

National Careers Service Customer Satisfaction and Progression Annual Report

Report based on findings from May 2021 – April 2022

Juliette Albone
David Thompson
Noah Coltman



Department
for Education



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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, webchat and online. Adults aged 19 or older (or 18 or older, who have been referred by Jobcentre Plus) 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 and replaced with the Telephone and Webchat service provided in each region by the prime contractor to provide a better customer journey.

This report presents the results from Year 11 of the customer satisfaction and progression study. This fieldwork was undertaken for from May 2021 to April 2022 and consisted of monthly satisfaction and progression telephone surveys, as well as a continuous online satisfaction survey. This report frequently references the report for Year 10 (fieldwork undertaken between May 2020 to April 2021).

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. In addition, the research aims to measure changes in customers’ employment and learning progression, personal development, and career management skills, six months after dealing with the service to provide a reflective view of customers perception after having used the service.

During Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), as a result of COVID-19, from the 23rd of 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.

Customer profile

Overall, the customer profile of those accessing the face-to-face, telephone or online services remained largely consistent with previous years.

However, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of females using the service for both face-to-face customers and telephone customers when compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (45% compared to 49%).

There was a significant increase in the proportion of customers with a disability or long-term limiting health condition using the service (rising from 25% to 33%). This is likely to be a result

of the opening up of services, following the predominantly telephone appointments during the lockdowns in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

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?

Two thirds of customers reported that they found out about the service through Jobcentre Plus (67%), emphasising the importance of this information channel, and being significantly higher than Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (59%). 18-24 NEETs (71%), those with a below Level 2 qualification (75%), a disability (70%), single parents (77%) and those at risk of unemployment (75%) were all more likely than average to have heard about the service through a Jobcentre Plus.

Online customers often heard about the National Careers Service through Jobcentre Plus (25%), searches online (16%), social media (12%), from a National Careers Service adviser (12%), or a teacher (8%).

Reasons for contacting the National Careers Service were primarily focused on progressing into employment. Help with CV writing remains a key reason for using the telephone and face-to-face services (40% and 32%). Therefore, providing support for CV writing is often the starting point for the National Careers Service to provide independent and impartial advice to customers. Website use was largely for obtaining information and advice about jobs, careers or apprenticeships (36%).

Experiences of using the National Careers Service

Two thirds of customers had their enquiry handled in one call (67%), an increase from Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021). This reflects across the service a return to normal levels of operation after drops in certain areas during the pandemic.

Three in ten face-to-face customers (29%) had two or more meetings with the National Careers Service adviser. Customers who are 50+ and unemployed or are at risk of unemployment were less likely than average to have their query dealt with one call (61%). Two-thirds of customers who had more than one meeting saw the same adviser each time (61%), which is in line with the Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) results (62%). Due to the pandemic's impact on the way the service was offered in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), there was a significant increase in those having meetings at a Jobcentre Plus office, at 35% against 10% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

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 two fifths (42%) went on to use the tool and the majority of these customers found the tool useful (92%).

Just under half of online customers got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website (48%).

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 (94%). In line with this, the vast majority of customers were satisfied with the National Careers Service overall (88%), in line with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

The customer groups that have been consistently satisfied with the service year on year include younger customers (93% of 19 years old and younger), those who had an action plan (92%) and customers who had the same adviser for multiple appointments (92% amongst face-to-face customers).

18-24 NEETs were the only priority group that were more likely than average to be satisfied with the service (91%) compared to 88% on average.

Among telephone and face-to-face customers, satisfaction with individual aspects of the service remains high, especially the professionalism of their adviser (96% telephone and 95% face-to-face).

Almost nine in ten face-to-face or telephone customers either had already recommended or reported they would recommend the National Careers Service (88%).

Nearly three in five (58%) were satisfied with the National Careers Service website. Three in ten online customers (34%) said they had already recommended the National Careers Service, and a further two fifths (43%) said they would¹.

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

Overall, Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) has seen a significant increase in employment progression and job or learning outcomes. This is most likely explained by the economic consequences of COVID-19 during Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) 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. Nearly 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 69% in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), broadly in line with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (71%).

Over half of customers (56%) achieved employment progression, an increase from the 44% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), which could also reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the job market. Those with higher qualifications, those between 18-24 years old, and those without a disability were more likely to achieve employment progression than average.

¹ The figures for the online survey presented in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) 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.'

Ninety-four 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, which was highest amongst younger customers (18-24 years old) 98%.

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 and the North-East & Cumbria (90%) – compared to 88% average satisfaction.
- Customers were also more likely to agree that the quality of the service was good in the North-East and Cumbria (97%) and in Yorkshire and Humber (95%) compared to 94% average.
- North-East and Cumbria and Yorkshire and Humber were also more likely than average to say they have or would recommend (91% and 90%). Whereas London customers were less likely than average to say they have or would recommend the service (86%).
- There has been a return to high levels of satisfaction to the logistical elements of face-to-face meetings that had seen a fall in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).
- Satisfaction with the advisers and the quality of information and advice is high and fairly consistent across regions.
- There was little variation across region in terms of progression, with all having high levels.

