers used them, but it was here that the use of more extensive and higher payments was concentrated. Among the medium performers there was a mixture of Job Broker services which used incentives and those that did not, but there was little use of them among the poorer performers whose access to direct financial support for clients was mostly through either internal or Jobcentre Plus discretionary funds.

There were no clear patterns in caseload size across different patterns of performance: higher and lower caseloads were described across the performance groups, and with no more emphasis among some performance levels than others. In terms of arrangements for maintaining contact with clients, across the groups Job Broker advisers and managers stressed the importance of maintaining contact with clients (as discussed in Chapter 3), and noted a contractual or organisational requirement to be in touch every 15 or 20 days. It was rare for advisers or managers to be self-critical of the level of contact or to say that contact is often initiated by clients or that they focus more of their activities on clients who contact them, but where this did occur it was among the medium or poorer performing Job Brokers.

Finally, as noted in Chapter 2, Job Brokers described most of their contacts with employers as 'client-led' and there were some doubts about the efficacy of what were seen as more 'employer-led' approaches such as setting up arrangements for notification of vacancies or more general marketing and awareness-raising activity. The number of Job Brokers who placed emphasis on the proactive development of relationships with employers, rather than a client-led approach, was relatively small. However, none of those placing most emphasis on employer-led approaches were among the highest performing Job Brokers; those that appeared to be more active here, or who were planning to become more active, were all in the medium or lower performance groups.

7.4.7 In-work services

Views about features of effective practice

The managers and staff interviewed often stressed the importance of maintaining contact with clients once they were in work and of providing support, and linked this with the success of their service. Some saw well organised and fully resourced in-work provision, which was made a high priority in staff's work, as a reason for the success of their own service. A key learning point for some was that the early period in work could be a critical one, and that being proactive in initiating regular contact at this stage was important. Job Brokers who worked within supported employment models also talked about the importance of engaging employers in in-work support. Other Job Brokers were more self-critical, acknowledging that they did not make in-work support a priority or that they had not really developed this aspect of the service yet.

Some Jobcentre Plus staff, as noted in Chapter 6, saw whether or not a Job Broker provided clear in-work support as an important distinction. Although in-work support was critical in a few cases, clients generally did not see it as a particularly key aspect of provision. However, as noted in Chapter 5, this reflects to some extent, their limited association of Job Brokers with in-work issues rather than the absence of support needs.

Analysis across the performance groups

These issues were examined in relation to the four performance groups, focusing on sustainability rates rather than on job entry rates. It is important to note here that sustainability rates relate to applications for sustained work payments, which need to be accompanied by evidence of a sustained job. They, therefore, reflect the ability of the Job Broker to gather the required evidence, as well as the extent to which clients remained in work.

All the Job Brokers who were providing a more proactive or extensive service – involving regular and standardised contact, personal contact rather than just by letter, contact initiated by the adviser rather than just in response to the client, and generally a broad awareness of the types of problems that clients face in work – were

achieving high or medium sustainability rates. Some of these Job Brokers involved administrative staff, or designated adviser staff, in making contact with clients and thought this had helped to free up time for this aspect of the service. None of those achieving low sustainability rates described this proactive or standardised approach to in-work support.

However, there were some Job Brokers who had high sustainability rates but who appeared not to place much emphasis on in-work support, did not have standardised procedures and talked about it being difficult to make time to maintain contact with clients once they had started work. It may be that the quality of job matching here explains their high sustainability rates. It is also important to note, as mentioned earlier, that the numbers of people in sustained jobs was very low for some Job Brokers and the distinctions drawn between the groups inevitably crude. The picture is mixed, but there is some evidence that suggests that more proactive, tightly managed and resourced services are linked with higher sustainability rates. Again, there is likely to be a circular dynamic here. A Job Broker service which is more effective at maintaining contact with clients in work is in a better position to provide the support which might be important to sustaining work. But it also increases the likelihood of the Job Broker obtaining the evidence required for sustained job payments, irrespective of whether in-work support was needed, and, thus, securing more funding for service development.

7.5 Conclusion

In describing the approach taken to exploring effectiveness, this chapter has highlighted that the findings should be treated with caution and, without further research, are not necessarily generalisable more widely. However, the findings suggest that there is no single 'type' or set of 'types' of effective Job Broker, nor a single aspect of the service which is central to performance. Among the most effective Job Brokers are Jobcentre Plus services, large national voluntary organisations, and regional and local voluntary and private organisations. Some provide particularly in-depth services to clients with more severe and enduring impairments. At the other end of the spectrum are those which describe a more commercial or business-like approach, a narrower range of services, and a stronger focus on clients who are closer to work. In between are Job Brokers of varying sizes who are less focused on closer to work groups and who provide a wider range of services with less focus on immediate labour market barriers.

Rather than pointing to a single model, then, the analysis highlights a range of practices and ways of organising the Job Broker service which appear to be more effective across different organisational contexts.

In terms of the wider organisational setting of Job Brokers, the findings suggest that high performance may be helped by strong organisational support for the Job Broker service, with the service being seen as a central part and natural extension of the organisation's activities. Having existing resources and expertise which provide

a foundation and support for the Job Broker service also appears to be important: more effective performers were able to draw on other internal provision such as training and job search resources, and on more intensive programmes of support that could be used to prepare clients for NDDP. The findings also suggest that considered planning and design and strong management of the Job Broker service, with a more involved manager of the service and with active use of management information, is associated with success. This does not necessarily mean more targeting of registrations or a narrower range of services: it was not the case that the higher performers are those which focus their work on closer to work groups.

In terms of financial support for the Job Broker contract, there was some concentration of better-funded contracts among those with highest performance, although there were also Job Brokers who appeared to be very effective with lower payment contracts. The more effective services also generally described themselves as broadly self-funding or generating surpluses.

In terms of the structure of staffing, the findings suggest that effectiveness is linked with staff either working on the Job Broker contract alone, or not differentiating between the Job Broker contract and their other work. The highest performers were also less likely to have staff working in specialised roles within the Job Broker team. They either used generic staffing patterns (so that an individual worked with a client throughout their contact with the service), or, in one case, a core adviser worked with each client throughout their contact drawing on specialist staff to complement their own role. Although it is difficult to assess it in-depth, team working and strong team support appear also to be associated with success.

The more effective Job Brokers appear to have an outward facing approach with proactive marketing, good links with other external services, and strong relationships with Jobcentre Plus. However, they do not generally place particular emphasis on proactive development of relationships with employers and instead see client-led approaches to employers as more effective or appropriate.

A range of different types of services were found across the performance groups.

However, the lowest performing group of Job Brokers tended to focus on more immediate labour market issues, with less emphasis on in-house training, funding for external training, confidence and other personal barriers, and in-depth vocational guidance. The findings also suggest that effectiveness is associated with a more proactive, intensive and tightly managed approach to maintaining contact with clients in work. Finally, a more proactive approach to in-work support and a wider range of types of help were associated with higher rates of sustained work.

8 Conclusions and implications for policy

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this final chapter is to review the findings from the second wave of the qualitative element of the evaluation of the NDDP national extension, and to consider how these, with findings from the first wave of work, might inform policy thinking about the future development of the programme.

The chapter is organised initially to address two core questions: Firstly, (Section 8.3) what works for clients in helping them move towards work, into work, and staying in work? The answer to this will help understanding of the types of help and services that are important, and how they are delivered. Secondly (in Section 8.4), is an exploration of what contributes to making a Job Broker 'effective', intended to develop understanding of the types of internal organisation and practices, contractual and funding arrangements, and external relationships that contribute to moving people towards and into work.

The way in which NDDP is delivered, via outcome-funded external organisations, has implications for what the Department can and cannot do to achieve the Government's policy aims of helping increasing numbers of recipients of incapacity benefits into work. In the course of this chapter, some findings suggest the possibility of policy changes where the Department can take a principal lead. Hence, the sections following the 'core' questions outlined above consider two ways in which the Department can influence Job Broker performance: improving relationships between Jobcentre Plus and Job Brokers (Section 8.5), and outcome targets and funding (Section 8.6). Other changes that could enhance the delivery of NDDP, such as improvements in the internal organisation and management of Job Broker organisations, are not within the direct control of the Department though they could be actively promoted, for example, through its contract management arrangements.

Before considering 'what works' for incapacity benefits claimants, it is useful to consider two important issues concerning the place of NDDP within the context of employment policies and provision for disabled people, and the changing organisational context of the Department and Jobcentre Plus. These are tackled in Section 8.2.

8.2 Putting NDDP policy development into context

8.2.1 NDDP in context

In thinking about the future development of policy, NDDP and Job Broker services cannot be seen in isolation from other services and organisations. NDDP is only part of a wide and diverse network of provision that people who have a health condition or disability and who are interested in moving towards, and into, work can come into contact with. This diverse network includes Jobcentre Plus, providers of specific programmes such as WORKSTEP and Work Preparation, training providers, and voluntary, local authority and health services organisations not contracted to Jobcentre Plus.

8.2.2 Changes within the Department

It was explained in Chapter 2 that the NDDP national extension has been operating over the past two or three years against a backdrop of the major reform of the way benefit and employment policies are delivered with the phased introduction of Jobcentre Plus offices. Also of relevance are other policy initiatives and pilots such as the Incapacity Benefit Reform pilots. These developments have had a direct effect on new and existing claimants of incapacity benefits.

In the Jobcentre Plus process model, new and repeat claimants are required to attend a work-focused interview at a local Jobcentre Plus office. This comprises an initial meeting with a financial assessor (who checks the claim and discusses the financial aspects of claiming more widely), and a subsequent meeting with a personal adviser who explains Jobcentre Plus services, discusses possible barriers to work and help that might address these, and agrees any future contact and activity. In the offices participating in the Incapacity Benefit Reform pilot, this model of working is extended (so that most claimants are required to attend six mandatory work-focused interviews) and new ways of addressing barriers to work made available to claimants. These include specialist Incapacity Benefit Personal Advisers, a wider range of interventions (under the umbrella of the 'Choices Package'), and a new financial incentive (the 'Return to Work Credit'). A fuller description of the Incapacity Benefit reforms is set out in Chapter 2.

In the second wave of fieldwork, therefore, evidence has emerged about how some Job Brokers have experienced working within these changes. This is valuable in thinking about how NDDP provision might be developed in the future. The Jobcentre Plus model of work-focused interviews is not likely to change in the near future and it is possible that the Incapacity Benefit reform model of additional

mandatory interviews will be extended to all Jobcentre Plus offices. Any changes to NDDP policy or practices will, therefore, need to be compatible with a process model of work-focused interviews.

8.3 What works for NDDP clients?

This section addresses one of the key research questions of the evaluation: what works, for whom and in what circumstances? In addressing this question from a client perspective, the analysis draws upon two sets of interviews with recent NDDP clients in 2002 and 2003/04 and upon follow-up interviews with a sub-sample of clients interviewed at Wave One. What has emerged very clearly, though not surprisingly, is that the circumstances and characteristics of people who become Job Broker clients are very varied. People had wide variations in types and severity of health condition, in their own perceptions of their health, and their employment and educational records. Some had been on benefits for years, others had relatively recently made their first claim for an incapacity benefit. Their households varied, as did their sources and levels of income. Importantly their thoughts and aspirations about work also spanned a wide range. At one extreme, some people had clear ideas and well-worked plans for returning to work or starting a new direction. In contrast, others had little idea about what they wanted or could do other than a desire to do something.

It is clear, therefore, that 'what works' for one person will be very different to 'what works' for another. For some people, what works in getting them into work has little to do with a Job Broker or any other source of external help. Nevertheless, as Chapter 3 sets out, it has been possible from the accounts of the respondents to generalise types of activity that were important for other respondents and which could be effective in moving people towards and into work. These were:

- identifying clients' aspirations and needs;
- matching needs with appropriate provision; and
- maintaining communication between clients and Job Broker personal advisers.

This section distinguishes between two distinct phases in the trajectories of NDDP clients: the period up to and including getting a job, and the period in work. In both phases, clients will have different aspirations and needs, each of which require a different set of responses.

8.3.1 Identifying needs in moving towards work

As mentioned above, when they first made contact with a Job Broker organisation some people had clear ideas about what they wanted to do and how to get there. For many, however, this was not the case. Discussing aspirations, defining initial job goals and identifying the way forward was, therefore, a crucial first step which was not necessarily straightforward, but influenced by a range of considerations including the person's health, family circumstances, and self-confidence and

esteem. The task of a Job Broker personal adviser, consequently, could be complex. Job Broker staff in the study explained that relevant information might not emerge, necessarily, very quickly and they may need a number of meetings before sensitive information was volunteered. It was important, therefore, to take time to reach a position of trust and rapport with a client. There were many examples in the study of clients valuing Job Broker staff who were prepared to 'listen' to them sympathetically. Vocational guidance was reported by some clients to have been the most important part of the input from a Job Broker. In helping people move forwards, Job Brokers called upon additional input from, for example, occupational psychologists, careers advisors, or the 'Adult Directions' software package.

Successfully identifying job goals relied on Job Brokers' knowledge and understanding of a wide range of jobs and occupations, and their interpersonal skills in getting clients to reflect and think positively about the future. Overall clients emphasised that the key to a Job Broker service identifying their needs was the individual adviser and the relationship they had with them. This did not always happen and there were accounts from clients of Job Brokers suggesting inappropriate types of work and criticisms that Job Brokers were ill-equipped to respond to the requirements of people with professional and technical employment histories, or people interested in self-employment.

Job Brokers themselves reported they did not feel qualified to deal appropriately with some health-related needs, particularly mental health needs, and issues around drug/alcohol use and housing. They sometimes signposted clients to relevant services but expressed some concern that these needs were not being met.

8.3.2 Matching provision to needs

The needs of clients reflected how close they felt they were to getting a job. The extent to which needs were met by Job Brokers was dependent partly on the range of services and assistance offered, partly on Job Broker capacity, and partly on how services were provided. People at varying distances from getting a job identified, or were helped to identify by Job Broker staff, a range of needs such as training and other courses, basic skills development, work preparation or work experience, or increases in self confidence. As might be expected, there were varying experiences reported by respondents about the extent to which they felt their Job Brokers had responded to their needs, and about the quality of services received from either Job Brokers themselves or external providers. Lack of opportunities for work experience and for moving into voluntary work were examples of gaps identified by some clients. Some people perceived other barriers to work that were less amenable to the types of intervention that a Job Broker might be able to arrange. For example, some clients mentioned age and other forms of discrimination.

Other clients were more 'job-ready' and needed help with job searching, preparation of CVs, or help filling out application forms. When asked to attend job interviews, some people were offered further help, for example, with interview skills, clothing, or being accompanied to the interview itself. The extent to which these needs were

addressed depended partly on the ethos of the Job Broker organisation. For example, some Job Brokers took the view that job searching should be a shared exercise between Job Broker and client in order to promote the client's independence and skills, or a skill that should be learned independently of the Job Broker. There were many positive comments from respondents about the help they received in applying for jobs, but as the accounts of some clients show in Chapter 3, some people did not receive the service they wanted. The financial help that clients received, in the form of money for clothes or travelling, for example, was widely valued.

Financial concerns, particularly about the effect of working on benefit receipt, were still an issue for NDDP clients at Wave Two of the fieldwork as they were at Wave One. Financial advice was, therefore, frequently important for clients. Information about tax credits and the Permitted Work rules was particularly welcome. For clients, financial advice needed to be accurate and often quick in order to make decisions about job opportunities.

8.3.3 Maintaining communications in moving towards work

What emerged clearly from the client data was the importance for clients of a strong supportive relationship with their Job Broker, regardless of the stage they were at in moving towards work. Job Broker personal advisers boosted confidence and raised morale when progress was slow or when clients were despondent. Conversely, when contact was infrequent or cursory, confidence could fall and motivation drop. Clients were disappointed when Job Brokers did not make contact or return calls.

