TRANSITIONS TO EMPLOYMENT: ADVISING DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

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SUMMARY

Introduction: advice and the transition to work

1. During the 1980s and 1990s the proportion of people unable to consume and participate in the type of activities that others took for granted in the UK grew substantially. It was this legacy of poverty and inequality that the Welfare to Work agenda was designed to address. For the Scottish Executive, increasing the chances of sustained employment for disadvantaged groups is considered essential if poverty is to be addressed. Reform of the tax and benefits system has been one element that is key to the welfare to work strategy, but ensuring that the most disadvantaged groups can benefit from these changes depends on their ability to make sense of them and to use advice and support services that can help them move between benefits and earnings. This report examines the nature of government and non-government sources of advice, the issues that affect marginalized groups as they make transitions from welfare to work and their experience of using advice services. It is the second stage of a research project. The first stage examined existing literature on advice services and transition to work and is reported in Advice Services and Transitions to Work for Disadvantaged Groups: A Literature Review (Gillespie and Scott, 2004). This second stage comprises primary research amongst those providing and using advice services.

Research Aims

2. The central aims of the research were: to map the nature of advice and the advice environment available to disadvantaged groups moving towards employment; to investigate the pattern of use and experience of such advice; to inform training provision and service development amongst advice services wanting to improve provision to disadvantaged groups; and to consider the implications of the research for policy and service delivery in Scotland.

Methods

3. Fieldwork comprised a mixed mode of enquiry: strategic interviews and consultation with the project’s advisory group to inform development of the research instruments and to define key characteristics for analysis of advice services; a survey of 90 advice workers in 37 organisations; a survey of 117 advice service users; and interviews with 35 service users. Collectively, the sample of advice workers and organisations presented a diverse population in terms of organisational, social and geographic location of advice and included voluntary, local and central government services (including Careers Scotland and Jobcentre Plus), as well as ‘informal’ services in community settings. The advice worker questionnaire explored the nature and level of services, patterns of delivery, resources used and service development relating to disadvantaged groups. The service user questionnaire explored respondents’ employment experiences and barriers to work, their use of services and preferences for support and advice during transition periods. This was explored in more depth in interviews with selected groups.
4. Some services delivered advice along with other services, most covered geographical areas and two thirds provided services for specific groups. Most were small: half employed 3 or less staff and only 8 of the 37 services used volunteers. Advice workers tended to be women, with an average of 9 years length of service. They had a wide range of duties involving advice, information, representation and specialisation and some had additional roles unrelated to advice. All had targets relating to quality and accuracy of service and information. Government services had added targets on transitions to work and service user participation. Although most services see themselves as providing confidential and non-judgemental advice: voluntary sector, housing associations and education services tended to view their services as service user focused; income maximisation was the focus in local authority welfare rights; and support during transitions to employment and payment of benefits were key in government services.

5. The services used a range of delivery methods, most often telephone and face to face advice. Most provided a degree of specialism in either areas of advice, services for specific groups or levels of work. Most services provided advice about benefits and better off calculations, but few covered taxation, course or grant applications, criminal records disclosure and travel costs and entitlements. Most provided support at the level of representation, particularly local authority and voluntary advice services, and few delivered information only. Routine coverage of issues for clients moving towards work was most concentrated on benefits issues and meeting certain costs, e.g. housing or childcare costs. Few routinely considered childcare availability, adult care, travel access, taxation, money management, grants and scholarships or disability related costs, despite disability and care issues being central to income maximisation in the transition to work or education.

6. Child Poverty Action Group was mentioned most often as an information source, but a wide range of other sources were also used. The main sources of second tier support were Jobcentre Plus, CAS and CPAG. Less than half of advisers were in welfare to work networks or partnerships, including only 11 per cent of those in voluntary sector advice, although most said that they were in advice networks of some description. The most common sources of training were in-house, CPAG and other voluntary sector providers. Two thirds had attended training on the advice needs of specific groups, with a strong focus on benefits or tribunal representation, but equality issues were mentioned less often. Only 40 per cent had been to training on advice needs in the transition to work that also had a strong benefits focus. There was limited evidence of training that addressed access to advice needs for groups or welfare to work issues in the context of advice provision.

7. There was limited awareness about service user consultation and involvement but in some voluntary sector and housing association services, service users had a central role. Service user views were taken into account mainly through consultation processes. Good practice in meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups was identified, although less often for prisoners and former prisoners than other groups, and included: physical access, outreach, home visits, interpreting, large print and specialist posts. Priorities for developing effective support for disadvantaged groups included accuracy of advice. Suggestions for improving responses to advice needs covered: training, networking, resources and better links with peers and across sectors to improve referral, support and liaison. For voluntary sector advice services, however, funding problems remain a barrier to shared working and service development.
8. When advice and other services are delivered by the same organisation conflicting priorities can arise. Although some advisers provided advice about their own services, few had a conflicts of interest policy. Despite the potential for such conflict of interest in Jobcentre Plus, few advisers commented on this. Some advice workers, particularly in the voluntary sector, had concerns about their relationship to the welfare to work agenda and the implications for their advice services of partnership working with government services. In particular, there were concerns that such joint work should not compromise their capacity to deliver impartial advice that is independent of the interests of government and other agencies.

Transitions and Barriers to Work

9. The survey of advice service users included people in a range of situations considered to put them at a disadvantage in making transitions to work covering: physical impairment, long term illness or health problems, mental health issues, literacy problems, learning difficulties, lone parenthood and current or former prisoners. Survey participants were at different stages of the transition to work. Employment status was not a simple matter for service users and often involved more than one element. Almost a third of respondents were currently in paid employment and two thirds of the remainder had been in paid work before. Only one in five of survey participants overall had no experience of paid employment. Over one third was registered unemployed and a quarter was in education or training. Some were also caring for children or adults, not looking for work or had asylum seeker status.

10. Health or disability issues, employer behaviour and motherhood were identified as the main catalysts for leaving previous employment. Occupations were broader for past employment compared with current employment that was in a narrow range of sectors characterised by low wages. Reasons for taking current employment were not always financial. However, the type of work on offer and the degree of employment progression from fairly menial work was open to question. For those seeking to develop their skills and education there were some questions over the access, availability and relevance of courses that may be driven by administrative concerns more than the individual training needs.

11. Survey participants identified the barriers they faced trying to move from benefits to education, training or work. The vast majority identified multiple barriers and, overall, the financial situation of individuals generally and lack of confidence were mentioned most often. Some barriers were particular to specific groups, including the following:

- The benefits system presents barriers to the transition to work, particularly for people with learning disabilities and in relation to DLA. Benefits were seen as complex and uncertain, particularly where work is part-time and low paid or for those anticipating the need to leave work and return to benefits.
- Up to a third of most groups said that managing bills and debts act as a barrier.
- Health barriers were largely in line with individuals’ health problems, but multiple health barriers were marked among those with a health problem or disability.
- Childcare was important for women, particularly lone parents, but not men.
• Discrimination acted as a barrier across groups, but particularly former prisoners, those with a physical impairment and men more than women.

• Transport problems were important, particularly for prisoners, those with learning difficulties and people with literacy and numeracy problems.

• The extra cost of work, pay and conditions and getting suitable hours were barriers for some groups as were lack of skills and perceived poor reading and writing abilities.

• Lack of confidence was a significant barrier among many groups and more so for women than men.

• There was a general trend for former prisoners to perceive more barriers than current prisoners, including having a criminal record and managing bills and debt.

Using Advice services

12. Most survey participants had used more than one advice service and most had used Jobcentre Plus. A small number had used no advice service. Although Jobcentre Plus and other formal services in the voluntary sector and local government accounted for most services used recently, more people than anticipated had used informal services. Three groups of service providers were identified: formal government advice services; other formal advice services; and informal advice services (supported employment, employability and training projects across sectors). Advice sources varied for different groups, for example:

• Women were more likely to use formal government services, voluntary sector advice and student support services while men were more likely to use informal services;

• Lone parents and prisoners had used government services more than non-government advice services

• Ethnic minorities were underrepresented in their use of Job centre Plus and local authority services for advice;

• People with mental health problems and former prisoners used formal voluntary sector services and informal services; and

• Those with reading and writing difficulties or learning difficulties and younger age groups were more likely to use informal services in the local authority and voluntary sectors.

13. In their most recent enquiry, most advice service users wanted advice about more than one issue. Benefits issues were most often identified and earnings and employment issues were highlighted across groups. There were some predictable differences in the nature of enquiries: for example, enquiries relating to childcare were raised almost exclusively by
women. Women, especially lone parents, were also more concerned than men about benefit delays and run-on benefits. Younger age groups wanted help with disability related costs and help to stay in work or education, while older age groups more often wanted advice about the impact of starting work or education on other benefits. Other less predictable issues were a concern for several groups, including travel access and travel costs.

14. Most people wanted advice and support to deal with the problem themselves, but few wanted information only. Men and those with literacy problems or learning difficulties were more likely to want advocacy or representation. Representation was least likely to arise in enquiries to formal government services and most likely to arise in informal and formal advice services. The need for representation was linked to: barriers to work such as confidence, literacy and skills and qualifications; and advice issues such as disability related costs, criminal records disclosure and the impact on DLA of starting work or education.

Experiences and impact of advice

15. Overall, there were high levels of satisfaction with the way enquiries were handled and an impression that services were friendly and understood the needs of service users. However, a small number of people, all of whom had used government advice services, expressed some dissatisfaction. Some people lost confidence in services after they felt that they had been badly advised. Staff attitudes were important: services seen as comprehensive and sensitive to individual need were viewed positively; but dissatisfaction with services was linked to the atmosphere in the services. Those expressing dissatisfaction often had advice needs that had not been met and were more likely to describe a service as impersonal or service led. Long periods in waiting rooms, advisers who were too busy and lack of confidentiality, particularly in relation to privacy, were all issues that generated criticism.

16. Almost half of respondents felt that the advice they had received had affected their decisions about the transition to work, particularly those who had used formal government advice sources. However, while half had been assured that moving from benefits was viable, some others, mostly women, found that the transition was not financially viable in their present circumstances. Service users highlighted significant gaps in advice including: childcare availability, benefits rights (including discretionary benefits), employment rights, education and training opportunities, money management and DLA. Access to continuing support proved difficult for some of those in work, but they still felt the need for aftercare services.

17. Although most people had used government services, they did not distinguish well between activities such as ‘signing on’ and advice services in Jobcentre Plus, while some were concerned about incomplete information from such sources. Many individuals had little knowledge of their rights and relied on a wide range of sources of information about rights, but family and friends were particularly important. Others relied on services that do not have advice as a core function, particularly supported employment and training projects. For most service users, key advice service priorities were relationships of trust and confidentiality with advisers and staff. They did not rate service user involvement a priority, but wanted services to understand the barriers they faced and deliver services appropriate to their needs.
Discussion of Findings

18. There was a strong match between barriers to work and the advice issues raised. Access to suitable childcare was top of the list of gaps in advice that could affect transitions to work. Barriers remain in the benefits system that affect the transition to work, particularly for people with learning disabilities or mental health problems and all those concerned about the need to return to benefits. The system remains complex and advice becomes critical when things go wrong, especially where disability benefits are concerned. For individuals with complex issues to deal with, holistic advice was especially important and such groups are most in need of advice that is centred unambiguously on their circumstances and needs.

19. Government services were more strongly associated than other services with getting people into work or education. However, when problems arose that threatened the sustainability of a chosen path in work or education, service users were more likely to use formal advice services outside of government. The use of government advice services remained linked to activities such as registration for work and work focused interviews.

20. Although government services have a responsibility to provide information about rights and entitlements and the personal adviser role in Jobcentre Plus is viewed more positively than past provision, the combined roles of advocacy and gate-keeping can produce a conflict of interests. The research suggests some inconsistency in advice, including incomplete information about rights that led, in some cases, to a loss of financial entitlements. Attitudes and beliefs continue to affect delivery and receipt of advice and conflicting perspectives are unlikely to be resolved quickly or easily. This reinforces the importance of advice strategies that acknowledge the need for a healthy and accessible independent advice sector.

21. The limited focus of advice providers on transitions to work meant that key areas of advice need were not well supported, particularly childcare availability, travel, access and health issues. This has implications for delivery of holistic advice at an important and challenging period of change for people who make limited distinctions between welfare rights and other support services.

22. Informal services were trusted sources of support for individuals with multiple barriers to overcome, but were less likely than formal advice services to provide the range of issues and depth of support, including representation. Survey participants viewed their own situation in a holistic way, with limited distinctions between welfare rights advice and other support such as job coaching or skills development. Where links existed between advice and employability services that provided holistic support, they had a positive impact for individuals. Accessibility, weak systems of referral, limited partnership working and resource issues in the voluntary sector are all likely to contribute to advice needs that are not fully met, but need to be addressed if individuals are to make fully informed choices. Consultation with and involvement of service users was found to be patchy and, while studies such as this may help to inform service providers, they can only be complementary to measures that ensure service user views are integral to service delivery.

23. For advice workers, particularly in the voluntary sector, there were concerns about their relationship to the welfare to work agenda and the implications of partnership working with government services for delivery of their advice services. A particular concern was that such joint work should not compromise their capacity to deliver impartial advice that is
independent of the interests of government and other agencies. There is scope for more dialogue than exists at present, but voluntary sector resources may be a limiting factor.

24. The needs of different groups in accessing services was a focus of training for government advice providers, but much of the training attended by advisers in formal non-government advice services was focused on benefits and rights issues rather than access to advice or welfare to work issues in the specific context of advice provision. Pilot training was developed and run as part of this project. The training centres on the needs of: people with physical impairments or long term ill health, including mental ill health. It aims to raise awareness of barriers to work, the advice needs that arise and the need for holistic advice. A training pack as a resource for use by trainers and a separate report on the training issues arising from this research have been produced.

25. Many recommendations below have resource implications for services, some of which are already struggling to access information resources and training or make the time to meet with others, particularly in formal advice services in the voluntary sector. Holistic advice in needed from trusted sources that: recognise that individuals have limited knowledge of their rights; take a proactive approach to advice provision; and offer the independence and confidentiality that service users prioritise. Strategies are needed to ensure services can support holistic approaches and be truly ‘open to all’. Sustainable resources are needed to enable services to move beyond current reactive service provision.

**Future developments and recommendations**

26. Two recent developments are relevant for strategic approaches to advice: the Strategic Review of the Delivery of Legal Aid, Advice and Information; and, as part of the Scottish Executive’s financial inclusion objective, measures to address the money advice needs of disadvantaged groups. The financial inclusion measures bring important resources for frontline money advice provision and test new approaches to service delivery. The Strategic Review addresses a wide range of legal services and recommends advice provision based on transparency, objective assessment of need and a targeted approach to service demand.

27. The recommendations are based on the understanding that core proposals in the Strategic Review and the development of an employability strategy for Scotland will go ahead. We do not recommend another layer of networks to address advice and transitions to work, but seek to ensure that core concerns can be accommodated within planning and development around advice and employability. A strategic approach to development and delivery of advice services is needed to achieve more effective responses to resource issues, gaps in provision, complex advice needs and advice that links more effectively with employability services. The recommendations are targeted towards key agencies, but we recognise that there are overlaps.

**The Scottish Executive and its agencies**

- Recognition should be given to the role of advice services in the development of strategies relating to both legal advice and information and employability, and that advice services need to provide a continuum of advice and support that has scope beyond
justiciable and employability issues. Strategic and local partnerships must have scope to accommodate a continuum of advice provision and support needs.

- Local partnerships should be based on principles that recognise the importance of non-government advice services as full partners, both in funding agreements that reflect the work involved in participating in such partnerships and in recognising and valuing their independence and the distinctive contribution that they bring. They also need to plan mainstream access to services for disadvantaged groups or ensure that advice provision dedicated to particular groups is accessible.

- Strategies and partnerships need to take fully into account that many such services require resources to enable them to participate fully in development of services, partnerships and networks. This will be of central importance for voluntary sector advice services that were found to be most under pressure in our study.

- Mainstream delivery of services for all groups has implications for resources. Good practice measures have been identified in this study, particularly in relation to people with disability and health issues or learning difficulties that, if implemented, can contribute to improved practice. Some strategic provision of resources may provide economies of scale (for example, large print information or easy to read leaflets).

- Measures to meet the advice needs of groups such as lone parents, prisoners and former prisoners should be given greater focus to address areas of weak advice provision and ensure that advice needs in the specific context of transitions to work are holistic and based on the need of individuals for advice and support.

- Quality standards and monitoring systems should be based on an understanding of the capacity and size of many advice services and seek to balance bureaucratising advice and encourage high standards of advice. Common standards that are recognised and accepted by key funding bodies may be helpful in reducing the administration involved.

- Reviews should also consider co-ordination of and access to information resources covering national issues and local services and benefits.

- Local welfare to work networks should include the advice sector more centrally in their membership and activities to reflect the importance of advice in supporting successful and sustainable transitions to work.

- In planning on advice and employability, there is considerable scope to develop more robust systems of referral. It will be important that information services, including Careers Scotland as a national service, can undertake managed referrals that meet complex advice needs and recognise the capacity of receiving services.

- In order to facilitate improved referral arrangements, further training is suggested to raise awareness of: barriers to work, the advice needs that arise, the need for holistic advice and an understanding of when referral elsewhere would be of benefit.

- Careers Scotland are encouraged to increase collaboration with advice providers to support its role in achieving holistic advice for individuals.
• The Scottish Executive should consider support for collaboration and funding to further develop training that addresses the advice needs of disadvantaged groups making the transition to work.

**Local authorities**

• Local authorities will have a pivotal role in the development of local advice networks and partnerships and most of the recommendations made to the Scottish Executive above have direct relevance in relation to local planning and delivery of advice services.

• They are well placed to encourage more effective dialogue between advice activities and routes into employment activities and to co-ordinate local links into employability service development that is being undertaken at present.

• Local reviews of advice should aim to identify and address gaps in provision including:

  - accessibility of services for disadvantaged groups (e.g. physical access, time and location of services, measures to meet the needs of specific groups);
  - methods of delivering advice and support;
  - the availability of support to the level required by individuals (across the range of information, advice and support and representation or advocacy);
  - gaps in provision (for example, key issues in this study were childcare availability, transport, education and training issues, employment rights and some benefits and money management issues);
  - robust systems of referral;
  - service user consultation and involvement in service development and planning;
  - training needs of advice providers that takes account of the current heavy reliance on in-house provision.

**The UK government and its agencies**

• There remains a need for benefits barriers to work to be addressed. Key concerns in this research related to disability benefit, the benefits cycle and the financial viability of work for some lone parents.

• Jobcentre Plus pays a central role in Welfare to Work and Pathways to Work partnerships and should incorporate guidelines on collaboration with the specific aim of achieving appropriate representation of the mix of advice providers in each locality.

• It will be important to clarify the limits of support provided in Jobcentre Plus, particularly in relation to legal entitlements to benefits where conflicts of interest can arise, and to
provide information about the availability of other advice services. Addressing such concerns will be of central importance for disadvantaged groups who have limited knowledge of their rights and rely on representation of their interests by others.

- It is recommended that Jobcentre Plus recognises service users’ views in relation to the desire for independence and the loss of confidence in the service that individuals may experience if they have had incomplete advice, and explores networking and partnership arrangements that maintain the autonomy of the independent sector.

**Advice providers, supported employment and other employability services**

- Advice services are encouraged to review the range of issues that they cover in advice delivery and the measures they take to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups and address gaps identified. In the specific context of transitions to work, advice workers need to be equipped to offer holistic advice or make appropriate referrals on financial and other issues that are significant for service users such as childcare availability, travel issues or education and disability related needs.

- Advice and employability projects should develop operational and strategic links, including approaches such as outreach provision and awareness training in relation to both advice issues and the advice needs of key groups, in order to develop skills, resources and capacity to deliver holistic advice. Participation of advice providers in local employability partnerships is recommended.

- Organisations for whom advice is one of several functions or services delivered should give more formal consideration to addressing conflicts of interest in delivering advice and develop practice and procedures to distinguish between advice and other service or resource decisions and ensure service users understand the nature of the service that is being provided. Greater use of referral for independent advice is recommended.

**Advice Service User Groups**

- Despite service user engagement in some services, there is a long way to go before the needs of specific groups are met and there remains an ongoing need to pressurise for appropriate services and for service users to be consulted and involved in service development and planning.

**Training providers**

- We recommend that both in-house and external training providers in the advice field review training to ensure that barriers to work and accessing advice are integrated where possible into training provision.

- Advice training providers should also review the potential for training to be provided for informal advisers to improve understanding of the range of advice services and the situations in which individuals could benefit from referrals elsewhere.
Further Research

• Service user consultation and involvement is an area in which further research may be useful to develop approaches that ensure people can take part in identifying priorities and planning, monitoring and evaluating services. Existing practice in the field will be helpful and an action research approach may be useful for developing effective approaches and provide templates and resources for services with limited resources.

• It is questionable whether, within Jobcentre Plus, the current range of functions can be delivered together without one of them being compromised at least some of the time and our worry is that it is the advice function that is most likely to be compromised. If advice and representation are viewed from a human rights approach to social welfare (Dean, 2004), the question of advocacy and representation needs to be addressed explicitly and clearly. We are concerned that the most disadvantaged groups may have a combination of complex advice needs, limited awareness of their rights and less capacity than most service users to exercise their rights without representation or advocacy. We suggest that further research is needed that considers in more detail the apparent conflicts between: government policy on supporting transitions to work; the delivery of advice on rights and entitlements in the same service that makes decisions on entitlements and implements sanctions; and the exercise of rights and entitlements of disadvantaged groups of people.

• Finally, we wish to emphasise once again the issue of resources. Our research suggests that government services do not substitute for or replace other sources of advice that remain critically important to meeting the advice and representation needs of disadvantaged groups. Independent advice is likely to be more important as the boundaries between advice and compulsion become increasingly blurred. It would be unfortunate indeed if resources prevent them from undertaking that role.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION: ADVICE AND THE TRANSITION TO WORK

Background

1.01 During the 1980s and 1990s the proportion of people unable to consume and participate in the type of activities that others took for granted in the UK grew substantially. It was this legacy of poverty and inequality that New Labour’s Welfare to Work agenda was designed to address. According to Gordon Brown in 1997:

“If every person is to be regarded as of equal worth, all deserve to be given an equal chance in life to fulfil the potential with which they were born.”

1.02 Various measures have been introduced to alleviate poverty and inequality of opportunity at both UK and Scottish government level as a result. Central to policy has been the idea that work represents the major route out of poverty. According to Finn, governments have:

“embarked on radical reforms aimed at creating ‘work-based’ welfare systems. The shared aim of what are increasingly described as these ‘Welfare to Work’ strategies is to create new active benefit regimes which improve employability, reinforce work incentives and reduce costs and welfare dependency”. (Finn, 2000: 43)

1.03 Reform of the tax and benefits system has been key to the UK Government’s welfare to work strategy. In addition to a modest minimum wage, a range of tax and benefits reforms have taken place that aimed to improve work incentives as well as household income. They have included the introduction of Tax Credits and other benefits, mainly short-term continuation of existing means-tested benefits, that exist to support the immediate transition period. Such changes make the financial decisions necessary to make the transition from welfare benefits to education and employment more complex.

1.04 In Scotland the Scottish Executive argues that employability – the ability of individuals to move towards and into the labour market, and to stay and progress in employment – is key to many elements of the Executive’s Partnership Agreement. One of the recently announced Closing the Opportunity Gap objectives that the Executive is now attempting to address through policy initiatives that relate to areas of devolved and reserved powers is:

“To increase the chances of sustained employment for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups – in order to lift them permanently out of poverty.” (Scottish Executive, 2004a: 1)

1.05 Certain groups of individuals who have been dependent on benefits for some time may experience particular difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated into training or the labour market, they include:
• lone parents;
• people with physical impairment;
• people with mental health problems;
• people with learning difficulties; and
• those leaving prison

1.06 The difficulties arise for several reasons, including the risks encountered in getting sustainable employment that will compensate for the financial security of the benefits they have received and the uncertainty of an income that is dependant on in-work benefits and student funding regimes that have only been implemented recently (Millar & Rowlingson, 2001; Convery, 2002). Perceptions of uncertainty based on information geared to non-disabled people and those without other disadvantages, however, may contribute as much of a hurdle to employment for some as tangible financial barriers (Gillespie et al, 2003).

1.07 Information and advice about benefits and tax credits are accessed through a wide variety of locations including family, friends, community organisations, independent advice centres, local authorities, housing associations and educational institutions as well as Job Centre Plus (Lishman-Peat & Brown 2002, DWP 2002). Many of these are funded or supported in some way by the Scottish Executive, rather than UK Government, often through local government. As such, they represent an area of intervention for disadvantaged groups making transitions to sustainable employment that devolved powers can address.

1.08 This report examines the nature and experience of governmental and non governmental information and advice sources in relation to benefit and tax credit issues that affect marginalized groups as they make transitions from welfare to work. It also explores how the challenges can be met by a range of agencies. It is the second stage of a research project which explores the role and experience of benefits advice amongst disadvantaged individuals and groups moving from dependence on benefits towards sustainable employment. The first stage comprised a literature review (Gillespie and Scott. 2004) that concluded that more information is needed regarding:

• The contribution of information and advice services and different models of service to the effectiveness of the broad welfare to work agenda;

• How the location and nature of information and advice services affects the transition from welfare to work for disadvantage groups seeking to return to the labour market;

• The steps needed to ensure good practice in advising disadvantaged groups.

Aims

1.09 The report and the literature review, which shaped its form (Gillespie and Scott. 2004) seek to inform the efforts of the Scottish Executive in working towards effective support for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups as they move towards sustained employment.
1.10 The research on which this report is based had 4 primary aims:

- To map the nature of advice and the advice environment available to disadvantaged groups moving towards employment;
- To investigate the pattern of use and experience of such advice by disadvantaged groups;
- To inform training provision and service development amongst advice services wanting to improve services to disadvantaged groups; and
- To consider the implications of the research for policy and service delivery in Scotland.

Method

1.11 Fieldwork comprised a mixed mode of enquiry:

- strategic interviews and consultation with the project’s advisory group to inform development of the research instruments and to define key characteristics for analysis of advice services;
- a survey of 90 advice workers working in 37 organisations;
- a survey of 117 advice service users; and
- interviews with 37 individuals, including 32 advice service users and five people who had not used advice services.

1.12 Collectively, the sample of advice workers and organisations presented a diverse population in terms of organisational, social and geographic location of advice. Services surveyed included voluntary, local and central government services (including Careers Scotland and Jobcentre Plus), as well as more ‘informal’ services in community settings. The recruitment strategy for the service users’ survey and interviews was based on the need to explore a diversity of experience amongst groups that previous research had identified as disadvantaged in terms of employment access. The final sample covered respondents with a range of work and benefits experience, of advice use, of personal background and of life stage. Most importantly for this study, the sample was selected to ensure that groups experiencing significant barriers to employment and complex benefits issues were represented. The groups targeted included those with physical impairment, long-term health problems and mental health problems, lone parents, people with learning difficulties, those with literacy problems and pre-release prisoners and ex offenders. In practice membership of different groups overlapped for a number of respondents.

1.13 The research team at the Scottish Poverty Information Unit (SPIU) used many existing service based and community based contacts to recruit participants into the study. Considerable effort was invested in developing good working relationships with key contacts during the first stage of the research in order to ease access to service users. Advice worker questionnaires were completed by post, email and telephone. Service user questionnaires
were administered face to face, either by the researchers or by support workers and a small number were administered by post. Interviews with service users were carried out either face to face or by pre arranged telephone contact. All interviews were tape-recorded (with consent) and were preceded by a brief summary of the scope of the research and the interview.

1.14 Full details of the research participants are included in Appendices 1 and 2. A summary is provided here.

Organisations

1.15 Responses were received from 90 advice workers across 37 different organisations. Voluntary sector advice services accounted for 30 per cent of individual responses and almost a quarter of the organisations represented. The voluntary sector (excluding housing associations) was the largest sectoral group of organisations that participated and accounted for 48.9 per cent of advisers overall. Responses to the survey have come from across Scotland, covering a mix of rural and urban areas. More than three quarters of respondents were female, one in five had a long-term illness or impairment and all except one described themselves as white. Within the sample, 84 were paid workers and six were volunteers.

Funding sources

1.16 There were 30 services that gave information about funding sources. Jobcentre Plus and Careers Scotland services are directly funded by central government and the Scottish Executive respectively. Local authority services were directly funded and two had European funding. Voluntary sector advice services were mostly funded through local authority grants and two mentioned Scottish Executive funding, charitable trusts and funding from a bank. Other voluntary sector services mentioned local authority funding, but several are funded by central government, including Jobcentre Plus, European Social Fund, Scottish Executive and NHS. Housing Association services were funded through rentals and one had funding from Communities Scotland while education sector services were funded through SHEFC and a University. There is a relatively narrow funding base for the services involved in this survey with a very heavy reliance on public sector funding at one level or another across the sectors, including the voluntary sector where a broader range of funding sources might have been anticipated.

Service users

1.17 There were 117 people who participated in the survey of users of advice services, a higher proportion of whom were women (70.9 per cent) than men (29.1 per cent). Although the vast majority were white, 6.9 per cent were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Only 18 people (15.8 per cent) said they had a spouse or partner. Respondents were concentrated in an age range from 25 to 44 (table 1.1), although 23.5 per cent were aged between 16 and 24.
### Table 1.1: Age of Advice Service User Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.18 In the survey, respondents were asked to identify which of a series of statements applied to them, covering a range of issues that may contribute to disadvantage in making the transition to work including: physical impairment, physical and mental ill health, learning difficulties, literacy and numeracy difficulties, lone parenthood or being a current or former prisoner. There were 41 respondents who thought that more than one of the statements applied to them. The single situations most often identified included lone parenthood (33 or 28.2 per cent), having a current or past mental health problem (12 or 10.3 per cent) and having a long-term illness or health problem (10 or 8.5 per cent). Taking account of multiple responses, more than a third of respondents were lone parents and most of the other statements applied to between 20 and 30 per cent of respondents. However, only eight people identified themselves as current or former prisoners. There were five people who identified that some other key situation applied to them, including three who were asylum seekers or refugees, one who was a recovering drug user and one who said their first language was not English.

1.19 There were 35 people overall who participated in qualitative semi-structured interviews about their experiences of using advice services. The aim was to achieve a sample of people who were in each of the five groupings of people. In common with the survey participants as a whole, almost half of the interviewees (17) thought that more than one of the statements applied to them:

- Amongst the interviewees were 13 people who had a physical impairment or long-term illness/health problem, including 6 people who said they had both.
- Although not included specifically in the original sampling groups, there were eight people who had literacy or numeracy problems.

1.20 There were more women than men in the interviewee sample, but the proportion of men was higher than for survey participants as a whole. Interviewees were spread across the range of ages, but more than half were aged between 25 and 44. All except one were white. Just over half of the interviewees were not in work or education, nine were in work, six were in education or training and one person was in both work and education. The sample included 8 people who had used formal governments services, 15 who had used other formal advice services (mainly in the voluntary sector and local government), nine people who had used informal services and one who had not gone to anyone for advice.

1.21 The questionnaires and interview topic guides are presented in Appendices 3 to 5. Their development was informed by the literature review, input from EQUAL Access Development Partnership and a piloting process used at each stage. The advice workers questionnaire was designed to explore the range of sectors, characteristics of advisers,
resources available to the service for the provision of advice, patterns of service delivery, adoption of measures to address the needs of disadvantaged people and involvement and use of advice networks. The questionnaire for service users was designed to explore their perceptions and experience of moving towards work, experience of using advice, and diversity within and between social groups. The interview topics were designed to explore strategies for managing the transition to work and the role of benefits and wider advice in managing that transition.

1.22 The mixed mode of enquiry provided a valuable means of gaining a wide coverage across Scotland, as well as a means of exploring both quantitatively and qualitatively the diversity of opinion and experience amongst different service users. However, it is acknowledged that the strategy for achieving the service user survey sample and the use of a survey form rather than interviews led to considerable delays in the research and did not lend itself to involving the most excluded groups.

**Report Structure**

1.23 This report is structured into three substantive sections, followed by a concluding chapter.

- First, a picture is constructed of the environment in which benefits advice is delivered. This reviews the characteristics of organisations delivering advice, the methods of delivery, the type of advice and the place of benefits advice within the work of the organisation as a whole. Particular attention is then devoted to understanding the extent to which organisations providing advice actively address the needs of disadvantaged groups and the role of training and referral networks in improving service delivery for such groups.

- Second, we report on the experience of a range of service users who would be classed as disadvantaged. We examine their employment status, their stage in transitions to employment and the barriers they face in moving towards work in Chapter 3

- We explore advice needs and the use and experience of advice across a range of services in Chapter 4. Their preferences for service development are also introduced.

- Finally we present a summary of the main findings in Chapter 5 and a review of the key issues emerging for research relating to advice and transitions to work and consider the implications for policy and practice.
CHAPTER TWO: ADVICE PROVIDERS

Introduction

2.01 This chapter provides the results from the survey of 90 advice workers from 37 organisations. The first section describes in more detail the role and remit of organisations and advice workers, and the second section goes on to discuss the service delivered, including the range and depth of advice provided. The third section looks at the steps taken to meet the advice needs of disadvantaged groups, including special measures and training provision, highlighting existing good practice measures. In the fourth section, we draw out the issues that arise for policy and practice in relation to benefits barriers in the transition to work, advice service delivery, partnership working and some of the conflicting interests that arise.

Role and remit of advice providers

2.02 Survey participants were asked about the role that advice plays both in relation to the organisation and advisers in their own jobs. They were asked to identify whether advice is the main activity, one of the main activities, a secondary activity or an informal activity. Advice is treated as a secondary activity where it is not one of the core functions of an organisation – this applied to a significant proportion of organisations, including local authority welfare rights services, housing associations and some of the voluntary sector agencies. Advice was either the main activity or one of two or more main activities in just over half the agencies involved in the survey (table 2.1). Most of the remainder said they deliver advice as a secondary activity, particularly in local government and voluntary sector (other) organisations. Only one service involving 5 survey respondents described advice as an informal activity.

Table 2.1: Role of advice in the organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Advisers</th>
<th>Organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main activity</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One of main activities</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary activity</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal activity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.03 Almost two thirds of organisations (23) provided a service for specific groups of people: nine of whom targeted the five groups that are the focus of this research. The remainder included advice services for tenants and share-owners (housing associations), students (colleges and universities) and six provided services for a range of other groups including benefits recipients and unemployed people (table 2.2).
Table 2.2: Specific groups served

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disabled people</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health problems</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners/ex-prisoners</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenants/ share owners</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work Roles

2.04 All except three of the respondents had some direct advice delivery in their job. Most respondents (two thirds) were direct advice providers and most of the remainder supervise others in addition to providing direct advice (table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Work Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice provider</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervise casework of others</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data missing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.05 Respondents were asked to give their job title, provide a brief description of the advice related duties of their post and to identify any work they do in addition to advice. Although almost 40 different job titles were given (table 2.4):

- More than a quarter were advisers, advice workers or rights workers, although there may be other parts to the job title, such as ‘money adviser’, ‘benefits advice worker’ or ‘fuel rights worker’ – most of this group were in voluntary sector organisations;
- A quarter were service or team managers, supervisors or co-ordinators;
- The welfare rights/ benefits officers were predominantly in local authority welfare rights and housing associations;
- The careers adviser and link worker posts were in Careers Scotland;
- The information officers were in the voluntary sector;
The restart, jobsearch and employment support workers, along with the personal advisers were located in Jobcentre Plus; and

The employment development workers were in local authority (other) services.

Table 2.4: Job titles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job title</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adviser/ rights worker</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service/ team manager</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare rights/ benefits officer</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers adviser</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information/ training officer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Development worker</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restart/ jobsearch/ employment support</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal adviser</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link worker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student welfare support</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project administrator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.06 All except one person provided some information about the duties of their post and almost two thirds of respondents (56) described their job as involving duties additional to those of an information and advice role, including half of the men and over two thirds of the women. In view of some differences in perceptions of what is and is not part of the advice role in a job, the overall nature of jobs is discussed here.

