

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 166

Delivering a work-focused service

*Final findings from ONE case
studies and staff research*

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Claire Lyons and Julie Hills

A report of research carried out by the Tavistock Institute on
behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ix

The Authors x

Summary 1

1 Introduction to the evaluation 7

- 1.1 Overview of ONE 7
- 1.2 The key objectives of ONE 8
- 1.3 ONE clients 9
- 1.4 The ONE process 10
 - 1.4.1 *Start-up* 10
 - 1.4.2 *Personal Adviser meeting* 10
 - 1.4.3 *Follow-up* 11
 - 1.4.4 *Call Centre variant* 11
 - 1.4.5 *Private and Voluntary Sector variant* 11
- 1.5 Integration through partnership 11
- 1.6 The evaluation report 12

2 Research focus and method 15

- 2.1 Components of the ONE evaluation 15
- 2.2 The evaluation of ONE in practice 15
- 2.3 Key areas for evaluation 16
- 2.4 The aims and design of the research 16
- 2.5 Research methodology 17
 - 2.5.1 *Staff interviews* 17
 - 2.5.2 *Observational case studies* 17
 - 2.5.3 *Focus groups of ONE trainers* 18
 - 2.5.4 *Interviews relating to partnership* 18
 - 2.5.5 *Interviews with local service and training providers* 18
 - 2.5.6 *Feedback on implementation and validation* 18
- 2.6 The timing of the research 18
- 2.7 Commentary on the evaluation 19

3 Getting started 21

- 3.1 Management arrangements 21
- 3.2 Staff recruitment 22
 - 3.2.1 *Entering ONE* 22
 - 3.2.2 *Deterrents and concerns* 23
 - 3.2.3 *Payment and working conditions* 24
- 3.3 Training 26
 - 3.3.1 *Training received* 26
 - 3.3.2 *Staff views on benefit training* 26
 - 3.3.3 *Staff views on employment aspects of training* 27
 - 3.3.4 *Other training issues raised* 27

3.4	Ongoing support and staff development	29
3.5	Communicating the ONE vision	30
3.6	Implementation and infrastructure	31
3.6.1	<i>Office facilities and layout</i>	32
3.6.2	<i>Improvements in the working environment</i>	33
3.7	IT systems	34
3.8	Summary of key points	35
4	The client pathway: delivering ONE	39
4.1	Reception	40
4.2	Start-up	40
4.2.1	<i>Benefit claim activity at Start-up</i>	41
4.2.2	<i>Work-related activity at Start-up</i>	41
4.2.3	<i>Booking and preparing for the first Personal Adviser meeting</i>	42
4.2.4	<i>Comments on Start-up</i>	43
4.3	The first Personal Adviser meeting	43
4.3.1	<i>Benefit claim activity</i>	44
4.3.2	<i>Work-related activity</i>	45
4.3.3	<i>Balance between benefit and work activities</i>	48
4.3.4	<i>Comments on the first Personal Adviser meeting</i>	49
4.4	Personal adviser: 13-week meeting	49
4.4.1	<i>Benefit claim activity</i>	49
4.4.2	<i>Work-related activity</i>	50
4.4.3	<i>Comments on the 13-week meeting</i>	50
4.5	Personal adviser: six-month and one-year meetings	51
4.5.1	<i>The six-month meeting</i>	51
4.5.2	<i>One-year meeting</i>	53
4.6	Caseloading and individual follow-up	54
4.6.1	<i>Deferral of Personal Adviser meetings</i>	57
4.7	Relationship between Personal Advisers and clients	57
4.8	Clients' views on ONE	58
4.9	Summary of key points	59
5	Delivering the service: The role of the ONE Adviser	61
5.1	The roles undertaken by ONE Advisers	61
5.2	The responsibilities of frontline staff	63
5.2.1	<i>Establishing a work focus</i>	63
5.2.2	<i>Caseload management</i>	64
5.2.3	<i>Time management</i>	66

5.3	Skills and knowledge required by Personal Advisers	68
5.3.1	<i>Benefits knowledge</i>	68
5.3.2	<i>Knowledge of employment and the labour market</i>	69
5.3.3	<i>Knowledge of internal and IT systems</i>	69
5.3.4	<i>Interpersonal skills</i>	69
5.3.5	<i>Teamwork</i>	71
5.3.6	<i>Using judgement and discretion</i>	71
5.4	Staff perspectives	72
5.4.1	<i>The ONE vision</i>	72
5.4.2	<i>Personal satisfactions</i>	74
5.4.3	<i>Personal dissatisfactions</i>	76
5.4.4	<i>Staff views on management</i>	79
5.4.5	<i>Staff views on clients</i>	79
5.5	Staff concerns about the end of the ONE pilots	83
5.6	Summary of key points	84
6	Managing and supporting the ONE service	85
6.1	Pilot management and ONE	85
6.2	Focusing the vision: priorities and targets	87
6.2.1	<i>Priorities</i>	87
6.2.2	<i>Performance indicators and targets</i>	88
6.3	Staffing and staff deployment	90
6.3.1	<i>Issues of recruitment</i>	90
6.3.2	<i>Staffing levels and deployment</i>	91
6.3.3	<i>Workloads and workload management</i>	93
6.3.4	<i>Specialisation</i>	93
6.3.5	<i>Teamwork</i>	93
6.4	Managing client demand	94
6.4.1	<i>Appointment scheduling and client waiting times</i>	95
6.4.2	<i>Client contact times</i>	96
6.4.3	<i>Managing Start-up</i>	96
6.4.4	<i>Failed appointments</i>	97
6.5	Interface with 'core' activities	97
6.5.1	<i>Benefits Agency processing</i>	98
6.5.2	<i>Employment Service signing on and job search</i>	98
6.6	Internal supports	98
6.6.1	<i>Administrative backup</i>	99
6.6.2	<i>Technical and information supports</i>	99
6.6.3	<i>Training strategies</i>	101
6.7	External contacts	102
6.8	Summary of key points	103

7	Achievements and developments	105
7.1	Key aspects of delivery	105
7.1.1	<i>Delivering the key features</i>	105
7.1.2	<i>Labour market performance and targets</i>	106
7.1.3	<i>Benefit performance</i>	106
7.1.4	<i>Cultural changes</i>	107
7.1.5	<i>The Identity of ONE</i>	107
7.2	Impact of the ONE pilot on the core agencies	108
7.2.1	<i>Resources</i>	108
7.2.2	<i>Service delivery</i>	110
7.2.3	<i>Performance</i>	112
7.3	Partnership	114
7.3.1	<i>Partnership - levels and members</i>	114
7.3.2	<i>Planning and setting-up partnerships</i>	115
7.3.3	<i>The involvement of Local Authorities</i>	115
7.3.4	<i>Implementation and management</i>	116
7.3.5	<i>Stakeholder partnerships</i>	118
7.3.6	<i>Assessment of partnerships</i>	119
7.4	Links with the wider community	120
7.4.1	<i>Links with service providers</i>	120
7.4.2	<i>Service providers' views of ONE</i>	123
7.4.3	<i>Contacts with employers</i>	124
7.4.4	<i>Issues relating to external links</i>	125
7.5	Summary of key points	125
8	Conclusions and discussions	127
8.1	Issues and problematic aspects	127
8.1.1	<i>Focusing and managing the service</i>	127
8.1.2	<i>Supports for service delivery</i>	127
8.1.3	<i>Managing workloads and client demand</i>	128
8.1.4	<i>Training and staff development</i>	128
8.1.5	<i>The Personal Adviser's role</i>	128
8.1.6	<i>Clients</i>	128
8.2	Suggestions for the future development of an integrated service	128
8.2.1	<i>The focus of an integrated service</i>	129
8.2.2	<i>Management and resources</i>	129
8.2.3	<i>Training and support issues in an integrated service</i>	129
8.2.4	<i>IT</i>	130
8.2.5	<i>Managing an integrated service</i>	130
8.2.6	<i>The role of a Personal Adviser</i>	130
8.2.7	<i>Wider links</i>	131

8.3	Discussion	131
8.3.1	<i>A positive vision</i>	131
8.3.2	<i>The focus and resourcing of ONE</i>	132
8.3.3	<i>Cultural change</i>	134
8.3.4	<i>ONE as a 'gateway'?</i>	135
8.3.5	<i>Clients and attachment to the labour market</i>	136
8.3.6	<i>ONE and Welfare to Work</i>	138
8.3.7	<i>Organisational development challenges</i>	138
8.3.8	<i>Reflections on the overall ONE evaluation</i>	139
8.3.9	<i>Conclusion</i>	140
Appendix A	Notes on research approach	141
Appendix B	Research instruments	153
References		163
Other research reports available		165
 LIST OF TABLES		
Table A.1	Breakdown of previous agency/source of ONE staff interviewed	143
Table A.2	Interview participants: Locations and job category	144
Table A.3	Sites where observations were conducted by model	145
Table A.4	Number of client/staff meetings observed by model and site – Phase One spring 2000	147
Table A.5	Observation: Phase two spring 2001	149
Table A.6	Interviews with ONE core agencies about ONE impacts	150
Table A.7	Interviews with service providers	150
Table A.8	Interviews with stakeholder partners	151

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 8.1	Focusing ONE	135
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SUMMARY

About ONE

ONE was a major pilot under the government's Welfare to Work policy. A ONE service was set up in each of 12 pilot areas: these were matched, for comparison with 12 control areas. Three different models of delivery were piloted: a Basic Model, a Call Centre variant and a Private and Voluntary Sector (PVS) variant.

The specific objectives of ONE were:

- to establish a service which would encourage job seeking and independence for those who are able to work;
- to put more benefit recipients (clients) in touch with the labour market and increase the sustainable level of employment by getting more clients into work and more quickly;
- to ensure that more clients experience effective, efficient service;
- to change the culture of the benefits system and the general public towards independence and work rather than payments and financial dependence.

Evaluating ONE

The report provides an account of the observational case study and staff research evaluation of 'ONE' delivery, which was one strand of several assessing the performance of the ONE pilots.

The objectives were to:

- understand the processes and activities in ONE delivery;
- consider staff experience of, and reactions to, the service;
- identify difficulties in delivering ONE and consider what else needed to be done to implement it;
- consider local management, including partnership arrangements, and the integration of Employment Service, Benefits Agency and Local Authority services;
- assess the effectiveness of the delivery process;
- consider what cultural changes had taken place;
- assess the role of the Personal Adviser.

The main methods were:

- interviews with frontline staff and managers at three points during the life of the pilots across all areas: in spring 2000, autumn 2000 and summer 2001;
- observational case studies of ONE in practice at two points during the pilots, pre- and post full participation, in three pilot areas: one from each of the delivery models.

These were augmented by additional work including: interviews with representatives of the core agencies and partners; interviews with training and service providers and a series of workshops with ONE managers to verify and discuss findings.

This research was one of several studies which were designed to provide comprehensive policy and delivery evaluation of ONE. This strand makes a particular contribution to our understanding of the ONE service because:

- it was unique in observing ONE in action and thus obtaining a live picture of the service at the point of delivery;
- it focused on the client pathway and the face-to-face meetings between Personal Advisers and clients, it helped to highlight key issues of delivery.

*The key findings
Setting-up (Chapter 3)*

The launch of the ONE pilots was highly complex and involved large-scale resource, infrastructure, personnel movements and crucial communication issues: tight time constraints added to the considerable challenge of the early implementation period. There were wide variations in how these challenges were tackled at pilot area level but, overall, the setting-up phase was completed successfully.

Important concerns relating to staff training, resource levels, management and information systems were identified during this phase, many of which persisted throughout the pilot.

The move to unscreened environments did not appear to cause any real difficulties in practice.

*The client pathway: the service for
clients (Chapter 4)*

On the whole, an integrated benefit claim and work-focused service was established for both Jobseeker's Allowance and, with 'full participation', non-Jobseeker's Allowance clients.

The individualised and client-focused aspects of the service were not so well established and there were difficulties in maintaining continuity of Personal Adviser.

ONE clients displayed a wide range of capacities and levels of motivation in relation to employment: there was scope for a better understanding of the needs of people at different levels or stages of 'job-readiness', the kinds of barriers to work which people face and how to respond to these.

There were difficulties in providing caseloading or ongoing follow-up for clients with more complex or long term employment issues.

Staff thought that clients were, on the whole, getting a better service. Staff did also express reservations about the service: these centred on limitations of the time available to support clients and to provide follow-up meetings, and the limitations to assisting clients with more complex needs.

In general, clients were positive about the ONE service: there was evidence that this included some non-Jobseeker's Allowance clients who responded to individual and sensitive approaches to a work focus.

*The role and activities of the
Personal Adviser (Chapter 5)*

The ONE service, like the New Deal programmes, has confirmed the central role of the Personal Adviser: the outcomes of ONE have rested on the development, management and performance of its Personal Advisers.

ONE has demonstrated that there needs to be a clear focus for the Personal Adviser role if it is to be effective (and felt by staff to be effective): the setting of boundaries to the range and scope of the tasks Personal Advisers undertake should be a management priority.

The ONE experience indicates that the effectiveness of caseloading and individualised support for clients is dependant on the effectiveness of initial client assessment, a dedicated time for these activities, on a clear understanding of how clients may be helped and on good links with local community supports and services.

*Managing and supporting the
service (Chapter 6)*

Teamwork – including mutual cover, support and expertise exchange – was central to the effectiveness of Personal Advisers.

ONE pilots operated in a challenging environment where training, IT, equipment and facilities and staffing provision all militated against effective performance.

ONE pilots faced major time and resource issues but also explored how such problems might be addressed.

The pilot nature of the service limited how far managers could actively manage the development of ONE and make the kind of changes and adjustments necessary to respond to local demands and changing circumstances.

Partnerships (Chapter 7)

Implementation and management of the partnership between different agencies was a particularly successful feature of the ONE pilot. However, fears were expressed that the relationships with Local Authorities built up in ONE might be lost with Jobcentre Plus.

Overall achievements

In terms of the key objectives of ONE, we can summarise the achievements as follows:

- *A positive move forward.* The ONE service and the ONE vision were appreciated as positive steps forward in terms of benefits provision and job placement service in the view of staff, front line managers, clients (and researchers) alike, although there was some ambiguity about what ONE was really about – what was its key objective – persisted throughout the pilots;

- *An integrated service.* ONE was broadly successful in integrating the activities of the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency in relation to benefits claiming and job seeking. However, since ONE was not a free-standing service, there were essential linkages with the core operations to be maintained which were, by definition, not fully under the management of ONE staff;
- *Improved customer service.* The overall feedback from clients, frontline staff and managers was that ONE provided a much better service. In particular the single point of contact and the welcoming environment were appreciated. There were issues about the delay in submitting claims caused by the requirement to attend the first Personal Adviser meeting;
- *An individualised, client-focused service.* ONE did achieve a measure of individualised contact for clients but was not consistently able to provide a 'rounded' assessment leading to specifically tailored supports to meet particular circumstances. There were also difficulties in sustaining individualised follow-up in the form of caseloading by Personal Advisers. Clients were not always able to see 'their' adviser for follow-up meetings since this continuity was often compromised in favour of meeting appointment scheduling targets. And, clients were not usually asked for their preference on these occasions. The service was not always, then, able to provide a smooth or a complete 'pathway' for clients;
- *The central role of the Personal Adviser.* Although the work of the Personal Adviser was indeed central to the service, there were questions about quite what this role should be and how far it should extend. For example, client assessment might focus narrowly on job-readiness or extend into identifying and planning how to overcome personal or social barriers to employment. There was a fine and important distinction to be clarified between the Adviser as gatekeeper and broker (providing access to wider supports and referring clients on to external/specialist services as relevant) and Adviser as caseworker (providing an integrated client service);
- *The core partnerships.* The core agencies (Benefits Agency, Employment Service and Local Authorities) worked together to implement ONE and this partnership was broadly successful in establishing an integrated service with a predominantly work focus which also met the requirements of a good standard benefit claim service for both Jobseeker's Allowance and non-Jobseeker's Allowance clients;
- *Cultural change.* ONE did bring about certain cultural shifts in line with establishing a work focus and movement towards employment as central to all benefit claims (i.e. not only for Jobseeker's Allowance clients). This was evident among, core Employment Service and Benefits Agency staff, clients of ONE and, to some extent, external service providers.

Some issues for future
development

Alongside the achievements we can identify some key issues and questions of relevance for future developments:

- the overall vision could be further clarified and then formulated into more specific service objectives, priorities, working practices and operational arrangements which are consistent and congruent with the vision; **which would enable**
- further focusing and clarifying the role of the Personal Adviser and developing both boundaries to the role and links with other sources of support/advice for clients; **which would be helped by**
- the development of a more sophisticated definition and understanding of, and approaches to the assessment of, work-readiness and the barriers to employment; **and so**
- increase the repertoire of responses to support those who were unemployed and to promote work-readiness, especially for clients who have complex or longer-term needs; **and therefore**
- establish linkages and agreements with other key services and agencies to ensure collaboration and integration across statutory, voluntary and private sector services as a crucial element in promoting work-readiness.

I INTRODUCTION

This report provides an account of one of the key evaluation strands of the ONE pilots: an evaluation of the delivery of the service by using intensive periods of observation in case study areas and a longitudinal series of interviews with frontline staff and managers in all pilot areas. Other strands in the evaluation of ONE delivery provide perspectives from individual clients who participated and on operational performance: this report focuses on ONE in practice. As such, it is an attempt to consider the service as a whole – the processes, activities and time frames involved and to do so with some attention to the interactions and relationships between the key people involved, i.e. between staff and clients, between frontline staff and managers.

1.1 Overview of ONE

ONE was a major programme within the government's Welfare to Work strategy. It sought to establish a work focus in relation to *all* new or repeat claims for benefit: to do so required the integration of benefit claiming, (the core business of the Benefits Agency) and work placement/job seeking (a central role of the Employment Service). The intention was to provide individual support and advice, not only for people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) but for all benefit claimants (see Section 1.3), through meetings with a Personal Adviser. The employment focus was thus intended to reach a wide diversity of clients with the aim of promoting economic independence and diminishing welfare dependency. The ONE service, through the central role of the Personal Adviser, aimed to promote job seeking and also assist those furthest from employment in moving towards work. Thus, a work focus would be at the heart of the claim-making process and combine accessing relevant welfare support and services with benefit claim activity from a single point of contact.

ONE was designed to address a number of issues in the fields of employment and of welfare benefits which had been characterised by:

- the fragmented nature of welfare and work interventions for those in receipt of benefit;
- inefficiencies in the delivery process, time consuming both for clients and for front line staff of both agencies which often duplicated parts of each others' procedures;
- a welfare system that was geared more to benefit payments than to managing transitions to independence and work;
- a lack of appropriate infrastructures – both organisationally between agencies and professionally at the front line – to support and guide people towards appropriate services and jobs.

ONE was delivered through the Benefits Agency, the Employment Service, Local Authorities and private and voluntary sector organisations working in partnership for the delivery of a seamless service to clients. It was piloted in 12 areas and delivered through three different models: the Basic Model (pilots began in June 1999), the Call Centre variant, and the Private and Voluntary Sector variant (pilots began in November 1999).

The core partners – the Benefits Agency, the Employment Service and the Local Authorities – each had a distinctive contribution to make to the delivery of ONE.

- *Benefits Agency* – their benefits expertise and their experience of working across departmental boundaries as part of delivering an active modern service;
- *Employment Service* – their knowledge of the labour market, skills in job matching and the experience of leading the New Deals in partnership with a wide range of organisations, and;
- *Local Authorities* – their experience of integrating and delivering local services and information and administration of Housing and Council Tax Benefits;
- in addition, Private and Voluntary partnerships were invited to run four of the ONE pilots.

1.2 The key objectives of ONE

It was against this background that ONE sought to enhance the client's attachment to the labour market or access other services, training and support resources which would help them to do so.

The specific objectives of ONE were:

- to put more benefit recipients in touch with the labour market (through the intervention of their Personal Adviser);
- to increase the sustainable level of employment by getting more recipients into work;
- to ensure that more clients experience effective, efficient service tailored to their personal needs;
- to change the culture of the benefits system and the general public towards independence and work rather than payments and financial dependence.

The ways in which these objectives were pursued included the following specific aspects for delivery:

- to integrate benefit claims and job seeking by providing a single gateway – originally called the Work Focused Gateway;
- to provide an individualised service to assess clients' needs and access appropriate guidance and support;

- to establish the post of Personal Adviser to provide the individual client focus;
- work to reduce duplication and speed up procedures;
- to promote partnerships between existing service delivery agencies and bring new private sector and voluntary organisations into play;
- to promote innovation in terms of caseload management, the uses of new technology and the organisation and management of service delivery.

1.3 ONE clients

ONE, then, aimed to provide a single point of entry to the benefit system for those of working age who were not currently working or working less than an average of 16 hours a week and who were making a new or repeat claim for the following benefits:

- Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA);
- Income Support (IS);
- Incapacity Benefit (IB) (unless returning to work at a specific time);
- Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) (unless claiming an in-work benefit or making a renewal claim);
- Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA);
- Invalid Care Allowance (ICA); and
- Widow's Benefit (WB).

Lone parents, disabled people or those suffering long-standing illness were the main groups for whom a work focus was likely to be a new element. These are the largest groups claiming social security who are of working age but each has had rather different patterns of being on and off benefit. This reinforces the view that the growth of social security expenditure associated with the large increase in their numbers is not explained by the working of a single labour-market mechanism. Work-focused solutions to their long-term reliance on social security benefits were thought to need supply-side adjustments in order to re-position them as potential workers and re-equip them for a changing labour market.

At the initial stages of the ONE pilots, participation for non-JSA claimants was voluntary. However, from April 2000, anyone making a new or repeat claim in the categories listed above were required to participate in a work-focused meeting before their claim could be lodged. Failure to attend the first meeting with a Personal Adviser would lead to sanctions in that their claim to benefit could not be passed for processing and/or might lead to a reduction of benefit.

One of the key differences for clients, therefore, was that they had to fulfil certain requirements in order to make a benefit claim. For non-JSA clients this represented a significant shift in the way they related to the benefit service: for all clients of ONE it implied an expectation that they would discuss their circumstances in some detail. But the most

important shift, a cultural change as well as a change in the ‘rules’, was that people who had, hitherto, no immediate expectation of getting or returning to work, were required to participate in a work-focused discussion.

1.4 The ONE process

The ONE process consisted essentially of three stages: a Start-up meeting, an initial Personal Adviser meeting which was a pre-requisite for making a benefit claim and, where appropriate, follow-up meetings with the Personal Adviser. Our findings on the sequence of client meetings and the activities involved are provided in Chapter 4.

1.4.1 Start-up

The purpose of Start-up was to establish some basic information about the client, including personal details, reasons for claiming benefit and previous work experience. The Start-up Adviser would then issue the appropriate benefit claim forms and, where possible, look at possible vacancies with job-ready clients. It was the Start-up Advisers’ responsibility to book the client’s first, and mandatory, meeting with a Personal Adviser. Alternatively, the Start-up Adviser could defer this if a client’s circumstances (e.g. someone recovering from a major operation, someone recently bereaved) meant that a work-focused meeting was inappropriate at that time.

The Start-up Adviser was expected to identify and understand the requirements and aspirations of a wide variety of client groups (e.g. people with disabilities, lone parents, etc.) and, when appropriate, to recognise the need for special support (e.g. from the Child Support Agency, Disability Employment Advisers, etc.).

An important part of the process was ensuring that clients understood the rights and responsibilities associated with the benefit being claimed, and advising the client of the evidence they need to provide for their claim to be processed.

1.4.2 Personal Adviser meeting

The role of Personal Advisers was central to the ONE service. The aim was that they should assess individual circumstances and needs in relation to employment. This was intended to be an holistic and integrated response which could identify and begin to address clients’ difficulties by accessing services, support, advice and guidance to help people into or towards work. The client making a claim to benefit would have their own Personal Adviser (ideally the same one for each subsequent meeting) who would act as the main point of contact and offer advice and guidance as well as ongoing personal support to the participant.

In general, the Personal Adviser was seen as having a range of responsibilities in assessing employment potential and, in a sense, acting as a broker for the more-or-less job-ready clients. In addition, the Personal Adviser might act as case manager, ‘sign-posting’ clients to more specialised organisations experienced in, for example, helping long-term unemployed

or those facing health, social or personal difficulties. Personal Advisers were expected, then, to adopt a proactive, client-focused and holistic approach aimed at helping clients, as far as possible, to become independent and overcome their barriers to work.

An essential element in this meeting was the checking of the completed benefit claim forms so that these could be lodged for processing: no claims would proceed until the Personal Adviser had met with the client.

Part of the ONE vision, and an underlying assumption, was that staff would establish a working relationship with their clients partly by taking an individual approach and partly through continuity of contact – so that a rapport could be established.

1.4.3 Follow-up

The Personal Adviser's responsibilities provided a point of reference for the client, retaining oversight of their case and keeping it under regular review. For JSA clients, this involved conducting required meetings at 13 weeks, six months and one year and every subsequent six months, if they were still out of work. At the Personal Adviser's discretion they could 'caseload' non-JSA clients, i.e. call them in for additional meetings, call them on the phone, pursue particular work or training possibilities or generally review progress.

1.4.4 Call Centre variant

The Call Centre variant was designed to provide the ONE service using Call Centre technology. The use of new technologies was an attractive part of the agenda to modernise public services ('e-government') and within ONE this was mainly represented by the Call Centre pilots. The rationale was that elements in the process could be carried out more efficiently by telephone, freeing up people to concentrate on the functions that are better carried out face-to-face. In this variant the Start-up meetings took place over the phone. An appointment was then made for a meeting with a Personal Adviser, which would be carried out face-to-face in the same way as in the basic model.

The use of Call Centre technology was intended to offer client services that were accessible, flexible and which could respond rapidly: they would also allow work to be integrated across the four Call Centre sites.

1.4.5 Private and Voluntary Sector variant

The Private and Voluntary Sector (PVS) variant was intended to try out innovative approaches to the delivery of ONE. It was expected that the involvement of private and voluntary sector organisations could lead to new partnerships, new working arrangements and 'free up' management from the traditions of the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service.

1.5 Integration through partnership

ONE aimed to change the culture of benefit service provision and effect a major shift in people's attitudes to welfare. To achieve this required effective partnership and the co-operation of relevant bodies both at a national and local level. Indeed, the notion of partnership figured

prominently in the Government's Welfare to Work policy. Several of the design characteristics of ONE were intended to improve customer service and enhance efficiency and central to achieving this was the promotion of partnerships between the main agencies involved, i.e. Benefits Agency, Employment Service, Local Authorities. ONE also sought to bring new partners from the private and voluntary sector into the provision of services and to promote new, innovative, inter-agency relationships.

As a result, partnership working was reflected at all levels within ONE. At national level, there was the Ministerial Sub-Group of the Prime Minister's Welfare Reform Group that set the strategic direction of ONE. At local level, ONE was delivered by a **core partnership** between the Benefits Agency, Local Authorities and the Employment Service. This partnership was responsible for delivering ONE in the Basic Model pilots. In the four Call Centre pilots ONE was delivered by the core partners supported by technology and management expertise supplied by a contractor. In the four Private and Voluntary Sector pilots ONE was delivered by a partnership led by the private and voluntary sector.

ONE implementation was also based on a wider nexus of **stakeholder partners**, i.e. local public, private and voluntary sector organisations and other service providers which were able both to contribute to the ONE service and, potentially, to benefit from the involvement through increased collaboration, networking and enhancing opportunities for local developments.

1.6 The evaluation report

This report is organised in the following way:

Chapter 2 gives an account of the *evaluation research* and its aims, how the research was designed and the methods which we used. Appendices A and B provide a substantial account of the research approach and the methods used and include the instruments used and data about the interviews and observations carried out.

The next five chapters present the *key findings* - each taking a somewhat different perspective. Inevitably, there are overlaps: different actors were expressing views on similar aspects and the service had a number of inter-linked elements. However, we have tried to keep these overlaps to a minimum and, where possible, we cross reference important points without, we hope, making the report too fragmented. Chapter 3 gives an account of the *early days* of the service and focuses on 'getting started'. Chapter 4 looks at the frontline activities of service delivery which we have called the 'client pathway'. Chapter 5 considers the role and views of the frontline staff. Chapter 6 focuses on management and the supports provided for service delivery. In a slightly different mode, Chapter 7 identifies the *key achievements and developments* in the pilots and, in doing so, comments on three additional areas: the impact of ONE on the core

partners; issues of partnership; the links between ONE and the wider community.

Finally, Chapter 8 provides a *concluding discussion* which summarises key themes and highlights some implications for the future development of a ONE-type integrated service.

2 RESEARCH FOCUS AND METHOD

2.1 Components of the ONE evaluation

The ONE evaluation comprised four, complementary, elements: a delivery evaluation, a policy evaluation, cost-benefit analysis and a database.

The delivery evaluation had two strands: social research and operational research. The social research was conducted with ONE clients, staff and stakeholders to assess people's experience and views of the service and difficulties with delivering the service. The operational research was designed to examine the cost and operational effectiveness of the different models.

The policy evaluation is testing the impact of ONE in improving labour market participation of people of working age. It comprises a programme of quantitative and qualitative research including a survey of ONE clients (in pilot areas) and equivalent (in control areas), in-depth interviews with ONE clients, and research with employers.

The Cost-Benefit Analysis assesses the overall impact of ONE for the period of full participation. This includes measures of employment additionality and cost-effectiveness. The Cost-Benefit Analysis consists of in-house analysis and contracted-out research.

The ONE evaluation database was set up to support the formal evaluation of ONE and provide analyses to help monitor ONE. The ONE evaluation database is constructed from data taken from the various IT systems that support the operation of the pilots and the payment of benefits that can be claimed through it. This includes the Employment Service's Labour Market System (which was used to record participation in ONE and such things as attendance at work-focused meetings) and the Department for Work and Pensions benefit systems that are used to pay and administer the various benefits that can be claimed through ONE. This data is being analysed by various strands of the evaluation, in particular the cost-benefit analysis and operational research.

2.2 The evaluation of ONE in practice

This strand of the evaluation was one element of the delivery evaluation.

The focus of this element was the processes and activities involved in setting up and providing the ONE service. It was essentially about obtaining as complete a picture as possible of ONE in action. In many ways it was the interface between ONE frontline staff and clients, i.e. the point of delivery, which provided the most comprehensive record of how the ONE service actually operated. The key components were three observational case studies and a longitudinal staff survey.

2.3 Key areas for evaluation

In planning this research, we expected that the following areas would be of particular importance:

- *The role of Personal Advisers:* this is the pivotal element of the ONE concept and as one of the major and broadly successful innovations of the New Deals for unemployed and for disabled people.
- *The client pathway:* i.e. the sequence of meetings and activities involved in ONE delivery and how the clients experienced these. As the point of delivery this would be essential in looking at the service in practice.
- *Cultural and organisational change:* since a key expectation was that the ONE pilots would demonstrate and promote a shift in welfare culture, it was important to obtain some picture of why and how things did change in the course of the pilots.
- *Partnership:* since the core partnership between the Benefits Agency, the Employment Service and the Local Authorities was at the heart of ONE, we expected that the relationships between agencies and between them and wider networks and partnerships would influence the operation and development of ONE.

2.4 The aims and design of the research

The objectives of the case studies and the staff survey research can be summarised as follows:

- to understand the processes and activities in ONE delivery;
- to consider staff experience of, and reactions to, the service;
- to identify difficulties in delivering ONE and consider what else needed to be done to implement it;
- to consider how local management arrangements, including partnership arrangements, worked;
- to consider the integration between Employment Service, Benefits Agency, Local Authorities and Child Support Agency;
- to identify whether there had been a reduction in unnecessary client contacts;
- to consider whether staff understood and had undergone the cultural change required to deliver ONE;
- to look at the effectiveness of the Personal Adviser in identifying barriers to work, considering clients' needs and in offering appropriate advice.

The evaluation was designed to cover practice and processes across the three delivery models and to gather information and views at intervals during the life of the pilots. The key activities were:

- interviews with frontline ONE staff and managers at three points during the pilots across all areas;
- observational case studies of ONE in practice in three pilot areas (representing the three delivery models – Basic, Call Centre and PVS) for two periods about one year apart;
- review of the experiences of partnership;

- interviews with representatives from the key agencies to assess the impact of the pilots on core business;
- interviews with external training and service providers.

In addition we carried out a series of sites visits and short observations at the start of the evaluation in order to gain a preliminary understanding of the ‘shape’ of ONE and initial issues in implementation. At a mid-way point, and near the end of our work, we conducted a series of workshops with ONE managers to verify and discuss findings.

A detailed discussion of the research approach is provided in Appendix A.

2.5 Research methodology

Our research approach on which the findings of this report are based included three waves of interviews with staff and three in-depth observational case studies, carried out at two points.

2.5.1 Staff interviews

The aim of the staff interviews was to monitor and track staff experiences and reactions to working within the ONE pilots and to compare the findings both over time and across the different pilot models. To this end, we interviewed six staff from each pilot area (72 in total) at three points in time over the lifetime of the ONE pilots (spring 2000, autumn 2000, summer 2001). This ‘panel study’ approach was adopted rather than a series of surveys carried out with different staff, since the experiences of staff would naturally vary on the basis of individual experience. Also, by sampling data from the same people over time, investigation of ‘changes’ in the issues facing staff could be made. The research instruments used for the in-depth interviews with staff and a breakdown of the numbers and types of respondent can be found in the appendices.

2.5.2 Observational case studies

Observational case studies were carried out in three ONE pilot areas, each one representing one of the model variants. Two researchers visited each area for a period of two weeks during 2000 and one week in 2001 to conduct extensive observation-based fieldwork.

The observational work allowed us to build up a picture of ONE in action. This was an opportunity to see the sequences of activities and how well these were organised and integrated for the clients, to see the tenor of the work for staff and something of the pressures and demands involved.

The first round of observations were framed around three main areas:

- *The client pathway*: observing clients through the stages of the ONE process, in their face-to-face meetings with ONE frontline staff.
- *Support systems*: what was available to, and used by, ONE staff.
- *Local arrangements*: if, why and how sites made specific arrangements to meet local demands.

In all we observed 175 meetings between clients and staff more-or-less equally distributed across the three models. Appendix A contains a breakdown of this work.

The second round of observations focused on the complete working day of individual Start-up and Personal Advisers in order to gain information about the flow of work, the demands and time pressures on staff.

In both phases, researchers also conducted interviews with managers during the observation periods.

The findings were validated in workshops with the case study area ONE managers, and also triangulated with data from the staff interviews. For more information on this element of the research see Appendix A. The research pack used for the observational case studies, can be found in Appendix B.

2.5.3 Focus groups of ONE trainers

Three focus groups were run with people involved in providing training for ONE staff. These were an opportunity to understand the approaches which they had taken and to discuss how successful they thought the training provision had been. Their views provided a point of triangulation with staff views on training inputs.

2.5.4 Interviews relating to partnership

Group interviews were conducted with the Pilot Management Group (PMG) members in each of the 12 areas. These took place at different stages of the pilots so that we could explore how partnerships developed over time. We also conducted a number of in-depth and telephone interviews with individual members of PMGs.

2.5.5 Interviews with local service and training providers

We arranged interviews with a number of service providers, including training agencies, in the case study areas. The purpose of these was to understand what kind of provision, services and supports were available to ONE clients. It was also possible to explore the links between Personal Advisers and external services and to consider the appropriateness of the support and training inputs available. Local service agencies were able to comment on how far the referrals made by Personal Advisers were appropriate and comment generally about ONE.

2.5.6 Feedback on implementation and validation

During the preparation of our interim and final reports we held workshops with frontline managers from all the pilot areas in order to provide feedback and to verify and further develop our findings.

2.6 The timing of the research

Finally, it is relevant to note some issues about the context and timing of the research.

Our evaluation started with some preliminary and orientation work at the point that the Basic Model pilots had been 'live' for about three to four months. Main blocks of fieldwork for the case studies and staff

research was conducted before and just after participation in ONE became compulsory for non-JSA claimants. This was introduced in summer 2000 and was termed ‘full participation’. The efforts of pilots to stabilise were affected by ‘full participation’ as this period saw a sharp increase in number of non-JSA clients entering ONE.

In addition, after ‘full participation’, areas experienced the annual surge in Jobseeker’s Allowance claims and inherited staff leave which, combined with the effects of the relatively recent introduction of full participation resulted in the pilots experiencing considerable pressure. As a consequence many of the pilots had to invoke contingency arrangements. Not surprisingly the pressures that ONE experienced in the early stages were reflected in our findings of the observational work and research with staff presented in the following sections.

As the pilots were developmental, the research would pick up information and comment about changes in service delivery over time.

In March 2000 came the crucial announcement of the new agency to be formed from an amalgamation of the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service – referred to at the time as the Working Age Agency. Later this became formalised as Jobcentre Plus and, late in the pilots, those areas which were to be the ‘pathfinders’ in implementing this new service, were announced. There were considerable implications arising from this policy development: the anxieties, questions and views of staff were expressed in both the second period of observations and in the final wave of staff interviews. It was inevitable that such a radical restructuring of services would affect the evaluation tasks of assessing ONE in practice.

2.7 Commentary on the evaluation

Finally, one of the unexpected findings of the research concerned methodology. Our interviews with staff and with clients proved effective (as expected) in obtaining thoughtful and detailed commentaries. We were impressed by the overall capacity of staff – advisers and managers – to reflect on their experience and articulate their views. This showed not only their willingness to participate in the evaluation but also their commitment to ONE and its development.