What worked well and what people said contributed to moving towards, and into, work was frequent, constructive contact at the right pace. Clients did not like to feel pressured or rushed nor feel that nothing was happening. In contrast, when Job Brokers did not maintain contact, this could send a strong negative signal to clients, who might then decide not to attempt to make contact themselves. One of the key factors identified by Job Brokers as influencing their ability to maintain contact was the size of their caseloads.

8.3.4 Identifying in-work needs

As explained in Chapter 5, the reported needs of clients who had entered work were mostly different to those encountered in moving towards work. For some people the transition to work created no problems – they were satisfied with their work, found colleagues and employers supportive and friendly, and had jobs that matched their capabilities and requirements (such as hours and pay). When this happened, the likelihood of the job becoming 'sustained' increased. Difficulties that militated against sustaining work were associated with the terms and conditions of the job (such as unsuitable working hours or poor working conditions), changes in health and, for some people, approaching the end of the allowed period under the Permitted Work rules. Where respondents reported inflexible employers and unsuitable environments, jobs were less likely to be retained.

In the interim qualitative report on the NDDP national extension (Corden *et al.*, 2003), it was noted that in-work support was often the last function to be addressed by Job Brokers who were more concerned, initially, with setting up their services aimed at getting people into work. At the time of the Wave Two interviews, in-work support was still relatively underdeveloped. Some Job Brokers had made innovative changes, including, for example, the introduction of specialist staff to help people after they had found work, but many appeared to offer only minimal, reactive support to clients who contacted them.

8.3.5 Matching provision to in-work needs

Overall, amongst both the Wave One and Wave Two clients who had entered work, few reported any post-employment contact with Job Brokers. There was some indication that clients who had comparatively high levels of contact with Job Broker advisers before entering work, were more likely to use the services of a Job Broker for in-work support.

Some clients received direct, on-the-job support in the form of a job coach or a Job Broker accompanying them to work in the early days or weeks. These forms of in-work support were valued. Other clients received support in the form of regular telephone calls or visits to their place of work. In some cases, the support received from advisers appeared to have enabled respondents to stay in work when they might otherwise have not. This was particularly the case when a Job Broker had liaised directly with an employer about working terms and conditions or the workplace environment.

The findings suggest that many respondents did have support needs in work. From some accounts in interviews it also seemed likely that had some people sought assistance from a Job Broker, they might have been able to avoid early job exits or at least been able to negotiate with employers over, for example, terms and conditions or a transition to a more suitable job.

Some needs were practical, such as financial assistance to buy equipment for work; other needs were less tangible, related to having someone to contact them to make sure they were all right, to talk through difficulties, or to discuss issues together with employers. For some, these needs were limited to the negotiation of the transition into work, but for others needs extended beyond the early weeks or months.

8.3.6 Maintaining communication in work

There were variations in the approach Job Brokers took to keeping in touch with clients who had entered work. A common approach was to make occasional telephone calls, or more rarely, to write or visit a client to check that there were no problems with the job. The more minimal approaches were explained by some Job Brokers as reflecting their perception, based on experience, that clients did not generally welcome contact once they had started work. For other people in work, the onus was on them to contact the Job Broker if they had any difficulties.

Some clients experienced difficulties with staying in work over the longer-term, sometimes a reflection that the chosen job was probably not right for them in the first place. However, it was rare that such people sought Job Broker advice and support, and awareness of the type of support they could receive appeared to be low among respondents. The question is raised, therefore, about whether Job Brokers should be telling clients more explicitly about the difficulties they might encounter in work, and give more information about how Job Brokers can help.

8.3.7 Longer-term effects for clients of NDDP

The primary aims of NDDP are to help people move into work and help them over any initial transitional problems so that they have an increased chance of staying in work. However, the NDDP programme can also have longer-term effects that should be taken into account in the evaluation of its usefulness and effectiveness.

Many of the clients who had been registered with Job Brokers for relatively long periods of time (who were part of the sub-sample of Wave One respondents interviewed a second time) reported the same range of positive and critical comments as people with shorter associations with Job Brokers. As described in Chapter 4, some clients welcomed assistance with moving towards work and advice about job search and finances; others were critical of the input from Job Brokers and had ceased contact with them. Some people interviewed at Wave One, had found work by Wave Two and had reassessed their earlier assessments of their Job Broker, recognising the longer-term impact of the services they had received. Negative experiences were again associated with needs not being identified or met and a lack of communication with Job Broker staff.

There were examples of Job Broker clients turning (or returning) to other sources of help in their continued desire to return to work. Included here were Jobcentre Plus staff, specialist disability organisations, and local organisations and voluntary bodies offering back-to-work services. Some people had registered with a new Job Broker organisation. However, there was little evidence that people had been advised of or signposted to other sources of help by Job Brokers, although this may be partly explained by a decline or cessation of contact between Job Broker and client by the time the client had wanted to move on. The implication here is that some people, whose motivation to work is still present, and are, therefore, part of the target population for welfare to work policies, are not getting the service they want or need from the Job Broker they initially register with. The lessons for policy of this conclusion are discussed later in Section 8.7.1.

Some of the clients in the study reported long-term benefits of their involvement with a Job Broker service. These included increased confidence, knowledge about benefits and tax credits, and skills in job searching, CV preparation, job applications and attending interviews. Some of these had been useful for people wanting to change their terms and conditions, or apply for new jobs.

8.3.8 Overview of the 'what works' question

Over the course of the NDDP pilot, knowledge has accumulated about the sorts of services and other interventions that help incapacity benefits recipients move towards and into work, and what supports them in work. The range of services and interventions that have been mentioned in the interviews with the key players has been varied and extensive. What people have needed and received has depended to varying degrees on the effects of their impairment, on how their needs are perceived by Job Brokers, on their closeness to the labour market, and on the availability of appropriate services.

Many people appeared to have one or more of a common set of requirements, including vocational guidance, assistance with job search, CV preparation, interviewing skills, and confidence building or personal support. Others had additional needs, such as training, education, work experience, or supported employment provision (including job coaches, for example). These lists are not intended to be exhaustive but to indicate that it is possible to think in terms of a range of 'core' services that many incapacity benefits recipients might benefit from, whether they are supplied by a Job Broker or from elsewhere. The policy implications of this observation are considered further in Section 8.7.

8.4 What makes Job Broker organisations effective?

The qualitative study has generated extensive data on how individual Job Brokers have chosen to provide NDDP services and how this has been done in practice. The diversity in organisation and practice that has emerged has been described in detail throughout this report and can be related to a number of factors: Firstly, as explained earlier in the report Job Brokers vary in size, organisational background, geographical coverage and specialisation. Their motivations for wanting to provide Job Broker services also varied. Some organisations have a long history of involvement with employment programmes for disabled people; others are relative newcomers to the field. Some have integrated job broking into other provisions; others have maintained a separate service. Secondly, in the contracts for delivering NDDP, the Department does not specify how Job Broker services are to be delivered but allows individual organisations to design their services to deliver an agreed level of outcomes in terms of job entries and sustained employment. The funding structure of payments linked to registration, job entry and sustained employment underpins this outcome-related approach.

Understanding differences in approach and implementation adopted by Job Brokers can, in itself, act as a source of new ideas that can stimulate thinking about how to develop services. However, one of the key questions for policy is the extent to which organisation and practice have an impact on performance. Because the Department has defined the key parameters of performance as job entries and sustained employment outcomes, the question of what makes Job Brokers 'effective' has been addressed in terms of these two measures. This has required an innovative

analytical approach combining quantitative administrative data with qualitative data about organisational settings and practices found in the study. This analysis was set out in detail in Chapter 7 earlier. This section is a review of the findings from that analysis and a consideration of how these can inform development of policy.

As explained in Chapter 7, the 23 Job Brokers in the second wave of the qualitative study were categorised according to performance based on administrative data about job entries and sustained employment. Four categories were defined using this approach. The *highest performers* had a high rate of job entries (compared with registrations) and high or medium sustained employment rates. This group comprised Job Brokers who worked with clients closer to the labour market, and two Job Brokers who worked with clients with specific impairments only. The *middle performers* had high job entry rates but low sustained employment rates, or medium job entry rates and high or medium sustained rates. These were all Job Brokers who primarily worked with people closer to work. A third group were defined as '*in-depth Job Brokers*' for whom the high, medium and low performing categorisation appeared inappropriate because they worked primarily with people further from the labour market. These Job Brokers achieved relatively low job entry rates (which was consistent with their client group) but high sustained employment rates. The final group of Job Brokers fell into a *lower performing* category, defined by a combination of low or medium rates for job entries and sustained employment, or by working with people closer to work but only achieving low job entries despite getting high rates for sustained employment.

This categorisation of Job Brokers was compared with seven features of their organisation and practices including: the nature of the parent organisation; funding arrangements; the management of the Job Broker contract; how staffing is organised; links with Jobcentre Plus and other external organisations; and the nature of the pre-work and in-work services provided. This analysis was innovative and the results are necessarily tentative given the limitations of the data available but findings suggest that, among the 23 Job Broker organisations in the second wave of fieldwork, there was no single 'type' or set of 'types' of effective Job Broker, nor a single aspect of provision that was central to performance.

However, analysis does suggest that a range of practices and ways of organising the Job Broker service appeared to be more effective than others across different organisational settings. These are set out in detail in Chapter 7 and summarised below:

- strong organisational support within the parent organisation for the Job Broker service;
- resources and expertise within the parent organisation to support the Job Broker service;
- strong management of the Job Broker service, and active use of management information;

- staff working solely on the Job Broker contract, or not differentiating between the Job Broker contract and their other work;
- an adviser working exclusively with each client throughout their contact with the service, either providing all support or drawing on specialist staff to complement their own role;
- team working and strong team support;
- a proactive approach to maintaining contact with clients in work and providing in-work support;
- proactive marketing, good links with other external services, and with Jobcentre Plus; and
- funding arrangements that include high outcome payment levels.

It can be seen from this list that most of the contributory factors to effective working are principally internal to the Job Broker organisation although, as mentioned in the introduction, the contract management arrangements can provide a means through which to promote improvements. Where there is scope for the Department to have a more direct influence is in improving links with Jobcentre Plus and in changing the structure of Job Broker funding. These are discussed separately in Section 8.5.

8.5 Relations between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus

As mentioned in the previous section, having good links with Jobcentre Plus was a contributory factor in the effectiveness of some Job Brokers. Job Brokers could benefit from good relations with Jobcentre Plus in two main ways: Firstly, Jobcentre Plus staff, that is advisers involved in the work-focused interview process and DEAs, could point potential clients towards Job Brokers or at least provide them with information. Secondly, Jobcentre Plus staff had a range of resources, such as Work Preparation, Work-based Learning for Adults and the Adviser Discretionary Fund, that Job Brokers could not access directly themselves for their clients.

Job Brokers could also be of value to Jobcentre Plus staff working with incapacity benefits claimants. Some Job Brokers could use their organisation's own resources to address some of the financial barriers faced by clients, some provided specialist training and other services, and some had experience of dealing with specific impairments. Being able to signpost Jobcentre Plus customers to a Job Broker also had advantages for Jobcentre Plus staff by reducing their own workloads and by contributing to meeting internal targets for job entries (through the Jobcentre Plus 'points' system).

Factors that emerged as important in fostering good relations between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff included:

- knowledge and understanding of each other's target population, services, practices and organisational targets;
- a sense of trust and confidence in each other;
- good personal relationships and rapport;
- confidence in the appropriateness and quality of services provided; and
- proactive communication about clients' progress or problems.

In the course of the second wave of fieldwork, Jobcentre Plus and Job Broker staff identified a number of constructive and productive ways in which their understanding of each other had developed and increased. These included:

- visits to each others premises;
- presentations; and
- Job Brokers using Jobcentre Plus offices.

Though viewed mainly positively, visits and presentations were sometimes seen by Jobcentre Plus staff as time consuming and unhelpful particularly where they had the feeling that some Job Broker were not just informing them of their services but trying to 'sell' them. References were made to a sense of 'overload'.

Trust and confidence were fostered by visits and presentations but had accumulated principally by experience over time. Where Jobcentre Plus had received positive feedback from clients or learned of positive outcomes, then confidence grew about the quality of services being provided. As a consequence, more clients were likely to be signposted to Job Broker services. Feelings of trust and confidence could be undermined by a sense of competition between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus but relations worked smoothly where both sides understood how Job Brokers benefit from job entry outcome payments and Jobcentre Plus staff from 'points' towards their job entry targets. Good relationships were unlikely to develop if there were perceptions on either side of poor quality services, if clients made complaints, or if there was a sense that targets were more important than individual clients.

The general picture to emerge from the Wave Two interviews was that for many Jobcentre Plus and Job Broker staff, working relations had improved since Wave One. Improved relations and understanding are not only desirable, *per se*, but should increase the likelihood that incapacity benefits recipients receive the most appropriate service or combination of services to help them move towards work. However, there was also evidence from Jobcentre Plus staff that not all Job Brokers were perceived positively and some had failed to establish a good reputation with them or to inform them of details of their services. As a result, some Jobcentre Plus staff were working with only a subset of their local Job Brokers.

In the context of the rolling introduction of the Jobcentre Plus process model (referred to in 8.2 above) and the Incapacity Benefit Reform pilots, it is likely in the future that more claimants will learn about Job Brokers in a work-focused interview at a Jobcentre Plus office. There is likely, therefore, to be a greater reliance on personal advisers to inform and advise claimants about Job Brokers. The evidence from this evaluation so far is that practice here is still very varied. Job Broker staff often did not know who was told about their services or what kind of information was offered by Jobcentre Plus staff. In Jobcentre Plus offices, understanding about local Job Brokers' services and ways of working varied considerably among work-focused interview advisers, but DEAs generally had more detailed knowledge. There were also wide variations in the extent to which Jobcentre Plus staff signposted potential clients to individual Job Brokers, but these must be seen in the context of the change in the guidelines from the Department to Jobcentre Plus staff in relation to promoting informed choice. Some staff were still offering minimal information, such as a list of Job Brokers in the area, while others were making direct referrals to specific Job Brokers (and sometimes facilitating an initial contact).

In Section 8.3, it was suggested that incapacity benefits recipients who want to work must have their needs matched to appropriate services and interventions. Encouraging effective working relationships based on mutual awareness, understanding, trust and confidence between Jobcentre Plus and Job Brokers would appear to be essential if that is to be achieved.

8.6 Funding and targets

The funding of NDDP and the associated contractual arrangements (including targets) have had an important impact on the design and delivery of Job Broker services. The principle of outcome funding has always underpinned the design of the NDDP national extension and the structure of payments for registration, job entry, and sustained employment has remained unchanged. However, there have been two important changes from the original arrangements that were made in October 2003:

- registration payments increased from £100 to £300; and
- sustained employment payments made at 13 weeks instead of 26 weeks.

Payments for job entries and sustained employment outcomes have always been negotiated separately between each Job Broker organisation and the Department. Detailed information on the level of these payments was not sought in the qualitative interviews, but managers and other staff made it clear that these were much higher than registration payments. The weighting of payments towards job entry and sustained employment was a matter of concern for some Job Brokers and is discussed further later.

An additional important change has been the introduction by the Department of a target for 'conversion' of registrations into job entries. This was set at 25 per cent in the autumn of 2003 when extensions to original contracts were negotiated.

The emerging influence of funding arrangements was explored in the report from the first wave of qualitative research. At that time Job Broker staff reported that experience of the funding arrangements had prompted changes in their registration practices (towards more job-ready clients), and restrictions in services and staff numbers. At Wave Two, Job Broker managers reported similar effects but, in addition, some noted the additional effect of the 'conversion rate' target. At Wave Two, therefore, more Job Brokers were mostly registering people whom they were confident would find employment, and in a relatively short period of time. If there was some doubt about the likelihood of someone eventually finding work, some Job Brokers provided an initial period of support without formally registering them. This meant possibly forgoing the registration payment but reduced the risk of not meeting the 25 per cent conversion rate target. Not all Job Brokers concentrated on job-ready clients, however, and many continued to work with people who were further away from the labour market for reasons of health, lack of recent work experience, or low self-confidence.