1 Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Background

The Department for Education (DfE) 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, webchat, and online. Adults aged 19 or older (or 18 or older, who have been referred by Jobcentre Plus) 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, and replaced with the Telephone and Webchat service provided in each region by the prime contractor to provide a better customer journey. 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).

During 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 2021 and April 2022. For face-to-face and telephone customers, this means the satisfaction survey covers sessions with an adviser between April 2021 and March 2022.

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 2021 and April 2022 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 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) to the data from Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).**

1.3 Methodology

This report presents the results from Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) of the customer satisfaction and progression study, covering fieldwork between May 2021 to April 2022.

1.4 Telephone surveys

For face-to-face and telephone customers this involved a total of 7,285 interviews for the satisfaction survey and 5,586 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).

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

	Fieldwork month	Satisfaction survey Progression survey			
		Month of adviser session	No. of interviews	Month of adviser session	No. of interviews
Quarter 1	Sep-11	Aug-11	2,217	Mar-11	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-14	Sep-14	747		

Quarter 3	Nov 14-Jan 2015 (sat)	Oct-Dec 2014	2,222	Apr-Jun 2014	1,064
	Oct-Dec 2014 (prog)				
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 2015 (sat)	Jan-Mar 2015	2,197	Jul-Sept 2014	797
	Jan-Mar 2015 (prog)				
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 (May 2020 to April 2021)			6,145		4,415
Quarter 1	May-Jul 2021	Apr-Jun 2021	1,830	Nov 20-Jan 2021	1,391
Quarter 2	Aug-Oct 2021	Jul-Sept 2021	1,823	Feb-Apr 2021	1,399

Quarter 3	Nov 21-Jan 2022	Oct-Dec 2021	1,824	May-Jul 2021	1,394
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 2022	Jan-Mar 2022	1,808	Aug-Oct 2021	1,402
Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021)			7,285		5,586

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 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 IA or IAG from the service. Those who are offered IAG have a Skills Action Plan. Both customer types have been included in the survey, however, the volume of IAG sample provided throughout the year was significantly higher than the amount of IA sample.

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

In total 587 website users took part in the website satisfaction survey. 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, 81 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.

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 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) 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 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 significant decrease in the proportion of females using the service. However, there was an increase in the proportion of customers with a disability or long-term limiting health condition using the service, likely an impact of the resumption of more face-to-face appointments after the mainly telephone service during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns. 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.

This chapter examines the profile of customers accessing the service in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), from May 2021 to April 2022, and those accessing the National Careers Service website from May 2021 to April 2022. 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 11 (May 2021 to April 2021). The figures presented for face-to-face and telephone customers are based on weighted data, whilst online figures are based on unweighted data². 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 customers³

	Channel used as main way of accessing the service (%)		
	Face-to-face -2,796	Telephone (4,489)	Online (587)
Base:			
Gender			
Male	55	52	47
Female	44	46	47
Age group			
<u>19 or younger⁴</u>	8	8	11

² 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).

³ Not all categories will add up to 100% as a result of the 'Prefer not to say' code.

⁴ The age ranges are 18-19 for face-to-face and telephone customers, 16-19 for online customers.

20-24	20	17	10
25-49	48	47	45
50 or older	24	28	32
Ethnicity			
White	61	78	63
Black/Black British	16	7	10
Asian/Asian British	15	9	7
Mixed/other	8	6	12
Prefer not to say	1	1	9
English not first language	73	83	78
Long term illness/disability	31	35	27

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

2.1.2 Gender and age

In previous waves, the majority of face-to-face and telephone customers using the service were men, however in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) there was a slight increase in females using the service (49% female and 51% male). In Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), the proportion of females using the service has decreased back to Year 9 levels (45% female and 53% male).

In terms of the key priority groups, single parents were more likely to be female (77%), compared to the average (45%), whereas NEET customers aged 18-24 (62%), customers aged 50+ and at risk of unemployment (61%), customers unemployed for more than 12 months (58%), and customers with a disability (56%) were more likely to be male, when compared to the average (53%).

The highest proportion of telephone and face-to-face customers were aged between 25 and 49 (47%). Whilst 25-49 is still the most common age group for telephone and face-to-face customers, there has been a decrease in the number of customers in this age band compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (47%, compared to 52% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)).

There was relatively little difference between the age groups for telephone and face-to-face customers, with 47% and 48% respectively made up of 25-49 year olds. However, there was a slight difference for those aged 50 plus, who were slightly less likely to use the face-to-face channel than telephone channel (24% vs. 28%).

Customers with a disability were more likely to be 50 plus (35%, compared to average, 26%), whilst single parents were more likely to be aged 25-49 (72%, compared to the average, 47%).

Online web users who completed the survey were equally likely to tell us they were male or female (47% each). This represents a decrease in the percentage of females taking part in the survey compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (47%, compared to 55%), a trend that has been occurring over the past few years of the study.

2.1.3 Ethnicity and English as a first language

Around two thirds of customers taking part in the telephone and face-to-face survey identified themselves as white (63%), whilst 28% identified as BAME. Male customers were more likely to be from a BAME background (35%) compared to female customers (23%). This could indicate that female BAME participants are less likely to access the service compared to their male counterparts.

Four in five customers say that English is their first language (78%). BAME customers were more likely to suggest that English is not their first language (43%, compared to average, 19%).

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 (26% face-to-face, 17% telephone, and 19% online).

BAME customers were also more likely to be aged 25-49 (61%, compared to white customers, 42%).

The most common age group for website customers was 25-49, with 45% of customers in this age bracket. There has been a decrease in the proportion of white customers using the website (63%) compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (76%).

2.1.4 Disability

In Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), the proportion of customers with a disability or long-term limiting health condition using the service is significantly higher amongst telephone customers than the average (35% vs 33%). There was an overall increase in the proportion of customers with a disability or long-term health condition using the service, after a fall in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), back to levels seen at Year 9 (33% in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), 25% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), and 29% in Year 9). This is likely to be as a result of the opening up of services, following the predominantly telephone appointments during the lockdowns in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

Customers with a disability were more likely than average to have been referred by Jobcentre Plus (70% compared with 67%) and were more likely than average to be claiming benefits (84% against 76%).

Customers with qualifications below Level 2 (38%), those aged 50+ and unemployed or at risk of unemployment (39%), and those who had been unemployed for more than 12 months (38%) were more likely to have a disability when compared to the average (33%).

2.1.5 Region

Website users who participated in the survey were asked where they lived; this provides a picture of the regional spread of website users. In total, 75% 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 three per cent of online customers lived in each of the English regions. The highest proportions were in London (16%), the North West (12%) and rest of the South East (11%).

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

	Channel used as main way of accessing the service (%)		
	Face-to-face	Telephone (4,489)	Online (587)
Base:	-2,796		
In work	18	18	41
Full-time employee	7	7	26
Part-time employee	8	7	9
Self-employed	2	3	5
In learning	7	4	11
Full-time learning	4	3	5
Part-time learning	3	2	1
School	*	*	4
Unemployed and looking for work	62	62	31
Unable to work due to health	6	8	6
Looking after home/family	4	5	4
Retired	*	*	1
Other	1	1	3

In Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), telephone customers and face-to-face customers were equally likely to be unemployed and looking for work (both 62%), whereas in the online survey, the proportion of unemployed customers was 31%.

The following customer groups were more likely to be unemployed and looking for work⁵.

- men (67%, compared with 57% of women); and
- customers with qualifications below Level 2 (62%)

The Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) data demonstrates that those aged 19 or younger are more likely to be unemployed and looking for work (68%), which is similar to the levels in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (66%). A similar proportion of face-to-face a telephone customers reported being in work (18%), which is a significant decrease from the Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) average (23%). However, this is a continuation of a shift seen in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), as previously face-to-face customers were less likely than telephone customers to be in work.

Face-to-face customers were more likely to be in education than telephone customers (7% compared to 4%). Overall, 6% of customers were in education. This represents another trend that was observed in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) and has continued into Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), when 5% of customers were in education, compared to 11% in Year 9.

Among face-to-face and telephone customers who were unemployed at the time of their call/meeting, two in five had been unemployed for less than 6 months (42%), one in ten had been unemployed for between 6 and 12 months (12%), and four in ten had been unemployed for more than 12 months (43%). Those unemployed for more than 12 months is significantly higher than seen in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (43% vs 23%).

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.

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.

⁵ Analysis of customer groups is based on face-to-face and telephone customers (combined).

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 -2,796	Telephone (4,489)	Online (587)
Base:			
Highest qualification			
Level 4 or higher (e.g. degree or equivalent)	26	26	39
Level 3 (e.g. A-levels)	23	23	10
Level 2 (5 GCSEs A*-C)	21	22	12
Level 1	11	11	9
Entry level	3	2	5
Other	4	4	n/a
Level 2 or higher	63	65	60
Below Level 2	12	12	23
18-24 NEET	20	19	7

Similar levels of both face-to-face and telephone customers had a L2 qualification or higher (63% and 65%), though both had decreased from the Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) levels, when 81% of face-to-face customers and 79% of telephone customers had Level 2 or above qualifications.

Similarly, both face-to-face and telephone customers had equal proportions (26%) a Level 4 or higher qualification. However, this lower than at Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), when it was 34% and 33% respectively. Online customers had the highest proportion of customers with a Level 4 or higher qualification (39%), although a slight decrease from Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (42%).

Under one in ten online customers were 18-24 and NEET at the time of their meeting (7%), a smaller proportion than face-to-face and telephone customers (20% and 19% respectively).

Being 18-24 and NEET was more common among customers who were male (23%, compared to 15% of females).

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

Two thirds of customers heard about the service through Jobcentre Plus (67%), which is an increase from Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (59%). The proportion of customers being referred to the service through Jobcentre Plus was particularly high among telephone customers (69% in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), up from 59% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)).

Online customers often heard about the National Careers Service through Jobcentre Plus (25%), through searches online (16%), through social media (12%), or from a National Careers Service adviser (12%). As in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), the customer groups most likely to have been signposted to the service by Jobcentre Plus were those aged 50 plus who were unemployed or at risk of redundancy (55%), customers who had been unemployed for at least 12 months (52%), and customers with no qualifications (46%).

Over a third of customers reported that their main reason for contacting the National Careers Service was for help with CV writing (36%), which is an increase of six percentage points compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (30%) when it was also the most common reason for using service. Telephone customers were particularly likely to contact the Service for help with CVs (40% vs 32% of face-to-face customers). Website use was largely for obtaining information and advice about jobs, careers or apprenticeships (36%).

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 are likely to have a large impact on levels of 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 the year after the worst of the pandemic.

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

3.1.1 Telephone and Face-to-Face Customers

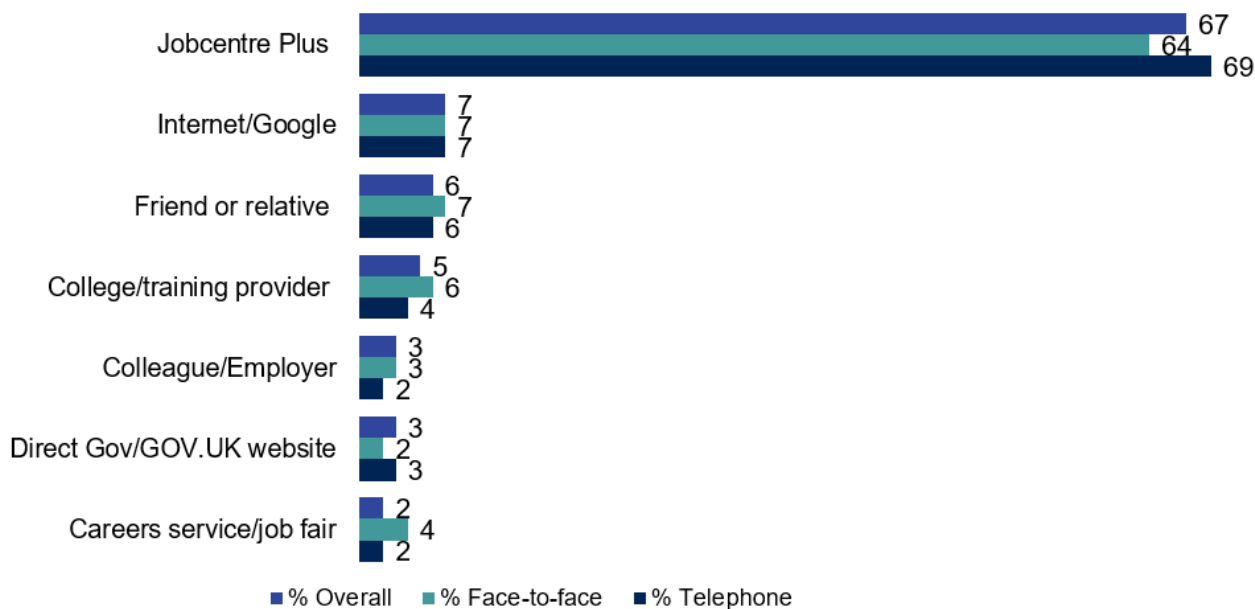
In Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), two-thirds of customers reported that they found out about the service through Jobcentre Plus (67%). Due to the pandemic and the impact this had both on customers and the service itself, there has been a large increase in the proportion of customers who heard about the service through Jobcentre Plus, increasing from 59% in both Year 9 and Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) to 67% in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021). The proportion of face-to-face customers being referred to the service through Jobcentre Plus has increased from last year and returned to pre-pandemic levels (64% in Year 11 (May 2021 to

April 2021) compared to 59% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) and comparable with 64% in Year 9) as this service has once again been offered more widely. The proportion of telephone customers being referred by Jobcentre Plus has also increased from 59% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) to 69% in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021).

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 seeking information and advice were more likely to have heard about the service through the internet (13%), compared to face-to-face customers (7%) and telephone customers seeking information, advice, and guidance (6%). Whereas more face-to-face customers had heard about the service through college or training provider (6%, compared to 4% of telephone customers).

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



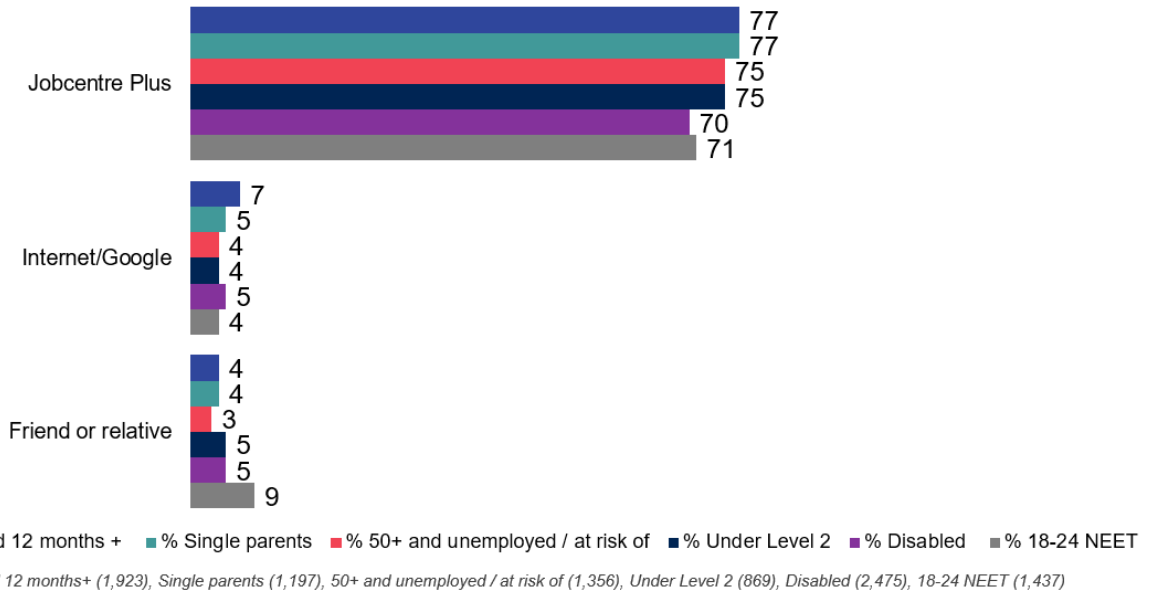
Base: Overall (7,285), Face-to-face customers (2,796), Telephone (4,489)

Customers aged 50+ were significantly more likely to have heard about the service for the first time through the Jobcentre Plus than younger customers (73% vs 63% aged 19 or younger). 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.

In terms of key priority groups, at least three quarters of customers unemployed for 12 months or more (77%), single parents (77%), aged 50 or more and at risk of unemployment (75%), with qualifications below level 2 (75%), or aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (75%) reported that they first heard about the National Careers Service through the Jobcentre Plus.

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



Online customers among website users the most common channel for first hearing about the National Careers Service was also via Jobcentre Plus (25%). This was followed by through online searches (16%), social media (12%), or from a teacher or National Careers Service adviser (12%). There has been little change in these sources compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

In terms of key priority groups, customers aged 50 plus and unemployed or at risk of redundancy, and those who had been unemployed for at least 12 months, were more than twice as likely than the average to have been signposted to the service by Jobcentre Plus (55% and 52% respectively, compared to 25% overall). In addition, customers with no qualifications (46%) were more likely than average to have been signposted to the service by Jobcentre Plus.

Table 3.1: Website visitor referral⁶

Base:	Overall	Disabled	50 plus and unemployed	Under L2	L2 plus	Unemployed for 12 months +
	-587	-157	-85	-87	-335	-60
Jobcentre Plus adviser	25%	32%	55%	31%	19%	52%

Online	16%	10%	2%	10%	18%	5%
Through social media	12%	12%	8%	16%	10%	17%

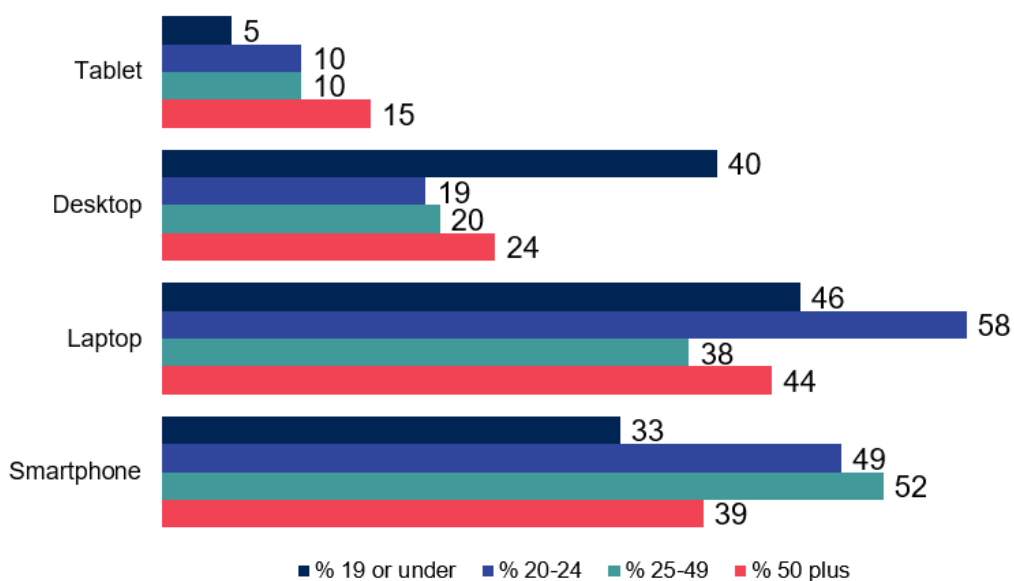
The vast majority of customers accessed the website at home, although there has been a decrease of nine percentage points since Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) in the proportion doing so (79% compared to 88% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)), likely as a result of customers' changes in behaviour and return to the workplace after the restrictions of the pandemic. Indeed, more than one in ten customers (11%) accessed the website from work, up from seven percent in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

Overall, seven per cent accessed the site at a school, college, or university, and only three per cent accessed the service from a library or other public facility, which is only a one percentage point increase from Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) despite libraries resuming a normal service.

Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) is the first year that smartphone access has overtaken laptop use, with customers most commonly accessing the website with a smartphone (45%) followed by a laptop (43%). Around a quarter have accessed the site using desktops (24%). This trend towards smartphone use again illustrates the importance of device agnostic design ensuring that the website operates well on a range of platforms.

A similar pattern to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) is seen in terms of the age of customers using smartphones, with smartphone use no longer being most prevalent among younger groups: over half of website users aged 25-49 said they accessed the website using a smartphone (52% compared to 41% aged 24 or under). Smartphone use was particularly high among BAME customers (58% compared to 41% of white customers).

Figure 3.3: How customers accessed the National Careers Service website



Base: Under 19 (63), 20-24 (59), 25-49 (263), 50+ (190)

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 (7%) had previously met with a National Careers Service adviser face-to-face, which is only a slight increase compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (5%) despite the resumption of face-to-face services following the pandemic. This might indicate that customers have changed their habits of interaction following the pandemic to use more remote services. Those who had lower than level 2 qualifications (10%), were aged 18-24 and NEET (9%), or been unemployed for more than 12 months (9%) were more likely to have spoken to an adviser face-to-face previously. Face-to-face customers were twice as likely to have previously met with an adviser face-to-face, compared with telephone customers (11% and 5% respectively).

One in four (25%) customers had previously spoken to an adviser over the telephone, which is an increase compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) and Year 9 (19% and 10% respectively).

Other groups that were more likely to have previously spoken to an adviser via the telephone were BAME customers (33%) and those with lower than level 2 qualification (28%)

A quarter of customers (26%) had accessed the website before they used the service, which is also a decrease on Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (30%). Those who were younger were more likely to have previously visited the website (32% of those aged 24 or younger compared

to 19% of those aged 50 or older). In terms of key groups, those that were 18-24 and NEET (30%) were more likely to have visited the website in the 3 months prior to their contact.

Four in five online customers (59%) were 'new' service users, visiting the site for the first time, which is an increase compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (50%) and previous years. Customers with lower than level 2 qualifications were most likely to have been visiting the website for their first time (72%).

In terms of key priority groups, over a quarter (27%) of customers who were 50 or over and unemployed or at risk of redundancy reported having had previous dealings with the National Careers Service via face-to-face meetings compared to the average, 14%. This group was also most likely to have spoken to an adviser via the telephone helpline previously (41% compared to 19% overall). Customers with a disability were also more likely than those without to have spoken to an adviser on the telephone (29% vs. 15% with no disability).

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 (79%, similar to 80% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)) than learning or training options (63%, which is lower than in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), at 66%).

Customers aged 50 plus and unemployed or at risk of unemployment and customers with a disability were less likely than average to be exploring career options (73% and 76%). Whereas customers aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (82%), NEET customers aged 18-24 (83%), BAME customers (82%), and customers with qualifications Level 2 and above (82%) were more likely to be exploring career options.

As seen in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), seeking advice on learning or training options was more common among female customers (65%, compared to male customers, against 61%), BAME customers (69%) and single parents (70%). Face-to-face customers (65%) and customers aged 25-49 (69%) were also more likely than average to be planning or thinking about doing a course or some learning.

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 (36%), although telephone customers were more likely to call the service for this reason than face-to-face customers (40% compared to 32%). Customers who were 16-24 and NEET (43%), have been unemployed for less than 6 months (42%), customers aged 50 plus and unemployed or at risk of redundancy (39%), single parents (42%) and customers with qualifications below Level 2 (41%) were more likely to contact the National Careers Service to get help with writing or developing their CV than customers overall (36%).

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



Base: Overall (7,285), Face-to-face customers (2,796), Telephone customers (4,489)

3.3.2 Website users

Consistent with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), the main reason website visitors were on the site was to get information or advice on jobs, careers, or apprenticeships (36%). This was followed at least a quarter of website visitors by looking to get information or advice about a course or learning (26%), or to access ‘Discover your skills and careers’, and to access ‘Skills Health Check’ (25%). There has been an increase in the proportion of website visitors accessing ‘Find a course’ (23% compared to 18% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)), with a noticeable increase in Q4 (31%).

Top reasons for customers visiting the National Careers Service website



Base: All online satisfaction survey customers (587), top answers shown

Customers using the website for information on learning were asked what sort of information they wanted. Table 3.3 below outlines the learning related information that was sought by online customers. Around half of customers were looking for information on a specific course (54%) or different ways of learning (48%).

Table 3.2: 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 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) 2021/22	Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) 2020/21	Year 9 2019/20
	-151	-231	-162
A specific course	54%	46%	48%
Different ways of learning	48%	45%	35%

How to get back into learning	35%	34%	30%
Apprenticeships	n/a	n/a	n/a
Paying for a course	19%	20%	21%
Other caring responsibilities	13%	10%	5%
Childcare	12%	4%	3%
Other	9%	9%	7%

4 Experiences of using the Service

Two thirds of telephone customers had their enquiry handled in one call (67%), which is an increase compared with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (61%). Amongst those who had multiple calls, 69% dealt with the same adviser.

Seven in ten face-to-face customers (70%) had just one meeting with an adviser, and a quarter (26%) had more than one which is a decrease compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (30%). Customers who were 50 or older and unemployed or at risk of redundancy were more likely to have had more than one meeting (31%).

Three fifths (61%) of customers who had more than one meeting saw the same adviser each time. A third (35%) of customers had a meeting at a Jobcentre Plus office, which shows a large increase from 10% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) due to the pandemic but is still well below the pre-pandemic figures in Year 9 when 75% of customers had a meeting at a Jobcentre Plus office.

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 four in ten (42%) went on to use the tool and the majority of these customers found the tool useful (92%). Just under half of online customers got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website (48%). 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 (39%), 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

Two thirds of telephone customer queries were handled in a single call in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) (67%), which is an increase compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (61%). Customers who were aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (74%) and those aged 18-24 and NEET (75%) were among those most likely to have their query dealt with in one call. In contrast, older customers, particularly those aged 50 or older and at risk of unemployment or redundancy were the least likely to have their call resolved in one query (61%). Amongst those who had multiple calls, 69% dealt with the same adviser.

On average, customers spent 36 minutes speaking with their adviser during their first call, which is the same as Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

Eight in ten telephone customers reported that their adviser said they would send information outlining the conversation and what to do next (79%). However, among those with lower than level 2 qualification, those with a disability, those aged 50 or over and at risk of unemployment and those unemployed for more than 12 months this proportion was lower (75%, 76%, 75% and 75% respectively).

Overall, almost nine in ten (87%) recall receiving this information. Female customers (90%), those in work (91%), and those with level 2 or higher qualifications (90%) were particularly likely to report they received the information.

The vast majority of telephone customers found the information they received useful (93%), and six in ten found it very useful (59%). Six per cent of customers found the information not very or not at all useful. These findings are broadly in line with previous years demonstrating the continued value of the information provided to telephone customers. Female customers were more likely to find the information very useful (63%, compared to male customers, 54%) as were single parents (66%). In terms of key groups, those aged 18-24 and either receiving benefits (96%) or NEET (95%) were most likely to find the information useful.

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

Seven in ten customers had just one face-to-face meeting with a National Careers Service adviser (72%) and a quarter (25%) had two or more meetings. Customers who were 50 or over and at risk of unemployment were the most likely to have had at least two meetings (31%). Those who were satisfied with the service were more likely to have had multiple meetings (27% compared to 16% of those who were dissatisfied).

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 did not meet in a Jobcentre Plus (74%).

On average, customers spent 38 minutes speaking to their adviser, which is similar to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021). Those who only had one meeting, reported it took 40 minutes on average compared to 33 minutes for those who required more than meeting. Meetings with customers with level 4 or higher qualifications took longer (41 minutes on average), as did meetings with those who have used the Skills Health Check (40 minutes) and with customers in the North-East and Cumbria (40%).

The three main reasons for attending more than one meeting were that: the adviser was reviewing or amending their CV (26%); the adviser could not answer all the questions during the first meeting and needed to provide more information (24%); or because there wasn't time to go through everything in the first meeting (14%), which were also the three main reasons in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

Six in ten customers who had more than one meeting saw the same adviser each time (61%). Over three in ten (34%) saw different advisers, although the majority (73%) did not mind this.

A third (35%) of customers had a meeting at a Jobcentre Plus office, which is up from 10% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) when the service had to adapt its delivery due to the pandemic and down from 75% before the pandemic in Year 9. The proportion of customers who have had meetings at a Jobcentre Plus office has also increased through each quarter of Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) as the service has been able to increase its face-to-face offering following the pandemic. Younger customers (44% of those aged 19 or younger), those aged 18-24 and unemployed (41%) or 18-24 and NEET (42%), and those aged 50 or above and at risk of unemployment (42%) were among those most likely to have had a meeting at a Jobcentre Plus office.

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

The most commonly used feature was 'Discover your Skills and Careers' (30%), followed by Skills Health Check (29%), and 'Explore Careers' (25%). Over one in five website customers also used 'Find a course' (22%) and Careers advice (21%). Customers with a disability were particularly likely to have used 'Skills Health Check' (43% compared to 25% of those with no disability). Customers aged 50 or above at risk of unemployment were the key group most likely to use 'Find a course' (37% compared to 26% overall).

The majority of customers who used the various tools and features found them useful, as shown in Table 4.1. The Skills Toolkit tool was found the most useful with eight in ten (81%) rating it as useful, and more than half (53%) rating it as 'very' useful.

Table 4.1: Proportion rating each feature as 'very useful' or 'quite useful'

	The Skills Toolkit	Careers advice	Explore Careers	Discover your Skills and Careers	Skills Health Check	Find a course	Contact the service
Base: All who used feature	75	125	149	175	172	131	62
Very/quite useful	81%	78%	77%	68%	66%	66%	63%
Not very/at all useful	12%	15%	16%	24%	27%	28%	37%

Just under half of website visitors got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website (48%), similar to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (49%). Overall, over a third

either got some (16%) or none of the information they required (21%). The remaining 16%⁷ were just browsing.

