



National Audit Office

National Audit Office survey of Personal Advisers in Jobcentre Plus

We surveyed Personal Advisers to find out about their attitudes to their work and barriers getting in the way of them working effectively.

The questions we asked in our survey arose from our initial analysis of the issues, drawing on evidence from interviews with national managers in Jobcentre Plus, interviews with advisers and adviser managers during our visits to two Jobcentre Plus sites, review of existing literature and consultation with external organisations (as explained in the main report).

In order to test our survey design we conducted a pilot at two Jobcentre Plus sites in March 2006. Pilot respondents were asked to complete an additional feedback sheet asking for comments on the survey instrument. The pilot responses were used to refine the survey instrument but are not included in the response data.

The full survey took place in April 2006. Because Jobcentre Plus does not hold a central list of Personal Advisers we drew our sample at office level and surveyed Personal Advisers in the selected offices. Sixty-four offices were selected randomly for inclusion in the survey from a list of all Jobcentre Plus offices with the exception that offices which were participating in other parts of our study – such as visits or the ‘one day log’ – were excluded. We sent 942 surveys by post, after telephoning each office to determine the number of surveys needed, from which we received 578 responses, a response rate of 61 per cent.

Reproduced on the following pages is the original wording of the NAO survey form with a summary of responses for each question. Annotations are distinguished by blue typeface and are enclosed in square brackets [].



National Audit Office

Survey of Personal Advisers in Jobcentre Plus

The National Audit Office (NAO) is carrying out a study looking at the valuable role of Personal Advisers in Jobcentre Plus. The NAO is an independent organisation that scrutinises public spending. The study will result in a published report to Parliament.

We are interested to find out more about the work that Personal Advisers do and about any day-to-day events that impact upon them being able to carry out their job effectively. To ensure we have a balanced understanding of the role of Personal Advisers, we are asking Advisers from randomly selected Jobcentre Plus offices across the country to complete this short questionnaire.

This questionnaire should not take more than 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire is anonymous and your individual responses will not be fed back to Jobcentre Plus. Results will be aggregated and used only for our own analysis.

There is space at the end of this questionnaire for you to record any further comments you feel are relevant.

Please complete the questionnaire within 2 days of receipt and return it in the pre-paid envelope.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Q.1 Which Jobcentre Plus office are you based in for most of your time?

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| East Midlands | 42 |
| East of England | 74 |
| London | 47 |
| North East | 36 |
| North West | 72 |
| South East | 26 |
| South West | 53 |
| West Midlands | 34 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 34 |
| Wales | 21 |
| Scotland | 48 |
| Number of responses (n) | 487 |

[Note: respondents specified the office in which they work, however the table shows a summary broken down into Jobcentre Plus regions to avoid disclosing small numbers of advisers for each site. A further 91 advisers did not specify the site in which they work.]

Q.2 What Adviser role(s) do you perform? (Please tick all that apply)

| | | |
|--|------------|-----|
| JSA New Claims Adviser | 239 | 42% |
| New Deal Under 18 Adviser | 56 | 10% |
| New Deal for Young People Adviser | 111 | 19% |
| New Deal Adviser 25 Plus Adviser | 99 | 17% |
| New Deal 50 Plus Adviser | 83 | 14% |
| Restart Adviser | 164 | 29% |
| Disability Employment Adviser | 28 | 5% |
| Incapacity Benefit Personal Adviser / Pathways to Work | 99 | 17% |
| New Deal for Lone Parents Adviser | 115 | 20% |
| Other | 61 | 11% |
| Number of responses (n) | 576 | |

Q.3 Do you currently work full-time or part-time? (Please tick)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Full-time | 374 | 65% |
| Part-time | 202 | 35% |
| Number of responses (n) | 576 | |

Q.4 How long have you worked in an Adviser role at Jobcentre Plus? (Please tick)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Less than one year | 60 | 11% |
| 1 to 5 years | 253 | 44% |
| 6 to 10 years | 150 | 26% |
| 11 or more years | 111 | 19% |
| Number of responses (n) | 574 | |