The extent to which Job Broker services experienced the effect of the funding arrangements depended on three factors: whether there was a devolved budget for Job Broker services; any sources of other funding to cover part of job broking costs, such as some staff; and any direct or indirect subsidisation of job broking from the parent organisation. A common, and growing, practice among Job Brokers was to offer financial inducements or rewards to clients that mirrored the timing of payments available from the Department. Many Job Brokers offered clients payments when they entered work and when they had stayed there for 13 weeks. Some Job Brokers also gave clients a payment for registering with them initially.

In general, Job Broker staff and managers were broadly in agreement with the principle of outcome funding, some feeling that it encouraged improvements to the quality of service to clients. However, as in Wave One, there was a consistent view that the balance and the levels of funding overall, were not appropriate for the input they had to make to help the NDDP client group. There were a number of suggestions for improvement:

- introduction of some form of set-up funding;
- higher payments for registration (in relation to the other outcome payments);
- increasing outcome payments for part-time jobs (from the current 50 per cent of the rate for a full-time job entry);
- funding for *intermediate* outcomes (particularly for people who register when a long way from work); and
- funding for some types of Job Broker activity such as training or job coaching (again particularly for people who register when a long way from work).

The inequalities in payments between Job Broker organisations (the result of separate negotiations with each) were also widely seen as unfair.

The funding arrangements and targets for NDDP and the changes to these have, of course, been intended to promote and support effective and efficient practice. In thinking about future funding that might accompany changes to NDDP after the end of the national extension period, some of the consequences of the current arrangements should be borne in mind. These include:

- the risk that Job Broker services become more concentrated on job-ready people at the expense of those further from the labour market;
- the vulnerability of services that are not self sufficient but underpinned in some way by the parent organisation;
- the possibility that financial inducements to clients from Job Brokers biases the practices of Jobcentre Plus staff in referring potential clients;
- the possibility of collusion between Job Broker and Jobcentre Plus staff to secure outcome payments and points for both; and
- the possibility of clients 'churning' through different Job Brokers in order to receive financial inducements to register (and thus generating several possible registration payments).

These consequences can be viewed in different ways: as problems that require some form of remedial response; as unavoidable effects that can be tolerated; or as findings that can be used to influence policy. Some of the implications of these are discussed in Section 8.7.

8.7 Implications for policy

The national extension of the NDDP pilot is due to end in 2005. The recent changes to the Jobcentre Plus process model and the introduction of pilots of the Incapacity Benefit Reforms suggest that incapacity benefits claimants, in future, will be required to attend not only one, but possibly more, mandatory work-focused interviews. The future role of Job Brokers cannot be viewed in isolation, therefore, but must be compatible with these likely increases in the extent of conditionality of benefit receipt.

The two waves of qualitative research that have formed part of the overall evaluation programme have generated a wealth of data that can inform thinking about the future direction of policy. Findings have indicated how Job Broker services have contributed positively to moving people towards and into work and why some people have not been helped. This final section builds on these findings to address three fundamental policy questions:

- How can incapacity benefits recipients best be helped to move towards and into work?
- What role, if any, should Job Brokers play?
- What structural and financial arrangements can support Job Brokers?

8.7.1 How can incapacity benefits recipients best be helped to move towards and into work?

The answer to this question is addressed fully in Chapter 3 and discussed further in Section 8.3. Clients are best served by services that meet a number of functional requirements: firstly, to help them identify their aspirations and needs; secondly, to match their needs with appropriate provision; and thirdly, to maintain communication between themselves and their advisers. This is not an answer that requires a single type of organisation. Different organisational models are capable of fulfilling these functional requirements.

However, these are also demanding requirements. In the course of this study, it has become clear that some incapacity benefits claimants have been well served by their Job Broker or by Jobcentre Plus or, occasionally, by a combination of both. They have received the help they need at the right time and have made the transition into paid work. Others have not fared so well, but as shown in Chapters 3 and 4, it appears that some of these might have progressed more had they been linked with the right sort of help.

Whether people are matched with the services they need might depend heavily on their first point of contact with the network of services and organisations that help people with health conditions and disabilities into work. For example, someone on incapacity benefits thinking about work might first contact one of a number of sources, including a Jobcentre Plus office, a Job Broker (for example, in response to advertising) or its parent organisation, an organisation providing some form of related provision (such as a training provider or college), a GP or other health service worker, or an advice or welfare rights agency. Two related challenges for policy are, therefore, to ensure that incapacity benefits recipients are made aware that combining work with receipt of benefit is legitimate and desirable, and to ensure that they are directed towards the most appropriate form of help, regardless of with whom they first discuss a desire to get back to work.

Current policy developments are encouraging here given that most new claimants of incapacity benefits will be required to take part in one or more work-focused interviews in the future. This reinforces the already pivotal position of Jobcentre Plus advisers as sources of information and advice about the full range of help available in a local area. Because they are not primarily providers of services themselves, they have the potential of acting as neutral brokers of services for incapacity benefits claimants. In contrast, it is possibly not feasible to expect Job Brokers and other providers to be knowledgeable about the full range of provision in the same way, particularly when they are effectively operating in a competitive environment and have little incentive to refer people on to a different organisation.

In the future it is highly likely that clients will continue to make initial contact with non Jobcentre Plus sources, particularly since many organisations, including Job Brokers, undertake their own advertising, publicity and outreach work.

To best serve the interests of clients, therefore, there appear to be two central roles for the Department:

- to promote a comprehensive range of services and interventions in all areas; and
- to maximise the likelihood that clients are matched to the most appropriate services.

For most of the time that the NDDP national extension has been running the principal mechanism for ensuring that clients are matched to the most appropriate Job Broker has been *client choice*. In the report of the first wave of qualitative research the conclusion was reached that, in the first 12 to 15 months of the national extension, client choice was not working as intended. Chapter 3 of this report presents data that show this is still the case. Clients do not always find out about more than one Job Broker, and even then, do not find out much about what that Job Broker can do for them. While there is no suggestion here for removing choice altogether, there is perhaps an argument for promoting quality of services alongside better forms of advice and guidance as an alternative strategy for the Department.

These findings do not necessarily provide arguments either for or against the continuation of a programme called the 'New Deal for Disabled People'. Other findings, such as the cost-effectiveness of Job Brokers, and judgments about the appropriate allocation of public spending, will clearly form an important part of policy decision making. However, there is evidence from this qualitative evaluation that points to Job Broker services in the future forming part of a strategy for helping people with health conditions and disabilities into work, a theme that was raised earlier in Section 8.2.

8.7.2 What role should Job Brokers play?

There are a number of arguments that have emerged from this qualitative study that suggest that Job Brokers can play a productive role in future policy for helping disabled people and people with health conditions back to work. It is difficult to see how the Department can address the aim of promoting a comprehensive range of services and interventions in all areas without input from Job Broker organisations. Part of the reason for this observation is the finding (reported in Chapter 6) that, despite some duplication of provision, the work of Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff was complementary.

Views about the value of Job Brokers changed between the two waves of the study, but there appears to have been a growing and mutual recognition among Job Brokers themselves and Jobcentre Plus staff that some of what brokers provide is different from Jobcentre Plus services. For example:

- Job Brokers were perceived to have more time to spend with clients;
- Job Brokers had access to a wider range of interventions, in particular in-work support;

- Job Brokers had additional resources unavailable to Jobcentre Plus;
- some Job Brokers had levels of expertise, for example in relation to specific health conditions and impairments;
- Job Brokers were less encumbered by red tape, and not associated negatively with government or the benefits system; and
- some Job Brokers had developed strong links with employers.

Jobcentre Plus offered different services, including:

- specialist assistance from DEAs and occupational psychologists;
- access to schemes such as Work Preparation, Work-based Learning for Adults and WORKSTEP;
- detailed knowledge of the benefit and tax credit systems; and
- access to the Adviser Discretionary Fund.

The lists above suggest positive features of Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus that can inform further policy thinking, but it is not the argument here that all of the people interviewed held these positive views. For example, some DEAs, in particular, disputed the notion that Job Broker organisations housed specialist expertise, and some Jobcentre Plus staff did not think all claimants viewed them negatively and were used to, and happy with, visiting Jobcentre Plus premises. Nevertheless, the findings from the qualitative element of the evaluation package suggest that Job Broker organisations, whether or not under the banner of the 'New Deal for Disabled People', have potential to contribute to the Government's policy aim of moving people on incapacity benefits towards and into work, though perhaps, as suggested in the evaluation report of the original NDDP personal adviser pilots (Loumidis *et al.*, 2001, p.249), as only 'one element in a concerted multifaceted strategy'.

It was mentioned previously that one of the consequences of the changes to Job Broker funding and targets has been for some Job Brokers to concentrate more on 'job-ready' clients. Indeed, it has emerged that there is a growing perception among Jobcentre Plus staff that Job Brokers principally, or only, deal with such clients. As also mentioned this might, or might not, be perceived as a problem. What clients need, as explained in Section 8.7.1, is the appropriate type of help, not help from a particular type of organisation. If Job Brokers concentrate on job-ready clients the services available to people further from the labour market would be restricted overall unless other services met their needs.

Though some Job Brokers have reached the conclusion that they cannot provide services to people further from the labour market under current funding arrangements, others have well-established services aimed at helping such people, which represents a positive contribution to overall policy aims. There do not appear, therefore, to be strong arguments in favour of restricting Job Brokers to any

particular kind of client, in particular, the 'job-ready'. By contrast, there may be stronger arguments for encouraging more provision for people further from work through, for example, changes to the funding arrangements (which are discussed in the following section).

8.7.3 What structural and financial arrangements can support Job Brokers?

As mentioned in Section 8.6 there was general support among Job Broker managers and other staff for the principle of outcome funding. No other model of funding was raised as an alternative. However, the structure and level of payments and the target for 'conversions' from job entries to sustained employment, have had impacts on practice, some of which can be seen as negative, that need to be kept under review.

There are also opportunities to consider further changes suggested by Job Brokers in relation to set-up funding, the level of payments for registration and part-time job entries, and additional payments for activities and intermediate outcomes for people a long way from the labour market.

8.7.4 Final comments

The NDDP has been in a state of change and development since it was first introduced in 1998 as a programme of 12 'personal adviser pilots' that ran until 2001. The personal adviser model that formed the basis of those pilots informed the national extension of NDDP in 2001, which itself was clearly defined as part of an ongoing pilot phase. The evolving nature of NDDP, which has been set out in detail in this, and the previous, qualitative research report has been the backdrop against which the evaluation project has taken place.

This report, therefore, does not claim to be any form of 'end-of-term report', but must be seen rather as a report of a project in progress. Some of the developments that have taken place (such as changes to funding arrangements) have occurred relatively late in the period covered by the research. Although the findings reported here cover a period of over two years, it can be argued that this is still too short a time to offer any definitive verdict of the performance of some Job Brokers. Experience in delivering Job Broker services appears to be highly salient to performance. As shown in Chapter 7, all of the organisations that provided services under the personal adviser pilots from 1998 to 2001 were among the highest performing group of Job Brokers.

What has been possible in this report, however, has been to identify, at a high level of abstraction, the elements of NDDP and Jobcentre Plus that help people move towards, and stay in, work, and at the level of detail some of the specific features of Job Broker services that have been effective. It has also been possible to show how Job Brokers have been influenced by the structural and financial parameters of NDDP.

What has emerged is that, collectively, Job Brokers appear to have established themselves as important contributors to pursuing the aims of NDDP, through the provision of services that can complement and add capacity to services available through existing Jobcentre Plus programmes and contracts. Services and interventions that help people move towards, and into, work have continued to develop, though improvements in the provision of in-work support have been less impressive.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, whereas NDDP was originally the central element of policy to help people with health conditions and disabilities back to work, it must now be seen in the context of more recent policy developments such as the roll out of Jobcentre Plus and the introduction of the Incapacity Benefit Reform pilots. The relationship between Jobcentre Plus and Job Broker organisations is likely, therefore, to be one of the keys to any success or failure of the Government's welfare to work agenda for people on incapacity benefits.

Within a model of delivery that is based on a network of diverse organisations each of whom can make its own decisions about the scale and scope of services it offers, it is inevitable that changing behaviour and performance in the future will require a mix of approaches. Some things are within the power of the Department and Jobcentre Plus policy makers and managers to change, such as funding levels, target requirements, and contract management. Other things such as referral practices from Job Brokers to other services and establishing and improving personal relations with Jobcentre Plus staff, might have to rely on the professionalism, goodwill and commitment of Job Brokers, and be promoted through other means such as disseminating examples of good and effective practice. There is also perhaps a need for the highest tiers of management in the Department for Work and Pensions and Job Brokers to promulgate and reinforce the message to management and frontline staff in their respective organisations that co-operation and collaboration *at all levels* is necessary for the future development and success of the New Deal for Disabled People.

Appendix A

Published NDDP evaluation reports

Ashworth, K., Hartfree, Y., Kazimirski, A., Legge, K., Pires, C., Reyes de Beaman, S., Shaw, A. and Stafford, B. (2004), *New Deal for Disabled People National Extension: First Wave of the First Cohort of the Survey of Registrants*, DWP Research Report 180, Sheffield.

Aston, J., Atkinson, J., Evans, C., Davis, S. and O' Regan, S. (2003), *Employers and the New Deal for Disabled People: qualitative research first wave*. DWP Report No.145.

Corden, A., Harries, T., Hill, K., Kellard, K., Lewis, J., Sainsbury, R. and Thornton, P. (2003), *New Deal For Disabled People National Extension: Findings From The First Wave Of Qualitative Research With Clients, Job Brokers And Jobcentre Plus Staff*. DWP Report No 169.

Kazimirski, A., Pires, C., Shaw, A., Sainsbury, R. and Meah, A. (2005 forthcoming). *New Deal for Disabled People Evaluation: Eligible Population Survey Wave Three*. DWP Research Report.

Woodward, C., Kazimirski, A., Shaw, A. and Pires, C. (2003), *New Deal for Disabled People Evaluation: eligible population survey Wave One interim report*. DWP Report No.170.

Appendix B

Full methodological and sampling details

B.1 Job Brokers

This section describes the initial selection of Job Broker services to be included in the in-depth study (Section B.1.1), and preliminary site visits to the selected organisations (Section B.1.2). The sample selection, recruitment and fieldwork conducted with Job Broker managers and staff is outlined, with the approach taken in the first wave of research (in 2002) described in Section B.1.3, and the approach taken in the second wave (during 2003/2004) in Section B.1.4.

B.1.1 Initial selection of in-depth study Job Broker services

Eighteen local outlets of Job Broker services were selected as the focus of the in-depth study. Job Broker services vary in their geographic coverage, some covering just one local authority area, others several contiguous local authorities; a larger area or region; several areas or regions or a country, and some providing UK-wide coverage. The intention in DWP's procurement of services was to ensure that there was choice in service delivery wherever possible, and most local authority areas had somewhere between two and eight Job Broker services. The areas covered by individual Job Broker services changed somewhat during the course of the study. It was decided that, where in-depth study Job Brokers operated in more than one area, the study should focus as much as possible on an individual local outlet to ensure that delivery there could be explored in some detail.

The initial selection of Job Brokers was based on information provided in Job Broker service bids which was collated by the research team. The key selection criteria were:

- size of Job Broker service area (based on the number of local authority areas covered by Job Brokers and predicted volume of registrations);
- type of organisation (public, private, or voluntary sector, and including some partnerships or consortia of organisations);
- any specialism by impairment type;
- geographical location (including some areas covered by more than one of the Job Brokers in the study); and
- principal mode of delivery (to ensure inclusion of telephone-based services).

The selected Job Brokers were notified by DWP that they had been chosen for the in-depth study.