However, it was the structured observational work which proved to be particularly useful in identifying live and dynamic issues of delivery. It was a decisive tool within the evaluation, providing as it did:

- a unique opportunity to observe ONE ‘in action’ – thus, adding a *live* quality to our understanding of the service at the point of delivery;
- a means of focusing on the client pathway through the face-to-face meetings between Personal Advisers and clients and, therefore, a way of capturing some of the *dynamics* of the integration and continuity which clients experience.

The data developed in the observations could only be indicative but the participation of ONE managers in feedback and verification workshops was a crucial element in refining and endorsing the findings.

3 GETTING STARTED

This chapter provides an overview of the early days of ONE implementation. The findings presented here are based on observations made during preliminary site visits, data from the first two rounds of staff interviews, and the first phase case studies.

3.1 Management arrangements

At the outset different pilot areas chose line management structures based on function or sites, or a hybrid of the two. *Functional management* meant that ONE sites and services were overseen by dedicated ONE managers whose sole responsibility was the management of ONE. In contrast, under *site management*, ONE sites and services were the responsibility of the person managing the location in which ONE was situated. For example, if the ONE service was operated at an Employment Service Jobcentre site, then it was managed by the Jobcentre manager.

During the early days of ONE, managers saw the main parameters to providing a quality service according to the ONE vision as:

- solid procedures and systems in place;
- adequate staff resources;
- quality training of staff in time for full participation;
- development of core partnerships;
- harnessing of external provision of services for clients.

A common management framework for implementing ONE delivery operations and overseeing strategic development was adopted across all 12 pilot areas. The components of the management framework were a Local Implementation Team, including the ONE delivery manager; reporting to a Pilot Management Group (PMG) which included the participating core partner organisations; and a higher level, Regional Pilot Steering Group (RPSG).

Some concern was expressed ‘on the ground’ across pilot areas about the effectiveness of the Centre in its supporting role, specifically in terms of its capacity to provide quick and positive solutions to problems faced.

Another source of concern during the early days was the imperfect integration of Local Authorities into the ONE partnership. Whilst the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency were working closely together and developing a solid partnership base. Local Authority representation and input during the early implementation phase was less apparent and some of the factors which contributed to this are identified in Section 7.3.3.

Allocated resources did not seem to be always in line with actual requirements for the ONE vision to be fully realised. Key resource issues that emerged early on included inadequate staff numbers, transaction costs that were not accounted for by the ONE resource and process models, and cross-subsidisation of the pilot by the Benefits Agency and Employment Service. These remained key issues and are also discussed later in this chapter, also in Chapter 7.

In terms of managing the process of delivery, most pilot areas appeared initially to be on top of their client flows. Some minor operational set-up difficulties were inevitably experienced, but impacts on the service appeared to be short-lived as staff became more confident and experienced with the various procedures and systems.

A key management consideration which came to dominate the early stages of ONE, was the anticipated impacts of ‘full participation’. It was recognised that the effects of this would be characterised by the combination of a change in the profile of the client group and an increase in the number of clients to be seen. This raised a number of questions about ‘coping’ strategies, including whether:

- pilot areas had sufficient resources (frontline staff) to handle the increase in client numbers;
- new client groups would create additional demands on the staff time per client and if so how would this be dealt with;
- informal but effective arrangements for pooling and sharing expertise between staff could be maintained in the face of increased numbers and more demanding client groups;
- staff would be able to provide an appropriate service in keeping with the ONE vision of increasing labour market attachment to this extended client group.

3.2 Staff recruitment Here we focus on the the reasons given by staff for entering ONE, on deterrents to, and concerns about, joining the ONE pilot and on staff views about payment and working conditions.

3.2.1 Entering ONE Most staff responded to the positions that were advertised internally for ONE in their agencies but a few were encouraged to apply by their own management. A variety of reasons for application were offered but the most frequent was an interest and belief in the concept of ONE. First impressions of the ONE vision were positive with comments including ‘*excellent*’ and ‘*brilliant*’. Enthusiasm for ONE was frequently combined with a desire for change and the opportunity for a new challenge.

'I felt it was a good idea, also at that time I'd applied for a promotion at the Benefits Agency and didn't get it, so the ONE job seemed even more attractive. But really, the idea of being able to spend time actually helping clients and achieving something with them seemed like a step forward.'

(Start-up Adviser, PVS Model).

Many staff specifically welcomed the client-focused approach of ONE, viewing the pilot as providing the opportunity to forge a more productive relationship with clients through maintained contact and by being *'there for them'*. Other key attractions of the ONE initiative included:

- the provision of integrated services: there was general agreement with the principle of having the whole range of services in one place and the principle of an integrated service was viewed by many as welcome progress.

'It was a new concept that I liked - a one-stop shop for the clients'.

(Manager, Private and Voluntary Sector Model);

- offering alternatives by helping clients to think beyond reliance on benefits;
- the partnership principle behind the three agencies working together.

Clearly, the ONE vision was a key motivating factor for many staff and there was a broad consensus that an initiative like ONE was a long time coming. Nonetheless, some scepticism was evident. Although the *idea* of ONE was viewed positively by the majority of staff, their belief as to whether the concept could, and was, working *in practice* was prone to misgivings.

3.2.2 Deterrents and concerns

Some reservations about joining the ONE pilot were expressed. Particularly amongst Employment Service recruits, there were concerns about the complexity of the range of benefits that would have to be dealt with. For those who were not accustomed to working directly with the public some apprehension was evident. Certainly, for staff from Benefits Agency backgrounds the prospect of working in an 'unscreened' environment was an initial cause for concern. In practice, at this early pre-full participation stage, this concern had not materialised into any real or perceived threat to their safety. Indeed, a number of staff felt that 'putting up barriers' could be more likely to engender a more aggressive atmosphere because screens can be perceived as perpetuating an 'us and them culture'.

Somewhat different issues were expressed by staff seconded to Private and Voluntary Sector pilot areas. These centred on concerns that the management of ONE by private sector contractors was *'privatisation through the back door'*, a concern which unions seem to have shared and done little to assuage. Managers and staff both indicated that the unions of staff applying for ONE posts, actually discouraged their members from making applications.

‘They did try very politely, because they were aware of where they stood, to perhaps (I won’t say) deter secondees but they were making it very clear that they thought that union members that were secondees should perhaps think twice.’

(Manager, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

Generally, staff in all pilot areas were concerned about the uncertainty surrounding their positions after the pilots had concluded. Some staff expressed worries about whether they would still have a job in their previous agency to go back to. This was married with the concern that ONE might be trying to achieve a rationalisation of (human) resources, as is often the case in mergers and acquisitions, and this could lead to their posts being effectively redundant. Although the majority of the secondments were voluntarily made, it seems that for some there was pressure to apply.

‘And it was a case of if we hadn’t applied, we had to then report back to our Regional Manager as to why we hadn’t applied.’

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

3.2.3 Payment and working conditions

The application of three separate sets of terms and conditions to the ONE service according to staffs’ home agency, was the source of much contention, with considerable dissatisfaction being expressed with regard to differential pay.

In some pilot areas ONE was treated as a temporary promotion for Employment Service secondees but not for Benefits Agency secondees. In some cases Local Authority staff were paid more than Employment Service and Benefits Agency staff. Furthermore, the conditions for direct recruits, particularly those working in Private and Voluntary Sector areas were different again, in some cases involving lower pay still.

Some agencies had different working hours arrangements, for example the Benefits Agency operated flexitime, whereas others did not. Complaints were made about some staff doing less hours for the same salary or more. However, in some cases, agency conditions of employment had been rescinded – in at least one pilot area (PVS) the conditions of Benefits Agency staff enabling them to work flexi-time was suspended.

The operation of different systems across the agencies encompassed pay review and appraisal systems, with pay reviews for ONE staff occurring at different times of the year and being judged by different criteria according to which of the three core partner agencies they were seconded from. Suggestions to solve these differentials were offered. For example:

‘I think it would help if ONE had its own terms and conditions, separate from the agencies because it’s not like anything that’s done in the agencies.’

(Manager, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

At different points in time throughout 2000 each agency had awarded a pay rise to their staff, and this included secondees to ONE. The implication, in the mind of some staff was that those staff awarded pay rises earlier were going to be paid more throughout the year.

A further variation in 'rewards' involved Private and Voluntary Sector areas providing a 'PVS bonus' to agency staff who were seconded to ONE. Furthermore, in one Private and Voluntary Sector area a form of Performance Related Pay was established that was welcomed by staff:

'They have also introduced a 'stakeholder' system through which everyone is issued a share and on the basis of company performance (quarterly, yearly, etc.) everyone is going to get a bonus.'

(Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

In a different pilot area (PVS) individual Performance Related Pay had been introduced, but not widely welcomed by staff:

'They have introduced a performance reward system and I did make my feelings totally clear about it at the time, which is basically that it's a really bad idea because it will cause bad feelings amongst us staff, the amount of backbiting that occurs with these schemes is just awful.'

(Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

Contention with regard to pay also emerged in relation to role responsibility, as opposed to differentials associated with home agency terms of employment and Private and Voluntary Sector incentives. Personal Advisers and Start-up Advisers were on the same grade. However, some resentment was expressed by Personal Advisers, who felt that Start-up Advisers had a less challenging and complex role than them, particularly those Start-up Advisers based in Call Centres.

A consequence of the demands placed on ONE staff after 'full-participation' was the use of overtime in some areas to reduce the backlog of claims. Again, there seemed to be no unifying policy on the use of overtime or the payment for overtime. In some cases, overtime was done without payment; where there was payment, rates for overtime varied between the agencies.

Although the problems of pay disparity were highlighted by a majority of staff, a significant number reported a general satisfaction with pay and conditions. However, overall there was a call by staff for greater transparency in the terms and conditions of employment across the agencies because it was clear that perceived anomalies were a cause of animosity and, therefore, division between staff from different agencies.

Managers of ONE teams found the management of staff from three or sometimes more agencies or sources, a considerable challenge, demanding a lot of time. Not only did different conditions affect how and when staff could work, the managers were also faced with having to operate three different staff review procedures.

There was universal agreement among staff that there should have been a single set of terms and conditions for staff seconded to ONE. The actual system created some divisions and resentment between people who in other respects worked well together as close-knit, supportive teams.

3.3 Training

The issue of staff training generated more response than any other issue covered by our interviews and the difficulties that arose were stressed by both staff and training practitioners. The majority of staff felt that the training provided had been inadequate either in terms of content or timeliness. Staff described these shortcomings in considerable detail and here we summarise the key points which they made.

3.3.1 Training received

Staff entering the ONE pilot as advisers received training from three different sources:

- Employment Service training, incorporating specifics such as job broking, Labour Market System¹ training, Jobseeker's Allowance procedures, and introduction to the ONE Enquiry Service (OES³²);
- ONE specific training which included the introduction to ONE principles and practice, summarily called the 'WOW event';
- Benefits Agency specific training which encompassed the main bulk of the benefits training and associated IT systems. Further benefits training leading up to full participation was also provided.

3.3.2 Staff views on benefit training

The training on benefits, which was primarily for non-Benefits Agency staff, was felt to be overly detailed, too intensive and poorly timed. The years of experience and in-depth knowledge of benefits gained in the Benefits Agency were impossible to replicate in the three weeks training that the ONE advisers received. The majority of staff who expressed uncertainty about benefits were from Employment Service backgrounds.

This training was delivered well before 'full participation' and so could not be immediately consolidated by practical experience of processing non-JSA benefits until April 2000. As a result, staff had forgotten the knowledge required and frequently reported the need for top-up training to revisit the benefits issues.

Among those who cited benefits training as the main gap in their knowledge, many continued to find Local Authority benefits difficult to administer quite late into the pilot. This was partly because of the lack of

¹ Labour Market System (LMS): the Employment Service computer system linking all Jobcentres which process job vacancy and client data.

² ONE Enquiry Service (OES): computer system accessible by all core agencies (Employment Service/Benefits Agency/Local Authorities) showing client status in ONE. It shows what stage of the ONE process the client is at. OES is like a tracking system to show if a person is a ONE client, whether they have seen their Personal Adviser, whether the claim is still outstanding, etc.

Local Authority secondees in many of the ONE areas so that there was no 'resident expert' on site to support them.

Some of the advisers suggested that the most immediate need was for an update or refresher training. This was perceived as a way to replay, or consolidate, the lessons learned but subsequently forgotten with the passage of time.

'I would like to have regular reviews on the different benefits, just to keep up to date, like refreshers so that we are aware if there are any changes. You lose touch with some benefits.'

(Personal Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

A further area of difficulty was the unease and inexperience many staff felt in dealing with Child Support issues. It was reported in some areas that no training had been given on this yet ONE staff were expected to oversee the completion of maintenance application forms.

3.3.3 Staff views on employment aspects of training

The Employment Service training, specifically on Labour Market System (LMS) was generally viewed as poor. Training was carried out using 'paper screens' instead of computer terminals: *'imagine this page is your LMS screen'*. The impression was that the training was *'done on the cheap'*, with no use of video or role-play, and involved *'too much lecturing and manuals'*.

As a result of the inadequacies of the training programmes, staff were very much learning on the job. These problems were compounded sometimes by the tight timescales between completion of training and 'go live', giving no time to practice or consolidate. Those staff who reported a shortfall in how to deliver job-broking and labour market activities were predominantly from Benefits Agency or Local Authority backgrounds. This also extended in some cases to include a need for knowledge of local resources, training providers and agencies. The evidence suggests that staff fell back on their prior experience rather than their training as ONE advisers.

3.3.4 Other training issues raised

About the ONE service

Initial training necessarily focused on providing staff with the essential information about procedures and regulations relating to the main benefit and employment aspects of delivery. However, this did not fully meet staff expectations, which were as, if not more, concerned with skill and knowledge development. It was felt that Personal Advisers especially were required to possess a great deal of knowledge about a wide range of benefits and advice; a level of knowledge that was not adequately addressed in the training staff received. Personal Advisers commented in particular that the training had been too 'process orientated'. There was, for example, little attention given to how to conduct a start-up or work-focused meeting with new clients. This was felt particularly relevant where Personal Advisers had not had to deal directly with clients in their previous jobs – e.g. staff from Benefits Agency and Local Authority backgrounds.

Staff were, in a sense, making the point that ONE was intended to be different, and to have a different outlook: it was not intended to be a simple amalgam of the constituent agency practice. But, clarification and training on quite what that meant in practice was missing.

As a result, many staff felt that they were making up their role and their 'behaviour' in the job as they went along. It was proposed that greater emphasis could be placed on training in interviewing and interaction skills.

'No, [training] is not adequate, as we wanted an 'idiots' guide to benefits' and also needed IT training. The changes that should be made are that it should be an Employment Service and Benefits Agency joint effort, structured from basic to detailed information, training should be in-depth and include more benefits information and [it should include] learning about dealing with different clients.'

(Start-up Adviser, Call Centre Model)

In terms of the provision of specialist training Personal Advisers felt the need for training in dealing with non-JSA clients – such as lone parents, people with disabilities or health problems – as these more sensitive cases were felt to be particularly difficult. For example, they would have liked training in how to approach discussions about work with severely disabled or recently separated or bereaved clients. It was felt that dealing with such people could, in some cases, be distressing.

Staff also felt there were gaps in their knowledge in utilising the various IT systems:

'I would still like more training in the IS computer systems, I am not too good on searching through DCI [Departmental Central Index]. I have sometimes had to refer people on to the Benefits Agency or ring them, whereas if I had more knowledge, perhaps I could have done it.'

Overall, staff expressed the need for a more bespoke approach to training. The implication of using off-the-shelf training, and not training specifically tailored to ONE was that the anticipated cultural change might have been hampered by staff being trained using 'old systems' of client engagement. There seemed to have been no attempt to address the wider cultural issues associated with the three agencies now having to work together towards a new common purpose. Clearly, the change in staff culture that was expected, in terms of how the staff should operate, might be diminished given that the training did not tackle this issue.

Training for managers

Managers expressed concern about the lack of training they themselves had received. There were instances where the managers overseeing ONE staff were so unfamiliar with the procedures that they were frequently asking their staff for information. Managers particularly emphasised the

need to get to grips with managing staff from different agency backgrounds. In particular, there was a lack of experience in the appraisal systems of the different agencies. One manager suggested that greater insight into the activities of a ONE adviser would be beneficial because the theory, as outlined in the ONE vision, had become detached from the day to day operational realities of delivering the service.

3.4 Ongoing support and staff development

Perhaps because of the tight timescales between completion of training and implementation, some staff did not receive the necessary support to fulfil the objectives of their Learning Assessment Framework (LAF)³. Furthermore, those who had completed the LAF had not had feedback on when they would get their training needs addressed. Some felt that it had raised their expectations unfairly since little movement had been noticed afterwards. In general, it was felt that the LAF did not identify the wider development needs of staff who needed to transfer advisory skills relevant to JSA clients to those claiming other benefits. Pressures on offices due to understaffing and client numbers had pushed staff development to the bottom of the list of priorities.

Similarly, perhaps because of a lack of time and managerial support pre-course learning by staff had not occurred in many cases, which meant that staff commenced training without any preparation.

Generally it was felt that the content of the training itself was not tailored to the experiences of those who attended and it was reported that the trainers just did not know their material.

Many staff felt the training had let them down so much that their first few weeks when the pilot went live was extremely stressful:

‘... like everybody else I’d had totally inadequate training. Labour Market System was inadequate training, didn’t cover how to take a JSA claim, didn’t cover the fact that you were actually going to do the claim then and there, there were thousands of things that you needed to do and it was hell, it was a nightmare.’

(Staff focus group participant).

Staff consistently reported the feeling of being ‘*thrown in the deep end*’. The counter to this was that there had been a great deal of mutual support from colleagues. Any after-training support was provided predominantly by colleagues passing on information rather than any formal support arrangements being put in place. Clearly, it was intended in ONE that

³ The ‘Learning Assessment Framework’ (LAF) was designed to assess staff training needs. Staff should discuss with their line manager and select from the options outlined in a modularised training handbook. The LAF was supposed to be viewed as a flexible tool and was generally seen as appropriate and well designed, but the approach did not work particularly well since it relied on line management support for its use.

inter-agency experience was to be shared and this form of consultation, particularly between Personal Advisers had been taking place and was appreciated by staff. However, whilst learning on the job through the informal sharing of knowledge was recognised as working well, this could only occur where the staff with the relevant specialist knowledge were on site. If that knowledge was not present within the team, gaps in the service could occur. Overall, staff felt unsupported by management and felt they had been left to get on with it. It was suggested that formal role-play exercises and formal consolidation activities such as ‘on-the-job’ training or ‘shadowing’ of colleagues, would have been valuable.

Career development

One of the developments associated with the training of ONE staff was that it would enable them to work towards a National Vocational Qualification Level III in Guidance. Most staff were pleased that the training was leading to a qualification which was recognised in the workplace outside of the Civil Service and found the challenge of working towards it worthwhile and rewarding. However, two issues did emerge: disquiet from non-agency staff concerning where the funding for the NVQ would come from; concern from staff generally that they were unable to fulfil the requirements of the NVQ syllabus, particularly in terms of compiling a portfolio of evidence in the light of ongoing day to day pressures on the ONE offices.

3.5 Communicating the ONE vision

There were mixed feelings about how effective the initial communication of the ONE vision had been. The ‘headline’ features of ONE were well understood. It was on how to put these into practice – the kind of relationship to establish with clients and the key focus and purpose of the different meetings and stages of the process – where staff were looking for clearer guidance.

There was also concern among some staff that the clients were not well informed, leading to confusion at the early stages of the pilots:

‘It [ONE] is confusing to the public and there is a low awareness of ONE. It is well communicated to staff with lots of literature to read up on.’

(Administrative staff, Call Centre Model)

However, in addition to general publicity and advertising, it was the responsibility of frontline staff to ensure that clients were well briefed about ONE.

Reports from some areas gave the impression of ‘rushed’ implementation with ‘piecemeal’ communication and a ‘low key’ marketing both to staff and clients.

'It was all very late going out. It was too insular. Even other offices around [Pilot area withheld] didn't have an awareness of what ONE was.'

(Personal Adviser, Call Centre Model)

A significant number of staff did report that, for a number of reasons, communication had been ineffective. The main reason given was that information, particularly about changes within ONE, was not trickling down to staff in the sites. This was a finding across all the pilot areas. Similar issues were reported later – relating to the ending of ONE and the creation of Jobcentre Plus.

3.6 Implementation and infrastructure

Staff reported a variety of problems with infrastructure, resources and buildings that impacted on the experience of ONE and service delivery during the early days. Here, we first consider some general issues that emerged, the concerns expressed about office facilities and layout and the improvements that occurred in the working environment.

In some areas the implementation of ONE coincided with the start of the school holidays (June 1999, Basic Model) with the result that some ONE staff were taking holidays during this demanding period. This issue was compounded in some areas with large college student populations seeking holiday work since this period coincided with the end of college term. As a result, there was a perception among both management and staff that the initial forecast of client volumes had rather underestimated demand ONE was expected to deal with. It should be noted, however, that these factors were included in the funding assumptions of ONE and were not unexpected events.

As outlined in the previous section, a major area of concern for staff was the feeling of having inadequate knowledge of the systems and benefits for ONE, coupled with an unfamiliarity with ONE procedures. As a result, some staff gave the impression of a struggle to get things up and running and a 'steep learning curve' leading to delays in getting clients through the system:

'Well, we literally finished training on the Friday and started the job on the Monday, we were straight in and to be honest from what I heard, I was quite grateful I missed out the Monday. I think the first two days was quite hectic, you were suddenly thrown in and there hadn't been the opportunity to even sort a desk out and you didn't even know where you were sitting until the Monday morning when they [the clients] turned up so that obviously caused a lot of pressure, because not only were you dealing with a lot of paperwork you weren't familiar with, there was a few of us dealing with computer systems we had never ever used before..'

(Start-up Adviser, Basic Model)

Staff from all the 12 pilot areas cited problems with the amount of paperwork required to process one client's claim through ONE. This was seen as slowing down the process further and it was clear that the

same information about a particular client's details was being reproduced up to three or four times for each separate form. There was a general view that the level of management information required further eroded time which might be better spent with clients.

Between spring and autumn 2000 issues remained with regard to resources that needed to be addressed. Across all areas and sites managers and staff consistently reported a lack of resources in terms of staff numbers and appropriate information technology support. It was felt that these resource pressures made it difficult to deal with the volume, number and types of claims and clients after 'full participation'.

3.6.1 Office facilities and layout

The fact that ONE was a new and different service was signalled by the specially designed logo, the cerise coloured livery and the unscreened environment (although the latter was not achieved in some offices until well on in the pilots). In particular, the desk design with its small side screen providing some privacy, were obviously different from the furniture of colleagues on the same site although these were not available for all ONE staff.

Difficulties associated with office facilities and layout were experienced to varying degrees in many sites, but initial problems of a lack of office resources seemed particularly prominent in Private and Voluntary Sector sites. Problems included, a lack of office furniture such as filing cabinets leading to clients' claim details being 'filed' on the floor behind the Personal Advisers' desks, and a lack of appropriate clerical forms, leading to staff having to photocopy their last original forms in the office. There were insufficient desks for all staff – particularly where offices had a number of part-time staff, this could mean 'hot-desking' with all its attendant problems.

In a number of pilot sites the waiting area for clients was directly in front of the Advisers. As a result, ONE staff could hear clients conversing and could feel intimidated and pressured by being overly aware of people waiting to be seen. Concerns were also expressed that a number of ONE sites were not easily accessible to disabled clients and parents with children (e.g. carrying buggies) because they lacked lifts and ramps.

In many cases ONE shared office space with other services, most frequently with the Employment Service. The accompanying problems of insufficient furniture and storage facilities, were again frequently mentioned. In some cases, staff indicated that desks were placed end-to-end so that no-one could get through: this gave rise to Health and Safety issues and also gave the impression of a 'wall of desks'.

Staff commented on the way in which insufficient allocation of work-space and the layout of the office could compromise client privacy and confidentiality. The lack of private rooms for the purpose of carrying

out interviews which might require greater confidentiality, compounded this issue in many areas.

Staff experience of the working environment itself did vary greatly between sites. Across pilot areas, a number of ‘bespoke’ sites were set up where ONE staff occupied whole office suites or floors of buildings. This was considered to lead to more effective team-working and less confusion for clients. Where ONE teams had been placed on two separate floors of a building, communication between the two groups of staff could be identified as problematic. For example, it was common in most areas for Personal Advisers to fill-in on Start-up if the demands required it. However, this was less likely to occur if Personal Advisers could not see the queues increasing at start-up because they were on a different floor – they were considerably less likely to know when to step into the breach to help out.

Similarly, in the early days there had been some friction between Personal Advisers and Start-up advisers in the Call Centre pilots. Specifically, Personal Advisers reported that Call Centre staff were making mistakes on the forms and clients were turning up to their meetings with either the wrong or missing information. This entailed Personal Advisers having to go through all the Start-up questions again to rectify the problem. The source of the problem was generally perceived as one inherent in the Call Centre model; that of physical distance between the two sets of colleagues, leading to a greater climate of ‘them and us’ between the sites. Some staff from both grades suggested that cross-over visits and meetings should take place to try to break down the perceived barriers in order to ‘see how the other half lives’. Even where Personal Advisers and Start-up Advisers were located on a separate floor within the same building divisions seemed to emerge and again an ‘us and them’ culture was in danger of developing. This was most likely a function of the inability in these circumstances to interact in an informal way and quickly check issues of concern.

The Call Centres tended to be custom-built offices and therefore were more tailored to the needs of the ONE staff, better designed, bright and spacious with good facilities.

3.6.2 Improvements in the working environment

In a few areas there were considerable improvements in the office layout by autumn 2000. Previous complaints about a lack of storage facilities and resources seemed to have been addressed in these cases:

‘Yes, the environment is fine, warm, and spacious, office is friendly. The office furniture is on its way. Advisers are not allowed personal drawers, so they are each going to have to go to a separate cabinet to get files. Still, it’s better than papers all over the floor.’⁴

(New Client Adviser, PVS Model)

⁴ Staff repeated that they were not allowed to have small pedestal drawers because of the possibility they could be used as projectiles – presumably by clients.

It appeared that the ability of ONE staff to change the working environment had been contingent on whether they occupied an office with another agency and were therefore bound by their rules. For example, where ONE shared a site with the Employment Service or Benefits Agency, ONE staff and managers had no control over the layout because they had to conform to the other agency's rules, e.g. Employment Service Estates Planning, Local Authority Health and Safety. The impact on ONE, apart from the frequent reports of staff being cramped, was that shared offices blurred the identity of ONE:

'I want ONE to have an identity, at the moment I feel that it is a little bit mixed. I think if we had been on the next floor it would have given us a whole new identity and people would have seen it as a different concept and a different idea.'

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

The lack of private rooms for client meetings persisted as an issue, either because they were also used by Jobcentre staff, or by managers and visitors; as too did the concern over client privacy rights being infringed because of advisers' desks being so close together.

3.7 IT systems

IT systems were a central element in ONE delivery and Advisers' jobs were significantly structured by the IT systems. However, staff reported experiencing a wide range of IT-related problems including double inputting, double booking of appointment slots, lack of flexibility in arranging meetings with clients, difficulties with a common diary system, lack of flexibility in coding and recording information and complete seize-up if the computer systems 'crashed'. Some advisers actually mentioned that they had no access to stand-alone personal computers and often had to write specific letters by hand.

In the Call Centre areas, the incumbent computer system was beset with some initial teething problems. For example, initial problems with the client appointments information and diary system had led to instances of the system being very slow or crashing.

The lack of integration of the different IT systems used in ONE, where systems failed to interact, was cited as the most prominent operational support problem for staff from the outset. The effects on work were varied, but mainly it meant that basic tasks such as entering the same clients' details were carried out three or four times, thereby increasing workloads and also increasing the likelihood of data entry mistakes.

Although these problems were recognised and efforts made to improve the system, fundamental problems remained throughout the duration of the pilots because their full resolution required radical system changes.

'The problem of the systems not being integrated is still an issue. I mean there are too many systems that need data inputted and yet if they only talked to each other the work would be much easier and this aspect would be considerably less time consuming.'

(Manager, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

A second issue was that staff did not have access to Local Authority benefits systems (document management systems). If there were queries concerning claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit, ONE staff were required to make a verbal enquiry to the Local Authority offices to try to resolve these. Again these problems persisted throughout the pilot period.

It was suggested that both the introduction of a truly integrated claim form, not just in Call Centre sites, and enhanced access to Local Authority benefit systems would be welcomed.

The use of e-mail as a means of improving communication was commented on by both staff on sites where it had been introduced and where it was not available. It was clear that where it had been introduced (Private and Voluntary Sector Areas), it had been welcomed and useful.

With regard to the adequacy of IT support services for staff, mixed findings emerged. It appeared that, where full-time IT support staff were based on site, the level of service provided by the contractor(s) was generally highly regarded. In sites without official IT support or where contractors were only available on a part-time basis, staff expressed dissatisfaction with the levels of support available.

'[We] are funding a half time Computer Support Officer (ESSA) which is a technical support grade, but if we want anything doing they are never about to do it. We are funding one of these people yet they can't come in for half an hour to put a new member of staff on the system.'

(Private and Voluntary Sector Area Site Manager)

Fortunately, in many cases, collective IT knowledge among the members of the ONE teams provided unofficial support to other team members. This was largely in terms of how to carry out operations rather than dealing with crashes or other problems with the systems.

3.8 Summary of key points

The main issues to emerge about the implementation of ONE:

- *management arrangements* - ONE was set up with a three-tier management structure. The main concerns were: the capacity of the centre to provide timely support; the imperfect integration of Local Authorities; inadequate resources base; increased client demand with 'full participation';

- *staff recruitment* - staff were positive about joining ONE and showed enthusiasm for the ONE vision – specifically the customer focus and integrated service provision. However, there was some scepticism about whether ONE could work in practice and concern about positions once the pilot concluded. For some Benefits Agency staff there were concerns about the unscreened working environment, although this did not emerge as an issue. Private and Voluntary Sector agency staff were concerned about ‘privatisation through the back door’;
- *payment and working conditions* were contentious issues, focused predominantly on differential pay and conditions. Negative feedback was given in relation to an absence of pay differentials according to role complexity and responsibility within ONE. Furthermore, heavy management demands were identified as an outcome of working with three different agencies’ personnel systems. Overwhelming consensus existed about the need for ONE to have its own terms and conditions of employment;
- *training* - generally, there was dissatisfaction with the training provided: a number of issues were identified including: too detailed, too intensive; poorly timed; overall a lack of opportunity to consolidate knowledge and skills before going live; an over-emphasis on regulations, little on interviewing and interaction skills; a lack of training about how to deal with particularly sensitive or difficult clients; training not tailored to the experiences of the trainees. A key criticism was that training was based on ‘off the shelf’ Benefits Agency and Employment Service materials rather than being ONE specific. A key factor in the successful implementation was the sharing of knowledge and supports between staff on the job;
- *systems for providing ongoing support or staff development*, including career development, were not generally well worked out or were fragmented;
- *communication* - there were mixed feelings about the effectiveness of various aspects of communication during the early days of ONE. Staff generally felt that internal communication about the vision of ONE was well accomplished. However, they felt that clients were poorly informed about ONE leading to some confusion initially. It was felt that communication regarding ONE developments and changes, during the first turbulent months, was limited, and this did remain an issue in many areas;
- *implementation and infrastructure* - staff commented on a range of problems encountered with serious and enduring difficulties identified in relation to office facilities and layout in some areas. Complaints included, insufficient furniture and storage facilities, client access issues for those with mobility problems or young children, lack of privacy for clients, difficulty accessing private interview rooms, client waiting areas being ‘uncomfortably close’ to start-up services, and tensions created between ONE because of physical distances between them – different floors or, in the case of Call Centres, different locations. However, there were significant improvements over time in most areas on these issues. Positive feedback was given about the comfort of the custom-built Call Centres, that were tailored to the needs of ONE staff;

- *IT systems* – various IT-related difficulties were experienced across ONE areas ranging from double booking of appointment slots, to lack of flexibility in coding and recording information, to computers crashing. The most prominent issue was the lack of integration between different IT systems used in ONE, leading to duplication of effort, wasted time and greater potential for data entry mistakes. Many such difficulties remained, particularly those which required fundamental system changes. Other key issues included, advisers not having access to Local Authority systems; the value of having an e-mail system; and the importance of on-site, available IT support staff.

4 THE CLIENT PATHWAY: DELIVERING ONE

In this chapter we focus on the face-to-face contact between ONE staff and clients and provide an account of the sequence of meetings and activities which comprised the ONE service. By referring to the ‘client pathway’ we want to draw attention to the way in which individual clients move through the service. In doing so, we consider three key features of the ONE pilot in some detail: integration of services, the role of the Personal Adviser and continuity for the client.

The findings focus particularly on the processes of delivery and do, therefore, draw most on our direct observations of practice. This material is augmented by data from site visits and from interviews with frontline staff and managers. Throughout, we have attempted to indicate where findings are *indicative only* as they are based on a small number of cases or alternatively where they provide *reasonably good evidence* since they were drawn from a substantial number of sources.

ONE was set up to pilot the introduction of a work focus into *all* new or repeat benefit claims from people of working age. The integration of the work of the Benefits Agency and that of the Employment Service in respect of Jobseekers and other claimants was thus one of the most significant operational tasks for ONE implementation. Therefore, in what follows, we cover:

- how clients were introduced to the service;
- the key tasks involved at each client meeting;
- the succession of meetings and how these were connected;
- particular points about continuity and integration of service.

We do so by considering each of the main activities in the client pathway, namely:

- reception;
- Start-up;
- the first Personal Adviser meeting;
- the 13-week Personal Adviser meeting;
- the six-month and one-year Personal Adviser meetings;
- caseloading and follow up;
- deferral.

We go on to discuss the relationship between Personal Advisers and clients and clients’ views on ONE. The chapter concludes with a summary section highlighting main points.

4.1 Reception The reception function was carried out in various ways across the pilot areas. Usually the receptionist was dedicated to ONE: they guided people to the right waiting area having done an initial check and taken preliminary details, confirmed their appointment or taken forms (etc.) as appropriate. On the whole, ONE literature was not handed out, although a few clients did pick up the leaflets. In some Benefits Agency sites, reception was for all callers and here ONE clients had to queue alongside other claimants which could cause considerable delays. Later on, in some of the pilots, significant changes were made at local level to address problems relating to waiting times and queuing (see Chapters 6 and 7).

In one Private and Voluntary Sector Area, site reception and Start-up were the same; in the Call Centre variant the first contact from the client – the ‘inbound’ call – was essentially a part of Start-up.

Overall, whether reception was dedicated to ONE or general, this first point of contact for the client *did not* provide an introduction or orientation to the ONE service.

4.2 Start-up Start-up was the first contact between a client and ONE staff. Here, they would learn about the ONE service and what would happen next.

The tasks typically undertaken were:

- explaining ONE;
- taking basic details about the client’s circumstances and checking what claims needed to be made, giving out and explaining forms;
- explaining key requirements to JSA clients and the process involved, checking work interests and running a job search if possible;
- booking, and preparing the client for the first appointment with their Personal Adviser.

Explaining ONE did not take much time. It did not appear to be seen as a significant task nor an opportunity to ‘recruit’ interest in, and promote, the new service. Start-up Advisers tended to give a quick, ‘rote’ introduction to ONE – each person had their own version which they more-or-less stuck to for each client. In Call Centres the ‘outbound’ calls were scripted and screen based but contained little information about ONE or what was expected of clients.

These explanations tended to be partial: rarely did we observe Start-up Advisers give a full account of the ONE service or really attempt to engage the client’s interest. However, most did explain that claims and job seeking would be dealt with at the same office and that each client would have their own Personal Adviser. The work focus tended to be underplayed: for JSA clients it was assumed – with some justification – that the requirement to seek work was well-established and understood; for non-JSA clients there was some reluctance to promote work aspects

at this point, and this remained the case during the second phase of observation in spring 2001.

4.2.1 Benefit claim activity at Start-up

With JSA clients Start-up Advisers explained the process of claiming benefit – this tended to be done quickly. Many clients had been through the JSA process before and it was not surprising that they were not given much time by Start-up Advisers. But, for new clients – the speed with which information was given could be confusing and appeared hard to take in at one go.

For all JSA clients Start-up Advisers checked what claims needed to be made – reminding people they might need forms for Council Tax, Housing Benefit, etc. as well as the JSA claim forms. Some spent time explaining the actual forms – pointing out bits that must be completed – reminding clients of details, e.g. that they needed to present past wage slips. Mostly it was assumed (but not really checked) that clients knew what to do – again justified in many cases.

With non-JSA clients, the benefit claim was the predominant aspect and, both pre- and post- full participation, most of the time was spent on ensuring that clients understood what benefits they were likely to get.

4.2.2 Work-related activity at Start-up

With all JSA clients Start-up Advisers checked their job interests and preferences. This tended to be limited to brief questions about their last job and most recent work experience. Most Start-up Advisers immediately moved to run a job search. At this point meetings usually became screen focused and, on the whole, clients were not invited to discuss or explore their ideas about their experience, work preferences, acceptable wage level or willingness to travel or their work readiness in any detail. The job search varied in length according to the amount of time available but, whenever possible, Start-up Advisers would submit the client for work.

However, where staff knew that it would be several days before the client would get their Personal Adviser meeting, some took more time here, even over-running the time slot if necessary, as Case 1 illustrates. Staff wanted to ensure that the client was able to pursue possibilities in the meantime by taking time to run a job search, discuss vacancies and submit the client for job interviews.

Case 1: Job search at Start-up

The client was seen almost immediately having waited only three minutes. The Adviser firstly introduced herself and asked the client whether he knew about ONE but since the client had claimed through ONE before, the explanation was short. The client had trouble remembering the name of his Personal Adviser but they managed to identify her between them. The client wished to claim JSA again after being sacked from his previous job in warehousing and was again looking for building and warehousing work.

The focus of the meeting then changed to the client's aims for finding work. After ten minutes a job search was started which resulted in three leads: the Personal Adviser phoned for details of one post; ten minutes on, the client was passed the phone to arrange an interview for similar work which offered a much better salary; a third vacancy was also phoned during the meeting and the client arranged a time when he could go round to the firm 'for a chat'.

The Adviser and the client struck up a friendly and productive relationship in a short space of time. Afterwards, the Personal Adviser said she would always prefer to devote a fair amount of time on job-search activities at this stage because with the lengthy waiting times between Start-up and initial Personal Adviser meeting the client could be productively using their time following up job leads as long as they had those leads to go for. The meeting took 24 minutes, a slight over-run, but the client left with three potential job leads to follow up.

For non-JSA clients, pre- and post- 'full participation', the work orientation element was acknowledged but not always emphasised or followed through, e.g. by making a job search on Labour Market System. With 'full participation', work was always mentioned but some Start-up Advisers were not confident about tackling work issues in any depth with, for example, people with long-term illness or complex family responsibilities. It would usually be explained that there would be an opportunity for 'more detailed discussion' with their Personal Adviser.

4.2.3 Booking and preparing for the first Personal Adviser meeting

In terms of the timing of the first Personal Adviser meeting, it was clear that the waiting time of three days or less was the key standard but by no means possible to achieve in many cases. Clients who had been to ONE before were not necessarily given a choice about meeting with their previous Personal Adviser. Overall, it was fairly clear that the timing of the appointment was considered more important by staff and, in the absence of any strong protest by a client, this took precedence over continuity of Personal Adviser.

However, some Start-up Advisers – particularly the more experienced – used a degree of discretion in booking the first Personal Adviser meeting for clients. For example, booking a Personal Adviser with a benefit background for a newly deserted wife; booking a one and a half hour appointment for someone needing to claim Child Support; fast-tracking a very distressed young woman with children to see a Personal Adviser the same day. On the whole, preparation for the first Personal Adviser meeting consisted of ensuring that clients had the correct benefit claim forms and knew what they would need to bring with them. There was no specific preparation for the work-focus element of these meetings.

4.2.4 *Comments on Start-up*

Overall, Start-up was broadly successful:

- in obtaining basic information;
- in checking which benefits clients were entitled to claim, providing them with the relevant forms and information about what would be required for their Personal Adviser meeting;
- in introducing a work related element for both JSA and non-JSA clients.

Staff were also usually able to give clear responses to clients' immediate worries – mostly related to money and the time that claims would take. Some were confident in using their discretion to help the client by, for example, giving them more time. The meetings covered a lot of ground, often involving quite firm shifts in focus – sometimes in quite an emotional or anxious atmosphere.

What was less successful was:

- the almost universal time problem which led to Start-up meetings being pressurised, highly time conscious and rushed;
- that little time was given to explaining the ONE service and engaging clients' interest;
- there tended to be little direct encouragement to explore ideas about work;
- clients were often discouraged from asking questions or volunteering extra information: they were invariably told that they would have the opportunity to discuss things 'in detail' at their Personal Adviser meeting;
- Call Centre staff had difficulty in assessing clients and introducing a work orientation without face-to-face contact.

4.3 *The first Personal Adviser meeting*

The tasks undertaken at the client's first meeting with a Personal Adviser were, typically:

- to consider job possibilities and conduct a job search where relevant;
- to set up a Jobseeker's Agreement where relevant (e.g. JSA clients);
- to encourage non-JSA clients to take up the offer of ongoing support to find work on a voluntary basis and agree an action plan;
- to check and submit benefit claim forms.

Again, explaining ONE did not really feature at this stage for either JSA or non-JSA clients. Most Personal Advisers asked if it had been explained and either left it at that or gave a brief and partial account. This general lack of orientation to ONE, or discussion about the right and responsibilities of the client persisted, as far as we were able to observe, well into 2001.

4.3.1 *Benefit claim activity*

Across observation sites we noted that, in nearly all cases, the first action was to deal with completed benefit claim forms, Personal Advisers checked through the forms themselves taking a variable amount of time to do so. Some Personal Advisers helped clients who had not, or only partially, filled in the forms but some refused to do this: *'we don't have time to do this for people - they have to do it themselves'*. But the indications were that most did end up helping – especially if the client protested. Later on the pilots' staff seemed more relaxed about this and were more likely to assist clients.

Personal Advisers were alert to checking entitlement and there were occasions when they noted issues for the Benefits Agency processors, e.g. a possible cohabitation, a possible case of dismissal. It was clear that Personal Advisers had the possibility of fraud in mind and made discrete checks. Many thought that the face-to-face meetings made it more difficult for clients to defraud and attributed some of the failures to attend appointments to clients thinking twice about pursuing a possibly fraudulent claim for benefit. But, overall, the concern was to ensure that clients did claim all they were entitled to.

There were examples, during our observations, where virtually a whole meeting was taken up with a complex claim, e.g. for Child Support. Here great care was taken to ensure that the forms were accurately completed with no attempt to rush through the process. But it was these kind of claims which many staff considered might better be dealt with as a 'hand off' to expert/specialist staff.

Later on, some pilots made significant adjustments to the process of checking claim forms which achieved some saving in Personal Adviser time and thus allowed more time on work-focused activities with the client. In one example, all completed claims were given by the receptionist to a Benefits Agency claims checker who immediately went through them, highlighted any missing information and gave them to the Personal Adviser within about ten minutes: in another, benefit experts actually processed the claims while the client was in their Personal Adviser meeting. Such moves seemed to work well and were appreciated by front-line staff.

4.3.2 *Work-related activity*

Although clients were led to expect ‘a detailed discussion’ with their Personal Adviser, for the majority of JSA clients, work-related activity took the form of a brief check on:

- the client’s recent work history;
- the types of work preferred;
- travel to work distance;
- pay level preferred.

This was followed by a job search using Labour Market System online. Typically, there was little discussion: clients were not encouraged to explore their work experience, aspirations or ideas or, conversely, lack of these.

The issue of whether or not a client was ready for work was not really tackled at this point. If the individual did not have a medical reason not to work they were defined as able to work. After the meetings, Personal Advisers might express their doubt about an individual’s readiness but these were rarely voiced to the client. In several of the observed cases, it appeared that the client was anxious about other things, was not really motivated or focused or that a client’s work preferences were unrealistic. But Personal Advisers were rarely observed to explore or challenge these situations, as Case 2 illustrates.

Case 2: Unrealistic work preference

The client claiming JSA was a dishevelled, unshaven, rather uncommunicative, shy, but fairly cheery young man who appeared to be listening to the Personal Adviser and reasonably interested in the prospect of going through the local vacancies. His job history was in and out of low-skill work with little in the way of real experience and no formal qualifications.

On the basis of some occasional bar work, he thought he would like to try ‘retail’. The Personal Adviser was friendly and encouraging and ran a job search. Although there were a number of vacancies in sales, the Personal Adviser did not suggest any of these: he explained afterwards that they were in places like clothes and shoe shops and ‘*there was no way*’ the client would be taken on. But the client’s preference stayed on the Labour Market System.

The Personal Adviser did not suggest to the young man that his appearance and apparent lack of confidence with people might need looking at if he wanted to pursue employment in sales. There was no discussion about the kind of help, e.g. in the form of training, personal preparation, which might be relevant for/available to the client.

For JSA clients Personal Advisers ran a job search and many resulted in submissions for job interviews. Discussion about vacancies included checking on basic job requirements and whether the clients could meet these. Personal Advisers displayed their wide range of knowledge about the training and qualifications needed for various trades, about movements in the local labour market, possible seasonal openings and, in some cases, more specific information about certain employers or employment fields.

For JSA clients, setting the Jobseeker's Agreement was seen as the essential part of the meeting but this could only be tackled once benefit claim issues had been concluded. The Jobseeker's Agreement tended to be drawn up quite quickly and according to a formula (searching local papers on certain days, so many letters and phone calls, using Employment Service Direct). But Personal Advisers seemed less well-equipped to respond to, for example, more skilled or specialised clients who often had good ideas about where and how to access information about vacancies (using the internet, trade journals, networks etc). Even where clients were proactive and indicated that they wanted help with thinking about training or getting some help, many Personal Advisers either did not respond or said that they could not help with training until 'later'. This appeared to be an error of understanding of the provisions and potential of ONE since the policy intent was that clients should be entitled to training opportunities before the 13-week review meeting (at 'day one' of their claim).

Equally, however, there were examples where Personal Advisers took a lot of care to respond to the particular needs and circumstances of the client, as Case 3 indicates. In such cases, Personal Advisers often felt that they had to justify taking the extra time to do so: it appeared to be the more confident or experienced staff who took this line.

Case 3: A complex case - a refugee client

The client was a refugee. The Personal Adviser asked him for proof of his identity and then moved on to checking JSA forms. Discussion revealed that he had just completed a computer course and had worked for about two months. The Personal Adviser went through the JSA claim form. The client had been living in the UK for two years. He was a bit vague about some information, e.g. he didn't seem to know where his building society branch was. They then went through the Jobseeker's Agreement.

After 20 minutes the interview moved on to a discussion about work. The client was mainly looking for clerical or security work, yet had a degree and various other qualifications in economics and political science. They discussed his curriculum vitae and the Personal Adviser suggested that the local Programme Centre could advise on updating this. They looked at current jobs through Labour Market System and found two administrative posts: the Personal Adviser phoned the agency and the client agreed to phone up for an interview. The Personal Adviser also suggested looking at training in basic English and writing skills: the client admitted to only having rudimentary English and agreed to contact the resource centre. It transpired that the he had knowledge of several languages, including Urdu, Pushtu, Gudjerati, French and Serbo-Croat. So it then occurred to the Personal Adviser that the client might be able to work as a civil service interpreter for the 'language line', based locally. Again the client was given details to follow up.

The interview was over-running slightly so the Personal Adviser quickly explained the requirements of the Jobseeker's Agreement and signing on.

Afterwards, the Personal Adviser commented that it was obvious that the client had the ability to do a job more rewarding than clerical or security work so she felt it was important to explore, more thoroughly, the client's abilities. She really hoped that he would get a chance with the translation bureau, *'they always seem to be advertising in the paper'*.

This was a most thorough client interview but one which over-ran. The Personal Adviser said she felt quite *'defiant'* about providing the service she had originally signed up to ONE to provide and taking the time to do so.

There were several examples where staff booked fairly quick follow-up meetings for their clients because they felt confident that either they or the client could get something moving in that time. These were further

examples of frontline staff using their discretion in the spirit of the ONE ‘vision’ even where this was felt to be in tension with time frames or targets.

For non-JSA clients there was usually a fairly low-key approach to work. Personal Advisers were not pushing the issue and some did not feel it appropriate to mention work at all. There were strong indications that they were not comfortable in this area: many commented on their lack of interviewing skills and felt they did not have a sufficient understanding of the effects of, for example, particular illnesses or disabilities. With the increased emphasis on non-JSA clients and the introduction of targets for these clients, which came later in the pilots, Personal Advisers wanted more time as well as better support to a) introduce and then b) sustain a work focus in a suitably sensitive way. The point links with issues about caseloading, i.e. the time available and the extent of the Advisers’ role in moving such clients along the ‘pathway’.

4.3.3 Balance between benefit and work activities

The balance between benefit and work orientation could vary considerably with the type of client. For example, people who were clear about their finances, who knew the system well, who had completed their forms accurately, who were keen to look at work possibilities, were likely to move onto work issues quite quickly.

Conversely, there were numerous clients who were, for example: anxious about their benefit; muddled about what they could claim; anxious to explain things in great (and sometimes irrelevant) detail; confused and had filled in their forms in an inaccurate or misleading way; facing complex family circumstances or a problematic work issue – like claiming unfair dismissal. In these cases, not surprisingly, the work focus was difficult to achieve: personal circumstances as well as benefit matters took longer and squeezed the time available for job-related activities.

On the whole it seemed that two things determined the balance: the type of client and their general demeanour. So, for example:

- with clients claiming Incapacity Benefit, Personal Advisers were more likely to keep any discussion of work on fairly general lines, not question people’s ideas or aspirations in relation to employment and to assume a long-term inability to work;
- with lone parents, Personal Advisers were more likely to assume they would be interested in work in due time and to discuss training and child care possibilities;
- with a newly abandoned wife with children it was likely to be assumed that she would not be ready for work for several weeks and that establishing benefits was the primary issue;
- where JSA clients took more initiative in focusing on work, less time was taken up on claim activities.

4.3.4 *Comments on the first Personal Adviser meeting*

In general the first Personal Adviser meetings, like Start-up, were pressured. They were structured first, by essential benefit claim work, which clients saw as the most important, and second by job seeking activities which Personal Advisers saw as the real work of the meeting. In observed meetings, the tension between these two was clearly evident and staff commented in interviews about the difficulty of managing both aspects. The sense of pressure led to frequent difficulties in Personal Advisers being able to listen and respond to clients' concerns and questions which, most usually and inevitably, related to their benefit.

For JSA clients the meetings were successful in inputting details, carrying out job search activities, checking the information in the Labour Market System and setting up the Jobseeker's Agreement. Mostly, the observed meetings did not include much in the way of exchange between Personal Adviser and client but there were exceptions as our examples show.

In particular, Personal Advisers did not carry out any systematic assessment of 'real' ability to work with either JSA or non-JSA clients: i.e. how far someone was both *able* to work and *ready* (free of barriers) to do so. If there were no health reasons for not working, a client was assessed as ready for work when, in reality, many people faced barriers or difficulties which compromised their motivation or confidence in job seeking. Where there was discussion, this was usually initiated by proactive and reasonably confident clients who were determined to get their questions answered or to pursue their ideas.

4.4 *Personal Adviser: 13-week meeting*

At 13 weeks, Jobseekers who have not secured employment are called in for a further Personal Adviser meeting. These are 'triggered' through the signing-on process at the Jobcentre. In a sense these were not fully a part of the ONE service since, in the Private and Voluntary Sector and in some Call Centres they were done by Employment Service staff as part of 'core' Jobcentre business. Such meetings were, then, only partially studied and our comments here are tentative. However, they are indicative of issues which relate, most directly, to how barriers to work are identified and how the ONE service responds to different client needs in this area.

The tasks undertaken by the Personal Advisers at this stage were:

- checking in what ways – to what extent – the Jobseeker's Agreement was being adhered to;
- seeing if any help was required;
- running a job search;
- amending the Jobseeker's Agreement as appropriate.

4.4.1 *Benefit claim activity*

As would be expected, there was little benefit activity at this stage other than checking that the terms of the Jobseeker's Agreement were being kept. Clients were usually asked if they needed 'any help' but this was rather ambiguous: clients appeared unclear what kind of help they could ask for – especially since they were not usually encouraged to go into

details about, for example, home circumstances or how they could manage financially.

In several cases the Personal Adviser discussed the work/benefit rules and some ran an in-work/benefit 'better off' calculation which clients appreciated.

4.4.2 Work-related activity

All Personal Advisers asked what clients had been doing to find work and some checked online if job searches had been done when signing on. The Jobseeker's diary was rarely asked for and few clients seemed to use it, although Personal Advisers did stress its importance. Generally, Personal Advisers were not 'heavy' on checks and questioning at this stage but in nearly all cases they did run a job search.

In terms of assessing work-readiness, Personal Advisers tended to be a little more searching at this stage than at the first meeting. They were more likely to ask about job experience and skills but discussion tended to be brief. Most encouraged the client to widen their range of job fields and to consider dropping the level of acceptable earnings.

In a few cases Personal Advisers did discuss training possibilities or job preparation support from external agencies but, more usually, training was either not mentioned or clients were told that these kind of options were 'not available' until someone had been unemployed for six months.

Many of the clients observed were quite engaged with the work focus and worked positively with their Personal Adviser even though several were meeting with someone they had not met before. They had not been given an appointment with 'their' Personal Adviser for a variety of reasons but mainly because priority tended to be given to keeping, as far as possible, to the time frames.

Of those who were not very engaged in the work focus, some appeared preoccupied or worried but Personal Advisers tended not to help or encourage them to talk. Others seemed to be going through the exercise and it was difficult to read if they were serious or not but, here again, Personal Advisers tended not to challenge their position.

In post-meeting interviews with researchers the same clients were not reluctant, on the whole, to explain their hopes or expectations of the service – and, in several cases, information came out that had not emerged in the Personal Adviser meeting.

4.4.3 Comments on the 13-week meeting

Overall, what did emerge was that the role, focus and priorities of the ONE Personal Adviser was somewhat unclear at this stage. As with previous meetings, there was little exploration with the client about their circumstances, about the detail of their work experience, nor about the possible barriers to work or other difficulties, unless the client actively

took the lead on this. There was, then, some indication that Personal Advisers were more likely to respond to the more ‘proactive’ client: where someone showed interest, had ideas and was, in a sense, making the running, Personal Advisers were more relaxed and more likely to give the client more time. Equally, clients who were rather passive were not likely to be ‘drawn out’ by the Personal Adviser.

Work focus was interpreted mainly in terms of Employment Service targets. Arguably, it is at this stage that the ONE service might begin to focus on preventing longer-term unemployment and give priority to identifying and addressing the barriers which clients were facing. But the indications from our observations were that Personal Advisers were either limited in their understanding of why people fail to find work (e.g. they are ‘work shy’, ‘happy to depend on benefit’) or lacked resources and/or ideas about how to intervene. There were few cases where the Personal Adviser referred a client to an external agency – for example, for some form of training, vocational help, careers advice, personal help, specialised advice or support.

The general assumption was that if someone was able to claim JSA, then they were, by definition, capable of work. But, it did appear that many clients at this stage while *able* to work and apparently *wanting* to work in principle, were not ready to go out and *obtain* work. To do so, they would have to compete successfully against others in the local labour market while facing one or more of a number of barriers. Clients in this position displayed, for example, lack of work skills and experience, lack of confidence in presenting themselves, poor work record, difficult social demands, poor mental health, possible social problems like alcohol abuse, which Personal Advisers were either not recognising or not able to address.

4.5 Personal Adviser: six-month and one-year meetings

JSA clients who remained out of work after 13 weeks are required to see their Personal Adviser at further points: at six months and at one year and so on each six months if they are still claiming. We consider these together since they are concerned with clients who could well be heading into longer-term unemployment. However, our evidence here is indicative only since we were able to observe few such meetings and, on the whole, the responses from staff interviews were centred on the earlier part of the ‘pathway’. However, since there was evident concern about long term unemployment and since the issues faced here help to highlight questions both about the role of Personal Advisers and about where priorities are set, it is helpful to include these meetings in our account of the ‘pathway’.

4.5.1 The six-month meeting

The six-month meeting was also triggered through the signing-on process for JSA clients. Its purposes, as we observed, were:

- to check that the Jobseeker’s Agreement was being adhered to;
- to discuss progress in job seeking;
- to re-consider work preferences, realistic options;

- to consider training options;
- to run a job search;
- to amend the Jobseeker's Agreement as appropriate.

What emerged from the cases we were able to observe was that the clients were presenting a range of difficulties and in nearly all cases the client was not seeing 'their' Personal Adviser.

In several cases the Personal Adviser appeared somewhat uneasy about quite what to do after questioning the client about what they had done to seek work. Case 4 typifies some of the difficulties.

Case 4: Ex-New Deal longer-term unemployed

The client was a gaunt young man who had been out of work for eight years and been through New Deal 24+. The Adviser had not met him before. He appeared 'flat', uninterested and answered questions very briefly. The Personal Adviser gave him firm warnings about job seeking – she could see that he had done little in the past months. She seemed stumped and tentative about what to do – but referred him to the Programme Centre for the introductory module and made one job submission, which he seemed to go along with. There was no exploration of what he had done on New Deal, what skills he did have, or any discussion about what he was doing with his time or about his motivation. The client's history (in and out of work for years, lives with parents) and whole demeanour, (lack of affect, colouring up with discomfort, mono-syllabic responses, passive agreement to speak to the researcher, underlying anger in his expression) signalled the possibility of long-standing depression. The meeting lasted 20 minutes.

Afterwards, the client told the researcher he had '*no expectations*' of ONE – he did not expect to find work as he had '*no motivation*' and he seemed near to tears.

Afterwards, the Personal Adviser said she had felt very stuck, inadequate – she had not really known what to do. She described the client as lazy, '*he won't go for that job*' and asked '*what could I do that hasn't already been tried?*'. There were no thoughts along the lines of a possible mental health problem or seeking specialist advice.

In Case 5, we note a different kind of response from a Personal Adviser who had met the client before. The client confided in the Adviser who, as a result, did not hesitate to offer the young woman regular monthly meetings. This raises some interesting points about how Personal Advisers see their role, who they respond to and the decisions they make about how to support their clients.

Case 5: A client with a drug abuse problem

The Personal Adviser was surprised by the client revealing a long standing drug problem and that she was now on a supervised programme of therapy: she explained that she was really interested in working. The drug problem had not been suspected by the Personal Adviser who had seen her before. The Personal Adviser became animated, engaged, asking sympathetically about how she was getting on, practical questions about work, and was generally interested and encouraging the client. The Personal Adviser responded by putting the client onto monthly meetings – which the client saw as positive and supportive. The Adviser also ran an in-work benefit calculation for the client to check if part-time work might be a realistic option. The client was pleased with the meeting. The session lasted about 30 minutes.

During this meeting, the Personal Adviser changed from her previous, rather weary, ‘end-of-the-day’, demeanour to become animated and clearly interested in the client. She was very pleased that the client was making progress and that she was able to help her in that direction.

4.5.2 One-year meeting

One year on from the originating claim, JSA clients are called in to see their Personal Adviser and a series of ‘statutory’ requirements come into force. On the small amount of observation we had here, the tentative indication is that the focus of the ONE service at this stage, i.e. in relation to the longer-term unemployed, lacks clarity. There was a sense of failure for Personal Advisers who seemed to lack ideas and resources to respond to such clients. As at previous stages, they checked the Jobseeker’s Agreement and ran on-line job searches but with a sense of ‘going through the motions’ rather than with any conviction that this would assist the client into work. Case 6 illustrates perhaps an untypical case, of a young woman with, apparently, good work qualifications, but it raises questions about what the role of the ONE service is at this point.

Case 6: A highly qualified young woman

The client was a young woman with a good first degree, some experience of working in a voluntary agency, with two languages and computer skills. The client had had a series of fixed ideas about what she most wanted to do, which included media or advertising work on the one hand and working 'in mental health' on the other. In preparation the Personal Adviser had consulted colleagues about possible openings in advocacy and advice work. The Personal Adviser was 'puzzled' about why this client was still unemployed and was anxious about telling her that, after a year out of work, she would now be required to attend a Programme Centre. The Personal Adviser clearly thought that this was not likely to be helpful and seemed to see the requirement as punitive.

In fact, the client, who was bright, responsive and apparently keen to find work, seemed almost to welcome the idea of having some support in up-dating her curriculum vitae and being part of a programme. In addition, the Personal Adviser suggested that she check with the local college about getting a 'European Driving Licence' for her computing skills. The Personal Adviser decided to arrange a fairly quick follow-up meeting to see how she was getting on.

What was the problem in Case 6 since the client did not lack qualifications, ideas or, apparently, motivation? This kind of example can do no more than, perhaps, indicate that there might be quite complex and subtle issues involved in assessing and working with clients who remain unemployed for extended periods. This raises questions as to the kind of approaches and resources which ONE Personal Advisers might need in order to respond to harder to place clients and longer-term unemployed, and whether, indeed, Personal Advisers are best placed to respond (as opposed to, say, the New Deals).

4.6 Caseloading and individual follow-up

There were a number of variations in the way staff and managers defined 'caseloading' across the pilot areas and what they saw as its purposes.

Throughout this report we refer to caseloading as the meetings which Personal Advisers arranged with clients, or which clients initiated, which were *in addition* to those required at particular trigger points or by a change of circumstances. The distinction is between *discretionary* activities on the part of Personal Advisers – including their response to contacts initiated by clients – and those *required* and specified by the ONE process.

We look at the issues of caseloading and time management in more detail in Chapter 5 but here we consider the kind of activities which were undertaken for clients.

For both JSA and non-JSA clients caseloading was seen by staff as the individualised and flexible part of the ONE service: here the Personal Adviser could use their discretion in supporting and assisting the client. The aim was to use more personal contact to encourage clients, to check progress, to make specific contacts for or with them, e.g. for training or more specialised advice. However, Personal Advisers generally reported that they did not have time dedicated to this. What they did manage to do was done in 'down time', i.e. time which became available because of failed appointments or a lull in appointments. This meant that it was hard for staff to plan caseloading and, inevitably, they tended to prioritise some clients rather than others – such as the most job ready, the most interested in working, clients who actively sought further help or, as in Case 5, begin to confide in their Personal Adviser and actively ask for support.

For JSA clients, in principle, the Personal Adviser can use these discretionary contacts to pursue work options or access external sources of support or information. The 13-week and six-month meetings are, of course, an opportunity for follow up (whether these occur as part of the ONE process or as part of Employment Service business) but, to some extent, the knowledge that these appointments will be triggered automatically through the signing-on process might lead Personal Advisers to defer making contact in the meantime.

For non-JSA clients further intervention – other than changes of circumstances and other triggers – was at the discretion of Personal Advisers and, again, depended on their workload, the attitudes of the client and clients' own activities in seeking further contact. There were indications that a pilot area which had decided to arrange quick follow-up appointments after the initial Personal Adviser meeting, was getting results, which they considered significant, in terms of clients' willingness to pursue work related objectives – like training or personal preparation. Case 7 also illustrates some benefits of quick follow-up. It seemed that staff and managers were making three points here:

- that those furthest from the labour market, both JSA and non-JSA, might need a period of time to begin to review or revise their ideas in relation to work;
- that a proactive approach on the part of Advisers could help and that clients reacted quite well to this;
- that it might take a few meetings for the client to build trust.

We were able to observe few such meetings but understood from the comments which Advisers and managers were making, that this was a relatively new area of work and one which they were learning about all the time.

Case 7: Caseload meeting with a Personal Adviser

This meeting was arranged by mutual agreement between the Personal Adviser and client about ten days after the client's initial claim in order to discuss and pursue training and education options. The client was currently claiming Incapacity Benefit, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. Since the client had not been in work or education for 18 months, an access course at the local college was suggested. The client wanted to get back to college and wanted to know if part-time work would affect her Incapacity Benefit: the local college was contacted and an interview booked for a computer literacy course.

It was clear the client wanted to get off benefit and to improve her skills. The Personal Adviser was very supportive and attentive, despite the fact that the client went into minute and intimate detail about her current personal circumstances: e.g. problems with spouse, case of possible harassment.

The Personal Adviser consulted a colleague about the type of work that might be suitable for a person on Incapacity Benefit: she was told that 'therapeutic work', i.e. work that would rehabilitate could be considered.

The client left visibly more 'lifted' with a lot of different options to consider. The Personal Adviser said it was *'usually the first steps back to the real world which are the hardest'*, and felt that that was what ONE was set up to do, to help people back into the world of work – not just caseload the job ready. *'I've been keeping an eye on her because its clear she's keen to get back into work.'* She didn't think the client was fully able to take on either a full-time job or education so felt that small steps would be better. The meeting was characterised by an active, participatory dialogue, with both working together on the basis of the client's needs rather than the client getting advice handed out rote fashion. They agreed to review the situation when the client had had her meeting with the admissions office at the college. The outcome, potentially, may be that the client gets back into the job market, may be given the time by her employer to pursue her studies up to the point where she fulfils these goals.

Overall, the actual amount of time spent on and available for these activities was limited. Where caseloading did take place, there was a wide variation in practice based on differences in definition of the activity, underlying thinking about work getting, ideas about resources (internal and external) and timing, and – most especially – local realities and priorities.

4.6.1 Deferral of Personal Adviser meetings

The term deferral in this context refers to the decision made by the Start-up Adviser to postpone the client's first meeting with the Personal Adviser.

The main reason which staff gave for deferral, rightly, was on the basis of a client's physical incapability to attend, most often on health grounds. This was most likely to be in the context of Severe Disablement Allowance or Incapacity Benefit. Other instances were where a client had extenuating circumstances. For clients under restrictive medical treatment such as dialysis, women about to have a baby, or widows and other bereaved clients, an initial Personal Adviser meeting within three or so days was viewed as inappropriate.

It was suggested by staff that the use of deferral might be on the increase because they were discouraged from making home visits because of the cost in terms of loss of staff from the office.

'If someone can't come in to the office it's up to ONE to go out and see them. In those cases we invariably defer the interviews. We cannot afford to send anyone out. Now as a manager, I get the staff to come to me for advice so I'm always aware of potential deferrals'.

(Site Manager, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

At the start of the pilots, a deferral rate of about 15 per cent was expected. But, staff reported that this became almost a target figure and thought it would be better to replace this by clearer guidelines. Clearly, decisions about deferral were important in ensuring that clients were dealt with sensitively while ensuring that the principles of ONE and the work focus element were not eroded.

Some staff complained that the lack of ground rules made it difficult to judge when deferral should be used. Staff and their managers reported that pressure from pilot management to reduce deferrals increased during the pilots so they were actively avoiding them or only doing so if given the go-ahead by their supervisor. However, the deferral rate target was removed in Spring 2001.

Later findings suggested that some pilot areas were giving staff greater discretion in their decisions to defer clients' initial meetings with their Personal Adviser, rather than requiring them to refer to their team leader or manager to sanction such decisions.

4.7 Relationship between Personal Advisers and clients

Based on the direct observations of practice, the relationships between Personal Advisers and ONE clients were friendly and relaxed: clients were greeted in a courteous way and Personal Advisers were not directly critical of people's situations or difficulties in gaining work. The overall 'feel' was that Personal Advisers were welcoming but business-like, focused on the job and down to earth.

However, a general observation was that Personal Adviser tended not to open up discussion or push exploration of employment options and personal circumstances. This was not only where clients might be facing health difficulties or sensitive situations involving more personal, social or domestic aspects. It was also evident in relation to exploring a client's work experience, ideas and how realistic these were. In a few cases Personal Advisers appeared relaxed, encouraging clients and thoughtful about work options (rather than going through a rather 'rote' sequence of questions or advice about work). Some were quite firm in 'pushing' clients a bit but this was not usually accompanied with ideas or, for example, referrals to external sources of information, support or training.

The overall tendency, however, was to deter discussion and this apparent reticence is discussed in more detail in relation to time management in Chapter 5.

It was interesting to note the extent to which the approach and behaviour of clients themselves affected the tenor of meetings as some of the earlier case examples show.

4.8 Clients' views on ONE

Finally, we look briefly at the views of clients which were obtained immediately before and after observed meetings with Personal Advisers. Although these do not represent a large nor representative number of clients, their commentary helps to complement the picture of service delivery.

A detailed picture of clients' views of ONE is provided by Osgood *et al.*⁵

Most of the clients we met were positive about the ONE concept although few had a full picture of this. JSA clients liked the idea of one place to come to where claiming benefit was linked to work seeking. People appreciated the idea of having 'their' Personal Adviser and the idea of individual support which this suggests. The open environment and pleasant décor was seen as a welcome change creating an altogether more positive atmosphere.

It seems that in terms of customer care, ONE represented a favourable alternative to what was perceived as the more confrontational approach of previous arrangements in both Benefits Agency and Employment Service offices.

Clients who found form-filling difficult, appreciated support and assistance in completing their claim forms.

⁵ Osgood, J., Stone, V. and Thomas, A. (2002) *Delivering a work-focused service: views and experiences of clients*, DWP Research Report No. 167, CDS: Leeds.

Clients' main criticisms were that ONE principles were not coming through in practice. For example, some JSA clients thought that the service was not really any different from what they experienced before. Many reported that they were not necessarily able to see 'their' Personal Adviser as they had been led to expect or that they could not rely on them being available on the phone. Others commented on the relatively limited help available: ONE had not produced more resources in, for example, access to training, help with accessing help with family issues, career counselling.

4.9 Summary of key points

In summary, we can highlight the following points about the 'pathway':

- there was also some evidence that, although staff were cautious about introducing a work focus with non-JSA clients, some clients did welcome such discussion if handled in an unpressured and sensitive way;
- continuity of the relationship between the client and their Personal Adviser was not fully achieved;
- meetings with JSA clients were largely successful in establishing a general work focus but this tended to be limited to ascertaining basic details and running a job search: consideration of client's experience and assessment of their possible difficulties and needs were not systematically undertaken;
- with non-JSA clients a reference to work was usually introduced but not pursued in any detail;
- benefit claim activities were handled better from the client's point of view;
- integration of work and benefit claiming activities was largely successful although the balance between the two did vary;
- there was evidence that Personal Advisers were not always clear about their role in assessing work-readiness or referring clients for more specialised help;
- there were points where the role of the Personal Adviser and the purpose of the different meetings/stages of the process were not clear to clients or staff;
- there was evidence of time pressures throughout all pilot areas.

5 DELIVERING THE SERVICE: THE ROLE OF THE ONE ADVISER

We comment here on the knowledge, the responsibilities and the skills of frontline staff which appeared crucial to service delivery. We also consider the range of roles that ONE Advisers undertook. The main source of these findings was the interviews with staff and local managers: the emphasis is, therefore, on what they reported from their own experience.

This chapter is organised as a series of broad areas in which we identify some themes and issues which emerged from our analysis of the ‘client pathway’ and delivery activities.

5.1 The roles undertaken by ONE Advisers

Drawing on the observations, it was clear that staff were taking on a range of rather different roles in the course of their meetings with clients. Analysing these in terms of key focus and content we can identify, and make distinctions between, the following:

- *recruitment*: orientating and introducing clients to the ONE service – particularly where clients were new, the role of the Start-up and Personal Advisers has an element of ‘recruiting’ people into and explaining the service. As we noted earlier, people did need to understand their rights, responsibilities and the requirements of the service;
- *advisers on benefit matters*: the role here was about explaining benefit entitlements and claim procedures, ensuring that all relevant claims were made and that the requisite forms were accurately completed. The role was, then, a mixture of information giving, advice, guidance and checking;
- *employment advisers*: this role was comprised of accessing information about job requirements and providing labour market advice; helping with job searches and submitting clients for interviews;
- *assessors*: a rather different role was that of assessing clients’ job-readiness or difficulties in seeking employment. This was a rather different mode from either employment or benefit advice;
- *a brokerage role*: accessing more general support and advice and referring clients to other sources of support, e.g. to internal experts within the Employment Service or Benefits Agency and/or to external, community based statutory or voluntary services;
- *policing the benefits system*: staff were clearly aware of their responsibilities in ensuring that false claims were not made, in alerting the claim processors to the possibility of, for example, cohabitation, dismissal from work.

The point of analysing and identifying these different roles is that we can consider how far these were compatible, whether there were tensions in combining these into the one role, and whether there were essential and more peripheral roles. For example, policing claims required a rather different mode of approach than when an adviser was encouraging a client to discuss problems in relation to job seeking.

In terms of motivating clients and ensuring their understanding of ONE, we noted earlier (Chapter 4), that few clients received a clear explanation about ONE at Start-up and were not encouraged to think about their rights and responsibilities in relation to the service. Staff tended to mention what they saw as positives (e.g. dealing with claims and job seeking in the same office, having one's own Personal Adviser), but not the possible difficulties (e.g. the longer time frame for claiming because of the requirement to have a work-focused meeting before the claim could be lodged and processed) nor the requirements on clients (e.g. for JSA clients to attend subsequent meetings if still unemployed).

A number of advisers did not explain the emphasis on work in any clear way – partly because JSA clients knew, or were expected to know, the system well and partly because staff were wary of pushing this for non-JSA clients. There was a general lack of clarity about what ONE was really promoting but for many JSA clients ONE was 'a new system' that was very little different from the old.

Some staff specifically raised the concern about there being inadequate knowledge within their whole pilot area on external agencies to address the needs of various types of clients. For some, it was not the actual *dealing* with non-job-ready clients, it was being unable to refer them to the most appropriate services because of a lack of knowledge of where to go.

'I feel comfortable interacting with the different groups that have more social or personal difficulty issues, that's not a problem, but I do feel inadequate in terms of not really having a thorough understanding of where we can refer them to for additional support or help - I don't know what's available for them, yes we have the external agencies directory but I don't feel confident in doing this - would like some training and support with this.'

(Personal Adviser, Call Centre Model)

Referrals to specialist agencies and training were also limited due to the inability to allocate time to caseloading in many offices.

For many staff, their view of the job of the ONE adviser was mostly as a *benefits processor* rather than an adviser, due to such constraints.

'This is more like claim processing, taking claims and processing them as opposed to caseloading. In my past life I have done claims, not under ONE and what I am doing now is not dissimilar to what I was doing a few years ago. I feel very disappointed about that because obviously the benefits or the rewards are when you are actually getting an opportunity to deal with people, submit them to jobs and generally give them more advice and guidance. At the moment we have to be sort of knocking claims out as it were.'

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

Others were more comfortable with the employment aspects of their role and saw this as the most important element of their work. Few were fully comfortable with the possibilities of linking with other services to obtain support for clients although training and work preparation and through, for example, Programme Centres, did feature more strongly.

5.2 The responsibilities of frontline staff

We look here at the responsibilities which the staff carried out not only in relation to direct service delivery and the face-to-face meetings (and phone calls) with clients but also for organising and balancing their work.

5.2.1 Establishing a work focus

There were various elements involved in establishing a work focus and these were somewhat different between JSA and non-JSA clients.

Assessing work readiness

For the most part, staff were only assessing clients' ability to work in an informal way. For example, staff did not assess clients' employability other than by their own impression of the client's willingness and abilities based on their previous employment history, qualifications and 'body language' which apparently *'let's you know whether they want to work'*. Health or other barriers to work were not always explored. In only a handful of cases did staff appear to be drawing on more formal or systematic approaches of assessing clients' job readiness reported. For example, we were not made aware of any specific guidelines or list of useful checks to assist staff with this element of the work.

Start-up advisers working in Call Centre areas raised the specific issue of trying to assess job-readiness over the phone:

'Personally speaking, I don't feel I do [assess client's job-readiness]. I go on the basis of what they tell me. Since I've been here I haven't done one job search because I just don't think it's the right thing to do over the telephone, because you can't see the client and gauge them. I mean that's not the only reason in that also I haven't been trained properly in this respect and also you don't have the time to do job searches.'

(Start-up Adviser, Call Centre Model)

Understanding the barriers to work and how to overcome these

There were indications throughout the ‘pathway’ that Personal Advisers were not always clear how far they should be assessing a client’s general capacity and availability for work, i.e. their social, personal and emotional readiness for employment as well as their general health and work experience. Practice here appeared to vary quite widely. Many Advisers worked an Employment Service model which tended to assume that someone was available for, and capable of, work if there were no medical reasons against this. Others, for example, staff with a Local Authority background, might be interested in social circumstances and make a more holistic appraisal of ‘readiness’.

Generally, however, Personal Advisers did not take the initiative in questioning or inviting discussion around such matters in any systematic or comprehensive way that would identify barriers arising from a wide spectrum of causes.

5.2.2 Caseload management There were important issues for staff about managing their work with clients.

The Personal Adviser’s caseload

Each Personal Adviser was responsible for managing a caseload. Although this was variously defined, each did have a listing of clients with whom they were expected to be actively involved in an ongoing way. Example 5.1 provides an illustration of one Personal Adviser’s caseload.

Example 5.1: A Personal Adviser caseload		
[Annotated by researcher: quotes from the Personal Adviser]		
Job-ready	38	clients who ‘ought to get work fairly easily’
Caseload	101	‘sticky clients’ - officially designated job-ready but seen as difficult to place in work and will need support from the Personal Adviser
Specialist	3	‘not sure quite what ‘specialist’ means but they are referred to, for example, the DEA’
Incapacity benefit	4	
In work support	0	

Continued

Invalid Care
Allowance 1

Income Support 2

Waived 1 'the client has cancer'

The Personal Adviser did not have a plan for prioritising her caseload but realised that she did know some individuals 'quite well': she thought she tended to leave the 'job-ready' client and to contact the 'caseload' clients she thought she could help. It was hard to plan time for caseloading: slots for this could not be booked out and other times were unpredictable, could be very brief and at all times liable to interruption.

What was clear was that staff came to their own conclusions about how to prioritise these lists. For example, some commented that they would only caseload 'those who wished to work'; others thought that lone parents particularly benefited from follow-up; yet others focused on the job ready; and there were those who thought that some non-JSA clients could respond to closer contact and support. But the numbers of clients involved and the lack of dedicated caseloading time meant that these ideas were not often put into practice.

Most staff, in our observations and in interviews, expressed concern and disappointment that there was not sufficient time to 'caseload' properly. In many instances, the work-based element of both the Start-up meeting and the Initial Personal Adviser meeting was restricted to the (limited) remaining time after the client's details and benefits had been processed. However, advisers who wanted to suggest a follow-up meeting, to continue with a client in more depth, for example, found it difficult to find appointment time to do so since diaries were, typically, solidly booked for weeks ahead with incoming new claims. This inability to provide the full range of services which ONE purported to offer was mainly put down to an insufficient number of staff to cope with the numbers of clients entering the service:

'As a Start-up Adviser it hasn't really turned out as I expected, although I knew it would be hard work, I never realised that we would be so stretched for time and mainly that's because we haven't got the staff, but it does have a huge impact on what we can actually offer the clients. I don't think the service I'm providing is as complete as it could be, not the entirely holistic or in-depth personal approach I envisaged.'

(Start-up Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

Difficulties in providing follow-up and caseloading for clients persisted through the pilot period.

Managing the balance between benefit and work focus

There were some differences in how staff managed their responsibilities. During the observations it was helpful to distinguish between what Personal Advisers *wanted* the focus to be and what *actually* took up the time. The issue of time pressure was almost universal across the areas and sites and meant that staff had to make decisions about what they could and could not do in the time.

In the Initial Personal Adviser meetings priority was always given to ensuring that benefit claim activities were covered. In the time remaining, staff had to judge the extent to which they could involve the client in work-related activities such as job searches and vocational advice. This general finding is not in line with the ONE vision, according to which, work-related activities should come first, followed by dealing with the benefit claim. However, particularly in more complex cases it has claim activities which tended take up the majority of the time allocated. A consequence of this was that staff were rarely able to engage clients in discussion or respond in any detail to their enquiries. More usually, clients only really had the opportunity to respond to Personal Advisers' questioning; this placed clients in an essentially passive stance, which was at odds with the more proactive approach expected of JSA clients.

The balance between work and benefits activities also varied with the kind of client and how ready they were to seek work. It also varied according to whether it was an Employment Service site where staff would expect JSA clients and move onto the work-focused elements as soon as they could. In contrast, cases where the client was not job-ready, particularly with more complex claims, the focus of the interview would be primarily benefit focused although the work orientation would always be acknowledged.

5.2.3 Time management

The question in relation to time management was how staff organised their time and how they responded to the pressures and issues about timings. An underlying question is how far it was down to *individual staff* to manage their time and how far this was an issue for *management*.

As the pilots progressed, the sense of time pressure eased somewhat and the more confident Personal Advisers were able to make the most of the time available. For example, staff were able to access the IT systems faster and more accurately; some made the most of flexi-time to come in early before client appointments to 'catch up' or to prepare for the day.

In certain areas the local management did introduce a range of mechanisms to help deal with time pressures: these are discussed in Chapter 6.

The anxiety about time did lead, rather paradoxically, to staff cutting meetings short. Drawing together indications from across the sites and areas, the possible explanations as to why this might be so include:

- staff were most concerned not to *over-run* the time and this limited what they felt able to ‘open up’ with clients;
- administrative tasks required at least as much time as was ‘saved’ from meetings and probably more, particularly where there was no dedicated ONE administrative backup, difficulties with IT systems, etc, were likely to cause delays;
- staff were unclear about how far to engage clients in discussion about difficulties relating to work or more personal issues both because of the time factor but also because they were not sure what to do. Several Personal Advisers said, in effect, *‘I’m not a counsellor’* or *‘that’s not for me to get into’*. They also seemed to lack information and ideas about *where* to obtain more specialised support, *when* this could be suggested to clients and to lack confidence about *what* external sources of help might deliver;
- staff were keen to ‘win’ time to caseload;
- it was a way of easing the stress of back-to-back interviews and the impact of meeting demanding and often quite distressed clients.

What emerged quite strongly was that staff were trying hard to make maximum use of each moment but that they faced some difficulties in doing this:

- *the balance between administration and client contact*. – our observation indicated that there were staff who spent about one and a half hours on administration for every two hours spent in direct contact with clients (face-to-face or telephone);
- *failed appointments and waiting for clients who were late* – this caused continual difficulties. Our observations indicated that something in the order of one in four clients were either late (over five minutes) or failed to keep appointments. This meant that Personal Advisers experienced a high incidence of waiting for clients before deciding they could devote the remaining time to other activities. Some were ‘tough’ and allowed clients ten minutes after the appointment time to attend. After that they would tend to refuse to see them on the grounds that they could not carry out a full meeting in the time remaining. Others were more pragmatic – *‘they’ll only come back’* – or more sympathetic – *‘they will miss their benefit otherwise’* – and did what they could in the time. For these reasons, using the time ‘gained’ from late clients or ‘no shows’ for caseloading or administration was highly problematic.

Overall, there was no clarity or agreement, either within or across sites and pilot areas, about how to prioritise time and how each day should be planned. ‘Down time’ arising from a client’s failure to attend their work-focused interview was largely unpredictable and so utilising this time

effectively required a high level of concentration and skill. Somewhat paradoxically, it appeared to require the *flexibility* to change activities and mental focus quickly; an ability to retain overall *focus* and sense of priorities and an *innovative approach* in managing day-to-day activities. This downtime was sometimes used for caseload activities, such as targeted job searches, arranging follow-up appointments with clients, or catching up on general administrative activities. However, some Personal Advisers seemed less able to re-focus constructively and engaged in such activities as general paper shuffling, ‘flitting’ from one thing to another or taking a short break. With indications that failures to attend may run as high as one in five (i.e. about 20%), there does seem to be a case for staff and management considering ways to ensure that these opportunities are used in a focused way (see also Chapter 6).

5.3 Skills and knowledge required by Personal Advisers

The core skills and knowledge which staff felt were essential in carrying out their roles covered quite a wide compass: these are identified and discussed in the following sections.

5.3.1 Benefits knowledge

A good level of benefits knowledge was a core requirement of the work and rated highly by staff. This view was also reinforced by some of the managers of ONE sites:

‘Having a full breadth of benefits knowledge, so that you know what problems your staff are having when they come to you with questions.’

(Manager, Call Centre Model)

‘Wide knowledge of other benefits and Employment Service programmes.’

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

There were questions about whether *all* Personal Advisers should be required to know about *all* benefits – particularly the more complex and least often encountered. Few advisers, for example, had direct experience of the Personal Capability Assessment. From the limited data gathered, very few clients appeared to have had a meeting with their Personal Adviser following the receipt of their Personal Capability Assessment (PCA). ONE staff felt that they could always call on the advice of the Disability Employment Adviser in cases of the client having failed their Personal Capability Assessment.

This finding was confirmed by frequent reports from staff that, in terms of the further knowledge they felt they required, benefits-related knowledge emerged as a predominant training need. Additional training in work with special client groups was also identified and particular concerns were expressed about working with 16–17 year olds, carers, lone parents and clients with mental health problems entering ONE.

There was also a recognition that keeping up to date, e.g. knowledge of new benefit arrangements, required careful planning and timing.

5.3.2 Knowledge of employment and the labour market

Staff who were seconded to ONE from the Employment Service, brought with them considerable experience of the local labour market, employment and training opportunities within the area. For staff from Benefits Agency and Local Authorities, the transition from a role focused purely on benefits delivery to the more holistic role of ONE adviser, encompassing employment advice, was a steep learning curve.

'It's the local employment scene, knowing the main employers, also what's out there in terms of training and help. It helps to have staff [from the Employment Service] in the office with that knowledge.'

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

Again, knowledge of the employment field, the kind of qualifications and skills required for different areas of work, and training available were highly valued: a range of information which was hard to obtain quickly or in one training input. It was such in-depth knowledge which distinguished between Personal Advisers formerly from the Employment Service and those from the Benefits Agency. Local knowledge of, for example, specific employers, seasonal work, new opportunities were also highly important but most likely to be obtained informally by living in the area.

The more specialised area of working with non-JSA clients on employment were seen as the responsibility of experts, for example, the Disability Employment Adviser. On the whole, Advisers did not have knowledge of statutory, voluntary or private sector agencies which provided services for people with specialised needs – whether these were for health, educational or social services. There were some indications that there was somewhat less *general* knowledge about how to address the kind of barriers faced by, for example, people with disabilities among Employment Service staff than among staff from the Benefits Agency many of whom were, at least, used to meeting non-JSA clients.

5.3.3 Knowledge of internal and IT systems

Since a major part of the processes of delivering ONE, with respect to the client interview, is centred on the Labour Market System, knowledge of this and other systems was essential to staff performance. It was clear that staff developed confidence and speed in using these systems in the courses of the pilots. Their knowledge was based in accurate inputting and navigating their way around the systems not necessarily in understanding the systems themselves.

5.3.4 Interpersonal skills

In terms of the key skills required of their roles, staff reported that the most important were those relating to establishing good working relationships with clients: good communication, diplomacy, listening skills, patience and sensitivity. Personal Advisers were keen to emphasise the time and patience needed to deal with the range of clients.

'Good communication skills, listening skills, empathy, oh yes, and a positive attitude.'

(Personal Adviser, Warwickshire)

Dealing with a wide range of clients

Although a significant number of staff reported that they felt able to serve the needs of all clients, it was notable that the majority of these were from Benefits Agency backgrounds. This was understandable, given that clients who were severely disabled, lone parents, the recently bereaved and carers were all previously in the service domain of the Benefits Agency. It was predominantly staff from an Employment Service background who felt unsure of how to work with the wider range of clients coming into ONE after full participation. It was particularly carers, the recently bereaved and people with mental health problems who staff were most likely to report as being difficult to help effectively. Many staff who did not feel confident in dealing with these clients attributed this to a lack of suitable training at the outset.

Relationship between staff and clients

In general, the frontline staff were friendly, confident, able to put clients at their ease, focused and fair. Overall, their relationships with clients, given the range of people they had to deal with, were remarkably good. The fact that staff felt pressured by what they viewed as insufficient time, did mean, as we have noted earlier, that meetings were typically led by, and strongly controlled by, the Advisers – mainly through questioning the client.

We noted in Section 5.2, how frontline staff were (potentially) taking on a number of roles. This meant it was crucial for them not only to keep a grip on the meetings but also, since each role implies a rather different kind of relationship with the client, to be able to make shifts in their approach during a meeting. It was clear that some Personal Advisers felt more comfortable with some aspects than others: some favoured an egalitarian approach, for example, while others preferred to take a firm lead and others were most comfortable in more of a supportive role.

An underlying anxiety for staff was the possibility of a client becoming aggressive or violent. The advent of ‘full participation’ brought fears about the response of non-JSA clients to the ONE process. It was felt that, for most clients, the ONE process with the requirement to attend a work-focused interview, would be seen as an additional and unnecessary process. In addition, there were fears about dealing with clients with mental health, alcohol or drug problems. The (mostly) open plan offices did allow staff to be quietly aware of what was going on for their colleagues but there was some evidence of some stress for staff in meeting ‘all comers’, as Case 8 illustrates.

Case 8: Personal Adviser's comments following a meeting with a 'difficult' client

The Personal Adviser reported that she had been uneasy that morning realising that she had to see 'X': *'I was in the bath and suddenly thought about him and my heart sank'*. Previously, she had refused to see him as he was very late for an appointment: he had been aggressive and had been drinking: *'I might have seen him then if he had been less aggressive'*.

In the event, the Personal Adviser established *'quite a good rapport with him - I was surprised - he really needs help but he won't admit to having a drink problem - he's just a kid really - sort of needs a Mum'*.

5.3.5 Teamwork

It was clear to the majority of ONE staff and their managers that their work depended on good teamwork and a willingness to work closely with staff from different agencies. One of the key achievements of ONE was the drawing together of staff from different backgrounds, thus bringing expertise from the three main areas of provision. In areas where many staff had been recruited from outside the core agencies they, too, were seen as providing a valued contribution and an additional outlook on the delivery of the ONE service:

'Team work is another one of ONE's strengths - coming from different agencies we have different specialised knowledge, and working together, sharing knowledge, and giving each other support.'

(Personal Adviser, Call Centre Model)

'Great and getting better - XXXXX [organisation] people have integrated well too. They come with a fresh outlook, but there is a need to keep an eye on them because they have so little knowledge.'

(Team Leader, PVS)

5.3.6 Using judgement and discretion

Several times in the preceding accounts we have referred to points where frontline staff were using their judgement and discretion. In particular, the key activities of assessing clients' situations and developing ideas about how to respond to them as individuals, requires a capacity to form and act on one's own judgement. As one member of staff pointed out, a key skill was the ability to be objective, to form judgements about individual cases but to be non-judgemental.

We can, then recognise some tensions between delivering a service which has clearly defined requirements and protocols on the one hand, and providing a client-based, individualised and personal service on the other: the first tends towards standardised practice while the second requires flexibility and a responsive approach where the utilisation of discretion is essential.

5.4 Staff perspectives This section covers our findings on the views of ONE staff regarding their roles, the management of ONE, the positive and negative aspects of working on the ONE pilots, their views on the clients' experiences and their concerns about the imminent end of the ONE pilots.

5.4.1 The ONE vision **Commitment to ONE**

Staff and managers were almost universally positive about ONE in principle and this was sustained throughout our study of the pilot. One of the main themes was an enduring commitment to the ONE vision:

'I now feel more a part of ONE than the Employment Service ... yes, still committed to ONE, I want to see it through. It's becoming more interesting and it's still challenging.'

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

Identifying with ONE

This general account is representative of the general shift from thinking only in agency terms to being more aligned to the ONE approach and identity than the culture of their previous agency.

'Staff working within ONE are now more and more seeing themselves as ONE employees, although they are still employed by the [core agencies], there has been a shift since the beginning of ONE.'

(Manager, Basic Model)

Indeed, a key finding was that, on the whole, there were few differences between staff with a Benefits Agency, Local Authority or an Employment Service background – all had identified with the ONE concept and were highly motivated to pursue this.

'When I see how we were dealing with clients I feel we are so much better with them [clients], we give them so much more of a service. I wouldn't want to go back ... ONE is the way forward.'

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

The client focus

The strength of the ONE concept was seen as the emphasis on establishing a one-to-one relationship with clients and a continuity of support from the Personal Adviser. Frontline staff generally were pleased with the idea that ONE was intended to provide the opportunity to work with clients in more depth through building up a relationship with them.

'The major strength of ONE is the client focus really. We do try to establish rapport with them rather than just be glorified claim checkers, so I think ONE is an improvement. I mean they do now have a human face, a contact name and they do appreciate it - it's a much more friendly service.'

(Personal Adviser, Call Centre Model)

The original idea of maintaining some continuity of relationship between a client and an adviser was seen as a potential benefit both in terms of greater continuous support for the *client* and familiarity with their own Personal Adviser and greater satisfaction for *staff* in being able to see the client through from beginning to end. Getting to know clients and the opportunity to build up trust were seen as being of particular relevance in working with non-JSA clients and those who were not fully job-ready.

'ONE is an education process. It has the capacity to assist non-JSA groups back to work, such as sick or disabled clients. It helps people to realise they don't have to remain on benefit.'

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

Generally, staff did express some concern that failure to maintain continuity was eroding the ONE vision of a personal and client-focused service.

'Day One' provision

One element which was particularly welcomed, was that Personal Advisers could refer people for training and other services right away rather than having to wait for six months before the client could access such services.

'The best thing is 'day one' eligibility for training, getting people fresh out of work, keen to keep working or people new to benefits you can give them a boost by giving them something worthwhile straight away. We seem to be given greater discretion in ONE.'

(New Claims Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

However, this was not universally understood, as we noted in some observations of client – Personal Adviser meetings (Chapter 4).

More thorough benefits assessment

Staff felt that ONE could enhance the integrity and accuracy of the benefits system, while at the same time, ensuring the client maximum entitlement to benefits.

'The claim form checking is a good idea, as long as all the evidence is there.'

(New Claims Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector Areas Model)

'Sharing of information between the different [core] agencies, is thought to have cut down on fraud, and give a better service offered to the clients.'

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

Integration of benefit and work-seeking activities

Bringing together benefit claims and job-related activities in one place was seen as a logical step forward by most ONE staff. The principle of having both benefits provision and labour market activities in the one place was also found to be a major strength of the ONE service.

The integrated process was seen as a more engaged way of ensuring the clients got the right benefits and therefore the right service.

'People are being made aware of more benefits and what they're entitled to. They are getting more information from the outset - this seems to make people less aggressive, and claims are getting processed more quickly, except Income Support claims.'

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

'The strength is that ONE is working. By working I mean if you look at it from the public point of view, the fact that they don't have to traipse half way round [my area], they can come to ONE place.'

(Manager, Basic Model)

Advisers felt that having the same person overseeing the various claims put forward by a client meant it was less likely that 'discrepancies' in information would occur between the claims.

5.4.2 Personal satisfactions

Staff were clearly keen to point out the positive aspects of their roles; those they found most satisfying. Those aspects most frequently cited are outlined below.

Helping clients

High on the list was the satisfaction of supporting clients and, in many cases, receiving positive feedback from them. Staff valued both the work-focused part of the role and helping to ensure clients received good information about their benefit entitlement. For Personal Advisers especially the opportunity to help clients on an ongoing basis was a positive factor. Many commented that they liked the actual process of working with clients 'face-to-face', the client contact and the role of advising was a main source of satisfaction.

'I find particularly attractive the fact that I see a person from beginning to end and that I can develop more of a relationship. That person knows that there is someone to help them ... [it's] beautiful when a person has signed off, especially a lone parent, and they say, 'Thank-you', it makes you think that all the trouble is worthwhile. If you can persuade non-JSA clients that they're better off getting that job rather than just sitting there and drawing benefit, it's really worth it.'

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

For Start-up Advisers, who were the first point of contact for a client, there was satisfaction in being able to reassure those who were anxious or distressed and help them to leave in a more positive frame of mind:

'Putting clients, particularly those who come in distressed, at ease so they feel more comfortable about things when they leave. It seems that some clients are genuinely frightened having to deal with claiming benefits'

(Start-up Adviser, Basic Model)

Helping people through their distress was another recurring theme:

'Problem solving, helping clients understand what they need and what they can get. Helping a distressed person and they will walk out of the door with a smile because they are confident they will get things sorted out'

(Benefits Expert, Basic Model)

There was some optimism that ONE was helping clients who had missed out under previous arrangements. Getting positive feedback from clients, like getting thanks for solving clients' problems was also a source of satisfaction.

Teamwork

Teamwork and the sense of working with others was valued. It was clear that good working relationships between team members from different backgrounds had, in many cases, engendered a supportive atmosphere among ONE teams. A specific source of satisfaction was the realisation of ONE working in practice and the satisfaction came from managing the process.

'Seeing ONE in operation and full realisation. Identifying the issues, trying or helping to address them. Flagging up what needs to be resolved.'

(Manager, Basic Model)

Overall, it seemed that ONE had led to a greater sense of 'ownership' of the service by staff. In part this was a result of being in a pilot programme with a certain pioneering element involved in 'making it work'.

Office environment

Some staff particularly appreciated the open plan layout of their ONE offices and the friendlier atmosphere. This linked with the points about teamworking since an important aspect was that open plan offices did allow staff to notice what was going on generally. This meant, for example, that staff could cover reception if necessary, were aware if a client was getting upset, were easily available to be consulted. The 'down side' of this was that staff could easily be interrupted or diverted from tasks in hand.

Although there were initial concerns about the unscreened environment on the part of Benefits Agency staff, these did not emerge as a big issue.

Job enrichment

For many staff, secondment onto ONE was a career move which they hoped would enrich their experience and there was some satisfaction in feeling that they had more control over their working day and were able to use a degree of discretion in their work with clients. For most staff the ONE service did extend their knowledge and skills into new areas.

Similarly, for managers, there was a recognition that there was a greater level of responsibility attached to the managerial role in ONE and with it a greater level of autonomy:

'Having been a team leader previously at the Employment Service I'm used to most aspects of the work on ONE. I think I have greater flexibility and responsibility for the team, less asking for permission from top management. It's good for both myself and my staff.'

(Manager, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

For some staff, the job actually exceeded expectations and this was to being able to carry out the full range of responsibilities of the role.

'It's getting there. There is still a lot of paperwork involved. It's got more and more interesting as I get to deal with a wider set of benefits and clients, more of a challenge with those that aren't work-ready, a lot more interesting.'

(New Claims Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

Where staff were covering both Start-up and Personal Adviser roles, there were further advantages, both in terms of flexibility of work allocation, and variety and job enrichment for front-line staff. Recent findings suggest that in some pilot areas, such job rotation proved valuable in terms of enabling staff to cover for shortages and in introducing greater variety and fairness in workloads.

A greater sense of competence and expertise

As the pilots have progressed, staff generally expressed a greater degree of confidence in carrying out the activities and an affinity and sense of belonging to ONE.

'I am much more positive about ONE and the job now. It [ONE] has come along since then, I feel more confident in what I'm doing. ONE is settling down and things are not as hectic as they were. I am also getting more positive feedback from clients. It's like I've been doing the job for years, very different from what I was doing previously, I'm really enjoying it.'

(New Claims Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

This may have been a function of the greater competence developed by experience, certainly, there is no indication that the numbers of clients decreased in any of the pilots.

5.4.3 Personal dissatisfactions

Staff also had a number of issues which were causing some dissatisfaction. The overall finding was that, almost universally across the pilots, staff considered that they were unable to deliver the ONE vision fully and, in many ways, were prevented from doing so.

Lack of time

Time pressures, as we noted earlier, featured strongly and were cited most frequently as the reason for failing to deliver the service to a good standard.

‘This is a key weakness, we do not have the necessary time to provide the ONE service as it was envisaged, either in terms of supporting and developing a relationship with those people who are not job-ready or in terms of helping the job-ready find work’.

(Start-up Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

Failure to maintain a work orientation

Similarly, there was frustration that opportunities to divert people from benefits were being lost. There was concern that, for example, clients who were clearly job ready, were not getting an initial jobsearch because of the limited amount of time available:

‘We had a guy immediately out of work, waiting a week for the Initial Personal Adviser meeting. He didn’t want to go back to work because he didn’t think he would be better off. He’d got into the benefits trap. It took a lot of work to assure him that he would be better off with Working Families’ Tax Credit. That was because we didn’t have time to get him a job at Start-up or the Initial Personal Adviser meeting.’

(Employment Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

Demands on clients

Some clients may have genuine difficulty in attending a work-focused meeting: staff felt that there were specific instances where deferral or a home visit would be more appropriate but that these options were not encouraged by management. The issues of privacy for clients also caused some concerns particularly where private rooms were not readily available.

Limited caseloading

As we noted earlier, there were problems about the level of caseloading and prioritising which clients would have follow-up and how intense that should be. The overall limitations on this were a major source of dissatisfaction: it was this element, above all, which was viewed as the core of the ONE vision and its erosion was felt to take the heart out of the service.

Paperwork

A source of considerable dissatisfaction and a cause of increasing workload was the amount of paperwork required to be completed as part of the ONE process.

‘Paperwork - and I’m speaking for all ONE staff here! You get piles of paper by your desk, and since full participation it’s grown, for example, any change of address generates a lot of work. There is also duplication involved in inputting information into the different systems.’

(Personal Adviser, Call Centre Model)

The problem of excessive paperwork emanated from two sources: the actual processes central to delivering the service for clients was accompanied by additional record keeping and administrative staff were required to fill in additional management information and statistics. Some staff had been given additional responsibilities, for example, for collecting and collating data for ONE returns. This was viewed almost universally as creating further time pressures on staff and was coupled with a scepticism about the importance and the relevance of such ‘stats’ since staff did not receive any subsequent feedback relating to the data they were producing.

However, managers too complained that paperwork seems to dominate their working days at the expense of actual management of staff:

‘Paperwork, which increases as a manager, no time to do mentoring with staff. Can’t see the light at the end of the tunnel. There aren’t enough people to do the job.’

(Site Manager, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

Obstacles to the ONE vision

In general, these dissatisfactions emanated from what staff saw as the barriers to delivering the ONE vision and the difficulties of realising these principles in practice. The main obstacles referred to were:

- inadequate staffing for the high level of demand, leading to extended client waiting times;
- tight time frames limiting time for specific job searches for individuals;
- an inability to carry out caseloading which was the opportunity to get to know and focus on a client’s situation in some depth;
- lack of continuity with clients and difficulty of establishing rapport;
- ‘targets’ and expectations about job placements;
- lack of clarity about external sources of help;
- excessive paperwork and form-filling.

Because of the above, the aspects of the ONE service which had attracted many, if not most, of the staff we met could not be fully realised. This combined with the difficulties of working in this way led to considerable

disquiet and individuals questioning if they wanted to stay in ONE. Indeed, the most frequent statement from ONE advisers seems to be *'This has not turned out to be the job I signed up to do'* and the reason is that they do not have the time to do the job they were told they would be doing.

5.4.4 Staff views on management

Staff comments about management were mixed. There were positive views about the role of managers and the good level of support they provided. In some cases changes in the management structures and work planning had seemingly enabled more effective working.

'Things have improved in terms of how the staff feel about ONE and how [private contractor] is managing ONE. Staff feel more confident in doing their work and they also feel more as a part of [private contractor]. The appointment of an Operations Manager has made a lot of difference [and] has improved communications.'

(Team Leader, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

Moreover, with some of the staff having more than a year's experience of working on ONE, they were in a better position to comment about the impact of ONE. Managers also felt that the benefits to the clients were now becoming more apparent:

'We've seen enough clients who have really benefited from the one-to-one advice. It's nice to know that there are at least some people out there who appreciate what you are trying to do for them.'

(Site Manager, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

On the other hand, there were more critical comments. There were a number of references to lack of communication across sites, lack of support and recognition for staff, and poor information about what was happening to ONE as time went on.

5.4.5 Staff views on clients

The majority of staff reported positive client responses to ONE based on their experience of working with them and positive feedback from clients at various stages of the process. In one Private and Voluntary Sector pilot area, this was reinforced by client feedback sheets, which had recently come into operation.

Staff pointed out that clients' perception of, and satisfaction with, ONE depended on the individual's experience of the system and the type of benefit claim. If a client got their Initial Personal Adviser meeting booked closely following Start-up and it all ran smoothly then they were likely to be positive about it. Certainly any delay in getting their claim processed, even though it was back-dated to Start-up, was bound to create tension. It was a general observation that the clients noticed the improvements in general atmosphere, the environment and the reception they received, the more personal service, and commented favourably on the *'nice office'* and the *'helpful staff'*.

Clients who benefit

Some staff reported that JSA clients also benefited more than before on the basis of the integrated approach to benefits, that their claim forms were reviewed by the Personal Adviser before being processed, and the 'one client, one Personal Adviser' approach meant that they were more aware of the client's background and 'case-history'. This was tempered in some cases with the view that the length of time it took JSA clients to get their claims processed had been extended compared to previous arrangements.

'Those who benefit least I would say are the repeat JSA claimants - the process of claiming is considerably longer for them than it was before and they do notice. I don't know who I'd say benefits most, most clients do I think because of the improved client-focused service.'

(Personal Adviser, Call Centre Model)

For non-JSA clients it was felt that the Personal Adviser was able to give them more detailed information on benefits and services they might be entitled to. Staff mainly thought that non-JSA clients were probably more satisfied with ONE than their previous experience. The improved ambience of the ONE environment compared to Benefits Agency offices was felt to give 'more of a human face to the service'. Staff thought, for example, that lone parents were offered a better service than previously with greater encouragement to 'think beyond motherhood', given more information, such as on local sources of support, and access into New Deal for Lone Parents.

'For single parents I think it [ONE] does really help because you can let them know about opportunities that they might not have been aware of before and they do appreciate it. People with health problems it's different, they've actually got a reason as to why they can't work, so there is only a few you might be able to help here and now'.

(Personal Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

The clients thought to gain no extra benefit from ONE were those for whom the very nature of their claim meant they were unready for work, for example, clients on Incapacity Benefit and Carers. A number of staff across the pilots were highly critical of having to arrange meetings with people who had 'passed' their Personal Capability Assessment as being unfit for work. They expressed considerable doubts about the usefulness of these post-Personal Capability Assessment.

*'Having to do the post-Personal Capability Assessment interviews after six months is depressing the **** out of me! The thought that there are millions of people out there languishing at home with depression, who think they can't see themselves going back to work, they need to put some money into training and rehab ... but just calling them in ... '*

(Manager PVS Area)

‘Just calling people in when they have just passed their Personal Capability Assessment and the doctor has just given them 12 months on Incap’ ... we’re supposed to go through what they have been doing to find work. It’s a waste of time!

(PA PVS Area)

At the same time, however, others argued that, in terms of general quality of life, it was an improvement for such clients to be able to talk about possibilities with a Personal Adviser who might open up training or ‘therapeutic work’ opportunities.

‘It depends on the client: Incapacity Benefit clients don’t see why they should go through the ONE work-focused meeting, others are quite keen and all clients like getting their forms checked. Some clients will phone up saying ‘Why do I have to come in? I never had to before.’

(Start-up Adviser, Basic Model)

Staff also referred to clients who, they considered, were not helped sufficiently. For example, refugees, some ethnic minority populations, people whose first language was not English and people who really needed a home visit. And, there were concerns about clients with urgent and complex needs who were considerably distressed by having to wait for more than five days to be seen by a Personal Adviser.

‘One-stop-shop’

The ‘one-stop-shop’ aspect of the ONE service was also a source of positive feedback from clients.

‘The majority of the clients like the personal touch of ONE and the one-to-one aspect of the Personal Adviser meeting. Dyslexic clients like the fact that they can complete the claim form over the phone, but others [JSA clients] would prefer to just pop down to the Jobcentre and sign on.’

(Personal Adviser, Call Centre Model)

There was some variation in views concerning the attitudes of JSA clients to ONE. Some staff had gained positive feedback about the service from JSA clients, the exception seemed to be the well qualified professional client, those more than able to use their own means to find a job and perhaps resentful of having to go through a protracted process of two meetings. Several of the more skilled clients found the Personal Adviser less well informed than themselves about the labour market opportunities for their particular occupation and found their insistence on running a Labour Market System job search irritating and irrelevant. JSA clients returning to claim benefit after short-term work were reported to be confused by the change, whereas clients new to the claiming of benefits were thought to be more appreciative of the service.

Issues for clients

Issues which staff considered were important for clients, not surprisingly, echo their views on which clients benefit most from ONE.

The negative aspects for clients related to delays in being seen and the impact that had on them receiving benefits.

'It all depends on their experience of the process. The delays in getting their claims in are the most negative experiences for clients, and they let you know about it.'

(Personal Adviser, Call Centre Model)

For JSA clients, the processes were similar since the requirements of the Jobseeker's Agreement and 'active signing', i.e. showing your face at regular intervals, are not that different from previous arrangements. However, clients who were used to claiming JSA before ONE tended to make a negative comparison and note that the ONE process is more involved with longer delays in getting their claims processed. Indeed, it was reported by Advisers that JSA clients had to wait longer than before for their claim to be processed and for actual money to come through.⁶ For these clients the innovation was that their benefit claim could be made in the same office. The cultural change for them was more about the link between job seeking and benefit eligibility.

For non-JSA clients it seemed to introduce extra stages into the claim process, which they could see as irrelevant. Thus, some staff felt that the defining aspect of clients' satisfaction with ONE would be their background and previous experience.

Moreover, the lack of complete integration of services meant that JSA and non-Jobseeker's Allowance clients might still need to contact their Local Authority to check the progress of their Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit claim since the ONE sites do not have access to Local Authority data so that the promise of a 'one-stop shop' seems hollow to some clients.

For some non-JSA clients – such as people with a disability – who would have previously registered their claim by post without the need for a work-focused meeting, ONE represented an additional and unwelcome

⁶ Internal analysis of administrative data shows that, overall, ONE has had little impact on the processing of JSA claims. In all three variants, but particularly in the Call Centre, JSA claims have taken longer to reach the Benefits Agency than in non-ONE areas. This is due to the time taken to book callbacks and Personal Adviser meetings. However, the time taken for the Benefits Agency to process JSA claims has been relatively efficient in ONE areas. The net effect of these two factors is negligible, except in Call Centre areas, where the overall claim clearance time is slightly longer. However, there is no consistent evidence of an impact on the time taken to process Income Support or Incapacity Benefit claims.

effort on their part. Some carers seemed to resent the requirement to attend an interview the most: it lengthened the process and they did not see the point of a work-focused meeting when there was no prospect of their child or partner recovering and therefore they would remain unavailable for work.

5.5 Staff concerns about the end of the ONE pilots

In the final stages of our research, concerns emerged which related to the end of the pilots and the emergence of the Working Age Agency and Jobcentre Plus. Staff generally felt that they had been kept in the dark about transitional arrangements and that in the absence of information to the contrary, they were likely to assume that they would have to 'sink or swim' back to their home agency. For those staff on temporary contract (mainly those working in Private and Voluntary Sector areas) they would not have any jobs to go back to, so were, as one Personal Adviser put it; 'already looking for the exit door'.

'What we want to know as soon as we can is what is happening with the pilot. Not necessarily for me, because I know I have a job to go to at the end of it, but I have 17 people who are all asking me every week, have you heard anything, have you heard anything? And, they are not going to tell us. I've got two Employment Service, five or six Benefits Agency and I think nine or ten of them are [private contractor]. It is quite a large proportion to that aren't going to be in work. I mean, we don't know what is going to happen with ONE, nobody has given us any advice, any information, nobody knows anything yet and that is really worrying people.'

(Personal Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector)

There was a tangible sense of loss among staff, not only of a worthwhile role, but possibly a great deal of experience. Although they had a strong sense of personal achievement about what had been accomplished, there was concern about what would happen to ONE clients when the pilots ended:

'Has anyone thought of the impact on clients of removing ONE and going back to the old system? One of my colleagues went back to the Benefits Agency office she worked in before and felt it was ten years back in time'

(Team Leader, Private and Voluntary Sector)

One of the results of this insecurity and uncertainty was that staff were leaving the pilots and, given the fact that the pilots had less than 12 months to run, replacement staff were not coming forward from the agencies.

5.6 Summary of key points

In summary:

- Personal Advisers undertake a variety of roles, there may be tension between some of these and the work is complex;
- the Personal Advisers' role was not always clearly defined and work priorities were not always clear;
- the breadth of knowledge required by Personal Advisers was considerable;
- Personal Advisers' responsibilities included not only those relating to frontline work with clients but also for workload and time management;
- on the whole Personal Advisers were positive about ONE and identified a number of features which they saw as providing a good service for clients;
- staff identified a number of concerns and difficulties which they felt hampered their ability to deliver the service and realise the ONE vision, in particular staff mentioned the lack of time for caseloading;
- staff felt there were particular difficulties with time pressures and found it difficult to manage all the demands of the job and to establish priorities;
- staff thought that many clients were receiving a better service than before but, again, they had some reservations about aspects of the service – especially for some types of client: non-JSA clients and JSA clients who were not really job-ready were seen as needing more time, support, and in cases specialised help, than they could provide;
- staff were concerned about their future due to their uncertainty about what would happen at the end of the pilot.

6 MANAGING AND SUPPORTING THE ONE SERVICE

This chapter provides a commentary on the tasks of managing and supporting the ONE service at local level with a focus primarily on delivery and the various systems and arrangements which support this. In Chapters 4 and 5 we looked at the individual staff-client transaction and the work of frontline staff: here we move to the operational level of local management and overall issues of delivery.

The findings are drawn mainly from observation in the case study areas and interviews with frontline staff and managers but also from group interviews, discussions and workshops with ONE managers.

6.1 Pilot management and ONE

We are not here commenting directly on aspects of management which were concerned with higher levels of ONE implementation, with strategic issues or with communication between the pilots and the ONE Pilot Management Unit (OPMU). However, it is helpful to identify some specific aspects which arose from the pilot nature of the ONE programme. In terms of local management there were some ‘pilot’ artefacts which influenced the role and scope of local management.

Levels of management

It is helpful to recognise the distinction between:

- *pilot management* which had responsibility for the whole of a pilot area and its constituent sites;
- *site management* where a manager had dual responsibilities – for the core work of the office (usually Benefits Agency or Employment Service) and the ONE service;
- *functional management* where managers were dedicated to ONE, providing staff support and managing systems specifically for the service. In a sense they too had dual responsibilities: for ONE delivery and for liaison with the core agencies.

Implications of the pilot nature of ONE

One of the important issues for ONE managers was that they were operating a pilot and one which was strongly shaped and defined from the centre. We observed earlier that there was clear guidance that the ONE service should be implemented in as ‘pure’ form as possible – adhering to the processes and protocols laid down. Managers were, therefore, responsible for implementing a largely prescribed programme: their role was not, at least in the early days, that of active managers with a primary responsibility to make the kind of adjustments and adaptations that would ‘make it work’. The reverse was the case: managers were

expected to hold true to the ONE specifications and a ‘conformity review’ was conducted in late 2000 to assess how far these had been adhered to. ONE managers were, in this sense, managing a process of implementation rather than developing a service.

One of the obvious corollaries of this was that it affected how managers related to their staff. Staff commented fairly frequently that the managers ‘*did not listen*’ or that ‘*they listen but nothing gets done*’. To the extent that local managers were debarred from making changes, they were unable to respond to local circumstances, to learn from the experience of their staff or capitalise on feedback from clients or partners: several complained about the limitations this imposed.

There were operational effects too: for example, the requirements to collect and collate data for OPMU and the pilot area implementation teams (and, of course, respond to the requests of the various teams evaluating ONE). All these impacted on the overall workloads of staff and managers.

The Private and Voluntary Sector areas were in a slightly different position in that these were set up with some expectation that private sector management would be more innovative than the other two models. In fact, the Private and Voluntary Sector areas experienced what they considered significant limitations to innovation – partly arising from the contract arrangements, partly from the structure of ONE, and partly to do with time and resource issues. As one manager from a Private and Voluntary Sector area commented, ‘*the idiocy of giving Private and Voluntary Sector targets for trying to ‘programme in’ innovation!*’ The Private and Voluntary Sector pilots were, then, in a comparable situation to managers in the other variants.

At the same time we did obtain some indication that pilots were expected to solve local issues without intervention, support or guidance from OPMU. This apparently paradoxical situation was attributed to a caution about implementation difficulties becoming too visible.

A shift to ‘making it work’

However, as we will discuss in Chapter 7, pilots did begin to make changes. As time went on, local problems did have to be solved and demands responded to. The advent of ‘full participation’ in particular did require specific arrangements at a local level. Managers, like staff, were committed to the vision, there was a strong wish to see progress and in some cases the changes were quite radical. Overall there was an increasing and distinct shift towards the end of the pilots to ‘making it work’.

6.2 Focusing the vision: priorities and targets

6.2.1 Priorities

The prime objective of ONE was to establish a work-focused gateway for all working age benefit claimants. This was clear and underwritten by the requirement that in all meetings with clients, staff would begin with the work element.

However, for a number of reasons, this focus was subject to a number of shifts, driven by practicalities, individual staff behaviour, policy decisions about targeting and the need to make local adjustments.

First, it quickly became apparent that it was almost impossible to make work focus the prime – in the sense of coming first – activity, even with the most work-ready and motivated of clients. As we noted in Chapter 4, all clients were concerned, in the first instance, to check their benefit entitlement and make their claim. Attempts to focus on work could make no headway until people felt reassured that the claiming process was under way.

Second, there were practical decisions to be made within Personal Advisers' caseloads about what kind of clients to 'caseload' or follow up more actively. In the absence of clear management guidance on this, Personal Advisers came to their own conclusions – most strongly influenced by local (site) expectations. These included placement targets, accuracy in completing forms and generally winning 'brownie points' for their performance rather than, necessarily, considering ONE objectives.

Third, with the advent of 'full participation' there was an accommodation to be made not only between JSA clients who were more or who were less job-ready, but also between JSA and a diverse range of non-JSA clients. Later in the pilot, the centre did place more emphasis on establishing a work focus with non-JSA clients and this steer was commented on by staff across the pilots:

'We've been told that there must be a greater push to work with non-JSA clients. What they don't realise is that the results are bound to take longer to become apparent. They need a lot more work and more continual contact to move them forward.'

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

The emerging requirement of staff to engage non-JSA clients in a more proactive way led to a number of concerns, mainly to do with their ability to address the needs of such a wide range of clients, given their limited training in dealing with clients with a diversity of problems such as homelessness, refugee status, illness and disability:

'Dealing with non-JSA in a more proactive way needs greater skills than we were trained to. More of a counselling role. Some non-JSA clients don't know where to start.'

(Personal Adviser, Call Centre Area)

Another source of concern, was that ONE might be inappropriate, either because some clients were too severely detached from the job market or presented serious issues for staff safety:

'Had one client at my desk last week, he had spent four years in prison, alcohol problems, had only worked for ten years and he was 58. What was the point of calling him in for a work-focused meeting.'

(Team Leader, PVS Area)

'Some clients need specialist help, had seriously mentally disturbed people in front of us. We have no idea what backgrounds clients have - could be dangerous.'

(Start-up Adviser, Basic Model Area)

Fourth, in some areas, decisions at management level led to extra activities being 'bolted on' to the normal duties of ONE staff, for example New Deal for 50+. In other instances, responsibilities had been handed over to other services such as clients returning to the New Deals, e.g. New deal for Young People. Now New Deal clients would have their Initial Personal Adviser meeting and then be handed off to their New Deal Adviser.

Overall, there was no evidence of any real co-ordination between these different sources of influence on ONE focus and targeting. Not surprisingly, there were indications that staff were receiving conflicting messages. For example, staff were told that the service was to be client-focused and that the clients' personal circumstances should be taken into account. Examples of this would include doing home visits for clients unable to attend a meeting, or using the 'language line' for clients whose English was poor, yet staff were also being told that such things were too costly.

A point to consider is that although the ONE vision was originally defined at the top, it was subject to continual adjustment, not only from the top but also at pilot level, from local individual and management responses to local demands and circumstances. There were also different priorities in terms of getting the service delivered. In some ways, despite the strong central framing and intention to standardise the service, the ONE vision was left to evolve.

6.2.2 Performance indicators and targets

In the earlier stages of the pilots there were no formal ONE targets but each Personal Adviser was aware of having to meet certain expectations. These were, it appeared, shaped at least as much by the site and the specific aims of the 'host' agency as by ONE specific objectives. There were concerns that, for example, things which they saw as good practice, like helping clients with difficulties and following them up, were not necessarily recognised, whereas outcomes like job submissions which are associated with Employment Service, did count informally.

This was most clearly in evidence at an Employment Service site where there was a site management system for ONE. Here Employment Service targets were more-or-less assumed by ONE staff and there were informal 'hierarchies' among staff according to who had the best results for job placements, switching someone to a more appropriate benefit, making a referral to a particular external agency. Examples 6.1 and 6.2 illustrate that ONE staff across the areas were operating on rather different sets of expectations about performance and outcomes.

Example 6.1: Targets and outcomes at an Employment Service site

At an Employment Service site and among staff with an Employment Service background, the work tended to be target driven: the targets being more-or-less defined by Employment Service policy and practice. Thus staff were concerned to achieve as many 'submissions' (sending a client to a job interview), placements (into work), external referrals (listed agencies e.g. providing job preparation, training etc) as possible.

At one observed meeting, all Employment Service staff attended the first part when new developments for the Employment Service were explained. These included new priorities for dealing with unemployed people. Following this, the ONE staff had their own meeting at which these priorities were not discussed or clarified in the context of ONE delivery.

Example 6.2: Targets and outcomes at a Benefits Agency site

The Benefits Agency site had a clear set of expectations for all customer service staff - which included ONE - that clients would leave their meeting reassured, their questions answered, appropriate benefit claims taken accurately and clear about what would happen next. This was a client centred approach.

There was evidence that this tension persisted. In some ways, it was increased by the emphasis on non-JSA clients because the Employment Service wanted to preserve good placement results in the short term whereas non-JSA clients are likely to require time to address the often more complex barriers to moving towards employment and independence.

The introduction of targets

In the spring of 2000, targets were introduced for non-JSA clients as well as JSA. In principle, targets were welcomed - as a way of focusing the work, of measuring performance. These were intended to re-emphasise the work-focus of ONE meetings with clients but also reflect customer

service performance as well as job placements or submissions. Staff expressed some caution about these and how realistic they would be. There were some fears about ‘pushing people into jobs’, or that targets would be unobtainable because of resource restrictions and, in any case, performance would always be subject to local labour market conditions. There were indications that targets were being applied in rather different ways across the pilots and that there were issues about getting feedback on their effectiveness.

There was evidence that tensions relating to targets persisted from the last round of interviewing in summer 2001 and from the observations conducted. Staff had, in some senses, become used to and resigned to them. But, there were more comments in the later rounds of fieldwork about the need for more relevant measures of performance and outcomes.

‘Distance travelled’ measures

A key issue to emerge was that staff and managers wanted to be able to note and measure a client’s progress towards employability and employment: the so-called ‘measure of distance travelled.’ A problem here is that of being able to establish an audit trail which clearly links activities undertaken by ONE staff to outcomes for the client. For example, referral to an external agency might be a crucial benefit in supporting a client but there is no easy and accurate way of tracking this. What was clear was that staff were strongly of the view that such measures were important both for obtaining credit for their work and learning about ‘what works’ for clients.

‘We can’t track clients when they have gone on courses and then got jobs, so they will not be included in targets, so we’re losing a lot of true placings because they don’t get the card [ONE19FDC] back from the Jobcentre.’

(Personal Adviser, Call Centre Model)

‘They [ONE Management] need to give credit for non-placement outcomes with the non-job ready.’

(Personal Adviser, Private and Voluntary Sector)

Staff generally were keen to promote the wider expectations of ONE, i.e. to increase labour market involvement and to help people into sustained work.

6.3 Staffing and staff deployment

6.3.1 Issues of recruitment

As we noted in Chapter 3, most ONE staff were recruited originally from the Employment Service, the Benefits Agency and, to a lesser extent, Local Authorities and that there was a generally positive response to the opportunity to join ONE.

Later on in the pilots, the issue of replacing staff became a critical issue because of the need to fill the posts of people who left the service. Experienced staff had to be replaced by less experienced people, some of

whom, particularly in PVS areas, had no core agency experience. For new entrants, there were big training and training resource implications. Since it was impossible to recruit fully trained staff 'off-the-street', the new recruits had to be trained very rapidly. Offices could then be short staffed for weeks at a time, with no possibility of covering the absences. Unlike the settling-in period, particularly in Private and Voluntary Sector areas, there was little likelihood of recruiting again from the core agencies.

6.3.2 Staffing levels and deployment

There were a number of issues which emerged about staffing levels and staff deployment.

Staffing levels

A key issue which staff highlighted was what they considered to be inadequate numbers of staff to deal with the demand from clients. This was a consistent finding across all pilot areas.

'There [are] not enough staff, and still not enough time to do the job ... the job that we're expected to do. When we first came in we were told that we would take claims in the morning and be free in the afternoon to do caseloading, the 13 week interviews and the six-month interviews, and that we would have some sort of leeway on what we dealt with in our diary, but that's never, never happened, from day one.'

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

'ONE is suffering from under-resourcing in terms of the lack of staff - it's a huge weakness. I'd say that it's having a seriously negative impact not only in terms of the delays caused to clients, but also the really low morale.... amongst the staff.'

(Start-up Adviser, Call Centre Model)

The situation with regard to human resources appears to have been exacerbated after 'full participation' with most staff working under intensive workloads from April 2000.

'Over the last six months since full participation the biggest issue has been human resources. Getting through full participation was in itself a trial and with under-resourcing of staff we were almost stretched to breaking point.'

(Call Centre Manager)

Staff reported that they had been expecting an increase of about ten per cent in client volumes with the onset of 'full participation'. However, many commented that the increase had been significantly greater than this and that there had been insufficient staff to cover this increased demand. Overall, staff perceived that work loads after 'full participation' had been significantly underestimated by management. In good part, this was because the amount of time which staff needed to become familiar with, and confident in, handling the increased range of benefits and responding to a much wider client base, was much longer than anticipated.

Covering and ‘back-filling’

One of the artefacts of the pilot was that local managers were not able (or were not supposed) to use ‘core’ staff to back-fill nor to recruit temporary staff. This meant that there were continual difficulties in covering staff absences: i.e. for the (considerable) number of staff days taken up in training events, for any contingencies (e.g. a local abattoir laying off staff because of the advent of foot and mouth), for sickness. Towards the end of the pilots, there were increasing reports of staff loss, due in part to people leaving ONE to return to their ‘home’ agencies. The finite pool of ONE trained staff meant that the deployment was unusually inflexible.

The demands of the work

There were several aspects of the work which lead to staff feeling pressure.

First, increased numbers of clients with full participation were a main cause of pressure for a significant number of staff. More specifically, it was the amount of time they had to deliver the ONE service in comparison to the amount of work they were expected to carry out.

‘The amount of work we’ve got compared to the amount of time we’ve actually got to do the work, it’s a total mismatch which is why we’re having to keep on whittling down the service we’re giving, just ending up cutting corners left, right and centre.’

(Administrative Assistant, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

Some managers and staff were clear that it was not only the *content* of the tasks which was demanding but also the *volume* of clients which staff were expected to see in a day which caused the pressure.

Second, time limitations could result in both advisers and their managers viewing their activities as similar to a ‘production line’. This was compounded for some Call Centre staff where, for example, one Start-up adviser commented on the strain of being tied to the phone all day and not being able to talk with colleagues.

‘Just really the sheer volume and the pressure this makes you feel under, and a certain degree the isolation. Being plugged in all day you just don’t have the opportunity to communicate with colleagues so it can be very wearing.’

(Start-up Adviser, Call Centre Model)

Third, there were the pressures of having to deal with more *sensitive cases*, clients with special needs and difficulties.

‘The different client groups, I think this aspect is difficult because it can be stressful for the staff having clients coming in sobbing their hearts out or coming in with some really very sad and distressing stories, the illnesses that some of them have got as well can be hard going on the staff because they have to be strong for those clients and I think that’s very demanding.’

(Site Manager, Private and Voluntary Sector Model)

6.3.3 Workloads and workload management

As we have noted, across the pilots, there was evidence that staff felt under strain and that there were important issues about workload management. In Chapter 5 we noted that staff were addressing time and workload issues in various ways but on an individual basis. When we looked at how far there were active workload management systems in place to help meet demands we found no clear examples. Although managers were addressing aspects of *client demand* by adjusting waiting times, queuing, appointment scheduling, these responses were not the same as assisting frontline staff by systematically clarifying issues of workload and caseload management for a team, or for a pilot area as a whole.

6.3.4 Specialisation

There were a number of comments from staff and managers which raised the question of specialisation in the ONE service as a way of maximising staff resources and avoiding the obvious problems involved in training everyone to do everything. Several possibilities were discussed in interviews and during observations. For example, there might be:

- *functional specialisation* like establishing a specific placement team or having dedicated job matching advisers;
- *client specialists* – like the existing Disability Employment Advisers – to assist particular types of client – especially non-JSA;
- *liaison posts* where advisers might take particular responsibilities for links with external agencies and services.

However, these ideas all rest on clarifying the *essential and universal* tasks of the ONE advisers, i.e. those which all practitioners would undertake with all (most) clients and distinguishing these from *additional, specialised or longer-term tasks* which might either be taken on by specific ONE staff or referred to other sources of support for clients with particular needs or circumstances. We return to these points in Chapter 8 where we consider the role of the Personal Adviser and distinguish between types of clients and the implications they have for different levels of work.

6.3.5 Teamwork

Working relationships between ONE staff from the different agencies were consistently reported as excellent and, as we noted in Chapter 5, this aspect of ONE was valued by staff. It was clear early on in the life of the pilots that staff generally had forged effective working relationships with a high level of mutual support.

However, staff reports of working relationships with staff from other agencies and Local Authorities was varied. In some cases, ONE staff enjoyed a mutually supportive relationship with staff in the Jobcentres and Benefits Agency and Local Authority sites, and this was a valued source of informal support. In others, however, there were cases of obstructive rivalry and a blame culture.

The high level of commitment and team spirit engendered among ONE teams was viewed as essential in delivering the service. However, in

relation to the management of ONE, there were only one or two examples of managers taking steps to promote team-working or team building:

'The managers are also very good in trying to support this - for example I'm going on a team event today, they make the time for us to be able to do these things.'

(Team Leader, Private and Voluntary Sector)

6.4 Managing client demand

A crucial issue across all the pilot areas was managing client demand. The main aspect of this, initially, was meeting the targets set for client waiting times for and between appointments. These issues were raised almost universally by frontline staff and we consider them here as the overall scheduling and appointment systems were a function of management rather than individual members of staff. Some significant adjustments were made in this area during the pilots: these are considered in more detail in Chapter 7 where we look at the achievements and overall development of ONE across the areas.

Managing client demand and staff workloads also included the balance between scheduled appointments and administration and the utilisation of 'down-time' created by clients failing to show for an appointment (FTAs). We referred to some of these in Chapter 5 since they were issues which staff had to manage as individuals. Here we look at them again since they also had implications for pilot management.

The ways in which sites responded to fluctuating levels of demand varied, but typically involved some or all of the following:

- reducing clients appointment times;
- setting low priority on caseloading;
- merging the roles of Start-up and Personal Adviser;
- introducing parallel claims checking by a benefit expert;
- cutting out 13-week and six-month meetings for JSA clients or returning these to the Employment Service core business.

There overall effect of such moves was intended:

- to cut the amount of time staff spent on benefit activities – thus increasing, in principle, the time available to pursue the work focus;
- to reduce the time spent with each client so that more could be seen in the day;
- to achieve greater flexibility in staff deployment and more work variety.

What we can note is that none of these strategies really reduced the overall work loads on Personal Advisers and that time savings were not necessarily enough to be translated into, for example, significant caseloading activities.

6.4.1 Appointment scheduling and client waiting times

ONE delivery was strongly framed by a set of requirements about client waiting times and appointment scheduling. These varied across the models but the aim was to establish good standards of customer care by keeping waiting times for and between appointments to a minimum.

The interval between first contact – the Start-up meeting (or Call Centre call) – and the first Personal Adviser meeting was originally intended to be no longer than three days although this target was changed later in the pilots to four days. After the Personal Adviser meeting a benefit claim could be forwarded for processing but no standards were established for the amount of time this should take: times for processing varied but, as we will note in Chapter 7, important developments were made in this area.

One result of increased work loads and the reported understaffing was the lengthening, in some cases, of the time period between Start-up and Initial Personal Adviser meetings. In some areas Initial Personal Adviser meetings were being booked as far ahead as eight to ten days, for example. Staff were embarrassed by these waiting times and naturally felt some empathy with the clients especially where a wait was greater than under previous arrangements. Although this concern was expressed in the main by staff in Call Centres, information from other areas suggested that six to eight days' duration was not uncommon and across all models.

'Mainly, it's the waiting time between Start-up and the Personal Adviser meeting, which really isn't very fair on them - at least five days and has been since full participation.'

(Start-up Adviser, Call Centre Model)

'Clients have to wait a long time to see a Start-up Adviser and a Personal Adviser. If a claim comes in the post then it can wait for days (e.g. two weeks) before the Start-up Advisers can deal with it.'

(Benefits Expert, Basic Model)

As a result there were more frequent claims for crisis loans in some areas:

'Clients waiting for benefits too long. There has also been a big increase in Crisis Loans.'

(Personal Adviser, Call Centre Model)

However some features of the Call Centres caused delays in processing clients' claims. This was mainly on the basis of the extended periods between initial contact and 'call-back'.

'People have had to wait maybe over a week to have the call back and then have to wait to be seen by a Personal Adviser who will tell them that the Benefits Agency, depending on the benefit [can] need up to 30 working days to process their claim. The Call Centre has added about another week to a process that was already lengthy.'

(Personal Adviser, Call Centre Model)

Although this was a particular problem in the earlier days of the pilots, the issue was still real and of concern during the later fieldwork. The lack of flexibility and back-up resources meant that the system was vulnerable to any seasonal or unexpected increase in demand or staff absence.

In terms of the management of the service, this raises crucial questions about how far staff should have control over the structure of their day rather than a more-or-less universal office system. In the case of the Call Centre variant, for example, booking of client meetings remotely by the Start-up Adviser was seen as too rigid.

6.4.2 Client contact times

The research did not obtain comprehensive data on the time that Advisers spent with clients. However, from our observations we did gather indications of considerable variations across the pilot areas, (and some variations between sites within areas): the range was in the order of:

Meeting	Minutes
Start-up - Basic Model	10- 20
Start-up (inbound) - Call Centre	5 - 10
Start-up (outbound) - Call Centre	30 - 40
First PA - New Claim	20 - 50
First PA - Restart	most < 30
13 week	20 -30
6 month	<30
Case-loading or follow-up	most <30

NB: 'Inbound' refers to the clients first phone call into the Call Centre. They were then given the date and time when the Start-up Advisers would ring them back - this being the 'outbound' call.

As we noted in Chapter 4, individual staff did use their discretion to either shorten (the more usual occurrence) or lengthen the duration of their time with a client. And managers did alter the appointment slots in order to cope with backlogs and periods of increased demand.

6.4.3 Managing Start-up

There were a number of issues relating to the management of Start-Up.

Some pilots operated a system of Start-up on demand where clients were logged in by reception as they arrived and were expected to be seen by an adviser within 20 minutes. Other sites, however, did not have a walk-in system and the Start-up appointment would be made for the same day if possible. 'Outbound' or Start-up calls from the Call Centre would be booked for between one and five working days ahead.

For Basic Model and Private and Voluntary Sector areas operating Start-up on demand meant that client flows were unpredictable and, therefore, less easy to manage.

‘Operationally, it’s the increase in the number of people that we have to get through and the problem that that creates with managing the public through the system. Basic model does Start-up on demand and that demand is very difficult to plan for and to administer. Lunchtimes it goes ape.’

(Site Manager, Basic Model)

‘Start-up on demand is lovely in theory but it doesn’t work often enough. It’s difficult to manage. What effect on our staff does it have to see 15 to 20 people just sitting there waiting in a peak period?’

(Personal Adviser, Basic Model)

The main issue here was that staff were constantly taking claims with no respite to carry out either paperwork or caseloading activities. As the manager above indicated, the demand for the service was unpredictable and led to long queues of clients at the more popular times of the day such as ‘lunchtime’.

6.4.4 Failed appointments

We noted earlier in Chapter 5 that there was a relatively high incidence of clients failing to attend appointments: in the order of one in five or roughly 20 per cent. In addition there was a fairly high number of clients who arrived late – a difficult situation for staff to manage without risking a ‘knock-on’ effect and themselves being late for subsequent appointments. In the validation and feedback workshops, managers confirmed that they were concerned about this, anxious to find out why this was happening and what might be done to reduce it. Various reasons for clients’ behaviour were suggested that:

- clients with an idea about making a false claim were put off by having to attend a face-to-face interview;
- clients might be put off in some way during the Start-up process;
- in the population of claimants, there will always be a percentage of people who are disorganised and/or irresponsible;
- a number of failures would be non-JSA people who found it hard to make the journey.

Two key questions follow: how far and in what ways ONE delivery might influence client behaviour *vis-a-vis* keeping appointments; and how the time slot which is ‘freed’ might be used most effectively. And, given the scale of the issue, these do appear to be questions for management rather than for individual staff to address.

6.5 Interface with ‘core’ activities

ONE was not a free-standing service. It depended on linking into the core operations of the Employment Service, Benefits Agency, the Local Authorities and, to a lesser extent, the Child Support Agency. Drawing on the observations and staff interviews we identify some specific findings about ONE delivery which relate to these connections. The broader issues about the impact of the ONE pilot on the core business of the Employment Service and Benefits Agency are covered in Chapter 7.

6.5.1 Benefits Agency processing

One issue which emerged, particularly for Private and Voluntary Sector areas was that the level of errors highlighted by Benefits Agency processing staff was viewed as unfairly high, suggesting to the ONE staff that they were being ‘overly vigilant’ when processing claim forms from ONE sites. One example was the Benefits Agency sending back a claim form that had been initialled by clients in a different colour ink to the one that they had used originally.⁷ This was felt by some areas to further foster a ‘them and us’ culture between ONE and the Benefits Agency:

‘Been having problems with the Benefits Agency processing site over the error checking of claim forms. Seems that every little nit-picking error is being sent back to us.’

(Personal Adviser, PVS Area)

‘It’s the attitude of the Benefits Agency processing teams. They are constantly picking up on errors which would be overlooked under previous arrangements.’

(Personal Adviser, PVS Area)

Personal Advisers were pleased when it was possible to track claims by making direct contact with processing staff at the Benefits Agency and there was evidence that, over time, this happened more frequently and easily.

6.5.2 Employment Service signing-on and job search

Our data on ONE’s connections with the signing-on and job search functions of core Employment Service operations was not comprehensive, mainly because it was not possible to observe these operations alongside our observation of ONE staff. However, the following points were made by staff and managers:

- there were anxieties that ONE would depress the achievement of Employment Service targets;
- some difficulties were reported in relation to Employment Service making appointments for 13-week and six-month meetings;
- there were also cases where clients complained to their Personal Advisers that they had not had job searches done when signing-on;
- the interface between ONE and New Deal was an issue which several staff referred to as needing to be rationalised and clarified to avoid needless duplication.

6.6 Internal supports

The two aspects which emerged as being of most importance in supporting frontline staff were a good level of administrative and technical systems backup and meeting ongoing training and information needs.

⁷ Any amendments to the client’s claim form which are highlighted during the initial Personal Adviser meeting require the client to initial them to signify they witnessed and agreed the changes to the form.

6.6.1 *Administrative backup*

The initial lack of dedicated administrative staff for ONE which emerged as a hindrance to the smooth running of the service and, almost certainly, added to the time pressures on some staff as we saw in Chapter 5.

There were indications that managers were limited in what they do in the early stages to improve matters. This was because resources were allocated in relation to the costing models which had been worked out for the pilots and they were not able to support ONE from core operations. There were also limitations imposed by the sites and existing arrangements. For example, in one office we observed all staff – ONE and Employment Service – were responsible for answering the phone after two rings: no-one was supposed to take their receiver off the hook – even when they were with clients. To change the system for ONE would have had a knock-on effect on all staff on site: it was obviously not possible to bring in administrative staff to answer only ONE calls since all came in on the same lines.

There were also pilot artefacts, as we noted in Chapter 5, which added to the administrative load, i.e. the paper work involved in keeping statistics and returns for the central OPMU team and pilot management. In some areas the burden of collecting and collating such information, in the absence of dedicated ONE back up, was put on to the workload of frontline staff.

However, in the later stages of our study, it was clear that some of these problems had been addressed in many of the pilot areas, since extra resources had been found to fund dedicated administrative support for ONE sites.

6.6.2 *Technical and information supports*

IT systems

While some of the initial teething problems had been ironed out by the later stages of the pilots, some issues concerning the IT and systems remained. No further developments in the IT systems meant that ONE staff were still operating the stand-alone systems of Employment Service and Benefits Agency. As noted earlier, staff viewed the lack of integration of the various systems as cumbersome and time consuming since the same, or similar information was required by both the Employment Service and Benefits Agency, leading to duplication of effort and therefore additional time taken to process a client's details.

Recent developments in the IT and systems supporting ONE included the parallel processes instigated by the Employment Service under the heading of Modernising Employment Service and included an upgrade of the Labour Market System. The improved system facilitated job searches but also required staff to learn a completely new classification for coding job categories. Staff also felt that this change had been instigated without any effective support:

'No support and one manual between all of us.'
(PA Call Centre Area)

Call Centre systems

There were generally greater levels of complaints about IT from Call Centre Start-up Advisers. The main reason for this was the Call Centre Start-up LMS could crash with no warning, sometimes while on the phone with a client. During the duration of our evaluation, a new version of the appointments and communications software came on line which was seen by many staff as a great improvement, since they could now allocate time six months ahead.

The other technical innovation supporting the Call Centre variant is the Integrated Claim Form (ICF). Staff views on this were mixed. Problems remained with this and staff reported that it would disappear from the system after they were working on it for up to 30 minutes. One complaint was that repeat claims had to be started from scratch rather than copied to the client's new claim form. In addition, ICFs were not popular with Local Authorities since they found it difficult to find the information they needed since it was *'peppered across the whole form from front to back'*.

Expert advice and support

In terms of providing supports for frontline staff, access to expert advice and accurate information was crucial. The key areas were in benefits and employment but, as we will discuss in Chapter 7, links to other sources of advice, e.g. from specialist agencies and service providers, were seen to be of growing importance.

Benefits expertise

The most important source of internal support was advice on benefits. This came informally from colleagues with a Benefits Agency background or, more formally, from dedicated benefit experts. Staff considered that it would be *'almost impossible'* to know enough about the more complex benefits and to be confident enough to help and advise clients accurately. The presence of a benefits expert was highly valued by frontline staff. In the absence of a benefit specialist providing a service across all benefits – i.e. including Housing and Council Tax benefit matters – was a problem. In pilot areas where specialist benefits advice was not available on site, this was seen as an essential development to improve delivery.

Employment expertise

On the whole employment and labour market information was not called upon as much. It was clear that people with good local knowledge and links with employers were of great value to their colleagues and that

specialists were called upon – like the Disability Employment Advisers, but employment information and expertise was not sought nearly as often as benefit matters.

Informal supports

Across the areas ONE staff had formed good working teams with a high level of informal and mutual support. All staff valued this and most relied on the availability of their colleagues to help them with day-to-day queries and information. Mostly staff consulted each other about benefit matters and about job searches and related issues. On the whole, ONE managers or Personal Adviser managers were not necessarily seen as having the same detailed benefits-related knowledge or experience as colleagues with a Benefits Agency or Employment Service background.

Overall, the high level of co-operation between frontline staff in particular was striking across the areas and sites but it did appear that this had grown up without any particular management or training support for team building.

6.6.3 Training strategies

The issue of staff training has been covered in some detail in Chapter 3. Here we can note that ongoing training was a major issue for pilot management. The logistics of freeing staff to attend training, for example, in preparation for ‘full participation’ or for new benefit arrangements like Joint Claims, were formidable. Part of the problem was that the provision of these events was not fully in the hands of the pilots: some of it was arranged from the centre and so times and dates could not be flexible.

Similarly, it was not clear how far managers had the resources and opportunity to respond to training needs and issues raised by staff. For example, a frequent observation from staff was the need for in-depth training in guidance and interview skills – which increased with the need to deal with a wider range of clients (non-JSA) and more actively engage them in the work-focused element of ONE, or at least to explore steps towards greater independence. Staff felt that there had been no real training in dealing with the complexities of non-JSA clients’ issues such as the implications of various illnesses, conditions and impairments for employment and daily living and in the area of carers’ issues.

The clear message was that staff wanted more help and sustained support in interviewing, general ‘people skills’ and how to support people in difficulties – the distressed, the depressed, possible domestic troubles, mental health problems. But alongside this there were questions about what the focus of the work and, therefore, the limits of their work, should be.

Other issues which staff cited as needing further support included more knowledge on local agencies and service providers. This was, arguably, less of a training need and more of a structural/contextual problem since knowledge about external agencies among ONE advisers varied widely depending on the efforts of individual areas to address this issue.

Managers also identified some training needs of their own, for example, in conducting staff appraisals.

There were, then, clear indications that staff were recognising and articulating training needs of these kinds but there did not appear to be a training strategy for ONE which could embrace both the requirements from the centre and a capacity to respond to 'grassroots' needs.

As a pilot programme, it was not, perhaps, surprising that ONE did not have a strong programme of staff or career development. There were supports for individuals but this fell short of any systematic opportunity for staff or managers to develop and there were indications of poor morale associated with uncertainties about future prospects.

6.7 External contacts

There were some indications that the ONE service was beginning, through the partnerships which were established and through active developments by site offices, to make both strategic and operational links with external agencies.

The kind of aspects managers and staff were interested in were:

- developing links with services to which Personal Advisers might refer clients;
- establishing the kind of working arrangements which would allow the ONE service to have an 'audit trail' to log the outcomes of client referrals, placements, outcomes;
- more strategic level contacts which could extend networks and create opportunities for closer working/developments in the future.

On the whole, however, it is fair to say that this was an underdeveloped aspect of work at the local/ONE office level although ONE managers were aware of the potential benefits here and making progress at strategic level.

6.8 Summary of key points

In summary we can note:

- at the pilot area level, management was essentially about implementation not service development;
- there were indications that pilot area and site managers were limited in how far they could respond to local circumstances and needs;
- there were a number of crucial and complex issues relating to managing client demand and workload management;
- there was evidence of tensions between core agency performance/target expectation and those for meeting ONE objectives and between central and pilot area/site priorities;
- similarly, it appeared that managers were limited in how far they could respond to the views and experience of staff in relation to, for example, staff development, training needs;
- the development of external links and contacts was recognised as an important management task.

7 ACHIEVEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

The aim of this chapter is to present an overview of the key developments and achievements of ONE relating to service delivery. Included in this discussion are the key strands which we identified as likely to be important in appreciating the progress made by ONE: the central role of the Personal Adviser; the clients' experience of the service – the client pathway; cultural changes and partnerships.

7.1 Key aspects of delivery

This strand of the evaluation focused primarily on the processes and activities involved in delivering the service. In terms of achievements, therefore, we cannot comment directly on client outcomes – for example, on job placement levels, on involvement in the labour market. What we can comment on is the extent to which certain key objectives and intentions of ONE were established.

The aim is to identify these aspects fairly briefly here as a way of identifying, highlighting and collating achievements: many of the points are covered in more detail in later sections of the chapter.

7.1.1 Delivering the key features

In terms of the key objectives of ONE, we can summarise the achievements as follows:

- *an integrated service*: ONE was broadly successful in integrating the activities of the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency in relation to benefits claiming and job seeking. However, since ONE was not a free-standing service, there were essential linkages with the core operations to be maintained which were, by definition, not fully under the management of ONE staff;
- *improved customer service*: the overall feedback from clients, frontline staff and managers was that ONE provided a much better service. In particular the single point of contact and the welcoming environment were appreciated. There were issues about the delay in submitting claims caused by the requirement to attend the first Personal Adviser meeting;
- *an individualised, client-focused service*: ONE did achieve a measure of individualised contact for clients but was not consistently able to provide a 'rounded' assessment leading to specifically tailored supports to meet particular circumstances. There were also difficulties in sustaining individualised follow-up in the form of caseloading by Personal Advisers. Clients were not always able to see 'their' adviser for follow-up meetings since this continuity was often compromised in favour of meeting appointment scheduling targets. And, clients were not usually asked for their preference on these occasions. The service was not always, then, able to provide a smooth or a complete 'pathway' for clients;

- *the central role of the Personal Adviser:* although the work of the Personal Adviser was indeed central to the service, there were questions about quite what this role should be and how far it should extend. For example, client assessment might focus narrowly on job-readiness or extend into identifying and planning how to overcome personal or social barriers to employment.

7.1.2 *Labour market performance and targets*

This research was not geared to assessing ONE in terms of job placements or increased labour market involvement, but we did obtain some important indications of performance.

Although it was feared that the complex set-up of ONE and integration of benefit claiming and job seeking activities might result in a down turn in performance on job placements, this did not emerge as a significant problem. We are not clear if placement numbers actually increased but would not have expected this because:

- of the considerable complexities and time commitments involved in setting up ONE;
- of the advent of ‘full participation’ which brought new client groups with more complex needs into the service;
- latterly, the focus of ONE was, as we understand it, specifically shifted to non-JSA clients who would be, by definition, ‘harder-to-place’.

The response to non-JSA clients suggested that, after an initial period of orientation and caution on the part of Personal Advisers, they were beginning to have more confidence about introducing a work-focus. There were signs not only that this was welcomed by some clients but also that sensitive and carefully timed support was beginning to bring results.

Personal Advisers and managers saw the importance of, and wanted to find ways of, recognising and measuring progress along the path – the ‘distance travelled’ – towards job-readiness for non-JSA clients. This would also be true of JSA clients facing the kind of barriers which make them less than work-ready.

7.1.3 *Benefit performance*

ONE was seen as providing a better customer service by taking all claims to benefit at the one visit. There were moves to deal with queuing and waiting times, the provision of benefit experts to support frontline staff and the introduction of parallel processing in one area were major achievements.

As far as we were made aware, there were no significant ‘knock-on’ effects for processing times although many of the operations of the Benefits Agency were affected by the implementation of ONE (see Section 7.2). Staff suggested that ONE was having an influence on reducing the number of fraudulent claims and, with the introduction of benefit experts on site, many thought that the level of accuracy was increasing overall.

The establishment of an open and unscreened working environment was a big achievement and, on the whole, managed fairly confidently by staff.

7.1.4 Cultural changes

One of the intentions of the ONE programme was that it would achieve a shift in the way benefit claiming and work seeking were perceived by staff, by clients and, to a lesser extent, the public in general.

- *Welfare to Work and establishing a work focus:* within the limits of the geographical areas of the pilots, ONE did become known about and understood by a wide range of organisations and individuals. The shift of thinking away from benefit driven ideas of welfare and towards the promotion of work as both an economic and social benefit had become more widely understood. There were indications that agencies outside the domain of the labour market, like for example, social care and specialised support agencies, were becoming interested in work issues. Although these shifts could not necessarily be attributed to ONE, there did appear to be mutual interests which could be explored at local level.
- *Changing client expectations and public awareness:* similarly there were indications that clients were beginning to learn about the new system. Staff reported rather less criticism from clients about longer times for their claims to be lodged and a positive response to having a Personal Adviser. We noted earlier that the introduction of a work-focus for non-JSA clients was, on the whole, accepted by clients and that the overall emphasis on work was seen as fair if not always feasible. It was thought that the general public, in pilot areas, were becoming aware of ONE and coming to understand that any benefit claim would involve a meeting with a Personal Adviser and a discussion about work.
- *Cultural shifts for staff:* there were also significant shifts for staff in terms of work cultures and working practices. One of the key changes was to embrace a work focus into their work: on the face of it that was a more marked shift for staff with a Benefits Agency background but Employment Service staff too had to re-orientate their work to include benefit activities. Their 'home' agency expectations and established ways of doing things were not, as we have noted, entirely replaced by a ONE culture or ethos although ONE teams did develop quite clear identities.

7.1.5 The identity of ONE

An overall finding was that ONE did have a more-or-less separate identity: the ONE logo, the distinct furnishings, the lack of screens and generally open, friendly atmosphere ensured that the ONE service was different from other operations on the sites observed.

However, it was also clear that ONE was strongly influenced by the 'home' site, i.e. the Employment Service, Benefits Agency, and to a lesser extent, Local Authority offices, in which most of the ONE teams were located. In terms of having a 'mission' and purposes, definitions,

objectives, priorities and targets which were distinct from those of the main partners – Employment Service and Benefits Agency – the ONE service did not emerge overall as having a clear and separate identity. Indeed, ONE was never conceived of as a free-standing service: it depended on its links into the mainstream operations of the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency.

In terms of a ONE culture, then, it is not surprising that it was difficult for managers to define a ‘free-standing’ identity or a clearly separate ‘mission’ for ONE. This is partly also an expression of the pilot nature of the service. Many staff, even late on in the pilots, expressed their doubts about what ONE was really trying to achieve: *‘what is ONE really about?’*

7.2 Impact of the ONE pilot on the core agencies

This strand of the research explored the ways in which the implementation of ONE impacted upon the core work activities and business functions of the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency. Identifying and reflecting on these impacts is of particular importance in relation to the imminent establishment of Jobcentre Plus.

The following findings are based on interviews with the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency directors and managers from across the three case study areas at regional, district and site levels. The impact themes raised by respondents are discussed under the following main headings: resources, service delivery and performance.

7.2.1 Resources

One of the key resource issues for both the Employment Service and Benefits Agency was that of losing experienced agency staff to ONE during the set-up phase of the pilot. Workforce depletion in terms of size and expertise occurred due to the secondment process and resulted in both agencies implementing remedial recruitment and training drives.

‘We had to bring in 30 to 40 new staff and train them up from scratch. We are still recovering from that loss and the need to bring new people up to speed.’

(Benefits Agency)

It was emphasised that the task of replenishing human resources using new inexperienced staff was a considerable one. Associated costs included management time, increased workload and pressure on existing staff and the allocation of training funds.

Cross-subsidisation of the pilot was a recurrent theme across Employment Service and Benefits Agency respondents, with both agencies providing various illustrations of this. The two main issues which emerged concerned deployment of own agency staff to cover ONE staff shortfalls during peak claiming periods; and a perceived inadequate resourcing for on-site management.

It was suggested that the ONE resource model in terms of staff numbers did not cater for fluctuations in volume of clients. ONE staff activities and time were officially ring-fenced from the Employment Service and Benefits Agency site operations. However, there was general agreement that this did not address the claiming ebbs and flows that occurred, and which required management through appropriate deployment of all site staff. During peak claiming periods and ONE staff absences, both Employment Service and Benefits Agency directed their own human resources away from home agency business and on to ONE work in order to meet ONE demands.

The over-riding message from both agencies was that:

‘They definitely need to look in the future at how to contract and deploy people so that there is flex in the system to cope with the ebbs and flows of claims.’

(Benefits Agency)

Site management, i.e. where ONE was managed by the existing local manager in addition to their Employment Service or Benefits Agency operational responsibilities, was seen as a key factor in integrating ONE and existing agency processes, so that the service was able to function. Furthermore, site management was recognised as supporting ONE staff in their work:

‘I still advocate that there is nothing to substitute having a manager there in situ.’

(Employment Service)

However, management of ONE by agency operatives did emerge as a main cross-subsidisation issue. Although resourcing was incorporated for site management, it was felt that responsibility for ONE took a toll on availability for focusing on home agency demands and so this element was perceived as under resourced.

‘Business Managers in the Employment Service generally have a demanding job, and so when you add the ONE dimension and all the related management information and data that needs to be communicated to the staff on a whole range of ONE issues it does add a great load. It’s really a full time job, but wasn’t resourced as such.’

(Employment Service)

Both the Employment Service and Benefits Agency also reported on delivery transaction costs that they believed were not factored into the original model. For example, attendance at ONE meetings, dealing with ONE generated enquiries from clients or ONE staff and the time taken up by IT systems that did not talk to each other, were all cited as examples of time expended on ONE by agency staff for which the resource model had not been calibrated.

'The IT doesn't support the pilot, because basically it creates extra transaction costs e.g. transferring claims from one server to another - when you add up the volumes of these small tasks it does make a difference.'

(Employment Service)

'These liaison meetings were not factored in yet they took a lot of BA staff from their work - District Managers, Executive Officers, and so on.'

(Benefits Agency)

Whilst apparently minor in nature, it was stressed that in terms of accumulated personnel time, these transactional costs resulted in considerable additional resources from both agencies effectively being 'sucked' into ONE.

Overall, the ONE resource and process models were viewed as only partial representations of the reality of implementing a functioning ONE service, with home agency transaction, subsidisation and delivery costs not having been accounted for in the original ONE design.

'It was largely where we were offering up casuals to help, we were loaning managers, there were bits of our time that couldn't be attributed in the ONE model. Basically the process map wasn't comprehensive and so things were missed out.'

(Benefits Agency)

7.2.2 Service delivery

A key concern for both the Employment Service and Benefits Agency was an apparent lack of clarity in relation to the division of some delivery responsibilities. Both agencies suggested that whilst ONE is an 'improved outsource' dealing with all the processes that go with the front end of a claim, an issue that has remained unresolved throughout the pilot is when hand-over of a client's requirements to agencies occurs. For example, there was confusion about who was responsible for change of circumstances and service provision for lone parents.

'Eighteen months into the ONE pilot and still we are coming up with things where we are not sure who does an element of work and who fills in a certain form.'

(Team leader, pilot area)

Whilst it was suggested that this issue of blurred lines of responsibility, could lead to cross-subsidisation of the pilot by the two agencies, nonetheless concern for clients' welfare came at the top of the agenda.

'We have to take the pragmatic approach that says the person is there in front of you and someone has to deal with it.'

(Employment Service)

However, the clear message accompanying the acceptance of the situation was that:

‘One management system would help reduce this type of tension.’

(Benefits Agency)

Benefits Agency respondents commented on additional delivery pressures for their staff in relation to crisis loan services:

‘Because of delays between Start-up and Personal Adviser meetings and the lag in processing benefits, more and more people were becoming desperate for money. Thus, the number of Social Fund applications rose.’

(Benefits Agency)

Staff thought that the impact of greater number of crisis loan applications associated with ONE predominantly occurred in the early days of the pilot and at peak claiming periods during the years.⁸

In the main, it was felt by both the Employment Service and Benefits Agency that the implementation of ONE had improved agency services. Client relations and links with other agencies in the community were cited as particularly positive examples of the way in which the pilot has impacted on home agency delivery approaches.

For the Employment Service the ONE service was perceived as indirectly benefiting the agency, through enhancing their public image:

‘The absolute bonus is this wonderful public relations exercise that has gone on with our customers.’

(Employment Service)

Furthermore it was suggested that some real changes in the delivery of agency services, to establish a client-focused concern, have occurred as a result of ONE .

The greatest impact of the ONE pilot on delivery operations was probably experienced by the Benefits Agency since ONE provided the impetus for ‘an enormous change of culture’ both amongst staff and customers.

‘For years we’ve been trying to educate customers about what evidence and documents are needed to support their claims, the ONE process provides an opportunity to do this in a much more customer-focused and friendly way. Previously, the processing section would simply write to the customer saying what was needed without explaining why, which customers found very frustrating.’

(Benefits Agency)

The use of Benefits Agency offices as ONE sites had major implications for traditional Benefits Agency delivery approaches, the first of which

⁸ Internal analysis of administrative data shows that the apparent effect on crisis loans was confined to a small number of pilot areas.

was the ONE requirement to provide an unscreened environment. Successful negotiations occurred with trade unions in relation to health and safety issues associated with staff operating in unscreened environments. It was suggested that ‘with the walls coming down’ the Benefits Agency have begun to change their customer relations attitude, with clients becoming the focus of attention rather than the processing of claim forms. A clear example of this is the development of an innovative delivery strategy, in one pilot area, aimed at actively supporting ONE clients – front-end processing. Benefits Agency processors met with clients during their Personal Adviser interviews to check forms and evidence, inform clients of the status of their claim and, when possible, start processing the claim. In the same pilot area efforts to overhaul the delivery services to agency clients were also made. For example, floor walkers were introduced to deal with enquiries, diffuse tensions and alert staff to clients who had been waiting for long periods of time. Face-to-face decisions and explanations by experts in relation to crisis loan applications (rather than back room decisions by experts that are then fed back to customers by receptionists) were also introduced with good results.

A further shift in attitude was also evident in terms of both agencies beginning to think beyond the boundaries of their own business concerns and targets, to the potential for adopting a more joined up approach to work and welfare.

‘The Benefits Agency could do a lot more in terms of what the visiting teams could do out on the road in terms of encouraging clients to think about work.’

(Benefits Agency)

Increased networking with organisations in the locality, through operating the ONE service, was identified as significantly contributing to the development of greater contacts and dialogue with local service providers and agencies to the benefit of home agency activities.

‘Certainly, I have met some new people that without ONE I wouldn’t have linked with. It has given me some new contacts, and that impacts for me not only in terms of ONE, but also in terms of all the New Deals that I am responsible for, so that’s very helpful. There is much more dialogue on these non-JSA client groups which I think has positively impacted on the implementation and delivery of the New Deals as well.’

(Employment Service)

7.2.3 Performance

As indicated earlier, both the Employment Service and Benefits Agency identified loss of experienced staff as a key resource impact of the pilot, with subsequent associated impacts on performance. It was observed that the new recruits brought in to replace staff seconded to the pilot lacked the knowledge and experience of their predecessors and that, despite training, the inevitable learning curve for new personnel caused business performance to suffer.

'We lost half of our best staff to the ONE project and that really had an effect on our targets because we had to get in casual staff to fill in the gaps and we had to train them up quite quickly.'

(Employment Service)

Similarly, the early stages of the pilot were characterised by a learning curve for ONE staff that had an initial impact on each agency's performance, with both reporting a reduction in the quality of overall services.

'It did take I would reckon about six months to get back on an even keel in terms of performance, you know again reaching each month our job placement targets.'

(Employment Service)

Employment Service respondents cited job submissions and placements, speed of processing new claims and claim accuracy as the key service targets that were detrimentally affected by the implementation of ONE. Whilst this was acknowledged to be largely associated with the early stages of the pilot it was also suggested that three other factors throughout the pilot have led to continuing concerns over meeting own agency targets: the fixed number of ONE staff in relation to peak claiming periods, conflicting ONE and Employment Service requirements, and the Employment Service target monitoring systems.

Since ONE staffing was ring-fenced, problems were encountered during peak claiming periods. When client volumes exceeded staff resources to see new claimants within three days, a decrease in Personal Adviser-client meeting time was often implemented. However, it was thought that this led to a decrease in job searches in order to handle the benefit aspect and this, in turn, caused a drop in achieving Employment Service job submissions targets.

'Employment Service requirements don't necessarily mesh with ONE requirements and so fulfilling one may have an adverse impact on the other.'

(Employment Service)

Exacerbating the issue of Employment Service targets in ONE pilot areas, were the monitoring mechanisms used. Whilst not a direct impact of ONE, respondents gave illustrations on how the ONE status attached to job placements detracted from their overall performance ratings:

'Through our Labour Market System, we have a marker that shows the client as a ONE client and that marker actually takes precedence. So, if you have a New Deal Lone Parent client who is going through ONE, they lose their New Deal status on the screen and they are 'captured' as ONE, and if we get a placing, at the moment New Deal Lone Parents contribute into our A1 target which is our top priority target but actually all the ONE placings are captured under A3 which is further up this nesting process. It is feeding in higher so we are missing on our A1 target.'

(Employment Service)

For the Benefits Agency key performance issues arose in relation to both claim form accuracy and processing times. Again, it was recognised, that certainly in relation to claim form accuracy, the learning curve for ONE staff was the dominant factor that attributed to a decrease in this target performance by the agency. In addition, ‘full participation’ was also identified as a follow-up contributing factor:

‘In May, following ‘full participation’, two of our performance indicators, accuracy and time of processing, just fell off the map.’

(Benefits Agency)

However, the majority of Benefits Agency respondents felt that, having gone through a stabilising process, the ‘double handling’ of client case papers did achieve greater accuracy on claim forms than existed in pre-ONE days.

Both Employment Service and Benefits Agency respondents described ONE as the front end of a new claiming process. For the Benefits Agency this has meant an additional administrative tier extending the time taken to process claims, due to ‘double handling’ of forms. However, actual processing delays were mainly associated with peak claiming periods and attributed to the delay in claim papers reaching them, when Personal Adviser-client meetings did not occur within the specified three day time frame. The idea of establishing on-site processing teams was raised enthusiastically and was certainly thought to be an important consideration relevant to the establishment of Jobcentre Plus.

7.3 Partnership

The aim of our work on partnership was to identify and assess the partnership arrangements for the development, implementation and operation of ONE in the 12 pilot areas.

The following discussion is based on our findings from group interviews with all Pilot Management Groups and individual in-depth interviews with key informants across the three case study areas.

7.3.1 Partnership - levels and members

At the heart of ONE was the core partnership between the Benefits Agency, Employment Service, and Local Authorities. There were two levels of this partnership: the *strategic* under the Pilot Steering Group (PSG) and the *operational* under the Pilot Management Group (PMG).

In terms of inclusivity of the ONE partnership, across the pilots it was felt that the core partnership (as represented by Pilot Management Group) involved the right partners for the purposes of managing and monitoring ONE on a regular basis. In general, it was felt that it would have been counter-productive to include other partners, as this would hinder the coherence and decision-making process of Pilot Management Group. In any case, pilots felt that the stakeholder partnership provided a good platform for the involvement and engagement of other interested parties.

Apart from the core partners, ONE involved a wider range of organisations, agencies and actors as stakeholder partners. These included a number of Local Authorities departments in addition to Housing (like Social Services and Education, and also regeneration, community links), the Child Support Agency, and welfare rights/benefit advice groups to voluntary organisations, Health Authorities/Boards. In some cases employers and their representative bodies (such as Chambers of Commerce, Employer Coalitions, Training and Enterprise Councils) were also included.

7.3.2 Planning and setting-up partnerships

In most cases, partnership between the ONE core agencies evolved organically as a natural successor to the initial Implementation Team. In all cases the fact that partners already knew each other and had worked together on other programmes contributed to a relatively smooth planning and setting-up process. For example, two of the core partners (the Employment Service and Benefits Agency) had already been working together on the delivery of JSA. Similarly, in a number of pilot areas, the Benefits Agency and the Local Authorities had instigated liaison meetings on welfare issues. As a result, many partners were familiar with each other and with some of the constraints under which each operated. This was particularly useful in forging the ONE core partnership, especially given the tight timescales involved.

Across the pilots there was criticism of the initial planning: the timescales and deadlines set had been unrealistic and had led to problems. An example was the award of the ONE contract to private contractors who, once successful in their bidding, had a limited number of weeks to put everything in place. Indeed, recruitment and selection of ONE staff was mentioned by all pilots as having been quite taxing, since initially partners had no uniform and standard recruitment procedure specifically linked to ONE. Instead, each partner had their own recruitment and selection procedure. In most cases, however, the PMGs managed to devise a recruitment procedure that was acceptable to all partners, e.g. a recruitment panel with representatives from all core partners.

More importantly, the resources provided to the ONE pilots (based on the Costed Business Model) were deemed by all the pilots to have been rather inadequate. Even in terms of the setting up of the ONE Core Partnership, this was feasible only by the hard work of all core partners who initially met on a weekly or fortnightly basis and were willing to 'go the extra mile' to make things happen. In terms of cost savings which were expected as a result of ONE, in the view of most partners it had been very difficult to identify, isolate and estimate these.

7.3.3 The involvement of Local Authorities

An issue that gave rise to concerns at the setting-up stage was the involvement of Local Authorities. Across the pilots Local Authorities felt that they had come into the partnerships late and as an afterthought. The design of ONE did not seem to take account of the way local government is structured and operates:

- the model assumed that in each pilot either there would be one Local Authority or a number of Local Authorities operating in a homogeneous and uniform way, but this was not the case as in most pilots there was more than one Local Authority involved. Different Local Authorities had distinctive structures and policy frameworks as well as operating procedures and each PMG had to take particular account of these;
- equally, the planning did not seem to take into account the political nature of the Local Authorities whereby all actions have to be approved by Council Members. This inevitably led to a more cumbersome and time-consuming process in relation to Local Authority responses to ONE developments;
- according to Local Authorities, the ONE model did not take into account that Housing Benefit was only one of many services they provided and, as such, did not represent a major part of their work. In contrast, the work-related focus of ONE and the majority of the other benefits it covered were seen as being much more central to the work of the Benefits Agency and Employment Service. As a result, in some cases it was difficult to secure top management commitment from Local Authorities since ONE was not seen as being of strategic importance for them. Moreover, at the time of introducing ONE, Local Authorities were also involved in a number of other Government initiatives (e.g. Verification Framework) which also required management time and resources. Consequently, some Local Authorities had difficulty providing the resources (i.e. staff) deemed necessary for ONE;
- the ONE design model did not seem to take account of the different budget assumptions under which Local Authorities operate (as opposed to those of the Benefits Agency and Employment Service. In the case of Local Authorities, the budget is set in March–April each year. Local Authorities have to operate within this budget and cannot deviate or pull down funding from anywhere else. This, in turn, limited their ability to be flexible in terms of embracing new initiatives in the middle of the budget cycle;
- the way ONE was introduced and its tight timescales meant that unless there had been prior co-operation and Local Authority involvement in the work of the Benefits Agency and/or Employment Service, there was not enough time and space to mobilise all the Local Authorities on which ONE had an impact. As a result, our fieldwork highlighted a quite mixed and varied Local Authority involvement in the ONE Partnership, with Local Authorities ranging from being very involved and committed to ONE to those whose liaison with the ONE partnership was quite loose, if not non-existent but most pilots fell somewhere in-between the two extremes.

7.3.4 *Implementation and management*

The PMG was responsible for the delivery, and overall management and development of ONE. At the initial stages of ONE the PMG partners met almost on a weekly basis, but later this reduced to monthly.

In most cases the Chair of the Pilot Management Group was the District Manager of either the Benefits Agency or the Employment Service, but in some the Chair rotated every six months. The latter arrangement not only enhanced the sense of ownership of ONE but also addressed the feeling among Local Authorities that they did not really matter in the ONE Partnership. Local Authorities who were involved in chairing meetings did appear to be more engaged in the process.

In general, the Pilot Management Groups were serviced by the ONE manager and their team who provided the necessary secretarial support. The ONE manager was accountable to the Pilot Management Group, which provided the necessary support in relation to the operation and delivery of ONE.

The Pilot Management Group provided strategic direction for the pilots and acted as the mediator for any issues that arose at Pilot Management Group level which the partners were unable to solve among themselves.

Once the initial rather tense period had passed, few issues remained that were not resolved at Pilot Management Group level. However, as we noted earlier, an issue that continued to cause some tension between the partners (albeit at delivery/operational level) was that each core partner had different targets, thus sending different messages to ONE (and non-ONE) staff. For example, the primary focus of the Employment Service was on job placings as opposed to the Benefits Agency whose targets emphasised accuracy. On the other hand, Local Authorities were working to targets around average processing time. At the time of the fieldwork, partners had not managed to reconcile these into a meaningful set of ONE targets.

Related to this was the fact that each of the core partner organisations had their distinct and different cultures. For example, the Employment Service was seen as being focused on work and target driven as opposed to the Benefits Agency which put benefits first and was concerned with the claim being processed in an accurate and timely way (as were the Local Authorities).

However, an interesting finding was the way PMG evolved over time, not so much in terms of numbers and types of partners around the table, but rather in terms of developing a shared understanding of, and a common approach to, resolving issues related to ONE. This was underpinned in each case by the strong customer focus of ONE and the willingness on the part of the partners to provide the best possible service to the client. This desire for enhanced customer service enabled partners to transcend their own, rather restricted, organisational views and priorities and develop a common agenda specific to ONE, which acquired a life of its own. As a result, the closer co-operation between partners in relation to ONE led to the breaking down of barriers and to a change in attitudes and mindsets.

7.3.5 Stakeholder partnerships

In addition to the partnerships with a direct responsibility for implementing and managing ONE, the pilots set up stakeholder partnerships. These were not so much formal partnerships as local or regional networks of organisations and groups with an interest in the ONE and with a contribution to make to its implementation or development. We noted earlier that the kind of organisations participating included those from public, private and voluntary sectors and covered a range of interests across economic, commercial, educational, health and social service fields.

These were, then, potentially large and somewhat loose knit partnerships where involvement would be more attractive to some than others. One of the issues, then, for the ONE implementation teams which took the initiative in setting these up, was on what basis they could recruit and sustain commitment. Not surprisingly, some of these partnerships reflected a wider set of issues than those which related most closely to the ONE implementation. As well as the immediate objectives of the pilots, they also embraced some of the broader Welfare to Work policy issues. Thus, for example, people with an interest in promoting social inclusion, increasing public participation, forging new links across policy and programme domains in line with ‘modernising government’, seeking to generate new economic opportunities – and so on – were invited to join stakeholder partnerships

The stakeholder partnerships developed during the pilots and were seen as valuable for a number of reasons – some not directly related to ONE. For example, local agencies were more likely to realise the connection between their work and employment issues, to understand more about each others’ work and priorities. There were some indications that these partnerships allowed participants to gain new perspectives: for example, a small local voluntary agency could appreciate more about the local Chamber of Commerce; a public sector worker might learn about new plans for strategic or economic development. Because ONE connected, through welfare and employment concerns, to such a wide spectrum of interests, people were coming into contact with new perspectives, information and ideas. Although the focus was primarily on ways of working to reduce welfare dependency and increase employability, the range of partners meant that other aspects of local working together and local development were identified.

However, there were indications that, not surprisingly, ONE was in competition with other local or regional networks which were also concerned with local developments large and small – such as regeneration schemes, welfare rights campaigns, developments in planning or collaborative schemes – so that there were dangers of losing focus and support. For example, moves to modernise local government and policy moves in the National Health Service both emphasise the importance of increasing consumer and citizen participation: as a result more organisations, large and small, are being invited to join or contribute to

meetings and conferences and partnerships of various sorts. Sustaining involvement in these circumstances could depend on the careful definition of the kind of contribution each partner can make and recognition of mutual benefits.

7.3.6 *Assessment of partnerships*

One key finding of the fieldwork was that the partnership worked well at the strategic and at the operational level, including the stakeholder partnership and in general the overall assessment of partnership working within ONE was positive. The core partnership (as represented by Pilot Management Group) was successful on a number of fronts.

First, it was instrumental in achieving inclusiveness and representativeness by ensuring that all the relevant actors were involved at Pilot Management Group level. Moreover, the Pilot Management Group along with ONE managers (and in most cases an external liaison co-ordinator) had identified a wide range of service providers and other agencies that could address the varied nature of clients' needs. These were invited to join the Stakeholder Partnership which, in some cases, at the time of the fieldwork was just bedding down.

Second, partnership working within ONE had led to a broader and shared understanding of each partner's role, responsibilities, constraints and concerns. This, in turn, resulted in partners' willingness to work together for a common goal (e.g. customer service) and to develop a common approach in dealing with ONE-related issues. ONE partnership developed its own momentum, with partners able to break down and overcome organisational barriers, especially at Pilot Management Group and Pilot Steering Group levels. As mentioned above more needed to be done at the operational interface of the main agencies. At the time of the fieldwork, these had not mapped out clearly how ONE linked into their core business.

Third, partnership working had succeeded in fostering a shared commitment to the success of ONE and to partners working together to overcome common problems by ensuring that client focus was maintained. Something of a virtuous circle was established, ensuring that client focus was not lost in the various deliberations and that the customer focus acted as the focal point where the interests of all parties converged.

Fourth, to some extent partnership working within ONE had also facilitated inter-agency co-operation in that it broke down various demarcation lines that existed even in the joint working and close links between the Employment Service and Benefits Agency with regard to JSA. ONE and its holistic approach led to the blurring of the boundaries between organisations and can be seen as the precursor or the test-bed of Jobcentre Plus.

Finally, partnership working had enhanced inter-organisational and collaborative learning between organisations. For example, partners learnt

about the Local Authorities' role, operation and constraints and how to overcome the latter. More importantly, because ONE introduced a completely new way of doing things, partners had to come up with new solutions to problems. To do so, they had to work together, learn together and develop innovative ways of addressing operational issues.

Against the above it should be noted that the process of partnership building and working was not devoid of problems. For example, across all the pilots the concept of partnership had not necessarily filtered down to the staff of the core agencies, especially those involved in the processing of claims. However, across the pilots steps had been taken to improve the quality of interaction and enhance the extent of shared understanding between ONE employees and non-ONE staff at the processing sites. To this end, most pilots had introduced regular meetings (on a monthly or even weekly basis) between ONE managers and managers/supervisors from the processing sites to discuss and find ways of resolving issues related to processing. Moreover, in a number of pilots, exchange visits had taken place between ONE and non-ONE staff in an attempt to raise awareness and enhance understanding between the two.

However, commitment and determination, underpinned by a strong belief on the part of the partners that ONE represented a better way of working and of serving the client, the setting up and operation of partnerships was broadly successful. It was recognised by many that '*we [Pilot Management Group partners] all pulled together in the face of adversity*'. It is an achievement that partnership working was established and was built upon during the lifetime of the pilots.

7.4 Links with the wider community

We have referred several times to the fact that ONE was not a free-standing service. Most obviously, it had essential links into core Employment Service, Benefits Agency and Local Authority operations. But, an important element in ONE implementation was to establish strategic and grass-root links with a range of agencies that provide services to local communities. In addition, the employment objectives of ONE meant that the service was also closely concerned with the labour market and so links with the demand side – employers – at strategic and operational levels were important. Here we look at our findings about how these external relationships developed.

7.4.1 Links with service providers

Service providers refers to those agencies that provide the kind of services to which ONE clients might be referred, or could provide information and advice to the ONE service. They cover a range of more-or-less local organisations from voluntary, private and statutory sectors. As part of our evaluation we looked at links between ONE implementation and service providers in two main ways. First, we explored the links with stakeholder partnerships, where the issues were more likely to be those concerned with strategic level planning and these points were presented above. In addition, we looked at client referrals, the views of frontline staff and obtained comments from the service agencies themselves, which we present here.

In looking at service providers we made a distinction between those which were more directly concerned with preparation for employment, training and job seeking and those which provided personal or social support and advice.

Training and work preparation services

The type of service most used by Personal Advisers were those that provided training and work preparation for clients. These actually covered quite a wide field of activities and opportunities, including:

- general and personal preparation for work where the individual is helped to ‘square up’ to work, for example, self-presentation and interview skills, personal, career or vocational guidance, job seeking and CV preparation;
- employment preparation where clients are helped to acquire knowledge, skills and experience, for example, training courses, work experience, general work skills, specialised qualification courses, skills upgrade, and so on.

In most localities, these agencies were reasonably well known to frontline staff, particularly programme centres and training agencies of various kinds. However, there were some gaps in knowledge and, as we noted earlier (Chapter 4), indications that staff were not using these services to the full. In some instances, Personal Advisers were clearly not thinking about the potential value of external services as a matter of course, particularly in relation to non-JSA clients. Such services do offer support and training services for a range of non-JSA as well as JSA clients. Services providing opportunities for personal preparation including confidence building, work trials, help with motivation, individual careers or vocational counselling are highly relevant, for example, for people considering a return to work after illness or those who have never worked because of disabilities.⁹

Overall, then the picture is of Personal Adviser’s knowing about training and work preparation facilities but not fully recognising their relevance for the full range of ONE clients. The reasons for this appeared to arise from the following:

- the ethos of the Employment Service has not been to submit people for training until a certain point in time;
- the training provision for New Deal for Young People was seen as being specifically for that programme;
- a general caution about what non-JSA clients really need on the one hand and what is available on the other;
- a tendency to see training in terms of gaining specific work skills or qualifications rather than personal and more general preparation like vocational or career guidance.

¹³ Hills, D; Child, C; Blackburn, V; Youll, P. (2000). *Evaluation of the New Deal for Disabled People Innovative Schemes Pilots*, DSS Research Report No. 143, CDS: Leeds.

Personal and social services

The other category of service provision was that of personal and social services. This is a very broad collection including a wide and quite disparate range of services, for example:

- services for specific groups e.g. ex-offenders, the homeless, people with drug or alcohol problems, those with mental health problems;
- general information and advice, like debt counselling, welfare rights, legal assistance;
- family, childcare and carer support, including practical assistance;
- personal support such as individual counselling, victim support, and bereavement counselling.

Any one or combination of these might be relevant in helping a ONE client. Those who appear to be ‘technically’ job-ready may, in reality, be facing particular personal or social circumstances which are effective barriers to employment. Recognising these, alerting the client to the kind of services that are available and helping them to make contact with external services could be a key role for Personal Advisers.

Personal Advisers were aware that they lacked knowledge and sometimes confidence in this area. Exploring personal issues or domestic details with a client was seen as likely to be too probing or intrusive and frequently Personal Advisers did not consider themselves trained to do so (see also Chapter 5).

Typically, responding to clients with mental health issues was often quoted as problematic for Personal Advisers. However, these concerns only really surfaced as an issue where a Personal Adviser sensed there was a problem, but no medical information or formal diagnosis was provided by the client. Personal Advisers were aware that such clients might be significantly helped by getting advice from a suitable (and known) local agency. Several staff commented on the need for more development here and thought that there were considerable potential benefits in being able to ‘hand off’ clients to specialised agencies.

There were indications that managers were making contacts with specialised agencies but it was not clear that such initiatives had, as yet, resulted in strong working links where frontline staff became confident about making referrals or asking for advice. Furthermore, although each pilot area did have a directory of local services and agencies, maintenance of the directory in terms of updating and enhancing content through adding new services and providing suitably detailed information about the relevance and quality of services, did not appear to occur. Such directories were of limited value to frontline staff as a result.

7.4.2 Service providers' views of ONE

Our information here is indicative only as we were not able to reach a fully representative sample of agencies. Constructing a sample was difficult because pilot areas, and localities within them, differed in the range of agencies and services available. Equally, agencies could only provide information and commentary from their particular viewpoints: there were there few which could represent any wider sets of interests. However, a number of common points did emerge and these provide an indication of the kind of issues which ONE would need to address to promote stronger and effective working links.

In general, feedback was positive:

- service providers liked the ONE vision in principle and there was considerable goodwill towards the pilots. Responses suggested that some agencies were already more interested in, and aware of the value of, employment issues for their particular clients. For many this was a relatively new aspect to their work;
- providers indicated that they were prepared to get more involved with the work of ONE and would welcome closer links: some organisations were taking the initiative on this. They were happy to respond to invitations to talk to or be visited by ONE staff;
- it was recognised that *'Personal Advisers cannot know it all'*: their role was seen primarily as helping clients claim benefit and guide them towards work. They were not expecting Personal Advisers to have broad and detailed knowledge of the more specialist need of clients and how to respond to them. They *did*, however, expect them to have more, and more accurate, information about their local services;
- overall, providers recognised that they had a potentially valuable role in helping to access wider networks of support for ONE clients. They saw themselves as able to provide specialised help for frontline ONE staff in the form of information and advice;
- in addition, some expressed a willingness to extend and develop existing service provision in response to the kind of client demand which might come from ONE referrals.

Some concerns were also voiced:

- Personal Advisers tended to be seen as having an incomplete or inaccurate knowledge of the services available in their localities, both in terms of what providers were able to offer and for whom;
- agencies commented on a general lack of referrals from ONE and suggested that better use could be made of local services to help a number of clients;
- ONE frontline staff were seen as primarily concerned with job matching and work placement. Service providers suggested that this emphasis could lead to inadequate assessments of peoples' circumstances. Equally, thinking about how to tackle the issues of the less-than-work-ready tended to be limited;

- providers tended to focus on overcoming barriers for people with specific needs and as such were concerned that the ONE service was not referring people at all or were not doing so early enough;
- some agencies were concerned that the priority given to making job placements led to a tendency for Personal Advisers to ‘push people into jobs’. Intermediate or instrumental objectives (like training or social supports) did not count in the same way.

Overall, the question of ‘who pays’ underpinned discussions. Many of the services in this field are provided by voluntary agencies whose funding may be limited and not necessarily secure over the longer term. Such agencies may be dependent on specific service agreements, for example, with the Local Authority. While they might be interested in new work or expanding existing provision, this would have to be funded. If money followed the ONE client or if ONE had funding to buy in some forms of training, advice or staff development, it seemed that there were agencies interested in developing closer working links. The creation of monies for widening service supports and availability would imply strategic development as well as local.

7.4.3 *Contacts with employers*

The connection between the ONE service and employers was not an aspect that we looked at in detail.¹⁰ However, some points of interest emerged from our work with frontline staff and so are discussed here.

At the Personal Adviser level the main contact with employers came in submitting a client for a vacancy. Some were aware of local movements, for example in relation to seasonal work, and would make speculative calls on behalf of clients but these were not extended into any form of regular contact. This is in some contrast to, for example, the role of the Personal Adviser in the New Deal Service for Young People and the job broker role currently being explored through the extension of New Deal for Disabled People.

Generally, staff commented on their lack of knowledge about which local employers were willing to employ people with special needs. Advisers also indicated that they felt that employers’ awareness of ONE was low. Although local advertising of the ONE service was an element of implementation, there was no specific focus on promoting awareness among employers.

Many Personal Advisers felt that it would be valuable to contact employers for feedback on how a client progressed, for example in terms of interview performance, as this would allow Personal Advisers to advise clients more effectively. It would also mean that a more accurate impression of the successes and failures of job submissions could be gained.

¹⁰ Employers’ views of ONE and the recruitment of benefit claimants were studied by Bunt, K. *et al.* (2001a, 2001b).

At manager level there appeared to be little activity in relation to enhancing work opportunities, either through talking to employers about their needs or promoting ONE. In one pilot area (Private and Voluntary Sector), when employers were making large-scale redundancies, a ONE team did visit to do on-site Start-up. However, this approach was a specific response adopted mainly for the benefit of ONE, in that it effectively avoided a large number of new claimants coming to the ONE office.

At the more strategic level, some employers or employer organisations were included among key partners, but, in general, the links with the labour market remained the remit of core Employment Service activities.

7.4.4 *Issues relating to external links*

Overall, it was recognised that links with external services and employers would be valuable. However, it did appear that a number of issues concerning such links were not clarified prior to or during ONE implementation and that these remained largely unresolved. Some of these points are outlined below:

- there were concerns about the scope of the assessment of client's needs that the ONE service should provide. The nature of assessment, and how far this included identifying social and personal barriers to work, had implications for if, when and to whom clients were referred;
- linked with this were questions about how far it should be the role of the Personal Adviser to help people to move along the path towards job-readiness and at which points clients could/should be referred to the services which provide specialised or intensive or long-term support which ONE cannot offer;
- there were also questions about the extent to which individual Personal Advisers could or should be aware of local services and how this knowledge can be kept up to date;
- an underlying issue was that of who pays for the services of local agencies: ONE, the client, the providing agency;
- it appeared that little emphasis had been placed on developing relations between ONE and employers either at a strategic level or operational level, despite the labour market objectives of ONE.

7.5 *Summary of key points*

We conclude with a brief synopsis of the key issues to have emerged in relation to each of the main topics covered in this chapter.

- *Key outcomes:* ONE pilots did achieve an integration of Employment Services and Benefits Agency functions and an improved service for clients. The individualised and personal approach was appreciated by staff and clients but this was not always fully established or sustained. The central role of the Personal Adviser was confirmed but the evaluation identified a number of issues relating to the assessment of clients' job-readiness and personal circumstances, managing caseloads and the focus and limits of the Personal Adviser's role.

- *Cultural changes*: There were indications that ONE had achieved a level of public awareness of changes in the approach to welfare and was beginning to establish a work focus for non-JSA clients. There were some ambiguities about the overall mission and identity of ONE.
- *Impact on core agencies*: there were impacts on the ONE core services in the areas of:
 - *resources*: loss of experienced staff, cross-subsidisation of the pilot in terms of on-site management and the deployment of agency staff, delivery transaction costs;
 - *service delivery operations and performance*: confusion over the division of some delivery responsibilities, increased demands on the Benefits Agency crisis loan service, positive delivery developments of benefit to the home agencies, such as improved customer relations;
 - *performance*: some negative impacts associated with the learning curves of both ONE staff and replacement agency staff during the early phase of the pilot, conflicting ONE and agency objectives, incompatible target monitoring, decreased agency performance during peak claiming
- *Issues of partnership*: Implementation and management of the partnership was a particularly successful feature of the ONE pilot. The three tier approach adopted, involving a strategic drive under the Pilot Steering Groups, operational drive under the Pilot Management Groups, and a local focus with stakeholder partnerships, was seen as contributing to success of ONE. Some concerns were expressed over poor planning in relation to Local Authority involvement.
- *Links with the wider community*: overall, service providers viewed ONE as a positive development and would welcome closer links. Many service agencies were working to support people facing medium- and longer-term difficulties: most of these saw themselves as having either a direct (e.g. through educational or job preparation supports) or an indirect (e.g. providing personal or social supports) relevance for clients of ONE service seeking to improve their employability. There were few direct links with employers.

8 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In Chapter 7 we looked at the broad achievements of the ONE pilots. Here we summarise, briefly, what we see as the key issues to emerge and, based on these, make outline suggestions for the development of integrated services. This is followed by a more broadly-based discussion of ONE and some of the implications for future development.

The authority for this commentary flows from the wide coverage of views and information which we obtained from staff and managers, the intensive periods of observation which we carried out and the verification workshops in which we explored our ideas and conclusions with ONE managers.

It is important when considering these findings to note that the ONE service was a fixed term pilot – it was not designed as a permanent programme. We have tried to indicate where we considered that there were specific ‘pilot’ effects and to keep these separate from our conclusions about future developments and the implementation of Jobcentre Plus.

8.1 Issues and problematic aspects

Alongside the considerable achievements of the ONE pilots, the research identified a number of problematic areas affecting service delivery which we itemise below. These help to highlight the kind of issues which would have to be addressed if a ‘ONE type’ approach is to succeed in the long-term.

8.1.1 *Focusing and managing the service*

There was evidence that the ONE pilots:

- lacked clarity about the key objectives of the service;
- had a tendency for required procedures to overrule objectives (e.g. meeting targets to book a Personal Adviser meeting within four days whereas consumer service objectives would stress the importance of continuity of service);
- claim complexity, particularly Child Support Agency.

8.1.2 *Supports for service delivery*

In terms of overall support systems, most pilots displayed:

- a lack or absence of dedicated administrative backup;
- administration taking up a large element of Personal Adviser time (roughly 40 per cent of productive time spent on administration/paperwork to 60 per cent on direct client contact);
- a lack of basic equipment;
- problems with IT compatibility and double inputting;
- a lack of sufficient (as perceived by staff) management involvement in the day to day operation of ONE;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a lack of knowledge about and contacts with external services and other providers; • few links with employers.
8.1.3 <i>Managing workloads and client demand</i>	<p>On the whole, pilot management approaches and practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • had not fully worked out the logistics of meeting client demand and providing the full service; • lacked clarity about priorities for Personal Advisers; • lacked systems of workload management; • were operating on a poor model of calibration for the system.
8.1.4 <i>Training and staff development</i>	<p>The implementation arrangements for ONE showed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a lack of training geared specifically to ONE and consistent with the ONE vision; • training which was either insufficient or untimely or ‘cut and pasted’ from other training packages for other services; • a lack of ongoing training; • few systematic policies or opportunities for staff development.
8.1.5 <i>The Personal Adviser’s role</i>	<p>Across the pilots, the Personal Adviser’s role appeared to be compromised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited resources (time, knowledge and expertise) for responding to needs of harder to place and longer-term unemployed; • lack of caseloading – which staff saw as the essence of ONE; • lack of continuity of Personal Adviser for clients; • defining and responding to the needs of less-than-job-ready clients; • lack of awareness and use of external services and supports; • lack of skill and experience in dealing with people who lack motivation, who are anxious, who communicate poorly or who have personal or social problems; • general lack of priority setting and guidance, e.g. in workload and caseload management.
8.1.6 <i>Clients</i>	<p>Clients were not always fully engaged in the ONE process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Advisers did not take time to explain ONE and recruit the interests of clients; • many clients ‘go through the process’ in a somewhat passive way; • Advisers reacted differently to different clients – the more motivated get more attention.
8.2 <i>Suggestions for the future development of an integrated service</i>	<p>On the basis of the these findings there are a number of suggestions which could be made for future policy in Jobcentre Plus, as an integrated benefit and work-focused service.</p>

8.2.1 *The focus of an integrated service*

- Greater clarity about the purposes and key objectives of the service which would define the service as distinct and free-standing from those of the constituent agencies, Benefits Agency and Employment Service.
- In Jobcentre Plus, as in ONE, the central role of the Personal Advisers would be enhanced both by a sharper definition of the scope and limits of that role and clarity about when/where Personal Advisers could refer (hand-off) client to other services for more appropriate support (this is further discussed below).
- Linked with both the above, there may need to be some reflection in the planning of Jobcentre Plus on setting some priority on which clients this 'ONE type' of service is best geared to help.

8.2.2 *Management and resources*

- ONE was not free-standing: it depended essentially on its internal links into the mainstream activities of the core agencies. Any new service would need to establish all the process elements into a single management and operational structure.
- Calibration of the system (clients and client transactions per front line staff member) would appear to need to be re-assessed to take account of the more time-consuming nature of meetings with non-JSA clients if the key labour market attachment focus of Jobcentre Plus is to be achieved.
- Within this, the effects of different resource variables on system performance may need to be considered (e.g. contribution of 'Benefit Experts' to freeing up Personal Adviser time in interviews; effects of integrating Start-up and Personal Adviser roles in smaller offices; potential effects of prioritising workload and caseload activities).
- Models for resource allocation may also be needed which take into account the variations in client demand.
- The service might need to develop process and output measures which cover all ONE activities: this would provide a more complete framework for workforce and other resource planning.

8.2.3 *Training and support issues in an integrated service*

- Training arrangements for staff need to be re-examined: an integrated and specific Jobcentre Plus training¹¹ would be indicated from the ONE experience. In addition, it is important wherever possible that staff training be completed and consolidated before the service goes 'live'.
- More training and support is also needed for staff to address more demanding client groups particularly as regards assessment, intervention or referral strategies, available internal and external sources of support and advice for clients, and communication skills.
- Staff training would still need to include an understanding of Housing and Council Tax Benefit systems, even if these benefits are not integrated into Jobcentre Plus.

¹¹ i.e. not cut and pasted from existing Benefits Agency and Employment Service training provision.

- Knowledge of local provision is likely to be important and might be enhanced, for example, through secondments.
- 8.2.4 *IT*
- Radical changes to computerisation will be required if potential efficiency gains and service improvements are to be realised.
- 8.2.5 *Managing an integrated service*
- The capacity of the centre to respond to operational questions from the ground in pursuit of continuous service refinement may need attention.
 - The quality agenda will remain a priority and will require evaluation of processes to be continual, systematic and congruent with the vision of an integrated service.
 - Targets may need to be set which reflect the new vision of an integrated service. Any targets would need to include factors other than throughput and placements – such as, appropriate referrals, quality of case loading, measures of ‘distance travelled’, and ‘non-diaried’ activities (handling telephone inquiries, follow-up communications).
 - More attention might also be paid to the role of management, a role that might be said to have been somewhat neglected in ONE – for example, there has been no specific *management* training for ONE. ONE area managers typically felt neglected by the Centre while not having a clear mandate actively to manage and develop ONE.
- 8.2.6 *The role of a Personal Adviser*
- The point about clearer definition of the key objectives and purposes of ONE links with the need for clearer specification of the role and, therefore, the priorities of Personal Advisers. If the service is a work-focused ‘gateway’ then Advisers will be generalists able to meet the needs of the job-ready or ‘near job-ready’, but with the knowledge and skill to refer more complex or longer term clients on for (external) specific or specialised help. If it is to be a fully integrated ‘one-stop-employment-shop’ for all comers, then Personal Advisers’ roles are extended to include ways of bringing in expertise and developing client-focused programmes or packages. The roles, priorities, training and other resource requirements are very different in each case.
 - Depending on the overall objective of the service, there may be a case for filtering-out and re-directing a number of types of client at Start-up, for example the bereaved, those clients still employed (e.g. clients claiming Statutory Sick Pay) and clients unable to attend because of the level of their incapacity.
 - More generally there could be benefits from some process redesign: for example, to use deferrals, hand-offs and referrals more effectively to ensure that the service focuses on those clients which are defined as priorities.
 - Equally, there might be advantages to introducing additional protocols into the client meetings: for example, brief interview checklists to ensure that key areas are discussed with clients as an aid to making rounded assessments.

- At the same time, allowing wider exercise of discretion could enable advisers to respond more flexibly and appropriately to individual clients both within each interview and in the use of follow-up meetings and other ‘caseloading’ activities.

8.2.7 Wider links

- The development of external networks and partnerships with the range of voluntary, statutory and private sector services which provide services to which clients might be referred or ‘handed-off’. This would require liaison at strategic and operational levels and clarity about which clients, at which point and who pays. It certainly implies close liaison with Local Authorities (since they provide a range of services and also work closely with other service providers) and with a wide range of voluntary and community-based agencies (since it is these organisations – often quite small – which provide local, accessible and specialised client services, information and advice).
- The ONE experience of partnership indicated that external agencies were interested in employment related issues and willing to establish working links. There would appear to be scope for increased collaboration and closer working relationships to mutual benefit.
- In terms of delivering Jobcentre plus, there does appear to be scope for inter-organisational learning between the private and public sectors: on the ONE experience this would depend on balancing risk and innovation on the one hand and contractual and procedural compliance on the other.

8.3 Discussion

Overall, findings from the observational case studies and longitudinal staff survey would indicate that, while the pilots demonstrated significant achievements, there is need to reappraise the ONE vision of an integrated benefits and work-focused service.

The fundamental issues can be summed up as the need to define, and then achieve, the requisite balance between:

- the client focus and the work focus; and
- ONE as an integrated service and ONE as a gateway.

The following discussion is framed around, and explores, these distinctions. It seeks to highlight where the processes, operations and practices of delivering the service were, in some way, out of gear with the intentions and overall vision of ONE and the broader Welfare to Work policy.

8.3.1 A positive vision

There was no doubt that the ONE concept was widely welcomed but that there were problems achieving it in practice. From the outset, front-line staff were enthusiastic about the integration of services and the client-centred focus of the ONE. However, staff felt that their training in delivering the vision has been inadequate, and that back-up systems – both infra-structural (e.g. poor and un-integrated Information Communication Technology) and organisational (e.g. line managers who were limited in numbers and over-stretched) did not fully support the

process. Personal Advisers were enthusiastic about their role in the ONE vision in principle and, where things went well, in practice. But, nevertheless, they consistently felt frustrated by the pressure of routine activities (that is, the level of daily throughput), unable to provide the tailored, client centred service.

A key point in considering the purposes and focus of the service, is that staff also reported that they were unable to undertake the caseloading activities which they perceived as lying at the heart of the ONE vision. Yet, it is these activities, the individualised, client-focused work, which would have the most impact on increasing the number of non-JSA clients moving towards employment.

Specifically, in the ONE context, staff expressed the need for more systematic training on understanding client behaviour and needs, stronger links with both internal experts and external service providers, more Benefit Expert support, more administrative support and better IT.

Our own observations of practice seemed to confirm these staff perceptions, particularly the high levels of staff commitment and the degree of time pressure. Our observations also highlighted other issues, the extent of which staff themselves seemed less aware: for example, how staff often lacked the knowledge and experience of specific types of client needs and the types of practical interventions which might be possible. Consistent with experience in New Deals, it appeared, that a lot more might be achieved in terms of labour market outcomes if Personal Advisers had the right training, support and time allocations. Support elements here, for example, might include not only 'one off' training inputs but also ongoing opportunities to develop on the job through peer workshops, shared discussions.

8.3.2 *The focus and resourcing of ONE*

A further aspect of realising the vision was that of resources. Overall, it seemed that the ONE system was struggling with resource allocations which made it difficult to deploy staff and manage workloads to meet demand. Clients were affected by waiting times for appointments and ONE's own data indicates that there was a long bedding-down period, when average days waited for appointments were considerably in excess of that planned in the original design. Staff perceptions and our own observations of time pressures and under-staffing appeared to be borne out by other work. For example, work with clients indicated some frustration at the time that claim processing took and some scepticism, therefore, as to whether ONE was greatly different from what had gone before.¹²

¹² Johnson, C. *et al.* (2000) *First Effects of ONE: Part A - Survey of Clients and Part B - Qualitative Research with Clients*, DSS Research Report No 126, CDS: Leeds; Davies, V. and Johnson, C. (2001) *Moving towards work: the short-term Impact of ONE*, DSS Research Report No 140, CDS: Leeds.

Apart from an underestimation of staffing levels in the Costed Business Model, there are other possible explanations for staff's perception of the lack of resources, for example:

- unrealistic assumptions in the original resource planning exercise (eg. over-estimation of the amount of staff 'downtime');
- an assumption that time liberated by failed appointments or lateness could be fully utilised;
- dedicated time for caseloading not factored into the model;
- inflexibility of staff deployment across sites;
- peaks and troughs in client demand;
- 'pilot' effects like ongoing operational data collation and participation in evaluation;
- IT failures;
- unaccounted for but necessary activities (such as clerical work), inadequate time management ('excessive helpfulness' on the part of Advisers), and the difficulty of using 'spare time' effectively.

However, there are clear indications that these time or resource problems might be more complex. The apparent issues might be symptoms of a deeper problem in the design of the ONE process and could originate, in particular, from a confusion among staff and managers about their priorities rooted in the nature of the ONE vision itself. It could be that the problematics of 'time' are a shorthand for management and staff uncertainty about what *should* be done and what *could* be done. For example, consistently in our observations we find that for staff the key question seemed to be '*What could I be doing to help this person?*'. Yet it seems to us that an equally appropriate question and one more in line with developing a clear focus for the service would be '*What should I be doing with this person - and if it is not part of my role, who could help?*'. The former certainly invites a client-focused response on the part of Advisers but it is also open-ended and lacks definition of purpose. The second question is bounded by a notion that there is a focus for the work and decisions to be made about who can and cannot be helped by the service.

The possibility raised here is that with clearer priorities and direction setting the delivery of ONE could be more effective and more focused: clients with particular, complex or longer-term needs, for example, might be referred (handed-off) to more specialised sources of help and support. In this way time could be used more efficiently to make good referrals, rather than absorb Advisers' time in, perhaps, activities which others could do better.

In many ways, then, the issues of time and levels of resource depend on the definition of how far and in what ways the service deals with those who are furthest from employment and whose participation in the labour market will depend on more-or-less individualised services, facilities and

supports. Within ONE, it was with these clients that Advisers felt strongly that caseloading could make a difference. However, it is clear that without a clearer definition of what the service should take on, this could lead to long term, open-ended, unfocused work.

8.3.3 *Cultural change*

In order to examine questions of cultural change, we need to consider what has taken place since the introduction of ONE. In reviewing the 40 or so sites (offices) from which our staff respondents were drawn or in which our observations took place, the greatest changes in staff attitudes and behaviour were found where either a distinctive ONE management culture had been established or where the ONE office had its location separate from either the Employment Service or Benefits Agency. These staff were more likely to perceive ONE as discrete and to have moved away from the cultures and norms of their service of origin: their activities were likely to be more client-focused and less preoccupied with either traditional Employment Service or Benefits Agency concerns (e.g. processing performance, fraud prevention, adherence to set routines, meeting work placement targets).

However, such changes in attitude and behaviour, while desirable, were perhaps overly dependant on the frontline staff and their adherence to a client-centred interpretation of the ONE vision. Our research indicated that changes in ethos and objectives were not reinforced in practice by the type of organisational changes (infrastructures, routines, norms, performance measures) or organisational development measures (training, supervision) that might be expected to underpin such a cultural change process. This might be seen as readily correctable through process design. For example, at various points in this report we have noted:

- the advantages of systematic use of deferral at Start-up stage and immediate re-routing of New Deal clients back in to New Deal;
- the time which can be saved and the improvements to service provided by wider use of Benefit Experts;
- the potential for appropriate client referrals to external service providers;
- the efficiency gains which might be made with some targeted investment in administrative support and IT systems; and so on.

But it is not just a design issue: it is a question of 'fit' and of communication. In this we are suggesting that processes, working practices and protocols, management and operational arrangements must be congruent with and endorse the overall 'vision' and objectives of the service. And, they must be clearly communicated throughout the service. In the absence of organisational changes and organisational development measures which guide practice (and in ways that are consistent with the overall purposes), staff will develop their own (and several) interpretations and definitions of service intentions, focus and priorities and, therefore, their role.

8.3.4 ONE as a 'gateway'?

It would appear to us, without a clear definition of ONE and how the service is located in the broader welfare-to-work policy, the sense of ONE as a *gateway* (the original terminology was the *Single Work Focused Gateway*) has been occluded. Instead, it was the promotion of ONE as *one* integrated service to clients which appeared uppermost in the minds of staff and many managers as well. If 'gateway', (which implies that clients are either helped directly into work or helped to access further supports) was intended to be the primary concept of service, then too often staff were not taking the decisions which move clients on (and through) the ONE process, which enhance clients' likely labour market attachment, and which conserve staff time for those activities and transactions which actually tend to add value and make a difference. Rather, staff interaction with clients is based around vaguer (if still laudable) notions of 'helping people' and of 'completing the process'.

Returning to the distinction made earlier between work-focus and client-focus, and between gateway and integrated service, we can see that the choices are not entirely mutually exclusive and that there are a number of options for combining these. The matrix following helps to demonstrate that it is not a question of either 'gateway' or integrated service nor of a work- or client-focus. What it does highlight is:

- that each cell in the table – **a**, **b**, **c** and **d** – implies rather different requirements of practice, rather different priorities, and different relationships between the service, experts in the benefit and employment fields and certain external organisations and providers;
- that a 'gateway' service might incorporate both a work-focus and client-focus (i.e. **a** and **b**);
- that a work-focus might involve both a 'gateway' and integrated approaches (i.e. **a** and **c**);
- that it is possible to define a service which 'sits' within one cell.

The key point which this analysis strongly suggests, however, is that it is almost certainly not feasible to do all of these things. Equally, it is possible to suggest that the ONE pilots were, in many ways, trying to do just that.

Figure 8.1 Focusing ONE

	Work-focus	Client-focus
'Gateway'	a	b
Integrated	c	d

8.3.5 *Clients and attachment to the labour market*

Considering the clients of ONE, the range of circumstances which they presented, the nature of their relationship with the labour market and the kind of service which might best help them, we can make a further set of distinctions.

Heuristically, it is possible to break down the single nominal category of 'job-ready' clients in the ONE process into three categories – clients who are motivated to take work and readily employable; clients who are motivated to take work but face some extrinsic barrier to employment; and clients who are not very motivated and/or have intrinsic barriers to work. In addition, there is the diverse non-JSA category. Each category requiring a different response:

1. Clients who are *motivated to take work and readily employable* are unlikely to be greatly affected by ONE. Job search activities confined to Labour Market System may be less relevant than the clients' own searches through the press and private agencies, and no more effective than the clients own 'look at the board'. Where a client is clearly motivated and 'getting on with it' Personal Advisers may have little to add to the normal JSA provision and indeed JSA attendances are also likely to be perfunctory beyond simple information provision (e.g. about job clubs or sources of information about employment opportunities). However, even here, some clients might need support in overcoming, for example, a lack of confidence or self belief after some difficulty in a previous workplace.
2. Clients who are *motivated to take work but face some practical extrinsic barriers to employment* – such as caring responsibilities, lack of child care provision, difficulties with travel to work, redundant skills, imagined 'benefits traps', and so on. In principle, such clients would have most to gain from a service such as ONE. Here, ONE can add value provided Personal Advisers are able to recognise and understand the nature of the barrier and effectively provide the correct information, guidance and/or access further help through internal or external referral. There could also be a role in supporting someone during the transition back to work. Lone parents, for example, often quite welcomed the possibility of obtaining work and responded well to the support provided.
3. Clients who are *not very motivated to take work and whose lack of motivation is linked to intrinsic barriers to work* – such as low levels of literacy and numeracy; mental health, substance abuse, poor social skills or other psychological problems are only likely to be helped if Personal Advisers can make an effective diagnosis of the situation *and* make an appropriate and effective referral. Personal Advisers on their own are not likely to make a difference to such clients and even specialist providers may struggle. Many longer-term unemployed people might come into this category. Whatever the original reason for being out of work, the longer they are, the more difficult it is to get back because of lack of confidence, being out of a work routine and discipline, lack of social

supports, etc. One of the most difficult groups of clients to reach are those who lack motivation but who, apparently, face no obvious health or social difficulties, who have no medical diagnosis and who are unable or unwilling to articulate their experience: since their difficulties are not formally diagnosed they are most likely to be overlooked and/or defined as 'work-shy' and 'difficult'. Such clients are likely to have some form of mental health problem – one of the most prevalent reasons for inability to obtain or sustain employment – and require intense help over a period of time. In this sense they 'belong' in the next category.

4. Clients who *may or may not be motivated to work but who face (formally diagnosed) long-term illness or severe and continuing physical or psychological impairments*. Almost by definition, these clients will present particular challenges for any service based on a work-focus since they have been accepted as being unavailable for work in the long or short term. The experience of New Deal for Disabled People for example, particularly the Innovative Schemes¹³, indicated that significant progress could be made in helping a wide range of such clients into or towards work, but, to be successful, this required highly individualised approaches, with relatively high levels of staff input and over extended periods of time.

In process design terms, it has to be questioned whether any value, in terms of increasing labour market attachment, is being added to the first category of clients, and whether the added value with the third category is anything more than marginal or, at best, 'hit or miss'. The fourth group, by definition, presents fundamental challenges to a work-focused service. The second category of clients seems to be the group to which a ONE type service might have most to offer. We might therefore conclude that the key issue for the Personal Adviser is to determine as quickly as possible which of these categories a client fits into and respond accordingly. Staff training and routine processing might usefully concentrate on getting this determination and consequent action right. One view could be that only the second category of clients should be case-loaded, with the first category dealt with rapidly and largely left to their own devices, while the third and fourth groups should be 'left' (referred) to more intensive measures whether through the New Deal or otherwise. Without such discrimination the role of the Personal Adviser is likely to be bounded by expediency – the time available for interaction with clients – rather than by a clear sense of overriding purpose.

Consequently, it appears to us, that as long as staff are left (implicitly) to conceive of their role to some extent as an omni-competent, 'all singing, all dancing' Personal Adviser, it is inevitable that they may never feel as if

¹³ Hills, D; Child, C; Blackburn, V; Youll, P. (2000). *Evaluation of the New Deal for Disabled People Innovative Schemes Pilots*, DSS Research Report No. 143, CDS: Leeds.

they have enough time to do all the things for clients they feel they could and should do. In the absence of clear direction and priorities and a more sophisticated understanding of the barriers to work and how to respond to these, the job of Personal Adviser may always be impossible to perform to their own satisfaction, whatever resources were provided. There is always the possibility that staff get caught into activities which do not ‘add value’, which do not increase participation in the likelihood of labour market and there is the danger adviser meetings degenerate on both sides to ‘going through the motions’.

8.3.6 ONE and Welfare to Work

These reflections raise broader issues as to what extent ONE itself can be the unit of analysis when considering ONE’s design. That is, it is in the interaction between ONE and other parts of the welfare to work policy that the specific role of ONE may be clarified. For example, one might speculate that, as the welfare to work programmes evolve, the New Deals may be integrated and generalised for all the longer-term unemployed, (perhaps with New Deal Personal Advisers increasingly specialising in specific client groups and provision), while something like ONE becomes the front-end for all unemployment related benefits claims and a first stage preceding the New Deal Gateway (explicitly), for those who fail to find work within a reasonable period. In such a model the gateway or referral aspect of ONE might be brought to the fore. This might mean a greater emphasis on assessment, decision making and brokerage aspects of the current Personal Adviser role and a more curtailed view of scope of the interventionist or problem solving aspect of the role.

8.3.7 Organisational development challenges

These reflections on the ONE service should help indicate at least some of the organisational change and organisational development challenges implied in the provision of a more integrated service. These are likely to be primarily questions of establishing continuous improvement mechanisms and effective management training. In particular our research indicates the importance of:

- Getting the resource base right, specifically:
 - productivity enhancing IT systems;
 - ‘just-in-time’ training;
 - administrative, expert and specialist back-up.
- Process redesign:
 - focus on real outcomes (i.e. opportunities for maximum impact on clients);
 - focus on key moments (understanding client situation, early intervention/early referral, appraisal of barriers to work, appropriated intervention);
 - interface with New Deal.
- Management:
 - management development;
 - local autonomy for process innovations;
 - appropriate targets, management by objectives.

8.3.8 Reflections on the overall ONE evaluation

It is our perception that ONE does represent a real step forward and prepares the ground for Jobcentre Plus. In any pilot evaluation it is essential to distinguish between evaluating the concept and evaluating the execution of the concept. As regards the former, there are already pockets of practice within ONE which provide ‘proof of concept’, but as regards the latter, inevitably, execution of concept (for the reasons laid out above) has been uneven. However, the ONE experience does provide important learning about what *could* work and what *can’t* work which should be of use to the pathfinder sites and the roll-out of Jobcentre Plus.

Evidence on the short term labour market impact of ONE from the Client Survey¹⁴ indicates that ONE has had no discernable labour market impact on JSA clients but that for non-JSA there had been some positive and significant shifts but it is important to wait until evidence from the medium term outcomes from the Client Survey is available before making any judgements on this. The lack of results for JSA clients would not be surprising in the light of our qualitative research: while the infrastructure had been put in place, and a better service was being provided, for most clients the services provided, benefits processing and job search, were not greatly different from what was offered in the control areas. The ONE service had time pressures and problems of client appraisal, caseloading and knowledge of external services and still struggles to concentrate time, expertise and resource on the ‘harder to place’ client.

There are important lessons to be learnt from the set-up and roll out of ONE as a pilot. Firstly, ONE provides a good deal of transferable learning about the generic issues involved in setting up and starting up new initiatives (e.g. as regards recruitment, remuneration and staff development). Secondly, the ONE experience raises an important question concerning the scope for continuous improvement (i.e. change) while an innovative initiative is under evaluation – it could be argued that adherence to set procedures and operational norms actually inhibited the capacity of frontline managers to achieve the overall ONE objectives. Thirdly, and more generally, ONE again demonstrates the difficulty of realising a new vision and cultural changes in a system where there is simultaneous management by procedures (inputs/outputs), outcomes (targets) and objectives.

¹⁴ Green, H., Marsh, A. and Connolly, H. (2001). *Short term effects of compulsory participation in ONE Survey of clients: Cohort Two Wave One*, DWP Research Report No. 156, CDS: Leeds.

8.3.9 Conclusion

We are, therefore, suggesting that two main conclusions might be drawn about the provision of a work-focused service on the basis of the experience of the ONE pilot:

- overall, there may be a need to clarify and communicate the vision of an integrated benefits provision and job placement service to give equal emphasis to the ideas of ‘gateway’ and ‘work-focused’ alongside ‘integrated’ and ‘client focused’;
- on the immediate, practical level there is an opportunity to redesign some key moments in the client pathway to further clarify each moment’s *purpose*, and to provide staff with a more focused and circumscribed definition of the adviser *role* including attendant guidance, training and supervision.

APPENDIX A NOTES ON RESEARCH APPROACH

An innovative evaluation strategy was used, matched to the particular circumstances in which ONE pilots were being implemented. Because the pilot was itself intended to promote innovation and support cultural change, an integrated, embedded and action-oriented strategy was used. The outputs of the research were expected to have the potential to be formative at an operational as well as a policy level. By emphasising the ownership of the evaluation by participants in ONE and engaging participants (staff, partners and policy customers) in the evaluation process it was hoped to ease access, encourage ownership of the evaluation and support the successful implementation of ONE.

A.1 Starting considerations

Innovative delivery arrangements are important to the successful implementation of ONE. Our evaluation stance aimed to:

- integrate delivery evaluation activities into the implementation of ONE and its associated innovations in service delivery, inter-organisational partnerships and management;
- put in place appropriate feedback, validation and reporting mechanisms to ensure that the evaluation team was adequately steered and that it was possible to handle critical as well as positive findings;
- ensure that the evaluation contributed in a constructive way to the implementation and development of ONE during its pilot stages;
- promote continuing dialogue with both policy and area based stakeholders (e.g. department/agency based policy customers, area partnerships, local management and staff) so as to overcome access problems, encourage ownership of the evaluation and contribute to processes of organisational and cultural change.

We anticipated that ONE would be the subject of close scrutiny raising inter-departmental and industrial relations concerns – among others. We expected that policy, and certainly operational policy, was also likely to evolve, probably prior to evaluation findings becoming available. At the very least the ‘object’ of evaluation would be unstable and shifting. Qualitative evaluation on delivery in this context needed to be properly grounded, well informed and carefully steered.

Delivery, management, service and staffing issues – the content of our work – were presented in the specifications document in a relatively stable form: i.e. ‘to see how well the process is working and to identify best practice which can be carried forward if the pilot is rolled out nationally’. The evaluation not only needed to address the effectiveness of the process but also take into account how ONE is bedding down in different areas and under different models – if only to ensure that it was

possible to distinguish between initial ‘setting up’ problems and the effectiveness of particular arrangements.

Because of the profile of ONE we felt that there might be an emphasis on ‘good practice’ and possibly difficulties in learning from bad practice – even though this is often the source of much learning. *In extremis*, good practice can easily deteriorate into ‘good news stories’ with some partners and managers favouring a public relations rather than self critical or reflexive stance. Interview data can yield a great deal about what respondents perceive to be the desired response and there is likely to be greater than usual discrepancy between what people say (e.g. in ONE sites) and what happens in practice. The need for observational or even ethnographic data to complement interviews was therefore great – as is other sources of data cross-checking (or ‘triangulation’).

We were aware that those involved in the delivery of ONE might be working under considerable pressure due to high workloads, which might be reinforced by external scrutiny, and the different agendas of different partner agencies. Experience in North America and in various New Deals confirms that Start-up and Personal Advisers are likely to experience two kinds of stress – one related to workload and the other in response to being open to client problems, demands and circumstances. Some staff are also likely to see themselves under threat from steps towards inter-agency and service integration and (especially in the Private Sector/Voluntary Sector extensions) the need to demonstrate the success of innovative provision.

We felt that these pressures might affect the orientation of ONE staff and partners to evaluation. There was a risk that the evaluation would be perceived as a burden or diversion from ‘real work’. If those risks were fully realised they could have led to pressures on us to reduce the demands they make on ONE field-staff possibly by adopting less appropriate methodologies. In order to minimise these risks, case studies and associated research with staff needed to be designed in a way that was seen as an integral part of the development of ONE. It should be helpful and formative at the operational level – and not just in terms of future policy.

Finally, because the content of our work was about delivery, and the implementation of delivery, it was important that findings and recommendations were validated at an operational level. We, therefore, held a series of feedback/validation workshops involving both case-study and non-case-study areas. These workshops aimed to confirm and contextualise findings and subject recommendations to the critical assessment of partners, local management and staff.

The overall intention was to put in place an evaluation design that both answered key evaluation questions but did so in a way that avoided some anticipated pitfalls in evaluation in the sensitive circumstances of a pilot

initiative, encouraged ownership by operational and policy stakeholders of the outcomes of the evaluation and contributed formatively to the successful implementation of ONE.

A.2 Research methodology

A.2.1 Staff interviews

In each area, staff were, whenever possible, to be selected on the following basis: two Start-up Advisers, two Personal Advisers, one Team Leader or Line Manager (or nearest equivalent), and one member of the ONE Support Staff. This category would encompass both specialist advisory roles such as Benefits Experts and general Administrative Support Staff. The aim was to also take account of staff’s background in terms of their previous agency. Hence the Areas were instructed to select staff from the range of prior backgrounds wherever possible. Table A.1 shows a breakdown of the backgrounds of the staff interviewed.

Table A.1 Breakdown of previous agency/source of ONE staff interviewed

Background	<i>n</i>
Employment Service	34
Benefits Agency (including Benefits Expert role)	23
Local Authority	8
Private Sector/External recruits	3
Child Support Agency	2
Non-agency recruitment	2
Total	72

The bulk of the first wave of the staff interviews were carried out in May and June 2000 after the onset of full-participation. At the time of these interviews, several of the areas were already combining the activities of the Start-up and Personal Adviser into one role. The aim was to introduce greater flexibility in terms of meeting the demand for appointments, and introducing greater client-adviser continuity from the outset of the client’s claim. Within both the Basic Model and the Call Centre Areas, the staff were sourced from one of the three agencies (Employment Service, Benefits Agency, and Local Authority). Within all of the Private and Voluntary Sector Areas, staff were also recruited from external agencies. Table A.2 shows a breakdown of all three interview samples by job, location and ONE model variant.

Table A.2 Interview participants: Locations and job category

Model variant	Area	Job category											
		First wave (Spring 2000)				Second wave (Autumn 2000)				Third wave (Spring 2001)			
		Managers	Advisers	Start-up	Support staff	Managers	Advisers	Start-up	Support staff	Managers	Advisers	Start-up	Support staff
Basic Model	Clyde Coast	1	5*	0	0	1	5*	0	0	1	5*	0	0
	Lea Roding	1	2	1	2	1"	2	1	2"	1	4"	0	1"
	South East Essex	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1
	Warwickshire	1	2	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	1	1
	Buckinghamshire	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2"	1"
Call Centre	Somerset	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
	Calderdale & Kirklees	1	2	1	2	1	2"	1	1	1	2	1"	2
	Gwent	2	2	2	0	2	3	2"	0	3"	3	1	0
	Leeds	1	5*		0	2		4*	0	2		4*	0
	North Cheshire	2	3*		1	3"	2"	1	0	3	2	1	0
PVS	North												
	Nottinghamshire	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	1	1"
	Suffolk	2	3*		1	2	0	2	2**	2	3"	0	1

* Combined PA and Start-Up roles under the title of New Client Adviser

" One or more replacement staff

** Includes 1 Employment Adviser

A.2.2 Observational case studies

The observational studies were undertaken in two phases:

- a two-week period in early 1999: two researchers each spent two weeks on site, observing the work of the frontline ONE staff. The focus was primarily of the meetings between staff and clients;
- a one-week period in early 2000: again two researchers spent the week on site, observing a series of Advisers through their working day.

Coverage

The case study areas were: one Basic Model, one Call Centre and one PVS. The basic model case was undertaken prior to full participation, the other two post full participation.

Sites: the studies were able to make some comparisons across sites but only one Benefits Agency site could be included. However, this did provide the opportunity to observe something of the preparation for, and potential impacts of, full participation for non-JSA claimants.

Activities: the observations centred on the face-to-face meetings between staff and clients. The researchers were also able to observe some formal staff meetings and gain an overall impression of day-to-day life for ONE staff. What was *not* observed were the administrative activities and paperwork which staff carried out: the timings which we note do not, therefore, reflect the full 'time cost' for each client meeting. The focus was therefore on what was directly observable rather than any examination of documents or detailed (as opposed to *ad hoc*) interviews with staff and managers about their work.

Table A.3 Sites where observations were conducted by model

Sites	Model			Total
	Basic Model	Call Centre	PVS	
Employment Service				
Jobcentre	1	-	2	3
Benefits Agency	1	-	-	1
Local Authority	-	2	1	3
Non-agency site		1		1
Total	2	3	3	8

The client pathway

The 'pathway' idea

The idea of a pathway was used to emphasise that ONE clients are involved in a process – that of moving into or towards employment – rather than a series of discrete meetings or events. The specific feature of ONE is that clients are offered an integrated service which attends to their benefits claims (to Benefits Agency, Child Support Agency, Local Authority) but

does so within a strong orientation to work. This work focus was extended to include non-JSA clients with the introduction of full participation. The point of delivery of the ONE service is, in good measure, through the face-to-face contact between frontline staff and clients. It is the clients who follow through the sequence of meetings and activities involved and it is, in part, through their experience and their outcomes that the success of ONE can be judged.

For the first observation period the researchers focused their observations on the following aspects:

- the client pathway – the series of meetings with Advisers;
- the supports available for frontline staff;
- local arrangements.

In addition the researchers conducted interviews with site managers and brief pre- and post- meeting interviews with clients

The overall questions addressed by this phase of the observations were:

- how is ONE and the focus on work explained to the client?
- how do frontline staff find out about the client's situation?
- benefit-related activities undertaken;
- work-orientated activities undertaken;
- assessing the client's employability;
- the relationship between client and ONE staff;
- time frames.

As far as possible, the observational case studies followed the clients' progress in order to understand how they experienced the service. However, it was only possible to observe 13-week or six-month Personal Adviser meetings with JSA clients in the basic model area. In the Call Centre and Private and Voluntary Sector areas these meetings were conducted by Employment Service staff as part of mainstream business and the ONE service had not been live for long enough for the six-monthly meetings to be coming through in any numbers.

The observations at this phase included: a total of 175 staff-client meetings¹⁵ observed. These were augmented by: brief interviews with over 60 clients; over 90 discussions with ONE Start-Up Advisers and Personal Advisers pre- and/or post-client meetings; and numerous informal discussions with frontline staff across the three case study areas. Table A.4 provides a breakdown of the meetings observed in phase one by model and site.

¹⁵ This figure includes inbound and outbound telephone contacts at the Call Centre variant.

Table A4 Number of client/staff meetings observed by model and site – Phase One spring 2000

Models		Basic			Call Centre			Private and Voluntary Sector			Totals	
Sites	ES	BA	LA	CC	ES	BA	LA	ES	BA	LA		
Clients												
Meetings	J	N-J	J	N-J	J	N-J	J	N-J	J	N-J	J	N-J
Start-Up *	16	-	1	7	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	13	-	n. a.	5	2
Personal Adviser first	12	1	6	n. a.	14	7	n. a.	7	7	14	9	n. a.
Personal Adviser 13 weeks	14	-	1	-	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	-	-	-	n. a.	n. a.
Personal Adviser 6 months	5	-	-	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	-	-	-	n. a.	n. a.
Caseload/ Ad hoc	2	-	2	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	n. a.	-	-	1	-	n. a.
Totals												
Client by group	49	1	3	15	n. a.	n. a.	7	9	14	7	28	9
By site	50	18	n. a.	n. a.	16	21	n. a.	14	36	n. a.	20	n. a.
By model	68				51				56			

Key:

ES Employment Service Jobcentre

BA Benefits Agency site

LA Local Authority site

CC Call centre

J Jobseeker's Allowance

N-J Non-Jobseeker's Allowance

* Includes inbound and outbound Call Centre calls

n.a. Not appropriate

- Well over one-third of the observations took place prior to full participation (68 of 175).
- Over two-thirds (120 of 175) of the observed meetings were of JSA clients: i.e. roughly in line with the national figures for ONE.
- Of the non-JSA clients, over two-thirds (39 of 55) were observed post full participation: the rest (16 of 55) were seen prior to this with all but one at the Benefits Agency site.

This means that, in the research, JSA-related issues tend to emerge somewhat more strongly than those more directly concerned with non-JSA clients in the ONE service.

For the second observation period the researchers focused on the work day of the advisers.

- observations of the day-by-day *experience of the frontline staff*: the aim was to obtain a track of ‘a day in the life of’ Personal Advisers especially and Start-up Advisers; observation of staff/client meetings and general office activities will necessarily form a part of this but will not be the key focus.

Table A.5 provides a breakdown of the observations conducted in phase two.

Table A.5 Observation: Phase two spring 2001

Basic Data		
A rough log of times and balances between various activities: timings were rounded up/down to nearest 5 minutes		
	No	Remarks
Number of staff observed	16	S/U = 4, PAs = 12
Number of areas	3	
Number of sites	7	ES = 3, BA = 1, LA = 2, CC. = 1
Average length of day (in hrs)	8	very approx. incl. breaks
Average total of breaks (in hrs)	1.25	highest = 2 hrs, lowest = 55 mins. Do not correlate with longest days worked
Total client meetings observed	109	incl. S/U & in & out bound calls
No of Personal Adviser appointments	72	
No of Personal Adviser 'no shows'	14	incl. 2 late cancellations
<u>So</u> , ratio of appointment: no shows	5 : 1	very roughly
No of clients late for appointment	7	<5mins = 3, 15 = 2, 20+ = 2
No of clients kept waiting by Personal Adviser	15	5mins = 5, 10+ = 5, 15+ = 4, 20+ = 1
<u>So</u> , ratio of on time: late starts	3.3 : 1	very roughly
Average no of key task shifts/day	18	highest = 22 (S/U), lowest = 10
Ratio of Personal Adviser time client appointment - admin	2 : 1.5	very roughly
Incomplete data for 3 observations		
Key:		
S/U Start-up Adviser		
PA Personal Adviser		
ES Employment Service Jobcentre		
BA Benefits Agency site		
LA Local Authority site		
CC Call Centre		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) service providers; b) partner organisations; c) representatives of the core partners – Benefits Agency, Employment Service and Local Authority 		

Table A.6 provides a breakdown of the observations and interviews undertaken.

Table A.6 Interviews with ONE core agencies about ONE impacts

Total: 21 interviews involving four postholders

Pilot area	Organisation
Basic Model	Area Director; Scottish Benefits Agency District Manager; Benefits Agency Assistant Director; Employment Service District Manager; Employment Service 'X' District Council 'X' District Council Site Manager 'X' Employment Service ONE Management Team CSA
Private and Voluntary Sector	District Manager Benefits Agency Deputy District Manager Benefits Agency ONE Co-ordinator Benefits Agency Employment Service Manager Deputy Regional Manager Contracts Manager
Call Centre	District Manager Employment Service District Manager Benefits Agency District Council (a) District Council (b) Site Manager Benefits Agency (a) Site Manager Benefits Agency (b) Local Authority ONE Manager

Table A.7 Interviews with service providers

Total: 15 organisations involving 19 representatives

Pilot area	Organisation
Basic Model	Local College Programme Centre Careers Partnership Advice Agency Citizens Advice Bureau
Private and Voluntary Sector	Training Provider City Construction Opportunity Centre
Call Centre	MIND 'X' CI YMCA Citizens Advice Bureau Careers Housing Association Programme Centre

Table A.8 Interviews with stakeholder partners

Total: 15 interviews

Pilot area	Organisation
Basic model	Scottish Executive
	Child Support Agency
	Welfare Rights Agency
PVS	Incapacity Manager Benefits Agency
	Benefits Agency manager
	Benefits Agency
Call Centre	Citizens Advice Bureau
	Careers
	Chamber of Commerce
	Housing Association
	Probation Service
	Social Services
	Welfare Rights
	Race Equality Unit
	MIND

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The following instruments were used for the staff interviews:

First wave of staff interviews

Interviewer		Date	/	/	
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The Evaluation of ONE

Staff Interview Schedule

Background Details

Name	
Job	
Tenure	
Previous agency and grade	
Area	
Location	

Observations	

KEY			
ALL	All staff	Call Centre	Call Centre Areas
M	Managers	PVS	PVS Areas
PA	Personal Advisors	Ex	Benefits Expert
SuA	Start-up Advisors		

Recruitment	
1	How were you recruited into ONE? (describe the processes)
2	What were your reasons for volunteering?
3	Were there any problems or deterrents to volunteering?
4	What are your views on the payment and working conditions attached to ONE?

APPENDIX B RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Initial Impressions		
5	What were your impressions of ONE (in terms of the general concept, feasibility)?	All
6	What were your views about the communication of the "message" concerning ONE?	All
7	And how effective is communication on the whole (timeliness, format, relevance)?	All
8	What do you <u>now</u> see as the strengths and weakness of ONE?	All
Training & Orientation		
9	What training have you received which is specific to ONE?	All
10	Has the training for ONE been adequate? Were there areas which could have been improved?	All
11	After the training, has adequate support been provided?	All
12	What additional knowledge do you need to be more effective in your role? (Are there any aspects of ONE which you still feel unfamiliar with? Because she/he hasn't come from the BA background she/he doesn't understand the implications of not doing it.)	All
Implementation		
13	What issues emerged during the first few weeks after implementation?	All
14	Were there any problems with setting up ONE? /Are there still problems?	All
15	<i>Please describe the types of changes and innovations which have been introduced</i>	PVS
16	Have there been any changes in the management of ONE since implementation? (The management structures, ONE processes or the way workload is managed)	All
17	What are your views on how the ONE project is managed? Locally, i.e. at office/district level : Areal/Head Office	All
18	Are there any issues emerging about the ONE working environment or layout? (The need for client confidentiality, staff security, and open plan offices)	All
19	Have any form of targets been set, and if so are they realistic?	All
I.T. and Systems		
20	Have the IT systems for ONE been fully integrated and are they working effectively?	All
21	The ES and BA operate different IT systems. Does this cause problems for delivery?	All
22	Has there been adequate support provided in the use of these systems?	All
23	Have any issues, specific to the call-centre technology arisen?	Call Centre
The Role		
24	Please describe the main activities of your role.	All
25	How are the various tasks managed ? (Caseload, benefits enquiries, client interviews)?	All
26	Are you asked/required to undertake any other duties apart from ONE ?	All
27	What are the key skills required of the role?	All
28	What have been the major changes in the way you carry out your work?	All
29	Which aspects specific to ONE have emerged as the most difficult/demanding?	All

	(e.g. balancing benefits and jobsearch/managing caseloads/multi-tasking/new systems)	
30	Do any of the call centre processes cause any additional difficulties in your role?	Call Centre
31	Overall, what aspects of the role are the most satisfying and the most dissatisfying?	All
32	Which aspects of the role do you find most stressful, and why?	All
33	What sources of support exist (Is this support adequate)?	All
<i>Clients</i>		
34	Please describe the range of clients entering ONE (Proportions of each type of client)	All
35	What are your impressions of the clients' attitudes to ONE (Does this vary for different client groups?)	All
	The ONE concept	All
	The interview process; which elements cause difficulty	PA/SuA
	Employability assessment	PA/SuA
	Personal Capability Assessment	PA/SuA
	Referrals	PA
	Future support needs	PA
	Are there any aspects of the call-centre system which clients find a problem?	Call Centre
36	How do you assess clients' job-readiness? (e.g. assessment of literacy/numeracy, substance abuse, criminal record? Do you feel you have the capability to do this effectively?)	PA/SuA
37	Have there been any changes in the of matching of clients to employers (job matching)?	M/PA
38	Do you feel able to deal with a wider range of clients: including those with special needs? (Cite: substance abuse, homelessness, disability, lone parents, carers)	PA/SuA/ Ex
39	Do some clients benefit from ONE more than others? (If so, which type of clients do and don't?)	All
<i>Partnerships</i>		
40	Please describe how the working relationships between the Personal Advisors, Start-up Advisors and other members of the ONE team (e.g. Benefits Experts) operate.	All
41	Are these newly forged working relationships working effectively? (And if not, why not?)	All
42	Please describe the processes of liaison with specialists, e.g. DEAs LPAs Benefits Experts. Are there any ways this could be improved?	All
43	Please describe the type and extent of local resources for clients within the area (e.g. training, job preparation, and advisory centres).	M/PA
44	Could you describe, perhaps by examples of specific cases, how liaison and referrals to specialist providers operate: Are there any ways in which this could be improved? Are there any ways in which this could be improved ?	M/PA
45	Please describe the various ways in which liaison with employers takes place Could any aspect of these partnerships with employers be improved?	M/PA
46	Has ONE affected/changed the working relationship with employers?	M/PA

<i>Further Issues</i>		
47	What aspects of the ONE process need most immediate review?	All
48	What have been the main issues to emerge from full participation?	All
49	Any other issues concerning the ONE initiative?	All

Second wave of staff interviews

Interviewer	Date / /
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The Evaluation of ONE
Staff Interview Schedule
Background Details

Name	
Job	
Previous agency/ background and grade	
Tenure (ONE)	Yrs
Tenure (previous agency)	Yrs
Pilot Area	
Location (working)	

Observations

KEY			
ALL	All staff	CC	Call Centre Areas
M	Managers	PVS	PVS Areas
PA	Personal Advisors	Ex	Benefits Expert and other specialist staff
SuA	Start-up Advisors	Repl	Replacement staff member

Replacement Staff (staff members replacing previous interviewees)	
a.	How were you recruited into ONE (describe the processes)?
b.	What were your reasons for volunteering?
c.	Were there any problems or deterrents to volunteering?
General Impressions	
1a	Could we start by talking about your general views and experience of ONE?
1b	Have your views changed in any way during the time you have worked on ONE?
2	What are your views on the current payment and working conditions attached to ONE?

3	On the whole, how effective has communication been (timeliness, format, relevance)?	ALL
4	What do you <u>now</u> see as the strengths and weakness of ONE?	ALL
		Training
5	What additional knowledge do you need to be more effective in your role? <i>Prompt: Are there any aspects of ONE which you still feel you need training on?</i> <i>Prompt: To what extent have you been able to follow the Learning Assessment Framework?</i> <i>Prompt: Have you received the necessary support to do so?</i>	ALL
Management and Change		
6	Please describe the types of changes and innovations which have been introduced <i>Prompt: How are these working in practice?</i> <i>Prompt: Have any issues arisen from these innovations?</i>	PVS
7	What are your views on how the ONE project is managed at various levels?	ALL
7a	Locally, i.e. at site level	ALL
7b	Area/Head Office	ALL
7c	Generally	ALL
8	Have there been any changes in the management of ONE since full participation? <i>Prompt: The management structures, ONE processes or the way workload is managed?</i>	ALL
9	What issues remain regarding the working environment or office layout? <i>Prompt: The need for client confidentiality, staff security, and open plan offices?</i>	ALL
10a	What targets have been imposed (are these fair and attainable)?	ALL
10b	What are your views on the new performance measures? <i>Prompt: Do these conflict with previous/agency targets?</i>	ALL
I.T. and Systems		
11.	With regard to the IT systems, what issues, if any, still remain unresolved?	ALL
12.	Are you receiving adequate support in the use of these systems?	ALL
13.	What issues have emerged with use of the Electronic Claim Form? (see footnote) ¹²	CC / PVS
14.	Have any issues surrounding the call centre systems remained?	CC
The Role		
15.	In terms of the way things are done in ONE, what have been the major changes in the way you carry out your work (compared to your previous role)? <i>Prompt: Do you now feel fully integrated into ONE now?</i> <i>Prompt: Do you still feel committed to the ONE approach?</i>	ALL
16.	Has your role turned out as you expected (please explain)?	ALL
17.	Are you able to manage the various tasks required (client interviews, caseload, paperwork, time)?	ALL
18.	What do you now feel are the key skills required of the role?	ALL
19.	Have any changes occurred in the way you carry out your work in ONE?	ALL

¹² Electronic claim forms exist in call centre sites but are also to be introduced in North Cheshire, Leeds and Suffolk

20a	Which aspects specific to ONE have emerged as the most difficult/demanding?	ALL
20b	Which aspects of the role do you find most stressful, and why?	
21	Do any of the call centre processes cause additional difficulties in your role?	CC
22a	Overall, what aspects of the role are the most satisfying?	ALL
22b	and, the most dissatisfying?	
23	Do you receive adequate support in order to carry out your job effectively	ALL
<i>Clients</i>		
24	Please describe the range of clients now entering ONE.	ALL
25a	What are your impressions of the clients' attitudes to ONE? Prompt: Does this vary for different client groups?	ALL
25b	Do any aspects of the ONE process cause problems for clients? Prompt: Have you had experience of the Personal Capability Assessment process?	ALL
25c	Are there any aspects of the call-centre system which clients find a problem?	CC
26a	How do you assess clients' job-readiness?	PA
26b	Do you feel you have the capability to do this effectively?	SUA
27	Do you <u>now</u> feel able to deal with a wider range of clients: including those with special needs? <i>Prompt: Cite, e.g.: mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness, disability, lone parents, carers</i>	PA / SUA / EX
28	In which instances would you decide to defer a client's Work Focused Meeting?	SUA
29	Do some clients benefit from ONE more than others? Prompt: If so, which type of clients do and don't?	ALL
<i>Partnerships</i>		
30	Are the working relationships between staff from the various agencies/sources working effectively (if not, why not'?)?	ALL
31	Are the working relationships between Advisors and specialist staff (DEAs, Benefits Experts, LPA, working effectively?	ALL
32	Please describe the type and extent of local resources for clients within the area (e.g. training, job preparation, and advisory centres).	M/PA
33a	Have you referred any clients to outside agencies?	PA
33b	IF YES, which agencies did you refer clients to?	PA
33c	What factors determine your decision to refer to external agencies?	PA
33d	Could the referral process be improved?	PA
34a	Has ONE affected/changed the working relationship with employers?	M/PA
34b	Could any aspect of these partnerships with employers be improved?	M/PA

<i>Further Issues</i>		
35	What aspects of the ONE process need most immediate review?	ALL
36	What have been the main issues to emerge from full participation?	ALL
37	Any other issues concerning the ONE initiative?	ALL

OBSERVATIONAL CASE STUDY PACK - PHASE 1

ORIENTATION AND GENERAL FOCUS OF CASE STUDY: NOTES FOR RESEARCHERS

1. Overall approach to the case studies

The main approach of the case studies is to observe. We are learning from what we see and hear - rather than pre-determining the questions and issues. What is important about delivering ONE - for staff, managers and clients - will emerge from the various activities we have identified.

This 'researchers pack' is intended as a guide only - to help frame the observations, to keep us broadly on track amidst the diversity of things going on, and to make analysis a little easier.

2. Strands framing the case studies

The key aspects which we what to observe and note can be outlined by three main strands in the ONE system:

The client pathway: The process of ONE delivery, frontline interaction between staff and clients: key activities; general tenor of face-to-face contact with clients; client views and concerns

Supports for frontline staff: What types of support are available? How and when are they used? How well they meet the need of frontline staff? Any gaps?

Local arrangements: What, if anything, has been adapted to meet local demands and requirements?

ACTIVITIES - TOOLS

Activities	Tools	Time
1 Pre-study discussions with ONE area and site managers to explain the collaborative nature of the case studies, to agree the programme and the access required		
2. Initial meeting with manager and staff on site to explain the study and invite their collaboration	D1	
3. <i>Client agreement</i>	D2	
4 Direct observation: <u>start-up</u> meetings	D3	
5 Direct observation: PA meetings with <u>new clients</u>	D3	
6 Direct observation: PA meetings with clients 'ad hoc'	D3	
7 Direct observation: PA meetings with clients <u>13 week review and 6 month review</u>	D3	
8 Brief post-meeting discussion with staff	D3	
9 Short interviews with clients – a) after S/U b) after PA1 meeting c) after PA2, PA3	D4	Brief
10 Interviews with experts on site	D5	
11 Direct observation of site-based meetings for ONE management and staff which occur in the study period	D6	May find useful - we did not!
12 Mid-way visit interview with site manager	D7	± 1 hr
13 End/near end of visit discussion/feedback with site/ONE manager and staff	D8	1 – 1.5 hours
14 Local policy documents, guides, collated local information, etc, to assist staff, weekly/monthly client stats		
15 Observation of general office activities and interactions	C	All the time
16 Interview with other staff on site - in support roles (IT, BA experts, reception, marketing)	D9	
17 Preliminary codings (may be useful for on-site recording)	E	

RESEARCHER' S DIARY: FIELDWORK NOTES AND COMMENTS

Each researcher will keep a day-by-day log:

- a) of their activities during the day
- b) associated thoughts, queries and ideas
- c) end-of-day thoughts about key themes and issues to emerge from the day.

Any thing that is to do with ONE and its delivery is admissible.

The tools will act as very general aide memoire so that we keep track of the main aims of the case studies alongside our individual creative contributions.

Log of activities It will be helpful to keep a note – in roughly time order – of the day's activities – to include informal observation periods. e.g. Item all activities observed and undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Notes associated with specific events – ie. additional to those to be recorded on the data sheet- observations, interviews, meetings- Notes on informal interactions and observations- Note thoughts and queries as they occur
End-of-day notes A way of reflecting on the day, identifying key themes and issues to emerge, formulating the odd idea, Check through and clarify recordings and notes Planning for next day etc. Item actions etc for next day Plan ahead

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OBSERVATIONAL CASE STUDIES

The Tavistock team is conducting an evaluation of the way the ONE system is delivered in the 12 pilot areas.

As part of this, the team has selected 4 pilot areas – of which Milton Keynes is one - in which to carry out case studies based on observing how the ONE process is actually working.

This is different from other elements in the whole evaluation strand, in that it seeks to learn about the whole operation - not parts or aspects of it.

The Approach

Each case study will involve two researchers visiting a ONE pilot area for a two-week period and then revisiting the same area for a week one year later.

The idea is to follow, as far as possible, the experience of clients participating in ONE. The work will be based on observing meetings between staff and ONE clients, looking at how frontline staff are supported in their work and by talking with clients themselves.

It is important to emphasise that the researchers are not assessing the work or performance of ONE staff as such: the purpose is to learn from and with staff about how the system is running, about what is working well and about what aspects are seen as needing development. The researchers would like to give a brief outline of the team's work at the start of the visit and would be pleased to organise a feedback and open discussion session for managers and staff at the end of the two week visit, if this was agreed.

Main questions to be covered which the case studies will address are, in broad terms:

- How is ONE being delivered in terms of face-to-face contact with clients?
- What are the formal and informal supports for frontline staff?
- What area/site arrangements have been made in response to local demands?
- What are clients' views about ONE?
- Overall, which aspects are working well?
- Are there specific area/site issues?
- Are there general issues about the ONE initiative to be noted?



OBSERVATION OF 'ONE' FRONTLINE MEETINGS WITH CLIENTS

Delivery Evaluation of 'ONE' Observational Case Studies

- Notes for researchers: key elements in observing frontline meetings:
- How ONE is explained - e.g.: the basic idea, its purposes, who benefits and how - a big change?
  - The same really? New responsibilities on the client?
  - Understanding client's story/agenda - e.g.: How much focus on getting the story? Encouragement?
  - Questioning?
  - Benefit activities
  - Gaining/giving information about employment
  - Assessing employability & overcoming barriers to work - e.g.: Active information seeking?
  - Exchange of ideas?
  - The tenor of the interaction between ONE staff and client? - e.g.: Interrogatory Collaborative
  - Partnership Confrontational - Discussion Pressurised Easy going
  - Issues about support - backup - information

|                                                                |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Researcher                                                     | Date     | Coding                                                            |                  |                  |                 |
|                                                                |          | Area                                                              | Site             | Client codes     |                 |
| OBSERVATION OF STAFF/CLIENT MEETINGS: OUTLINE OF FIELD RECORDS |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| Meeting with ...                                               |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| Reception                                                      | Start-up | PA1<br>(First PA Meeting)                                         | PA2<br>(13 Week) | PA3<br>(6 Month) | PA4<br>(Ad hoc) |
|                                                                |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| Physical Environment                                           |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
|                                                                |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| Timings                                                        |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| Waiting time                                                   |          | Start time                                                        |                  | End time         |                 |
| Hr                                                             | Min      | Hr                                                                | Min              | Hr               | Min             |
|                                                                |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| Client                                                         |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| Est. Age                                                       |          | Category                                                          |                  | M/F              |                 |
|                                                                |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| Contextual Comments                                            |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
|                                                                |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| Main content/topics and actions taken                          |          | Note the predominant topic or focus in terms of time and emphasis |                  |                  |                 |
| a) Nature/style of interaction between staff/client            |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| b) Sources and/or colleagues consulted                         |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| c) Decision/ agreements about further action                   |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| d) Post-observation comments: staff                            |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
| e) Researcher's comments and notes                             |          |                                                                   |                  |                  |                 |
|                                                                |          | Codings                                                           |                  |                  |                 |

TOPIC GUIDE: CLIENTS

| Post S/U | Post PA1<br>(1 <sup>st</sup> PA meet)                                                | Post PA2<br>(13 weeks) | Post PA3<br>(6 months) | Post PA4<br>(Ad Hoc) |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1        | Previous experience of claiming ? (eg JSA, ONE, New Deal, Benefits)                  |                        |                        |                      |
| 2        | <i>Hopes re: employment ? (previous work ? current interests ? training ?)</i>       |                        |                        |                      |
| 3        | ONE: How did you hear of it ? Expectations of it ? Experiences of it ?               |                        |                        |                      |
| 4        | The Meeting: What did the client want from it ? was this achieved ? other comments ? |                        |                        |                      |
|          | Researcher observation about client understanding of and attitudes towards ONE:      |                        |                        |                      |

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INTERVIEWS WITH EXPERTS ON SITE - TOPIC GUIDE

Site	Date
1	Title/role
2	Outline activities carried out for ONE
3	Balance of time spent on ONE activities
4	General Views on ONE
5	Comments on what works well
6	Comments on any difficulties/issues
7	Points for development

OBSERVATION OF ONE MEETINGS

Title of meeting		Date	Place
1	Purpose/nature of meeting		
2	Who present		
3	Main items on agenda/discussed		
	i)		
	ii)		
	iii)		
4	Key people in the discussion		
5	Key features of the interaction between participants		
6	Decisions/agreements		
7	Points of difficulty/disagreement		
8	Researcher's comments		

MID-VISIT INTERVIEW : SITE MANAGER - TOPIC GUIDE

Site	Date
1	General comments: local operation of ONE
2	Key features of the site office & the locality
3	Staffing issues
4	Support systems
5	Aspects which are running well locally
6	Aspects which pose problems for area &/or site
7	Comments on ONE overall

FEEDBACK MEETING: ONE MANAGERS AND STAFF

GUIDE FOR PREPARING FEEDBACK/DISCUSSION SESSIONS

- A. The aim of these sessions is to provide fairly straightforward feedback to the site staff as a basis for clarification, correction and to elicit some open discussion. It is not about asking for more information – although this may come!
- B. *In preparing for these it would be helpful to use the original three strand model - client pathway, support systems, local arrangements – as a way of organising the themes and issues to arise from the observations. Plus, think of ONE generally*
- C. The following matrix might be useful for checking for key points

Activities / Sources	Client Pathway	Support Systems	Local Arrangements	ONE Generally
Start-up				
PA1				
PA2				
PA3				
Client view				
Managers				
Staff incl experts				
Meetings				
Externals				
General				

INTERVIEWS WITH EXTERNALS - TOPIC GUIDE

Site		Date
1	Organisation and its purposes	
2	Role	
3	Nature of links with ONE - e.g. Contract? To do what? For whom?	
4	Main employment related issues for the area	
5	Key issues: ONE clients e.g. Appropriate referrals? Clients' main concerns	
6	Comments on ONE generally	
7	What works well	
8	Comments on any difficulties/issues	

OBSERVATIONAL CASE STUDY PACK - PHASE 2

THE OBSERVATION CASE STUDY FIELD 'PACK'

CS Access	Re contacts with area managers/liaison people. There are points to be careful about – like viewing details on screen (as part of the PA's work that day) which do not refer to a client who has agreed to being observed
CS Diary	As before, researchers should keep a diary through the week - a note of thoughts, ideas and queries about 'on-site' fieldwork and interviews
CS 1.	General handout for managers and staff - as before - an outline of what we are and are not - evaluating
CS 2	Handout for members of staff being observed – ensuring confidentiality
CS 3	Handout for clients - as before - seeking their permission to observe their meetings with PA's (etc)
CS 4	Staff observation record sheets A guide to what to note - aspects of the work - eg 'down time', admin, How staff manage 'caseloading',
CS 5	Observations of general office activities
CS 6	End of day de-briefing with observed staff
CS 7	Researcher's end of day notes
CS 8	List of useful information to obtain while on site - as and if possible

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OTHER RESEARCH REPORTS AVAILABLE:

<i>No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>ISBN</i>	<i>Price</i>
1.	Thirty Families: Their living standards in unemployment	0 11 761683 4	£6.65
2.	Disability, Household Income & Expenditure	0 11 761755 5	£5.65
3.	Housing Benefit Reviews	0 11 761821 7	£16.50
4.	Social Security & Community Care: The case of the Invalid Care Allowance	0 11 761820 9	£9.70
5.	The Attendance Allowance Medical Examination: Monitoring consumer views	0 11 761819 5	£5.50
6.	Lone Parent Families in the UK	0 11 761868 3	£15.00
7.	Incomes In and Out of Work	0 11 761910 8	£17.20
8.	Working the Social Fund	0 11 761952 3	£9.00
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10.	Benefits Agency National Customer Survey 1991	0 11 761956 6	£16.00
11.	Customer Perceptions of Resettlement Units	0 11 761976 6	£13.75
12.	Survey of Admissions to London Resettlement Units	0 11 761977 9	£8.00
13.	Researching the Disability Working Allowance Self Assessment Form	0 11 761834 9	£7.25
14.	Child Support Unit National Client Survey 1992	0 11 762060 2	£15.00
15.	Preparing for Council Tax Benefit	0 11 762061 0	£5.65
16.	Contributions Agency Customer Satisfaction Survey 1992	0 11 762064 5	£18.00
17.	Employers' Choice of Pension Schemes: Report of a qualitative study	0 11 762073 4	£5.00
18.	GPs and IVB: A qualitative study of the role of GPs in the award of Invalidity Benefit	0 11 762077 7	£12.00
19.	Invalidity Benefit: A survey of recipients	0 11 762087 4	£10.75

20.	Invalidity Benefit: A longitudinal survey of new recipients	0 11 762088 2	£19.95
21.	Support for Children: A comparison of arrangements in fifteen countries	0 11 762089 0	£22.95
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26.	The Effects of Benefit on Housing Decisions	0 11 762157 9	£18.50
27.	Making a Claim for Disability Benefits	0 11 762162 5	£12.95
28.	Contributions Agency Customer Satisfaction Survey 1993	0 11 762220 6	£20.00
29.	Child Support Agency National Client Satisfaction Survey 1993	0 11 762224 9	£33.00
30.	Lone Mothers	0 11 762228 1	£16.75
31.	Educating Employers	0 11 762249 4	£8.50
32.	Employers and Family Credit	0 11 762272 9	£13.50
33.	Direct Payments from Income Support	0 11 762290 7	£16.50
34.	Incomes and Living Standards of Older People	0 11 762299 0	£24.95
35.	Choosing Advice on Benefits	0 11 762316 4	£13.95
36.	First-time Customers	0 11 762317 2	£25.00
37.	Contributions Agency National Client Satisfaction Survey 1994	0 11 762339 3	£21.00
38.	Managing Money in Later Life	0 11 762340 7	£22.00
39.	Child Support Agency National Client Satisfaction Survey 1994	0 11 762341 5	£35.00
40.	Changes in Lone Parenthood	0 11 7632349 0	£20.00
41.	Evaluation of Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance	0 11 762351 2	£40.00
42.	War Pensions Agency Customer Satisfaction Survey 1994	0 11 762358 X	£18.00
43.	Paying for Rented Housing	0 11 762370 9	£19.00

44.	Resettlement Agency Customer Satisfaction Survey 1994	0 11 762371 7	£16.00
45.	Changing Lives and the Role of Income Support	0 11 762405 5	£20.00
46.	Social Assistance in OECD Countries: Synthesis Report	0 11 762407 1	£22.00
47.	Social Assistance in OECD Countries: Country Report	0 11 762408 X	£47.00
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49.	Women and Pensions	0 11 762422 5	£35.00
50.	Pensions and Divorce	0 11 762423 5	£25.00
51.	Child Support Agency Client Satisfaction Survey 1995	0 11 762424 1	£22.00
52.	Take Up of Second Adult Rebate	0 11 762390 3	£17.00
53.	Moving off Income Support	0 11 762394 6	£26.00
54.	Disability, Benefits and Employment	0 11 762398 9	£30.00
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56.	Confidentiality: The public view	0 11 762434 9	£25.00
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58.	Employers' Pension Provision 1994	0 11 762443 8	£30.00
59.	Delivering Social Security: A cross-national study	0 11 762447 0	£35.00
60.	A Comparative Study of Housing Allowances	0 11 762448 9	£26.00
61.	Lone Parents, Work and Benefits	0 11 762450 0	£25.00
62.	Unemployment and Jobseeking	0 11 762452 7	£30.00
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67.	Maternity Rights and Benefits in Britain	0 11 762536 1	£35.00
68.	Claimants' Perceptions of the Claim Process	0 11 762541 8	£23.00
69.	Delivering Benefits to Unemployed People	0 11 762553 1	£27.00

70.	Delivering Benefits to Unemployed 16–17 year olds	0 11 762557 4	£20.00
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73.	Unemployment and Jobseeking before Jobseeker’s Allowance	0 11 762576 0	£34.00
74.	Customer views on Service Delivery in the Child Support Agency	0 11 762583 3	£27.00
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77.	What Happens to Lone Parents	0 11 762598 3	£31.00
78.	Lone Parents Lives	0 11 762598 1	£34.00
79.	Moving into Work: Bridging Housing Costs	0 11 762599 X	£33.00
80.	Lone Parents on the Margins of Work	1 84123 000 6	£26.00
81.	The Role of Pension Scheme Trustees	1 84123 001 4	£28.00
82.	Pension Scheme Investment Policies	1 84123 002 2	£28.00
83.	Pensions and Retirement Planning	1 84123 003 0	£28.00
84.	Self–Employed People and National Insurance Contributions	1 84123 004 9	£28.00
85.	Getting the Message Across	1 84123 052 9	£26.00
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87.	Unemployment and Jobseeking: Two Years On	1 84123 088 X	£38.00
88.	Attitudes to the Welfare State and the Response to Reform	1 84123 098 7	£36.00
89.	New Deal for Lone Parents: Evaluation of Innovative Schemes	1 84123 101 0	£26.00
90.	Modernising service delivery: The Lone Parent Prototype	1 84123 103 7	£26.00
91.	Housing Benefit exceptional hardship payments	1 84123 104 5	£26.00
92.	New Deal for Lone Parents: Learning from the Prototype Areas	1 84123 107 X	£29.00
93.	Housing Benefit and Supported Accommodation	1 84123 118 5	£31.50

94. Disability in Great Britain	1 84123 119 3	£35.00
95. Low paid work in Britain	1 84123 120 7	£37.00
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97. Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit delivery: Claimant experiences	1 84123 127 4	£24.00
98. Employers' Pension Provision 1996	1 84123 138 X	£31.50
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102. Attitudes and aspirations of older people: A qualitative study	1 84123 158 4	£29.00
103. Relying on the state, relying on each other	1 84123 163 0	£27.00
104. Modernising Service Delivery: The Integrated Services Prototype	1 84123 162 2	£27.00
105. Helping pensioners: Evaluation of the Income Support Pilots	1 84123 164 9	£30.00
106. New Deal for disabled people: Early implementation	1 84123 165 7	£39.50
107. Parents and employment: An analysis of low income families in the British Household Panel Survey	1 84123 167 3	£28.50
108. Evaluation of the New Deal for Lone Parents: Early lessons from the Phase One Prototype Synthesis Report	1 84123 187 8	£27.50
109. Evaluation of the New Deal for Lone Parents: Early lessons from the Phase One Prototype Findings of Surveys	1 84123 3190 8	£42.50
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113. Piloting change: Interim Qualitative Findings from the Earnings Top-up Evaluation	1 84123 194 0	£28.50
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118. Pensions and divorce: Exploring financial settlements	1 84123 199 1	£24.00
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120. Lifetime Experiences of Self-Employment	1 84123 218 1	£31.50
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122. Lone Parents and Personal Advisers: Roles and Relationships	1 84123 242 4	£29.00
123. Employers' Pension Provision	1 84123 269 6	£35.00
124. The Changing Role of the Occupational Pension Scheme Trustee	1 84123 267 X	£25.00
125. Saving and Borrowing	1 84123 277 7	£28.50
126. First Effects of ONE	1 84123 281 5	£38.50
127. Why not ONE?	1 84123 282 3	£25.00
128. The British Lone Parent Cohort 1991 to 1998	1 84123 283 1	£34.00
129. Housing Benefits and the Appeals Service	1 84123 294 7	£26.00
130. Pensions 2000 (Attitudes to retirement planning)	1 84123 295 5	£33.00
131. Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Effects on Unemployed People	1 84123 289 0	£38.00
132. Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Employers' Reactions	1 84123 290 4	£29.50
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