Q.5 How many customers are in your current live caseload? (Please tick)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Up to 25 customers | 223 | 41% |
| 26 to 50 customers | 207 | 38% |
| 51 to 70 customers | 69 | 13% |
| 70 or more customers | 50 | 9% |
| Number of responses (n) | 549 | |

Q.6 How many interviews do you conduct in a typical working day? (Please tick)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| 1 to 4 interviews | 12 | 2% |
| 5 to 8 interviews | 318 | 56% |
| 9 to 12 interviews | 215 | 38% |
| 13 or more interviews | 27 | 5% |
| Number of responses (n) | 572 | |

SECTION 2: TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Q.7 Do you have a current personal development plan? (Please tick)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Yes | 442 | 77% |
| No | 131 | 23% |
| Number of responses (n) | 573 | |

Q.8 Do you have regular performance appraisals? (Please tick)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Yes - monthly | 56 | 10% |
| Yes - quarterly | 139 | 25% |
| Yes - six monthly | 272 | 48% |
| Yes - annually | 65 | 12% |
| No | 33 | 6% |
| Number of responses (n) | 565 | |

Q.9 How often are you observed conducting interviews with customers as part of your performance appraisal? (Please tick)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| More than once a month | 38 | 7% |
| Once a month | 111 | 20% |
| Every 2 or 3 months | 142 | 25% |
| Every 4 or 5 months | 34 | 6% |
| Every 6 months | 60 | 11% |
| Once a year | 75 | 13% |
| Never | 82 | 14% |
| Other | 28 | 5% |
| Number of responses (n) | 570 | |

Q.10 When did you most recently receive training for your role as a Personal Adviser (including e.g. classes/seminars, coaching, web-enabled courses)? (Please tick)

| | | |
|--|------------|-----|
| Within the last month | 148 | 26% |
| Within the last 6 months | 134 | 23% |
| Within the last year | 98 | 17% |
| Within the last 2 years | 86 | 15% |
| More than 2 years ago / received no training | 108 | 19% |
| Number of responses (n) | 574 | |

If you did receive training within the last 2 years, please answer Questions 11-13. If you received no training, please go straight to Question 14.

Q.11 If you received training, what type of training did you receive? (Please tick all that apply)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Other | 247 | 51% |
| Benefit related training | 141 | 29% |
| Personal effectiveness | 99 | 21% |
| New Deal related | 93 | 19% |
| Number of responses (n) | 482 | |

'Other' responses have been coded as follows:

| | |
|--|------------|
| Benefit/Specialist technical knowledge | 92 |
| IT training | 75 |
| Advisory/Interviewing/Customer | 50 |
| Miscellaneous (e.g. Health & Safety) | 26 |
| Targets | 12 |
| Total | 255 |

[Note: the two 'other' totals do not match because some respondents completed the free text area but did not tick the corresponding 'other, please specify' box.]

Q.12 How far do you feel the training has helped you do your job better?
(Please tick)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| A lot | 94 | 19% |
| To some degree | 306 | 62% |
| Not at all | 81 | 17% |
| Not sure | 14 | 3% |
| Number of responses (n) | 495 | |

Q.13 What format did the training take? (Please tick)

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-----|
| 'Classroom' based | 332 | 69% |
| IT/web enabled | 122 | 25% |
| Coaching from an Experienced Adviser | 103 | 21% |
| Personally driven desk-based | 52 | 11% |
| Other | 32 | 7% |
| Number of responses (n) | 485 | |

SECTION 3: CARRYING OUT YOUR ROLE

Q.14 What does doing a good job mean to you? (Please select the two most relevant)

Please rank 1,2 (where 1 is the outcome you consider is most important)

| | 1 | 2 | Tick | Total |
|---|-----|-----|------|------------|
| Making a difference for the customer | 198 | 58 | 110 | 366 |
| Getting the customer into a sustainable job | 82 | 107 | 74 | 263 |
| Moving the customer closer to finding work | 53 | 119 | 72 | 244 |
| Seeing the customer increase in confidence | 23 | 51 | 23 | 97 |
| Meeting my targets | 17 | 25 | 21 | 63 |
| Getting the customer in to a job as quickly as possible | 6 | 13 | 10 | 29 |
| Other | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| Number of responses (n) | | | | 537 |

[Note: In addition to the responses shown, a further 38 respondents selected more than two options, those responses have been excluded from the results.]

