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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY

RESEARCH REPORT No 106

NEW DEAL FOR DISABLED PEOPLE: EARLY IMPLEMENTATION

Sue Arthur, Anne Corden, Anne Green, Jane Lewis, Julia Loumidis, Roy Sainsbury, Bruce Stafford, Patricia Thornton and Robert Walker

A report of research carried out by the Centre for Research in Social Policy, National Centre for Social Research, Social Policy Research Unit and Institute for Employment Research on behalf of the Department of Social Security and the Department for Education and Employment

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Access to Work	A programme to provide practical support to disabled people to get and retain jobs. The support includes special aids and equipment adaptations to workplaces, support workers and help with travel to work costs.
IBIS	A computerised system used to calculate if clients would be 'better-off' in work rather than on benefit.
Intervention Fund	A discretionary fund used to assist clients move towards employment. The Intervention Fund can be used to, for instance, fund training, meet job interview travel costs, one-off payments to set up businesses, etc.
Jobfinder's Grant	One-off payment of £200 when a disabled person starts work in a low paid job. It is designed to encourage those out of the labour market for a long time to accept employment they might otherwise not consider. Being piloted in 15 areas from April 1999 for one year, including all the Personal Adviser Service Areas.
Job Introduction Scheme	A grant (£75 per week) towards employers' costs for up to the first six weeks of employment. Paid where the employer and/or disabled person has some concerns about whether the job is within the disabled person's capability.
LMS	Labour Market System. A computerised system used by the Employment Service, which includes information on job vacancies notified to Jobcentres.
PACT	Placing, Assessment and Counselling Team.
Progress Plan	A plan of action agreed between a Personal Adviser and a client. The Progress Plan can outline tasks for the client and the Personal Adviser to complete. The client is 'caseloaded' after a Progress Plan has been drawn up.

SUMMARY

Overview

The New Deal for Disabled People Personal Adviser Service pilot commenced in October 1998 and is to run for two years. The Personal Adviser Service aims both to assist disabled people and those with a long-standing illness who want to work to do so, and to help those who are already in work to retain their employment. It also seeks to promote the abilities of disabled people and to extend the range of services available to them.

The pilot was initially implemented in six pilot areas where the Employment Service delivered the Personal Adviser Service. It was extended to six other areas in the April 1999 and delivered by partnerships that include private and voluntary sector organisations.

The research

The report draws on evaluative research conducted during the first year of the pilot. This interim report is intended to describe and reflect on progress during the early stages of the Personal Adviser Service pilot, rather provide than a comprehensive evaluation. It covers the period when the Employment Service pilot areas were becoming established and when practice was changing quickly. Practice and levels of activity are continuing to change and will be covered by further research, and the final evaluation report.

The research design is pluralistic and involves quantitative and qualitative elements that are described in detail in Appendix A. Much of the report is based on *qualitative* research since the slow start-up and uptake of the Personal Adviser Service has limited the use that can yet be made of surveys of participants and non-participants. The qualitative research was mostly conducted between February and May 1999. The quantitative research covers people who came forward between May and June 1999.

Structure of the report

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the report while subsequent chapters describe the organisation and operation of the local pilot areas (Chapter 2); the characteristics, experiences and perceptions of the clients and non-participants (Chapters 3 and 4); Personal Advisers (Chapter 5) and employers (Chapter 6).

This summary section draws on Chapter 1 and, highlights strategic conclusions.

Set up and uptake

Although at the time of the research the pilots were still at an early stage, an active Personal Adviser Service had been established in each pilot area (Section 1.2 and Chapter 2) and, with certain reservations, high levels of satisfaction were recorded among clients (Section 3.5). However, uptake

of the Personal Adviser Service was running at about three per cent of those sent an invitation letter, though almost as many again came forward in other ways. (Section 1.5). While perhaps lower than anticipated, the fact that very large numbers of non-participants did not expect ever to work suggests that the Personal Adviser Service is reaching a far higher proportion of disabled people who are able and want to work.

Perspectives on the Personal Adviser Service

There is evidence that the Personal Adviser Service is not yet salient among disabled people or employers and that the association with the other New Deals may not always be helpful (Section 1.8). The quality of the interaction between Personal Advisers and their clients is the key to the overall success of the Personal Adviser Service. While generally good, communication was sometimes poor. The need for Personal Advisers to be able to mediate disagreements with clients is critical. Additional training needs were identified which included the effects of illness and impairment, benefits advice and outreach to ethnic minorities. Personal Advisers' relationships with employers are particularly complex with employers demanding specialist advice, financial support, in-work support and opportunities for work trials while not always understanding the needs of disabled people.

Policy insights

While uptake was not high, the letter of invitation received little criticism from clients (Section 1.9). Increased uptake will require targeting potential clients when they are most receptive which may suggest exploiting routine contacts with the Benefits Agency and other welfare agencies. Although there was some variation in administration between pilot areas, radical innovation is not yet evident.

It is important to determine whether the initiative, if implemented nationally, is to continue to promote local innovation and a holistic approach to casework, and how it should encourage employers to adopt good employment practices. Particularly important is the extent to which the Personal Advisers are to be actively engaged in service provision, rather than adopt a co-ordination role.

Organisation and Operation of the Personal Adviser Service

Pilot workloads

Employment Service pilot areas were visited five months after the launch of the scheme, at which point they were still in the process of being established. At that time three of the six areas reported very high workloads whilst the remainder appeared not to have reached full capacity (Section 2.5).

Advising the Personal Adviser Service

Most pilot managers had established a steering or advisory group. Overall, these groups had performed a useful and valuable role. However, a few managers were ambivalent about the usefulness of their steering or advisory group and some had changed the membership because of a perceived lack of support (Section 2.7).

Mapping service provision

The amount of mapping of service provision completed varied between the six Employment Service pilot areas. Some pilots had begun exploring available services before the launch of the Personal Adviser Service whilst others had done little before the scheme became operational (Section 2.8).

Location of the Personal Adviser Service

Views differed on the merits of using Jobcentres, which could be seen as a threatening location to some clients, but providing staff with access to Employment Service resources and camaraderie with colleagues (Section 2.2).

Recruitment of staff

In most Employment Service pilot areas Personal Advisers had been recruited by the pilot manager from within the Employment Service, and a significant proportion had been Disability Employment Advisers (Section 2.3). However, recruitment problems meant that some pilots launched the Service without sufficient numbers of fully trained Personal Advisers.

Training of Personal Advisers

Personal Advisers were generally appreciative of their training, although some gaps were identified, particularly in relation to Information Technology, mental health issues and benefits advice (Section 2.3).

Roles and responsibilities of staff

Pilot managers were able to devote most of their time to the overall management of their pilot (Section 2.4). Personal Advisers themselves often had specialist roles, such as line managing administrative staff and responsibility for marketing.

Re-emphasising policy objectives

Many respondents said that at around Christmas 1998 they noted an increase in the importance attached to employment outcomes for the Personal Adviser Service. Many Personal Advisers expressed feelings of concern about this perceived shift in focus away from intermediate outcomes, and towards employment ones (Section 2.5).

Occupational Psychologists and administrative staff

Occupational Psychologists were available in all areas and, in addition to conducting psychometric tests and employment assessments, offered mentoring and advice to Personal Advisers (Section 2.4). Administrative staff were often described as the first point of contact for clients but their duties could range from making appointments and answering clients' questions to checking eligibility for the Service.

Links with the Benefits Agency and Employment Service

In the pilot areas relations between the Benefits Agency and Employment Service were generally positive, especially for those located in Employment Service buildings (Section 2.5). However, some Personal Advisers felt that contact with the Benefits Agency had triggered some reviews of their clients' benefit entitlement.

Developing service provision

Staff identified two important reasons for marketing the Service: to ensure client referrals and to establish links with service providers (Section 2.6).

Pilots varied in the number of providers and organisations involved in the Service (Section 2.9). Interaction with providers could range from those who had pledged support to those who had provided work placements, offered training, employment and supported employment opportunities. Interviews with service providers in the Employment Service pilots suggested few referrals had been made to them from the Personal Adviser Service. A shortage of provisions for people with learning difficulties and mental health problems was identified (Section 2.10).

Key service providers' perceptions of the Personal Adviser Service

Overall, the key service providers interviewed concluded that the Personal Adviser Service offered a valuable service to people with impairments or long-term illnesses. However, some worried that the focus on work outcomes and the shortness of the pilot would be counterproductive (Section 2.11).

Employment characteristics of Employment Service pilots

All six Employment Service pilot areas shared in the gradual decline in unemployment rates that occurred nationally over the period from January 1997 to April 1999 (Appendix B). However this decline was often not particularly marked. Lanarkshire, Eastern Valleys, Sandwell and Central Sussex displayed unemployment rates consistently higher than the Great Britain average over the period. Bolton and Bristol East & Bath enjoyed below average unemployment.

Economic inactivity was higher than average in three of the pilot areas, Eastern Valleys, Lanarkshire and Sandwell between Spring 1997 and Winter 1998/99. Indeed economic inactivity was consistently above average and employment below average in the Eastern Valleys while the reverse was true of Bristol East & Bath.

The local area also differed in terms of their industrial structure. Over a third of employees in Sandwell were engaged in manufacturing in 1997, compared with a fifth in Great Britain and less than a tenth in the Central Sussex area. Manufacturing was also below average in Bristol East and Bath with a higher proportion of total employees employed within the real estate, renting and business activities sectors. The wholesale/retail trade - another important sector in terms of employment volumes - was more evenly distributed across the six local areas.

Survey of participants and non-participants

Information on the characteristics of the target group and clients of Personal Adviser Service was derived from a survey of people sent an invitation letter from January 1999 onwards and all those who had had a first Personal Adviser interview between March and June 1999 (Section 3.1). It includes non-participants who did not respond to the invitation letter within six weeks, those who did and who took part in at least one interview (invited participants) and people who were either referred to the Service or approached it independently ('uninvited participants'). A total of 580 telephone and 250 face-to-face research interviews were conducted between April and September 1999. Uninvited participants

were underrepresented in the issued sample and consequently in the interviews.

Health and employment characteristics

Participants were on average younger and better qualified than non-participants, and more likely to have a partner in paid work and access to transport (Section 3.2). A third of participants were aged 50 or older (compared with 52 per cent of non-participants) and 41 per cent were aged under 40.

Participants had typically had their impairment or health problem for less time than non-participants and had consequently not been without work and on benefit for as long. Forty-seven per cent of participants had been receiving a qualifying benefit for at least three years compared with 60 per cent of non-participants. Thirty-two per cent of participants reported a mental health condition as the main health problem, 21 per cent a problem with their back, eighteen per cent some other form of muscular-skeletal impairment and eight per cent circulatory problems. The remaining 21 per cent had a range of other health conditions and impairments.

Participants were more likely ever to have worked and more were actively seeking work. Ninety-six per cent had worked at some time although half had not done so for at least three years. Ten per cent were already, or still, in work at the time of the research interview. Nineteen per cent had undertaken voluntary work while on benefit and six per cent had engaged in therapeutic work compared with six and three per cent of non-participants.

Non-invited participants were somewhat younger and better educated than those who had replied to the letter, although they tended to have had a health condition or impairment and to have been on benefit for longer.

Attachment to work

More participants than non-participants wanted to work and felt able to do so, and fewer needed concessions, help and support (Section 3.3). Sixty-three per cent of participants believed that they would be able to engage in paid work, 53 per cent wanted to work immediately and 39 per cent said that they would want to in future. Seventy-seven per cent of non-participants reported that they were unable to do any paid work and 50 per cent, compared with only eight per cent of participants, said that they would never work.

Seventy-nine per cent of participants felt that their health condition or impairment meant that they would need more than 20 days off sick each year, 73 per cent said that they would have to have several breaks a day, 42 per cent would need someone to help at work and 22 per cent required special equipment to be provided.

The reasons why participants sought work included financial ones (60 per cent mentioned these), escaping boredom (38 per cent), improving esteem and self-sufficiency (30 per cent) and striving for normalcy (19 per cent).

Experience of the Personal Adviser Service

After some prompting, 56 per cent of non-participants appeared to be aware of the Personal Adviser Service, and about two-thirds of these recalled receiving the letter of invitation (Section 3.4). Non-invited participants tended to hear about the Service through the media and via Jobcentre staff.

The reasons given for not responding to the letter were primarily health related, but six per cent did not see the scheme as applicable, four per cent said that they had insufficient information and a similar number said that they did not trust the system or the New Deals.

Not surprisingly the most common reason for approaching the Service was to seek help to return to work, but 20 per cent wanted help to acquire training and seven per cent more benefit(s). Three per cent thought attendance was compulsory.

Although 80 per cent could recall discussing the type of work that they could do with their Personal Adviser, 54 per cent could not remember discussing methods of job-search and 51 per cent any special work requirements.

Activities undertaken by clients

Sixty per cent of invited clients and 52 per cent of uninvited ones had begun or increased job-search after meeting with their Personal Adviser; 21 per cent of the former group and 26 per cent of the latter had started or applied for training. Sixteen per cent had started work (Section 3.5).

The work of the Personal Advisers

Discussions were held with 24 Personal Advisers, four from each of the six Employment Service pilot areas including two group events, in March 1999, and 12 in-depth interviews during April/May (Section 4.1).

Job satisfaction amongst the Personal Advisers and Personal Adviser Service Teams

Personal Advisers were committed to working with the client group in a client-centred approach (Section 4.2). Job satisfaction came from working with motivated people taking part voluntarily, the holistic approach and personal relationships in one-to-one working.

Reaching, receiving and selecting clients

Local pilot projects took standard approaches to local publicity. Some Advisers felt the invitation letter could be improved (Section 4.3). Personal Advisers tended to characterise clients at first interview according to motivation and readiness for work:

1. people seeking reassurance about benefit status;
2. severely ill, disabled or disadvantaged people with social care needs;
3. people not considering work but who might have some potential for work;

4 people motivated to work but uncertain about work goals and not job-ready;

5 people who were job-ready or almost job-ready;

6 people coming with a clear, work-related aim or specific requests for help.

Group **4** above was generally considered to be the most appropriate target group, and some Advisers were reluctantly turning away some clients in group **3**. They were ambivalent about the appropriateness of the Service for people in groups **5** and **6**.

Working with clients: the initial interviews

The number of initial interviews offered to a client before case loading varied within and across projects (Section 4.4). Personal Advisers often had little prior information about people and the first interview typically lasted just under one hour. The aim was to reassure clients about benefits, to put them at ease and to begin to build up trust. The Service and benefit provisions were typically described in general terms and little was offered to clients in the way of written materials.

Working with clients: vocational and health assessment

Few clients had particular jobs in mind, and Personal Advisers explored their ideas and interests (Section 4.5). When Personal Advisers perceived mismatches between clients' aspirations and what was 'realistic' they might steer clients in different directions, or sometimes support them in learning from unsuccessful attempts to try work.

Identifying health status could be a difficult and lengthy process. There was little evidence that Advisers sought input from health professionals to help with vocational guidance, or sought advice from ergonomic experts. Overall, Personal Advisers seemed not to be included in local circles of health and social care professionals.

Working with clients: the way forward

Personal Advisers were expected to agree a progress plan with clients joining the official caseload (Section 4.6). Some Advisers perceived this as an administrative chore; others felt it was useful, both to the client and for their own work, and practice varied accordingly.

Personal Advisers sometimes arranged voluntary work placements and provided ongoing support. External providers contracted to the Employment Service or Training and Enterprise Council usually provided work preparation courses. Finding time to support clients in voluntary work and work preparation was a growing problem in some projects.

Co-ordinating support

Personal Advisers turned first for external support to providers with Disability Service or other Employment Service contracts (Section 4.7). Options for clients varied across pilot areas. In areas of shortage, Personal Advisers often tried to stimulate new services or previously untapped sources of support. Most Personal Advisers had used the discretionary Intervention Fund only once or twice and usually for low-cost uses such

as taxi-fares. For larger expenditures, a business case had to be made, and in general, the Intervention Fund had not led to much exploration of new possibilities.

The move to paid employment

Personal Advisers identified a number of structural and institutional barriers for clients ready to take up paid work (Section 4.8). Local job opportunities often did not suit their clients' needs and some clients were unable or unwilling to travel to work. Some clients rejected the 'disabled' label, constraining the help Personal Advisers were able to give. Also some employers were not sympathetic to employing disabled people. Personal Advisers also perceived obstacles in the structure and operation of the benefits system.

Some pilot projects had staff dedicated to job matching but Personal Advisers usually accessed the computerised Labour Market System and spent much time looking directly for job openings for clients. Direct approaches to employers known personally to Personal Advisers were often successful, and Disability Symbol users were targeted. Generally, Personal Advisers did not use employment agencies, and said it could be hard to get disabled people onto their registers.

Work with employers

In general, Personal Advisers did not see supporting employers as a significant part of their remit, but some recognised the need to address employers' concerns about employing people with mental health problems or fluctuating conditions (Section 4.10).

The views and experiences of clients

Clients' perceptions and experiences of the Personal Adviser Service were explored in in-depth interviews with 17 men and 14 women, whose ages ranged from 21 to 63 years (Section 5.1).

Work histories and expectations

Some clients had never had paid work; others had to leave a previous job on becoming ill or disabled. It was not unusual to report being away from work for five years or more. A small number considered themselves currently 'off sick' or had already accepted a new job. Some were confident about getting work eventually, but most perceived problems (Section 5.2).

Contacting the Service

Clients had found out about the Personal Adviser Service in different ways, including through the Benefits Agency invitation letter. There were no major criticisms of the letter and people had known that getting in touch was voluntary. Making contact with the scheme generally appeared to have been straightforward. Awareness of the nature of the scheme appeared to have been low before making contact, and had remained low for some clients, sometimes causing confusion about what they were eligible for or what help they could ask for (Section 5.3).

People had approached the Personal Adviser Service with different aims, ranging from the fairly vague to the quite specific. Clients did not express

a high level of anxiety or concern at approaching the scheme, although some had considerable concern about returning to work more generally, particularly about the impact on their benefits. Where people had been offered a choice of venue and had been able to talk to the Adviser in a private room, this had been appreciated.

Experience of the Service

Clients on the whole did not appear to have a strong sense of being involved in a planning process and there was little recall of any written progress plan. Some clients were pleased if this meant that they did not feel pressurised, but others felt frustrated, particularly if they felt things were not progressing as they wished.

Where clients anticipated ongoing contact with the Personal Adviser, this was either in a mentor role or as a resource for specific information. Where clients felt future contact was unlikely this was because either:

- they had received the help they required or had decided not to move towards work; or
- they felt that the Service they had received was inappropriate or unsuitable, or had been told that what they wanted was not available.

Clients had received a wide range of help and advice from the Personal Adviser Service including: general counselling and support; work guidance and assessment; provision of funding and financial aid; advice about the financial implications of working; assistance with job-search; and support while in work.

Clients' evaluation of the Service

Most said that the Personal Adviser Service had made some positive difference (Section 5.4). They perceived the Service as helpful when it:

- raised their confidence or self-esteem as when their Adviser had a real grasp of the everyday effects of an impairment or a medical condition;
- opened new options which appeared or proved useful;
- enabled access to something already identified as necessary; or
- intervened to prevent or divert something perceived as unhelpful.

Less positive experiences had arisen where clients felt that options suggested or set up by the Personal Adviser were inappropriate or unsuitable, or where they had not been granted funding for a desired training course. Clients were frustrated where they felt that they had received inadequate benefits advice. Some clients felt that the Personal Adviser had limited knowledge of their specialist work area, or that using the Service might stigmatise them in employers' eyes.

The views and experiences of employers

Thirty in-depth interviews were conducted with employers, selected to include diversity in size, sector and involvement with the Personal Adviser Service (Section 6.1).

Employers' approaches to employing disabled people

The study identified two broad groups of employers. The first had a strong commitment to employing disabled people. They were mostly larger organisations with specialist support departments and access to external sources of support. The second group did not have the same active commitment to employing disabled people, but said they did not discriminate. They generally had little experience of employing disabled people or specialist support, either internally or externally (Section 6.2).

Both groups identified a range of issues involved in employing disabled people, which tended to be seen as problems or barriers by employers in the second group and as challenges by those in the first. Some were concerned that impairments might conspire to limit the productivity of disabled people and that there could be difficulties relating to the working environment, raising issues about both safety and access. Their views seemed sometimes to be influenced by limited experience, and narrow definition, of disability. Some respondents found it difficult to envisage the type of support or adjustments that could make a post accessible. Employers were also concerned about financial costs, and employing disabled people was generally seen to involve uncertainty and risk (Section 6.3).

Employers' involvement with the Personal Adviser Service

Employers described different types of involvement with the Personal Adviser Service including;

- employing a participant;
- taking someone on a placement;
- involvement in the set-up of the Service or receiving publicity about it.

Some employers had not heard of the New Deal for Disabled People before the research interview; others had become aware of the Service only after they had recruited a disabled person (Section 6.4).

Employers sought or received different types of help from the Service including:

- help with understanding whether a participant and post were well matched;
- whether any particular help or support was needed;
- access to or support for equipment and training; wage subsidies or other payments and other in-work support.

There were different views about whether needs were met and about satisfaction with the Service (Section 6.5).

Expectations of the Personal Adviser Service

Employers differed in their ability to identify the needs they had of the Personal Adviser and what it might be able to provide. Some also saw shortcomings in the Service. Some found it administratively cumbersome; others spoke of Advisers who had been insufficiently proactive,

inadequately informed about disability and who failed fully to investigate the needs of employer and employee (Section 6.6). Despite this, employers who had had contact with the Personal Adviser Service were generally keen to continue to be involved. Some felt their contact had widened their understanding of disability; others had begun to notify the Service of vacancies as they arose, or saw the Service as a potential source of information and advice about disability. In one or two cases, however, employers were more cautious about future involvement (Section 6.7).

Employers also discussed sometimes conflicting, suggestions as to how the Service should be publicised. Some, for example, saw written material as most useful; others said that they would prefer a meeting with the Personal Adviser team. Similarly, some wanted general information about the scheme or publicity, which challenges unhelpful stereotypes about disabled people; others thought that an approach relating to a specific participant who would fit well within their organisation would be more useful. Some wondered why they had not yet been approached about taking on participants. They sometimes saw themselves as having *'signed up'* to the New Deal for Disabled People, and there was some confusion with other New Deal programmes (Section 6.8).

1 REFLECTIONS ON THE EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW DEAL FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, PERSONAL ADVISER PILOTS[1]

1.1 Introduction

The New Deal for Disabled People Personal Adviser Service pilot, began in September/October 1998 and is to run for two years. The Personal Adviser Service aims both to assist disabled people and those with a long-standing illness who want to work to do so, and to help those who are already in work to retain their employment. Through local partnership, the Personal Adviser Service also seeks to promote the abilities of disabled people and to extend the range of services available to them. The pilots are being extensively monitored and during the first year a consortium of research organisations led by the Centre for Research in Social Policy[2] undertook a programme of research, the results of which are summarised in this chapter and reported in more detail in subsequent ones.

The pilot was initially implemented in six areas where the Employment Service delivered the Personal Adviser Service. The Personal Adviser Service was extended to six other areas in April 1999 and delivered by partnerships which include private and voluntary sector organisations. The report draws to a varying extent on all the elements of the evaluation conducted to date. It is important to recognise that the study is intended as a report on the progress of the Personal Adviser Service, rather than a comprehensive evaluation at this stage. It relates to the period when the Employment Service pilots were becoming established and when practice was changing quickly. It is far too soon to establish the long-term outcomes for clients or to begin to try to measure the impact of Personal Adviser Service. Nevertheless, the report provides an informative account of the process of implementing the Personal Adviser Service (largely in the Employment Service pilots) and identifies important pointers for the future.

1.1.1 Research methodology

The research design is pluralistic and involves quantitative and qualitative elements. (Details of the methodology are provided in Appendix B). In summary, the research has involved to date:

- site visits to the Employment Service pilots (between December 1998 and February 1999) and to the partnership pilots (during July and August 1999);
- two group discussions with Personal Advisers (March 1999) and 12 in-depth discussions (held between mid-April and mid-May 1999);
- in-depth interviews with 30 representatives of a range of businesses and organisations (held during April and May 1999); and

[1] This chapter draws on the analysis and ideas of all members of the research consortium and was drafted by Robert Walker, Bruce Stafford and Julia Loumidis.

[2] The other members of the Consortium are the Institute for Employment Research, the National Centre for Social Research, the Social Policy Research Unit and the Urban Institute.

- a survey of 450 participants in the Personal Advisory Service and of 380 people with a long-standing illness or disability who had not yet approached the Service (non-participants). The fieldwork was conducted over the period April to September 1999.

The research is continuing and it is emphasised that the findings reported here are necessarily interim and relate only to the first 10 months of the pilot. Accordingly, certain issues raised in the report, such as take-up and staff training may have improved or been satisfactorily addressed. For the most part the findings are limited to experience in the six pilot areas run by the Employment Service and which were established first.

The majority of the report is based on carefully designed *qualitative* research, the slow start-up and uptake of the Personal Adviser Service having contributed to limited use that can as yet be made of surveys of participants and non-participants. Indeed, the survey interviewing of clients and other disabled people is still continuing and the results are therefore based on a partial and comparatively small sample.

1.1.2 Structure of the report and first chapter

The report is structured around the perspectives of the various groups involved in, or affected by, the Personal Adviser Service. This chapter provides an overview of the key findings and Chapter 2 outlines the organisation and operation of the pilot in local areas. Preliminary results from survey interviews with participants and non-participants are summarised in Chapter 3 and the work of Personal Advisers is described in Chapter 4. The views and experiences of clients are discussed in Chapter 5 and the employers' perspectives on the Personal Adviser Service are reported in Chapter 6.

Returning to the structure of this chapter, Section 1.2 describes the set-up and organisation of the Personal Adviser Service in all 12 pilot areas. Section 1.3 reports on the characteristics of the clients using the Service and Section 1.4 details the barriers to employment identified by clients, Personal Advisers and employers. Section 1.5 explores the limited uptake of the Personal Adviser Service by disabled people and speculates on the optimal level of uptake.

A summary account of delivery of the Personal Adviser Service and an account of the assistance provided to clients is presented in Section 1.6 and is followed by a discussion of the early outcomes for clients and their evaluation of the Service to date (Section 1.7).

Finally, Section 1.8 and Section 1.9 offer reflections on the pilot experience so far, the former being focused on current operations, the latter on issues to be addressed in any national implementation. More specific lessons for policy are presented at the end of Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

1.2 Organisation and set-up of the pilots

As already noted the New Deal for Disabled People is being piloted in 12 areas; six are run by the Employment Service and the remainder by partnerships of private, public and voluntary organisations. The Employment Service pilots were launched on the 30th September 1998 and the partnership pilots in April 1999. The latter were selected following a competitive tendering process. Each partnership has a lead organisation managing the pilot on a day to day basis.

1.2.1 Employment Service pilot areas

The six Employment Service pilot areas were chosen to include a mix of inner city, urban and rural districts, with differing levels of unemployment and incapacity for work (Table 1.1). Appendix A provides a detailed analysis of the labour markets for the Employment Service areas.

Table 1.1 Characteristics of Employment Service Pilot Areas (selection criteria)

Local Area	Incapacity/Unemployment	District Type
Sandwell	High	Inner city
Lanarkshire	High	Mixed
Eastern Valleys	High	Rural
Bolton	Medium	Urban
Central Sussex	Medium	Mixed
Bristol East and Bath	Low	Urban

Lanarkshire, Eastern Valleys and Sandwell tended to experience higher than average unemployment over the two years to April 1999, while Bolton and Bristol East enjoyed lower than average rates. In each area the ratio of unemployment to unfilled vacancies fell slightly over the same period. However, only Bristol East exhibited an *employment rate* that was consistently higher than the national average between May 1997 and February 1999; employment in the Central Sussex area rose to above national levels in the latter part of the period and, while employment increased relatively from a comparatively low base in Lanarkshire, employment in Eastern Valleys remained lower than in any of the other pilot areas.

The six Employment Service areas differ markedly in size. The number of cases in the target population ranges from 37,820 in Eastern Valleys to 11,320 in Newham (Table 1.2). As a consequence the Employment Service pilot areas, Lanarkshire and Eastern Valleys each together issued 28 per cent of all invitations to participate in the Personal Adviser Service in the period ending 30 July 1999; and a Central Sussex and Bristol East accounted for nine and ten per cent respectively (Table 1.3).

Table 1.2 Size of Target Client Population

Area	Annual Flow into Client Group	Existing Client Group (August 1997)
Employment Service Areas		
Lanarkshire	8,330	36,660
Eastern Valleys	8,245	37,820
Sandwell	3,180	12,500
Bolton	3,400	16,260
Central Sussex	3,580	13,100
Bristol East & Bath	3,470	13,940
Partnership Areas		
Newham	3,280	11,320
South Tyneside	4,210	21,600
Mercia East	3,215	16,520
South Devon	4,190	15,660
Bedfordshire	3,685	14,700
North Yorkshire	3,550	17,220

Source: DSS

1.2.2 Delivering the Service

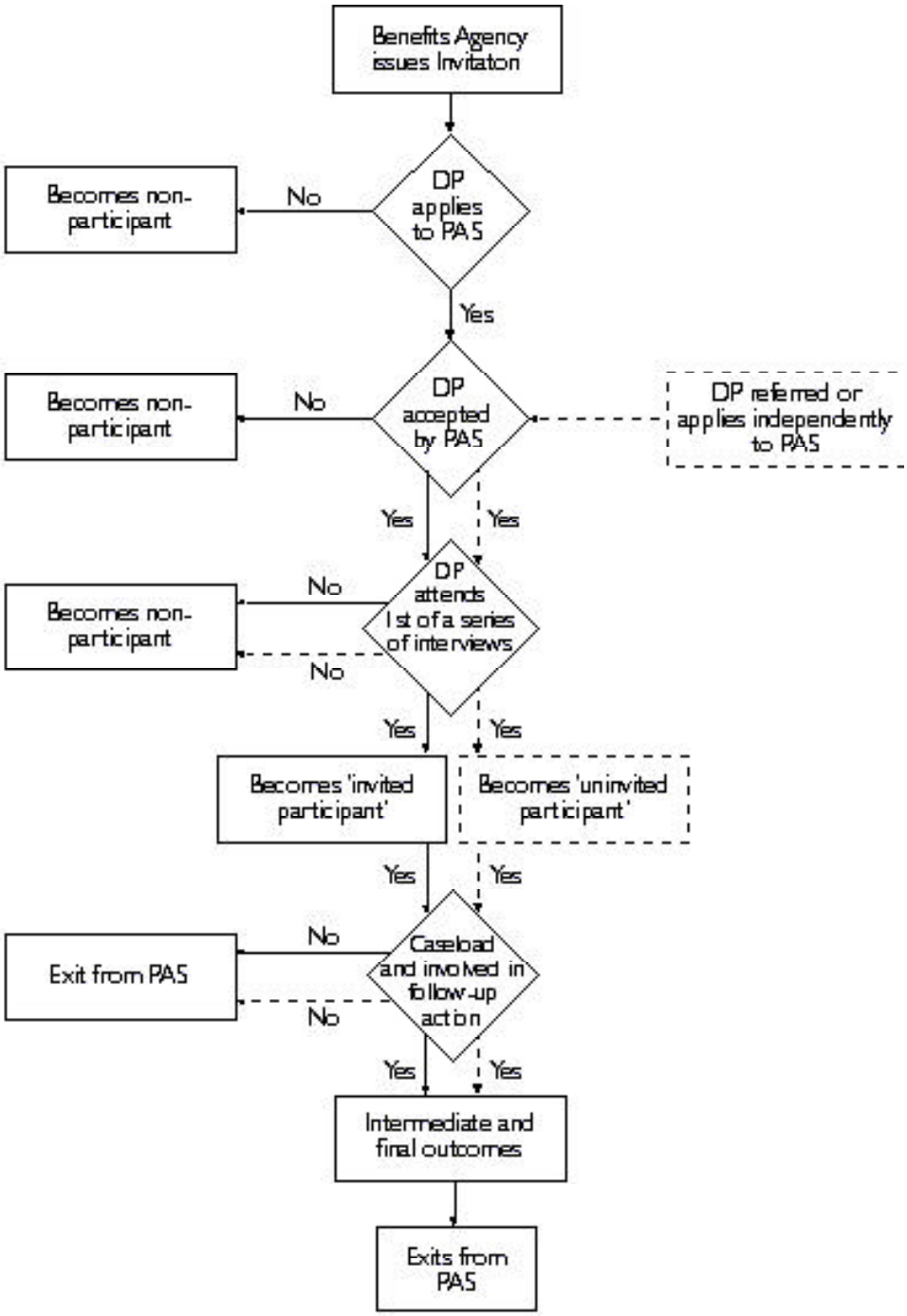
Benefits Agency offices in each pilot area identify people who are eligible for the New Deal for Disabled People. To manage Personal Advisers' workflows the target client group is divided into stock and flow components. All those people in the pilot areas of working age who have been receiving social security benefits on grounds of their incapacity are contacted when they reach 28 weeks of incapacity (the 'flow'). Those claimants who were in receipt of benefit due to incapacity for 28 weeks or more on a given date (the 28th September 1998) are dealt with on a rolling basis depending on the volume of other work (the 'stock'). People who are terminally ill or approaching minimum pension age are excluded. Letters inviting people to contact the Personal Adviser Service are sent out from Benefits Agency offices on a monthly basis. By the end of the pilot period, all eligible claimants in the 'stock' will have received a letter of invitation. The Personal Adviser Service is also available to people still in employment but at risk of losing their job due to illness or disability and moving onto incapacity benefits.

After receiving the invitation letter, people are expected to contact the Personal Adviser Service. People who learn of the Personal Adviser Service by other means may also approach the Service. At this stage, the first of a series of interviews with a Personal Adviser may be arranged. These interviews have a number of objectives that include giving the client an overview of the programme, assessing eligibility and, if appropriate, their employability (see Section 1.6 for further details). During one or more introductory interviews, a client may be invited to

agree a Progress Plan; if this is done, the client joins the Personal Adviser's caseload. This point marks the commencement of a series of steps to be undertaken to help the client move back into, or remain in, work.

The sequence of stages involved in the Service is shown schematically in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Schematic representation of Personal Adviser Service



Key
DP = Disabled Person
PAS = Personal Advisor Service

1.2.3 *Issues in establishing the Personal Adviser Service*

Both the Employment Service delivered pilots and the partnership pilots were successful in relatively quickly offering a service to clients. Nevertheless, and as might be expected, there were some issues that staff had to address in establishing the Personal Adviser Service:

- Finding suitable accommodation for both the main office and for Personal Advisers to use in the community was sometimes difficult. For Employment Service delivered pilots it also meant considering the relative merits of locating the Service in Jobcentres. In one partnership area some Personal Advisers worked from home – although clients were not seen in the Personal Advisers' homes (Section 2.3).
- Recruiting/seconding some of the managers and Personal Advisers was a lengthy process, and this delayed the setting up of the Service (Section 2.3).
- Although Personal Advisers were generally appreciative of the training they received, some were critical of its timing and coverage (Section 1.8.3).

1.2.4 *Operating the Personal Adviser Service*

As expected there were a number of differences and similarities in the way in which the areas administered the Personal Adviser Service. Variations may have been the result of fundamental differences in the local labour market in terms of unemployment rates and industrial sector (see Appendix A), the provision of services, the expertise of staff, the experience of the pilot manager and the support received in setting up the Service.

However, the differences observed may also have been because the site visits were made early in the life of the Personal Adviser Service and the fact that areas were in different stages of development. Similarities may be a function of national guidelines and possibly the involvement of the Employment Service in most of the pilot areas.

Differences related to:

- *Organisational structure*. Some pilots, for example, had a deputy manager (Section 2.4).
- *The roles and responsibilities of Personal Advisers, Occupational Psychologists and administrative staff*. Some Personal Advisers performed specialist roles, such as marketing the Service (Section 2.4). Occupational Psychologists were sometimes prominent figures in the support of Personal Advisers. Two of the partnership pilots included Occupational Psychologists seconded from the Employment Service (Section 2.4). Administrative staff were usually described as being the first point of contact for clients, but their duties were diverse ranging from basic clerical tasks to considerable involvement with clients.

- *The Intervention Fund*. In some cases responsibility for the Intervention Fund (a discretionary fund used, where appropriate, to assist clients to move towards employment (see Section 1.6.9 for further details)) was devolved to Personal Advisers but in other areas the manager retained responsibility for deciding all cases (Section 2.5).
- *Marketing to clients, to those who might refer clients, service providers and employers*. The extent of marketing varied between areas and managers also varied the level of marketing over time in response to local circumstances, such as the workload of Personal Advisers (Section 2.6).
- *Mapping service providers*. In Employment Service areas, the timing and scope of the mapping exercise used to identify local service providers varied (Section 2.8).
- *Targets*. The partnership pilots had contracted targets for the numbers of clients entering paid employment and retaining their jobs. In most of the pilots these targets had been conveyed to the Personal Advisers. However, some Personal Advisers in these areas expressed doubts about whether their scheme's targets would be met (Section 2.5). (There are no targets for the Employment Service delivered pilots.)

In addition, there was an apparent shift in the focus of the Personal Adviser Service in the Employment Service pilots around December 1998, when Personal Advisers report that an increased emphasis was given to employment outcomes (Section 2.5). Whilst Personal Advisers' training had acknowledged the relevance of intermediate outcomes, the focus of their work was said to have shifted towards identifying people who would move most quickly into employment and ensuring they did so.

1.2.5 Level of activity

Figure 1.2 shows the uptake of the Personal Adviser Service during the first ten months of operation. It shows the number of first introductory interviews per month has varied, with a low of 270 interviews in December 1998, and peaks of 469 and 411 interviews in March and July 1999 respectively. Expressing the number of introductory interviews as a proportion of invitations during the period to 30 July 1999 suggests a gross uptake of about 5.5 per cent. However, management information suggests that about 46 per cent of those participating were self-referrals or referrals from agencies (rather than responding directly to the Benefits Agency's letter).[3] This would imply a direct response rate of three per cent from the letter of invitation.

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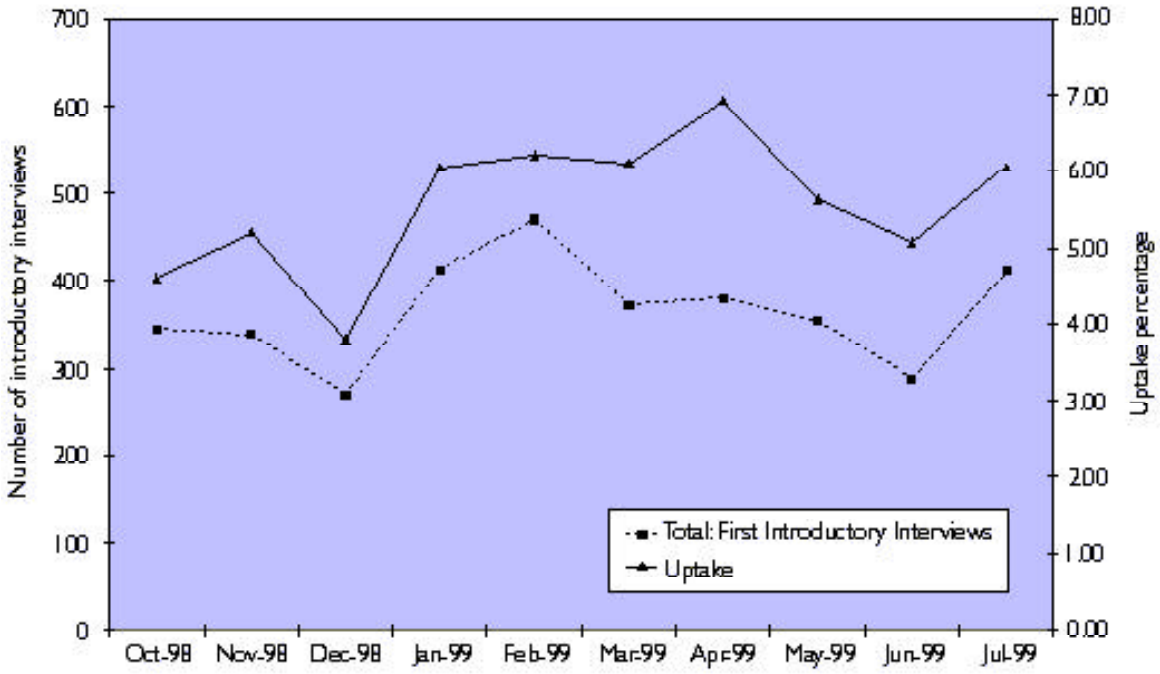
[3] It appears that only 20 per cent of clients interviewed in the survey approached the Service independently of the letter of invitation, which suggests that the sample issued under-represents this group. This should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings.

Table 1.3 Activity in the Employment Service Pilot Areas (Cumulative to 30 July 1999)

Local Area	Invitations issued		1st Introductory interviews		Initial action		In work	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Sandwell	7752	12	352	10	225	10	34	7
Lanarkshire	18202	28	764	21	408	18	68	15
Eastern Valleys	18478	28	848	23	468	21	154	33
Bolton	8749	13	666	18	419	19	86	18
Central Sussex	5682	9	436	12	286	13	43	9
Bristol East and Bath	6891	10	570	16	413	19	81	17
Totals	**65754**	**100**	**3636**	**100**	**2219**	**100**	**466**	**100**

Source: Management Data.

Figure 1.2 Uptake of the Personal Adviser Service



There is some variation in activity between Employment Service pilot areas. Uptake may be higher in Bolton and Bristol East and lower in the two largest areas (Lanarkshire and Eastern Valleys) (Table 1.3). It may be, too, that a higher proportion of cases proceed beyond the first interview in Bristol East (72 per cent) and Central Sussex (66 per cent) than in either Lanarkshire (53 per cent) or Eastern Valleys (55 per cent), although it is recognised that the administrative statistics may have limitations. The proportion of people recorded as being in work on 30 July 1999 was running somewhat ahead of trend in Bristol East and below it in Lanarkshire.

1.3 Characteristics of clients

At the time of writing, information is available for 450 clients who had had a first interview with Personal Advisers between March and June 1999. It is not possible to say how representative this group is of all Personal Adviser clients and it is known that it under represents those who did not come forward in direct response to the letter.

1.3.1 Socio-demographic characteristics and health and disability status

Four-fifths (80 per cent) of the clients were in receipt of Incapacity Benefit, 41 per cent received Income Support with a Disability Premium, 25 per cent were on Disability Living Allowance and five per cent claimed Severe Disability Allowance (Section 3.2.3). Forty-seven per cent had been receiving benefit for more than three years but 26 per cent had claimed within the last 12 months (Section 3.2.3). Four per cent had never had paid employment and 31 per cent had not worked for five or more years (Section 3.2.5). Of those who had worked, 76 per cent gave health reasons as a main or contributory factor in their decision to leave their last job (Section 3.2.5).

At the time of the interview, 65 per cent described their economic activity as being either sick or disabled, six per cent were in full-time work, seven per cent were employed part-time and eight per cent were training or in education (Section 3.4.1). Only one per cent described themselves as retired. Twelve per cent of clients were aged less than 30 with 32 per cent aged 50 or more and the remainder evenly distributed between the age groups 30 to 39 and 40 to 49 (Section 3.2.1). Fifty-one per cent were married or cohabiting of whom around seven out of ten had dependent children (Section 3.2.1). Twenty-three per cent were single and 16 per cent lived with parents or another close relative. Seven per cent were single parents.

Thirty-two per cent of clients reported a mental health illness (such as depression or anxiety) as their main health condition or impairment and 17 per cent noted similar problems as a secondary consideration (Section 3.2.2). A back problem was mentioned as a main condition by 21 per cent of clients and as a secondary one by 12 per cent, and muscular-skeletal difficulties by 18 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. In addition, 17 per cent of clients reported circulatory problems as either their main condition (eight per cent) or as a secondary one (17 per cent). In all, 48 per cent of clients mentioned one health condition or impairment and 52 per cent noted more than one. Forty-seven per cent of clients had had their main impairment or health condition for at least five years (Section 3.2.2).

What is evident from the above statistics is that the client group is very diverse but includes sizeable proportions of people with long lasting health problems and impairments and with little recent work experience.

1.3.2 Work motivation

The survey evidence suggests that the majority of people who approached the Personal Adviser Service wanted paid work. Fifty-three per cent wished to work immediately and 39 per cent aspired to work sometime in the future; seven per cent said that they did not want to work (Section 3.3.1). Eighty per cent of those who did not wish to work, at least in the short-term, gave their impairment or illness as the reason (Section 3.3.1); others gave a wide range of disparate reasons: two per cent felt that employers would not want to employ them.

The majority (60 per cent) of clients who wanted paid work said that the main reason was to obtain extra money. However, finance was clearly not the only factor. Thirty-eight per cent wanted to avoid the boredom of worklessness, to be occupied; nine per cent mentioned the enjoyment that work provided; and ten per cent the social contact that it brought. Thirty-one per cent looked to the increased self-esteem and self-sufficiency that work conferred and 19 per cent mentioned the 'normality' of employment. Very similar reasons were articulated by clients in the depth interviews and it seems that the reasons may vary with circumstance – an issue that will be examined quantitatively as the sample size expands over time (Section 5.2):

- The attraction of work as part of having a 'normal' life was a view held by those with long employment histories, those who had never worked and young disabled people.
- Having a job that provided a purpose or interest was important to clients who lived alone or spent long hours at home.
- The higher income that work brought seemed to be especially important to clients with dependants; it was also important to those that had worked in securing a previous higher standard of living.

It was also noted in the qualitative interviews that employment can have therapeutic value, sometimes being a way of managing an illness, for example, preventing the recurrence of the symptoms of a mental illness (Section 5.2).

1.3.3 Job readiness

'Job readiness' is a term used by Personal Advisers rather than clients. However, as already noted, a substantial minority of clients did not envisage themselves working in the near future - usually because of the severity of their health problem or impairment. Others, as the qualitative research makes clear, felt unable ever to return to the kind of work that they had done before or to exploit their qualifications (Section 5.2). Moreover, it was apparent that clients were at different stages in the journey back to work when they approached the Personal Adviser Service (Section 5.2):

- Some people had already made choices about specific jobs and were pursuing them.
- Some who said that they wanted to work were persistently making job applications or were engaged in training or had identified training that they thought would be appropriate.
- Others were not actively engaged in work-related activities.

The survey evidence also indicates that a significant minority of clients (44 per cent) wanting to work were unsure whether they would ever do so; eight per cent believed that they never would (Section 3.1).

From the perspective of the Personal Advisers people approaching the Personal Adviser Service can be grouped as follows (Section 4.3):

- Those not actively seeking work and wanting reassurances that they did not need to do anything, that their benefit entitlement was not threatened and that the scheme was voluntary.
- People not actively seeking work, and yet wanting to work or whom the Personal Adviser thought had potential for work.
- Those seeking work who were already undertaking some form of work-related activity such as job-search or training. This is a potential target group for the New Deal for Disabled People, where Personal Advisers could help clients secure intermediate and final outcomes.
- Clients who were also seeking work but whose plans were considered to be unrealistic by Personal Advisers. Examples included clients who wanted employment in areas that were difficult to enter (such as acting) or wishing to return to a previous, but now unsuitable, job. Personal Advisers might seek to divert, with varying degrees of overtness, these clients from making what they considered to be fruitless job applications to other goals.
- Clients close to work, who had already made choices about employment. This was a group that required less intensive support.
- People already in work who required support. This group included clients who had moved into work, as well as job retention cases (Section 4.9). Personal Advisers acknowledged that sustaining clients in employment was a key task for the Personal Adviser Service.

Some clients were, in the judgement of Personal Advisers, 18 or more months away from obtaining employment (Section 4.3). For others, work was not considered to be a realistic option by Personal Advisers. Even if a client was keen to work, a Personal Adviser might advise a work placement or voluntary work. From the Personal Advisers' perspective this allowed clients to augment their CVs, and retain benefits whilst exploring vocational options. It also allowed a Personal Adviser to test a client's commitment and potential for employment.

1.4 Barriers to employment

For the most part clients and Personal Advisers were agreed on the kinds of barriers to employment that disabled people confront, although the 'same' barrier could be described in different ways. However, this is not to say that there was always agreement in individual cases. More especially, there were sometimes differences in opinion between clients and Personal Advisers as to the steps to be taken in preparing for work. Procedures for mediating disagreement were an important element in casework that has important positive and negative implications for clients' perceptions of the Service (Sections 5.3 and 5.4). Indeed, poor mediation of any disagreement could result in a client withdrawing from the Personal Adviser Service.

While many barriers were similar to those faced by non-disabled jobseekers, others were directly related to health condition or impairment. On occasion, of course, incapacity related barriers served to exacerbate the impact of those barriers generally affecting jobseekers.

1.4.1 General barriers to employment

The most prominent barriers to employment identified were:

Human capital

- lack of relevant skills/qualifications - 30 per cent of clients thought that they lacked sufficient qualifications and experience (Section 3.3.2);
- age: 38 per cent of clients in the survey believed that age acted as an impediment to finding work; some clients also considered themselves to be too old to work;
- lack of recent or previous work experience;
- low confidence and self-esteem - 50 per cent of clients felt they lacked the confidence to work; in some cases this might also have been directly related to ill-health or impairments either directly, as in the case of some depressive conditions, or indirectly as a result of being out of the labour market for long periods on health grounds.

Perceived travel to work area

- clients talked about a lack of jobs in their locality (see below) which Personal Advisers sometimes interpreted as a reluctance of clients to search for, and travel to, work outside of their immediate community/town.

General financial concerns

- uncertainty about meeting costs incurred in moving from benefit to work;
- fear that clients had that they would not be financially better-off in work and might have difficulty, for example, meeting mortgage repayments; and
- concerns that income from, for example self-employment would be too irregular, and uncertainty as to how this might be combined with in-work benefits (Sections 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and 4.8).

1.4.2 Constraints related to health condition/impairment

Both clients and Personal Advisers were naturally acutely aware of the constraints that certain conditions and impairments can impose on employment; an important objective of the Personal Adviser Service is to assist disabled people and employers in overcoming or removing these constraints. In the qualitative interviews, some clients talked about the nature of their impairment or health not only in terms of the impact on their lives, but also in terms of their perception of employers' responses or attitudes towards their impairment or condition;

The nature of clients' illness/impairment

- many respondents (49 per cent) felt they were too ill for much of the time to work and some experienced levels of pain and/or exhaustion that they felt imposed restrictions on the kind of employment opportunities that they could consider;
- some clients experienced conditions that recurred or varied with sometimes unpredictable levels of severity and unknown consequences;
- work and particular working conditions could place some people under undesirable levels of stress and anxiety;
- work could make some clients, for example those with depressive illness or schizophrenia, ill again or exacerbate an impairment, such as a back injury or skin condition;
- some clients felt that the unpredictable effects of their medication/treatment could also limit choices.

Practical issues

- the practicalities of access to the workplace, ergonomics, communications, could limit the kind of work that clients could undertake, especially those with, say, a sensory impairment. Moreover, travelling to work could be uncomfortable and even painful;
- most clients thought that they would have difficulty finding work (66 per cent) and/or there were insufficient job opportunities for disabled people (57 per cent) (Section 3.3.2).

Concerns about benefits

- clients shared with other jobseekers uncertainty about the pattern of provision of in-work benefits;
- some clients were also concerned that entitlement to Incapacity Benefit/Disability Living Allowance might be withdrawn, and/or that their claim might be reassessed as a result of looking for or starting work. Clients tended to express this worry in terms of a loss of income or financial security;
- some clients feared that it might not be possible to reclaim benefit if they lost their job; and
- some clients and Personal Advisers both felt that Benefits Agency decisions on eligibility for benefits and therapeutic earnings were illogical and inconsistent and hence uncertain. This made planning a path into work very difficult.

1.4.3 Perceptions of employers and employers' perceptions

Most clients in the survey sample (46 per cent) felt that employers would consider them to be too sick to disabled to offer them jobs (Section 3.3.2); sometimes these views were substantiated in qualitative interviews by recourse to experience (Section 5.2). People with back problems and mental health illness were particularly fearful; sometimes the latter were concerned that any mention of their illness would limit their employment prospects. It was also suggested by some clients that employers wished to avoid the possibility of recrimination if the client's condition deteriorated at work.

These views were echoed by Personal Advisers, interviewed during site visits, who emphasised discrimination by employers against clients with mental health problems. They also felt that age discrimination was an issue. The prejudices of employers arose less often in the depth interviews with Personal Advisers, possibly because they tended to work on individual cases with employers whom they already knew were committed to equal opportunity policies (Section 4.8).

Employers, themselves, when interviewed – typically personnel managers - can be divided into two (Section 6.2):

- those with a strong commitment to working with disabled people who had active policies on recruitment and retention; often these were large public sector organisations or smaller units within larger organisations; and
- those without an active commitment who had little by way of policies or structures to support the employment of disabled people.

All employers claimed to be supportive of placing or employing people with a long-standing illness or impairment (Section 6.3) but it was only the former who actively sought to increase the number of people with an illness or impairment working in their organisations (Section 6.2).

Employers perceived several challenges, even barriers, to employing disabled people (Section 6.3). Sometimes these views were specific to impairments; at other times they were related generally to disabled people. Employers' concerns about employing disabled people focused on:

- *the ability of disabled people to meet certain job-related requirements*: disabled people were generally seen as less effective and productive than other employees, and to need more managerial support (Section 5.3.1);
- *accessibility*: for those with mobility problems the accessibility of sites and their safety, and for those with learning difficulties the accessibility of the working environment (Section 6.3);
- *the reactions of other staff and customers to disabled members of staff*: it was suggested for example, that customers might feel threatened by staff with mental health problems (Section 6.3);
- *absenteeism*: a number of employers expressed concerns that disabled people might be prone to extensive periods of absence due to illness (Section 6.3).

Underpinning these perceptions was a further concern about the extra financial cost of employing people with long-standing illnesses and impairments (Section 6.3).

It was evident that the views of employers were not necessarily formed on the basis of either experience or objective evidence (Section 5.3.4):

- some had little or no experience of working with disabled people. This could lead to a narrow perception of disability issues with an emphasis placed on the potential difficulties associated with employing someone with *severe* impairments;
- some lacked awareness of the adaptations that could be made to jobs and the working environment; and
- some employers had only limited, if any, access to specialist advice services and to funding.

As a consequence of their limited knowledge, both about particular conditions and impairments and of their work-related implications, some employers were uncertain about employing disabled people. This was less often the case for those employers with active policies although some of these admitted to encountering difficulties in operationalising strategic equal opportunities policies at local level (Section 6.6).

1.5 Understanding limited uptake

The proportion of people approaching the Personal Adviser Service as a result of the invitation letter, has been in the region of three per cent, though almost half of clients have come forward on a self-referral basis. Although it is still comparatively early days there are a few pointers from both the qualitative work and the survey evidence as to why this might be so. It is also possible to offer initial thoughts on the maximum likely uptake of the Personal Adviser Service.

1.5.1 Low uptake

Leaving aside the important consideration that the research evidence relates only to the first few months of the pilot when systems were still bedding down, there are several possible reasons for the limited uptake of the Personal Adviser Service.

- The survey evidence indicates that disabled people who had not approached the Service ('non-participants') were far less likely to want to work immediately – only 17 per cent did so compared with 53 per cent of participants (Section 3.3.1). Moreover, 50 per cent said that they would never like to have a regular paid job. This might be because:
  - non-participants were confronted by more disability-related barriers than participants. Eighty-one per cent of those not wanting to work said that this was because of their illness or impairment; four per cent linked their health with their age and another one per cent mentioned age alone (Section 3.3.1). Two per cent said that they did not want to worsen their health by working.
  - non-participants were also likely to face higher non-disability-related barriers to employment than disabled people who approached the Service. Non-participants were much older than clients of the Personal Adviser Service – 52 per cent were aged

over 50 and 13 per cent were aged over 60. They were also less likely to have academic qualifications – 57 per cent had no qualifications whatsoever. (Even younger non-participants had fewer qualifications than clients of a similar age.)

- Probably because non-participants were not generally contemplating returning to work, the invitation letter had less salience. Fifty-two per cent of the non-participants appeared to be unaware of the New Deal for Disabled People and, even after prompting, 44 per cent insisted that they had not heard about the Personal Adviser Service (Section 3.4.1). Of those who did know of the Personal Adviser Service, only 64 per cent could recall the letter of invitation. In total, therefore, 66 per cent of all non-participants could not remember ever having received a letter of invitation.
- Whereas participants talked of the letter arriving when it was 'the right time to think about working' (Section 5.3), this was probably not the case for non-participants. Fifty per cent said that they did not respond either because they were too ill work or were waiting for an improvement in their health (Section 3.4.2). Nine per cent considered themselves to be 'too old' to work.
- Some people ignored the publicity about New Deal for Disabled People and the Personal Adviser Service, because they did not consider themselves as 'disabled' (Section 5.5).

Nobody in the survey mentioned concern about possible loss of benefit – a factor that Personal Advisers felt might be a reason for uptake not being higher (Section 4.3.4). This was certainly a concern when people were thinking about the move towards work – either because they feared the consequences of not being able to sustain employment, or because of the possibility of being reassessed for Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance if they started moving towards work (Sections 4.8 and 5.3). However, it may be this set of concerns primarily becomes salient only once the decision to pursue the work option has been taken.

1.5.2 Defining optimum uptake

To date, non-participants constitute the overwhelming majority of disabled people receiving benefits in the pilot areas. Given that it would seem that comparatively few of these people have aspirations to work in the immediate future, this clearly places a ceiling on the numbers of people likely to be recruited into the Personal Adviser Service. Survey numbers are not yet large enough to establish precise estimates of the proportion of disabled people who might want to make use of the Personal Adviser Service. However, rough approximations are in order based on the initial survey returns.

It is appropriate to distinguish between take-up that might be achieved with the current caseload in the short term and longer term. Just 12 per cent of non-participants - 47 individuals in the sample to date - wanted to work, expected to work and at the time of the survey felt able to do

some work (Section 3.4). Twenty-three out of these 47 had heard about New Deal and ten planned to ask for an interview with a Personal Adviser. While it is dangerous to extrapolate from such small numbers, the above figures point to a potential to increase the participation rate quite substantially if this 12% of non-participants could be attracted into the service.

However 41 per cent of non-participants wanted to work and either expected to do so or did not rule out the possibility of doing so at some point in the future. Of this group, about half (51 per cent) had heard of the New Deal of which about one-third (31 per cent) planned to ask for an interview with a Personal Adviser. Over the longer term, therefore, the attainable uptake could point to a much higher uptake of the service if this two-fifths use the service when they are ready to start looking for work. Clearly, increasing the participation rates in both the short and longer term depends on people knowing about the service and wanting to be involved with it. For the longer term group, it also depends on them becoming able to work.

1.6 Working styles and assistance offered to clients

An important feature of the Personal Adviser pilots was the considerable degree of discretion given to local areas to develop their own style of working. It is appropriate, therefore, to describe in some degree of detail the sequence of stages, events and procedures that have evolved. For the most part, the following description relates solely to the first tranche of pilots led by the Employment Service.

1.6.1 Initial contact

From management information, just over half (54%) of clients approached the Personal Adviser Service in direct response to the letter of invitation (Section 3.1). The remainder were either referred to the Personal Adviser Service or acted on their own initiative after hearing about it. However, and as already mentioned, the survey does underrepresent the number of participants who were self-referrals or referrals from other organisations.

Their first point of contact on approaching the Personal Adviser Service was typically the receptionist. During a client's first interview, the receptionists and Personal Advisers typically described the Personal Adviser Service in general terms, stressed its voluntary nature, and explained that their benefits would not, at that stage, be affected (Section 4.4). Personal Advisers also said that the '52 week linking rule' (see Section 1.6 below) was often mentioned at the first interview (Section 4.4). However, Personal Advisers tended to be undirective in the first interview. This was often in order to establish the rapport with their clients that they felt was necessary if they were to be effective in the help and support they provided. One consequence was that information about the resources available to Personal Advisers to assist clients, for instance the Intervention Fund or the role of service providers, was rarely given (Section 4.4). Indeed, some Personal Advisers continued to give clients information sparingly, not wishing to overload them.

1.6.2 Case management

In accord with expectations, a case management approach was adopted in each pilot area although caseloads varied between areas and typically increased over time. Personal Advisers manage their own cases under supervision from a project manager and are assisted by administrative staff and sometimes by Personal Advisers performing specialist roles and by Occupational Psychologists. All of the Employment Service pilot Personal Advisers have direct access to an Employment Service Occupational Psychologist as do four of the partnership pilots. In addition, one of the partnership pilots employs a Benefits Advisor (Section 2.2). Once a client has been added to a Personal Adviser's caseload, an ongoing relationship is maintained until a successful outcome is achieved or a decision is taken - usually, but not always, in discussion with the client - to end the relationship in which case the client is 'exited' from the programme. Personal Advisers can broker specialist sources of support (see Section 1.6 below) and have access to the Intervention Fund (see Section 1.2 and Section 1.6 below) if existing programmes do not provide the assistance/support needed by a client. They appear to vary in the extent to which these additional resources are used and in what circumstances.

Clients varied in their perception, experience and description of the case management system (Section 5.3). In part, of course, this reflected the different needs and circumstances of clients and their differing demands and expectations (Sections 1.3, 5.1 and 5.2). However, on the whole, clients did not have a strong sense of being engaged in an ongoing programme of action that was to lead them closer to paid work (Section 5.3).

Some clients did describe a stepwise progression through discussion and mutual agreement with clients in which Personal Advisers were able to make a helpful intervention that moved clients closer to employment (Section 5.5). Other clients had a more marginal involvement with the Personal Adviser Service, perhaps having only one interview so that they had no sense of a programme of action moving them closer to work (Section 5.3). In such circumstances clients might have no recall of a Progress or Action Plan or of a timetable of agreed steps, and/or no involvement with a service provider or Occupational Psychologist. Sometimes this was simply a function of the timing of the research fieldwork; it was too early for this stage in the counselling process to have been reached. On other occasions, it was because the client was already close to employment when they approached the Personal Adviser Service. Sometimes it was because casework at the individual level was not progressing well or, at least, not in a linear fashion.

The fact that clients did not see themselves as involved in a programme did not necessarily cause clients difficulties. However, some clients felt they did not have as much control as they would have liked over the process and pace of advancement, and their lack of knowledge or

understanding of the programme appeared to contribute to this (Section 4.3).

1.6.3 Caseloading – Action or Progress Plans

Formally, a client is caseloaded by a Personal Adviser when a Progress or Action Plan has been agreed. Such Plans outlined the steps a client and Personal Adviser agreed to take to move the client closer to employment. The actions could include meeting a named person, finding out about voluntary work, preparing a CV, and/or arranging another meeting with the Personal Adviser.

The stage at which Personal Advisers caseloaded clients varied. Some did not produce a Progress Plan unless the client was clear about his/her vocational goals, others prepared Plans earlier to include intermediate steps (Section 4.6). By the beginning of 1999 some Personal Advisers had begun to caseload only those clients they thought would move into work in the short- to medium-term, say within six months (Personal Advisers, Section 4.3). Accordingly, the number of interviews before a client was caseloaded varied.

Progress Plans were not necessarily given to clients; indeed, some Personal Advisers did not tell some clients that they had a Progress Plan (and as such had been caseloaded (Section 4.6)). Some Personal Advisers felt that issuing Progress Plans might be interpreted as too bureaucratic and serve to undermine confidence building and the supportive relationship that they were trying to develop with clients (Section 4.6). As a consequence some Personal Advisers preferred verbal agreements with clients with the result, not surprisingly, that some clients had little recall of their Progress Plans (Section 5.3).

The client survey did suggest that about half (47 per cent) of clients had discussed and agreed to undertake specific actions (Sections 3.4), but very few clients in the qualitative interviews could recall a Progress Plan. Those that could differed in the significance that they attached to it: some found it helpful, others frustrating. Some clients - perhaps because a Progress Plan had not been discussed - were also uncertain about the allocation of responsibility for certain tasks, and the nature of any future actions.

Some clients, especially those facing substantial barriers to work, appreciated 'relaxed' time-scales and the absence of any written plan (Section 5.3). Others were frustrated when progress appeared to be too slow, and because they did not know what was happening.

Personal Advisers' own views on the value of caseloading differed. Some saw it as an unhelpful administrative chore. Others said it was a useful tool for themselves and their clients because Progress Plans were a record of what had been agreed, a reminder of tasks outstanding, and a framework for the way forward (Section 4.6). Most Personal Advisers retained control

of the progress planning and rarely viewed the plan as the client's property for which the client had prime responsibility (Section 4.11).

1.6.4 Work/vocational focus

Where clients had no clear work goals that they could articulate or Personal Advisers considered their plans to be 'unrealistic', Personal Advisers sought to help them express and formulate their vocational and career ambitions. Personal Advisers reported that it was unusual for clients to have clear work-related goals and to know how to explore options when they initially contacted the Personal Adviser Service (Section 4.5). However, some clients did have clear strategies, sometimes approaching the Personal Adviser Service to complete the last element in their plan to return to work.

Clients interviewed in depth had different views on the value of the guidance that they had received to date (Section 5.4). Some had found it helpful - it may already have achieved a positive outcome or things were seen to be progressing in the desired direction. Others, especially those who felt that their expectations did not match with the views of Personal Advisers about what was realistic, tended to take a less optimistic view. In some cases the Personal Adviser was perceived by the client to be seeking a 'quick fix', trying to fit the person into courses and provision that was available however unsuitable it might be. This was something that Personal Advisers generally denied ever doing.

1.6.5 Assessing readiness for work

Personal Advisers' guidance was typically based on an assessment of a client's readiness for work. In particular, they sought to establish a client's health status and to determine the limitations it might impose on employment. This was not always an easy task for Personal Advisers, some of whom were concerned about their competence in this area, especially with regard to mental health illnesses (almost of third of the cases dealt with). With the client's permission, Personal Advisers might seek further guidance from the client's medical advisor. Where they considered it to be appropriate, Personal Advisers also referred clients to an Occupational Psychologist for assessment (Section 4.5). However, it did not appear that Personal Advisers sought professional advice or guidance very frequently.

These exchanges of information were not one-way. Personal Advisers needed to listen to clients and understand their illness or impairment and its effects. Some clients were critical of Personal Advisers who did not seem to acquire this understanding (Section 5.4).

1.6.6 Job-search and applications

A standard service that Personal Advisers offered was assistance in job-search and the negotiation of work placements. They used the Labour Market System (although access to the system had proved difficult in the early months for Personal Advisers not located in Jobcentres) and contacted employers directly to find suitable vacancies. They also helped clients complete application forms and prepare CVs (26 per cent of clients

reported this (Section 3.4)). Clients valued such practical help and advocacy, especially where it resulted in a suitable placement but not where they considered the jobs to be unsuitable or felt that the Personal Adviser was insufficiently pro-active (Section 5.4).

1.6.7 Benefits and financial advice

Personal Advisers provided financial advice to clients. They often identified which benefits clients were claiming at a client's first interview, although they rarely checked benefit calculations. Where appropriate, Personal Advisers pointed out clients' eligibility for Disability Living Allowance. Some clients requested better-off calculations to check entitlement or to determine if participation in the New Deal for Disabled People was appropriate. Thirty-one per cent of clients interviewed in the survey said that the Personal Adviser had done a better-off calculation and that 64 per cent had talked about how paid work might affect their benefit position (Section 3.4).

It was evident from the qualitative interviews that clients could find information on in-work benefits useful if it was relevant and, above all, accurate. Explanations of the '52 week linking rule' and assurances that undertaking voluntary work did not affect benefit entitlement were important for some clients (Section 5.4). Equally, Personal Advisers found these provisions helpful when encouraging clients to think positively about work (Section 4.8). Likewise, Access to Work could be used to convince clients that they could travel to work.

However, some Personal Advisers admitted that they felt ill-equipped to provide advice on benefits and some clients were dissatisfied with the quality of advice that they received (see Section 1.7 below).

1.6.8 Accessing external services providers

Over the period covered by the fieldwork, comparatively few clients appear to have been referred to external service providers, such as training or work placement/support agencies. (The survey evidence indicates that the possibility of referral was discussed with 26 per cent of clients (Section 3.3).) There are a number of possible reasons for this:

- the fieldwork took place relatively early in the life of the pilots – service providers operating locally were still being identified in some areas (typically on a case-by-case basis);
- caseloads were still quite small and casework was far advanced with comparatively few clients;
- some Personal Advisers were reluctant to devolve tasks to a third party when they had succeeded in establishing rapport with a client (Section 4.7); and
- presumably for some clients a referral to a service provider would have been inappropriate.

The number of providers varied between pilot areas (Sections 4.7 and 2.9). Where there was a shortage, efforts were being made to stimulate new providers. In other areas providers were competing for clients; Personal Advisers tended in the first instance to use those with existing contracts with the Employment Service (Section 4.7).

Among the services that had been used by Personal Advisers (Section 4.7) to support clients were those aimed at:

- building confidence;
- improving social skills;
- acquiring work experience;
- obtaining vocational qualifications;
- improving presentation skills;
- writing a CV;
- searching for a job;
- helping clients through job interviews; and
- supporting clients in the workplace.

1.6.9 Intervention Fund

Personal Advisers generally said that they had not made great use of the Intervention Fund, which was available assist clients move closer to employment. While use of the Invention Fund appeared to be limited, 26 per cent of clients in the interview survey had been told that the Personal Adviser would help pay for something needed to help assist them to find or keep training or work (Section 3.4).

In the event the Intervention Fund appeared to have been used to:

- fund training course fees;
- meet travel costs to interviews or training courses;
- cover *ad hoc* needs, such as, smart clothes to wear at interview and suitable shoes for work;
- provide one off payments for setting up a business (for example, insurance, registration and professional membership fees); and
- purchase/hire of equipment (such as, an ergonomic chair, a computer and a pager (for someone with no telephone)) (Sections 5.4 and 4.7).

Personal Advisers tended not to mention its existence to clients (Section 4.7) who, not surprisingly, as a consequence were generally unaware that it was available (Section 5.4). However, clients benefiting from the Intervention Fund rated it highly and its use could influence the decision to return to work. Some clients reported that they had been refused funding (including fees for courses and assistance to start up a business because they were seen as too expensive (Section 5.4)).

1.6.10 In-work support

One component of Personal Advisers' work is to continue to support clients once they move into employment and to assist disabled people to retain their existing employment. Some clients and employers reported receiving this help (although the latter in particular were not necessarily clear that this had been supplied by Personal Advisers (Section 6.5)). The support included job-coaching, regular supportive contact and even - in the case of one employer - assessment of staff on long term sick leave. The support was generally welcomed. However some employers cited cases where they felt that placements should have received a more intensive level of support and two of the clients interviewed reported no support after starting work which possibly contributed to them having relapses (Section 5.4).

On the job support, such as job coaching, is usually provided by the service provider, under contract, and not by the Personal Adviser directly. However, the Personal Adviser may maintain contact with the client and employer. The low visibility of the Personal Adviser in the employers' eyes may be explained by the use of providers.

1.6.11 Marketing to employers

Marketing the Personal Adviser Service to employers took two forms: first, the presentation of the Service through various publicity events and direct contacts and secondly, personalised communication in an attempt to place specific clients (Section 4.10). In some pilot areas the same Personal Advisers were expected to engage in both activities but, in others, specialist Personal Advisers had taken over the role of publicity.

Most of the Personal Advisers' efforts were concentrated on 'marketing' individual clients. Some commented that employers would not be interested in the programme unless there was a specific client available for a vacancy.

Some employers felt that general publicity was likely to be less effective than an approach about a particular case (Section 6.8). Others were more open to a general approach although there were mixed views as to whether written material or personal contact was likely to prove to be the most effective. Some employers, particularly the larger ones, saw themselves as being 'signed up' for New Deal for Disabled People or for the New Deal generically (Section 6.8). However, some of these were surprised that they had not been approached about specific candidates and, generally, the employers interviewed seemed not to anticipate the flexible client-centred approach offered by Personal Advisers. Indeed, there was generally a lack of clarity about the Personal Adviser among employers who had not had extensive contact with it, and limited knowledge about the range of support available (Section 6.6).

Most employers who had had direct involvement with the Service were complimentary about it, noting that staff were helpful, efficient and knowledgeable (Section 6.6). Some, though, felt that inadequate attention

had been given to matching clients with the right employment opportunity, that some Personal Advisers lacked experience of working intensively with disabled people and failed to adequately appreciate the needs of the client and the employer and the problems that could arise (Sections 6.6 and 6.7).

1.7 Quality of service and early outcomes for clients

The survey interviews indicated that a large majority of clients were satisfied with the service that they had received (Section 3.5): 91 per cent said that their Personal Adviser had listened to and understood what they had to say, 83 per cent found their interviews helpful and 79 per cent similarly felt that the specific advice that they had received had been helpful.

1.7.1 Client feedback

This positive feedback may well reflect the close match between the content of clients' discussions with the Personal Advisers and their reasons for approaching the Personal Adviser Service: 66 per cent had wanted help to move back to work, 43 per cent wanted an opportunity to discuss their situation, 24 per cent wished to determine whether a return to work was possible, 25 per cent sought help to find a job tailored to their needs and 20 per cent wanted to find out about training possibilities (Section 2.3).

Consistent with these goals, 80 per cent remembered discussing the work that they might do, 63 per cent the hours of work and 66 per cent the possibility of training. Clients were much less likely to record discussions about approaches to job-search or the support or adaptations that might be needed at work. The qualitative interviews suggested that discussion about job-search may have been of most value to clients who wanted practical help in setting up an interview or placement (Section 5.4).

Although accessing information about benefits were not a priority for clients (only nine per cent had come seeking information or assistance with benefits), 65 per cent remembered talking about how work might affect their benefit status. However, discussions about benefits were typically conducted at a general level and only around a third recalled discussion of better-off issues. Even fewer were offered practical help with benefit applications although this may have been because comparatively few had reached the point of returning to work when the research interviews took place (Section 3.4.3). When prompted in the survey, 81 per cent of clients said that knowing that they would definitely be able to reclaim their benefits if forced to leave work would make it easier for them to try paid employment and 69 per cent thought that an in-work benefit or tax credit would be similarly beneficial.

The qualitative interviews uncovered some dissatisfaction with the quality of advice received and rather more disagreement between Personal Advisers and clients about strategy (Sections 5.3 and 5.4). This may be reflected in the survey responses since about three times as many people

recalled talking about training as initially had this on their agendas and 45 per cent also discussed the possibility of unpaid or voluntary work which did not seem to feature in people's initial aspirations.

1.7.2 Early outcomes for clients

Although the research evidence relates to the early days of the pilot and clients may have been involved for a short period some had begun or had been enabled to begin certain activities.

It is too early to establish whether clients had participated in activities as a direct result of their interaction with a Personal Adviser, or how long involvement had been or could be expected to last. However, the survey does throw some light on the range of activities in which clients participated (Section 3.5). At least half the clients (58 per cent) reported they had increased their search for paid work since meeting with a Personal Adviser. This could include looking for job vacancies in newspapers or in Jobcentres and applying for these, preparing a CV or joining a Jobclub. About one-quarter had started or applied for a training or education course (22 per cent) and 16 per cent had commenced some form of employment. The qualitative interviews with clients suggest that they were generally pleased with the training and education courses that they had or were attending both in terms of personal achievement and relevance (Section 5.4) and that clients who had been helped to achieve their pre-determined goals were amongst the most satisfied (Section 5.2).

1.8 Perspectives on the Personal Adviser Service

The intention in this section is to identify emergent features of the pilot that may warrant policy attention as the Personal Adviser Service is further developed. These are grouped into six relating to:

- the presentation and image of the Personal Adviser Service;
- its setting locally;
- the interaction between Personal Adviser and client;
- the interaction between Personal Adviser and employer;
- the training of Personal Advisers; and
- the interaction between the Personal Adviser Service and other policies.

In each case reference is made to a more detailed discussion in later chapters.

1.8.1 Presentation and image of the Service

The marketing of the Personal Adviser Service as part of the New Deal package of policies but with an emphasis on disabled people generated some confusion both for potential clients and employers. It is not altogether clear that the Personal Adviser Service had managed successfully to establish itself as a distinct and readily identifiable presence by the end of the fieldwork period:

- Some employers found the multiplicity of New Deals and Employment Service initiatives confusing. Moreover, Personal Advisers reported that the New Deal label, combined with the absence of the perceived

financial incentives for employers included in some other New Deals, (other than the Job Introduction Scheme) served to disadvantage their clients (Section 4.10).

- There was a low level of awareness and understanding of the New Deal for Disabled People among even those employers who were interviewed - all of whom had all been involved in some way with the local pilots (Sections 6.1 and 6.6).
- Although clients had no major criticism of the letter of invitation (Section 5.3) and many clients approached the Service after receiving it, several had to be prompted to remember it. Generally, the letter does not seem to have been a very effective marketing tool. Some people dismissed local publicity because they did not think of themselves as being 'disabled' (Section 1.5).
- Some clients feared that the association with New Deal for Disabled People would harm job applications if employers were prejudiced against disabled people (Sections 5.3 and 5.4).

1.8.2 Location and accessibility

Force of circumstances and strategic choices mean that the Personal Adviser Service operates in different settings. Sometimes it is located in Jobcentres, sometimes in special or hired premises and in some cases Personal Advisers were going from place to place. Both clients and Personal Advisers varied in their views about the suitability of these various models.

- The length and ease of the journey to the office were important considerations for clients with mobility problems or with no access to a car (Section 5.3).
- Some clients and Personal Advisers disliked meeting in Jobcentres because they were perceived to be stigmatising and threatening for clients (Sections 5.3 and 5.4). On the other hand Jobcentres were often at convenient locations and Personal Advisers could easily access Employment Service resources. Personal Advisers could additionally enjoy the support and camaraderie of colleagues (Section 2.3). Venues outside Jobcentres could also be convenient for clients and Personal Advisers recognised that clients appreciated the private rooms that were available for interviews. However, such sites entailed Personal Advisers expending time travelling and transporting materials and equipment.
- The physical access to some sites – doors and lifts – and feeling threatened or intimated by some security and reception staff were problematic for some clients (Section 5.3).
- Personal Advisers recognised the need for advance information about the nature of a person's impairment in order to facilitate choice of a suitable venue (Section 4.4).

1.8.3 Client – Personal Adviser interaction

The effectiveness of the Personal Adviser Service is likely to be highly dependent on the relationship established between the Personal Advisers and their clients. Typically the feedback from clients was positive -

between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of those interviewed in the survey said that the Personal Adviser had listened and offered helpful advice (Section 3.5.2). However, there were some areas for improvement:

- Communications with clients could be poor. Some clients felt uncertain about what future contacts they were to have with the Personal Adviser Service. As noted earlier (Section 1.6), clients often did not have a strong sense of being engaged in an ongoing developmental programme (Section 5.3).
- Some clients were frustrated when they could not get what they considered to be basic information on benefits (Section 5.2)
- Occasionally clients felt expectations had been raised only to be dashed when the hoped for options appeared to be unavailable.
- Not all clients felt that Personal Advisers understood their needs and capabilities, this seemed to be particularly true of clients with mental health problems or sensory or mobility impairments. Clients also found it demotivating and demoralising when Personal Advisers tried to dissuade them from their chosen course of action.
- Some Personal Advisers seemed keen to provide a holistic personal service even when referral might have been a preferable option.
- At a practical level, some clients had problems contacting Personal Advisers by telephone; they could not get through to mobile telephones and there might be no call back to messages left on mobile or office telephones for Personal Advisers (Section 5.3).

While the counselling role performed by Personal Advisers inevitably involves the management of expectations, a recurring theme in the qualitative interviews was the mismatch of expectations between Personal Advisers and their clients (Section 5.4). Also Personal Advisers did not always seem to be open with clients (or, indeed, employers) about the range of services that could be exploited.

1.8.4 Relations with employers

The relationship between Personal Advisers and employers is a particularly complex one. Employers are simultaneously a resource for Personal Advisers and also their clients or customers. For some employers their concerns about employing disabled people represented challenges and difficulties to overcome. However, as already mentioned, many employers were not well informed on disability matters; they could lack experience of employing disabled people, be over concerned with the financial costs and could assign high levels of risk and uncertainty to employing disabled people (see Section 1.4.3). Indeed, the perceptions and behaviour of some of the employers interviewed was such as to impede the employment of disabled people (Section 6.3). Sometimes Personal Advisers had to persuade employers both of the generalised case for employing disabled people and the potential of specific individuals. There is, though, a clear incentive for Personal Advisers to avoid these difficulties by seeking to place clients with 'good' employers known to employ disabled people.

Pilot teams seemed to place different degrees of emphasis on increasing the numbers of employers willing to take placements. Moreover, it was not always clear whether the aim was to increase the general share of labour demand going to disabled people or to prepare the ground for placements from the Personal Adviser Service (Section 2.3.2).

Employers' accounts suggest they needed:

- *specialist advice*: to explain the implications of the impairment;
- *greater financial support*: to meet extra costs of employing disabled people;
- *in-work support*: to minimise potential disruption to production; and
- *opportunities for work-trials;* without commitment or expenditure (Sections 6.9).

While the Personal Adviser Service can offer all these elements, it remains to be seen whether it can supply them in sufficient quantities to satisfy large numbers of employers.

Finally, an important element in the three-way relationship between Personal Adviser, client and employer is the extent to which the Adviser gives information about the client and their impairment to the employer. Employers want information that they can understand and any support needs. However, while some clients were happy for information to be passed to employers, others were very anxious about this and would either want to contact an employer directly or not to divulge the information at all.

1.8.5 Training of Personal Advisers

Training was a recurrent issue in interviews with both Personal Advisers and clients and while management was addressing many of the training needs, some problems remained and recurred for new staff. Indeed, some clients were discouraged by what they felt to be their Personal Adviser's lack of knowledge and competence, and as a consequence did not return for a second interview (Section 5.3):

- Many Personal Advisers – in both Employment Service and partnership pilots – recognised that they lacked the confidence and expertise to advise clients on in-work and disability benefits (Sections 4.2 and 4.4). This was apparent, too, to some clients (Section 5.4). Personal Advisers also felt that they required training on IBIS in order to carry out better-off calculations for clients.
- Clients and Personal Advisers also identified the need for staff training on the effects on the client group of illnesses (especially mental health conditions) and impairments, and of medication and treatment (Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 5.3).
- Further training was required to enhance awareness of how to reach out to minority ethnic communities (Section 4.2) and to support Personal Advisers with no previous experience of direct contact with clients.

1.8.6 Policy interaction

Both Personal Advisers and clients felt that the effectiveness of the Personal Adviser Service was compromised by its interaction with other policies.

- The options that the Personal Adviser Service could offer were seen by some clients to be constrained by benefit regulations, notably the therapeutic earnings rules and treatment of irregular earnings (Section 5.5).
- Some Personal Advisers felt inhibited in their use of therapeutic work because they could never be sure that their decisions would be upheld by Benefits Agency adjudication.
- Some Personal Advisers in one pilot during the early stages of the research said that they were hampered by a local Benefits Agency office refusing to do better-off calculations.

Some Personal Advisers also felt that their clients were to some extent competing for vacancies with those of Disability Employment Advisors and with other New Deal clients (Section 4.8). Indeed, they were disadvantaged in that they did not have access to the same kind of employment subsidies as other New Deal clients.

1.9 Policy insights

This section attempts to go further in drawing together the implications of the research for any national implementation of the Personal Adviser Service. Therefore, the intention in this final section is briefly to reflect on the experience of the Personal Adviser Service pilots to date, and the issues that it raises for policy development. It should be stressed that the research presented in this and subsequent chapters relates only to the early stages of the pilot and is largely restricted to the experience of the pilots led by the Employment Service. The issues discussed are necessarily selective and emphasise areas for improvement.

Other more specific policy lessons are collated at the end of individual chapters:

- the introduction and set up of the pilots (Section 2.11);
- the role of Personal Advisers (Section 4.11.1 on emerging themes and Section 4.11.2 on policy development);
- derived from interviews with clients (Section 5.5.1 on emerging themes; Section 5.5.2 on implications for maintaining and improving the Service);
- based on interviews with employers (Section 6.9 on emerging themes and on implications for developing the Service).

1.9.1 Low uptake

Although the indications from the Labour Force Survey are that over 30 per cent of disabled people on benefit would like to work, uptake of the Personal Advisory Service is running at less than a fifth of this level.[5]

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[5] Of the 2.356 million people with long term disabilities who are receiving state benefits (other than Child Benefit) and are economically inactive, 868,000 or 37 per cent say they would like to work. Source: Spring 1999 Labour Force Survey.

However, it is now evident that there is a marked distinction between people's aspiration to work, their expectation of doing so and their own perception of their ability to do so. Only 12 per cent of the survey sample interviewed to date wanted, expected and felt able to work (Section 1.5.2). Moreover, an even smaller proportion saw work as a possibility in the immediate or short-term future. While this means that extended implementation of the Personal Adviser Service would be very unlikely to reduce the disability benefit caseload by anywhere near a third, a high proportion of those with good employment prospects could be enrolled into the system. It is too early to establish whether enrolment would significantly increase their chances of securing employment.

1.9.2 Promotion and targeting

The letter of invitation was responsible for the majority of people who approached the Personal Adviser Service although recall among non-participants was low. Recipients had no major criticisms of the letter - the survey evidence suggests that 85 per cent of those who could recall it understood it - (Section 3.4.1) although the design made no use of the presentation techniques used by commercial mail-shot companies. The qualitative interviews suggested that the accompanying material that referred to New Deal and 'disabled people' may have deterred some people who did not consider themselves to be 'disabled' from applying.

The letter of invitation was presumably most effective when its arrival coincided with a time when the claimant was receptive to the possibility of working. (It is of course possible, if a little unlikely, that other disabled people will recall having received the letter when in due course they think about paid work.) To achieve a significant increase in uptake, it will be necessary to find ways of targeting people when they are most receptive. It might be possible to achieve this directly if pertinent information was obtained from disabled people at the point of applying for benefit and subsequently at times when this was facilitated by routine benefit administration. Promoting the Personal Adviser Service among other groups of relevant professionals might enable them to alert disabled people at appropriate times - although attempts to stimulate knowledge of benefits among such professionals in the past have not proved very effective (Elam et al., 1998). Also the potential role of the media is important - 34 per cent of survey respondents had heard about the Personal Adviser Service through coverage by the mass media (Section 3.4.1) - suggesting that multiple methods may be required to reach the target population.

1.9.3 Varying models of implementation

The pilots were explicitly designed to allow local teams to develop their own models of service provision consistent with the objectives of New Deal for Disabled People. While this has not apparently stimulated very radical innovation, there are notable differences in both the specification of objectives - some pilot teams and individual Personal Advisers seem to prioritise employment outcomes more than others - and in some aspects of administration. For example, there is variation - some of which may

have been driven by differences in the size of the pilots (Section 1.2) - in:

- the use of secondees;
- the structuring of workgroups;
- the use and role of Occupational Psychologists;
- management style;
- the degree of liaison with support groups;
- the size and management of caseloads;
- the salience of performance targets;
- the location of interviewing; and
- marketing and relationships with employers and service providers.

This is not to suggest that distinctively different and coherent models of delivery have yet emerged. Nor is it possible to comment on which variations are most effective at this stage.

1.9.4 Policy objectives and mechanisms

There are not only differences in the interpretation of policy objectives between pilot areas but some confusion between objectives and mechanisms that may inhibit the distillation of policy lessons.

- Is the freedom given to teams to develop their own mode of delivery for the policy that is to be evaluated, or merely the mechanism by which to determine the 'best' model to be implemented nationally?

  If it is the former, this inevitably raises the possibility of uneven service provision and the need for mechanisms to set and enforce minimum and better standards when implemented nationally.
- Is the holistic approach that is typically employed by Personal Advisers the model to be evaluated, or are Personal Advisers to be expected to identify a more prescribed set of the most effective procedures that will be offered if and when the pilots are extended?

  If it is the latter, the effectiveness of individual components of the Service will be evaluated within the context of holistic service provision and may work differently when implemented in isolation.
- Is the large element of individual flexibility exercised by Personal Advisers to be a permanent feature of the Service?

  If so, the training and expertise of Personal Advisers will need to reflect this. There will also be a need for greater transparency (linked to telling people what they can expect) and accountability to protect clients and staff. Systems for the redress of grievance will be required.
- Is one objective of Personal Advisers to increase the numbers of employers prepared to employ disabled people?

- Personal Advisers work in a very individualised way in their dealings with employers, 'selling' the capabilities of an identified individual rather than explicitly marketing the Personal Adviser Service to potential employers. Personal Advisers generally prefer to have specialist marketing staff but it is not self-evident that employers will change their recruitment and retention practices in response to such generalised marketing. It is also difficult to say whether focusing resources on intensive support of individual clients and their employers is an attempt to secure a satisfactory placement would be a better way of fostering demand for the employment of disabled people.

1.9.5 Defining the role of the Personal Adviser

The adoption of a caseworker model was an explicit recognition of the exceedingly diverse characteristics, circumstances and needs of disabled people, confirmed by the experience of implementation. However, the ambiguity as to whether Personal Advisers, as caseworkers, should seek to be the principal deliverers of assistance to disabled people seeking to work or co-ordinators of services has not yet always been resolved. During the early stages of implementation Personal Advisers had the capacity to work intensively with clients who required this and some are understandably reluctant to lose this very rewarding element of their work. As caseloads grow it is unlikely that Personal Advisers will have the capacity (or the necessary expertise) to provide comprehensive services themselves. However, until Personal Advisers begin referring clients more regularly, their involvement with, and knowledge of, service providers will remain limited. Some clients did not need such an intensive service - whether provided by a Personal Adviser or another agency - either because they were near to work already or because they used the Personal Adviser Service as one 'resource' among many.

Even with a more limited role, substantively improved training will continue to be required if Personal Advisers are to be able appropriately to assess and refer clients (see also Section 1.8).

1.9.6 Service providers

While it is early days in the development process, there have been some positive outcomes. Certainly in the early months of implementation Personal Advisers tended to turn to existing Employment Service, Department for Education and Employment, Training and Enterprise Council/Local Employment Council provision since funding was provided. There has been comparatively little use of the Intervention Fund to create new opportunities and forms of provision. Indeed it is not clear whether the purpose of the Intervention Fund is to plug gaps in availability or to stimulate a market in alternatives to already contracted provision. Locally, the Intervention Fund is too small to do the latter. Either way thought will need to be given to reviewing the size of the Intervention Fund.

1.9.7 Disseminating good practice

While one objective of the pilots was to stimulate diversity and innovation, there may be a case for improving communication between pilot areas. This might facilitate the recognition and dissemination of good practice. The partnership pilots are keen to learn from the experience of the first tranche of pilots but often feel that they are not been encouraged to do so.

1.10 Conclusion

It is still early in the life of the Personal Adviser pilots and much has already been achieved. Active systems of provision have been established in all areas and the survey results suggest high levels of satisfaction among clients. Clients appreciate the opportunity to discuss their employment prospects with knowledgeable experts, and welcome the access to training, work experience and other services made available through the Service. They value the voluntary characteristics of the scheme and with it personal control over their dealings with Personal Advisers, and over the route taken to employment and the speed of transition. Clients vary markedly in the support that they require and appreciate it when they feel that they have received the appropriate level of input from the Personal Adviser Service. Likewise, they value high quality advice and guidance to help them through the complex benefit system.

Naturally clients are less appreciative when they feel that they have not received a service that matches up to their expectations. Some clients felt that Personal Advisers were not always as well informed and trained as they ought to be, and Personal Advisers themselves recognised that they were sometimes ill-equipped to assess employment implications of some forms of impairment and ill-health and also to provide accurate benefits advice. Furthermore, the ability successfully to recognise and resolve or mediate disagreements and differing perceptions is a vital element in a Personal Adviser's casework. Likewise, employers appreciated expert advice and input from the Personal Adviser Service that occasionally they did not feel that they had received.

Clearly the ultimate success of the Personal Adviser Service will be highly dependent on the performance of Personal Advisers. This, in turn, is likely to be much influenced by the quality of managerial support that Personal Advisers receive and in the successful resolution of the policy conundrums summarised in the previous two sections and discussed at the end of each of the subsequent chapters.

2 ORGANISATION AND OPERATION OF THE PERSONAL ADVISER SERVICE[5]

2.1 Introduction

The organisation and operation of the Personal Adviser Service in its early days are considered in this chapter. It provides a context to the remaining chapters in this report, and covers:

- The set up of the Personal Adviser Service and how it was established in each of the pilot areas (Section 2.3).
- The organisation of the scheme (Section 2.4).
- The operation of the Personal Adviser Service (Section 2.5).
- The procedures for marketing the scheme (Section 2.6), and
- The advice or steer received from other organisations (Section 2.7).
- The process of mapping service provision by the Personal Adviser Service (Section 2.8).
- The key service providers in each area and their involvement with the Personal Adviser Service (Section 2.9).
- The development of service provision and gaps in provision (Section 2.10).
- Perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the Personal Adviser Service of key service providers (Section 2.11).

2.2 The study

The findings reported below are based on visits by the research team to each pilot soon after they became operational. Most of the discussion is based on visits to Employment Service areas, but does include findings based on a preliminary and tentative analysis of site visits to the partnership pilots.

Interviews were held with pilot managers and Personal Advisers, and in some instances with Occupational Psychologists and administrative staff. The discussions covered many aspects of the Personal Adviser Service. The principal aims of the site visits were:

- to explore how each pilot area had established and operated the Personal Adviser Service, highlighting particular commonalities and differences between and within areas;
- to gain an understanding of the structure of service provision within each locality.

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[5] This chapter was written by the research team: Julia Loumidis, Jenny Beach, Bruce Stafford, Robert Walker (CRSP), Sue Arthur, Jane Lewis (National Centre), Anne Corden, Roy Sainsbury, Patricia Thornton and Ayesha Vernon (SPRU).

The visits to the Employment Service sites were made between December 1998 and February 1999, and to the partnership pilots during July and August 1999. For the Employment Service pilots and one partnership pilot these were supplemented by contacts with respondents from other organisations identified as having interests in the operation of the Personal Adviser Service (Section 2.9).[6] Further details about the site visit methodology are given in Appendix C.

2.3 Set up: Establishing the Personal Adviser Service

2.3.1 The 12 pilot areas

The New Deal for Disabled People is being piloted in twelve areas; six are run by the Employment Service and the remainder by partnerships of private, public and voluntary organisations (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 The twelve pilot areas

	Pilot Area	Lead organisation
Employment Service:	Bolton	
	Bristol East and Bath	
	Central Sussex	
	Eastern Valleys (Wales)	
	Lanarkshire	
	Sandwell	
Partnership:	Bedfordshire	Outset Ltd
	Mercia East	Sema Group
	Newham, London	Shaw Trust
	North Yorkshire	City of York Council
	South Devon	Westcountry Training and Consultancy Service
	South Tyneside	Shaw Trust

The Employment Service pilots were launched on the 30 September 1998 and the partnership pilots in April 1999. The latter were selected following a competitive tendering process. Each partnership has a lead organisation (see Table 2.1) who manage the pilot on a day to day basis. The Employment Service and the Shaw Trust were involved in most of the partnerships schemes.

2.3.2 The location of the Personal Adviser Service

Managers, when establishing the Personal Adviser Service, saw finding an accessible office building to accommodate the staff as a key priority.

[6] The Employment Service site visits showed that relationships with service providers were still emerging, it was felt that further interviews with service providers in the partnership pilots would not significantly add to the data already collected. This was confirmed by the one group interview held with providers in one of the partnership areas.

Central location and base

Employment Service pilot managers and Personal Advisers generally agreed that a central office from which to work was important. Whilst each pilot area had a central office the actual location and choice of a base appeared to depend on the geographical characteristics of the area. For larger areas, the base was often distant from where Personal Advisers saw their clients; as a result a few saw colleagues less frequently. Some Personal Advisers felt alienated and experienced delays in administrative processes when distanced from the central office. At the time of the research, strategies for dealing with these problems were being considered and most areas were keen to maintain frequent whole team meetings and ensure support on an ad-hoc basis.

Two of the Employment Service pilots were located within Jobcentres, another two were based within Regional Disability Services offices and two rented offices from other organisations or commercially. Those housed in Jobcentres or other Employment Service buildings tended to share space and resources with other parts of the Employment Service. However, the level of integration varied between areas, with some sharing staff as well as equipment and floor space.

Factors driving decisions of location

Overall, decisions about location of the Employment Service pilots were made by the pilot manager. Reasons for locating outside Employment Service offices appeared to be client driven. Being central to where clients lived and having a non-threatening environment were valued. Decisions to base pilots within the Employment Service were sometimes a result of the need to get the scheme up and running in a short space of time. One Employment Service pilot manager would have preferred to be located in offices independent from the Employment Service.

The advantages and disadvantages of working out of either Employment Service or non-Employment Service locations could offset each other. The perceived advantages of an Employment Service location were:

- sharing Employment Service resources that were 'bedded down';
- opportunities to discuss and share problems with other Employment Service staff;
- a chance to keep in contact with developments in the Employment Service.

Whilst a non-Employment Service location could offer:

- a non-threatening environment for interviewing clients;
- a central and accessible location for clients;
- opportunity for greater independence.

An issue for Employment Service and partnership Personal Advisers was finding suitable places to see clients, although Jobcentres were often available. Even though partner organisations could provide accommodation for the Personal Adviser Service, these were not always seen as ideal locations by the managers and Personal Advisers, for instance, there was insufficient space. In special circumstances, Personal Advisers visited clients at their homes, although this practice was not common and raised personal safety issues. In one of the partnership areas a Personal Adviser had been working from her car and meeting clients in cafes. In another partnership area some Personal Advisers were working from home and the initial contact with clients could be by telephone with subsequent meetings at the client's home or in the office.

2.3.3 Recruitment of staff

Issues in the recruitment of staff for the Personal Adviser Service

Managers generally had responsibility for recruiting staff to work in the Personal Adviser Service. The one exception was an Employment Service area where the manager was recruited late into the Service and staff had already been selected.

Overall, managers thought that a mix of Personal Advisers from within and outside of the Employment Service was advantageous. External candidates brought an array of skills whilst internal candidates had experience of the Employment Service and often of the client group. Some Employment Service managers had experienced problems recruiting experienced Employment Service staff and this had created other difficulties; notably delays in the initial set-up of the service. Similarly, some partnership pilots experienced delays in recruiting/seconding staff. Indeed, the recruitment of 'permanent' managers occurred after the Service had started to operate in a number of the partnership pilots. This meant that some Personal Advisers were appointed before the 'permanent' manager was in post because of the need to contact clients. Key recruitment problems included:

- some managers found it difficult to persuade the Disability Service to release Disability Employment Advisers; and
- the short-term or temporary nature of the pilot was felt to be off-putting for some people.

2.3.4 Backgrounds of Personal Advisers

Pilot managers had been successful in establishing teams of Personal Advisers with complementary skills. A chance to work on something new, and to be innovative, were important reasons why Personal Advisers had applied for their positions. Other salient explanations were autonomy, a desire to work with disabled people and promotion.

Personal Advisers from within the Employment Service included:

- disability Employment Advisers.
- experienced advisers from other New Deals.
- staff from the Employment Service administrative teams.

The partnership pilots included secondees from the Employment Service.

Personal Advisers from outside the Employment Service included:

- secondees from the Benefits Agency, local authorities and voluntary organisations;
- people experienced in disability issues;
- people experienced in counselling techniques.

The partnership pilots typically seconded staff from partner organisations to act as Personal Advisers.

2.3.5 Training of Personal Advisers

There were few, if any differences in the training of Personal Advisers across the six Employment Service areas. All Employment Service Personal Advisers had followed a two-week residential training course and non-Disability Employment Advisers were also involved in the three-week Disability Employment Adviser course. Personal Advisers were generally appreciative of the training. They recalled learning, or refreshing, essential counselling and interviewing skills and reported the importance of having the roles of a Personal Adviser explained to them. In addition, an opportunity to air fears and concerns was said to be an important benefit of the training, as was the chance to meet with other Personal Advisers.

Employment Service Personal Advisers and pilot managers identified some gaps in training sometime after the completion of the training course. These gaps included the following areas:

- Information technology and data recording.
- Mental health issues.
- Local labour market issues.
- Service provision and opportunities for disabled people.
- Procedures and terminology for people new to the Employment Service.
- Disability awareness.[7]

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[7] One area had received training from a disability organisation on disability equality based on the social model.

These gaps appeared either to be the result of differences in the size and nature of the client group or because of a difference in the approach Personal Advisers were expected to take with clients. Some Personal Advisers felt that they lacked the necessary knowledge to deal with those clients with long-term mental health problems. In the Employment Service delivered pilots, training had focused on providing a client centred holistic approach yet this did not match the perceived increase in importance attached to employment outcomes (see Section 2.5.5). Managers concurred with Personal Advisers' frustrations and some expressed concern that Personal Advisers had not been trained to do what was expected of them.

The partnership pilots tended to recruit/second staff with expertise relevant to the Personal Adviser Service, accordingly individual training needs appeared to vary. Some of the partnerships' Personal Advisers were critical of the organisation, content and late timing of the training they received. Employment Service staff seconded to the pilots who were not ex-Disability Employment Advisers did receive the three week training given to Disability Employment Advisers.

At the time of the research, some pilots were in the process of reviewing training needs.

2.4 Organisational structure: Managing the Personal Adviser Service

2.4.1 Roles and responsibilities of pilot managers

With one exception, every Employment Service area had a single pilot manager. The reported roles and responsibilities of the managers were broadly similar. Managers were largely involved in the management of the Personal Adviser Service and of their Personal Advisers. Other key duties included liaising with partners and overseeing the marketing of the scheme, checking that strategic objectives were being met, maintaining and reviewing contact with their steering committee or advisory group and ensuring the provision of appropriate personal development for all staff. Working relationships between managers, Personal Advisers and other staff were generally described as 'good'.

In the partnership pilots arrangements for managing Personal Advisers could appear to be more complex. Where Personal Advisers were secondees they might retain some contact with their 'host' organisation.

2.4.2 Specialist roles and responsibilities

Some staff had specialist roles that were additional to the standard job specification of a Personal Adviser. The number with specialist responsibilities varied between areas, from over half in one area to none in others.

Variety of specialist roles

Some areas had someone aside from the pilot manager who was line manager to the Personal Advisers. This was more likely in some of the larger areas.[8] These people were referred to as the 'Deputy Manager' or 'Team Leader' and were not necessarily Personal Advisers themselves. Table 2.2 illustrates the variety of specialist roles.

Table 2.2 Variety of Specialist Roles in the Personal Adviser Service

Role	Key responsibilities	Speciality or experience
Deputy Manager	Line managing Personal Advisers Day to day planning Overseeing statistical procedures Directing appointment structures	Experience in management
Office Manager	Line managing and supervising administrative staff	Experience of Employment Service
Marketing Officer[1]	Establishing service provision Marketing the Personal Adviser Service to service providers	Ex Disability Employment Advisers and ex Disability Service
Mentor	Supporting Personal Advisers	Ex Disability Employment Advisers
Benefits Adviser[2]	Advising clients on benefits	Welfare benefits

Note [1] Includes two partnership pilots [2] A partnership pilot

Where possible, managers had utilised the specialist skills and experiences Personal Advisers brought to the scheme, for example in Information Technology and sign language. Because of the early stage of the scheme, some roles were limited. For example, some Personal Advisers had responsibilities for liaison with clients from ethnic minorities, for quality assurance in interviews or for retention work but were not yet doing these.

2.4.3 Roles of other staff within the Personal Adviser Service

Role of Occupational Psychologists

Occupational Psychologists tended to work part-time, and were seldom a resource exclusively available to the Employment Service delivered Personal Adviser Service. Because of their qualifications, some Occupational Psychologists had to be line managed at a regional level. In most areas, the Occupational Psychologist principally provided a professional input into the Service using a set of skills rarely held by Personal Advisers or pilot managers. Their responsibilities included:

- carrying out psychometric tests and employment assessments;
- analysing and then interpreting the results of tests;

[8] In this instance the larger areas are those Employment Service pilots with the largest numbers of people eligible for the Personal Adviser Service in August 1997.

- identifying gaps in provision for clients and gaps in training for Personal Advisers;
- helping to secure the necessary training requirements of Personal Advisers;
- offering in-house consultation when Personal Advisers required extra help;
- in two areas – one Employment Service and one partnership pilot - the Occupational Psychologists had run focus groups with potential clients in an attempt to provide information to aid the design and development of the Personal Adviser Service.

Occupational Psychologists were sometimes prominent figures in the support of Personal Advisers and overall were highly valued.

The partnership pilots could include seconded Occupational Psychologists.

Roles and responsibilities of administrative staff

The roles and responsibilities of administrative teams were diverse and could range from basic clerical duties to considerable involvement with clients. More specifically their key responsibilities could include:

- making appointments, answering clients' questions and reassuring them about the voluntary nature of the scheme and about their benefits;
- checking eligibility, explaining the Service and gathering information on the clients, including information on impairment or disability;
- filtering clients into or out of the scheme.

Less common and often complex duties could involve:

- in Employment Service delivered pilots, job matching using Labour Market System software;
- administering occupational tests;
- gathering, logging and updating records.

In one area, a member of the administrative team was responsible for a one-off exercise collecting information on reasons for non-participation over a one-month period.

Administrative staff were usually described as the first point of contact for clients. The majority of areas had at least two members on the administration team (although both could work part-time); occasionally one person was exclusively employed to run the free-phone service.

In one partnership pilot the administrative staff were secondees from the Employment Service. This meant that they had access to the Employment Service's Labour Market System (see Section 2.4.4). In another scheme the sharing of accommodation with a partner organisation meant that the administrative support was provided by the partner organisation. In

a third pilot the administrative staff were multilingual, reflecting the high number of Asian people living in the area.

2.5 Operations: Running the Personal Adviser Service

2.5.1 Pilot area workloads

Four to five months following the launch of the pilot scheme the areas were still in the process of 'bedding down'. There were various administrative reasons for delays in the set up of the Personal Adviser Service. These included:

- delays in finding a suitable location;
- bureaucratic obstacles in organising space for the team;
- bureaucratic obstacles in arranging for adequate facilities;
- insufficient training and supervision in Information Technology;
- not having equipment set up, and not knowing how to work it when it was;
- Personal Advisers still in training at the start of the scheme;
- delays in getting the contracts signed for the partnership pilots.

The length of time it had taken to establish the Personal Adviser Service meant that workloads differed; some reported very high workloads whilst the remainder appeared not to have reached full capacity.

The timing and rate at which the New Deal for Disabled People invitation letters were dispatched could also influence workloads in the partnership pilots. Some managers in the partnership pilots would have preferred more control over the sending out of these letters.

In the early months of the pilot, there was a wide variation in the numbers of clients on Personal Advisers' caseloads. There were indicators that high caseloads were causing anxiety for some Personal Advisers.

2.5.2 Recording data and using information technology

The value of data and Information Technology was widely acknowledged. However, some Personal Advisers raised concerns with both. Insufficient time to complete complex data-recording statistical forms was a particular problem for Personal Advisers, as was their lack of knowledge in using computers. In addition, some Personal Advisers were confused by the changing requirements for data collection. Not surprisingly, more initial training in Information Technology at the onset of Personal Advisers' training and continual 'top-up' courses were requested. Personal Advisers in the contract areas in particular had wanted training on IBIS earlier because their clients requested information on whether they would be better off in work.

2.5.3 Intervention Fund

Pilot managers had made some use of the Intervention Fund. There were two ways in which the Intervention Fund was managed:

- the manager decided all cases; and
- Personal Advisers had delegated authority to spend up to a defined limit.

Some Personal Advisers were unaware of the amount of money available from the Intervention Fund. Personal Adviser sought to make use of existing Employment Service contracts and any 'free' provision, before using the Intervention Fund.

2.5.4 Links with the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service

Contacts with the Benefits Agency were important. The Benefits Agency administered clients' benefits and sent out the invitation letter to clients. In most pilot areas a standard letter of invitation was used, but a few partnership pilots had developed their own version.

In the Employment Service delivered pilots relations with the Benefits Agency were generally good; most pilot managers reported regular meetings with Benefits Agency managers and two areas had staff from the Benefits Agency seconded to the Personal Adviser team. Links with the Employment Service and PACT were also said to be good, especially for those who were based within Employment Service buildings. Nevertheless, there were some issues in managing the Employment Service/Benefits Agency interface. There were concerns that contacts with the Benefits Agency could trigger a review of benefit entitlement for clients. In addition, some Personal Advisers had difficulty getting the Benefits Agency to agree to their interpretation of the therapeutic earnings rule.

Some of the partnership pilots reported some difficulties with their relationships with the Employment Service. In particular they were concerned about the lack of direct access of non-Employment Service secondees to the Labour Market System and the absence of information about, and easy access to, Employment Service programmes for clients.

2.5.5 Re-emphasising policy objectives

Background to the issues

Many respondents in the Employment Service delivered pilots said that at around Christmas 1998 they noted an increase in the importance attached to employment outcomes for the Personal Adviser Service. Whilst Personal Advisers' training had acknowledged the relevance of intermediate outcomes, the focus of their work was said to have shifted towards identifying people who would move quickly into employment and ensuring they do so. One manager mentioned that the change had not yet been made explicit but was there.

Areas visited immediately before or after Christmas 1998 did not report any perceived shift in policy, although the issue of meeting specific targets was an increasing concern.

Attitudes towards the perceived re-focus on employment outcomes

Employment Service Personal Advisers expressed the following concerns about this perceived shift in focus away from intermediate and towards employment outcomes:

- they felt they could not respond to clients' individual needs;
- they did not have all the skills required to do the job; and
- they believed it changed their job specification.

Some managers were concerned that solely focusing on work outcomes would appear to limit the scheme's success because it was attracting significant numbers of people who were considered incapable of work in the immediate future. Some managers also feared alienating service providers who preferred a more holistic and client centred approach. A further concern was that the focus on work outcomes might result in a target driven service that could give rise to unwanted competition within and between areas.

In addition, some Personal Advisers in the partnership pilots were unsure about the objectives of the Personal Adviser Service: whether it should improve the employability of clients and/or place people in paid work.

The partnership pilots had contracted targets for the numbers of clients entering paid employment and retaining their jobs. In most of the pilots these targets had been conveyed to the Personal Advisers. Some Personal Advisers expressed doubts about whether their scheme's targets would be met.

2.6 Networking: Selling the Personal Adviser Service

Respondents marketed the Service direct to clients, to those who might refer clients to the scheme, to people who might help promote the scheme, to service providers, and to employers who would provide services and jobs.

2.6.1 Varying marketing strategies used by pilot areas

Pilot managers were generally responsible for marketing the Personal Adviser Service before and immediately following the launch. Subsequently responsibility was shared with one or more Personal Advisers. The strategies used to market the Service varied between pilots.

Marketing to ensure client referrals involved presentations to clients, social workers, visits to mosques, posters in GP surgeries and jobcentres, etc. Marketing to service providers and employers involved face to face communication, mailshots, advertisements in the local press and events to promote the service.

2.6.2 Limited marketing activity amongst pilot areas

In several Employment Service areas, marketing had been reduced sometime after the initial launch of the scheme. Limiting marketing to those who could make client referrals was generally a purposeful reaction to Personal Advisers' high caseloads. Marketing to service providers and employers was limited for one or more of the following reasons:

- There were few clients ready for work.
- Some Personal Advisers were unaware of service provision in their area.
- One manager felt that some service providers might be confused with all the variations of New Deals and so had decided to slow down their marketing.
- One manager had slowed marketing because some organisations contacted early on had created problems because of their political agendas and steers.

Where a lack of knowledge was a key reason for low marketing Personal Advisers and managers realised that mapping exercises to improve existing databases of provision and to create new contacts were an immediate requirement (see Section 2.8).

While respondents in some areas continued to limit their marketing, others believed that more was needed and that they could not rely on pre-launch publicity.

2.7 Steering or advising the Personal Adviser Service

2.7.1 Establishing the Steering or Advisory Group

Most Employment Service pilot managers had established a steering or advisory group. Membership of the groups was broadly similar across the areas and tended to involve a mix of voluntary organisations representing disabled people, local employers and training providers. In some areas, members of the Benefits Agency and political representatives also sat on the committees and one had a Personal Adviser involved in the group. Some areas were more willing to accept a degree of direction than were others; the latter were more likely to have convened advisory than steering groups.

2.7.2 Role and importance of the Steering or Advisory Group

Individual steering or advisory groups had generally been convened in the Employment Service delivered pilots to help set up the Personal Adviser Service and so had often been involved since the beginning. The objectives of the steering or advisory groups varied and included:

- To influence the design of the service.
- To assist with or direct the development of the service.
- To act as a catalyst to get the word of the Personal Adviser Service into the community.
- To offer advice on marketing opportunities.
- To suggest appropriate locations for interviewing clients.
- To arrange for disability equality training.

The partnership pilots were, by definition, built around six consortia. These could be relatively large sized groups, in one instance it comprises 21 partner organisations. The level of active involvement of the partners in the pilots varied. Indeed, the role of some partners was unclear to some pilot managers. The partners did meet to discuss the Service, but these were not always called steering or advisory groups.

A few managers were ambivalent about the usefulness of their steering or advisory group. Reasons included lack of support from the group, it being too large to manage or the existence of different factions and internal politics. In an attempt to improve relations between the Personal Adviser Service in the Employment Service pilots and their steering or advisory group, some managers had made significant changes to its structure, and others reported that they intended to do so. The suggested measures for improving the steering or advisory groups included:

- introducing employers to the group, if not already involved;[9]
- involving a cross-section of organisations so as to not limit the potential input of the group;
- ensuring regular meetings with the group to build links and relations;
- dividing a large, difficult to manage group in one area into two smaller and more manageable groups;
- streamlining responsibility for advice on strategy to one group of organisations and advice on client related issues to another group had provided beneficial information in one area.

2.8 Mapping service provision

2.8.1 Mapping service provision

Mapping of local service provision had been undertaken in all Employment Service pilot areas. (It is less clear that a similar exercise had been undertaken in the partnership pilots; in part this will be because there were networks of partners underpinning these pilots.) There were differences in strategy and when the mapping took place. Some areas had begun mapping provision before the launch of the Personal Adviser Service and others sometime later. In most areas mapping was jointly undertaken by Personal Advisers and the pilot manager; although in one area one Personal Adviser had sole responsibility for mapping provision.

A range of methods of differing sophistication were used by Personal Advisers to help them with their mapping exercise, such as:

- networking with organisations, e.g. Social Services, day centres and disability groups;
- trawling through Yellow Pages, databases and disability handbooks;
- discussing provision with Disability Employment Advisers and those with experience of the Employment Service; and
- conducting mailshots.

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[9] At least one partnership pilot had two large private companies as members of its consortium.

2.9 Involvement with service providers

This section refers only to the Employment Service areas.

2.9.1 Organisations involved in the Personal Adviser Service

Areas varied in the number of providers and organisations involved in any way in the Personal Adviser Service. Two areas had an extensive list of over 30 organisations and providers and another two named between five and ten.

2.9.2 Key service providers

This section briefly describes the links key service providers[10] had with the Personal Adviser Service in each Employment Service area. The size and scale of the service providers interviewed varied, ranging from small local societies to well known national voluntary organisations. They served a range of client groups, including people with impairments, learning difficulties and mental health problems. The services provided included training, rehabilitation, employment support and raising awareness of disability issues amongst employers. (Further details of the 13 providers interviewed are included in Appendix C.)

Links between key service providers and the Personal Adviser Service

Links between the Personal Adviser Service and service providers had been established and initiated in a variety of ways, including:

- Marketing by pilots.
- The provider initiated contact with the Personal Adviser Service.
- Contacts generated after a provider attended the local launch of New Deal for Disabled People.
- The provider was invited onto a pilot's steering or advisory group.
- Links with the Employment Service existed prior to the launch of the New Deal for Disabled People.
- The provider was actively involved in other New Deal programmes.
- The provider had a formal contract with the Employment Service.

2.9.3 Interaction between the Personal Adviser Service and service providers

The level of interaction between the Personal Adviser Service and individual service providers varied across the six areas. It could involve one or more of the following ways:

- Pledging support to the Personal Adviser Service.
- Providing work placements.
- Providing employment and supported employment opportunities.
- Providing training opportunities.
- Providing professional and practical help for clients.
- Providing mentoring services.
- Providing job coaches for people taking on voluntary work.
- Providing resources for job retention.
- Seconding staff to the Personal Adviser Service.

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[10] Key service providers were those identified by the Employment Service pilot managers and who were available for an interview.

Areas who had mentioned fewer providers were more likely to have contact with all of them than were those with extensive lists of providers; who only saw a few regularly.

Few formal contracts had been finalised between the Personal Adviser Service and service providers and few referrals had been made to the key providers interviewed. However, it was generally understood that involvement with service providers would become more widespread and regularised as more clients reached the stage when they would be ready to move into work or training.

The key service providers reported that they had valuable and successful roles in the provision of services for disabled people and those with long-term illnesses. To this end the majority believed that their involvement in the Personal Adviser Service was crucial.

2.10 Development of service provision in the Employment Service delivered pilots

This section refers only to the Employment Service areas.

2.10.1 Furthering service provision

At the time of the research visits, mapping of service provision in the majority of areas was continuing. Problems encountered in the mapping exercise were exacerbated by a number of factors. In one area, Employment Service contracts for rehabilitation were being negotiated by Disability Services. Consequently, Personal Adviser Service staff did not know which services would continue to exist in the area. In two other areas Personal Advisers found accessing specific information time-consuming and felt they lacked the administrative support required to maintain a complete database of provision. Personal Advisers in one area suggested that exploring potential links with providers was an on-going process determined by individual clients' needs.

2.10.2 Identifying gaps in service provision

Staff in many of the Employment Service areas felt that it was too early to determine gaps in service provision. Personal Advisers in one area explained that gaps would only become visible when they had more clients to find provision for. However, some gaps were identified that were common to most areas, including:

- Work-focused opportunities for people with learning difficulties.
- Development work for people with mental health problems.
- Support for clients' early weeks in work.
- Support workers for people on training courses.

2.10.3 Filling gaps in service provision

Few long term solutions for combating existing gaps in provision were offered by respondents. Rather, they suggested piecemeal remedies relevant to their own local circumstances. Staff in one Employment Service area explained that they had striven to fill gaps on a temporary basis as they arose. Respondents in another area had planned a brainstorming session with their steering/advisory group to identify any gaps.

2.10.4 Relationships between service providers

Most of the service providers interviewed reported good relationships with other stakeholders. One provider explained that whilst competition for clients is evident they all have different strengths and weaknesses and rivalry is generally friendly. Another provider reported closer co-operation with stakeholders since the launch of the Personal Adviser Service; and described how working together reduced the likelihood of duplication.

2.11 Key service providers' perceptions of the Personal Adviser Service in the Employment Service delivered pilots

This section refers only to the Employment Service areas.

All in all the key providers from each area concluded that the Personal Adviser Service offered a valuable service to disabled people or those with long-term illnesses. Most providers hoped that the Personal Adviser Service would succeed and some were keen to point out that a national programme would be of value.

2.11.1 Approach of the Personal Adviser Service

The service providers were on the whole enthusiastic about the approach of the Personal Adviser Service and commended several of its features:

- The flexibility and readiness of the Personal Adviser Service to meet clients' needs.
- The partnership model; because it allowed for sharing knowledge and working together.
- The holistic client centred approach.
- The efficiency of the Personal Adviser Service in comparison with other schemes that operate at a local level.
- The enthusiasm and commitment of the Personal Adviser Service staff.
- The information and advice Personal Advisers offered to their clients.
- The absence of red-tape, compared with other New Deals.

Some service providers were concerned that:

- The Personal Adviser Service would move away from its holistic approach and focus on employment outcomes. Some believed this might result in fewer opportunities for creative schemes.
- There would be insufficient time for the pilot to mature and consequently some issues would not be addressed. Some thought job retention and on-going support for people in work might be overlooked.
- The preparation and groundwork before the launch of the Personal Adviser Service was in some cases insufficient. Some felt marketing and publicity had been inadequate.
- The training of Personal Advisers was inadequate. Some believed that at least six months' training was necessary for those with limited experience of the client group.

2.11.2 Key service providers' suggestions for the future of the Personal Adviser Service

Service providers had diverse suggestions for improving the delivery of the Personal Adviser Service:

- Providers should meet with the Personal Adviser Service to review progress and plan future provision.
- A Personal Adviser Service newsletter and group work would facilitate mutual support among clients.
- Personal Advisers should access existing resources instead of developing special schemes.
- More targeted publicity such as leaflets to employers was necessary.
- There should greater inclusion and integration of clients into the running of the Personal Adviser Service.

2.12 Summary

There are a number of lessons that can be learnt from the organisation and operation of the Personal Adviser Service in the early months. Some managers might have benefited from more time to reflect on the location of the pilot and to recruit Personal Advisers. One manager would have preferred to locate elsewhere but had not had the time to do so. For some managers, a longer recruitment period might have meant that more trained Personal Advisers were in post before the launch of the scheme.

Unexpected delays in the set-up of the Personal Adviser Service were experienced in some areas. Again, some managers needed more time than had been originally expected. Delays were often said to be due to bureaucratic obstacles in organising space and facilities for the Personal Adviser Service team. The partnership pilots cited delays in getting their contracts signed as a principal reason for the slow start to their programmes.

Personal Advisers in the Employment Service areas were generally appreciative of their training. However, some Personal Advisers in both the Employment Service and partnership areas would have welcomed more direction in particular areas, especially mental health issues and Information Technology.

In the contract areas the partners had provided a range of resources and services, including secondees and accommodation.

The mapping of service provision varied between Employment Service areas. Respondents in some areas reported having spent considerable time and energy locating services whilst others had done little. A mix of methods was utilised to establish the level of service provision in each pilot area, and methods ranged from desk-top research to active networking with organisations. At the time the fieldwork was conducted, the partnership pilots did not appear to have undertaken major mapping exercises; although this may reflect the availability of contacts through their partnerships.

Links with service providers varied across areas, as did the level of interaction they had with the Personal Adviser Service. Interaction with providers could range from those who had pledged to support the Personal Adviser Service to those who had provided work placements, offered training opportunities or who had formalised contracts with the Personal Adviser Service. Respondents in each area expected increased contact with service providers in the near future and suggested that low involvement was due to the early stage of the scheme. Likewise, although some gaps in provision were apparent others were expected to arise as the number of clients ready to leave the scheme increased. The service providers interviewed were generally supportive of the Personal Adviser Service in the Employment Service delivered pilots and believed it was a necessary service for disabled people and people with health problems.

As expected a number of differences and similarities in the way in which the areas had established and operated the Personal Adviser Service were evident. Variations may have been the result of fundamental differences in the local labour market, the provision of services, the expertise of staff, the experience of the pilot manager and the support received in setting up the service. However, differences may also be because of the early days of the Personal Adviser Service and the fact that areas were in different stages of development. Similarities may have been a function of national guidelines and possibly the involvement of the Employment Service and the Shaw Trust in most of the (partnership) pilots.

If best practice is to be encouraged across all of the pilots and disseminated quickly then there is a need for mechanisms to allow pilots to exchange ideas and information. It is recommended that the use of, for example, visits, workshops, leaflets, and short-term shadowing be explored.

3 SURVEY OF PARTICIPANTS AND NON-PARTICIPANTS[11]

3.1 Introduction

This chapter has three main aims. First, it looks at the characteristics of those who participated in the New Deal for Disabled People Personal Adviser Service and those who did not. Secondly, it reports on people's experiences of their interviews with a Personal Adviser and dealings with the Personal Adviser Service and the forms of help offered to them. Finally, it considers the range of activities people had participated in since becoming involved in the Personal Adviser Service.

3.1.1 The study

The analysis presented here is based on the early returns to a survey interview of disabled people who participated in the Personal Adviser Service and those who did not. The sample was drawn from the administrative database which was designed to keep track of those who were invited to the programme and those who took part.

The sample includes respondents who had their first interview with a Personal Adviser between March and June 1999. It also includes people who had been sent a letter inviting them to participate from January 1999 and who had not contacted the Service at least six weeks after it had been sent to them.[12] Throughout this chapter the terms 'participants' and 'non-participants' are used to refer to people who had had at least one interview with a Personal Adviser and those who had not, respectively. People in the pilot areas are invited to participate in two ways. First, all those who were in receipt of benefit due to incapacity when the pilots began (i.e. the 'stock') are invited on a rolling basis, and these form the bulk of the letters sent out each month. Secondly, anybody who becomes newly eligible for the Service (i.e. the 'flow') is written to as and when his or her spell of incapacity for work passes 28 weeks.

In total, 580 telephone and 250 face-to-face interviews were conducted between April and September 1999.[13] Of these, 450 interviews were carried out with participants and 380 with non-participants.[14] Three hundred and sixty participants had received a letter inviting them to contact the Personal Adviser Service, 90 others had approached the Service before receiving a letter inviting them to do so. These people had either been referred to the scheme or on hearing about it had volunteered for

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[11] Julia Loumidis was responsible for data analyses and writing the report. Carli Lessof was responsible for data management and co-ordination of the fieldwork.

[12] Further details on the research design and sampling are reported in Appendix B.

[13] Survey interviews with participants commenced in June 1999, and fieldwork is ongoing.

[14] Proxy interviews were carried out for 25 cases.

it.[15] Hereafter, these people will be referred to as 'uninvited participants' and those who had responded to the letter 'invited participants'. The proportion of uninvited participants in the sample is much less than expected. Management information shows that about 46 per cent of participants had approached the Personal Adviser Service without first having received a letter inviting them to do so. Therefore, the survey sample over-represents clients who came forward in response to the letter, and this should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings. The results have been presented separately for these two groups where possible. Tests of significance are not presented, but were used for guidance in the interpretation of the results.

3.1.2 Organisation of the chapter

The material reported within this chapter begins with a description of the characteristics of participants and non-participants (Section 3.2). The respondents' attachment to paid employment is reported in Section 3.3 and their experience of the Personal Adviser Service is discussed in Section 3.4. The range of activities people had participated in since their first contact with a Personal Adviser is identified in Section 3.5 and the final section draws together the main findings of the survey.

3.2 Characteristics of respondents

This section describes the characteristics of respondents in the survey, focusing on similarities and differences between people who participated in the Personal Adviser Service and those who did not. The following sections examine respondents:

- social and demographic characteristics (Section 3.2.1);
- disability or health problems (Section 3.2.2);
- benefit status and receipt (Section 3.2.3);
- economic activity (Section 3.2.4); and
- labour market background (Section 3.2.5).

Each section begins with a brief description of the main characteristics of the sample regardless of their participation status.

3.2.1 Social and demographic characteristics

The respondents tended to be middle-aged or older. Most lived with a partner and at least half either owned or mortgaged their own home. Partners tended to be in paid work or looked after the family or house; even so, about one in seven were sick or disabled. A significant proportion of the respondents had no formal qualifications or valid driving licence.

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[15] These people are likely to form part of the client group and so would be expected to receive a letter inviting them to contact the Service in due course.

Gender

Sixty per cent of the participants and 59 per cent of the non-participants were men; the rest were women (40 per cent of participants and 41 per cent of non-participants). Sixty-six per cent of uninvited participants and 58 per cent of invited participants were men, the rest were women (34 per cent of uninvited participants and 42 per cent of invited participants).

Age

Participants tended to be younger than non-participants (Table 3.1). Sixty-nine per cent of the participants were under 50 years compared with 49 per cent of non-participants.

Of participants, 28 per cent were aged between 40 to 49 years, 27 per cent were 30-39 years and 12 per cent were under 30 years. The rest were between 50 and 59 years (28 per cent) or over 60 (four per cent). Of non-participants, 23 per cent were aged 40-49 years, 16 per cent were aged between 39 and 40 years and 10 per cent were under 30 years. The rest were between 50 and 59 years (39 per cent) or over 60 (13 per cent).

Female participants tended to be younger than male participants. Eighty per cent of women participants were under 50 compared with 58 per cent of men.

Uninvited participants were younger than invited participants. Eighty per cent of uninvited participants were under 50 years compared with 64 per cent of those invited to contact the Service.

Table 3.1 Age of respondents

				Column per cent
	All respondents		All participants	
Age	Non-participants	All Participants	Uninvited	Invited
Under 20 years	2	1	0	1
20 – 29 years	8	11	20	9
30 – 39 years	16	29	29	26
45 – 49 years	23	28	31	27
50 – 59 years	39	28	19	31
60 years and over	13	4	1	5
Base	378	448	90	358

Household composition

Participants were more likely to have children living with them and their partner than were non-participants (34 per cent and 25 per cent respectively) (Table 3.2). On the other hand, participants were less likely

to live with a partner without children than were non-participants (17 per cent and 29 per cent respectively). This may reflect the younger age of participants as compared with non-participants, in that their children had not left home.

No significant differences in household composition emerged between invited and uninvited participants.

Table 3.2 Household composition of respondents

				Column per cent
Household	**All respondents**		**All participants**	
composition	**Non-participants**	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
Single no children	21	23	21	24
Lives with partner no children	29	17	14	18
Single with children	7	7	11	6
Lives with partner with children	25	34	38	33
Lives with parents	7	8	7	9
Lives with other relative/sibling	7	8	7	8
Lives with non-relative	4	2	2	2
Base	380	449	90	359

Qualifications

People who participated in the Personal Adviser Service were better qualified than those who did not (Table 3.3). Seventy-one per cent of participants had at least one formal qualification compared with 43 per cent of non-participants.

Participants were especially more likely to have only academic qualifications (29 per cent) than were non-participants (16 per cent). More participants than non-participants had both academic and vocational qualifications (22 per cent and 12 per cent respectively) and more had solely vocational qualifications (21 per cent and 14 per cent respectively).

Even when considering the age of respondents, participants were better qualified than non-participants. Amongst those over 50 years, participants were more likely to have at least one qualification (62 per cent) than were non-participants (37 per cent). Similarly, more participants than non-participants under 45 years had at least one qualification (75 per cent and 49 per cent respectively).

Uninvited participants were better qualified than those who responded to the invitation letter. Eighty per cent of uninvited participants compared with 69 per cent of invited participants held at least one formal qualification.

Table 3.3 Respondents' qualifications

				Column per cent
	All respondents		All participants	
Qualifications	Non-participants	All Participants	Uninvited	Invited
Academic and vocational	12	22	27	21
Academic only	16	29	24	30
Vocational only	14	20	29	18
No formal qualifications	57	29	20	31
Base	378	448	90	358

Access to transport

Participants were more likely to have access to private transport or good public transport than were non-participants. Respondents were asked whether they held a current driving licence and if so whether they had access to a vehicle. They were also asked whether they could use public transport and if so was it of an acceptable standard. Fifty-seven per cent of participants had a current driving licence and access to a motor vehicle compared with 46 per cent of non-participants. Forty-nine per cent of participants could use and had access to good public transport compared with 34 per cent of non-participants.

Even when taking into account age participants were more likely to have access to private transport than non-participants. Of those under 50 years, 54 per cent of participants had a current driving licence and access to a motor vehicle compared with 36 per cent of non-participants. Sixty-three per cent of participants over 50 and 53 per cent of non-participants had a current driving licence and access to a motor vehicle.

Participants who had approached the scheme before receiving the invitation letter were not more likely to have access to private transport (56 per cent) than were invited participants (58 per cent). Neither were they more likely to have access to acceptable public transport (42 per cent and 50 per cent respectively).

Tenure

No significant relationship was evident between housing tenure for participants and non-participants (Table 3.4). Fifty-two per cent of participants owned or mortgaged their own home compared with 47 per cent of non-participants. Thirty-four per cent of participants lived in council or local authority owned property compared with 40 per cent of non-participants.

The pattern of housing tenure for invited and uninvited participants was also similar.

Table 3.4 Housing tenure of respondents

				Column per cent
	All respondents		All participants	
Tenure	Non-participants	All Participants	Uninvited	Invited
Owner occupier	47	52	50	53
Rented from council/ local authority	40	34	32	34
Rented from private landlord	7	10	9	10
Other	7	4	9	3
Base	380	450	90	360

Partner's economic activity

About half respondents lived with a partner (52 per cent). Participants were more likely to have a partner in paid employment and less likely to have a partner working at home looking after the family than non-participants (Table 3.5). Fifty-five per cent of participants said their partners were in paid work compared with 42 per cent of non-participants. Twenty-four per cent of participants and 31 per cent of non-participants described their partners as looking after the family.[16]

Table 3.5 Respondents' partners' economic activity

		Column per cent
Partners' economic activity	Non-participants	Participants
In paid employment	42	55
In education or training	1	2
Looking after family/home	31	24
Sick or disabled	15	12
Early retirement	6	2
Unemployed	1	1
Retired	1	Less than 1
Carer	0	Less than 1
Other	0	3
Base	218	241

3.2.2 Disability or health problems of respondents

The majority of respondents had a disability or health problem that they expected to last for more than one year (79 per cent). The most common health complaints were mental health problems, for example depression or anxiety (27 per cent), back problems (20 per cent) and musculo-skeletal problems (18 per cent). Around two-fifths (43 per cent) of the respondents interviewed had more than one health condition and over half (58 per cent) had had their main health problem for more than five years.

[16] Insufficient cell sizes limited further analyses between uninvited and invited participants

Presence of a current disability or health condition

Participants were about as likely as non-participants to report a current disability or health condition that affected their everyday activities (92 per cent and 93 per cent respectively). Uninvited participants were as likely as invited participants to have a current health condition (91 per cent and 92 per cent respectively)

Permanence of disability or health condition

Respondents were asked whether they expected to have their disability or health problem a year from now. Fewer participants (74 per cent) than non-participants (85 per cent) believed their disability or health condition was long-term (Table 3.6). Participants also expected to recover more quickly: seven per cent of participants expected to recover within one year compared with three per cent of non-participants.

Uninvited participants (78 per cent) were as likely as invited participants (73 per cent) to believe their disability or health problem would last for more than one year.

Table 3.6 Permanence of respondents' disabilities or health problems

				Column per cent
Permanence of	**All respondents**		**All participants**	
disability	**Non-participants**	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
Over one year	85	74	78	73
Less than one year	3	7	2	8
Unsure	13	19	20	19
Base	352	404	82	322

Nature of disability or health condition

The most common health problems for participants were mental health (32%), back (18%) or other muscular-skeletal problems.

Overall, no significant associations were evident between the type of disability or health condition and participation in the Personal Adviser Service (Table 3.7). Almost a third of participants (32 per cent) and just over a fifth of non-participants (22 per cent) had mental health problems.

No significant differences were evident between uninvited and invited participants in terms of their disability or health condition.

Table 3.7 Respondents' main health condition or disability

				Column per cent
Main disability or	**All respondents**		**All participants**	
health condition	**Non-participants**	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
Mental health (depression, anxiety)	22	32	36	31
Back problems	18	21	22	21
Muscular-skeletal (arms, legs, hands etc)	18	18	13	19
Circulatory problems (heart, blood pressure)	12	8	6	7
Mental health (severe or specific learning difficulties)	7	1	3	1
Gastro-intestinal (stomach, liver, kidneys)	5	3	6	3
Progressive illness (e.g. cancer, MS)	4	2	3	2
Chest or breathing problems (e.g. asthma)	4	3	2	3
Sensory (seeing)	2	2	1	2
Epilepsy	2	1	2	2
Sensory (hearing/speaking)	1	1	1	1
Skin conditions /allergies	Less than 1	1	0	1
Diabetes	1	1	0	1
Other	4	6	5	7
Base	372	440	87	353

Fewer participants than non-participants reported more than one disability or health condition. Fifty-two per cent of participants said they had two or more health conditions compared with 62 per cent of non-participants. Fifty-six per cent of participants who had approached the scheme before receiving an invitation inviting them to do so had more than one disability or health problem compared with 50 per cent of invited participants.

Even when considering the age of respondents, participants were less likely to have more than one disability or health problem than non-participants. Fifty-nine per cent of participants over 50 said they had more than one health condition compared with 69 per cent of non-participants of the same age. Of those aged under 50 years, 48 per cent of participants reported more than one health condition compared with 54 per cent of non-participants.

Respondents' other disabilities or health conditions are reported in Table 3.8.[17] Twenty-six per cent had a muscular skeletal condition in addition to their main disability or health condition (31 per cent of non-participants and 21 per cent of participants).

[17] Small cell sizes limited further analyses between uninvited and invited participants.

Table 3.8 Respondents' other health conditions or disabilities

		Cell per cent
Main disability or health condition	**Non-participants**	**Participants**
Mental health (depression, anxiety)	10	17
Back problems	16	12
Muscular-skeletal (arms, legs, hands etc)	31	21
Circulatory problems (heart, blood pressure)	19	17
Mental health (severe or specific learning difficulties)	2	0
Gastro-intestinal (stomach, liver, kidneys)	14	12
Progressive illness (e.g. cancer, MS)	2	3
Chest or breathing problems (e.g. asthma)	15	14
Sensory (seeing)	3	1
Epilepsy	3	2
Sensory (hearing/speaking)	6	4
Skin conditions /allergies	2	1
Diabetes	6	6
Other	7	10
Base	234	236

Duration of disability or health condition

Participants tended to have had their disability or health condition for less time than non-participants (Table 3.9). Twenty-six per cent of participants had had it for more than 10 years compared with 36 per cent of non-participants. However, participants were about as likely as non-participants to have had their disability or health condition for a shorter period. For example, 23 per cent of participants and 21 per cent of non-participants had had their disability or health condition for between two and five years, and 28 per cent and 27 per cent between five and 10 years.

Regardless of their participation in the Personal Adviser Service, younger respondents had had their disability or health condition for about as long as older people. Fifty-six per cent of respondents under 50 had had their disability for more than five years compared with 60 per cent of those over 50.

No significant association was evident between uninvited and invited participants in terms of the length of time they had had their disability or health problem. Thirty-two per cent of uninvited participants and 24 per cent of invited participants had had their disability for more than 10 years.

Table 3.9 Duration of disability or health condition

				Column per cent
	All respondents		All participants	
Duration	Non-participants	All Participants	Uninvited	Invited
Within the last 12 months	5	9	7	10
Within the last 1 to 2 years	11	15	12	15
Within the last 2 to 3 years	9	9	7	10
Within the last 3 to 5 years	12	14	14	14
Within the last 5 to 10 years	27	28	29	27
More than 10 years ago	54	26	32	24
Base	366	434	87	347

3.2.3 Benefit status and receipt

Of the respondents who were still receiving incapacity-related benefits at the time of the survey and who could recall when they had started to receive benefits, over half (53 per cent) had been claiming for more than three years.

Duration of qualifying benefit receipt[18]

Participants had been on incapacity-related benefits for a shorter period than non-participants (Table 3.10). Forty-seven per cent of participants had been receiving incapacity-related benefits for over three years compared with 60 per cent of non-participants. Nine per cent of participants had been receiving benefits since before 1990 compared with 19 per cent of non-participants. About one-quarter (26 per cent) of participants and one-fifth (19 per cent) of non-participants had been claiming for less than one year. The rest of the participants and non-participants had been in receipt of benefits for between one to two years (14 per cent and 10 per cent respectively) and two to three years (12 per cent and 10 per cent respectively).

No significant association was evident between uninvited and invited participants in terms of the length of time they had been receiving incapacity benefits. Fifty-two per cent of uninvited participants and 45 per cent of invited participants had been receiving incapacity-related benefits for more than three years.

[18] Qualifying benefits are Incapacity Benefit, Income Support, Severe Disablement Allowance and those receiving National Insurance Credits for incapacity.

Table 3.10 Duration of claim

				Column per cent
	All respondents		All participants	
Duration	Non-participants	All Participants	Uninvited	Invited
Within the last 12 months	19	26	20	29
Within the last 1 to 2 years	10	14	16	13
Within the last 2 to 3 years	10	12	13	12
More than 3 years ago	60	47	52	45
Base	244	281	56	225

Benefit status and receipt at the time of the survey interview

Participants were more likely to have left benefit by the time of the survey interview than were non-participants (15 per cent and five per cent respectively).

The pattern of benefit receipt did not vary greatly between participants and non-participants (Table 3.11).[19] However, more participants (80 per cent) than non-participants (73 per cent) received Incapacity Benefit but fewer received Severe Disablement Allowance (five per cent and 10 per cent respectively).[20] In addition, fewer participants (25 per cent) than non-participants (34 per cent) received Disability Living Allowance.

Forty-eight per cent of participants and 56 per cent of non-participants received two or more disability or incapacity benefits. Fifty-four per cent of uninvited participants and 47 per cent of invited participants received more than one incapacity or disability benefit.

Table 3.11 Respondents' receipt of incapacity and disability related benefits

		Cell per cent
Income/disability related benefits	Non-participants	Participants
Incapacity Benefit	73	80
Income Support with premium	42	41
Severe Disablement Allowance	10	5
Statutory Sick Pay	1	1
Occupational Sick Pay	1	Less than 1
Disability Living Allowance	34	25
Disability Working Allowance[1]	2	3
Industrial Injuries Disablement Allowance	4	3
War Disablement Pension	1	1
Other	1	2
None of these	2	2
Base	376	445

[1] DWA has now been replaced by the Disabled Person's Tax Credit

[19] Small cell sizes limited further analyses between uninvited and invited participants.

[20] Severe Disablement Allowance is paid to people who do not have enough National Insurance contributions to qualify for Incapacity Benefit.

The majority of respondents (61 per cent) also received non-incapacity/disability benefits (Table 3.12). Participants, especially uninvited participants were more likely to receive benefits in addition to their incapacity/disability benefits than non-participants. Sixty-four per cent of participants and 58 per cent of non-participants received additional benefits. Seventy per cent of uninvited participants received additional benefits to their incapacity or disability benefits compared with 50 per cent of invited participants.

Of those respondents who received non-incapacity/disability benefits, most participants and non-participants received Council Tax Benefit (65 per cent and 71 per cent respectively) and Housing Benefit (54 per cent and 64 per cent respectively) (Table 3.12). In accordance with the younger age of participants compared with non-participants, participants were more likely to receive Child Benefit/One Parent Benefit (37 per cent) than non-participants (28 per cent).

Including disability or incapacity benefits, 75 per cent of the sample received more than one benefit and 51 per cent received more than two. The average number of benefits received by participants (mean 2.8) was similar to that for non-participants (mean 2.7).

Table 3.12 Respondents' receipt of non-incapacity benefits

		Cell per cent
Non-incapacity related benefits	**Non-participants**	**Participants**
Council Tax Benefit	71	65
Housing Benefit[1]	64	54
Child Benefit/One Parent Benefit	28	37
Jobseeker's Allowance	3	7
Family Credit[2]	1	3
Invalid Care Allowance	10	2
Other benefit	9	16
None of these	2	2
Base	220	290

Base: those who received any non-incapacity/disability benefit

[1] Housing Benefit is paid to people on a low income who need help with rent payments

[2] Family Credit has now been replaced by Working Families' Tax Credit

3.2.4 Economic activity

About one in 10 respondents were in full-time or part-time paid work at the time of the survey interview (10 per cent). Five per cent were in education or training, another five per cent were looking after the home or family.

Economic activity at the time of the survey interview

Participants (65 per cent) were less likely to describe themselves as sick or disabled at the time of the survey than were non-participants (79 per cent) (Table 3.13). Even when considering age, participants were less

likely to describe themselves as sick or disabled than were non-participants. Of those over 50 years, 74 per cent of participants described themselves as sick or disabled compared with 87 per cent of non-participants. Sixty per cent of participants under 50 said they were sick or disabled compared with 70 per cent of non-participants.

Participants (13 per cent) were about twice as likely to have paid full-time or part-time jobs than were non-participants (six per cent). In addition, participants (eight per cent) were more likely to be in education/training than non-participants (three per cent).[21]

Fewer participants who had approached the Service before receiving a letter inviting them to do so described themselves as sick or disabled than invited participants (61 per cent and 66 per cent respectively) and more said they were in education or training (13 per cent and six per cent respectively).

Table 3.13 Respondents' economic activity at the time of the survey interview

				Column per cent
	All respondents		All participants	
Economic activity	Non-participants	All Participants	Uninvited	Invited
Full time paid work	4	6	4	6
Part time paid work	2	7	8	6
Education/training	3	8	13	6
Looking after family/home	5	6	4	6
Sick or disabled	79	65	61	66
Retired	3	1	1	1
Other	5	8	8	9
Base	380	450	90	360

Of the 10 per cent of respondents in part-time or full-time work, participants (21 per cent) were less likely than non-participants (50 per cent) to have started that job before their current spell on benefit. Other respondents had started their job since their current spell; 79 per cent of participants and 50 per cent of non-participants.

Activities whilst receiving benefits

Respondents were asked whether they had done any part-time paid work, casual work, voluntary work or work that was described as therapeutic whilst receiving benefit. Participants (29 per cent) were more likely than non-participants (nine per cent) to have undertaken some form of work during their time on benefits (Table 3.14).

[21] Section 3.5 establishes whether starting work or starting an education/training course for participants had occurred after meeting with a Personal Adviser.

Voluntary work was especially common amongst participants (19 per cent); just six per cent of non-participants had done any unpaid work. The rest had done some casual, part-time or therapeutic work.

Uninvited participants (35 per cent) were more likely to have participated in some form of work during their time on benefits than invited participants (27 per cent).

Table 3.14 Respondents' activities whilst receiving benefit

				Cell per cent
Activities whilst	**All respondents**		**All participants**	
receiving benefit	**Non-participants**	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
Part time paid work	1	4	6	4
Casual work	1	2	5	1
Voluntary work	6	19	24	18
Therapeutic work	3	6	8	6
None	91	71	65	73
Base	358	416	88	328

Job-search

Respondents were asked whether they had been looking for work during the previous four weeks. Participants (23 per cent) were more likely to have been looking for work than non-participants (three per cent). This difference might be explained by the participants' involvement with the Personal Adviser Service. Twenty-eight per cent of uninvited participants had been looking for jobs during the previous four weeks compared with 21 per cent of invited participants.

The most common job-search methods used by participants were advertisements in newspapers (84 per cent) and Jobcentres (70 per cent). There were no significant differences between uninvited and invited participants (Table 3.15).

Table 3.15 Job-search methods used by participants

		Cell per cent
	All participants	
Job-search methods	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
Advertisements in press	74	87
Jobcentre	55	74
Asked a friend/relative	26	19
Contacted employer	17	20
Self employed work	9	6
Recruitment agency	4	17
Jobclub	4	9
Base	23	69

3.2.5 Labour market background of respondents

This section looks at the period since respondents were last in paid work, the time spent in that job and their reasons for leaving it. Around two-fifths (39 per cent) of the respondents had been out of paid work for over five years and seven per cent had never worked. For 80 per cent of the sample, ill-health was a contributing factor in the termination of their last job.

Employment before current spell on incapacity-related benefits

Participants were less likely to have been out of paid work for as long as non-participants (Table 3.16). About one-third of participants had been out of the labour market for over five years; 19 per cent between five to 10 years and 12 per cent for more than 10 years. In comparison, about half of those who did not participate in the Personal Adviser Service had been out of paid work for more than five years; 22 per cent between five and 10 years and 25 per cent more than 10 years. Fewer participants (four per cent) had never had paid work than non-participants (eleven per cent). Conversely, more participants had been in work within the last 12 months than non-participants (15 per cent and six per cent respectively).

Even allowing for age, participants were less likely to have been out of paid work for as long as non-participants. Discounting from the analyses those who had never worked, 31 per cent of participants under 50 and 44 per cent of non-participants of the same age had been out of work for more than five years. Thirty-eight per cent of participants over 50 and 54 per cent of non-participants over 50 had been out of work for more than five years.

No significant association was evident between invited and uninvited participants and the time they had been out of paid work. Thirty-six per cent of uninvited participants and 30 per cent of invited participants had been out of paid employment for more than five years.

Table 3.16 Period since respondents' last in paid work

Column per cent

Period since last job	All respondents		All participants	
	Non-participants	All Participants	Uninvited	Invited
Never in paid employment	11	4	5	4
Under 1 year	6	15	9	16
1 to 2 years	12	20	14	21
2 to 3 years	7	11	12	11
3 to 5 years	17	19	25	18
5 to 10 years	22	19	20	19
More than 10 years	25	12	16	11
Base	352	411	81	330

Information on last job before spell on incapacity benefits

Participants had not been in their previous job for as long as non-participants (Table 3.17). However, this difference was only evident amongst older respondents. Thirty-seven per cent of participants had been in that job for more than five years compared with 51 per cent of non-participants. More participants (28 per cent) than non-participants (21 per cent) had been in that job for up to 12 months. The rest had previously been employed for between two to five years; 35 per cent of participants and 27 per cent of non-participants.

Participants over 50 years (50 per cent) were less likely to have been in their last job for more than five years than non-participants (63 per cent). However, no significant differences emerged between those under 50; 31 per cent of participants and 36 per cent of non-participants had been in their last job for more than five years.

There were no significant association between uninvited and invited participants in terms of the time spent in their previous job. Twenty-nine per cent of the uninvited participants and 39 per cent of invited participants had been in the their last job for more than five years.

Table 3.17 Period in last paid job

				Column per cent
How long in last	**All respondents**		**All participants**	
job before spell	**Non-participants**	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
Up to 6 months	13	18	17	19
6 to 12 months	8	10	10	10
1 to 2 years	9	12	17	11
2 to 5 years	19	23	27	22
More than 5 years	51	37	29	39
Base	323	416	83	333

Respondents were asked whether their last job was their usual job or occupation. This was the case for 68 per cent of participants and 75 per cent of non-participants. The rest of the respondents said either that it was not their usual job (27 per cent participants and 19 per cent of non-participants) or that they do not have a usual job (five per cent of participants and six per cent of non-participants).

Similar proportions of uninvited and invited participants said that their last job was their usual one (64 per cent and 69 per cent respectively). The rest said either that it was not their usual job (31 per cent of and 25 per cent respectively) or that they do not have a usual job (five per cent and five per cent).

Reason for leaving last job

Participants (76 per cent) were as likely as non-participants (78 per cent) to have left their last job because of ill-health. For a small minority, health had played only a minor part in their last job ending (three per cent of participants and two per cent of non-participants). For the rest, their health had not been the reason for their last job ending (21 per cent of participants and 19 per cent of non-participants).

Participants who had contacted the Personal Adviser Service before receiving a letter inviting them to do so were as likely to have left their last job for health reasons as were other participants (76 per cent and 76 per cent).

3.2.6 Summary

Participants tended to be younger, better qualified, more likely to have access to transport and more likely to have a partner in paid work than non-participants. Whilst most participants and non-participants had a disability or health problem that affected their everyday activities, fewer participants thought this was long-term or had more than one health condition. In addition, participants had not had their health condition for as long as non-participants. Accordingly, they had not been receiving benefits for as long and had not been out of work for as long as non-participants.

When asked about their current economic activity, participants were less likely to describe themselves as sick and disabled and were more likely to have done some form of work whilst on benefit than non-participants, especially voluntary work. They were also more likely to be looking for work than people who had not contacted the Personal Adviser Service.

Uninvited participants tended to be younger and better qualified than those invited to contact the Service. Overall, no significant differences emerged between uninvited and invited participants in terms of their disability status, benefit status, economic activity or labour market background. Marginal differences suggested that uninvited participants were more likely to have a longer-term health problem or disability, were slightly more likely to have more than one condition and had had their disability for longer than invited participants. Accordingly, they were marginally more likely to have been receiving benefits for longer, were more likely to receive more than one incapacity or disability benefit and had been out of paid work for longer than invited participants. Even so, they were less likely to describe themselves as sick or disabled and more were in education/training. In addition, slightly more uninvited participants had participated in some form of paid work during their time on benefits and were engaged in job-search activities than participants who had responded to the letter inviting them to contact the Personal Adviser Service.

3.3 Attachment to work

This section provides a comparison of respondents' attachment to work. Participants' and non-participants' ability and aspirations to work, and expectations of doing so are compared (Section 3.3.1). Also reported are the barriers to work perceived by participants and non-participants and how these may be overcome (Section 3.3.2).

3.3.1 Distance from paid employment

Perceived ability to do paid work

Participants (37 per cent) were less likely to say that their disability or health condition meant that they could not do any work than were non-participants (77 per cent) (Table 3.18). By implication, the rest either said that they could do some paid work or that their health condition had no affect on their ability to work. Possibly, participants who felt unable to work expected in the future to be able to do some with the help and support from their Personal Adviser.

Older non-participants, especially, were more likely to say that their disability or health condition meant that they could not do any work than participants. Eighty-four per cent of non-participants over 50 felt unable to do paid work compared with 40 per cent of participants. Sixty-nine per cent of non-participants under 50 said they were unable to do paid work compared with 35 per cent of under 50s who participated in the Personal Adviser Service.

No significant relationship was evident between uninvited and invited participants in terms of their ability to do paid work. Thirty-three per cent of uninvited participants claimed they were unable to do any paid work compared with 37 per cent of invited participants.

Table 3.18 Respondents' perceived ability to do paid work

				Column per cent
	All respondents		All participants	
Perceived ability	Non-participants	All Participants	Uninvited	Invited
Unable to do any work	77	37	33	37
Able to do some work	23	63	67	63
Base	363	425	84	341

Where respondents thought they could do some paid work, they were asked whether they would need extra help in their job, and/or allowances such as regular breaks and time off work (Table 3.19). The only significant difference related to participants being less likely than non-participants to need someone to help them at work (42 per cent and 57 per cent). Fewer participants than non-participants needed more than 20 days off work per year (79 per cent and 84 per cent respectively), several breaks whilst at work (73 per cent and 78 per cent respectively) or special equipment (22 per cent and 26 per cent respectively).

Fewer uninvited participants (28 per cent) believed they needed someone to help them in work than invited participants (46 per cent).

Table 3.19 Extra help and allowances respondents believed they would need if in paid work

				Cell per cent
Respondents were asked whether their health condition meant they would:		**All respondents**	**All participants**	
	Non-participants	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
Likely to be off sick for more than 20 days per year	84	79	80	78
Have to have several breaks a day	78	73	76	72
Need someone to help at work	57	42	28	46
Ability to search for work is affected	55	53	56	53
Need special equipment at work	26	22	26	21

Base ranged from: 50-86 non-participants; 177-276 participants; 35-57 uninvited and 142-219 invited participants

Aspirations to do paid work

Respondents who were not in paid work at the time of the interview were asked whether they would like a regular paid job. More participants than non-participants would like paid work immediately (Table 3.20). Over half the participants (53 per cent) would like a regular paid job now compared with just 17 per cent of non-participants. Accordingly, participants were less likely to say that they would never like to work than were non-participants (eight per cent and 50 per cent respectively). The other participants and non-participants said that they would like to work sometime in the future (39 per cent and 33 per cent respectively). Possibly, the small number of participants who said they would never like to work had joined the Personal Adviser Service for other reasons than starting work.

Whilst older participants were more likely to want work than younger ones; the reverse was true for non-participants. Sixty per cent of participants over 50 wanted to work immediately compared with 50 per cent of participants under 50. Fifteen per cent of non-participants over 50 wanted work immediately compared with 20 per cent of non-participants under 50.

Uninvited and invited participants had similar aspirations to work. Fifty-nine per cent of uninvited participants wanted work immediately compared with 52 per cent of invited participants.

Table 3.20 Respondents' aspirations to do paid work

				Column per cent
Aspirations to	**All respondents**		**All participants**	
work	**Non-participants**	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
Would like work now	17	53	59	52
Would like work in the future	33	39	39	39
Would never like to work	50	8	3	9
Base	351	384	78	306

Sixty-four per cent of participants who would like to work (now or in the future) felt able to do so compared with 35 per cent of non-participants.

It was common for respondents who would like to work to choose a full-time job (Table 3.21); 55 per cent of respondents wanted to work for 30 hours or more per week. Participants (55 per cent) were as likely to want full-time work as were non-participants (55 per cent). Furthermore, one-quarter of participants (26 per cent) and non-participants (25 per cent) wanted part-time work of under 16 hours per week; and one-fifth would choose to work between 16 and 29 hours a week (19 per cent and 20 per cent respectively).

Uninvited participants (56 per cent) were as likely as invited participants to want to work full-time (55 per cent). Thirty-one per cent of uninvited participants and 25 per cent of invited participants wanted to work under 16 hours a week.

Table 3.21 Weekly hours respondents wanted to work

				Column per cent
Hours respondents	**All respondents**		**All participants**	
wanted to work	**Non-participants**	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
Up to 15 hours per week	25	26	31	25
16 to 29 hours per week	20	19	14	20
30 or more per week	55	55	56	55
Base	170	341	72	269

Respondents' reasons for wanting paid work

Respondents who would like to work either immediately or in the future were asked why.[22] Participants mentioned more reasons for wanting to

[22] This was an open-ended question.

work than non-participants, even so the same reasons were important for both (Table 3.22). The main reason mentioned by both participants (60 per cent) and non-participants (60 per cent) was financial benefit. However, to be occupied and avoid boredom was more important for participants (38 per cent) than non-participants (28 per cent). Self-sufficiency and self-esteem were similarly common for participants (30 per cent) and non-participants (27 per cent). Comparatively few participants (five per cent) or non-participants (two per cent) said that they wanted work in order to leave benefit.

Participants who had approached the Personal Adviser Service before receiving a letter inviting them to do so gave the same reasons for why they wanted work as did invited participants.

Table 3.22 Respondents' reasons for wanting paid work

				Cell per cent
Reasons for	**All respondents**		**All participants**	
wanting work	**Non-participants**	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
Financial benefit	60	60	57	61
To be occupied/avoid boredom	28	38	32	40
Self sufficiency and esteem reasons	27	30	34	29
To be normal/used to working	13	19	18	19
Social reasons	8	10	15	8
Enjoyment of work	5	8	8	8
To leave benefit	2	5	5	5
Improve health/sign of good health	3	3	4	3
To gain respect from others	1	3	3	2
Other	5	2	3	2
Base	177	355	76	279

Respondents' reasons for not wanting paid work

Respondents who did not want work immediately or ever were asked why not.[23] The main reasons respondents gave were related to their disability or health condition (Table 3.23). Eighty per cent of participants and 81 per cent of non-participants said that they were too sick to work. Overall, participants and non-participants mentioned the same reasons for why they did not want work.[24]

[23] This was an open-ended question.

[24] Small numbers limit meaningful comparisons between participants and non-participants and between uninvited and invited participants.

Table 3.23 Respondents' reasons for not wanting paid work

Cell per cent

Reasons for not wanting work	All respondents		All participants	
	Non-participants	All Participants	Uninvited	Invited
Too sick to work	81	80	74	80
Too sick and too old	4	1	0	1
Caring for others/children	5	2	3	1
Do not want to worsen health	2	1	3	1
Do not want work	2	0	0	0
Employer would not employ me	1	2	0	3
Too old	1	2	0	2
Unable to move into different work	0	1	0	1
Suitable work is difficult to find	Less than 1	1	0	1
Other	5	9	7	10
Base	275	178	31	147

Expectations of starting paid work

Respondents who said they would like to work either immediately or in the future were asked whether they expected to do so (Table 3.24) and if so, when. Figure 3.1 presents the relationship between respondents' aspirations to work and expectations of doing so for all participants and non-participants. Of the 72 per cent of respondents who wanted to work either immediately or in the future, 12 per cent said they did not expect to work and 46 per cent were unsure of their chances. The rest (42 per cent) expected to work in the future; of this group, 61 per cent thought they would work within the next six months, 21 per cent within six to 12 months and 18 per cent did not expect to work within 12 months.

Participants were less likely than non-participants to have negative opinions of their chances of starting working. Eight per cent of participants did not expect to work compared with 20 per cent of non-participants. Participants were more likely than non-participants to believe that they would work in the future (48 per cent and 31 per cent respectively), the rest were unsure of their chances (44 per cent and 50 per cent respectively).

The majority of participants who expected to work in the future thought they would do so within the next six months (68 per cent); 18 per cent said within six to 12 months and 14 per cent did not expect to return to work within 12 months. Fewer non-participants expected to work within the next six months (41 per cent); the rest thought it would take them longer to start work. The participants who would like work but who were unsure of their chances of doing so or the few who thought they

would never work might have become involved in the Personal Adviser Service with the hope that their chances of working would improve in the future.

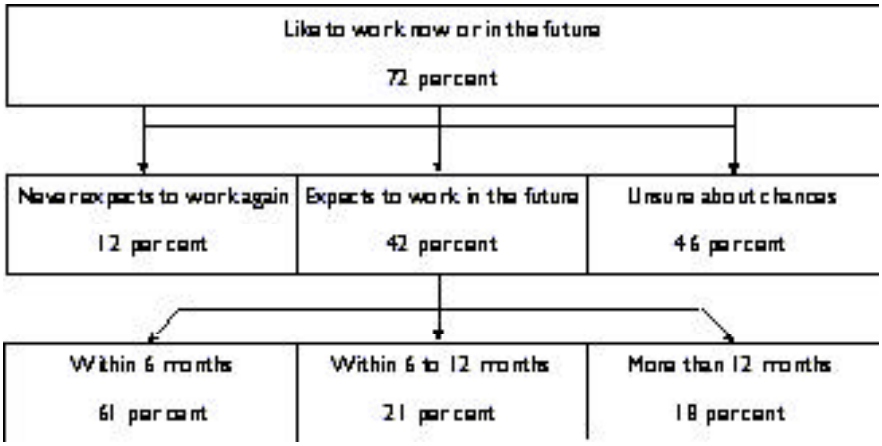
Uninvited participants held similar expectations of their chances of starting paid work as invited participants. Fifty per cent of the former and 47 per cent of those invited to participate believed they would work sometime in the future, and only five per cent of uninvited participants and nine per cent of invited participants never expected to work.

Expectations of returning to work were lower amongst older participants and non-participants. Thirty-five per cent of participants and 15 per cent of non-participants over 50 expected to work again compared with 54 per cent of participants and 40 per cent of non-participants under 50.

Table 3.24 Respondents' expectations of starting paid work

				Column per cent
Expectations of	**All respondents**		**All participants**	
starting work	**Non-participants**	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
Never	20	8	5	9
In future	31	48	50	47
Unsure	50	44	45	44
Base	177	354	76	278

Figure 3.1 Aspirations to do paid work according to expectations to work – all respondents



Obstacles to work

Respondents selected from a list of possible obstacles to work, those that affected them (Table 3.25). Participants identified more barriers to work than did non-participants. This may reflect the high number of non-participants who believed they were too sick or disabled to work (75 per cent) and who may not consider any other barriers as applicable to them. In comparison, 49 per cent of participants said they were too sick or disabled to work.

Other common barriers mentioned by participants included difficulties finding suitable work (66 per cent); insufficient local job opportunities (57 per cent) and low confidence about working (50 per cent).

Overall, participants cited the same barriers to work regardless of whether they had received a letter inviting them to contact the Personal Adviser Service before doing so. Some non-significant differences were apparent, uninvited participants were less likely to say that they were too sick or disabled to work than others (42 per cent and 50 per cent respectively) and were less likely to have low confidence about working (45 per cent and 51 per cent respectively). However, they were more likely to cite insufficient opportunities locally as a barrier (61 per cent) than invited participants (56 per cent).

Being too sick or disabled to work was the single most important barrier to work for non-participants under 50 (71 per cent) and over 50 (79 per cent). However, for participants under 50 (48 per cent) and over 50 (50 per cent) their disability or health problem was secondary to a number of other barriers. Age was the most significant barrier for participants over 50 (73 per cent). For participants under 50 and those over 50, the difficulties experienced finding suitable (67 per cent and 64 per cent respectively) or local work (58 per cent and 57 per cent respectively) were also important barriers to commencing work. Low confidence about working was cited by one-half of participants under 50 (52 per cent).

Table 3.25 Respondents' barriers to work

				Cell per cent
Barriers	**All respondents**		**All participants**	
to work	**Non-participants**	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
I'm too sick or disabled to work	75	49	42	50
It is difficult for me to find the kind of work that would suit me	34	66	67	66
My confidence about working is low	34	50	45	51
I'm unlikely to get a job because of my age	32	38	28	40
There aren't enough job opportunities locally for people like me	31	57	61	56
I can't get work because my employers think I'm too sick or disabled	30	46	48	45
Other people's prejudices make it difficult for me to work	19	34	36	34
I'm worried that I might be worse off if I start work	18	41	39	41
I haven't got enough qualifications and experience to find the right work	15	30	27	31
I think I would be worse off financially	9	18	16	18
None of these	4	3	5	3
Base	330	339	67	272

Bridges to work

Respondents were asked to identify from a list those things that may make it easier for them to work (Table 3.26). More non-participants (49 per cent) than participants (11 per cent) said that none of the things listed would help them in work.

Common responses for participants and non-participants included having a flexible job (72 per cent and 35 per cent respectively); work that does not demand a lot of physical strength (69 per cent and 35 per cent respectively) and is not too stressful (60 per cent and 35 per cent respectively). Comparatively few participants or non-participants thought that specialist equipment would make it easier for them to work (21 per cent and 10 per cent respectively).

Overall, uninvited participants identified the same things that would make it easier for them to work as invited participants. However, fewer

uninvited participants believed that having someone to help them at work would be helpful than invited participants (27 per cent and 35 per cent respectively).

Table 3.26 Bridges in work

				Cell per cent
Bridges	**All respondents**		**All participants**	
in work	**Non-participants**	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
A flexible job	35	72	72	72
Work that is not heavy and does not need a lot of physical strength or stamina	35	69	66	70
Work that is not stressful	35	60	61	60
Work that does not need a lot of concentration	24	35	34	35
Someone to help at work	16	34	27	35
Specialist equipment	10	21	19	21
None of the things listed	49	11	12	11
Base	328	339	67	272

Respondents selected from a list those things that could help them prepare for work (Table 3.27). Non-participants (12 per cent) were about four times more likely than participants to have said that none of the aids suggested would ease their transition into work.

Participants and non-participants identified similar aids as most important. Both thought being knowledgeable about the job was key (77 per cent of participants and 36 per cent of non-participants). Continued in-work training was the second most important thing for participants (72 per cent) whilst self-confidence was of higher importance for non-participants (33 per cent). Pre-work training was identified as important for participants and non-participants (70 per cent and 30 per cent respectively).

Generally, uninvited participants mentioned the same things that would help them to prepare for work as invited participants.

Table 3.27 Bridges in preparing for work

				Cell per cent
Bridges in preparing	**All respondents**		**All participants**	
for work	**Non-participants**	**All Participants**	**Uninvited**	**Invited**
Knowing about the job before you begin	36	77	78	77
Training to get ready for work	30	70	66	71
More confidence in yourself	33	57	61	56
Continued training when you are in work	28	72	73	71
Suitable clothes for work	19	43	36	45
None of the things listed	52	12	15	11
Base	330	339	67	272

Respondents were asked to select from a list the types of support and advice that might make it easier for them to work (Table 3.28). Non-participants were about five times more likely to say that none of the things listed would make it easier for them to work than were participants (46 per cent and nine per cent respectively).

The most common response for participants and non-participants was assurance that they could return to their original benefit if the job did not work out (81 per cent and 44 per cent respectively). The second most mentioned item for participants was having their earnings topped up through an extra benefit or tax credit (72 per cent) whilst for non-participants it was transport to and from work (35 per cent). Job-search advice (67 per cent), a subsidy paid to their employer (64 per cent) and someone to talk to an employer on their behalf (61 per cent) were important for significant numbers of participants. Help with childcare was the least important aid for both participants (12 per cent) and non-participants (six per cent).

Uninvited and invited participants cited the same types of support and advice as important. However, a benefit or tax credit paid to top-up earnings was identified as important by more uninvited participants (84 per cent) than invited ones (69 per cent).

Table 3.28 Support and advice in work

Cell per cent

Support and advice in work	All respondents		All participants	
	Non-participants	All Participants	Uninvited	Invited
Knowing that you could definitely get back to your original benefit if the job did not work out	44	81	81	81
Transport to and from work	35	59	58	59
A benefit or tax credit paid to top up your earnings	30	72	84	69
Job-search advice	26	67	66	67
A subsidy to an employer to help them pay my wage	25	64	66	63
A grant to help me find a job	23	58	57	59
Someone to talk to employer on my behalf	23	61	63	60
Doctor or medical expertise at place of work	21	37	33	38
Help with childcare	6	12	10	12
None of the things listed	46	9	10	9
Base	326	339	67	272

3.3.3 Summary

Participants were more positive about starting work than non-participants. More participants wanted to return to work, felt they could do some paid work and would need fewer concessions, help and support than others. Likewise, participants were more confident about their chances of returning to work in the near future. The financial benefits gained by returning to work were important for participants and non-participants who wanted to work.

Being too sick or disabled was a common barrier to work for respondents, although more often stated by non-participants. This might explain why participants identified more barriers to work than did non-participants, as the latter may not have perceived other barriers as applicable. Common barriers mentioned by participants included difficulties finding suitable work, insufficient local job opportunities and low confidence about working.

Participants and non-participants identified flexible work with low physical demands and stress levels, knowledge of the job and training, and assurance of financial support either in the form of benefit or earnings as important. Being able to return to their original benefit if the job they started did not work out was a critical consideration for about four-fifths of participants. Non-participants typically had more difficulty identifying factors that would assist them in the workplace than did participants.

3.4 Experience of the Personal Adviser Service

This section provides an overview of respondents' experiences of the Personal Adviser Service. Initial experiences of the Personal Adviser Service (Section 3.4.1) and the involvement of non-participants (Section 3.4.2) and of participants (Section 3.4.3) are all discussed.

3.4.1 Initial experiences of the Personal Adviser Service

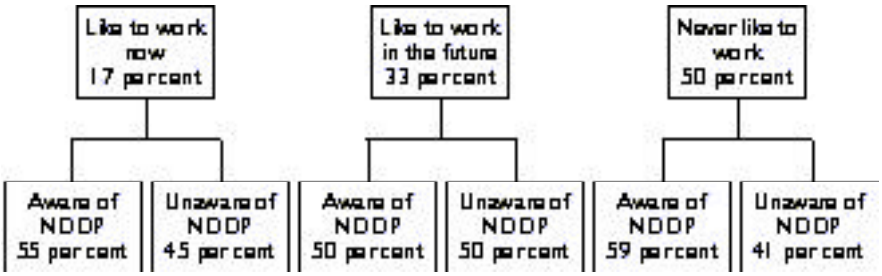
This section provides information on non-participants' awareness of the New Deal for Disabled People, how all respondents heard about it and their initial impressions of the Personal Adviser Service.

Non-participants' awareness of the New Deal for Disabled People

Fifty-six per cent of non-participants had heard of the New Deal for Disabled People. However, 17 per cent of these had had to be prompted before they remembered it.

An individual's awareness of a programme may be affected by the salience of the issues that it addresses. People who want to work, perceive themselves as able to work or are of younger working age may be more likely to notice or remember an offer of help to find work. However, no significant relationship was evident between respondents' aspirations to work and their awareness of the New Deal for Disabled People programme. Fifty-five per cent of non-participants who said they wanted to work immediately and 50 per cent who wanted work in the future knew about the programme compared with 59 per cent who said they would never like to work (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 Aspirations to work by awareness of New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP)



Likewise, people who perceived themselves able to do some work (60 per cent) were not significantly more likely to have heard of the New Deal for Disabled People than those who said that their disability or health condition meant they could not work at all (56 per cent).

Whilst younger non-participants were more likely to want work immediately than older respondents they were not more likely to know about the New Deal for Disabled People. Fifty-one per cent of respondents under 50 had heard of the scheme compared with 62 per cent over 50 years.

The length of time respondents had been out of paid employment was not associated with their awareness of the scheme. Sixty per cent of those employed within the last two years knew about New Deal for Disabled People compared with 59 per cent of respondents out of work for between two and five years and 57 per cent who had been out of work for over five years.

How participants and non-participants had heard about the New Deal for Disabled People

Of those non-participants who said they had heard of the New Deal for Disabled People 64 per cent remembered receiving a letter telling them about the Personal Adviser Service. Of all non-participants (those who had heard of New Deal for Disabled People and those who had not), only 34 per cent remembered receiving a letter telling them about it.

Participants who had not received a letter inviting them to contact the Personal Adviser Service were excluded from the subsequent analyses about participants' recollections of the invitation letter. However, they were asked how else they had heard about the New Deal for Disabled People and their responses are included in Table 3.29. All participants who had been sent a letter remembered it, however 34 per cent had to be reminded of it.

Aside from the letter, the next most common method of hearing about the scheme was through the media (34 per cent) (Table 3.29). This was more common amongst non-participants (43 per cent) than participants (31 per cent) and may reflect the reported coverage of the scheme in local newspapers. About one-fifth (18 per cent) of participants had heard about the Personal Adviser Service from staff in Jobcentres or Benefits Agencies but this was far less common amongst non-participants (six per cent).

Uninvited participants, as might be expected, were more likely to report hearing about it through other sources than were other participants. In particular, 47 per cent of the uninvited participants compared with 27 per cent of invited participants said they had heard about it through the media. In addition, 30 per cent of those who did not receive a letter had been told about the scheme from staff at the Jobcentre or Benefits Agency compared with 16 per cent of invited participants.

Forty-three per cent of participants and 26 per cent of non-participants who had heard of New Deal for Disabled People had heard about it from more than one source.

Table 3.29 How respondents had heard about the Personal Adviser Service

				Cell per cent
How heard	All respondents		All participants	
about service	Non-participants	All Participants	Uninvited	Invited
Letter	64	100	*	100
Through the media	43	31	47	27
Received a leaflet	14	12	8	13
From a friend/relative	7	5	11	4
From staff at Jobcentre or BA	6	18	30	16
Saw a poster or pamphlet	4	6	10	5
From a welfare rights worker	2	Less than 1	0	0.3
From an employer	1	1	2	0.3
From medical professional	1	3	7	2
None of these	4	3	5	3
Base	171	423	83	340

* By definition this group was not sent a letter inviting them to contact the Personal Adviser Service

Initial impressions of the Personal Adviser Service

Respondents who remembered receiving a letter inviting them to contact the Personal Adviser Service were generally positive about it. Eighty-five per cent said that they had understood the letter and realised that they had a choice over whether or not to ask for an interview. The rest were concerned that whilst they understood the letter they did not have a choice (10 per cent) or that they had a choice but did not fully understand it (two per cent). A few said either that they did not understand the letter and did not think they had a choice (two per cent) or that they could not remember whether they had understood it (two per cent). Participants were not more likely to understand the letter than non-participants (86 per cent and 85 per cent respectively).

3.4.2 Non-participants' initial involvement in the Personal Adviser Service

This section provides information on non-participants' contact with the Personal Adviser Service, their reasons for not participation and identifies potential candidates for the Service.

Non-participants' contact with the Personal Adviser Service

Some non-participants who had heard of the New Deal for Disabled People had either asked for further information (six per cent) or spoken to the receptionist (eight per cent) at the Personal Adviser Service. The rest had had no contact with the Service.

Some non-participants may ask for an interview with a Personal Adviser in the future. Fourteen per cent of respondents who were aware of the scheme said they intended to ask for an interview with a Personal Adviser. Sixty-nine per cent said they had no such intentions and 17 per cent were undecided.

Reasons why non-participants had not contacted the scheme

Respondents were asked why they had not asked for an interview with a Personal Adviser (Table 3.30).[25] Regardless of their future intentions to contact the Service, the most common reason for not contacting it related to respondents' disability or health condition. Forty-six per cent said they were too ill to work and 20 per cent said they were too ill to see a Personal Adviser. Almost one in 10 (nine per cent) had not contacted the scheme because of their age. Reasons related to the Personal Adviser Service itself were also often mentioned. Six per cent had not contacted the scheme because they thought it was not applicable, four per cent because they did not trust it or had negative impressions of other New Deals and four per cent said they had not received sufficient information about it. Six per cent had not got around to contacting the Service.

Table 3.30 Non-participants' reasons for not contacting the Personal Adviser Service

Reasons	Cell per cent
Too unwell to work	46
Too unwell to see an adviser	20
Age	9
Scheme not applicable	6
Not the right time or have not got around to it	6
Waiting for improvement in health	4
Waiting to find out about job/in work/job waiting	4
Do not trust the system, negative impression of other New Deals	4
Insufficient information from scheme, expected more contact from scheme	4
Involved in other scheme	3
Young children to care for	3
Not comfortable talking to strangers/confidence too low to takeup scheme	2
Other	4
Base	161

Potential candidates for the Personal Adviser Service

Likely candidates for the Personal Adviser Service, based on their aspirations and expectations of employment, and their perceived ability to work, are considered in this section.

Fifty-six per cent of non-participants were aware of the New Deal for Disabled People, of these respondents 43 per cent wanted to work now or in the future (Figure 3.3). Most of this group (78 per cent) either expected to work or were uncertain of their chances. About one-third (32 per cent) of these people felt able to do some paid work and of this group 10 people planned to ask for an interview, four were thinking about it and five had no plans to contact the scheme.

[25] This was an open-ended question.

Forty-four per cent of non-participants had not heard of the New Deal for Disabled People, of these respondents around half (51 per cent) wanted to work now or in the future (Figure 3.4). Most of this group (82 per cent) expected to work or were uncertain of their chances to do so. About one-third of these respondents (34 per cent) felt able to do some work.

In all, about two-fifths (41 per cent) of all non-participants wanted to work and either expected to do so or were uncertain of their chances. These people may be potential candidates for the Service either now or in the future. About one-third (35 per cent) of this group believed that they were able to do some work at the time of the survey interview. Whilst numbers are small this refers to 12 per cent of all non-participants. Of these respondents, 62 per cent were unlikely to contact the scheme; 24 people because they did not know about it and five because they were not interested in it.

Figure 3.3 Mapping of likely candidates who are aware of the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP)

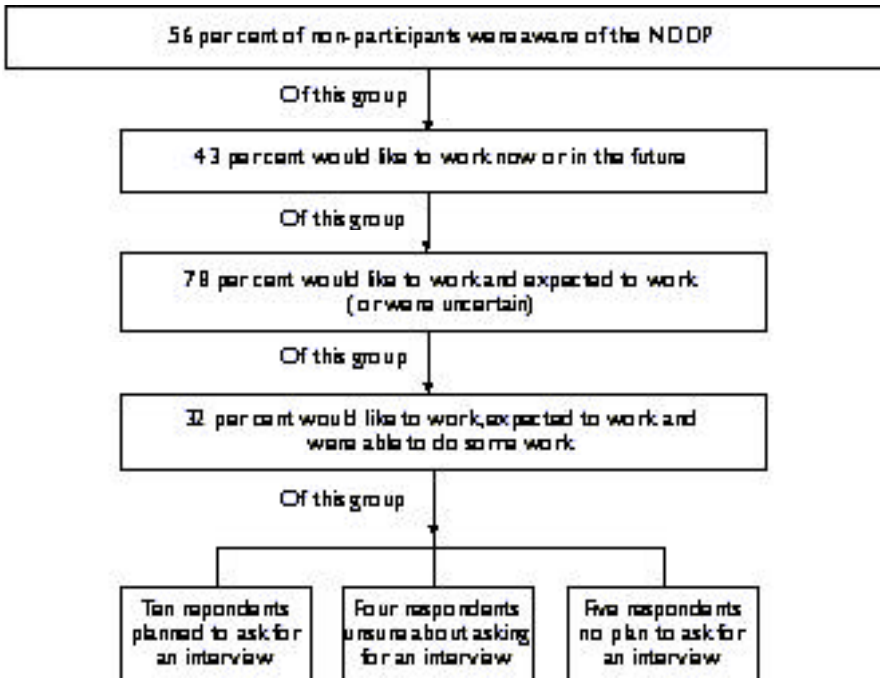
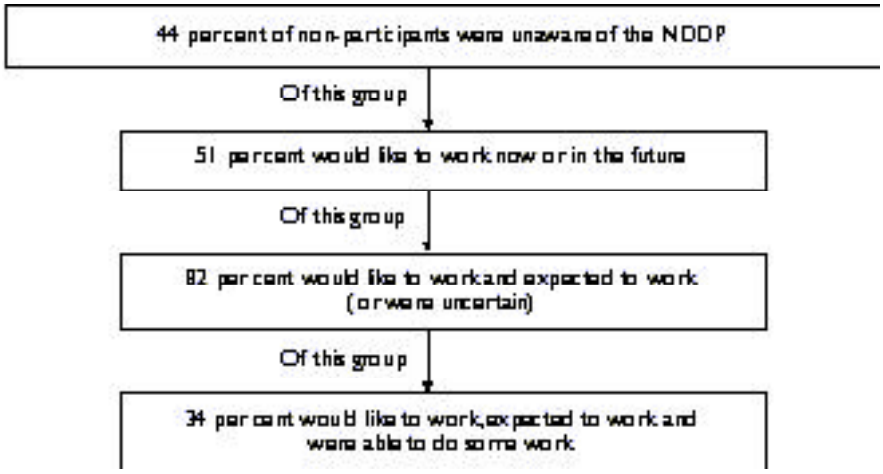


Figure 3.4 Mapping of likely candidates who are unaware of the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP)



3.4.3 Participants' involvement in the Personal Adviser Service

This section considers participants' reasons for joining the Personal Adviser Service and their contacts with it, and what they remembered discussing with their Personal Adviser.

Participants' reasons for their involvement

Participants were asked to select from a list their reasons for attending an interview with a Personal Adviser (Table 3.31). The most common responses were *'to help me move back into work'* (66 per cent) and *'an opportunity to talk about my situation'* (43 per cent). Other frequently mentioned explanations included *'to find out whether I am able to go back to work'* (24 per cent), *'to find a job that is tailored to my needs'* (25 per cent) and *'help to find training'* (20 per cent).

Respondents who had contacted the scheme before receiving a letter inviting them to do so gave more reasons for why they had become involved in the scheme than invited participants. The former were more likely than invited participants to have become involved because it gave them an *'opportunity to talk about my situation'* (54 per cent and 40 per cent respectively) or *'to find a job that is tailored to my needs'* (35 per cent and 23 per cent respectively).

Few differences were apparent between participants under 50 years and those over 50. Marginally more older participants mentioned they had become involved because it *'seemed like a good idea'* than younger participants (26 per cent and 20 per cent respectively).

Table 3.31 Participants' reason for their involvement in the Personal Adviser Service

					Cell per cent
Reasons for involvement	**All participants**		**Age**		**Total**
	Uninvited	**Invited**	**Under 50**	**Over 50**	
To help me move back into work	68	65	64	68	66
Opportunity to talk about my situation	54	40	43	43	43
To find a job that is tailored to my needs	35	23	26	24	25
It seemed a good idea	25	22	20	26	22
To find out whether I am able to return to work	23	25	24	24	24
To help me find training	23	19	21	18	20
Feel unable to find work by myself	15	12	13	11	12
To help me get or increase my benefits	7	7	7	8	7
I thought it was compulsory	0	3	2	2	2
Other	16	14	14	14	14
Base	83	358	298	145	445

Participants' contact with the Personal Adviser Service

Respondents were asked how many interviews they had had with a Personal Adviser either by telephone or in person.[26] Significant numbers of interviews or contacts with a Personal Adviser over a comparatively short period were common. Most participants had had their first interview with a Personal Adviser between March and June 1999. By the time of the survey interview[27], 52 per cent of participants said they had had between two and five interviews or contacts with a Personal Adviser. Twelve per cent had had more than five interviews or contacts. The rest (36 per cent) said they had had one interview with a Personal Adviser. Note that the survey sample was designed to represent all those who had at least one introductory interview; some of this group would not be caseloaded by the Personal Advisers.

Uninvited participants (68 per cent) were about as likely as invited participants (63 per cent) to have had more than one interview.

[26] Future research will examine where interviews between participants and Personal Advisers took place.

[27] Survey interviews were carried out with participants between June and September 1999.

Content of interviews with Personal Advisers

This section outlines what participants remembered of their interviews with Personal Advisers. Thought is given to discussions of employment (Table 3.33), job-search (Table 3.34), in-work requirements (Table 3.35) and benefits (Table 3.36). Also examined is participants' perceptions of what their Personal Adviser said that they would do for them.

Respondents identified from a list those aspects of employment they had discussed with their Personal Adviser (Table 3.33). Most participants (80 per cent) said that they had discussed the work they might do and 63 per cent had talked about the hours they might work. Another common topic was the possibility of training or education (66 per cent). Discussions of unpaid or voluntary work or starting supported employment were less often considered (45 per cent and 40 per cent respectively).

Overall, uninvited respondents remembered discussing the same things as invited participants. However, fewer recalled discussing the possibility of doing unpaid work than invited participants (38 per cent and 47 per cent respectively).

Table 3.32 Participants' discussions about employment with Personal Adviser

			Cell per cent
Participants recalled discussing the following:	**Uninvited participants**	**Invited participants**	**Total**
The work you might do	82	80	80
The possibility of training or education	68	66	66
The hours you might work	67	62	63
The possibility of supported employment	42	40	40
The possibility of doing unpaid or voluntary work	38	47	45
Other	12	13	13
Base	82	357	439

Respondents were asked to identify from a list the job-search methods they had talked about with their Personal Adviser (Table 3.34). Forty-one per cent remembered discussing where they should look for suitable job vacancies, 26 per cent had discussed completing job applications and 24 per cent had talked about preparing for job interviews. Uninvited participants recalled discussing the same aspects of job-search with their Personal Adviser as did invited participants.

Fifty-four per cent of respondents said that they had not discussed any of the job-search methods listed. Respondents who had had only one interview with their Personal Adviser (72 per cent) were more likely to have said they had not discussed any of the job-search methods mentioned than those who had had between two and five interview contacts (47 per cent) or more than five (30 per cent).

Table 3.33 Participants' discussions about job-search with Personal Adviser

			Cell per cent
Participants recalled discussing the following:	**Uninvited participants**	**Invited participants**	**Total**
Where to look for suitable vacancies	37	41	41
How to complete a job application	24	26	26
How to prepare for job interviews	21	24	24
None of these	55	54	54
Base	83	358	441

Respondents identified from a list of in-work requirements those they had talked about with their Personal Adviser (Table 3.35). Thirty-seven per cent had discussed training or personal support needs whilst in work and 20 per cent had talked about special adaptations and equipment they would need.

Fifty-one per cent of participants maintained they had not discussed any of the requirements listed. Respondents who had only had one interview with their Personal Adviser (68 per cent) were more likely to have not discussed any special in-work requirements than were those who had between two and five (45 per cent) or more than five (24 per cent).

No differences emerged between uninvited and invited participants in relation to their discussion of in-work requirements with their Personal Adviser.

Table 3.34 Participants' discussions about in-work requirements with Personal Adviser

			Cell per cent
Participants recalled discussing the following:	**Uninvited participants**	**Invited participants**	**Total**
Training or personal support needed in work	34	38	37
Other help or support needed in work	29	30	30
Special adaptations or equipment needed in work	25	19	20
None of these	53	51	51
Base	83	358	441

Respondents were asked whether they had talked about benefits with their Personal Adviser (Table 3.36). About two-thirds (64 per cent) of participants said that they had discussed with their Personal Adviser how their benefits would be affected if they started work. Forty-eight per cent considered the benefits they would be able to receive whilst in work and 31 per cent had a better-off calculation done for them. Fewer

participants were offered help to fill in benefit forms (27 per cent) and only one-third of these were actually helped (35 per cent).

Generally, uninvited and invited participants had had similar discussions around benefits. However, uninvited participants were less likely to have discussed help with filling in benefit forms than were participants invited to contact the Service (18 per cent and 30 per cent respectively).

Table 3.35 Participants' discussions about benefit receipt with Personal Adviser

			Cell per cent
Participants answered yes to the following questions:	**Uninvited participants**	**Invited participants**	**Total**
Did you talk about how work may affect benefits	63	65	64
Did you talk about benefits you can claim while working	50	47	48
Did adviser calculate whether you would be better off in work	27	32	31
Did the adviser offer to help you fill in benefit forms	18	30	27
Base	83	358	441

Respondents also selected from a list tasks that their Personal Adviser had offered to do for them. Forty-nine per cent of participants were told that their Personal Adviser would be talking to employers and looking for suitable job vacancies on their behalf (Table 3.37). Forty-two per cent understood that their Personal Adviser would be looking for suitable training or education courses. Twenty-six per cent had been informed that their Personal Adviser would help pay for something they needed to find work or keep training or work. About one-quarter (26 per cent) were told that they would be referred to someone else for help.

Respondents who had contacted the scheme before receiving a letter inviting them to do so remembered fewer things that their Personal Adviser said they would be doing for them than other participants. Fewer recalled their Personal Adviser saying that s/he would be talking to employers (41 per cent) or searching for jobs (39 per cent) than invited participants (51 per cent and 51 per cent respectively).

Twenty-three per cent of participants said that their Personal Adviser had not said s/he would be doing any of the things listed; however, this was more likely amongst those who had had only one interview with a Personal Adviser. Thirty-seven per cent of people who had had just one interview said their Personal Adviser had not promised to do anything compared with 17 per cent of those who had had between two and five interview contacts and just six per cent who had more than five interview contacts.

Table 3.36 Participants' understanding of what their Personal Adviser would be doing for them

			Cell per cent
Participants recalled their Personal Adviser saying the following:	**Uninvited participants**	**Invited participants**	**Total**
S/he would be talking to employers on your behalf	41	51	49
S/he would search for suitable training/education on your behalf	40	43	42
S/he would search for suitable jobs on your behalf	39	51	49
S/he would refer you to see another person to help you	27	26	26
S/he would help pay for something you needed to find or keep training or work	22	27	26
None of these	25	22	23
Base	83	358	441

Agreeing to certain activities

This section examines whether participants agreed with their Personal Adviser, during any of their interviews, to do certain activities and the characteristics of those who had. Forty-seven per cent of participants said that they had agreed, with the Personal Adviser, to do certain activities that would help them find work, training or something similar. Uninvited participants were more likely to have agreed to undertake certain activities than invited participants (57 per cent and 45 per cent respectively).

Respondents who had had fewer interviews or contacts with a Personal Adviser were less likely to have agreed to certain activities. Thirty-one per cent of participants who had had just one interview with their Personal Adviser had agreed to certain activities compared with 69 per cent of participants who had more than five interview contacts and 55 per cent who had had between two and five.

3.4.4 Summary

Fifty-six per cent of non-participants were aware of the New Deal for Disabled People, although some had to be prompted before they remembered it. People who may be closer to returning to work, for example, those who would like to work were not more likely to remember it than others. About two-thirds of the non-participants who had heard of the New Deal for Disabled People remembered receiving a letter inviting them to contact the Personal Adviser Service. Most non-participants, like the participants, had understood the letter.

Uninvited participants were more likely to report hearing about it through other sources than were invited participants, especially via the media and Jobcentre staff.

Non-participants' explanations for not contacting the Personal Adviser Service were related to their disability or health problem and to the scheme itself, for example, it not being applicable or them not knowing enough about it. Even so, about one in seven thought that they would be responding to the letter by asking for an interview sometime in the future.

Twelve per cent of non-participants may be likely candidates for the Personal Adviser Service. The definition of likely candidates is those who wanted and expected to work, and felt able to do so. However, over half of this group was unlikely to contact the scheme; mainly because they had not heard of the New Deal for Disabled People.

The most common reason participants gave for why they had approached the scheme was to help them return to work. Whilst most respondents recalled discussing the type of work they might do with their Personal Adviser, over half did not remember discussing job-search or specific in-work requirements. This might indicate a lack of readiness to return to work, as perceived by the Personal Adviser. Moreover, participants who had only had one interview with a Personal Adviser were less likely to remember discussing job-search or in-work requirements than other participants. Only about half recalled agreeing to do certain activities that would help them to find work, training or something similar. People who had had more than one interview with a Personal Adviser were more likely to have agreed to certain activities than those who had had just one interview.

3.5 Activities since contact with a Personal Adviser

This section provides a brief description of the activities respondents had participated in since their contact with a Personal Adviser (Section 3.5.1) and their opinions of it (Section 3.5.2). The participants in this survey had been involved in the Personal Adviser Service for a relatively short period. Hence, analysis was conducted to identify the range of intermediate and longer-term outcomes and not simply to establish the number of successful outcomes. It is also worth noting that the length of time participants had been involved with the Service varies and no attempt has been made to correct for this. Future research will try to establish whether activities undertaken were a direct result of participants' involvement in the Personal Adviser Service or would have happened anyway.

3.5.1 Activities

Respondents were asked to select from a list those activities they had done since their contact with a Personal Adviser (Table 3.38). Increased job-search activities, education/training and employment were key outcomes for some participants. Twenty-four per cent said that they not done any of the activities listed.

Over half (58 per cent) had started or increased their job-search since meeting a Personal Adviser. Respondents mentioned a number of different job-search activities. Of these, 77 per cent had looked for vacancies in newspapers; 53 per cent had looked at Jobcentre vacancies; 44 per cent had prepared their CV; 44 per cent had applied for a job and three per cent had joined a Jobclub.

Twenty-two per cent of participants had started or applied for an education or training course. Sixteen per cent of participants had started work of some kind since their contact with a Personal Adviser.[28] Of these, 54 per cent had started to work for someone else, 31 per cent had started therapeutic work, 13 per cent had begun supported employment and 11 per cent had become self employed.

A few respondents had seen another person for help (eight per cent) or had started to receive a different benefit (seven per cent).

Few differences were apparent between those who contacted the scheme before receiving a letter inviting them to do so and other participants. The former were marginally more likely than the latter to have started or applied for education or training (26 per cent and 21 per cent respectively) but less likely to have started or increased their job-search (52 per cent and 60 per cent respectively).

Table 3.37 Activities participated in by participants since meeting with a Personal Adviser

			Cell per cent
Activities	**Uninvited participants**	**Invited participants**	**Total**
Started or increased job-search activities	52	60	58
Started or applied for training/education course	26	21	22
Started work of some kind	14	16	16
Saw another person for help	7	8	8
Started a different benefit	6	8	7
Base	90	360	450

3.5.2 Participants' opinions of the Personal Adviser Service

Overall, participants had good opinions of the Personal Adviser Service. Ninety-one per cent said that their Personal Adviser had listened to and understood what they had to say. Eighty-three per cent had found their interviews to be helpful; and 79 per cent of participants said that the help and advice they received from their Personal Adviser was helpful.

[28] By the time of the survey interview some participants had left their education/training course or spell in work, or else had not recorded therapeutic work or supported employment as work (see Section 3.2.4).

3.5.3 Summary

Over half the participants interviewed said that they had increased their job-search and almost one-quarter had begun a training or education course since meeting with a Personal Adviser. Whilst case numbers are small, some participants had started or returned to some form of employment relatively quickly after meeting with a Personal Adviser. Overall, respondents had good opinions of the Personal Adviser Service.

3.6 Conclusion

A key aim of this study is to explain participation in the New Deal for Disabled People Personal Adviser Service. Although the respondents in this survey represent a small number of the total sample being used in the evaluation, the differences that have emerged between participants and non-participants help to explain why some were involved in the Service and others were not.

First, participants were closer to the labour market and may be likely to find it easier to return to work than non-participants. Secondly, participants were keener and more positive about returning to work than non-participants. Thirdly, a number of non-participants were unaware of the existence of the New Deal for Disabled People Personal Adviser Service.

Participants tended to be younger and better qualified. They were less likely to think their disability or health problem would last long-term, less likely to have more than one health condition and less likely to describe themselves as sick or disabled. In addition, they had not been out of paid work for as long as non-participants.

Participants were more positive about starting paid work than non-participants. More participants would like to work and felt they could do some paid work than non-participants. Likewise, participants were more confident about their chances of starting paid work. Seeking help to return to employment was the most common reason participants gave for why they had approached the scheme.

Some respondents may not have participated in the Personal Adviser Service because they did not know about it; they were not aware they had received any information about it. About two-fifths (44 per cent) of non-participants said that had not heard of the New Deal for Disabled People. However, during the life of the pilot, some non-participants might be expected to become participants. Of those aware of the New Deal for Disabled People, about one in seven said that they would be asking for an interview with a Personal Adviser sometime in the future.

Participants and non-participants identified similar barriers to work and measures for overcoming these. Being too sick or disabled was a common obstacle for respondents, although more often mentioned by non-participants than others. Other obstacles included finding suitable work locally, low confidence and the prejudices of employers and other people.

As a group, non-participants had greater problems identifying things that might help them return to work. Flexible work with low physical demands and stress levels, knowledge of the job and training, and assurance of financial support either in the form of benefit or earnings were common requirements for participants and non-participants.

Another aim of this study was to describe participants' recollections of their interviews and the help offered to them by their Personal Adviser. Some participants had had a significant number of interviews or contacts over a short period and around two-thirds had had more than one. Most respondents recalled discussing the type of work that they might do with their Personal Adviser. However, over half did not remember discussing job-search or specific in-work requirements and about half said that they had agreed to do certain activities to help them find work, training or something similar. People who had had fewer interviews with a Personal Adviser were less likely to have agreed to activities than those who had had more.

Another aim of this study was to begin to identify the range of activities people had participated in since becoming involved in the Personal Adviser Service. Future research will attempt to identify the characteristics of those best helped by the Personal Adviser Service.

Sixteen per cent of participants had started some kind of work since first meeting with a Personal Adviser. Over half had increased their job-search and around one-quarter had begun a training or education course. A few had been referred to someone else for help or onto a different benefit. Overall, respondents had good opinions of the Personal Adviser Service.

4 THE WORK OF THE PERSONAL ADVISERS[29]

4.1 Introduction

This chapter, based on Personal Advisers' accounts, describes their work and how it evolved in the six Employment Service pilot projects, up to April and May 1999, and discusses some of the service delivery questions that arise.

The main questions addressed within this chapter are:

- how do Personal Advisers interpret the objectives and remit of the Personal Advisor Service?
- how do Personal Advisers identify and meet clients' needs?
- what resources do Personal Advisers need and use?
- what difficulties and constraints have Personal Advisers met and what action has been taken to overcome them?
- what new ways of working have developed, and why?
- how have local factors shaped the development and operation of the pilot projects?

The chapter begins by summarising the research carried out with Personal Advisers and the operational context of their work (Section 4.1). Section 4.2 looks at the experience Personal Advisers brought to the pilot projects, the appeal of working for the Personal Adviser Service, and the expertise of the pilot project teams. The core of the chapter examines the processes of working with and supporting clients, from initial contact to supporting clients in employment (Sections 4.3 to 4.9). Section 4.10 considers Personal Advisers' work with employers. The chapter concludes with a discussion of emerging themes and issues, and identifies some implications for service development (Section 4.11).

4.1.1 The study

The analysis presented here is based on the accounts of Personal Advisers, in particular on the experiences of those whose main role was to work with clients. The work of Personal Advisers with specialist functions, such as promoting the Service to employers, is not addressed in depth. The perspectives of pilot managers, Occupational Psychologists and administrative staff are not covered in this chapter.

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[29] Fieldwork interviews were conducted by Sue Arthur, Anne Corden, Jane Lewis, Roy Sainsbury and Patricia Thornton. Group discussions were moderated by Anne Corden and Roy Sainsbury. Patricia Thornton and Anne Corden worked on the analysis and Patricia Thornton wrote this report.

The study included 24 Personal Advisers, four from each of the six Employment Service pilot projects. Appendix B gives further details of the selection of study participants. There were two parts to the study design:

- two one-day events, held at the end of March 1999, both comprising group discussions with six Personal Advisers. These events focused on developments in the Personal Adviser Service within and across pilot projects since the site visits held around four months previously, and on the effects of local issues;
- twelve in-depth interviews, held between mid April and mid May 1999. These focused on how Personal Advisers worked with clients excluding their work with people at risk of losing their jobs; this will be explored later in the evaluation.

4.1.2 Early days and changing times

This chapter also draws selectively on the views and experiences of some Personal Advisers (including a minority of those in the study reported here) recorded during the research team's visits to the six pilot projects between mid December 1997 and early February 1999 (reported in Chapter 2).

It should be remembered that Personal Advisers were commenting on practice in the early days of the pilot projects. Personal Advisers reported that they were still learning and adapting their practice. Some were still reflecting on how experiences in the job matched their initial expectations. At the time of the fieldwork, rather few clients had moved into work and Personal Advisers' accounts inevitably focused more on the stages of working with clients and service providers than on working with employers.

At the same time, there were changes on the ground. Most pilot projects were moving from an initial situation of relatively few clients to increasing pressure on workloads. In one pilot the build-up of a waiting list (with around 70 clients waiting to see the Personal Advisers at the time of the study) brought changes in practice. Some pilots were experiencing staff shortages due to sickness absence, maternity leave and vacancies, and when staff left for other jobs replacements had to be trained.

The policy ground was also shifting. Easements in the disability benefits rules and new incentives to disabled people taking up employment were introduced in the pilot areas in April 1999.[30] Moreover, as explained in Section 4.1.3, several Personal Advisers reported a shift in focus at project level towards catering for more clients who could enter employment more quickly. This perceived change in policy emphasis was reported by staff from some of the pilot projects in the research team's early visits (see Section 2.5) and had increased in salience at the time of the Personal Adviser study.

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[30] Work Trials, Incapacity Earnings Provision, Jobmatch Payments and Jobfinders' Grant.

4.1.3 Pilot organisation

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the organisation of the six pilots in late December 1998 and January 1999. Key organisational points to note are:

- The boundaries of pilot areas are determined by Benefits Agency district areas. The population in most pilot areas covers a number of distinct communities, and the size and accessibility of geographical area covered varies. Accordingly, pilot project office locations and Personal Adviser deployment varied.
- Personal Advisers in the six Employment Service pilots underwent a standard training programme but pilots augmented training to meet needs emerging locally.
- The division of roles varied across pilot projects and many have staff with specialist functions. The balance between specialism and generic working changed in some areas, in response in part to increasing workloads.

Operational guidelines

The pilots were not designed to compare the effectiveness of pre-determined models of service delivery. Sometimes referred to by their staff as a 'blank sheet' approach, it was expected that innovative approaches to clients' needs would be generated. Pilot schemes were expected to respond flexibly to experience.

The approach Personal Advisers were expected to take in working with clients is encapsulated by the 'purpose of the job' in the core job description: 'the Personal Adviser aims to adopt a pro-active, holistic, problem solving approach to helping clients'.[31] The procedure was that Personal Advisers should offer assessment interviews to those coming forward who met the eligibility criteria, accept on to their caseloads those who wished to move into paid work (including self-employment), co-ordinate individually-tailored packages of support and assistance, and support clients in work until employment became sustainable. The centralised administrative record-keeping system marked the key stages of initial interview, agreement to a Progress Plan (a mark of caseloading), entry to paid employment and exit from the Personal Adviser Service.

Although the term was not used, this in essence is a 'case-management' approach. Personal Advisers were expected to take responsibility for managing their own cases, under the supervision of their manager or another dedicated staff member and with support from colleagues in the team. While the assumption underpinning the programme was that Personal Advisers would look outside their pilot project and broker specialist sources of support for the client, they had the option of providing elements of support directly.

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[31] Personal Adviser Job Description, August 1998.

A novel feature of the New Deal for Disabled People pilot projects was an Intervention Fund, managed locally, which Personal Advisers could draw on for *ad hoc* client expenses and (with their manager's approval if large sums were involved) for services other than those funded by the Employment Service, the Department for Education and Employment or Training and Enterprise Councils. Unlike the mainstream New Deal, the New Deal for Disabled People had no special subsidies to offer employers, although the long-standing Job Introduction Scheme could be used.

When they were set up, pilot projects were not expected to reach pre-determined targets in terms of numbers of clients entering paid employment. However, at the time of the fieldwork one pilot project manager was said to be encouraging Personal Advisers to concentrate on working with clients who could enter employment within six months, and in two projects managers were reported to have asked Personal Advisers to work towards targets of clients entering work each month. Staff from the other pilot projects reported a general sense of pressure to get people into jobs.

4.2 Personal Advisers and Personal Adviser Service teams

This chapter looks at the experience Personal Advisers brought to the pilot projects, the appeal of, and satisfaction from, working for the Personal Adviser Service, how teams pooled expertise and gaps in Personal Advisers' knowledge and expertise.

4.2.1 Experience Personal Advisers brought to the pilot projects

Almost all of the 24 Personal Advisers in the study had previously worked for the Employment Service, some for more than 20 years but others for only a year or two. Thus the study group under-represents Personal Advisers with no Employment Service experience (see Appendix B).

In terms of type of experience they fell into five groups:

- those whose experience was solely with mainstream Employment Services - working in Jobcentres as front-line staff or as claims advisers, or as personal advisers; handling vacancies; job-broking; marketing Jobcentre work or the New Deal to companies; or managing computer systems. Many had experience in more than one of these areas;
- Personal Advisers who, in addition to mainstream Employment Service work, had experience with the Disability Service, as a Disability Employment Adviser, in a skill centre, advising on the Disability Discrimination Act or managing Disability Service contracts;
- those whose Employment Service experience was solely in the Disability Service, as a Disability Employment Adviser or, earlier, as a Disablement Resettlement Officer;
- a small number who had worked in other fields in addition to the Employment Service and brought, for example, a working knowledge of health and social care services;
- one who previously had worked only outside the Employment Service.

Thus, Personal Advisers brought various skills and assets to the job: working with caseloads, personal advisory work, 'people skills', job-matching, occupational knowledge, knowledge of the labour market and contacts with local employers, knowledge of and contacts with providers. Many brought expertise in working with disabled people and people with health problems who were seeking employment. (Some of those assets were more essential than others when working in the pilot projects, and those without caseload or direct client experience in particular felt they had a lot to learn on the job.)

The early visits by the research team to the six pilot projects found that Personal Advisers nevertheless felt challenged professionally by the situation of many of the clients they were seeing, which was unlike that of those they had seen in their previous employment. They observed then that the majority of clients were some distance from the labour market and many had been unemployed for a number of years. They were particularly struck by the large proportion who appeared to them to need long-term intensive help, by the number of clients who had multiple health problems and by the unexpectedly large number who had mental health problems.

4.2.2 The appeal of the Personal Adviser Service

The Personal Advisers in the study came to the Personal Adviser Service with a commitment to working with the client group and to the client-centred approach. While some also had applied for their post for promotion or as a change of direction, the universal main attraction was that participants were volunteers - people who had chosen to come forward. For some, this contrasted with their previous experiences of working with people *'press-ganged'* to take part. They were attracted by time to spend with clients and for clients to progress at their own pace, and by the absence of targets for numbers to be moved into employment - again a contrast with other Employment Service experience. Scope to use their initiative and find creative solutions to problems also appealed to some.

4.2.3 Job satisfaction

On the job, Personal Advisers gained the most satisfaction from working with *'motivated'* people taking part voluntarily, especially those they believed needed extra help. They welcomed the *'holistic'* approach to meeting clients' needs for which their training had prepared them. For some it was a surprise that many clients appeared to need lengthy periods of preparation for employment but Personal Advisers enjoyed *'moving people along'* and the personal relationships in one-to-one working. Some reported considerable personal investment in the people they worked with (to the extent of being willing to spend non-work time with clients) and expressed feelings of pleasure (or sometimes disappointment) in their progress.

Many felt that a shift in emphasis to concentrate efforts on clients who could enter employment quickly would be unfair to motivated clients who needed lengthy periods of preparation for work. Personal Advisers'

thought the job would be less satisfying should they be required to concentrate on clients who could take up employment quickly or on moving people too swiftly towards paid work, because focusing on employment outcomes would restrict opportunities for holistic working and possibly result in employment which proved not to be sustainable. For some, the point of the pilot was to find out what was possible with people in different situations and they thought that the introduction of targets would distort the findings; one Personal Adviser was especially concerned about competition between pilot projects, echoing concerns expressed to the research team in their earlier visits to pilot projects.

Some Personal Advisers appreciated the autonomy to develop their own way of working and manage their own cases. On the other hand, some staff were challenged by the uncertainties of working without rules. Particularly in the early days of the pilot projects, Personal Advisers missed the procedural guidance they were accustomed to in the Employment Service. They commented on the breadth of matters they had to address and the difficulty of knowing how to proceed in areas outside their previous experience.

4.2.4 Team working

Personal Advisers generally worked independently with the client, although sometimes other Personal Advisers sat in on interviews. They used their discretion to consult other team members, or their manager or Occupational Psychologist, when they were uncertain about the best way forward or when they lacked particular expertise or knowledge. Personal Advisers often identified complementary skills within their team and welcomed opportunities to tap into colleagues' expertise. Opportunities for intra-team support depended on Personal Advisers' operational base. Where Personal Advisers shared a central base they often discussed cases informally amongst themselves. Those Personal Advisers based in outposts could link with other Personal Advisers in the locality, by telephone or informal meetings, and so pool their expertise; for example, sharing knowledge of local employers and of Disability Services provision.

Views were mixed about the supportive value of formal team meetings. Sometimes team meetings were not seen as the best use of time and it was felt that electronic communications could suffice. Alternatively, they were valued as a way of reaching joint solutions to common problems, particularly when new ways of working emerged, and Personal Advisers were pleased when team members' ideas were acted upon.

Specialist support within teams

Pilot projects all had Occupational Psychologists in their staff team. Personal Advisers could opt to call upon them for specialist occupational assessments or to manage clients that they found particularly *'difficult'*.

Some pilot projects chose to concentrate specialist aspects of work in particular staff appointments. Examples given included job-matching (where clients worked directly with the dedicated staff), processing Access to Work applications (which some Personal Advisers found particularly taxing), liaising with employers to find job opportunities, and providing a benefits advisory service to Personal Advisers. In one pilot, an arrangement was reported where a Personal Adviser with expertise in mental health matters sat in on interviews and generally offered advice to other Personal Advisers about how to work with clients with differing mental illness diagnoses.

As generic Personal Advisers became aware of the breadth of their remit and the difficulties of being experts in all matters, and as caseload pressure built up, they mostly appreciated the chance to pass on functions to specialists in the team. This might involve temporarily *'handing over'* the client to a specialist colleague and Personal Advisers usually took care to keep in touch with the client and maintain the rapport.

A view was expressed that one way forward for the Personal Adviser Service was to develop new ways of working that made better use of individual skills and strengths, and in one pilot project Personal Advisers themselves were completing psychometric tests as a first step.

4.2.5 Gaps in knowledge and expertise

As noted in Section 2.3, in the research team's early visits to the projects Personal Advisers and their managers identified a number of needs which had not been anticipated or met adequately by the initial training. At that time, some projects were investigating ways of filling some of the gaps. By the time of the fieldwork reported here, some gaps had been partially filled, some remained and new gaps had been identified.

In general, Personal Advisers identified an on-going need for training both to refresh their memories of what had been covered in formal training and to increase their level of skill and knowledge in new situations which arose on the job. Several Personal Advisers found that although topics had been covered in their initial training their recall was blurred in real life; for example, how to *'exit'* someone from the Personal Adviser Service and how to deal with a mentally disturbed client. Training in counselling was reported by one Personal Adviser to be as yet at a low level, yet clients could *'lay their souls bare'*.

The following gaps in knowledge and expertise were most salient. Some Personal Advisers said that steps were being taken to address some of their needs.

Mental illness

Personal Advisers in the study were concerned about their limited knowledge of diagnosed mental illnesses and how they affected clients.

This was also brought up by clients, and is reported in Section 5.4.2. Personal Advisers were worried that encouraging clients towards work might *'push them over the edge'*, or that once in work they might relapse. Preconceived ideas about the affects of some mental illnesses in some instances led Personal Advisers to turn away clients; one commented that the likelihood of relapse meant that sustainable employment was not realistic for clients with mental health problems.

Some felt they were learning from contacts with professionals in the field (notably Community Psychiatric Nurses and mental health day centre staff) although they acknowledged it still to be a *'grey area'*. Others appeared to the researchers to be working in the dark, acting on the basis of intuition rather than expert advice. One or two Personal Advisers pointed to the importance of understanding the effects of medication, of the cycles which certain illnesses take and of the *'trigger points'* which might affect certain clients, but most Personal Advisers in the study lacked such detailed knowledge. In-house training on-the-job from a Personal Adviser trained in the mental health field was reported to be valuable in one pilot project.

Minority ethnic groups

Involving people from minority ethnic groups was thought to need different outreach methods which required an understanding of the culture of the groups. Personal Advisers from some pilot projects indicated that their teams still needed to develop more inclusive ways of working.

Disability benefits

As discussed in more detail in Section 4.4.6, many Personal Advisers felt they lacked the confidence and expertise to advise clients on the more complex aspects of the benefits system. (Clients' concerns in this respect are reported in Section 5.4.5.) Some remarked that some clients were more knowledgeable than they were, and implied that this undermined their expert status. No Personal Adviser in the study had special expertise in disability benefits. A few pilot projects had specialist staff to support and train Personal Advisers on the job, and training was sometimes arranged locally, for example through visits to Benefits Agency adjudication officers. Personal Advisers welcomed these arrangements.

Information technology

Competence in using lap-top computers (standard equipment for Personal Advisers) for word processing reports and accessing the Internet through modems was increasing, but several Personal Advisers still felt uncomfortable, especially in the presence of clients. Personal Advisers generally felt competent in using the Employment Service Labour Market System (LMS) to explore job vacancies. Some felt that training had increased their expertise in manipulating the IBIS package (to calculate

clients' benefits) but several remained doubtful about their ability to use it to its full advantage.

4.3 Reaching, receiving and selecting clients

This section considers the processes of bringing in potential clients, and analyses how Personal Advisers characterised the clients they saw and which clients they saw as suitable for the Personal Adviser Service.

4.3.1 Reaching clients

Initially, pilot projects were dependent on the Benefits Agency letter as a means of attracting potential participants to the Personal Adviser Service. Personal Advisers reported that some pilots would have liked to negotiate a reworded letter, although many felt that the letter was appropriately *'friendly'* and encouraging.

Apart from clients who approached the Personal Adviser Service in response to the Benefits Agency letter, self-referred people were a significant group, responding to project publicity or word-of-mouth from friends. Personal Advisers commented that advertising *'success stories'* in the press or on local radio meant that some clients came more *'clued up'* and positive about what the Service could offer, compared with recipients of the Benefits Agency letter who could appear worried about its implications.

Giving talks to membership organisations and to organisations providing professional support (particularly involving people with mental health problems) proved effective in encouraging people to come forward. General Practitioners and practice nurses were difficult to reach in this way and results of posted publicity materials had been disappointing. Clients were also directly referred to the Personal Adviser Service from other community services - notably community mental heath teams, but also probation, community education and social work services.

Some difficulties were encountered with these methods of encouraging clients to come forward. Press publicity was of limited value if a newspaper was also circulated outside the pilot project area, leading to inappropriate approaches from the public and disappointment. Outreach to statutory agencies was complicated if the pilot project covered more than one local authority or NHS trust area. As noted below, outreach needed to be carefully handled to achieve 'appropriate' referrals; where Personal Advisers got to know potential clients' professional advisers the advisability of a referral could be discussed at an early stage. Personal Advisers reported that some local organisations were unwilling to refer people to the Personal Adviser Service. For example, an advice office which supported individuals appealing against loss of benefits and some disability organisations suspected a Personal Adviser Service agenda to remove people from benefits.

Personal Advisers' accounts suggest that the pilot projects were taking a standard approach to increasing public awareness of the Service. The

methods were typical of those used by numerous organisations trying to increase the appeal of their service (press articles and advertisements, radio slots and, more rarely, local television news items) and no innovative examples were given. While it was recognised that local publicity could reinforce awareness of the Personal Adviser Service among those who had received the Benefits Agency letter, the pilot projects were hampered in targeting supplementary publicity at recipients by a lack of information about which individuals, or areas, were receiving the Benefits Agency letter at a given time.

Caseloads varied between and within pilot projects. One pilot area had developed a large waiting list. Some Personal Advisers felt overloaded, while others were disappointed by the numbers coming forward. In pilot projects where Personal Advisers covered discrete geographical areas some Personal Advisers had heavy caseloads and others had seen relatively few clients. No explanations were offered for these differences but it seems likely that those Personal Advisers who were proactive in reaching out to community organisations attracted more referrals.

4.3.2 Receiving clients

The Personal Adviser Service pilot projects operated an 'open door' policy and were generally willing to give a first interview to all who requested one. Receptionists played a limited role in screening out clients, concentrating on checking that they met the official benefits-related criteria, and appeared typically to encourage attendance at interview. Some recipients of the Benefits Agency letter, especially older people, were believed to have responded out of politeness and to prefer to explain to the Personal Adviser rather than a receptionist that they did not wish to participate. Consequently, Personal Advisers saw at first interview some people with whom they would not continue working. Some of those individuals' needs might be satisfied immediately and no further Personal Adviser intervention would be called for. Others might be seen as outside the remit of the Personal Adviser Service.

4.3.3 How Personal Advisers characterised clients

Of interest here is how Personal Advisers judged clients' suitability for the Personal Adviser Service, how and why their criteria shifted as the pilot projects developed, and how they handled decisions that clients' needs were outside the remit of the Personal Adviser Service.

Personal Advisers tended to distinguish clients they saw at first interview according to their motivations and readiness for work. They identified them as:

- incapacity benefits recipients seeking reassurance from a Personal Adviser that they need do nothing in response to the Benefits Agency letter and that their benefit status was not in question;
- severely ill, disabled or otherwise disadvantaged people with unmet or continuing health and social care needs;

- people not considering work but in whom Personal Advisers detected some potential for work;
- people motivated to *'do something'* and in need of support, guidance, preparation and training to move towards work;
- those who were almost *'job ready'* and needed some help, or *'an extra push'*, to move into work; and
- people approaching the Personal Adviser Service with a clear work-related aim or a specific request for help, many of whom were already active in looking for or preparing for work, or, occasionally, already in work.

Non-participants seeking reassurance

Personal Advisers observed that incapacity benefit recipients in the first category - of whom there were *'loads'* - who had received the Benefits Agency letter wanted to be reassured in person that the scheme was voluntary and their benefits were not being threatened. (Personal Advisers commented that a minority responded to the letter hoping that their benefits situation might be improved.) Some, according to the Personal Advisers, were worried by receiving the Benefits Agency letter around the time of being called to the All Work Test. For some, publicity about the Single Work-Focussed Gateway (as 'ONE' was then termed) added to the impression that attendance at interview was obligatory. Personal Advisers typically set about allaying these concerns.

The interviews could also serve as a public relations exercise, emphasising the voluntary nature of the pilot programme, and laying the ground for the future should claimants wish to consider work. Incapacity benefit recipients in this group normally saw the Personal Adviser on one occasion only and did not join the caseload.

Severely ill, disabled or socially disadvantaged people with outstanding health and social care needs

Those in the second group referred themselves or were referred to the Personal Adviser Service by other professionals, such as community psychiatric nurses, and were on occasions accompanied by mental health professionals, social workers, probation officers or a family carer. Often, it seemed to the Personal Advisers, clients' other advisers were not informed about the employment-related remit of the Personal Adviser Service and occasionally were suspected of wishing to *'off-load'* the client on to another supportive agency. Some clients who referred themselves or were brought along by family or members of community groups had 'fallen through the cracks' in the welfare system and were not in touch with formal sources of help. Some individuals were apparently not considering work, while others came wanting a job.

It was apparent to Personal Advisers that many were far from ready to discuss moving towards work and first needed extensive help with a combination of problems, such as basic literacy and numeracy, personal hygiene, the side effects of medication, and behavioural difficulties. Some needed to adjust to the community after institutional living. Where people were undergoing treatment regimes, or expected periods of hospitalisation, participation in the Personal Adviser Service was generally thought to be inappropriate, although therapy, such as attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, could be compatible with work preparation. As noted in Section 4.5.3, Personal Advisers did not necessarily seek advice from a client's medical adviser.

Consequently, a Personal Adviser could spend an hour and a half, or more, with an interviewee who would not join the caseload. For example, a Personal Adviser who knew the system might tell interviewees about benefits they could claim (notably Disability Living Allowance), put them in touch with day centres, or refer them to local authority social services departments. Although some made referrals to external sources of help, Personal Advisers did not all see it as part of their remit. Such referrals were not recorded in the official records of Personal Advisers' activities.

Some Personal Advisers found it difficult to turn away from the programme people who had come voluntarily, and might advise them to contact the Personal Adviser Service again if their personal circumstances made it easier for them to consider preparing for work. The understandable desire of some Personal Advisers to turn people away gently might explain why some clients were reported as uncertain as to whether the Personal Adviser Service was continuing to work on their behalf (as reported in Section 5.3.6).

Occasionally, Personal Advisers accepted on to their caseloads clients who combined continuing medical or psychiatric treatment with moving towards work. Those Personal Advisers with good working relationships with clients' health service advisers, or more rarely with direct experience in the field, were persuaded that treatment and progress towards work were compatible. Sometimes, determined clients asserted that undergoing treatment should not be a barrier to work.

Impairment, as opposed to chronic illness, was not typically seen as a barrier to work, although in a small number of instances Personal Advisers felt that the individual's extensive personal assistance requirements meant that employment was not a realistic option.

Not considering work but with some potential

In the early days of the pilot programme, some Personal Advisers took on to their caseloads clients who were not initially considering work but in whom they could see some potential to move further forward, if not

into work. Some clients in this category had severe health problems; an example was given of man with a diagnosed mental illness of a cyclical nature who had alternated between supported community living and hospital. Quite how Personal Advisers identified their potential is not obvious. Coming forward voluntarily was thought to indicate some motivation. Some Personal Advisers referred to *'intuition'* or, occasionally, their experience of seeing similar clients in previous jobs. A few said they *'felt sorry for'* a disadvantaged person and wished to help improve their situation.

Some of these clients had responded to the Benefits Agency letter because they felt they ought to; others had been referred by community agencies. Personal Advisers gave some examples of how, with intensive support and time, clients could come close to entering employment; one Personal Adviser had worked with a client for seven months before the client expressed a desire to look for full-time employment and at the time of the research interview was arranging job interviews.

At the time of the fieldwork some Personal Advisers, under pressure of rising caseloads and management messages to move more clients into work, had reluctantly accepted that they had now to turn away such clients if they were not sure about their commitment to gaining paid work. Others still held that a valid purpose of the pilot was to move people *towards* work, and not necessarily into work within the lifetime of the programme.

Motivated but not 'job ready'

People in the fourth category - motivated but often uncertain about their work goals and not 'job ready' - were thought to form the bulk of Personal Advisers' clients. Many Personal Advisers considered them to be the most appropriate target group - where the *'added value'* of the programme could be demonstrated.

These clients were characterised as curious about what the Personal Adviser Service could offer them and keen to work, although in many instances anxieties about taking up work, and the effect on their benefit situation, needed to be overcome. Such clients typically had spent long periods out of work, or had never worked, and had few, if any, qualifications. They had limited knowledge of what today's labour market could offer and, conversely, limited awareness of what they could offer to the labour market. Many, according to the Personal Advisers, lacked confidence to mix in a work setting, to adjust to the routines of a working day, or to manage the journey to work. Some were thought to be hampered by mental ill-health, in particular by depression, anxiety, phobias and addictions, sometimes combined with physical impairments. For these clients, the journey towards work was considered likely to be lengthy. Confidence building, vocational guidance and assessment, work 'tasters',

training, work experience placements, job-search and the job application process could take up to 18 months, or longer should lengthy training or work placements prove necessary. Personal Advisers were agreed that no *'quick fixes'* could solve the problems of these clients.

Within this group of motivated but not 'job ready' clients were a few whom Personal Advisers considered to be unrealistically optimistic about their readiness for employment although they might be actively seeking work. In such instances, the Personal Advisers judged that clients needed to be diverted from fruitless attempts to apply for jobs, or from taking up job opportunities in which they were likely to fail, and guided instead towards confidence building, voluntary work and work preparation.

In the early days, when time was not at a premium, Personal Advisers were willing to accept all clients who were 'motivated but not yet job-ready', no matter how long it might take to reach employment. They pointed out that their initial expectations of their job included working with clients unlikely to progress to employment for some considerable time, keeping them motivated and optimistic about work. Personal Advisers enjoyed working with people who were motivated but needed extra help, and spoke of the rewards of seeing them gain in confidence, make personal progress and move forward in a series of small steps. Some positively preferred working with this group and strongly regretted loss of opportunity to do so.

In some pilot projects Personal Advisers felt under pressure to close cases where employment was not realistic in the short to medium term. Diverse strategies evolved for *'exiting'* such clients. One or two more forceful Personal Advisers felt able to tell clients that the case was closed. Some arranged contacts with organisations which could provide voluntary work. Others wrote clients carefully and sensitively crafted letters, designed to minimise the appearance of rejection, to explain that the Personal Adviser Service was unable to offer further help, sometimes leaving the door open for clients to re-contact the Service. Others tested the clients' commitment by setting them tasks and asking them to report back; in this way some clients dropped out of the system without being formally notified. Generally, Personal Advisers found the task difficult and many felt guilty about letting down their clients. The researchers felt that Personal Advisers' diffidence may have led to clients being unclear about whether they should expect further help from the Personal Adviser Service (an observation reinforced by the opinion of some clients, reported in Section 5.3.6).

Almost 'job-ready' and 'job-ready'

Personal Advisers were ambivalent about the appropriateness of the programme for people who fell into the last two categories. Some believed that the added value of Personal Adviser Service intervention was not

sufficient to warrant taking on people on the margins of employment. Some Personal Advisers were minded to offer only the minimum of support to people who appeared to demonstrate a capacity to find work. They felt that their specialist service should be confined to people who needed the extra help it offered; one Personal Adviser said that he would not caseload individuals who seemed able to find work without Personal Adviser help. On the other hand, pressures to get more people into work more quickly encouraged Personal Advisers to work with clients who were relatively *'easy'* to move into work, and some admitted to claiming clients on the verges of work in order to boost their placement record.

Within this group were a small number of people who came to the Personal Adviser Service with a specific requirement, such as funding for a vocational course or to set up in self-employment. In some of these instances, Personal Advisers believed that applicants were merely tapping into the programme for specific purposes and did not wish to take advantage of the additional support they could offer. Consequently, Personal Advisers were less willing to invest time in helping them to realise their ambitions and turned potential clients away if they could not easily meet their demands.

4.3.4 Summarising the inclusive approach

Personal Advisers met a range of potential clients and had considerable discretion to select those who might benefit from the Personal Adviser Service. Generally, they adopted an inclusive approach, giving people 'the benefit of the doubt'. The almost universal view expressed was that the Service was set up to improve clients' employability. Employment, while an ultimate objective, could not necessarily be secured within the life of the pilot projects. Personal Advisers felt that they had joined the programme to help people along the road to employment and repeatedly referred back to their training which, they believed, had stressed this purpose. As noted above, many Personal Advisers had been attracted to the Personal Adviser Service by the opportunity to work with people who volunteered to take part, who had not been *'press-ganged'* to participate, without the constraints of targets. They obtained job satisfaction from working with those they saw as needing extra help. The perceived pressure to move more people into work diverted them from what they saw to be the prime client group, and dented the morale of the Personal Advisers.

If Personal Advisers judged people who came forward to be unsuitable for the Personal Adviser Service, or felt under pressure to restrict entry, they adopted various overt or, more commonly, covert strategies to turn them away. But they found it hard to reject people because they had chosen to approach the Personal Adviser Service.

4.3.5 Balancing demands

At the time of the fieldwork, some pilot projects were considering how to respond to a situation where some clients needed intensive help while others could benefit from relatively short-term interventions. One possibility under consideration was to allocate *'fast-track'* clients to some staff while others dealt with those who needed more intensive and longer-term support. Another option was to contract out support to clients who needed intensive help.

A third approach was to screen out at the start those clients who were unlikely to reach employment within the lifetime of the pilot and those who only needed to be 'signposted' to sources of help for job-finding. Also under pressure of a large waiting list, one pilot project had devised a strategy to cut down on time spent on initial interviews. A day was devoted to a series of half-hour interviews. Interviewees were given an overview of what the Personal Adviser Service could provide and invited to contact the project again if they wished to take advantage of the Service.

A further issue which some Personal Advisers were weighing up was how far their remit could extend to sorting out problems in clients' lives which indirectly affected their potential to enter employment. As already noted, Personal Advisers were committed to a client-centred, holistic and problem-solving approach. In the early days, they had sufficient time to attend to problems clients identified in their living situation. One example given was given of a client who could not progress writing his book at home because he lacked curtains at his windows and a reliable typewriter. In this instance the Personal Adviser set about remedying the problems. He believed that sorting out such difficulties in people's lives was beyond his official remit but argued that it was necessary to do so to prepare this client for future employment. As caseloads built up, Personal Advisers could not afford the time to intervene in ways like this.

4.4 Working with clients: The initial interviews

This section looks at the approach Personal Advisers took with clients when they first contacted the Personal Adviser Service and the operational factors which affected the way they worked. The processes of medical assessment and vocational guidance and assessment, which sometimes began in the initial interviews, are discussed in Section 4.5.

The term 'initial interviews' applies to the first arranged interview and subsequent interviews up to the point when the Personal Adviser formally takes the client on the caseload. As observed in the research team's earlier visits to the six pilot projects, clients could have as many as six pre-caseload interviews. Thus, Personal Advisers in effect were carrying an unofficial as well as an official caseload. In the early days, some project staff had been unsure about how to interpret the central administrative guidelines on recording the move to the official caseload, contributing to the differences between projects in the numbers of caseloaded clients, but this difficulty had been resolved by further guidance at the time of

the fieldwork reported here. Nevertheless, there was still variation within and across pilot projects in the number of initial interviews Personal Advisers offered to a client.

4.4.1 Interview setting

Interviews usually were prearranged and held typically where Personal Advisers were stationed - the offices of the project or Jobcentres. One pilot project also interviewed in Benefits Agency premises. Some pilot projects interviewed at hired premises in local communities, such as community centres, health centres or offices of disability organisations.

Personal Advisers identified a range of advantages and disadvantages to these locations. Personal Advisers working in Jobcentres complained about the lack of dedicated office space and limited access to information and communications technology, although they welcomed the chance to talk with Disability Employment Advisers or other New Deal advisers based there. Hired premises in community buildings offered clients convenient access, the privacy of a dedicated interview room and avoided the 'stigma' associated with visiting Jobcentres. However, Personal Advisers spent considerable amounts of time travelling, had to transport their materials and their remote access technology once it became available, and unforeseen problems, such as a ban on use of mobile phones in a medical centre, proved frustrating. Personal Advisers envied the pilot project with a single central office.

Some Personal Advisers had also made arrangements for *ad hoc* interviews, for example in mental health day centres. These gave the Personal Adviser the opportunity to talk first to members in a group and offered the chance to liaise with other professionals.

Home interviews were unusual. A visit to the home was not routinely offered but usually would be arranged if the client gave good reasons. Personal safety was a concern to Personal Advisers - one Personal Adviser would not consider a home visit unless he already had met the client. Following Employment Service guidelines which dictated that two Personal Advisers should conduct home interviews was a resource-intensive option, to be used sparingly. Despite their references to the 'holistic' approach, Personal Advisers did not comment on the lack of opportunity to assess the client's home situation and involve other members of the family.

Most interviews were one-to-one and clients typically did not meet other interviewees. Some pilot projects, however, had arranged 'drop-in' occasions and 'coffee mornings' where the participants could talk informally amongst themselves, prior to short interviews (as described in Section 4.3.5). Personal Advisers reported that some clients liked this approach and felt supported by contact with people like themselves.

4.4.2 Prior information about clients

Personal Advisers typically had little prior information about the people they were to interview. They were equipped by the Personal Adviser Service receptionists with basic standard information (age, health condition or impairment, whether responding to a letter, self-referred or referred by another agency) gathered when the client first made telephone, or occasionally personal, contact. The comprehensiveness of the standard information depended on clients' readiness to impart information, especially about their impairments. Some receptionists were thought to be particularly skilled at finding out more from clients. Unusually, the caller was transferred to a Personal Adviser who took the opportunity to talk to the client and explore further their situation and expectations of the Personal Adviser Service.

Generally Personal Advisers were content to work with limited prior information. However, they identified two aspects in which more information about the client would be useful. Several were concerned about their ability to handle the situation, and the possible threat to their personal safety, if the client turned out to be abusive or potentially violent, particularly where the client had an unspecified mental health problem. For this reason one pilot had attempted, unsuccessfully, to obtain more detailed information from the Benefits Agency. Secondly, Personal Advisers identified a need to know in advance about access requirements, given that not all venues were fully accessible to people with mobility impairments, and for other health- or impairment-related information which would help them to accommodate the clients' ergonomic requirements, such as seating arrangements. (Section 5.3.3 reports that arriving at venues which were not fully accessible caused clients some concern.)

Advance knowledge of the interviewee's history was mostly considered unnecessary, as clients typically were thought to be keen to tell their story at the first interview. One Personal Adviser dissented from this view and made a point of telephoning the client two days in advance of the interview. This strategy was thought to put clients at ease, relieve them of the need to do most of the talking at the start of the interview and give them the chance to hear the sound of the Personal Adviser's voice. A rare instance when the Personal Adviser had access to a client's case notes from previous contact with Disability Services was thought to be *'enormously helpful'*; the Personal Adviser knew what had already been discussed and tried, avoided covering old ground with the client, and saved a great deal of time.

4.4.3 The personal approach

The first interview typically lasted just under one hour, but could stretch to one-and-a-half or even two hours if the Personal Adviser had no follow-on appointment. Personal Advisers generally felt that a long first interview was essential to put clients at their ease, gain trust where a client appeared unsure, build up rapport, explain the Service, hear their stories, uncover the benefits and health situations, and where appropriate

begin to explore vocational options. One Personal Adviser, concerned about overloading the interviewee with information, had changed to a half-hour first interview, however.

The approach taken in the first interview had several common features. Personal Advisers stressed the voluntary nature of participation and aimed to reassure clients that their benefits would not be affected by seeing the adviser. They aimed to put less confident or nervous clients at their ease, and to begin to build up trust and achieve a rapport. Sharing information about themselves could help to set Personal Advisers apart from other *'bureaucrats'* whom clients encountered in the Employment Service and Benefits Agency. A Personal Adviser with personal experience of living with an impairment found that sharing this with a client with a similar impairment appeared to alter the power relationship, noted by clients (Section 5.4.2) as boosting confidence and trust. Occasionally, knowing the client's locality, having acquaintances in common or discovering a shared interest seemed to create a bond. For one or two Personal Advisers, the relationship could develop into friendship.

The pace of the first interview was generally relaxed. Listening was an important part of the Personal Adviser's function, and Personal Advisers observed that they took on a quasi-counselling role when clients revealed domestic, marital or personal problems in initial and subsequent interviews. A few Personal Advisers expressed concerns about their competence to counsel clients but others seemed to find it unproblematic. As already noted, Personal Advisers subscribed to the holistic approach emphasised in their job descriptions and training, and did not attempt to restrict the discussions to work-related issues. They felt that clients often needed someone to talk to about personal matters, and listening sympathetically helped to establish a relationship between Personal Adviser and client.

4.4.4 Arranging follow-up interviews

Personal Advisers found that for many clients second, third or even more interviews were necessary to explore fully their history, current situation and work-related aspirations, before they joined the caseload.

Practice in arranging these further interviews varied. Some Personal Advisers fixed an appointment at the time, for a week or two weeks ahead. Others gave clients space to think about whether they wished to carry on seeing the Personal Adviser Service and asked clients to get in touch if they wished a second appointment. A minority did not fix an appointment on the spot and telephoned the client some days later.

As noted in Section 4.3.3, leaving the client to get in touch was one strategy for *'exiting'* people when Personal Advisers doubted their commitment to, or potential for, taking up paid work. However, some Personal Advisers were worried when clients did not get in touch within a week or two. They typically wrote to the client once or twice but rarely made further efforts to regain contact. They were reluctant to

telephone a client or call at the client's home if they had no telephone. A commonly expressed view was that it was not appropriate to put pressure on a client in this way in a voluntary scheme.

4.4.5 Information giving

During the first interview, Personal Advisers described the Service in general terms but took care not to overload clients. They used their discretion in giving specific information about what the Service could offer, unless clients asked directly. Detailed information was generally held in reserve until clients reached the point where it was applicable; for example, the Access to Work programme might not be explained to a client as yet undecided about vocational goals. The same reasoning appeared to apply to giving information about in-work benefits, such as Disability Working Allowance and the therapeutic earnings rule. On the other hand, Personal Advisers commonly told clients about the '52 week linking rule', in the context of assuaging fears about loss of benefit entitlement should return to work not be sustainable.

While some Personal Advisers gave clients information packs containing general Disability Service leaflets and some Personal Advisers gave them selected leaflets, there was little evidence of Personal Advisers giving clients written information about disability benefits and changes in the benefit rules. From Personal Advisers' accounts it seems that clients rarely left the first interviews with comprehensive written materials about what the Personal Adviser Service offered, such as the process of working through providers or the discretionary Intervention Fund. In some instances, Personal Advisers simply gave clients their business card. (Section 5.3.5 notes that clients in the study had little recall of any written information.)

4.4.6 Benefits advice

Usually Personal Advisers identified which benefits participants were claiming, although they did not necessarily check the detailed calculation of those benefits. As already noted, Personal Advisers set out to reassure interviewees that their benefits would not be affected by attending interviews, and it may be that Personal Advisers were concerned not to undermine that reassurance by delving too deeply into the benefits position. Some clients, however, asked specifically for 'better-off in work' calculations and Personal Advisers suspected that, in some instances, they were using the Personal Adviser Service only to check whether they were receiving the right level of benefit. Others wanted 'better-off' calculations to gauge whether participation would be worthwhile. Many Personal Advisers in the study said they were not sufficiently confident in dealing with the intricacies of income replacement disability benefits and preferred the client to obtain more expert guidance from a Citizens Advice Bureau or authoritative advice from the Benefits Agency. One pilot project was hampered by a Benefits Agency office refusing to do 'better-off' calculations.

On the other hand, Personal Advisers were happy to point out to clients their eligibility for Disability Living Allowance, an extra costs benefit administered centrally, and would assist clients to obtain and complete the application forms - although one Personal Adviser was unwilling to run the risk of being implicated, in the client's eyes, in a failed application. When clients were concerned about the potential effects on their Disability Living Allowance if they tried out or entered work, as was quite often reported, some Personal Advisers encountered problems in obtaining advice from the Disability Living Allowance helpline. Some found local advice services which proved more useful.

It is clear from clients' reported experiences that confidence in the Personal Adviser Service was reduced if Personal Advisers were not able to provide the detailed advice that they wanted and had to resort to external sources of advice (Section 5.4.5).

4.5 Working with clients: Vocational and health assessment

Vocational and health assessments were not defined stages in the Personal Advisers' work with clients. Rather, Personal Advisers addressed clients' vocational aspirations and aptitudes when the questions arose in the course of working with them. Health and ergonomic assessments were similarly discretionary.

4.5.1 Vocational guidance and assessment

Personal Advisers reported that it was unusual for a client to have a clear work-related goal at the first interview, although they said that a small sub-set of clients came to the Personal Adviser Service with a particular occupation or job in mind. While keen to do something, most clients, Personal Advisers believed, did not know how find out about options or how to decide what was possible or practicable.

Personal Advisers typically guided clients by exploring their interests (what one Personal Adviser termed *'interest explorations'*) first by asking about what they enjoyed doing. (As reported in Section 5.4.3, this approach was appreciated by some clients in the study.) They might also encourage the client to speak to friends and family in work, to look around at the types of work people did, or consider the jobs they saw portrayed on television. Looking at newspapers could also help the client to form a view of what he or she might like to do. At the same time, a Personal Adviser might offer the opportunity to consult an 'Occupations Directory', to give an indication of the range of jobs available and what they involved. Such a resource was not universally available, and career software was identified as gap in provision. Sometimes clients were referred to the local Careers Service, where they could consult similar resources.

Use of formal vocational guidance tools, such as an Occupational Interest Inventory (completed by the client and scored by the Occupational Psychologist), was reported less frequently. Although Personal Advisers had the option of bringing in their Occupational Psychologist, and some found their help invaluable when the client was '*stuck*' and could not see

a way forward, this kind of specialist help generally was not sought at the exploratory stage.

Occupational Psychologists could offer a range of tests to assess vocational aptitude. Personal Advisers used their discretion in deciding to refer the client to the Occupational Psychologist. Close team working seemed to facilitate use of the Occupational Psychologist, although some Personal Advisers seemed uncertain about what precisely the Occupational Psychologist could offer. There was little evidence of clients being referred to external providers of occupational assessment, unless they were placed on a course which offered the opportunity to test a range of vocational options.

4.5.2 Negotiating 'realistic' work goals

Some clients were thought to have low expectations of what they might achieve and the Personal Advisers saw their task to uncover the reasons and encourage them towards higher goals. However, the gap between the client's preferences or expectations and what was *'realistic'* was mentioned more often, in particular the gulf between the client's goal and the labour market. Clients might hanker back to a traditional job, such as machining, for which they were no longer skilled, or they might set their sights on a career, such as writing or acting, which was exceptionally difficult to enter. Forms of ill-health, such as chronic fatigue, or the effects of medication, also made certain goals unrealistic, in the view of the Personal Advisers.

Personal Advisers acted in different ways when they perceived a mismatch between aspirations and what they considered realistic. Some overtly directed the client away from a vocation which was apparently inappropriate; for example, a job which required a level of responsiveness and attention to detail (such as driving) unsuitable for a client suffering panic attacks. Some applied more subtle pressure to direct the client towards one vocation when a number were contemplated. In some situations, Personal Advisers went along with the client's expressed wishes in order to bring it home to the client that their aspirations were not achievable. In such instances, the Personal Adviser judged it better to allow the client to try out the possibility through work experience or applying for work rather than to advise then against it, and some argued that there was value to the client in learning from unsuccessful attempts.

To determine what was realistic Personal Advisers generally had to rely on their previous experience with Employment Services. One Personal Adviser had been on a training course on identifying what is appropriate and realistic in people's goals, but Personal Advisers on the whole appeared to feel competent in making such judgements without additional training.

4.5.3 Health assessment

In the first interview, Personal Advisers typically aimed to identify the client's health status. Some commented that at least an hour was required to uncover fully the multiple health conditions and impairments of some clients.

If Personal Advisers doubted the client's account of their ability to work (or, occasionally, to work in certain occupations) they might seek the client's permission to obtain further information from their medical adviser. Uncertainty over the appropriateness of seeking further information meant that such action was not always pursued. Personal Advisers were not always certain which professionals, if any, were working with a client. Obtaining health reports could take a long time and hold up progress with the client, possibly contributing to loss of motivation. As pilot procedures firmed up, it seems, Personal Advisers were more likely to ask for a medical opinion in cases where they were unsure. There was rather little evidence of them seeking input from health professionals to help with vocational guidance or assessment, however.

The researchers found some examples of Personal Advisers continuing to work with clients without medical advice when they lacked experience of the effects of their ill-health; one Personal Adviser with no prior experience chose to work alone with an early client who was contemplating suicide, though faced with the same situation again he would seek advice. Several Personal Advisers were concerned about their competence to work with clients with diagnosed mental illnesses and, as noted in Section 4.2.5, this was identified as an outstanding training need.

There was little evidence of Personal Advisers seeking advice from ergonomic experts and, although it seemed to the researchers that some clients described might have benefited from it, Personal Advisers rarely identified the need. When questioned, they tended to see it as a matter to be addressed through Access to Work provision when a job had been identified.

Occasionally, a Personal Adviser might discuss with a client's social worker the implications of entering a work environment. But Personal Advisers were not included in case conferences to discuss their client's situation, and seemed unaware that other professions operated in this way. Several, when asked, said that they did not see sharing information about clients with other professionals outside the Personal Adviser Service and Disability Service as part of their role. Overall, Personal Advisers seemed not to be included in the circle of health and social care professionals, although they might forge relationships with individual health or social care workers.

4.6 Working with clients: The way forward

This section begins to look at how Personal Advisers worked with clients once they had been accepted on to their caseloads. It considers the role of the Progress Plan in shaping the way forward and some of the stages on the road to employment.

4.6.1 The Progress Plan

The Personal Adviser was expected to agree a Progress Plan with the client when he or she wished to continue working with the Personal Adviser Service. At this point the client would be recorded as having

joined the Personal Adviser's official caseload. While Personal Advisers might explain to their clients that they would work with them from that point forwards, many saw 'caseloading' as an administrative procedure. Typically they did not advise clients of their official change of status. Some Personal Advisers took clients on to their unofficial caseload without completing Progress Plans. They felt that specifying action might backfire, as clients might turn out not to be ready to join the caseload.

Minimal guidance during training on the purpose and content of Progress Plans contributed to some inconsistencies in their introduction at the point of caseloading. Personal Advisers trained in their previous work in work-targeted interviewing sometimes thought it inappropriate to formulate a Progress Plan at that point if clients were not yet clear about what they wished to achieve in vocational terms. Others felt that Progress Plans could be used to identify steps to be taken in the short-term, rather than as a statement of the ultimate goal and how to achieve it. In one group discussion, Personal Advisers called for standardisation of the Progress Plan format. Some pilot projects had devised their own proforma, with structured headings; elsewhere Personal Advisers used a free format.

Opinion was divided over whether the Progress Plan was merely an administrative chore or a tool for Personal Advisers and for clients. Some Personal Advisers resented it as an administrative requirement which caused unnecessary paper work and had no other purpose. Others acknowledged its usefulness to them as a case record of what was discussed and decided, and a reminder of action they should take. Some believed that the Progress Plan was essentially a tool for the client, providing some structure and encouragement in the way forward. The view was also expressed that the Progress Plan benefited both Personal Adviser and client.

These attitudes were reflected in the practice of preparing Progress Plans and sharing them with clients. Where the Progress Plan was seen primarily as an administrative requirement or a case record, its formulation was not necessarily shared with the client, and sometimes clients were not informed of its existence. Some doubts were expressed about whether giving the client a copy of the record was appropriate. Doing so might give the appearance of bureaucracy and 'red-tape', contrary to the spirit of the pilot, and get in the way of creating confidence and a friendly relationship.

Usually the record was provided to the client, however, though not necessarily at the close of the interview. This gave Personal Advisers some leverage if the client did not follow through the action agreed, and protection if the client disagreed about what was decided. The Progress Plan was also thought to serve as a reminder to the client of what was discussed and motivate them to carry through the action agreed. For those reasons, it was thought important to give the client something to take away with them.

Involvement of clients in the writing of Progress Plans varied considerably. Quite commonly, the Personal Adviser and client discussed the content of the plan on the spot. However, some Personal Advisers were reluctant to use the computer in the client's presence, believing that doing so would change the nature of the interaction. Sometimes Personal Advisers wrote up the record of the discussion after the interview and posted it to the client. One Personal Adviser, mindful of the Data Protection Act, invited the client to review the record on receipt and notify any disagreement.

No Personal Advisers reported that clients themselves wrote Progress Plans. The plan was rarely seen as the client's property over which they had ownership, although one Personal Adviser (who did not use a proforma) described how the plan was written in terms of 'I will do this and my Personal Adviser will do that'. Some asked the client to sign the plan, and occasionally both parties signed it to signify joint agreement.

Despite the view expressed that the Progress Plan could be a useful tool for clients, there were no reports by Personal Advisers of clients spontaneously referring to the plan in their subsequent interviews. Clients in this study had little recall of any written Progress Plans (Section 5.3.5).

4.6.2 Preparation for work

Most clients who were 'motivated but not job-ready' and some who were 'not considering work but with some potential' were thought to need some form of preparation for work. Generally, Personal Advisers were cautious about directing people straight into jobseeking if they lacked qualifications for today's labour market. Even where clients were determined to find immediate work, they typically advised those who had spent time out of the labour market to obtain experience through voluntary programmes or work placements. This would augment their CV and make them more attractive to employers. Moreover, voluntary work and participation in 'work preparation' programmes allowed clients to retain their benefits while they explored their vocational interests. Unpaid work was often viewed as an opportunity for clients to explore their potential for work. Personal Advisers could assess their stamina, ability to adjust to routine, reliability, confidence in mixing socially, and team-working abilities.

Voluntary work was often arranged directly with a voluntary organisation, sometimes using the local volunteer bureau to identify possibilities. This allowed clients to work alongside other volunteers, sometimes out of doors, avoiding the pressures of the workplace. The Personal Advisers, and not the voluntary organisations, provided ongoing support. For the Personal Adviser Service this was a low cost option. Formalised work preparation was organised usually with providers contracted to the Employment Service or Training and Enterprise Council. This tended to be offered to people who were closer to taking up work, but examples were also given of placements arranged in protected environments which

enabled clients a long distance from work to *'feel good about themselves'*.

Finding time to support clients in these various forms of voluntary work and work preparation was a growing problem in some projects. One pilot had developed a new contract to provide support to people with mental health problems in these situations. A novel feature here was bringing the clients together for peer support one day a week.

Vocational training courses were often seen as the first step for clients who lacked qualifications. Personal Advisers turned to community education colleges, vocational colleges for disabled people contracted to the Department for Education and Employment and mainstream training providers. Otherwise, finding the right course in the locality and at the right time could involve quite intensive searching of directories and networking. Personal Advisers might use their familiarity with training providers to negotiate tailored provision for their clients.

4.7 Co-ordinating support

Once clients had been accepted on to their caseloads, Personal Advisers could draw in external sources of support to assist them in the move towards employment. External providers might help to build confidence, improve social skills, acquire experience of mixing in a quasi-work setting, obtain vocational qualifications, improve presentational skills, write a CV, search for jobs, help the client though job interviews or support clients in the workplace. At the same time, Personal Advisers provided ongoing support to the client, with regular meetings and frequent telephone contact. Clients and Personal Advisers might make contact more informally to up-date each other on developments.

It was clear that Personal Advisers felt some tension between their wish to carry on offering personal support to the client and the expectation that they should co-ordinate specialist external support. In the early days, small caseloads meant that Personal Advisers could provide much of the support themselves. Having established a rapport with the client - and having invested so much themselves in helping the client to succeed - Personal Advisers were sometimes reluctant to devolve responsibility to a provider. In some instances, Personal Advisers provided direct help - such as CV preparation or accompanying the client to a work placement - although external provision could have been arranged. Some commented on being reluctant to 'let go', although aware of increasing pressures on the available time to work with clients (but, on the other hand, setting up arrangements with providers was itself time-consuming). Even where a provider was contracted to provide a service some Personal Advisers took on some of their functions, such as liaising with employers.

4.7.1 Working with providers

Personal Advisers turned in the first instance to providers with Disability Service or other Employment Service contracts. As explained in Section 4.1.3, there was no cost to the Personal Adviser Service in using those services for clients who were eligible. However, some were seeking out

alternatives where they were dissatisfied with Employment Service provision (Programme Centres were singled out). In the early days of some pilot projects Disability Service contracts were being renegotiated and Personal Advisers were uncertain about approaching providers whose contracts might not be renewed.

The supply of providers and the opportunity to choose the best option for the client varied across pilot areas. At one extreme, one pilot project was very well supplied, so much so that providers competed with one another for clients. At the other extreme, described as *'desperate'*, the few existing providers were severely over-stretched, leading to delays for the client (of up to five or six weeks) and a lack of choice, particularly in work preparation and placements with employers. In areas of short supply, Personal Advisers sometimes had to seek out placements themselves and hope to formalise the arrangement with the official provider subsequently.

Personal Advisers experienced in working in the locality as Disability Employment Advisors were particularly well placed to use familiar providers. In areas with an adequate supply, Personal Advisers tended to stick with tried and tested providers. Criteria in selecting the provider were trust, a personal contact with whom the Personal Adviser could work, a known supportive worker with proven abilities, and flexibility. The suitability of the worker for the client could be the over-riding criterion. Sometimes the quality of the placement and support obtained was more important than speed of provision.

In areas of shortage, considerable effort was invested in stimulating new services and trying out previously untapped sources. For example, mainstream New Deal providers were encouraged to set up a special course in job-search techniques for New Deal for Disabled People clients, funded from the Intervention Fund. Elsewhere, some difficulties were encountered initially in accessing mainstream New Deal contractors.

Personal Advisers identified a number of difficulties in working with providers. Some were frustrated with the system which required that the provider take on functions which the Personal Adviser could do more quickly, efficiently and (some felt) to a higher level of quality. Some mainstream providers were found not to understand the clients' health problems, and some Training for Work providers tended to push for employment outcomes.

4.7.2 Financial sources: The Intervention Fund

Personal Advisers did not report heavy use of the Intervention Fund, most having used it once or twice. Typical low cost uses were taxi or public transport fares, meeting *ad hoc* needs such as smart clothes to wear to interview, suitable shoes for work, a subsidy to pay for rent until the first pay packet was received. More imaginative uses include purchase of a pager for a client with no telephone, so that he could be contacted by employment agencies he had enlisted with. In some instances, Personal

Advisers were prepared to use the Intervention Fund to solve small problems in clients' everyday lives which were interfering with their ability to settle to thinking about work. Most said that no other low cost needs had arisen, but one noted that the lack of ready cash restricted opportunities to reimburse clients for out-of-pocket expenses, such as costs incurred in meeting the Personal Adviser (which were not normally offered). Generally, Personal Advisers did not advertise to clients the existence of the Intervention Fund, and, as directed, used their discretion to offer assistance for needs which emerged; clients' awareness of this source of support was low (Section 5.4.4).

For larger expenditures, such as fees for training courses not subsidised from other sources, a business case had to be made, arguing for the probability of ultimate employment. Sometimes the case was difficult to substantiate, and an instance was reported of a request for a training course to teach English as a Foreign Language being turned down. Personal Advisers used their discretion in deciding whether a case should be put for Intervention Fund support. They seemed to favour training which was clearly vocational and, in one instance, a case for funding an arts course was not put forward on the grounds that it would not necessarily lead directly to employment. More than one Personal Adviser was unwilling to support requests from people who seemed to be '*professional course takers*'.

While examples were given of the Intervention Fund opening doors to new avenues, Personal Advisers reported that, as claims on the Intervention Fund could be made only once other funding possibilities had been fully explored, client progress had been held up in one or two instances.

In sum, the Interventions Fund did not appear to have liberated Personal Advisers to explore new possibilities. Some believed that use of the Intervention Fund was tightly monitored, an impression reinforced by an instruction in one area to draw in the first instance on the client's Job Finder's Grant (introduced on 11 April 1999).

4.8 The move to paid employment

This section begins by looking at the barriers for clients ready to take up paid work from the Personal Advisers' perspective. It then reports on the roles of Personal Advisers in the processes of job-search, job application and attending job interviews.

4.8.1 Barriers to clients taking up paid work

Personal Advisers identified a number of structural and institutional, rather than individual, barriers for those Personal Adviser Service clients who were ready to take up paid work.

The job market

In reviewing developments in their local labour markets, Personal Advisers' impressions were of a growth in types of job opportunity which did not

necessarily suit the types of clients they were seeing. New opportunities, they thought, were:

- often part-time and thus limiting earnings;
- demanding flexible hours thought to be inappropriate for clients who required a set structure to their week and the security of a predictable income;
- typically dealing with the public, which did not suit some people with mental health problems such as depression, or who lacked confidence;
- requiring adaptability on the job, such as a sharing of duties within teams, which some clients did not recognise from their distant employment experiences;
- available in leisure complexes and retail parks, with poor public transport links compounding the difficulty of having to work flexible hours;
- in leisure, catering and retail industries, where work might exacerbate impairments, such as back injuries or skin conditions;
- with wage levels set to attract the youth labour market, especially in leisure, catering and retail; or
- in call centres, where the work was inappropriate for less articulate clients and where working conditions were unsuitably pressured for clients unaccustomed to working or for some with certain mental health problems.

They also noted the loss of jobs in production industries, and consequent limitations on openings for clients for whom repetitive work was thought to be suitable.

Some of the perceived local labour market changes offered opportunities but the work was not acceptable to the client; for example, telesales and clerical work might suit people with certain impairments but not be seen as an appropriate job for a man.

Some Personal Advisers expressed surprise at the number of clients who were willing to work for the same amount or a little more than their benefit, mainly to escape from the boredom of non-employment and being stuck at home.

Travel to work

Some pilot areas consisted of a number of separate towns and communities with no special affinity to one another, and it was commonly reported by Personal Advisers that clients were unwilling to contemplate travelling to a job outside their community. Access to Work could be useful in persuading clients otherwise, although some clients were said to be anxious that travelling might prove uncomfortable or painful.

Employer attitudes and practices

The research team's early visits to the pilot projects found that Personal Advisers saw employer prejudice as a barrier to clients entering work, especially for clients with a history of diagnosed mental illness, and that they believed that older clients faced age discrimination.

The issues of employer prejudice and discriminatory hiring practices were less salient in this study, possibly because Personal Advisers tended to work on clients' behalf with employers they already knew were *'good'* employers. But Personal Advisers in this study also commented on the existence of employers (or their staff) who were not sympathetic to employing disabled people. One example was given of a work experience placement that had broken down because of what the client and the Personal Adviser both felt was a hostile attitude to disability on the part of the client's manager. Discrimination on grounds of age was a lesser issue, some Personal Advisers arguing that employers could prefer older workers for their greater reliability.

The 'disabled' label

Personal Advisers said that some clients saw being identified as 'disabled' as a barrier to employment because they believed that employers would not consider them if their health problem or disability was disclosed (echoing the position expressed by some participants in the clients' study reported in Chapter 5).

Clients' rejection of the 'disabled' label was also an operational barrier for the Personal Adviser Service, particularly to moving into work those clients who appeared to need help at the job application and interview stages. Although such clients were receptive to direct help from Personal Advisers, they did not want Personal Advisers to make contact with a potential employer on their behalf. In most instances the Personal Adviser respected the client's wishes but believed that the scope of Personal Adviser Service help was constrained as a consequence. For example, it was not possible to broker the introduction to a prospective employer, write a supportive reference for the client or provide the employer with details of the Job Introduction Scheme or Access to Work (actions which might influence the employer's judgement in favour of recruiting the disabled client).

The benefits system

The '52 week linking rule' was helpful in assuaging clients' concerns about losing eligibility for benefit if they moved into paid employment but subsequently lost or gave up their job. Obstacles in the structure and operation of the benefits system remained, however. Clients were reported by Personal Advisers to be anxious about whether entering work would mean that their Disability Living Allowance would be re-assessed at a

lower rate or removed, even although their care needs or mobility had not changed significantly. (This was a significant anxiety among clients in the study, reported in Section 5.2.4). Personal Advisers found some sources of advice inconsistent and probably unreliable. One instance was reported of a client turning down an opportunity to take up work so as not to put his Disability Living Allowance at risk.

As noted in the early visits to the projects, some Personal Advisers had experienced problems in making therapeutic earnings rules work for their clients. Increasingly good relations with Benefits Agency adjudication officers, and standardised procedures for obtaining the right certification from clients' General Practitioners, were easing the difficulties of arranging voluntary work while still in receipt of Incapacity Benefit.

4.8.2 Job-search

If pilot projects had staff dedicated to 'job-matching' the client was introduced to them at the job-search stage. Personal Advisers welcomed this service. Concentrating expertise was more efficient, freeing up their time for other aspects of their role with clients. Having the Service in-house facilitated the temporary 'hand-over' of clients, allowed job-matching staff and Personal Advisers to discuss the clients' requirements, and, importantly for the Personal Adviser, meant that rapport with the client could be maintained. (As job-matching staff were not interviewed, there is no information on how they set about job-matching other than that they used the Labour Market System discussed below.)

Otherwise, looking for suitable openings was generally seen as an activity to be undertaken jointly by the Personal Adviser and client. In some instances, however, job-search was seen as the client's responsibility, as they were already competent and experienced or had specialised training arranged by the Personal Adviser Service.

Personal Advisers usually accessed the Employment Service computerised Labour Market System. Some felt under pressure to use it as they believed that the employment outcomes achieved by this method were those counted in the administrative returns. The Labour Market System had some disadvantages. Some Personal Advisers were concerned that, as the data was not updated often enough, they ran the risk of identifying listed vacancies which had been filled. They also reported a lot of competition to get people into the same jobs, from the mainstream New Deals and Disability Employment Advisors. Its usefulness also was limited if, as Personal Advisers suggested, larger employers use high street recruitment agencies rather than the Jobcentre. This was a particular problem when companies moving into the area commissioned private agencies to recruit on their behalf. Some Personal Advisers liked to consult the Labour Market System together with the client but for most of the period covered in the research the Labour Market System could not be accessed in out-stations. As already noted, some Personal Advisers were uncomfortable about using the computer in clients' presence.

Some Personal Advisers invested a lot of their time in looking for openings for their clients. They described scouring the local newspapers daily, scanning cards in newsagents' shop windows, looking through Jobcentre vacancies and asking around. Personal Advisers tended to recommend these methods to clients also, and clients might be looking in the same places simultaneously. In some instances, clients themselves did most of the looking for openings. From Personal Advisers' accounts, the researchers were not sure whether the division of labour between Personal Adviser and client was clearly understood by the latter.

How far Personal Advisers undertook job-search themselves seemed to relate to having worked intensively with the client up to that point; they were keen that progress towards work that the client had made with them should be realised. Personal Advisers accepted they were not competent to assist the client with job-search in highly specialised fields, such as computer sciences. In those instances, the clients were seen as highly capable, and usually better placed than the Personal Adviser to seek out vacancies, although Personal Advisers passed on information about vacancies they guessed might be suitable.

Direct approaches to employers

Especially where Personal Advisers had local experience of working with employers in their earlier Employment Service posts, they could make direct approaches to managers in firms they knew (and sometimes were friendly with) to enquire about potential vacancies for particular clients, for example those looking for office work. They also targeted Disability Symbol users. These approaches were often successful; co-operative managers found temporary jobs which could develop into more permanent positions. In this way, clients avoided competitive application and selection processes. The direct approach to a potential employer was not appropriate for those clients, particularly those with mental health problems, who did not wish their condition to be known. However, it was noted by one Personal Adviser who used this method that in that area of high unemployment some managers were sympathetic as family members had experienced mental health problems associated with unemployment.

When a client had a very specific skill to offer or was seeking a particular job in fields where the Personal Adviser had no prior contacts (and where the Personal Adviser was less familiar with the labour market), the Adviser might canvass possible employers. This approach was used cautiously, Personal Advisers noting that they were looking for an employer who would be understanding about the potential employee's health problem. Personal Advisers tended to prefer to arrange work placements to show the employer what the client was capable of and to demonstrate the kind of support that could be expected from the New Deal for Disabled People.

Occasionally, Personal Advisers supported clients to make speculative approaches themselves. They might steer clients towards employers thought to be positive about employing disabled people by consulting the directory of Disability Symbol users. One Personal Adviser helped a client to mail his CV to a large number of employment agencies specialising in the client's desired occupation. The Personal Adviser helped with the design and printing of the CV, including a photograph of the client, and with finding directories of agencies. Generally, Personal Advisers appeared not to use agencies for job-search, however. It could be hard to get disabled people on to their registers, as applicants who declared their health problem could be sent for an occupational health assessment.

4.8.3 Applying for vacancies

How far Personal Advisers helped clients with applications for identified vacancies again depended on how competent they perceived clients to be and their familiarity with the clients' occupational field. Particularly in branches of computer science, Personal Advisers felt incompetent to offer advice in tailoring applications.

If a client was already actively looking for work when they approached the Personal Adviser Service, the Personal Adviser typically reviewed their standard CV and might suggest improvements in presentation. If a client needed to design a CV from scratch, the Personal Adviser would often provide intensive help but some were concerned whether this was the best use of their time. Some clients were referred to the Employment Service Programme Centres, but Personal Advisers were not always content with the quality of support these provided to disabled people and some were looking for more specialised providers.

Sometimes Personal Advisers concluded that clients already actively applying for jobs, for which they had formal qualifications, were not succeeding because of their lack of work experience. In those situations Personal Advisers tended to advise voluntary work placements to gain experience. But placements in voluntary work were typically of a standard well below that for which the client was qualified. Personal Advisers argued that placements might well lead to jobs. However, the salary for a job which emerged from a voluntary placement would probably be considerably lower than the client's original goal. Some Personal Advisers were doubtful about whether they had advised the right course of action, in part because they did not fully understand the fields in which clients aimed to work and could not judge their chances of finding the employment they sought.

Particularly where Personal Advisers had worked with clients to help them to the point where they were ready to apply for jobs (not many instances were reported at this stage in the pilot programme, however) they were keen to support them in the job application process. Support might include suggesting to clients that they include with their application a leaflet about the Job Introduction Scheme or Access to Work and

writing a reference. Personal Advisers sometimes telephoned the prospective employer to alert them to the client's connection with the Personal Adviser Service and the support the Service could offer. An example was given of a job offer resulting from a positive response to information about the Job Introduction Scheme which the employer then followed up with the Personal Adviser. If Personal Advisers had relatively light caseloads, these kinds of support and intervention were sometimes offered to clients who were job-ready when they approached the Personal Adviser Service. These options were not possible where the client did not wish their health condition or impairment to be known to the employer, however.

4.8.4 Help with job interviews

Rather few examples of helping at interview were found at this stage of the evaluation. Again, when they had invested in helping clients to the position where they obtained a job interview, and also where they were not under pressure of large caseloads, Personal Advisers tended to support clients through the interview process. Practical help included advising clients on what to wear, buying clothing with the Intervention Fund and driving clients to the interview. Some gave clients leaflets about the Job Introduction Scheme to give to the interviewer or advised them to explain that it was available. Personal Advisers might act as an advocate for the client by contacting the employer to assure them of the client's ability to do the job and outline the support the Personal Adviser Service could offer. Sometimes their intervention seemed to have been helpful, and instances were reported of employers contacting the Personal Adviser to discuss ways of adapting the job to meet the needs of the disabled person.

4.9 Supporting clients in work

There is rather little information from the study on how Personal Advisers supported clients once they entered employment. Personal Advisers acknowledged the importance of helping clients to sustain employment. When a Personal Adviser had worked with a client through the stages of moving towards work they expected to continue to provide support in the first weeks or months of employment, reducing their input as clients became established in the job. Sometimes those clients who had entered work kept in touch with the Personal Adviser, typically to assure them that thing were going well, and few examples were given of clients contacting Personal Adviser about problems which had arisen. Those clients who came to the Personal Adviser Service 'almost job-ready', and found work with relatively little Personal Adviser input, appeared less likely to maintain contact.

Personal Advisers had concerns about the sustainability of employment for some clients with diagnosed mental illnesses. How far Personal Advisers supported them in work appeared to relate to experience of working with people with mental health problems and an understanding of how the work environment might affect the individual. Opportunity for direct support by the Personal Adviser was also affected by the system of contracting support to providers.

During work preparation placements (typically of six weeks) support on the job might be purchased from a specialist organisation (different from the provider arranging the placement) and the option of contracting similar support for the move into paid work was being explored in some pilot projects. If the client's mental health deteriorated, Personal Advisers preferred to rely on those providers or on mental health organisations already in touch with the client rather than to intervene themselves, except where they had a relevant professional background.

Assumptions that other professionals would step in, and some Personal Advisers' fear of mental illness, may explain why some clients said they were unsupported in the jobs they had found through the Personal Adviser Service (see Section 5.4.7).

In the early days of the pilot projects, there appeared to be some variation in understanding over whether the Personal Adviser Service could support people in work at risk of losing their job but who were not receiving Statutory Sick Pay. An example was given of an ex-Incapacity Benefit claimant approaching the Personal Adviser Service who was experiencing many difficulties in the first week of a part-time job, particularly because he believed he was worse off financially, and on the verge of giving up. The Personal Adviser worked intensively to safeguard the client's employment: first establishing the financial situation (including the intricacies of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit entitlements), exploring ways of working while retaining benefit and eventually obtaining Disability Working Allowance; helping with fares to work and appropriate work wear through the Intervention Fund; ensuring the support of the employer for continuing and hopefully enhanced employment; and continuing to meet weekly with the client to provide support and to explore ways of advancing his career with the help of the Intervention Fund.

4.10 Work with employers

This section examines the role of Personal Advisers in attracting employers to the Service and in supporting employers who had taken on their clients.

4.10.1 Attracting employers to the Personal Adviser Service

This component of the research did not set out to explore how pilot projects marketed the Service to employers. Some pilots had dedicated members of staff for this function, some of whom also carried small caseloads. Personal Advisers in the study reported here generally approved of a division of functions which allowed them to specialise in working directly with clients.

It could be argued that Personal Advisers marketed the Service indirectly when they supported their clients in the job application and interview processes (as illustrated in Sections 4.8.3 and 4.8.4) and by demonstrating in the workplace the support available to clients and employers. However, in the study Personal Advisers rarely spoke about these possible impacts on employers' attitudes to the Personal Adviser Service. Most of their

efforts were concentrated on *'marketing'* individual clients, and how far they took the opportunity to 'sell' the Personal Adviser Service itself was not clear. Some commented that employers would not be interested in taking on a New Deal for Disabled People client in the abstract.

Personal Advisers offered some observations on the appeal of the programme to employers. They felt quite strongly that it was disadvantaged compared with the New Deal for Young People as it had no subsidies to offer other than the Job Introduction Scheme. As employers did not usually distinguish the various New Deals they were sometimes disappointed to discover that the Personal Adviser Service could not offer a subsidy, and an example was given of paying a subsidy from the Intervention Fund. However, Personal Advisers were uncertain about the incentive effect of New Deal subsidies. The Job Introduction Scheme might tip the recruitment decision in favour of an equally qualified interviewee who was disabled. But they felt that the availability of a wage subsidy did not necessarily persuade an employer to consider candidates they might otherwise reject.

Many commented that the New Deal for Disabled People's real *'selling point'* was that the scheme was voluntary - employers were influenced by knowing that its clients had put themselves forward and were motivated to work. It was observed, however, that to be effective the Personal Adviser Service needed to be supported by other work; as one said, *'there is still a lot to do to educate employers about the abilities of disabled people'*.

4.10.2 Supporting employers

In general, Personal Advisers did not see supporting employers as a significant part of their remit. This may derive from their past Employment Service experience; one Personal Adviser commented that the Employment Service had not been good at advertising what it can do to help employers.

Rather few examples were given of the support Personal Advisers gave to employers, either directly or indirectly through their work with individual clients in placements or in paid work. This is explained in part by the fact that relatively few of the Personal Advisers' clients had taken up a job with direct help from the Personal Adviser (others having found work independently) and in part by the system whereby in-placement support was contracted to providers (an option to which many pilot projects were turning). Some Personal Advisers would have preferred to work directly with the client and employer in the workplace if they had enough time.

Those Personal Advisers who discussed their practice of working with clients' employers stressed the need to address employers' concerns about the implications of employing, or providing work experience for, people with mental health problems or with fluctuating conditions. They commented that employers were *'frightened'* of taking on the whole

responsibility and were reassured by knowing that the placement or first weeks or months of a job would be monitored by the Personal Adviser. Some Personal Advisers were ambivalent about revealing to the employer the extent of a client's mental health problem which, they believed, stigmatised the client; others believed it critical that the employer fully understood the effects of ill-health on the client's performance in the workplace.

4.11 Discussion

Personal Advisers who participated in the research were enthusiastic about the New Deal for Disabled People and most believed that the pilot projects were working well. While some had found their role unproblematic, many expressed anxieties about aspects of their remit and most identified obstacles to effective working. This final section, drawing on Personal Advisers' experiences, concentrates on some of the difficulties and tensions encountered in implementation of the pilot projects and discusses their implications for the development of the Personal Adviser Service.

4.11.1 Emerging themes and issues

First we consider factors that appear to have led to the pattern of working described in this chapter, and attempt to explain some of the evolving changes. We then look at some of the issues for practice, and conclude this sub-section by examining some of the constraints on the implementation of the pilot projects and outstanding issues.

Factors shaping initial patterns of work

Personal Advisers were strongly committed to the *client-centred, holistic and problem-solving way of working*. They welcomed the chance to work closely, and at an unpressured pace, with those who needed extra help to move towards employment. In the early days of most pilot projects, low caseloads meant that Personal Advisers could invest their own time in working with clients in this way. A pattern of working was thus established involving:

- an initial willingness to work with clients who showed some potential for work but were not yet thinking about taking up employment, as well as with those who wanted to work but were uncertain about their goals;
- sometimes quite protracted periods of one-to-one working with clients before they joined the official caseload;
- a preference to provide support to clients themselves, rather than to 'hand over' the client to a provider;
- less individualised attention to clients who, when they came to the Service, were job-ready or almost job-ready.

Personal Advisers were strongly attached to *voluntary participation* in the programme. This also affected patterns of working:

- Personal Advisers were reluctant to turn away people who had come forward voluntarily even if they doubted their potential to achieve employment.
- They were reluctant to follow up clients who did not immediately respond to invitations to continue working with them.

Personal Advisers also welcomed the absence of *targets*. This contributed to:

- concentration on *'added value'* rather than employment outcomes;
- investment in working with clients to increase their employability even though they might not obtain employment in the lifetime of the pilot programme;
- diversion of active jobseekers who were having no success in finding jobs into voluntary work or re-training.

Changing work patterns

As caseloads built up, and as messages to focus on achieving employment outcomes became stronger, scope for Personal Advisers to choose how to invest their time became constrained and different patterns of working began to emerge within the pilot projects:

- Pilot projects had to consider how to handle working with two distinct client groups; those who were almost ready to take up work, and those who needed intensive support over a long time period. Some pilot projects were considering allocating 'fast-track' clients to certain Personal Advisers.
- Personal Advisers were beginning to develop their techniques for screening out clients approaching the Personal Adviser Service who were not likely to enter employment in the short to medium term. Alternatives to the standard initial interview were emerging.
- Personal Advisers had to develop skills for 'exiting' those on their caseloads who were not making progress towards sustainable employment. Criteria for making such decisions were in the early stages of development.
- Projects were developing ways of allocating responsibilities within the teams, for example staff dedicated to job-search and job matching, and marketing officers.
- Personal Advisers were looking at how they could use their time more efficiently, and were moving towards a co-ordination role where external providers took on some of their roles in working with clients.
- Opportunities for helping clients with problems in their lives were becoming more constrained, but Personal Advisers were often uncertain about referring clients to other agencies.

Adapting to these emerging changes was problematic for many Personal Advisers. They regretted limited opportunities for ongoing one-to-one working with clients who needed the most help, in part because they sometimes lacked confidence in the quality of external providers, but mostly because they believed that maintaining trust and understanding was important for ensuring clients' progress. They disliked having to disappoint clients who had come forward voluntarily. And they were concerned by what some saw as the replacement of the 'holistic' approach by work-targeted goals.

Issues for practice

We identify here three key issues in the practice of the Personal Adviser Service.

Discretion and inconsistencies in Personal Adviser practice

In a programme set up to explore what is possible, premised on a personalised service, Personal Advisers inevitably had considerable discretion over which client needs they prioritised, how they progressed the case, what they offered clients and which resources they drew upon. Variation in practice can be helpful in highlighting different ways of working but it also leads to inconsistencies in the Service clients receive. Some Personal Advisers were concerned about the absence of guidance (for example in the use of Progress Plans) and the personal responsibility of discretionary decision-making. From the clients' perspective, a lack of transparency in the Service makes it difficult to know what to expect and to judge if their requirements have been met in the best way.

Choice and control

Most Personal Advisers interpreted their role as *'moving people along'* pathways mapped out in a process of negotiation, but some clearly influenced clients in the directions they took by steering them away from unrealistic aspirations and suggesting alternative routes. Typically, Personal Advisers acted as gatekeepers to information about services the client might use. Only a minority believed strongly that their role was to empower, by opening up information to people and allowing them to make decisions for themselves, thus serving as facilitators of people's choices. Progress planning was controlled by the Personal Advisers and although the plan might be seen as a tool for clients it was rarely viewed as the client's property for which he or she had prime responsibility.

Mismatch between service requirements and personal resources

Personal Advisers in the study generally felt qualified, through their Employment Service experience, to support clients actively seeking work. They accepted that they were much less well equipped to serve the requirements of people on long-term incapacity benefits. Personal

Advisers identified a lack of fit between service requirements and what they were able to provide in two major respects:

- Overall, Personal Advisers acknowledged a limited understanding of mental illnesses, treatment regimes and the effects of illnesses on clients.
- Expertise in providing detailed benefits advice to clients was seriously under-developed.

Constraints on project implementation

Some aspects of implementation at the pilot project level which frustrated some Personal Advisers derived from the *structure of the programme*:

- The boundaries of the pilot projects corresponded to Benefits Agency districts, some of which were geographically widespread. For some pilot projects this meant operating across different labour markets, and liaising with more than one social services department or health provider. It entailed setting up multiple offices and interview sites convenient for clients, with concomitant time-consuming travelling and difficulties in working as a team and sharing expertise.
- The mechanisms for sending out the standard Benefits Agency letter to clients were not open to influence. It was not possible for pilot projects to target supplementary publicity at recipients to encourage take-up. Nor were they able to re-design the letter to minimise approaches from claimants not interested in participating in the programme.
- The expectation that pilot projects should use providers already contracted to the Employment Service, the Department for Education and Employment or the Training and Enterprise Council as a first resort, combined with an apparent reluctance to maximise use of the Intervention Fund, appeared to restrict the range and quality of services for clients.
- Working through different providers to support clients at the various points of their journey to employment was not always the Personal Adviser's preferred way of working with a client if they were able to provide the support themselves. Sometimes Personal Advisers and providers worked in parallel, which may not have been the most efficient use of resources.
- Using providers to support clients in work placements restricted Personal Advisers' opportunities to work directly with employers and so market the Service.
- The New Deal for Disabled People presupposes that participants identify themselves as disabled people. Personal Advisers' opportunities to intervene on clients' behalf in the job application process were severely restricted when clients did not wish their 'disabled' status to be revealed to prospective employers.

4.11.2 Implications for service development

The structure of the benefits system and inconsistencies in its implementation were seen as obstacles beyond the control of the pilot projects.

This analysis of the work of Personal Advisers offers a number of pointers for any development of the New Deal for Disabled People Personal Adviser Service. These follow in no order of priority:

- Consideration might be given to how service boundaries are drawn to facilitate Personal Adviser Service contacts with local communities and agencies, and so improve the accessibility of the Service to its clients, and to facilitate team working. Decisions about how the Service is developed hinge on the geographical area covered.
- Staffing decisions need to take account of competencies in meeting the wide-ranging requirements of the client group. Whether it is possible for any one Personal Adviser to be fully equipped to help the wide range of clients approaching the Service could be explored further. The options of appointing (or sub-contracting) specialist staff or of building teams with complementary skills (if close team working can be facilitated) might be considered. Any increase in specialism has implications for the personalised nature of the advisory service, however.
- Personal Advisers need to be educated about mental illnesses and their effects, and about the roles of professionals in the field, in order both to better understand their clients and their requirements and to provide appropriate advice and support to employers. Expertise may also need to be developed in understanding the effects of other health conditions and impairments; assessing how far impairments restrict clients' occupational choices and identifying ergonomic and other practical solutions; and understanding and using external expertise to inform Personal Adviser practice.
- The 'holistic' approach means that Personal Advisers can become involved in helping with problems in clients' lives which might be handled more appropriately by other agencies. The boundaries of the Personal Adviser Service need to be clarified and joint working developed with health, social care and housing agencies to ensure an appropriate division of responsibilities.
- A Personal Adviser Service needs to be able to provide clients with accurate advice about benefits entitlements and detailed calculation of the interaction of benefits and income. Personal Advisers need training to understand the benefits system and access to reliable advice sources. The options of ensuring that all Personal Advisers are fully competent to provide benefits advice or of concentrating expertise in specific staff members need to be weighed up.
- Training is an ongoing need for Personal Advisers. Initial training may need to be reinforced in the light of practice and training on the job might be developed for emerging needs.

- Consideration might be given to practice guidelines to assist Personal Advisers who are uncertain how to proceed and to ensure less inconsistent and more transparent practice. At the same time, clients and employers might be offered clearer information about what they can expect from the Service. Clarity about the purpose of the Service and what it can offer might reduce uncertainties among the public and other professional agencies about who might benefit from it.
- Deciding who is suitable for the Personal Adviser Service among the diverse range of people approaching it is an intractable problem facing the existing pilot projects. There are two issues here: whether the Service is intended only to move disability benefits claimants into paid work; or whether intermediate outcomes (such as voluntary work while retaining benefits) which improve quality of life, as well as employability, are legitimate aims. Some Personal Advisers argued that the latter objective fell within their remit. If the objective is to move people into paid work, what yardsticks can be used to identify suitable clients? Personal Advisers' accounts indicate that *motivation* to work is not related to distance from the labour market or type of impairment. Their judgements of *potential* for paid employment appear to be based on perceived motivation, their knowledge of local labour market conditions and the availability of employers willing to take on disabled people, their assumptions about the effects of impairment on ability to work, and an instinct, grounded in their experience, of whether sustainable employment is feasible in the longer term.

5 THE VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF CLIENTS[32]

5.1 Introduction

The main objective in interviewing clients[33] was to explore their perceptions and experiences of the Personal Adviser Service, and in particular to investigate:

- their expectations of the scheme and reasons for taking part;
- their experiences of the scheme and processes involved; and
- the range of impacts and outcomes of the scheme.

Findings from this part of the study contribute to understanding how the scheme is working and how it is meeting clients' needs; and the perceptions and views that clients may share with other people in the community, which may influence participation generally. Understanding how clients experienced what happened to them provides pointers to ways in which the Service might be improved and developed.

The chapter starts by summarising the research approach adopted and presents a profile of some of the main characteristics of the people interviewed. The next section (5.2) presents an overview of the clients' experience of the Personal Adviser Service, including how it had been helpful and why some people were disappointed. This provides a general picture, and sets the scheme in context before looking more closely at experiences of particular components of the Service. The third section describes the process of dealing with the Personal Adviser Service, and covers clients' motivations and expectations on contacting the Service and the style of ongoing contact. Section 5.4 provides a description of the help and advice that clients received from the Personal Adviser Service and their perceptions of how well this met their needs. The chapter concludes (Section 5.5) by drawing out the main themes emerging from the interviews with clients, and offers some pointers towards the further development of an effective service.

5.1.1 The study

This part of the evaluation comprised a series of in-depth interviews with clients in a purposively selected study group.

The study group was built to include people with a range of personal characteristics and different levels of involvement with the scheme, across the six pilot areas. Selection was based on information recorded in the administrative returns from the Personal Adviser Service and the Benefits

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[32] Fieldwork interviews were conducted by the research teams at SPRU and the National Centre. Sue Arthur, Anne Corden, Jane Lewis, Roy Sainsbury and Patricia Thornton worked on the analysis, and the report was drafted by Anne Corden and Sue Arthur.

[33] Throughout this chapter we use the term 'clients', which is the preferred Personal Adviser Service term, but does not necessarily reflect the language of people interviewed.

Agency database. The aim was to achieve balance in terms of sex and age of participants, and representation of people with health conditions or impairments of different kinds. It was important to include people who had approached the scheme without having been sent a letter of invitation from the Benefits Agency, as well as people who had been sent a letter. Also, by including people from the Benefits Agency 'stock' and from the 'flow' (see Appendix B) and people currently in receipt of different income-replacement benefits it was hoped that people with different employment and benefit histories would be represented. Selection also took account of different recorded outcomes, in terms of whether people had agreed to a Progress Plan, were in a job or placement, or had formally left the scheme.

Most people approached agreed to take part and interviews took place throughout April and May 1999. Interviews generally took place in people's homes, and a small number of interviews were mediated through a spouse or parent, when people had severe mental health problems, sensory impairments or learning difficulties.

Interviewers used a list of topics to guide discussion across the issues of interest. Most interviews were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. Appendix B gives further details of the selection of people in the study group, response, and analytical techniques.

5.1.2 Profile of the study group

It is useful to describe some of the main characteristics of the 31 people included in the study group. This helps to build up a picture of the group of clients whose views and experiences were explored. The group included 17 men and 14 women. In terms of ethnicity, one man said he was of Asian origin, and two women came from European countries outside the UK. There were nine people in each of the two younger age-bands: 20-29 years and 30-39 years; seven people in their 40s and six people aged 50 years or over. The youngest clients were a man of 21 years and a woman of 22 years, and the oldest clients were both men of 63 years.[34]

Family and household circumstances

Table 5.1 summarises clients' family and household circumstances at the time of the research interview. As far as we know, there had been no significant changes in these particular circumstances since the clients were in touch with the Personal Adviser Service.

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[34] The survey of NDDP participants reported in Chapter 3 suggests that this qualitative sample slightly under-represents older clients: 32% of the survey sample were aged 50 or over (Table 3.1).

Table 5.1 Family and household circumstances of 31 clients

Circumstances	Number
Living as lone parent	2
Living with partner and children	8
Living with partner and dependent grandchildren	1
Living with partner (and, for some, other adult family members)	10
Living in parents' home	4
Living alone	5
Living in shared accommodation	1

While some clients talked about the support and encouragement received from domestic partners, who sometimes also brought earnings into the household, other clients had partners who were themselves ill or disabled and not doing paid work. Clients who lived in their parents' homes included younger severely disabled people, who received some help with day-to-day care from parents, but hoped one day to be able to live independently.

Ill-health and impairment

People talked about aspects of ill-health or impairment which had led to problems in getting or staying at work. Not everybody used medical terminology, or the kinds of medical descriptors and diagnoses that are used in the Personal Adviser Service administrative returns. It was not unusual for people to have several health problems or impairments, some of which had fluctuating or variable impact on their lives. Across the study group, conditions described by clients as contributing to problems in working included loss of vision or hearing; musculo-skeletal problems; circulatory disease; skin conditions; loss of mobility; major illnesses such as cancer and multiple sclerosis; problems with memory and learning; pain; nausea and headaches (sometimes associated with treatment regimes and medication); alcoholism; history of drug misuse; and different kinds of mental illness including depression and schizophrenia.

Some people described having health problems or impairments since childhood, for example problems associated with spina bifida and hydrocephalus. Others in the group had experienced the onset of illness later in life, such as people who developed cancer or heart disease. Some explained how ill-health or impairment had gradually become worse, including people with arthritis and spinal problems. Other people in the group had experienced sudden impact of impairment after accidents or unexpected injuries. Such differences in experience of ill-health or impairment help to explain the wide differences in employment histories, discussed later. There were also people who had left work as a result of one kind of illness, but then developed additional different health problems or impairments while away from work, creating new problems in returning to employment. Examples were people who had given up work due to

back problems, and subsequently experienced the development of depressive or circulatory illness.

Sources of income

The study group was built to include people with different benefit histories, claiming a range of earnings-replacement benefits including Incapacity Benefit (at short-term and long-term rates), Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support (see Appendix B). A small number were not claiming disability or sickness benefits, including some in work, or were allowed National Insurance credits only.

When interviewed, not everybody could put a name to the benefits they received, and some were currently in transitional situations and uncertain about entitlements. Three people said they were claiming Severe Disablement Allowance and eight mentioned Income Support. It appeared that 13 people claimed Incapacity Benefit. Those who had earned income included two men working as employees, another man with self-employed earnings supplemented by Disability Working Allowance, and two women who worked part-time and claimed Income Support, with the therapeutic earnings disregard. Another person was still receiving a monthly salary although currently not well enough to work. Two men who had, respectively, just left a job because of ill-health and just completed a training course, were unclear what their current situation was with respect to benefits. A woman who was receiving National Insurance credits only said she had been told that her husband's earnings meant that she was not entitled to Income Support.

A full analysis of all sources of income in the clients' households was beyond the scope of this study. It was common for people to report receipt of Disability Living Allowance, mentioning different components and various rates. Several clients said they had occupational pensions from previous work, and some household incomes also included earnings, pensions and benefits of partners, and benefits and allowances paid in respect of children. Where particular sources of income were reported to be influential in decisions made this is described later in the chapter.

Using the material

The clients in the study group were among the early entrants to the Service. There is no reason to believe that their experiences were atypical among early entrants, but some of what they reported may be associated with the relatively early stage of development of some pilot projects. It is important to remember that the clients were at different stages in engagement with the Personal Adviser Service when they talked about their experiences. Some were talking about a service they had used in the past, and with which they were no longer in touch. Others were currently service users, some of whom had not yet had the opportunity

of benefiting from the full range of advice and help that the Service might offer in the future.

The group is not representative of Personal Adviser Service clients in a statistical sense. In what follows, numbers are not used; people are grouped together for analytical and explanatory purposes, and to show emerging patterns and themes, but there is no statistical inference to the general Personal Adviser Service clientele. Findings should be used to gain insight and understanding about how the Personal Adviser Service pilots were working for this group of people.

5.2 An overview of the experience of the Personal Adviser Service

It is useful to have an overview of the role and significance of interaction with the Personal Adviser Service for the people in the study group, before looking in detail at clients' expectations and experiences of different components of the Service. This part of the chapter aims to sketch in 'the whole picture', as presented by clients, which aids understanding of detailed aspects of use and delivery of the Service which are addressed in following sections. We look first at clients' employment histories when they made contact with the Personal Adviser Service; the skills and qualifications they already had to offer, and their motivations regarding the place of work in their lives. We then sketch out the problems perceived in achieving their aims. We summarise clients' views of the overall relevance and impact of the Personal Adviser Service. The material presented will be explored further in later sections, and the overview will be developed in more detail in the final section. An overall picture at this stage will help to set the general scene from the beginning of our account.

5.2.1 Clients' employment histories at first contact with the Personal Adviser Service

A small number of people in the study group had never been in paid work, including younger people whose impairments arose in childhood or adolescence, and who continued to live with supportive parents, and a woman who had started a family as soon as she finished her education.

Most of the Personal Adviser Service clients interviewed already had some experience of paid work when they first made contact with the Service. There was considerable difference in their 'distance' from work in chronological terms. A small number had already accepted a job when they approached the Personal Adviser Service; identified a job they wanted to apply for, or considered themselves currently 'off sick' from a job to which they expected to return.

Others in the study group had some experience of paid work in the past, but had left their last work on becoming ill or disabled and did not have a job to return to. A different trajectory described by a small group of middle-aged women was leaving work primarily to care for children or elderly relatives, and then experiencing deterioration in health.

Among those with no work to return to, the length of time that they had been without work varied. Those who had most recent experience of working included people who had to leave their job during the past year as a result of worsening back problems, and an injury at work. Absences from work of two or three years were described by people who had developed major illnesses, requiring periods in hospital and continuing treatment, and people whose lives had been interrupted by development of or recurrence of mental illness. For one young man, time away from work had been lengthened by a period of imprisonment as well as mental illness.

It was not unusual for people to report not having worked for five years or more. A man trying to overcome alcoholism had not worked for seven/eight years. The longest periods out of work were described by a man in his 50s who last worked 14 years ago, before injury and subsequent spinal degeneration, and a woman in her 40s who had last been employed more than 20 years ago before raising a family and experiencing deteriorating health.

5.2.2 Clients' skills and qualifications

Findings from the quantitative survey suggest that a relatively high proportion of Personal Adviser Service clients had had at least one formal qualification (Chapter 3, Table 3.3). Across the qualitative study group there was a wide range of educational and work-related qualifications, and vocational skills. While a few people had left school with minimal qualifications, several people had continued with their education to degree level and/or acquired professional qualifications. Several men had served apprenticeships in vehicle maintenance and engineering trades, and both men and women had completed secretarial, administrative and computing courses. Other clients described specialist skills and experience in performance arts, medical services and industrial processes.

While educational and work-related qualifications and skills were seen as an advantage by people who felt it would be possible to use these again, others believed they would no longer be able to do the work for which they already had qualifications or experience. For example, men who had previously worked in engineering, manual or technical trades and had developed musculo-skeletal problems, or heart disease did not expect to be able to return to the same kind of work. A person who had been a nurse thought that this kind of work would now be too stressful. A person whose sight had gone over a short period of time thought he could no longer do the kind of technical work for which he was trained. People like this, as well as those who had few qualifications or skills, and little work experience, thought that steps towards work might involve retraining, or extending their education and qualifications.

5.2.3 Reasons for working

Reasons for working were expressed differently. Those who had previous long employment histories talked about going to work again as part of a normal life; what they had usually done before their life was interrupted

by illness or injury. The view that work was a normal part of life was shared by people who had so far not experienced paid work - young disabled people talked about wanting to be part of society; they also aimed at normality and dignity. Having a job could be an important part of the roles which people wanted to fill in their family lives. Young people spoke of their parents' hopes that they would be able to have a job, and men spoke of their need to be seen to be supporting their family.

Work was valued for the interest and opportunities it offered. People who had to spend long hours at home or alone wanted a purpose and interest; to get out of the house; to meet other people. Work was also recognised as a way of managing some kinds of illness. A woman with mental illness explained that work helped to prevent recurrence of symptoms.

The need for higher income was especially important to people with dependants. Men and women with families spoke of the need to bring more money into the household, and a lone parent found it hard to manage on her current income. It could be hard to maintain mortgage repayments or try to deal with other kinds of debts without earned income. Some people compared current incomes with previous higher salaries or good wages, and wanted to regain their standard of living. Those who seemed less motivated towards achieving higher incomes included younger people who shared their parents' homes, and some single people who had become used to living on low incomes.

The source of income was important to those who disliked being 'dependent' - being financially independent could be as important, or more important than being better off. Strong feelings of this kind were expressed by some of those who disliked what they perceived as constant surveillance of their benefit entitlement - being called for interview or medical examinations, and having to worry about the effects on benefit of doing voluntary or unpaid work. There was some stigma attached to being out of work and claiming benefits; and some fear of being thought fraudulent in claiming benefits.

5.2.4 The problems perceived

Not all the people interviewed perceived major problems in getting or keeping work. This did not mean that they would necessarily be in work immediately as the strategies they were pursuing might take some time, but they did not perceive a great need for help and their morale and confidence were high.

However, across the group as a whole, a number of problems were perceived in getting or keeping work, many of which were similar to those that have been described by non-disabled people. For example, the lack of suitable jobs in their area; problems and expense of travelling to work; the length of time out of the labour market; being too old; lack of training; lack of qualifications; lack of experience; lack of confidence;

and problems of fitting work around child care and family responsibilities, especially for people whose domestic partners were also ill or disabled. Such problems were often perceived as increased by ill-health or impairment.

People also talked about the financial uncertainties and risks perceived in taking a job. There were considerable anxieties about being able to earn enough money on a regular basis; the uncertainties of transitional periods and loss of security of benefit income in the future. Being able to pay the mortgage from low or insecure earnings was an anxiety mentioned by some people who currently had some mortgage protection through Income Support.

When people talked about the problems associated with the nature of their illness or impairment these were perceived not only in terms of their own limitations or difficulties but also, for some people, in terms of employer attitudes. Some people were talking about anticipated problems here, while others already had experience of difficulties.

There were, within this group, people who often felt ill, such as people with active cancer, severe mental health problems or heart disease. Those who were currently undergoing treatment sometimes depended on strong medication to control symptoms, with debilitating side-effects. Most aspects of such people's lives were hard, and they knew work would make heavy demands. People who had to deal with pain or exhaustion expected this to impose restrictions; travelling to work could be a problem. People who experienced conditions that recurred, especially those which were unpredictable such as arthritis flare-ups or epileptic fits, believed they might need time away from work. Unpredictable effects of medication or treatment also posed problems.

People with mental health problems sometimes found it hard to concentrate, and some felt they reacted badly to normal aspects of the workplace such as supervision or social interaction with colleagues. Anxiety that work might make them ill again was expressed by people who had experienced depressive illness, schizophrenia and heart disease.

This picture reflects the findings from the quantitative survey of clients, which showed that high proportions of clients said that it would be easier for them to work if they could have a flexible job, work that was not heavy or physically demanding, or work that was not stressful (Table 3.26).

Authoritative advice not to work from doctors or psychiatrists could be a strong influence, although not all those who had received such advice agreed with it.

People who did not feel ill, such as people with sensory impairments, described how practicalities of access, communication, ergonomics, or environmental aspects imposed limitations on the kind of work they could do.

Negative attitudes of employers were especially feared by people who had back problems, arthritis, heart disease and mental health problems. Some employers, it was believed, would be reluctant to offer jobs to people they expected to have time off work. Some employers were believed to want to avoid the possibility of any recrimination if employment worsened people's health. Some of these fears were based on beliefs and expectations, but some people had real experience of unhelpful attitudes from employers. A person with a visible skin condition described several job interviews in which employers had said they 'could not take the risk' that the condition might be associated with the work.

Being seen to be able to work might have disadvantages, however. Of particular significance to some people was the possibility they perceived of losing Disability Living Allowance if they demonstrated interest in or ability to do work. This benefit was important in helping people meet the extra costs of ill-health or disability, or making it possible to travel around. Some already had real experience of a previous loss or down-rating of Disability Living Allowance and the problems there had been in regaining entitlement. Others had fears based on what had happened to family members or friends in similar situations.

5.2.5 Steps taken towards work

Across the group, the number, type and extent of problems faced were thus perceived and experienced differently by individual people. At the same time, motivations and confidence varied considerably, and people were at different stages in terms of the steps towards work they were already making when they approached the Personal Adviser Service. Putting together some of these characteristics and circumstances, clients appeared to fall into the following groups, when they first made contact with the Personal Adviser Service:

- *Group A*: people who had already identified a specific job they wanted to take or return to. They perceived relatively low barriers, and were confident about being able to do the work. Concerns were mainly financial; whether they could maintain their earnings, how to boost low incomes, and the financial insecurities of moving off benefits.
- *Group B*: people who had already identified a job they wanted to do but still had some concerns about their ability to work, due to their health condition or impairment, and its impact. Mostly these were people with fluctuating health conditions including mental health problems. Some were strongly influenced in their pursuit of work by the financial pressures they felt.

- *Group C*: people who were actively engaged in job-search and applications. The barriers perceived were largely related to finding a suitable job, and dealing with employer attitudes. Some were concerned about what kind of job it would be sensible to pursue. In this group were several people with back problems, or improved mental health.
- *Group D*: people who were actively engaged in obtaining training or education as part of their strategy to get work. They often had a clear job goal, although it might take some time to achieve it. The barriers they perceived were largely related to their need for further qualifications or experience, for example how to get access to a suitable course, and pay for it.
- *Group E*: people who appeared to be a long way from the labour market, with considerable concerns about their ability to do paid work. They perceived high barriers, especially in relation to their lack of qualifications and experience, and financial insecurity, but did not emphasise problems associated with their health or impairment. Some had a job goal, but none had a strategy as to how to reach it, and few were engaged on an activity that might take them on a forward path towards work, for example voluntary work.
- *Group F*: people who also appeared to be a long way from the labour market, with considerable concerns about their health. In this group were older people with deteriorating health conditions, and people with mental health problems. They were not engaged on an activity that might take them nearer paid work, and were spending most of their time at home, on domestic activities. Some had ideas about how they might 'test out' work, or a job goal for the future, when their circumstances changed.

Such diversity of circumstances, motivations and readiness to work makes considerable demands on the scope, quality and pace of the Service available to individual clients through the Personal Adviser Service. People in the first two groups above had already overcome many problems and were looking for advice or help with final stages, or just actively searching for all possible opportunities that might help them. Those in the first group had clear aims, and were confident of realising plans. Some in the second group felt that additional support would be helpful, and there were also some in this group who thought they might reconsider what they were doing.

People in the next two groups probably had further to go in moving towards work. The timescale might be longer, and there were likely to be more steps along the way, in terms of further job applications, placements, training or education. While there were some people in both groups with a clear strategy about resumption of work, it appeared to the researchers that while plans matured there might be other major influences, such as family demands, or changes in their own health. A Personal Adviser Service which provided a more holistic approach, over

a longer timescale would be appropriate for some people in this group and some might need considerable encouragement and help, both in taking positive steps towards work and in building confidence and self-esteem.

People in the remaining two groups had considerable anxieties about the possibility of trying work, or having paid work again. They were less strongly motivated towards work, generally. It appeared to the researchers that there might have been scope for positive influence from the Personal Adviser Service for some people in this group, especially in terms of remotivation and building self-esteem and confidence, and suggestion of strategies or help in 'trying out' activities. A fairly long timescale might have been necessary. For others, it appeared perhaps unlikely that paid work was a realistic objective unless there were major improvements in health, or changes in other life circumstances that enabled a change in perspective or focus.

Clear links can be seen between the above groupings, based on the clients' reported characteristics and circumstances when they made contact with the Personal Adviser Service, and the way in which Personal Advisers themselves characterised clients (Section 4.3.3).

We continue the overview of clients' interaction with the Personal Adviser Service by looking at whether and how the Service had been helpful.

5.2.6 How had the Personal Adviser Service helped?

Clients perceived the Personal Adviser Service as helpful in a number of ways:

Positive influence on morale, confidence or self-esteem

People were generally appreciative of the personal interactions they had with Personal Advisers and other staff, and many left discussions with higher morale and self-esteem. They felt valued, and felt they had authoritative endorsement of the advantages and possibility of work. People who had decided they did not want to go ahead at the moment still valued the personal interactions, the interest shown and the way in which they had been treated.

Opening new options which appeared or had proved useful

Some of what people reported as new options had yet to be explored or acted upon, and we do not know what the eventual effect will be. There were some examples of people who had gained new ideas or new information that had already led to action. Some initial interviews had sharpened goals in thinking about career paths, leading for one person to active pursuit of qualifications in a profession. On the other hand, some people said the discussions had widened their horizons and helped them think more broadly about what might be possible.

In terms of financial discussions which offered new options, people had been reassured by learning, or receiving confirmation, that they could return to their benefits if the jobs they tried did not work out, or that it would be possible to supplement low earnings with benefits.

Providing or enabling access to something already identified as necessary

Among the most satisfied clients were those who said they had been helped to do more quickly, or more easily, things that were already happening or to which they were already committed. There were several examples of people who had already identified places on training courses they wanted to attend, either through mainstream employment or education services, from friends or through voluntary organisations. They had learned that access and funding came via the Personal Adviser Service, and when the Adviser could make the arrangements for this, it was helpful. There were some examples of people who had received assistance with job-search, and appointments for job placements that were appreciated.

Direct financial help was usually highly valued, and often was believed to have enabled or helped things move along more quickly. Where a better-off calculation had been asked for, provided, and understood, this was reported as useful, and had sometimes contributed to further action.

Intervention to prevent or divert something perceived as unhelpful

The Personal Adviser was said to have made a positive difference in some situations where intervention had prevented something happening that the client perceived as unhelpful. People who had been called for interviews by the Jobcentre or called for an All Work Test in the middle of their own plans or courses of action were glad when the Adviser could sort this out, preventing wasted time and frustration. One Adviser had taken an active part in negotiations with an employer to prevent unhelpful working conditions, so that the client felt more confident in going back to work.

As well as these outcomes and influences that clients felt had made a positive difference, as we would expect, some people said there had been negative impacts.

5.2.7 Constraints and disappointments

Clients expressed a number of disappointments and dissatisfactions. Some went further and said they had embarked on actions that were unhelpful and frustrating as a result of using the Personal Adviser Service.

Clients' experiences provide further perspectives on findings from the previous chapter, in particular the need for Personal Advisers to be equipped to understand the effects of health conditions and impairments;

the need for the Service to offer accurate information about benefits; and some of the uncertainties and lack of transparency in the Service (Section 4.11.2).

Perceived gaps in service

It was frustrating for clients who wanted specific information about benefits and better-off calculations when they felt they did not get this.

It was disappointing for clients who hoped for specific direct financial help if this could not be offered. If expectations of financial help were raised at an early stage but the client was subsequently told such options were not possible, this was disappointing, and of course, perceived as a gap in the Service.

Clients who hoped the Personal Adviser would arrange more job interviews or come up with a placement or course to meet their requirements sometimes perceived inactivity or ineffectiveness in the Adviser. We do not know what decisions or actions the Personal Adviser had taken on their behalf.

Disappointing or poor quality service

There were some problems of access to the Service and to individual Personal Advisers. Not everybody was pleased with the Personal Adviser's general approach and manner. Those who said they did not believe the Personal Adviser had understood their needs were mainly people with mental health problems and people with sensory or mobility impairments. Some people had felt the pace of progress had been inappropriate, and some were left uncertain about what was happening. Not everybody was comfortable about the responsibilities which the Personal Advisers appeared to have taken on their behalf.

Interventions perceived as inappropriate

People were frustrated when they went for interviews or work placements that proved, they believed, inappropriate. It could be demotivating and demoralising if people felt that the Personal Adviser tried to dissuade them from a chosen course of action. There were a number of mismatches in expectations, and assessments of needs and abilities between clients and Personal Advisers. (The previous Chapter (4.5.2) explained how Personal Advisers interpreted their role in steering clients towards 'realistic' work goals.)

In a pilot scheme that offers a new approach to a heterogeneous group of people we would expect some clients to report unhelpful impact, as well as people who had positive overall experience. In the following parts of the chapter, we explore clients' experiences in detail, in order to understand their perceptions of what had happened.

5.2.8 *Making a difference*

The interviews with clients were not designed to provide overall assessments of the outcome of their interaction with the Personal Advisers. The people interviewed were at different stages in their use of the Service. Some were no longer using the Service, while others expected further interaction and developments. There might be changes in objectives of some clients. However, the researchers did ask clients to reflect on the overall process of interaction with the Personal Adviser Service, and to consider how much difference it had made in their lives, and, primarily, in their relation to paid work. We therefore conclude this section with a summary of the reflections offered about the overall impact of the Personal Adviser Service, so far.

A small group of people felt that the Personal Adviser Service had made little or no difference to what was happening in their lives, and some people in this group went further and said that the overall impact had been to waste their time and energy, or increase their frustration and lack of motivation. All these people had got in touch with the Personal Adviser Service after receiving a letter from the Benefits Agency, and initially had been interested in what might be offered. There were men and women in this group, in all age groups, and clients of all six pilot projects. Among them were people already close to work - currently off sick, or engaged on active job-search, as well as people at greater distance from work. Reasons why people felt that nothing positive had come about included being directed to interviews for jobs or places on training courses that were perceived as unsuitable or unhelpful. Some people criticised Personal Advisers' inability to provide adequate information about the effect on benefits, for example better-off calculations, or in-work benefits, especially if this was critical information. When people had been initially encouraged by suggestions that the Personal Adviser might find work placements or look for suitable jobs, and nothing subsequently happened, people were disillusioned and disappointed. When the Personal Adviser Service proved unhelpful, the people in this group tended to continue on their previous course of action. For some this meant getting on with their own strategy as before, which sometimes included advice from voluntary organisations or a trade union, which were considered more effective. There was little expectation among these people of getting in touch with the Service again.

In contrast was another small group of people who felt that the Personal Adviser Service had made a considerable positive difference so far in their move towards work. There were men and women in this group; the oldest was 43 years old. There were people who had volunteered for help as well as those who came in response to the Benefits Agency's letter. Again, this group included some highly motivated people already actively engaged on their own strategy, including gaining professional qualifications, training, and job-search, as well as people who were currently not doing much that would take them nearer paid work when

they got in touch with the Personal Adviser Service. The tangible steps forward that were acknowledged as making a big difference included identifying new career paths, receiving help in identifying and funding suitable training courses, being offered work placements, and receiving direct financial help, including costs of travel, purchase of a special chair, and a payment to help meet living expenses of the first weeks in work. One young person described the 'kick-start' he had received as influential; another described efforts currently being made by the Personal Adviser in negotiating new working conditions so that she might try to return to work. Those people who said that the Personal Adviser had made a considerable difference in what was happening in their lives were not always uncritical, however. The process could seem disempowering, and one person had felt a lack of in-work support in her job.

The largest group of clients were those who said that the Personal Adviser Service had made some positive difference. Experiences within this group covered a wide spectrum. 'Making a positive difference' did not always mean there had been tangible moves towards work. People who were no longer in contact with the scheme, having decided that they were not well enough to take further steps could still report the Service as having made a big difference to their lives if they had received understanding treatment which helped them come to terms with their circumstances. Similarly, knowing that there was a trusted person available, who would be ready to help should their health improve could have a powerful effect on confidence and self-esteem, and be experienced as 'a big difference'.

In terms of more tangible aspects identified by clients who said that the Service had made some difference were having identified the kind of work they would like to do; identifying a suitable training course; arranging funding for a training course; practical and financial help in setting up a small business; providing correct and helpful information about benefits; and intensifying and concentrating job-search activities. In this group, there were clients of all age groups, men and women, clients of all six pilot projects, and people who had responded to the Benefits Agency's letters as well as volunteers.

In view of the previous account of different ways in which clients had found the Personal Adviser Service helpful (Section 5.2.6) there might be some surprise that relatively few people interviewed said that, taking an overall view, the Personal Adviser Service had made a big difference. It might also be surprising that those who were in work at the time of the research interview said that this was not primarily due to contact with the Personal Adviser. In order to understand this, it is helpful to realise the extent to which some people in this group of clients were already pursuing activities in parallel to what was happening with the Personal Adviser Service. Some already had work to go to or return to. Several people in this group were already actively engaged in education, training,

search for courses, job applications, and setting up small businesses. Some were doing semi-vocational classes. Engaging with the Personal Adviser Service was just one strand for people who were already receiving valued help from mainstream Employment Service services, voluntary organisations and trade unions. As we see later (Section 5.3.5) engaging with the Personal Adviser Service was experienced by some clients less as being part of a 'programme' with a plan for stepwise progression, than as an experience of 'dipping-in' for a specific purpose. This being the case, we would expect that even if such people felt entirely satisfied with the help they had received, they would nonetheless see it as 'of some help' only.

We must add to this the other influential life experiences that were important. Some people in the group had severe health problems, and periods of hospital treatment, increases in pain, reduction of mobility, and effects of medication had important consequences for several clients during the period of interaction with the Personal Adviser Service. What happened in other parts of people's lives, including their family life and their relationships with partners, children and parents, continued to be important to people, and could influence choices made and decisions taken. For some people in this group, their interaction with the Personal Adviser Service was really a rather small part of what was happening.

Having set the general picture, the chapter goes on to explore in greater detail clients' experiences of particular components of the overall service.

5.3 Dealing with the Personal Adviser Service

This section describes how clients came to be in contact with the Personal Adviser Service, their expectations of the Service, and the process of dealing with the Service. Section 5.3.4 describes the impact of their first interview with the Personal Adviser, and Sections 5.3.5-5.3.7 look at the nature of ongoing contacts with the scheme.

Throughout Sections 5.3 and 5.4, we are drawing on clients' perceptions of their contact with the Personal Adviser Service. What people remember about their involvement in the process will vary considerably. The material is best used to understand the impressions people had of their contact with the scheme, and the effect they felt it had on helping them move towards paid work. Clients' perceptions are clearly very important, as they are part of what shapes subsequent contacts with the scheme and what information they pass on to the wider community.

There were three interviews where it was impossible to identify any point at which the respondent had been in contact with the scheme. This may partly be due to poor recall, perhaps reflecting the low significance of the Personal Adviser Service in these people's lives, or it may be that the Service was indistinguishable from contact with other Employment Service services. In all three cases, there were identifiable points of contact with government agencies, in relation to moving from

benefits towards work. These people had either had multiple contacts with agencies, or had been passed rapidly between agencies, including by telephone. Information has only been included from these interviews where appropriate.

In all other interviews, it was possible to identify a point at which they had first come into contact with the Personal Adviser Service. Where clients were unaware that the person they had seen was from the Personal Adviser Service, the researcher sometimes recognised the name of the person described by the client as a Personal Adviser in the local service.

5.3.1 Finding out about the Personal Adviser Service

Clients in the study group described finding out about or coming across the Personal Adviser Service in a number of ways. Finding out about the scheme involved two stages – hearing about it and knowing how to make contact.

Responding to the Benefits Agency's invitation letter or leaflet was one of the main ways in which people had found out about the scheme. There was a range of other formal and more informal ways that clients had come across the Personal Adviser Service; sometimes their knowledge about the scheme had built up from a number of different sources.

- *BA letter*: this had informed people about the Personal Adviser Service and given a point of contact. People did not have any major criticisms of the letter, and said they had known that getting in touch was voluntary. Occasionally, people had not felt ready for work or in need of help at that point, and had thrown the letter away, subsequently making contact when they had identified a job they were interested in. Otherwise, clients described making contact with the Personal Adviser Service soon after receiving the letter.
- *Employment Service services*: where people had some limited knowledge about New Deal for Disabled People (for example, from national media sources), they had approached the Jobcentre or a Disability Employment Adviser to find out more; other people had approached the Employment Service in search of general help or advice and had been given contact details for the Personal Adviser Service. One respondent said she had seen a sign by chance at the Jobcentre when accompanying someone else.
- *Local information sources*: for example, publicity in a local newspaper or visiting a stand at an organised Mental Health day. One young man had been told about New Deal for Disabled People by a friend who had encouraged him to go along, to stop him 'grumbling' about the benefit trap he felt he was in (where he was classified as either 'capable' or 'incapable' of work with no status in between). However, clients who felt that they were not 'disabled' said they had dismissed local publicity as not relevant to themselves.

- *External service providers*: some people were given contact details by local service providers, for example a disability specialist training provider. This happened where people wanted to obtain a place on the training course, and where the Personal Adviser Service had been recommended as a source of specialist advice.
- *Referral through social worker*: one person had an appointment set up for him by his social worker – he had a major sensory impairment and relied heavily on his social worker for assistance with communication.

The role of other organisations as a source of information about the Personal Adviser Service was clearly important here.

Making contact with the Personal Adviser Service generally appeared to have been straightforward. Clients had made a telephone call direct to the Personal Adviser Service, or had been shown to the Personal Adviser Service office within the Jobcentre. However, there had been some confusion between the new service and Disability Employment Advisers, and some people thought the adviser they had seen was a Disability Employment Adviser. One young woman had made a general enquiry at the Jobcentre, had been seen by an adviser from New Deal for Young People (despite having explained that she was a disability benefit claimant) and told that she was too old. As it had taken a lot of courage to approach the Employment Service, she had felt distressed and discouraged. (She had subsequently received a telephone call from a Personal Adviser inviting her for an appointment.). These confusions may suggest a need for more clearly identified roles and referral mechanisms within the Employment Service.

People on the whole had little to say about their first contact with the scheme, which had usually taken place through a telephone call to the Personal Adviser Service, but in some cases was face-to-face. Contact was either via a receptionist or direct with the Personal Adviser, and where clients talked about the telephonist, they described their manner as friendly and appropriate. In one area, clients remembered the receptionist saying that he was also a disabled person, and had found this encouraging and valued his empathy.

One young man's initial contact had been through attending a *'meeting'* (possibly the Personal Adviser Service launch) which he had found impressive and encouraging. However, initial contact had occasionally been discouraging, when people had been told that the help they required was not available (discussed further in Section 5.4). It was not clear whether these contacts had been with a Personal Adviser or a receptionist.

The route to the Personal Adviser Service described by people did not always match the details provided in the Benefits Agency's database. Only half of those who were recorded as having been sent an invitation letter described this as their way of finding out about the Personal Adviser

Service, and the others did not remember receiving a letter. For people who described their contact in ways other than via the invitation letter, the use of their own initiative and self-motivation was important to them.

5.3.2 Motivations, expectations and concerns

People described a range of motivations and expectations on making contact with the scheme, which largely reflect the situation that they were in and their perception of their needs (as discussed in Section 5.2). Their knowledge and understanding of how the Personal Adviser Service works also underpinned what they were expecting or hoping for.

It is difficult to draw any strong conclusions about people's knowledge or expectations prior to making contact with the Personal Adviser Service, as these are likely to be influenced by their subsequent contact. People's initial knowledge was linked to how they had found out about the scheme. Awareness of the nature of the scheme on the whole appeared to have been fairly low prior to making contact, and where this was the case people did not have very specific or clear expectations of what they were looking for from the Personal Adviser Service. Some people had gathered a general awareness from the letter or other publicity that help was being provided for moving back to work. Others had a limited awareness of a single aspect if they had been recommended in relation to a specific need (for example, the provision of benefits advice).

Where awareness was limited, this had sometimes increased on making contact, and clients expressed surprise at the breadth of service that was on offer. However, awareness of specific elements of the Service seemed to have remained fairly low for most clients, sometimes causing confusion about what they were eligible for or what help they could ask for. (This is discussed further in Section 5.4.)

Initial motivations and expectations

There were three different sets of expectations, which were linked to what people knew about the Personal Adviser Service and how they had found out about it. First, some people approached the Service seeking 'help to work' in a general sense. They tended to be people who were some distance from the labour market, who were not looking actively for work, and did not have a clear perception of the type of job they wanted to do or what steps might be needed to move towards work (people in groups E and F described in Section 5.2.5). They tended to have responded to the Benefits Agency's invitation letter. They were sometimes looking for voluntary work or training before they felt they would be ready for work. Where people saw the Personal Adviser Service as something new or different, the letter had prompted interest or curiosity about what help might be on offer. Others talked about raised hopes and expectations, a feeling that *'something could actually be done'*.

A second set of people also had a fairly general aim in contacting the Personal Adviser Service, but tended to have clearer ideas about the type of work they wanted, or appeared to have more direction and certainty about their chances of getting work (these people were generally in groups C or D, in Section 5.2.5). They described their contact with the scheme as having happened under their own initiative, because they felt it was the 'right time' to think about working. For example, clients said that their health had improved and they felt able to work, others felt motivated by changes in their home circumstances (settling down with a girlfriend, or a daughter starting at school). One woman said that a motivating factor for her was having won a Disability Living Allowance appeal: knowing that her Disability Living Allowance income was guaranteed for 5 years gave her the security to pursue options for working. Some had responded to the invitation letter, because it had come at the right time in terms of identifying a job, or starting to look for work. They mainly looked to the Personal Adviser Service for help with finding a job, or with identifying and obtaining further training or qualifications.

There was a third distinct set of expectations among people who had a clear idea of what they wanted to do, sometimes having already found work or a specific training course. They had contacted the Personal Adviser Service for some specific help or advice in a range of areas:

- Funding for an identified course.
- Benefits advice.
- Financial assistance in starting up a business.
- 'Clearance' for doing identified therapeutic or voluntary work.
- Advice about future possible loss of paid job.
- Advice about financial support for starting an identified job.

Clients tended to have these specific expectations when they had been referred by a service provider or other organisation. They were less likely to have a perception of the Personal Adviser Service as a 'holistic' service, but more as a service that they could tap into, or another option to explore (this is discussed further in Section 5.4.2).

Initial concerns

In terms of approaching the Personal Adviser Service, clients in this study group did not on the whole express a high level of anxiety or concern, which is perhaps not surprising given that they had initiated contact themselves. Among people who had responded to the letter, there was no impression that they felt obliged to respond. In addition, people who approached the scheme for ad-hoc advice or help may be less likely to have concerns if they did not see themselves as 'signing up' to an ongoing scheme. However, where people had low confidence or were self-consciousness about their appearance, this sometimes caused anxiety about meeting the Personal Adviser.

People did express considerable anxieties in terms of making the move towards work. For example, some had concerns about losing benefits, either because of not being able to sustain a job, or because of being re-assessed as ineligible for Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance if they started moving towards work. Occasionally, making contact with the Personal Adviser Service had added to clients' fear of losing benefits through reassessment, because it is a government agency.

There were clients who were concerned about using the Personal Adviser Service and thus identifying themselves as 'disabled' because of fear of discrimination against them by employers (this is discussed further in Section 5.4.6).

5.3.3 Location of the Personal Adviser Service

In terms of the accessibility and suitability of office venues, no general patterns could be discerned in clients' views. These depended on individual circumstances and preferences. The length and ease of the journey was important to people with mobility problems or pain, and those who had to rely on public transport or help from friends who drove cars. The expense of the journey was also important. Venues identified as 'community centres' were convenient to some clients, for these reasons, but other people found Jobcentres similarly convenient. Offices located within Jobcentres could present problems to people who did not like the proximity of 'the DSS', and there was some anxiety about the possibility of DSS surveillance of work-related activity leading to disputed entitlement or loss of benefits. Having to visit a Jobcentre was 'degrading' for one woman, and probably one of the main reasons for her for not maintaining contact with the Personal Adviser.

Offices that were not at ground level were a problem for people with mobility or visual impairments or limited energy and those who feared being in a lift. When clients had identified such problems, they had received *'help'* from security staff or staff in the Personal Adviser Service. Doors that were not open could also be a problem. People who were anxious, lacked confidence or easily became paranoid had to find extra courage to knock, or ask a porter to work the door-code. Security staff could seem threatening to people with particular kinds of mental illness, and offers of assistance at the door or in a general reception area were not always helpful, for similar reasons.

People were appreciative of being offered a choice of venues and being visited at home, and there was some surprise at this level of flexibility. Others would have preferred to talk to a Personal Adviser at home but had not realised that this might be possible, or had been told that this was not easy to arrange because two members of staff would have to come.

In the office setting there was appreciation of being able to talk to the Personal Adviser in a *'private room'*, sometimes contrasted with previous bad experiences of discussing private matters in open-plan offices at

Jobcentres. Clients who had visited offices at an early stage in the pilot had noticed that things did not seem quite ready - equipment was not set up or working properly, and unpacking was still in progress.

5.3.4 Experience and impact of first interview with Personal Adviser

Clients' recall of the details of their first interview with a Personal Adviser was not always very good. This seemed to be the case where their contact generally had a low salience, or where there had been several early interviews, which all merged into one. First interviews appear to have lasted anything up to two hours, and were generally at the Personal Adviser Service office or at an outpost.

There was a wide variety in what clients seemed to have discussed at the first interview, on the whole appearing to reflect the client's objectives and expectations. Some discussions therefore seemed to have been very general (covering employment history and aspirations, health and so on), whereas others had covered mechanisms for funding for training, information about benefit claims or better-off calculations, or how to set up therapeutic earnings arrangements. Little appeared to be off-limits, although some clients said that they would not want to discuss anything very personal or reveal 'too much' at a first interview. In addition, some people said that the Personal Adviser had felt there was no need to discuss benefits issues until they were nearer to obtaining a job (these issues are discussed further in Section 5.4.2).

Clients did not generally talk about any formal outcomes of their first meeting, or any written plans of action (see Section 5.3.5 below). However, on the basis of the first interview, a range of different actions appear to have been taken by the Personal Adviser, for example, setting up a training course, or beginning job-search for the client.

The first interview had been encouraging for clients who were at different positions in relation to the labour market, and who had approached the Personal Adviser Service with different hopes and expectations. For some people who were unclear about what they wanted, the opportunity to discuss their views and options thoroughly with the Personal Adviser had been very helpful. There were a number of clients who did not see the Personal Adviser again after the first interview. For some of these, this was because they were very close to starting or returning to a job, or to starting a training course, but they anticipated that they might contact the Personal Adviser again in the future.

Occasionally clients had been discouraged after the first interview and felt that the Personal Adviser Service was not able to help them. This was sometimes linked to their initial expectations, for example, one older man had wanted the Personal Adviser Service to find him a job, and was disappointed because he felt that the Personal Adviser had not offered anything sufficiently concrete in the way of jobs or benefit advice to make it worth the effort of embarking on the scheme. Other less positive

impressions were created during the first interview when the client felt that the Personal Adviser had insufficient knowledge or competence, and when the Personal Adviser's suggestion did not fit with what the client wanted. (Clients' assessments of the extent to which the Personal Adviser Service met their needs or expectations are explored further in Section 5.4.)

5.3.5 Overview of contacts and progress planning

At the point the research fieldwork was carried out, the extent of contact with the Personal Adviser Service among clients varied. There were two factors here: one was the length of time people had been in contact with the scheme, which ranged from two to seven months, and another was the frequency of contact, in part a reflection of clients' needs and expectations of the scheme. Where clients were very close to paid work, and only required the 'last piece in the jigsaw', contact was inevitably brief and often consisted of only one or two interviews. The number of interviews or meetings clients said they had been to with a Personal Adviser ranged from one interview up to seven or eight meetings. In addition, some clients said that the Personal Adviser had been in contact with them by telephone a number of times. The quantitative survey of clients suggests that it was common for clients to have had between two and five contacts with a Personal Adviser within a relatively short time period (Section 3.4.3).

In addition, a small number of clients had seen an Occupational Psychologist as part of their contact with the Personal Adviser Service (see Section 5.4.3).

There was not always a good match between the model described by Personal Advisers of case management and ongoing contact with clients and these clients' perceptions of their contact with the scheme. Clients on the whole did not appear to have a strong sense of being part of an ongoing programme of action to move closer towards work. For some, this was because their contact with a Personal Adviser had only been brief. However, it also appeared to be underpinned by a number of factors:

- There was little recall of any written Progress Plan: only a small number of clients remembered receiving something from the Personal Adviser that laid out options or next steps, (although some who had not received written information nevertheless had a concept of small 'steps', or tasks to be carried out before the next meeting).
- There appeared to have been little discussion about timetables for action or moving into work.
- A lack of involvement with the Personal Adviser Service as a whole, or with service providers accessed through the Personal Adviser Service; clients related more to the Personal Adviser as an individual, rather than to a service.

- Little recall of any written information about the Personal Adviser Service and what services it can offer.
- A small number of clients had not heard of the Personal Adviser Service or New Deal for Disabled People, or were not aware that they were clients of this pilot scheme.

This apparent lack of a formal programme or formal planning was viewed in different ways, depending on the expectations and anticipated timescales of clients. Clients who wanted immediate action in response to a specific request for information or access to a training course were pleased when matters had been dealt with in the first interview; they had no wish for involvement in a planning process. At the same time, where clients were anxious about having any pressure on them to move quickly into work, they were appreciative that they had not been given a formal written plan and that the timescale was *'relaxed'*. This was particularly true where they felt that there were substantial and unpredictable barriers to moving into work, for example fluctuating mental illness.

For other clients, however, the lack of knowledge about the scheme and lack of formal planning may have contributed to their frustration when they felt that things were not progressing or when they did not know what was happening. This frustration was also underpinned by uncertainty about the allocation of responsibility for certain tasks, or a feeling that they had not had an adequate explanation. One young man had not heard from his Personal Adviser for five months, although he had been expecting the Personal Adviser to be identifying a work placement for him. Where people had embarked on action agreed with the Personal Adviser, they said it was very important to keep up the pace set; both to reinforce and build on what had been learned and to prevent loss of new confidence and self-esteem. One woman had a clear sense of the steps she wanted to take and the help she required but felt that it had been constantly up to her to push things forward.

The research with Personal Advisers suggests two features of the Personal Advisers' approach that appear to reflect clients' perception that they are not involved in an ongoing programme: first, that Personal Advisers valued the opportunity to deliver an individual, tailored service (see Section 4.6) and secondly, that they were hesitant to overload the clients with written information (see Section 4.4.5). However, it is possible that this approach has an effect on the degree of choice and control which a client feels they have in using the Personal Adviser Service. For example, it will be difficult for a client who does not know what options are available under the Personal Adviser Service to make a decision about how the Service might help them. One young man in our study group was hoping to apply for funding to start up a business, but had not asked the Personal Adviser for help; he said he had not thought that this might be part of the Personal Adviser's role.

5.3.6 Staying in touch with and leaving the Personal Adviser Service

As described above, there was a wide diversity in the extent to which clients felt they were part of an ongoing programme, or had ongoing contact with the Personal Adviser. As such, it is not always meaningful to talk about clients 'leaving' the Personal Adviser Service; sometimes it was rather just a choice not to make further contact after the first or second meeting. At the time of the research interview, the extent to which clients were in ongoing contact and anticipated future contact with their Personal Adviser varied considerably.

Where people anticipated ongoing contact with the Personal Adviser Service, it was with the Personal Adviser in one of two types of roles: either:

- a mentor, as a 'lifeline' or a 'friend figure'; or
- as a continuing or future resource for seeking information or advice (for example, on Disability Working Allowance, or on pursuing training ideas).

This appeared to be underpinned partly by the extent to which people had a clear idea themselves of their goal and the steps they required to reach it. Deciding to stay in contact had also sometimes involved a shift in initial expectations, for example one young man was discouraged by the Personal Adviser from pursuing his chosen occupation and was now following her suggested training path in an alternative occupation.

Some people planned to stay in contact with the Personal Adviser, but their short-term plans were uncertain due to predominant illness. There were two women who had officially been 'exited' (according to the Benefits Agency's database), but for whom the Personal Adviser Service or a particular Personal Adviser still featured highly in their view of their future when they felt well enough. If they had been told that they were no longer on the caseload, this had not registered with them. The research study with Personal Advisers suggests that Personal Advisers found the task of 'exiting' a client from the scheme difficult, and did not always tell a client directly that they were no longer on the caseload (see Chapter 4).

There was an uncertainty about future contact with the Personal Adviser among clients who were ambivalent about whether the Personal Adviser could add anything to their own activities (for example in terms of job-search), or even felt that association with the Personal Adviser Service might possibly damage their application, if employers were prejudiced against disabled people. Other clients were confused about what their current situation was in relation to the Personal Adviser Service; this had happened where initial anticipated activities had not worked out or taken place, and their confusion was underpinned by lack of communication.

Telephone contact with individual Personal Advisers had not always been easy to maintain. Clients who had been given numbers of mobile

telephones did not always get an answer, and messages left on mobile or office phones were said sometimes not to have been followed up, leading to frustration and disappointment.

Clients who did not anticipate any further contact were mainly people who had only had one or two initial meetings. There were four broad reasons why clients were not likely to be in contact again:

- Specific help required and given; the client was satisfied with the Service but did not anticipate any ongoing need for help.
- Decision not to move towards work for the foreseeable future; one man with severe health problems had discussed this with his Personal Adviser, and found the support and advice helpful in this decision.
- Dissatisfaction with the Service, especially where there was a mismatch in expectations and provision: where the specific help offered was not suitable, or did not add anything to their own efforts. The decision was sometimes deliberate, and sometimes a result of letting time go by.
- Told by Personal Adviser Service that they were not eligible, or help required was not available.

Among clients who had left the Personal Adviser Service, it is possible that contact with the scheme had initiated or encouraged them to continue on their own, in terms of boosting their confidence, or reassuring them that they could look for work. However, clients did not always have alternative sources of help, or feel that they were comfortable in dealing with their situation without help, although this was certainly the case for some clients. Examples of where there may have been unmet need are discussed further in the next section.

5.4 Help and advice provided by the Personal Adviser Service

This section provides an overview of the help and advice clients said they had received, and goes on to describe in detail the different kinds of help and support provided.

5.4.1 Overview

Clients had received a wide range of help and advice from the Personal Adviser Service, as might be expected given the range of circumstances and the range of options available to a Personal Adviser to offer. This section divides the types of help into six broad categories: general counselling and support; work guidance and assessment; provision of funding and financial aid; advice about the financial implications of working; assistance with job-search; and support for people in work. Some elements of the help provided were perceived by clients as making a key difference to their situation, others were helpful, but less significant, and others were viewed as less helpful and sometimes discouraging.

There was general appreciation of the pleasant, polite and friendly approach of all members of the Personal Adviser Service with whom clients had had contact, including receptionists, people who answered telephones

and individual Personal Advisers. People had felt welcomed, and talked positively about being put at ease. Although some clients were critical of the content and quality of advice and intervention, such criticisms were generally qualified by descriptions of Personal Advisers as *'a really nice person'* or *'very kind'*. As reported in Chapter 3, the quantitative survey also found that the large majority of clients felt that their Personal Adviser had listened to and understood what they had to say (Section 3.5.2).

There were a few criticisms of the Personal Adviser's manner: a young man felt that the Adviser was judging him and looking down on him; a young woman thought the Adviser had become evasive when she was unable to provide the information required. Others felt that the Personal Adviser was uncomfortable when talking about their impairment or their health condition (see Section 5.4.2).

One of the functions of the Personal Adviser Service is to facilitate access to external service providers. Only a small number of clients in this study group had been put in touch with external providers by the Personal Adviser Service. This had been to provide job-search support and skills-based training, and is discussed further below (Sections 5.4.4 and 5.4.6). Apart from these two broad types of help, Personal Advisers did not appear to have helped clients to access help and advice from external organisations. This appears to reflect the quantitative survey findings where a relatively small proportion of clients recalled their Personal Adviser suggesting a referral to someone else for help (Table 3.38). Chapter 4 suggests that some pilot projects were aware of a shortage of existing providers and services and at the same time some Personal Advisers may have felt it more appropriate to provide a service themselves rather than devolve responsibility to a provider.

When clients were asked to reflect on the type of help received elsewhere (independent of the Personal Adviser Service) to see how it compared with their contact with the Personal Adviser Service, clients did not report a great deal of help from other organisations. Where clients were in contact with other organisations, this had been in the areas of general counselling and support, work guidance, and benefits advice. Those in contact with disability organisations (such as the National Schizophrenia Fellowship and RNIB) valued this contact. They felt that staff or members of these organisations had a greater understanding of their particular impairment or illness than the Personal Adviser had shown. However, clients recognised that the role of these organisations was limited in that they could not provide official access to schemes and funding in the same way as the Personal Adviser Service.

5.4.2 General counselling and support

Early documentation describing the Personal Adviser projects suggested that the approach adopted by Personal Advisers might be 'client-centred' and 'holistic'. These terms were not introduced, as such, by the researchers in the interviews, nor were they used spontaneously by any of the people

interviewed. This section therefore reflects comments by clients about the involvement of the Personal Adviser in the wider aspects of their life, and any other comments that might reflect on client-centredness. The most important factors for clients appeared to be an understanding of their specific situation and its effect on their ability to work, including their impairment or illness, an ability to listen carefully and to be encouraging.

As described in Section 5.2, some clients were in situations that caused them anxiety, particularly in relation to health or financial difficulties, caring responsibilities, and perceived employer discrimination. It was important for some people that the Personal Advisers understood significant aspects of their home environment that affected the possibility of working, such as being a lone parent or being responsible for the care and support of a disabled or ill partner. However, other clients set boundaries around issues perceived to be personal or wider aspects of their lives, such as financial management or housing. Some talked about being careful about the direction in which discussion went, wanting to *'feel their way'*, especially in the initial stages. As shown in Section 5.3.6, a number of people in the study group did not move beyond these 'initial stages' and so were not in a position to build up a relationship of trust with their Personal Adviser. At the same time, not all clients appeared to view the Personal Adviser Service as a holistic service, particularly those who were looking for help or advice with one particular aspect (see Section 5.3.2).

There were mixed views on how well Personal Advisers understood or were involved in people's circumstances, in this respect. One young woman was concerned that her Personal Adviser might try to *'take things too quickly'* because she did not fully understand the demands of the caring role this young woman had for her husband, who was also disabled. However, clients who had experienced stress as a result of a difficult encounter with another agency (being called for an interview at the Jobcentre, or having a benefit stopped) had been very appreciative of the Personal Adviser intervention on their behalf.

Those who felt that the Personal Adviser had a real grasp of the effects of their medical condition or their experience as a disabled person said that this boosted confidence and trust. For example, early offers of help with transport to job interviews had demonstrated to a person with a spinal condition that the Personal Adviser properly understood the effects of his condition. Clients whose Personal Advisers were themselves disabled people felt that they had *'real understanding'* of their situation.

Clients who were critical of the Personal Advisers' understanding of illness and its effects included people with various mental health problems. Some clients perceived lack of understanding about the effects of schizophrenia; and of depression, and some confusion between the different illnesses.

Their Personal Advisers had sometimes appeared diffident and uncertain, even *'frightened of them'*, which had not encouraged confidence. One young woman said she felt the Personal Adviser would have had a better understanding of her mental illness, if she had made direct contact with her psychiatrist or nurse, for example by attending her care plan meetings. The previous chapter (Section 4.5.3) described how Personal Advisers identified training needs in their own understanding of mental illness.

Clients' comments about the Personal Adviser's manner, for example listening to them, or encouraging them, also illustrate the nature of the Personal Adviser's role in people's lives. There were mixed views on how carefully the Personal Adviser had listened and been encouraging about what people had to say. Some had been pleased and even surprised that so much time had been available, and that the Personal Adviser gave so much attention. Where people were critical that the Personal Adviser had tried to steer them, that *'she didn't listen to me'*, this had sometimes put people off maintaining contact with the Service.

General support, advocacy or counselling had been positively received from outside organisations, particularly mental health organisations, where staff were felt to have a good understanding of specific impairments or illnesses. This included peer support for one young woman with a mental illness. For one man whose impairment meant that communication was difficult, his social worker was his main support, as he was able to communicate with and through her.

The study of Personal Advisers (Chapter 4) suggested that the holistic approach and personal investment was an important element in Personal Advisers' job satisfaction; evidence from clients suggests that some people do not want this level of involvement or do not feel that it is necessary. Others do value it highly, but feel that the Personal Adviser is not always able to adopt the responsive and understanding approach that they would like.

5.4.3 Work guidance and discussion of options

Where clients were already clear about what they wanted to do, or were close to getting paid work, guidance about work goals or paths was perhaps less important. Some clients, however, appeared to the researchers to be applying for jobs without a clear focus, but were reluctant to consider discussing different options. This tended to be where the client felt some pressure to start paid work quickly (either through financial need or their own motivation to work) and was therefore less keen to spend time reviewing options.

Reviewing the Personal Adviser's help in this area, some clients said their discussions with the Personal Adviser about the direction they might go in or the practical options open to them had been helpful. One young woman had never worked, and said she had no idea what to do; she was very pleased that the Personal Adviser had helped her to identify

that her enjoyment of doing local voluntary work could form the rationale for gaining a qualification in social care work, and she was now waiting to start the initial pre-qualification for that course. Another had been applying for jobs unsuccessfully for some time, and following discussions with the Personal Adviser had decided to retrain. Some clients also found talking to the Personal Adviser had generally helped to build their confidence.

When the client had some idea of what they wanted to do but the Personal Adviser had suggested or set up something different, clients had sometimes found their contact with the Personal Adviser frustrating. Here, some clients believed that the Personal Adviser was trying to fit them into existing courses or service provision, or seeking a 'quick fix'. One young woman said that she had been offered places on special programmes for people with mental health problems, and felt her request for help with the voluntary work that she had identified did not 'fit' the Personal Adviser Service's idea of what was appropriate. There were also cases where the client said their idea was rejected on the grounds of expense or length of time of a training option. Without knowing the Personal Adviser's view, it is difficult to assess the full situation (for example to what extent the client had articulated their different opinion to the Personal Adviser), but there may have been scope for some clients to have had a more detailed discussion of options, or a better explanation as to why options had been rejected. Without this, clients expressed ambivalence towards or rejection of what were felt to be the Personal Adviser's choices.

Findings from the study of Personal Advisers suggest that they are anxious to avoid 'quick fixes'; however, Personal Advisers also talked about strategies to deal with 'unrealistic' expectations.

Where people had received guidance, it had generally been from the Personal Adviser. A small number of clients, however, recalled receiving work guidance from someone other than the Personal Adviser:

- Assessment by an Occupational Psychologist: at the point of the research interview, very few clients had see an Occupational Psychologist and these had little to say about this contact, which they had involved a number of 'tests'; there appeared to be some nervousness about seeing the Occupational Psychologist beforehand, combined with a lack of clarity about what the Occupational Psychologist was seeking to achieve.
- One-off 'careers days' for guidance and for assessment: here a client reported that the assessment day was more useful than the guidance day, because it had focused on her abilities, rather than on what she wanted to do (which the client felt she already knew).
- A Personal Development Programme: although initially enthusiastic, the client had left the course after the first day, as she felt that the environment was more akin to a therapeutic group session than the practical help and advice that she was seeking.

Those for whom the Personal Adviser had made such arrangements sometimes seemed to have attended only in order to continue to receive the more practical, skills-based help that they were looking for.

Some people felt that guidance about work and training options from outside organisations was more relevant and appropriate than the Personal Adviser's help; this was put down to the fact that they were disability-specific organisations.

5.4.4 Provision of financial help, funding and equipment

One of the key features in the design of the Personal Adviser Service is the option of using a discretionary budget to meet the individual needs of clients, at any stage in relation to their move towards work. Among the study group, financial help or equipment had been given (or offered) in a range of ways and in a variety of circumstances:

- Funding for courses (see below).
- Travel costs to work, interviews, or to training courses, including taxi fares, bus/train fares, payment of car tax.
- Direct financial costs of moving into work; both general (to cover a two week period prior to payment of salary) and specific (vouchers for clothes for an interview).
- One-off payments needed for setting up a business: insurance, registration, professional membership fee.
- Equipment: purchase of ergonomic chair; hire of a computer (during period of course).

Clients generally said that financial help had been important; sometimes describing it as the critical factor in facilitating their return to work. For example, one man said that he would not have been able to start a job which he had already secured if he had not had financial support in travel to work, and £100 towards his initial living costs (before his salary came through). It was reported in Chapter 3 that a relatively small proportion of clients recalled their Personal Adviser offering financial help towards finding or keeping work or training (Table 3.38).

There was overall a low awareness among clients of the funding available under the scheme. It was not always easy for clients to think about what they might need or might have needed from the Personal Adviser Service, and it appeared that the Personal Adviser had not told clients about the Interventions Fund. For example, researchers were able to identify areas where clients might have benefited from the purchase (or hire) of a computer, or an ergonomic assessment of a potential workplace.

However, some clients did identify a number of items with which they would have valued financial help. In some cases their request had been met by refusal from the Personal Adviser, and some clients were left believing that what they wanted help with was outside the scope of the Personal Adviser Service, for example: travel expenses to work and to

job interviews; training courses, for example a postgraduate degree; clothes for work; and financial help for starting up a business.

There were no clear indications from the circumstances of the client's situation why practice had been different across the cases where help had been given, and where it had not. Where clients have little information about what financial help might be available, they may not be in a position to discuss possible needs with the Personal Adviser.

Funding for courses

One of the main ways of purchasing help for clients had been through funding for training courses, including courses that appeared to be run under contract to the Personal Adviser Service and Disability Services as well as more ad-hoc arrangements. At the time of the interview, some clients had already started or completed courses, and others were hoping to start later on in the year. The funding of a training course (sometimes in combination with help in identifying the course) was sometimes said to be the most important feature of the help they had received from the Personal Adviser Service.

The clients who had already attended short courses at the time of the interview were generally very pleased, partly through a strong sense of personal achievement and belief in the relevance of the course as an important next stage (courses undertaken were highly vocational - computing skills, website design, HGV driver's licence). One short course in basic computing skills was undertaken by three clients in the study group, who were all very pleased with it: the features that clients found particularly helpful were the flexible design and pace of the course, lack of pressure, and supportive, friendly environment. The course was aimed at people with a range of impairments and disabling conditions.

Perhaps not surprisingly, where courses appeared to be run under contract the client described a fairly smooth process of referral and set up. Where courses were identified with other providers, the process had sometimes been less smooth and taken longer to set up. For example, one man was seeking to do a vocational course, and was originally told that funding would not be available because the course lasted more than one year. This was resolved by the Personal Adviser Service deciding to pay the fees in full at the beginning, but the client still felt frustrated by the length of the process.

Other clients had been frustrated in their desire for training when the Personal Adviser did not share their view about appropriate courses. This included one young man who said the Personal Adviser had not allowed him to take a follow-up to a NVQ course, which he sought in order to build on his basic level course.

5.4.5 Advice about financial implications of moving towards work

The extent to which people needed and received advice about benefits and the financial impact of working is difficult to assess for a number of reasons. While it was clear that there was generally a great deal of anxiety about financial situations and moving off benefits, it was not always possible in the interviews to establish the precise financial circumstances and therefore what someone's benefit situation or needs might be. Clients themselves were often confused about their situation. In addition, some clients appeared to find it difficult to recall the details of discussions about benefits with the Personal Adviser, it is therefore particularly difficult to draw firm conclusions about what help or advice was sought or received.

People were in a wide range of financial situations at the point when they came in contact with the Personal Adviser Service, some of which were more secure than others. Anxiety was expressed in the research interview around moving off benefits and into work. There were considerable fears of being re-assessed as ineligible for Disability Living Allowance on demonstrating a capacity to work, fears of not being able to reclaim benefits in the event of losing a job, concerns about ways of combining work with benefits, and concerns about whether they would be better or worse-off in work. In general, people demonstrated some confusion about the workings of the benefit system, combined for some with a strong sense of suspicion and vulnerability.

There were a small number of people who felt that they did not want to discuss money issues with the Personal Adviser. It also appeared that some Personal Advisers were reluctant to give specific advice, for example better-off calculations or advice about Disability Working Allowance, until the client had a job in mind.

On the whole, clients had been told about and reassured by the opportunity to return to benefits if they tried a job that did not work out, and that their benefits would not be affected by trying out voluntary work, and this had been critical for some people. Personal Advisers were also felt to have been helpful where they were seen to have thoroughly explored all options in relation to benefit entitlement, including informing the client about in-work benefits (which several clients had found very useful). One man said he had found the approach of the Personal Adviser Service particularly helpful and clear, compared to advice he had received in the past.

However, other clients were still concerned about the effect on their benefits of trying out working even after meeting with the Personal Adviser. Particular concerns focused around how to combine irregular earnings (for example, from self-employment) with receiving benefits (because this could not be set up formally as therapeutic earnings), and uncertainties around eligibility decisions for benefits and therapeutic earnings. Insecurity around these issues was partly based on experience of past Benefits Agency decisions that were felt to be illogical or

inconsistent. A small number of clients were also particularly concerned about their lack of eligibility for help with mortgage payments.

Clients were also concerned where they felt that their Personal Adviser's knowledge and competence in the area of benefits advice was weak. This had been particularly apparent to clients when the Personal Adviser had found it difficult to carry out a better-off calculation, or had failed to illuminate the situation in order to help the client's decision-making. Clients were critical of this when they knew what they wanted the Personal Adviser to be able to tell them and were surprised and frustrated when this was not provided. For these clients, the fact that the Personal Adviser was needing to look things up or telephone other agencies made them feel less confident about the Adviser's ability. The concerns of Personal Advisers in giving benefits advice were discussed in Section 4.4.6. We saw there that many Personal Advisers did not feel confident in dealing with income replacement disability benefits.

A really important role for the Personal Adviser Service therefore is to be able to give accurate, clear advice.

The experience of some clients confirmed that decisions of the Benefits Agency (for example on eligibility for therapeutic earnings or stopping payment of benefits) can make the Personal Adviser's job more difficult. Where the Adviser had negotiated with the Benefits Agency on the their behalf, clients were grateful for the help received even if the outcome was not what they had sought.

5.4.6 Assistance with job-search and applications

People who sought help with looking for a job were at different stages in terms of their own job-search activity at the point when they approached the Personal Adviser Service. Some had been looking and applying for jobs for some time, while others were just starting to think about ways of looking for jobs. People were not very specific about the sort of assistance that they would like, although their main focus appeared to be on finding out about a larger number of suitable vacancies, rather than on practical help with application forms or introductions to employers. At the same time, a number of clients in the study group felt they were not in a position to be looking for work: their focus was more on preparing for paid work through acquiring skills or qualifications.

There were a small number of people who were in paid work at the time of the research interview, or had been in work subsequent to contact with the Personal Adviser. Each of these had found the job they were doing under their own initiative, prior to coming into contact with the Personal Adviser Service. Some had nonetheless received important financial help to enable them to start work (see Section 5.4.4).

The Personal Adviser had suggested to some clients that they pursue a work placement or voluntary work as an intermediate step towards

obtaining paid employment. This reflects the strategy that Personal Advisers themselves said that they adopted for people who they felt were not job-ready and to test out their potential (Section 4.6.2). Where clients objected in principle to working for no pay, they were not interested in this as an option. No clients in the study group recalled any discussion of supported employment.

Where the Personal Adviser had found and set up a work placement or a suitable interview on behalf of clients, this was felt to be very helpful, particularly where the client was unconfident about communicating directly with an employer (due to general low confidence or the effect of a sensory impairment) and valued the Personal Adviser's liaison and advocacy role. Advice about form-filling and preparing CVs where given was also felt to be helpful.

Some clients however, had been frustrated with their contact with the Personal Adviser, where they perceived that the Personal Adviser was not able to find anything suitable for them, or even that they did not understand the work that the client was qualified for. This tended to be where the jobs required were more specialised: one woman who was currently completing professional training found that the Personal Adviser arranged several interviews for work which did not relate to her training. The client said that neither she nor the Personal Adviser had communicated very well over this confusion.

Where people were already looking and applying for jobs, they were sometimes hesitant about what value the Personal Adviser would be able to add to what they were doing. This was underpinned by two main factors:

- A belief that Personal Adviser's job-search was more limited than their own: clients believed that Personal Advisers' only resource for vacancies was through the Jobcentre and had discouraging past experiences of using Jobcentres where they felt they were over-qualified for the type of job vacancies on offer.
- A fear that using New Deal for Disabled People would stigmatise them in employers' eyes: this appeared to be based on an assumption that the Personal Adviser would either reveal their impairment to an employer or would refer to the New Deal for Disabled People programme when making contact.

Some help had been received from outside agencies. A voluntary sector training provider had been found useful. A client who had used the Employment Service Programme Centre felt that the Centre had been insufficiently pro-active in looking for jobs for her; that searching for a professional job was something they had found difficult, and that liaison between the Centre and the Personal Adviser Service was not good.

Overall, job-search help appeared to be most valued where clients perceived a need for practical help and advocacy in setting up a placement or interview. Help with general job-search is perceived as more limited, because Personal Advisers were not perceived to be able to add anything that clients cannot do for themselves. In particular, some clients who were seeking specialist or technical work were not confident that their Personal Adviser understood what they were looking for.

The fear among some clients that employers will discriminate against them if their impairment is known, may suggest either a greater scope for effective advocacy and liaison work, or that the Personal Adviser maintains a lower profile in the job-brokering process. Findings from the quantitative survey of clients suggest that a high proportion would find it helpful to have someone talking to an employer on their behalf (see Table 3.29). It is perhaps surprising in this context that clients' awareness of the Disability Discrimination Act and their employment rights appeared to be low, and the subject did not appear to have formed part of clients' discussions with the Personal Adviser.

5.4.7 Help or support while in work

There were a number of people in our study group who were in paid or voluntary work at the time of the interview, or had been in work shortly prior to the interview. Some were in employment situations that they felt were suitable and appropriate, the key elements of which appeared to be flexibility in hours and tasks and support from colleagues, but others appeared to be in less supported situations. Two clients were pursuing self-employment as an option.

A number of people who were or had been in work had experienced difficulties, which had resulted in them leaving the job, taking time off on sick leave, or expecting to lose their job shortly. None of these people said they had received any help or support from the Personal Adviser Service while they were in work: one had in fact been told that he was ineligible for help from the scheme while he was in a job and had been referred to the local Disability Employment Adviser.

Where jobs had started subsequent to initial contact with the Personal Adviser Service, it might be expected that there would be ongoing contact or support provided at work. However, this did not always appear to have happened, and in two cases, the client had suffered a breakdown in mental health after starting work. Here, the clients identified (possibly retrospectively) the kind of support they would have liked, in particular the option to have someone to talk to about difficult situations or problems in the workplace. One client also said she would have liked support in managing her medication, as she had felt the time pressure of work prevented her from attending regular medication appointments; the subsequent break in her treatment had partly led to her breakdown.

In other cases, there had been some ongoing contact with the Personal

Adviser after starting work, although this appeared to be in relation to benefit issues (specifically looking to make a claim for Disability Working Allowance) and was not related to more general issues at work or health-related difficulties. This may reflect clients' perceptions of the role of the Personal Adviser, and what type of support they feel is appropriate (as discussed in Section 5.4.2). It may also reflect the type of support offered by individual Personal Advisers.

In one case, as a result of the client's breakdown and sick leave, the Personal Adviser had become involved in negotiations with the employer about facilitating the return to work, but it was too early to tell what the outcome of these would be.

The next section concludes this chapter with a discussion of the main themes that have emerged in the previous sections, and suggests some implications for developing the Personal Adviser Service.

5.5 Discussion

This chapter has presented the clients' perspectives on what had happened during their participation in the New Deal for Disabled People. Section 5.2 provided an overview of clients' experiences of the Personal Adviser Scheme, including what clients felt had been helpful, what was less helpful, and in what situations contact with the scheme had made a difference. The next Section (5.3) looked in more detail at initial and ongoing contact and the nature of clients' interactions with the scheme. Section 5.4 then looked at the different types of assistance that clients had received, and clients' perceptions of how helpful these had been in relation to their objectives.

People remember parts of an overall process in different ways, and there are a variety of influences on what they choose to discuss in a research interview. The material is best used to understand how people felt about the process in which they had been involved, their impressions and perceptions of the ways in which they had been dealt with, and their views on the impact of their participation on their relationship with paid work. These views and experiences throw light on aspects of the Service that are seen by clients as especially helpful or effective, as well as aspects that were ineffective or unhelpful, and thus provide some pointers to ways in which the Service might maintain or develop good practice. Findings also provide early insight into the messages about the New Deal for Disabled People that are being taken into the community by those who have the real experience of participation, in the early stage of the scheme.

The research interviews were carried out at a point when some clients' contact with the Personal Adviser Service was ongoing. The researchers plan to return to some of these clients in spring 2000, and these later experiences will be reported in the final report.

5.5.1 Emerging themes

A number of themes emerge from the interviews with the clients.

There is a wide variation in the characteristics and circumstances of the clients who approach the Personal Adviser Service. There is extreme diversity in employment history, current skills and aptitudes, health and impairment, motivation towards and interest in paid work, job aspirations, confidence, and support from significant other people. For the Personal Adviser Service, such diversity means a wide range of 'job readiness' and 'distance from work'.

Some clients within this group were pursuing other activities and existing strategies for moving towards work, in parallel with what was happening with the Personal Adviser Service.

A range of perceived barriers and problems face clients who are interested in work. Disabled people face all the problems identified by non-disabled people who would like to work, but these are often made greater by aspects of poor health or impairment. There are also additional problems associated with particular health conditions or impairments which make it hard to find or retain suitable work.

Provision of effective help across a clientele with such a wide scope of requirements is thus likely to be hard. Inevitably, we can expect some clients to be disappointed and frustrated, alongside others who feel they have been helped.

From the clients' experience, aspects of the Service that influence its effectiveness include, in no order of priority:

- The accessibility of the Service, and the Personal Adviser.
- The perceived quality of the human interactions.
- The match between expectations and outcomes.
- The perceived skills and competencies of the Personal Adviser.
- The amount and quality of information exchanged.
- The perceived pace of interaction.
- The appropriateness of choices available.
- Perception of control over what happens.
- Perception of allocation of responsibilities between client, Personal Adviser and other actors.

From the clients' point of view, the Personal Adviser Service could still be effective and helpful if there was positive experience of the above criteria, even if the eventual outcome brought them no closer to work. (It is also possible, of course, that in some cases outcomes achieved did actually bring people closer to realistic work prospects, but clients perceived what happened as unhelpful.)

In addition to the aspects of service which influence effectiveness, clients perceive a range of other effects and influences on their relationship with work, including benefit regulations, characteristics of the labour market, family relationships and demands, security of income, and employer attitudes. There is a possibility of intervention by the Personal Adviser Service in some, but not all of these. For example, what can be offered is sometimes limited by the need for Personal Advisers to operate within the structural limitations of benefit regulations (for example, therapeutic earnings rules; mortgage protection; Benefits Agency treatment of irregular earnings).

The reluctance among some people to talk about or explain their impairment or illness to a potential employer may have an impact on the Service that a Personal Adviser can offer. In these cases, the opportunity to provide a 'job brokering' service, including advising employers about the implications of a client's impairment for workplace adaptations or working conditions will be limited.

The 'model' of stepwise progression, through discussion, agreement and helpful intervention by the Personal Adviser, did fit what happened to some clients. For others, involvement with the Personal Adviser Service was one small part of something that was happening already in their lives - they wanted or used one particular part of the Service offered. In such cases there was a poor fit with the model of case-management, and the holistic approach that had been important in the conceptualisation of those who designed the Service.

5.5.2 Implications for maintaining and improving the Service

The analysis provides a number of pointers for policy-makers to consider in developing the Service. There is no order of priority in what follows.

There is a continuing need for publicity and promotion of the Personal Adviser Service, as widely as possible. People in the community, including professionals, people associated with other organisations, and friends and relatives are all important in encouraging people to approach the Service, and in promoting the advantages and opportunities in the New Deal. There is scope for reconsideration of language and terminology here. Some people did not recognise themselves amongst 'disabled people' when they saw advertisements and some people did not want to be labelled in this way. Other clients said that they responded to the Service where they felt it was specially aimed at 'people like themselves'.

Accessibility of the Service, and of individual Personal Advisers, is of key importance. Details of location of office, stairs, lifts, doors, security staff, lighting, private rooms, and telephone service can be critical for individual people. There are drawbacks, as well as advantages, in the use of mobile phones for access to Personal Advisers, and there must be a disciplined and systematic use of mobile telephones.

Ongoing communication with clients and adequate explanations about their progress on the scheme is important. Confusion or frustration can arise for clients over: the selection of options, the timescale of their path, the allocation of responsibilities, the role of the Personal Adviser, what is on offer from the Service, and referral to other organisations. This can affect the client's sense of control over the process and can influence their future participation. There may be scope here for reviewing the way Progress Plans are used or might be used to facilitate communication and encourage dialogue between clients and Personal Advisers.

There is a need for greater attention to the way in which clients leave the Service. There is some evidence that Personal Advisers' reluctance to hurt people, or reduce self-esteem or confidence, is resulting in unclear messages. What Personal Advisers perceive as 'leaving the door open' to people in case their circumstances should improve may be interpreted differently by some clients, such that expectations raised are not met. This may then have negative effects for the way in which the Service is perceived in the wider community.

The Service must be able to offer immediate, accurate financial information, in respect of benefit entitlements. This has important implications for Personal Adviser training, and communications between the Personal Adviser Service and Benefits Agency offices. There may be scope for the Personal Adviser Service, at a local level, to seek formal links with independent advice agencies, with service agreements to ensure quality. Getting inaccurate or insufficient information about benefits and income can have serious consequences for clients, and provokes strong criticism of the Service.

There is a clear need for Personal Advisers to be better informed about mental health issues, including different kinds of mental illness, likely trajectories and timescales of illness, symptoms, treatment regimes, and effects of medication. There is much scope for improvement in Personal Advisers' confidence and personal manner in working with people with mental illness. Policy makers may like to explore ways of raising Personal Advisers' skills, knowledge and understanding here.

There is some evidence that clients' needs for in-work support, and job retention were not being met. This may be an issue for both refocusing the aims of the Service, and for increasing skills and competencies of Personal Advisers in this area.

There is also some evidence that the role of the Personal Advisers in job-search might be reconsidered, especially in relation to specialist or technical work sought by clients.

6 VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF EMPLOYERS[35]

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the Personal Adviser Service from the perspective of employers, drawing on the 30 in-depth interviews undertaken with representatives from a range of different businesses and organisations. The first half of the chapter discusses employers' attitudes and approaches to employing disabled people, identifying perceived constraints on the employment of disabled people. The second half then discusses employers' contact with and experiences of the Personal Adviser Service, looking at their experiences of recruiting New Deal for Disabled People participants as permanent employees and on placements, and their knowledge and understanding of the Service. The chapter then explores employers' views about how the New Deal for Disabled People should be communicated and marketed to employers.

Full details of the conduct of the study are given in Appendix B. Here, however, we note that the sample frame was generated by the pilot teams, who were asked to provide details of employers with whom they had had contact. A sample was selected from these names, and potential respondents were approached direct by letter and telephone call by the research team. Quotas were set to ensure the sample selected was sufficiently diverse and included key sub-groups.

A profile of the study group is shown in Table 6.1 below. As the table shows, the sample included representatives of organisations within the public, private and voluntary sector, and of different sizes. The organisations involved were very diverse. Within the public sector they included local councils and organisations such as hospitals, libraries and schools. Within the private sector they included large companies such as national retail chains, financial services providers and a transport operator. Smaller private organisations included a rest home, businesses providing services such as computing or recruitment support to other businesses, small manufacturing firms and a restaurant. The study group also included two voluntary sector organisations.

There was also diversity in the roles and responsibilities of the organisational representatives interviewed. Eleven respondents, mostly from large organisations, had specialist roles focusing exclusively on personnel or

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[35] This chapter draws on interviews undertaken by the teams at the National Centre for Social Research and the Social Policy Research Unit. Analysis was undertaken by Sue Arthur, Marion Clayden and Jane Lewis at the National Centre, and the chapter was written by Jane Lewis.

human resources issues. Some of these described being involved in the development of personnel or equal opportunities strategies; others were involved in recruitment at a more operational level. Their job titles included personnel manager, human resources manager, training co-ordinator and access, equality or fairness officers. Nine respondents from large or medium sized organisations were involved in recruitment or broader personnel issues, but combined this with other largely managerial or supervisory responsibilities. They included, for example, the head teacher of a school, the manager of a library, operations managers, department heads and store managers. Two managers from large organisations were not involved in recruitment but line managed other staff. All the seven respondents from small organisations were responsible for personnel issues as owners or managers of the business. For ease, in this chapter we refer to all respondents as 'employers'.

Involvement in the New Deal for Disabled People among the study group was also diverse. Eight had recruited a Personal Adviser Service participant as a permanent employee. Three others had interviewed participants for a job but this had not (or not yet) resulted in employment. Six had taken a participant on a placement. One was involved with the Personal Adviser Service in the context of retention issues only. Not all these respondents, however, were aware that the individual they had interviewed or recruited was involved with the Personal Adviser Service, and some appeared to have had contact with a Personal Adviser but had not known them as such.[36]

Of the remaining respondents, nine had had some contact with the Personal Adviser Service, for example being involved in the design or launch of the Service, being sent information or being approached about it by a Personal Adviser. In the remaining three cases, there was nothing in the respondent's account to suggest any contact with the Service.

Employers who were unaware that their contact had been with the Personal Adviser Service, or who appeared to have had no contact with it, were sometimes not aware of the existence of the New Deal for Disabled People, and heard of it for the first time only during the in-depth interview.

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[36] However, they referred to individuals who were known by the research team to be Personal Advisers.

Table 6.1 The employer study group

	No. of respondents
Sector	
Public	10
Private	18
Voluntary	2
Size[1]	
Small (1-49 employees)	7
Medium (51-499 employees)	8
Large (500+ employees)	15
Nature of involvement in New Deal for Disabled People	
Permanent employee[2]	11
Placement	6
Job retention only	1
Launch/marketing only	9
No involvement or contact apparent	3

[1] Number of employees in UK

[2] Includes employer who interviewed participant but did not offer post, employer who offered post which participant did not accept and employer who was undecided, at the time of the in-depth interview, whether to offer post

As with other studies reported here, the research among employers was undertaken at a relatively early stage in the operation of the Personal Adviser Service. The extent of involvement employers had had with the Service is likely to reflect this. Some expected to be involved in the future but had not yet been; for those who had been involved this had generally (although not exclusively) been in relation to one employee or placement only.

6.2 Employers' approaches to employing disabled people

6.2.1 Employers with an active commitment to employing disabled people

The sample included a group of employers who expressed a strong commitment to employing disabled people or taking them on placements. Particularly prominent in this group were respondents with strategic responsibilities for personnel and equal opportunities issues within large public sector organisations. However, the group also included respondents with general management responsibilities, both within smaller organisations and within smaller units of large organisations (such as a library, or a local branch of a national company). These employers had experience of recruiting disabled people, dealing with retention issues arising when existing employees became ill or disabled, and providing placements for disabled people either through the Employment Service disability services or through private or voluntary sector organisations. Within the larger organisations, this experience was extensive.

The commitment to working with disabled people was underpinned by a range of motivations and attitudes:

- A sense of responsibility to provide equal opportunities to all groups in society, or to help to address barriers disabled people face to entering the workplace. For some this was underpinned by a desire for the organisation's workforce to reflect the diversity of the population it serves. Others talked about *'putting something back into the community'*, or about wanting to set an example to other employers.
- Recognition of the priority placed by the government on facilitating disabled people's access to the workplace.
- A sense of the potential benefits to the organisation's public image if it was seen to support the inclusion of disabled people: where this was seen to *'send the right message'* to staff, customers and clients.
- A desire to help people who were seen as unfortunate or disadvantaged.
- Views about the qualities that disabled people bring as employees: where employers described disabled employees as having high motivation to work, a strong sense of loyalty, and low rates of absenteeism. One employer felt that disabled people place high value on the status they derive from working, beyond the financial benefits of work; another felt that disabled people's high commitment to work is underpinned by their recognition that employers may have uncertainties about their abilities. However, it was also said that these assumptions about disabled people may be rooted in a sense of pity for disabled people and may perpetuate unhelpful stereotypes.
- Within smaller organisations, the personal views or experiences of respondents also emerged as an important influence on their active commitment to employing disabled people.

Respondents within this group who had strategic responsibility for personnel issues in larger organisations were generally aware of the legislative framework surrounding the employment of disabled people. However, legal requirements seemed to be of less direct importance than other considerations in underpinning their commitment to employing disabled people.

Within the larger organisations in this group, the employment of disabled people was supported by a range of structures and systems. These employers described having detailed formalised equal opportunities policies addressing recruitment and retention. Their implementation involved, for example, a policy of automatically shortlisting disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria required for a post or of giving written reasons why a disabled applicant was not shortlisted; advertising job vacancies in the disability press; regular monitoring and auditing of recruitment to investigate how effectively equal opportunities policies are being implemented, and initiatives to make the workplace fully accessible. Some were members of the Disability Symbol users (or *'Two Ticks'*) scheme.

One employer described having moved from an equal opportunities policy towards one of *'valuing diversity'*, seen as a better approach to ensuring inclusion in recruitment and staffing.

These employers also often had active retention policies and practices, with a commitment to retain employees who become sick or disabled where possible, redeploying if necessary, and making adjustments to posts or the working environment and providing retraining if required.

There were sometimes other specialist groups within the organisation, including occupational health departments; advisory groups of disabled employees; disability interest groups within recognised unions; employee counselling services, and access to funding within the organisation for adjustments or support for disabled employees. Finally, these employers were generally aware of and had access to external sources of financial and other support, including active links with the Employment Service disability services.

In smaller organisations which were part of larger public or private sector enterprises, respondents were aware of systems and specialist departments for supporting equal opportunities, but there was generally little detailed discussion of their role and little evidence of their active involvement at the local level. Here, and within the smaller organisations, there was a general ethos of inclusive employment, but in the absence of formalised structures to support the employment of disabled people, these employers seemed to be more reliant on the personal motivation of other staff to make the organisation accessible to disabled people.

Respondents with strategic responsibility for personnel issues expressed some concern that their recruitment of disabled people remained at a low level. Three particular constraints emerged.

First, it was said that few applications were received from disabled people. Some employers were actively undertaking what was described as *'outreach work'* with disability and welfare rights organisations to publicise their commitment to equal opportunities and to encourage applications from disabled people, and the Disability Symbol users scheme was seen as valuable in supporting this message. Secondly, there was a recognition that disabled applicants may be reluctant to say they have an impairment, particularly at the application stage but also after recruitment (and indeed some other employers acknowledged that knowing an applicant was disabled might be a source of concern to them). This, it was felt, can frustrate policies such as the guaranteed interview and disability equality monitoring, and employers' attempts to provide any necessary support to disabled employees. Again, the Disability Symbol users scheme and outreach work were felt to be helpful in encouraging applicants to be open about their impairment at an early stage.

A third constraint on recruiting disabled employees was seen to be the difficulties inherent in translating commitment to equal opportunities throughout the organisation. In particular, it was said that staff line managers may not share the strategic commitment to the inclusion of disabled people. Managers' inexperience in working with disabled colleagues was said to lead to some discomfort and uncertainty. Respondents expressed concern that managers may sometimes lack the ability to think laterally and creatively about the type of adjustments that can make an organisation or a post accessible to disabled people. It was also said that line managers sometimes question whether support for disabled applicants actually disadvantages other applicants. It was widely said that all employees operate under increasing pressures, and that managers may resent any need to support disabled employees as an intrusion on their time.

For these employers, involvement in New Deal for Disabled People was welcomed as a mechanism to support their strategic commitment to employing disabled people, and in particular a way of increasing the number of disabled employees.

6.2.2 Employers without an active commitment to employing disabled people

Outside this group of committed employers, respondents generally described their approach as wanting *'the best person for the job'* whether disabled or non-disabled. They stated that their organisation would never discriminate against disabled people, and that disabled job applicants would have an equal chance of being recruited provided they were able to undertake the work required. However, there seemed not to be an active decision to increase the number of disabled employees or the presence of disabled people in the organisation. This group particularly included smaller private sector employers, but large private sector and smaller public sector organisations were also represented within it.

Here, there seemed to be little in the way of policies or structures to support the employment of disabled people: these employers did not generally have equal opportunities policies, nor specialist personnel department or occupational health departments. Similarly, they seemed less aware of the support available externally, including through Employment Service disability services and programmes. They generally had less experience of working with disabled people, seemed less knowledgeable about the issues raised by employing disabled people and appeared to have a keen sense of disabled people needing additional support to join the organisation.

Their approach seemed somewhat rigid, with little evidence of willingness to make adjustments to jobs or working environments to equalise access for disabled people. Although it was not the purpose of the study to explore employers' knowledge of the legislative framework, their comments sometimes suggested that they had limited understanding of their legal obligations and of the Disability Discrimination Act in particular,

and sometimes suggested an exaggerated sense of how onerous the legislative framework is.

Although most seemed genuinely keen to treat disabled people fairly, there were a few instances where this was outweighed by employers' concerns about recruiting disabled people, and these employers appeared to have reached the conclusion that the organisation would generally not be able to recruit or retain a disabled person.

6.3 Employers' concerns about employing disabled people

Among both groups of employers – those with an active commitment to the employment of disabled people and those without – there were a number of concerns about employing disabled people. Both groups tended to discuss the same broad issues. However, among employers with an active commitment to working with disabled people, and particularly among larger employers with policies to support equal opportunities, they tended to be described as challenges and difficulties to be overcome. Among the group without active commitment to employing disabled people, they seemed more often to be seen as barriers to the employment of disabled people and reasons for not recruiting or retaining disabled employees. Employers' views seemed to be based on a combination of their experiences of disabled employees or people on placements and, particularly where this experience was very limited, assumptions about disabled people.

Three types of issues arose: the requirements of jobs and the ability of disabled people to meet them; the working environment, and the reactions of others to disabled employees. In discussing them, employers sometimes saw them as difficult only in relation to specific types of impairments, but at other times described them as constraints on the employment of disabled people generally. A number of underlying factors contributed to employers' perceptions of these issues as difficulties or constraints inherent in the employment of disabled people. These were lack of experience of employing disabled people, concerns about the financial costs of recruiting disabled people, and a sense of employing disabled people involving uncertainty and risk. The following sections discuss the difficulties employers identified, and the factors that seem to contribute to their perceptions, in more detail.

6.3.1 Job requirements and disabled employees' abilities

Some employers noted that posts required specific abilities, which they felt would exclude disabled people with particular types of impairment. These requirements included mobility between sites or within a working environment; physical strength, for example to carry loads or to care for patients; mental agility or responsiveness, for example in dealing with the public, and the ability to read and deal with paperwork. More generally, the demanding nature of the work – a busy and stressful atmosphere, long hours, pressure of deadlines and expectations – was felt to make employing disabled people difficult.

There was a perception that disabled people may take more sick leave, especially if they have a fluctuating condition, and much concern about this. Long periods of sick leave were recurrently said to raise real difficulties, putting more pressure on other staff who have to provide cover or incurring costs if additional staffing resource has to be provided. (Although this may, at least for some employers, reflect an exaggerated sense of absence records of disabled employees, both the qualitative work with clients and the survey highlight participants' own concerns about needing sick leave – see for example Section 4.1.)

There was also much concern among respondents about their own abilities to understand the nature and implications of different types of impairments. This was seen as important both in assessing whether an impairment would prevent an applicant from being able to undertake the required work, and in helping employers to identify and access any appropriate support. There was real anxiety about this, particularly among smaller employers, who noted that they do not have access to specialist expertise that might exist within larger organisations. Respondents from larger organisations, however, also felt unconfident about understanding the implications of rarer or more specialised impairments. Mental health problems and learning disabilities seemed to cause particular anxiety.

Here, there was a view that short and finite term placements, or trial periods of employment, can be helpful in assessing whether the organisation can accommodate a disabled employee. Employers had sometimes encountered problems when disabled people had been recruited for permanent posts or placements and had needed more support than envisaged. However, some described help they had received from the Employment Service or other agencies in 'mediating' between employer and employee or person on placement, and identifying changes or systems that facilitated their inclusion.

More generally, there was an assumption that disabled people are likely to be less effective and less productive employees than non-disabled people, that they demand more of managers in terms of support, training and supervision, and that this means managers and other members of staff have to 'make allowances' for them. This was seen to be an unattractive proposition in increasingly pressurised working environments.

6.3.2 The working environment

Employers also perceived difficulties relating to the working environment. Here, two issues emerged. First, respondents noted the problem of buildings or parts of buildings which might be inaccessible to people with mobility impairments, particularly those using wheelchairs. Secondly, they were worried about the safety of a disabled person, for example where heavy loads were carried from one part of the workplace to another; where there was equipment, machinery or vehicles which were seen to pose a safety threat; where potentially dangerous chemicals were used, or where a job involved working with animals. Employers appeared at

times to have in mind mobility impairments and at times learning disabilities in seeing these conditions as barriers to the employment of disabled people, although their rationale was not always clear.

6.3.3 The reactions of others

The third set of difficulties identified by employers related to the reactions of others – both members of staff and customers - to disabled employees.

Section 6.2.1 above noted the perception of respondents involved with personnel issues at a strategic level, that line managers may not always share an organisation's commitment to the inclusion of disabled people. Employing disabled people was also sometimes thought to place additional pressures on other members of staff. Employers were generally robust about discriminatory or derogatory attitudes among other members of staff, saying that these would not be tolerated and were not expected. This was not always the case, however: one employer, for example, felt it was inevitable that a disabled employee would be *'ripped to death … they'd just rib him'* by some other employees and would bear this in mind in deciding where in the organisation to place a disabled recruit. More generally, employers expressed anxiety that providing additional support to disabled colleagues, or covering periods of sick leave, placed real pressure on staff. It was also said that there might be resentment if accommodations were made for a disabled member of staff which were not available for others. Employers were also concerned that an impairment might directly impinge on other members of staff, for example where staff had to assist a colleague who sometimes had epileptic fits at work.

Among those employers whose business involved dealing with the general public, emphasis was placed on providing a high level of service. Here, it was said that customers might have to make allowances for disabled employees, and might be reluctant to do so. There was also some concern that employees with some mental health problems might pose a threat to customers or the general public.

6.3.4 Factors contributing to employers' concerns

As noted earlier, for some employers these concerns were seen as challenges to be addressed. For others, however, they were seen as barriers to the employment of disabled people. A number of factors seemed to contribute to this: limited experience of employing disabled people, concern about financial costs, and a sense of uncertainty and risk in recruiting disabled people.

Some employers felt they had little or no experience of working with disabled people. Their comments seemed sometimes to stem from a somewhat narrow perception of disability with severe impairments uppermost in their minds, for example identifying barriers to the employment of someone who used a wheelchair, or who had a complete visual impairment. Indeed, in some cases where a disabled person's contribution to the organisation had been very successful and where their condition had not impinged on their ability to carry out the work,

employers said that *'He wasn't disabled at all'* or *'I almost didn't consider him to be disabled'*. This suggests that an impairment that affects someone's ability to work is perhaps in a sense inherent to definitions of disability for some.

Where employers were less experienced in working with disabled people, they also sometimes seemed to find it difficult to envisage the type of support or adjustments that might make a post accessible. Employers who were aware of how physical alterations to premises or to equipment could make a post accessible to someone with a physical impairment, sometimes found if difficult to envisage anything that could facilitate the employment of someone with a learning disability or a profound sight impairment.

As noted earlier, smaller employers did not have access to the sort of specialist advice or support structures that larger organisations had, and within larger organisations there was not always detailed knowledge of, or contact with, these support structures at the local level. There was also somewhat patchy knowledge of external sources of support or funding, and this too seemed to underpin the extent to which particular concerns were seen as actual barriers to employment for disabled people.

Underlying these concerns, there was a theme of working with disabled people involving financial costs. Costs were seen to arise directly where specialist equipment or adjustments to buildings would be necessary to accommodate a disabled employee. More broadly, they were anticipated where disabled employees were thought to be less effective or productive, likely to need more support and supervision from managers and colleagues, and where they were perceived as taking more sick leave which would need to be covered by additional staffing resources.

In larger organisations there was some discussion about the need to make a *'business case'* for recruiting disabled people. By this, employers seemed to mean the need to demonstrate to others within the organisation that there would be a net benefit to the organisation. Being able to demonstrate that the recruitment of disabled people would not incur any additional costs, or that such costs would be covered by external financial support, was seen as an important element of building a business case. Here, there was generally awareness of internal and external sources of funding. However, there was a recurrent view that external funding is not always forthcoming and that too much of the financial burden falls on employers, and it was said that funding is particularly lacking for placements and retention. In smaller organisations there was more acute concern about the financial implications of employing disabled people.

More broadly, there was an underlying sense of employing disabled people involving uncertainty and risk. This seemed to stem particularly from employers' sense of their limited knowledge of particular conditions and

impairments, and of their possible implications for a disabled person's ability to undertake the work required. Again, some employers felt more confident about their own knowledge and experience, or had more awareness of internal or external sources of specialist advice on which they could draw. Others who lacked these resources had sometimes had difficult experiences in the past where a disabled employee's support needs had been more extensive than anticipated or could not be met, and here uncertainty seemed a more significant difficulty.

The implications of these views for the role of the Personal Adviser Service are explored in the final section. We now move on to explore employers' experiences of involvement with the Personal Adviser Service.

6.4 Employers' contacts with the Personal Adviser Service

The following sections look at employers' reasons for becoming involved with the Personal Adviser Service, the needs they have of the Service and whether and how these needs were met. The discussion draws on the accounts of those employers who had direct contact with the Personal Adviser Service in the context of placements and permanent posts (although, as noted earlier, not all were aware that their contact was with the Service).[37]

6.4.1 Initiating employers' involvement with the Personal Adviser Service

It was not always certain, from the employer's account alone, how their involvement with the Personal Adviser Service had been initiated, and employers sometimes acknowledged that they had no knowledge of earlier contact between the Personal Adviser and participant which might have led to their involvement. However, they understood their own involvement to have been initiated in a range of different ways:

- In some cases, employers had become involved in the pilot at an early stage (and sometimes in its design and set-up) when approached by the Personal Adviser Service or when they first became aware of it in some other way. Some had at this stage indicated a general willingness to take participants on placement or to consider them for permanent posts.
- Other employers approached the Personal Adviser Service, or were referred to it by another part of the Employment Service, when a permanent or short-term recruitment need was identified.

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[37] It is important to note that we only have the employer's account of their interaction with the Personal Adviser Service. Drawing on the views of the Personal Adviser and client with whom they had contact might, in some cases, have led to a different understanding of the role of the Service. In carrying out the employer study, care was taken to ensure that we did not interview employers if the participant with whom they had had contact had been interviewed as part of the client study. It was felt that this would be inappropriate in case it led to concerns, particularly on the part of the client, that information from one respondent had been revealed to another in the course of the interview.

- Some employers had recruited someone, or identified them as a potential recruit, and only then became aware of the Personal Adviser Service. This occurred, for example, where participants applied for a post and later told the employer they had an impairment and mentioned the Personal Adviser Service.
- In some cases, the first approach to the employer was made by a Personal Adviser, for example to ask the employer whether they would take a particular participant on a placement, to put forward a possible candidate for a permanent or short-term post advertised by the employer, or to make contact with the employer after a client had been shortlisted for interview or appointed.
- Finally, the Personal Adviser had sometimes made contact with the employer at some point during a placement which had been initiated and arranged by a provider organisation.

6.4.2 Motivations for involvement

Employers' motivations for becoming involved varied, and to some extent related to when and how contact had been made with the Personal Adviser Service.

Where employers had become involved with the Personal Adviser Service at an early stage, it was often seen as a way of meeting a strategic aim of working more actively with disabled people (discussed in Section 6.2 above). Working with the New Deal for Disabled People was also seen as an opportunity to demonstrate, to others in the organisation, how smooth and successful employing disabled people can be. Employers also wanted to demonstrate their support for the principle of increasing workplace access for disabled people, and to been seen to be involved in the New Deal for Disabled People as responsible employers. Within the public sector there was also a sense of political imperative to join the scheme, to demonstrate their commitment to government policy.

In some cases, employers initiated contact because they sought help from the scheme in meeting recruitment needs. This arose:

- where finding good recruits was difficult, and the scheme was seen as a way of widening the net of possible recruits (particularly where experiences of recruiting disabled people had been positive);
- where an employer had identified an individual they wanted to take on, and sought specific help from the scheme to facilitate this.

Where employers' involvement was responsive to an approach made by the Personal Adviser Service (or by another agency), however, their reasons for participating seemed to be less clearly formulated. Here, employers' involvement was sometimes motivated by a willingness to help when approached, for example by taking a client on a placement. In other cases, employers were accepting an offer of help made by the Personal Adviser – for example, after they had recruited someone who they subsequently learnt was disabled – but without specific expectations of the type of help needed.

Some employers initiated contact with the scheme because they had a short-term piece of work which they felt would suit someone on a placement. In other cases involving placements, though, there was not a specific role or requirement for the participant, and this sometimes seemed to place additional pressure on staff to find work to *'occupy'* the client.

6.4.3 The role played by the Personal Adviser Service

The role played by the Personal Adviser Service varied in the cases described by the study group. In some, the Service seemed to have played a marginal role; in others, its role was seen by the respondent as central. There were also cases where employers needed little or nothing by way of support. The role played by the Personal Adviser Service included:

- Introducing the participant to the employer and vice versa – for example, where a client was put forward by the Personal Adviser Service in response to an advertised vacancy or where the employer was approached about a placement. (In other cases the client approached the employer direct, and employers were not in a position to comment on whether the Personal Adviser Service had played any part in the participant's decision to do so.)
- Providing assistance that was not crucial to the decision or ability to take the participant on, but that may nevertheless have facilitated the process. In some cases, for example, the Personal Adviser Service provided general reassurance to an employer, although no specific help was needed: the prospect of support from the Personal Adviser Service, should it be needed, reduced their uncertainty about the participant. One respondent, for example, acknowledged that he had doubts about taking on the participant but, because he anticipated the Personal Adviser Service would be able to provide any necessary support, was prepared to give the client *'the benefit of the doubt'*.
- A more central role was also described, where the assistance provided by the Personal Adviser Service was seen as central to the decision to take on the client. In some cases the Personal Adviser Service had provided a structure for the employer to take on someone they had already identified. In one case, for example, an employer sought an external source of funding for a participant on a placement without which they could not continue the placement; in another an employer wanted to take on someone they had already identified on a short-term or trial basis without jeopardising their receipt of benefit. There were also examples where the Personal Adviser Service provided support – financial and other – that had been crucial in the employer's decision.

The following section explores the service provided by Personal Adviser Service in more detail.

6.5 Services provided by the Personal Adviser Service

This section explores the type of support employers sought of the Personal Adviser Service, whether their needs were met, and the factors that appear to facilitate or inhibit the effective provision of support to employers.

6.5.1 Initial assessment of participants and of employment opportunity

A key service employers sought from the Personal Adviser Service was exploration of whether the participant met any particular requirements of the employer; whether the employer organisation was an appropriate place for the participant, and whether any particular changes or support would be required to make the post accessible to the participant.

Employers who were considering or who had appointed a participant for a permanent post generally had a sense of the type of skills or experiences they sought, and participants usually went through the same selection process as other applicants. Employers generally sought basic skills and qualifications and previous work experience, but they particularly emphasised the participants' workplace or personal skills as reasons for appointing them.

They stressed the importance of motivation. Appointed participants were described as enthusiastic and hard working, with strong motivation for work generally, and a particular interest in the area involved. They were also valued for abilities such as organisational skills, working to deadlines, learning quickly and working alone and in a team, dealing with the general public and having a *'customer service orientation'*. Some personal attributes of appointed participants were also mentioned, such as maturity and a capable manner, being honest, seeming reliable and likely to attend regularly and punctually, and being sociable with a personality that would enable them to fit in. Finally, some also described participants as being in good health and able to manage the physical demands of the job.

Employers considering participants for a placement did not always have a set of required skills so clearly in mind, and had fewer expectations of the qualities the client would bring. One employer, who sought participants for short-term placements when a particular work need arose, seemed as rigorous in selection procedures as employers seeking to fill permanent posts. Other employers, however, had considered whether they were able to provide a placement rather than whether the participant proposed was suitable, and had generally been inclined to *'help out'* if at all possible. Some said that they would always accommodate a person who wanted to do a placement and had never turned down an application. However, placements were sometimes felt to have been unsuccessful precisely because participants had lacked the workplace or personal skills employers actively sought in permanent employees.

In either event, therefore, the Personal Adviser Service could play an important role in assessing the suitability of the applicant for the employer and vice versa - whether because the employer had specific selection criteria, or because they exercised no selection at all.

As discussed in Section 6.3, employers were worried about understanding the implications of an employee's impairment and whether it meant that there was a need for any particular support for either employer or employee. The Personal Adviser Service was seen to have an important role to play here. In some cases, employers were inexperienced in working with disabled people and unsure what information they needed; some were also unsure whether it would be appropriate to ask about the impairment directly. One employer understood that applicants for placements may not be willing to be very open about any particular needs since this might deter the employer from taking them on, but felt that not having this information from the beginning made it difficult to ensure that the placement was as positive as possible for the participant.

The qualitative research study and survey among participants highlight that participants have mixed views about how much they want the Personal Adviser to discuss their impairment with employers, but some clearly do not want this – see Sections 3.2 and 5.4. Personal Advisers, too, as discussed in Section 4.8, recognise this but may feel constrained in their approach to employers if they are unable to give information about the participant's impairment. It should also be noted that clients' accounts suggest Personal Advisers may not always have detailed knowledge of conditions and impairments.

Employers, then, have a range of needs of the Personal Adviser Service in assisting with selection for permanent posts and placements. There were mixed experiences of whether these needs were met. In some cases, employers were delighted with the performance of the client and felt they were well-matched to the post and the organisation. One employer noted how helpful the Personal Adviser had been in discussing the 'pros and cons' of taking on a participant and the support the participant might need. In other cases, however, employers felt the participant and the post had not been well-matched. This occurred:

- where it was felt that the client was not yet ready for a placement or a permanent post – for example, where they were very unconfident and seemed to find the work stressful, where they had actually withdrawn from a placement or job, or where they were felt to be unreliable and inconsistent in their attendance;
- where it was felt that the post was not right for the participant – for example, because they had little interest in the area of work and did not see it as their chosen vocational direction;
- where clients were felt to need more support than the employer had envisaged. Here it was thought that more information from and discussion with the Personal Adviser would have helped the employer to decide whether they should take the participant, and what support would be needed. (This is discussed further below.)

6.5.2 Access to or financial support for equipment and training

Some employers whose contact with the scheme was in the context of recruitment for a permanent post had received support from the Personal Adviser Service in meeting needs for specialist equipment or furniture – such as a chair or IT equipment. For others, this had been offered but not required. Employers were sometimes unclear what the precise source of funding had been, but in some cases equipment or funding was thought to have been provided directly by the Personal Adviser Service and in others the Personal Adviser was understood to have facilitated access to other schemes, particularly Access to Work. In one case, the Personal Adviser was arranging access to a short training course for a new employee. None had required funding for more extensive adjustments to premises.

Again, employers reported mixed experiences of the Personal Adviser Service. In general, needs for equipment had been met. However, two employers had been discouraged from obtaining funding for equipment because they understood that, if the employee left within a year, they would be obliged to reimburse all or part of the funding. In one case, where the employer had not yet decided whether to appoint the applicant, this was seen as a real disincentive: the employer felt they risked being left with equipment which they no longer needed, and having to carry all or part of its cost themselves.

6.5.3 Wage subsidies and placement payments

As well as providing a route for funding for equipment and training, the Personal Adviser Service can provide access to wage subsidies and placement payments from different sources. These include the Job Introduction Scheme (providing a payment to the employer of £75 per week, usually for six weeks), supported employment (where salary costs are shared between the employer and the 'sponsor' organisation) and payments made by provider organisations for example in support of a placement. Some employers had received a financial contribution towards wages or the costs of supervising a placement. Although there was some lack of clarity about the nature and source of funding, there were cases which appeared to involve Job Introduction Scheme subsidies, other contributions to the participant's salary (which sometimes appeared to be supported employment), and payments from providers in support of placements.

The role and impact of financial payment varied considerably.

In some cases, subsidies and payments had played an important role in funding a short-term or permanent post. In one case, for example, the Job Introduction Scheme subsidy enabled the employer to offer a salary that would match the participant's benefits income. In another, a disabled person came to the end of a funded placement but the Personal Adviser Service was able to arrange continued funding through another agency, without which it seems the placement would have ended. Some employers saw wage subsidies as being particularly important to them as small employers. The Job Introduction Scheme subsidy was sometimes

seen as providing payment during a 'trial period'. In one case where an employer received the subsidy, there was some uncertainty about whether the employee would be kept on after the subsidy had ceased. For an organisation with very high staff turnover, it was seen as *'insurance'* against wasted training costs if the participant left.

In other cases, financial payments played a supportive but less central role. Here, employers felt that the payment had helped to secure the organisation's commitment to taking on an employee and helped to *'make the business case'* by demonstrating that any needs could be met without cost to the organisation. Receiving a payment was sometimes thought to have helped to ensure that an appropriate level of support and supervision could be given. However, the payment had not been directly applied to this purpose and it was not clear that a lower level of support would have been given had there been no funding.

For some employers, the payment they received had no significant impact and was seen as *'a bonus'*. This arose in two ways. First, it was the view of employers who did not see the participant's impairment as limiting their ability to undertake the work required – including some who had not been aware the employee was disabled, or were unaware that a financial payment would be made until after they had been recruited. Secondly, it arose where the impairment was felt to have some implications for the participant's performance, but where the employer was committed to employing disabled people. In larger organisations the size of payments was sometimes seen to be too small to be significant.

Not all employers had been offered financial payment, either in relation to a permanent post or a placement. Although in most of these cases the employer did not identify a need for financial support, there were some cases where there seemed to have been scope for financial support for the employer. This arose where employers appeared to be somewhat frustrated by the level of support and supervision required by the participant and by its impact on other staff. Employers in these circumstances were not always aware of the availability of financial support and did not explicitly identify it as something they had needed. However, although it was no means clear cut, it is possible that a financial contribution towards support costs (or providing other in-work support – see below) might have helped to make the employment experience a more positive one for employer and participant.

The payment of wage subsidies and placement funding did not, then, always seem to match exactly with employers' needs. In some cases, payments made had not influenced the decision to take on the participant or the level of support provided; in others, it is possible that some financial support might have helped to make the post or placement more successful. There was also some criticism of the paucity of financial support for employers taking on New Deal for Disabled People participants compared

with payments received by those involved with New Deal for Young People – clients where employers felt that disabled people were likely to need more support than non-disabled young people. However, it should be noted that other employers had seen no need for financial support and had not felt that the participant's impairment had any implications for their support needs or their ability to carry out the required work.

Finally, employers were sometimes aware that participants received expenses or other financial support, but clearly were not in a position to comment on their impact.

6.5.4 Other in-work support

In some cases, employers had received other support, although again there was sometimes a little uncertainty about whether support had been provided via the Personal Adviser Service or by another agency. In-work support took various forms, including the provision of a job coach in a new employee's first weeks at work, the involvement of a Personal Adviser when problems arose in a job or placement, and more general contact by a Personal Adviser to check whether things were running smoothly and whether any help was required. In one case, an employer used the Personal Adviser Service for assessments of existing employees who were on long-term sick leave, to advise about the scope for adjustments to posts or the working environment or to give vocational guidance if a return to the previous work or to the employer was not feasible. Some employers were also aware of the Personal Adviser being in contact directly with the participant, although they had no knowledge of the nature or value of this.

Again, there was diversity among employers in the types of support needs they identified and in whether they were met. Those who had received support generally welcomed it and felt it had been useful. In other cases, no in-work support had been needed. For some employers, particularly those with little experience of employing disabled people, knowing of the existence of the scheme provided a general reassurance, even if no particular support had been required or sought.

As discussed above in relation to financial support, however, there were some instances where difficulties arose during employment or a placement which might have been addressed with in-work support from the Personal Adviser Service. In some cases, these had led to real concern about continuing the placement or employment. Again, employers in this situation did not usually explicitly identify a need either for support generally or for a specific type of help, were not necessarily aware of the support that the Personal Adviser Service could provide, and had not sought support from the it.

Difficulties arose where employers felt that the participant needed more support and supervision than they had anticipated, and more than they could comfortably provide themselves, sometimes leading to increased

pressure on or frustration among other employees. Some employers also reported behaviour by participants which may have been indications of a need for more support for either employer or participant – such as irregular attendance, perceived low motivation, lack of confidence, or participants withdrawing from a placement or permanent post. This would seem to reflect the findings from the qualitative work among clients that requirements of in-work support are not always met (see Section 5.4).

6.6 Factors influencing whether needs were met by Personal Adviser Service

Employers' experiences of the Personal Adviser Service were, therefore, diverse. Some required little or nothing in the way of support from the Personal Adviser Service. Some required and received more support and were very satisfied with their contact with the Service. In other cases, unmet needs were explicitly identified or were implicit in employers' accounts. The factors which appeared to influence whether or how effectively needs were met are generally of four types: those relating to the ability of employers to identify their needs of the Personal Adviser Service; limited knowledge or understanding of the pilot, perceived shortcomings in the Personal Adviser Service itself, and attitudes to working with disabled people.

6.6.1 Identifying needs of the Personal Adviser Service

First, there was considerable diversity among employers in the extent to which they were able to identify the type of support they might need from the Personal Adviser Service. In some cases, although the employer was aware that all was not going smoothly, it sometimes seemed to be difficult for them to identify whether there was a need for help and what particular type of support was required. For example, employers who felt that a participant needed more support and supervision than the manager or team could easily provide appeared not to have considered whether there might be a role for a job coach or assistant – sometimes because they were not aware that such a function exists.

In part, this seemed to be underpinned by the experience or knowledge employers had about working with disabled people. As Section 6.2 noted, whilst some had extensive experience, others had had little or no contact with disabled people. This seemed to inhibit understanding of the types of difficulties that disabled people might face in the workplace, the type of support that might help, and the existence of schemes and agencies which can provide this support. Even in larger organisations, however, where there was more extensive experience of working with disabled people and systems and structures to support this, these seemed not always to be called upon. Some respondents from organisations which were part of large private and public sector enterprises described difficulties that had arisen during placements but had not involved specialist personnel or occupational health departments either in discussing the type of support that might be needed or in seeking to access that support.

6.6.2 Understanding of the Personal Adviser Service

However, employers' ability to identify their need for help seemed also to be influenced by their knowledge and understanding of the Personal Adviser Service. Again, this was very varied.

Some had been involved in the design and set-up of one of the pilot services and had a detailed understanding both of the intention of a flexible and client-centred approach, and of the range and type of support available. Other employers had had extensive contact with a Personal Adviser, were aware of the scheme as a specialist function within the Employment Service and had a general sense of the type of support the Service could provide or to which it could facilitate access.

In other cases, however, there was a lack of clarity about the scheme, its role and the range of support it could provide. Some employers who had had contact with a participant's Personal Adviser had not understood that the person they met was from the Personal Adviser Service, describing them as the participant's counsellor or college tutor. Others were aware of the Personal Adviser as a member of the Personal Adviser Service, but seemed not to have a full understanding of their role. The involvement of a third organisation, for example a placement provider, sometimes seemed to be part of the explanation for this lack of clarity.

There was sometimes limited knowledge of the range of support available through the Personal Adviser Service. For example, there were employers who were unaware of the availability of wage subsidies or placement payments; of financial support for equipment or adjustments; that participants could access training before or during employment through the Service; that each participant has a Personal Adviser, or that the Service can assist in helping to identify any particular support needs. Some employers' knowledge of the Personal Adviser Service had arisen in the context of one particular participant, and they were unaware of aspects of the Service which this had not involved. For example, employers were sometimes unaware that the Service could provide candidates for permanent posts if their contact had been in relation to placements, or were unaware that participants could be employed in short-term placements if their involvement had been in the context of permanent employment. Knowledge of the possible role of the Personal Adviser Service in job retention cases seemed to be particularly patchy. It was sometimes assumed that the New Deal for Disabled People is only available to disabled people who have been long-term unemployed.

There also seemed to be some confusion with the New Deals for Young People and Long-Term Unemployed: some employers referred generically to *'the New Deal'* and seemed unaware that their contact had been specifically with New Deal for Disabled People; others referred to the high profile given to the New Deal for Disabled People through national advertising, which suggests confusion with other New Deals or Employment Service publicity campaigns. The multiplicity of New Deals

and of Employment Service initiatives and schemes was said by some to be confusing.

6.6.3 Perceived shortcomings of the Personal Adviser Service

Some employers were very positive about their contact with the Personal Adviser Service. They described the Personal Adviser as helpful, efficient and knowledgeable, and felt they had understood their needs and provided the guidance and assistance sought. Others however were less positive. There was some criticism of the quality of service received, and some employers saw this as inhibiting the extent to which their needs were met.

Some employers felt that Personal Advisers had not invested time in investigating the participant's needs or in ensuring that the employment opportunity was right for them. They thought that Personal Advisers were not sufficiently aware of the operating context of employers, did not fully understand the nature of their work and the required characteristics or abilities of the participant, and did not acknowledge the extent to which business demands constrain the ability of employers to provide support to disabled employees. It was suggested that internal operating targets may encourage Personal Advisers to put participants forward for posts for which they are unsuited, or to suggest a placement or permanent post before a participant was ready for this step. Some employers thought that participants may not feel entirely free to articulate their concerns about moving towards employment, for fear that this might jeopardise their benefits. These comments sometimes arose from a broader context of lack of confidence in the Employment Service more generally and in Jobcentres in particular as a source of job applicants, where it was felt that unemployed people who did not meet employers' requirements are often put forward for advertised posts.

These perceptions among employers are not entirely supported by the accounts of clients themselves, who sometimes felt that Personal Advisers discouraged them from moving into the workplace at the speed they would have liked themselves. Similarly, it conflicts somewhat with the accounts of Personal Advisers which place emphasis on the fact that the road to work, for some clients, is likely to be a long one – see for example Sections 4.2 and 4.5.

There was also a view among employers that Personal Advisers do not always have extensive experience of working with disabled people and the specialist knowledge and skills required. This reflects the views of some participants, and of Personal Advisers themselves (see for example Sections 4.2 and 4.4). One employer felt that the Personal Adviser Service may focus too narrowly on encouraging disabled people to return to the workplace without sufficiently addressing ways in which their broader personal circumstances might inhibit effective and sustainable workplace participation. Here it was said that the voluntary sector is more able to access the *'joined up support'* that may be required, and more able to

provide a client-centred service. Again, this is reflected in finding from the study among Personal Advisers that time for addressing participants' non-work related needs may be under pressure (see Section 4.3).

There was some criticism where Personal Advisers were felt not to have been sufficiently proactive, leaving it to the employer to identify what support was required and to request it from the Personal Adviser Service. Some employers felt that more frequent contact and closer liaison would have been welcomed and might have helped to avoid or find solutions to problems that arose. One small employer had found the Personal Adviser Service slow and cumbersome to deal with, where it had taken several weeks to arrange an assessment by a specialist agency and to line up financial and other support required. His conclusion was that larger employers are more likely to have the resources required for dealing with the administrative *'complexities'* of the New Deal for Disabled People.

In some cases, the employer's direct contact had been with a placement provider agency rather than with the Personal Adviser Service, and these types of criticisms were made of the agency rather than of the Personal Adviser Service. This echoes the Personal Adviser study. For example, Section 4.11 noted Personal Advisers' own concerns that working through different providers may leave little scope for Advisers to provide the support required.

6.6.4 Employers' attitudes towards employing disabled people

The fourth set of factors which appear to inhibit employers' ability to access support from the Personal Adviser Service relates to their attitudes towards employing disabled people. In general, the employers interviewed appeared to have a genuine commitment to making the post or placement successful. However, there were one or two instances where employers appeared to be less positive about employing disabled people and where there were some suggestions in the employer's account that there had not been a strong commitment to making the involvement of the participant work. Here, support offered by the Personal Adviser had sometimes been turned down, for reasons that were unclear.

More generally, it may not always be easy to translate a strategic commitment to equal opportunities into active policies and practices throughout an organisation. As reported in Section 6.3, respondents with strategic responsibility for equal opportunities sometimes noted that staff line managers may not be as supportive of the employment of disabled people; even where there was a commitment to working with disabled people and organisational structures and specialisms to support this, respondents did not describe calling on these internal sources of help to resolve difficulties that arose.

Finally, some did not feel that the participant's impairment had any implications for their ability to carry out the required work, and in some cases had not been aware they were disabled until after they had been

recruited. In other cases, however, particularly those involving placements, employers did appear to anticipate that the participant's impairment would inhibit their performance, and this sometimes seemed to be implicit in the fact that it was a placement rather than open employment that was envisaged. Section 6.3 also described more generally the types of difficulties that employers anticipated might be raised by the employment of disabled people, and it was clear that some employers had in mind quite severe impairments. It is possible – although there is no direct evidence for this in the study – that some employers may see problems as being in some way inherent in working with disabled people. If this is the case, it may be that this discourages employers from actively considering what support might be appropriate and from seeking it, seeing insuperable difficulties as inevitable.

6.7 Future involvement in the New Deal for Disabled People

In general, employers who had had direct involvement the Personal Adviser Service were keen to continue to be involved with, and – although there were some exceptions - those who had not yet been directly involved were keen to be approached. Some had become aware, through their involvement with a New Deal for Disabled People client, that disabled people could have the qualities they sought, and their knowledge of the support available from the Personal Adviser Service encouraged them to see it as a potential source of recruits. One employer had recruited someone with what he saw as a minor impairment which had not affected the employee's ability to carry out the job, and felt that his contact with the client had widened his perception of disability. In a small number of cases, employers had begun notifying Jobcentres or the Personal Adviser Service direct of vacancies and had indicated their willingness to consider participants for them.

For some employers, their contact with the Personal Adviser Service had also encouraged them to see the Service as a potential source of information about employing disabled people. They said they would approach the Personal Adviser Service both for specific advice or information if they were considering taking on a disabled person, and for more general advice and information for example about their legal obligations or to provide disability equality training to staff.

In a small number of cases, however, where employers' contact with the Personal Adviser Service had been less successful, there seemed to be some caution about future involvement. One employer who had taken a participant on a placement but had found it difficult to provide the level of support and supervision the client was thought to need, felt that she would ask more questions about the background and likely needs of a participant in future, and be more cautious about whether her team was able to provide the support required. Another felt more reluctant to take on a disabled person for a permanent post in future following a similar experience. A third had found the bureaucracy involved in accessing financial and other support cumbersome, and again felt less

inclined to take on a disabled person. Although such circumstances were rare, they do demonstrate the potential effects of unsatisfactory experiences.

Finally, one employer had welcomed the New Deal for Disabled People as the client-centred and flexible approach they felt was missing from the existing array of disability services, but was somewhat disappointed with their contact with the Personal Adviser Service, feeling that it was not sufficiently distinct from other services and not empowering to clients. The respondent felt that the Personal Adviser Service might need to do more, both to ensure that the individual participant's own wishes are given due weight, and to make the Personal Adviser Service more obviously client-led (rather than just client-centred) with the participant the person *'behind the steering wheel'*. It may be that situations where organisations envisage becoming involved with large numbers of participants (discussed further below) can contribute to this perception.

6.8 Communicating the New Deal for Disabled People to employers

6.8.1 Involving employers in the New Deal for Disabled People

Among the larger public and private sector employers, there was some uncertainty as to why they had not yet been more actively involved in the New Deal for Disabled People, and a degree of anxiety about this. Some felt they should have been approached by the Personal Adviser Service but had not been (and in some cases, had not been aware of the New Deal for Disabled People until the research interview). Others had had initial contact with the Personal Adviser Service and indicated a willingness to be actively involved, but had not yet been approached with possible candidates for permanent posts or placements, or not with the anticipated volume of candidates. Some had heard nothing further from Personal Advisers since the launch of the Service and were somewhat concerned at this absence of contact.

Employers sometimes referred to having *'signed up'* for the New Deal for Disabled People, or for the New Deal generically. It seemed that they did not anticipate that New Deal for Disabled People would be flexible and client-centred, and anticipated the high volume of participants on a structured employment programme that they had seen or heard of in the context of the New Deals for Young People and for the Long-Term Unemployed. This seemed to be beginning to become a source of real concern to some employers, sometimes leading to suspicions that the New Deal for Disabled People was not proving successful, that there must be few participants who were ready for work or a placement, or that Personal Advisers may not be directing their attentions to the right employers. It would seem that there is at least some potential for this to become, for employers, a source of frustration and disillusionment with the New Deal for Disabled People.

6.8.2 Suggestions for communicating the scheme to employers

As their varied knowledge of the Personal Adviser Service would suggest, employers had mixed experiences of the marketing of the Service. Some had attended an official launch, been sent written information about the scheme or been approached by a Personal Adviser about their possible

involvement in general; others were not aware of any marketing activity and if they had heard of the scheme knew it only in the context of a specific participant. Whilst they made a number of suggestions about how marketing might most effectively be carried out, there were many contradictions among them, suggesting that a variety of approaches are likely to be required to meet diverse needs.

There were mixed views about the respective merits of written material and personal contact. Some employers were scathing about written material, seeing it as *'junk mail'* likely to be discarded unread and preferring a personal approach through either a telephone call or a visit. Meetings were welcomed as an opportunity to help Personal Advisers to understand the business environment and the types of employment opportunities the employer might have, and as a chance to develop a personal rapport with an individual representative of the Personal Adviser Service.

Others, however, actively preferred written material which could be read in their own time. Some wanted this to be fairly detailed, describing and giving illustrations of the type of support the Personal Adviser Service could offer. Others wanted it to be brief: just enough to generate an initial interest, followed up with a telephone call or personal visit giving more information. Some wanted bold, glossy and visually enticing material, seeing this as professional and indicative of a positive approach to disabled people. However, this is exactly the approach that might be off-putting to others, who were wary of approaches that smacked of selling or made claims they saw as unrealistic.

The importance of directing information to the appropriate person was stressed – usually seen as those with strategic responsibility for personnel issues or for equal opportunities. Among respondents from national organisations, particularly those who assumed they would be asked to make a significant commitment or to *'sign up'*, it was said that the approach should be made to the organisation's head office, even if this was outside the pilot area.

Some employers felt that general publicity was less likely to be effective than an approach about a particular participant who would fit well within the employer's organisation, either in a placement or a permanent post. They emphasised the importance of approaching the employer with a clear and considered strategy for providing support, actively demonstrating how the scheme can work. However, there was also a perceived need for *'trumpet blowing'*: a high profile publicity campaign aimed at challenging stereotypes of disabled people and demonstrating positive attitudes about their role as employees. The importance of making disabled people, and organisations of and for disabled people, aware of the scheme was also noted.

More generally, it was felt to be important that those marketing the scheme demonstrate awareness of the realities of the business environment, do not have unrealistic expectations of employers, and recognise that employers may need to *'make the business case'* to the wider organisation. Some respondents suggested that employers themselves would be the most persuasive advocates for the Personal Adviser Service. They felt that employers talking positively about their experiences of working with disabled people and of involvement in the New Deal for Disabled People would be a better way to demonstrate understanding of the business realities, to convey dynamism and enthusiasm about the Personal Adviser Service, and to be convincing to other employers.

6.9 Discussion

In this final section, we draw together some of the key themes in the views and experiences of employers, and highlight a number of issues that policy-makers may wish to consider in developing the Personal Adviser Service.

6.9.1 Emerging themes

- Employers' accounts endorse the perception of clients (see Sections 3.2 and 5.2) that employers' attitudes towards disabled people can be a significant barrier to their inclusion in the labour market. Employers perceive a number of difficulties and challenges inherent in employing disabled people. Their discussion of perceived constraints on the employment of disabled people suggest that it may not always be obvious how a post or the workplace can be adapted to be inclusive to a disabled person. This perhaps requires creative and lateral thinking that may come more easily to an employer with experience of employing disabled people.
- Some employers appear to have an image of disabled people which emphasises more severe impairments, and this seems to contribute to their sense that employing disabled people is difficult. There are some suggestions that an impairment which affects a person's ability to work is, for some employers, inherent in their definition of disability. Again, lack of experience of working with disabled people seems also to play a part here.
- Although some employers have a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion in their recruitment practices, there seems to be a need for more information for others about their legal responsibilities, the benefits of inclusive recruitment practices and the type of flexible approaches that can make the workplace accessible. Even where a strategic commitment to employing disabled people exists, this may not always be translated throughout the organisation, suggesting that attitudes at the ground level need to be tackled as well as communicating with organisations at a more strategic level.

- There is diversity among employers in their access to information about, and support for, the employment of disabled people. This arises both in terms of knowledge of external support (through the Employment Service and other organisations) and access to specialist advice and financial support from within the organisation. Even where specialist departments exist, they seem not always to be called upon for help at the local level within the organisation.
- Employers identify a number of areas where they perceive a need for support. Broadly, there is a need for information and reassurance that will help to diminish employers' sense of risk and uncertainty in working with disabled people, as well as educating them about their responsibilities. More specifically, employers' accounts suggest that they perceive a need for the following types of support:
  - specialist advice: to assist employers' understanding of the implications of particular impairments, the support or adjustments that would make a post accessible, and the type of help available;
  - financial support: for adjustments to premises, for equipment or furniture, and for in-work support;
  - in-work support: providing or funding job assistants or job coaches, mentoring or peer support and training. There seems also to be a role for 'mediation' between employer and employee if difficulties arise, to come up with active solutions. Employers have particular concerns about fluctuating conditions which entail periods of sick leave. Whilst their views may not reflect the actual attendance records of disabled employees, there may be a role for financial support for additional staff cover as well as broader reassurance about the performance of disabled employees;
  - opportunities for job trials or short-term paid or voluntary placements: without commitment or expenditure.
- The study has not explored retention issues in detail, since these will be the focus of a later element of the research programme. However, employers' accounts identify support needs in relation to retention as well as recruitment. These encompass specialist advice and help with assessment; financial support for adjustments or equipment; vocational guidance and retraining if redeployment is inevitable; counselling and advocacy, and vocational guidance and job-search support if continued employment within the organisation is not feasible.
- The New Deal for Disabled People was seen by some employers in the study group as an opportunity to demonstrate to others in the organisation that employing disabled people does not necessarily raise additional support needs, and that needs can be met successfully without financial cost to the organisation. This was seen to be an important strategy in addressing employers' concerns about working with disabled people, but one that requires adequate external funding.

6.9.2 Implications for developing the Service

The study shows that some employers have had very positive experiences, both of recruiting disabled people and of the Personal Adviser Service. In some cases, a client was taken on and their impairment was not felt, by the employer, to have led to any particular support needs from the employer or the Personal Adviser Service. In others, employers received help from the Personal Adviser Service which played an important role in facilitating the employment of a participant. However, the study also raises a number of issues which may have implications for the development of the Service:

- Some employers were surprised that they had not been approached; others that initial approaches had not resulted in more involvement. This may reflect the deliberately client-centred approach adopted by Personal Advisers, which may lead to a reluctance to approach employers outside the context of an individual client. On the other hand, the alternative approach of encouraging employers to *'sign up'* may not be necessary or desirable: indeed, there may be dangers in this approach if it leads to expectations of large numbers of participants coming forward from the programme. It also runs the risk of stigmatising disabled people and excluding them from 'mainstream' employment opportunities. However, there would seem to be some untapped interest in involvement in the New Deal for Disabled People, including among large employers who would offer a wide range of employment opportunities. There may be value in finding ways of making contact with such employers without compromising the client-centred approach.
- The employers in the study group have quite varied knowledge and understanding of the Personal Adviser Service. There was evidence of misconceptions and gaps in awareness. There seems to be a need for a clearer articulation to employers when they become involved with the Personal Adviser Service of the range of services and support the Service can provide. (This echoes the finding in the Personal Adviser study that clients seem not to be given clear information about the range of services available.) However, the ability of the Personal Adviser Service to provide this clear articulation may be constrained by the client's desire for confidentiality – see further below.
- Employers, both large and small, perceive a need for external sources of financial support in employing and retaining disabled people. This raises a broader question about the appropriate balance between providing external funding and encouraging employers to accept financial responsibilities themselves.
- The study suggests that Personal Advisers may need to work closely with employers to help them to understand how a particular post or workplace can be made accessible to a client. This may require a proactive approach by the Personal Adviser, particularly where an employer's knowledge and experience of working with disabled people is more limited.

- The type of support and advice provided to employers by the Personal Adviser Service did not always match exactly with employers' needs. Again, this suggests a need for more proactive work with employers to help to identify the support required. If problems arise in a placement or permanent job, Personal Advisers need to do more than just discuss them with the employer and employee: they need also to be active in identifying solutions.
- Some employers look to the Personal Adviser for information and advice about a client's impairment and its implications. Personal Advisers need to be sufficiently well informed to give this, and findings from both the client and the Personal Adviser studies suggest that not all are. Moreover, this may conflict with the wishes of participants, some of whom do not want information about their impairment to be communicated to the employer, at least not before they are appointed. This is potentially a difficult conflict of interest for Personal Advisers, and there may be a need for more active consideration of where their primary responsibilities lie.
- Personal Advisers need to demonstrate that they understand the perspective and business needs of employers. They need to work closely with individual employers to understand the nature of the business, work opportunities and skill needs. Employers emphasise the importance of personal contact and a professional service in their dealings with the Personal Adviser Service, and this places demands on Personal Advisers' time.
- Finally, the study suggests that a range of approaches to marketing the Service to employers is required, and that this may require communicating with several different individuals or departments within a large organisation. A particular requirement is the need to challenge unhelpful images of disabled people. The dominance of severe impairments in employers' perceptions of disabled people may need to be tackled (and it may be that the 'disability' label is unhelpful in this regard). At the same time, there is a need to tackle the perception of impairment – whether severe or not - as necessarily in itself a barrier to work.

APPENDIX A[38] CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PILOT AREAS

A1 Introduction

In this appendix, selected summary labour market indicators are presented for the six Employment Service pilot areas. These summary indicators are drawn from broader local labour market studies concerned with providing a comparative overview of the labour market and socio-demographic characteristics of the pilot areas. The aim of the local labour market studies was to provide a description and limited assessment of the context in which the New Deal for Disabled People operated.

The incapacity and unemployment levels for each of the pilot areas are reported in Table A.1, along with categorisation of each area according to urban and regional system characteristics.

Table A.1 Employment Service pilot areas by levels of incapacity and unemployment

Local Area	Incapacity/Unemployment	District Type
Sandwell	High	Inner city
Lanarkshire	High	Mixed
Eastern Valleys	High	Rural
Bolton	Medium	Urban
Central Sussex	Medium	Mixed
Bristol East and Bath	Low	Urban

A1.1 The 'geographies' of the pilot areas and associated data issues

The Employment Service pilot areas (and the other pilot areas) are Benefits Agency Districts. A 'best-fitting' exercise conducted at the outset of the project showed that Benefits Agency Districts do not 'nest' easily into other geographical areas for which local labour market data is more readily available (notably travel-to-work areas). Partly this is due to the presence amongst the pilot areas of several inner city areas (which do not form functional local labour market areas), and also relatively small parts of metropolitan areas.

Based on the results of the 'best-fitting' exercise, a decision was taken to make use of counties and unitary authority areas with local authority districts for unemployment[39] and employment analyses. For analyses using data from the Labour Force Survey it was necessary to use counties and local authority

[38] Anne Green, David Owen and Chris Hasluck were responsible for the preparation of local labour market studies.

[39] 'Official' unemployment rates denominators have recently been made available for these areas. In theoretical terms it would have been preferable to use travel-to-work areas (since travel-to-work areas are defined on a consistent and comparable basis), but due to the circumstances outlined above a decision to make use of administrative geographies instead was taken.

districts based on 1981 geographies.[40] For analyses of data on vacancies (and unemployment/vacancy ratios) it was necessary to use some Jobcentre-based geography, and in this instance a mixture of county, local education authority and Jobcentre-based travel-to-work area geographies were used.[41]

A1.2 Selected labour market indicators

The indicators presented here relate to the following topics:

1. Unemployment rates (calculated using the claimant count statistics).
2. Ratio of unemployed to unfilled vacancies, hereafter termed 'unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratios', (calculated using vacancies recorded by the Employment Service).
3. Inactivity rates for persons of working age (from the Labour Force Survey).
4. Employment rates for persons of working age (from the Labour Force Survey).[42]
5. Employment by sector (using employee data from the 1997 Annual Employment Survey).

These indicators were selected to provide an insight into some of the key features of the labour market in the six pilot areas. The unemployment rate has traditionally been the most widely used socio-economic indicator – particularly at local level. It is sometimes used as an indicator of social distress, but is interpreted here mainly as an indicator of labour market imbalance. Information on vacancies may be set alongside data on the numbers of people unemployed to provide a crude indication of the numbers of unemployed in a local area relative to the number of vacancies.[43] The unemployed/vacancy ratios presented in this appendix have been calculated by dividing the claimant unemployed by the number of unfilled vacancies in an area multiplied by three. This multiplication factor is based on the conventional assumption that only a third of vacancies are notified to Jobcentres.

As well as the indicators relating to unemployment and unemployment in relation to vacancies, information is presented on those of working age outside the labour force (i.e. the economically inactive). Employment rates are used to show the proportion of people within a local area in employment. Finally, statistics are presented on the comparative industrial profiles of employment in the local areas. The industrial profile of an area has implications for both the occupational and full-time/part-time structure of employment.

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[40] For sub-regional analyses the Labour Force Survey uses 1981, as opposed to 1991, geographies.

[41] Decisions as to what geographical units to use were made on a case by case basis. Hence, in some cases the 'best-fit' geographical units for vacancy analyses will not match exactly the 'geographies' used for other topics.

[42] These are the converse of non-employment rates for persons of working age.

[43] The unemployment/vacancy ratio is described as 'crude' since it takes no account of possible mismatches between the unemployed and jobs available.

A2 Unemployment rates

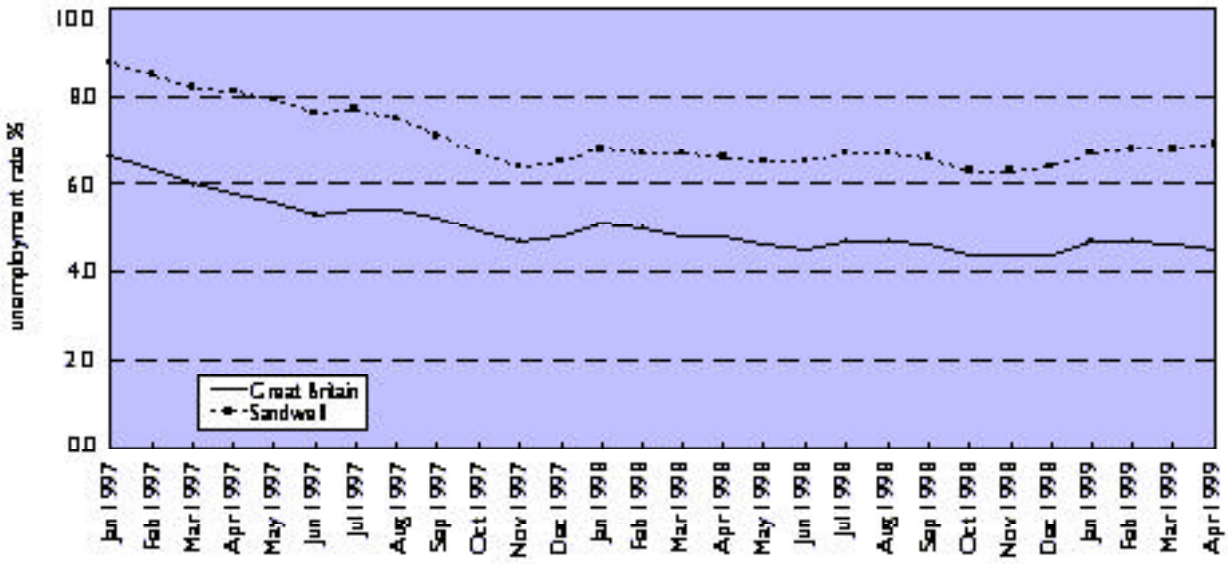
Aggregate unemployment rates on a monthly basis over the period from January 1997 to April 1999[44] are shown for each of the six local areas and Great Britain (Figures A.1 to A.6). The graphs are presented on a common scale, so as to aid cross-area comparisons.

The following features are evident:

- All pilot areas shared in the general trend for a gradual decline in unemployment rates, although often this decline was not particularly marked.
- Lanarkshire, Eastern Valleys, Sandwell (high unemployment/inactivity areas) and Central Sussex (a medium unemployment/inactivity area) display unemployment rates consistently higher than the Great Britain average over the period.
- Bolton (a medium unemployment/inactivity area) and Bristol East and Bath (a low unemployment/inactivity area) are characterised by unemployment rates below the national average.

Hence, it is apparent (as would be expected) that the labour market is 'tighter' in the high unemployment/inactivity areas than in the low unemployment/inactivity areas.

Figure A.1 Unemployment rate - Sandwell



[44] This is the most recent month for which data have been extracted.

Figure A.2 Unemployment rate - Lanarkshire

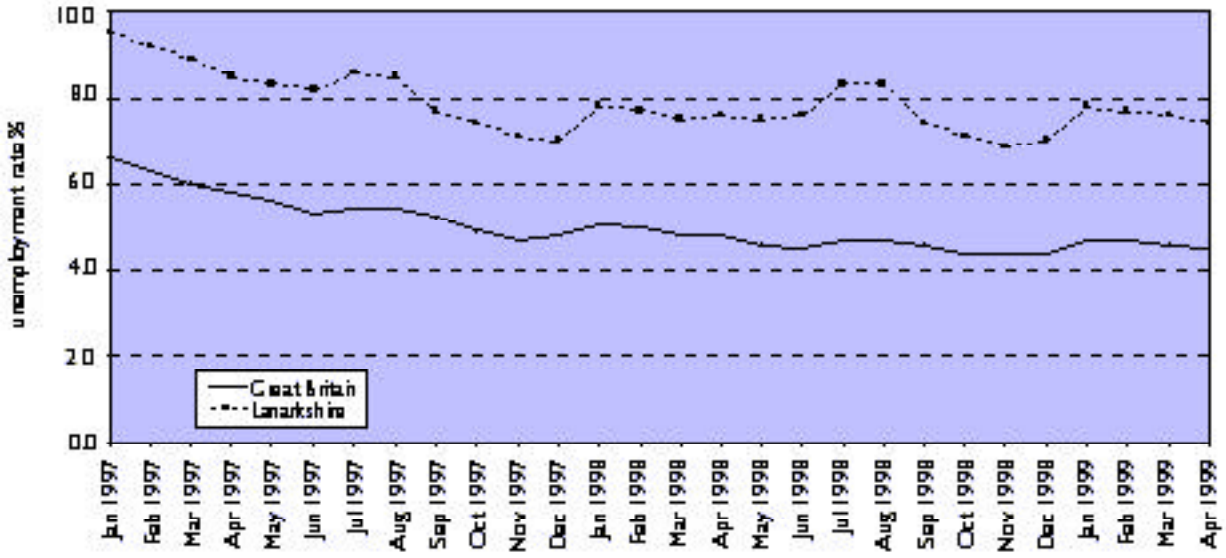


Figure A.3 Unemployment rate – Eastern Valleys

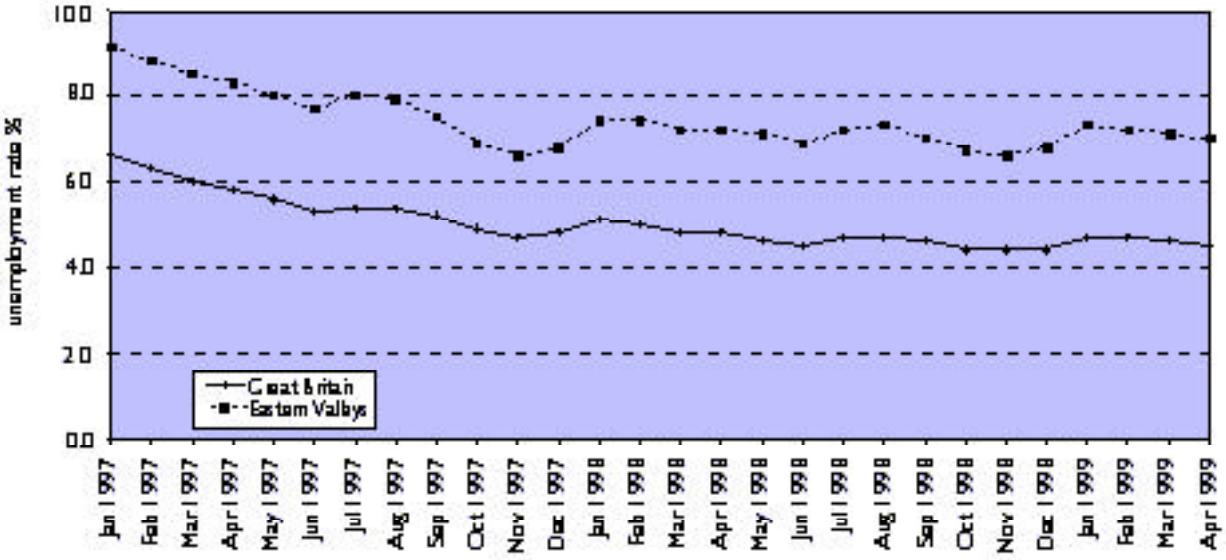


Figure A.4 Unemployment rate - Bolton

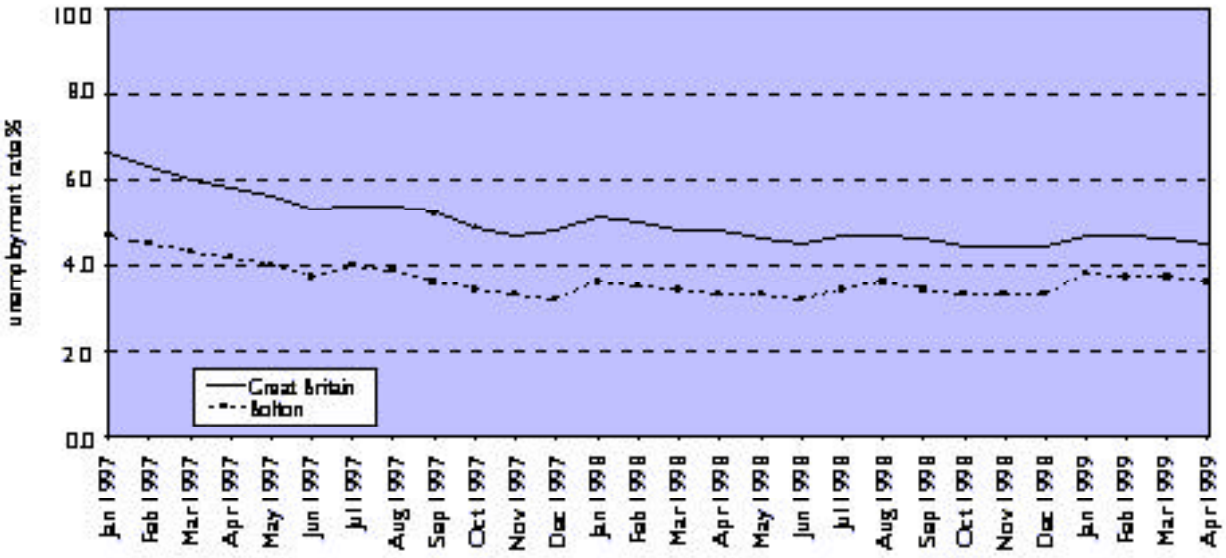


Figure A.5 Unemployment rate – Central Sussex

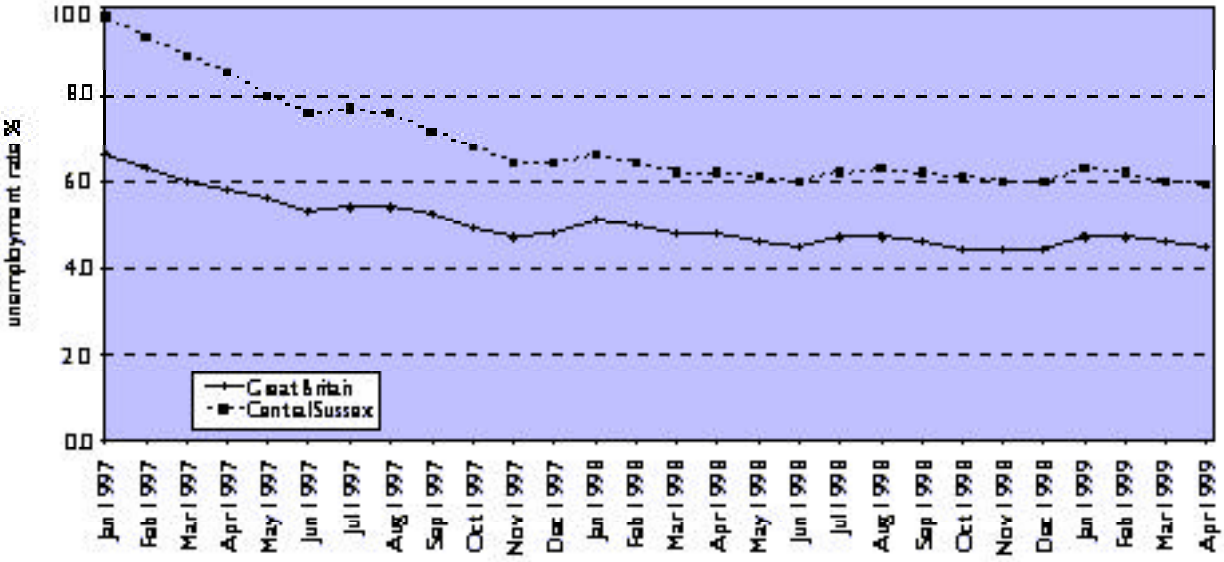
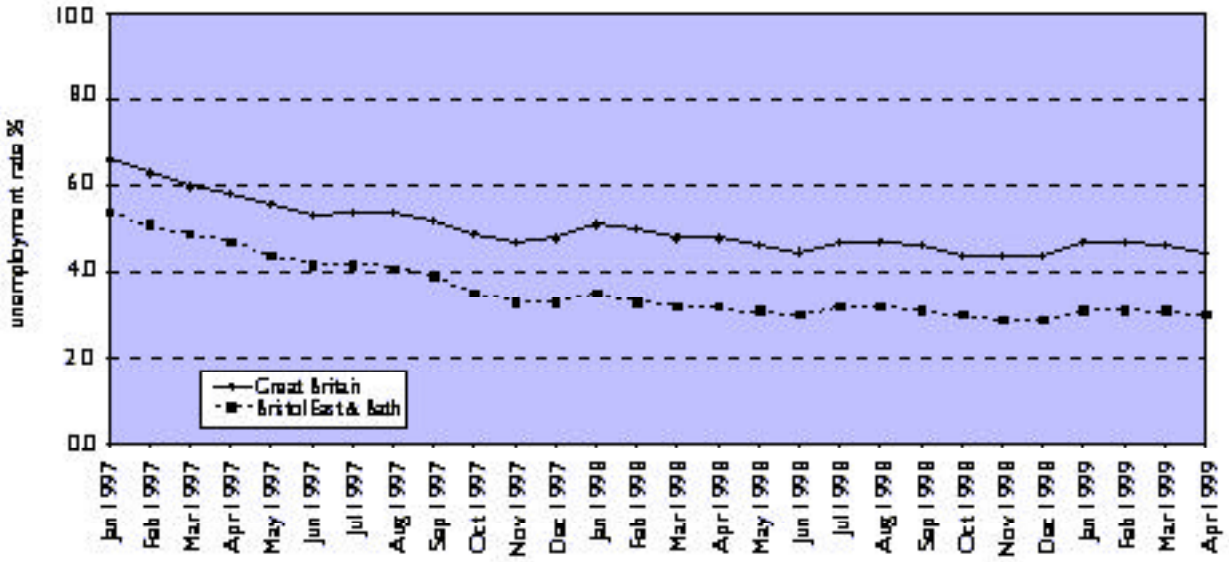


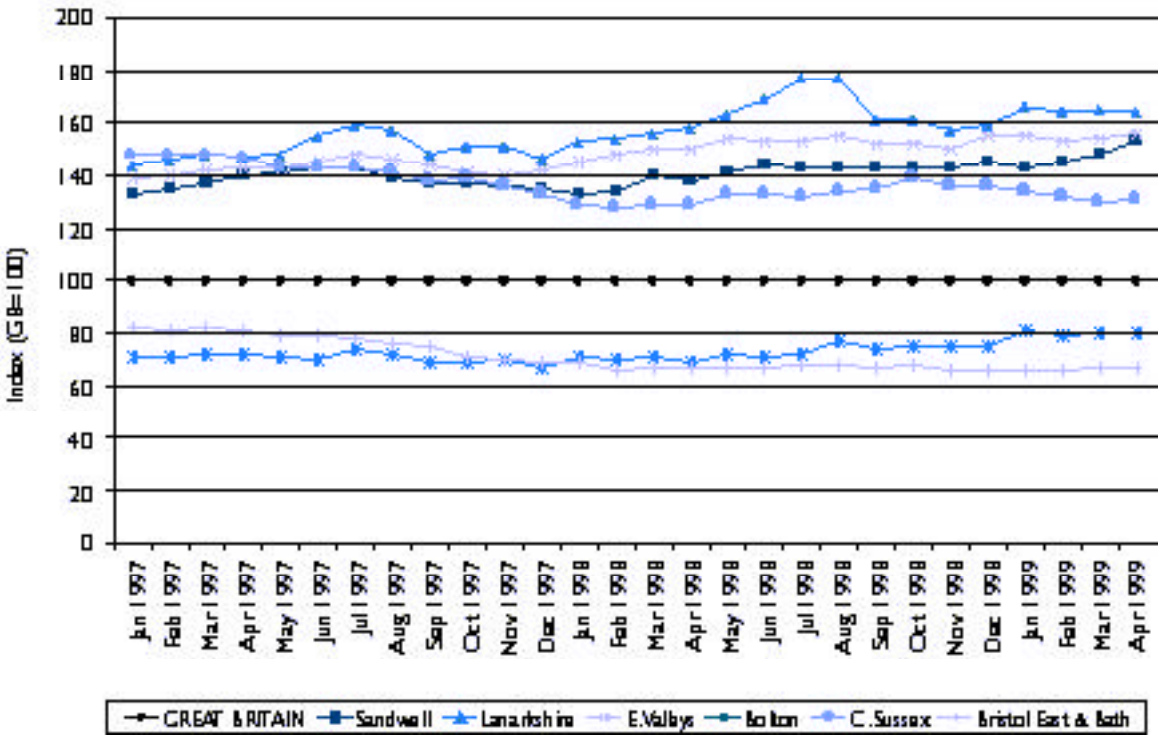
Figure A.6 Unemployment rate – Bristol East & Bath



In Figure A.7 the unemployment rates are expressed as an index (with the Great Britain unemployment rate assigned a value of 100). From this figure it is evident that:

- Unemployment rates in the high unemployment/inactivity areas (Lanarkshire, Eastern Valleys, Sandwell) and in the low unemployment/inactivity area (Bristol East and Bath) have tended to diverge from the Great Britain average since 1998. This pattern indicates a relative widening of the 'gap' between high unemployment/inactivity areas and low unemployment/inactivity areas despite the trend for a general decline in unemployment rates over the period from January 1997 to April 1999.
- Unemployment rates in the medium unemployment/inactivity areas (Bolton and Central Sussex) have tended to converge towards the national average over the period.

Figure A.7 Unemployment rate – indices



A3 Unemployment/vacancy ratios

The unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratios presented here have been calculated by dividing the claimant unemployed by the number of unfilled vacancies in the local area[45] multiplied by three[46]. The unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratios are recorded on a monthly basis over the period from January 1997 to April 1999.

Graphs for each of the six local areas and Great Britain are presented (Figures A.8 to A.13). Again, the graphs are presented on a common scale, so as to aid cross-area comparisons. Figure A.14 shows the trend in unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratios for all of the areas.

[45] It should be noted that the geographies used here are in many cases not the same as those used for the unemployment rates shown in the previous section (see Section A1.1).

[46] This is based on the conventional assumption (noted above) that only a third of vacancies in the labour market will be notified to Jobcentres; (although it is acknowledged that this proportion may vary by local area.)

Figure A.8 Unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratio - Sandwell

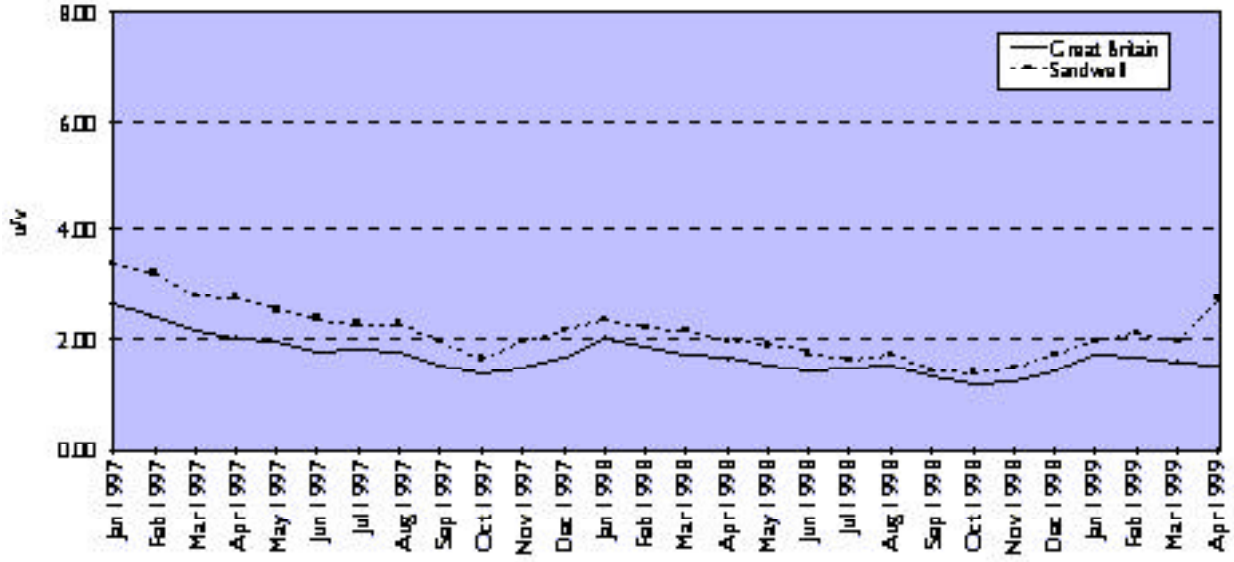


Figure A.9 Unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratio - Lanarkshire

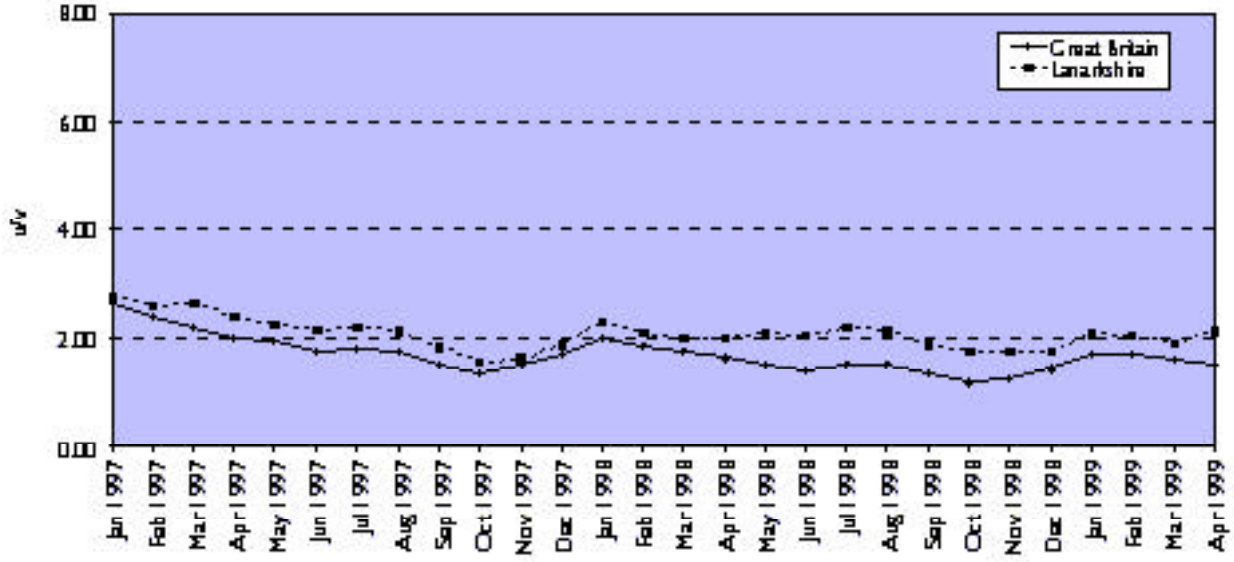


Figure A.10 Unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratio – Eastern Valleys

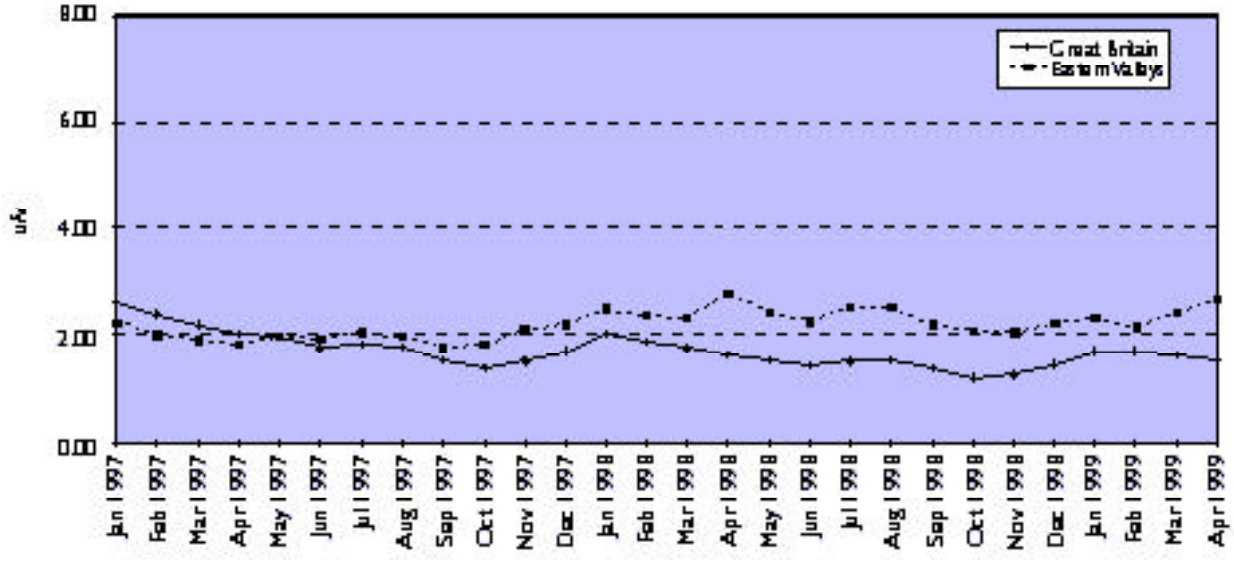


Figure A.11 Unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratio - Bolton

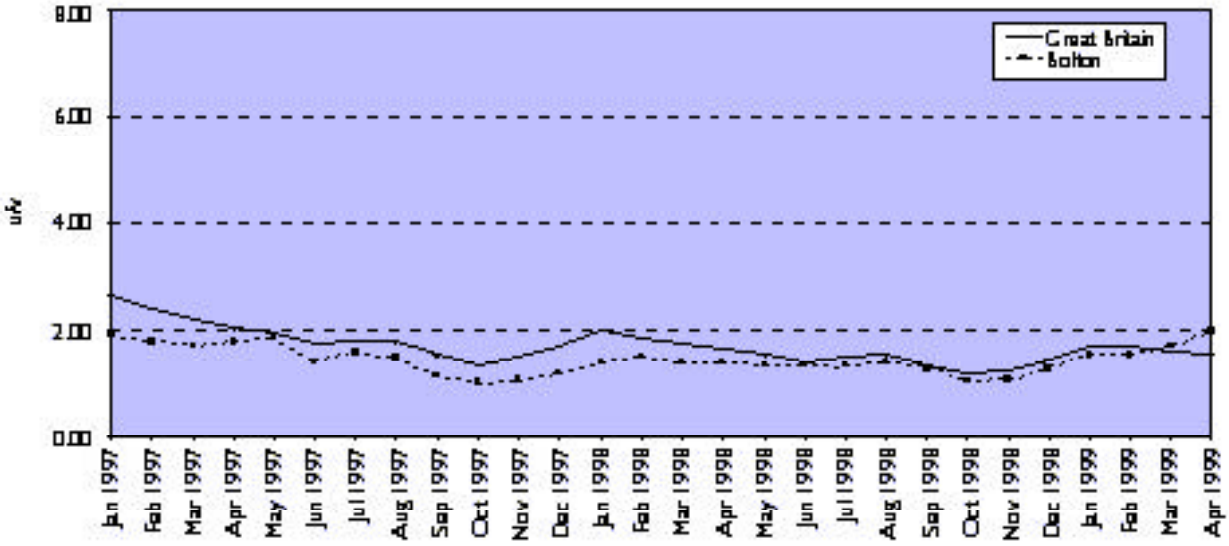


Figure A.12 Unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratio – Central Sussex

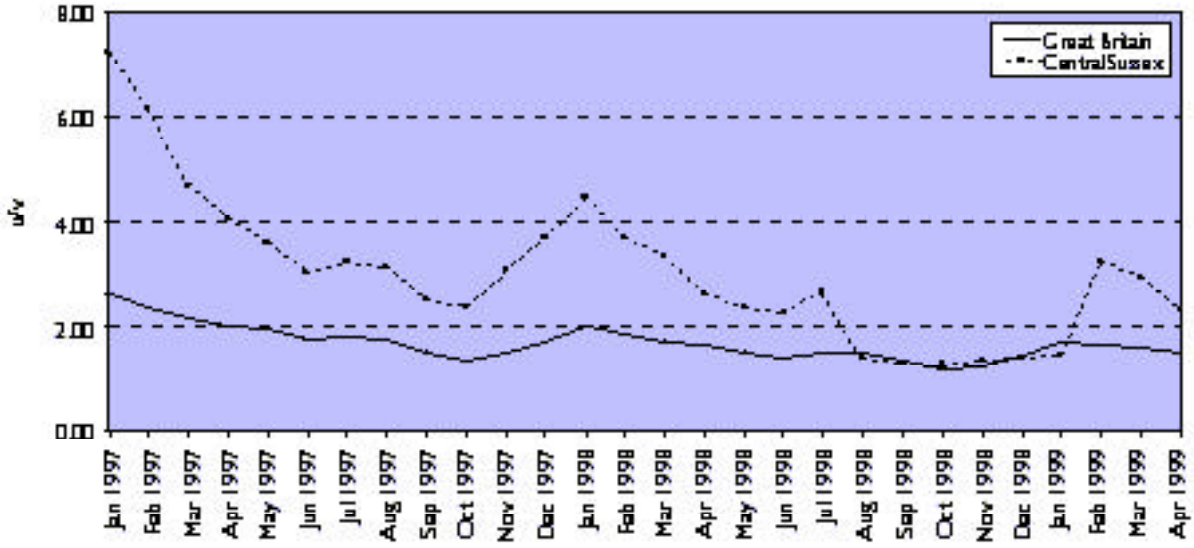


Figure A.13 Unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratio - Bristol East & Bath

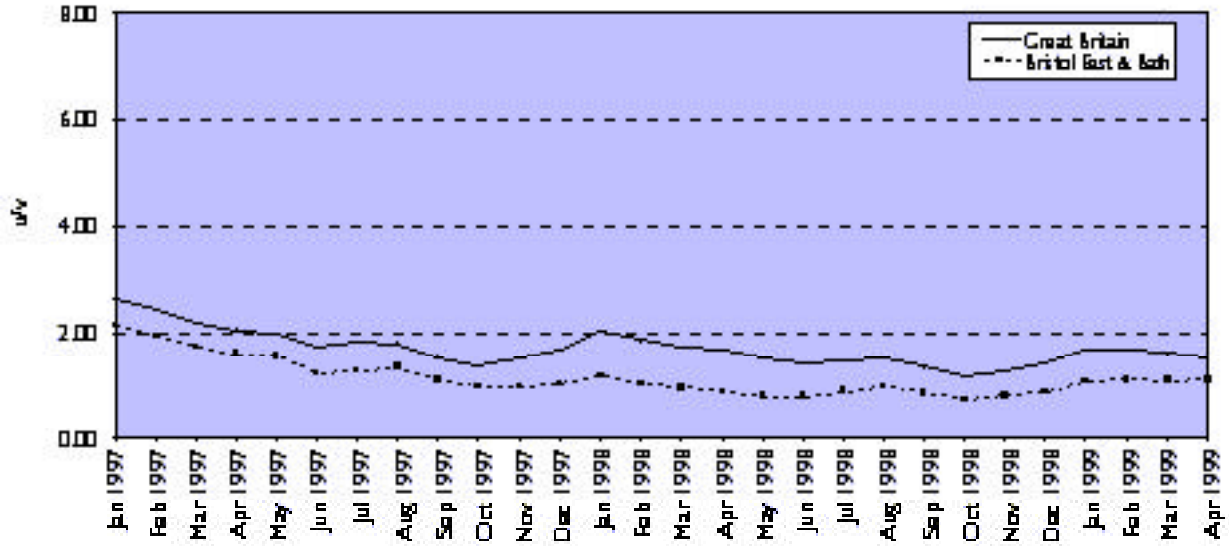
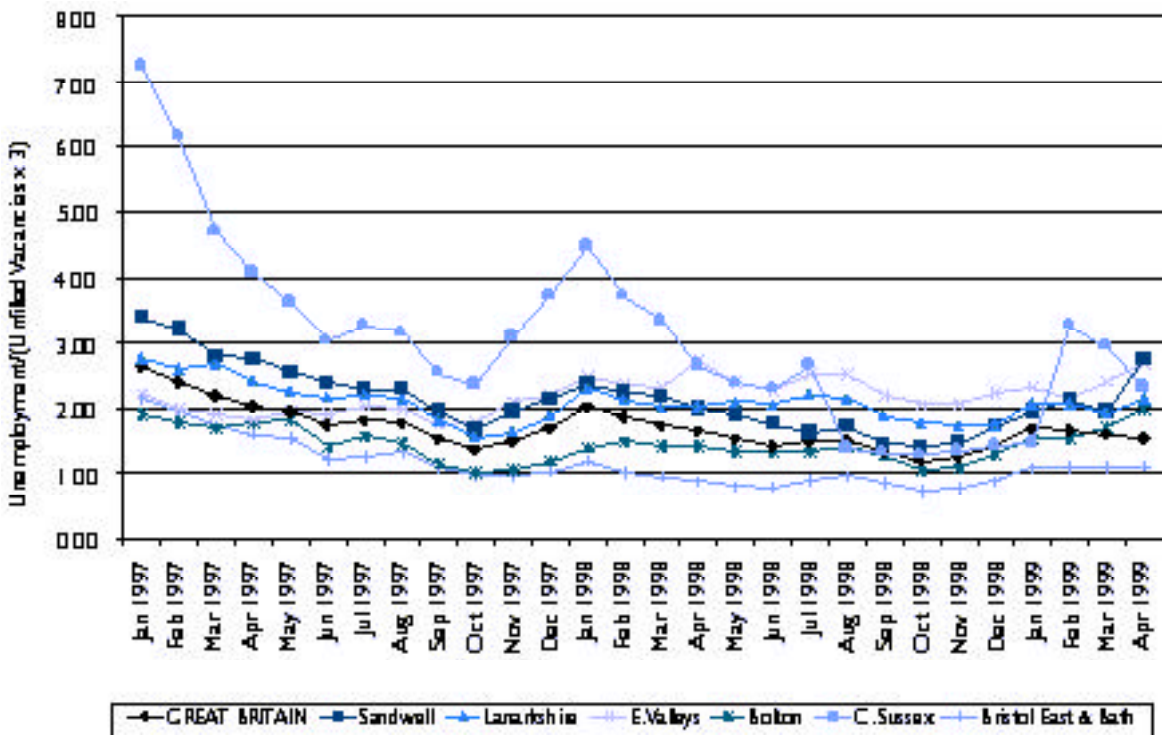


Figure A.14 Unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratios for all of the areas



The following features are evident from an examination of Figures A.8 - A.14:

- The trend in unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratios in most local areas follows the Great Britain trend, which is for a slight reduction in unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratios over the period.[47]
- Central Sussex displays the most marked variations in unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratios over the period.[48]
- Lanarkshire, Eastern Valleys, Sandwell (high unemployment/inactivity areas) tend to display unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratios close to, but slightly above, the Great Britain average. This indicates that there are more unemployed people chasing each vacancy than nationally.
- Bristol East and Bath (a low unemployment/inactivity area) exhibits a consistently lower than average unemployed to unfilled vacancies ratio, as does Bolton for most of the period. This suggests that, on average[49], an unemployed individual would find it easier to find work in Bristol East and Bath than in the other pilot areas.

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[47] It should be noted that vacancy stock figures for Great Britain were adjusted by the Employment Service in April 1999 to make up for a gradual build up in inaccuracies. This resulted in discontinuities (both upwards and downwards) for some Jobcentres.

[48] This is the area covering Brighton, Hove and Lewes. The South Coast has some of highest unemployment rates in southern England.

[49] Ignoring mismatches between the skills of the unemployed and the attributes required in the jobs on offer.

A4 Inactivity Rates for persons of working age

Inactivity rates for persons of working age on a quarterly basis over the period from the Spring quarter 1997 to the Winter quarter 1998/99 are shown for each of the six local areas and Great Britain (Figures A.15 - A.20). Once again, the graphs are presented on a common scale.

Figure A.15 Inactivity rate: persons of working age – Sandwell

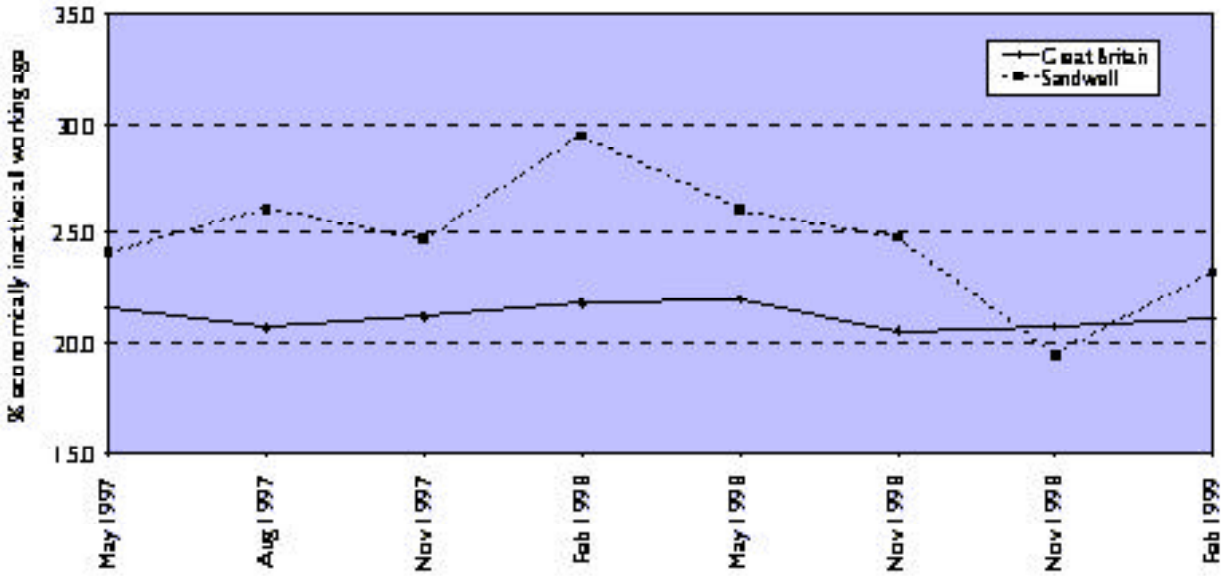


Figure A.16 Inactivity rate: persons of working age – Lanarkshire

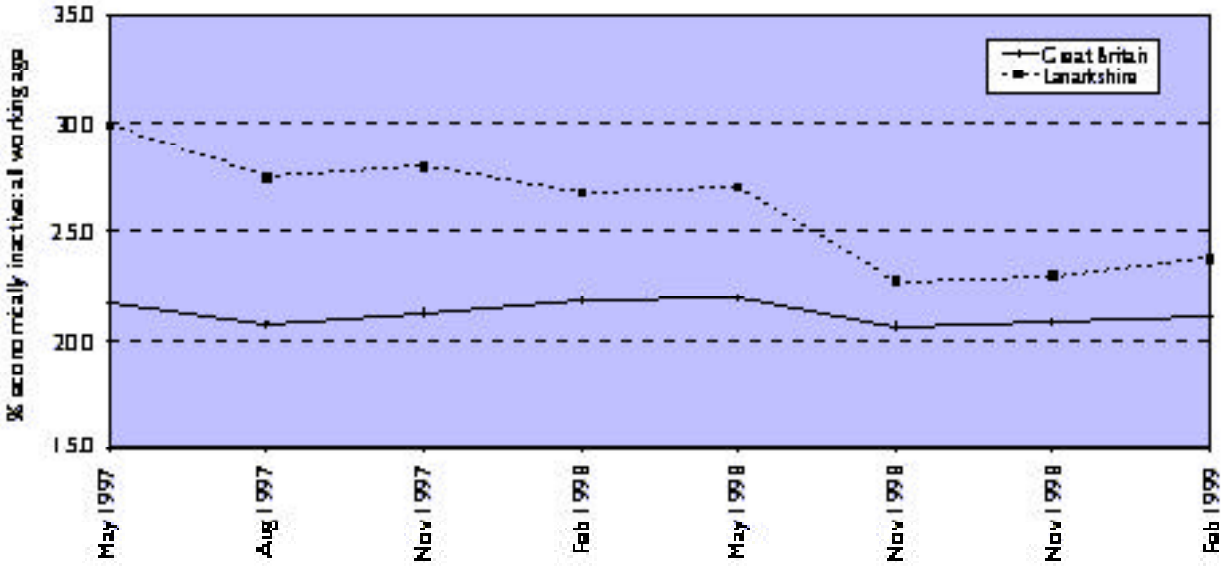


Figure A.17 Inactivity rate: persons of working age – Eastern Valleys

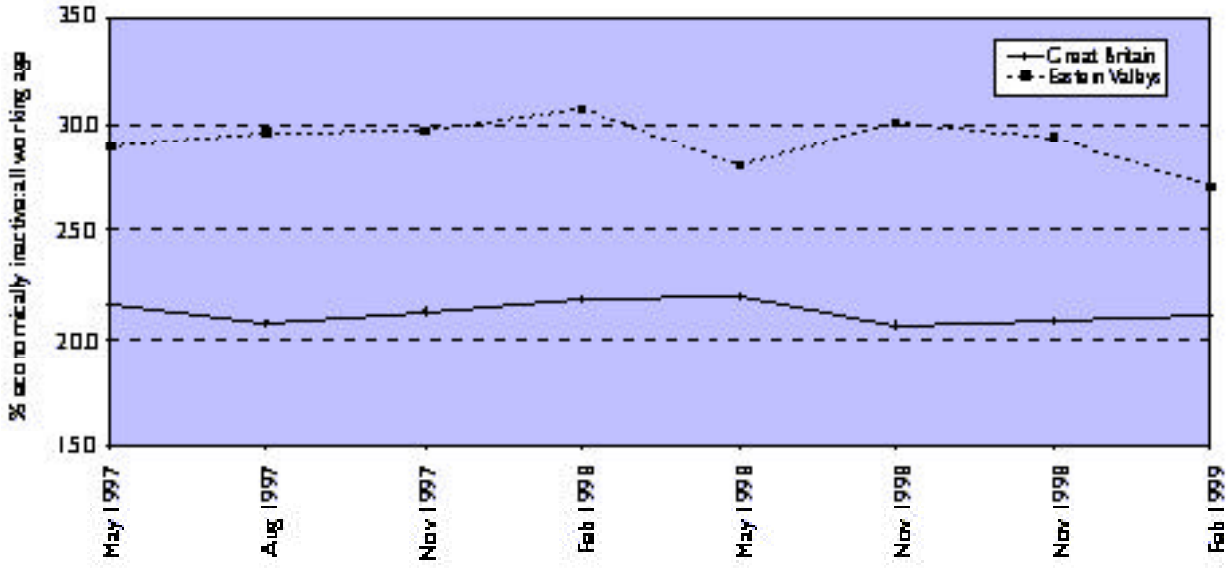


Figure A.18 Inactivity rate: persons of working age – Bolton

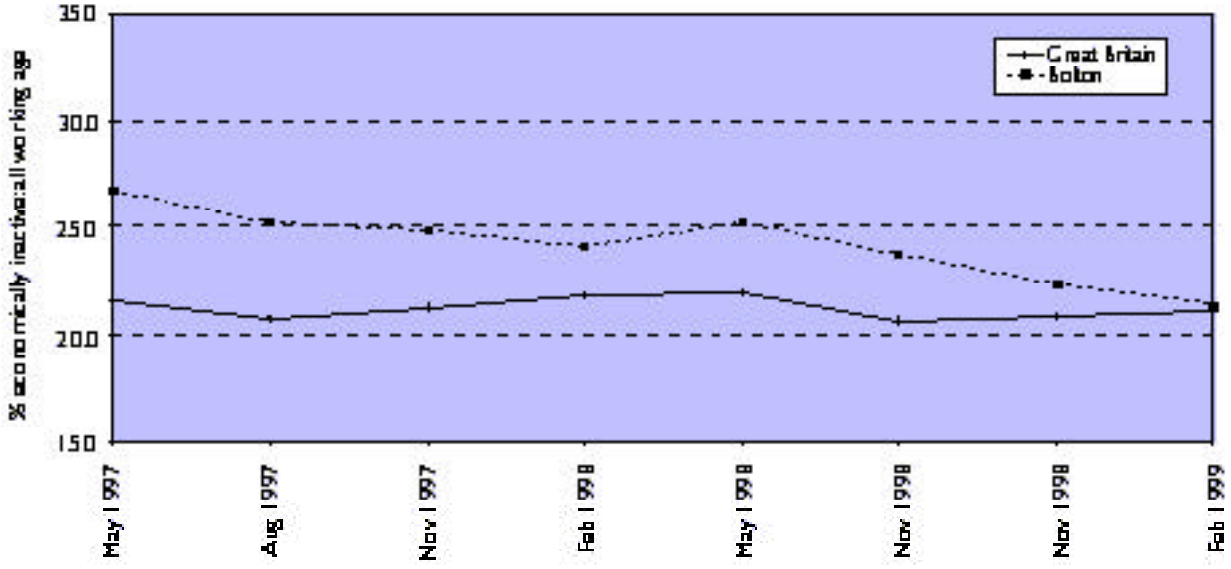


Figure A.19 Inactivity rate: persons of working age – Central Sussex

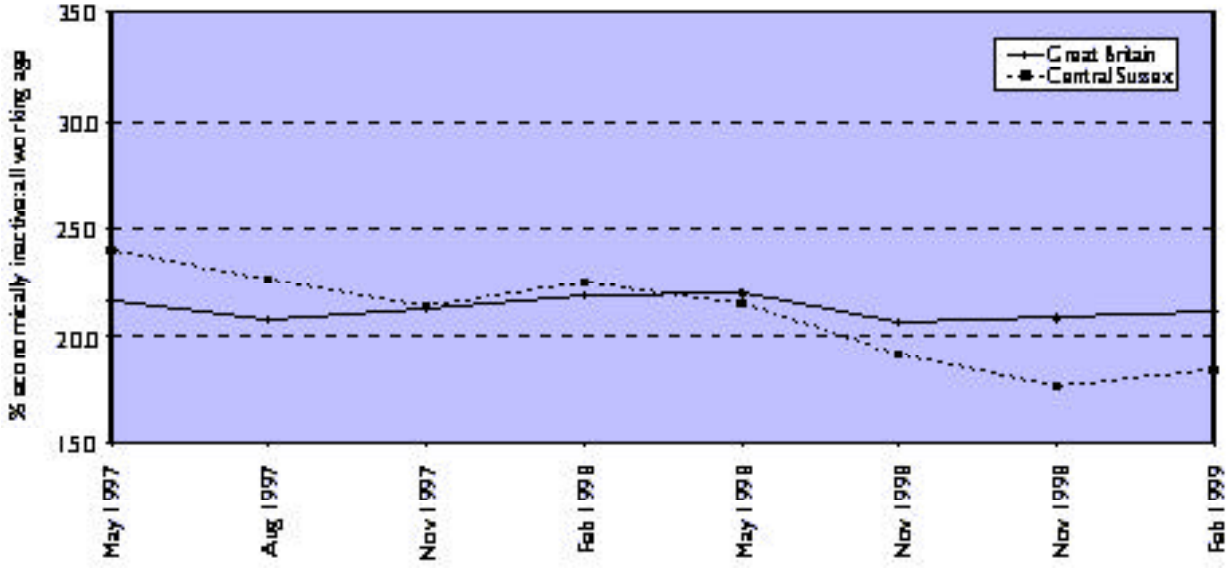
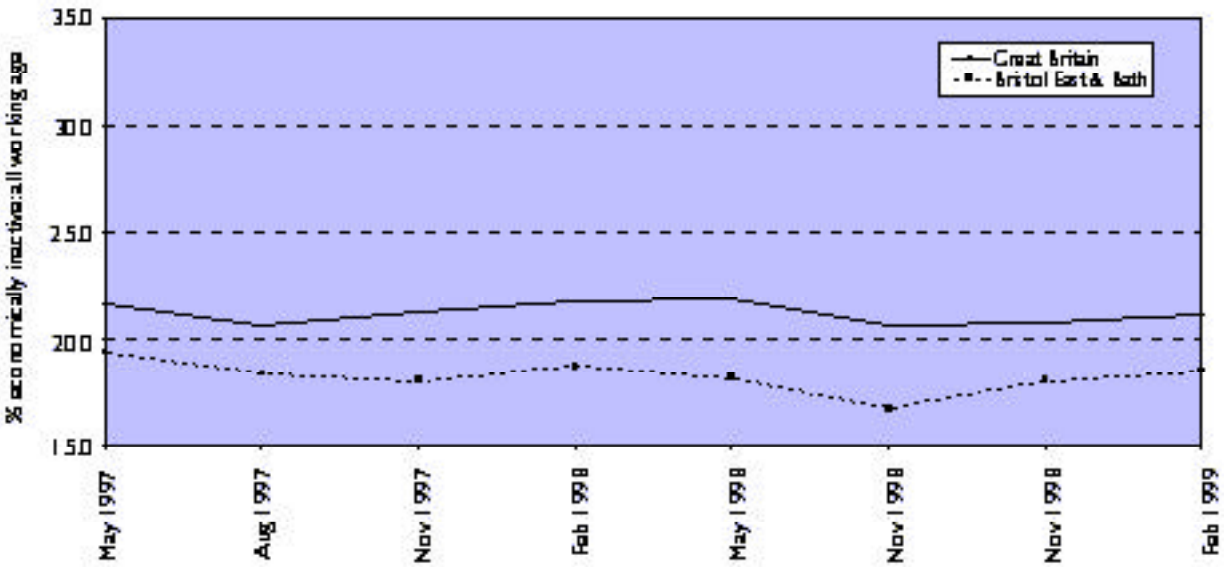


Figure A.20 Inactivity rate: persons of working age – Bristol East & Bath



The following features are evident from an examination of Figures A.15 - A.20:

- Eastern Valleys, Lanarkshire and Sandwell (high unemployment/inactivity areas) display inactivity rates higher than the Great Britain average[50] over the period.
- In Bolton (a medium unemployment/inactivity area) the inactivity rate is higher than that for Great Britain in most quarters.
- In Central Sussex a decrease in the aggregate inactivity rate is evident over the period, in contrast with relative stability across Great Britain as a whole. The inactivity rate is below the Great Britain average from Spring 1998 onwards. This contrasts with above average values in 1997.
- In Bristol East and Bath (a low unemployment/inactivity area) the inactivity rate is consistently lower than the national average.[51]

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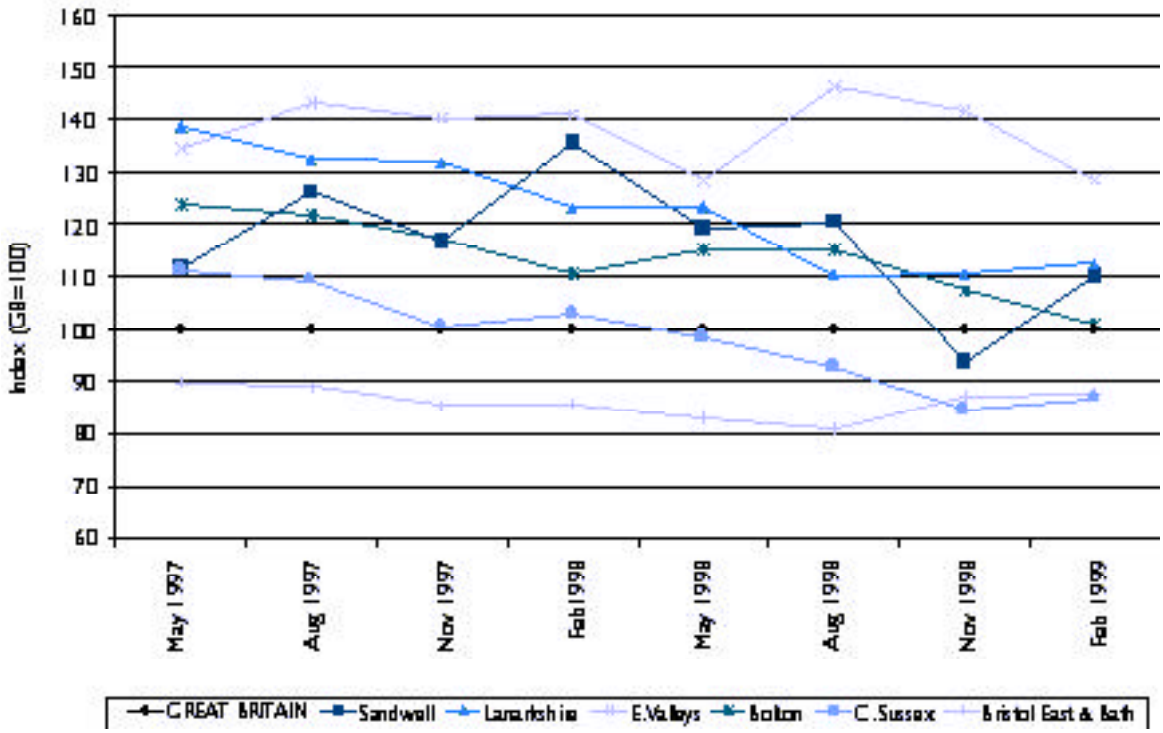
[50] In Sandwell the inactivity rate dips below the Great Britain average in one quarter, but this could be due to sampling variation in the LFS. Due to sampling variability in the LFS at local level, some caution should be exercised when interpreting the values/trends shown.

[51] It is notable that a north/south regional dimension of variation is evident here. Other research has shown that inactivity rates tend to be higher in northern than in southern Britain.

Figure A.21 Inactivity rate for persons of working age – indices



In Figure A.21 the unemployment rates are expressed as an index (with the Great Britain inactivity rate assigned a value of 100). From this diagram it is evident that:

- Eastern Valleys consistently displays the highest inactivity rate.[52]
- There is a slight suggestion of a convergence in aggregate inactivity rates towards the national average over the period. (This is particularly pronounced in the cases of Lanarkshire and Sandwell.)

A5 Employment rate – Persons of working age

Given current debates about the scope of counts of unemployment and inactivity, in recent years greater attention has been focused on employment and non-employment (i.e. unemployment plus inactivity). Employment rates for persons of working age on a quarterly basis over the period from the Spring quarter 1997 to the Winter quarter 1998/99 are shown for each of the six local areas and Great Britain (Figure A.23 - A.28). Again, the graphs are presented on a common scale.

In Figure A.22 the employment rates are expressed as an index (with the Great Britain inactivity rate assigned a value of 100).

[52] This is consistent with the findings of other research that inactivity rates tend to be particularly high in former mining areas and in Wales.

The following features are evident:

- Bristol East and Bath (a low unemployment/inactivity area) is the only one of the six areas to display an employment rate consistently higher than the Great Britain average (i.e. with a greater share of the population of working age in employment than nationally).
- Central Sussex (a medium unemployment/inactivity area), and the only other representative from southern England amongst the six local areas) displays an employment rate in excess of the national average at the end of the period, suggesting an upturn in local labour market fortunes between 1997 and April 1999.
- In Bolton (a medium unemployment/inactivity area) the aggregate employment rate is close to the national average.
- Eastern Valleys, Lanarkshire and Sandwell (high unemployment/inactivity areas) display employment rates lower than the Great Britain average.
- Eastern Valleys has the lowest employment rate of the six areas; (this is a function of very high inactivity rates coupled with a higher than average incidence of unemployment).

Figure A.22 Employment rate for persons of working age – indices

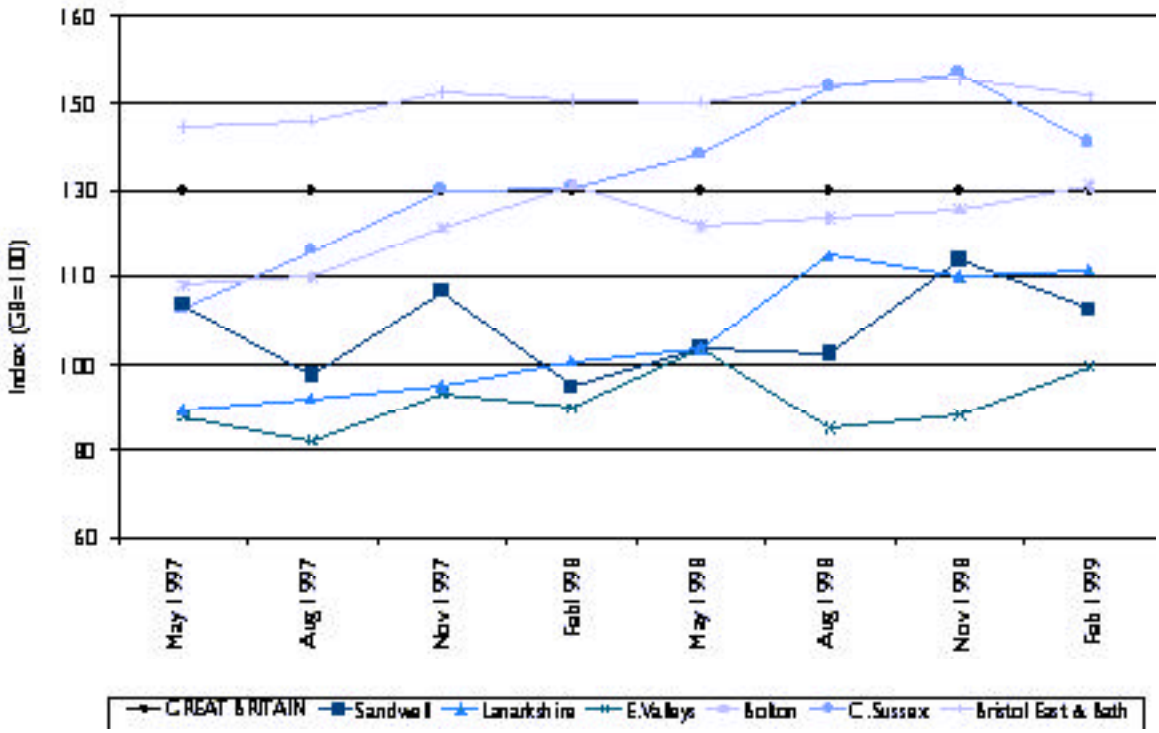


Figure A.23 Employment rate: persons of working age – Sandwell

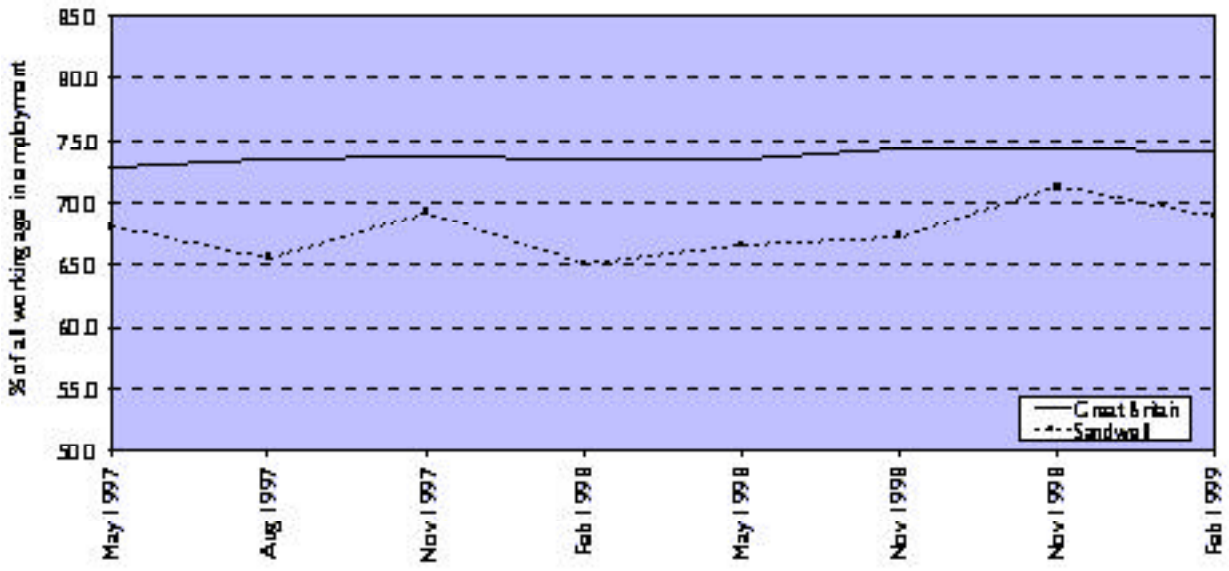


Figure A.24 Employment rate: persons of working age – Lanarkshire

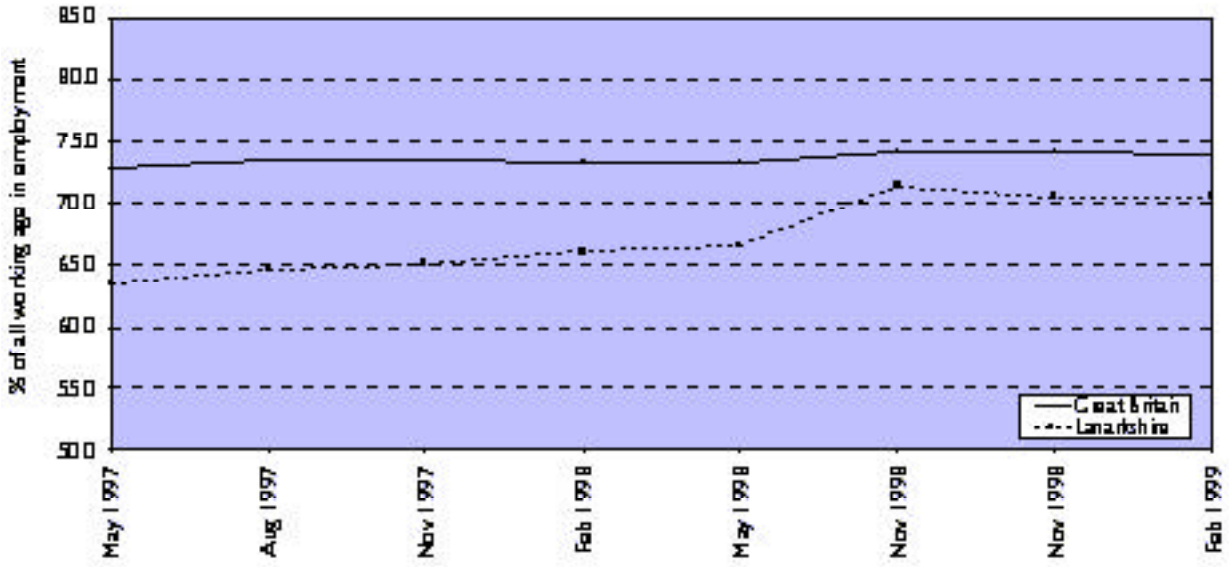


Figure A.25 Employment rate: persons of working age – Eastern Valleys

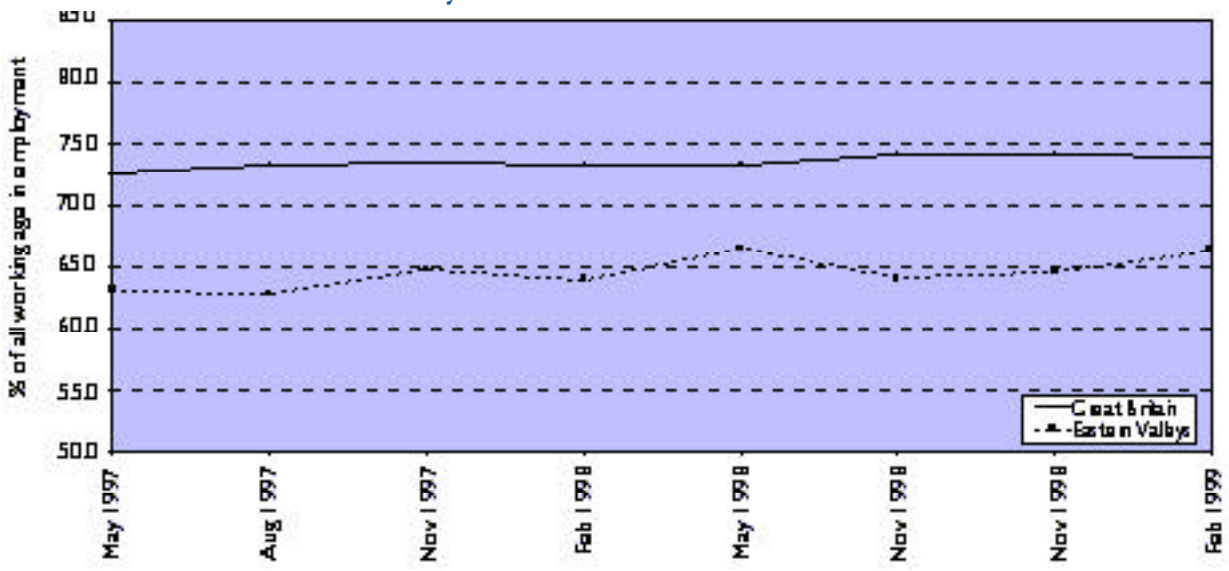


Figure A.26 Employment rate: persons of working age – Bolton

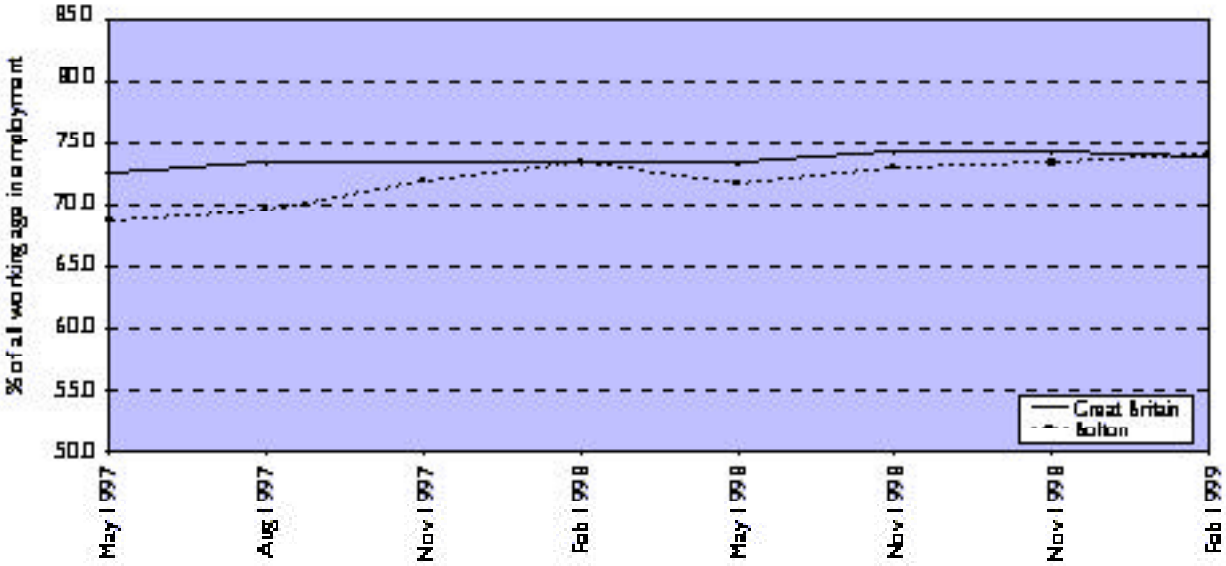


Figure A.27 Employment rate: persons of working age – Central Sussex

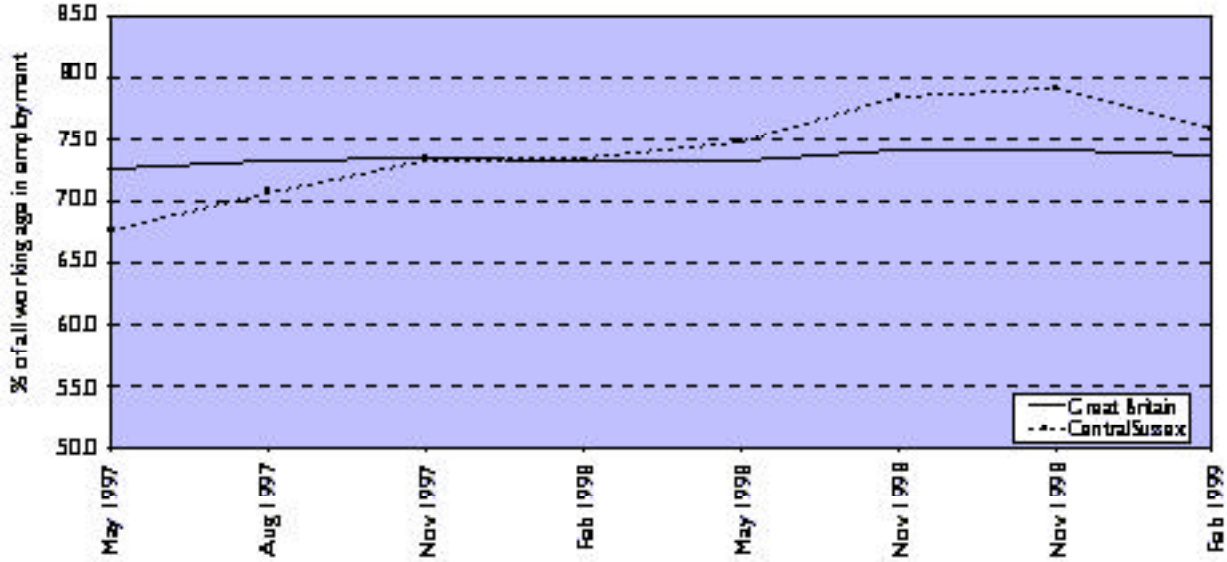
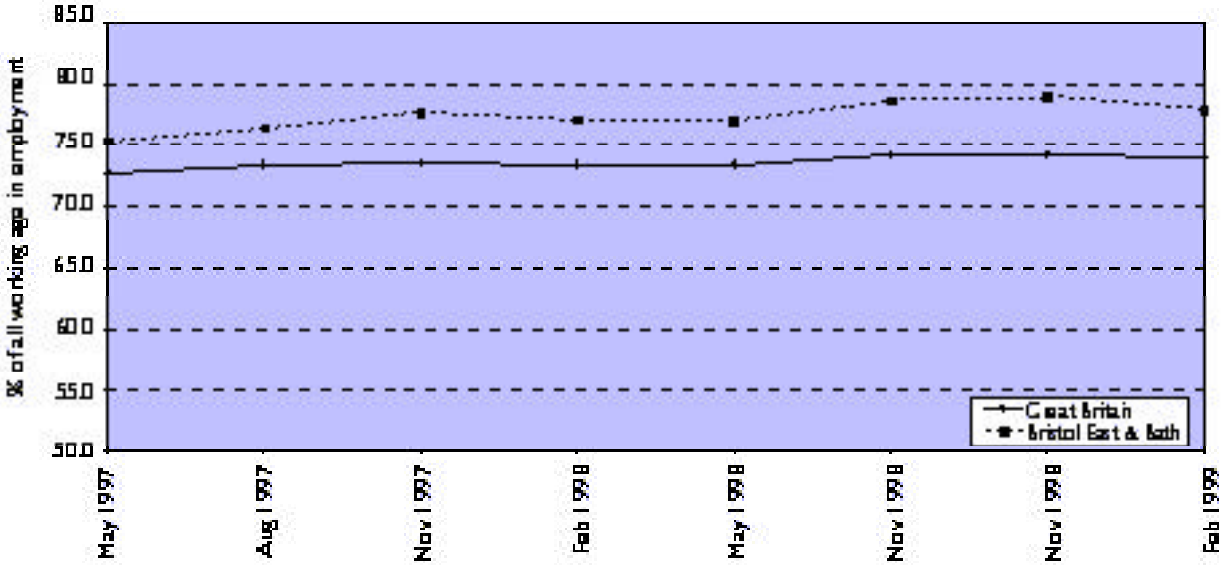


Figure A.28 Employment rate: persons of working age – Bristol East & Bath



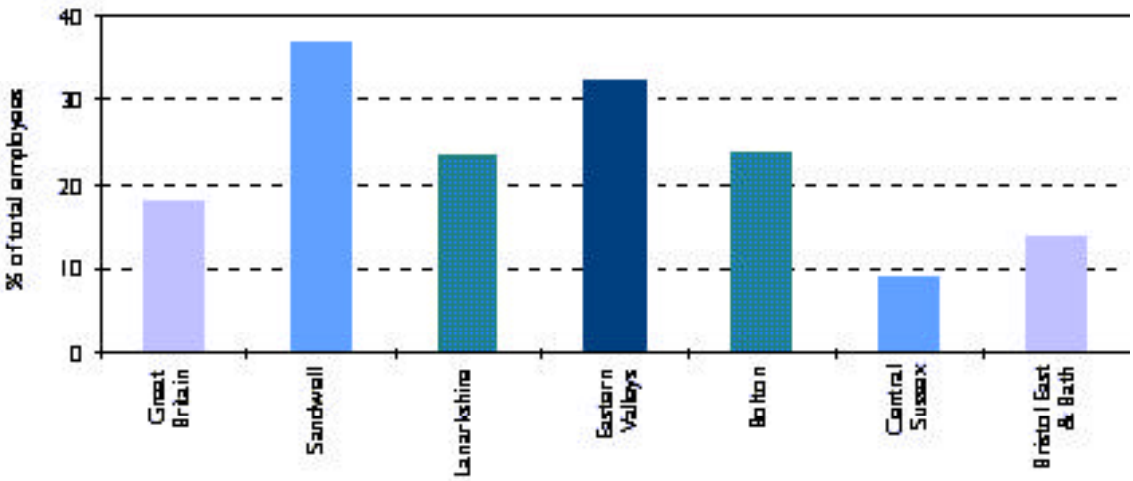
A.6 Employment

This section presents key indicators from the 1997 Annual Employment Survey (AES). This source provides the most up-to-date information available on the industrial disaggregation of employment at the local level.[53] The AES covers employees in employment only, and in 1997 much of the information relating to agriculture and forestry is suppressed at the local level.[54] As noted above, the industrial structure of employment has implications for the nature of employment opportunities in a local area, in terms of both occupations and the full-time/part-time nature of employment opportunities.

The four figures below (Figure A.29 - A.32) show the percentages of total employees in the four sectors accounting for the largest single shares of employment in Great Britain in 1997:

- Manufacturing (Figure A.29) – 18 per cent of total employees in Great Britain, of which 92 per cent worked on a full-time basis and 71 per cent were male.
- Wholesale and retail trade (Figure A.30) – 17 per cent of employees in Great Britain, with a workforce evenly split between males and females, and part-time employees accounting for just over one-third of the total.
- Real estate, renting and business activities (Figure A.31) – 14 per cent of employees in Great Britain, with a similar gender and full-time/part-time profile to the wholesale and retail trade.
- Health and social work (Figure A.32) – 11 per cent of employees in Great Britain, with women accounting for 80 per cent of the total employees, and 44 per cent of employees working on a part-time basis.

Figure A.29 Employment – percentage of total employees in manufacturing, 1997



[53] Some data on employment are available from the Labour Force Survey, but at the local level there are constraints of small sample size when industrial disaggregations are employed.

[54] Any data on agriculture should be treated with extreme caution.

Figure A.30 Employment – percentage of total employees in wholesale and retail trade, 1997

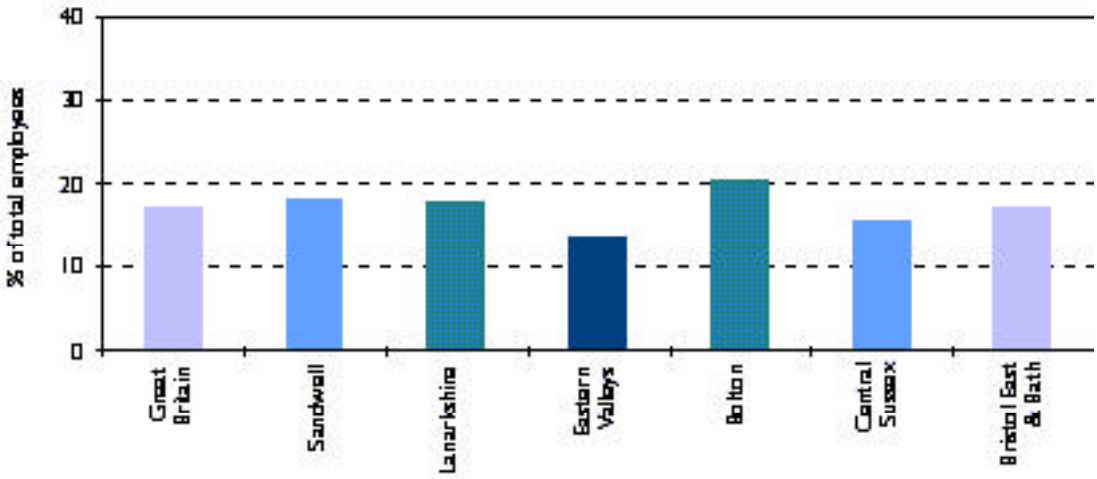


Figure A.31 Employment – percentage of total employees in real estate, renting and business activities, 1997

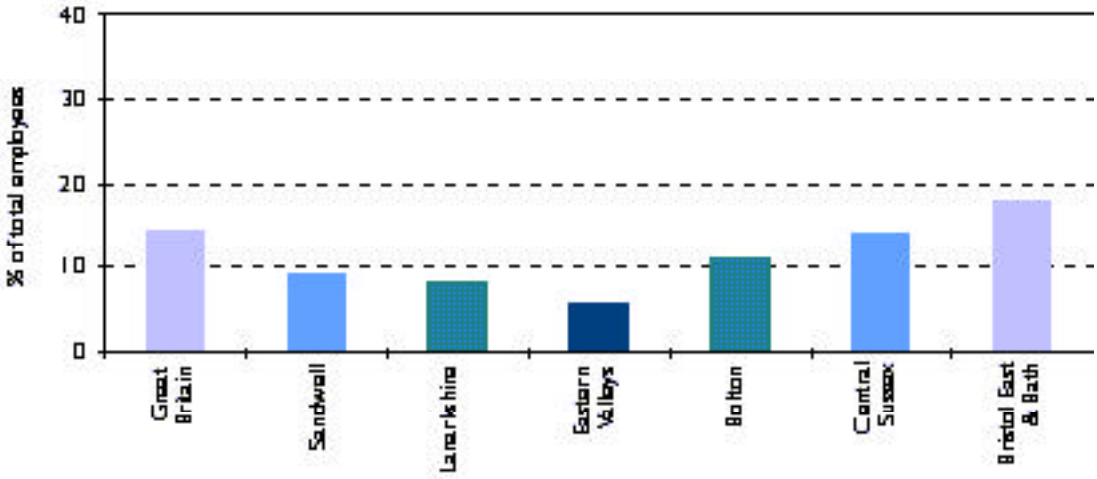
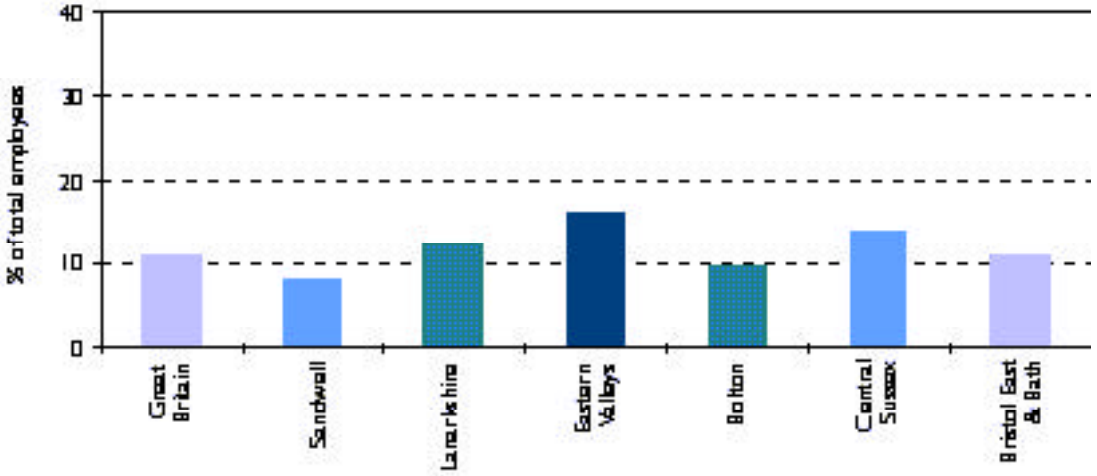


Figure A.32 Employment – percentage of total employees in health and social work, 1997



The following features are evident from an examination of Figures A.29 - A.32:

- Over one-third of total employees in Sandwell are in manufacturing, compared with less than a third across Great Britain as a whole. The other high unemployment/inactivity areas (Eastern Valleys and Lanarkshire) also display larger than average shares of employment in manufacturing, along with Bolton (a medium unemployment/inactivity area). Central Sussex displays the smallest share of employees in manufacturing of the six local areas (less than 10 per cent of the total), and in Bristol East and Bath the share is lower than the national average.
- The wholesale/retail trade is more evenly distributed across the six local areas.
- Real estate, renting and business activities accounts for a higher proportion of total employees in Bristol East and Bath and Central Sussex than in the other five local areas. This sector is particularly poorly represented in Eastern Valleys and Lanarkshire.
- Eastern Valleys and Central Sussex display the largest shares of employees in health and social work of the six areas. Sandwell and Bolton display below average proportions of employment in this sector.

In order to provide a fuller picture of the industrial profile of the local areas relative to Great Britain, Table A.2 presents location quotients for each industry in each of the local areas.

Table A.2 Location quotients by industrial sector, 1997

Industry	GB	Sandwell	Lanark	E Valleys	Bolton	C Sussex	Bristol
A: Agriculture, etc	1.00	0.09	0.70	0.21	0.22	0.44	0.23
B: Fishing	1.00	0.00	0.59	0.51	0.18	0.17	0.47
C: Mining & quarrying	1.00	0.21	1.07	2.04	0.25	0.11	0.24
D: Manufacturing	1.00	2.04	1.29	1.80	1.31	0.51	0.77
E: Electricity, gas, water	1.00	1.27	1.82	0.56	2.19	2.05	1.20
F: Construction	1.00	0.98	1.58	0.99	1.22	0.71	0.84
G: Wholesale/ retail trade	1.00	1.06	1.04	0.78	1.18	0.89	1.00
H: Hotels & restaurants	1.00	0.60	0.89	0.64	1.03	1.14	0.76
I: Transport/ comms.	1.00	0.80	1.15	0.54	0.87	1.01	0.97
J: Financial intermediation	1.00	0.34	0.42	0.32	0.48	1.95	1.69
K: Real estate, business	1.00	0.63	0.59	0.39	0.78	0.99	1.25
L: Public admin., etc	1.00	0.67	0.98	1.06	0.83	1.02	1.09
M: Education	1.00	0.79	0.77	1.01	0.92	1.46	1.07
N: Health & social work	1.00	0.75	1.12	1.46	0.87	1.27	1.01
O: Other services	1.00	0.67	0.94	1.09	0.82	1.09	0.80

Location quotients are calculated by dividing the share of employment in a particular industry in a particular local area by the corresponding share of that industry in national employment. Where the value of the location quotient for the local area exceeds 1.00 the industry is 'over-represented' in the local area and where the value is less than 1.00 the industry is correspondingly under-represented.[55] For example, a location quotient value of 2.04 for manufacturing in Sandwell indicates that this sector accounted for just over double the share of total employees in Sandwell than nationally. Conversely, a location quotient value of 0.34 for financial intermediation in Sandwell shows this sector accounted for a share of employment in Sandwell only one-third the size of that recorded for Great Britain.

Key features of the industrial structure of the pilot areas evident from Table A.2 include:

- *Sandwell*: the most notable feature is the much greater importance of manufacturing industry relative to the national average. All service industries – with the exception of the wholesale/retail trade are under-represented relative to the national average.
- *Lanarkshire*: manufacturing, construction, mining and public utilities, along with transport and communications and health and social work are over-represented relative to the Great Britain average. Conversely, there is a smaller than average proportion of employees in many service industries, particularly in 'producer services'.[56]
- *Eastern Valleys*: manufacturing, mining and public services are over-represented relative to the Great Britain average in 1997, in an industrial profile typical of some of the more depressed industrial regions. Producer services account for a much smaller proportion of employment than across Great Britain as a whole.
- *Bolton*: is characterised by greater than national average shares of employment in manufacturing, construction, the utilities and the wholesale and retail trade. With the exception of hotels and restaurants, all other service industries are under-represented.
- *Central Sussex*: has an industrial profile skewed heavily towards service industries relative to the national average. The share of total employees engaged in financial intermediation is nearly twice the national average, and the shares of employment in education and health and social work also exceed those across Great Britain as a whole.

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[55] It should be borne in mind that extreme location quotient values are generally more prevalent in industries employing relatively few workers and in industries which are concentrated in a few locations (rather than being more widespread).

[56] Notably financial intermediation and real estate and business services.

- *Bristol East and Bath*: perhaps the most salient characteristic of this local area is the greater than national average importance of producer services in employment terms.[57] The proportions of employment in most service industries identified in Table A.2, with the exception of hotels and restaurants and other services equalled, or exceeded, the national average.

A.7 Summary

This final section presents 'pen portraits' of each of the pilot areas, with particular emphasis on comparisons with Great Britain. As well as the labour market characteristics outlined above, reference is also made to other labour market and socio-demographic indicators from the more comprehensive local area studies undertaken. First, Table A.2 provides summary statistics on the unemployment rates and inactivity rates in each of the pilot areas and Great Britain.

Table A.3 Unemployment rates and inactivity rates

Industry	GB	Sandwell	Lanark	E Valleys	Bolton	C Sussex	Bristol
Unemployment rate, 01/97	6.6	8.8	9.5	9.2	4.7	9.8	5.4
Unemployment rate, 04/99	4.5	6.9	7.4	7.0	3.6	5.9	3.0
Inactivity rate, winter 98/99	21.1	23.2	23.7	29.4	21.3	18.3	18.5

Sandwell is a heavily urbanised area in the West Midlands conurbation. People from minority ethnic groups comprised a greater share of the population in 1991 than across Great Britain as a whole. The industrial base rested heavily on manufacturing, and this sector remains much more important in employment terms than nationally. Associated with this is a marked concentration of employment in manual occupations, while professional and managerial occupations were under-represented relative to the national average. Partly reflecting the under-representation of services, female economic activity rates were below average. From 1997 onwards unemployment rates and unemployment/vacancy ratios have been consistently above the national average.

Lanarkshire covers a number of cities and towns (such as Motherwell and Hamilton) to the south and south-west of Glasgow. A higher than average proportion of the population lived in the social rented sector and the proportion of households without access to a car was above the Great Britain average in 1991. Unemployment and inactivity rates have remained consistently above those recorded for Great Britain, and the incidence of limiting long-term illness amongst the population of working age has remained substantially higher than nationally. The relative local/national disparity in

[57] At the western end of the M4 corridor and a regional capital for the South West region, Bristol is an important centre for relocations in financial services, as providing a range of services for the wider region.

unemployment rates widened between 1997 and 1999. The employment structure of Lanarkshire was biased towards manufacturing industry and non-manual occupations. Net gains in employment between 1993 and 1997 were smaller than those recorded nationally, with employment increases confined to females and to part-time employees.

Eastern Valleys comprises the eastern part of the South Wales Valleys, including towns such as Ebbw Vale and Merthyr Tydfil, and the Rhymney and Cynon Valleys. It is one of the most distinctive of the twelve pilot areas by virtue of substantially higher than average inactivity rates and long-term limiting illness – approximately one-quarter of the working age population was classified as 'disabled' in the Labour Force Survey. While the unemployment rate was consistently higher than that for Great Britain over the period covered by the information presented in this report (1997 to 1999), it was the contribution of high levels of inactivity to non-employment that was the most distinctive feature of this area. Although the proportion of unemployed leavers moving off the claimant count was similar to that for Great Britain, the share moving onto Incapacity Benefit was much larger than average. Relative to the Great Britain employment profile, manufacturing and public service industries and manual occupations were strongly represented in Eastern Valleys. Between 1997 and 1999 there was a decline in unfilled vacancies in Eastern Valleys relative to the Great Britain trend, and the unemployment/vacancy ratio remained higher than average.

Bolton is an urban centre within the Greater Manchester conurbation. It was categorised as a medium unemployment/inactivity area, although throughout the period between 1997 and 1999 the unemployment rate was slightly lower than that recorded at the national level. The industrial and occupational structures in Bolton were weighted more towards manufacturing industry and manual occupations than across Great Britain as a whole. Greater than average female economic activity rates (reflecting the legacy of the textile industry in the area) contrasted with lower than average economic activity rates for males.

Central Sussex covers Brighton, Hove and Lewes and surrounding areas in Sussex. Despite being characterised as a medium unemployment/inactivity area, unemployment rates on the South Coast are amongst the highest recorded in southern England outside London, and the unemployment rate for Central Sussex was somewhat higher than the national average. Long-term unemployment has also been entrenched, although there was a more marked reduction in long-term unemployment locally than nationally between 1997 and 1999. Economic activity rates increased over the same period. Once the older than average age profile has been accounted for, its performance on health-related indicators is more favourable than the national average. In socio-demographic terms Central Sussex was characterised by a greater than average share of population from managerial and professional socio-economic groups. The industrial structure was dominated by services, with a particular relative concentration of producer service sectors (including

finance and business services). Relative net employment gains between 1993 and 1997 were greater in Central Sussex than nationally.

Bristol East and Bath displayed consistently lower than average unemployment and inactivity rates during the 1990s. Between 1997 and 1999 the relative decline in long-term unemployment was more pronounced than the reduction recorded nationally. On virtually all labour market indicators Bristol East and Bath registered a more favourable performance than the national average – with higher than average economic activity and employment rates and greater than average relative net gains in employment. A greater than average share of employed residents were in higher level non-manual occupations, and within the service sector producer services were strongly represented. In socio-demographic terms the population profile was similar to the national average in 1991, and car ownership levels and the incidence of owner-occupation was higher than average. The prevalence of limiting long-term illness and disability was below average.

APPENDIX B STUDY DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH STUDIES

B.1 Study design and research methodology for qualitative research studies

B.1.1 Use of qualitative research

The main research objectives for the three qualitative studies were to explore perceptions and experiences of the Personal Adviser Service among three key groups – Personal Advisers themselves, service users or clients, and employers. The nature of the research objective suggested a qualitative research design using mainly in-depth interviews. Group discussions were used as an additional element in the study of Personal Advisers, to enable the sharing of experiences and views, identify differences and act as a stimulus to further thought among respondents.

The function of qualitative research is not to provide data that is statistically representative but rather to describe, clarify and explain. The open-ended and responsive questioning techniques used in qualitative research were felt to be particularly suitable for encouraging participants in the study to describe their attitudes and behaviour, and to explain why they held certain views or took certain courses of action.

Qualitative research seeks to provide explanations of attitudes and experiences rather than quantify the degree to which they exist among any particular group. Qualitative samples are designed to provide robust explanations and to generate conceptual frameworks applicable to the broader population. Samples are therefore selected purposively to achieve a range and diversity among the population under study. The sampling design and strategy for each study, as well as details about the recruitment and conduct of the fieldwork are given below.

Topic guides were designed for each study in consultation with the Departments. The purpose of these was to guide the interview in a way that ensured coverage of all relevant areas, while allowing an exploratory and responsive style of questioning.

B.1.2 Method of analysis

Based on both tape recordings and the verbatim transcripts, a detailed content analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken. The analysis was undertaken using 'Framework', an analytic tool developed by the National Centre. The first stage of the analytic process involves reading through the verbatim transcripts to identify the principal themes and sub-themes emerging from the data. A thematic matrix, consisting of six or seven A3 charts, is drawn up using the themes and sub-themes identified. Serial numbers for individual respondents are entered at the side of the charts. The material from the transcripts is then transferred onto the charts under the appropriate headings and against the serial number for the particular respondent. Each block of material on the charts has a page reference back to the verbatim transcript.

This method of analysis can be adapted to take account of themes that arise as the analysis develops in that headings can be added or subtracted as required. It also allows for within case analysis, to see how expectations and perceptions help to shape behaviour and attitudes, or for comparisons to be made between cases.

A similar approach was taken with the analysis of the group discussions with Personal Advisers. Themes and sub-themes were identified and material from the transcripts entered on to charts (without identifying contributors). The thematic material from the groups was juxtaposed with that from the interviews, rather than amalgamated within a single charting system, in order not to lose the different emphases emerging from the two studies.

B.1.3 Personal Adviser study

There were two parts to the Personal Adviser study:

- two group events involving 12 Personal Advisers, six at each event; and
- face-to-face in-depth interviews with a further 12 Personal Advisers.

Design and selection of samples

The researchers drew up broad criteria for selection of Personal Advisers to be invited to participate in group discussions and face-to-face interviews. Managers of the six projects were then asked to identify participants who met the criteria as far as was possible. The main considerations were to recruit Personal Advisers from different employment backgrounds, to avoid those who had joined the Personal Adviser Service comparatively recently (or had spent longish periods absent from the job), and to avoid Personal Advisers with specialisms involving little work with clients. In pilot projects with larger staff complements we asked that Personal Advisers who had taken part in our earlier site visits should not be selected. Gender was a secondary consideration.

Some managers found it difficult to identify two Personal Advisers for the group events. Unavoidably, some potential participants were on leave at the date for which the group discussion had been fixed and sickness absence also limited the scope. The scope for successfully specifying face-to-face interviewees was more limited as we wished to select from those who had not participated in the group discussions, and Personal Advisers' busy work schedules occasionally made appointments difficult at times that were suitable for fieldwork.

The achieved sample of 12 group participants and 12 interviewees met the aims of:

- equal representation of Personal Advisers from all six pilot projects. In each pilot project two Personal Advisers took part in a group discussion and a further two were interviewed;
- a spread of prior employment experience among Personal Advisers involved in the studies which reflected that of Personal Advisers overall. The composition of the two study groups taken together reflected the roughly equal divide among Personal Advisers with previous Employment Service experience (around four out of five of all Personal Advisers) between those with 'mainstream' experience and those who previously worked as Disability Employment Advisers or otherwise with Disability Services. Personal Advisers with no previous Employment Service experience (the remaining fifth) were less well represented in the study, however;
- involving Personal Advisers more experienced in working with clients, although one interviewee now specialised in marketing and had a very small current caseload;
- a ratio of women to men (two to one) which seems similar to that in the total Personal Adviser staff complement.

Conduct of the fieldwork

The two group events were held on 29 and 31 March 1999. The first was held at a hotel in Bristol within relatively easy reach of staff from the three pilot projects in southern England and Wales. The second was held in one of the research institutes (York) to which Personal Advisers from the three pilots in the Midlands, North West and west Scotland travelled. The events were moderated by two members of the research team at the Social Policy Research Unit using guides developed in consultation with the Departments. The events comprised group discussions over a range of emerging themes; and task-centred exercises. Both components focused on developments in ways of working within and across pilot projects, and the effects of local issues.

The focus of the group discussions was on recent changes and developments in the New Deal for Disabled People, with respect to:

- the clients;
- ways of working with clients;
- administrative arrangements;
- working with other key agencies;
- response of local employers;
- Personal Advisers' expectations of the Service.

In the task-centred exercises, Personal Advisers focused on how far the particular characteristics of their own locality influenced what might be achieved in the New Deal for Disabled People. The programme for the first

event was repeated in the second. An additional discussion was introduced with four participants at the first day's event while awaiting the delayed arrival of the other two members. Each event lasted six hours including a break for lunch. The group discussions were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Interviews with Personal Advisers were held between mid April and mid May 1999. They were generally held at the local office of the Personal Adviser Service and lasted about an hour and a half. Interviews were carried out by members of the research team at the National Centre for Social Research and SPRU using topic guides drawn up in consultation with the Departments.

Topic guides were constructed to encourage Personal Advisers to reflect on their practice in working with clients from their first contact with the Personal Adviser Service to the point of being in work. The interviews were constructed to parallel themes contained in the interviews with clients. Areas of the Personal Advisers' work which were explored thus included:

- initial interviews;
- action/progress planning;
- increasing employability of client;
- supporting a move into paid work;
- the key inputs;
- added value of the Service.

Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

In advance of the groups and interviews, letters were sent to participants outlining the plan for the discussion or interview and the topics which would be covered, and inviting them to think about what they would contribute on the day.

B1.4 Client study

The study of clients consisted of 31 in-depth interviews with people who were currently or had been in contact with the Personal Adviser Service. They were not necessarily people who had agreed to a Progress Plan, and were not necessarily therefore formally on the Personal Adviser's caseload.

Design and selection of the sample

The sample was designed in agreement with the Departments with the aim of achieving diversity over a number of key characteristics. In late February 1999, the DSS drew an initial sample of 107 people who had been or were currently in contact with the Personal Adviser Service, from the Benefits Agency database, which is compiled on the basis of administrative returns from each Personal Adviser Service. The sample was designed to represent a range among the following primary sampling variables:

- sex;
- date of birth;
- letter or volunteer;
- equal distribution among pilot areas;
- status – on caseload or exited Personal Adviser Service.

From this initial sample frame, a purposive sample was drawn using sample quotas for these variables, which were set in agreement with the Departments. Table B.1 shows the key characteristics of the achieved sample. Quotas were generally achieved, except where difficulties with recruitment or relatively low representation in the initial sample made this impossible, for example among respondents aged 50 or over, and among people recorded as part of the 'flow' onto disability benefits.

The database also contained information which was used as secondary sampling variables:

- impairment/disability type;
- type of benefit received;
- year of disability benefit claim;
- 'stock' or 'flow' (in relation to benefit claim).

These variables were monitored during recruitment of the sample, to ensure further diversity.

The sample design was shaped by the type of information that was available on the Benefits Agency database. For example, information was not kept on the number of contacts that a client had had with a Personal Adviser, nor about any activities that they had undertaken while on the scheme. We were not therefore able to take account of these dimensions in selecting our sample. For future stages of this research, we may want to consider looking more closely at these characteristics.

The sample selection was also dependent on the full recording of client details by each Personal Adviser Service. Occasionally, relevant information was missing or characteristics recorded on the Benefits Agency database and used for selection of the group were not confirmed by participants. There were particular discrepancies in respect of the route to the scheme, the outcome, and the impairment type.

The study group profile

Table B.1 The client study group profile

Selection criteria	Number of clients
Pilot area:	
Central Sussex	7
Bolton	5
Eastern Valleys	5
Bristol	4
Sandwell	5
Lanarkshire	5
Sex:	
Men	17
Women	14
Age:	
20-29 years	9
30-39 years	9
40-49 years	7
50 years and over	6
Incapacity benefits claimed (from BA database):	
Incapacity Benefit (long-term)	11
Incapacity Benefit (short-term)	3
Severe Disablement Allowance	5
National Insurance credits	8
None of above/not known	4
Client type (from BA database):	
'Stock'	24
'Flow'	7
Route to scheme (from BA database):	
Sent letter of invitation	21
'Volunteers'	10
Status (from BA database):	
Agreed to progress plan	19
In work/training	7
Exit from scheme	**5**

It was agreed that aiming for a range of impairments and disabling conditions was an important element of the sample design. This was based on an assumption that impairment might be one factor which had an impact on the perception or experience of the PAS, and to ensure that people with particular impairments, for example people with mental health problems or people with sensory impairments, were not excluded from the sample. The sample was therefore selected to include people from each of five broad impairment categories. In the event, these categories were fairly fluid for two reasons: firstly, many respondents had impairments or conditions which 'fitted' into more than one category, and secondly, respondents were not

obliged to disclose impairments or disabling conditions during the research interview. However, the following is known about the sample:

- at least five people had a sensory impairment;
- at least nine people had a muscular-skeletal impairment or condition;
- at least nine people had mental health problems or learning disabilities;
- at least 10 people had a disabling or long-term illness.

Recruitment

Respondents were recruited by the research team. Initially, a letter explaining the research and offering the opportunity to withdraw was sent in March 1999 to a sample of just over 107 Personal Adviser Service clients from the Department of Social Security. Five people chose to opt out of the research study at this stage. Following this, the Departments made contact with each pilot project to expand on and update the Benefits Agency data provided for each client. Names and addresses of those who had not withdrawn after two weeks were passed to the research team, who made contact with potential respondents, building up a study group according to the criteria agreed for selection. Initial contact was often made by telephone, but face-to-face recruitment was also conducted for two reasons: first, it was important to include clients who did not have, or use, a telephone, and secondly, in a number of cases telephone numbers were not provided by the pilot projects, although the client did have a telephone. Respondents were reassured about confidentiality, and appointments were made at a time and place of their convenience. Researchers also asked the respondent whether there was anything that could be done to facilitate the interview.

There were two refusals on contact and one withdrawal from an appointment; reasons were associated with a desire for privacy, and anxiety. One further contact made did not result in an interview, because that respondent was an employee of the New Deal for Disabled People, and it seemed inappropriate to proceed. Problems in recruitment occurred where respondents had moved from their recorded address, or had appointees, and it was hard to make contact. Generally, however, response was encouraging.

Conduct of interviews

Fieldwork was carried out during April and May 1999. Interviews were carried out by members of the research team at the National Centre and SPRU using a topic guide drawn up in consultation with the Departments. The topic guide covered the following areas:

- background;
- current situation;
- initial access to NDDP;
- role of Personal Adviser;
- role of other staff;

- venue and location;
- activities undertaken on the scheme;
- other sources of help and advice;
- overall impact and plans for the future.

Most interviews took place at the respondent's home and lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. Two interviews took place in other places where the respondent felt more comfortable – one in a hotel foyer and one at a day centre. A small number of interviews with people with sensory impairment, learning difficulties or mental health problems were mediated by a parent or spouse, who enabled communication or encouraged participation. Most of the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In one case the respondent's hearing impairment meant that the most appropriate way to conduct the interview was via his wife and using written communication and the researcher made detailed notes.

All participants received a gift of £15 for giving up time and helping with the research.

B1.5 Employer study

Design and selection of the sample

The intention in designing the sample for the employer study was to reflect in key sampling variables:

- sector (to include private, public and voluntary);
- size of organisation;
- nature of involvement with Service (to include employers who had Personal Adviser team);
- type of activity of organisation.

Each team provided these details, with the name and address of the organisation and the name of the key contact person, to the DSS and DfEE and these were passed on to the research team.

The Personal Adviser teams do not routinely keep a list or database of employer organisations with which they have contact, and details had to be provided by individual Personal Advisers. They were asked to provide the names of any participants who had been involved with each employer organisation. This was needed because it was intended that employers should not be approached if they were involved with a participant who had taken part in an in-depth interview as part of the study. The research team felt that this was necessary to avoid any suspicion on the part of either participant or employer that information given by one respondent had been passed to another.

The details passed on did not always fully match the research team's initial requirements, and some teams were not able to provide information about 20 employers as requested (although some provided more). There were

some cases of missing information, for example about the nature of an organisation's involvement with the Service or the type of activity of the organisation. In some areas, organisations which had recruited a participant for a permanent job or taken someone on a placement were in short supply. The range of organisations was sometimes limited, with for example few voluntary and public sector organisations in some areas. In one area several organisations had been involved as providers or stakeholders rather than as employers, and here a further list of organisations had to be sought from the Personal Adviser Service. The research team and the DSS and DfEE research managers will discuss ways of addressing these issues in the sampling for future stages of the research.

Selection and recruitment

A letter was sent by the research team to a sub-set of the organisations whose details had been obtained, explaining the purpose of the research and asking whether a representative of the organisation would be willing to take part in an interview. This was followed by a telephone call by the research team to give more information about the study, identify the appropriate member of staff to talk to, invite participation and, where employers were willing to take part, to set up an appointment. Some employers declined to take part, for a variety of reasons: some were too busy; others, who were not aware of any involvement with the Personal Adviser Service and who saw limited opportunities for employing disabled people felt they had little to contribute and were unwilling to devote time to the study. In other cases, the research team were passed between several members of staff to identify the appropriate person to interview.

The study group profile

Table B.2 shows the profile of the recruited sample.

Table B.2 The employer study group

Characteristic	No. of Respondents
Sector	
Public	10
Private	18
Voluntary	2
Size[1]	
Small (1-49 employees)	7
Medium (51-499 employees)	8
Large (500+ employees)	15
Nature of involvement in New Deal for Disabled People	
Permanent employee[2]	11
Placement	6
Job retention only	1
Launch/marketing only	9
No involvement or contact apparent	3
Standard Industrial Classification	
Manufacturing	3
Electricity, gas and water supply	1
Wholesale/retail trade, hotels, restaurants	7
Transport, storage and communications	1
Financial intermediaries, business services	3
Public administration	4
Education	3
Health and social work	4
Other community, social, personal services	4

[1] Number of employees in UK

[2] Includes employer who interviewed participant but did not offer post, employer who offered post which participant did not accept and employer who was undecided, at the time of the in-depth interview, whether to offer post

Conduct of interviews

The in-depth interviews were carried out in April and May 1999, by members of the research team at the National Centre for Social Research and SPRU. Interviews lasted for between an hour and an hour and a half, and took place at respondents' offices. All were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The interviews were structured to cover both any contact the respondent had had with the Personal Adviser Service and their experiences of and views about employing disabled people generally. Respondents were sometimes unaware that someone they had interviewed or recruited was disabled, or that a person with whom they had contact was a Personal Adviser or a participant in the Service. The researchers had to be sensitive to this and ensure that they did not divulge information they had been given by the Personal Adviser team.

The interviews explored the following themes, the order in which they were discussed varying between interviews as appropriate:

- background information:
  - about the respondent and organisation;
  - how recruitment is organised and nature of job opportunities;
- nature of any contact with the New Deal for Disabled People:
  - any ways in which involved;
  - how involvement was initiated;
  - reasons for involvement;
- details of involvement in Steering Group, work placement or trial, employment, job retention etc:
  - details of placement or job;
  - how came about;
  - role of Personal Adviser Service;
  - factors influencing whether participant taken on;
  - factors influencing success of placement/appointment etc;
- general contact with the Personal Adviser team:
  - level of contact;
  - value of Personal Adviser role;
  - desirable qualities;
- approach to employment of disabled people:
  - general approach, role and aims of any equal opportunities policy, specialist departments;
  - experiences and practices in employing disabled people;
  - successes and difficulties and factors contributing;
  - potential role of Personal Adviser Service in addressing any problems;
- overall views about New Deal for Disabled People:
  - perceptions of good/less good features;
  - impact and expected impact;
  - perceived constraints on operation;
- future involvement:
  - any anticipated involvement;
  - suggestions for making scheme more attractive to employers;
  - suggestions for marketing to employers.

B.1.6 Site visits

The six Employment Service pilot areas were visited between December 1998 and February 1999. Each visit lasted one day. Within local offices, interviews were held with pilot managers and some of the Personal Advisers either singly or in groups. In some instances, interviews were also held with Occupational Psychologists and administrative staff. Interviews with Personal Adviser Service staff were supplemented by contacts with respondents from other organisations identified by the pilot manager as having essential interests in the operation of the scheme. In most instances, representatives from at least two key service providers were interviewed in each pilot. Table B.3 below presents the other people interviewed and describes the organisations they represented.

The discussions covered many aspects of the Personal Adviser Service. The principal aims of the site visits were:

- To explore how each pilot area had established and operated the Personal Adviser Service, highlighting particular commonalities and differences between and within areas.
- To gain an understanding of the structure of service provision within each locality.

Using tape recordings and extensive field notes, two research proformas were completed for each locality. One covered the pilot office and the other the perspective of the other organisations.

Table B.3 Information on Service Providers interviewed

Location of organisation	Information on organisation	Information on interviewee
Central Sussex	Charitable organisation. Provides a range of services, including work-related ones, to people with different impairments.	Director of the society.
Central Sussex	Charitable organisation. Delivers services to people with learning difficulties and mental health problems.	Placement Co-ordinator/ New Initiatives Manager. Responsible for setting up and monitoring placements, planning and establishing links.
Bolton	LEA funded community-based adult education.	Advice and Guidance worker. The role involved targeting and improving the participation of under-represented groups.
Bolton	Training Division of the Engineering Employers' Federation Lancashire. Runs a variety of training programmes and courses for unemployed people.	Responsible for running the REHAB contracts at CLEEA, mainly administrative work and some training.
Bolton	Remit is to promote economic and physical development in Bolton.	Responsible for developing employment opportunities, training and work experiences.
Bristol East and Bath	Vocational Advice Centre, Mental Health Directorate.	Undertook assessments, in-work support, guidance, networking and partnership.
Bristol East and Bath	Private company. It had the ES contract for REHAB and Personal Development Programmes.	Responsible for the employment rehabilitation programmes.
Bristol East and Bath	Charitable organisation, remit was to give disabled people opportunities to try equipment aimed at facilitating independent living.	Business co-ordinator with responsibility for fund-raising.

(continued)

Location of organisation	Information on organisation	Information on interviewee
Eastern Valleys	National organisation that provides rehabilitation, training, employment support and opportunities for people with impairments of health problems.	Operational Manager involved in developing new services. The team supported 300 disabled people in employment.
Eastern Valleys	National organisation that supports over 2,500 people in employment, it runs over 140 enterprise projects and works in partnership with a number of organisations.	The interviewee worked within Pathway – the employment arm of the organisation. Supporting over 120 disabled people in South East Wales.
Lanarkshire	Private training provider. Involved in work preparation for disabled people and those with long term illnesses.	Interviewee was responsible for preparing disabled people for work by finding suitable employment, monitoring progress and assessing work readiness.
Sandwell	Government funded organisation.	Interviewee was a contact supervisor for the 'Training for Work' programme, and liaised with suppliers of training courses.
Sandwell	Charitable organisation established to raise awareness of disability amongst employers.	Responsible for establishing an employers' network.

B.2 Study design and methodology for quantitative surveys

This section reports the methodology of the two quantitative studies, namely the study of the characteristics of the Employment Service pilot areas (Appendix A) and the participant and non-participant survey (Chapter 3).

B.2.1 Use of quantitative research

In identifying the characteristics of the Employment Service pilot areas, the aim was to establish for each of the areas:

- unemployment rates;
- ratio of unemployed to unfilled job vacancies;
- inactivity rates for persons of working age;
- employment rates for persons of working age;
- employment by sector.

The main aims of the participant and non-participant survey were to:

- establish the differences between those who participated in the New Deal for Disabled People Personal Adviser Service and those who did not;
- identify people's responses to their interviews and dealings with the Personal Adviser Service and the help offered to them;
- consider the range of activities people had participated in since their contact with the Personal Adviser Service.

B.2.2 Method of analysis

Study of the characteristics of the Employment Service pilot areas

Claimant count statistics were used to establish unemployment rates and the ratio of unemployed to unfilled vacancies were calculated using vacancies recorded by the Employment Service. Inactivity rates and employment rates for persons of working age were established from the Labour Force Survey and employment by sector from employee data from the 1997 Annual Employment Survey.

Participant and non-participants survey

All data was analysed using SPSS Version 8.0.

B.2.3 Study of the characteristics of the Employment Service pilot areas

A comment on 'geographies'

The Employment Service pilot areas (and the other pilot and control areas) are Benefits Agency Districts. A 'best-fitting' exercise conducted at the outset of the project showed that Benefits Agency Districts do not 'nest' easily into other geographical areas for which local labour market data is more readily available (notably travel-to-work areas). Partly this is due to the presence amongst the pilot and control areas of several inner city areas (which do not form functional local labour market areas), and also relatively small parts of metropolitan areas. Moreover, the relatively close geographical proximity of some pilot and control areas to one another, coupled with the relatively poor fit in some cases to travel-to-work areas, would result (in some cases) in the use of the same travel-to-work areas as 'best fit' geographies for pilot and control areas.

Based on the results of the 'best-fitting' exercise, a decision was taken to make use of counties and unitary authority areas with local authority districts for unemployment[58] and employment analyses. For analyses using data from the Labour Force Survey it has been necessary to use counties and local authority districts based on 1981 geographies.[59] For analyses of data on vacancies (and unemployment/vacancy ratios) it is necessary to use some jobcentre-based geography, and in this instance a mixture of county, local education authority and jobcentre-based travel-to-work area geographies were used.[60]

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[58] 'Official' unemployment rates denominators have recently been made available for these areas. In theoretical terms it would have been preferable to use travel-to-work areas (since travel-to-work areas are defined on a consistent and comparable basis), but due to the circumstances outlined above a decision to make use of administrative geographies instead was taken.

[59] For sub-regional analyses the Labour Force Survey uses 1981, as opposed to 1991, geographies.

[60] Decisions as to what geographical units to use were made on a case by case basis. Hence, in some cases the 'best-fit' geographical units for vacancy analyses will not match exactly the 'geographies' used for other topics.

B.2.4 Participant and non-participant Survey

The sample

The samples for the early survey of non-participants and for the continuing survey of participants and non-participants were drawn from the New Deal for Disabled People administrative database. This was designed to help staff running the New Deal for Disabled People keep track of those who were invited to the programme and those who took part.

In the first instance, we drew a sample of non-participants to provide early information about their characteristics. This sample was selected from those sent letters inviting them to participate in the Personal Adviser Service in the last two weeks in January and early February 1999, for whom there was no record of any further contact by the time the sample was drawn. A minimum of six weeks was allowed from the date that the invitation letter was sent to when someone could be defined as a non-participant.

We then began drawing monthly samples of participants and non-participants from the administrative database.[61] Over time, the sample incorporated individuals who had been sent invitation letters between mid-January and mid-May 1999,[62] and those who had a New Deal for Disabled People interview between March and July 1999[63].

Fieldwork

Letters were sent on behalf of the Department of Social Security to members of each wave of the sample. Overall, this involved six mail outs between March and August 1999. The letter provided information and reassurance about the survey and asked that anyone who did not want to participate to contact the DSS within a two-week 'opt-out' period.

Fieldwork was conducted by the National Centre for Social Research using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) and Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). CATI interviews were conducted where telephone numbers where available and sample members were willing and able to be interviewed by phone. Members of the sample for whom no number was known, who could not be contacted by phone, or who preferred

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[61] At this point, we randomly selected a group of non-participants who had been interviewed by phone from the early survey to be carried forward into the final data set of participants and non-participants and conducted additional face to face interviews with non-participants to ensure that the sample was representative of non-participants over time.

[62] For the purpose of sampling, individuals were treated as non-participants if they did not have an interview within six weeks of their invitation letter. Any respondents who had subsequently attended a New Deal for Disabled People were, however, asked all the right questions relevant to participant.

[63] The data set which forms the basis of this analysis does not include any individuals who first participated in July 1999 and excludes members of the sample who are harder to contact and those who will have face to face interviews because no telephone contact could be made, despite identifying a number for them.

or required a face to face interview were transferred to the next wave of the CAPI sample. This meant that face to face interviews of those who were hardest to reach lagged behind the telephone interviewing. By the time the analysis for this report was carried out, 580 interviews had been completed by CATI and 250 interviews had been completed using CAPI. The data used for this report was collected between April and September 1999 but fieldwork continued into November 1999[64]. As a result, the findings presented in this report may change.

Duration of interviews and conduct of proxy interviews

The average amount of time taken to conduct an interview was 30 minutes. Participants' interviews were on average longer than non-participants' interviews (33 minutes and 24 minutes respectively).

Approximately five per cent of the interviews reported here were carried out by proxy or with the assistance of a member of the sample's family (in fact, among these, half a per cent were classified as 'assisted interviews'). By the time that the whole of fieldwork is complete it is likely that the proportion of proxy interviews will rise significantly. For example, our most recent analysis of the interviews completed face to face shows that as many as 15 per cent have been completed by proxy and a further three per cent with the help of another person.

Response rates

It is difficult to estimate an accurate response rate for the data which forms the basis of this report since fieldwork is continuing and the method of interviewing the sample has been complex (contact was attempted by telephone where possible, then cases were transferred to field interviewers).

Our best estimate at this point in time, based on the sample up to and including wave seven (July participants), is that we have achieved an overall response rate of approximately 80 per cent. This figure is likely to change by the time fieldwork is completed. For example it could rise to around the level achieved for some of the earlier waves of fieldwork which are in the region of 85 per cent response but this could be offset if the remaining face-to-face fieldwork produces a much lower response. This uncertainty arises because it is not clear how to treat cases which the telephone unit were unable to contact and were (or will be) transferred for face-to-face interviews at later stage. If we treat all of these cases as unproductive then the response rate for the waves included in this report is approximately 77 per cent, but an indication of the true response rate can be seen by comparing the current response rates to wave four (85 per cent) to the later waves (77 per cent for wave five and 71 per cent for wave six).

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[64] Further fieldwork has been, or will be, conducted in August and September.

The presentation and interpretation of response rates for this study is further complicated by differences in the nature of subsequent waves of the sample. We currently expect a higher response rate to wave seven which comprised June participants only (currently 76 per cent response) and our best explanation for this which remains to be tested is that participants responded more than non-participants. It will only be possible to give accurate and complete figures when the fieldwork is complete.

Of the non-response, almost three-quarters (73 per cent) were refusals by the individual or someone on their behalf while the remainder were other kinds of non-contact. Other non-contacts included just over nine per cent who were too sick or disabled to take part, though this figure is likely to underestimate the number of refusals that were a direct or indirect result of the health status of the individual sample members.

Non-response bias

At the time at which the data set used for this report was created, 30 per cent of the interviews had been conducted face to face and 70 per cent by telephone. However, the balance between face to face and telephone has changed considerably over the course of the survey and has not yet reached stability. This is because face to face interviewing necessarily lagged behind telephone interviewing to ensure that hard to reach sample members could be identified and followed up.[65] Clear evidence of this effect is presented in Table B.4, where it can be seen that earlier waves of interviewing are subject to far less potential for bias. It can be seen that the results presented in this report are based on data that over-represents those interviewed by telephone. It should be noted that most of those interviewed by telephone were participants (69 per cent) rather than non-participants (31 per cent), while most of those interviewed face to face were non-participants (80 per cent) rather than participants (20 per cent).

Table B.4 Changing proportion of interviews conducted by face-to-face showing lag effect[66]

	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Total
Interviews conducted by phone (%)	58	63	69	95	70
Interviews conducted by face to face (%)	42	37	31	5	30
Total (base)	334	191	103	152	780

[65] By mid-October the proportion carried out face to face had risen to 42 per cent, but this should not be seen as a final estimate as a large batch of telephone interviews (for July participants) were also being carried out.

[66] This table is indicative and shows interviews conducted for waves 4 to 7 which completed in time to be included in the data set which formed the basis of this report. Wave 3 has not been considered here.

In the general population, people who do not have a telephone are more likely to live in social housing, live on lower incomes and have achieved a lower level of education. In a population of sick and disabled people we might also assume that people with more severe disabilities would be less likely to have access to a telephone or be able to respond to a survey by phone. In effect, the survey findings in this report that is based on data that derives from a disproportionate number of telephone interviews may under-represent those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market, because of their socio-demographic characteristics and disability. We are continuing the fieldwork so that any bias in the data will be corrected over time. A full technical report will be available from the National Centre.

Elam, G., Dilley, M. and Shaw, A. (1998), *Getting the Message Across*, DSS Research Report No. 85, CDS: Leeds

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