

The Closure of MG Rover: Perspectives of 38 former employees on the support provided by public agencies

March 2006

Research Study conducted for the National Audit Office

The National Audit Office (NAO) commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct qualitative research to understand the perspectives of former employees about the support and information they received from central government funded public bodies following the closure of MG Rover. The research provides an insight into the reactions of 38 people who have had to deal with the wide ranging financial and social implications of being made redundant at very short notice.

When interpreting the findings of this work, it should be remembered that as qualitative research the results are not based on statistical evidence and do not claim to be statistically reliable. Individual quotes have been used to illustrate findings. While these comments have been chosen because they represent the majority view it does not imply that every member in the discussion group has or expresses the same strength of feeling. Where possible, opposing views have been included. It is also important to keep in mind the context in which public agencies were operating. The large scale and the speed of the Company's closure created a substantial challenge for public agencies who had to expand their capacity quickly to deliver support and advice to former employees.

This research forms one element of a body of evidence collected by the NAO. It should be read in conjunction with the NAO's report "Closure of MG Rover" available at www.nao.org.uk

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Introduction

Ipsos MORI was commissioned by the National Audit Office (NAO) to conduct research into the support provided to former employees of MG Rover, following the closure of the company¹. This report is part of a wider examination by the NAO investigating the circumstances surrounding the closure of MG Rover. It should be read in conjunction with the NAO's report 'The closure of MG Rover' available at www.nao.org.uk

The main objectives of the research are:

- To understand the effect of the closure of MG Rover on former employees of the company
- To obtain the perspectives of former employees of the company on the support and information that was provided by public agencies. The support included payment of redundancy pay and social security benefits, advice and assistance on accessing relevant training courses and finding new employment.

The perspectives of former employees provide a valuable source of information for those public bodies who might be involved in preparing and delivering services in similar circumstances to those created when MG Rover collapsed.

Research in Context

The closure of MG Rover in April 2005 had a profound effect on its employees, 95 per cent of whom had worked at the company for nine years or more. At the time we ran the group discussions - September and November 2005 - many of the employees remained distraught over the Company's closure and the consequent impact on their lives.

As a result of the closure of the company, many had their first experiences of being unemployed and as a result, their first direct contact with the public bodies that were responsible for providing them with financial support, advice and other services.

The Company's closure created a substantial challenge for Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council and the Redundancy Payments Directorate of the Insolvency Service. They each had to increase their own capacity – and, in the case of Learning and Skills Council, work with their partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors to increase the provision of training courses - in response to the immediate and large increase in demand for advice and services. This demand came from the 5,300 plus people who were made redundant from

¹ In this report the MG Rover or the company refers to both MG Rover Group Limited – which manufactured motor vehicles – and Powertrain Limited – which manufactured engines and gearboxes.

Longbridge on the 15 April, others who were subsequently made redundant from companies in the wider group, and others who lost their job with companies in MG Rover's supply chain.

The public agencies introduced a number of new programmes and services to assist former employees, and have continued to develop their services in the period since the closure.

To set the views of the former employees in context we have outlined the services provided by public bodies in the relevant parts of this report. In doing so we have drawn on material that appears in the NAO report 'The closure of MG Rover'.

Methodology

Ipsos MORI conducted nine group discussions with former employees in Birmingham and the surrounding areas. In total 38 former MG Rover employees were involved in this research. The intention was to divide participants into three broad categories - unemployed, in training and in work - with three discussion groups held in each category. In any discussion group the greater the homogeneity of participants the more successful the group is in terms of the depth of information gathered and the dynamic between participants. Shared perspectives and experiences generally help the group to gel, and provide more in-depth information. However, in practice there was often a degree of mixing between the three categories within individual groups. The Methodology Appendix sets out the numbers of people attending groups who were unemployed, in training and in work. Participants in this research had a variety of job roles at MG Rover such as paint shop, track, shop floor, product development, sales and management positions.

To recruit participants, a letter of invitation was sent through the MG Rover Task Force weekly mail communications pack co-ordinated by the Human Resources team. The letter explained the purpose and importance of the research. Please refer to the appendices of this report for a copy of the letter.

In total 1,600 letters were dispatched. Due to the Data Protection Act, personal information such as telephone numbers and home address could not be provided to Ipsos MORI. In light of this recipients of the letter were provided with a free phone number, fax back form and email address to opt-in to the research. In order to increase the number of responses, Ipsos MORI also conducted a snowballing exercise where participants who opted in to the research were asked to recommend former colleagues who might be interested in taking part in one of the discussions. Once participants opted-in to the research, they were contacted via telephone and invited for the discussion groups. Participants who were snowballed were allocated to the most appropriate group based on their employment status. Some 14 people were recruited through this technique. To

further increase the number of participants, we used the BT internet phone search to find telephone numbers of recipients of the invitation letter.

The recruitment process necessarily means that people chose to opt into this research. The element of self-selection brings a potential bias as some categories of people, for example, those with strong feelings due to their situation or those who are disappointed by the services provided, may have been more likely to attend the discussion groups than other categories of people. We sought to reduce this risk by recruiting a good mix of people who had found work, were in-training or remained unemployed.

Interpretation of the Data

Qualitative methods, such as group discussions, are ideal for exploring complex issues and to elicit a full range of possible answers. The real value of qualitative research is that it allows insight into the attitudes and beliefs of participants, which could not be examined in as much depth using a structured quantitative questionnaire. The informal nature, rapport and trust developed with the moderator in a group discussion forum allow participants to be more honest about their *actual* experiences and perceptions. Qualitative research utilises smaller samples that are chosen purposively to ensure representation of a full range of views within the sample.

The aim of qualitative research is to get ‘under the skin’ of what participants say, think and feel in order to answer the all important ‘why?’ questions. Qualitative research is exploratory in nature rather than a surface level enquiry. Issues and perceptions are probed in depth to elicit participants’ underlying feelings and motivations. However, it must be remembered that qualitative research is designed to be illustrative and does not look to produce statistics, but to identify the range of views, opinions and experiences of participants. In addition, it is important to bear in mind that we are dealing with perceptions rather than facts. However, these perceptions are facts to those who hold them. These issues need to be taken into account when interpreting the research findings.

Throughout this report verbatim comments are used to illustrate findings. To aid in the anonymity of those consulted they are only identified by gender and their employment status. While these comments have been chosen because they represent the majority view it does not imply that every member in the discussion group has or expresses the same strength of feeling. Where possible opposing views have been included.

Publication of the Data

As with all our studies, these findings are subject to Ipsos MORI's standard Terms and Conditions of Contract. Any press release or publication of the findings of this research requires the advance approval of Ipsos MORI. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy, or mis-interpretation of the findings.

Report Structure

Below is a summary of the structure of the discussion in this report.

- Working for MG Rover
 - After the closure

- Support from organisations
 - Redundancy Payments Directorate and the Department for Trade and Industry
 - Jobcentre Plus
 - Learning and Skills Council

- Impact of the closure
 - Financially
 - Socially
 - Experiences of those in employment

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1. Working for MG Rover

It is necessary to set the context in which the former employees of MG Rover have experienced the closure of the company. The working environment, the relationship employees had with their employer and the changes they noticed prior to the company going into administration provides the setting that has an influence on how former employees reacted to being made redundant and how they experience their current situation.

1.1 Working for MG Rover

Looking back, many of the former employees of MG Rover say they enjoyed working for the company and that it was a unique working environment for its camaraderie and team spirit within the various levels of the workforce. However, some participants were critical of certain aspects of their working environment. For example, one participant who had worked as an engineer for 37 years was critical of his displacement into the marketing department in the last 12 months before the closure of MG Rover.

Most of the participants had served from 15 to 40 years at the company, some starting as apprentices and moving through the ranks to management positions. MG Rover was not only a company of long serving employees but also a place where members of the same family worked, usually after completing school or college. The participants in this research describe the workforce as loyal and dedicated to the company, and to the business of building cars.

The knowledge and the people that we had was very, very high and it's so sad that it failed like it did because it certainly wasn't due to a lack of the knowledge

Male, Employed

The people and enthusiasm, and that goes down to the shop floor people as well, they worked very, very hard

Male, Employed

The workforce of MG Rover was considered highly skilled in all aspects of the business, from shop floor to sales. There was a good amount of training provided to employees and professional advancement was encouraged.

Just a great place to work, the people were good, and if you wanted training, sometimes you had to push for it, but you could get trained up, in whatever it was you wanted to do, and that was really great

Male, Unemployed

I don't think anybody would appreciate how highly skilled and highly motivated people were at MG Rover. Our qualifications and our skills database was second to none. And now we're having to find work elsewhere

Female, Employed

Most participants agree that MG Rover was a good employer. They received salaries and benefits that were at the top end of the industry standard. Former employees also say they had an open relationship with their managers.

We were working for a company in some ways that looked out for us. I know it doesn't seem like that from the way they finished with us, but compared to what's on offer out there now, I don't think I'll ever see the benefits that I had while I was at Rover again, not in my time of life, anyway

Male, Unemployed

You couldn't fault them, because in hindsight, now we're all looking for jobs, the salary and working environment were excellent

Female, Employed

1.2 After the closure

The closure of MG Rover came as a shock to most employees. While some say there were warning signs at least 18 months prior to the company going into administration, the speed and suddenness with which decisions were taken came as a surprise to most people. This was further accentuated because senior management and the MG Rover Directors had reassured employees that the deal with Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation (SAIC) would be signed. The speed at which a large number of people were made redundant and the abruptness of the decision came as a shock.

I was in shock. I couldn't believe this was happening. It felt like everything was falling apart around me

Male, Unemployed

It was the worst feeling I've ever had. I just didn't know what to do. I was totally lost and in complete shock. I kept thinking it would go away, that someone would rescue the whole thing, but that didn't happen

Female, Employed

However, those in senior management positions say that it was not a shock to them because there were clear warning signs. Others say they were relieved by the news because they knew that the company could not carry on with the limited amount of funds and resources that were available.

We certainly knew because you couldn't have carried on like that and then of course towards the end you couldn't even buy a printer cartridge or a pencil, we were cutting back on everything

Male, In training

I was relieved because the way people had been treated, especially those who had been displaced, was diabolical. It just couldn't go on like that

Male, Unemployed

Most participants received information of the closure by telephone from managers, or colleagues and friends who had seen the news on television. Employees who did go into work after hearing the news were formally told by their managers that the company had gone into administration. Participants say they were not exactly sure what that meant for them as employees.

One of the managers said 'don't bother coming in, just watch the TV', and obviously then I put the TV on, and I see what happened, and it just totally shocked me

Male, unemployed

However, not all employees were made redundant on the same day. Some respondents were told that if they did not receive a letter from the company, they would be expected to come into work. This created some friction between colleagues, as some members of a team were made redundant while others were asked to remain in employment for a few weeks longer.

Employees who were made redundant immediately were grouped in alphabetical order and sent a letter requesting their attendance on particular days and times at the walk-in centre at the MG Rover plant at Longbridge where they were asked to fill in forms relating to their redundancy payment. The walk-in centre was organised by the Company's administrators, Jobcentre Plus and MG Rover's Human Resource department. The alphabetical grouping prevented colleagues in the same team from meeting or exchanging contact details. Participants describe the mood as one of shock and disbelief. They say that most people had not

realised the implications of the closure and others were still hopeful that a deal with China would emerge.

It was a demeaning exercise queuing to see people. You were with people you'd worked with, a lot of them it could be ten, 15 or 20 years plus. Some of the people were walking round like zombies

Male, In training

It all happened so suddenly, you never really got to say goodbye to the guys who worked with for so many years. Some people you just never saw them again

Male, Unemployed

At the walk-in centre at Longbridge a number of stalls were set up by prospective employers. Some participants say that the implications of the closure had not yet sunk in and most people were not emotionally equipped to start applying for jobs so soon. Also they were not prepared with their CVs to be able to apply for the jobs. Some say that advertising positions in the police or army were inappropriate because most of the workforce was over 40 years of age and such careers were unsuitable – although for some of the positions, for example, offered by the police, age would not have been a barrier. There were also positions advertised for outside of Birmingham and most people did not have the financial backing to relocate. However, one participant secured a job as a result of a contact made at the walk-in centre.

Two job fairs were held, one organised by Birmingham City Council at Cofton Park and the other organised by Jobcentre Plus at Cannon Hill Park which was attended by 7,000 people. Overall, most participants seemed to have dismissed the idea of a job fair primarily because they were concerned that it was merely a display put on by the MG Rover Task Force to show that they were trying to help people find employment. Participants who went to the job fairs found that they submitted CVs to prospective employers but did not receive a reply from them. They say that this adds to the feeling of disappointment and dejection.

It was a bit of a joke as well because they had the police and the army there, which is fair enough, but I didn't see anybody under 40 there and you can't do those jobs

Male, Unemployed

And there were a lot of jobs for out of the area, there wasn't any in Birmingham, if you want to relocate but I don't think many people want to relocate. They're all happy where they all live now. Don't think many people can afford to relocate

Male, In training

2. Support from organisations

After the closure of MG Rover a number of public agencies were responsible for supporting former employees of the company. Each organisation had a specific role to fulfil. Here we look at participants' reactions to the support they received and their experiences of dealing with each of the central government funded agencies. The underlying attitude among most former employees was a loss of self-esteem and a perception that they are 'owed' support because it is not due to their failing that they are unemployed, but because the company was not rescued before it fell into decline.

2.1 Redundancy Payments Directorate and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI)

Background on services provided

The Redundancy Payments Directorate is part of the Insolvency Service which is an executive agency of the Department of Trade and Industry. The Directorate assisted workers to make claims for, and then made payments of, statutory redundancy pay. The Redundancy Payments Directorate reported that, on average, it was able to make statutory redundancy payments within 2 days, and compensatory notice pay within 4 days, of applications being received from former MG Rover employees. This was well ahead of the normal targets to pay 70 per cent of claims within three weeks and 92 per cent within six weeks.

Participants say they were surprised by how quickly they received their redundancy payments. There is speculation that the government played a role in speeding up the process. The redundancy pay has provided people with a financial buffer for a few months while they search for employment. However, some people are aware that the lump sum of money could provide a false sense of security because eventually the money would run out.

While most participants are appreciative of the fact that the money was paid out so quickly, they are also concerned by the lack of information they received from the company or the administrators regarding the exact amounts they would receive. This was of particular concern because irrespective of the number of years served, employees would receive a capped amount as their redundancy payment.

DTI

The DTI provided financial assistance to MG Rover by providing a loan of around £6 million to pay employees' wages and other running costs for one week from the 11 April. There is a view that the DTI was attempting to keep the workforce in place in the event that a deal would be brokered with SAIC and this was seen as good gamble to make. In light of this some employees at this stage were still under the impression that a deal with SAIC would be brokered and their jobs secured.

There were so many things going on at that time and many rumours flying around that the SAIC deal would come through so we were still holding out some hope that we would be saved

Male, In employment

When asked whether this had an impact on their situation, there were mixed reactions from participants. Some argue that there was a great deal of confusion and speculation regarding the amount of money they were to receive as redundancy payments, compensation in lieu of notice, and pension, so they were unclear as to what impact one week's wages had at that time. Others say that one week's wages did provide a running start whilst they looked for jobs. Some participants were unclear as to whether they were paying tax on those wages. Some recall receiving that money only three or four weeks after being made redundant therefore reducing the impact it may have had.

People were expecting to have some money and they got it, so there was no noticeable difference

Male, Unemployed

It was there to buy time, but again and I think an outsider looking in would say well what did people usually do in that time because they don't appear to have made any particularly strenuous efforts to keep more people in work longer

Male, Unemployed

I'm not sure if we were paying tax that week. It got very confusing because you got all these payslips and money in the bank

Male, Employed

We did get that week's wages but it wasn't until three or four weeks later, so I can't say if it made an impact

Male, In training

However, participants speculate that for people who manage their finances on a weekly basis, the extra week's wages may have provided some financial respite.

2.2 Support from Jobcentre Plus

Background on services provided

Jobcentre Plus, an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions, had a twin role:

- advising workers on their entitlements to social security benefits and processing their applications and making payments
- advising workers on employment opportunities available to them and providing help in writing CVs. It has had on-going contact with people who have not found work and continue to receive Jobseekers Allowance.

Few of the participants in this research had previously been unemployed or had reason to visit a Jobcentre. As such, they did not know what to expect or the type of service that Jobcentre Plus was supposed to provide them. Participants say there was a general lack of information as to the procedures and the type of support they were to receive at Jobcentre Plus.

2.2.1 Claiming benefits

Background on services provided

Jobcentre Plus had to process applications for benefits from the 5,300 former MG Rover employees who received redundancy letters on 15 April 2005. Jobcentre plus reported that employees were interviewed and able to make their claims for the benefits to which they were entitled within seven days, and those that did claim received benefit payments within 10 days of their claim. This exceeded Jobcentre Plus's normal customer service standard to pay individuals within 12 days of making a claim.

To provide this service Jobcentre Plus, amongst a range of measures, brought in 160 staff from other Jobcentre Plus regions and used over 2,000 staff from the West Midlands region - a third of the region's workforce – to process the cases of former MG Rover employees during the first two weeks after the Company's closure. It also worked a double shift each day over a seven day period at the Jobcentre Plus office next to the Longbridge site and distributed the applications for benefits to other offices across the country to minimise delays in processing

Participants say that the process of 'signing on' was completed swiftly. They recognise that Jobcentre Plus had to deal with an unprecedented number of people at one time.

At the end of the day, they did a good job in getting people through the door, you can give them that

Male, Unemployed

They were obviously under a lot of pressure to process people so in that way they did a good job. It was confusing but fairly painless

Female, Employed

They say that Jobcentre Plus at Longbridge was open for seven days that week up till 10pm. They also understand that this initial period was a processing exercise and most participants did not expect to receive focussed job seeking advice at this time. They recognise that extra help was brought in from Jobcentres in surrounding areas and across the country to help with the large volume of people. However, there was concern that if the extra staff were retained beyond the processing stage, that not all the staff would have local knowledge of employers and job opportunities to assist people in searching for employment.

Jobcentre Plus were very flexible in that they brought in a lot of extra people, like Saturday and Sunday they were open till ten o'clock at night, I can't fault them for that.

Male, In training

They were sympathetic at first at the Jobcentre. Initially in the first week it was clear that they wanted to make sure everybody was coming in and getting their benefits straightaway, which did happen

Male, In training

We recognise that the following points in this section can be applicable to anybody using Jobcentre Plus. However, in this case participants say that due to their lack of experience of using a Jobcentre and the lack of information provided to them prior to visiting one, coupled with their overall situation of being made redundant compounded their frustration of using the service.

Most participants had never claimed benefits. They therefore had a number of questions regarding how to claim certain types of benefit or tax credit but there was not always an advisor on hand to guide them through the forms. Most people say they were not voluntarily given information about which benefits they were eligible to claim or the amount of money they would receive.

Jobcentre Plus provided a range of relevant information to former employees. For example, a pack on the services provided by Jobcentre Plus, including the process for claiming benefits, was issued to workers with their redundancy notices, however, many of the participants did not recall receiving this information. There is a view that in mentally and emotionally getting to grips with this overwhelming situation, some verbal and written information received at this time may not have had their desired effect.

There were some leaflets about what to do and who to see but to be honest, there was so much stuff coming through the letterbox and you just didn't want to hear it

Male, Unemployed

To be honest I was so depressed at the time that I couldn't really digest very much information. I didn't have the energy to go through their leaflet. You get so much mail and junk and you can never tell what you are going to need

Female, Employed

I may have jumped the gun and went to the Jobcentre on my own and I may have got a leaflet. I can't remember. I can't be sure if it was sent after I already went down there [Jobcentre Plus]

Male, Employed

Participants say that if Jobcentre Plus' primary aim was to get people on benefits as quickly as possible, they should have provided more information at the start of the process as to what information people had to bring with them to sign on. Due to this, participants say there were a number of lengthy forms to complete in order to claim benefits for which extensive and detailed financial and personal information was required that some people did not have to hand.

2.2.2 Assistance in finding employment

Background on services provided

Once the Company had closed, Jobcentre Plus made available to former employees services to help them find work in recognition of the fact that many of those made redundant would not have recent experience of looking for jobs. These services included advice on preparing CVs and attending job interviews. Such services are not usually provided until a person has been unemployed for six months.

Working with the Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus took action to facilitate the large number of companies that wanted to offer vacancies to former MG Rover workers. This included organising a large jobs fair in May 2005, which

was attended by 140 employers, and establishing an employer hotline for all companies interested in taking on former MG Rover employees.

By early January 2006, Jobcentre Plus had registered 5,270 former MG Rover employees and some 956 other people who it could identify as former supply chain company employees. At this time, Jobcentre Plus had reported that 58 per cent of these people had found new jobs.

Personalised service

Participants agree that while they needed to find employment as soon as possible to assist them financially, they would have preferred **career counselling** as the first step in looking for work. This would have helped them explore their interests, the type of jobs and career opportunities available in the local job market and how they could adapt, or transfer their skills to a new career path. Many participants say the process of finding employment was rushed and that they could have benefited from a more personalised, bespoke service that would have allowed them to see their situation as a potentially positive, life-changing experience.

Participants perceive that some of the extra staff that Jobcentre Plus had used to cope with the large volume of job seekers were not well versed with how systems worked and often had to seek the help of others. Some participants thought that they had been assisted by trainees and were not satisfied with the service they received. They say that specifically in this situation, it would have been preferable if experienced advisors had dealt with former MG Rover employees. They argue that since the government had declared that getting MG Rover employees back into work was a priority, special attention should have been paid to the calibre of staff that dealt with former MG Rover employees.

They were so out of their depth with this many people coming in and the amount of people coming in who wanted a job and how many jobs were available and they actually bought people in from Wales, Scotland and all other parts of the country to help at Longbridge. But it was just processing people, it wasn't helping you, it was just processing people through the queues. All we were, were statistics, they didn't help us find a job

Male, Unemployed

In general, participants found that when looking for jobs there was a lack of a personalised service at Jobcentre Plus and a lack of sensitivity and knowledge about the situation at MG Rover. Most participants say they would appreciate Jobcentre Plus staff acknowledging that they understand the situation ex-employees are in and showing that they respect their plight and achievements so far.

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I had this trainee and he didn't really know how to use the system. He only half filled in the form he said, 'Oh well I think we've finished, I'll get somebody to finish this form cos I'm not sure what I'm doing'. So there was inexperience among the staff but there must have been some stress as well

Male, Employed

The government made a huge play in the early days that they were going to take special action and put special support in place because of the MG Rover collapse, and it's not working. I think it was all election time talk

Male, Employed

In most cases participants say that they were not voluntarily told how to use the job search terminals or that they were required to do so. A few participants say that the terminals were frequently out of order on consecutive days, which made it difficult to search for jobs.

Participants were given a list of job vacancies that they could apply for in the streams they had chosen. However, participants say that they had to request the application forms from the employers and liaise with them regarding the outcome of the application. In most cases, participants say they did not receive any further communication from employers. They would have preferred more hands on assistance from Jobcentre Plus in chasing up decisions from employers and in actively helping them to find employment that matched their interests and skill sets rather than a list of available vacancies.

Type of vacancies

In general participants say the vacancies on offer at Jobcentre Plus were not well paid and most jobs averaged £5.50 an hour. The former employees of MG Rover were well paid and, while they recognise that at this time the goal is to find employment, they perceive there is a lack of jobs that match their salary expectations.

The Stratford office said to me, 'We're not going to find anything around here; you're going to have to find your own job. There's nothing we can do for you. We can find you a job at £5.50 an hour'. They make it very clear that because of the work you did, the experience you've got, the salary you were on, there's nothing for you

Male, Employed

There is concern amongst some participants that owing to the lack of highly skilled vacancies advertised in Jobcentre Plus, they have to rely on their own efforts to find employment. However, as many of the former employees have

been out of the job market for over 10 years, they need to be coached about career opportunities and informed about local employers.

Participants in senior management positions say that the majority of vacancies advertised in Jobcentre Plus are low paying and manufacturing focussed. There is a perception that highly skilled management, sales and engineering positions do not come under the usual repertoire of Jobcentre Plus. Some participants were frustrated because they perceive that special attention is given to people who are training or are qualified as skilled labour, or in a manufacturing position. There is a perception that organisations such as Jobcentre Plus assume that those in management positions will be able to find employment through other means and not necessarily rely on the Jobcentre. Also those in administrative or managerial positions are not given the same benefits such as travel expenses which can be available to those who find new work in manufacturing and engineering.

Some participants say that if they apply for managerial positions that are advertised in Jobcentre Plus, employers may get the impression that they are applying for the position as a stop-gap to earn some money before moving on to a job that they would prefer in the long term. Some argue that being an ex-MG Rover employee can go against you because employers in the area know that people are buying time before moving on to other jobs.

If you went to Jobcentre Plus and there are management jobs, a lot of employers would think you were taking that position as a stop-gap to find something else

Male, In training

Some participants say that employers are aware of the high salaries paid at MG Rover and there is a perception that former employees of the company would not accept or would leave positions because of the lower pay structure.

I think they look at what you've been earning and they know they can't offer that rate. They think that you're not going to stop there and you're going to keep trying for a better pay. So working for MG Rover can work against you

Male, Employed

Older employees

Older employees of MG Rover are particularly concerned about re-entering work because of age discrimination they have experienced in the job market. The workforce of MG Rover was considered an 'ageing' workforce because of the large number of long serving employees, some serving up to 40 years. Most of the employees in this research were over 35 years old and some were close to retirement age. A quarter of the MG Rover workforce that was made redundant

was over 50 years of age.² For these participants, starting a new career is a daunting prospect because they are competing in a young job market. There is a perception that a prospective employer would choose a younger employee who would stay in the role for a longer period of time. It is also thought that it would be more worthwhile for an employer to invest in a young person's training and development.

I wouldn't have thought there are many people at Longbridge, who are under 35. We had an ageing workforce

Male, In training

When pushed, he said the company themselves had taken the decision that they only really wanted to appoint somebody who was under 40, and unfortunately I'm over 50. You've got the government on one hand saying they'd like everyone to work until they're 70 but no one wants to hire someone who is above 40. It doesn't add up

Male, Unemployed

Most of the older participants in this research say their options are limited to becoming self-employed or freelance consultants where work is not guaranteed. Others say they will now have to accept any form of employment even if they are over qualified and do not receive job satisfaction in the last few years of employment. Some participants suggest that if the government's policy is to increase the retirement age, it needs to consider the age discrimination that older people face in the employment market.

Older participants argue that agencies such as Jobcentre Plus do not recognise that age is a barrier to finding employment and they do not appear to be tackling the issue with employers. They also say that if these agencies do recognise there is a problem with finding work for older people, they should use their judgement when suggesting specific types of vacancies to avoid disappointment or raising people's expectations.

Participants' reaction to attending Jobcentre Plus Offices

Participants in this research say they prided themselves on never being unemployed or claiming benefits. The process of signing on and being at a Jobcentre is not a situation they expected to experience. Some say it is demeaning and demoralising to be on benefits and the longer they are on benefits, the more angry they are with the situation they have been forced into through no fault of their own.

² Closure of MG Rover: Economic Impact Assessment, Stage 2 Report November 2005, Regeneris Consulting

I'm 40 years old, and I'd never been on the dole. I've always had a job since the day I left school

Male, Unemployed

You've proved you weren't idle, 'cos you worked all your life

Male, In training

I tell you every time I absolutely hated going to that job centre, even though the people, once you saw them, were kind but they weren't especially helpful with helping me find a job

Female, Unemployed

They're not from a background that's akin to going that extra mile and actually working outside of their normal remit. They're used to just taking some details down, being very impersonal, saying, 'Right, OK thank you, next.'

Male, Employed

2.2.3 Joined up service

Participants who live in areas outside Birmingham such as Worcester, Coventry and as far as Wales and Northamptonshire, perceive that there is a concentration of efforts in the Birmingham area. They say that information regarding the situation at MG Rover has not reached Jobcentre Plus offices in the surrounding areas with regard to helping people find suitable employment. There is also a lack of sensitivity and in some cases knowledge amongst staff about the situation at MG Rover, which adds to the notion that the closure of the company has been forgotten and is only of concern in the areas near Longbridge. They feel living outside the area puts them at a disadvantage because they have to travel long distances into Birmingham to get help and advice, which ultimately costs them money.

I said to them that there's special money and such for people from MG Rover. And they said, 'MG Rover? Oh, that was that car company that closed down wasn't it?' That was the attitude I got from Jobcentre Plus

Male, Unemployed

However, a number of participants say there were problems in Jobcentre Plus offices closer to Longbridge. For example, participants in the Black Country say there is a lack of services in this area. They argue that a centre should have been set up in Dudley to make access easier for people in that area. They also say there is a lot of confusion regarding which Jobcentre people living in certain postcode areas should go to. Many participants say they have been shunted between Jobcentres and told their files were in other offices and thus had to travel back and forth between places.

I met one of the guys I knew at the Jobcentre and he was coming out cos they said he had to go to the one in Tipton. By the time I'd finished my stuff I saw him again cos Tipton Jobcentre had sent him back and said they got it wrong. And this guy said he had just put in his last fiver for petrol, I just felt sorry for people like that

Male, In training

Overall, most participants say that under the circumstances Jobcentre Plus was successful in processing a large volume of benefit applications but the staff were not well equipped to deal with the volume and calibre of people who were eager to find new employment.

2.3 Support from the Learning and Skills Council

Background to services provided

The LSC plans post 16 training provision and funds further education colleges and training providers in the private and voluntary sector. When the Company closed it was given the additional responsibility of helping former MG Rover workers develop the skills which would assist them in getting jobs.

To do this it had to establish the capacity to provide advice to former MG Rover employees, many of whom had only worked in manufacturing, and often only at MG Rover, but were now expressing a wish to train in a different vocational area. Once the Company closed, the LSC put in place the capacity to provide advice to former employees on skills needs and training options. Within the space of a week it had established a pool of 120 skills advisers who were seconded, for example, from Further Education colleges. It also established a new facility at Hollymoor close to the Longbridge factory where former employees could get advice on training. During its first two weeks, when the demand was at its highest, the Hollymoor centre was open for extended hours, including weekends.

Lack of communication

In most cases, participants say that staff at the Hollymoor Centre and other centres took all their personal details and employment history but they did not receive any further communication. At the time of the group discussions, some participants were still waiting to be placed on training courses. Most participants say they had to re-contact the LSC to enquire about the progress with their case. It is the lack of communication and information that is a cause for frustration among most people in this research.

I've had an absolute nightmare trying to get information out of people as to training courses, and when I did get into the Learning and Skills Council, they were very slow and cumbersome in reacting. They did try, but they're so bureaucratic

Male, In training

They [LSC] was a bit slow in getting back to me but they did eventually which was good

Male, In training

They gave me some information about different courses and I took some information off of them which turned out to be useful

Male, In training

In some cases participants have found a lack of information regarding which centre to attend especially if they live outside the designated postcode areas. Initially any former employee could go to the Hollymoor centre which the LSC established close to the Longbridge site. From late April 2005 the LSC moved back to its normal method of operation and individuals were linked to their local LSC area which was determined by their postcode. There are, however, people who live closer to the centre set up at Hollymoor than the centre in Worcester in spite of their postcode being in Worcester. In some cases people were under the impression that they had to travel 20 miles to Worcester when the Hollymoor centre was in walking distance.

I live in an area that previously was part of Hereford and Worcester. My postcode is B45. That puts us for Learning and Skills Council purposes under Worcester. The Hollymoor Learning and Skills Centre office is literally a stone's throw away, but because of this arbitrary line that's been drawn we can't come under Hollymoor, we have to go to Worcester and every time I go there, I hear nothing back from them

Male, Unemployed

Service flexibility

Participants felt that the LSC could have been more flexible in their procedures and systems.

Hollymoor didn't seem to go out of their way at all, they weren't flexible, if you were out of their normal way of working, they just didn't want to know

Male, In training

The way we've changed jobs, worked different days doing odd times, all sorts of things. Yet compare that with Hollymoor [LSC centre] I don't think they were flexible at all, they just wanted to accommodate us within their standard system with their standard course and if you fell outside that it would take forever to get what you wanted

Male, In training

Some participants say that the LSC does not offer information regarding reimbursement of travel expenses. Others felt that the management of travel expenses was inflexible³. One participant who had to travel to Coventry for a training course wanted to take a route that avoided rush hour traffic through the city centre but which would be longer in terms of mileage. However, he was told he could only be reimbursed for travel through Birmingham city, which was more difficult and time consuming during rush hour.

We only found out you could have your travel expenses paid through another Rover person we met at Hollymoor. The LSC didn't volunteer the information, we had to find out ourselves, and it just depressed me that you have to fight for everything

Male, In training

I'm currently having trouble trying to get travelling expenses out of the LSC because they want me to take a route straight through Birmingham city centre. It's ridiculous really, especially in rush hour. I find it easier to avoid the traffic, though in distance the route I take may be longer. So if I just go the easiest route they don't want to pay for it

Male, In training

³ The administration of travel expenses is undertaken by the individual training providers, such as Further Education colleges. LSC established the travel reimbursement system based on Jobcentre Plus travel payments for training.

Finding a course

Background on services provided

The LSC made preparations to deal with MG Rover's closure, but could only approach Further Education colleges and other potential providers of training once MG Rover had closed. The LSC had to work with colleges - who were in the process of delivering their planned courses for the summer term - and other providers to develop training courses and programmes and acquire the extra staff and other capacity needed to deliver additional training. The LSC coordinated an expansion in the number of training places, for example, by funding local colleges so they could substantially increase their provision during the summer. One college, for example, 'bought out' the holiday of some of its staff to enable it to operate throughout Summer 2005. The college also recruited and trained new lecturers.

By September 2005, some 3,500 individual training plans were prepared following one-to-one skills needs assessments with former employees. These plans were used by the LSC to arrange training or develop courses accordingly. The LSC used the flexibility provided by the European Social Fund to source and make available to former MG Rover and supply chain employees a wider range of courses than can normally be accessed by redundant workers. It also provided 'taster' courses which did not lead to formal qualifications, but were intended to provide a short introduction so that former MG Rover employees - the majority of whom had not worked for another employer for many years - could take a better informed view about the suitability of a new area or type of work.

Participants feel that the LSC should have a tailored approach to finding courses. Some feel that the LSC has a specific number of courses and there is a drive towards placing people on those courses, such as fork-lift truck driving or construction. There are some participants in management and sales positions who feel that the LSC provides training only in certain areas such as construction, plumbing, carpentry or other skilled labour professions. They say that careers such as sales or youth work, to name a few, are outside of LSC's usual remit of courses and it takes longer to get on courses that they perceive the LSC considers to be out of the ordinary.

I was asking for a higher level course, and they just totally ignored it. I know several people in exactly the same position. They're totally ignored. It's all biased between manufacturing and engineering

Female, Employed

Their sole purpose in the demise of MG Rover was to get the track workers into new employment. It was a case of sod the staff, they'll sort themselves out. Now, whether that's because, I don't know, we're seen to be motivated or what, I don't know

Male, Unemployed

It's about percentages. It's also about the where the Government see their biggest wins. And they'll get a big win if they make sure that most of the guys who are in manufacturing are suddenly now finding work. But people in administration or office work, they think will just find work in time

Male, Employed

Case Study 1

This is an example of a participant who felt there was a drive towards certain types of courses, and a lack of flexibility in the approach adopted to finding appropriate courses.

One participant in this research, who worked in the paint shop at MG Rover, has decided to change career and become a youth worker. He took up part time employment at a Youth Centre while hoping to complete a diploma to become a qualified youth worker. He approached staff at the Hollymoor centre for suitable courses and initially they said that since he was the only one who wanted to do a youth work course, they did not think it would be worthwhile for them to find a course. They then tried to find him a course in youth work but failed, and suggested he ask his temporary employers to suggest a suitable course.

At Hollymoor they went on the computer and said, 'Cos you're the only one who wants to do the course, they're not going to find you one'. I said, 'Well, that's what career I want to do.' So my wife came with me and she had a right go at them. They had a board up with 120 people for plumbing, 80 people for carpentry and she got out a marker pen and wrote youth worker, 1. The bloke said, 'You can't do that'. She said, 'Well, he don't want to be a plumber, he don't want to be a carpenter, he wants to be a youth worker, you're going to find him a course.' The next day the bloke rings me up and says they've tried their hardest to find a course but if I could ask the youth centre where I work to find a suitable course and then they'll fund it. It turns out the course is at Birmingham University, right under their noses. Male, Employed

Some participants feel there is a drive to place people on training courses without proper consideration as to whether it would be useful for their career. For instance, participants find they are offered 'taster courses' that only last for a week. They are designed to help people get an appreciation of an occupational area they are considering training in but as they do not provide a qualification they are not considered valuable by some participants.

Some participants understood that the LSC had a database of courses. They feel that there was a reliance on the database to prescribe a suitable course rather than advisors exploring training options that are not immediately obvious but could suit an individual's needs. In general participants suggest that the LSC could have been more proactive and creative in its approach to finding suitable courses.

I signed on with the LSC, because you have to do it by a certain date, and you're entitled to any course up to two and a half hours. But I really don't know what I want to do, that's the trouble, because there's nobody there to say 'Oh well, you can do this, you can do that, this is how you could use your skills differently'. I need good advice, not a list of courses for the sake of it

Male, Unemployed

Some participants say they had to find the courses they were interested in and then approach the LSC for funding. In some cases the LSC did not know of certain courses and participants had to enrol and get letters from the principal of a college to vouch for the course. Some participants felt they had faced bureaucracy and inflexibility from the LSC.

One participant had found a course he was interested in. He had a letter from the principal and had negotiated a discount for the course. He was told by the LSC the course could not be approved immediately and he would have to wait till the LSC contacted him. After 3 weeks of no communication from the LSC he contacted his local MP regarding his situation. In the interim period the participant says he was concerned that the LSC would not fund the course and he would need to make alternative plans.

I told them what courses I want to do and despite going up and chasing them and presenting them with an invoice saying this is the course, this is where it is, this is how much it will cost, this is the date and all they said was, 'Oh you'll have to go away and wait till we contact you'. I've had absolutely nothing from them until I wrote to my MP two weeks ago to tell him how fed up I am. Not even a letter saying, 'Sorry we're taking time getting round to you'

Male, Employed

I found myself a course, and I had to tell them about it, and even then it took a while to get into the gear to say that I could actually be funded for that course. You feel like you are in it alone and they are not really helping looking out for you

Male, In training

However, a few of the participants were positive about the LSC as they had or were helping them attend courses to match their interests. For example, one participant had seen an advertisement for a job as a drugs' counsellor and the LSC were able to find a training course that would provide him with a qualification to take up this role.