Q.15 What are the three main obstacles to you carrying out your job to the best of your abilities? (Please select the three most relevant)

Please rank 1,2,3 (where 1 is the obstacle you consider is most significant)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | Tick | Total |
|--------------------------------|-----|----|----|------|------------|
| Other | 108 | 81 | 86 | 97 | 372 |
| Too much paperwork/ admin | 96 | 92 | 71 | 83 | 342 |
| Customers failing to attend | 94 | 75 | 66 | 55 | 290 |
| Diary management issues | 47 | 64 | 60 | 46 | 217 |
| Lack of management support | 18 | 33 | 46 | 24 | 121 |
| Lack of training | 23 | 29 | 35 | 29 | 116 |
| Caseload too big | 27 | 29 | 22 | 18 | 96 |
| Number of responses (n) | | | | | 555 |

[Note: In addition to the responses shown, a further 20 respondents selected more than three options, those responses have been excluded from the results.]

'Other' responses have been coded as follows:

| | |
|---|------------|
| Lack of jobs/ provision | 134 |
| Management/ targets | 38 |
| Short staffed | 36 |
| Lack of time/ big caseload | 33 |
| IT system | 23 |
| Upstream problems (such as contact centres) | 22 |
| Interruptions | 21 |
| Customer attendance/ behaviour | 15 |
| Facilities/ office layout | 11 |
| Too much paperwork/ admin | 10 |
| Lack of training | 10 |
| Miscellaneous | 10 |
| Total | 363 |

[Note: the two 'other' totals do not match because some advisers ticked the 'other, please specify' box but did not complete the corresponding free text area.]

Q.16 Has your job as an Adviser changed substantially in the last 2 years? (Please tick)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| A lot | 202 | 35% |
| To some degree | 278 | 48% |
| Not at all | 40 | 7% |
| Not applicable | 55 | 10% |
| Number of responses (n) | 575 | |

Q.17 Have changes to the Adviser role led to service improvements for customers? (Please tick)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| A lot | 28 | 5% |
| To some degree | 192 | 34% |
| Not at all | 310 | 54% |
| Not applicable | 41 | 7% |
| Number of responses (n) | 571 | |

Q.18 Have changes to the Adviser role made your job easier to carry out? (Please tick)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| A lot | 7 | 1% |
| To some degree | 142 | 24% |
| Not at all | 370 | 65% |
| Not applicable | 53 | 9% |
| Number of responses (n) | 572 | |

Q.19 How often do you experience the following? (Please tick all those that apply)

a) Customer fails to attend

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Several times a day | 120 | 21% |
| Daily | 304 | 54% |
| Weekly | 129 | 23% |
| Monthly | 14 | 3% |
| Never / not applicable | 0 | 0% |
| Number of responses (n) | 567 | |

b) Customer is late

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Several times a day | 91 | 16% |
| Daily | 313 | 55% |
| Weekly | 125 | 22% |
| Monthly | 29 | 5% |
| Never / not applicable | 7 | 1% |
| Number of responses (n) | 565 | |

c) Seeing customers who do not have an appointment

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Several times a day | 131 | 23% |
| Daily | 238 | 42% |
| Weekly | 126 | 22% |
| Monthly | 38 | 7% |
| Never / not applicable | 31 | 6% |
| Number of responses (n) | 564 | |