B.1.2 Site visits

The study began with a site visit to each selected Job Broker service where the research team interviewed the service manager (sometimes more than one, either separately or together) and conducted a focus group with frontline staff. The aim here was to collect background information on the organisation itself, structure and staffing of the Job Broker service, range and types of services provided, target clientele, practices and procedures followed by staff, links with other organisations and the local labour market. The interviews and discussions took place in spring 2002 and lasted for between an hour and an hour and a half and were tape-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed; this information was then summarised in a proforma for each service.

B.1.3 Wave One

Wave One sample selection and recruitment

The Wave One fieldwork, similarly, involved an in-depth interview with each service manager and a focus group with frontline staff. The manager of each service was contacted by letter, followed up by telephone, to make arrangements for the fieldwork. Staff were nominated by the service manager who was asked to identify four to five advisers who worked directly with clients, and to ensure, where possible, that the selection of individual reflected:

- different roles and specialisms;
- differences in ways of working with clients;
- different offices (where the team was located in more than one);
- diversity in age and sex; and
- different professional backgrounds.

Those nominated were then contacted directly by the research team to provide more written information about the group discussions. They were also asked to complete a proforma giving brief information about their role, the proportion of their time spent working on the Job Broker service, and their professional background.

Wave One fieldwork

Fieldwork took place at the Job Broker offices to minimise disruption for Job Broker teams, between August and October 2002. Interviews with managers lasted between an hour and an hour and a half; in a small number of cases two or three managers were interviewed together, where the Job Broker team felt this was necessary to provide full responses, given the different roles of individual managers. Interviews followed topic guides which covered the following themes:

- background to the service, organisation and their role;
- reasons for involvement in Job Broker service;
- any partnership arrangements;
- staffing structure and set up;
- funding arrangements;
- relationships with the DWP;
- clients: registration, target groups, referral routes;
- promotional activities;
- relationships with external organisations including employers;
- perceived impacts of the service, learning points and plans for the future.

Focus groups with staff involved between two and six advisers; in one case, a single adviser was interviewed, by telephone, where their organisation worked in partnership with another but a single member of staff was involved. The precise roles and titles of staff varied. Discussions lasted for up to two hours, and were tape-recorded with participants' consent. The topics addressed were:

- staff roles and staffing set up;
- initial contact with clients and registration;
- working with clients;
- in-work support;
- decisions and discretion;
- local employers;
- promotional activities;
- perceived impacts of the service.

In addition, the research team observed at least one interaction (usually face-to-face meetings) between Job Broker staff and clients, to provide some insight into the way in which staff work with clients. The staff member was first asked to discuss with the client the possibility of the research team observing a session, and to provide and go through written information about what would be involved. If the client consented to the session being observed, the research team member was then brought in and introduced to the client. They gave a verbal explanation of what would be involved to the client and the client's consent was again sought. Notes were taken of sessions on a proforma, and the information collected informed the fieldwork undertaken.

Feedback event

An event was held in Sheffield in October 2003 to provide feedback to the teams involved; all 18 Job Brokers were invited to send up to two members of staff to participate. The purpose was primarily to present the key findings for discussion with Job Brokers and to answer questions, but the event was also used as an opportunity to gather information about developments and changes in delivery since the first wave of fieldwork.

B.1.4 Wave Two

Wave Two selection of in-depth study Job Brokers

The second wave of research involved fieldwork with all the first stage Job Brokers bar one which had withdrawn from delivering NDDP after the first stage fieldwork. In addition, at the DWP's request, the sample of Job Broker organisations was widened to include a small number of additional Job Brokers who appeared to be operating most effectively. Fieldwork was reduced among a small number of Wave One Job Brokers who appeared not to be among the strongest performers nationally. Five new Job Brokers were included at this stage. With six of the existing Wave One Job Brokers, fieldwork was limited to an interview with the Job Broker manager and did not involve a group discussion with staff. The additional and reduced fieldwork Job Brokers were selected on the basis of their job entry and sustainable job rates as recorded in the evaluation database. However, since there were differences among Job Brokers in the types of clients with whom they worked, which might be expected to affect job entry rates, the selection also took account of:

- specialisms in client group, to ensure inclusion of Job Brokers who were achieving high or relatively high performance levels with clients with more severe and enduring mental health conditions and learning disabilities;
- payment levels, to ensure representation of Job Brokers who were achieving relatively high performance levels with lower outcome payment levels;
- employment outcomes for clients who had recently claimed incapacity benefits and for those who had been on incapacity benefit for at least six months, to ensure the sample was not unduly biased towards Job Brokers who work with clients expected to be closer to work and to have fewer needs of the service; and
- size of area of operation, sector, and type of organisation, to ensure that the diversity sought at Wave One was maintained.

Wave Two sample selection and recruitment

Within 17 Job Broker organisations, an interview with the service manager and a focus group with frontline staff was conducted; within six Job Broker organisations, the fieldwork involved an interview with the service manager only. As at Wave One, Job Broker managers were approached by letter and by telephone to outline what the research would involve and the key research questions. They were again asked to nominate staff to take part in the focus groups, with the same criteria as at Wave One, and the nominated staff were again contacted direct by the research team to provide more information about the research and the group discussion.

Wave Two fieldwork

As noted in Chapter 1 of the Wave Two study report, because of the breadth of issues to be covered, a series of core themes and additional themes were identified. Core themes were explored with all Job Broker services; additional themes were explored with a subset of between nine and 14 Job Brokers. The allocation of theme to individual Job Broker was designed carefully to ensure that each theme was explored with a diverse set of Job Brokers.

With Job Broker managers, the core themes explored were:

- the staffing and organisation of service provision;
- registration practices and particularly any selection of clients;
- an overview of developments in provision; and
- decisions about continuing with or withdrawing from the service.

The additional themes were:

- marketing;
- relationships with Jobcentre Plus;
- in-work support;
- relationships with employers;
- funding; and
- developments in implementation, covering specific issues such as the use of 'better-off' calculations, action plans and basic skills assessments.

Among Job Broker staff, the core themes were:

- the organisation of staffing; and
- registration practices.

The additional themes were:

- identifying and meeting clients needs;
- funding and targets;
- in-work support;
- relations with employers;
- relations with Jobcentre Plus;
- developments in implementation; and
- non-participation, where eligible potential clients approach the service but do not register.

The research teams prepared for fieldwork by reviewing transcripts and analysis notes from Wave One visits to the Job Brokers. In general, changes since Wave One were explored by asking Job Broker staff to identify how service delivery had evolved, but the research teams were also alert to apparent differences in staff members' accounts between Wave One and Wave Two and used these as further prompts to explore changes in service delivery or in views.

Interviews with managers lasted for up to one and a half hours, and in some cases, two or three managers were interviewed together as at Wave One. Focus groups with advisers lasted for around an hour and a half and generally involved four or five members of staff, but in one case seven advisers took part and some groups were smaller. Fieldwork took place between December 2003 and March 2004, again at Job Broker team offices and, generally, on a single day. One interview was conducted by telephone. All interviews and focus groups were tape recorded with participants' permission and transcribed verbatim.

B.2 Clients

This section describes in detail the sample design, selection, recruitment and fieldwork conducted with the NDDP clients included in this research. Section B.2.1 describes the approach taken in the first wave of research, and Section B.2.2 outlines the approach taken in the second wave of the research.

B.2.1 Wave One clients

Wave One sample selection

The in-depth study focused on 18 Job Brokers covering specific local authorities. The client sample was designed to include 90 interviews with clients registered with the 18 selected Job Brokers (five clients per Job Broker).

The sampling criteria was designed to represent a range of characteristics across the 90 achieved interviews. The characteristics were agreed with the Department, taking into account their particular interest in the inclusion of people with mental health conditions and people aged fifty or over. The key sampling characteristics were:

- age (range from 18 up to 65);
- gender;
- primary disability or impairment (as recorded on the NDDP database);
- ethnicity;
- benefit (as recorded on the NDDP database);
- job entry since registration;
- whether clients were in receipt of a qualifying benefit in September 2001 or began a claim after this date (as recorded on the NDDP database);
- area (to include clients from rural areas if possible).

A database of NDDP registrants provided by the Department was used to construct a sample frame of people who had registered with one of the selected Job Brokers at least three months prior to the commencement of the fieldwork. This was to ensure that registrants would have had the chance to participate in NDDP between registration and fieldwork, but would still be able to recollect details of their participation. The sample frame aimed to include 25 registrants per Job Broker⁸, from which five would be purposively selected and interviewed, based on the key characteristics highlighted above.

Wave One Recruitment

An opt-out letter was sent to all of the 442 clients included in the sample frame. The letter explained the purpose of the research and gave people an opportunity to 'opt-out' of the research by contacting the research team by telephone or letter within two weeks. Seventeen people withdrew from the research, and one letter was returned with the addressee unknown. A further 22 recipients of the letter contacted the research team during this period in relation to the study, some were keen to take part, some wished to amend contact details and others sought clarification about the letter or the research.

Details of the remaining sample (424 people) were then distributed among the research team who each took responsibility for selecting and recruiting registrants of their six Job Brokers. The sample build-up as a whole was carefully monitored to ensure sufficient representation across the different sampling criteria.

⁸ In a few cases, selected Job Brokers had fewer than 25 registrants during the specified time period.

In most cases, respondents were contacted by telephone to arrange a convenient time for an interview. A letter was then sent out to confirm the arrangements. Where it was not possible to contact people by telephone, a letter was sent out to advise them that a researcher may be calling on them to discuss the possibility of an interview. In all correspondence, respondents were given reassurances about confidentiality and asked if they had any requirements that could help their participation in the interview.

Wave One fieldwork

The Wave One client fieldwork was carried out between August and October 2002 by researchers from CRSP, NatCen and SPRU. In-depth interviews were used to explore the impact of the NDDP programme from the clients' perspective and to gather their views and experiences. The topic guide used in the interviews was designed in consultation with the Department and covered the following themes:

- respondent background including personal circumstances, benefit and work history;
- initial awareness of, and reaction to, NDDP;
- approach and registration with a Job Broker;
- the types of services received through NDDP;
- outcomes, including employment and non-work outcomes;
- overall views, including the service received from the in-depth study Job Broker and more general views about the programme.

Interviews generally took place in people's homes. In a few cases, respondents chose to have another person present during the interview, typically a parent or a partner. Interview length was generally between 45 minutes to an hour and a half. Respondents' permission was sought for the interview to be tape-recorded, and in the majority of cases this was given. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim. In a small number of cases, respondents indicated that they did not want the interview to be recorded, so detailed notes were taken instead. At the end of the interview, consent was sought from respondents to contact them in a year's time for a follow-up interview (consent was given in all cases). All respondents were given £20 to thank them for taking part in the research. Details of the characteristics of the respondents are given in Table B.1.

Table B.1 Wave One achieved sample composition

	No. of interviews
Age	
Under 35 years	25
35 – 49 years	36
50 years and over	29
Gender	
Men	53
Women	37
Primary disability/impairment (from NDDP database)*	
Mental health	29
Problems with neck/back	12
Problems with arms/hands	10
Problems with legs/feet	10
Heart/blood pressure	5
Sensory impairment	5
Epilepsy	3
Progressive illness not covered above	3
Learning difficulties	2
Chest, breathing problems	1
Diabetes	1
Skin conditions, allergies	1
Stomach, Liver, Kidney, digestion	1
Other	7
Ethnic minority group	16
Benefits claimed (from NDDP database)*	
Incapacity benefit (LT and ST)	64
Income support (with a Disability premium)	15
SDA	5
Other	6
Job entry since registration	22
Client type (from NDDP database)*	
Receiving a qualifying benefit in September 2001	67
Began a claim after September 2001	15
Unknown	8

* Categories based on DWP records at time of sample selection, which are likely to vary from information collected during interviews.

B.2.2 Wave Two clients

The research was designed to include follow-up interviews with around half of the NDDP participants interviewed at the first wave to explore the longer term experiences and impact of the Job Broker service. In addition, interviews were carried out with a new sample of people who had registered at a later stage of the programme. The two different approaches to sample selection, recruitment and fieldwork are outlined in Sections B.2.2.1 and B.2.2.2.

B.2.2.1 Wave One follow-up interviews

Wave One follow-up sample selection

The aim of the Wave One follow-up was to conduct a second interview with around half of the 90 people originally interviewed in Wave One, to include in particular those who had had experience of (sustained) work since initially registering, as well as those who had not been in employment but had remained in contact with the Job Broker service. Administrative data from the Department's database of NDDP registrants was used to identify Wave One respondents' activities since the initial interview. Information was available on registration status (if still registered with the same Job Broker, deregistered, or registered with another Job Broker), and also employment status (if entered and/or sustained⁹ employment and dates).

The database information was reviewed in conjunction with what was known about respondents from the Wave One interview. This enabled the researchers to identify three main sampling groups based on circumstances in relation to work at Wave One, and recorded change in terms of employment and Job Broker registration since the first research interview. The three groups were:

- those who had worked since Wave One (particularly those with a sustained period of employment);
- those who were not in work at Wave One, were not recorded as entering work since then, but still were still registered with (and ideally still in contact with) the Job Broker; and
- those who were not in work at Wave One, were subsequently recorded as de-registering from a Job Broker (mostly at the Job Broker request) with no record of employment.

Where possible, within these groups it was hoped to include both men and women, and a range of ages and different health conditions.

Subsequent contact with potential respondents revealed that the database information was not always accurate. For example, some respondents were no longer in contact with a Job Broker, but were still registered. Others had had

⁹ Sustained employment refers to the NDDP definition which, at that time, was 26 weeks.

experience of employment, but this did not appear on the NDDP database (often because the client was no longer in touch with the Job Broker so had not informed them).

Wave One follow-up recruitment

A letter was sent by the researchers to the Wave One clients to remind them about the research and to advise them that a researcher may contact them about taking part in another interview. During a follow-up telephone call to respondents, basic information was obtained with regard to employment status and Job Broker contact since the Wave One interview, to supplement the sample selection data. Where appropriate, an interview time was arranged.

Wave One follow-up fieldwork

The Wave Two fieldwork was carried out between December 2003 and April 2004. Most interviews were conducted by telephone although a few face-to-face interviews took place, at the request of the respondent. The interviews began with a review of the client's employment activity and Job Broker contact at the time of the Wave One interview (using a brief proforma completed in advance by the researcher). A topic guide was then used to guide the interview, which covered the following areas:

- changes in circumstances and economic activity;
- factors that have contributed to change;
- experiences of work;
- contact with the Job Broker since the Wave One interview; and
- overall views on the impact of participation in NDDP.

The interviews varied in length from under thirty minutes to more than an hour. Interviews were tape recorded in almost all cases, and then transcribed verbatim. As in Wave One, interviewees were sent £20 as a token of thanks for taking part in the research.

Table B.2 Wave One follow-up interviews: achieved sample composition

	No. of interviews
Age (at registration date)	
Under 35	9
35 – 49	17
50 or over	19
Gender	
Men	29
Women	16
Primary disability/impairment (from NDDP database)*	
Mental health	12
Problems with neck/back	8
Problems with arms/hands	5
Problems with legs/feet	5
Heart/blood pressure	3
Sensory impairment	3
Epilepsy	1
Progressive illness not covered above	1
Learning difficulties	1
Skin conditions, allergies	1
Other	5
Benefit duration**	
Less than 6 months	11
6 > 24 months	7
24 months or over	25
Information not available	2
Work circumstances at Wave 1 and Wave 2	
Not in work at W1 or W2#	18
Not in work at W1, in work at W2	13
In work at W1, not at W2	3
In work at W1 and W2##	11

* Categories based on DWP records at time of sample selection, which are likely to vary from information collected during interviews.

** Duration of last claim before registration – from DWP records supplemented with client interview data.

Though may have experienced work during this period.

Not necessarily in same job, and may also include movement in and out of work.

B.2.2.2 Wave Two 'new' clients

Wave Two 'new' clients sample selection

The Wave Two 'new' clients comprised people who had registered for NDDP around 18 months after those interviewed at Wave One of the research. This second group of clients were selected from 12 of the original 18 Job Brokers included in Wave One, plus a further six Job Brokers new to the study (see Section B.3 for Job Broker selection details).