2.07 Most respondents described providing elements of advice, information and representation, some by specific methods such as telephone, email, home visits or outreach. In five cases the job involved advice in one specialist area only, three relating to money advice and one to each of fuel rights and housing. However, most who specified specialist advice also did more general advice or delivered advice across several areas, typically benefits, employment, housing and debt or money advice. Other aspects of the posts mentioned by respondents included:

- Duties linked to the adviser role, such as training (20 people), talks and other promotional work, updating information systems (4) and production of information resources such as leaflets (3);

- Roles relating to the wider operation of the organisation, including management functions and supervision of other staff (27 people), policy work (5) and administration (3);

- Provision of services other than advice to those using their services, e.g. 14 people had an element of guidance in their jobs, particularly in Careers Scotland, most of whom also worked with individuals to reduce barriers to
work, training or other opportunities and a smaller number mentioned advocacy
and support;

• Some survey participants had roles that can be viewed as distinct from advice
including fund management, job search support and helping to move people
towards employment in relation to disabled people in local authority (other)
services and wider groups of unemployed people in voluntary sector (other)
services and Jobcentre Plus.

**Characteristics, Principles and Values of Advice Services**

2.08 In order to gain an overall impression of the characteristics of advice services from
the perspective of people delivering advice, survey participants were provided with words
and phrases and asked to identify those that best described the service for which they worked.
Positive, negative and neutral words and phrases were listed in a random order with the
opportunity for people to add a word or phrase of their own. There were 87 people who
identified at least one word or phrase and all words or phrases except two were mentioned by
at least one person (table 2.5). There were 11 ‘other’ words chosen including challenging/
tackling discrimination (four people), impartial, proactive, flexible, user friendly, holistic,
anonymous and needed.

2.09 Advisers most often described their services as confidential and non-judgemental.
Services were also often viewed as friendly, supportive, responsive to people’s needs and
service user centred. Approaching one in five thought their service was under-resourced but
only five people said their service was well resourced, while similar numbers described their
service as work focused and focused on rights.

**Table 2.5: Describing the Service**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>% (n=106)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>% (n=106)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidential</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>Focused on rights</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-judgmental</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>Work focused</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>Taking on people’s problems</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive to people’s needs</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>Balancing rights and responsibilities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service user centred</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>Targets driven</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>Well resourced</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>Convenient</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising awareness of rights</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>Impersonal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under resourced</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>limited service</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive service</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>Inefficient</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community resource</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main Purpose/ Principles of Services

2.10 The characteristics identified by advice workers generally reflect what advisers described as the main purpose of the service they provide and the principles under which services operate. In the voluntary sector, these generally had a focus on service users, sometimes particular groups, and stressed features such as “accurate, high quality information, advice and representation” and confidential, free and impartial service provision. One response described a significant role for service users:

“Advice, information and representation are provided on a range of issues within a safe and supportive environment. Service is needs led with no restriction placed on length or number of appointments required to deal with a particular issue. All aspects of service are provided by people who are themselves users of mental health services and this is clearly stated at outset. Code of confidentiality is observed at all times.”

2.11 Some had an emphasis reflecting charitable principles of “education of the public in matters relating to mental, physical and social welfare and by relieving poverty” and several aimed to ensure that individuals do not suffer through lack of knowledge of rights, responsibilities or services available, or through an inability to express their needs effectively. Others described campaigning and policy roles in addition to advice and support. However, a thread running throughout these comments was reduction or relief of poverty. In voluntary sector services that provided advice with other services, some survey participants described the purpose more broadly as addressing the health and welfare of their service users.

2.12 In responses from local authorities, the role of services was more often described in terms of maximising income, managing debt, representing at appeals and delivering training. Survey participants from housing associations and other services also highlighted income maximisation and a foundation of principles centred on rights to benefits, entitlements and freedom from poverty, as well as services that are confidential and non-judgemental.

2.13 In education services, principles included “support, mediation, advocacy and representation where appropriate” and in one response the purpose of information, advice and counselling services to students was to “aid retention”. Some in the voluntary sector described purposes that were more explicitly linked to supporting people through the transition towards education and employment and for one person, their purpose was “to get people into work”. For most staff in Jobcentre Plus, the purpose was also linked to transitions to work and to other functions such as “to pay benefits timeously & accurately”. Their values were described as: “Respecting People, Making A Difference, Looking Outwards”. In responses from Careers Scotland there was an emphasis on: transitions to work; client centred services, fulfilling potential and improving “employability and enterprise skills”; identification and “removal of barriers” for socially excluded young people; and advocacy, mentoring and an all age guidance role.
The service delivered

Delivery methods

2.14 All of the six methods of service delivery identified were used by the majority of workers, although telephone, face to face and advice by post were used more than other methods. Similar patterns were suggested for services, although methods other than face to face and telephone advice were all mentioned more often than for the individuals in their own jobs (table 2.6). There were some differences of opinion between individuals in the same organisations about whether some services were provided, including email, home visits or post. Local authority workers used email less frequently than those in other sectors. However, along with workers in government services and voluntary sector advice services, they were more likely to offer home visits. Voluntary sector and government services were more likely to include postal and outreach provision. Only respondents in the voluntary sector and Careers Scotland identified other methods of delivery that included use of other settings such as GP surgeries and hospital wards, use of text phones, tapes, Braille and large print, text messaging, information events and group work.

Table 2.6: Service methods – services and individuals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Service No.</th>
<th>Service %</th>
<th>Own job No.</th>
<th>Own job %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home visits</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>68.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advice range and specialisms

2.15 Respondents were asked about the range of advice delivered by the service and by individual workers in their job to establish the extent to which they: provide advice across a broad range of services (generalist); concentrate on specific areas of advice (specialist); or provide a broad based service with some specialisms. A slightly smaller number of respondents (83) answered in relation to the service than in relation to their own jobs (87). Most workers consider their service to be generalist with specialisms and very few were seen as generalist (table 2.7). The proportion of advice workers who considered their job to be generalist was also relatively low, but there were marginally more who described their job as specialist rather than generalist with specialisms.

2.16 Within some organisations there was not complete agreement about the service range, although it is only in Careers Scotland that responses were across the range. This may reflect the fact that the service has been revised recently (Scottish Executive, 2001) and that the role of advice provision in the organisation is still developing. Those in voluntary sector advice services, Jobcentre Plus, housing associations and student support services most often described their service as generalist with specialisms, while those in other types of services
were more evenly split between that and specialist services. Government and local authority workers were more likely than not to describe their job as specialist and voluntary sector workers see their job as generalists with specialisms or specialist. Those in dedicated advice organisations mostly described their service as generalist with specialisms, while those for whom advice is one of the main activities were more likely than others to view their service as generalist and those who provided a service for specific groups were more likely than others to view their service as specialist, particularly in services that target disabled people (10 of 12 respondents in such services).

Table 2.7: Advice range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Advice workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generalist</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generalist with specialisms</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.17 Overall, most services and jobs involved a degree of specialism and most of the 73 people who identified specialist areas of work provided details of specialist areas for the service and their own job. More than one area of specialism was mentioned in most cases. In the 24 responses from those working in voluntary sector advice services, specialisms included areas of advice including: welfare benefits and money or debt advice that were both mentioned by more than half, most often together; employment; housing and homelessness; disability information and disability benefits; eviction; fuel poverty; health; legal issues; and consumer disputes. Some respondents also provided service specialism in lone parent issues, disability and learning disability and one organisation specialised in advice for disabled students on FE and HE issues. Seven respondents identified tribunal and appeals representation as areas of specialism in their service, most often in relation to specific issues such as benefits.

2.18 In the 12 responses from workers in voluntary sector (other) organisations, specialisms related to mental health, welfare benefits, debt, employment, housing and appeals and tribunal representation. However, half the responses in this group described their service as involving specialist work that may not be directly related to advice, including training and education, recruitment, support, guidance, employability, capacity building and group work.

2.19 In local authority welfare rights services, specialisms included welfare rights or welfare benefits and debt and money advice, tribunal representation and appeals work, training and information in welfare rights and support to other local authority staff and voluntary groups. In other local authority services, the five responses all mentioned employment issues and benefits as being specialist work relating to disability, mental health or learning disability.

2.20 Specialisms in Jobcentre Plus related to government programmes such as the New Deal and incapacity benefit reforms, payment of benefits, job search and training. In Careers Scotland, they related to education or careers guidance and special or additional support needs and benefits advice. For those based in colleges and universities, specialisms included money advice and welfare rights, disability advice, careers and their own university
procedures. For housing association and other workers, welfare benefits, money advice and disability benefits were the main specialisms for services and jobs.

**Level of advice provided**

2.21 All the services provided direct advice, although 38.9 per cent (35) also provided support to other people who were delivering advice. Respondents were asked to indicate the most detailed level of service provided by the agency and by themselves with respect to 3 elements of service provision: information; advice; and representation. There were three people who had supervisory and support roles who did not provide direct advice in their own jobs. Almost two thirds of respondents said their service provided advice up to the level of representation or advocacy. This applied particularly where advice was the main activity for the service, especially in local authority welfare rights, voluntary sector advice services and other services. Those providing advice and support were more concentrated in voluntary sector (other) and government services and, overall, very few services provided information and signposting only (table 2.8). Respondents provided a similar level of service in their jobs, although marginally more provided information and signposting only and just over half provided support to the level of representation/advocacy.

**Table 2.8: Advice level provided by services and individual staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Service No</th>
<th>Service %</th>
<th>Own job No</th>
<th>Own job %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>information and signposting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advice/support</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>representation/advocacy</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Advice level and subject areas**

2.22 Survey respondents were also asked to identify the most in-depth level of advice that they would normally provide in relation to a range of subject areas. All except one person identified the level of advice they provided in at least one of the subject areas listed. The issues most often identified as being covered related to benefits and better off calculations, most of which were identified at one of the levels in 80 per cent or more of cases. However, in all benefits related issues with the exception of housing benefit, less than one third would routinely deliver advice up to the level of representation. Those subjects least likely to be identified as being covered at any level were taxation, course or grant applications, criminal records disclosure, travel costs/entitlements, money management/debt advice, child support/child maintenance and childcare.

2.23 Representation was identified as the highest level of support provided most often in relation to housing benefit and benefits entitlements generally and least often in relation to taxation, childcare and criminal records disclosure. In general, issues and entitlements relating to education and courses were less likely to be covered at the level of representation, including student benefit rights for which only 14.6 per cent of respondents would provide representation (table 2.9).
Table 2.9: Advice level by subject areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Advice</th>
<th>Representation</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%*</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits entitlements generally</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of work on benefits entitlements</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income/ better off calc (work/ education)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing benefit</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of work on ancillary benefits</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Credits</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Minimum Wage</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing/ homelessness</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding - education/ training courses</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination (gender, race, disability)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ benefit rights</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel costs/ entitlements</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access/ equipment issues (disabled people)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run-on benefits</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education guidance</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ other financial entitlements</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money management /debt advice</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child support/ child maintenance</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal records/ disclosure</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>course or grant applications</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxation</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* percentages relate to base of 89

2.24 Some key financial issues relevant to the transition to work include tax credits, run-on benefits and money/ debt advice. The extent of support at any level and at the level of representation/ advocacy relating to these areas, showing a breakdown according to the main sectors, is outlined in table 2.10 below. The table shows that proportionately more respondents in voluntary sector advice provided support at the level of representation and at any level for all three issues and support is also consistently high in these areas in ‘other’ organisations. Respondents in government services were least likely to say they provided support at the level of representation.

2.25 It is interesting to note that, although no Jobcentre Plus advisers said that they provided support at the level of representation in general (paragraph 2.21), a small number did consider that they provided that level of support in relation to some benefits issues, including tax credits and run-on benefits. This raises a contentious point in that it is disputable whether advocacy or representation can be provided by the service that delivers decisions about benefits, some of which carry a statutory entitlement if prescribed circumstances are met and that carry a right of appeal or review.
2.26 Support at any level for debt and money advice was lower than may have been anticipated and lower than for most benefits issues. This may be explained partly by the fact that money advice specialist services were not included in the survey. ‘Other’ services and voluntary sector advice services were more likely to provide such support compared with other service types. Services for specific groups were less likely to provide support at any level compared with those that serve a general population (53.5 per cent compared with 71.7 per cent). Similarly, services described as specialist were less likely to provide any level of support on debt and money advice (41.7 per cent) than those services described as generalist with specialisms (75.9 per cent).

Table 2.10: Advice levels: tax credits, run-on benefits and debt/ money advice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tax Credits</th>
<th>Run-on Benefits</th>
<th>Debt/ Money Advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Represent</td>
<td>Support at any level</td>
<td>Represent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol. Sector advice</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol. Sector other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.11: Advice Levels: Course/ grant applications, childcare, criminal records, access/ equipment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Course/ grant applications</th>
<th>Childcare</th>
<th>Criminal records</th>
<th>Access/ equipment issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support at any level</td>
<td>Support at any level</td>
<td>Support at any level</td>
<td>Support at any level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol. Sector advice</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>74.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol. Sector other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>81.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.27 A slightly different picture emerges with issues that do not necessarily involve benefits or other financial entitlements (table 2.11). Consideration of any level of support for courses or grant applications, childcare, criminal records or access/ equipment issues for disabled people shows that voluntary sector advice and ‘other’ services continued to provide comparatively high levels of support. However, levels of support provided by respondents in government services were higher, both in comparison to the levels of support they provided on the benefits and financial issues identified above and the level of support provided in other sectors.

2.28 Advisers were asked to identify the issues that they would explore routinely with someone in addition to the presenting problem or question in relation to: moving to employment; and moving to further or higher education. The aim here was to try to identify
the breadth of issues considered at the point when people were anticipating change in the transition from benefits to work. Advisers were asked to identify what they would do routinely, rather than what they thought they should do, but as one project manager commented:

“It is hard to separate out day to day and ideally, should this client come in, all appropriate areas would be looked at.”

2.29 These results do not give a full and accurate picture and rely on advisers being honest about what they consider and, perhaps more importantly, do not consider in the course of a routine advice enquiry relating to transitions to employment or education. There were 84 people who responded to the question, one of whom gave information about advice issues in moving to education only and six of whom gave information about advice issues for people moving towards work only. The median number of issues identified by individual respondents was 13 for moving to work and 7 for moving to education. (means are 13.24 and 8.43 respectively). The number of issues covered were across the full range but half the responses were in a range from 11 to 20 in relation to moving to work and 5 to 14 in relation to moving to education. The degree of variation suggests that survey participants have endeavoured to be forthright about the issues they would cover.

2.30 The greater number of issues identified as being covered routinely in relation to moving towards work was reflected across sectors, although local authority welfare rights, housing association and voluntary sector advice workers said they considered routinely more issues in relation to moving to work than did other groups (means of 14.6, 14.6 and 14.75 respectively). Local authority (other) and student support service respondents identified a narrower range of issues concerning transitions to work. In relation to moving to education, workers in Careers Scotland, student support services and voluntary sector advice (11.9, 10.75 and 9.85 on average) considered more issues routinely than other services, most of which fell below the average. Services and individuals that provided advice and support at the level of representation or advocacy identified more issues that they would consider routinely in relation to moving both to work and education than services or individuals providing advice and support or information and signposting only. The results suggest that advice provision across a broad range of issues and provision of the more complex level of support involved in representation are more likely to be provided together than representing alternative service delivery models.

2.31 Tables 2.12 and 2.13 show the issues that would be covered routinely by survey participants. In line with the earlier discussion concerning the levels of advice and support given across a range of issues, the table shows that the issues that were most often considered relate to benefits and meeting costs such as housing and council tax costs and childcare costs. In contrast, however, relatively few said they would routinely consider childcare availability, adult care issues, travel access, taxation or money management in dealing with enquiries about moving towards work. Less than half the respondents would routinely consider access or equipment issues or meeting disability related costs or issues of criminal records and disclosure of offences.

2.32 In relation to moving to education, once again, the financial issues such as benefits entitlements, grants, bursaries and hardship funds were identified most frequently as being considered routinely along with costs such as housing, council tax benefits and childcare.
However, there would appear to be less consideration given to, or awareness of, some of the grants that exist, such as those for school meals and childcare and expenses allowances and less consideration given to sponsorships and scholarships, meeting disability related costs or childcare availability.

**Table 2.12: Advice issues - moving towards work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earnings</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Taxation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>National Insurance</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits entitlements (e.g. WTC)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Run-on Benefits</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Incapacity Benefits</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on health benefits</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Impact on DLA</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Benefit delays</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on other benefits</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Travel costs</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Housing/homelessness</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting disability related costs</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Housing costs</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Council Tax payment</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting work related costs (tools/ clothes etc)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Hours of work</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Renegotiating debts</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aftercare/ support services</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Childcare costs</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Childcare availability</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of stopping work on benefit entitlement</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Adult care issues</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Money management</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access/ equipment issues (disabled people)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Travel access</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Child support</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal records/ disclosure of offences</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.13: Advice issues - moving towards education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help with fees</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Loans</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled Students’ Allowance</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Bursaries</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Hardship Funds</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School meals grants</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Childcare grant</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Expenses Allowances</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorships/ scholarships</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Travel costs</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Renegotiating debts</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits entitlements (e.g. Child tax credit)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Travel access</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Money management</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of education on health benefits</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Adult care issues</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Housing/homelessness</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of education on other benefits</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Childcare costs</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Housing costs</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aftercare/ support services</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Childcare availability</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Council Tax</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting disability related costs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.33 It can be argued that the need to consider disclosure of offences is something of which advice providers may not necessarily be aware at the point of contact. However consideration of disability and care issues, whether in relation to adult care or childcare availability are factors for which information would be required for income maximisation and which have been identified as important to successful transitions to work (White and Nairn, 2004; Gillespie et al, 2003, McKendrick et al, 2003; Witton, 2002), yet they would be considered routinely by very few of the advice providers participating in this survey.
Target setting

2.34 Respondents were asked about the kind of targets set for the service overall and for them in their jobs. One voluntary sector advice service highlighted that their targets were identified through a service level agreement with their funders. However another voluntary sector service manager saw the service as:

“needs led and we therefore respond to demand rather than setting targets. Issues such as training and accuracy of advice are nevertheless of paramount importance as are many of the other points identified.”

2.35 In some services, there were no specific targets set but ongoing evaluation was used to review and develop services. However 80 survey respondents identified at least one target for the service they worked for (88.9 per cent). The targets that respondents identified most often for services related to numbers of contacts, visits etc (57); advice accuracy (50); information campaigns (49); staff/volunteer training (48); customer satisfaction (44); and information provision (44). Targets for workers most frequently identified were on advice accuracy (42); numbers of contacts visits etc (41); staff/volunteer training (38); service development for particular groups (35); and customer satisfaction (34).

2.36 Other targets identified in addition to those listed included: capacity building with other agencies; customers placed into work; accuracy of benefit payments; out of hours contact; “referral for barrier removal” and uptake of such; sustainability of progressions; development of and participation in interagency networks and development groups; and development of joint working practices to the benefit of common client groups. Whilst some targets for services and workers applied across sectors, there were others that were concentrated in a few services including:

- targets relating to service development for particular groups, service user participation, customer satisfaction, service user outcomes related to moving into work or training, distance travelled by service users towards job readiness and staff/volunteer training were all identified by Jobcentre Plus and Careers Scotland respondents more than others;

- targets on income generation, appeals and tribunals were identified more often by those in voluntary sector advice and local authority welfare rights;

- service outreach and volunteer development were identified more often by those in voluntary sector; and

- Quality standards, advice accuracy, access hours/access points/service delivery methods were identified more often by those in Jobcentre Plus, Careers Scotland and voluntary sector advice.

Information sources/second tier support

2.37 The survey asked about sources of information and second tier support. There were 88 responses concerning information sources. The internet and CPAG were most often cited
as sources of information and DWP leaflets and the Disability Rights Handbook were used by a third of respondents. In contrast only a quarter of respondents used the Citizens Advice Scotland Information System.

Table 2.14: Information sources used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>% (n=88)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPAG welfare benefits/ other handbooks</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self help packs/guides</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Rights Handbook</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS information system</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWP leaflets</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other texts</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- CPAG sources were most often cited by those working in voluntary sector advice and local authority welfare rights and those in other sectors, but were less likely to be used by Jobcentre Plus employees.

- Self help guides and the Internet were both cited as an information source more often by voluntary sector advice workers, those in local authority welfare rights and Careers Scotland. The internet was also used by all of those in education and housing associations.

- All voluntary sector advice and local authority welfare rights workers said they used the Disability Rights Handbook, as did most people from Careers Scotland, but it was mentioned less frequently by workers in all other service types.

- The Citizens Advice Scotland Information System was mentioned mainly by CAB staff, those in affiliated organisations and 4 people in other voluntary sector organizations. It was also mentioned by three people in Careers Scotland, but it is not clear whether they were subscribers to the full information system or accessing the more limited information available on the CAS website.

- DWP leaflets were mentioned as an information source by the majority of people in the voluntary sector, local authorities and government.

- Other texts were most often cited by local authority welfare rights and voluntary sector advice services and those working in colleges/ universities.

- local authority welfare rights, voluntary sector advice services and those in other sectors (education and housing associations) mentioned other sources more than other service types.

2.38 A wide range of other texts were mentioned by respondents including local reference books and unspecified professional journals, legal text books, directories, charities digests and medical dictionaries etc. Other texts mentioned include the following:
• social security and other primary legislation, including CPAG legislation volumes 1 to IV (10), texts on housing and housing benefit including housing benefit handbook (Shelter), housing and council tax benefits (Zebedee and Ward) (3), Housing Benefit for Housing Managers, Harvey and Tolley, and employment law publications;
• Bankruptcy (W McBryde) and A Guide to Money Advice (Money Advice Trust) (5);
• Employment law encyclopaedia and publications including IDS handbooks;
• Publications such as Welfare rights bulletins (3), Scolag (2) and Adviser, Into HE (Skill Publication);
• Texts relating to specific groups or situations such as: One Parent Families - Lone Parent Handbook; Splitting Up; SAMH Updates/ briefings; Maternity Alliance publications; and
• Medication list from UK Pharmacists.

2.39 Other sources of information mentioned include: Money advice consultancy service local agencies, support groups Database – funder finder (2) maternity alliance 2 IBIS for better off calculations (3), Lisson Grove benefit check software, Derbyshire council – case law CD (2) and the DWP Intranet (2).

Second tier support

2.40 There were 81 people who identified one or more agencies that they went to for advice or second tier support. Overall, workers in the voluntary sector were most likely to identify other sources of advice.

• Local authority (other), Careers Scotland and voluntary sector (other) workers were most likely to use Jobcentre Plus for second tier advice;
• Jobcentre Plus, local authority welfare rights and voluntary sector (other) workers were less likely than other groups to identify CAS or CABx as a source of advice;
• A higher proportion of workers in the voluntary sector, particularly those in advice agencies, and ‘other’ organisations used CPAG for advice;
• Government and voluntary sector (other) respondents were more likely than other groups to seek advice from Careers Scotland;
• Careers Scotland and voluntary sector (other) services were more likely than others to seek advice from local authority welfare rights; and
Voluntary sector advice and Careers Scotland respondents mentioned Disability Alliance as a source of advice more often than other types of organisations.

Table 2.15: Second tier agencies used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens Advice Scotland</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPAG</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers Scotland</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority welfare rights</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Alliance</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.41 The other sources of advice identified included:

- Voluntary sector services and networks that focus on specific areas of rights such as Scottish Homelessness Advisory Service and Shelter (5); Money Advice Scotland (2); Scottish Employment Rights Network; Housing Association Welfare Rights Forum;
- Specialist voluntary organisations such as RNIB, RNID and Carers Scotland;
- Equalities Agencies including the Commission for Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission;
- 8 respondents mentioned other local advice services and law centres;
- Government services and agencies such as ACAS, Appeals Advisory Service, the Lone Parent Unit/CSA (3), DSS and other help lines;
- Local authority housing, finance and social work departments and Rights Advice Scotland (6);
- Legal services in colleges and universities (2);
- Other specialist services including Accountant on Bankruptcy;
- Update (4)

**Referrals**

2.42 The survey form asked respondents about the agencies they make referrals to and who they receive referrals from in relation to the advice issues under consideration. Almost all respondents (85 or 94.4 per cent) use one or more sources of referral on (Table 2.16). Most referred on to other advisers in the same organisation, Jobcentre Plus and other voluntary sector advice agencies. Solicitors, other government services and Careers Scotland were identified least often. Other routes for referral on included local and national specialist services that address befriending, carers, homelessness, learning disability issues and energy.
efficiency; the Disability Rights Commission; colleges; housing associations; and Money Matters.

Table 2.16: Referrals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Referral to others</th>
<th>Referrals from others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>% (n=90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other adviser in the organisation</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAB</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law centre</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other voluntary sector advice</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers Scotland</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA welfare rights</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA other</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solicitor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.43 All except one of the respondents provided information concerning from whom they received referrals. There were five people who did not receive any referrals. The most frequently mentioned sources of referral were other advisers in the organisation, voluntary sector advice services other than CABx and Law Centres and local authority services other than welfare rights. The other sources of referral included:

- Health professionals including medical centres, health visitors, midwives, district nurses and doctors in GP surgeries, psychiatrists, CPNs;
- Voluntary Sector organisations including Societies for the blind, RNID, services assisting people with mental health problems or dealing with employment and training issues;
- Learn Direct, UCASS, advisors of study and other services within universities; and
- Housing Officers and support workers in housing associations.

Networks and partnerships

2.44 All except four of the organisations participating in the survey and approaching two thirds of individual respondents were involved in some form of advice networks or partnerships. The organisations were involved in a wide range of national and local partnerships involving formal and informal links, some with specific projects and agencies.

2.45 Local networks and partnerships included rights or advice forums and others that were focused on specific advice issues such as employment, money and housing advice. Two
respondents mentioned DWP Welfare Agencies Forums. Other local and regional networks and partnerships mentioned cover a wide range of issues in which the relevance of input from advice services has been recognised, but are not specifically advice networks. They covered: adult learning and literacies; domestic abuse, regeneration strategies; homelessness; community care; redundancy support and Voluntary Organisations Forums. A smaller number mentioned networks and partnerships that were linked to skills, training, employability and work preparation programmes and local economic forums including, for example, the Scottish Union of Supported Employment. National networks and organisations included:

- Scottish advice and rights networks such as: Money Advice Scotland, Rights Advice Scotland, Scottish Employment Rights Network, Citizens Advice Scotland, Scottish Social Security Consortium and Housing Associations Welfare Rights Officers Forum;
- Other networks included the Telephone Help lines Association, Update, Enable, Disability Agenda Scotland, and West of Scotland Forum for Advisers in HE;
- Information networks were identified such as SAIF; Skill UK Information Service, SCVO Information Officers Network;

2.46 Individual responses generally reflected the range of advice networks identified above and some described informal or project based partnerships. However additional networks or membership organisations identified included Child Poverty Action Group, Scottish Welfare Law Practitioners Association, Tribunal Users Group, local Consumer Support Networks and a Community Care Advisers Group. Some voluntary sector (other) respondents were involved in formal partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and others delivering government programmes such as Routes to Work. Similarly, Jobcentre Plus and Careers Scotland respondents referred to training and employment initiatives and local advice and guidance forums.

2.47 However only 42.9 per cent were involved in welfare to work networks or partnerships. They included the majority of respondents from government services and voluntary sector (other) organisations, but only 11.1 per cent of those in voluntary sector advice. The two networks mentioned by respondents in voluntary sector advice services were a DWP Welfare Agencies Forum and a supported employment network.

2.48 Most respondents from other voluntary sector organisations described supported employment networks, informal links with other agencies or direct and contractual links with Jobcentre Plus under service level agreements and one respondent mentioned a Scottish Homelessness and Employability Network. Local authority respondents highlighted partnership around money advice projects and Working for Families, both initiatives funded by the Scottish Executive, a regeneration partnership and, in two cases, formal links with Jobcentre Plus including one for the Workstep Programme.

2.49 Jobcentre Plus respondents described formal partnerships with training and education providers and the Scottish Prison Service and links with voluntary sector organisations through programmes such as A4E (Action For Employment) and Progress to Work. Careers Scotland respondents also described local formal welfare to work partnerships and initiatives, including “Get Ready For Work – a Government initiative to help young people facing
barriers to access education, training or work”, a thematic SIP for care leavers and local supported employment groups. Amongst other respondents, welfare to work networks in relation to students were “informal” within universities or colleges, but others described more formal links with Jobcentre Plus and other agencies supporting groups in the transition to work.

Advising disadvantaged groups

2.50 Respondents were asked what proportion of their service users fell into the categories of disabled people, people with mental health problems or learning difficulties, lone parents and prisoners. Half of the organisations involved in the survey were able to provide some information. However, most of the data provided were estimates since, in most cases, no monitoring was done on service use by most groups. Organisations that served specific service user groups were more likely to be able to offer estimates than other services. In view of the extent to which respondents have estimated the representation of key groups identified, the information is not reliable and, as the tables below suggest, the estimates fall within a very wide range. The generic category of ‘disabled people’ was identified most often. The three highest percentages were identified in two voluntary sector agencies and one local authority welfare rights service. All four agencies identifying 36 per cent or more service users with mental health problems were in the voluntary sector (other) category.

Table 2.17: Proportion of service users in vulnerable groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. giving estimate</th>
<th>Lowest estimate</th>
<th>Highest estimate</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled people</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health service users</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with learning difficulties</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parents</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures to improve access for disadvantaged groups

2.51 In an attempt to identify existing good practice in making advice services accessible, two related questions were included in the survey form. The first asked what measures services offer to ensure effective access to advice for key groups. The figures in table 2.18 below include four organisations for which a single response was given to cover all of the groups identified. All except two organisations made a response about at least one of the key groups. The majority of organisations identified some access measures for each of the groups except (ex)prisoners. Measures were most often mentioned in relation to disabled people. Overall, organisations with small numbers of staff, where advice is the main activity and those in the voluntary sector were less likely than others to identify specific access measures.
Table 2.18: Service measures to ensure access for groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of Organisations commenting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disabled people</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with mental health problems</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with learning difficulties</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parents</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners/ Ex-prisoners</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.52 Individual respondents were also asked to say what measures they took to meet the advice needs of the key groups. Of 78 respondents who gave information on access measures in relation to at least one of the groups identified, three quarters across sectors commented on access measures for disadvantaged groups generally (table 2.19). More than half identified measures in relation to disabled people, although less than half of those in voluntary sector (other) organisations did so. Those in the voluntary sector, local authority welfare rights, Jobcentre Plus and Careers Scotland were more likely than other groups to identify special measures to meet access needs for people with mental health problems. Local authority welfare rights, Jobcentre Plus and Careers Scotland were generally more likely than other groups to identify special measures to meet needs for the remaining groups mentioned.

Table 2.19: Advisers measures to improve access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Percent n=78</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantaged groups generally</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled people</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with Mental Health Problem</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>62.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with learning difficulties</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parents</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.53 A small number of people asserted that their service was “open to all” or that all groups “have access to all the services we have available”. However, most identified a range of measures that aimed to ensure access needs could be met, including the following for disadvantaged groups generally that were also mentioned in relation to some of the specified groups:

- Service provision through local outreach including targeting ‘disadvantaged’ areas, home visits, GP surgeries, awareness raising talks and displays;
- Training for staff and other services working with groups; and
- Funding for dedicated services for particular groups, employment of specialist staff, partnership working with other agencies and referral to “relevant specialist”.
Access measures for disabled people

2.54 Measures to ensure access for disabled people were identified by three quarters of individual survey participants and all except 4 organisations in the voluntary sector. The following is a summary of measures identified.

- Links with groups and bodies representing client groups were considered important and some voluntary organisations have a membership that is partly or entirely made up of disabled people.

- In some services, advisers such as disability employment advisers were dedicated to addressing issues for specific service users groups and one had an adviser dedicated to supporting DLA claims.

- Physical access was a key area, including wheelchair accessible premises with disabled toilets and parking, a stair lift. Measures to achieve barrier free access included the use of induction loops.

- A range of approaches offer alternatives to office based advice, including home visits, telephone, website and email advice, interactive video advice, targeted outreach sessions in venues such as a Sensory Impairment Centre, GPs’ surgeries and in local communities.

- Provision to address communication problems and accessibility of written materials included the use of BSL sign language interpreting, information in Braille, tape and large print, a text phone service and an accessible web site.

- Referrals were also made to other services considered appropriate to meet the needs of specific groups and targeted campaigns; talks and presentations were used to raise awareness.

- Jobcentre Plus services also highlighted that “there are a number of incentives for clients and employers to help people get back into employment such as Aids to Employment, Employer Subsidies and benefit top-ups.”

Access measures for people with mental health problems

2.55 In relation to people with mental health problems, the measures that were identified included approaches identified above such as partnership working, home visiting, targeted outreach and dedicated or specialist posts and the following:

- Maintaining a database of mental health support groups and leaflets;

- links with primary care or social work mental health teams and carers, psychiatric services and specialist agencies and services; and

- for one service: “location within the grounds of the local psychiatric hospital ensures easy access for our client group”.

27
Access measures for people with learning difficulties

2.56 Many of the approaches taken in relation to disadvantaged groups generally were mentioned in relation to people with learning difficulties. However, the following are additional measures identified:

- A small number of services were dedicated to working with people with learning disabilities;
- Some take steps to ensure information about rights is understood such as attention to information being written as clearly as possible, talking through information on the phone, easy to read leaflets and literacy and additional support;
- One off exercises undertaken in adult training centres to “ensure income of users is maximised and support provided to understand and make informed choices”; and
- Work in Careers Scotland on the transition between school and post school while individuals are still in school.

Access measures for lone parents

2.57 Specific measures for lone parents included the following:

- Freephone helpline;
- Involvement of lone parents on a management committee;
- Free childcare provision;
- Partnership work with Throughcare/ Aftercare and referrals and links with lone parent organisations; and
- Dedicated staff, including lone parent advisers.

Access measures for (ex) prisoners

2.58 There were fewer measures identified in relation to prisoners compared with other groups. The measures specific to prisoners include:

- Prison based service provision including visits and clinics;
- Links to and partnership working with agencies such as Scottish Prison Service, Youth Justice, Criminal Justice sections in Social Work Area Teams. APEX; and
- Enabling access to ILM training opportunities to enhance employability.
Service user consultation and involvement

Role of Service Users

2.59 There were 68 people who provided information in response to the question: What role do service users have in the organization? Some advice workers did not know their role while some said that they have no official role other than as users of services. Some survey participants did not seem to understand what the question was referring to and gave responses such as “Our clients are our first and paramount concern”, “without service users there would be no requirement for this service”, “users of a valuable service that enables them to overcome barriers into employment” or, as one Jobcentre Plus adviser commented, service users “attend office on a regular basis”.

2.60 In contrast, advice workers in voluntary organisations and housing associations mentioned frequently that service users were on advisory or management committees and in some cases constituted the entire management body. In a few cases service users were volunteers, providing advice, support and representation for others using the service. Some indicated that service users were consulted about new issues or policies through surveys or focus groups and one lone parent organisation mentioned a conference that 200 lone parents attended to discuss childcare/training and benefits. One respondent said simply that “they lead”.

2.61 In other sectors involvement was more often in relation to evaluation of services, comments or feedback or, in one case, they were said to “pay for it via Council Tax”. However, another local authority service described their service as user led.

Taking Account of Service User Views

2.62 The survey form asked how the views of service users were taken into account in service development. This question generated comments from 72 people, marginally more than responded in relation to service user involvement, although some said they did not know and a small number said that service users were not consulted about service development. However, most of those providing information mentioned consultation processes such as surveys, feedback forms and suggestions and complaints procedures. For some services such information was said to form the basis of preparation of business planning: “e.g. requests for local clinics led to development of GP surgery advice clinics and home visiting service” and another said they implemented recommendations made during reviews “if practical and appropriate”. In one voluntary sector organisation “the service is developed according to the views of service users”, while in another there is a service user advisory group.