d) Aggressive customers

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Several times a day | 9 | 2% |
| Daily | 29 | 5% |
| Weekly | 146 | 26% |
| Monthly | 257 | 46% |
| Never / not applicable | 114 | 21% |
| Number of responses (n) | 555 | |

e) Delays with IT

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Several times a day | 114 | 21% |
| Daily | 143 | 26% |
| Weekly | 156 | 28% |
| Monthly | 117 | 21% |
| Never / not applicable | 23 | 4% |
| Number of responses (n) | 553 | |

f) Telephone disruptions

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Several times a day | 380 | 67% |
| Daily | 125 | 22% |
| Weekly | 21 | 4% |
| Monthly | 7 | 1% |
| Never / not applicable | 32 | 6% |
| Number of responses (n) | 565 | |

g) Covering for other staff

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Several times a day | 104 | 19% |
| Daily | 140 | 25% |
| Weekly | 167 | 30% |
| Monthly | 98 | 18% |
| Never / not applicable | 46 | 8% |
| Number of responses (n) | 555 | |

Q.20 In your opinion, what two main practical changes would help you to carry out your job more effectively? (Please write in spaces below)

| | | |
|--|------------|-----|
| Administrative support/ less paperwork | 132 | 23% |
| More jobs/ provision/ support for customer | 126 | 22% |
| Improved IT | 98 | 17% |
| More staff | 93 | 16% |
| Fewer/no interruptions | 79 | 14% |
| Better understanding by management/ improvements to targets | 80 | 14% |
| Smaller caseload/ more time for interviews/ more time between interviews | 74 | 13% |
| More/ better training | 60 | 10% |
| Changes to the upstream process (such as contact centres) | 55 | 10% |
| Control over diary | 46 | 8% |
| Better facilities/ office layout | 39 | 7% |
| Reduced failure to attend | 25 | 4% |
| Specialise to one customer type | 9 | 2% |
| Number of responses (n) | 507 | |

SECTION 4: THE FUTURE

Q.21 Where do you see your career in 2 years' time? (Please tick)

| | | |
|---|------------|-----|
| Same type of Personal Adviser as now | 203 | 37% |
| Different type of Personal Adviser | 65 | 12% |
| Within Jobcentre Plus - but not as an Adviser | 45 | 8% |
| Outside Jobcentre Plus | 71 | 13% |
| Not applicable (e.g. retired) | 25 | 5% |
| Don't know | 141 | 26% |
| Number of responses (n) | 550 | |

Q.22 Considering everything about your job, how satisfied are you with it? (Please tick)

| | | |
|------------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Very satisfied | 37 | 7% |
| Satisfied | 211 | 37% |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 173 | 31% |
| Dissatisfied | 115 | 20% |
| Very dissatisfied | 29 | 5% |
| Number of responses (n) | 565 | |

SECTION 5: ABOUT YOU

To help with our analysis please tick the boxes below that apply to you:

Note this information will be used for statistical purposes only, and will not be used to identify individuals.

(a) Your age

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| 18–30 | 66 | 12% |
| 31–45 | 282 | 50% |
| 46–55 | 151 | 27% |
| 55+ | 65 | 12% |
| Number of responses (n) | 564 | |

(b) Gender

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Male | 124 | 22% |
| Female | 441 | 78% |
| Number of responses (n) | 565 | |

(c) How would you describe your ethnicity?

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| White | 500 | 90% |
| Black | 16 | 3% |
| Asian | 30 | 5% |
| Mixed | * | |
| Other | * | |
| Number of responses (n) | 558 | |

[* denotes less than 10 respondents]

(d) Highest qualification

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----|
| GCSE or O-level | 167 | 30% |
| A-level or equivalent | 238 | 43% |
| Degree level | 103 | 19% |
| Other | 45 | 8% |
| Number of responses (n) | 553 | |

SECTION 6: ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Please use this space for any further comments you would like to add.

[Note: these comments were reviewed but did not indicate any consistent pattern.]

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE