

November 2021

National Careers Service: Customer Satisfaction and Progression Annual Report

**Report based on findings from May 2020 –
April 2021**

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Executive Summary

Introduction and methodology

The National Careers Service (“the service”) is delivered via a multi-channel approach: face-to-face, telephone, and online. Adults aged 19 or older (or 18 or older, who have been referred by Jobcentre Plus or are in custody) are eligible for face-to-face advice. Young people aged between 13 and 18 may also use the National Careers Service, through its website or digital channels, or through a dedicated young people’s telephone service. The National Careers Service is actively engaged in building partnerships between schools, colleges and employers.

The National Careers Service is delivered by a network of area-based Prime Contractors. Since November 2020, the National Careers Helpline (NCH) service was phased out.

This fieldwork was undertaken from May 2020 to April 2021 and consisted of monthly satisfaction and progression telephone surveys, as well as a continuous online satisfaction survey.

The main aims of this research are to monitor customers’ experiences of using the National Careers Service, through a range of Key Performance Indicators and other measures, and to measure changes in customers’ employment and learning progression, personal development, and career management skills, six months after dealing with the service.

As a result of COVID-19, from the 23rd March 2020, the government advised individuals to stay at home and for certain businesses to close. Due to the lockdown measures put in place at this time, the National Careers Service offered a reduced service, with a reduction in face-to-face contact and an increase in telephone or video calls.

As a result of the reduced service, fewer interviews were completed with customers that used the service and the majority of the interviews were with customers who had received the telephone service. This affected the satisfaction survey in Q1 and Q2, and the progression survey in Q3 and Q4. Those who used the face-to-face service throughout Year 10 included both in person appointments, and video call appointments.

For the online survey, the overall figures presented throughout the report exclude the results from Quarter 2. In Q2 there was a very high volume of online satisfaction survey customers and the vast proportion of these were first time visitors to the site. The large amount of traffic to the online satisfaction survey was the result of a tweet from a customer about their ‘Discover your skills and careers’ result, which went viral and generated a lot of media interest. The results from Q2 skew the overall results for Year 10 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and also had a different demographic profile. When Q2 customers are excluded, the profile of customers in Year 10 is broadly comparable to Year 9.

Customer profile

- The customer profile of those accessing the face-to-face, telephone or online services remained largely consistent with previous years.
- There was a slight increase in females using the service for both face-to-face customers and telephone customers.
- There was a decrease in customers with a disability or long-term limiting health condition using the service, likely an impact of the change in service to be predominantly telephone appointments due to COVID-19.
- Online customers were more likely to have higher qualifications, and more likely to be in work, when compared to face-to-face and telephone customers.

Why do customers contact the National Careers Service?

Six in ten customers reported that they found out about the service through Jobcentre Plus (59%), emphasising the importance of this information channel, and showing consistency with Year 9 (59%). Due to the pandemic and the impact this had both on customers and the service itself, there has been a large increase throughout year 10 in the proportion of customers who heard about the service through Jobcentre Plus, starting at 47% in Q1 and increasing each quarter up to 71% in Q4.

Online customers¹ often heard about the National Careers Service through Jobcentre Plus (25%), through searches online (19%), through social media (13%), or from a teacher or National Careers Service adviser (both 10%). Customers aged 50 plus who were unemployed or at risk of redundancy (53%), customers who had been unemployed for at least 12 months (50%), and customers with no qualifications (41%), were more likely than average to have been signposted to the service by Jobcentre Plus.

Reasons for contacting the National Careers Service were primarily focussed on progressing into employment. Help with CV writing was the most common reason for using the telephone and face-to-face service (32% and 27%). Website¹ use was largely for obtaining information and advice about jobs, careers or apprenticeships (40%).

Experiences of using the National Careers Service

Six in ten telephone customers had their enquiry handled in one call (61%), a decrease from previous years, however, the proportion of calls that were resolved in one call increased throughout Year 10. Amongst those who had multiple calls, 68% dealt with the same adviser.

Three in ten face-to-face customers (30%) had two or more meetings with the National Careers Service adviser. Customers with a disability were more likely to have multiple meetings with their adviser (38%). Two-thirds of customers who had more than one meeting saw the same adviser each time (62%). Due to the impact of the pandemic on the way the service is offered, only one in ten (10%) of customers had an in person meeting at a Jobcentre Plus office, which is down from 75% before the pandemic in Year 9.

The National Careers Service provides tools to support its customers across multiple platforms. The majority of customers found these tools useful. Amongst those who had been referred to the Skills Health Check half (47%) went on to use the tool and the majority of these customers found the tool useful (82%).

Just under half of online customers¹ got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website (49%).

Around four in ten face-to-face and telephone customers reported that they had been followed-up by the National Careers Service since their initial contact (38%), consistent with previous waves.

¹ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers',

Customer satisfaction with the National Careers Service

The overall quality of the service continued to be rated highly by telephone and face-to-face customers, with over nine in ten agreeing that it was good (93%).

Despite the reduced service and the change to predominantly telephone appointments due to COVID-19, overall ratings have significantly increased in Year 10. The overall quality of the service continued to be rated highly by telephone and face-to-face customers, with over nine in ten agreeing that it was good (95%). In line with this, the vast majority of customers were satisfied with the National Careers Service overall (88%).

The customer groups that have been consistently satisfied with the service year on year include younger customers (92% of 20-24 year olds), those who used the Skills Health Check and / or recall drawing up a Skills Action Plan (92% and 91% respectively) and customers who had the same adviser for multiple appointments (91% amongst telephone customers).

Among telephone and face-to-face customers, satisfaction with individual aspects of the service was also high, especially the professionalism of their adviser (97%).

Almost nine in ten face-to-face or telephone customers either had already recommended or reported they would recommend the National Careers Service (91%).

When asked about what further support customers would like because of the COVID-19 pandemic, two-thirds (67%) of customers said they were happy with the service. For those who felt differently, the most common thing customers wanted was advice and help finding a job.

Satisfaction with the National Careers Service website has remained in line with Year 9. Three in ten online customers (37%) said they had already recommended the National Careers Service, and a further half (45%) said they would².

Customer progression six months after their contact with the National Careers Service

Overall, Year 10 has seen a decrease in employment progression and job or learning outcome. This is most likely explained by the economic consequences of COVID-19 resulting in fewer employment opportunities. Progression of softer skills, such as personal added value, remained stable, which suggests that customers have been continuing to develop their skills throughout the pandemic. In addition, there was a slight increase in levels of learning progression compared to Year 9. Optimistically, all face-to-face and telephone customers (97%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months since their call/meeting.

Learning progression averaged 71% in Year 10, broadly in line with Year 9 (69%). Customers with qualifications Level 2 and above were more likely to have undertaken each of the specific types of training and learning. For example, 40% of customers with Level 2 qualifications and

² The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers',

above were more likely to have taken part in training relating to a future job (compared to the average, 36%).

Over four in ten customers (44%) achieved employment progression, a decrease from the 51% in Year 9, which could reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the job market. Younger customers, those with higher qualifications, those unemployed for less than 6 months, and those without a disability are most likely to achieve some form of employment progression. The most common developments were feeling motivated to take action (68%), improvements in CV writing or interview skills (59%), increased self-confidence (56%), and developing skills related to a current or future job (54%).

Ninety-five percent of face-to-face and telephone customers indicated that they had gained some form of Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service.

Eight in ten face-to-face and telephone customers reported developing career management skills during the six months since their contact with the National Careers Service (77%).

How do key results vary across National Careers Service contracting areas?

Across contracting areas, customers expressed consistently positive views on the service they received. The main distinctions are:

- Satisfaction was higher than average in Yorkshire and the Humber (91%).
- There has been a significant decrease in satisfaction with the venue and the location of the meeting, with a 20-percentage point decrease compared to Year 9 in the South East and West Midlands and Northamptonshire.
- Satisfaction with the advisers and the quality of information and advice is high and fairly consistent across regions. Customers in the East of England and Buckinghamshire had higher than average levels of satisfaction with their adviser's level of knowledge and understanding of their needs.
- There was little variation across region in terms of progression.

1 Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Background

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is responsible for the commissioning, contracting and performance management of the National Careers Service which provides information, advice and guidance to help individuals make decisions on learning, training and work. The service offers confidential and impartial advice, provided by qualified careers advisers.

The National Careers Service is delivered via a multi-channel approach: face-to-face, telephone and online. Adults aged 19 or older (or 18 or older, who have been referred by Jobcentre Plus or are in custody) are eligible for face-to-face advice. Young people aged between 13 and 18 may also use the National Careers Service, through its website or digital channels, or through the telephone service. Schools and colleges are responsible for the delivery of careers advice (either directly or through their own contracted provision) and the National Careers Service does not deliver face-to-face advice to young people who are still in full-time education. It does promote its online and telephone services via schools, colleges and other training providers, as well as providing labour market information and supporting materials to their careers services. The National Careers Service is actively engaged in building partnerships between schools, colleges and employers.

The National Careers Service is delivered by a network of area-based Prime Contractors. Since November 2020 the National Careers Helpline was phased out. To ensure and assure the quality of the National Careers Service, all National Careers Service Prime Contractors and subcontractors must achieve and retain the Matrix Standard. This is a government-endorsed, national, independent quality standard for any organisation that provides information and advice as part of its service offer. To achieve and retain accreditation, organisations must undergo a comprehensive assessment and commit to annual reviews that explore how well the organisation is performing in the areas of leadership and management, deployment of resources, service delivery and continuous quality improvement.

From October 2014, the service was re-configured under a new contract which meant that some area-based contractors were replaced, either by new providers or by providers who were already delivering the service in other regions. A range of other changes were introduced from October 2014, the principal ones being the introduction of an outcome-based funding model and the requirement that area-based contractors move away from purely delivering face-to-face advice and diversify into telephone, online and digital methods.

From October 2018, the service was again re-configured; this meant that some area-based contractors were replaced, again, either by new providers or by providers who were already delivering the service in other regions. The new regions are as follows: East of England and Buckinghamshire, East Midlands and Northamptonshire, South West and Oxfordshire, North East and Cumbria, Yorkshire and Humber, London, West Midlands and Staffordshire, South

East and the North West. Changes were also made to the National Contact Centre, which is now referred to as the National Careers Helpline. Following, October 2018, National Careers Helpline customers were offered advice and guidance, as well as information. For this reason, comparisons to Year 8 will only be made to Quarters 3 and 4 of Year 8 to ensure the data is comparable.

During Spring 2019, the position of the online satisfaction survey link on the National Careers Service website was altered. As a result, the number of completed surveys received in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 declined. In Autumn 2019, changes were made to the tools on the National Careers Service website and were reflected in the online satisfaction questionnaire (from Quarter 3 onwards).

Since November 2020, the National Careers Helpline (NCH) service was phased out. Therefore, there is no separate analysis on this service for the telephone satisfaction from Q3 onwards, with separate NCH analysis only reported in comparisons to the area-based contractors. We continued to survey NCH customers for the progression surveys until April 2021, however, the base size for NCH in Q3 and Q4 is low, so comparisons across waves should be treated with caution.

As a result of the pandemic, the National Careers Service offered a reduced service, and this had an impact on the way individuals were able to interact with the National Careers Service. The closure of JobCentre Plus offices resulted in a reduction in face-to-face contact and an increase in telephone or video calls.

1.2 Research aims

An extensive programme of research has been developed to understand customer views of the National Careers Service and to help inform its development and continuous improvement. This involves continuous monthly research to:

- Measure customer satisfaction, with face-to-face and telephone customers interviewed in the month after their session, and website visitors asked about their views of the site at the time they access it.
- Assess customer progression, with face-to-face and telephone customers interviewed six months after their last adviser session, and website visitors assessed three months after they completed the online satisfaction survey. Customer progression measures changes in customers' employment and learning progression, personal development, and career management skills.

This report is based on fieldwork conducted between May 2020 and April 2021. For face-to-face and telephone customers, this means the satisfaction survey covers sessions with an adviser between April 2020 and March 2021. As a result of COVID-19, from the 23rd March 2020, the government advised individuals to stay at home and for certain businesses to close. Due to the lockdown measures put in place at this time, the National Careers Service offered a reduced service. As a result of the reduced service, fewer interviews were completed with customers

that used the service and most of the interviews were with customers who had used the telephone service. This affected the satisfaction survey in Q1 and Q2, and the progression survey in Q3 and Q4.

Due to the variations in the base sizes, comparisons across waves should be treated with caution. As a result of smaller base sizes, a bigger percentage point difference is needed to show statistically significant differences in results.

For face-to-face and telephone customers, the progression survey covers the period six months beforehand (i.e. from November 2019 to October 2020).

The research among web visitors covers those accessing the National Careers Service website between May 2020 and April 2021 for the online satisfaction survey.

The overall aims of this research are to:

- Provide full analysis of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the National Careers Service, which incorporate specific measures on customer satisfaction and progression following their contact with an adviser. It should be noted that the progression measures reported here are not designed to provide an impact evaluation of the National Careers Service as they are self-reported outcomes with no counterfactual (i.e. there is no way of knowing whether that impact would have occurred anyway, without the intervention of the National Careers Service).
- Understand customer views of the service at different points in their journey, to provide actionable feedback to help the National Careers Service to identify areas for improvement and to inform its service development.
- Identify and understand any demographic differences in how customers experience and rate the service, in particular among priority groups, including; NEET customers aged 18-24, single parents, customers with a disability, those aged 50 plus who are unemployed or at risk of redundancy, customers who have been unemployed for more than 12 months.
- Measure variations in performance among the area-based contractors delivering the service.
- Monitor changes over time by comparing the results for Year 10 to the data from Year 9.

1.3 Methodology

This report presents the results from Year 10 of the customer satisfaction and progression study, covering fieldwork between May 2020 to April 2021.

1.4 Telephone surveys

For face-to-face and telephone customers this involved a total of 6,145 interviews for the satisfaction survey and 4,415 interviews for the progression survey. The achieved interviews by

quarter is shown in Table 1.1, including comparative sample sizes and fieldwork dates for the previous years of the survey.

In order to clearly demarcate satisfaction results under the new National Careers Service contracts which started in October 2014, it was agreed to adjust the quarterly coverage of the satisfaction survey so that it aligned with the start of the new contract. This means that the October 2014 fieldwork (with customers who first had contact with the service in September 2014, the last month under the old contracts) is treated as a stand-alone month, with adjusted quarters then running from November 2014 fieldwork (with customers whose first contact with the service was in October 2014, under the new contract).

As a result of the reduced service, fewer interviews were completed with customers that used the service in Year 10 and the majority of the interviews were with customers who had received the telephone service. This affected the satisfaction survey in Q1 and Q2, and the progression survey in Q3 and Q4. Those who used the face-to-face service throughout Year 10 included both in person appointments, and video call appointments.

Table 1.1: Achieved interviews by quarter (face-to-face and telephone customers)

	Satisfaction survey			Progression survey	
	Fieldwork month	Month of adviser session	No. of interviews	Month of adviser session	No. of interviews
Quarter 1	Sept 2011	Aug 2011	2,217	Mar 2011	1,601
Quarter 2	Oct-Dec 2011	Sept-Nov 2011	2,195	Apr-Jun 2011	1,599
Quarter 3	Jan-Mar 2012	Dec 11-Feb 2012	2,198	Jul-Sept 2011	1,638
Year 1			6,610		4,398
Quarter 1	Apr-Jun 2012	March-May 2012	2,211	Oct-Dec 2011	1,599
Quarter 2	Jul-Sept 2012	Jun-Aug 2012	2,199	Jan-Mar 2012	1,599
Quarter 3	Oct-Dec 2012	Sept-Nov 2012	2,199	Apr-Jun 2012	1,599
Quarter 4	Jan-Mar 2013	Dec 12-Feb 2013	2,199	Jul-Sept 2012	1,599
Year 2			8,808		6,395
Quarter 1	Apr-Jun 2013	Mar-May 2013	2,199	Oct-Dec 2012	1,598
Quarter 2	Jul-Sept 2013	Jun-Aug 2013	2,199	Jan-Mar 2013	1,599

Quarter 3	Oct-Dec 2013	Sep-Nov 2013	2,198	Apr-Jun 2013	1,598
Quarter 4	Jan-Mar 2014	Dec 13-Feb 2014	2,199	Jul-Sept 2013	1,597
Year 3			8,795		6,392
Quarter 1	Apr-Jun 2014	Mar-May 2014	2,100	Oct-Dec 2013	1,603
Quarter 2	Jul-Sept 2014	Jun-Aug 2014	2,210	Jan-Mar 2014	1,602
	Oct 2014	Sept 2014	747		
Quarter 3	Nov 14-Jan 2015 (sat) Oct-Dec 2014 (prog)	Oct-Dec 2014	2,222	Apr-Jun 2014	1,064
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 2015 (sat) Jan-Mar 2015 (prog)	Jan-Mar 2015	2,197	Jul-Sept 2014	797
Year 4			9,576		5,066
Quarter 1	May-Jul 2015	Apr-Jun 2015	2,200	Nov 14-Jan 2015	1,599
Quarter 2	Aug-Oct 2015	Jul-Sept 2015	2,210	Feb-Apr 2015	1,601
Quarter 3	Nov 15-Jan 2016	Oct-Dec 2015	2,200	May-Jul 2015	1,600
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 2016	Jan-Mar 2016	2,202	Aug-Oct 2015	1,611
Year 5			8,812		6,411
Quarter 1	May-Jul 2016	Apr-Jun 2016	2,201	Nov 15-Jan 2016	1,600
Quarter 2	Aug-Oct 2016	Jul-Sept 2016	2,207	Feb-Apr 2016	1,605
Quarter 3	Nov 16-Jan 17	Oct-Dec 2016	2,209	May-Jul 2016	1,606
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 17	Jan-Mar 2017	2,204	Aug-Oct 2016	1,602
Year 6			8,821		6,413
Quarter 1	May-Jul 2017	Apr-Jun 2017	2,055	Nov 16-Jan 2017	1,604
Quarter 2	Aug-Oct 2017	Jul-Sept 2017	2,051	Feb-Apr 2017	1,605
Quarter 3	Nov 17-Jan 2018	Oct-Dec 2017	2,061	May-Jul 2017	1,613
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 2018	Jan-Mar 2018	2,061	Aug-Oct 2017	1,616
Year 7			8,228		6,438
Quarter 1	May-Jul 2018	Apr-Jun 2018	2,054	Nov 17-Jan 2018	1,633

Quarter 2	Aug-Oct 2018	Jul-Sept 2018	2,052	Feb-Apr 2018	1,614
Year 8 (Q1&Q2)			4,106		3,247
Quarter 3	Nov 18-Jan 2019	Oct-Dec 2018	2,927	May-July 2018	3,148
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 2019	Jan-Mar 2019	3,184	Aug-Oct 2018	3,395
Year 8 (Q3&Q4)			6,111		6,543
Quarter 1	May-Jul 2019	Apr-Jun 2019	3,171	Nov 18-Jan 2019	2,958
Quarter 2	Aug-Oct 2019	Jul-Sept 2019	2,306	Feb-Apr 2019	1,723
Quarter 3	Nov 19-Jan 2020	Oct-Dec 2019	2,255	May-Jul 2019	1,759
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 2020	Jan-Mar 2020	2,264	Aug-Oct 2019	1,760
Year 9			9,996		8,200
Quarter 1	May-Jul 2020	Apr-Jun 2020	816	Nov 19-Jan 2020	1,759
Quarter 2	Aug-Oct 2020	Jul-Sept 2020	812	Feb-Apr 2020	1,392
Quarter 3	Nov 20-Jan 2021	Oct-Dec 2020	2,242	May-Jul 2020	632
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 2021	Jan-Mar 2021	2,275	Aug-Oct 2020	632
Year 10			6,145		

All survey interviews among face-to-face or telephone customers were conducted by telephone using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Targets were set each month based on the type of service they received:

- Face-to-face National Careers Service customers;
- Telephone customers can either be offered Information and Advice (IA) or Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) from the service. Those who are offered Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) will receive a Skills Action Plan.

The survey identifies whether customers have accessed the service via different means, while continuing to assign them to a 'primary' channel based on their first substantive interaction with the service.

In addition to these overall targets, quotas for each month of fieldwork were set on age, gender and employment status at the time of the call (within service type), in proportion to the customer profile.

Telephone customers can either be offered Information and Advice (IA) or Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) from the service. Those who are offered Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) have a Skills Action Plan. The telephone satisfaction customers surveyed in Q1 and Q2 include IA and IAG customers, while those surveyed in Q3 and Q4 are only IAG customers.

At the analysis stage, the telephone satisfaction and progression data were weighted by contracting region to match the customer profile.

The customer profile used to set the quotas and weight the data is aligned with the corresponding month(s) that these customers used the service.

1.5 Online surveys

For the online survey, the overall figures presented throughout the report exclude the results from Quarter 2. In Q2 there was a very high volume of online satisfaction survey customers and the vast proportion of these were first time visitors to the site. The large amount of traffic to the online satisfaction survey was the result of a tweet from a customer about their 'Discover your skills and careers' result, which went viral and generated a lot of media interest. The results from Q2 skew the overall results for Year 10 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and also had a different demographic profile. When Q2 customers are excluded the profile of customers in Year 10 is broadly comparable to Year 9.

In total 861 website users took part in the website satisfaction survey excluding customers in Q2. Use of cookies means that someone accessing the site from the same computer will only be asked to participate once. As in previous years, no weighting has been applied to the web satisfaction survey because the demographic profile of the population of website users is unknown.

Typically, an online progression survey would also take place throughout the year. This progression survey for website users is longitudinal and conducted online, with respondents sent an email with a link to the online questionnaire three months after they took part in the online satisfaction survey. The email is only sent to individuals (rather than employers or careers advisers) who accessed the site seeking information on their own behalf, were willing to be re-contacted, and supplied a valid email address for this purpose. In total, 188 online progression interviews were conducted. Due to the small volume of interviews, this data has been excluded from this report.

1.6 Interpretation of the data

Throughout the chapters, 'customers' refer to those who access the National Careers Service face-to-face at Jobcentre Plus or another location or over a video call or receive the advice by telephone from area-based contractors. Since November 2020 the NCH service was phased out. Therefore, there is no separate analysis on this service for the telephone satisfaction from Q3 onwards, with separate NCH analysis only reported in comparisons to the area-based contractors. We continued to survey NCH customers for the progression surveys until April 2021, however, the base size for NCH in Q3 and Q4 is low, so comparisons across waves should be treated with caution.

This latest research follows previous sets of comparable surveys. The report highlights relevant differences between the average and subgroup findings, or between findings from previous waves. This only includes differences that are found to be statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence. This means that we can be 95% confident (i.e. 19 times out of 20) that the difference is a 'real' difference rather than one resulting from having spoken to a sample of customers. However, not *all* statistically significant differences are noted – it only refers to differences that appear consistently across questions, which indicate important subgroups, or indicate important shifts over time.

Throughout the report, due to rounding of percentages, exclusion of a very small number of "refused" responses, or questions that allow more than one response, figures in charts do not always add to 100%. Asterisks denote values greater than zero but less than 0.5.

1.7 The structure of this report

The rest of this report presents the results of Year 10 of the National Careers Service customer satisfaction and progression surveys, as follows:

- Chapter 2 details the profile of customers accessing the National Careers Service;
- Chapter 3 explores customers' reasons for contacting the service, how they found out about it, and what they wanted from it;
- Chapter 4 examines the customer journey in detail, looking at their experiences of using specific aspects of the service across all of its main channels;
- Chapter 5 assesses customer satisfaction with the service, and willingness to recommend it to other people, including relevant National Careers Service Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); and
- Chapter 6 explores customer progression six months on from their interaction with the service, including relevant National Careers Service Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- Chapter 7 looks at customers' experiences across the different contracting regions, identifying any variations in performance.

2 Customer Profile

The customer profile of those accessing the face-to-face, telephone or online services remained largely consistent with previous years. For face-to-face and telephone customers, there was a slight increase in females using the service. There was also a decrease in customers with a disability or long-term limiting health condition using the service, likely an impact of the change in service to be predominantly telephone appointments due to COVID-19. Online customers⁵ were more likely to have higher qualifications, and more likely to be in work, when compared to face-to-face and telephone customers.

This chapter examines the profile of customers accessing the service in Year 10, from May 2020 to April 2021, and those accessing the National Careers Service website from May 2020 to April 2021. It looks at demographic characteristics such as gender, age and ethnicity, work status, and highest qualification at the time of accessing the service.

2.1 Customer characteristics

Table 2.1 shows the age, gender and ethnicity profiles of National Careers Service face-to-face, telephone and online customers surveyed during Year 10. The figures presented for face-to-face and telephone customers are based on weighted data, whilst online figures are based on unweighted data³. Overall the customer base varied by service channel, but still had a similar profile to that found in previous years.

Table 2.1: Demographic profile of National Careers Service customers⁴

	Channel used as main way of accessing the service (%)		
Base:	Face-to-face (1,958)	Telephone (4,187)	Online ⁵ (861)
Gender			
Male	50	51	42
Female	49	49	52
Age group			
19 or younger ⁶	8	7	12

³ The National Careers Service does not collect any management information on the demographic profile of its website users, so it is not possible to ascertain how representative the survey profile is (and the data is therefore unweighted).

⁴ Not all categories will add up to 100% as a result of the 'Prefer not to say' code.

⁵ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers'.

⁶ The age ranges are 18-19 for face-to-face and telephone customers, 16-19 for online customers.

20-24	18	15	8
25-49	48	53	46
50 or older	26	25	32
Ethnicity			
White	70	80	72
Black/Black British	10	7	8
Asian/Asian British	12	9	5
Mixed/other	6	4	9
Prefer not to say	1	*	6
English not first language	21	18	18
Long term illness/disability	21	26	26

2.1.2 Gender and age

In previous waves, the majority of face-to-face and telephone customers using the service were men (in Year 9 it was 55% male compared to 45% female), however, in Year 10 there was a slight increase in females using the service (49% female and 51% male).

In terms of the key priority groups, single parents were more likely to be female (75%), compared to the average, 49%), whereas NEET customers aged 18-24 (59%), customers with qualifications below Level 2 (59%) and customers with a disability (52%) were more likely to be male, when compared to the average (51%).

The highest proportion of telephone and face-to-face customers were aged between 25-49 (53% and 48% respectively). Compared to Year 9, there has been a slight decrease in the number of customers aged 50 plus (26%, compared to 29% in Year 9). Overall, customers aged 50 plus were more likely to use the face-to-face channel than telephone channel, but the difference was small (26% vs. 25%) and was only slightly higher in the online channel (32%). Face-to-face customers were more likely to consist of those who are aged 50 plus and unemployed or at risk of redundancy (19%) compared to telephone customers (18%).

Customers with qualifications below Level 2 (27%) and customers with a disability (34%) were more likely to be 50 plus, compared to the average (26%), whilst single parents were more likely to be aged 25-49 (74%, compared to the average, 52%).

Online web users⁷ who completed the survey were predominantly women (52%) and aged 25-49 (46%). The proportion of customers aged 18-24 increased from Year 9 to Year 10, from 13% to 20%. The proportion of customers aged 50 plus has stayed at a similar level (32% in Year 10 compared with 33% in Year 9).

2.1.3 Ethnicity and English as a first language

Most website users⁷ who participated in the survey were White (72%), a similar proportion to Year 9 (75%). Higher proportions of telephone and face-to-face customers were White (80% and 70% respectively). The proportion of BAME customers using the service was highest amongst face-to-face customers, with 10% being Black/Black British and a further 12% being Asian/Asian British.

The proportion of customers who said that English was not their first language was split mostly equally across face-to-face, telephone and online channels (21% face-to-face, 18% telephone, and 18% online⁷).

2.1.4 Disability

In previous waves, the proportion of customers with a disability or long-term limiting health condition using the service is significantly higher among face-to-face customers than telephone customers and online customers. In Year 10, a fifth of face-to-face customers had a disability or long-term limiting health condition (21%), while a quarter of telephone customers had a disability or long-term limiting health condition (26%). This is likely an impact of the change in service to be predominantly telephone appointments due to COVID-19. This is also likely to have resulted in the overall decrease in customers with a disability or long-term limiting health condition using the service, from 29% in Year 9 to 25% in Year 10.

Customers with a disability were more likely than average to have been referred by JobCentre Plus (63% compared with 59%). Face-to-face customers were as more likely to be claiming benefits (77%, compared with the average, 76%), which will include people who are claiming the welfare support for a disability, such as ESA.

Customers with qualifications below Level 2 (33%) and those who had been unemployed for more than 12 months (38%) were more likely to have a disability when compared to the average (25%).

⁷ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers'.

2.1.5 Region

Website users⁷ who participated in the survey were asked where they lived; this provides a picture of the regional spread of website users. In total, 85% of online customers said they lived in England, with the remainder living in Scotland (2%), Wales (1%), Northern Ireland (less than 1%) or outside of the UK (less than 1%).

At least four per cent of online customers⁷ lived in each of the English regions. The highest proportions were in London (20%), the rest of the South East (14%) and the South West (10%).

2.2 Employment status

Table 2.2 provides an overview of customers' employment status at the time of their first adviser session or visit to the website.

Table 2.2: Economic activity of customers

Base:	Channel used as main way of accessing the service (%)		
	Face-to-face (1,958)	Telephone (4,187)	Online ⁸ (861)
In work	22	23	47
Full-time employee	8	8	21
Part-time employee	6	6	13
Self-employed	4	5	10
On furlough	4	4	3
In learning	6	5	5
Full-time learning	3	3	3
Part-time learning	3	1	2
Unemployed and looking for work	63	63	24
Unable to work due to health	2	4	4
Looking after home/family	3	2	5
Retired	*	*	3

⁸ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers'.

Other	1	2	12
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In Year 10, telephone customers and face-to-face customers were equally likely to be unemployed and looking for work (both 63%), whereas in the online survey, the proportion of unemployed customers was 24%.

The following customer groups were more likely to be unemployed and looking for work⁹.

- men (69%, compared with 57% of women); and
- customers with qualifications below Level 2 (63%)

The Year 10 data demonstrates that those aged 20-24 and customers 19 or younger are more likely to be unemployed and looking for work (67% and 66% respectively, compared to customers aged 25-49, 60%). This is a similar level to Year 9, when 67% of those aged 20-24 were unemployed and looking for work.

A similar proportion of face-to-face and telephone customers reported being in work (22% and 23%), whereas the figure was much higher for online customers, at 47%. This is a shift from the pattern of previous years, which showed face-to-face customers were less likely than telephone customers to be in work. Among face-to-face and telephone customers, customers with a disability were less likely than customers without a disability to be in work (17% compared with 25%), although this a slightly smaller difference than seen in Year 9 (15% compared with 25%).

Face-to-face customers and telephone customers were similarly likely to be in education (6% compared to 5%). Only 5% of customers were in education, which is a decrease on the level seen in Year 9 (11%), and of that seen in Year 8 Q3 and Q4 (23%).

Among face-to-face and telephone customers who were unemployed at the time of their call/meeting, half (47%) had been unemployed for less than six months, 15% had been unemployed for six to 12 months and just under a third (27%) had been unemployed for more than 12 months. Customers with qualifications below Level 2 (32%), customers with a disability (40%) and single parents (40%) were all more likely than average (27%) to have been unemployed for more than 12 months.

As with previous years these figures illustrate the continuing challenge faced by the National Careers Service in terms of its diverse customer base. Customers who have never worked or who have been out of work for several years will have very different advice and information needs to those who are in work and seeking to progress or change career, or to those who have recently been made redundant and may be looking to re-train or get a new job.

⁹ Analysis of customer groups is based on face-to-face and telephone customers (combined).

2.3 Highest qualification

A key customer group for the National Careers Service is those with qualifications below Level 2, defined as adults without a Level 2 qualification (i.e. equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C), this does not include people with no qualifications. The majority of customers already had qualifications at or above this level, regardless of which channel they used to access the service, as shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Highest qualification and NEET status among National Careers Service customers

	Channel used as main way of accessing the service (%)		
	Face-to-face (1,958)	Telephone (4,187)	Online ¹⁰ (861)
Base:			
Highest qualification			
Level 4 or higher (e.g. degree or equivalent)	37	39	42
Level 3 (e.g. A-levels)	23	22	11
Level 2 (5 GCSEs A*-C)	19	20	14
Level 1	8	9	8
Entry level	2	3	5
No qualifications	1	*	8
Other	3	3	n/a
Level 2 or higher	81	79	67
Below Level 2	10	12	13
18-24 NEET	19	16	13

Face-to-face customers were more likely to have a qualification at Level 2 or above (81%), compared with telephone customers (79%). This is a shift from the results of Year 9, where

¹⁰ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers'.

telephone customers were more likely than face-to-face customers to have a qualification at Level 2 or above (78% compared with 65%).

Telephone customers were slightly less likely to hold a qualification at Level 4 or higher (33%, compared with face-to-face customers, 34%). Online customers¹¹ have the highest proportion of customers that hold a Level 4 or higher qualification (42%), a slight decrease compared to Year 9 (43%).

Over one in ten of online customers¹¹ were 18-24 and NEET at the time of their meeting (13%), a smaller proportion than face-to-face and telephone customers (19% and 16% respectively). Being 18-24 and NEET was more common among customers who were male (19%, compared to 13% of females).

¹¹ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers'.

3 How and why do customers contact the National Careers Service?

Six in ten customers reported that they found out about the service through Jobcentre Plus (59%), emphasising the importance of this information channel, and showing consistency with Year 9 (59%). The proportion of customers being referred to the service through Jobcentre Plus greatly increased among telephone customers (59% in Year 10 compared to 28% in Year 9), likely a result of the change in service due to COVID-19. With the majority of customers receiving information, advice and guidance via the telephone service.

Online customers often heard about the National Careers Service through Jobcentre Plus (25%), through searches online (19%), through social media (13%), or from a teacher or National Careers Service adviser (both 10%). Customers aged 50 plus who were unemployed or at risk of redundancy (53%), customers who had been unemployed for at least 12 months (50%), and customers with no qualifications (41%), were more likely than average to have been signposted to the service by Jobcentre Plus.

Reasons for contacting the National Careers Service were primarily focussed on progressing into employment. Help with CV writing was the most common reason for using the telephone and face-to-face service (32% and 27%). Website use was largely for obtaining information and advice about jobs, careers or apprenticeships (40%).

This chapter explores how customers first found out about the National Careers Service and the reasons why they got in contact, including what sort of information or advice they were seeking prior to using the service. It is important to look at these factors because customers' reasons for contacting the service and whether their expectations of it were met will influence subsequent views on satisfaction. It is also important for the National Careers Service to be aware of how motivators for accessing the service may vary amongst different customer groups so that they can tailor provision more closely to customer need. In addition, it is important to understand the extent to which, if at all, the demand for information or advice has shifted in light of the pandemic and the impact this has had on the jobs market.

3.1 How did customers first find out about the National Careers Service?

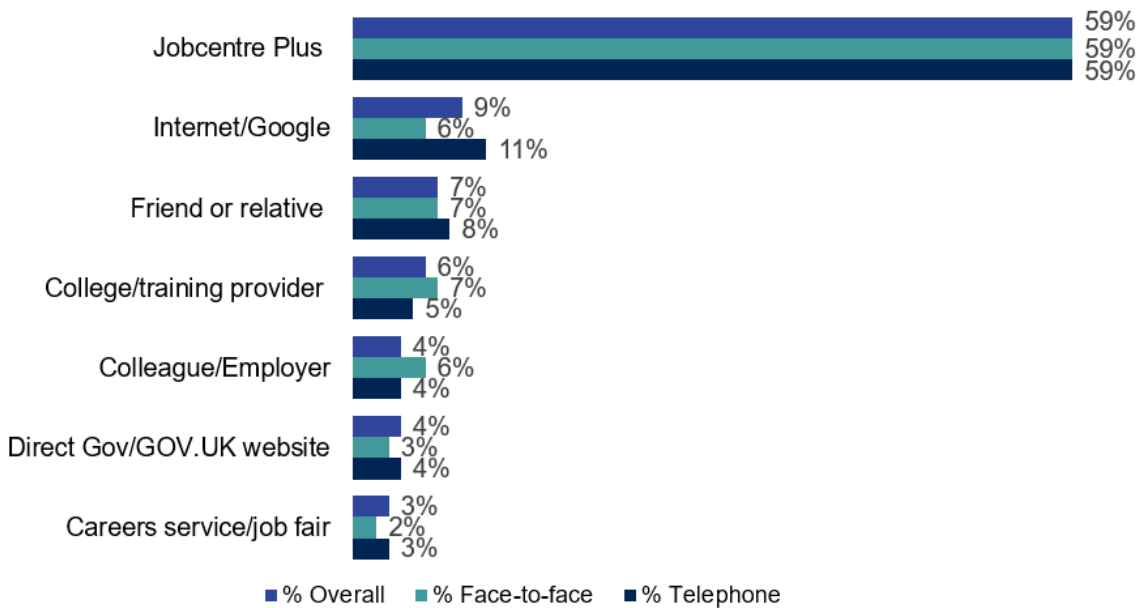
3.1.1 Telephone and Face-to-Face Customers

Across Year 10, more than half of all customers reported that they found out about the service through Jobcentre Plus (59%), which is consistent with Year 9 (59%). Due to the pandemic and the impact this had both on customers and the service itself, there has been a large increase throughout year in the proportion of customers who heard about the service through Jobcentre Plus, starting at 47% in Q1 and increasing each quarter up to 71% in Q4. The proportion of face-to-face customers being referred to the service through Jobcentre Plus decreased slightly from last year (59% in Year 10 compared to 65% in Year 9) but has massively increased among

telephone customers (59% in Year 10 compared to 28% in Year 9). This is likely a result of the reduced service the National Careers Service offered throughout Year 10, with the majority of customers receiving information, advice and guidance via the telephone service. The prominence of Jobcentre Plus reflects the longstanding referral and co-location arrangements between Jobcentre Plus and National Careers Service as part of a continued commitment for a more integrated approach to the provision of employment and skills advice to unemployed people.

Telephone customers were more likely to have heard about the service through the internet (11%), compared to face-to-face customers (6%). Whereas more face-to-face customers had heard about the service through their employer (6%, compared to 4% of telephone customers).

Figure 3.1: Where customers first found out about the National Careers Service



Base: Overall (6,145), Face-to-face customers (1,958), Telephone (4,187)

The survey shows that whilst Jobcentre Plus was the main way in which customers heard about the service (59%), customers aged 50+ were significantly more likely than younger customers to have heard about the service for the first time through this channel (64% vs 58%). Moreover, those who were unemployed and looking for work were also more likely to have heard about the service through Jobcentre Plus than those in work or learning (70% compared to 37% and 34% respectively). This is the same pattern as seen in previous years and reflects that older customers are more likely to be unemployed when they first contact the service.

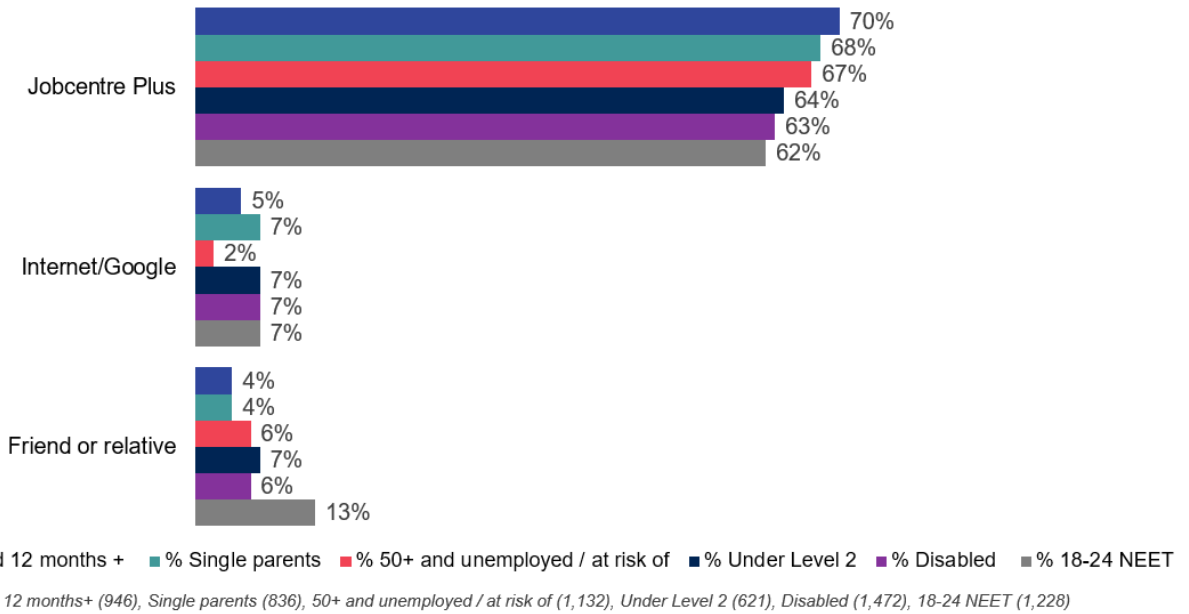
Other groups more likely than average to have first found out about the service via Jobcentre Plus were customers aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (70%), customers who had been unemployed for less than 6 months (70%) or more than 12 months (70%), customers aged 50 plus *and* unemployed or at risk of redundancy (67%), customers who had been unemployed for between 6 and 12 months (67%), single parents (68%), and customers with a disability (63%).

Men and women were equally likely to have heard of the service through Jobcentre Plus (59%), which is in contrast with previous years when men were more likely to have heard of the service

through this channel. This may be a reflection of more women using the service in Year 10, whereas in previous years the proportion of men using the service was higher.

Figure 3.2 shows how key groups varied in terms of how they first found out about the National Careers Service.

Figure 3.2: Where customers first found out about the National Careers Service by key group



3.1.2 Online customers¹²

The following section presents the findings from the online satisfaction survey. However, the overall figures for the online survey presented throughout the report exclude the results from Quarter 2. In Q2 there was a very high volume of online satisfaction survey customers and the vast proportion of these were first time visitors to the site. The large amount of traffic to the online satisfaction survey was the result of a tweet from a customer about their ‘Discover your skills and careers’ result, which went viral and generated a lot of media interest. The results from Q2 skew the overall results for Year 10 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and also had a different demographic profile. When Q2 customers are excluded the profile of customers in Year 10 is broadly comparable to Year 9.

The most common ways for website users to have first heard about the National Careers Service was via Jobcentre Plus (25%), through online searches (19%), through social media (13%), or from a teacher or National Careers Service adviser (both 10%). Customers aged 50 plus and unemployed or at risk of redundancy, and those who had been unemployed for at least 12 months, were far more likely to have been signposted to the service by Jobcentre Plus (53% and 50% respectively, compared to 25% overall). In addition, customers with no qualifications (41%) were more likely than average to have been signposted to the service by Jobcentre Plus.

Table 3.1: Website visitor referral¹²

Base:	Overall (861)	Disabled (228)	50 plus and unemployed (108)	Under L2 (112)	L2 plus (576)	Unemployed for 12 months + (78)
Jobcentre Plus adviser	25%	29%	53%	29%	23%	50%
Online	19%	13%	13%	10%	23%	9%
Through social media	13%	8%	9%	14%	11%	8%

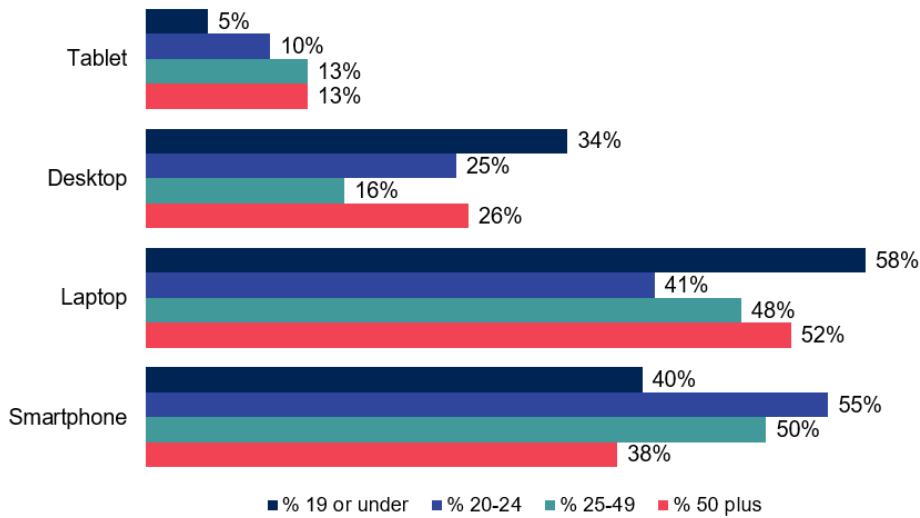
Nine in ten customers accessed the website at home (88% compared with 7% who accessed it from work), which is a significant increase on previous years. This is likely to have been driven by the higher proportion of people working from home during the pandemic. Overall, five per cent accessed the site at a school, college or university, although this was higher among those aged 19 or under (24%). Only two per cent accessed the service from a library or other public facility, although again this is likely to be due to the library closures and limited access during lockdowns.

Customers most commonly access the website with the use of a laptop (50%) or a smartphone (45%), followed by using desktops at 23%. There has been a continued decline in desktop use from 34% in Year 9, showing the shifting pattern of internet access and the importance of designing websites with smartphone user experience in mind. A further contrast with previous years is that smartphone use is no longer significantly more prevalent among younger groups: half of website users aged 25-49 said they accessed the website using a smartphone (50% compared to 40% aged 19 or under). People with a disability were more likely to report using a smartphone (51% compared to 44% with no disability), as were those not in employment or education or training (59%) and those who had been unemployed for 12 months or more (62%).

Laptop use was higher among those aged 19 or under (58%) and those with higher levels of qualification (56% with Level 2 and 61% with Level 4).

¹² The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers'.

Figure 3.3: How customers accessed the National Careers Service website¹³



Base: Under 19 (103), 20-24 (71), 25-49 (392), 50+ (272)

3.2 Previous use of the National Careers Service

All customers were asked whether they had previously had any contact with the National Careers Service or another organisation providing advice about learning, skills or careers. As the service offers an integrated and multi-channel approach, it remains important to monitor cross-referrals between face-to-face, telephone and web services.

One in twenty customers (5%) had previously met with a National Careers Service adviser face-to-face, which is a significant decrease from Year 9 (12%), most likely an impact of COVID-19 and the reduced face-to-face service offered by the National Careers Service throughout Year 10. Those who had been unemployed for more than 12 months (8%) were more likely to have spoken to an adviser face-to-face previously. Face-to-face customers were almost twice as likely to have previously met with an adviser face-to-face, compared with telephone customers (7% and 4% respectively).

One in five (19%) customers had previously spoken to an adviser via the National Careers Helpline, which is almost twice as many as in Year 9 (10%). In contrast with Year 9, face-to-face customers were more likely than telephone customers to have previously spoken through the National Careers Helpline, (26% and 17% respectively). Those who were in learning were more likely than average to have previously spoken to an adviser via the telephone helpline (26% compared to 19% of customers overall). Other groups that were more likely to have previously spoken to an adviser via the helpline were customers aged 19 or younger (27%), those from ethnic minorities (29%), those aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (22%) and customers who had been unemployed for between 6-12 months (27%).

¹³ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers'.

Three in ten (30%) customers had accessed the website before they used the service, which is also an increase on Year 9 (22%). In contrast with previous years, the proportion of telephone customers who used the website before accessing the service was similar to the proportion of face-to-face customers (29% vs 32%), although it was significantly higher among NCH telephone customers (47%). Those that were in learning (39%), aged 18-24 (37%), aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (33%) or NEET (35%) were also more likely to have used the website prior to their contact with the service, as were those that had qualifications of Level 2 or 4 or above (31% and 35% respectively) and customers who were single parents (73%).

Half of all online customers¹⁴ (50%) were 'new' service users, visiting the site for the first time, in line with previous years. Customers who had been unemployed for more than 12 months were less likely to be visiting the site for the website (35%, compared to the average, 50%).

In line with previous years, unemployed web customers¹⁴ were still significantly more likely to have had prior contact with the National Careers Service than those in employment. For example, 31% of customers who had been unemployed for at least 12 months had previous dealings with the National Careers Service via face-to-face meetings compared to the average, 14%. Those who were impacted by COVID-19 and started claiming Universal Credit since March 2020 were more likely to have previously spoken to an adviser on the telephone helpline (34% compared to 19% overall).

3.3 Reasons for contacting the National Careers Service

3.3.1 Telephone and face-to-face customers

General service needs

Before asking customers about their detailed reasons for contacting the National Careers Service, they were asked if they were looking to explore career options, learning or training options, or both.

More wanted to explore career options (80%, similar to Year 9) than learning or training options (66%, also similar to Year 9, 63%).

Customers aged 50 plus were less likely than average to be exploring career options (72%). Whereas customers aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (85%), NEET customers aged 18-24 (83%), customers in work (83%), customers from ethnic minorities (85%), and customers with qualifications Level 2 and above (82%) were more likely to be exploring career options.

As seen in Year 9, seeking advice on learning or training options was more common among female customers (70%, compared to male customers, 63%), BAME customers (71%) and single parents (76%). Customers with Level 2 or higher qualifications (68%), and those aged 25-49 (71%) were also more likely to be planning or thinking about doing a course or some learning. National Careers Helpline customers were most likely to be planning on doing some

¹⁴ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers'.

type of learning or training (85%) compared with area-based telephone customers (66%) and face-to-face customers (66%).

Specific service needs

Customers were asked for their main reason for contacting the National Careers Service. There continues to be a wide variety of reasons for using the service covering careers/jobs and learning and ranging from information on courses relating to a specific job to developing interview skills.

For telephone and face-to-face customers, the most common reason was to get help in writing or developing a CV (32% and 27% respectively). Customers who have been unemployed for less than 6 months (37%), customers aged 50 plus and unemployed or at risk of redundancy (37%), single parents (36%) and customers with qualifications below Level 2 (36%) were more likely to contact the National Careers Service to get help with writing or developing their CV than customers overall (30%).

Figure 3.4: Reasons for contacting the National Careers Service (top mentions)



Base: Overall (6,145), Face-to-face customers (1,958), Telephone customers (4,187)

3.3.2 Website users¹⁵

Figure 3.5 shows that four in ten website visitors¹⁵ were looking to get information or advice on jobs, careers or apprenticeships (40%), and almost three in ten website visitors were looking to get information or advice about a course or learning (27%), or to access ‘Skills Health Check’ (26%).

¹⁵ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about ‘Discover your skills and careers’.

Figure 3.5: Top reasons for customers visiting the National Careers Service website¹⁵



Base: All online satisfaction survey customers excluding Q2 (861)

Customers using the website for jobs or careers advice or information on learning were asked what sort of information they wanted (Tables 3.2 and 3.3).

The most common form of employment-related information that customers were looking for was information about different careers (58%), followed by advice on applying for jobs (41%) and information about the jobs market (36%). Those aged 50 plus and unemployed or at risk of redundancy, and customers with a disability, were more likely to look for information about how to get back into work (58% and 45% respectively compared to 29% overall). Similarly, those impacted by COVID-19 and made employed in the last 6 months or redundant since March 2020 were also more likely to be looking for help getting back to work (46% and 48% respectively).

Table 3.2: Specific job-related information sought by website visitors

Base (all those looking for information/advice about jobs and careers on the National Careers Service website):	Year 10 2020/21 ¹⁶ (346)	Year 9 2019/20 (282)	Year 8 2018/19 (1,260)	Year 7 2017/18 (3,121)	Year 6 2016/17 (4,381)	Year 5 2015/16 (5,793)	Year 4 2014/15 (6,129)
Information about different careers	58%	59%	67%	66%	64%	61%	61%

¹⁶ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers'.

Information about progressing in a career	36%	37%	36%	35%	32%	30%	29%
Applying for jobs	41%	39%	37%	33%	34%	37%	36%
Information about the jobs market	29%	27%	26%	24%	27%	25%	25%
CVs	29%	22%	25%	21%	27%	30%	34%
Information on apprenticeships¹⁷	28%	21%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
How to get back into work	29%	29%	19%	17%	17%	17%	20%
Interview skills	23%	18%	21%	16%	19%	19%	21%
Voluntary work	13%	12%	11%	9%	11%	11%	11%
Issues around redundancy	6%	4%	3%	3%	4%	3%	4%
Other	3%	10%	8%	9%	8%	8%	7%

Table 3.3 below outlines the learning related information that was sought by online customers. Over four in ten customers were looking for information on a specific course (46%) or different ways of learning (45%).

Table 3.3: Specific course-related information sought by website visitors

Base (all those looking for information/advice about a course or learning on the National Careers Service website):	Year 10 2020/21 ¹⁸ (231)	Year 9 2019/2 0 (162)	Year 8 2018/1 9 (595)	Year 7 2017/1 8 (1,244)	Year 6 2016/1 7 (1,647)	Year 5 2015/1 6 (2,345)	Year 4 2014/1 5 (2,406)
A specific course	46%	48%	49%	49%	48%	47%	47%
Different ways of learning	45%	35%	39%	34%	36%	38%	39%

¹⁷ 'Information on apprenticeships' was removed from the question surrounding learning and training and added to the jobs and careers question at the start of Year 9.

¹⁸ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers'.

How to get back into learning	34%	30%	27%	26%	26%	26%	29%
Apprenticeships	n/a	n/a	32%	27%	24%	22%	19%
Paying for a course	20%	21%	22%	22%	22%	21%	25%
Other caring responsibilities	10%	5%	7%	9%	10%	10%	9%
Childcare	4%	3%	6%	6%	9%	8%	7%
Other	9%	7%	12%	15%	14%	13%	12%

4 Experiences of using the Service

Six in ten telephone customers had their enquiry handled in one call (61%), a decrease from previous years, however, the proportion of calls that were resolved in one call increased throughout Year 10. Amongst those who had multiple calls, 68% dealt with the same adviser.

Three in ten face-to-face customers (30%) had two or more meetings with the National Careers Service adviser. Customers with a disability were more likely to have multiple meetings with their adviser (38%). Two-thirds of customers who had more than one meeting saw the same adviser each time (62%). Due to the impact of the pandemic on the way the service is offered, only one in ten (10%) of customers had a meeting at a Jobcentre Plus office, which is down from 75% before the pandemic in Year 9.

The National Careers Service provides tools to support its customers across multiple platforms. The majority of customers found these tools useful. In particular, amongst those who had been referred to the Skills Health Check half (47%) went on to use the tool and the majority of these customers found the tool useful (82%). Just under half of online customers got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website (49%). Around four in ten face-to-face and telephone customers reported that they had been followed-up by the National Careers Service since their initial contact (38%), again similar to previous waves.

This chapter examines customer experiences contacting the National Careers Service over the phone and face-to-face, and among those using the website. It also looks at the specific tools and features that customers across all channels used, including the Skills Health Check, Discover your Skills and Careers, Explore Careers, Find a Course, the Skills Action Plan and an Account, which enables customers to access a range of tools such as updating and storing their CV and actions plans which they can return to as their career develops.

4.1 Making contact with the National Careers Service by phone

Six in ten telephone customer queries were handled in a single call in Year 10 (61%), which is a significant decrease compared to Year 9 (72%) and previous years. However, the proportion of calls that were resolved in one call increased throughout Year 10, with 63% in Q4 resolved in one call compared to 56% in Q1. This suggests the overall decrease in the number of queries handled in a single call may be an impact to the change in service to predominantly telephone appointments due to the impact of COVID-19 at the start of Year 10. National Careers Helpline customers were more likely than average to have their query dealt with in a single call (75%), as were those aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (67%) and those aged 18-24 and NEET (66%).

Area-based telephone customers were more likely than NCH telephone customers to have their query dealt with in two calls (24% compared to 12%, as were customers aged 50+ and at risk of unemployment (28%). Amongst those who had multiple calls, 68% dealt with the same adviser.

Area-based telephone customers who had more than one call were more likely to have been dealt with by one adviser (69%).

On average, customers spent 36 minutes speaking with their adviser during their first call, which is an increase from 27 minutes in Year 9.

When compared to Year 9, there has been a significant increase in the number of people being offered information by the adviser and/or information outlining their conversation and what the customer should do next (84%, up from 75%). Of these, over nine in ten (95%) recall receiving this information, which is another increase upon Year 9 (90%). Female customers (97%), those in work (97%), and those with level 4 or higher qualifications (98%) were particularly likely to report they received the information.

Area-based telephone customers were more likely than National Careers Helpline customers to have been offered further information reflecting the more complex needs of this group (85% compared with 76%). Area-based telephone customers were also more likely to say they actually received the information than National Careers Helpline customers (95% compared with 91%).

The vast majority of telephone customers found the information they received useful (93%), and six in ten found it very useful (60%). Five per cent of customers found the information not very or not at all useful. These findings are mostly in line with previous years. Female customers were more likely to find the information very useful (63%, compared to male customers, 57%). In terms of key groups, those aged 18-24 and either receiving benefits (96%) or NEET (97%) were most likely to find the information useful.

4.2 Face-to-face contact with the National Careers Service

As a result of COVID-19, the National Careers Service offered a reduced service, with a reduction in face-to-face contact. Those who used the face-to-face service throughout Year 10 included both in person appointments, and video call appointments.

Almost seven in ten customers had just one face-to-face meeting with a National Careers Service adviser (68%), which is a significant decrease compared to Year 9 (79%). Three in ten (30%) had two or more meetings. Customers who have a disability were more likely to have two or more meetings with their adviser (39% compared to 28% of those with no disability). Interestingly, those who were satisfied with the service were more likely to have had multiple meetings than those who were dissatisfied (31% compared to 18%).

In terms of operational aspects, those who have not used a Skills Health Check were more likely to only have had one meeting (73%) as were those who did not meet in a Jobcentre Plus (69%).

On average, customers spent 39 minutes speaking to their adviser, which is significantly less than in Year 9. This could be an impact of many face-to-face meetings taking place through video calls. Those who only had one meeting, reported it took 42 minutes on average compared to 34 minutes for those who required more than one meeting. Meetings with customers with level 4

or higher qualifications took longer (44 minutes on average), as did meetings with those who have used the Skills Health Check (42 minutes) and with customers in the East of England and Buckinghamshire (47 minutes) and the South East (45 minutes).

The three main reasons for attending more than one meeting were that: the adviser was reviewing or amending their CV (29%); the adviser could not answer all the questions during the first meeting and needed to provide more information (22%); or because there wasn't time to go through everything in the first meeting (15%). There has been a significant decrease in the proportion of customers who said their adviser suggested they come back for a subsequent meeting, down from 21% in Year 9. However, by Q4 of Year 10, the proportion of customers who said their adviser suggested a second meeting had increased to 13%.

Almost two-thirds of customers who had more than one meeting saw the same adviser each time (62%). Over three in ten (35%) saw different advisers, although the majority (78%) did not mind this.

Due to the impact of the pandemic on the way the service is offered, only one in ten (10%) of customers had a meeting at a Jobcentre Plus office, which is down from 75% before the pandemic in Year 9. This was higher among customers who are in learning (25%), from an ethnic minority (14%), aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (14%), and those who have level 1 qualifications (17%).

4.3 Using the National Careers Service website¹⁹

Customers who used the National Careers Service website were asked which tools or features they had accessed.

The most commonly used feature was Skills Health Check (31%), followed by 'Explore Careers' (28%) and Discover your Skills and Careers (27%). Younger customers were particularly likely to have used 'Explore Careers' (39% of those aged 16-24 compared to 26% aged 25 and above).

The majority of customers who used the various tools and features found them useful, as shown in Table 4.1. In line with Year 9, the Explore Careers tool was found the most useful.

¹⁹ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers'.

Table 4.1: Proportion rating each feature as ‘very useful’ or ‘quite useful’¹⁹

	Explore Careers	Discover your Skills and Careers	Your Account (Q1 & Q2 only)	Skills Health Check	Find a Course	Contact the service
Base: All who used feature	243	233	60	270	200	95
Very/quite useful	84%	73%	83%	69%	72%	57%
Not very/at all useful	9%	22%	10%	24%	24%	38%

Just under half of website visitors got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website (49%), similar to Year 9 (48%). Four in ten either got some (21%) or none of the information they required (23%). The remaining 11%²⁰ were just browsing.

4.4 Use and usefulness of common National Careers Service tools

Customers were asked about the range of tools they have accessed through the National Careers Service. The questions covered the following:

- Face-to-face customers were asked if they went through the Skills Health Check tool and the Discover your Skills and Careers tool with their adviser in their meeting.
- All customers were asked if their adviser referred them to the Skills Health Check tool and the Discover your Skills and Careers tool (excluding those who had been through these tools with their adviser in a face-to-face meeting).
- All customers were asked if their adviser referred them to the following tools: Explore Careers, Find a Course and Webchat²¹.

4.4.1 Skills Health Check

The Skills Health Check is a diagnostic tool that helps customers to decide which jobs might be right for them.

Of the face-to-face customers, more than half went through the Skills Health Check diagnostic tool in a meeting (48%, increased from 48% in Year 9). Face-to-face customers who have multiple meetings were more likely than those who have had one meeting to have gone through

²⁰ The percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

²¹ Respondents were only asked about Webchat from Q3 onwards.

the tool (61% compared to 51%). Those who are satisfied with the service were also more likely to have used the tool (56% compared to 35% who were dissatisfied).

Over nine in ten (91%) said the Skills Health Check was useful, with 45% saying it was 'very' useful. Those aged 18-24 were most likely to say it was useful (95%), as were BAME customers (96%).

The main reason why the Skills Health Check was rated as not useful was that customers said it told them things they already knew (33%) that they were already skilled and not looking for alternatives (31%) and that the questions weren't relevant (34%).

Overall, three in ten (30%) customers said their adviser referred them to the Skills Health Check, which has increased from Year 9 (22%). Telephone customers were more likely than face-to-face customers to say they had been referred to this tool (31% compared to 21%).

Of those who had been referred to Skills Health Check, almost half said that they had used it (47%). Again, this is a significant increase on Year 9 when only 33% of those referred to the tool used it. Telephone customers were more likely than face-to-face customers to have used the diagnostic tool (48% compared to 32%). Those with level 2 or higher qualifications were also more likely to have used it (49%). In contrast, BAME customers (37%) were less likely than average to say they had gone through the Skills Health Check tool.

The majority of customers who used this tool found it useful (82%), similar to previous years. This includes 47% who found it 'very useful' and 45% who said it was 'fairly useful'. Only fifteen per cent did not find it useful. Younger customers were most likely to find the Skills Health Check useful (91% of those aged 18-24), as were NEET customers aged 18-24 (91%) and those receiving benefits aged 18-24 (93%). Those aged 50+ and at risk of unemployment were most likely to say it was not useful (24% compared to 15% overall).

4.4.2 Discover your Skills and Careers

Discover your Skills and Careers is a tool that assesses customer skills, interests and motivations.

Almost four in ten face-to-face customers (37%) recalled going through Discover your Skills and Careers with their adviser in their meeting, whilst half (48%) stated they had not and 14% said they could not remember.

Customers more likely to recall going through this tool include:

- Customers who had more than one face-to-face meeting (44% compared with 35% of those who only had one session) and;
- those who recalled having a Skills Action Plan (45% compared with 19% of customers who did not recall a Skills Action Plan) and;

- those who had visited the NCS website in the previous three months (43%, compared to 35% of customers who had not visited the website).

Customers over the age of 50 (60%) were more likely than average to say they had not gone through Discover your Skills and Careers, as were customers with qualifications Level 4 and above (53%).

The majority of face-to-face customers who used this tool found it useful (93%). This includes 54% who found it 'very useful' and 38% who said it was 'fairly useful'. Only six per cent did not find it useful.

The main reasons why customers did not find the Discover your Skills and Careers useful were that they did not find the questions relevant, and they thought it told them things they already knew. However, the small base size makes these findings indicative only.

Amongst those who did not go through the Discover your Skills and Careers with an adviser in a face-to-face meeting, over a third (34%) had advisers who referred them to this tool, which is an increase on Year 9 (22%). This was more likely to be the case amongst those who were NEET customers aged 18-24 (38%), aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (40%) or with a level 1 qualification (43%). Of these, almost half (46%) have gone on to use the tool, particularly customers in the South East (59%). The majority of these customers found the tool useful (92%). As with the Health Skills Check, those aged 50+ and at risk of unemployment were most likely to rate it as not useful (14% compared to 6% overall).

4.4.3 Explore Careers

Over four in ten customers (43%) were referred to Explore Careers by their adviser, which again is an increase on Year 9 (37%). This was more likely to be the case amongst those who were working (46%), customers aged 18-24 receiving benefits (47%) and those with qualifications above Level 4 (47%). Customers less likely to be referred to Explore Careers included those aged 50 plus and unemployed or at risk of redundancy (54%).

Amongst those who have been referred, over half (52%) have gone on to use the tool and the majority of these customers found the tool useful (91%). Again, those over 50 at risk of being unemployed were both less likely to have been referred and less likely to say it was useful.

4.4.4 Find a Course

Four in ten (42%) customers were referred to Find a Course by their adviser. This was more likely to be the case amongst those who were working (47%), female customers (46%), customers aged 25-49 (45%), and BAME customers (47%). In terms of region, those in London (47%) were more likely to be referred to Find a Course.

Amongst those who have been referred, half (52%) have gone on to use the tool, with almost seven in ten (69%) customers from Serco using it. The majority of these customers found the tool useful (87%), particularly those aged 18-24 receiving benefits (94%), those 18-24 NEET (96%) and those in the South-East (95%).

4.4.5 Webchat

One in five customers (21%) were referred to Webchat by their adviser. Those more likely to be referred to the service were those who have previously used other National Careers Services.

Amongst those who have been referred, almost three in ten (28%) have gone on to use the tool, which is a significant increase on Year 9 (16%). The majority of these customers found the tool useful (89%).

4.4.6 Skills Action Plan

Face-to-face and telephone advice customers were asked if a Skills Action Plan had been drawn up for achieving their goals and targets. The expectation is that the majority of these customers should participate in the creation of a Skills Action Plan which sets out their agreed next steps.

Two thirds half of telephone and face-to-face customers recalled having a Skills Action Plan (66%, up from 57% in Year 9). Female customers (68%) were more likely than average to have a Skills Action Plan drawn up for them, as were those with qualifications Level 2 and above (71%).

Furthermore, among face-to-face customers, those who had multiple meetings (74%) were more likely to recall a Skills Action Plan being drawn up. Similarly, telephone customer who had multiple calls (71%) and those who had the same adviser (71%) were more likely to recall a Skills Action Plan being drawn up. This suggests that having a more intensive level of interaction may relate to having a Skills Action Plan.

Customers aged 50 plus and unemployed or at risk of redundancy (62%) were less likely than average to have a Skills Action Plan drawn up.

Among those with a Skills Action Plan, over half of customers had a great deal of involvement in drawing up their plan (51%), while a further 36% reported that they had some involvement, again, in line with previous years.

The majority of telephone and face-to-face customers who recalled having a Skills Action Plan found it useful (89%), consistent with previous years. In particular, customers ages 19 or younger found it useful (95%). Nine percent found the Skills Action Plan 'not very' or 'not at all' useful; the main reasons were that it was too general/insufficiently tailored (21%), they did not think it was relevant to their situation (20%), or it did not contain any new information (13%).

4.4.7 Accounts

An Account allows customers to access a range of tools, such as updating and storing their CV, actions plans, qualifications and other information into an account which they could return to as their career develops. The use of Accounts was only asked in Year 10 Q1 and Q2.

Overall, only five per cent of face-to-face and telephone customers opened an Account during the session, a slight decrease compared with previous years.

Table 4.2: Use of Accounts

	Q1 and Q2 Year 10 2020/21	Year 9 2019/20	Q3 and Q4 Year 8 2018/19	Q1 and Q2 Year 8 2018	Year 7 2017/18	Year 6 2016/17	Year 5 2015/16
Base (all customers):	(3,846)	(9,996)	(6,111)	(2,954)	(8,228)	(8,821)	(8,812)
You have opened an account	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%	7%	10%
Was offered during session but not interested	13%	15%	14%	14%	13%	14%	13%
It was not discussed	65%	65%	65%	67%	69%	68%	66%
Can't remember	14%	12%	12%	11%	10%	10%	9%

Customers more likely to have opened an Account were:

- Customers who were in learning (12%)
- Customers who had a Skills Action Plan (7% vs 2% of customers who did not have a Skills Action Plan).
- Customers who, in the previous three months, have visited the National Careers Service (7%) or called the National Careers Helpline (9%).
- London customers (9%).

Eight in ten customers who had opened an Account had progressed as far as activating it (80%, up from 59% in Year 9).

4.5 Follow up actions

4.5.1 Reported follow-up by the National Careers Service

Almost four in ten of face-to-face and telephone customers said that the National Careers Service had been in touch with them again after their initial contact (38%). Email (23%) and telephone (18%) were the most common communication channels used for follow-up.

Customers aged 25-49 (40%), those in work (45%), and those with Level 4 and above qualifications (43%) were more likely than average to have received follow-up. In terms of region, those in the East of England and Buckinghamshire (46%), East Midlands and Northamptonshire (45%) and South West Oxfordshire (45%) were most likely to have received a follow-up.

Table 4.3 outlines the type of follow-up customers have received by region.

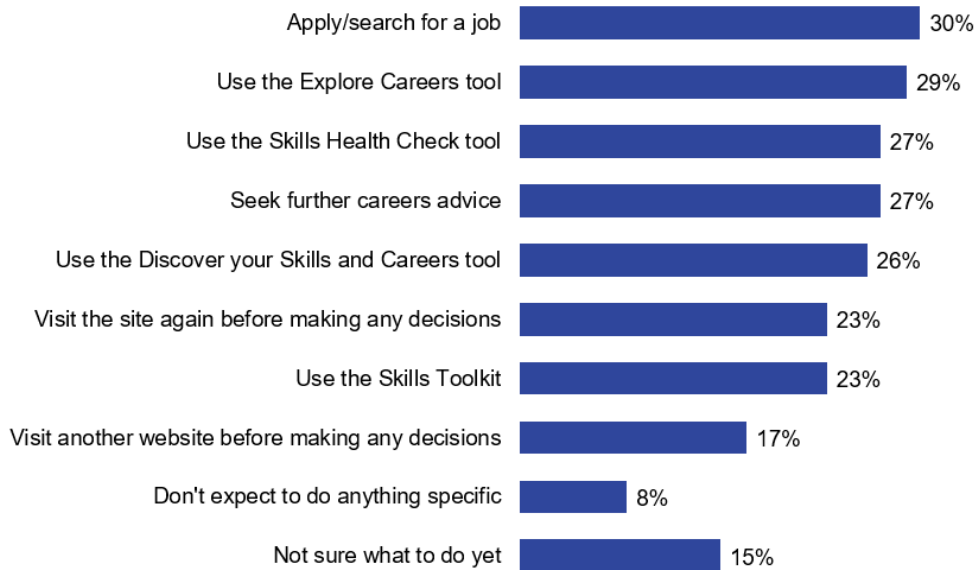
Table 4.3: Different types of follow-up customers have received by region

	Average	Serco/telephone information	London	East of England & Buckinghamshire	East Midlands & Northamptonshire	Yorkshire & Humber	West Midlands & Staff.	South West & Ox.	South East	North West	North East & Cumbria
Base:	6145	296	971	356	336	694	1113	351	692	646	690
No	59%	73%	61%	52%	52%	59%	53%	54%	60%	62%	58%
Net: Yes	38%	23%	36%	46%	45%	38%	34%	45%	37%	35%	39%
Yes - phone	18%	19%	19%	18%	21%	19%	18%	21%	16%	17%	16%
Yes - email	23%	9%	22%	33%	30%	20%	19%	26%	24%	22%	27%
Yes - face-to-face	*	*	*	*	1%	*	1%	1%	*	1%	*
Yes - text	3%	-	2%	3%	1%	6%	1%	5%	3%	2%	4%

4.5.2 Follow up actions carried out by online customers²²

Online customers²² were asked what they were likely to do as a result of visiting the National Careers Service website (Figure 4.1). The most common response was applying or searching for a job (30%), using the ‘Explore careers’ (29%) and ‘Skills Health Check’ (27%) tools and seeking further careers advice (27%).

Figure 4.1: Online customers planned next steps after visiting the National Careers Service website²³



Base: All online satisfaction customers looking for advice (775)

²² The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about ‘Discover your skills and careers’.

²³ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about ‘Discover your skills and careers’.

5 Customer Satisfaction

Despite the reduced service and the change to predominantly telephone appointments due to COVID-19, overall ratings have significantly increased in Year 10. The overall quality of the service continued to be rated highly by telephone and face-to-face customers, with over nine in ten agreeing that it was good (95%). In line with this, the vast majority of face-to-face and telephone customers were satisfied with the National Careers Service overall (88%).

The customer groups that have been consistently satisfied with the service year on year include younger customers (92% of 20-24 year olds), those who used the Skills Health Check and / or recall drawing up a Skills Action Plan (92% and 91% respectively) and customers who had the same adviser, if they had multiple appointments (91% amongst telephone customers). Among telephone and face-to-face customers, satisfaction with individual aspects of the service was also high, especially the professionalism of their adviser (97%). Almost nine in ten face-to-face or telephone customers either had already recommended or reported they would recommend the National Careers Service (91%).

When asked about what further support customers would like because of the COVID-19 pandemic, two-thirds (67%) of customers said they were happy with the service. For those who felt differently, the most common thing customers wanted was advice and help finding a job. Satisfaction with the National Careers Service website has remained in line with Year 9. Three in ten online customers (37%) said they had already recommended the National Careers Service, and a further half (45%) said they would.

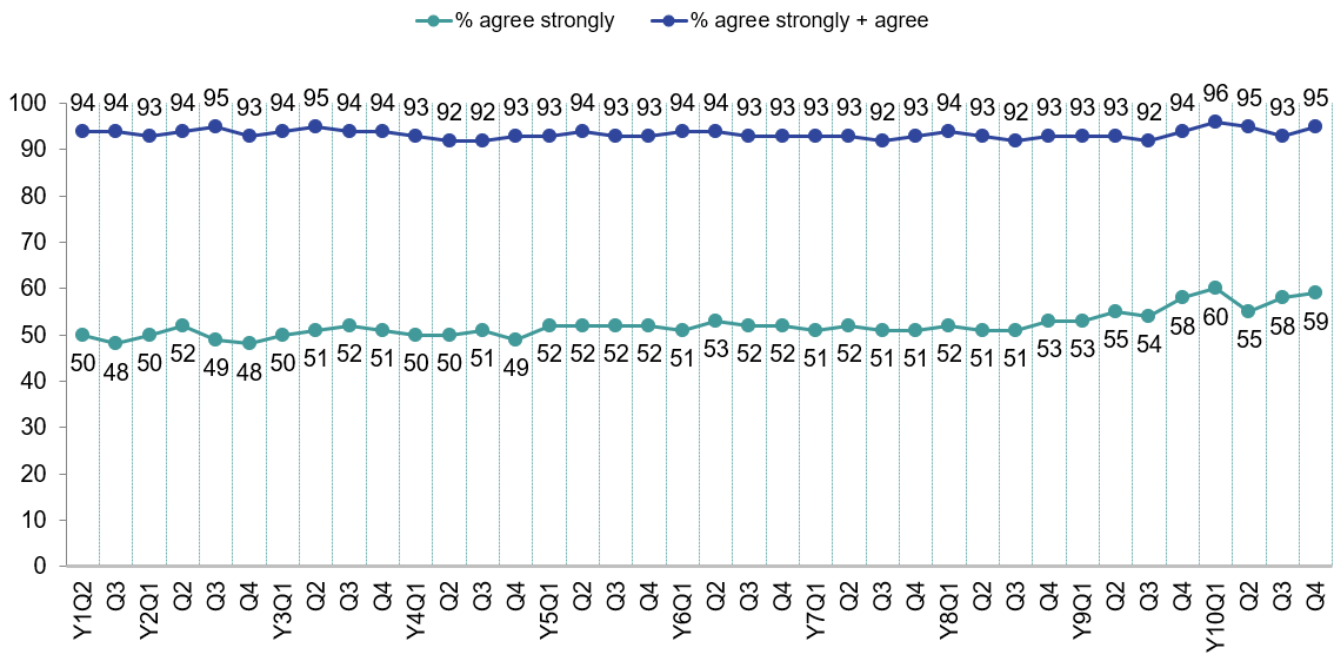
This chapter examines customer satisfaction with the National Careers Service. As well as overall satisfaction, it explores satisfaction with more specific aspects of the service ranging from logistical issues, such as the timing of appointments, to views on the quality of the advice received and, on the helpfulness, and professionalism of the adviser. It also details satisfaction with specific aspects of the National Careers Service website.

5.1 Overall perceptions about the quality of the service

5.1.1 Face-to-face and telephone customers

The overall quality of the service was rated highly by telephone and face-to-face customers. Most Year 10 customers agreed that it was good (95%), while only a small minority disagreed (4%). Ratings have been consistently high over time (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Agreement overall quality of service was good, by survey quarter



Base: All face-to-face and telephone customers (see Table 1.1 for base sizes per quarter)

There were some variations by customer group, as follows:

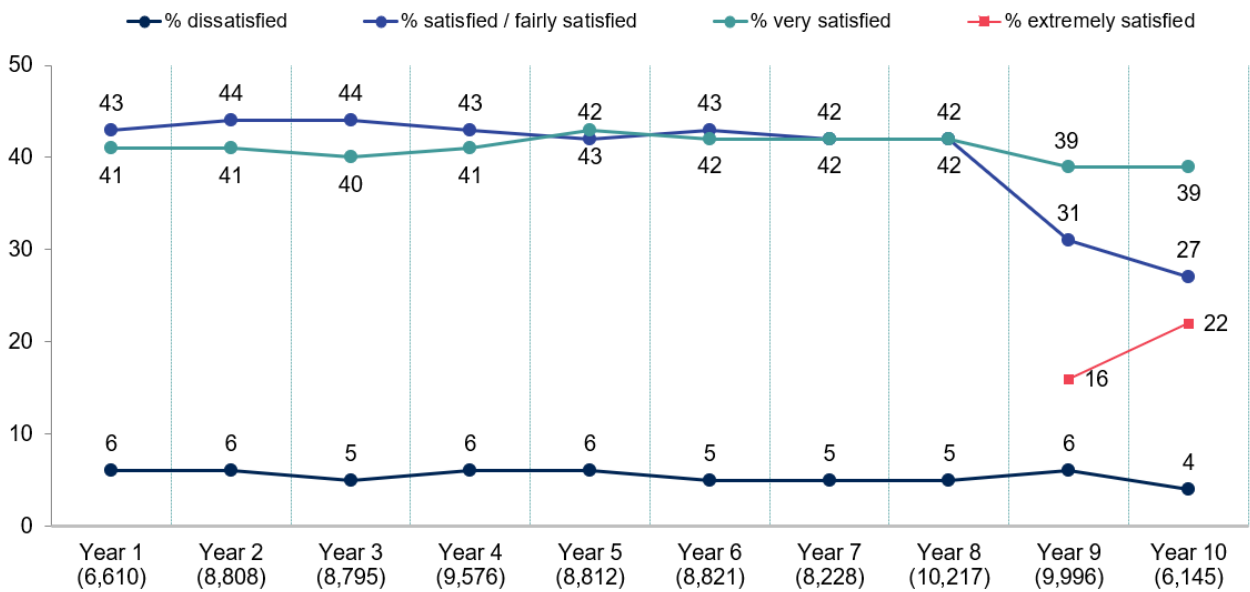
- By age group, customers aged 20-24 were the most likely to agree that the overall quality of the service was good (97%), while those aged 50 plus were the least likely to agree (94%).
- NEET customers aged 18-24 and customers aged 18-24 receiving benefits were more likely than average to agree that the service was good (both 97%).
- Customers who had a deeper level of engagement with the service overall were more likely to agree that the quality of the service was good. For example, levels of agreement were higher among those who recalled using the Skills Health Check (97%) or agreeing a Skills Action Plan (97% compared to 93% who had not).
- Among customers who had multiple calls, those who only spoke to one adviser were more likely to regard the service as good compared to customers who spoke to more than one adviser (97% compared to 94%).

5.2 Overall satisfaction with the National Careers Service

5.2.1 Face-to-face and telephone customers

Most face-to-face and telephone customers were satisfied with the National Careers Service overall (88%), representing a significant increase from Year 9 (85%). Only 4% of customers were dissatisfied, largely unchanged from previous years. (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Ratings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction amongst face-to-face and telephone customers²⁴



Base: As shown in chart

Satisfaction was high among all customer groups, although there were some variations:

- Young customers were more likely to be satisfied than older customers, with 92% of 20-24-year-olds being satisfied compared to 87% of customers aged 50 plus.
- Female customers were more likely to be extremely or very satisfied (65%, compared with male customers, 58%).
- NEET customers aged 18-24 were more likely to be satisfied with the service (92%) as were customers aged 18-24 receiving benefits (92%).
- Customers with qualifications of Level 4 or above were less likely to be satisfied (83%) and more likely to be dissatisfied (7%).
- Customers with a disability were less likely to be satisfied than customers without a disability (85% compared to 90%).
- Face-to-face customers who had multiple meetings were more likely to be satisfied with the service (91%, compared to those who had one meeting, 86%)
- Telephone customers who spoke to the same adviser where they have had multiple calls were also more likely to be more satisfied (91%, compared to those who did not, 85%).

²⁴ In Year 9, the scale used to measure satisfaction was changed to a 7-point scale: Extremely satisfied, Very satisfied, Fairly satisfied, Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, Fairly dissatisfied, Very dissatisfied, Extremely dissatisfied.

- As was the case for the rating of overall service quality, satisfaction levels were higher among customers who recalled using the Skills Health Check (92%, compared to those who did not, 87%) or agreeing a Skills Action Plan (91% compared to 83% who did not).

Respondents who were satisfied with the service were asked why this was the case. The main reasons for satisfaction relate to the individual advisers that customers dealt with. Most frequently, customers said that the adviser was knowledgeable, helpful or gave good advice (53%), while the other main reasons were that the adviser was friendly, personable or understanding (40%), gave good advice or helped with their CV (33%), or gave good advice relating to courses or training (20%). As shown in figure 5.3, these responses were very similar to those seen in Year 9, although the proportion of customers giving these reasons was consistently higher this year.

“The adviser made the effort to help me and was very adaptable. The information was suited to my needs”

“Was happy with everything, the adviser was organised and took a lot of time aside to see me.”

Figure 5.3: Top reasons for satisfaction with service, Year 9 and 10



Base: All telephone and face-to-face satisfaction customers who are satisfied (Year 10; 5,416, Year 9; 8,531)

Among the small proportion of dissatisfied customers (4%), the main reasons for dissatisfaction were also consistent with previous findings, and are summarised below:

- The most common reason for dissatisfaction was that some customers did not feel they received the help or information that they wanted and/or needed (56%).

“It was not relevant for what I was looking for, the adviser was being generic and there was no creativity from the staff on the subject I was wanting to know about”

- Over three in ten dissatisfied customers reported a lack of follow-up from advisers (32%).

“[I] was told someone would get in touch again to help me write my CV but then had no further contact.”

- There was criticism of not being helped to get a relevant course or training (14%).

“It was a very rushed call, and it was left for me to search for courses and do everything and the actual help and guidance wasn’t there.”

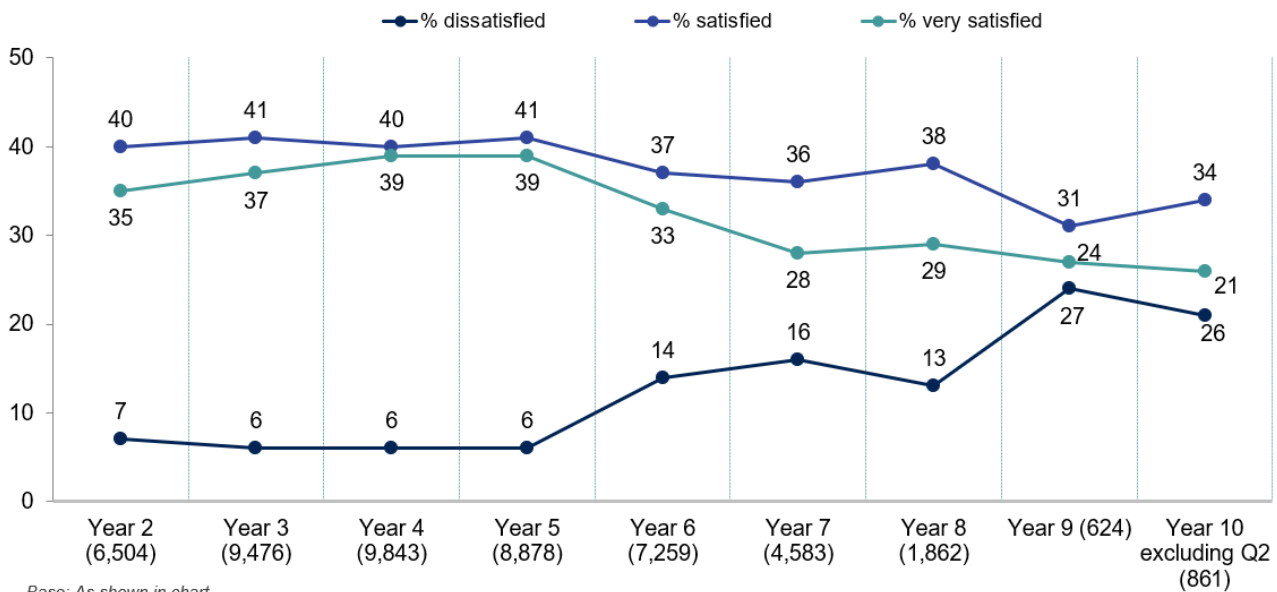
- Some customers wanted help with their CV and felt the support they received was insufficient (17%).

“I was not happy with the help on my CV, and I wanted more support contacting companies that are willing to let me work from home.”

5.2.2 Online customers²⁵

Following the redesign of the website in Year 6, there had been an uplift in satisfaction to 64% in Year 7, 67% in Year 8. However, in Year 9 there was a significant decline in satisfaction (58%). In Year 10, with the exclusion of Q2, satisfaction with the online service remained in line with Year 9, with 59% satisfied with the service (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4: Ratings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction amongst online customers²⁵



There were some notable differences among online customers:

- Satisfaction was highest among BAME customers (67%, compared to White customers, 59%).

²⁵ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about ‘Discover your skills and careers’.

- Younger customers had higher levels of satisfaction (71% of those aged 16-24 compared to 57% of those aged over 25).
- Customers in learning were more likely to be satisfied than those in work (72% compared to 51%).
- Customers with no qualifications (72%) and with qualifications below Level 2 (74%) were more likely to be satisfied with the website than those with qualifications Level 2 and above (56%).

A fifth of customers (21%) were dissatisfied with the website, a slight decrease from Year 9 (24%). The main reasons for dissatisfaction are summarised below:

- The most common reason for dissatisfaction was due to website instability (26%). In particular, customers experienced issues with the website crashing, with error messages of the service not working, and issues with the webchat.

"...I couldn't complete the skills assessments without the website crashing! I know it's in beta at the moment but it's still frustrating"

"I'm having problems to look at the careers section because recently when I have been clicking on it, it says that the service isn't found"

"During this visit I have tried to use the web chat service, but it states that it is 'Busy' and to 'Try again at another time'."

- Some customers felt that the feedback they received should be more tailored, both to the area where they live to their individual needs (19%).

"Anything useful - this is a site which directs you to careers which there is a shortage of people for, not something which matches your skills and abilities"

"Could not find the courses I wanted within the postcode area and distance I entered! the course I wanted was there but took a lot of various attempts to find it! For some reason the system thought that Cambridge was within 10 miles of Yeovil, so I was getting providers from 220 plus miles away not the within 10 mile radius I'd entered!"

- Another reason for dissatisfaction was due to issues with the tools, such as the 'Discover your skills and careers' and 'Skills Health Check' tools (16%).

"The discover your skills and careers tool resulted in only one category that I would consider a good fit and I already knew that one. The rest were entirely unsuited to my personality and skill set clearly the questions are inadequate to provide a useful result"

However, almost three in ten customers (28%) said that they liked the website because it was easy to use, a further 27% felt that the website had helpful and relevant information and 23% reported that the website was clear and had a good layout meaning it was easy to find what

they were looking for. The proportion of customers who gave these responses have also increased from Year 9.

“I liked how clear and open it was and that everything was easy to find”

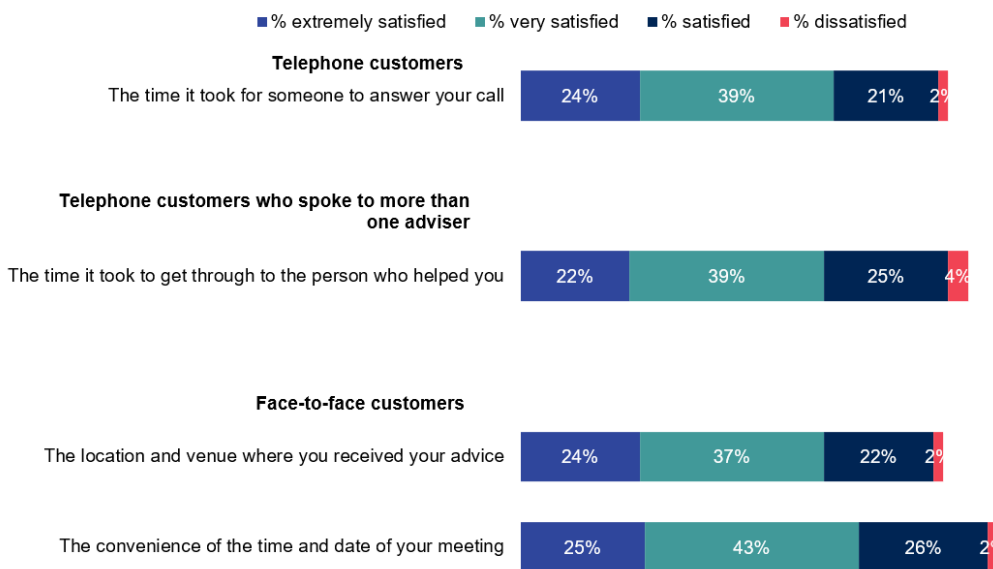
“Ease of access, and navigation. Helpful information and interesting results. Enables consideration of pathways which I had not considered.”

“I found the live chat useful and I was dealt with by someone who was very helpful, polite and friendly. I would recommend this website to people looking for work.”

5.3 Satisfaction with different aspects of the adviser sessions

National Careers Service face-to-face and telephone customers were asked for their views on a range of specific aspects of their session(s). The logistical aspects of the services scored highly on satisfaction, maintaining the trend seen in previous years (Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5: Customer satisfaction with logistical arrangements



Base: Telephone customers (4,187), Telephone customers who spoke to more than one adviser (429), Face-to-face customers (1,958)

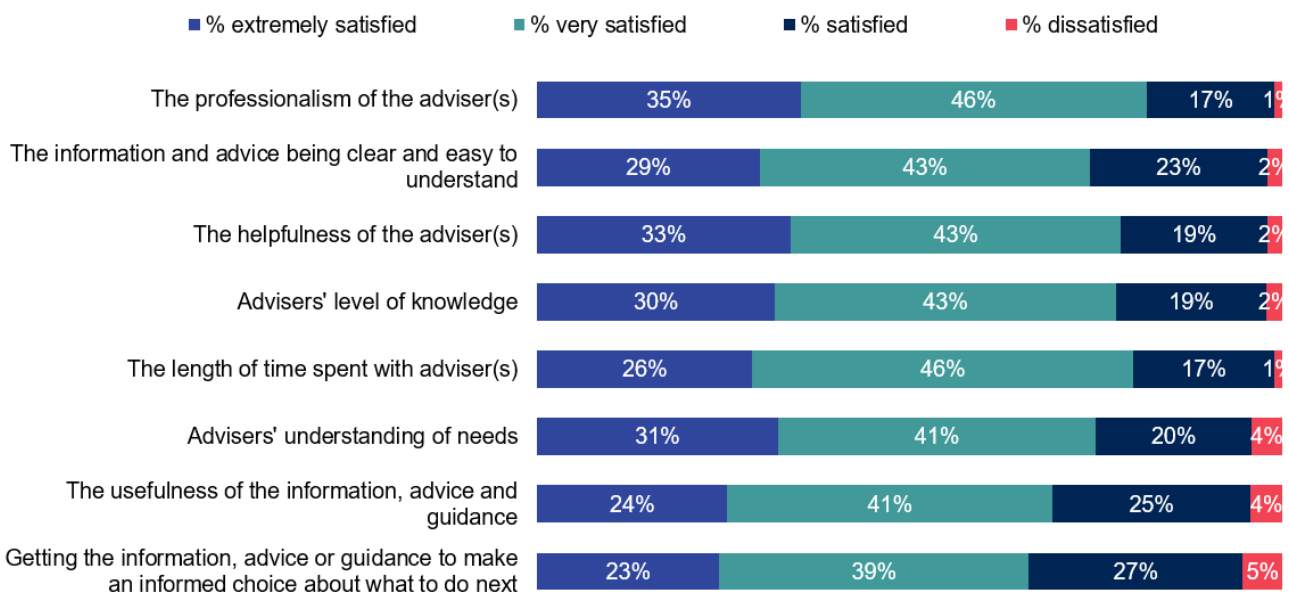
Over eight in ten telephone customers were satisfied with the time it took for someone to answer their call (84%). Amongst telephone customers who spoke to more than one adviser, 86% were satisfied with the time it took to get through to the person who helped them.

More than nine in ten face-to-face customers were satisfied with the convenience of their appointment time (94%) and over eight in ten customers were satisfied with the location and venue where they received their advice (84%). These findings were broadly consistent across customer groups. Levels of satisfaction with the location and venue where customers received advice was 9% lower than in Year 9, which might indicate that some customers would have preferred an in-person meeting that was not always an option in Year 10 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is supported by the finding that satisfaction with the location and venue was

higher among those who had a meeting in a Jobcentre Plus (93% compared to 83% who did not meet in a Jobcentre Plus).

Customers were also positive about both the assistance of their advisers and with the content and outcome of the National Careers Service intervention, as demonstrated by Figure 5.6. The highest satisfaction rating was given to the professionalism of their adviser. This mirrors earlier findings in section 5.2.1 on the reasons for overall satisfaction, which focused on positive impressions of advisers’ helpfulness and their ability to give good advice. It is also worth noting that the proportion who said ‘extremely satisfied’ has increased by around 10 percentage points across all aspects of the service compared to Year 9.

Figure 5.6: Satisfaction with information and advice from the service



Base: All telephone and face-to-face customers (6,145)

Although satisfaction across all the measures was consistently high, there were some variations between customer groups, as detailed below.

- Customers who had a deeper level of engagement with the service overall were more likely to be satisfied with the various aspects of the information and advice received. For example, those who recalled using the Skills Health Check or agreeing a Skills Action Plan were more likely to be satisfied with the advisers’ level of knowledge (96% and 97% compared to the average, 93%).
- Younger customers were more likely to be satisfied on several measures. For instance, almost all of 20-24-year-olds (97%) were satisfied with the helpfulness of their adviser.
- Customers aged 20-24 and in receipt of benefits were more likely to be satisfied on nearly all measures.

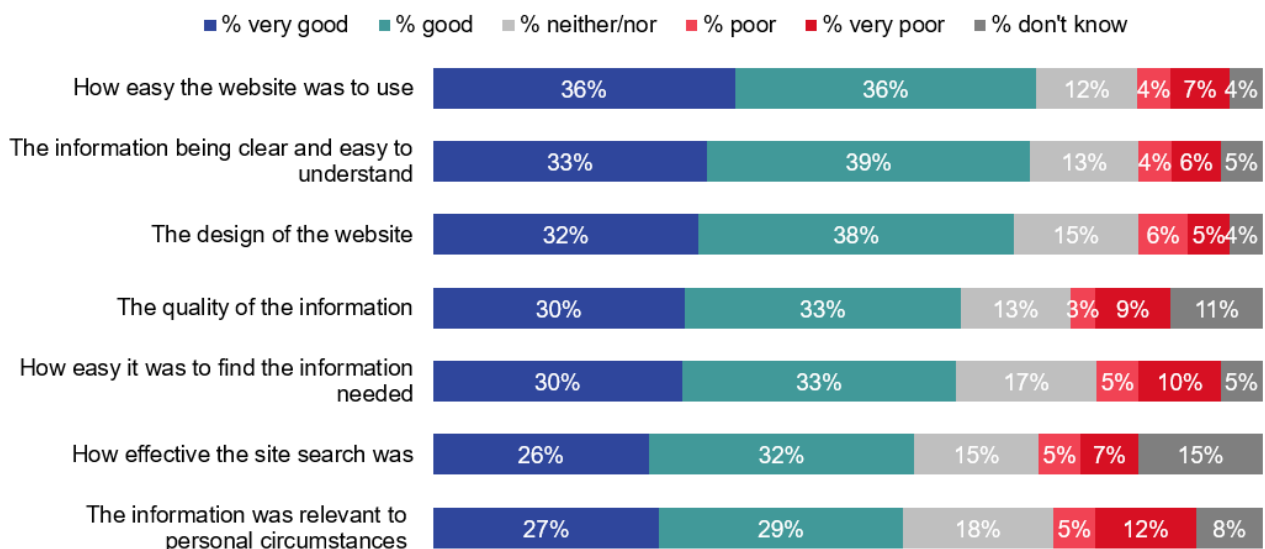
- Customers who were white were more likely to have higher levels of satisfaction than BAME customers on several measures. They were significantly more likely to say they were ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ satisfied with the following measures: that they got the information, advice or guidance to make an informed choice about what to do next, the professionalism of the adviser, the helpfulness of the adviser, that the adviser understood your needs, the information was clear and easy to understand,
- Customers who spoke to the same adviser if they had multiple face-to-face or telephone meetings tended to be more satisfied. For example, 97% were satisfied with the adviser’s level of knowledge compared to 93% overall.

5.4 Satisfaction with the different aspects of the website²⁶

Visitors to the National Careers Service website were asked to rate a number of different features of the website, on a scale from ‘very good’ to ‘very poor’. The most highly rated aspect of the website was how easy the website was to use (73% rated this as good or very good) followed by the information on the website being clear and easy to understand (72%). Customers were least positive in relation to the effectiveness of the site search (59%), and the information being relevant to customers personal circumstances (56%).

As previously mentioned, overall satisfaction with the website is in line with Year 9. This is mirrored when looking at the different aspects of the website, with satisfaction remaining stable.

Figure 5.7 Ratings on various aspects of the website²⁷



Base: All online satisfaction respondents excluding Q2 (861)

The key variations between customer groups, are detailed below:

²⁶ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about ‘Discover your skills and careers’,

²⁷ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about ‘Discover your skills and careers’,

- Customers whose first language is not English were more positive about most parts of the website. For example, 83% rated the website as easy to use, compared to 71% of customers whose first language is English and 74% rated the effectiveness of the site search as good, compared to 56% of customers whose first language is English.
- Customers aged 19 or under were more positive about most aspects of the website, particularly in comparison with customers aged 50 plus. For instance, 78% rated the ease of being able to find information as good, compared to 58% of customers aged 50 plus and 85% said the website was easy to use, compared to 68% of customers aged 50 plus.
- Customers who were in learning were more likely than those in work to be positive about how easy it was to find the information they needed (74% rated this as very good or good, whilst only 56% of working customers did).
- Certain key groups were more likely to be positive about numerous website features. Those with qualifications under Level 2 (79%), and those who have been unemployed for more than a year (76%) are more likely than average (62%) to be positive about how easy it was to find the information they needed.
- Customers with qualifications under Level 2 are also more likely to be positive that the information was clear and easy to understand (83%, compared to the average, 72%), well as how easy the website is to use (88%, compared to the average, 73%), the design of the website (87%, compared to the average, 70%) and the effectiveness of the site search (79%, compared to the average, 59%).

5.5 Recommending the National Careers Service

5.5.1 Face-to-face and telephone customers

Around a quarter of face-to-face or telephone customers said they had already recommended the National Careers Service to someone else (26%). Of the remainder, the majority said that they would recommend the Service (89%). In total, this means that over nine in ten customers either had recommended the Service or said that they would recommend it (91%). This is a slight increase on Year 9 (88%).

The following groups were more likely to say that they either had recommended or would recommend the Service:

- Younger customers (92% of 18–24-year-olds, compared to 89% of those aged 50 plus).
- Customers who have visited the National Careers Service website in the past three months (94% compared to 90% of customers who have not).
- Those who have Level 2 or higher qualifications (92%).
- Those who are aged 18-24 and NEET (94%).

- Those who had engaged with National Careers Service tools such as the Skills Action Plan (93%, compared to those who did not 88%) and the Skills Health Check (94%, compared to those who did not, 90%).
- National Careers Helpline telephone customers (95% compared with 88% of face-to-face customers).

5.5.2 Online customers²⁸

Over a third of online customers have already recommended the National Careers Service website (37%), a significant increase compared to Year 9 (31%). Additionally, a further half said they would recommend the National Careers Service website to friends, family or colleagues (45%), in line with Year 9 (51%). Around a third (36%) said they would not and 20% were unsure.

Customers with qualifications below Level 2 (67%) and those in learning (60%) were more likely than average to say that they would recommend the National Careers Service.

5.6 Improvements to the National Careers Service

5.6.1 Face-to-face and telephone customers

Almost two thirds of face-to-face and telephone customers could not think of any improvements that the National Careers Service needed to make (64%). However, suggestions for improvement focused on more tailored help (7%), and more follow-up (9%). The findings are very similar to previous waves.

“More specific workshops into different types of job sectors of interest along with the recruiters”

“More tailored help with regards to CV building, book quicker appointments.”

“Could be improved if they were a little bit more hands on, a little more contact, feel a little bit on your own with the course they provide for you.”

Younger customers aged 18-24 (69%) were most likely to be happy with the service and suggest no improvements. This pattern is also seen with customers with qualifications below Level 2 (74%) in comparison to customers with Level 4 or above qualifications (51%); men (63%) compared to women (59%), white customers (67%) compared to BAME (55%), and customers who have been unemployed for more than 12 months (67%).

Customers with Level 2 qualifications or above were more likely to say that more tailored help was required (9% compared to 7%). Telephone customers who had multiple calls and spoke to more than one adviser were more likely to suggest more tailored help, compared to average (21% compared with 7%), more follow-up (19% compared to 9%) and more knowledgeable advisers (9% compared with 3%).

²⁸ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about ‘Discover your skills and careers’.

When asked about what further support customers would like because of the COVID-19 pandemic, two-thirds (67%) of customers said they were happy with the service. For those who felt differently, the most common thing customers wanted was advice and help finding a job.

“No, no, they gave me all the advice they could, obviously in the current situation, I don't think there's a lot more they could have done to help me”

“I think possibly giving a bit more tailored advice, I think there's a lot of competition for jobs at the minute so finding ways to make your CV stand out would be useful.”

5.6.2 Online customers²⁹

When asked how the website could be improved, almost half (46%) of website visitors felt that the website was fine as it is and one in five (18%) said they were not sure how it could be improved. However, the comments below illustrate the main areas for suggested improvements:

- Layout / ease of use

“Better layout! Better comparability for different devices. More user friendly”

- Improve the skills test tools

“I did the skills test which was supposed to inform me which careers I might be interested in. The results were that I was a creative person yet none of the careers suggested were in the creative fields!”

- Information on training / learning

“Please improve the search and filtering functions so that courses specifically for sixth form students aged 16-19, or university preparation courses, can be filtered out of results for adult learners.”

²⁹ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 exclude the results from Quarter 2 due to the high proportion that were first time users, and the different demographic profile of customers using the service. This was a result of a viral tweet about 'Discover your skills and careers',

6 Customer Progression

Overall, likely related to the impacts of COVID-19, Year 10 has seen a decrease in employment progression and a slight increase in the levels of learning progression compared to Year 9. Regardless, all face-to-face and telephone customers (97%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months since their call/meeting. Learning progression averaged 71% in Year 10, broadly in line with Year 9 (69%). Customers with qualifications Level 2 and above were more likely to have undertaken each of the specific types of training and learning. For example, 40% of customers with Level 2 qualifications and above were more likely to have taken part in training relating to a future job (compared to the average, 36%).

Over four in ten customers (44%) achieved employment progression, a decrease from the 51% in Year 9, which likely reflects the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the job market. Younger customers, those with higher qualifications, those unemployed for less than 6 months, and those without a disability are most likely to achieve some form of employment progression. The most common developments were feeling motivated to take action (68%), improvements in CV writing or interview skills (59%), increased self-confidence (56%), and developing skills related to a current or future job (54%). Ninety-five percent of face-to-face and telephone customers indicated that they had gained some form of Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service. Eight in ten face-to-face and telephone customers reported developing career management skills during the six months since their contact with the National Careers Service (77%).

This chapter examines the extent to which National Careers Service customers progressed in the six months since their call or meeting with the adviser. The chapter considers the three main areas of progression which form part of the National Careers Service's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): employment progression, learning progression, and a measure of Personal Added Value incorporating the development of a range of different skills since their interaction with the National Careers Service; this includes job-related skills and 'soft' skills such as team working and social skills. The chapter also examines the extent to which customers attribute any of their progression outcomes to their interaction with the National Careers Service.

When interpreting the following results, it is important to understand that these provide information on changes over time in employment and learning status and do not imply that these were caused by interaction with the National Careers Service. On a similar note, as the results only provide a snapshot of the progression of National Careers Service customers six months after their interaction with the service, it is important to consider that some customers might not be seeking learning or employment progression at that point in time, or indeed may achieve this over a longer timeframe.

6.1 Overview of the extent of progression

6.1.1 Defining progression

Three core Key Performance Indicators are used to determine progression levels of National Careers Service customers six months after their intervention with the service:

1. Learning progression – whether customers have undertaken formal or informal learning or training in the six months since the call/meeting.

2. Employment progression – examining whether customers have entered new employment, changed career, were promoted or improved their salary, and/or have taken up voluntary work.

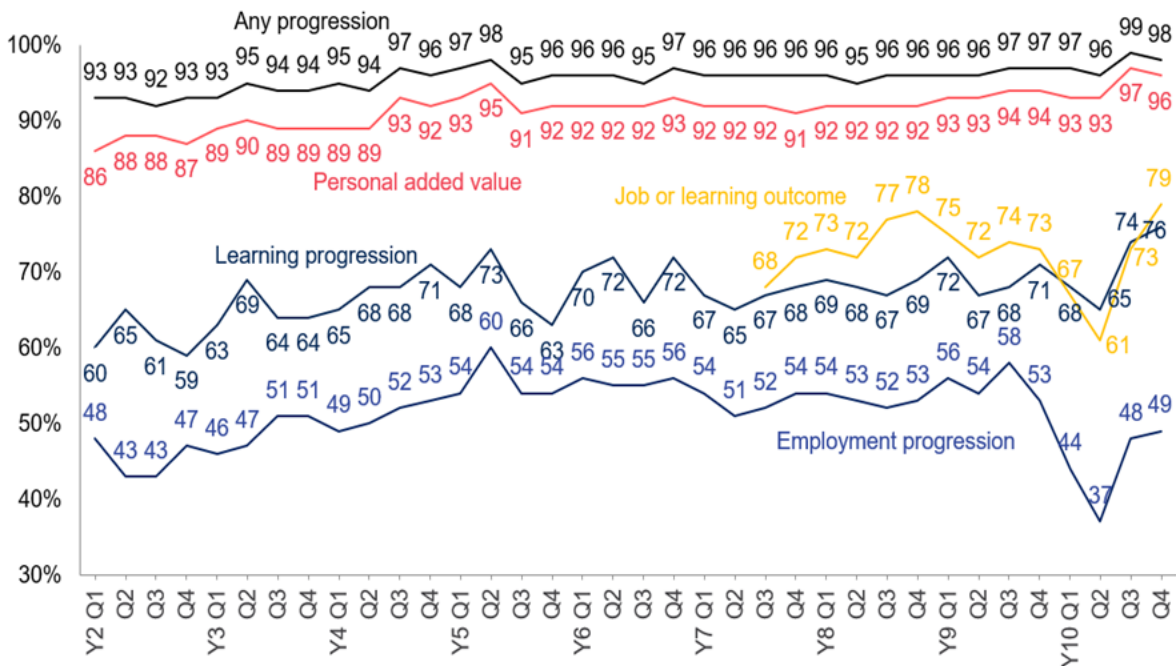
3. Personal Added Value – whether customers have achieved one or more of a range of ‘softer’ outcomes, such as improved work-related or more personal skills (IT skills, team working skills etc.), improved their self-confidence, increased ability to make decisions for the future regarding work or learning or increased job satisfaction.

Customers who reported any of the three types of progression were asked about the extent to which advice from the National Careers Service played a role in it³⁰.

Almost all face-to-face and telephone customers (97%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months since their call/meeting. The various measures are shown in Figure 6.1. When compared to Year 9, there has been a significant decrease across employment progression (44%, compared to 53% in Year 9), which could reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the job market, particularly in Q2. Positively, the other Key Performance Indicators have remained consistent or increased slightly since Year 9, despite a decline in Q2.

³⁰ The scale used to measure ‘adviser played a part’ was updated to a 7 point scale at the start of Year 9. This replaced the previous 3 point scale: ‘a lot’, ‘a little’ and ‘not at all’. This means that the Year 9 and Year 10 data is not directly comparable to previous data.

Figure 6.1: Trends in progression among face-to-face and telephone customers, by survey quarter



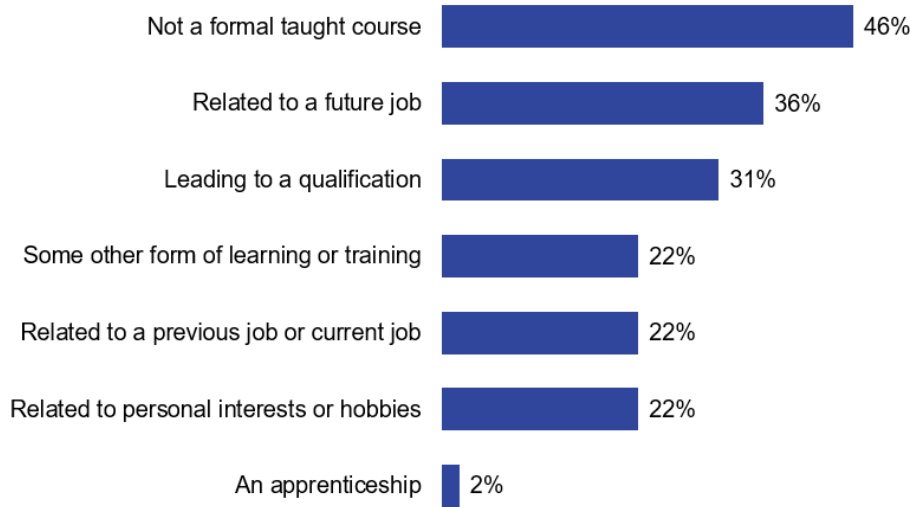
Base: All progression telephone and face-to-face customers (4,415)

6.2 Learning progression among face-to-face and telephone customers

In total, 71% of face-to-face or telephone customers achieved some form of learning progression, an increase from 69% in Year 9. Figure 6.2 details the different forms of learning and training customers have undertaken since their contact with the service.

Customers had taken part in various types of training or learning, most commonly learning that was not part of a formal, taught course (46%, an increase compared to Year 9, 41%). The proportion of customers undertaking learning leading to a qualification decreased slightly to 31% from 33% in Year 9.

Figure 6.2: Forms of learning/training undertaken since the call/meeting with National Careers Service



Base: All progression telephone and face-to-face customers (4,415)

The following groups of customers were more likely to have achieved (any) learning progression:

- Those with higher qualifications: 77% of those qualified to Level 2 or above, compared with 61% of those with qualifications below Level 2.
- Younger customers (76% of those aged 18-19, 78% of 20-24-year-olds, falling to 63% of those aged 50 plus).
- Customers without a disability (72%) compared with disabled customers (67%).
- BAME customers (75%) compared to White customers (69%).
- Customers whose first language is not English (74%, compared to those whose is, 70%).
- Customers who were learning (85%) or working (74%) at their time of first contact with the National Careers Service, compared to those who were unemployed (70%).
- Telephone customers (74%) compared with face-to-face customers (67%).

National Careers Helpline³¹ customers and customers with qualifications Level 2 and above were more likely to have undertaken specific types of training and learning. For example, 44% of National Careers Helpline customers and 40% of customers with Level 2 qualifications and above were more likely to have taken part in training aimed to lead to a qualification (compared

³¹ Since November 2020, the NCH service was phased out. We continued to survey NCH customers for the progression survey until April 2021, however, the base size for NCH in Q3 and Q4 is low, so comparisons across waves should be treated with caution.

to the average, 36%). Also, 47% of National Careers Helpline customers and 40% of customers with Level 2 qualifications and above were more likely to have taken part in training related to a future job (compared to the average, 36%).

Younger customers were more likely to have undertaken different types of learning or training; 26% of 18–24-year-olds had taken part in learning or training related to their interests (compared to the average, 22%). They were also more likely to have undertaken an apprenticeship (4% of 18–24-year-olds, compared to the average, 2%), and to have taught themselves a skill/improved their knowledge without taking part in a formal course (51% of 18-24 year olds compared to 46% overall).

Customers whose first language is not English were more likely than customers whose first language is English to take part in learning and training related to their interests or hobbies (28% compared to 21%) and learning to improve their knowledge without taking part in a formal course (53%, compared to 45%).

Overall, learning was consistently lower among customers who were aged 50 or above, who had a disability, or who had qualifications below Level 2.

The main motivations for doing further learning or training were very much job or career-related:

- To develop or improve job-related skills (90% said this was very or fairly important).
- To progress in a current job or career (88%).
- To raise qualification level (87%).
- To help get a job or change job (84%).
- To obtain a qualification (75%).
- To help change career (73%).

Among customers who had done any learning or training in the intervening six months, a fifth (20%) obtained a qualification, which has decreased from 26% in Year 9. A further 8% received credits towards a qualification, which has also fallen from 9% in Year 9. Almost two thirds (65%) did neither of these and 4% said they did not finish their qualification, similar figures to Year 9.

Over half (54%) considered that their National Careers Service adviser had contributed to their decision to do the learning or training, which is a large increase compared to Year 9 (41%). This is one of several indicators that the changes to service delivery have had a neutral or positive impact on outcomes for customers. This view was more prevalent among customers who do not speak English as a first language (64%) and customers who have been unemployed for between 6 and 12 months (62%).

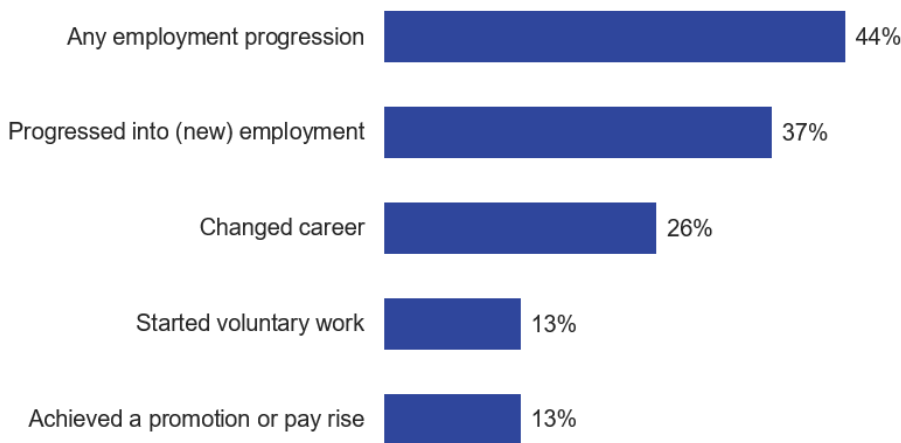
6.3 Employment progression among face-to-face and telephone customers

6.3.1 Overall employment progression

In total, 44% of face-to-face or telephone customers achieved some form of employment progression, a decrease from 52% in Year 9. This is most likely explained by the economic consequences of COVID-19 resulting in fewer employment opportunities. Figure 6.3 shows the types of employment progression achieved³².

Almost four in ten face-to-face and telephone customers had found a new job or role in those six months (37%), a decrease when compared to Year 9 (41%). This is likely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the job market. Amongst those who found a new job or role, half (53%) changed their career. Over one in ten took up voluntary work (13%) and achieved a pay rise or promotion (13%).

Figure 6.3: Employment progression among face-to-face and telephone customers (%)



Base: All progression telephone and face-to-face customers (4,415)

Customers more likely to have experienced employment progression (of any kind) were:

- Those with higher qualifications: 48% of those qualified to Level 2 or above, compared with 35% of those with qualifications below Level 2.
- Younger customers (51% of 18-24-year olds, compared with 41% of those aged 50 plus).
- People who were unemployed and looking for work at the point they first had contact with the service (49%, compared to those who were in work, 38%). Looking closely at unemployed customers, this was much higher among those who had been unemployed for less than six months (58%), compared to customers who had been employed for more than twelve months (27%).

³² It is important to note that this could include those who got a job and then left it within the six-month period since their interaction with the service.

- Customers without a disability (48%) compared with disabled customers (35%).
- NEET customers aged 18-24 (54%, compared to the average, 44%).

There were a few differences by channel in relation to overall employment progression. Telephone customers were more likely than face-to-face customers to have found a new job (40% compared to 34%) and achieved a promotion or improved salary (15% compared to 10%).

Customers who had achieved any employment progression were asked to what extent their interaction with the National Careers Service adviser had contributed to this. Over four in ten agreed the adviser had an impact (44%). Face-to-face customers were more likely than NCH³³ telephone customers to say that the adviser had an impact (46% compared with 35%), as were those with Level 1 or no qualifications (56% compared to 41% of those with Level 2 or above).

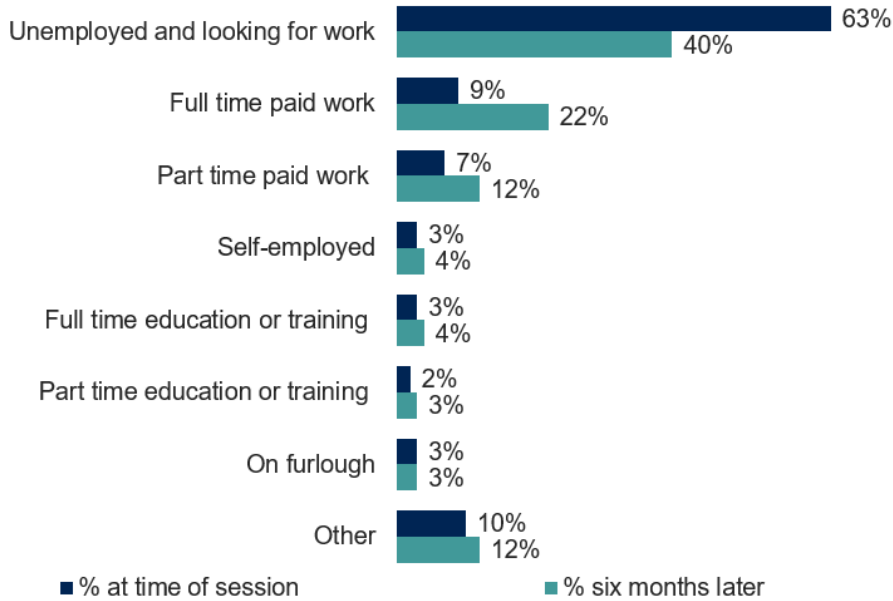
6.3.2 Change in employment status

The majority of customers interviewed for the progression survey had been unemployed and looking for work at the time of their adviser session six months previously (63%). Just over one in five customers were in work (22%), with the remainder in learning (5%) or doing something else (7%), including those unable to work due to ill health, with home or family responsibilities, or retired.

Figure 6.4 shows that, six months on, there was a large fall in the proportion of customers who were unemployed and seeking work and a large increase in the proportion who were in any form of work. When compared to Year 9, there has been a decrease in the number of people who are in work six months on (41%, compared to 43% in Year 9).

³³ Since November 2020, the NCH service was phased out. We continued to survey NCH customers for the progression survey until April 2021, however, the base size for NCH in Q3 and Q4 is low, so comparisons across waves should be treated with caution.

Figure 6.4: Employment status at the time of the call/meeting and six months later



Base: All progression telephone and face-to-face customers (4,415)

There were large increases in employment among the different customer groups (Table 6.1). For example, more than three times as many customers who were aged 50 plus and unemployed or at risk of redundancy at the time of their adviser session were in work after six months (34%, compared to 9% at the time of their session). There were also substantial increases into employment (+33 percentage points) among 18-24-year olds who were NEET³⁴ at the time of their initial interaction with the service.

The number of customers with level 1 or below qualifications in work almost doubled six months on (29%, compared with 15% at the time of their adviser session). A similar pattern was seen amongst customers aged 20-24 (40% were in work, compared with 16% at the time of their adviser session).

Looking closely at customers who have been unemployed for more than 12 months, all were unemployed and looking for work at the time of their adviser, dropping to two-thirds (68%) six months on.

Table 6.1: Changes in employment status among key customer groups

³⁴ NEET customers are those Not in Employment, Education or Training (at the point at which they had a meeting with their adviser).

Customer group	ULW = <i>Unemployed and looking for work</i>	Year 10			Year 9		
		Status at point of contact with National Careers Service	Status 6 months after contact	Change (ppts) ³⁵	Status at point of contact with National Careers Service	Status 6 months after contact	Change (ppts)
18-19 year olds (212)	ULW	55%	30%	-25	66%	35%	-31
	In work	20%	36%	+16	13%	40%	+27
	In education	15%	18%	+3	16%	18%	+2
20-24 year olds (719)	ULW	67%	41%	-26	64%	36%	-28
	In work	16%	40%	+24	19%	44%	+25
	In education	9%	10%	+1	10%	10%	-
Aged 50 plus (1,269)	ULW	67%	46%	-21	64%	38%	-26
	In work	21%	37%	+16	19%	37%	+18
	In education	2%	2%	-	2%	4%	+2
Aged 50 plus and unemployed or at risk of redundancy (926)	ULW	90%	54%	-36	90%	48%	-44
	In work	9%	34%	+25	8%	34%	+28
	In education	0%	1%	+1	0%	2%	+2
Customers with a disability (1,342)	ULW	60%	44%	-16	59%	38%	-21
	In work	18%	28%	+10	14%	27%	+12
	In education	4%	6%	+2	4%	6%	+2
Below Level 2 quals (475)	ULW	64%	50%	-14	64%	46%	-18
	In work	15%	29%	+14	14%	31%	+16
	In education	5%	5%	-	6%	6%	-
Unemployed for more than 12 months (730)	ULW	100%	68%	-32	72% ³⁶	50%	-22
	In work	0%	13%	+13	4%	19%	+15
	In education	0%	5%	+5	5%	8%	+3
	ULW	88%	48%	-40	90%	46%	-44

³⁵ Where percentage point changes do not appear to match the given status figures, this is due to the rounding of the two status figures.

³⁶ This percentage does not equal 100% because customers who have been unemployed for more than 12 months may not consider themselves to be 'unemployed and actively seeking work'

18-24 NEET (678)	In work	0%	33%	+33	0%	38%	+38
	In education	0%	7%	+7	0%	6%	+6
Single parents (607)	ULW	59%	39%	-26	58%	32%	-26
	In work	22%	35%	+13	23%	44%	+21
	In education	5%	6%	+1	5%	6%	+1

As discussed in Chapter 2, the work status of face-to-face and telephone customers at the time of their initial interaction with the National Careers Service was quite different, with face-to-face customers far more likely to be unemployed and seeking work. Nevertheless, both face-to-face and telephone customers showed significant movements into employment and learning over the six months since their contact. The key changes are:

- Amongst face-to-face customers, the proportion who were unemployed and seeking work dropped by a third over the six-month period, from 67% to 45%. The proportion in work (including self-employment) doubled, up from 18% at the time of their session to 35% six months later.
- Telephone NCS Helpline customers³⁷ were more likely to be in work (41%) or learning (12%) at the time of their first interaction with the National Careers Service, and less likely to be unemployed (35%). Six months on, the proportion in work had increased to 49%, while the proportion who were unemployed had dropped to 22%.
- Just under half of area-based telephone customers were in work six months after their first interaction (46%), increasing from 24%. There was a corresponding fall in the proportion that was unemployed, from 65% to 39%. A smaller increase in those in work was also seen amongst National Careers Helpline³⁷ customers (increasing from 41% to 49% six months on).

Amongst those who were not working at the time of their meeting, but were six months on, four in ten (44%) said that their adviser played a role in this. This was more common among face-to-face customers (46%, compared to 35% of NCS Helpline telephone customers³⁷), those whose first language is not English (51% compared to 42% whose first language is English), and customers in the North-East and Cumbria (53%).

6.4 Personal Added Value among face-to-face and telephone customers

6.4.1 Overall Personal Added Value

Almost all customers said that they had gained some form of Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service (95%, similar to Year 94%). Customers more likely to experience Personal Added Value include customers with Level 2 and above qualifications (96%), customers aged 18-24 (98%), customers whose first language is not English (97%) and

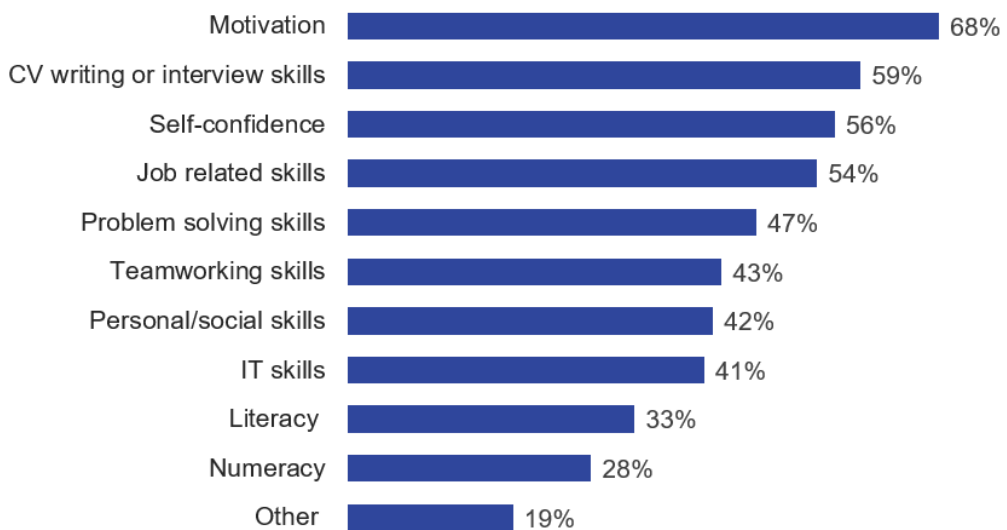
³⁷ Since November 2020, the NCH service was phased out. We continued to survey NCH customers for the progression survey until April 2021, however, the base size for NCH in Q3 and Q4 is low, so comparisons across waves should be treated with caution.

customers who do not have a disability (96%, compared to those who do, 92%). Telephone customers were more likely than face-to-face customers to have gained some form of Personal Added Value (96% compared to 93%).

6.4.2 Skills and personal development outcomes

Customers were asked if they had developed their skills since speaking to their adviser. The Personal Added Value outcome consists of those who said they had developed these skills. These skills are included in Figure 6.5.

The most common developments were increased motivation (68%, up from 54% in Year 9), improvements in CV writing or interview skills (59%), self-confidence (56%) and job-related skills (54%).



Base: All progression telephone and face-to-face customers (4,415)

Figure 6.5:
Skills and personal development outcomes

Telephone customers were more likely to develop their skills, compared to face-to-face customers, including:

- problem solving skills (44% of face-to-face customers, compared to 50% of telephone customers),
- job related skills (51% of face-to-face customers, compared to 56% of telephone customers)
- IT skills (38% of face-to-face customers, compared to 43% of telephone customers)
- motivation to take action (65% of face-to-face customers, compared to 71% of telephone customers).

Broadly, younger customers, customers with Level 2 and above qualifications and customers who do not have a disability are more likely to have developed their skills. For example, 63% of

18-24 year olds said that their skills relating to a current or future job have improved (compared to 44% of those aged 50 plus), similarly 58% of customers with a Level 2 or above qualification said this (compared with 45% of customers with qualifications below Level 2) and half (47%) of those who do not have a disability said this (compared to 37% of those who do).

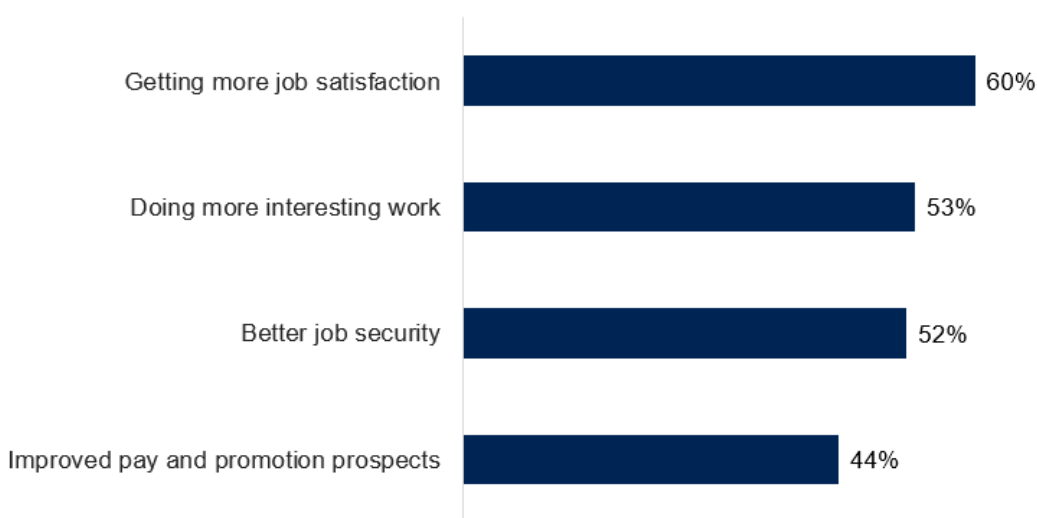
Amongst those who had developed their skills in some way, over half (52%) said that their adviser helped them to do this. Female customers (54%), those whose first language is not English (59%), and Yorkshire and the Humber customers (58%) were all more likely to say that their adviser helped them. Face-to-face customers were also more likely than telephone customers to report that the NCS advice or support helped them improve their skills (54% compared to 43%).

The Personal Added Value key performance indicator also includes those who, in the past 6 months, have increased their ability to make decisions about the future in terms of career, training or learning had improved over the past six months. Almost eight in ten (77%) said that their ability to do this has increased, including 41% who said it has increase ‘a lot’ and 37% saying ‘a little’. Female customers (44%), single parents (50%), customers aged 18-24 (46%), customers whose first language is not English (51%), and those with no disability (44%) were all more likely to say that this has increased ‘a lot’ for them.