The sample was selected purposively, again using the Department's NDDP registrants database to match Job Broker and local authority area. As well as a spread across age, gender, and health condition, the following criteria were taken into consideration:

- registration month – with the aim of minimising the time between (recorded) registration and interview;
- employment status – to ensure the inclusion of people who had entered employment since NDDP registration. Where numbers allowed a choice, clients were selected who had been (recorded as) registered with the Job Broker for more than a few weeks prior to job entry, to ensure that they had had some experience of the Job Broker service before entering work; and
- benefit duration – to include a spread of length of time on benefit (less than six months, six months to two years, and over two years).

The aim was to achieve two or three client interviews per Job Broker, giving a total of 45 'new' Wave Two respondents. The preliminary sampling frame consisted of 220 clients, covering all of the 18 selected Job Brokers.

Wave Two 'new' clients recruitment

The process of recruitment for this group of clients broadly followed the approach used in Wave One of the study (see Section 1.2). The opt-out exercise generated 17 telephone calls from potential respondents, of which seven opted out; the remainder were enquiries from people who were interested in taking part or who wanted to know more about the research. Details of the remaining sample were distributed amongst the research teams who then contacted clients to arrange an interview.

Wave Two 'new' clients fieldwork

The Wave Two new client fieldwork was carried out between January and March 2004. The in-depth interviews followed a topic guide which covered:

- respondent background including personal circumstances, benefit and work history;
- finding out about NDDP and registration with a Job Broker;
- client needs and how these were met by the Job Broker service;

- views about the Job Broker service organisation and staff;
- support received from other sources; and
- experiences of employment.

As in Wave One, the majority of interviews were conducted in peoples' homes, although alternative venues were used where this was more convenient. In a few cases, respondents chose to have another person present during the interview, typically a parent or a partner. The interview length varied from under an hour to around an hour and a half. The interviews were tape recorded with clients' permission and interviewees were given £20 as a token of thanks.

Table B.3 Wave Two 'new' clients: achieved sample composition

	No. of interviews
Gender	
Men	22
Women	23
Age	
Under 35	12
35 – 49	19
50 or over	14
Primary disability/impairment (from NDDP database)*	
Mental health	11
Problems with neck/back	8
Problems with legs/feet	7
Problems with arms/hands	2
Sensory impairment	2
Learning difficulties	2
Diabetes	2
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion	2
Heart/blood pressure	1
Chest, breathing problems	1
Other	6
Prefers not to say	1

Continued

Table B.3 Continued

	No. of interviews
Benefit duration**	
Less than 6 months	7
6 > 24 months	9
24 months or over	25
Information not available	2
N/A—already in work, receives DLA	2
Employment experience since registration	
Not worked	20
Moved into work, still in work at time of interview	15
Moved into work, but ended by time of interview	5
Already in work at registration	5

* Categories based on DWP records at time of sample selection, which are likely to vary from information collected during interviews.

** Duration of last claim before registration – from DWP records supplemented with client interview data.

B.3 Jobcentre Plus staff

This section details the sample design, selection, recruitment and fieldwork conducted with Jobcentre Plus staff. Section B.3.1 relates to Wave One discussions with mixed groups of advisers, designed not to include DEAs, and to Wave Two discussion groups with work-focused interview advisers. Section B.3.2 relates to interviews with DEAs. In each section, the first part describes the approach in Wave One and second part that in Wave Two.

B.3.1 Jobcentre Plus Advisers

B.3.1.1 Wave One

Wave One Jobcentre Plus Advisers Sample Selection

The aim was to convene in each of the areas covered by the 18 study Job Broker organisations a group discussion with Jobcentre Plus staff.

The aim was to recruit four to six advisers to each group discussion, drawing participants from those offices in or closest to the study areas. The aim was for each group to have a mix of men and women who had direct experience of referring potential clients to Job Brokers offering services in the study areas. This meant experience of explaining to customers how Job Broker services supported people with impairments and health problems who wanted to try work, and helping customers get in touch with Job Brokers by giving contact details or making direct contact on behalf of customers.

At this stage, the Jobcentre Plus Pathfinder integrated office model was operating in some offices in eight of the Wave One study areas, and the aim was that some staff recruited to the group discussions would have experience of conducting work-focused interviews with incapacity benefits customers. In areas where there were no Pathfinder offices, the aim was to recruit Jobcentre Plus staff who might provide a 'gateway' to Job Brokers, including personal advisers, specialist advisers, or New Deal advisers, depending on office organisation.

Wave One Jobcentre Plus advisers recruitment

Jobcentre Plus Managers were asked through Departmental channels to help identify staff who could contribute to the groups, and the researchers sent letters of invitation and explanation to staff who hoped to take part.

Where study areas overlapped, and there were practical problems for Jobcentre Plus in arranging for sufficient experienced staff to take part, one group discussion was held instead of two. In addition, there was no 'local area' for one Job Broker offering a telephone service on a national basis. As a result, fifteen group discussions were achieved overall. (Staff experience of, or perspectives on, the telephone service were sought in all the group discussions).

Wave One Jobcentre Plus advisers fieldwork

The discussions were held in private rooms within Jobcentre Plus offices, and generally took around one and a half hours.

The researchers used a topic guide (Appendix C) to moderate discussion across a number of areas:

- to understand how staff influence incapacity benefits recipients' participation in the NDDP;
- to understand ways of working with Job Brokers within Jobcentre Plus;
- to explore staff views on what Job Brokers add to existing provision;
- to explore views about good practice and lessons for the future.

The discussions were tape-recorded, with permission of participants, and the recordings transcribed for analysis.

The discussion groups each involved two to six participants and most included men and women. Overall, 63 people took part from a total of at least 49 Jobcentre Plus offices. There was a range of staff with wide differences in experience of NDDP, including reception and customer services staff; general New Deal and specialist New Deal advisers; personal advisers with and without experience of work-focused interviews; adviser managers; disability co-ordinators; members of Back to Work teams and Action Teams and one DEA.

B.3.1.2 Wave Two

Wave Two Jobcentre Plus advisers sample selection

In the second wave of research, it was decided to focus recruitment on staff with experience of conducting work-focused interviews with incapacity benefits recipients and who worked in Wave Two study areas. The aim was to include staff working in areas covered by some of the 'new' study Job Brokers in Wave Two, and some of the Wave One study Job Brokers (with a maximum of 18 areas overall). If it proved possible to recruit, again, some of the original participants in the Wave One discussions there would be an opportunity to explore change.

Not all study areas contained an integrated Jobcentre Plus office, but it was sometimes possible to make arrangements in another area, in which Jobcentre Plus staff might be expected to have some knowledge or experience of the particular in-depth study Job Broker.

Wave Two Jobcentre plus advisers recruitment

As in Wave One, Jobcentre Plus managers were asked through the Department channels to help identify up to four staff who might contribute to the discussions.

Again, there were some practical problems in arranging for sufficient experienced staff to take part. It was sometimes possible to suggest substitute areas. Decisions were made case by case, for example, looking at the geographical clustering of the Job Broker clients. Overall, fourteen discussion groups were convened, six of which were in areas covered by some of the 'new' Wave Two study Job Brokers.

Wave Two Jobcentre Plus Advisers Fieldwork

Group discussions were held in private rooms in Jobcentre Plus offices, and took around one and a half hours.

The researchers used a topic guide (Appendix C) to guide discussion:

- to understand how staff influence incapacity benefits recipients' participation in NDDP;
- to understand how NDDP currently fits with other provision for this customer group;
- to explore developments in ways of working with Job Brokers;
- to learn about good practice in relationships between Jobcentre Plus and Job Brokers.

The discussion groups generally included three or four people. Overall, 38 men and women took part, representing 21 integrated Jobcentre Plus offices (some of which were in the Incapacity Benefit Reform Pilot), and three offices in which the fully integrated model was not yet operating. Those who took part in Wave Two discussion groups included: Incapacity Benefit Personal Advisers; generic work-

focused interview advisers; non-JSA advisers; team leaders and line managers, and some people currently working as advisers in New Deal 18-24, New Deal 25+ and New Deal for Lone Parents who had been recruited because they had previous experience of working with incapacity benefits customers. Two people who took part had also participated in the first wave of the research.

The discussions were tape-recorded, with permission of participants, and the recordings transcribed for analysis.

B.3.2 Disability Employment Advisers

B.3.2.1 Wave One

Wave One DEA sample selection

The aim was to recruit one DEA working in the study areas covered by all 18 Job Brokers. The aim was to generate a study group of DEAs with different forms of contact with the study Job Brokers: some who had some kind of general contact with the Job Broker such as around marketing activity; some who were known to have had a role in a client approaching a study Job Broker; and some who had arranged disability services for a Job Broker client.

Wave One DEA recruitment

Each of the 18 Job Broker organisations was asked to complete a proforma by listing the names and addresses of all the DEAs with whom that Job Broker had had contact and by indicating the nature of the contact according to the categories given above. Contact details were returned for 90 DEAs. The researchers then made a selection of DEAs to approach to give a spread of types of contact. The selection also ensured correspondence between the area covered by a DEA and the home areas of clients interviewed. The research teams sent letters of invitation and explanation to the selected DEAs.

Wave One DEA fieldwork

The fieldwork was carried out in September and October 2002. Interviews were normally conducted face-to-face, usually in private rooms in Jobcentres and Jobcentre Plus offices. Where it proved exceptionally difficult to arrange a face-to-face interview, a telephone interview was conducted. The interviews took around one hour. The discussions were tape-recorded with participants' permission, and the recordings transcribed for analysis.

The topic guide used by the researchers to guide discussion covered similar ground to that in the group discussions with advisers, and areas outlined in Section B.3.1.1 apply.

Fourteen DEAs were interviewed. Time spent working as a DEA ranged from a few months to 20 years.

B.3.2.2 Wave Two

Wave Two DEA sample selection

In Wave Two the aim was to hold an interview with a DEA associated with each of the 23 study Job Brokers. The approach to selecting DEAs differed from that in Wave One. The main aims were first to include DEAs who had been interviewed in Wave One, in line with the longitudinal design of the qualitative research, and secondly, given the thematic focus in Wave Two on relationships, to select DEAs identified as having or not having good relationships with study Job Brokers.

Wave Two DEA recruitment

Attempts to recruit all DEAs who were interviewed in Wave One led to 11 interviews being achieved. Of the remaining DEAs the majority were found to have moved job or to have left the study area.

In study areas where no Wave One DEA was recruited for Wave Two, Job Broker staff were asked, either during the fieldwork or in a separate contact, to identify DEAs with whom they worked and among them those with whom they considered they had good working relationships. The researchers then selected DEAs to give a good spread of those perceived to have a good relationship and those not so identified.

Wave Two DEA fieldwork

The fieldwork was carried out mainly in March with a small number of interviews carried out in April 2004. As in Wave One, interviews were normally conducted face-to-face, usually in private rooms in Jobcentres and Jobcentre Plus offices. Where it proved exceptionally difficult to arrange a face-to-face interview, a telephone interview was conducted. The interviews took around one hour. The discussions were tape-recorded with participants' permission, and the recordings transcribed for analysis.

The topic guide used by the researchers to guide discussion covered similar ground to that in the group discussions with advisers, and areas outlined in Section B.3.1.2 apply.

Twenty-three DEAs were interviewed. Experience as a DEA ranged from six months to almost 30 years. Almost half of the DEAs taking part worked in integrated Jobcentre Plus offices, including Incapacity Benefit Reform Pilot areas. A majority of DEAs were attached to the same Jobcentre Plus offices as the work-focused interview advisers who took part in the group discussions.

B.4 Project management and analysis

B.4.1 Managing the research

A key challenge in carrying out this large-scale research programme, which spanned three main research samples, was to find effective ways of coordinating the research across the three research teams. It was decided to divide the fieldwork between the three research teams on a geographical basis, so that in each area one research team took responsibility for fieldwork with all study populations – Job Brokers, clients and Jobcentre Plus staff. This meant that an in-depth insight into the local operation could be developed, and that each research team had insight into all three study populations.

It was also decided that each research team should lead on the design of research with one of the study populations: either Job Broker staff, clients or Jobcentre Plus staff. This team was responsible for designing topic guides, sample approaches, letters to potential participants and analytical frameworks; the other teams all commented on draft documentation. A similar approach was taken to reporting, with each team responsible for reporting the data from the study population on which it had led.

The research team gave particular thought to how to coordinate Wave Two which was based around seven key themes. Early in the planning stage, the research team identified a provisional set of broad chapter themes for the report and discussed the research questions which each might address. These discussions informed the design of topic guides which were shaped around the provisional research questions identified. The provisional list of chapter themes was reviewed after fieldwork had been completed and a revised set drawn up. These then informed the analytical structure used for each data set.

It was agreed that one research team would lead on each chapter. Their role would be to act as an 'editor' for the chapter, proposing a structure and identifying the sections or research questions to be addressed by each individual team, drawing on the data from the study population on which it had led. The chapter lead then edited the material, suggesting further analyses or data to be provided, integrating the material provided by each team, and drafting chapter introductions, summaries and concluding sections. The teams also commented on all draft chapters.

B.4.2 Analysis

For both waves of fieldwork all the data were analysed using Framework (see Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). The first stage of analysis involves familiarisation with the data and identification of emerging issues to inform the development of a thematic framework. This comprises a series of thematic matrices or charts. Each matrix covers one key theme: the columns represent key sub-topics, and the rows individual respondents. Data from each case are summarised in the appropriate cell. The context of the information is retained and the page of the transcript from which it comes is noted,

so that it is possible to return to a transcript to explore a point in more detail. The charts are stored in spreadsheet format in Microsoft Excel. Organising the data in this way enables themes to be explored within a common analytical framework which is grounded in respondents' own accounts. The final stage involves classificatory and interpretative analysis of the charted data to explore the range of views or behaviours in relation to each topic, draw comparisons between study populations or between their members, and identify patterns and explanations.

Appendix C

Research materials and interview guides

- C.1 Research materials relating to Wave Two client interviews

Initial 'contact letter' inviting participation in the research

Centre for Research in Social Policy,
Department of Social Sciences,
FREEPOST, Loughborough University,
Leicestershire, LE11 OBR

5th December 2003

Ref:

Dear

We are writing to ask for your help with an important study. We would like to find out about your views and experiences of the New Deal for Disabled People. This is a programme which provides help and advice to people who are thinking about work. It is run by local organisations known as Job Brokers so you may recognise the programme by a different name. We want to find out what people think about this kind of service, and whether they find it helpful. We are interested in what you have to say, whatever your present circumstances. We have asked an independent research organisation [*insert CRSP, SPRU or NatCen*] – to conduct the study on our behalf.

Your name was selected from all those who have registered for this service. A researcher from the [*insert CRSP, SPRU or NatCen*] may be in touch in the next few weeks to see if you would like to take part in an interview to discuss your experiences of the service. They will arrange a suitable time to visit and can discuss any requirements you may have which will make it easier for you to take part. The interview would last about 1 to 1.5 hours and everyone who is interviewed will be given £20 as a small token of thanks for your help. Anything you say will be treated as **strictly confidential** by the evaluation team.

We hope you decide to take part in the study. If, however, you do not wish to take part, please telephone XXX on XXXX XXXX before 19th December 2003, giving your name and reference number (at the top of this letter). Or you can write to the FREEPOST address at the top of this letter.

Your involvement in this study is voluntary and will not affect any benefit you receive, or any dealings you may have with any government department or agency.
Thank you for your help. We hope you will enjoy talking to the researcher.

Yours sincerely



Martin Hill

Department for Work and Pensions

Topic Guide for 'new' Wave Two clients

1. INTRODUCTION (all respondents)

- About CRSP/NatCen/SPRU (independent role)
- Research funded by DWP. Brief explanation of overall evaluation and how this element fits in
- Reassurance of confidentiality, will not affect benefits
- Check permission to record

2. RESPONDENT BACKGROUND (ask all respondents)

2.1 Personal circumstances

- Household composition/circumstances, caring responsibilities
- (brief) employment/activity status – respondent and household members
- Health – duration, stability, impact on everyday and work activities
- Most recent involvement/contact with JB – check that aware of involvement with (sampled) JB
- (*check*) was client in the same circumstances when first made contact with JB, if not, what has changed since then

2.2 Work and benefit history

- Employment history (main/usual work, most recent work)
- Benefit/tax credit history (in and out of work)
- Any training/courses/work experience/voluntary activity (prior to participation ND/JCP/labour market programmes)
- Attitudes towards work, work aspirations, how clear that work was what they wanted and type of work
- Steps they felt would need to take to move into work/what moving towards or into work would involve; any barriers/constraints identified (eg, advice from GP not to work, health impacts, financial, confidence, household circumstances, caring responsibilities, transport etc)
- Any job search activity before approaching JB, job applications, interviews
- Any prior contact with Jobcentre Plus or DEA

3. ENGAGING WITH NDDP/JOB BROKER

3.1 Initial approach to the JB service

- How did respondent find out about the Job Broker service (*prompt: If JC/DEA/WFI explore experience/how helpful was the Jobcentre in providing information and helping with initial contact?*)
- Awareness of any JB marketing?
- How was NDDP presented to them – initial reaction?
- Reasons for approaching a Job Broker, motivations
- Awareness of choice, any selection process – how was it made – previous knowledge of JB organisation, any evidence of active choice/choice based on perceived suitability of service, how did they judge this – thoughts on process
- Initial contact with JB – mode, location, what discussed, views
- What did client want from the JB service – what types of help, services anticipated that the JB might offer/provide
- Problems/barriers that made it difficult for respondent to participate:
 - nature of problem, how overcame
 - what made it easier to access JB service
- finding out about the service – could it be better marketed/promoted? role of Jobcentre Plus in raising awareness/signposting NDDP?

3.2 Registration

- Awareness/understanding of registration process, how it was explained, by whom
- (*If aware*) When did registration take place (eg, how long after first approach)
- Once registered – expectations of the service, what would happen next
- (*If re-registering from another JB*) details, how did they decide on new JB, views on de/re-reg process

4. CONTACT WITH JOB BROKER OR NDDP (all respondents)

4.1 Experience of JB service

- Contact with JB – type, frequency, who initiated, appropriateness of
- Discussions of client circumstances and needs with JB – when discussed, how needs identified, any needs that weren't discussed or explored, why not
- Type of help or support received from JB e.g. Discussions about work/vocational direction, financial impact of work, job searching
- (*probe*) – any support/help sought/received from elsewhere – see Section 5)
- Activities undertaken with/through JB – appropriateness and adequacy eg. any training, work experience/placement
- Responsiveness to needs – was the programme was tailored to client's individual needs or requirements
- Gaps in service – what needs were not addressed; why not (eg client not aware of need, not aware service could help, didn't want to/have opportunity to raise with JB, told that service couldn't help/services not available etc)
- Recall/awareness of basic skills assessment/screening, views on purpose, appropriateness of level/timing
- Action/progress planning
 - client awareness of action planning by Job Broker – timing, purpose, usefulness
 - content – appropriateness/relevance (actions, timing, follow-up, usefulness in back to work planning, whether revisited/revised and by whom)
 - client input (JB led or client-led?)
 - was client given a copy? did client refer to it at all
- (If no recall of action planning – how useful would it have been to client?)
- Better Off calculations – whether needed/requested/offered. Who carried out, usefulness of (influence on work related decisions)
- (*If no experience of work since reg*) awareness of availability of in-work support from JB
- would client use it, if not why not
- who else could/should provide such support
- how might it help
- anything else that the Job Broker could have helped with?

4.2 Experience/views of Job Broker (organisation and staff)

- Perceptions of the organisation in terms of specialism, degree of expertise, appropriateness of expertise
- Any views on type of organisation, eg, (in-)experience with disabled people, people with health needs, people with specific health problems or impairments
- Impressions of JB staff – how helpful, knowledgeable, friendly, supportive etc, and impact of this on client
- Whether had contact with one or more members of staff or more than one organisation
 - views about appropriateness – pros and cons
 - experiences of co-working between staff or organisations eg concerns about confidentiality; having to repeat information; information not being passed between staff; duplication of activity or gaps; (in)consistency in approaches or communication
 - Awareness of how JBs are funded? Views, impact on organisation, staffing, type/quality of help available

4.3 Reason for contact ending *All those no longer in contact with JB*

- When/how JB activity ceased, and why
- If initiated by JB, why they think it stopped and how it was explained
- How client felt when contact ended
- Any awareness of deregistration – reasons for, views on process
- Whether JB 'signposted' client to other services – appropriateness

5. OTHER (NON JOB BROKER) SUPPORT *ask all respondents*

- Any other services/help/support accessed since registered with JB
- How made contact with them (check specifically for JC/DEA contact, route to, nature/frequency of contact)
- *(if JCP/DEA contact)* awareness/experience of JCP/JB relations
- Any other support/help/advice that would have been useful? Who best placed to provide

6. EXPERIENCES OF WORK

Ask all those who have worked since NDDP registration

6.1 Employment details

- Type of job, hours, employment dates, duration, inwork benefit/tax credit receipt
- Suitability of job – job satisfaction, health, financial, hours, positive/negative aspects
- Changes in job since began (hours, pay, tenure, responsibilities, aids/adaptations)
- Perception of job stability/progression opportunities (temporary, permanent, stepping-stone)
- Reflections on job(s), (*probe for both positive and negative aspects*)

6.2 Job entry

- How got job – level of JB involvement in job search/entry/interview, other factors that contributed to getting job
- role of any financial incentive/support (Job Grant) paid by JB
- Impact of JB involvement in job entry (would they have still got work, same type of work without JB involvement?)

6.3 JB/employer contact

- Any contact between employer and JB – if so type (*could mention that this only sometimes happens*)
- Client views on appropriateness of JB/employer contact
- Any aids/adaptations/A2W arranged by JB (or other sources)
- Impact of JB involvement with employer – what difference did it make

6.4 In-work needs and support

- Any work related difficulties experienced after entering employment
- Kind of help/support needed (*prompts*, learning the job, adjusting to workplace, peer/mentor support, someone to talk through worries with, practical difficulties, help with benefits/tax credits, other guidance, financial etc)
- When needs arose (eg, at start, throughout, after x weeks/months, seeking help at appropriate time)
- Receiving in-work support – from whom (JB, JC+/DEA, other agencies, family, workplace/peer support)

- If not from JB, why not? (awareness, access etc)
- Accessing in-work support – how?
- How effective was support? (impact on sustainability/stability/viability/appropriateness of employment)
- Impact of JB involvement – what difference did it make? Has JB helped them to stay in work?
- (If still in work) current contact with JB, future plans (ie, whether will stay in job/employment, possible progression)
- Awareness of JB outcome related funding – views on effect on in-work support

6.5 Reasons for leaving work

(ask all those who have left employment since registration)

- Reasons for leaving job(s) – health, financial, domestic/family etc
- JB involvement in decision to leave (if voluntary exit)
- Any further contact with JB after leaving job – purpose, frequency,
- Positive and negative outcomes of **employment** experiences

7. OVERALL VIEWS OF PARTICIPATION IN JB SERVICE

- Perceptions of progress made towards work (and JB role in any progress)
- Future aspirations/plans (and role JB might play, if any)
- Reflection on activities undertaken – what particular aspects or elements of JB service helped client (and which were less helpful),
- Impact of participation in NDDP
- Where would client be if they hadn't contacted the JB/taken part in NDDP
- What difference has the JB made
- what could have made the service more effective for them
- What did the Job Broker service add that wasn't already available elsewhere (eg, at jobcentre)?
- Whether would seek JB support in future (same or another) (if time and not already mentioned)
- Who (else) does respondent think JB service could work well for?
- Would they recommend the JB or the NDDP programme to others? why/why not

Re-contact letter for follow-up Wave One clients

Xx December 2003

Ref:

Dear xxx

You may remember that last September/October [*insert researcher name*] from the [*insert CRSP, SPRU or NatCen*] visited you to hear about your experiences of the Job Broker Service for people who are interested in working. This interview was part of the research we are carrying out on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions, to find out about how the Job Broker Service operates and whether people find it useful. We would like to thank you for telling us about your views and experiences on that occasion.

We are now planning the second part of the research and would like to talk to some of the people we interviewed a year ago to find out about their circumstances now. You may recall that last year you kindly said we could contact you again to see whether you would be willing to be interviewed a second time. We are writing now to advise you that we may contact you over the next few weeks to see if you would like to take part.

If we do contact you, this time the interview would be carried out over the telephone, unless you would prefer us to visit in person. It would take around 15 to 30 minutes. We would be grateful if you could advise us of any change in contact details since we last spoke to you.

[*insert CRSP, SPRU or NatCen*] is an independent research organisation and anything you say to the researcher will be treated as strictly confidential by the research team.

We hope that you are still willing to speak to us, in the meantime, if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on xxxxx.

Yours sincerely

xxxx

Topic guide for Wave One follow-up interviews

1. INTRODUCTION (all respondents)

- CRSP/NatCen/SPRU (independent role)
- Remind of first interview, and purpose of second interview
- Reassurance of confidentiality, check permission to record
- Recap of activity and circumstances at the time of wave 1 interview

2. CHANGES IN CIRCUMSTANCES/CURRENT ACTIVITY (*all respondents*)

Overview of changes in relation to work, and what has contributed to these changes.

- Changes in relation to work since we last spoke (thoughts about work, job search activity, actual experiences of work)
- Anything that has contributed to/influenced changes (particularly JB, and issues like health, personal/household change, other services and other activities only if the respondent raises these as relevant)
- Anything that has contributed to things not changing as above

3. EXPERIENCES OF WORK

Ask all those who have had experience of work since wave 1 interview. Capture details of **all** work since wave 1 interview.

3.1 Employment experience

- Details – Type, hours, dates/duration, any in-work benefit/tax credits, pay, responsibilities and any changes
- Suitability of job – (satisfaction, health, financial, hours) positive/negative aspects
- Perception on job stability/progression opportunities (temporary, permanent, stepping-stone) – Reflections if left

3.2 Job entry

- How got job – level of JB involvement in job search/entry/interview/financial incentive/support – other factors that contributed to getting job
- Impact of JB involvement in job entry – would they have still got work without JB involvement?

3.3 JB/employer contact

- Any contact between employer and JB – if so type, appropriateness (include any aids/adaptations/A2W arranged)
- Impact of JB involvement with employer – what difference did it make

3.4 In work needs and support

- Any work related difficulties experienced after entering employment
- Kind of help/support needed and when arose (*prompts*, learning the job, adjusting to workplace, peer/mentor support, someone to talk through worries with, practical difficulties, help with benefits/tax credits, other guidance, financial etc)
- Any contact/support with JB once in job – type, how accessed, views on appropriateness, effectiveness and impact on sustainability
 - support from other sources – JC+/DEA, other agencies, family, workplace/peer support
 - if not from JB, why not? (awareness, access etc)
- (If still in work) current contact with JB, future plans (ie, whether will stay in job/employment, possible progression)

3.5 Reasons for leaving work (*if appropriate*)

- Reasons for leaving job(s) – health, financial, family etc, any JB involvement
- Any further contact with JB – purpose, frequency, positive and negative outcomes of employment experiences

4. CONTACT WITH JOB BROKER OR NDDP SINCE WAVE 1 INTERVIEW

(ask only those who have had contact with a JB since wave 1 interview – for those not experienced work – check if had JB contact)

Establish nature/frequency/duration of contact (ie, whether past or current), whether with same or different JB than registered at wave 1, experience of service since wave 1, appropriateness of service/whether service met respondent needs, associated outcomes and reasons for continuing (or ending) contact.

4.1 Experience of service since Wave 1

- Type of support received/activities undertaken through JB since wave 1 interview e.g. Discussions about work/vocational direction, financial impact of work (including better off calculations), job searching activities, training, work experience/placement
- Appropriateness, adequacy, usefulness and impact
- Responsiveness to needs – extent to which programme was tailored to client's individual needs or requirements?
- Whether anything was missing or could have been improved
- (*if no experience of work since reg*) awareness of availability of in-work support from JB
- Would client use it, how might it help, if not why not

4.2 Continued contact with (sampled) JB

- Nature of contact – changes/developments since wave 1 contact, who initiated change, (any use of action plan)
- *(if relevant)*. Reasons/how contact ended – Feelings about this
- Whether JB 'signposted' client to other services – appropriateness
- Any awareness of deregistration

4.3 If contact with new JB (capture comparison with previous JB)

- Reason for contact/registration with new JB
- Recollection of registration process
- How type of help and way of providing it compared with first JB
- Impact of second JB, and comparison with impact of first
- Anything missing or that could be improved
- How ended and feelings about this

5. OVERALL VIEWS OF IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN JB SERVICE

Ask all clients

- Perceptions of progress made and future aspirations/plans – JB contribution
- What particular aspects or elements of JB service helped client (and which were less helpful)
- Impact of participation
 - where would client be if they hadn't contacted the JB?
 - what difference has the JB made?
- What could have made the service more effective for them
- What did the Job Broker service add that wasn't already available elsewhere (eg, at jobcentre)?
- Whether would seek JB (or similar) support in the future
- Awareness of JB outcome related funding – views on effect on services received including in-work support
- Impressions of JB staff – how helpful, knowledgeable, friendly, supportive etc,
- Perceptions of the organisation in terms of specialism, degree of expertise, appropriateness of expertise

(if time and not already mentioned)

- Who (else) does respondent think JB service could work well for?
- Would they recommend the JB or the NDDP programme to others? why/why not
- Finding out about the service – could it be better marketed/promoted? role of Jobcentre Plus in raising awareness/signposting NDDP?

C.2 Research materials relating to Jobcentre Plus staff interviews

Memo from DWP to Jobcentre Plus District Managers

To: District Manager (*insert area*)

New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) National Extension Evaluation

Issue:

1. In February and early March 2004, our contracted researchers from [*insert CRSP, SPRU or NatCen*] will be conducting research with Jobcentre Plus staff as part of the official DWP evaluation of the NDDP Job Broker services. As part of the evaluation, the researchers need to hold a discussion group with up to four Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisers based at [*insert location*] Jobcentre Plus office. The Personal Advisers will be those whose role includes carrying out work-focused interviews with claimants of incapacity-related benefits. In addition, the researchers wish to interview separately a Disability Employment Adviser based in the same office. We need your help to recruit staff for the research.

Action and timing:

2. Please would you:
 - identify up to four Personal Advisers whose role includes work-focused interviews with claimants of incapacity-related benefits. If possible, the Personal Advisers should be based at a [*insert location*] Jobcentre Plus office
 - liaise with the [*insert CRSP, SPRU or NatCen*] researcher (see paragraph 3) to arrange convenient times for the group discussion, which will take ninety minutes
 - identify a Disability Employment Adviser, to be interviewed separately, based at the same office. The researcher will contact them directly to arrange the interview
 - pass names and contact details to the researcher, so that she can write directly to the staff explaining further what will be covered in the interviews
 - if possible, offer meeting rooms for the group discussion and interview.
3. It would be helpful if you could get in touch direct with [*insert contact details*] in the week commencing 9 February. She will answer any queries you have and discuss the practical arrangements including dates and venues.
4. We would like arrangements for the discussions to be finalised in week commencing 16 February.

Background:

5. Refer to my submission to Field Directors (New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) National Extension Evaluation) 19 July 2002, gatekeeper clearance GK:1675/02.
6. As explained in my memo of 26 January 2004, Lone Parents, Older Workers and Disability Analysis Division of DWP is undertaking an evaluation of the NDDP National Extension. A key component is in-depth study of the effectiveness of Job Broker services from the perspectives of Job Broker staff, clients and Jobcentre Plus staff.
7. The researchers are revisiting some Districts visited in September and October 2002, while other Districts are included in the research for the first time.
8. The researchers wish to interview staff in your area to understand how customers are informed about Job Broker services, the perceptions staff have of the role and operation of the Job Brokers and communication between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff.
9. Everything discussed in the research is dealt with in confidence and it will not be possible to identify anyone taking part when the findings are reported.

**Confirmation of group discussion/background to research
letter for Jobcentre Plus staff**

Address

E-mail:

Date

Dear (Jobcentre Plus staff member)

New Deal for Disabled People National Extension Research Group Discussion

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in the discussion group arranged for (time) on (date) in (place).

The background is that the Department for Work and Pensions has commissioned a consortium of independent research organisations including the (Social Policy Research Unit/National Centre for Social Research/Centre for Research in Social Policy) to carry out an extensive evaluation of the New Deal for Disabled People National Extension. The first wave of qualitative research for this evaluation was carried out in 2002, and included discussions with a broad range of Jobcentre Plus staff in a number of offices. Findings were useful for the Department and were published in a research report in 2003.

We have now started work on the second wave of qualitative research. This includes in-depth interviews with Job Broker staff, clients of the Job Broker services and Disability Employment Advisers as well as group discussions with Personal Advisers in Jobcentre Plus. In this second wave of research we are returning to some Jobcentre Plus offices, and visiting some for the first time, to talk to staff delivering work-focused interviews to people claiming incapacity benefits.

The main objectives of the group discussion on (day) are to understand how staff might influence incapacity benefits recipients' participation in NDDP and to understand how NDDP currently fits with other provision for this client group. We also wish to explore developments in ways of working with Job Brokers.

The discussion will last up to one and a half hours.

The research findings will be reported in such a way that people and organisations taking part in the research cannot be identified.

I look forward to meeting you. Thank you for making time available for this important study.

Yours sincerely

Topic guide: Jobcentre Plus staff delivering Work-focused interviews – Wave Two

Aims

- to understand how staff influence incapacity benefits recipients' participation in NDDP
- to understand how NDDP currently fits with other provision for this client group
- to explore developments in ways of working with Job Brokers
- to learn about good practice in relationships between Jobcentre Plus and Job Brokers.

- Remind about NDDP study aims and components
- Explain independence of SPRU/NatCen/CRSP from DWP
- Remind topics to be covered
- Remind finishing time and check need for breaks
- Remind about confidentiality, and how material will be used
- Invite questions
- Seek permission for use of tape recorder

Introductions: Invite participants to introduce themselves, name, job description and Jobcentre Plus office (for purposes of transcription).

1. Working with disabled people

First, may we talk generally about how Work-focused interviews are dealt with in your office, and your own role.

- Which staff in your office have responsibilities for Work-focused interviews with incapacity benefits recipients?
- What is your own role and experience here? (*ask participants to explain individually how long they have been doing WFIs, with which customer groups and whether this their only work*)
- Do you do any work with disabled people apart from Work-focused interviews?
- What have been the main changes over the past year in how this office deals with people claiming incapacity-related benefits? (*probe for views on specialising in customer groups v generic working*)

- What is your own general approach to conducting a WFI with IB recipients?
- What kinds of services do you tell people about in this interview?
- Have you noticed any changes in disabled customers' expectations of Jobcentre Plus?

2. Awareness and understanding of Job Broker services

We are interested in how much you know about Job Brokers.

- What is your understanding of the aims of the Job Broker services in general?
- Which JB's currently serve your area?- have there been changes here? reason? views on changes
- *(Continue this section using prompts with names of Job Brokers if necessary, and explore in particular knowledge of Job Broker chosen for study)*
- Do you know about any differences in the way that they work? *(discuss all Job Brokers)*
- How have you learned about the way that Job Brokers work?
- Are there things you would you still like to know?
- What do you think about ways that Job Brokers promote their services to Jobcentre Plus ?
- How well do you think Job Brokers understand what you do?

3. Joint working between Jobcentre Plus staff and Job Brokers

May we talk now about ways in which you work with Job Brokers.

- What contacts do you have with Job Brokers? *(explore each different kind of contact; look for differences between Job Brokers; and explore contacts with chosen Job Broker)*
- Purpose
- Who initiates, frequency, outcome
- Specific JB staff involved
- What helps or hinders building relationships with Job Brokers?
- What are the benefits of your contact with Job Brokers?
- For customer, self, Jobcentre Plus, Job Broker?
- Are there any disadvantages of such contacts?
- Which other staff in Jobcentre Plus are aware of Job Brokers and have contacts with them?

- How do these fit in with your own relationships with the Job Brokers?
- Have the contacts between Jobcentre Plus staff and Job Brokers changed in the last year?
- Are Jobcentre Plus performance targets affected by working with Job Brokers?
- Views?
- What changes or developments in working relationships would you (still) like to see?

4. Enabling clients to access Job Brokers

We are interested in ways in which you enable people to access JB services.

- In the Work-focused interviews with incapacity benefits recipients how do Job Broker services fit into what you tell people about the programmes and services available?
- Which customers do you talk to about Job Broker services?
- Why these customers?
- How do you describe the services? (*prompt for in-work support*)
- What do people want to know?
- How do you manage choice, direction, making contact?
- How do you take account of the other programmes available to this client group?
- Has your approach changed?
- Why?
- What effect?
- Which people seem most/least interested in Job Brokers?
- Do you get to know what happens to people you talk to about Job Brokers?
- Do you hear whether and how Job Brokers have helped people?
- Do you have any experience of people deregistered from a Job Broker? (*explore impact on people*)

5. Funding

We are interested in whether you have views on how Job Brokers are funded

- Do you know how your local Job Brokers are funded? According to levels of understanding, explore further:
- Do you have any views on the principle of funding the service according to results for clients?
- Do you see any impact of this kind of funding?
- For clients, Job Brokers, Jobcentre Plus, employment service provision generally
- Does this issue ever arise when talking to people in Work-focused interviews?

6. The difference that Job Brokers make

Finally, we would like to know what difference you think Job Brokers make or might make.

- Thinking overall, what does the Job Broker service contribute to how you can help customers?
- How does this differ from what you previously had to offer this customer group?
- Look for any views about adding, complementing, duplicating, obstructing
- *Look for any comments about quality, innovation, accountability*
- For which people do Job Broker services work best?
- Are any of your local JB's more effective than others? Why do you think this is?
- *Look for any views about specialisms, organisational structure, history*
- What changes or developments would you like to see?
- *Thank the group members.*
- *Mention confidentiality again.*
- *Explain how findings will be used*

Letter inviting Disability Employment Advisers to take part in the research

Address

E-mail:

Date

Dear (Disability Employment Adviser)

New Deal for Disabled People National Extension Research

I am writing to ask you to take part in an [*a further*] interview as part of the official evaluation of the New Deal for Disabled People National Extension.

[*As you already know*] The background is that the Department for Work and Pensions has commissioned a consortium of independent research organisations including the [*Social Policy Research Unit/National Centre for Social Research/Centre for Research in Social Policy*] to carry out an extensive evaluation of the New Deal for Disabled People National Extension. The first wave of qualitative research for this evaluation carried out in 2002 included discussions with Disability Employment Advisers in a number of offices. Findings were useful for the Department and were published in a research report in 2003.

We have now started work on the second wave of qualitative research. As well as in-depth interviews with Job Broker staff and clients of the Job Broker services we are carrying out individual interviews with selected Disability Employment Advisers and group discussions with Personal Advisers in Jobcentre Plus. In this second wave of research we are returning to some Disability Employment Advisers [, *such as yourself,*] whom we interviewed in the autumn of 2002 while some are being invited to take part for the first time.

The main objectives of the interview are to understand how Disability Employment Advisers might influence incapacity benefits recipients' participation in NDDP and to understand how NDDP currently fits with other provision for this client group. We also wish to explore developments in ways of working with Job Brokers.

The research findings will be reported in such a way that people and organisations taking part in the research cannot be identified.

The interview will last up to one hour. I will get in touch with you shortly to answer any questions you have and to arrange a suitable day and time for me to visit you.

I look forward to meeting you [*again*].

Yours sincerely

Topic guide: Disability Employment Adviser Service – Wave Two

Aims

- to understand how staff influence incapacity benefits recipients' participation in NDDP
- to understand how NDDP currently fits with other provision for this client group
- to explore developments in ways of working with Job Brokers
- to learn about good practice in relationships between Jobcentre Plus and Job Brokers.

- Remind about NDDP study aims and components
- Explain independence of SPRU/NatCen/CRSP from DWP
- Remind topics to be covered
- Remind finishing time and check need for breaks
- Remind about confidentiality, and how material will be used
- Invite questions
- Seek permission for use of tape recorder

Introductions: Invite participants to introduce themselves, name, job description and Jobcentre Plus office (for purposes of transcription).

1. DEA experience and role

First, may we talk about your role as a DEA.

- What areas do you cover?
- How long have you been a DEA?
- What did you do before that?
- What is your role with customers claiming incapacity-related benefits?
- What have been the main changes over the past year in how this office deals with people claiming incapacity-related benefits?
- What difference has this made to the DEA role
- Have you noticed any changes in expectations of Jobcentre Plus amongst people claiming incapacity benefits?

2. Awareness and understanding of Job Broker services

We are interested in how much you know about Job Brokers.

- What is your understanding of the aims of the Job Broker services in general?
- Which JB's currently serve your area?
- Have there been changes here? reason? views on changes
- *(Continue this section using prompts with names of Job Brokers if necessary, and explore in particular knowledge of Job Broker chosen for study)*
- Do you know about any differences in the way that they work? *(discuss all Job Brokers)*
- How have you learned about the way that Job Brokers work?
- Are there things you would you still like to know?
- What do you think about ways that Job Brokers promote their services to Jobcentre Plus?
- How well do you think Job Brokers understand what you do?

3. Joint working between DEAs and Job Brokers

May we talk now about ways in which you work with Job Brokers.

- What contacts do you have with Job Brokers? (explore each different kind of contact; look for differences between Job Brokers; and explore contacts with chosen Job Broker)
- Purpose
- Who initiates, frequency, outcome
- Specific JB staff involved
- What helps or hinders building relationships with Job Brokers?
- What are the benefits of your contact with Job Brokers?
- For customer, self, Jobcentre Plus, Job Broker?
- Are there any disadvantages of such contacts?
- Which other staff in Jobcentre Plus are aware of Job Brokers and have contacts with them?
- How do these fit in with your own relationships with the Job Brokers?
- Have your contacts with Job Brokers changed in the last year?
- Are Jobcentre Plus performance targets affected by working with Job Brokers? views?
- What changes or developments in working relationships would you (still) like to see?

4. Enabling clients to access Job Brokers

We are interested in ways in which you enable people to access JB services.

- In your discussions with people on incapacity-related benefits how do Job Broker services fit into what you tell people about the programmes and services available?
- Which customers do you talk to about Job Broker services?
- Why these customers?
- How do you describe the services? (*prompt for in work support*)
- What do customers want to know?
- How do you manage choice, direction, making contact?
- How do you take account of the other programmes available to this client group?
- Has your approach changed? why? what effect?
- Which people seem most/least interested in Job Brokers?
- Do you get to know what happens to people you talk to about Job Brokers?
- Do you hear whether and how Job Brokers have helped people?
- Do you have any experience of people deregistered from a Job Broker? (*explore impact on people*)

5. Funding

We are interested in whether you have views on how Job Brokers are funded

- Do you know how your local JB's are funded? According to levels of understanding, explore further
- Do you have any views on the principle of funding the service according to results for clients?
- Do you see any impact of this kind of funding?
- For customers, Job Brokers, Jobcentre Plus, employment service provision generally
- Does this issue ever arise when talking to people on incapacity-related benefits?

6. The difference that Job Brokers make

Finally, we would like to know what difference you think Job Brokers make or might make.

- Thinking overall, what does the Job Broker service contribute to how you can help customers?
- How does this differ from what you previously had to offer this customer group?
- Look for any views about adding, complementing, duplicating, obstructing
- *Look for any comments about quality, innovation, accountability*
- For which people do Job Broker services work best?
- Are any of your local JBs more effective than others? Why do you think this is?
- *Look for any views about specialisms, organisational structure, history*
- What changes or developments would you like to see?

Thank the DEA

Mention confidentiality again

Explain how findings will be used

C.3 Research materials relating to Job Broker manager and staff interviews

Letter informing Job Broker managers about Wave Two of the research

This format was adapted depending whether the Job Broker had taken part in Wave One of the research

['Our ref: Pxxxx' (if required)]

e-mail

Direct line

[Click here and type date]

Dear

NDDP Job Broker Service Research Programme: qualitative research

As you will be aware, in October the Department for Work and Pensions published the report of the first wave of a qualitative evaluation of the New Deal for Disabled People national extension. As one of the consortium of research organisations that carried out this research, we would like to thank you and your staff for all your help and for sharing with us your views and experiences.

We are now writing to inform you about the second wave of this evaluation, in which we aim to find out how job broker services have evolved and to explore the longer term impacts of NDDP. This second wave of research will involve all the eighteen job broker providers that were involved in Wave One, plus six additional providers. Further details are on the attached sheet, but essentially we would like to pay two short visits to your offices between December and February in order to conduct an interview with the service manager and a discussion group with frontline job broker staff.

As was the case in Wave One, the research will be conducted confidentially. Views and comments will not be published in any way that allows them to be linked with the people who expressed them or with the organisations they work for. Neither will we report the names of individuals or organisations involved in the research.

Furthermore, throughout the research process, we will of course do our best to minimise any inconvenience to you and your staff.

We will be in touch by telephone during the next week to discuss the proposed arrangements and any questions you have. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if there is anything you would like to discuss.

Yours sincerely

Letter confirming participation of Job Broker staff

Evaluation of the New Deal for Disabled People national extension

Dear

A programme of research is underway to evaluate the New Deal for Disabled People national extension. The research is sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions. The study aims to understand the operation and impacts of the service. Along with twenty-three other job brokers, your service has agreed to take part in the evaluation. *Following on from the first stage of this study that was carried out in your service in 2002, we are now embarking on a second stage of work. [TO BE INCLUDED ONLY FOR W1 SITES]*

A key part of this evaluation is to explore the views and experiences of job broker staff responsible for delivering the service to clients. Group discussions will be carried out with staff in a number of job broker services involved in the evaluation. Within these groups we will be exploring a range of issues relating to how the service works. For example, practices around registering clients, the provision of in-work support and relations between the job broker service, Jobcentre Plus staff and employers.

We received your details from your service manager, who indicated that as a member of frontline staff, you would have a valuable contribution to make to the research and that you would be able to participate in a group discussion. We would greatly appreciate your involvement in this group.

Following discussion with your manager, I can confirm that the group discussion will take place as follows:

Date:	INSERT DATE
Time:	INSERT TIME
Place:	INSERT ADDRESS
Name of interviewer(s):	INSERT NAME (S)

We would greatly appreciate it if you could complete the attached form and return it to the noted address over the next couple of days. Knowing a bit about the current role and professional background of staff taking part in the group will be very helpful for us in planning the discussion. The information collected will be treated as confidential and it will only be made available to members of the research team.

All the research will be conducted confidentially. Views and comments will not be published in any way that allows them to be linked with the people who expressed them or with the organisations they work for. Neither will we report the names of the individuals or organisations that participate in the research.

We look forward to meeting you on the INSERT DATE. In the meantime if you have any questions or would like to talk about the research at all, please do not hesitate to contact me on xxxxx.