Training

2.63 Survey participants were asked about sources of training and what training they had attended in relation to addressing the advice needs of disadvantaged groups and those making the transition from benefits to employment. Amongst the 86 people who identified one or more sources of training on information and advice issues, in-house provision was identified most often as a source of training across sectors and service types, while CPAG was the
external training organisation identified most often (table 2.20). Some sectoral differences in other training sources were identified, however:

- Voluntary sector advice, local authority welfare rights and housing association respondents mentioned CPAG as a training source more often than other groups. CPAG was not identified by any government respondents.

- CAS was identified as a training source by voluntary sector advice and one housing association respondent, but no others.

- LSA training was most often identified by voluntary sector advice, local authority welfare rights and housing association respondents, but not at all by those in government services.

- Most of those identifying Shelter were in voluntary sector advice.

- Other voluntary sector sources of training were identified most often by respondents working in the voluntary sector and Careers Scotland.

- Most of those identifying Careers Scotland as a source of training were in government agencies.

- Careers Scotland and voluntary sector (other) staff accounted for most of those identifying Jobcentre Plus as a training source.

- Other government sources of training were identified by voluntary sector and housing association respondents.

- Local authority welfare rights were a training source for local authority respondents, Careers Staff and voluntary sector (other) staff, but not for any Jobcentre Plus respondents.

- Colleges and Universities were a training source within the sector, in local authority welfare rights and Careers Scotland, but not at all in Jobcentre Plus.

- Private training providers were mentioned most often by Jobcentre Plus, Careers Scotland, education sector and other local authority respondents.

Table 2.20: Training sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>% (n=86)</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>% (n=86)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In house</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>Careers Scotland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPAG</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>JC+</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>Other govt</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSA</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>LA welfare rights</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>College/ university</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other voluntary sector</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>Private provider</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.64 Those in local authority welfare rights mentioned other training sources more than other groups. The other sources were mainly in the voluntary sector and included, Money Advice Scotland (5), Scottish Employment Rights Network, Rights Advice Scotland, Children in Scotland and the Telephone Helpline Association.

Training attended - disadvantaged groups

2.65 There were 60 people (two thirds of all responses) who said they had attended training that addressed the advice needs of specific groups, including a high proportion of voluntary sector and government respondents. However, a relatively high number of people had attended training relating to benefits rights or tribunal representation for such groups, most often relating to disability and incapacity benefits rights and benefits for people with mental health issues, pension credits and tax credits. Some other training mentioned by survey participants addressed rights or legislation such as, housing or homelessness, debt, employment and family law. Those identifying training relating to awareness raising or service delivery for groups mentioned the following:

- In voluntary sector advice services, black and minority ethnic groups and disability (both mentioned by 3 people), students, equal opportunities and “clients with mental health issues”
- In other voluntary sector services, responses reflected the fact that several of them target specific groups and training covered mental health issues (5 people in one service), disability awareness or discrimination (3) disclosure training (2), supporting Asylum seekers (2), drug & alcohol abuse and working with offenders.
- Local authority welfare rights responses included awareness training on disability, sensory impairment race equality and mental health.
- Education and Housing Association sector survey participants mentioned training on disability and mental health in addition to benefits related issues.
- Jobcentre Plus staff highlighted new deal and lone parent training, drug dependency and “through the prisoners eyes” training.
- In Careers Scotland, the training mentioned reflected a greater focus on guidance and support covering groups and issues including: (ex)offenders, disclosure of offences, autism, dyslexia, travelling community, aspergers, disability, criminal justice, mental health, offenders and ex-offenders and child protection.

Training attended – transitions to work

2.66 Just over 40 per cent of respondents (37) had attended training relating to advice needs for those making the transition from benefits to work. They included a relatively high proportion of Jobcentre Plus and Careers Scotland respondents. Across services advice
workers were once again most likely to mention benefits, particularly tax credits. Voluntary sector and education based services listed training on student finance and IBIS training (a programme that does ‘better off’ calculations). Jobcentre Plus advisers again mentioned new deal and lone parent training and one mentioned in-house training that “covers all benefits and employment/ training effects”. Staff in Careers Scotland mentioned work preparation training and professional training in careers guidance.

**Responding to advice needs**

2.67 Survey participants were asked to identify what may be helpful to advice services in developing effective support for disadvantaged groups by indicating the importance of different approaches, using a series of statements rated on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is a very high priority and 5 is a very low priority. The results from the 84 responses are shown in table 2.21 below.

**Table 2.21: Advice providers priorities for disadvantaged groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIORITY</th>
<th>base no.</th>
<th>very high</th>
<th>high</th>
<th>Med</th>
<th>low</th>
<th>very low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>quality and accuracy of advice</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accessibility of information and advice (e.g. time, location, media)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>staff training</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specialist advice services (e.g. money advice/ benefits/ education guidance)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>independence from those making decisions on rights and entitlements</td>
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<td>28.2</td>
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2.68 Quality and accuracy of advice was given the highest priority overall and, although accessibility of information, staff training and specialist services were all rated highly, the full list of approaches were considered very high or high priority by at least 70 per cent of survey participants, suggesting that all these issues were viewed as important. Some issues generated some more low priority responses than others, although they were low priority for less than 10 per cent of survey participants, including influencing policy on benefits barriers and welfare to work (rated low mostly in education sector services) and aftercare services (rated low mainly in voluntary sector advice services, most of whom are unlikely to deliver time limited services). The reasons for the stated priorities were not explored in the survey,
but some of the issues that need to be considered in responding to advice needs are discussed next and provide some context for the priorities identified here.

2.69 Survey participants were also asked to identify things that might help them respond more effectively to the information or advice needs of vulnerable groups under four headings: their knowledge and skills; resources available and external referrals; support and liaison; and the service overall. Three quarters of responses (69) included comments under at least one of the headings.

Knowledge and Skills

2.70 There were 54 people across sectors who commented on knowledge and skills from across the organisation types. Most comments related to training, networking, and resources for maintaining and developing up to date knowledge and skills. More than half the responses identified training needs included, awareness raising and specialist training specific to groups, advanced training on key issues such as tax credits or benefits for throughcare and aftercare and awareness training that is more specific to welfare rights. Although several people envisaged benefiting from in-house provision, there were others who wanted training away from their workplace. Some responses mentioned specific groups or issues, including mental health and “those with suicidal tendencies and self-harming” in particular. Other suggestions for training included Scottish Youth Criminal System and advice and support to young offenders, drug and alcohol awareness and specialist training in welfare to work and entry to further education. Another adviser thought she would:

“benefit from training in helping people with learning disabilities as the ‘cloak of competence’ can make it difficult to help people without compromising their personal dignity”.

2.71 Several advisers mentioned the desire for better links with other organisations. Networking issues raised included “discussion with other advice workers regarding particular issues in moving to education/employment”. An education sector adviser considered that peer support and sharing of expertise were important:

“particularly within HEI sector, but also generally; swapping e.g. 1 day a week or for 3 month periods in other advice agencies to take and bring back knowledge.”

2.72 Referral mechanisms could be improved to ensure disadvantaged groups receive advice on benefits and money advice from specialist advisors. One person thought that the time to network with other organisations delivering services to offenders/ex-offenders would be beneficial.

Referral/support/liaison

2.73 There were 49 responses concerning referral, support and liaison. These came from across sectors, including high proportions from local authority welfare rights and Careers
Scotland. Responses suggested closer links and contacts with other specialist agencies and greater partnership working. Improved information on availability and locations of services was mentioned in several responses and "a mapping exercise of all agencies/bodies able to offer advice on particular topics" was suggested for improving knowledge of other services and appropriateness of referrals.

2.74 Some highlighted that more referrals should be made to advice services by e.g. social work and other agencies supporting in the community, but others thought that referral agencies could do "more assessment before referring clients" and provide "more information and in-depth client details". Several suggested the need for clear procedures and guidelines on referrals and one thought there was a need for "faster response times as external agencies are usually under-staffed". Referrals from advice to other services and training on such may also be important, including in particular circumstances such as "for someone for help with mental health issues and who to refer them to, e.g. when they are upset or even suicidal."

2.75 Other approaches suggested involved maintaining closer working links with other welfare rights workers, other services and more time for such work. Some felt that there were "good links with statutory and voluntary organisations but would benefit from broader support and liaison", while others suggested a working group to "facilitate networking and ensure formal referral systems are in place". In one rural area it was felt that the service was "limited by service available to clients... especially those in rural areas – we need better support for clients". Funding restrictions faced by voluntary agencies could also be a barrier since they are "not always funded to deal with the clients we would like to refer because of their funding constraints e.g. clients may live in an area which does not qualify." However, for one voluntary sector adviser there was insufficient "recognition of our role" that needed to be addressed by other services.

**Resources**

2.76 Suggestions in relation to improving service delivery resources included extended opening hours and improving accessibility of services, both in terms of physical access and provision of information in different formats. Jobcentre Plus staff suggested more time to spend with customers, "incentives for back to work" and improved infrastructure to use laptops in prison LINK centres. One Careers Scotland adviser did not feel the need for more in house resources and would "prefer to pass clients on to the experts". However, the responses from voluntary sector advice services suggest that the capacity for the ‘experts’ to deliver such support is severely constrained by financial resource limitations.

2.77 Although half of the survey responses had comments about resources, particularly in the voluntary sector and Jobcentre Plus, many of the comments summarised thus far were recognised to have resource implications, particularly in voluntary sector advice services for whom central concerns included: funding and long-term security of funding; the need for more staff and volunteers, including administrative support; and access to information systems, such as CPAG CD Roms or CAS information systems that projects could not afford. Funding problems were seen as a barrier to shared working and several highlighted that resources are stretched to the limit including, in some services, facilities such as space, IT facilities and rooms:
“we have a good fire engine with trained fire fighters, tremendous backup services but have hardly any water!!”

2.78 Having the money to pay for external training or cover for absence was a concern in several voluntary sector and local authority responses. Access to up to date and new information was also an issue for some, including “further knowledge of initiatives, assistance and programmes designed to assist unemployed people move into employment/education”. Other resource needs included access to information about the services that work with specific groups or are delivering welfare to work training and support. For one manager, limited resources “restrict scope of existing outreach service – increased funding would permit a better service for targeted groups who would benefit most from the service”. One suggestion to resolve some of these concerns was for “centralised resources around organisations that provide practical help in looking for work”.

Service Overall

2.79 There were 56 responses that included comments about the service overall from across all organisation types. Although some responses indicated that rigorous standards were already in place, most covered issues identified above such as partnership working, training, staff and information resources. In half of the responses and most of those from the voluntary sector, financial resources were key.

2.80 Other specific suggestions included a “demand map indicating the specific advice needs of targeted groups” to tailor services more effectively, better access to interpreting services and less paperwork, while two responses mentioned input from service users and agencies involved with service user groups. Another suggestion was for a “one stop shop approach where all enquiries could be handled by ‘an expert’, combining services that “address other needs at same time as advice needs”.

Other approaches

2.81 Suggestions were invited concerning other approaches to making information and advice provision more effective in helping disadvantaged groups make successful/sustainable transitions from benefits to education and employment, to which more than half of survey participants responded. In addition, more than half of survey participants used a general comments box to make suggestions and to highlight issues of concern relating to welfare to work and advice delivery, including issues relating to the benefits system.

2.82 Suggestions additional to those already identified above included some concerned with improving access and support through transition periods and improving the quality and comprehensiveness of advice. Some advocated holistic approaches to address “financial, emotional, low self-esteem, disabilities and legal issues”. Other ideas included:

- Benefits experts based in college/University should provide advice at the point of people considering education and should also pick them up at the stage of moving to employment;
• People being referred at an early stage for ‘better off’ calculations so that they are aware of the likelihood of their proposed change of circumstances;

• All employment offices/Jobcentres should develop close working partnerships with advice agencies such as CABs in their area;

• Raising awareness of the advice services available through advertising and outreach; and

• One to one support before, during and after starting work and closer links with employers.

Benefits Barriers to Successful Transitions

2.83 Advice workers highlighted that there remain considerable problems with the benefits system that “is not flexible, cannot react quickly or accommodate flexible pattern of work.” A voluntary sector worker argued that:

“Repeated government-sponsored research finds that the major barrier to people with learning disabilities getting work is the benefits system. Without good information and advice they would never get paid employment.”

2.84 DLA remains an issue with ongoing lack of clarity about reviews when a person starts work, including ‘permitted’1 work:

“With permitted work, it affects housing benefits, therefore you can’t work out income levels. There is a New Deal for young people, there is no properly resources equivalent for people with disabilities. The resources have not been put in place.”

2.85 Another response highlighted that transitions to work can have implications for other family members:

“Children entering work/training once their 16. The parental income is often removed and they are forced to seek employment themselves and transfer onto different benefits. The parents can sometimes restrict their children’s progress because of the fear that is associated with this loss/transition.”

2.86 Several responses stressed the need for less complexity and more consistency, simplifying the system to allow easier transitions and lobbying “for change in the benefits system to help people escape the benefits trap”. Some suggestions in this area included the

1 Permitted work is work within defined rules and earnings limits that is allowed to be carried out without loss of entitlement to that benefit by people in receipt of Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, National Insurance Credits or Income Support because of illness or disability (for further information, see http://www.dwp.gov.uk/lifeevent/benefits/pwr.asp)
need to implement processing and payment of in-work benefits “timeously, efficiently and correctly. This can make a significant difference to how people view the transition from benefits into employment”. Other suggestions included:

"Minimise the effect of the poverty trap by having shorter waiting times and longer run-ons/ linking rules/ simpler transfer between in/ out of work claims e.g. HB – encourage part-time study for job seekers.”

“More flexibility in clients favour between coming off benefits and receiving first wage.”

“Better information given by DWP on Run-on’s. Many people lose out on Run-ons, which can be vital during this transition period, because the DWP have not advised people who have previously transferred from one benefit to another of the importance continuous claims and the impact that losing this can have on their eligibility for Run-ons.”

“A back to work bonus equivalent to one month’s pay in advance would reduce the personal debt/ extortionate credit taken on by households starting work but waiting one month or more before first pay and tax credit”.

‘Impartiality’ and conflicting priorities

2.87 Two issues were identified that can bring about conflicting priorities in relation to advice service delivery. The first relates to conflicts of interest that can arise between advice and other services delivered by the same organisation, raising conflicting priorities within organisations. The other relates to advice delivered within the context of the principles and values of advice service delivery identified above and its fit with welfare to work delivery, raising conflicting priorities within organisations involved in delivering welfare to work projects or programmes or linking in with such. Both these issues may be significant considerations across advice services, but particularly in relation to Jobcentre Plus.

Conflicting Priorities

2.88 There is potential for conflicts of interest to arise where ‘advice’ is provided in conjunction with other services that can lead to confusion for service users as to whether they are getting ‘advice’ or decisions about rights or access to a service or resource provided by that organisation (Gillespie et al, 2003). In the survey, advisers were asked if they provided advice about their own services and, if so, whether the organisation have a policy to deal with conflicts of interest. There were 30 advisers who said that they provided advice about their own services – a third of all responses, but they included the majority of those in organisations that provide other services or resources as well as advice.
2.89 However, only 11 people stated that they had a conflicts of interest policy. Some of them commented on strategies for dealing with or avoiding situations in which conflicts may arise. In voluntary sector services, one project had a fee charging service that had the potential to conflict with some elements of benefits advice, but staff were aware of the issues and took them into account in advice service delivery. Another voluntary sector service noted that it had “recently undergone management re-structuring to ensure greater coordination between different functions e.g. services/ training/ employment”. In local government where a range of services are provided, including administration of benefits such as housing benefit, one survey participant said the advice service would advise on other services in the Council but would refer to another agency in the “rare event” of a conflict arising. However, in another local authority service (not welfare rights) the view was that “there are no conflicts, the interests of the organisation and the service user are similar if not the same.”

2.90 One student adviser in higher education identified that where advice and discussion did not resolve matters, they would “refer to student union to advocate for student or students union solicitor”. A practical solution to an identified cause of conflict in one housing association was to agree with the Welfare Rights Service, “a sliding scale for rent arrears repayment arrangements as this was the main source of contention.” However, despite what would appear to be significant potential for conflict of interest in Jobcentre Plus, few advisers commented on this issue and one adviser described their approach as “generally mediation, do not normally have any problems with conflict”. In Careers Scotland a similar approach was taken: “Generally issues arise with young people on JSA benefits and their requirement to seek training or employment. We discuss this in the interview.”

**Impartiality and independence**

2.91 For other advice workers, particularly those in the voluntary sector, there were concerns about the relationship of their service to the welfare to work agenda that had implications for the way that services are delivered and presented challenges for effective partnership working that did not compromise their role in delivering impartial advice that is independent of the interests of government and other agencies.

2.92 Many advisers did not see themselves as being part of welfare to work delivery and emphasised a role that was primarily to support rather than persuade people towards work and “providing information which will empower people to make decisions about their lives”. Issues of trust and confidence were considered to be of central importance in the relationship with advice service users in which advice has to be “seen as honest and reliable so as to overcome any suspicion that the agenda is one of forcing people into work rather than enabling.” Since information empowers individuals to “make choices about how they live their lives”, lack of access to reliable and holistic information can be significant: “Without accessible information many disabled people are discouraged from taking up employment for fear of losing benefits”.

2.93 The advice giving role of government services, particularly Jobcentre Plus, was questioned by advice workers in other services. It was suggested that people can be daunted by the paper work and “are not always made aware of their entitlements by Benefits Agency staff as routine, often they need to know to ask.” Some saw the main focus of Jobcentre Plus as appearing to be “on employment rather than income maximisation” and:
“whilst the DWP and Jobcentre Plus have a role in advice and information provision in respect of the transition to work, independent, specialist and holistic services are definitely more beneficial in this area, especially in relation to particular client groups.”

2.94 It was argued that advice providers need to “cover all bases” and “point out potential pit-falls and be prepared to deal with the issue of unrealistic options.” One advice worker summarised the conflicting pressures and interests that advice workers face in relation to the transition to work, some of which arise because of the nature of benefits and conditions for qualifying:

“Even though the benefit authorities may be moving in the direction of ensuring benefit entitlement as should be their remit, the advice sector needs to avoid complicity with any misplaced assumptions that disabled people may have that they are unable to work. The very nature of some advice work is being able to demonstrate inability to work in order to retain certain benefits. As such, the advice sector needs to feel comfortable with being able to advise on Tax Credits as well as such issues as Income Tax and National Insurance.”

2.95 One housing association worker suggested that it should be possible for “an integrated approach with statutory authorities that would still allow representation for independent dispute resolution”. However, a Careers Scotland adviser wanted to see the “policing” in their service of benefits such as JSA disappearing:

“I know some staff feel it gets clients in the door, but I often feel not much positive happens once they are in and the benefits hassle puts us in a bad light. This can get in the way of rapport building with clients who need sustained help.”

2.96 For those in the voluntary sector, there was insufficient recognition in working relationships and resource allocation to the role of advice services and volunteering in supporting successful transitions back to work and one CAB manager summed up the issues that they face:

“For too long the status of information and advice services has been given too low a priority by all except those trying to secure information and advice. Despite the rigorous quality assurance and potential capacity of the frontline CAB service there is no equity (and, in some cases, continuity) of funding which causes problems meeting the demand from users. This also prevents proactive working/ marketing/ promotion targeting those who could benefit from the service.”
Summary

2.97 A range of advice services across sectors was represented in the survey of advice workers, including a small number of ‘informal’ advisers. Some delivered advice along with other services, most covered geographical areas and two thirds provided services for specific groups. Most were small: half employed 3 or less staff and only 8 of the 37 services used volunteers. The values and purpose of services varied widely, but most espoused confidential and non-judgemental service provision with a focus on: service user involvement in the voluntary sector, housing associations and education services; income maximisation in local authority welfare rights; transitions to work and payment of benefits in government services.

2.98 Advice workers were typically female, with an average of 9 years service. They had a wide range of duties involving advice, information, representation and specialisation. Some had additional roles of guidance, fund management, job search support and supporting transitions to work. They used a range of delivery methods, most often telephone and face to face advice. Most provided a degree of specialism in either areas of advice, services for specific groups or levels of work. Target setting was focused on quality, accuracy and information campaigns. Government services had targets on service development for groups, service user participation, customer satisfaction and outcomes related to transitions to work.

2.99 Most services provided advice at the level of representation and few delivered information only. The issues covered most frequently related to benefits and better off calculations, although less than one third would deliver support at the level of representation. They were least likely to cover at any level taxation, course or grant applications, criminal records disclosure and travel costs and entitlements. Voluntary sector advice, local authority and other services provided the highest levels of support on key benefits and issues connected with making the transition to work. Advice provision in government services was higher on issues such as course applications, childcare and criminal records than benefits and debt. A small number of Jobcentre Plus advisers considered that they delivered support at the level of representation on some issues, including some benefits, raising questions about potential conflicts of interest.

2.100 Routine coverage of issues in contact with clients moving towards work was concentrated on benefits issues and meeting costs, such as housing or childcare. Few routinely considered childcare availability, adult care, travel access, taxation, money management, grants and scholarships or disability related costs, despite disability and care issues being central to income maximisation in the transition to work or education.

2.101 Child Poverty Action Group and the Internet were mentioned most often as information sources, while self help packs and the CAS Information System were used least. A wide range of other texts and guides to legislation were also used. The main sources of second tier support were Jobcentre Plus, CAS, CPAG and other services, mainly in the voluntary sector. Most referrals were made to colleagues, voluntary sector advice services and Jobcentre Plus. Referrals were received mostly from similar sources and local authority services.

2.102 Most respondents were in advice networks, but only 42 per cent of advisers were in welfare to work networks or partnerships including only 11 per cent of those in voluntary sector advice. Training sources mentioned most often were in-house training, CPAG and other voluntary sector sources. Two thirds had attended training on the advice needs of
specific groups, with a strong focus on benefits or tribunal representation, but equality issues were mentioned less often. Only 40 per cent had been to training on advice needs relating to the transition to work, much of which also had a focus on benefits rights. There was limited evidence of training that addressed access needs for groups or welfare to work issues in the specific context of advice provision.

2.103 There were wide ranging views and levels of awareness about service user consultation and involvement. For some, service users had a central or leading role, most often in the voluntary sector and housing associations, but others showed much less awareness. Service user views were taken into account most often through consultation processes such as surveys and feedback, while a small number of providers claimed that service user involvement was a structural feature of the organisation.

2.104 Measures to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups were identified, although less often for (ex)prisoners. The good practice measures identified most frequently covered physical access, outreach, home visits, interpreting, large print and specialist posts. Advisers gave the highest priority to accuracy of advice, but rated highly all of a series of suggestions to developing effective support for disadvantaged groups. Respondents suggested approaches aimed at improving responses to advice needs including:

- Training, networking and resources for maintaining and developing skills and knowledge, including awareness training that is more specific to welfare rights
- Better links with peers and across sectors that would help to improve referral, support and liaison and address existing concerns about the quality and nature of referral between services.
- Other suggestions included one stop approaches where experts handle all enquiries, or combining services that address other needs “at the same time as advice needs”

2.105 All the suggestions have implications for physical and financial resources that were central concerns for voluntary sector services, particularly advice services. Funding problems remain a barrier to shared working and service development.

2.106 Two issues about conflicting interests or priorities were identified, both of which are significant considerations for government services, particularly Jobcentre Plus. Conflicts of interest can arise between advice and other services delivered by the same organisation, raising conflicting priorities within organisations. Although some advisers provided advice about their own services, few had a conflicts of interest policy. Despite the potential for such conflict of interest in Jobcentre Plus, few advisers commented on this. Some advisers identified tensions and conflicts in delivering advice that supports sustainable transitions to work for disadvantaged groups.

2.107 The benefits system and its efficient delivery, resources, partnership working and delivering advice alongside benefits and other services, all present considerable challenges to advice delivery if it is to empower people to make important decisions. For some advice workers there were concerns about their relationship to the welfare to work agenda, making service delivery and partnership working complex if central concerns such as impartiality and independence from the interests of government and other agencies are to be maintained.
2.108 However, limited engagement with advice service users highlights the importance of understanding better user perspectives on the use of advice services and what is important for supporting users in decision making about the transition from benefits to employment. These issues are addressed in the next two chapters.
CHAPTER THREE: TRANSITIONS AND BARRIERS TO WORK

3.01 The previous chapter provided results from a survey of advice providers and discussed the nature of advice services provided, including measures taken to meet the advice needs of disadvantaged groups and support people in the transitions from benefits to education and employment. The survey of advice service users and interviews asked participants about moving from benefits to work, the barriers that they face and their experiences and views of using advice services. In this chapter, we discuss the issues arising in relation to transitions to and from work and education and the barriers that participants consider being significant for them. The following chapter will go on to look in more detail at the experiences and views of users of advice services. For both these chapters the data were explored in detail to identify key themes and issues, but the volume of data means that we report below on summary results and highlights from the research.

Transitions between benefits and employment

3.02 Survey participants were asked to provide details of their current economic status, their current occupation and whether they undertook any voluntary or community activity. Those not currently in employment were asked if they had worked in the past and, if so, what was their occupation. The information provided gave an indication of the stage that individuals were at in moving towards education or employment. In the interviews with advice service users, these issues were discussed in more detail as were some of the motivating factors for those seeking to move towards education and employment. This first section discusses the issues that arose.

Current economic status

Table 3.1: Current economic status (including multiple responses)

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<th>Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<td>not looking for paid work</td>
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<tr>
<td>FT paid work</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>PT paid work</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>in education</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>in training</td>
<td>14</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>caring for children</td>
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<td>Caring for an adult</td>
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<td>asylum seeker/ refugee</td>
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<td>other</td>
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<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.03 All except one person provided information about their current economic status, including 30 people (25.9 per cent) who gave more than one response. Current prisoners were asked what they expected their employment status to be on release and their responses
are included here on that basis. Taking account of multiple responses, approaching one third of respondents were in paid employment, more of them working part-time than full-time (table 3.1), although one person had both a part-time and a full-time job. Those registered as unemployed were the largest group and 10 people said they were not looking for work, 19 said they were caring for children while a similar number said they were in education and 14 described themselves as being in training.

**Employment**

3.04 All those in full-time employment were white and 78 per cent were aged 34 or less. Those working full time included 28 per cent of people with learning difficulties, 13 per cent of lone parents, but only one person with a mental health problem (2.9 per cent) and none of the current or former prisoners. Two thirds of those working full-time had been in their jobs for 20 weeks or less. Similar proportions of male and female respondents were working part-time. Part-time workers included relatively high proportions of people with physical impairment (23 per cent) and learning difficulties (28 per cent), but only 11.4 per cent of people with mental health problems and 8.9 per cent of lone parents. The majority have been in their jobs for less than a year.

**Unemployment**

3.05 Of those registered as unemployed, 38 people gave information on the time period: almost three quarters had been registering for a year or more and two thirds for two years or more. A higher proportion of male respondents were registered unemployed (54.5 per cent) compared with women (34.9 per cent), as were those aged 35 to 44 and 55+ compared with other age groups. All unemployed respondents were white. Amongst respondents with literacy and numeracy problems and those who fall into any of the health related categories, more than half were registered unemployed, including 60 per cent of people with a mental health problem. All former prisoners were unemployed and all current prisoners expected that to be their status on release. In contrast, only 36 per cent of those with learning difficulties and 40 per cent of lone parents were registered as unemployed.

**Not looking for work**

3.06 All of those describing themselves as not looking for paid work were white and they included slightly higher proportions of men and those with a long-term illness (24 per cent) or a mental health problem (20 per cent) than the sample as a whole. All of the 9 people giving further details had been in this situation for two or more years.

**Education and training**

3.07 A higher proportion of women and those aged 16 to 24 said they were in education. This group also included relatively high proportions of people with a long-term illness or health problem. The education courses covered a range from access and prevocational courses such as life skills, literacy and numeracy, to NC/HNC courses in administration, health and social care and beauty therapy and university degrees.
3.08 Women, lone parents and those aged 25 to 34 were more likely than other groups to describe themselves as being in training. Although this group included a small number of people undertaking new deal training and training for work, some who said they were training were also undertaking NC or HNC courses in computing, health and care and childcare, suggesting that there was not a clear distinction made by survey participants between what constituted education or training.

Care

3.09 All except two of those caring for children were women and most were in the age range from 25 to 44. The age of the youngest child was under five in half the cases. Survey participants from black and minority ethnic groups were strongly represented in this group. The three people caring for an adult were female, two had a current or past mental health problem and, in two cases, adult care has been provided for more than 10 years.

3.10 It is interesting to note that lone parents accounted for almost 80 per cent of those who described their employment status as caring for children, but only a third of lone parents overall specifically described themselves as such, instead choosing to describe themselves according to other provided categories. The largest group of lone parents (40 per cent) described themselves as unemployed, a third were in education or training and a quarter were in employment. Closer examination of multiple responses shows that only six lone parents defined their employment status as caring for children alone. The outlook of lone parents in this study suggests a more work focused approach than may have been anticipated in the past. It could be argued that this conforms to the work first approach of the welfare to work agenda.

Other circumstances

3.11 All those describing themselves as asylum seekers or refugees were females from black and minority ethnic groups and none of them had permission to work in the UK currently. The ‘other’ category included two women, one of whom was on a work placement and the other was receiving Disability Living Allowance.

Stages in the transition to work

3.12 The economic status of respondents is complex, involving more than one situation for a significant number of survey participants. However, it is possible to categorise responses into three groups that broadly reflect key stages in the transition from benefits to work: in paid employment, in education or training; and not in paid employment or education. One individual falls into a fourth category because she is in both employment and education which is reflected in table 3.2 below. The table shows that more than half of respondents are in either paid work or in education or training. While a significant proportion of both sexes were not in paid work or education, male respondents were more likely to be in employment while women were more likely than men to be in education or training.
Table 3.2: Employment status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in employment</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in education or training</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>in both work and education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not in work or education</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Voluntary work**

3.13 There were 111 people who responded to a question as to whether they did voluntary or community work, with 31 people (27.9 per cent) responding positively, two thirds of whom were not in employment or education. The groups most likely to undertake voluntary work were those with a physical impairment, a mental health problem or a long-term illness or health problem. Voluntary or community activity was also related to age, with older age groups more likely than the younger age groups to be doing some voluntary or community work. The groups least likely to be doing voluntary or community work included people with literacy and numeracy problems or learning difficulties and those in employment.

3.14 Those undertaking voluntary or community work described a range of activities including care work, administration, hospital visiting, web design, gardening, teaching assistant and five people were involved in support or mentoring roles with voluntary organisations. Others were involved in community groups or management committees, promoting organisations, doing work for credit unions and food co-operatives or developing service user networks and support groups.

**Transitions to and from Work**

3.15 Although less than a third of respondents were in paid employment at the time of the survey, two thirds of the remainder (47 people) said that they had been in paid work before and only one in five of survey participants overall had no experience of paid employment. Those who had a job previously included more than 70 per cent of those registered as unemployed and two thirds of those currently in education or training. Lone parents, people with mental health problems or literacy and numeracy problems were more likely than other groups to have no experience of paid employment, but there was little difference in this regard between male and female survey participants or different age groups.

**Occupational Changes**

3.16 Respondents currently employed were involved in a range of occupations, most of which related to administration, care work, hotel and catering, cleaning and retail. A small number of jobs involved labouring, plant operator, security and factory work and one job, electrician, could be described as a trade.
3.17 Those who identified previous occupations mentioned a similar range of jobs to those in current employment. However, they also cited other occupations, many of which can be described as trades, professional or managerial posts including: armed forces, building trade, careers advisor, estate agent, printer, manager, food technologist, hairdresser, nurse, lifeguard, painter and decorator, welder/ fabricator sales manager, stage manager. The situation of one man with a hearing impairment reflects such changes. Although he is a qualified printer and groundsman, his work now is as a handyman driver. This conforms to an overall picture of people having the desire to get back to work but they are returning to occupations in a narrower range of sectors, most of which are characterised by low wages (Murray, 2005) and may not reflect the skills or remuneration from previous employment.

Moving from work to benefits

3.18 There are many possible reasons for the kinds of occupational changes identified above that may reflect personal, family and economic factors. Such changes were explored further with interviewees, some of whom described the situations that led to them leaving their previous jobs. In some cases these related to childbirth and care responsibilities, including one lone parent who struggled to keep up her nursing certification, but could not maintain the necessary hours and, since she had a daughter who was starting school and wasn’t feeling great, she “just kind of gave up and wasn’t really interested in looking for work”.

3.19 However, the reasons most often given for leaving a previous occupation were related to health or disability issues. Some interviewees found that their health was deteriorating to a point where work was no longer possible. For others, stopping work was related to an employer’s behaviour and/or their inability to redeploy the individual after their health has deteriorated. A former security officer described being retired from a company following a nervous breakdown. One woman with epilepsy recently lost her job as a lifeguard and is taking her employer to a tribunal, as the employer made no attempt to find her other work within what was a large organisation. A lone parent with several health issues gave up her job because she didn’t feel her employer was meeting her disability needs. Another woman last worked full-time three years ago, but has had health problems since:

“I have done odd bits of work from that time but I haven’t been in full time employment... Since then I’ve done agency work, going into peoples homes but it wasn’t the same as working in nursing homes, it wasn’t as heavy... they’re obviously looking for people who don’t have those problems. What I was looking for was to be re-trained and possibly do a different kind of work that didn’t involve that heavy lifting.”

3.20 Her perception was that she may have missed the opportunity to find new and future employment. She had attempted to obtain re-training prior to being in receipt of DLA but did so in the knowledge that her health was deteriorating and that she would soon be unable to do her present job. Now she feels that receiving DLA not only rules her out of employment in which she is experienced, but also precludes her from obtaining alternative training and thus finding alternative employment.
3.21 One man described a situation that places him at a considerable distance from labour market participation:

“I’ve had a good few jobs but when I was 19, 20 I just stopped working and got disability, my back was sore and I was on the sick, I ended up getting into drugs. I was getting panic attacks with anxiety and all that... There are some days when I can’t get out the house, you know some weeks I can get out 10 times and feel alright and the next week I can get out once and feel I need to go home, its just how I feel at the time.”

3.22 A woman who resigned from her job on medical grounds also had a range of issues to contend with before she could consider work:

“I’ve got quite a series of medical surprises recently. I suffered from two strokes and I’ve just been diagnosed with MS, so I’m trying to come to terms with that at the moment, so that’s why I’m not looking for any work, but I did work for 14 years continuously for the social work department... But since I left that I actually became homeless... I lost my home, lost my car, split up with my partner, lost everything and found myself at the other end of the spectrum, but I had worked all my life. And it’s quite a vicious circle, you cannot put you’re homeless, nobody asks to be homeless it’s always circumstances that brings it... but as soon as you say you’re in a homeless unit, the amount of doors that are closed to you, the amount of doors that are slammed in your face...”

3.23 The experience of participants in this study reflect evidence elsewhere that suggests that the onset of disability or ill health and childbirth are likely to have a negative impact on income and economic status (Burchardt, 2000; Miller and Ridge, 2001; Burchardt, 2003; Daly and Rake, 2003).

**Moving to work and reasons for working**

3.24 Most survey respondents who were in work had started their jobs recently, including individuals who have successfully moved through education and training to gain skills and qualifications that increase employability. For example, a former prisoner described getting a draft insulation job through APEX after he got help with a CV and interview techniques. Amongst those in employment, the driving force for working was varied and job aspirations are not always being met. For example, one lone parent described her transition towards her current 20 hour a week job as a play worker in an after school service:

“I was on an intermediate labour market programme before that. I did my ILM... I had brought up my daughter, but I did voluntary work and I didn’t know about (Organisation)...But I had worked in my daughter’s school – I ran the PTA and I did classroom assistant on a voluntary basis. I was thinking that the SVQ would get me into a classroom assistant position but it didn’t because they are very hard to come by.”

3.25 Although she enjoyed her job, this interviewee was undecided about whether she was financially better off.
Non Monetary reasons for working

3.26 There were many people who wanted to work for non-monetary reasons. The reasons for working varied from trying to get some structure in life to wanting more physical independence, as well as the financial benefits of work. One woman with a long-term illness told us:

“I want to work, sitting in the house just gets to you, that’s why I went out to do voluntary work, you know, just to get out the house.”

3.27 For the mother of a young woman with learning difficulties, the motivation for her daughter to work was not financially driven:

“We always felt the job was more important for her than earning money because it gives her a structure in life... the job is very important for her, and we were very lucky to get a job very local.”

3.28 However, once that particular job came to an end there was considerable frustration that, despite doing all that was required and visiting numerous help agencies, no other suitable part-time work could be found and so the structure deemed so valuable was being lost.

3.29 For one lone parent who worked part-time as a domestic assistant in a nursing home, the motivation for working was not entirely financial, nor was the present job the type of work she would like to have ultimately. She worked 16 hours a week in order to stay within the limit for claiming income support. She had previously worked full-time, giving up her job after her child was born, but was currently working because she wanted her child at nursery:

“I feel that there's a good wee mixing with the other kids, ... because when I wasn't working she was with me all day, right, maybe meeting up with adults and that was it. She wasn't mixing with any children and now I see a big difference in her at nursery - that's my main reasons. It's obviously getting me out for a while, but it's a good wee job I've got just now - it's just I don't want to be cleaning forever, that's the only reason I'm looking for something else... Gives me a bit of my own life rather than being A's mum. As soon as you become a parent you start getting, you're somebody else's something rather than yourself. You can never be yourself anymore.”

3.30 In addition to having a number of different reasons for wanting to work, there were also many views regarding the type of work that respondents were doing or were willing to do. These related to the nature of work on offer but also concerned the desire to take the first steps back into the labour market, thus reducing selectivity. One lone parent adequately summed it up thus:
“At the moment I'm just doing cleaning, but I only took that job to get me back out working, I felt it was getting on a wee bit and I was starting to feel am I going to go back to work, so I just took the first thing that was available for the hours I was looking for. And now that's me starting to look for something that I'm more wanting to do.”

3.31 Such desires raise obvious questions regarding the degree to which there is employment progression for many of the groups we encountered during the research. There are some people who have sought other skills and so it could be imagined that they may find it easier to move jobs and indeed to ‘progress’. However, in this study we found that several people had taken fairly menial jobs as a first step but may find it increasingly difficult to move beyond that first step. A woman with a physical impairment and a young child saw working as a way to get out of the house and socialise but also a way to expand on her skills base:

“At the moment I would still work 16-20 hours a week, because I enjoy working. I enjoy getting out and getting away from everything - not obviously away from my child, I love spending time with him, but I like gaining experience and gaining knowledge in new things all the time, and trying to always put something towards helping me with my education, or just learning something, learning different things about people really.”

3.32 In addition one man summed up his feelings in a very stark manner. When asked what it is that makes him want to work he simply stated:

“To actually get my life, start living my own life so I can start living by myself and start to support myself.”

Skills and work experience issues

3.33 Several interviewees considered that education and training, work experience and voluntary activity were important for them. For example, one man found that his health meant he could not work full-time, so he was looking for part-time work but could not find a suitable job. He was doing voluntary work with a users network, including developing a database for the voluntary organisation. More positively, one woman with learning difficulties had gained experience from a work placement in a supported employment project and was going to a new placement with a bookbinder.

3.34 The availability of part time work was an issue for a number of our interviewees as was the issue of varying hours. One respondent felt that employer demands to change the number of hours worked at short notice could create benefit problems:

“you're working 12 hours, they might ask you to work a wee bit more and then the next Monday you get your dole you get hardly anything.”
3.35 For one lone parent, a 6 month placement ended but she volunteered to do web design with the same organisation. She was optimistic that, if funding can be found, she may obtain paid employment there. In contrast, one man with learning difficulties recalled negative experiences of Day Centres and was still looking for work experience that met his needs:

“There was just no work experience and even thinking back to when we were at school there was no careers advice or anything like that. We’d put on labels, pack coffee, I found it boring and I found that concentration was a weakness as well. I think it would be good if there was more of a choice than the day centre environment. I think they’re trying to get away from the day centre environment now but it’s taken them so long. I also would like to try a lot more employment things.”

3.36 Several interviewees discussed improving skills and qualifications. For example, one woman with a hearing impairment and no formal qualifications had left school when she was 14 to take care of her mother. Although she had recently moved into part-time employment, her links with a supported employment project led to her starting a class to learn sign language.

3.37 However, for some interviewees, volunteering and education or training fell short of their hopes and two women described barriers that related to institutional concerns. For a woman with mental health problems, her aspiration to move from level II to level III of her business administration course was being thwarted by issues with the training provider:

“... they didn’t have an advisor at that time. So everything was going nowhere, plus the place was being taken over by another company and the ones that’s taken it over are only wanting the ones for two weeks at a time, like we’re doing forklift and that, and they’re not letting any other folk come in to do admin.”

3.38 Another woman faced similar frustrations in trying to do voluntary work at an after school club, combined with a computer course, but she had been there for seven weeks and nothing had happened with the computer course:

“I just thought I’d rather – there’s no point in me going to do a job for nothing and not getting the computer skills at the same time, so I thought I’d leave that and concentrate on doing the computer course a bit more.”

3.39 Clearly the desire to access training exists but interviewees highlighted that there remain questions around access, availability and relevance of courses that may be driven by administrative concerns more than the training needs of individuals making the return to work.
Barriers to Work

3.40 In recent years a body of research has built up that aims to identify and understand the barriers that different groups of individuals face in trying to move from benefits to employment or education (see for example, Lakey et al, 2001; Miller and Rowlingson, 2001; Kasparova et al, 2003; Barnes and Mercer, 2003; Robbie and Pressland, 2003; NFFI, 2000, Wilson, 2003; Metcalf et al, 2001). That is not the purpose of this study, but in order to take account of different levels of need for access to advice and support, it is important to gain some understanding of the nature of the barriers faced by the participants in the study in trying to move from benefits to education, training or work.

3.41 Survey participants were provided with a list of issues that are considered to be important and were asked: ‘What are the main barriers you face in moving into work or education?’ The first point of interest to note is that there is a widely held perception among respondents that there are multiple barriers: some 83.1 per cent of respondents answering the question either ticked more than one of the options available or added to those options. Only 13 people (14.2 per cent) said they had one barrier, while 3 people said they faced no barriers: two were in work and one in education and all had learning difficulties. As table 3.3 shows, the majority of respondents who identified one or more barriers considered that they faced multiple issues in making the transition towards work and the mean number of barriers identified was 4.96. There were 10 people (8.8 per cent) who said they faced between 10 and 13 different barriers. Men were more likely to say they faced 7 or more barriers while women were over represented amongst those with one to six barriers. Lone parents were less likely than other groups to identify seven or more barriers, although 28.9 per cent did so. In contrast, more than 80 per cent of prisoners and former prisoners identified seven or more barriers, as did 48.6 per cent of survey participants with mental health problems and 40 per cent of those with learning difficulties or problems with reading or writing. Those in employment or not in work or education were more likely than those in education or training to identify seven or more barriers.

Table 3.3: Barriers to Work or Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% (n=110)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3 barriers</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 barriers</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 or more barriers</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.42 Overall, the barriers mentioned most often were ‘your financial situation generally’ which was identified by 57 respondents (50.4 per cent) and ‘your confidence’ which was selected by 38 people (33.6 per cent). There were then a cluster of issues that were selected by around a quarter of respondents covering the extra costs of working, physical and mental health, finding suitable part-time work, managing debt and benefits rules. These and other barriers identified will now be explored in more detail, under the themes of: financial situation (including benefits); disability and health; family issues; other social issues; and workplace, skills and experience. There is a table in each section providing information for each group of barriers. The research respondents were asked to identify which of several personal characteristics applied to them and these are used to identify key disadvantaged groups that for a particular focus of analysis here, namely: I have a physical impairment; I
have a long-term illness or health problem; I have a current or past mental health problem; I have problems with reading, writing or using numbers; I have difficulty with learning, I am a lone parent; I am a prisoners due for release; I am a former prisoner. Where the figures show relevant similarities or discrepancies in relation to gender and/or age, these will also be highlighted.

**Financial situation**

3.43 The first potential barrier highlighted in the questionnaire was the respondents’ **general financial situation**. The response to this question was interesting in that, across all of the groups identified in 3.42 above, the general financial situation was much more likely to be considered a barrier than most other barriers. The lowest response was still high among those with long-term illnesses or health problems (40.7 per cent), while approaching two thirds of those with a current or past mental health problem and lone parents perceived their financial situation generally as a barrier to participation in education or the labour market. It should be noted that 100 per cent of the small sample of prisoner responses cited finance as a barrier.

3.44 As far as gender is concerned there is a marked difference in relation to the propensity to see one’s financial situation as a barrier, with 55 per cent of women and 37 per cent of men giving a positive response in this category. There was also some divergence in views according to age with positive responses clustered around the mid range age groups.

3.45 There is a commonality of experiences among three groups when it comes to **managing bills or debt**. Around one third of people with a long-term illness, people with current or past mental health problems and lone parents indicated that money management acted as a barrier to moving from benefits. None of the prisoner respondents felt that managing debts would negatively affect them but, among those who have already left prison, some 80 per cent of respondents mentioned managing debt as a significant barrier. Although these figures are drawn from a small sample, they are indicative of a general trend with regard to these sub-groups: current prisoners do not perceive many barriers as a potential problem but, after release, former prisoners’ direct experiences would appear to refute these optimistic projections. One such former prisoner summed up his experiences thus:

“Aye, at first with managing bills and debts, there’s nobody there to say to you ‘you’ve got to do this, don’t do that’ you know what I mean, if you’re going to do it you’ve got to do it yourself sort of thing, it’s a bit puzzling.”

3.46 It is clear from this individual’s experience that the problems of managing debt are not just financial but also include the complexity of the situation and the lack of knowledge regarding what help or advice is available. There was considerable variation in terms of the age groups indicating debts as a barrier, the 25-34 age group being the largest (31 per cent).

**Benefits barriers**

3.47 There was a widespread perception that **benefit rules** were or had been a barrier. While those who had problems with reading and writing were the least likely to indicate this
as an issue, there were still some 22 per cent of this sub-group who did see benefit rules as a significant barrier. Most other group responses were clustered around the high twenties and low thirties, including lone parents, those with a physical impairment and those with mental health problems. However, prisoners’ and ex prisoners’ responses were significantly higher: half of prisoners and 60% of former prisoners felt that benefit rules will be or had been a significant barrier to moving from benefits into work, training or education.

3.48 In terms of the age distribution of those who saw this as a barrier, it is interesting to note that the proportion rose with age. While 11 per cent of the 16-24 age group saw this as a barrier this rose to 23 per cent for 25-34 year olds, 30 per cent for 35-44 year olds and 37 per cent for those aged 45 to 54. Interestingly the number dropped to zero for the small number of people over the age of 55. A couple of examples of what people told us would help to indicate this. One woman who identified herself as having multiple barriers indicated that she had been denied DLA while homeless (as the rules state that, in order to qualify, you must have a fixed abode). Another complained that for DLA purposes a hearing impairment does not seem to be treated with the same gravity as other disabilities. She stated that:

“For some reason they are not classing hearing as a disability.... we're the only group that I've known not be able to get disability money because they try to say it's not a disability. If you were blind, or you were blind in one eye you would get that disability money. If you're deaf you don't get it. Why's that?”

3.49 There was little overall perceptions that lost benefits acted as a barrier to moving off benefits. The only group who answered affirmative to this were those who have a long-term illness or health problem. However there were some very stark examples of lost benefits, or concern that they will be lost, being a major issue. One woman who has a teenage daughter of working age said that:

“... if my daughter worked. So I would lose £40, so she would need to go out and earn £40 every week at least, just to cover. Plus her bus fares, plus her dinner, and plus her makeup and plus her uniform every week.”

3.50 Benefit delays were perceived to be a barrier for many of the groups in the research including almost a third of people with physical impairments. Current prisoners also felt this to be the case, as did one in five or more of those with learning difficulties or literacy and numeracy problems, lone parents, those with long-term illnesses or health problems and people with mental health problems.

3.51 The benefit cycle was perceived as more of a problem among men (31 per cent), although the figure for women was still a significant 21 per cent and was a concern for 40 per cent of respondents with mental health problems. The fear and uncertainty about what may happen if you take a job and then quickly have to leave can be seen in the comments of one man with learning difficulties:
“I suppose when your on benefits I suppose its quite difficult to change from one job to the other or if you do change from one to the other and the job doesn’t work out what do you do?”

Table 3.4: Barriers – Financial Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your financial situation generally</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing bills/ debt</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits rules</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost/ reduced benefits/ services (e.g. DLA, school meals)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit delays</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worries about not being able to keep a job and reclaiming benefits</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages based on 113 responses

**Disability and health barriers**

3.52 Perhaps not surprisingly, a large number of people with physical impairments (some 61 per cent of respondents) identified **physical health** as a barrier. The figures were even higher for those with long-term illnesses and/or health problems, with 70 per cent perceiving their physical health as a barrier to their ability to move off benefits. Indeed, the only groups giving less indication of their physical health as being problematic in employment terms were lone parents and prisoners, since 40 per cent of those with mental health problems, 40 per cent of former prisoners, 30 per cent of those with literacy and numeracy problems and 28 per cent of people with learning difficulties saw this as a significant barrier to their movement from benefits.

3.53 There were no significant differences in the gender breakdown in relation to this issue but distribution by age was significant. Essentially, the perception is that this barrier increases with age. While 26 per cent of 35 to 44 year olds saw their physical health in this way the number rises to 44 per cent for those who are between 45 and 54 and 75 per cent for those over 55.

3.54 The issue of multiple barriers identified above in relation to physical health is replicated, albeit in lower numbers, when examining the degree to which people see their **mental health** acting as a barrier for them. Some 65 per cent of those with mental health problems indicated that their mental health may act as a barrier to their ability to move from benefits. They were joined by 41 per cent of those with long-term illnesses or health problems, 30 per cent of people with literacy problems and 24 per cent of those with learning difficulties. In addition half of prisoners also felt that their mental health will act as a barrier to their ability to work or move into training or education on release.

3.55 The perception of mental health acting as a barrier was more prevalent among men than women, 34 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. This perception also occurred more among older respondents with 50 per cent of those aged 45 or over seeing their mental health as a significant barrier.

3.56 The question of **drug use** appears to be a particular issue for those who are in or have been in prison: 50 per cent of current prisoners and 60 per cent of former prisoners identified
the fact that they are recovering drug users as a potential barrier. The only other group with any significant response in this category was those with mental health problems with 14 per cent responding in the affirmative. The issue of drug use was more significant among men than women (15 per cent and 4 per cent respectively).

Table 3.5: Barriers – Disability and Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your physical health</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mental health</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug use</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recovering from drug use</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages based on 113 responses

**Family issues**

3.57 Not surprisingly the responses in the category of **finding suitable care for dependents** were concentrated among lone parents, with some 36 per cent seeing this as a significant barrier. The responses among the other groups were negligible. Interestingly, while 23 per cent of women thought that finding care for dependents as a barrier, there were no men who felt similarly despite the fact that our respondents included some male lone parents. As might be expected, considering most of the care sought was child care, the age categories most represented in positive responses to this question were the 25 to 34 year old and the 35 to 44 year olds.

3.58 Once again the respondents finding **childcare costs** a significant barrier tended to be lone parents, with some 42 per cent seeing this as a barrier despite the financial help now available through tax credits. While 30 per cent of women indicated that childcare was an important issue, just 3 per cent of men agreed. The overall problem of the cost and availability of childcare can be summed up by one lone parent who stated that:

“I found that a big massive barrier because I wanted to work and earn money, but I wanted to make sure my child was looked after and, at that point, I didn’t know about the child care, the child tax credit. I just happened to realise about it when I was reading papers on it and reading about allowances and stuff like that. And we didn’t get as much money the first year because they were still judging me on my full-time wage, which was the year before, and we didn’t get that refunded until the next year, and by the time that happened, it’s pretty useless to you because you’re earning enough money anyway supposedly. That was a big barrier for me because I found they should have judged you on what you’ve got now and not what you used to have, you know, my hours had dropped. That was a big, big issue for us, because we had a year of quite a lot of hardship, financially.”

3.59 In addition, a number of respondents felt reluctant to take on too many hours at a time when their children may need them. The continuing pressures on women to work and
manage care responsibilities appear to be prevalent and are a restraint on many women wishing to access the labour market more fully.

3.60 **Health of children and family members** was mentioned as a barrier by a relatively small number of people, and most of those raising such concerns were lone parents. One woman highlighted the importance of family support and the impact that ill health can have for family members:

“It was a barrier in the fact that my mother-in-law was an amazing person. She would work and look after my child, so for me, I was so grateful for that, and that helped me with any barriers that I did have, which was maybe to work and cope financially. I knew that once she took ill that we were going to have a barrier - help with care for her, helping the family cope with it, and then when M fell pregnant at 17, it made life a lot more difficult because everybody was trying to deal with that as well and how she was going to cope with everything that was going on between her Mum being ill and being pregnant. Everybody was worried about that, so trying to focus on that and that’s on your mind and you’re trying to do your job and trying to do college. It was very difficult to switch off, and it was very stressful.”

3.61 All of the prisoners mentioned **other family issues** as a barrier to work or training. The other group who mention family issues in significant numbers were those with physical impairments.

3.62 There was another interesting and important issue raised in regard to ‘other family issues’, that being the absence of family networks and family ties. Not all who commented on this issue conform to notions of the breakdown of spatial communities since some were born abroad and their families remained there. However, it is a point that may be worthy of further investigation.

**Table 3.6: Barriers – family issues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding suitable care for dependents</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare costs</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health of children/ family members</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family issues</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages based on 113 responses

**Other social barriers**

3.63 For 16 per cent of men, **housing issues** were perceived as a barrier for them while only 5 per cent of women felt likewise. However it should be stated that a number of respondents who were interviewed indicated that housing issues had been a barrier in the past but did not make reference to it in the survey as it no longer applied. The figures were fairly evenly distributed among the various age groups and sub categories, although they were higher for prisoners and former prisoners standing at 50 per cent and 40 per cent respectively.
3.64 Among the different groups there was wide variation in the numbers who perceived **discrimination** as a barrier to them. While only 11 per cent of lone parents felt this to be the case the figures gradually rise to 25 per cent of those with mental health problems, 28 per cent of people with a learning difficulty, 30 per cent of those with a long-term illness and those with literacy and/or numeracy problems, jumping to a considerable 40 per cent of former prisoners and some 46 per cent of those with a physical impairment.

3.65 Interestingly men appeared to feel discrimination more than women (37 per cent and 15 per cent respectively). On further analysis it seems that this discrepancy is largely due to the comparatively larger sample of our male population having no qualifications or having literacy and numeracy problems, groups for whom discrimination was more marked as a barrier. Given that women are more generally discriminated against than men in terms of the labour market, this result may appear surprising. The reasons for this are not clear from the data, but may be explained in part by the slightly different socio-economics by gender of our survey population. It may also be the case that the general discrimination faced by women may mean their propensity to feel discrimination is lessened in terms of, for example, lone parenthood, or disability. We also noted that both men and women in employment were more likely than others to say that discrimination was a barrier, as were those with past work experience compared with those who had never worked. This suggests greater optimism amongst those without direct experience of the labour market compared with those who have been through the process of moving into work. Interviewees were extremely expansive in their comments regarding their experiences of discrimination in a range of circumstances. One lone parent told us:

“You know like sometimes when you’re going for interviews, they would say, oh you’ve got children to look after, and especially if you were going for shift work. So the barrier wasn’t in the actual workplace, it was before I got to the workplace. The barrier was already up.”

3.66 One woman with mental health problems stated that:

“Most employers, I find, they don’t like you having a mental illness. They don’t. And that’s one of my biggest issues is I do have a mental illness, and I will never get better from that. Because if you turn round and say that you’ve got mental health issues, I think that’s where you’ll find that you will come up against barriers.”

3.67 Lack of **confidence** was mentioned as a barrier for a significant number of individuals and among a significant number of the sub groups. The lowest response on this issue was among lone parents but even in this category 31 per cent perceived a lack of confidence as a barrier. From there the numbers for the other groups rise significantly: 44 per cent of those with learning difficulties, 46 per cent with physical impairments, 48 per cent of those with literacy and numeracy problems or long-term illnesses or health problems and half of respondents with mental health problems and prisoners. The perception of confidence acting as a barrier to training, education or employment was considerably higher among women than men (38 per cent and 22 per cent respectively).

3.68 **Transport problems** were mentioned by quite a number of the respondents. Half of prisoners, 36 per cent of those with learning difficulties, 30 per cent of people with literacy and numeracy problems, 26 per cent of those with long-term illnesses, 23 per cent of people
with physical impairments and 20 per cent of people with mental health problems indicated that transport problems can act as a significant barrier to moving from benefits into work or training.

3.69 The trend of former prisoners to see more barriers than current prisoners could also be seen in respect to whether having a **criminal record** will be or has been a barrier for them. While 50 per cent of current prisoners felt their record would be a barrier, a couple also said they’d just try to hide it and were therefore implicitly acknowledging that a record may act as a barrier. The figure for former prisoners seeing their record as a barrier was complete at 100 per cent. It is also worth noting that there is a residual fear among some who have never been in prison but who have a record from a long time in the past. Despite the minor nature of the convictions and the passage of time since the convictions, there was still a perception that this was a significant barrier to moving from benefits into training or employment. The following quotes adequately demonstrate the perception, based on experience, of a criminal record being a significant impediment to moving from benefits into work:

“If job centres know you’ve been an ex prisoner they don’t want to know you, they don’t want to sign you up for anything, they’ll sign you up for any jobs, they know its not going to work out for you but they’ll no give you a long-term job if you’ve got a criminal record. Most employers will not take you on either because of your criminal record. I’ve not been in trouble for 5 years now but it was just before that, it was only 6 months and 3 months, I’ve not had any heavy sentences, its all just been for breeches and for tapping change in the town.”

“Oh aye. Loads of employers won’t even look at you if you’ve got a record. I think I’d do okay in interviews but they see you’ve got a record and they don’t want to know. That’s why ____ was good, everybody there had done time so the employers knew they were getting people who’d done time. I sent out 50 letters to get work at one point and only got 1 reply. I’m pretty sure that was down to my record.”

“This criminal conviction thing – this happened in 1981. ____ told me I had to declare it. The minute I started to declare it, I was in trouble... It makes you feel like it happened yesterday. Initially they said I would need to declare it – you just have to keep plugging away... The minute I stop declaring them. I start getting interviews... What is now worrying me is that this job I have been offered is only covering maternity leave. They’ve offered me the job, but they have to do disclosure Scotland and I’m just worried because I know that form goes up to Edinburgh.”

3.70 More than one in five survey participants identified **other barriers** that they faced in moving from benefits to work or education, including 29 per cent of people with mental health problems and 17.4 per cent of people with literacy or numeracy problems. Men were more likely than women to identify other barriers as were older age groups compared with younger people.
3.71 Some of these other barriers were related to those listed, including travel, several concerning aspects of childcare (including summer holiday care), hours of work and issues relating to skills and qualifications. Specific health issues were mentioned here also: for one woman it was “a memory problem, partial brain damage” and for another women, an alcohol problem. The uncertainty of mental ill health was highlighted by one respondent, while other comments suggested that discriminatory attitudes were a concern, including the following from a man with a mental health problem:

“Employers lack of understanding of people with disabilities which has not been addressed by the DDA.”

3.72 For one man with learning difficulties, a key concern was that, combined with difficulties that he had with concentration, he was concerned about the amount of in-work support that would be available to him:

“lack of support in the past, staff in day centres can't provide that service.”

3.73 Age was also an issue for one older man with health problems and length of time out of work was considered a barrier for several people, while for one young person, lack of experience was a barrier. Travel and access to work were a concern for a former prisoner who lives in a rural area.

Table 3.7: Barriers – Wider social issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness/ other housing problems</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination/ attitudes at work</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your confidence</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport problems</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a criminal record</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages based on 113 responses

Workplace, Skills and Qualifications

3.74 The trend alluded to above regarding the different perceptions of prisoners and former prisoners can be seen once more in responses about the extra costs of working acting as a barrier. While a significant 50 per cent of prisoners felt this may act as a barrier the proportion rose to some 80 per cent among former prisoners. There were also significant responses among other sub categories: 34 per cent of those with a current or past mental health problem and 29 per cent of lone parents also saw this as an existing or potential problem area.

3.75 Pay and conditions, presumably poor, have been indicated as a barrier for many of our respondents: 20 per cent of those with mental health problems felt that expected pay and conditions acted as a barrier, while 22 per cent of those with a long-term illness agreed. On
the upper level of responses, 38 per cent of people with physical impairments agree that pay and conditions are a barrier to them. This issue evidences, once again, the dichotomy of attitudes amongst prisoner and former prisoner. Half of prisoners had such concerns but some 80 per cent of former prisoners felt that the pay and conditions available to them acted as a significant barrier.

3.76 There was also a significant difference regarding the proportion of men and women seeing pay and conditions as a barrier for them. While 34 per cent of men felt this to be the case the figure drops to 15 per cent of women. These concerns were particularly prevalent among the mid age range of 35 to 44 year olds.

3.77 There were two groups who felt that the availability, or lack of availability, of part time work acted as a significant barrier to moving off benefits: 30 per cent of respondents with a long-term illness or health problem along with 22 per cent of lone parents felt this to be the case.

3.78 Access problems getting to or at work were a barrier for more than one in ten survey participants, but particularly for those with mental health problems (14.3 per cent) or learning difficulties (16.0 per cent), prisoners and former prisoners. Such problems were identified more strongly by those under age 35 than older age groups and by men (21.9 per cent) more than women (7.4 per cent).

3.79 The extra costs of being a student were identified as a barrier by only six people, all of whom were women and most were aged 35 to 44. Lone parents accounted for half the number and were more likely to see this as a problem than other groups. This is consistent with research that suggests there remain challenges for lone parents accessing education, particularly higher education, despite measures aimed to improve such access (Ballantyne et al, 2003).

3.80 The overall numbers and the spread among groups for whom reading and writing abilities were a barrier were fairly restricted, with only 2 groups responding in any significant numbers: 65 per cent of people with literacy and numeracy problems and 56 per cent of those with learning difficulties. The gender division in this respect was significant, with 41 per cent of men indicating that their reading and writing abilities were a barrier but just 12 per cent of women. Of course, this can at least partly be explained by the relatively high proportion of men with literacy and numeracy problems and learning difficulties in our sample. The figures were particularly marked in two of the ages groups, that of the 16 to 24s with 42 per cent seeing this barrier in their lives and half of the over 55s.

3.81 There were numerous groups who, to varying levels, felt that their general skills and qualifications were a considerable barrier for them. Prisoners and former prisoners responded positively (40 per cent and 50 per cent respectively) and were also joined by 36 per cent of those with learning difficulties, 33 per cent of those with long-term illnesses or health problems, 30 per cent with literacy and numeracy problems and 29 per cent of people with mental health problems.

3.82 Again the perception of this barrier was higher among men than women (31 per cent and 11 per cent respectively). In addition, as with reading and writing abilities, the responses were more significant among the older age groups of our respondents with 31 per cent of 45
to 54 year olds and 50 per cent of the over 55s feeling that their skills and qualifications inhibited their ability to move off benefits and into work or training.

3.83 The small number of survey participants for whom an anticipated problem was that qualifications are not legitimate in the eyes of employers were all women under the age of 35 and included three asylum seekers and three people from black and minority ethnic groups.

Table 3.8: Barriers – work, skills and qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extra costs of working</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay/conditions of work you would get</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding suitable part-time work</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access problems getting to or at work</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra costs of being a student</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your reading and writing abilities</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your skills or qualifications generally</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications not recognised here</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages based on 113 responses

Summary

3.84 Survey participants identified a range of situations that applied to them including: physical impairment, physical and mental health problems, learning difficulties, literacy and numeracy difficulties, lone parenthood or being a current or former prisoner. Most situations applied to between 20 and 30 per cent of respondents, although there was a higher proportion of lone parents and fewer current or former prisoners. Conditions across a spectrum were identified by those with an impairment, illness or learning difficulty. Almost a quarter of respondents had no qualifications or ‘o’ levels/standard grades, a third had a vocational qualification, and 3.5 per cent had a university degree. The most common income sources were income support or job seekers allowance, disability living allowance and wages.

3.85 The employment status of respondents is complex, involving more than one situation for a significant number of survey participants. However, approaching one third of advice service users were in paid employment (more of them working part-time than full-time), 40 per cent were registered as unemployed and a quarter were in education (mainly women and younger age groups). Smaller proportions of people were caring for children or adults (mostly women and lone parents), not looking for work, or had the status of asylum seeker or refugee (all women from black and minority ethnic groups). Most of those registered as unemployed and all of those not looking for paid work had been in those situations for two or more years. Of 31 people who did a range of voluntary or community work, most were in neither employment nor education.
Transitions to and from Work

3.86 Less than a third of respondents were in paid employment, but two thirds of the remainder had been in paid work in the past and only one in five survey participants had no experience of paid work. There was a broader range of occupations for past employment compared with current employment that fell into a narrow range of sectors that are characterised by low wages. Moving out of employment was related most often to health or disability issues (including employer attitudes) and childbirth or care responsibilities. The participants in the study reflect other evidence that suggests that the onset of disability or ill health and motherhood are likely to have a negative impact on income and economic status.

3.87 Most survey respondents who were currently in work had started their jobs recently. Although financial issues were a motivation for some, many respondents had non-monetary reasons for working including: trying to get some structure in life; or wanting more independence. The type of work that respondents were doing reflected the nature of work on offer and the desire to take the first steps back into the labour market, thus reducing selectivity. However, there were questions about the degree to which there is employment progression for many of the groups and those who had taken fairly menial jobs as a first step may find it increasingly difficult to move beyond that first step.

3.88 Several interviewees considered that education and training, work experience and voluntary activity were important for them, often for improving skills and qualifications. However, for some interviewees, education or training fell short of their hopes, raising questions around access, availability and relevance of courses that may be driven by administrative concerns more than the training needs of individuals making the return to work.

Barriers to work

3.89 In order to take account of different levels of need for access to advice and support, the survey asked about the nature of the barriers faced by the participants in trying to move from benefits to education, training or work. The vast majority identified multiple barriers and, overall, those mentioned most often were: ‘your financial situation generally’ (mentioned by half the respondents across groups); and lack of confidence was mentioned by 33.6 per cent, particularly people with mental health problems, prisoners and those with long-term illnesses or health problems and women more than men. Around a quarter of respondents said the following were barriers for them: the extra costs of working, physical and mental health, finding suitable part-time work, managing debt and benefits rules. Other barriers were mentioned less often.

- Around one third of most groups said that debts act as a barrier to moving from benefits. No current prisoners saw debt as an issue, but most former prisoners did. Current prisoners did not perceive many barriers as a potential problem but, after release, former prisoners direct experiences were less optimistic.

- Benefit rules were a barrier across groups, but particularly for prisoners and ex prisoners. Concerns about returning to benefits were important for many of the groups in the research, but particularly people with mental health problems.
There was little surprise that physical health was more of a barrier for people with physical impairments, long-term illnesses or health problems than other groups, or that mental health was a barrier for two thirds of those with mental health problems. However, the existence of multiple health barriers was marked among those with a health problem or disability. For example, 40 per cent of respondents with a mental health problem also said their physical health was a barrier for them. The question of drug use was a particular issue for current or former prisoners and people with mental health problems.

30 per cent of women said childcare was a barrier compared with just 3% of men. In addition, a number of respondents felt reluctant to take on too many hours at a time when their children may need them. The continuing pressures on women to work and manage care responsibilities appear to be prevalent and a restraint on many women wishing to extend access to the labour market.

There was wide variation in perceptions of discrimination as a barrier: 11% of lone parents, 25% of those with mental health problems, 30% of those with a long term illness or literacy and numeracy problems, 40% of former prisoners and 46% of those with a physical impairment and 37% of men compared with 15% of women. The difference by sex may be accounted for by the comparatively larger proportion male respondents with no qualifications or literacy and numeracy problems.

Transport problems were mentioned by quite a number of the respondents including 50% of prisoners, 36% of those with learning difficulties and 30% of people with literacy and numeracy problems.

Various work related issues such as the extra costs of working, pay and conditions and hours of part time work acted as a barrier for some groups.

Reading and writing abilities were an issue mostly for those with literacy and numeracy problems and learning difficulties, men more than women and the youngest and oldest age groups.

Skills and qualifications were a considerable barrier, particularly for prisoners and former prisoners and people with learning difficulties or a long-term illness or health problem.

The trend of former prisoners to see more barriers than current prisoners also applied in relation to having a criminal record – half of current prisoners felt their record would be a barrier compared with all former prisoners.
CHAPTER FOUR: USING ADVICE SERVICES

4.01 This chapter provides analysis of the advice service user survey and interviews in relation to their use of advice services and their experiences and preferences in using such services. It discusses their general use of advice services and goes on to look in more detail at the service that individuals used most recently and the types of issues or problems with which they needed help. In considering general satisfaction with the services used, strengths and weaknesses, gaps in provision and preferences are discussed in more detail.

The services used

4.02 Survey participants were asked to indicate which of a range of advice service types they had used for advice on any aspect of moving from benefits to further education or work. All except one person provided a response and 65 people (56 per cent) identified that they had used more than one advice source in the past to meet their advice needs. Table 4.1 below gives details of the services used and shows that most respondents have used Jobcentre Plus and more than one in four had used other council services and other voluntary groups.

Table 4.1: Which types of advice services have you used in the past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>% (n=116)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAB</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other voluntary sector advice</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary sector (other)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing association</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority welfare rights</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other council service</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student support/welfare service</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers Scotland</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other government service</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone advice line</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.03 All of those using a CAB for advice had used one or more other services, including six who had used Jobcentre Plus and five who had used other voluntary sector advice services. Three quarters of those using CABx had a long-term illness or health problem and most were aged between 25 and 44, but only two lone parents, one person with reading or writing difficulties and none of those with learning difficulties or those aged under 24 had used the service.

4.04 Of those using other voluntary sector advice services, 13 people had used other sources of advice, including 12 who had also used Jobcentre Plus and 5 using CABx. People across the range of circumstances and age groups had used these services, but they included a higher proportion of men than women and people with a long-term illness or health problem.
4.05 Amongst the 31 people using other voluntary sector services, there were 23 people who had used a range of other services including 15 who had used Jobcentre Plus. Almost two thirds using other voluntary sector groups were not in work or education and this group included a high proportion of women compared with men, lone parents and respondents from black and minority ethnic groups and all asylum seekers.

4.06 Of those using housing association advice services, all except one had used other sources of advice, including 7 who had used Jobcentre Plus and three who had used voluntary sector advice services. Those using housing association advice services included 4 in employment, 6 not in work or education and 3 people who were not looking for paid work, but no people with reading and writing difficulties and only one with learning difficulties.

4.07 All of those who had used local authority welfare rights services had used other advice services as well, including four who had used other council services and 5 who had used Jobcentre Plus. This group included four people with a current or past mental health problem and three who were not looking for paid work, but no people from black and minority ethnic groups and only two people who were not in work or education.

4.08 Of those using other council services, three quarters had used other services including more than half who had used Jobcentre Plus (18), four who had used each of CABx and local authority welfare rights services and 5 who had used other voluntary sector advice services. Within this group there was a higher proportion of men than women, two thirds were aged 34 or less and two thirds were in paid employment. More than half (53 per cent) had learning difficulties and 40.6 per cent had reading or writing difficulties, but only two were lone parents and none were from black and minority ethnic groups.

4.09 All of those using student support or welfare services had used one or more other services as well, including 5 using Jobcentre Plus, two using each of CABx and other voluntary sector advice services and local authority welfare rights. All of this group were female, 6 were aged 25 to 34, 6 were in education or training, almost half (5) had a long-term illness or health problem and 5 were lone parents. However, none of those with reading and writing difficulties and only one person with learning difficulties had used these services.

4.10 Of the eight people using Careers Scotland, there were two who had not used any other services. Most (5) had used Jobcentre Plus. This group included two lone parents and one prisoner and all except one were aged 34 or less. There were three people in this group who were registered as unemployed, two were in paid work and two in education.

4.11 Most respondents had used Jobcentre Plus and almost three quarters of them had used other advice services (51). A relatively high proportion of those using Jobcentre Plus had reading or writing difficulties, almost half were lone parents (33), a similar number (32) were not in work or education and 20 people were currently in employment. Although Jobcentre Plus was used by people across a range of ages and circumstances, this group included all except one of the former prisoners and two thirds of those registered as unemployed, but only one survey participant from a minority ethnic group.

4.12 All except one of those using other government services had also used other services, including six who used Jobcentre Plus and four who had used other council services. Higher proportions of people with mental health problems or learning difficulties and those registered for work used these service compared with other groups. All of those using
telephone advice lines had used other services including other voluntary groups (2) and Jobcentre Plus (4). All except one was registered as unemployed.

4.13 While most respondents had used more than one source of advice, there were six people who indicated that they had not used any of the services identified, four of whom were female and two male. This group included four people who were neither in work or education and three who were in each of the following situations: unemployed, lone parent, having a long-term illness or health problem and having a current or past mental health problem. Only one of these individuals identified that they had gone to someone else for advice, a training organization in the voluntary sector.

**Most Recent Advice Enquiry**

4.14 Respondents were asked to identify the service that they had used most recently and when they had last used that service. Of the 112 people who responded to the question, Jobcentre Plus was mentioned more than any other service by a quarter of responses, but other voluntary groups and local authority supported employment projects were also mentioned by around one in five respondents (table 4.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.2: Type of service used most recently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary sector advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other voluntary group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority welfare rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other council service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student support/welfare services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other government service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported employment project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.15 From this point onward, the analysis of the use of advice services is based on responses from the 112 people who had gone to any advice source. However, the views of those who had not used any advice services are included in the final section that discusses preferences and advice priorities.

4.16 There were 87 respondents who gave information about when they last used the service, although three specified the number of times used rather than the time period. Most of the remaining 84 people had used the service in the preceding month and only 10 people had used the service more than 6 months ago (Table 4.3)
Table 4.3: How long ago was the service last used?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently using/ongoing</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last month</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within last 2-3 months</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within last 4-6 months</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 6 months to a year ago</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than a year ago</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.17 The sectors of advice sources are broadly split between government services (UK and Scottish), voluntary sector and local authority with a small number accessing advice sources in further or higher education (Table 4.4). However, men were more likely to use local authority services while women used voluntary sector and government sources of advice more often and accounted for all enquiries to education sector services.

Table 4.4: Sector of Advice Services Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary sector</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.18 Grouped together according to the type of service used, respondents, particularly women, had most often used those services whose main function was advice, including voluntary sector and local authority advice services and Jobcentre Plus (Table 4.5). Those organisations that provide advice along with other services such as housing associations and other voluntary groups were used by almost a quarter of respondents. However, it is interesting to note that a substantial group had used most recently a service that does not include advice as a main function, including almost half of male respondents. This group of services includes supported employment and ‘employability’ and training projects that do not have a formal advice service.

Table 4.5: Type of advice service used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services and advice</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/ training</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.18 Taking account of the sector and the formality of advice source, three broad groups of service providers can be identified that each account for approximately a third of services used: formal government services (including Jobcentre Plus and Careers Scotland and
services delivered by other agencies for Jobcentre Plus); formal other (all other services formally including advice in their services); and informal advice services (including supported employment, employability and training projects across sectors). Reflecting their greater use of support and training projects, men were more likely to use informal advice sources while female respondents were evenly divided in their use of government and other formal advice services (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Formality of advice services used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal government</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal other</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.19 Respondents were asked whether their most recent enquiry was about work or education or training. Of the 112 people who had used advice services, 106 gave a response. Most identified that they were seeking advice relating to employment, while one in five wanted advice in relation to education or training and a similar proportion were interested in both issues (Table 4.7). The small number of other situations included enquiries relating to staying in work, education or training and all such enquiries were made by women, including most of those who said they were asylum seekers.

Table 4.7: What was your most recent advice enquiry about?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/ training</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both of these</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.20 The broad nature of enquiries were strongly related to respondents’ current economic status: the majority of those in work had gone for advice about employment; almost half of those in education or training were seeking advice about aspects of education; while those who were not in work or education were most likely to have gone for advice about work or both work and education or training. A higher proportion of women than men and those aged 25-34 were looking for advice about a course of education or training. Lone parents accounted for half of those seeking advice about both work and education. Sectoral information shows that use of government sources of advice was strongly linked to work related enquiries, whereas use of voluntary sector advice services was more strongly linked to advice about education and training or both work and education.
Advice Issues

4.21 This section provides some analysis of the nature of the advice issues raised by survey participants. Respondents were asked to identify what kind of things relating to moving to education or work they wanted information or advice about. From the list of potential issues identified, the majority of the 107 people who responded to this section of the survey identified more than one issue (86 per cent). The issues most often identified were benefits rights (63 or 58.9 per cent), earnings (42 or 39.3 per cent), impact on ‘other’ benefits and housing costs (both 30 or 28 per cent) and hours of work (29 or 27.1 per cent). The issues raised are discussed in more detail below under five headings: Benefits and money management; costs relating to starting work, education or training; work related financial issues; education and training related issues; and non-financial issues, with a table of the issues raised included in each section.

Benefits and Money Management

4.22 Benefits issues were most often identified, particularly the general issue of benefits rights included by the majority of respondents, advice about the impact on ‘other’ benefits and how stopping work affects benefits (Table 4.8). The high ratio of people seeking help with benefits rights highlights that the system remains complex and advice becomes critical when things go wrong, especially where disability benefits are concerned:

“I went to the Citizens Advice but I got put onto the Law Centre. I’d applied for DLA, which I was in receipt of and then they cancelled it. (It was) for an appeal, but then cancelled the appeal and I put in a fresh claim because the appeal service would take a lot longer to be approved. I’ve just lost about a year and six months. They can only backdate it until the day that my fresh application went in, and they won’t consider any information before then. They don’t take any of that into consideration. So I took it down to the Law Centre and he did it all for me.”

“Well, I still don’t have it (DLA). I’m working on it. I’ve had that many other things that I’ve had to take care of, that I decided to leave it until I was able to cope ... it’s quite a stressful thing to do because... if you end up having to go for appeal, you’ve got to sit in front of people and explain why you need it, and it’s very hard to do that when they don’t know you, and there’s an awful lot of questions that they ask you. It doesn’t get done fairly and it’s not getting done effectively because people are lying so that they can get their allowance because they’re not going to accept people with the disability they genuinely have, and that is a big barrier. I don’t think they’re ever going to overcome that unless they re-look at the form and they re-do it. In my opinion, that is the obstacle I came across. I mean, I found it very, very off-putting. I don’t know whether that’s the general idea, they want less people to apply for it... but?”

4.23 Those currently in employment were more likely to want information about benefits rights than those in education or training, or in neither work or education. Those seeking
such advice used services across the range of service types. Some other key points about advice needs relating to benefits and money management are outlined below:

- Those with a long-term illness or mental health problems and those currently in employment were strongly represented amongst those seeking advice about the impact on health benefits of making the transition to work or education. They were more likely to use formal non-government and informal sources of advice in the voluntary and local authority sectors.

- Respondents with a current or past mental health problem or a learning difficulty, males, those not in work or education and those using informal sources of advice were strongly represented amongst those seeking advice about the impact of work or education on other benefits.

- The impact on benefits of stopping work was more of an issue for the following groups than for others: those with a mental health problem or learning difficulty, those aged 25-44 and those in employment. Respondents were more likely to seek advice on this issue from formal government or informal sources of advice, including supported employment and training projects.

- Lone parents accounted for two thirds of those seeking help with run-on benefits, and women and those currently in full-time employment were strongly represented in this group. They were more likely to seek advice on this issue from formal government sources than other services.

- The impact of work or education on disability living allowance was an issue for those respondents with physical and mental health issues and learning difficulties, those in employment and those aged 34 or less compared with other groups. This issue was most often raised with informal sources of advice such as supported employment or training services, particularly in local government.

- Incapacity benefits were more of an issue for people with a long-term illness or health problem, those with a mental health problem and amongst those using voluntary sector formal advice services.

- All those concerned about benefits delays were women and most were lone parents not in work or education. They used mostly formal government sources of advice.

4.24 Despite the significant number of individuals who raised benefits issues, the few people who wanted advice about money management or renegotiating debts included one person who mentioned both. Those seeking advice on money management issues were more likely to be men and included respondents not in work or education and those with mental ill health. They were less likely to use formal government services than other sources of advice.
Table 4.8: Benefits and Money Management Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits and Money Management Issues</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>% (n=107)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits rights</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on health benefits</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on other benefits</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How stopping work affects benefits</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run on benefits</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability living allowance</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacity benefits</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits delays</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money management</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renegotiating debts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Costs related to work, education or training

4.25 Those who wanted advice on meeting costs most often identified housing costs, but at least one in five people identified most of the costs listed as an issue for them (Table 4.9).

- Housing costs were mentioned more often by lone parents and those currently in full-time work than other groups. They were raised most frequently with formal government sources of advice.

- Lone parents and those currently in employment were more likely than other groups to have raised work related costs. These issues were raised with formal government and informal sources of advice rather than other formal sources.

- All of those identifying childcare costs as an advice issue were women, three quarters of them lone parents and their current status was more likely to be in training or education or caring for children than working. They used government or other formal sources of advice, particularly those in the voluntary sector.

- Travel costs were more often an issue for survey participants aged 24 or less, those with a mental health problem and prisoners and those not in work or education than other groups and enquiries on this issue were most often taken to formal government and informal sources of advice.

- Lone parents, people with mental health problems and those not in work or education identified council tax payment as an issue more often than other groups. They used formal government sources of advice more than other advice services.
Those seeking help with disability related costs were more likely to have a physical impairment, learning difficulty or literacy problem. Most accessed formal local authority advice services.

Child support was an issue only for non-working female lone parents. They used formal sources of advice, particularly government sources.

Table 4.9: Costs related to work, education or training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>% (n=107)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing costs</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work costs</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare costs</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel costs</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council tax payments</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting disability related costs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child support</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work related financial issues

It is not surprising that earnings were an issue for more than a third of respondents and just over one in ten wanted advice about taxation and national insurance (Table 4.10). Those currently in work or registered unemployed were more likely than other groups to seek advice about earnings as were those using formal government and informal advice sources. Women and lone parents were less likely than most other groups to be looking for advice about earnings. People with current or past mental health problems or learning difficulties and those currently in employment were more likely to raise taxation and national insurance issues than other groups, and such enquiries were made to informal sources of advice more than other sources.

Table 4.10: Work related financial costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>% (n=107)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earnings</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National insurance</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education and training related issues

A relatively small number of individuals identified advice issues relating to student finances (Table 4.11). In part, this may reflect the small sample of those using advice services located in or relating to further and higher education institutions. Grants and loans and help with fees were the main concerns in relation to education and training. Most of those with queries regarding student loans and student fees were female lone parents and...
those in work or education. They used formal advice sources in the voluntary sector and education. All those seeking help concerning bursaries were women, three of whom had a current or past mental health problem and none of whom were in employment.

Table 4.11: Education and training related issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>% (n=107)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student grant/loans</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with student fees</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bursaries</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student hardship funds</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled students allowance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorships/scholarships</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advice Issues – Non-financial issues

4.28 Of the issues listed that were not directly money or cost related, respondents mentioned most frequently hours of work, childcare availability and travel access (Table 4.12).

- All except one of those for whom childcare availability was mentioned as an issue were female and two thirds were lone parents. Those in work were less likely than those in education or not in work or education to raise childcare availability as an issue. Most of the enquiries on this issue were made mainly to formal advice sources in government and the voluntary sector.

- People with learning difficulties and current or former prisoners were more likely than other groups to raise queries concerning hours of work. These issues were raised with formal government sources of advice more than other sources.

- Advice about housing and homelessness was more of an issue for people with mental health problems and former prisoners than for other respondents. Most of those raising this issue were not in work or education and most used voluntary sector and local authority sources of advice.

- Travel access was an issue for people with learning difficulties and those in education more than for other groups and they accessed informal and formal government sources of advice more than formal non-government sources.

- Of those raising criminal records disclosure as an issue, four were men and two were women, half had a current or past mental health problem, three were former prisoners and none were in work or education. This group used mainly voluntary sector and local government advice sources.

- People with physical and mental health issues were most likely to raise access or equipment needs at work. Most of them were not currently in work or education.
Almost a quarter of survey participants wanted ‘help to stay in work or education’, including a third or more of: men; those with a long-term illness or health problem; people with learning difficulties; and asylum seekers. Those in employment made such enquiries more often and enquiries were taken to informal sources of advice more than other sources.

People registered as unemployed and those with mental health problems raised other advice issues more than other groups, most often raising them with formal non-government sources of advice in the voluntary sector. The other issues that were raised related to health, confidence building, interview skills and specific work or training opportunities.

Table 4.12: Non-Financial Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>% (n=107)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours of work</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare availability</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel access</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing/ homelessness</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal records/offence disclosure</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access/ equipment needs at work</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult care support</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help to stay in work/ education</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the above analysis highlights that some issues affected some groups more than others, it is also worth considering what issues were more significant for people in different situations and employment circumstances compared with other groups. Benefits rights, earnings and hours of work were important for people within all groups and situations, but some key points are drawn out below.

In general, women in the survey were more likely to have accessed formal government and voluntary sector advice services and accounted for all those using student support services, while male respondents were more likely to have used informal sources of advice, particularly in local government. There were differences between men and women in the types of issues they wanted advice about, but the most significant were that men accounted for the majority of those wanting help with criminal records disclosure, housing/ homelessness and the impact of starting work or education on DLA and were more likely than women to want help with staying in work or education. Women were more likely to seek help with student finance issues and accounted for all save one respondent who wanted advice about childcare availability and all enquiries relating to childcare costs, benefit delays, bursaries and child support.

People under age 35 were more likely than other age groups to use informal sources of advice, while older age groups were generally more likely to use formal advice services. The desire to get advice about benefits tended to be higher among older respondents. This was especially true regarding the impact of working or training on other benefits. It hardly needs pointed out that there is
more likelihood of older respondents being in receipt of a variety of benefits than their younger counterparts which would clearly make them more concerned about benefits. The opposite was the case for meeting disability related costs. Nobody over the age of 34 sought advice on this issue but 20% of 25-34 year olds and 8% of those 16-24 had done so. The younger age groups were also more strongly represented amongst those wanting advice about work related costs, help to stay in work or education, travel access and the impact of starting work or education on DLA.

- The 12 people with a physical impairment used advice providers across the range and most often asked for advice about benefits rights (7), earnings (6) and hours of work (4)

- The 24 people who had a long-term illness or health problem also used the range of services, particularly those in the voluntary sector, but included three of the five people who had not used any services. Almost two thirds wanted advice about benefits rights and other issues raised frequently by this group included earnings (11), help to stay in work or education (8) and travel costs (6).

- Amongst the 35 survey participants with a current or past mental health problem, formal non-government and informal sources of advice, particularly in the voluntary sector, were used more than government advice sources. This group included three people who had not used any source of advice. Generally there was a wide range of issues that were of obvious concern to those with mental health problems and, in particular, they raised council tax issues to a far greater extent than any other group. The other issues most often raised by this group included benefits rights (18 of 31 people), earnings (14); impact on health benefits (7) and other benefits (11), taxation (7) and incapacity benefits (6). This group accounted for five of nine people seeking help with money management and two of the three people looking for help to renegotiate debts.

- Most of the 23 people with literacy problems accessed informal sources of advice (12), particularly in local authorities and they included two people who had not used any advice service. Key issues raised included benefits rights (10), earnings (11), meeting disability related costs (4), impact on DLA (5), adult care support (3 of 4 enquiries on this issue) and hours of work.

- Informal and formal non-government sources of advice, particularly local government, were used by most people with learning difficulties – only two had used government services and two had used none. The issues most frequently raised by this group included benefits rights (12), earnings (10), the impact of work or training on other benefits (9), meeting disability related costs (6), help to stay in work or education (8), how stopping work affects benefits (6), impact on DLA (6), adult care support (3) and travel access (5).

- More than half of the lone parents had used formal government services and a third other formal advice services, most often in the voluntary sector, but only 12.2 per cent (5 of 42) had used informal services and 2 had used none. Their enquiries most often related to benefits rights (27 of 41), housing costs (17) and earnings (15) and lone parents were generally more likely to seek advice about
issues relating to education than most other groups. They accounted for half of those seeking information about work related costs, two thirds of those seeking advice about run on benefits and childcare availability, three quarters of those wanting advice about childcare costs (20) and all of those seeking advice about child support (6). Lone parents account for the majority of women who needed help with childcare costs.

- Two prisoners had used formal government services and one had used none. The issues with which they wanted advice were related to work but not education and included a range of financial and housing issues. In contrast, the ex-prisoners used voluntary sector services, including informal training and support projects. The issues they wanted advice about included housing, hours of work, benefits rights, help to stay in work or education and criminal records disclosure.

- Those caring for children used mainly formal government advice services and non-government advice services, mainly in the voluntary sector. The issues they raised more often than other groups included help to stay in work or education, run-on benefits, childcare costs (10 of 18 people), childcare availability, child support and student grants/ loans. The three people caring for adults used different service types and were concerned with a range of benefits rights and help with education related costs.

- The five asylum seekers or refugees had all used formal voluntary sector advice services most recently with a focus on education and training, but not work. As well as benefits rights, the main issues they raised concerned staying in education, help with childcare costs and childcare availability.

4.30 Survey participants who were in work were more likely to use informal sources of advice, particularly in local government, while those in education or training and the group not in work or education were more likely to use formal advice sources in government and the voluntary sector. Although at least half of all groups wanted advice about benefits rights, three quarters of those in employment raised this issue when they went for advice. Issues raised more often by particular groups included the following.

- For those in employment key issues were: earnings; help to stay in work or education; how stopping work affects benefits; adult care support (3 of 4 enquiries on this issue); national insurance; run-on benefits; money management and renegotiating debt.

- Amongst survey respondents in education or training, enquiries were generally more likely to include issues relating to education costs and financial support, including bursaries, hardship funds and student fees. Other issues raised included childcare costs and availability and child support, reflecting the relatively high proportion of female respondents in education or training.

- Those not in work or education were more likely to raise issues concerning earnings, impact on DLA and other benefits, criminal records disclosure enquiries, impact, housing/ homelessness, child support and childcare availability.
Contacting Services and dealing with enquiries

4.32 Survey participants were asked to identify the method that they used to contact the service initially and how the enquiry was dealt with. There were 103 responses for which information was provided. A small number of people (7) gave multiple responses and these are included in the figures provided in table 4.13 below.

4.33 Most people had made initial contact by drop-in at the service in question, by telephone or by going to a local outreach service. However, a much smaller proportion of men made contact by telephone. Men were more likely than women to say that they were referred by someone else. Referral or signposting to advice services was from a range of sources including Jobcentre Plus, Careers Scotland, job coaches, CPNs and other services such as training courses and training placements within organisations that also provide advice. Some referrals were informal or through a friend. Most people who indicated that they had been referred did not give any other information about the method of contact with the service. The other methods identified included contact initiated by the service (Jobcentre Plus) and other proactive contact by advice services such as contact during training courses. There were some differences between groups in the initial contact methods used, including the following:

- People with reading or writing difficulties or learning difficulties used the telephone and drop-in less than other groups, instead opting more for local outreach;
- Respondents with learning difficulties or mental health problems were more likely than other groups to say they had been referred;
- Survey participants with a physical impairment were less likely to used drop-in than other groups;
- Lone parents used telephone and drop-in more frequently compared with other groups;
- Those with a long-term illness or health problem used the telephone less frequently than other groups;
- Prisoners and former prisoners used mainly drop-in, as did half of those registered as unemployed;
- Those in employment had used local outreach more than other groups while those in education and training had used telephone contact more often and half of respondents who were not in education or training had used drop-in for their initial contact with the service;
- Relatively high proportions of those currently in employment had been referred to the service they used; and
- Formal non-government advice services were contacted more often by telephone or drop-in, but government advice services were more likely than other advice services to be contacted through local outreach services. Local
outreach was also more significant in local government services and for informal compared with formal advice services.

**Table 4.13: Initial contact methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female No.</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Male No.</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>All No.</th>
<th>All %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop in to advice service</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local outreach</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dealing with enquiries**

4.34 The survey form also asked about the methods used to deal with the enquiry. Included in the 103 responses were 14 people who identified more than one method (table 4.14). Most survey participants identified that drop-in at the advice service and appointments were the means used most often for dealing with enquiries. Although the telephone was used frequently for initial contact, relatively few enquiries were followed through by phone, but led to other approaches including appointments and home visits. In most cases where respondents had used drop-in for initial contact, the enquiry was dealt with in the same way or by appointment. Referrals led to a range of contacts, but half led to home visits. Those describing multiple contacts also identified several stages to the resolution of their enquiry that most often involved initial contacts by telephone or drop-in followed by further contact at appointments, home visits or by post. Other methods of dealing with enquiries involved meetings and more general support.

**Table 4.14: Method of Dealing with Enquiries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female No.</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Male No.</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>All No.</th>
<th>All %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop in to advice service</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local outreach</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home visit</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.35 Men were more likely than women to have a home visit, but no one with a physical impairment was visited at home. Most home visits were made to people with learning difficulties (11 of 13 home visits). Drop-in or appointments were the main methods of
dealing with enquiries from lone parents, and people with a physical impairment, long-term illness or health problem or mental health problem. Drop-in was also important for prisoners and ex-prisoners.

4.36 Formal government advice services dealt with most of the enquiries by appointment or drop-in, but none by home visit. Drop-in was the method used most by other formal advice services along with appointments and home visits, while informal services used home visits more than the other service delivery methods.

**Level of support needed**

4.37 The level of support that individuals need is determined by a range of factors including the nature of the issues with which individuals need help as well as factors such as knowledge of rights, confidence and capacity to deal with the issues themselves. Table 4.15 below provides information about the level of support needed from three levels identified in the survey form, namely: information only, advice/support to sort the problem yourself and someone to act or negotiate for you. There were 9 people who said that they needed more than one level of support. These have been included in the table at the most detailed level of support required since all of them wanted the adviser to act or negotiate for them, as well as support at one of the other two levels.

4.38 The largest group wanted advice and support to deal with the problem themselves. However, there are considerable differences between women and men in the levels of support they needed with almost half of all men identifying that they needed representation, while most women needed advice and support to act for themselves or information only. Lone parents and those caring for children reflected the situation of women generally, with only one in ten wanting representation whereas people with a literacy problem or learning difficulty were highly likely to want representation. Those currently in employment were most likely to want representation, while the largest group of those in education or training wanted information only and those neither in work or education wanted advice and support more than other levels of support.

4.39 The desire for representation from the advice service rather than information or advice was linked to some of the barriers to making the transition to work or education identified by survey participants that are discussed in the previous chapter. This was the case in enquiries concerning housing and homelessness, discrimination and access to work, but the most significant links were to confidence, literacy and skills and qualifications as barriers.

4.40 The advice issues raised by respondents that were most strongly linked to needing help at the level of advice and support included travel costs, childcare costs, the impact of work or education on other benefits and benefits delays. The issues most strongly linked to representation included meeting disability related costs, criminal records disclosure and the impact on DLA of starting work or education.

4.41 Representation was least likely to arise in enquiries to formal government services and most likely to arise in enquiries to informal services and other formal advice services, in local government and the voluntary sector. One woman with physical and mental health
problems found that representation reduced the problems she faced in dealing with other services:

“Well, what I found really good (about law centre and CAB) is in the initial interview we filled in all the forms..., discussed what we were going to be doing... and they spent that hour with me, dealing with other things, making sure I knew what was happening and asking if I’d had any problem to phone them up make another appointment. I wanted them to do it because it actually has a bigger impact on the services, like the social work, the DSS, the housing, it all has a knock-on effect if someone’s writing on your behalf, especially if it’s on the legal side of things, on the law side of it, but me going in on my own, they were like “oh right”.

Table 4.15: Level of advice needed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information only</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice/support to sort the problem yourself</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone to act/ negotiate for you</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experiences and impact of advice services

Satisfaction with Services

4.42 Overall, there were high levels of satisfaction with the way that enquiries were handled (table 4.16), although five people were fairly or very dissatisfied, including three lone parents and three who had issues that the service could not help them with. All of those who indicated a degree of dissatisfaction had used government advice services.

Table 4.16: Overall satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly satisfied</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly dissatisfied</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very dissatisfied</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still being dealt with</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experiences of advice services

4.43 In order to look in more depth at the perceptions of advice services and the experience of individuals in using them, two different approaches were taken:

- Survey respondents were given words and phrases and asked to identify those that best described their experience of the service they had used in order to provide an overall impression of attitudes to services. Positive, negative and neutral words and phrases were listed in a random order with the opportunity for people to add a word or phrase of their own.

- We asked interviewees and survey respondents to tell us about their actual experiences of advice services, what had been positive and what have been negative as well as which services have been most and least useful.

4.44 The responses from advice service users in relation to both of these areas of enquiry are discussed here, beginning with an overview of the responses concerning attitudes towards the advice services used. There were 106 people who identified at least one word or phrase from those provided and responses included all of the 26 words or phrases offered (table 4.17). The most regularly selected words and phrases can be described as positive while most of those selected least often are more negative. Most respondents viewed services across the range of types and sectors as friendly. Some other key points identified are outlined below.

Table 4.17: Overall perceptions of advice service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Quality</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>% (n=101)</th>
<th>Perceived Quality</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>% (n=101)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>Community resource</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They understand your needs</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>They tell you about your duties and rights</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well resourced</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They help you know your rights</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>You get a say about the service</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidential</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>They tell you what to do</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They can help with all your queries</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your needs come first</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>Not enough resources</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-judgmental</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>Limited service</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They help you decide what to do</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>Inefficient</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>Impersonal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>Their priorities come first</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>Not accessible</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>Judgmental</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.45 There were differences between groups of advice service users in the way they described the services they had used, including the following:

- People with a physical impairment or illness were more likely to comment on accessibility, resources and efficiency and identify services that help you know
your rights and duties and those with a long-term illness were also more likely to describe the service they used as challenging.

- People with mental health problems accounted for more than half of those who felt that ‘your needs come first’ in connection with the services they had used. They mentioned inaccessibility and independence more often than other groups.

- Those with literacy or numeracy problems and people with learning difficulties were more likely to claim the service they used was ‘accessible’ and ‘safe’ and where ‘your needs come first’, and people with learning difficulties also mentioned that the service ‘helps you decide what to do’.

- Lone parents mentioned more than other groups that services were ‘well resourced’ and accounted for most of those who claimed that the service’s priorities come first.

- Prisoners and ex-prisoners mentioned support with rights and helping you ‘decide what to do’ and helping with ‘all your queries’ as well as commenting on resources and efficiency.

- The focus for asylum seekers was on confidentiality and understanding your needs, dealing with all queries and helping you ‘decide what to do’.

4.46 In the survey forms, responses about good and bad experiences of advice services tended to be very short, often one word, but the words most often used to describe good experiences were friendly and useful. However, interviews provided the opportunity for people to expand upon some of the issues they raised in the survey. These responses are discussed below in conjunction with some of the key words and phrases in table 4.17 above.

Staff attitudes to rights and advice

4.47 Although possibly self evident, the attitude of staff has an enormous impact on the experience of service users. Most services used were described as friendly and several interviewees commented on the difference that made for their confidence, including one woman with physical and mental health problems:

“It’s the atmosphere and, some of these advice centres, to me, are a bit clinical. (Voluntary sector advice service) isn’t. It’s really a homely atmosphere. You may be waiting on an appointment, even if it’s your first time in the place and they make a point of making people feel comfortable and welcome. If you are nervous about filling out forms, you are likely to make mistakes.”

4.48 At the other end of the scale, an impersonal service or one that was perceived as “too busy” was off-putting. The following comments from two prisoners reflect the views of several interviewees in relation to Jobcentres, commonly known as ‘the social’:
“See if you go to the social, the staff in the social are too busy to help you. You feel uncomfortable if you ask them to help you.”

“Yeah they don't help you. If you've to fill a form out they don't sit and help you to fill the form out... they just send you away and tell you to fill it in then come back, make another appointment, and you can ask one of you pals or your family to help you with the form.”

4.49 However, it should also be noted that similar issues arose in relation to other advice services and voluntary sector projects in which staff were perceived as being pressed for time:

“I found it a bit rushed... but I think because he was so stressed for the time that we had to discuss what we were discussing, that he couldn’t give me the information. Maybe I was looking for too much help in that respect, but maybe not. I just felt it was kind of like you were in and you were, like, back out again, and it was holding other people back, because you knew he had other appointments, and I felt stressed that I was holding him back because I knew that there were other appointments fitted in ...”

“Citizens’ Advice is a bit odd. I mean, if you’re not there first thing in the morning, you can’t get seen. I found that a bit off-putting, but obviously there’s only so much these places can do because it’s a volunteer establishment...”

4.50 Attitudes to and involvement of people using advice services provided some contrasting points of view. “They understand your needs” was one of the phrases used to describe services in more than half the responses, but not in most cases where the person had an issue that the service could not deal with. This group accounted for most of the small number of cases that described the service they used as impersonal, particularly in relation to government advice services. One lone parent felt an agency delivering services under contract to Jobcentre Plus were not listened to people:

“... professional bodies, will not listen because they just think it’s like a story people are making up, things cannae be that hard, do you know what I mean? They’re no interested in hearing anybody else’s sad story anymore!”

4.51 Negative experiences generally revolved around the staff and the atmosphere in the services. However, there was some concern regarding the degree to which services are able or willing to follow up on the problems and concerns of service users. In addition, as far as Jobcentre Plus is concerned, the atmosphere in the waiting room was mentioned by a number of respondents with one going as far as to refer to it as “hostile”. In contrast, a woman with a hearing impairment described her initial experience of using a voluntary organisation delivering services and advice as follows:
“They were very, very understanding. I sat in the same chair more or less every day. B was always aware when she was talking to me that she had to speak to me and not turn her back on me. She would always ask me, can you hear me, did you pick that up okay, and I didn’t feel embarrassed, and all the girls, I felt comfortable with them knowing that I had a disability.”

4.52 Other interviewees using government services also described building up positive relationships, particularly with lone parent advisers:

“I have had the best advice from my lone parent adviser.”

“...I think the lone parent advisor, I got quite a lot from her. There were quite a lot of things I didn’t know, I would get the lone parent advisor.”

4.53 Men were more likely than women to select from the list of words and phrases “They help with all your queries” or “your needs come first”. The latter applied to informal advice services and to local authority and voluntary sectors more than government services and related not only to advice needs, but how enquiries were dealt with. One lone parent explained her experiences in trying to address her housing needs, first with a local government department and then a voluntary sector organisation:

“That was in the social work I went into them and spoke to them about it, and it was somebody that says to me that basically you're going to be on that (housing list) for years you, basically, have no chance of getting it... And I never got the form for it either, I was in about a few different things and I felt as if that was kinda just stepped aside.”

“Well (voluntary organisation adviser) said was there anywhere that was good for me to meet up with her and she said she could even come to your place if you want and I says that was great because I had (child) at the time and it just meant she could come up and it was quite comfortable to sit and talk to her in my own place.”

4.54 “Their priorities come first” was identified infrequently, most often in relation to government advice services. Informal and local authority services were more likely than other service types to be seen as helping you to “decide what to do”, whereas government and other formal advice services were more likely to “tell you what to do”. One respondent felt that Jobcentre Plus don’t treat people as individuals and conflicting priorities came to light for one woman contacting them:

“I phoned up the social the other week there to tell them I was doing voluntary work and they were actually very cheeky to me on the phone. I was biling. They said ‘oh your doing voluntary work’ and I says aye, ‘oh right, so are you looking for work’ and I was like I’m doing voluntary work and she started going, ‘if your doing voluntary work maybe you should start looking
for work’ and I said ‘listen hen you have no idea what I’m about’ and I came off the phone and I was raging... They just don’t care, I’ve been looking for jobs but cannae get one. I cannae get off benefits because of my disability, I’m looking for work, I’m doing voluntary work and trying to find a proper job but because I do take seizures I can’t get a job... I was trying to be straight by telling them but I’ll keep it to myself next time.”

4.55 In the list of words and phrases voluntary sector and local authority services were more likely to “tell you about your duties and rights”, but helping people to know their rights and provision of a confidential or non-judgemental service were identified as features across service types. These attributes were most often enlarged upon in relation to supported employment and training projects and advice and other services in the voluntary sector and local government. The following views of a prisoner and a lone parent are typical:

“They'll (CAB) always help you with the benefits you're allowed. If there's a benefit there you can claim it and you've not got it, they'll tell you if you're eligible and how to get it.”

“(Training organisation) brought lots of people in to do in work benefit calculations and things like that, how much you would be better off. They did give us quite a lot of support.”

4.56 The few occasions where a service was described as judgemental related mainly to government advice services, particularly where there was an issue that the service could not help with. The following quote reflects the position of many survey participants who did not make a distinction between signing on and accessing advice services at Jobcentre Plus, but it also reflects concerns about lack of confidentiality that affected attitudes to services:

“I just hate the Job Centre, going in, they just write you a number in a queue... and confidentiality is quite a big thing. I think it is because if its about a job you don’t want everybody, someone hearing how much you’re earning or what you’re going to do or whatever - I just don’t go in.”

4.57 One woman was more concerned that there is a propensity to give users only small specific pieces of information. She went on:

“DSS have not been particularly good when it comes to investing information. They won’t volunteer information they don’t thinks necessary to you. It’s if your face fits and it’s amazing how you’re treated.”

4.58 Independence was used to describe services by only one in eight survey participants, most often in relation to formal advice services and the voluntary sector.
4.59 There were contrasting words and phrases in relation to resources and capacity of services. Most services were described in a positive way, but there were a few, located in different sectors that were described as limited. Whether a service is well or inadequately resourced can be perceived in different ways, both in terms of what resources are put into service delivery and what resources the service has available to it to deliver, so perceptions about resources may mean different things. However, half the services were described as well resourced, particularly by those with high levels of satisfaction with the way enquiries were handled and particularly in relation to voluntary sector organisations delivering services and advice. Only eight people described the service they used as having not enough resources – these were also predominantly voluntary sector organisations delivering services and advice. Some survey participants considered that services were struggling with inadequate funding:

“Without that place we would be lost. I think they need more money for the work they do. It was a grotty place when J took over and she has done marvels with it…”

“there’s only so much these places can do because it’s a volunteer establishment, so you can’t expect people to do odd hours.”

4.60 Services, particularly informal services and those located in the voluntary and local authority sectors, were more likely to be described as efficient by men, whereas the small number of services described as inefficient were in government and informal advice services and likely to be described as such where the individual had an issue that the service could not help with or was dissatisfied with the service in some other way.

Access and input to services

4.61 From the list of words and phrases, men identified services as ‘convenient’ more often than women, particularly in relation to informal and local authority services in comparison to advice services. The one in five people describing the service as accessible were more likely to have used informal services or formal government sources, whereas the four described as ‘not accessible’ were in different sectors. A new advice service in a voluntary sector organisation for people with learning disabilities was much appreciated by interviewees because it made advice more accessible for them in an environment and culture with which they were comfortable and which gave service users confidence. For one lone parent, however, access to a CAB was on the organisation’s terms and not her own:

“They would have people phoning - because not everybody can go in the morning unless it’s their day off and it’s the last place in the world you want to spend your day off in, to try and sort something like that out. But I mean people do it because they have to…”
4.62 Non-government advice services and informal services were more likely to be viewed as a community resource, particularly by men. Such projects had a significant impact on some individuals including one male lone parent with mental and physical health issues who had become involved with a community based support project and who recently addressed a conference:

"when I came here I was shaking and panicky and I sat down and talked to people you know and everybody’s in the same boat or something similar you know so you can relate to people. I’ve learned some new skills, I’ve learned a new thing every day. If I learn more things then maybe I can go on and do that, you know."

4.63 Men were more likely to describe the service they used as ‘safe’, most often in relation to support and training projects in local authorities. Such projects were also where people said that “you get a say about the service” in contrast to non-government formal advice services that were rarely described as such. Overall, there was a great deal of praise for many of the supported employment services people were using. One advice service with a strong focus on service user consultation and involvement was the only place to go for advice for one woman with mental health problems:

"It makes you feel like you are part of a family. They will ask you if you think they should carry on with what they are doing. They are advising you of your rights and its up to you whether you take their advice or not."

4.64 Those who described the service they used as challenging most often related the word to government services and were likely to say that the advice they received had affected their decisions about moving towards work. This issue is enlarged upon in the following section.

**Impact of Advice on Decisions**

4.65 Survey participants were asked specifically if the advice they received had affected their decision about taking a job or starting a course of education or training. A significant proportion of the 94 people who answered the question thought that it had (table 4.18). This was particularly the case among male respondents, those with a physical impairment, people caring for adults or children and those currently in part-time work. People using formal government sources of advice were more likely than those using other advice services to say that the advice had affected their decision.

4.66 For half of those commenting on the impact of the advice they had received on their decisions about work, the advice had given them reassurance that the transition to work was possible for them and that they would be better off financially. For one man it encouraged him to “up my income in order to clear a debt problem”. Amongst this group were nine people who commented positively about advice helping them to get into education or training or to resolve a problem that enabled education to continue, including two people who went on to undertake literacy courses. For others, positive effects were linked more to other kinds of support such as supported employment and job coaching:
“I felt able to take job because I was getting ongoing help from (supported employment project)"

“I wanted to leave college and begin work. They helped me, I got tasters and I chose to work in the industry that I am in. I had other offers that were good but this one suited my needs.”

4.67 The remaining comments, most of which were from female lone parents, identified that work would not be financially viable for them in their current circumstances or that they had not yet achieved their aim of work or education. Cost issues identified included travel, availability and costs of childcare and loss of benefits.

Table 4.18: Did the advice affect decision to start a job/training/education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gaps in Provision

4.68 There were 12 survey participants (11.7 per cent of 103 people) who identified that there was something that they wanted help with that the service could not deliver. All except one of them were women, particularly those caring for children or in part-time employment, and four had a long-term illness or health problem. Most were seeking advice from education, government and local authority services, predominantly providing formal advice services. The issues that they most needed help with included childcare costs and availability, benefits rights, hours of work, sponsorship/scholarship, money management and DLA. Most of the issues raised (but not dealt with) were significant for the individuals in making the transition to work. For example, one woman who went to Jobcentre Plus could not get all the advice she needed at the point she felt it was important because she had to:

“wait for a job offer before they can work out benefits etc. Jobcentre cannot help with council tax or housing benefit forecasts.”

4.69 One hearing impaired woman described how she went about getting information on childcare availability:

“There should be people, maybe, I don’t know, somebody advertising it somewhere, just directly getting the information, for child care, because I had to, I had an awful lot of hassle for me to get it. I had to phone up my midwife, my midwife had to phone somebody else up, and we had to then look through a system to get the lists that were in that area.. That then had to be posted to me. That all took about a week and I was quite urgently needing that information...”
4.70 Another woman seeking advice from an informal local government service highlighted that, in terms of disclosure of offences, it is not only a recent criminal record that can cause anxieties about moving towards work and generate the need for advice:

“I had 2 £10 fines from the 80s. This caused me a lot of anxiety because of the Disclosure Scotland Act, they didn't know if they were spent.”

4.71 Some interviewees had lost confidence in services after they felt that they had been badly advised:

“I've mostly used the CAB as I don’t really know who else to go to. They were okay most of the time but in the past I’ve received false advice. I think they just follow the legal rules too closely so can’t step down and tell you the reality.

“There was one problem. My lone parent adviser retired and another lady took over and she doesn’t seem to be as knowledgeable as the previous one. She gave me some advice to go off income support and onto job seekers allowance because of the hours that I was doing at the voluntary job, but I checked up with (voluntary sector services and advice provider) and they said to me, not it’s wrong.”

Knowledge of rights

4.72 It was difficult through the research to address the question of the degree to which respondents were aware of their rights, at least in part due to the obvious fact that people are often not aware of what they do not know. One lone parent adequately sums up part of the problem with her comment that:

“I didn’t know I had a lot of rights, I didn’t know a lot of things I was entitled to.”

4.73 There were a multitude of opinions concerning where people find out about their rights and entitlements and how much people think they know about them. For example the degree of information received from Lone Parent Advisers appears to be very contingent on the individual advisers themselves. Some survey participants clearly relied on advisers to keep them right, including one woman who had a strong relationship with her lone parent adviser in Jobcentre Plus, but who found much uncertainty about her situation should she move into work since she could not get precise advice about what her benefits rights would be:

“I know the income support drops away and you’ve got family credit coming in. But I don’t know that I would be better off or anything. It would depend on how much I earn an hour.
4.74 Other sources of information were far more ad hoc, such as friends, family and colleagues who may have information, often as a result of going through a similar process themselves and passing on that information. One prisoner described it thus:

“You're brought up to know about things like that. You're streetwise, aren't you? You're brought up to know your ins and outs and what you're entitled to, especially when it comes to money. It's automatic. If you live in a swimming pool you're goin' to learn how to swim quick, aren't you? In a scheme, the social's a big part of people's lives. So basically you learn and if you don't know people will tell you how.”

4.75 Lack of confidentiality for one woman meant that another lone parent found out information about her own circumstances by chance at a service delivered under contract to Jobcentre Plus:

“I noticed that one of the other girls I was with, and she was getting information off them, and her situation is very similar to mine, for childcare, for getting the childcare tax credits, paying for school meals and everything.”

“So, you found out about that, almost by accident then?”

“Aha.”

4.76 There was an impression that in order to find things out with regards to rights and entitlements, people generally had to be very pro-active. This raised obvious questions about ability to do so and about where people might go. However, one woman told us that:

"I don’t wait for something to come to me, I go and look for it myself. I’ve got a computer and I looked it up online to see what was available, put my details in and various things, and then we phoned them up and we asked about what the entitlement was, what the rules and regulations were, and they said that you had to work 16 hours a week.”

4.77 Clearly not everybody is going to have access to a computer or even the aptitude to pursue these issues in the way this interviewee did. There is the added issue that if people are starting from scratch they may have difficulty finding out where would be the best place for them to go. Many people appear to end up going to official government bodies that do not necessarily have information on all of the questions they seek answers to. This research also suggests that gaining complete information is something of a lottery in government services, dependent upon the approach of the individual who sees the advice seeker.

4.78 The pace of change has proved to be a significant problem, both in connection with the rules and regulations regarding entitlements and what recipients must do in order to receive help. There is a considerable degree of confusion regarding DLA for example. One man with learning difficulties and a long standing mental health problem had never heard of
DLA up until recently and spent much of the previous couple of years struggling to get by while being entitled to a benefit he was not receiving. He felt that ‘the social’ should have made him aware of these entitlements but failed to do so. Another man with a hearing impairment had never heard of DLA until recently but had been informed that, for the purposes of that benefit, his disability does not make him eligible.

Advice Priorities

4.79 As part of both the survey and the interviews, one of the issues of major interest to both the researchers and the service users themselves was the degree to which advice services should prioritise various issues and services. Service users were asked on a five point scale about how important various aspects were to them. The results are provided in table 4.19.

Table 4.19: Advice Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIORITY</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Quite important</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Quite unimportant</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You trust the service and it is confidential</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff understand about the barriers you face</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service lasts for as long as you need it</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They know who to send you to if you have a complex problem</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service is in your local area</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They advise you, but you decide about what to do next</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You understand all the information and leaflets etc you are given</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s independent from those making decisions about claims</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service campaigns for benefits to be more straightforward</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can get advice about everything in the one place</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service can represent you at a tribunal</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They campaign to tell people about their rights</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can get advice where you sign on and claim your benefits</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you need it, they will come to see you</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People using the service can have a say in how it develops</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can contact them outside normal 9 to 5 hours</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relationships with advisers

4.80 Although relatively few people described the services they had used as independent, the majority thought that it was very important that services are independent of where you claim. The group that prioritised independence most highly were those with current or past mental health problems. Lone parents were the group that placed least importance on this, yet 46 per cent stated that independence was very important. There were some concerns
regarding the degree to which those working in the provision of benefits could provide independent advice. One lone parent adequately summed up this concern:

“You think, well, who pays their salary and whose side of the fence are they going to fall on? So it is something that you keep in mind. I do wonder, but there is not a lot that you can do about it.”

4.81 Among the lowest overall figures in terms of advice service priorities concerned service users having a say in how the service develops. While half of respondents with a physical impairment felt this to be very important, among other groups of respondents responses ranged between 28 per cent of people with mental health problem and 42 per cent of lone parents who felt this to be the case.

4.82 However, there was almost unanimity in the sample with respect to the importance of the view that staff in advice services understand the barriers that you face. The proportion highlighting this as very important ranged from 71% of those with literacy or numeracy problems to 85% for those with mental health problems. The only dissenting voices were those of the former prisoners, just 40% of whom felt this to be very important.

4.83 Having trust in the staff and being sure that the advice service is confidential was of utmost importance for large numbers in our sample. The numbers feeling such an attribute to be very important ranged from 60 per cent among former prisoners to 85 per cent of those with a physical impairment and all current prisoners. Service users linked the emphasis on trust to the delivery of a friendly service and several interviewees commented on the importance of a rapport with their adviser:

“Firstly I believe its honesty – can you help me, can’t you help me? Yes I can or no I can’t. If you can’t help me, tell me and I can then go somewhere else. If you are going to help me, then I want an attitude from a person who is friendly – they will give you advice, they will work with you and relate with you. When you get into a situation like that, you have got to form a bond between the adviser and yourselves, a working bond. I know that Mr and Mrs is polite and maybe its how it should be done, but it puts a slight barrier up.”

4.84 Indeed it almost seems that the friendliness of staff is held to be as important as any other aspect of the advice experience.

“Going on what I’ve seen at _____, the friendliness of staff, eager to help, the atmosphere in the place, the input they put in with you. You need time – all these forms take ages to fill out, they are a nightmare. You really need to have someone like the ____ staff who are prepared to sit with you for the length of time you need them”

“It could be a falling down building for all I care just so long as the people there are helpful.”
In addition, the issue of confidentiality was a very important one. We have already highlighted that there were numerous examples of advice services that failed to meet the standards of confidentiality expected by service users and this issue was fundamental, though often discussed more in terms of people overhearing than in relation to what is done with the information held about individuals:

“I think confidentiality is a big, big issue with anything like that, when you’re going to sort out is – it would come into it in a big way, because a lot of places don’t have it as in you’ve got to talk to somebody in the reception and explain why you’re there, and there’s loads of people sitting in the waiting room listening to you.”

There was significant variation in the proportion of individuals in each group feeling that it was very important that the advice service gives you advice but you decide what to do next. While 77 per cent of people with a physical impairment felt that ‘ownership’ of the issue was very important this figure fell among other groups with the low end being among those with a literacy or numeracy problem (50 per cent) and among former prisoners (20 per cent).

Accessibility

Different aspects of access to services were given varying degrees of priority by survey participants. Those with physical impairments prioritised the locality of advice services highest with some 85 per cent emphasising the importance of proximity. The priority of proximity was at its lowest among respondents with a learning difficulty. The location of advice services was an issue raised by many of the service users. Many felt that advice services should be in their local area and, if not, then they should be in the centre of town and easily accessible. However, one woman offered an opposing perspective:

“Where they are located. Even although I have the disability car, I still find that sometimes if I am really not well – I’ve been not well since Friday – can’t drive kind of thing, location is a problem. The only advice shop I know in couldn’t be in a worse place. You can’t get parked anywhere within miles. Its not convenient to anybody.”

Respondents tended to put lower levels of importance in being able to get advice in the same place as you sign on. Although 62 per cent of people with a physical impairment felt this to be very important, among other groups the range varied from 46 per cent among those with a long-term illness to a third of those with a learning difficulty.

Amongst those with a physical impairment, 62 per cent stressed the view that you can get advice about different things in the one place. Among most of the rest of the groups around 40 per cent of respondents placed a great deal of importance on this characteristic of advice services. This was one of the questions that respondents were most willing to elaborate on. The issue tended to revolve not around a wish for general or specialised services but the desire to have advice on a range of issues available in one office or, if not in one office, within close proximity. One respondent summed up his wishes thus:
“if you’ve got one building and it’s a big building and you’ve got all these offices is then obviously you’re going to the one building for 5 things instead of for the one thing and then you need to go elsewhere all over town. More resources in the one place really.”

4.90 That the advice service lasts as long as you need it to was felt to be very important among many of the respondent groups, including 77 per cent of people with a physical impairment, while the groups least likely to say this was very important were former prisoners (20 per cent) and lone parents, 62 per cent of whom felt that the length of time the service was available was very important.

4.91 The ability to contact a service outside of 9-5 office hours was not particularly prized by large numbers in our sample. The one major exception to this was among those with a physical impairment, 54 per cent of whom felt hours available was very important. One woman felt that there was more of a realisation of the need for such change but also felt that resources were necessary for such services to exist:

“... but places that used to always do a 9 to 5, or 9 to 6, are all trying to do things, they’re all realising that not everybody works, not everybody’s off during the day, not everybody’s got days off through the week. Some people don’t get off until the weekend and that’s not suitable then they can’t do anything, so they’re starting to realise, right, we need to have a system where we’ve got a back-shift in, or we’ve got people on at weekends, but not all facilities have got that. Maybe if more people looked into that, into trying to give that kind of resource, then they would have a better way of actually dealing with people’s complaints.”

4.92 For those now in employment opening times were regarded as very restrictive and so individuals who wished to use a service were unable to. There was also the worry about being unable to talk about a problem for several days:

“Maybe open on a Saturday morning or something. And maybe, because you might want to talk to somebody on a Saturday, you've got a letter from the bank or from some place that you'd be a wee bit worried, and you don't need to worry about it till Monday morning.”

4.93 Among the lowest figures in term of priorities for respondents was related to the idea that if you need it the service will come to see you. In our survey, it was individuals with learning difficulties that were most likely to be visited at home. However, the group who felt home visits to be most important were those with a physical impairment, 54 per cent of whom felt that this was very important. Just 37 per cent of both lone parents and, more surprisingly, those with a long-term illness or health problem felt that this was very important.

4.94 Just 20 per cent of former prisoners felt that it was very important that you can understand all of the information provided by an advice service. Among other groups the proportion that felt this to be very important ranged from half of those with a literacy or numeracy problem to 77 per cent among respondents with a physical impairment. There
were some complaints regarding the complexity of issues being dealt with. The source of much of the information was held responsible for this complexity by one interviewee:

“It’s not always plain and simple to read, but it could be made plain and simple to read... The benefits system is run by civil servants and they cannot put it in plain simple English... Its often legal gobbledygook that nobody can understand.”

Range and depth of advice

4.95 The complexity of benefits and benefits rules was a major issue in the research. There was a marked variation in the proportion of different groups believing it to be very important that advice services campaign for benefits to be more straightforward, ranging from 64 per cent of those with a long term illness or health problem to 46 per cent among long parents.

4.96 The numbers of respondents who felt it to be very important that the advice service can represent you in a tribunal were among the lowest overall in terms of priorities in the survey. However, 62 per cent of those with a physical impairment felt that this was very important. Among other groups, the proportion who considered that representation was important ranged from 20 per cent to 52 per cent. In part, this reflects concerns raised previously about the complexity of some benefits, particularly DLA for which many people require representation in order to resolve claims, and participate in reviews and appeals.

4.97 The need for an advice service to know who to send you to if you have a complex problem that they cannot deal with was very important for an extremely large proportion (85 per cent) of people with a physical impairment. The figure was also high for those with a long-term illness or a mental health problem but fell off to under 50 per cent among all other groups. As far as the idea of advice specialism is concerned, one man, when asked about his ideal advice service, used the analogy of a GP surgery: they can’t be expected to be experts on absolutely everything but should know when you need to see a specialist and who that specialist should be.

4.98 The prioritisation of an advice service campaigning to tell people about their rights varied across groups. While 58 per cent of people with a physical impairment felt that such a campaigning role was very important, among other groups the levels feeling this to be very important tended to be between 40 per cent and 50 per cent. These comparatively low levels of prioritisation are despite the fact that people are largely unaware of how much they know about their rights.

Summary

4.99 In this chapter, we explored in some depth the experience and use of advice services by the participants in our survey. In the final chapter, we go on to discuss the key points from this and the two preceding chapters, including some comparison between the perspectives of advice providers and advice service users. Conclusions from the study and some recommendations for policy, practice and further research are also made in the final chapter.
Most survey participants had used more than one advice service in the past and the majority had used Jobcentre Plus. However, there were six people who indicated that they had not used any of the services identified, only one of whom had gone to someone else for advice. The most recent advice enquiries by survey participants were in most cases made within six months. Although a quarter of these were made to Jobcentre Plus, other voluntary groups and local authority supported employment projects were also mentioned by around one in five respondents.

Three broad groups of service providers were identified: formal government advice services; other formal advice services; and informal advice services (including supported employment, employability and training projects across sectors). Women used formal government, voluntary sector advice and student support services more while men used informal sources of advice more. People under age 35 used informal sources of advice more than older age groups who used formal advice services more.

Advice issues

In their most recent enquiry, most people wanted advice about more than one issue. Benefits issues were identified most often, particularly benefits rights, highlighting that the system remains complex and advice becomes critical when things go wrong especially where disability benefits are concerned. Earnings were the other main concern. These issues were important for all key groups, but other issues included the following:

- Men accounted for the most enquiries about criminal records disclosure, housing/ homelessness and the impact of starting work or education on DLA. Women were more likely to want help with student finance issues and childcare availability and made all enquiries about childcare costs, benefit delays and bursaries.

- Those under age 34 accounted for all enquiries about disability related costs and also wanted advice about work related costs, help to stay in work or education, travel access and the impact of starting work/ education on DLA. Those in older age groups were more likely to want advice about the impact of starting work or education on other benefits.

- People with a physical impairment most often asked for advice about benefits rights, earnings and hours of work, while those with a long-term illness or health problem wanted advice about help to stay in work or education and travel costs.

- The main issues for those with a current or past mental health problem were the impact of work or education on health and other benefits and they accounted for most of those seeking help with money management and debt.

- Participants with literacy problems and those with learning difficulties raised issues including meeting disability related costs, impact of work or education on DLA.
• Lone parents’ enquiries included housing costs, work related costs, run on benefits, childcare availability, childcare costs and child support.

• Prisoners raised a range of financial and housing issues while ex-prisoners raised issues covering housing, hours of work, help to stay in work or education and criminal records disclosure.

Making contact and levels of support

4.105 Most people made initial contact by drop-in, telephone or by going to a local outreach service, although men were less likely to make contact by phone than women. People with reading or writing difficulties or learning difficulties used local outreach more than other contact methods while lone parents used telephone and drop-in more and those with a physical impairment used drop-in less. People with a long-term illness or health problem used the telephone less than others, while prisoners and former prisoners used mainly drop-in. Most often, enquiries were dealt with by drop-in or appointment.

4.106 The level of support that most individuals needed was advice and support to deal with the problem themselves. However, more men and people with literacy problems or learning difficulties identified a need for representation. Some barriers to making the transition to work or education were linked to the desire for representation, particularly confidence, literacy and skills and qualifications. Advice issues linked to representation included meeting disability related costs, criminal records disclosure and the impact on DLA of starting work or education. Representation was least likely to arise in enquiries to formal government services and most likely to arise in informal and other formal advice services.

Experiences and impact of advice

4.107 Overall, there were high levels of satisfaction with the way that enquiries were handled, although five people, all of whom had used government advice services, were fairly or very dissatisfied. The overall impression of services was most often that they were friendly and understood the needs of the service users. Those expressing some dissatisfaction with a service were more likely to describe the service as impersonal.

4.108 “They help with all your queries” or “your needs come first” were phrases used more often in relation to informal advice services and the local authority and voluntary sectors, whereas “Their priorities come first” was identified infrequently but most often in relation to government advice services. Informal and local authority services were more likely than other services types to be seen as helping you to “decide what to do”, whereas government and other formal advice services were more likely to “tell you what to do”.

4.109 Voluntary sector and local authority services were more likely to “tell you about your duties and rights”, but helping people to know their rights and provision of a confidential or non-judgemental service were identified as features across service types. Lack of confidentiality was a concern that affected attitudes to services. Half the services were described as well resourced, particularly by those with high levels of satisfaction with the service they used and in relation to voluntary sector organisations. Only eight people described the service they used as having insufficient resources – these were also mainly in
the voluntary sector. Services described as accessible were more likely to be informal services or formal government sources, whereas the four described as not accessible were in different sectors.

4.110 More than 40 per cent of survey participants thought that the advice they received had affected decisions about the transition to work, particularly if they had used formal government advice sources. Half had been reassured that the transition to work or education was possible for them and that they would be better off financially and some benefited from job coaching/support activities rather than advice. A minority, mostly women, found that work was not financially viable in their current circumstances.

4.111 Some people, all except one of them women, said there was something they wanted help with that the service could not deliver. Most were seeking advice from education, government or local authority services. They wanted help with childcare costs and availability, benefits rights, hours of work, sponsorship/scholarship, money management and DLA. Most issues raised but not dealt with were significant for the individuals in making the transition to work. Some people lost confidence in services after they felt they were badly advised.

4.112 Advice service users identified that they relied on a wide range of sources of information about rights, but family and friends were particularly important. Others recognised that they needed to be proactive concerning their own situation. This raises concerns about the ability of vulnerable groups to do so and about where people might go. Many people used government sources, but complete information was not always guaranteed from such sources. Complex benefits also presented particular difficulties.

Advice Priorities

4.113 Most advice service users thought that independence from those making decisions about claims was a high priority. Although fewer people thought service user consultation was a high priority, they rated most highly trust and confidentiality and understanding the barriers one might face. Local access was very important, but one-stop approaches less so. However access for an unlimited period of time was important. Home visits and extended opening hours were more significant issues for some groups than others, while understanding the information provided was important for most groups and problems with complex information were a feature of advice for many.

4.114 Representation was important, particularly for those who were involved with claiming complex benefits such as DLA, but differing views about the importance of campaigning for benefits to be more straightforward or to raise awareness of rights. Knowing where to send you to if you have a complex problem was of central importance for several groups.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

5.01 This research is occurring at a time when the UK and Scottish government are committed to achieving:

“A stable and dynamic economy, where everyone has the opportunity to work, and no part of the country is left behind.” (Blair, 2004)

5.02 The Spending Review in 2004 in Scotland reaffirmed this commitment north of the border. The objective of increasing the chances of sustained employment for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in order to lift people out of poverty, contained in Closing the Opportunity Gap (Scottish Executive, 2004a), informed the 2004 Spending Review in Scotland. Details a range of other spending plans that are intended to contribute to the aim of increasing employment and reducing unemployment. The plans involve initiatives that address key barriers to work including training and education, skills development and “increased investment in childcare provision in disadvantaged areas, to ensure that this is not a barrier to work” (Scottish Executive, 2004b: 43). Employment and employability, then, lie at the heart of the Scottish Executive’s policy agendas, and reflect the UK Government’s Welfare to Work policies and programmes.

5.03 Achieving progress, however, is not easy. We know, for example, that many of those moving from welfare to work find the transition difficult. Transition can be very hard for those in vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, often involving a major change in lifestyle (Woodland et al 2003, Richards and Morrison, 2004). The fear and reality of financial and emotional costs associated with leaving benefits and commencing work are important amongst the barriers that people face in trying to make successful transitions to work (Gillespie and Scott 2004, Harries and Woodfield, 2002). Changes in the benefits and tax credit regime can help to overcome the benefits trap and provide additional financial security to people moving into work, however Woodlands et al (2003) found that, amongst those out of work, there are low levels of awareness about the financial support available for people moving into work. Until now, we have known little about the role of advice in raising that awareness and supporting transitions from benefits to work.

5.04 The lack of awareness of financial support available and the role of advice generally has been explored as a barrier to progression in another area of anti poverty policy – access to Higher Education - where research provides some idea of the impact of financial advice, or the lack of it, on policies geared towards reducing inequality. It provides a useful starting point for an exploration of the role of advice in the welfare to work agenda. Callender’s study (2003) of student debt and Higher Education highlighted the key role that informal as well as formal sources of information play in decisions and fears about change. She found that those groups who are underrepresented in HE found it the most difficult to get information about financial support, but issues about finances had a particular negative effect on participation in Higher Education by low income prospective students.

5.05 In carrying out the research on which we report here, we started with a desire to find out whether access to information and advice about financial issues was a factor in decisions
about employment. We have tried to fill the research gap that exists about what advice is available to disadvantaged groups moving towards employment, and how such groups gain access to and use the advice they need to make effective transitions. Research for the DWP (Goldstone and Douglas, 2003) suggests that there is a significant difference in perceptions of accuracy, access and appropriateness between disadvantaged clients and advisors in Job Centre Plus. This led us to explore the perception of providers, in public, private and voluntary sectors, as well as users about the range of advice services that are, or could potentially be, available to such groups. In the literature review that formed the first phase of this project, Gillespie and Scott (2004: 39) argued that: the ‘advice’ giving role of different agencies has changed considerably. Jobcentre Plus, for example, has a new role in relation to advice, but is entering a field where: ‘advice’ services have traditionally advised and supported those pursuing their rights to benefits; and government departments traditionally provided services and delivered benefits payments. The advice role of Jobcentre Plus, moreover, remains a contested concept that has not yet been fully recognised in, for example, reviews of legal information and advice services in Scotland (Gillespie and Scott, 2004). At the same time advice services have not seen themselves working in the ‘employability field’ and have not needed to consider their role in the context of the welfare to work agenda or the comparative roles of governmental and non-governmental sources of advice. This research explores these issues in some detail and provides a basis for planning the future directions of governmental and non-governmental advice services.

5.06 Initially we had intended to focus on financial issues, particularly advice on benefits and tax credit, since these are the areas that have seen growing complexity and application as a result of welfare to work policies. In practice, while financial issues are very important, we have had to recognise that the advice people want and seek in relation to moving towards work is far wider than that, reflecting complex individual employability profiles. The result is a report that examines: the types and locations of financial and non-financial advice used by disadvantaged groups as they negotiate their move towards employment; the role of advice services in supporting such groups in transitions to work; and existing practice in meeting the advice needs of disadvantaged groups. As such we feel it fills an important gap in current knowledge and has much to contribute to current discussions of the action needed if disadvantaged groups are to get access to the kind of sustainable employment opportunities promised in the Closing the Opportunity Gap targets (Scottish Executive, 2004a).

5.07 The research itself involved a study of advice workers in a range of advice settings and groups of advice service users considered to be at a disadvantage in trying to access the labour market. The survey of advice workers gathered information about the service that they worked for, the advice services they provided, how these services were delivered, what steps they took to meet the advice needs of disadvantaged groups and what were the issues and priorities that they would take forward to improve services and access to them. The survey of advice service users aimed to find out more from key groups, who were at different stages in the transition to work, about: the barriers they faced; their advice needs and experiences of using advice services; and what would improve their access to and confidence in advice services generally. Qualitative interviews with a sample of survey respondents enabled issues raised in the survey to be explored in more depth.

5.08 In the next section, some key findings from the research results discussed in Chapters Two to Four are drawn out. This is followed by a discussion of the emerging themes, including some comparisons between types of service provision and between advice providers and service users involved in the surveys and interviews. The final section draws
conclusions from the study and makes recommendations for policy makers and advice providers.

Key findings from the research

Advice Services

5.09 The study found differences between sectors and types of advice providers in advice provision. In voluntary sector advice and local authority welfare rights services, provision of advice can be described as a dedicated function. In contrast, government and some other providers performed a much broader range of functions. In the case of Jobcentre Plus, that included payment of benefits and implementation of aspects of the government’s welfare to work agenda such as overseeing registration for work and administration of compulsory welfare to work activities such as work focused interviews. Target setting is common across service types. All have targets relating to quality and accuracy of service and information. Government services have added targets relating to transition to work, service user participation and customer satisfaction. Although most services see themselves as providing confidential and non-judgemental advice, there were different priorities across services:

- voluntary sector, housing associations and education services tended to view their services as service user focused;
- income maximisation was the focus in local authority welfare rights; and
- support during transitions to employment and payment of benefits were key in government services.

5.10 Staff resources were another key area of difference. Non-government advice services were generally small, but provided support to widely varying numbers of service users. However, we could not distinguish between advice work and other activities such as registration for work in government services to identify the scale of resources used for advice.

Scope of Advice Provision

5.11 Most services provided advice at the level of representation and few delivered information only. In terms of the issues covered:

- Overall advice provision tended to concentrate on benefits issues and ‘better off’ calculations, although a minority provided representation on these issues. Few services covered taxation, course or grant applications, criminal records disclosure or travel costs or entitlements.
- Advice on the greatest breadth of issues was delivered by voluntary sector advice services, local authority and ‘other’ services.
• Routine coverage of issues in contact with clients moving towards work was concentrated on benefits issues and costs such as housing or childcare. Few routinely considered issues such as education related advice needs, childcare availability, adult care, travel access, taxation, money management or disability related costs, despite disability and care issues being central to income maximisation in the transition to work or education.

Meeting advice needs of disadvantaged groups in the transition to work

5.12 Advice workers identified a range of service delivery, development and training issues related to meeting the advice needs of disadvantaged groups making the transition to work.

• Service user views were most often taken into account through consultation processes such as surveys and feedback while a small number have more central involvement of service users. There were varying views and awareness about service user consultation and involvement. For some, service users had a central or leading role, most often in the voluntary sector and housing associations but others showed much less awareness.

• Commitment and related measures to meet the needs of a wide range of disadvantaged groups were evident in all sectors, although ex prisoners’ needs were seldom addressed. Specialist knowledge about particular groups was more evident in voluntary and local authority sector services.

• Most service delivery approaches covered aspects of physical access, outreach, home visits, interpreting, large print and specialist posts, but others offered insights to steps that can be taken to meet better the advice needs for specific groups.

• Specific suggestions for effective provision of information and advice needs for disadvantaged groups centred on service development, training, networking and resources for maintaining and developing skills and knowledge.

• Most respondents were in advice networks, but only 42 per cent of advisers were in welfare to work networks or partnerships including only 11 per cent of those in voluntary sector advice.

• Many services relied heavily on in-house training provision, although cross sectoral training and support was evident between local authority and voluntary sectors.

• Existing training was focused most strongly on benefits and other rights, particularly in advice services, whereas training relating to awareness and the needs of specific groups was attended more often by staff in agencies targeting specific groups and in government services, particularly in Careers Scotland where awareness training concerning a wide range of groups was identified.
• Only 40 per cent had been to training on advice needs relating to the transition to work, much of which also had a focus on benefits rights.

• There was little training identified that addressed access to advice needs for groups or welfare to work issues in the specific context of advice provision.

Addressing barriers to advice

5.13 The advice providers rated quality and accuracy of advice as the highest priority overall. Although all other potential approaches to improving access to advice were rated highly by advisers, the most important were considered to be accessibility of information, staff training and specialist services, reinforcing the importance of knowledge and skills and the provision of high quality advice. Closer links with other services were considered a key route to addressing such issues. However, advisers rated links between government and non-government agencies higher than either links amongst non-government services or between advice providers and training and supported employment projects. Access for an unlimited period of time was not very important for advice providers, although this may reflect the fact that most advice services are not time limited in terms of how long individuals can be supported, but may be limited due to reliance on project funding. Service user consultation and involvement was another area that advice providers did not rate as a particularly high priority.

5.14 Voluntary sector advice providers were more likely than other services to describe their service as under resourced and to identify staffing and physical resources, such as information resources and training, as important needs for service development and shared working that were constrained by lack of or insecure funding. This issue also arose in relation to the desire by some services to refer cases to ‘experts’, tempered by recognition that the capacity for some services to respond was limited by lack of resources.

5.15 Some advice workers raised concerns that the benefits system continues to present difficulties for people making the transition to work, particularly in relation to disability benefits, and remains complex and inflexible. They made some suggestions for change focused on timeous and efficient delivery of benefits affecting periods of transition.

5.16 For some advice workers there were concerns about their relationship to the welfare to work agenda, making service delivery and partnership working complex if central concerns such as impartiality and independence from the interests of government and other agencies are to be maintained. Conflicts of interest can arise between advice and other services delivered by the same organisation, raising conflicting priorities within organisations. Although some advisers provided advice about their own services, few had a conflicts of interest policy. Concern existed in some quarters about the ability of government services to deliver impartial, independent advice in situations of conflict between service users interests and government policy.

Advice service users

5.17 The survey of those using advice services included people in a range of situations covering physical impairment, long term illness or health problems, mental health issues,
literacy problems, learning difficulties, lone parenthood and current or former prisoners. Survey participants were in different positions in terms of distance from the labour market and at different stages of the transition to work: although 46 were not in work or education, 28 per cent were in paid employment and 25 per cent were in education and/or training. However, most of those not in employment had been in paid work before and only one in five survey participants had no experience of paid employment. Health or disability issues, employer behaviour and motherhood were identified as the main catalysts for leaving previous employment.

**Barriers to work**

5.18 The vast majority of advice service users faced multiple barriers to employment, education or training. The barriers mentioned most frequently were the general financial situation of advice service users and lack of confidence and:

- Up to a third of most groups said that managing bills and debts act as a barrier.
- Various benefit barriers were mentioned by a large proportion of the respondents. Although benefit rules were considered to be a significant barrier there was far less concern about lost benefits and entitlements.
- Benefit delays were particularly important for certain groups and the benefit cycle appeared to act as more of a barrier for men than women.
- Health barriers were largely in line with the type of health problem that individuals had, but multiple health barriers were marked among those with a health problem or disability.
- Childcare was an important issue for women, particularly lone parents, but not men.
- Discrimination was perceived as a barrier across groups, but particularly amongst former prisoners, those with a physical impairment and men more than women.
- Transport problems were important, particularly for prisoners, those with learning difficulties and people with literacy and numeracy problems.
- The extra cost of work, pay and conditions and getting suitable hours were barriers for some groups.
- Lack of skills and perceived poor reading and writing abilities were mentioned by various groups.
- Lack of confidence was seen as a significant barrier among many groups and more so for women than men.
There was a general trend for former prisoners to perceive more barriers than current prisoners, including having a criminal record and managing bills and debt.

Using Advice Services

5.19 Most survey participants had used more than one advice service in the past and the majority had used Jobcentre Plus but a small number had used no advice service. Although Jobcentre Plus and other formal advice services, mainly in the voluntary sector and local government, accounted for most of the services used most recently, the use of informal services such as supported employment and training projects was higher than anticipated. Advice sources varied for different groups:

- Women were more likely to use formal government services, voluntary sector advice and student support services;
- men were less likely to use government services and more likely to use informal services;
- ethnic minorities were underrepresented in their use of Jobcentre Plus and local authority services for advice;
- people with mental health problems and former prisoners used formal voluntary sector services and informal services; and
- those with reading and writing difficulties or learning difficulties and younger age groups were more likely to use informal services in the local authority and voluntary sectors.

5.20 In their most recent enquiry, most people wanted advice about more than one issue.

- Benefits issues, including benefits rights, were raised most often, but were seldom the only concern of respondents.
- Money management and debt were not identified as often as anticipated, but were a concern for people with mental health problems more than other groups.
- Earnings and hours of work were key concerns for several groups.
- There were also differences between groups in the nature of enquiries, some of them following predictable lines, for example, enquiries relating to childcare were raised almost exclusively by women. Women, particularly lone parents, were more concerned than men about benefit delays and run-on benefits.
- Younger age groups wanted help with disability related costs and help to stay in work or education, while older age groups more often wanted advice about the impact of starting work or education on other benefits.
• Other issues that were less predictable were a concern for several groups including, for example, travel access and travel costs.

Accessing Services

5.21 Most individuals wanted advice and support to deal with the problem themselves, but few wanted information only. However, men and people with literacy problems or learning difficulties were more likely to want advocacy or representation. Representation was least likely to arise in enquiries to formal government services and most likely to arise in informal and other formal advice services. Factors linked to the desire for representation included:

• Some barriers to making the transition to work or education, particularly confidence, literacy and skills and qualifications; and

• Some of the advice issues raised such as meeting disability related costs, criminal records disclosure and the impact on DLA of starting work or education.

Experiences and impact of advice

5.22 Overall, advice service users were very satisfied with their experience of using advice services although a small number of people, all of whom had used government advice services, were dissatisfied. A lot of respondents said the services were friendly and understood their needs. Staff attitudes were important: services seen as comprehensive and sensitive to individual need were viewed positively; but dissatisfaction with services was linked to the atmosphere in the services. Those expressing dissatisfaction often had advice needs that had not been met and were more likely to describe a service as impersonal or service led. Long periods in waiting rooms, advisers who were too busy and lack of confidentiality, particularly in relation to privacy, were all issues that generated criticism.

5.23 Service users highlighted significant gaps in advice. These included lack of information about: childcare availability, benefits rights (including discretionary benefits), employment rights, education and training opportunities and money management. Although access to continuing support proved difficult for some of those in work, they still felt the need for aftercare services.

5.24 Respondents felt that advice had a significant role to play in decisions about returning to work. More than 40 per cent of survey participants thought that the advice they received had an effect, particularly where they had used formal government sources of advice:

• Half had been reassured that the transition to work or education was possible for them and that they would be better of financially. This group included a small number for whom advice was important helping them stay in education.

• Others had benefited from support in the form of training or job coaching rather than advice.
Some found that work was not financially viable for them in their current circumstances or that they had not yet achieved their aim of work or education. This reinforces evidence from other studies that, particularly for lone parents, childcare availability and costs, combined with part-time work in low paid jobs may not necessarily pay, even with tax credits in place (Gillespie et al, 2003; Rowlingson and McKay, 2002; Daly and Rake, 2003; Dean, 2001).

5.25 Although most people had used government services, they did not distinguish well between activities such as ‘signing on’ and advice services in Jobcentre Plus, while some were concerned about incomplete information from such sources. Overall, service users were more likely to describe services as under-resourced if their advice needs had not been fully met and as well resourced if satisfied with the service they received. However, some had concerns about the future of good services where resources were limited.

5.26 Many individuals had little knowledge of their rights and relied on a wide range of sources of information about rights, but family and friends were particularly important. Some expressed more confidence about their knowledge and a few considered that it was necessary to be proactive concerning their own situation. A complex and changing system of benefits and entitlements, combined with lack of awareness of information sources or advice that may not be complete or accurate, may lead to individuals making important decisions without the holistic advice tailored to their needs that many needed to progress towards work.

5.27 Others indicated that they relied on services that do not have advice as a core function, particularly supported employment and training projects. Although such services have sometimes facilitated access to expert advice for individuals, this was not always the case, raising concerns about whether such services are always in a position to provide full, accurate and holistic advice to the level that individuals may need.

Service User Advice Priorities

5.28 Above all other options, advice service users greatest advice priorities were relationships of trust and confidentiality with advisers and staff who understood the barriers that they face. Although positive outcomes such as benefits gained, problems resolved, or care arranged were central for advice service users, it is important to recognise that the manner of delivering advice, in terms of attitudes, relationships and accessibility, was also central for those using services. Local access was very important, particularly for some groups, but one-stop approaches and being able to get advice where you sign on were less so. Access for an unlimited period of time was important for service users as was the principle that advice services should be independent from those making decisions about claims. Although service users did not rate service user consultation and involvement as a high priority, they did want staff to understand the barriers they face and deliver services appropriate to their needs.

Summary of issues for key groups

5.29 Throughout this report, we have highlighted and compared the situations of the key groups of advice service users that have been the focus of this study. In this section, we
provide a brief summary of some key points in relation to each of the groups, covering economic status, barriers to work and advice needs.

Survey participants with a physical impairment

5.30 A relatively high proportion of those with a physical impairment were working part-time while over half were registered unemployed. Not surprisingly the biggest barrier identified by this group was physical health. Other significant barriers included their financial situation generally, discrimination, their confidence and the pay and conditions they could expect at work. None of this group had a home visit to deal with their enquiries. They asked for advice most often about benefits rights, earnings and hours of work. However, this group also sought advice about access and equipment needs at work more than other groups and disability related costs were also a significant issue. They were more likely than most to say the advice they received had affected their decisions in relation to starting work or education.

Survey participants with long-term illness or health problems

5.31 More than half of people with a long-term illness or health problem were registered unemployed and a quarter were in education or training. They identified numerous barriers in high numbers, of which physical health, mentioned by more than two thirds, was the most significant. Other important barriers included lack of confidence, financial situation generally, mental health, skills and qualifications and discrimination. One person in this group had a home visit to deal with their enquiry. Help to stay in work or education was more important for this group than others. Almost two thirds sought advice about benefit rights and other key issues included earnings, help to stay in work or education, travel costs and incapacity benefit. This group accounted for a third of those who said that there was something that they wanted help with that the service could not deliver.

Survey participants with mental health problems

5.32 Most survey participants with a mental health problem were unemployed, less than a quarter were in education or training and few were in employment. They were more likely than most other groups to identify seven or more barriers, a large number of which were selected as being important by a quarter or more of this group. The most significant barriers were mental health and the general financial situation of individuals, confidence, physical health, concerns about not being able to keep a job, the extra costs of working and managing bills or debt. This group were more likely than most to say they had been referred to a service. They raised a wide range advice issues and asked about council tax issues more often than any other group. Other key issues included benefits rights, earnings, the impact of starting work or education on health and other benefits. This group also accounted for five of 9 people seeking help with money management and two of the three people looking for help to renegotiate debts.
Survey participants with literacy and numeracy problems

5.33 Half of those with reading or writing difficulties were unemployed and approaching a third were in employment, but few were in education or training. Two thirds of this group said their reading and writing abilities acted as a barrier and other significant issues were confidence and their general financial situation. This group were more likely than most to want support to the level of representation. Key issues raised included benefits rights, earnings, the impact on DLA of starting work and meeting disability related costs. This group also accounted for 3 of the 4 enquiries about adult care support.

Survey participants with learning difficulties

5.34 Individuals with learning difficulties were most likely to be in employment (52 per cent) but less likely than other groups to be in education or training. Reading and writing abilities were the most significant barrier for this group. Other barriers mentioned frequently included confidence, their financial situation generally and skills and qualifications. They were more likely than most groups to say they had been referred and to want support to the level of representation. Most home visits were made to this group. The issues they raised most frequently included benefits rights, earnings, the impact of work or training on other benefits, help to stay in work or education, meeting disability related costs, how stopping work affects benefits, the impact of work on DLA and travel access.

Lone parents

5.35 A third of lone parents described their status as caring for children, but only six gave that alone as their economic status. The largest group said they were unemployed, reflecting a more work focused approach than may have been anticipated in the past. Lone parents were more likely to be in education or training than other groups and, of those in work, more were full-time than part-time. They identified fewer barriers than others, the most common being their financial situation generally, finding suitable childcare, childcare costs, managing bills and debts and confidence. Lone parents most often wanted advice and support and were less likely than others to want representation. Most often their enquiries related to benefits rights, housing costs and earnings and they had a stronger focus than other groups on education related issues. They accounted for half of enquiries about work related costs, two thirds of those concerning run on benefits and childcare availability, three quarters of those about childcare costs and all child support enquiries. They were also among the groups most likely to want advice about benefit delays, council tax payments and housing costs. Over a third of this group said the advice had affected their decisions about work or education and they included most of those who felt work was not financially viable in their current circumstances.

Prisoners and former prisoners

5.36 All former prisoners were unemployed and current prisoners anticipated the same economic status on release. One former prisoner was also caring for children, but none were in education or training. This group were most likely to identify a large number of barriers. Although drawn from a small sample, the figures suggest, however, that former prisoners
direct experiences of barriers to work were less optimistic than current prisoners. Key barriers included having a criminal record, the cost of working, pay and conditions in work and managing bills and debt, all of which were identified more by former prisoners than current prisoners. Drug use and the general financial situation of respondents were issues common to both groups, while other family issues and benefits delays were more significant for current prisoners. The issues that prisoners wanted advice about were related to work but not education and included a range of financial and housing issues. The ex-prisoners wanted advice about housing, hours of work, benefits rights, help to stay in work or education and criminal records disclosure.

Discussion of findings

Use of advice services

5.37 In general, the types of service involved in the survey of advice providers were represented amongst those used by individuals. The survey of advisers had a small sample of informal advice services, but a significant minority of service users used such services. Lone parents and prisoners had used government services more than non-government advice services, those with reading and writing difficulties or learning difficulties had used informal and local authority services more while those with mental health problems and former prisoners had used voluntary sector and informal services more. Although not offering a formal advice service, informal services were trusted sources of support for individuals with multiple barriers to overcome.

5.38 However such services were less likely than formal advice services to provide the range of issues and depth of support, including for example representation, that was most likely to be provided by voluntary sector advice services particularly in relation to benefits. As a result, people with complex advice needs did not always receive the type of support that they required. Part of the explanation for this may be that some survey participants viewed their own situation in an holistic way and did not distinguish between social, legal and welfare rights advice that traditionally are the main focus of advice services and other forms of support such as job coaching or skills development. However, other factors raised in the study are likely to play a part including: accessibility issues; weak systems of referral; limited partnership working; and resource issues in the voluntary sector. For advice services to support individuals with complex advice needs in making informed choices that can lead to sustainable transitions to work, such issues need to be addressed.

5.39 Although methods of contacting and using services were broadly in line with provision, there were some differences that were not necessarily predictable. For example, advice services were more likely than not to provide a home visiting service and advisers identified this as important for people with mobility problems. However, with one exception, advice service users in our survey with a physical impairment or health problem were not visited at home and most home visits were made to people with learning difficulties.

5.40 Advice service users and advice providers generally identified compatible priorities for meeting advice needs. Advice providers emphasised quality and accuracy of advice and staff development and training while service users identified trust, confidentiality and independence as their key priorities. Although service users and advice providers alike did not rate service user consultation and involvement as a high priority, service users did want
staff to understand the barriers they face and deliver services appropriate to their needs. Access for an unlimited period of time was important for service users, but not advisers, although this may reflect the fact that most advice services are not time limited.

**Barriers to work and advice needs**

5.41 The summary of findings relating to key groups outlined above shows that there was a strong match between barriers to work and the issues that service users wanted advice about. Benefits issues were central concerns for service users and providers alike. However, a range of other issues were important to making successful transitions to work, sometimes for particular groups of people. The more routine coverage of childcare costs compared with access to childcare is just such a case in point. Women accounted for all except one of the 12 survey participants who identified specific issues that they wanted help with that the service could not deal with and help with access to suitable childcare was top of their list. Without access to suitable childcare, help with meeting childcare costs could become irrelevant. It is also important to acknowledge that issues raised but not dealt with were significant for the individuals in making the transition to work and that a few had lost confidence in some services after they felt that they had been badly advised.

**Benefits barriers**

5.42 The research identified that barriers remain in the benefits system that affect the transition to work, particularly for people with learning disabilities or mental health problems and all those concerned about the need to return to benefits. The system remains complex and advice becomes critical when things go wrong, especially where disability benefits are concerned. Uncertainties in relation to the timing and accuracy of processing, if addressed, could contribute to improving confidence about moving towards work. Despite the introduction of tax credits and run-on benefits, there remain groups for whom employment may not be financially viable, particularly where work is part-time and low paid. These and similar concerns have been highlighted by other commentators (see, for example: Gillespie and Scott, 2004; Robbie and Pressland, 2003; Witton, 2002; Schneider et al, 2001; Wilson et al, 2000; NFFI, 2000; Simons, 1998) and remain to be addressed if work is to be a realistic route out of poverty for those affected by such issues. For individuals with complex benefits issues to address, there was a need to have the full picture, so that holistic advice was especially important and such groups remain most in need of welfare rights advice that is centred unambiguously on their circumstances and needs.

**Users concerns about the advice-giving role of Jobcentre Plus**

5.43 Conflicts of interest can arise between advice and other services delivered by the same organisation. Although some advisers provided advice about their own services, few had policies to address any conflicts of interest that arise. Such issues were most apparent in Jobcentre Plus where the different roles undertaken by staff were often not recognised by service users. Although individual advisers may be clear about their roles and remit, no such assumptions can be made in relation to those that they are advising. The research identified overlapping roles and activities across service types, but also some distinctive differences. Government services were more strongly associated than other services with getting people
into work or education and those using government services said more often that the advice they got had affected their decisions about work or education. However, when problems arose that threatened the sustainability of a chosen path in work or education, service users were more likely to use formal advice services outside of government. For advice service users in this study, the use of government advice services remained linked to activities such as registration for work and work focused interviews.

5.44 The role of Jobcentre Plus in relation to existing advice services was a question of interest to the researchers. Government services have engaged many more people in the welfare to work agenda and provided opportunities and challenges for some to make successful transitions to work. Many of these individuals face multiple barriers, not least of which is a complex system of benefits. It can be argued that it is a proper and legitimate role of government services to provide information about rights and entitlements, but Leonard argues that:

“information policy strongly influences which claimants are able to exercise their rights... In our risk society, ‘information poverty’, which results in many of those who are eligible not receiving their entitlements, has to be attributed in part to government policy.” (Leonard, 2003: 124)

5.46 Several factors affect take-up of benefits, including the structure of the benefit system, administrative arrangements, client characteristics and the dynamics of benefits (Stafford, 2003). Staff and users have expressed positive views about the personal adviser model that is seen as more effective and friendly than past provision (Kelleher et al, 2002; Osgood et al, 2002). It is a view reaffirmed in the research reported here. However, when personal advisers have both advocacy and gate keeping roles, including referral of cases for decisions about benefits sanctions, advice and compulsion can become blurred (Garrett, 2002). This can produce a conflict of interest although the response to this finding in the research by one senior manager in Jobcentre Plus in Scotland was that such blurring should not be viewed in terms of a conflict of interest:

“... If customers would be financially better off in work we think we have a duty to give them information about this, as part of the advice we give about the support they can receive in encouraging them to move from benefit to work. We would stress that it is about encouragement.”

5.47 Although their advice giving role is still developing, some Jobcentre Plus advisers in our research considered that they delivered support to the level of representation on issues, including some benefits, although they did not see representation as a role of the service as a whole. The research also suggested a lack of consistency in advice: although some service users were very happy with the service they received, others complained of incomplete information about rights that led, in some cases, to a loss of financial entitlements.

5.48 Attitudes and beliefs are central considerations for the effective delivery of services and support and this study is not alone in finding that tensions between advice and compulsion can affect outcomes. In research for the DWP, a study before the introduction of Pathways to Work (Goldstone and Douglas, 2003) and an early study of Incapacity Benefit Reforms (Dickens et al, 2004) found that beliefs and attitudes of staff and service users
affected how services were delivered and received. Dickens et al also found tensions between the supportive and enabling focus of the reforms with the mandatory elements and anticipate that these issues need further consideration in later stages of their study. However, such attitudes and beliefs continue to affect delivery and receipt of advice and conflicting perspectives are unlikely to be resolved quickly or easily. This reinforces the importance of a healthy and accessible independent advice sector that is acknowledged within advice strategies.

Advice services generally

5.49 Some approaches to good practice were identified both by advisers and in the descriptions by service users of positive experiences. However, some issues were identified that need to be considered in the development of advice services that are geared to providing holistic advice to individuals making the transition from benefits to employment. The provision of advice was found to have a limited focus on transitions to work that may have implications for delivery of holistic advice at an important and challenging period of change for people. One aspect of this is that benefits and financial issues were covered well in advice provision and training for advice providers but other key areas of advice need were less well supported, particularly childcare availability, travel and access concerns and health issues.

5.50 Although the greatest breadth and depth of advice was found in formal non-government advice services, vulnerable groups of service users in this survey had high levels of engagement with informal services that were trusted sources of support for them. However, these services were limited in their ability to provide the expertise and breadth of knowledge of more formal advice services. The whole picture was needed for many individuals in complex circumstances to make informed decisions about what was best for them. Advice service users made limited distinctions between different areas of need for support, such as advice on benefits and related issues, support with job seeking, improving skills and qualifications, or addressing supported employment needs. Despite the relatively low priority given by advice workers to links with other sources of support, the research suggests that, where such links existed, they had a positive impact for individuals and that they are valuable to the delivery of holistic support for some disadvantaged groups.

Advice and Welfare to Work

5.51 For advice workers, particularly in the voluntary sector, there were concerns about their relationship to the welfare to work agenda and the implications of partnership working with government services for delivery of their advice services. In particular, there were concerns that such joint work should not compromise their capacity to deliver impartial advice that is independent of the interests of government and other agencies. Advisers prioritised links between government and non-government sources of advice more highly than other networking or partnership activity. However, for many services that are independent of the DWP, such links may need to be informal and negotiated in a way that enables independence to be sustained and recognised as such by service users. Nonetheless, there remains considerable scope for more dialogue than exists at present. We would note, however, that for voluntary sector advice services the lack of resources to facilitate such
activity is already a barrier and would require to be addressed for them to affect change. We return to this issue below.

Service user consultation and involvement

5.52 It is generally recognised that there are benefits to engaging all stakeholders in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of development projects (Bennett and Roberts, 2004; Beresford and Croft 1993). When properly implemented participation of a wide range of stakeholders can enlarge problem solving capacity, enhance power sharing and improve the quality and effectiveness of projects and proposals because knowledge, perspectives and information of different stakeholders are used to solve problems (Farrell, 2004).

5.53 In the study, consultation with and involvement of service users was found to be patchy, with most understanding and consideration of service user views and input was found in voluntary sector organisations. Whilst it is understandable that input to the development of services is not necessarily important for individual service users, those involved in the survey were very clear that they wanted services to understand the barriers that they face. Studies such as this one may go some way to informing service providers, but they can only be complementary to measures that ensure that the views of service users are integral to service delivery. Some approaches are outlined in the research, but they are limited in number and scope and give an overall impression of limited development in this area to date.

Training

5.54 Training is clearly an important part of the development and updating of skills and knowledge for advice workers. However, although the needs of different groups in accessing services was a focus of training for government advice providers, particularly Careers Scotland, much of the training attended by advisers in formal non-government advice services was focused on benefits and rights issues and related less often to awareness of the needs or issues for different groups in relation to access to advice. There was also little training that addressed welfare to work issues in the specific context of advice provision.

5.55 One aim of the project of which this research study is part, was to pilot training that helps to address the problems and barriers for disadvantaged groups making the transition to work. In order to take this forward, training has been developed in partnership with two training providers to achieve dissemination of research outputs beyond traditional audiences. The pilot programmes are based on some of the key groups that have been the focus of this research, specifically: disabled people and people with long term ill health, including mental ill health.

5.56 The aim of the pilot training was to raise awareness of barriers to employment, the advice needs which arise out of these barriers and the need for holistic advice. Sessions were targeted at advisers in the voluntary sector and local government as the main sources of in-depth advice and a government advice service that is more focused on other aspects of advice and assistance. Following pilot training sessions, the training pack has been revised and produced as a resource for use by trainers in recognition of the strong reliance on in-house training in many advice services. A separate report on the training for advisers makes
recommendations for further development in relation to the training issues that arise as a result of this research (Kelly, 2005).

Resources

5.57 Many of the suggestions for change that are made below will have resource implications for services, some of which are already struggling to access information resources and training or make the time to meet with others. These pressures appear to be greatest in formal advice services in the voluntary sector. Even if those services with greater resources can improve the range and depth of the advice they provide, there remains a need for holistic advice from trusted sources that recognise that individuals have limited knowledge of their rights, take a proactive approach to advice provision and provide the independence and confidentiality that service users prioritise.

5.58 The limited range of funding sources for voluntary sector advice services, and their heavy reliance on public sector funding, point to the need for strategies to provide resources that enable holistic approaches to advice and achieve services that are truly ‘open to all’. Project funding for particular types of advice or to undertake specific activities such as home visiting or outreach projects are valuable for the services that have them. However, they will have a limited impact on development of approaches that ensure access to advice for vulnerable groups, or sustain expert support and representation if the resources cannot be found to engage in networking and partnership activities, develop the involvement of service users, or access training and other essential resources to move beyond current reactive service provision.

Future developments and recommendations

5.59 A key factor that will affect whether our recommendations are taken forward is current thinking in government circles about the delivery of advice. Gillespie and Scott (2004) identified that, until recently, there has been a lack of national co-ordination in the delivery and development of advice services in Scotland. However, there are two recent developments in Scotland that indicate that this situation is changing: the Strategic Review of the Delivery of Legal Aid, Advice and Information (Scottish Executive, 2004c); and, as part of the Scottish Executive’s objective to address financial inclusion, measures to address the money advice needs of disadvantaged groups (Scottish Executive, 2004b). Both of these developments address aspects of advice provision for disadvantaged groups making the transition from benefits to work. In the context of the role of advice in supporting transitions to work for disadvantaged groups, the financial inclusion strategy measures are important in that they put resources into front-line money advice provision and funding pilot studies to test new approaches to delivering money advice for disadvantaged groups, including several that aim to support transitions to work.

5.60 The Strategic Review addresses a much wider range of services than is under consideration here. It identifies that there is a complex mixed model of advice and information provision in Scotland, but that: it is not well matched to need; funding and planning are not well co-ordinated; and the potential for different services to work in a complementary way has not been maximised. Their recommendations for services operating on fixed resources (most of the non-government services considered in this study) is for
provision to be based on “as transparent and objective an assessment of need as possible” to encourage a distribution of resources between different demands that “focus on, for example, priority areas, subject matters or client groups” (Scottish Executive, 2004c: 4). The recommendations that follow are made on the understanding that core proposals in the Strategic Review of Legal Information and Advice, particularly those relating to strategic and organisational approaches, and future changes arising from an employability strategy are likely to be implemented. In particular, we do not want to recommend another layer of networks or partnerships to address issues relating to advice and transitions to work, but seek to ensure that core concerns arising from this research can be accommodated within planning and development around advice and employability.

**Recommendations**

5.61 The results of this study have implications for policy and practice. There is a need for a strategic approach to development and delivery of advice services in order to achieve more effective responses to resource issues, gaps in provision, complex advice needs and advice that links more effectively with employability services. The following recommendations aim to improve access to advice for disadvantaged groups in the transition to work. They are targeted towards key agencies, although it is recognised that there may be considerable overlap between agencies in terms of interests and responsibilities in delivering and developing advice services.

**The Scottish Executive and its agencies**

1. Recognition should be given to the role that advice services have to play in the development of strategies relating to both legal advice and information and employability and that advice services need to provide a continuum of advice and support that has scope beyond justiciable and employability issues. Many of the advice services that have been considered in this study provide advice on justiciable issues that are central to the Strategic Review (Scottish Executive, 2004c), but for disadvantaged groups with complex advice needs, a wider range of issues and types of support are required. While we support the proposed approach of strategic and local partnerships contained in the Review, it will be extremely important that there is scope within such partnerships to accommodate the need for a continuum of advice and support and recognition of the need for advice providers to engage more effectively with employability strategies and services.

2. The development of local partnerships should be based on principles that recognise the importance of non-government advice services as full partners, both in funding agreements that reflect the work involved in participating in such partnerships and in recognising and valuing their independence and the distinctive contribution that they bring. They also need to identify development plans to mainstream access to services for disadvantaged groups or ensure that advice provision dedicated to particular groups is accessible.

3. Strategies and partnerships need to take fully into account that many such services require resources to enable them to participate fully in development of services, partnerships and
networks. This will be of central importance for voluntary sector advice services that were found to be most under pressure in our study.

4. Mainstream delivery of services for all groups has implications for resources. A wide range of good practice measures have been identified in this study, particularly in relation to people with disability and health issues or learning difficulties that, if implemented, can contribute to improved practice. Some strategic development and provision of resources may be helpful in providing economies of scale (for example, large print information or easy to read leaflets) that make effective use of appropriate expertise.

5. Measures to meet the advice needs of groups such as lone parents, prisoners and former prisoners should be given greater focus to address areas of weak advice provision and ensure than advice needs in the specific context of transitions to work are holistic and based on the need of individuals for advice and support.

6. Development of quality standards and monitoring systems in relation to advice and information should be based on an understanding of the capacity of services. In particular, they should take account of the relatively small size of many advice, services and seek to achieve a balance that does not over-bureaucratise advice while encouraging services to achieve and maintain high standards of advice that meet the needs of individual service users. Development of common standards that are recognised and accepted by key funding bodies may be helpful in reducing the administration involved.

7. Reviews should also consider co-ordination of information resources and access to them in relation to both national issues (such as benefits, education and employment rights) and local services and benefits including, for example, childcare, education and training or transport needs.

8. Local welfare to work networks are encouraged to include the advice sector more centrally in their membership and activities to reflect the importance of advice in supporting successful and sustainable transitions to work.

9. In national and local strategic planning on advice and employability, there is considerable scope to develop more robust systems of referral. It will be important that information services, including Careers Scotland as a national service, can undertake managed referrals that meet complex advice needs and recognise the capacity of receiving services.

10. In order to facilitate improved referral arrangements, further development of training is suggested that can raise awareness of: barriers to employment, the advice needs which arise out of these barriers, the need for holistic advice and an understanding of when individuals could benefit from referrals elsewhere.

11. In developing its services and referral arrangements, Careers Scotland are encouraged to increase collaboration with advice providers to support its role in achieving holistic advice for individuals.

12. In relation to training needs more generally, the Scottish Executive should consider support for collaboration and possible funding to further develop training that addresses the advice needs of disadvantaged groups making the transition to work in the specific context of advice provision. It is also important to recognise that training has an
important role in maintaining up to date knowledge and skills to support advice workers in responding to complex and changing benefits and entitlements.

Local authorities

13. Local authorities are likely to have a pivotal role in the development of local advice networks and partnerships and most of the recommendations made to the Scottish Executive above have direct relevance in relation to local planning and delivery of advice services.

14. Local authorities are well placed to encourage more effective dialogue between advice activities and routes into employment activities and to co-ordinate local links into employability service development that is being undertaken at present.

15. Local reviews of advice provision should aim to identify and address gaps in provision including:

- aspects such as accessibility of services for disadvantaged groups (including physical access, time and location of services, measures taken to meet the needs of specific groups);
- methods of delivering advice and support;
- the availability of support to the level required by individuals (across the range of information, advice and support and representation or advocacy);
- gaps in provision (for example, key issues in this study were childcare availability, transport, education and training issues, employment rights and some benefits and money management issues);
- robust systems of referral;
- service user consultation and involvement in the development and planning of services; and
- training needs of advice providers that takes account of the current heavy reliance on in-house provision.

The UK government and its agencies

16. There remains a need for benefits barriers to work to be addressed. Key concerns in this research related to disability benefit, the benefits cycle and the financial viability of work for some lone parents. However good the advice that is given to individuals, their progress will be limited if the system does not support such transitions.

17. Jobcentre Plus pays a central role in Welfare to Work and Pathways to Work partnerships and should incorporate guidelines on collaboration with the specific aim of achieving appropriate representation of the mix of advice providers in each locality.
18. We suggest that it will be important at strategic and operational levels to clarify the limits of support that can be provided in Jobcentre Plus, particularly in relation to issues such as legal entitlements to benefits where conflicts of interest can arise, and to provide information about the availability of other advice services. Addressing such concerns will be of central importance in relation to disadvantaged groups who have limited knowledge of their rights and rely on representation of their interests to enable them to claim their rights and entitlements.

19. It is recommended that Jobcentre Plus recognises service users’ views in relation to the desire for independence and the loss of confidence in the service that individuals may experience if they have had incomplete advice, and explores networking and partnership arrangements that maintain the autonomy of the independent sector.

Advice providers, supported employment and other employability services

20. Advice services are encouraged to review the range of issues that they cover in advice delivery and the measures they take to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups and address gaps identified. In particular, it will be important to consider the specific context of transitions to work to ensure that advice workers are equipped to offer holistic advice or make appropriate referrals, not just on financial issues but on other issues that are significant for service users such as childcare availability, travel issues or education and disability related needs.

21. We recommend that advice services and projects such as those delivering training, skills development or supported employment develop formal links, including approaches such as outreach provision and awareness training in relation to both advice issues and the advice needs of key groups. In order to be fully effective, it will be important that there are operational as well as strategic links that contribute to developing skills and resources that increase capacity to deliver holistic advice. Participation of advice providers in local partnerships on employability is recommended as a route to improving cross-service awareness and working links.

22. Organisations for whom advice is one of several functions or services delivered should give more formal consideration to addressing conflicts of interest in delivering advice and develop practice and procedures to distinguish between advice and service or resource decisions provided by the same organisation and to ensure service users understand the nature of the service that is being provided. Towards this aim, greater active consideration of referral for independent advice is recommended.

Advice Service User Groups

23. Despite service user engagement in a number of services the report makes it clear that there is along way to go before needs of specific groups are met, so there is an ongoing need to continue to pressurise for appropriate services and for service user groups to be consulted and involved in development and planning of services.
24. We recommend that both in-house and external training providers in the advice field review training to ensure that barriers to work and accessing advice are integrated where possible into training provision. Some training resources have been developed and piloted as part of the study and can be accessed from www.povertyinformation.org.

25. Advice training providers should also review the potential for training to be provided for informal advisers to improve understanding of the range of advice services and the situations in which individuals could benefit from referrals elsewhere.

Further Research

26. Service user consultation and involvement is an area in which further research may be useful to developing approaches that ensure people can take part in identifying priorities and planning, monitoring and evaluating services. Existing practice in the field will be helpful and an action research approach may be useful for developing effective approaches in the advice and employability fields that would provide templates and resources for services with limited resources.

27. We consider that it is questionable whether, within Jobcentre Plus, the current range of functions can be delivered together without one of them being compromised at least some of the time and our worry is that it is the advice function that is most likely to be compromised. If advice and representation are viewed from a human rights approach to social welfare (Dean, 2004), the question of advocacy and representation needs to be addressed explicitly and clearly: should citizens have the right to independent advice and be made aware of such a right? We are concerned that the most disadvantaged groups may have a combination of complex advice needs, limited awareness of their rights and less capacity than most service users to exercise their rights without representation or advocacy. As a result, we suggest that further research is needed that considers in more detail the apparent conflicts between: government policy on supporting transitions to work; the delivery of advice about rights and entitlements in the same service that makes decisions about entitlements and implements sanctions; and the exercise of legal rights and entitlements of disadvantaged groups of people.

5.62 Finally, we wish to emphasise once again the issue of resources. Our research suggests that government services do not substitute for or replace other sources of advice that remain critically important to meeting the advice and representation needs of disadvantaged groups. Independent advice is likely to be more important as the boundaries between advice and compulsion become increasingly blurred. It would be unfortunate indeed if resources prevent them from undertaking that role.
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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Age of Advice Service User Survey Participants 5
Table 2.1: Role of advice in the organisation 7
Table 2.2: Specific groups served 8
Table 2.3: Work Roles 8
Table 2.4: Job titles 9
Table 2.5: Describing the Service 10
Table 2.6: Service methods – services and individuals 12
Table 2.7: Advice range 13
Table 2.8: Advice level provided by services and individual staff 14
Table 2.9: Advice level by subject areas 15
Table 2.10: Advice levels: tax credits, run-on benefits and debt/ money advice 16
Table 2.11: Advice Levels: Course/ grant applications, childcare, criminal records, access/ equipment 16
Table 2.12: Advice issues - moving towards work 18
Table 2.13: Advice issues - moving towards education 18
Table 2.14: Information sources used 20
Table 2.15: Second tier agencies used 22
Table 2.16: Referrals 23
Table 2.17: Proportion of service users in vulnerable groups 25
Table 2.18: Service measures to ensure access for groups 26
Table 2.19: Advisers measures to improve access 26
Table 2.20: Training sources 30
Table 2.21: Advice providers priorities for disadvantaged groups 32
Table 3.1: Current economic status (including multiple responses) 43
Table 3.2: Employment status 46
Table 3.3: Barriers to Work or Education 52
Table 3.4: Barriers – Financial Issues 55
Table 3.5: Barriers – Disability and Health 56
Table 3.6: Barriers – family issues 57
Table 3.7: Barriers – Wider social issues 60
Table 3.8: Barriers – work, skills and qualifications 62
Table 4.1: Which types of advice services have you used in the past 65
Table 4.2: Type of service used most recently 67
Table 4.3: How long ago was the service last used? 68
Table 4.4: Sector of Advice Services Used 68
Table 4.5: Type of advice service used 68
Table 4.6: Formality of advice services used 69
Table 4.7: What was your most recent advice enquiry about? 69
Table 4.8: Benefits and Money Management Issues 72
Table 4.9: Costs related to work, education or training 73
Table 4.10: Work related financial costs 73
Table 4.11: Education and training related issues 74
Table 4.12: Non-Financial Issues 75
Table 4.13: Initial contact methods 79
Table 4.14: Method of Dealing with Enquiries 79
Table 4.15: Level of advice needed 81
Table 4.16: Overall satisfaction 81
Table 4.17: Overall perceptions of advice service 82
Table 4.18: Did the advice affect decision to start a job/training/education? 89
Table 4.19: Advice Priorities 92
Table A1.1: Type of organisation 128
Table A1.2: Sectors 128
Table A1.3: Areas of service provision 129
Table A1.4: Enquiries in previous year 130
Table A2.1: Age of advice service user survey participants 131
Table A2.2: The situations of survey participants 132
Table A2.3: Highest educational qualification 133
Table A2.4: Which benefits or other income do you have? 133
Table A2.5: Which situations apply to you? 135
APPENDIX 1: ADVICE WORKERS PROFILES

This appendix provides further details from the survey of advice workers. Overall there were 90 responses received from advice workers across 37 different organisations, including 20 from which multiple responses from between two and ten people were received. Voluntary sector advice services accounted for 30 per cent of individual responses and almost a quarter of the organisations represented. The voluntary sector (excluding housing associations) was the largest sectoral group of organisations that participated and accounted for 48.9 per cent of advisers overall.

Table A1.1: Type of organisation

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Type of organisation</th>
<th>Advisers</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>Voluntary sector advice</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary sector (other)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority welfare rights</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers Scotland</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/ University</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Association</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A1.2: Sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectors</th>
<th>Advisers</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary Sector</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses to the survey have come from across Scotland, covering a mix of rural and urban areas. Of the 85 respondents defining the area they worked in, five individuals from 3 organisations delivered a Scotland wide service. However, most worked within a particular geographical area, the majority of which coincided with a local authority area or part of a local authority or Social Inclusion Partnership area. Overall, 15 respondents were with services that cover more than one area, including 5 covering Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, three in Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Argyll and two in Lanarkshire. Although Careers Scotland is divided into two broad areas, Highlands and Islands and the rest of Scotland, each of the advisers delivered services within a discrete area that coincided broadly with local authority areas and they are included in the table below on that basis.
Table A1.3: Areas of service provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Highlands and Islands</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Moray</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumfries and Galloway</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>North Lanarkshire</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dundee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Perth and Kinross</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Ayrshire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Renfrewshire</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Dunbartonshire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Scottish Borders</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Lothian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Stirling</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>West Dunbartonshire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fife</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>West Lothian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses = 85

**Staffing**

Staffing levels ranged from 0.5 paid staff to over 700, although half of the services had 3 or fewer paid staff, most of them in the voluntary sector and housing associations and 75 percent had 11 or less. There were eight services that had volunteer staff ranging in number from one to 86. In most of the organisations volunteers worked 9 hours or less each week.

**Advice Enquiries**

Information about the number of enquiries and service users in the last complete year were requested for each organisation. The information obtained is not consistent between services and, in particular, information for Jobcentre Plus and Careers Scotland offices has been excluded since the information available does not differentiate between advice clients and those who are, for example, registering as unemployed or receiving careers guidance only. However, information from the Jobcentre Plus Prisons project, for example, highlights that theirs is a “high volume service” since “almost 1,000 prisoners participated in Employment & Benefit Surgeries in February 04 at induction or pre-release.” One of the local authority welfare rights services indicated that they could not quantify the number of advice enquiries since they were used as a support to other frontline Social Work staff, but they “represented at 3631 appeal tribunals” over the year.

Although the information is limited, the 21 services for which some information is available show a wide range from 73 to 66,000 enquiries per year. Most of the services handling in excess of 5000 enquiries a year are voluntary sector advice services including those that use volunteer advice workers, whereas all of the ‘other voluntary sector’ services for which information is available dealt with 1000 enquiries or less in their last full year.
Table A1.4: Enquiries in previous year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-500</th>
<th>501-1000</th>
<th>1001-5000</th>
<th>5001 or more</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vol sector advice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vol sector other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA welfare rights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college/university</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housing associations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economic development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advice workers profiles

More than three quarters of respondents were female, one in five had a long-term illness or impairment and all except one described themselves as white. Within the sample, 84 were paid workers and six were volunteers – all the volunteers were women, three of whom have a limiting long-term illness or impairment. Approaching half had five years service or less, but the average service of respondents was almost 9 years. The average length of service for those with a limiting long-term illness or impairment was higher at just over 11 years than for those with no illness or impairment (8 years) but only marginally higher for men (9 years) than women (8.8 years). A higher proportion of male respondents worked in the local authority sector, while a higher proportion of women were in voluntary sector and government services. People who said they had no impairment or long term illness were spread across all sectors while those with an impairment or long term health problem were more strongly represented in the voluntary sector than other sectors.
APPENDIX 2: SERVICE USERS PROFILES

Survey Participants

There were 117 people who participated in the survey of users of advice services, a higher proportion of whom were women (70.9 per cent) than men (29.1 per cent). Although the vast majority were white, 6.9 per cent were non-white, including 5 people with an African background and three with an Asian background. Only 18 people (15.8 per cent) said they had a spouse or partner. Respondents were concentrated in an age range from 25 to 44 (table A2.1), although 23.5 per cent were aged between 16 and 24.

Table A2.1: Age of advice service user survey participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the survey, respondents were asked to identify which of a series of statements applied to them, covering a range of issues that may contribute to disadvantage in making the transition to work including: physical impairment, physical and mental health, learning difficulties, literacy and numeracy difficulties, lone parenthood or being a current or former prisoner. Of respondents, 41 people thought that more than one of the statements applied to them. The single situations most often identified included lone parenthood (33 or 28.2 per cent), having a current or past mental health problem (12 or 10.3 per cent) and having a long-term illness or health problem 10 or 8.5 per cent. Taking account of multiple responses, table A2.2 below shows that, overall, more than a third of respondents are lone parents and that most of the other statements applied to between 20 and 30 per cent of respondents. However, only eight people identified themselves as current or former prisoners. Of five people who identified that some other key situation applied to them, three were asylum seekers or refugees, one was a recovering drug user and one person’s first language was not English.

Amongst the 58 people providing more information about their impairment, illness or learning difficulty, the issue most often mentioned was depression which was identified by 16 people in total, including 5 who have additional health concerns. Other mental health problems identified included bipolar disorder, anxiety, panic attacks, stress and an eating disorder. Issues concerning physical health or impairment included injuries to back, hands or legs, heart conditions, arthritis, epilepsy (5 people), cerebral palsy, auto immune disease, allergies, paralysis eating disorders, hepatitis C, asthma and multiple sclerosis. There were five people with hearing impairments, including one who is profoundly deaf. Specific learning difficulties mentioned included aspergers syndrome, downs syndrome and dyslexia.

Within the disadvantaging situations identified, men and women were not evenly represented across groups. Women accounted for all except three lone parents and all of those in other
situations. Men accounted for all of the current and former prisoners and the majority of those with a physical impairment (7 of 13 people) and those with reading and writing difficulties (12 of 23 people). Women accounted for the majority of all other groups, although a third or more of each group were male, including 12 of the 25 people with learning disabilities.

Those aged 45 or more were more likely than other age groups to have a physical impairment, long-term illness or health problem or a mental ill health, while those aged 16 to 24 accounted for half of survey participants who had literacy or numeracy problems. Most of those with learning difficulties and current or former prisoners were in an age range from 16 to 34. Lone parents were concentrated in the age range from 25 to 44. Respondents with a non-white background were most strongly represented amongst those with literacy or numeracy problems and in the ‘other’ category.

Table A2.2: The situations of survey participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percent (n=117)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have physical impairment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a long term illness/ health problem</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a current/ past mental health problem</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have problems with reading/writing/using numbers</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have difficulty with learning</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a lone parent (one or more dependent children)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a prisoner due to be released in the next 6 months</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a former prisoner, released in last 6 months</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualifications

Respondents were asked to provide details of their highest educational qualification. Amongst the 115 people who answered the questions, the largest groups were those with no qualifications or ‘O’ levels/ standard grades (table A2.3). However, a third of respondents have a vocational qualification, HNC/ HND or a professional qualification and four people 3.5 per cent have a university degree. Other qualifications most often related to vocational study, including 6 people with SVQ modules, three with diplomas, access courses or certificates and city and guilds.

All those with no qualifications were white and include a relatively high proportion of men (35.3 per cent of male compared with 18.5 per cent of female respondents) and people aged 45 or more, while a higher proportion of those aged 16 to 34 had O levels or vocational qualifications and those aged 35 to 54 accounted for most of those with HNC or HND.

Women were more strongly represented than men across qualification categories except those of highers and vocational qualifications where there is little difference between sexes. Men mentioned ‘other’ qualifications more often than women. People of non-white origin had vocational qualifications or O levels/ standard grades and included two of the four respondents with university degrees.
Of the situations that are considered to disadvantage people in the labour market, lone parents were less likely than other groups to have no qualifications while the highest proportion with no qualifications was amongst people with physical impairments (6 or 46.2 per cent), those with a long term illness or health problem (12 or 40 per cent) and people with learning difficulties (10 or 40 per cent). Amongst those identifying multiple issues, 18 people (43.9 per cent) had no qualifications and this group is underrepresented in most of the qualification categories.

Table A2.3: Highest educational qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percent (n=115)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O level/standard grade</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocational qualification</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNC/HND</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional qualification</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Income Sources

Table A2.4: Which benefits or other income do you have?

| No. (n=115) | %
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>working tax credit with childcare element</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working tax credit with disability element</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working tax credit with no additional elements</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>income support/JSA</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disability living allowance</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housing benefit and/or council tax benefit</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASS benefits</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance/ child support</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child tax credit</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wages</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incapacity benefit</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education bursary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>training allowance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student loan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no benefits</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondents were asked to provide information about the type of benefits or other income they had. Most people (64 per cent) provided multiple responses that are shown in table A2.4 below. Income support or job seekers allowance, disability living allowance and wages were listed most often. Overall, 26 people received working tax credits of one form or another. Despite the number of people in education or training, only eight were in receipt of a bursary, allowance or loan. The number of people identifying housing or council tax benefit as an income is lower than anticipated, but may be accounted for in part by the fact that it may be given to individuals in local authority tenancies on the basis of a rebate on charges rather than a payment for council tax or housing benefit. The ‘other’ sources of income identified included widows and bereavement benefit, carers benefit, severe disablement allowance, army and occupational pensions.

**Advice Service User Interviews**

There were 35 people overall who participated in qualitative semi-structured interviews about their experiences of using advice services. The aim was to achieve a sample of people who were in each of five groupings of people:

- Those with a physical impairment or long-term illness/health problem
- Those with a mental health problem
- Those with learning difficulties
- Lone parents
- Current or former prisoners

The table below provides information about which statements applied and some other key characteristics of interviewees. In common with the survey participants as a whole, a significant proportion of interviewees (17) who thought that more than one of the statements applied to them. Amongst the interviewees were 13 interviewees who had a physical impairment or long-term illness/health problem, including 6 people who said they had both. Although not included specifically in the original sampling groups, there were eight people who had literacy or numeracy problems.

There were more women than men in the interviewee sample, but the proportion of men was higher than for survey participants as a whole. Interviewees were spread across the range of ages, but more than half were aged between 25 and 44 and one person. All except one were white. Just over half of the interviewees were not in work or education, nine were in work, six were in education or training and one person was in both work and education.

Another aim of the fieldwork was to achieve a sample of advice service users across the situations that are the focus of this study and to include a sample of people who had not used formal advice services. The sample included 8 people who had used formal governments services, 15 who had used other formal advice services (mainly in the voluntary sector and local government), nine people who had used informal services and one who had not gone to anyone for advice. Although the sample of people who had not used formal advice services is smaller than those who had, this group accounted for almost a third of the interview sample overall.
Table A2.5: Which situations apply to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percent (n=35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have physical impairment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a long term illness/ health problem</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a current/ past mental health problem</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have problems with reading/writing/using numbers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have difficulty with learning</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a lone parent (one or more dependent children)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a prisoner due to be released in the next 6 months/ I am a former prisoner, released in last 6 months</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION AND ADVICE WORKERS SURVEY

This survey will help us to understand more about the role of information and advice services in supporting the transition to work for disadvantaged groups. Most questions involve ticking boxes or circling words and some look for short written responses. Please tick one box only at each question unless you are asked to do otherwise. Please note that only staff in organisations providing a free service should participate in this survey.

PART ONE: ABOUT YOUR AGENCY OR ORGANISATION

Part 1 of the form provides us with information about the service you work for. Where the advice service is part of a larger organisation such as a local authority or economic development agency, questions 1 to 3 should be answered in relation to the organisation as a whole while questions 4 to 8 relate to the advice service only. If more than one adviser is participating in the survey, Part 1 need only be completed by one person.

Organisation

Address

Tel

email

1. Is the organisation:
   a) voluntary sector advice service
   b) voluntary sector other
   c) local authority welfare rights
   d) local authority other
   e) Jobcentre Plus
   f) government other
   g) Careers Scotland
   h) college/university student support/welfare service
   i) other, e.g. economic development (please specify)

   If you ticked d) or f) please state which service or department your advice service is in

2. What is the main source of income or funding for the organisation?

ABOUT THE INFORMATION AND ADVICE SERVICE YOU PROVIDE

3. Where does information/advice fit in your organisation, is it:
   a) The main activity
   b) One of two or more main activities
   c) Secondary to other main activity(ies) (e.g. advice project in training organisation)
   d) Informal activity carried out by staff who are not specialists in information and advice.

   If you ticked c) or d) above, please say what the other activity(ies) is(are)

   If none of above apply, please explain role:

4. Is the service provided for:
   A specific geographical area
   Specific group(s) of people
   A time limited period
   If yes, please specify

   If yes, please specify

   If yes, please specify
5. Staffing:
   How many full-time equivalent paid advisers does your service have (including case work supervisors):

   How many volunteer advisers does your service have:

   What are the average weekly hours of volunteers:

   Please give the name and contact details of the training officer for your organisation (if any)

6. What are the key principles or values that apply to the advice service you provide?

7. How many information and advice enquiries did your service deal with in the last (complete) year?
   How many people used the service in that year?
   What proportion of enquiries or issues raised related to welfare benefits?

8. Is your organisation involved in any advice networks or other partnerships?
   Yes ☐ No ☐
   If yes, please say what they are:

   ADVISING DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

9. What proportion of your service users are in the following groups (where information is available):
   Disabled People
   People with mental health problems
   People with learning difficulties
   Lone Parents
   Prisoners/ ex-prisoners

10. What measures does your service offer to ensure effective access to advice for the following groups: (if more convenient, information can be attached separately)
    Disabled People
    People with mental health problems
    People with learning difficulties
    Lone Parents
    Prisoners/ ex-prisoners
PART TWO: ABOUT YOUR JOB AND THE SERVICE PROVIDED

Your Name and organisation

Your job title

Please describe briefly your main information/advice duties

Please describe any duties you have in addition to advice, (e.g. guidance)

11. About you:

Are you: a paid worker □ a volunteer □

How long have you been an information/advice worker? ________ years

Do you: a) provide information/ advice □ b) supervise case work of others □ c) both of these □

What is:

Your sex: Female □ Male □

Your age 16-24 □ 25-34 □ 35-44 □ 45-54 □ 55+ □

Do you have a long-term health problem or impairment? Yes □ No □ Don’t know □

What is your ethnic background?

White:
Scottish □ Irish □ Other British □ Any other White background □

Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British:
Pakistani □ Indian □ Bangladeshi □ Chinese □ Any other Asian background □

Black, Black Scottish or Black British:
African □ Caribbean □ Any other Black background □

Other Background:
Any mixed background □ Other ethnic background □

ABOUT THE INFORMATION/ADVICE SERVICE

12. Please tick one box in each column to show the most detailed level of advice work provided by: i) the service ii) you in your job

- information only/ signposting
- advice/support (e.g. phone calls for person, help write letters, use of formal referrals, but not acting for the individual)
- representation/ advocacy (appeals, support in e.g. meeting re claims, generally ‘making the case’ with or for someone)

13. Does your service provide information/advice:

a) directly to individuals □ b) in a support role to other advice workers □ c) both of these □

If you ticked c), please tick one box in each column to show the main activity for: i) the service ii) you in your job

- directly to individuals
- support role to others delivering advice
14. Which of the following methods of delivering advice are used by: (tick all that apply)  

   i) the service  ii) you in your job

   - Telephone
   - Face to face (in office)
   - Email
   - Home visiting
   - Post
   - Outreach in communities
   - Other (please explain)

15. In relation to the range of issues covered, how would you describe the work done by: (tick one box in each column)  

   i) the service  ii) you in your job

   - a) Generalist
   - b) Generalist with specialisms*
   - c) Specialist

   If you ticked b) or c) please say which specialist areas:

   The service:  Your job:

   * Specialisms mean areas of advice work e.g. money advice, welfare benefits, education guidance, in which you or the organisation provided a specific or expert service compared with other areas of advice

16. What types of targets are set in relation to information and advice work: (please tick all that apply)  

   i) in the service  ii) for you in your job

   - Number of enquiries/ service users/ home visits/ calls etc handles
   - Income generation
   - Appeals/ tribunal representation numbers/ outcomes
   - Outreach provision
   - Service development for particular groups
   - Service user participation/ involvement
   - Service user or customer feedback/ satisfaction levels
   - Communication and information technology
   - Development and provision of written information (e.g. leaflets)
   - Service user outcomes related to moving into work or training
   - Distance travelled by service users towards job readiness
   - Quality standards implementation
   - Accuracy of advice
   - Access hours/ access points/ service delivery methods
   - Awareness raising/ information campaigns
   - Staff/ volunteer training
   - Volunteer development/ numbers
   - Other (please specify)

   The service:  Your job:
17. What information resources do you use currently for benefits/ money advice? (tick all that apply)

- CPAG welfare benefits/ other handbooks
- Disability Rights Handbook
- Other text books (specify main ones)
- Other (please specify)

18. To what level would you normally provide advice in the following areas in your work? (please tick one box in each row to show the most detailed level of support provided)

- Income/ ‘Better off’ calculations (in work/ education)
- Tax Credits
- Housing benefit
- Run-on benefits
- Benefits entitlements generally
- Impact of work on benefits entitlements
- Impact of work on ancillary benefits
- Money management /debt advice
- Taxation
- National Minimum Wage
- Housing/ homelessness
- Education guidance
- Funding for education/ training courses
- Students’ benefit rights
- Students’ other financial entitlements
- course or grant applications
- Travel costs/ entitlements
- Discrimination (gender, race, disability)
- Childcare
- Access/ equipment issues (disabled people)
- Criminal records/ disclosure of offences
- Child support/ child maintenance

19. In dealing with the above issues, do you ever seek advice from a second tier agency? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes, which agency would you contact: (tick all that apply)

- Jobcentre Plus [ ]
- Citizens Advice Scotland [ ]
- CPAG [ ]
- LA Welfare Rights [ ]
- Disability Alliance [ ]
- Other (specify) [ ]
- Careers Scotland [ ]

20. What agencies do you make referrals to in relation to the above issues? (tick all that apply)

- Another adviser in your agency [ ]
- Other voluntary sector advice service [ ]
- Local authority welfare rights [ ]
- Other (please specify) [ ]
21. **What agencies do you receive referrals from in relation to the issues identified?** *(tick all that apply)*

- Other advisers in your agency
- CAB
- Law Centre
- Other voluntary sector advice service
- Jobcentre Plus
- Careers Scotland
- Local authority welfare rights
- Local authority other
- Government other
- Other (please specify)

22. **What are the main sources of training on information or advice issues for advice workers in your organisation or service?** *(tick all that apply)*

- In-house training
- CPAG
- Citizens Advice Scotland
- LSA
- Shelter
- Other voluntary sector service
- Careers Scotland
- Jobcentre Plus
- Government other
- Local authority welfare rights
- College/ University
- Private sector training provider
- Other (please specify)

23. **Do you provide advice about non-advice services available through your own organisation?** *(e.g. where the advice service is part of wider service provision such as training or deciding on benefits or services such as school meals, tax credits, housing benefit, housing)*

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If yes, how are conflicts between the interests of the organisation and the service user resolved?
*(If more convenient, a policy statement or other document can be provided)*

**INFORMATION AND ADVICE IN THE TRANSITION TO WORK**

24. **Are you involved in any networks or partnerships relating to welfare to work?**

- Yes
- No

If yes, please say what they are:

25. **Are you involved in any advice networks or partnerships?**

- Yes
- No

If yes, please say what they are:
26. In providing information and advice about moving into work, which of the following issues would you explore **routinely** with someone in addition to the presenting problem or question (tick all that apply – please say what you cover in your day to day work rather than what you might do ideally)

- Earnings
- Benefits entitlements (e.g. WTC)
- Impact on health benefits
- Impact on other benefits
- Meeting disability related costs
- Meeting work related costs (tools/ clothes etc)
- Aftercare/ support services
- Effects of stopping work on benefit entitlement
- Access/ equipment issues (disabled people)
- Criminal records/ disclosure of offences

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<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Ticked Options</th>
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<td>Earnings</td>
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<td>Benefits entitlements (e.g. WTC)</td>
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<td>Impact on health benefits</td>
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<td>Impact on other benefits</td>
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<td>Meeting disability related costs</td>
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<td>Aftercare/ support services</td>
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<td>Effects of stopping work on benefit entitlement</td>
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<td>Access/ equipment issues (disabled people)</td>
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<td>Criminal records/ disclosure of offences</td>
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27. In providing information or advice in moving to further or higher education, which of the following issues would you explore **routinely** with someone in addition to the presenting problem or question (tick all that apply – please say what you cover in your day to day work rather than what you might do ideally)

- Help with fees
- Disabled Students’ Allowance
- School meals grants
- Sponsorships/ scholarships
- Benefits entitlements (e.g. Child tax credit)
- Impact of education on health benefits
- Impact of education on other benefits
- Aftercare/ support services
- Meeting disability related costs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Ticked Options</th>
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<td>Help with fees</td>
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<td>Disabled Students’ Allowance</td>
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<td>Benefits entitlements (e.g. Child tax credit)</td>
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<td>Impact of education on health benefits</td>
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<td>Impact of education on other benefits</td>
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<td>Aftercare/ support services</td>
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<td>Meeting disability related costs</td>
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28. **What other measures do you take to meet the advice needs of the following**: (e.g. targeted outreach or services, access):

- disadvantaged groups generally
- disabled people
- people with mental health problems
- people with learning difficulties
- lone parents
- prisoners or ex-prisoners

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<th>Other Measures</th>
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<td>disadvantaged groups generally</td>
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<td>disabled people</td>
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<td>people with mental health problems</td>
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<td>people with learning difficulties</td>
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<td>lone parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>prisoners or ex-prisoners</td>
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</table>
29. What training have you attended that addressed the advice needs of specific groups (including, but not confined to the groups identified)?

30. What training have you attended that addressed the advice needs of people moving from benefits to education or employment?

31. What would help you respond more effectively to the information or advice needs of the groups mentioned in relation to:

   The service overall

   Your knowledge or skills

   Resources available

   External referrals/ support/ liaison

32. The following are some activities or aspects that may be helpful to advice services for developing more effective support for disadvantaged groups making the transition to work. Please show what priority you would give them by circling or underlining the appropriate number (where 1 is a very high priority and 5 is a very low priority):

   local links between government and non-government advice agencies 1 2 3 4 5
   advice services participation in local partnerships 1 2 3 4 5
   links between non-government advice agencies 1 2 3 4 5
   links between advice providers and other groups such as training or supported employment providers 1 2 3 4 5
   service user participation/ involvement in service development 1 2 3 4 5
   independence from those making decisions on rights and entitlements 1 2 3 4 5
   accessibility of information and advice (e.g. time, location, media) 1 2 3 4 5
   use of a range of media to provide information/ advice 1 2 3 4 5
   specialist advice services (e.g. money advice/ benefits/ education guidance 1 2 3 4 5
   holistic or one-stop approach to advice 1 2 3 4 5
   aftercare services 1 2 3 4 5
   quality and accuracy of advice 1 2 3 4 5
   staff training 1 2 3 4 5
   Influencing policy on benefits barriers/ welfare to work 1 2 3 4 5
   awareness raising campaigns on rights and entitlements 1 2 3 4 5
33. Are there any other ways that you think information and advice provision can be made more effective in helping disadvantaged groups make successful/sustainable transitions from benefits to education and employment?

ABOUT THE SERVICE YOU WORK FOR OVERALL

34. What role do service users have in the organisation?

How are the views of service users taken into account in service development?

35. What is the main purpose of the service you provide?

36. Please circle or underline up to 6 of the words or phrases below that describe the service you work for from your own perspective. You can use alternative words of your own if you prefer.

Well resourced (1) Friendly (2) Inaccessible (3) Raising awareness of rights (4)
Impersonal (5) Convenient (6) Challenging (7) Balancing rights & responsibilities (8)
Non-judgemental (9) Accessible (10) Inefficient (11) Comprehensive service (12)
Enabling (13) Judgemental (14) Focused on rights (15) Taking on people’s problems (16)
Independent (17) Efficient (18) Limited service (19) Community resource (20)
Safe (21) Targets driven (22) Confidential (23) Responsive to people’s needs (24)
Supportive (25) Work focused (26) Under resourced (27) Service user centred (28)
Other

37. Please add any other comment below that you would like to make in relation to the role of information and advice services in supporting the transition to work

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE.
YOUR HELP IS MUCH APPRECIATED

Please return the form as an attachment by email to mgill@gcal.ac.uk or by post to Morag Gillespie, Scottish Poverty Information Unit, School of Law & Social Sciences Glasgow Caledonian University, Cowcaddens Road, Glasgow G4 0BA.
APPENDIX 4: ADVICE SERVICE USERS SURVEY

This survey is part of a project that aims to help information and advice services give a high quality service to people who are trying to move from benefits to work. Most questions involve ticking boxes or circling words and some look for short written responses. Please tick one box only at each question unless you are asked to do otherwise. Please read the separate information sheet – it gives guidance that will help you fill in the form.

ABOUT YOUR CURRENT SITUATION

1. Please say which of the following statements apply to you: (tick all that apply)

   a) I have a physical impairment (e.g. wheelchair user, sight impairment)
   b) I have a long-term illness or health problem (for example, angina or ME)
   c) I have a current or past mental health problem (such as depression, bipolar disorder)
   d) I have problems with reading and writing or using numbers
   e) I have difficulty with learning (for example, dyslexia, autistic spectrum disorder)
   f) I am a lone parent with one or more dependent children
   g) I am a prisoner due to be released in the next 6 months
   h) I am a former prison, released within last 6 months

   If you ticked any of a) to d) above, please say what is the type of the impairment, illness or learning difficulty (e.g. sight impairment, depression, dyslexia)

Please note: If none of the above apply to you or you have been employed for more than 2 years, you do not need to complete the rest of the form. Please return it to the advice worker who gave it to you or discard it. Thank you for considering taking part in the survey.

2. Please provide us with the following information about yourself

   a) Your sex:    Female  Male

   b) Your age    16-24  25-34  35-44  45-54  55+    

   c) To which of the following ethnic backgrounds do you belong? (tick one box only)

       White:        Scottish    Irish    Other British    Other White background

       Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British:
       Pakistani    Indian    Bangladeshi    Chinese    Other Asian background

       Black, Black Scottish or Black British:
       African    Caribbean    Other Black background

       Other Background:    Any mixed background    Other ethnic background

   D) Please give the first 5 characters of your postcode (e.g. KA21 6)

   e) What is your highest educational qualification? (tick one only)

       None    O level/ Standard grade    School Highers    Vocational qualification

       HNC/HND    Professional Qualification    University Degree    Other

       Please explain any other qualification:
3. What is your current employment status? *(tick all that apply)*

- a) Registered unemployed
- b) Not looking for paid work
- c) Full-time paid work
- d) Part-time paid work
- e) Self employed
- f) In education
- g) In training
- h) Caring for children
- i) Caring for an adult
- j) Asylum seeker/ refugee
- k) Other (please explain)

If you ticked c), d) or e), what is your occupation?

If you *did not* tick c), d) or e), have you ever done paid work before? Yes No

If yes, what was your occupation?

4. Do you do voluntary or community work? Yes No

If yes, please say what you are doing:

5. Do you have a spouse or partner who lives with you Yes No

If yes, what is their economic status? (use letters a-k as in 2. above)

6. Which benefits or other income do you have at present (not counting child benefit)? *(tick all that apply)*

- a) Working tax credit with childcare element
- b) Working tax credit with disability element
- c) Working tax credit, no childcare or disability element
- d) Income support/ Jobseekers Allowance
- e) Disability living allowance
- f) Housing benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit
- g) NASS benefits (asylum seekers)
- h) Maintenance/ child support
- i) Child tax credit
- j) Wages
- k) Incapacity benefit
- l) Education grants
- m) Education bursary
- n) Training allowance
- o) Student loan
- p) no benefits
- q) Other (please explain)

If you have a spouse or partner, what sources of income do they have? Please list income sources using the letters a) to q) above
BARRIERS TO MOVING INTO WORK OR TRAINING

7. Several things can act as barriers to moving into work. Which of the following barriers are important for you - if you are in work/education please show the barriers that were important for you in moving towards work (tick all that apply)

a) Your financial situation generally
b) Managing bills/ debt
c) Benefits rules
d) Benefit delays
e) Lost/ reduced benefits/ services (e.g. DLA, school meals)
f) Extra costs of working
g) Extra costs of being a student
h) Finding suitable care for dependents
i) Childcare costs
j) Homelessness or other housing problems
k) Discrimination/ attitudes at work
l) Access problems getting to or at work
m) Pay or conditions of work you would get
n) Lack of access to suitable English classes

o) Your physical health
p) Your mental health
q) Drug use
r) Recovering from drug use
s) Worries about not being able to keep a job and having to reclaim benefits
t) Finding suitable part-time work
u) Health of children or family members
v) Other family issues
w) Your confidence
x) Your reading and writing abilities
y) Your skills or qualifications generally
z) Having a criminal record
aa) Transport problems
bb) Qualifications not recognised here

e) Council welfare rights
f) Other council service
g) Student welfare/ advice service
h) Careers Scotland
i) Jobcentre Plus
j) Other government
k) Telephone help line
l) None of these

If there is anything else that is a barrier for you (or was a barrier if you are now in work or education), please explain briefly below:

From the issues you have identified above, which barrier is the most significant for you (please use letters a) to bb) above and say why:

USING INFORMATION AND ADVICE SERVICES

8. Which of the following types of services have you used to get advice about any aspect of moving from benefits to further education or work (tick all that apply)?

a) CAB
b) Other voluntary sector advice
c) Other voluntary group
d) Housing Association
e) Council welfare rights
f) Other council service
g) Student welfare/ advice service
h) Careers Scotland
i) Jobcentre Plus
j) Other government
k) Telephone help line
l) None of these

Please give the name of the service you used most recently

How long ago did you use that service (most recent occasion if more than once)?

If you ticked l) above, go to question 9. For any other responses, go to question 10
9. If you did not use any services listed at 8., did you seek advice from someone else about moving from benefits to education or work?  

Yes □  No □

If yes, please say who you turned to for information or advice:

IF YOU IDENTIFIED ANY SOURCE(S) OF INFORMATION AND ADVICE AT QUESTIONS 8 OR 9 ABOVE, PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS 10 TO 22

If you did not identify any source of information and advice, please go on to question 23 on page 6 below.

ABOUT THE LAST TIME YOU USED AN ADVICE SERVICE

10. Was your (most recent) advice enquiry in relation to:

Starting work □  Starting education/training □  Both of these □

11. Thinking of financial issues relating to moving to work or education, what kind of things did you want information or advice about (please tick all that apply)?

a) Earnings □  m) Taxation □  x) National Insurance □

b) Benefits rights, e.g. tax credits □  n) Run-on Benefits □  y) Incapacity Benefits □

c) Impact on health benefits □  o) Impact on DLA □  z) Housing/homelessness □

d) Impact on other benefits □  p) Travel costs □  aa) Benefit delays □

e) Meeting disability related costs □  q) Housing costs □  bb) Council Tax payment □

f) Work costs (tools/ clothes etc) □  r) Hours of work □  cc) Renegotiating debts □

g) Help to stay in work or education □  s) Childcare costs □  dd) Childcare availability □

h) How stopping work affects benefits □  t) Adult care support □  ee) Money management □

i) Access/equipment needs at work □  u) Travel access □  ff) Student grant/loan □

j) Disabled Students’ Allowance □  v) Bursaries □  gg) Student Hardship Fund □

k) Sponsorships/scholarships □  w) Child support □  hh) Help with student fees □

l) Criminal record/ offence disclosure □  ii) Other (please specify)

12. How did you first contact the service:

Telephone □  Drop-in to the advice service office □  email □  post □

Outreach service in your local community □  Other (please say how)

13. How was your enquiry dealt with?

Telephone □  Drop-in to the advice service office □  email □  by post □

Home visit □  At a local outreach service □  appointment □

Other (please explain)
14. Which of the following statements best describes what you were looking for?

- Information only
- Advice/ support so that you could sort the problem out yourself
- Someone to act or negotiate for you

15. Of the things you wanted help with in question 11, was there anything that the service could not deal with?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please say which ones:

16. Did the advice you got affect your decision about whether to take a job or start a course of education or training?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please explain:

17. Overall, how satisfied were you with the way your enquiry was handled?

- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Still being dealt with
- Don’t know

18. Please tick up to 6 of the words or phrases below to describe the advice service you used. You can use words of your own if you prefer.

   - Well resourced
   - Not accessible
   - Independent
   - Not judgemental
   - Your needs come first
   - A limited service
   - A community resource
   - Challenging
   - Not enough resources
   - j) Friendly
   - k) Convenient
   - l) Inefficient
   - m) Accessible
   - n) Impersonal
   - o) Judgemental
   - p) Efficient
   - q) Confidential
   - r) Safe
   - s) They help you know your rights
   - t) They help you decide what to do
   - u) They tell you about duties and rights
   - v) They can help with all your queries
   - w) They tell you what to do
   - x) They understand your needs
   - y) You get a say about the service
   - z) Their priorities come first
   - Other

19. What has been useful or what have you liked about the advice services you have used?

20. What has not been useful or what have you not liked about the advice services you have used?

21. What service have you found most useful and why?

22. What service have you found least useful and why?
ABOUT ADVICE SERVICES IN GENERAL

23. The following are some factors about advice services that may be important when you are moving from benefits to employment or further education. How important do you think they are? Please show your views by circling a number from 1 to 5 (where 1 means the statement is not at all important and 5 is very important)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The service is in your local area</td>
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<td>It’s independent from those making decisions about claims</td>
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<td>The staff understand about the barriers you face</td>
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<td>You trust the service and it is confidential</td>
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<tr>
<td>You understand all the information and leaflets etc you are given</td>
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<tr>
<td>You can get advice where you sign on and claim your benefits</td>
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<td>The service can represent you at a tribunal</td>
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<td>You can get advice about everything in the one place</td>
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<td>They know who to send you to if you have a complex problem</td>
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<td>The service lasts for as long as you need it</td>
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<td>They campaign to tell people about their rights</td>
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<td>You can contact them outside normal 9 to 5 hours</td>
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<td>They advise you, but you decide about what to do next</td>
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<td>People using the service can have a say in how it develops</td>
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<td>The service campaigns for benefits to be more straight forward</td>
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<tr>
<td>When you need it, they will come to see you</td>
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24. Is there any other comment you want to make about your experience of using advice services or anything else they should consider in future?

25. Finally, please say who has completed this form:

- Yourself
- Advice worker
- Family member
- Carer
- Someone else

We may want to ask you about some of the points you raise. It would be helpful if you provide your name and an address or home number, but you do not have to. No information on the form will be passed on to anyone apart from the research team.

We also would like to discuss key issues raised with some people in more detail. Would you be willing to take part in an interview by phone or face to face?

- Yes
- No

Name: [ ] Telephone: [ ]
Address: [ ]

Thank you for filling in this survey form. Your help is much appreciated. Please return it using the envelope or label provided, no postage needed.
APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Generally check completion of questionnaire and complete any gaps where the person is willing to provide the information

**Employment Status/history (Q3)**

2. Check current status/ employment history /education and training history

   **Prompt if required:**
   - *in work/unemployed/how long unemployed/ever done training/type etc*
   - *Where are you in the transition to work?*
   - *How do you feel about your personal situation re work?*
   - *Are things happening at the right pace for you?*
   - *If not in work do you feel you are ready to start looking?*

3. What type of work would you like to do (include voluntary etc)?

4. What hours do you want to work? – two issues to be addressed, if benefits were not effected how many hours would you like to work – at the moment how many can you work without benefits being effected – ignoring any benefit issues how many hours would you ideally like to work

5. What factors have affected your preferences relating to work?

**Home Situation (Q6)**

6. Check current income/ and situation re any partner or spouse

   **Prompt if required**
   - *Do you have a partner? What is their employment status?*

7. (If participant has a spouse or partner) Are you content with the status that you both have? What would you change in terms of who works what hours?

8. What kind of accommodation do you live in (owner occupier, rented, sheltered housing etc)?

**Barriers (Q7)**

9. Tell me a little bit more about the barriers you identified

   **Prompt based of survey responses as required**
   **Follow up most significant barrier if required**

10. Are there any others barriers you would like to mention now?
Rights

11. How well do you feel you know your rights regarding (from following list as appropriate):
   - General benefits
   - Benefits you are entitled to when you start work
   - Incapacity/disability benefit
   - Entitlements to childcare help

Where did you find out about your rights?
Where do you think you might be able to find out about your rights?

Advice sources (Q8-15)

• Used formal services

12. Check service used most recently and the issues/problems that help was needed with (refer to Q 11 if required)

   Prompt if required for:
   - Why did you use that particular service?
     - How well did it work?
     - What issues/problems did it present for you

13. What other sources of advice would you consider using?

   Prompt with main alternatives from survey form if required

• Not used formal services

14. Who have you gone to for advice?

15. Have you thought of using formal advice services?

   Prompt if required for
   - Why didn’t you use formal advice services? What stopped you?
   - What do you know about services are available and where they are?

Advice Services in General (Q 19-24)

Follow up on Q19-22 if required

16. When is access to advice of importance to you, when might it be important?

   Prompt if required for:
• What kind of issues do you think you might need further advice about?
• How important has it been or would it be for you to continue to get advice after you have started work?

Advice Priorities/ Ideals (Q23)

17. What would your ideal advice service be like?

• Prompt if required on e.g. location, times of access, type of access, open door or appointments, range and depth of advice, independence, confidentiality, links to other services such as signing on or paying rent

18. What would attract you to using advice services?

19. What would prevent you using a particular service?

20. What factors do you think are most important? Why?

• Check priorities in Q23, in particular:
  • is it important to get help over numerous issues in one place?
  • Do you prefer to have specialist help available?
  • Which of the above is more important?
  • Trust and confidence
  • Independence

For those in work

21. Do you feel better off in work?

• Prompt to clarify on non monetary issues.

All

Advice and Decisions about Work or training (Q16)

22. Finally, how important is advice/ has advice been for you in making decisions about moving towards work, training or volunteering?

Prompt if required:
• Can refer to all or any of work, training volunteering, supported employment
• What other factors are more important e.g. family care responsibilities, health?