Case Study 2

A participant in this research who is around 35 years old had worked for MG Rover for ten years in the shop floor. According to him, the closure of MG Rover has not affected him greatly. He says he is used to switching careers and the company's closure has given him an opportunity to consider a new career path. Before joining MG Rover he had driven an HGV, and completed three years of apprenticeship as a plumber. He is currently due to start a three year degree course funded by the LSC to become a drugs counsellor. When signing on at the Jobcentre he saw a vacancy advertised for a drugs counsellor working with young children. The Jobcentre said he needed special qualifications to do the job. He told the LSC about the position and he insisted on a degree course. However, he says he will find it hard to fund himself while he completes his studies. He believes the LSC helped him find a course but only because he came to them with some initial ideas and thoughts. He feels that there are a number of interesting jobs available and people need to explore new options.

The LSC, I can't fault them, they've been really, really good. They've given me exactly what I want to do. But I was down the dole, I was just signing on and I just seen this board and it was like a drug counsellor and I thought I wouldn't mind doing that, obviously I'm not experienced and I've got no chance. So I said, 'All right how do you get into that kind of work?' I've got to go to university now for three years and I said to him that I don't want a crummy course for two or three weeks. I don't know if I'll pass, but I've got the opportunity to go and do something that I want to do. So whether it works out or not there are opportunities out there and some interesting jobs but only if you go after them. People need to get off their backsides and do something with their lives. Male, In training

In general, participants agree that while they need to find employment as soon as possible to have financial stability, they would prefer **career counselling** as the first step in choosing a training course. This would have helped them explore their interests, the type of jobs and career opportunities available in the local job market and how they could adapt their skills, or transfer their skills, to a new career path. Many would have benefited from a dedicated career advisor.

3. Impact of the closure

The closure of MG Rover has had a profound impact on the lives of its former employees. The suddenness of the redundancy has affected them financially as well as socially. In this chapter we look at the way in which people have been affected and how they have tried to cope with their redundancy.

3.1 Financial impact

The most visible and immediate effect of redundancy is the financial insecurity faced by many former employees. Most people had made purchases and had financial commitments to creditors, and relied on their steady income from their employer to meet these obligations. A number of people had mortgages on their houses and bank loans that they are now unable to pay off. Participants say there is an element of fear because they no longer have the financial security of a job to rely upon.

All of a sudden the tap has been turned off and you are left with nothing. You don't think this will ever happen to you. You save for a rainy day and the day we lost our jobs, it poured

Male, In training

Council Tax relief is provided for a limited period of time, which has helped a number of people. However, those with a mortgage do not receive any assistance or payment holidays and this is left to the discretion of the finance company. Participants say that efforts should be made to liaise with mortgage lenders regarding this issue to help the employees.

Most participants recognise that the redundancy payment has acted as a buffer for a few months but they feel that this money will run out as they currently have no income. They say that this lump sum of money can be misleading. There are fears that those who are not motivated to work will rely on this money till it runs out and only then start looking for work, by which time the training courses and other benefits will not be available to them.

Company car scheme

Most participants in this research had a company car. Some had up to four cars on loan for members of their family with outstanding payments of almost £40,000. Most people had to make a decision within a week to either buy their cars outright or return them. They say that at this time there were a lot of

decisions being made about their future and the company car was another added burden.

From being one day in work and the next week out of work and then the next week having to make a decision whether you kept your car or not was tough. So I bought a new cheaper car and I'm happier now

Female, Employee

The decisions they had to make were rushed and in some cases complicated. They knew that a car was essential to their way of life and that their families relied on it. Transportation is essential, especially now that they have to get to job interviews, the Jobcentre, and to training courses. However, some people did not buy their cars from MG Rover as a matter of principle because they did not want to have any further dealings with the company.

I didn't want to hand any money back to the company that folded in the way that it did. They could have it [the car] back; I didn't want anything to do with it

Male, Employed

Those individuals who bought their cars say that the payment was often equivalent to their redundancy payment, which left them without a financial safety net to fall back on.

If you've got the car priced, it's come up on that offer, but like you say that's the redundancy payment gone, so the little safety net that you had was gone just like that

Male, Unemployed

But if you wanted to keep that car, you was given [redundancy] money in one hand, and just giving it out in the other. Cos if you want to work, you have to have a car to get there and to the job interviews to the dole centre

Male, In training

3.2 Social Impact

Participants say their redundancy has affected their attitude to life, their family and the local community. Many participants say they feel demoralised and depressed thinking about the way they were treated by MG Rover and their current predicament. Most participants say they feel isolated and that neither their families nor their friends understand how they feel. A few participants who live outside Birmingham state there is a lack of knowledge and sensitivity about the closure of MG Rover, which makes them believe that the country has forgotten about its last car manufacturer because it is an issue that no longer holds the front pages of the newspaper.

Closure of MG Rover: Perspectives of 38 former employees on the support provided by public agencies. This research forms one element of a body of evidence collected by the NAO. It should be read in conjunction with the NAO's report "Closure of MG Rover" available at www.nao.org.uk March 2006 27

It's just a very demoralising situation. I still feel very depressed when I think about it. I really pity people who were close to retiring and have very little left

Male, In training

It's a very isolated life. Work was not only how you earned a living but there was a social side to it as well. Sadly, now that the work environment's been taken away there social bonds have gone with it. It's just too traumatic for some people

Male, In training

For those participants who do socialise with former colleagues, they are torn between feeling guilty about spending money to socialise and the need to meet people and talk about their situations and in some way maintain a semblance of normality by carrying on as they used to before being made redundant.

You have mates, which mean a lot, because you work alongside them all the time, I miss some of them to be honest. And you never got to properly say goodbye

Male, Unemployed

You do want to go out and have a few drinks like it was before. But I do feel bad spending my dole money but we all do need a little support

Male, Unemployed

I feel guilty when I go out with the old gits on a Friday night, as I have done for 40 years, but you feel guilty because you're carrying on as normal and collecting the dole money

Male, Unemployed

Most participants say that their wives and partners have suffered greatly, especially now that they are the sole income earner and have to support the family. They admit a sense of guilt and embarrassment in relying on their partners for financial support. They say that the strain and insecurity of unemployment has altered the family dynamic. Some participants were the only income earners and their redundancy has restricted how much they spend on their children and household expenses in general.

One husband and wife couple in this research were both employed by MG Rover and they say their financial future is not looking healthy.

It's not normal, is it? It's not natural to rely on your partner for everything. It's been really hard trying to afford school uniforms and stuff for the kids

Male, Unemployed

My wife's pay isn't brilliant, and she works shifts. So when she's at work, I'm obviously home looking after the kids, but we've had to cut down a lot

Male, Unemployed

My wife doesn't work so we're just using credit cards and overdrafts, just keeps getting us into more and more in debt

Male, In training

Both my wife and I worked for Rover, and now that we are both out of a job, it is very hard for us to cope. Even though we're both in the same situation, sometimes you feel no one understands

Male, Employed

Former employees of MG Rover in this research say that while they know they are highly skilled, their redundancy has affected their confidence in their skills and ability to compete in the job market. As most people worked at MG Rover for over 10 years, there was a sense of security and their position was considered a 'job for life'. Some participants say that there was an air of complacency about the future and in hindsight, a dependence on the security of their employment.

There are a few participants who say that their redundancy has allowed them to evaluate their situation in a positive light. They say that this should be seen as a new opportunity to discover other interests and channel these into developing a career path. However, there is a need for career counselling and financial backing in order to accomplish a fresh start.

3.3 Experiences of new employment

Some participants in this research had found new employment. One participant who worked in the sales department at MG Rover, has now taken a position in a primary school as a school administrator. She has been in the position for a week and says that the pace of working is much slower than at MG Rover. She says she would prefer to be in a sales oriented position and is currently looking to change jobs.

Another participant who had worked for 37 years in product engineering at MG Rover is now employed as a project manager. He says he is now happier in his new position as he has more responsibilities and the culture of the new company is appealing. He says there is a lot more foresight and scenario planning in terms of safety and product design than at MG Rover.

Closure of MG Rover: Perspectives of 38 former employees on the support provided by public agencies. This research forms one element of a body of evidence collected by the NAO. It should be read in conjunction with the NAO's report "Closure of MG Rover" available at www.nao.org.uk March 2006

Two participants have now joined another automotive company. They say the pace of the working culture is more relaxed than at MG Rover. However, they do feel there is a lack of team spirit and camaraderie that they experienced at MG Rover, primarily because the teams are always evolving.

Appendices

Letter of invitation

Independent research following the collapse of MG Rover: come share your views and experiences

Ipsos MORI, the social research organisation, has been asked by the National Audit Office (NAO), to conduct an important research study with former employees of MG Rover. The NAO is an independent organisation that reports directly to Parliament on how government bodies have spent public money and what they have achieved. The study will play an important part in the NAO's examination of the collapse of MG Rover and the regional support package developed to help those directly affected.

The NAO is very keen to hear directly from former employees about the support services offered to you. We are therefore writing to **invite you to share your views and experiences** on how the collapse of MG Rover has affected you and the assistance, if any, provided to you to support you following redundancy. This includes claiming your redundancy pay, registering for the benefits to which you are entitled, and identifying future employment paths and training courses to help you into new employment.

We will be holding a number of small separate group discussions (6-8 people in each discussion) with former employees of MG Rover who have since gained employment, are in training or are currently not in work. The discussions will be held in Birmingham. The discussions will be hosted at a convenient time by an independent Ipsos MORI facilitator and will last for just under two hours. Refreshments will be provided. The discussions are informal and you will not need to prepare anything in advance. The NAO may also attend to hear your views. We will conduct the discussions on **the 6th and 7th of September 2005** in the **afternoon and evening, to allow those who are working to attend.**

We will be able to reimburse you for any travel expenses to and from the venue, and any other out-of-pocket expenses, such as childcare.

We would be grateful if you could contact us if you would like to share your views and experiences for this NAO examination. Ipsos MORI abides strictly by the Market Research Society Code of Conduct; **we will treat all views in complete confidence, and will not attribute any comments to you.**

Please ring us on this free phone number 0800 731 1050 as soon as possible (open 24hrs). If you are asked to leave a message please leave your full name and telephone number(s) so that we can will you back. Calls will not be charged to you.

Alternatively, please complete the details on the attached fax-back form, or email us at naoresearch@mori.com and we will be in touch. Please also get in touch if you have any questions about this research.

If you are not able to attend the discussion but know a former employee(s) who might like to, please do contact us.

We sincerely hope you will be available and willing to help us in this important study about the lessons to be learned and share your thoughts and experiences.

Many thanks in advance
Yours sincerely



Ipsos MORI research WITH former employees of MG Rover

REPLY FORM

Your Name: _____

Your Telephone Number(s)*: _____

Your Email address*: _____

- Yes, I might be interested in taking part and please contact me to tell me more.
- No, I am not interested in taking part
- I am unable to take part but can recommend a former employee(s) who might be interested in taking part

Their Name(s): _____

Their Telephone number(s): _____

Their Email address*: _____

**Please fax back to 020 7347 3803 (not a free phone number)
or email naoresearch@mori.com**

- **Your contact details will not be used for any purpose other than to contact you about this independent research study**

Methodology

Ipsos MORI conducted nine group discussions with former employees in Birmingham and the surrounding areas. In total 38 former MG Rover employees were involved in this research. Participants were divided into three broad categories: unemployed, in training and in work, with three discussion groups held in each category. In any discussion group the greater the homogeneity of participants the more successful the group will be in terms of the depth of information gathered and the dynamic between participants. Shared perspectives and experiences generally help the group to gel, and provide more in-depth information. In this case, the shared experience of the collapse of MG Rover and how this has affected their lives was a strong way for the group to bond.

Owing to the difficulties encountered in recruiting this audience, some of whom did not want to take part in the discussions as they say they have put the whole incident behind them, the group discussions were not entirely homogenous. In most groups there was a mixture of people in training, in employment and those who were still unemployed. However, the individual experiences of support received were specifically teased out owing to the mix of participants.

The breakdown of the number of people in training, in employment and currently employed who attended the group discussions is shown below:

NO.	Employment status
15	Currently unemployed
10	In training
13	Employed (includes self-employed)
TOTAL: 38	

To recruit participants, a letter of invitation was sent through the MG Rover Task Force weekly mail communications pack co-ordinated by the Human Resources team. The letter explained the purpose and importance of the research. Please refer to the appendices of this report for a copy of the letter.

In total 1,600 letters were dispatched. Due the Data Protection Act, personal information such as telephone numbers and home address could not be provided to Ipsos MORI. In light of this recipients of the letter were provided with a free phone number, fax back form and email address to opt-in to the research. In order to increase the number of responses, Ipsos MORI also conducted a snowballing exercise where participants who opted in to the research were asked to recommend former colleagues who might be interested in taking part in one of the discussions. Once participants opted-in to the research, they were contacted via telephone and invited for the discussion groups. Participants who were

snowballed were allocated to the most appropriate group based on their employment status. To further increase the number of participants, we used the BT internet phone search to find telephone numbers of recipients of the invitation letter.

The breakdown of participants recruited through these various methods is shown below:

NO.	How recruited
22	Original MG Rover mail-out
14	Snowballing
2	Other
TOTAL: 38	