Yours sincerely,

Topic guide: Job Broker manager interviews

Throughout the interviews, need to explore:

- *for managers included in Wave 1, changes in arrangements/services;*
- *for managers in newly selected sites, explore evolution of arrangements/services since commencing NDDP (but particularly current arrangements)*
- *for Wave 1 managers it will be necessary to review data collected last time to be alert to changes. We will not need to cover sections 1 and 2 in detail – just identify and explore any changes or fill any gaps from Wave 1 interviews*
- *for both, we should also review management information data so that we can directly ask about eg relative performance in terms of profile of clients (stock v flow), conversion rates, sustainability rates*

1. BACKGROUND

- Post, job title, responsibilities
- Place in management structure (of JB service and organisation overall)
- Length of time in post
- (Briefly) professional background
- The wider organisation (*brief description only, more depth sought in later section*)
 - activities and size, overall aims
 - involvement in other similar initiatives/other government-funded initiatives (*esp explore whether existing expertise in working with disabled people and in delivering work support service*)

2. MODELS OF JB SERVICE PROVISION

- Who the service is aimed at
 - geographic scale of organisation's involvement (e.g. local office only; regional; national)
 - any specialism/particular focus in service (i.e. either desire/contractual requirement to work with specific groups) e.g. type of impairment, occupation, other client characteristics
- Nature of service provided
 - overview of types of support and who provides (in-house, partner, external service)
 - how far providing standard packages or programmes of support (eg existing courses or programmes) cf designing around individual clients

- Funding (*descriptive information only, funding explored in more detail in section 8*)
 - Sources of funding (*inc indirect funding eg provision of staff, accommodation etc*) – reasons for any changes – impact of balance of funding sources
 - Level of NDDP payments
- How the JB service sits within the wider organisation: *explore reasons (inc influence of funding), pros/cons, implications*
 - size, sector, nature of other activities of organisation
 - comparisons between JB service and other areas of work (*eg client groups, nature of support/service provided, disability focus, work focus, outcome focus*)
 - how far drawing on in-house expertise, services and resources
 - relative size and profile of JB contract within other work
 - how JB finances are organised within organisation (*eg work as separate organisation in monetary terms or all in 'one pot'*)
 - changes in approach or ways of working required for JB contract and how comfortably these sit with other aspects of organisational ethos
- Organisation of staffing: *explore how staffing is organised, reasons for this (inc funding) pros and cons, implications for service provided (nature and quality)*. Key dimensions of staffing organisation to explore are:
 - size of JB team and caseload size
 - staff dedicated to JB/not
 - staff specialising within JB activities/generic JB staff roles
 - involvement of partner organisations
 - use of external organisations for delivery
 - any changes being considered/planned

3. MARKETING (if the service has a marketing specialist, suggest we do a short interview with them to cover this section)

- Marketing strategies and who aimed at (clients, employers, Jobcentre Plus, other referral sources etc) *explore informal (eg meetings) as well as formal*
- Focus of marketing (employment agency, disability-related programme)
- Impact of funding on marketing activities
- Effectiveness of methods: what has worked well, less well
- Changes made over time in strategies: reasons and outcomes
- Views about effectiveness/impacts of DWP national advertising (*e.g. tv ads, mailshot*)

4. RELATIONSHIPS WITH JC+

- Nature of contact with JC+ – which JC+ staff, who initiates, reasons for/objectives of contact- any changes in relationships: nature and influences- numbers of clients referred from JC+ to Job Broker- reasons for high/low numbers of referrals- anything significant about types of clients referred (how appropriate is service for them)
- What helps/hinders effective relationship with JC+ – eg overlap of roles, competition, misunderstandings of roles, time involved in building relationships, turnover of staff- who benefits from contact: advantages for clients, JC+, JB organisation and staff- any disadvantages
- Any feedback from JB to JC+ on individual clients – motivations for contact- policies and procedures for feedback
- JB access to: JC+ job vacancies – JC+ services – ease of access- formal/informal arrangements for access
- How work of JC+ and JB sits alongside each other- what JBs add to JC+ services; what JC+ services add to JB services

5. REGISTRATION

- When clients are registered and by which JB staff
- JB strategies for selection of clients for registration (formal/informal)
Probe for factors influencing registration strategies eg JB targets, DWP guidance, funding structure, other financial considerations, caseload size
- Circumstances under which clients do not receive full service/JB is not appropriate for client- how arises- how respond eg signposting other services; policy and practices around de-registering clients

6. JOB SUSTAINABILITY

- Any contact with client/employer after client takes up job- type of contact, purpose, who with, who initiates- whether standard procedures/ad hoc
- Factors that enhance/prevent job sustainability (*overview of key factors- theme to be explored in-depth with JB staff and clients*)- whether clients/employers make contact if problems encountered- views about why not
- Any types of in-work support provided- how provided, how significant a part of JB work
- Any impact of DWP procedures on sustained employment/services provided
 - sustained outcome payment moved from 26 to 13 weeks (any difference in degree of in-work support)
 - need for evidence of employment (does it influence JBs to keep in touch with clients in work)
 - target of 25% job conversions (any impacts for how go about job matching)

7. JB RELATIONS WITH EMPLOYERS

- Relations between JB and employers
 - policy/practice in telling employers about client group/programme
 - key objectives of contact with employers e.g. generating job placements, raising awareness of disability/organisation/NDDP, place clients in response to job adverts, effect change in employer practices
 - types of employer/sector targeted and why.
 - how are relationships with employers developed (eg, direct mail, employer conventions, visits, telephone canvassing)
 - what helps/hinders effective relationship with employers
 - have relations changed, if so how and why
 - use of financial incentives with employers (universal/selective, effectiveness)
- Resources available for developing relationship with employers

8. Funding

- Views on outcome related principles of NDDP funding
- Views on changes in funding structure
 - increase in registration rate
 - reduction in job sustainability payment period (26 to 13 weeks)
- Explore centrality of funding (structure, balance between sources and overall levels) as an influence and impact of recent changes in funding in relation to each issue: – impacts on nature of services provided and how delivered (eg use of partnerships; use of JC+ services) – impacts on organisation of JB service and staffing- impacts on marketing decisions – impacts on who work with (selection)
 - impacts on how work with them (rationing)
 - impacts on quality of service provided
 - impacts on performance and ability to achieve performance targets
 - impacts on plans for future development

9. DEVELOPMENTS IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Job search support and job matching – access to vacancies (JC+ and other) (*probe: use of internet to access JC+ vacancies*) – other ways of supporting job search – how actively involved in job matching/discussion of suitability of job – use of financial incentives to clients entering work: reasoning, how effective – impact of 25% job entry target on job search/matching services
- Financial advice and better off calculations – whether provided, how, why/why not – any changes in practice, reasons
- Basic skills screening – whether/how carried out – whether changed or changes planned
- Action plans/back to work planning – any past use of action plans: purposes, content, sharing with client, reviewing
 - whether approach will change with new procedures: purposes, content, sharing with client, reviewing
 - how, why
 - perceptions of usefulness and value of new approach
 - any practical changes required (eg administration, time required)

10. CONTINUING WITH OR WITHDRAWING FROM JB SERVICE

- Factors influencing decision:- to bid for extension of contract in case study area– not to bid for extension in case study area– to bid for additional areas (if manager involved)– to bid competitively in case study area
- Any expectations of changes in service under extended/new contract: services, coverage, target groups, ability to meet DWP targets, funding
- (If withdrawing) How preparing for cessation of JB contract- implications for existing clients- implications for staff- implications for organisation as a whole/ partners

11. OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICE

- Any benefits to organisation of involvement in NDDP, how changed over time
- Any disadvantages to organisation and how changed
- Wider impacts on organisation- any cultural/organisational shifts required- any changes to non-JB services and views about these
- What 'lessons' have been learnt about providing JB service/more generally
- Key aspects of their approach to job broking that contribute to success
- Key aspects of their organisation of JB service that contribute to success

Topic guide: Job Broker staff group interviews

ROUND TABLE INTRODUCTION

- Name
- Role in delivery of JB service – any specialist role – whether work uniquely on JB or combine with other aspects of organisation's work: what; how much of time on JB
- Length of time in position

1. ORGANISATION OF STAFFING

- Current situation, changes and views about: – size of JB team and caseload size – whether staff are dedicated to JB/work on other contracts – whether staff specialise within JB activities/have generic JB staff roles
- How different is JB work from other contracts they work on (and existing pre-NDDP service): implications,
- Pros and cons of involvement of partner organisations/external organisations in delivery

2. REGISTERING AND WORKING WITH CLIENTS

- Registration
 - when clients are registered and by which JB staff
 - factors influencing their decision to register/not register the client *Explore: client characteristics (esp meanings of job readiness and timeframe involved); organisational strategy; DWP guidelines; financial considerations; caseload size*
 - any formal procedures for determining decisions around registration
 - any circumstances under which would delay registration/suggest specific action before registering client; factors influencing this
 - action taken if decide not to register someone (eg suggest/signpost to other external/internal provision etc)
 - extent of involvement in registration process of Basic Skills, development/Action Plan (part of new contractual arrangements) – what is done and when
- Meeting client needs
 - which are the most important types of support for their client group (*a brief overview only as explored in more depth in section 6*)
 - how clear clients are about what help they want
 - types of needs about which JB might become aware only later
 - types of needs JB service is best able to address

- types of needs less able to address and why (e.g. structural barriers beyond scope of JB service; skills gaps for JB; funding; interpretation of role of JB service)
- how deal with any needs unable to address (e.g. signposting to other services)
- use of external organisations (including JC+) in providing support to clients
- Funding and targets– awareness of funding arrangements, any organisational financial pressures, targets for job entries– any views on principles of funding structure– implications for type of clients work with– implications for type of services provided, how provided– impacts on job satisfaction and staff morale

3. JOB SUSTAINABILITY/IN-WORK SUPPORT

- Any contact with client/employer after client takes up job- type of contact, purpose, who with, who initiates- whether standard procedures/ad hoc– any difficulties in making contact
- Factors which lead to clients leaving/experiencing difficulties in work (*eg suitability of job; JB involvement in job matching; benefits, tax credits and financial issues; employer barriers; client circumstances*)– how easy is it to anticipate and deal with these issues before client starts work- whether clients/employers make contact if problems encountered- views about why not
- Any types of in-work support provided- how provided, any use of other agencies/services- how significant a part of JB work, how much priority given, reasons– any constraints on help provided within JB service (inc client not wanting contact)– any gaps in provision, how should they be addressed
- Any impact of DWP procedures on sustained employment/services provided
 - sustained outcome payment moved from 26 to 13 weeks (any difference in degree of in-work support)
 - need for evidence of employment (does it influence JB; to keep in touch with clients in work)
 - target of 25% job conversions (any impacts for how go about job matching)

4. NON-PARTICIPATION

- Reasons for non-participation (staff perceptions and reasons given by clients)
- Lessons for JB;DWP (service/process/structurally related)

5. RELATIONS WITH EMPLOYERS

- Key objectives of contact with employers e.g. generating job placements, raising awareness of disability/organisation/NDDP, place clients in response to job adverts, effect change in employer practices
- Types of employer/sector targeted and why
- How are relationships with employers developed (e.g. direct mail, employer conventions, visits, telephone canvassing)
- What helps/hinders effective relationship with employers
- Have relations changed, if so how and why
- Use of financial incentives with employers (universal/selective, effectiveness)

6. RELATIONS WITH JOBCENTRE PLUS

- Nature of contact with JC+ – which JC+ staff, who initiates, reasons for/objectives of contact- any changes in relationships: nature and influences- anything significant about types of clients referred by JC+ (how appropriate is service for them)– what do clients appear to have been told about service by JC+ staff; views about this
- What helps/hinders effective relationship with JC+- eg overlap of roles, competition, misunderstandings of roles, time involved in building relationships, turnover of staff– any changes they would like to see
- Any feedback from JB to JC+ on individual clients- motivations for contact- policies and procedures for feedback
- How work of JC+ and JB sits alongside each other- what JBs add to JC+ services; what JC+ services add to JB services

7. VIGNETTES

Introduce vignettes- in relation to each example client explore the following themes

- Registration
 - views about whether and when would register the client; factors influencing this
 - action taken if decide not to register client (e.g. suggest/signpost to other external/internal provision etc)
- Meeting client needs
 - what are the key issues would like to explore with each client
 - what are the key issues the service would need to be able to address
 - what elements of service or support would be relevant for each client (eg vocational guidance, discussion of whether work is right option, voluntary work/Permitted Work, training, job search support, better off calculations, basic skills screening)

- how effectively would they envisage the service being able to meet the key needs
- what goals would work to with each; what time frame
- any use of other services/providers (incl. JC+)
- action would take if service unsuited to needs of client (e.g. signposting to other services)
- Job sustainability/In-work support
 - any expectations of on-going contact with client if successful in securing employment
 - any expectations of contact with employer if client successful in securing employment
 - types of in-work support

8. DEVELOPMENTS IN PRACTICE

- Job search support and job matching– access to vacancies (JC+ and other)– other ways of supporting job search– how actively involved in job matching/discussion of suitability of job– use of financial incentives to clients entering work: reasoning, how effective– impact of 25% job entry target on job search/matching services
- Financial advice and better off calculations- whether provided, how, why/why not, how useful to client– any changes in practice, reasons
- Basic skills screening – whether/how carried out – how useful to client – how useful to JB- any changes made or planned
- Action plans/back to work planning- any past use of action plans: purposes, content, sharing with client, use, reviewing- whether approach will change with new procedures: purposes, content, sharing with client, use reviewing– whether items included are responsibility of service, client, both– how clients react to plans- perceptions of usefulness and value of (new) approach
- Longer-term clients
 - types of clients who are longer-term
 - how maintain contact with longer-term clients
 - what has worked best- which element(s) of service have had an impact on clients
 - what do they do where clients have not made progress as expected

- Registered clients for whom the service seems inappropriate
 - types of clients/circumstances where this occurs
 - how it comes about (i.e. whether they register them knowing that the service may not be right for them; whether they only find out after registration, if so, why)
 - what they do in these circumstances (put the onus on the client; encourage client to de-register; reduce intensity of contact; refer to other JB; refer to other agency etc) and why

9. CONCLUSION

- Learning points for them in delivering JB service
- Aspects of JB service they would most like to see change; recommendations for future
- Aspects of their approach to job broking that contribute to success

Vignettes used in Job Broker staff group interviews

Vignette 1

Close to work

- Mary is 43 years old and has a heart condition and high blood pressure.
- Her last job was in a bank, where she worked for four years. She was made redundant 9 months ago due to branch closures.
- Mary found the period around her redundancy very stressful and feels it made her heart condition and blood pressure worse. This has now stabilised and she feels confident about returning to work, which her doctor is also encouraging.
- She left school at 16 with 5 GCSEs, including Maths and English.
- For the last 4 months she has been working three hours a week on a voluntary basis for a local charity, but would like to get back into full-time work.
- She says she would be willing to take on any job just to get back into full-time work.
- She was asked to attend an interview at the Jobcentre Plus office. An adviser told her about NDDP and gave her a list of Job Brokers, suggesting that she contact them as he felt they would be able to help her.

Vignette 2

Middle

- Bob is 30 years old and has been out of work for the last 18 months.
- He left school at 17 with 6 GCSEs and did an NVQ in marketing and advertising.
- Bob worked in advertising for 5 years full-time but left because he suffered from stress and depression, for which he is now on medication.
- He would like to return to work but is unconfident about resuming full-time employment – he is concerned that the long hours and pressured environment in which he last worked contributed to him becoming ill.
- He is unsure of what work he would like to do, or whether getting a job would be the best thing for him.
- Bob hasn't been looking for work himself as yet except for a brief visit to Jobcentre Plus where an adviser mentioned NDDP.

Vignette 3**Far from work**

- Joe is 52 and following a car accident 2 years ago has chronic back pain. He also says he gets very low, for which he is on tablets.
- He left school at 15 without any qualifications. Since leaving school he worked in factories and as a builder's labourer, and had some short periods of unemployment.
- Joe has not worked since his accident. He is unsure if he wants to return to work but is bored of doing nothing all day. He hasn't been looking for work himself yet.
- Joe thinks he might like to work part-time but is unsure about whether he'd be financially better off working, and whether any jobs suitable for him exist.
- He felt he ought to make an appointment to see a Job Broker after receiving a letter telling him about NDDP and the Job Broker service.

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