6.4.3 Positive changes at work

Customers who were in work when interviewed were asked about a range of other benefits they may have experienced in their job or career in the six months following their interaction with the National Careers Service. These benefits are included in Figure 6.6. It is important to note that ‘getting more job satisfaction’ is the only code which contributes to the overall Personal Added Value key performance indicator.

Figure 6.6: Positive changes at work



Base: All progression telephone and face-to-face customers who are in work (1,607)

Compared to Year 9, the proportion of customers who identify these positive changes at work has decreased by between 4 and 6 percentage points overall. Getting more job satisfaction has decreased from 66% in Year 9 to 60% in Year 10. Additionally, fewer customers feel they are doing more interesting work (53% in Year 10, compared to 58% in Year 9), and only half (52%) feel they have more job security (compared to 56% in Year 9). Those who think their pay and/or promotion prospects have improved has also decreased, from 48% in Year 9 to 44% in Year 10. However, similar to Year 9, across each of the measures there were consistent differences between the age groups with 20-24 year olds being more likely to cite positive changes, while those aged 50 plus were less likely. NEET customers aged 18-24 were also particularly likely to cite the positive changes; for example, 72% of these customers said that they were getting more job satisfaction.

Customers whose first language is English were also more likely than those whose first language is not English to report greater job security and that their pay and promotion prospects had improved (46% and 54% compared to 43% and 31% respectively). White customers were more likely than BAME customers to report that their pay and promotion prospects had improved (46% compared to 38%).

Customers with qualifications below Level 2 were less likely to say they are doing more interesting work (49% compared with 55% of those with Level 2 qualifications or above).

Four in ten customers who had benefitted from positive changes at work attributed these at least in part to the information, advice or support they received from the National Careers Service (40%). This was more common among face-to-face customers (44%) than among telephone customers (36%).

6.5 Career management skills

Alongside satisfaction and progression, developing career management skills among its customers is the third key outcome area for the National Careers Service. The development of career management skills has been defined as follows:

- The customer has re-used the National Careers Service website, visited the National Careers Service in person or used the National Careers Helpline;
- The customer has activated their Account;
- The customer has done any learning or training for career-related reasons – informed by discussion with the National Careers Service;
- The customer has developed any job-related skills, job application/CV skills or confidence – informed by discussion with the National Careers Service; or
- or other source of advice, acted on the suggestion of their adviser, or followed up this advice by contacting another organisation;

- The customer has improved their ability to make decisions about future careers or learning, has a better idea about where to look for information on jobs or on learning, has increased their motivation to find work or change career, or developed more confidence – informed by discussion with the National Careers Service.

Altogether, eight in ten face-to-face and telephone customers reported developing career management skills during the six months since their contact with the National Careers Service (77%). This included:

- 76% who reported that their awareness of work/career opportunities had increased over the past six months;
- 76% who said that their awareness of learning or training opportunities had increased;
- 78% who reported that their motivation to find work or change career had improved;
- 79% said that their interest in learning had increased.

7 How do key results vary across National Careers Service contracting areas?

Across contracting areas, customers expressed consistently positive views on the service they received. The main distinctions are:

- Satisfaction was higher than average in Yorkshire and the Humber (91%).
- There has been a significant decrease in satisfaction with the venue and the location of the meeting, with a 20 percentage point decrease compared to Year 9 in the South East and West Midlands and Northamptonshire.
- Satisfaction with the advisers and the quality of information and advice is high and fairly consistent across regions. Customers in the East of England and Buckinghamshire had higher than average levels of satisfaction with their adviser's level of knowledge and understanding of their needs.
- There was little variation across region in terms of progression.

The face-to-face elements of the National Careers Service are delivered through a number of different area-based contractors across the country. This chapter looks at area-based differences in Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and other relevant results, starting by looking at the demographic differences in customer profile across the areas. References to 'customers' in this section refers solely to face-to-face and telephone customers.

7.1 Customer profile in different areas

Table 7.1 shows area-based differences in the key demographics of: age, gender, qualifications and working status (specifically the proportion in work and the proportion unemployed and looking for work at the time of their contact with an adviser). Results are shown as row percentages.

- East Midlands and Northamptonshire (35%) and the South East (37%) had a higher than average share of customers aged over 50.
- The North East and Cumbria (63%) and the North West (62%) had a relatively high proportion of male customers.
- Customers in London (69%), the South East (70%) and the North East and Cumbria (74%) were more likely to be unemployed and looking for work at the time of their initial contact.

Table 7.1: Profile of customers by area

	All (incl. NCH)	London	East of England and Buckinghamshire	East Midlands and Northamptonshire	Yorkshire and Humber	West Midlands and Staffordshire	South West and Oxfordshire	South East	North West	North East and Cumbria
Base:	6145	971	356	336	694	1113	351	692	646	690
18-24	23%	19%	18%	26%	21%	27%	20%	21%	22%	25%
25-49	52%	60%	48%	50%	51%	51%	52%	46%	54%	51%
50+	26%	22%	34%	23%	27%	23%	28%	32%	24%	25%
Female	49%	55%	43%	55%	45%	48%	47%	48%	47%	44%
Male	51%	44%	55%	44%	54%	51%	52%	51%	53%	56%
Below Level 2	10%	9%	16%	6%	11%	9%	10%	10%	11%	11%
Level 2 and above	70%	68%	64%	75%	63%	67%	73%	72%	70%	75%
In work	23%	23%	23%	27%	18%	23%	26%	22%	18%	22%
Unemployed	63%	63%	61%	59%	67%	62%	59%	66%	67%	71%

7.2 Satisfaction

7.2.1 Overall satisfaction

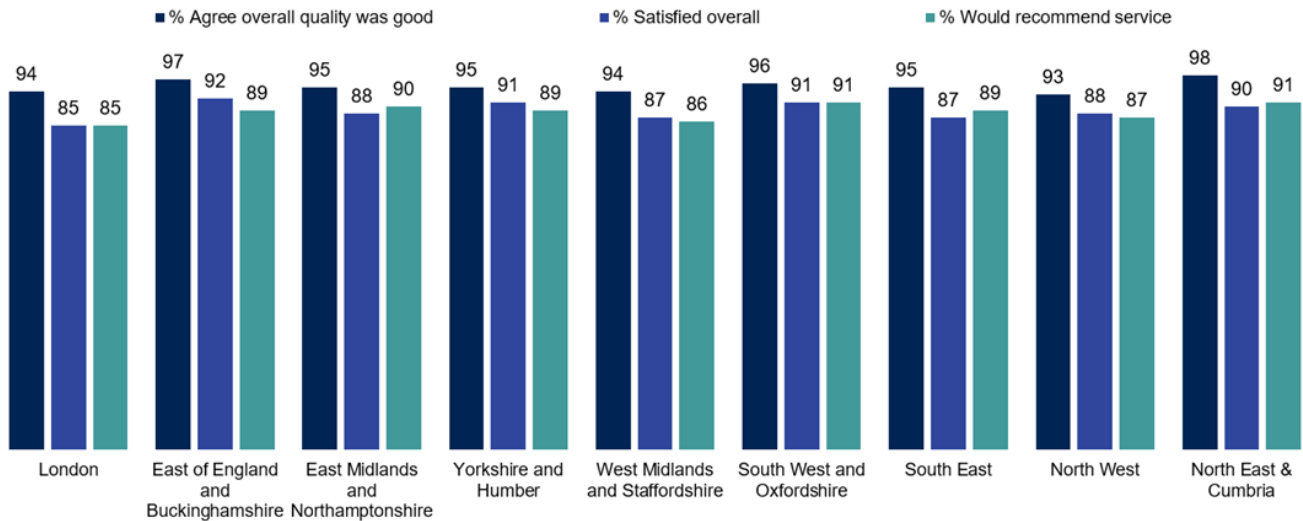
Overall perceptions of the Service were consistently positive across the contracting areas. There were very few statistically significant differences in relation to overall satisfaction, perceived service quality, or whether customers had recommended or would recommend the service (Figure 7.1).

Satisfaction was significantly higher than average in Yorkshire and the Humber (91%), consistent with Year 9 (90%).

Customers were more likely to agree that the quality of the service was good in the North East and Cumbria (98%).

With regards to likelihood to recommend service, there was not much variation in likelihood to recommend the service with consistently high rates across all regions, higher than in Year 9. Customers in London (85%) were less likely than average to do so.

Figure 7.1: Satisfaction, perceived service quality and willingness to recommend the National Careers Service by area



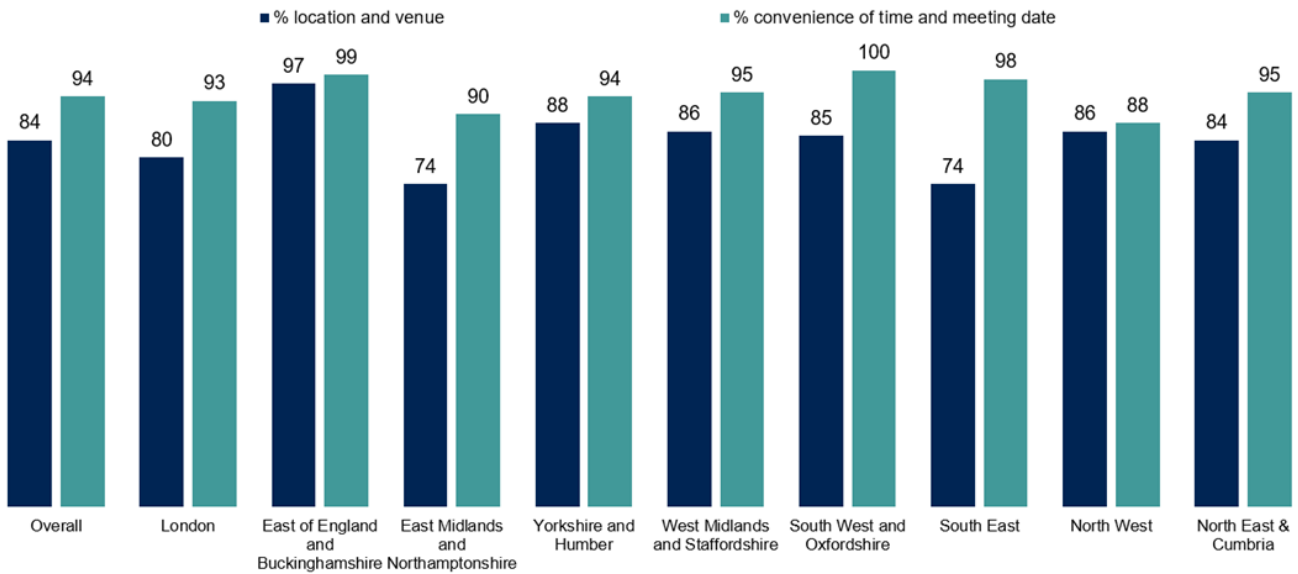
Base: All telephone and face-to-face customers (6,145)

7.2.2 Satisfaction with operational aspects and the adviser

Across all contracting areas, face-to-face customers were consistently positive about the logistical and operational elements of the service. There were only minor variations by area, as shown in Figure 7.2. However, compared with Year 9, there has been a significant drop in satisfaction with the location and venue where customers received their advice from 93% to 84% overall. In a couple of regions, there has been around a 20 percentage point decrease in satisfaction: in the South East satisfaction dropped from 94% to 74% and in the East Midlands and Northamptonshire it dropped from 93% to 74%. This suggests that a significant minority of face to face customers prefer meeting in person than virtually, as has been required due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, levels of satisfaction with the convenience of the time and date of the meeting remain high and comparable with Year 9 (94% in line with 95% in Year 9). Satisfaction levels were similar across the different regions, ranging from 88% in the North West to 100% in the South West and Oxfordshire. This suggests that advisers have been able to offer a similar range of meeting times and dates as pre-pandemic.

Figure 7.2: Satisfaction with logistical/operational elements of the service by area



Base: All face-to-face customers (1,958)

Despite the changes to service delivery that have been necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, satisfaction with the adviser remains very high and comparable across all measures with Year 9. This indicates that advisers have been able to offer a similar high-quality service through virtual meetings.

In Year 10, there were very few differences by region in satisfaction with NCS advisers:

- Customers in the East of England and Buckinghamshire and the North East and Cumbria expressed higher levels of satisfaction with their adviser’s level of knowledge (97% and 96% compared to 93% overall).
- Customers in the East of England and Buckinghamshire also had higher levels of satisfaction with their advisers’ understanding of their needs (95% compared to 92% overall).

Table 7.2: Satisfaction with the adviser by area

	All (incl. NCC)	London	East of England and	East Midlands and Northamptonshire	Yorkshire and Humber	West Midlands and Staffordshire	South West and Oxfordshire	South East	North West	North East and Cumbria
Base:	6,145	917	356	336	694	1113	351	692	646	690
Length of time with adviser	95	94	97	94	93	95	96	94	93	97
Professionalism of adviser	97	97	98	97	97	96	98	98	95	99
Helpfulness of adviser	95	95	97	96	95	94	94	96	95	96
Adviser knowledge	93	91	97	94	93	93	94	92	92	96
Adviser understood needs	92	88	95	91	93	92	95	91	91	92

7.2.3 Satisfaction with the information or advice received

As with satisfaction with advisers, satisfaction with the information or advice received is in line with or higher than Year 9. Again, this strengthens the evidence that changing the service delivery to telephone and video calls has not impacted on customer satisfaction with the quality of information or advice. Moreover, as shown in table 7.3 across contracting areas, customers were consistently positive about the advice and information they received.

Table 7.3: Satisfaction with the advice/information provided by area

	All (incl. NCC)	London	East of England and Buckinghamshire	East Midlands and Northamptonshire	Yorkshire and Humber	West Midlands and Staffordshire	South West and Oxfordshire	South East	North West	North East and Cumbria
Base:	6,145	917	356	336	694	1113	351	692	646	690
IAG was clear/easy to understand	95	94	96	96	96	95	96	94	93	95
IAG was useful	91	89	92	91	92	91	91	90	90	94
Got the IAG to make informed decision	88	88	91	90	88	88	91	85	88	89

7.3 Progression and career management skills

Almost all customers in Year 10 (97%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months following their intervention (as discussed in Chapter 6). The main progression Key Performance Indicators by contracting region are shown in Table 7.4, together with development of career management skills.

Table 7.4: Key progression measures and career management skills by area (%)

	All (incl. NCC)	London	East of England and	East Midlands and	Yorkshire and Humber	West Midlands and Staffordshire	South West and Oxfordshire	South East	North West	North East and Cumbria
Base	4415	454	393	321	520	438	368	476	421	444
Any positive outcome	97	99	98	95	97	96	96	98	98	97
Learning progression	71	69	69	73	65	68	72	71	70	71
Employment progression	44	38	43	44	47	40	49	43	45	48
Personal Added Value	95	97	95	91	96	94	93	95	94	95
Career management skills	77	82	74	77	80	76	78	77	75	80

Across each of the regions, there were no regions that scored higher than average for learning progression. However, learning progression was significantly below average in Yorkshire and the Humber (65%).

There was minimal regional variation on employment progression. London were less likely to report employment progression (38%). However, customers in London were more likely than average to have experience Personal Added Value (97%).

Variation across regions in career management skills was minimal in Year 10 with all regions scoring close to the average of 77%.

8 Conclusions

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the Year 10 findings show that the service held up well despite the challenges of reduced service delivery and the switch to predominantly telephone/virtual appointments during the lockdown periods. Positively, overall ratings for both the quality of the service (95%) and overall customer satisfaction (88%) have significantly increased in Year 10. This strengthens the evidence that changing the service delivery to telephone and video calls has not impacted on customer satisfaction or the quality of information or advice offered. Additionally, recommendation of the service continues to remain high with nine in ten customers saying that they had already or would recommend the National Careers Service (91%).

Amongst face-to-face and telephone customers, those who recall drawing up a Skills Action Plan and/or used the Skills Health Check were more likely to be satisfied (91% and 92% respectively), in addition to those in the younger age groups (92% of 20-24-year olds) and customers who had the same adviser, if they had multiple appointments (91% amongst telephone customers). Satisfaction with advisers remained high despite the reduced service and the change to predominantly telephone appointments. The professionalism and helpfulness of the advisers are the top aspects customers were particularly satisfied with.

Almost two thirds (64%) did not feel that any improvements needed to be made to the National Careers Service, however there were those who suggested that more tailored help could be offered and that there could be more follow-ups. On this point, around four in ten (38%) reported being followed up by a National Careers adviser since their initial contact, suggesting that this is an area of improvement.

When asked about what further support the National Careers Service could offer customers in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, two-thirds (67%) of customers said they were happy with the current support on offer. For those who felt differently, the most common thing customers wanted was advice and help finding a job.

In Year 10, with the exclusion of Q2, satisfaction with the online service remained in line with Year 9, with 59% satisfied with the service. A fifth of customers (21%) were dissatisfied with the website, a slight decrease from Year 9 (24%), but indicating that improvements are needed to website functionality and personalisation. Of those customers who were dissatisfied with the website, a quarter (26%) said this was due to website instability, with issues with the website crashing, error messages, and issues with the webchat function. Other reasons for dissatisfaction included customers wanting more tailored feedback, and issues with the tools such as the 'Discover your skills and careers' and 'Skills Health Check' tools. Improving the website stability could be an area of improvement to increase satisfaction among online customers.

Half of website users reported this was the first time visiting the site and as seen in previous years. The main reason for visiting the site was information on jobs/careers or apprenticeships.

Online customers reported that just under half (49%) got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website. When these customers were asked how they thought the website could be improved, the following themes were mentioned; the layout/ease of use of the website, improve the skills test tools, and the information on training/learning.

Overall, there has been a decline in employment and job or learning outcome compared to Year 9. This is likely explained by the economic consequences of COVID-19 resulting in fewer employment opportunities.

Younger customers, those with higher qualifications, those unemployed for less than 6 months, and those without a disability are most likely to achieve some form of employment progression. The most common developments were feeling motivated to take action (68%), improvements in CV writing or interview skills (59%), increased self-confidence (56%), and developing skills related to a current or future job (54%).

Progression of softer skills, such as personal added value, remained stable, which suggests that customers have been continuing to develop their skills throughout the pandemic. In addition, there was a slight increase in levels of learning progression compared to Year 9 suggesting that customer took the opportunity to learn something new during lockdown. Customers with qualifications Level 2 and above were more likely to have undertaken each of the specific types of training and learning.

Optimistically, all face-to-face and telephone customers (97%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months since their call/meeting.

Ninety-five percent of face-to-face and telephone customers indicated that they had gained some form of Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service. Eight in ten face-to-face and telephone customers reported developing career management skills during the six months since their contact with the National Careers Service (77%).

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