4.3 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 Webchat⁸.

4.3.1 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 (53%, consistent with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)). Face-to-face customers who have multiple meetings were more likely than those who have had one meeting to have gone through the tool (58% compared to 52%), as are those who had the same adviser if they had more than one meeting (60% compared to 55% who had different advisers). In terms of key groups, customers who had been unemployed for between 6 and 12 months (62%) and those with higher level 4 or above (57%) were more likely to have gone through the Skills Health Check. By region, those in London were most likely to report that they went through the Skills Health Check (57%). Those who are satisfied with the service were also more likely to have used the tool (55% compared to 33% who were dissatisfied), as are those who have an action plan (63% compared to 37% who do not).

Over nine in ten (93%) said the Skills Health Check was useful, with 50% saying it was 'very' useful. Those aged 18-24 were most likely to say it was useful (96%), as were those who had been unemployed for between 6 and 12 months (99%).

The main reason why the Skills Health Check was rated as not useful was that customers said it told them things they already knew (24%) and that the questions weren't relevant (28%).⁹

Overall, three in ten (28%) customers said their adviser referred them to the Skills Health Check, which has decreased from Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (30%). Similar to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), telephone customers were more likely than face-to-face customers to

⁷ The percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

⁸ Respondents were only asked about Webchat from Q3 onwards.

⁹ Small base size (69) should be treated with caution.

say they had been referred to this tool (31% compared to 18%). Those aged 25-49 (32%) and those with higher qualifications (32% level 4 or higher) were more likely to report that they were referred to the Skills Health Check. Customers with an action plan were also more likely to report their adviser referred them to the Skills Health Check (37% compared to 15% of those with no action plan).

Of those who had been referred to Skills Health Check, four in ten said that they had used it (42%), which is a decrease compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (47%). Telephone customers were more likely than face-to-face customers to have used the diagnostic tool (44% compared to 32%). Those with level 2 or higher qualifications were also more likely to have used it (46%).

The majority of customers who used this tool found it useful (92%), which is a ten-percentage point increase compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021). This includes 49% who found it 'very useful' and 43% who said it was 'fairly useful'. Only six percent did not find it useful. Those with action plan were more likely than those without to find it useful (94% compared to 86%).

4.3.2 Discover your Skills and Careers

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

Three in ten customers (31%) recalled going through Discover your Skills and Careers with their adviser in their meeting, whilst half (53%) stated they had not and 16% said they could not remember.

Customers more likely to recall being referred to Discover your Skills and Careers by their adviser were:

- telephone customers (35% compared to 23% of face-to-face customers);
- those aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (36%) or 18-24 and NEET (34%);
- those who had visited the National Careers Service website in the previous three months (42%, compared to 28% of customers who had not visited the website); and,
- those with an action plan (41% compared to 18% with no action plan).

Overall, four in ten customers that were referred to Discover your Skills and Careers said that they had used it. Usage of the tool was higher among telephone customers (46% compared to 35% face-to-face), female customers (47% compared to 40% male), and those with higher levels of qualifications (46% level 2 or higher). Those with an action plan were also more likely to report that they had used the tool (47% compared to 33% with no plan).

The majority of customers who used this tool found it useful (92%). This includes 48% who found it 'very useful' and 44% who said it was 'fairly useful'. Only six per cent did not find it useful. Those who were younger were more likely to find it useful (96% of those 18-24

compared to 87% of those aged 50 or older). Those with an action plan were more likely than those without to find it useful (93% compared to 89%), as were those who were satisfied with the service (93% compared to 65% of those who were dissatisfied).

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.

Among face-to-face customers, four in ten (42%) went through the Discover your Skills and Careers tool in their meeting, up from Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (37%). Those who had more than one face-to-face meeting (48%), and who had the same adviser (51%) were more likely to have gone through the diagnostic tool. The majority of these face-to-face customers found the tool useful (93%).

4.3.3 Explore Careers

Over four in ten customers (41%) were referred to Explore Careers by their adviser. This was more likely to be the case amongst those who were working (46%), customers aged 18-24 receiving benefits (44%), customers 18-24 and NEET (44%), and those with qualifications above Level 2 (43%). Face-to-face customers were more likely than telephone customers to have been referred to this tool (44% compared to 39%).

Amongst those who have been referred, just under half (45%) have gone on to use the tool and the majority of these customers found the tool useful (93%). Those over 50 at risk of being unemployed were both less likely to have been referred and less likely to say it was useful.

4.3.4 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 (45%), female customers (45%), customers aged 25-49 (46%), and BAME customers (47%). In terms of region, those in London (51%) were more likely to be referred to Find a Course. Those aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (40%), 18-24 and NEET (40%), and aged 50 or above and at risk of unemployment (37%) were among those least likely to recall being referred.

Amongst those who have been referred, less than half (46%) have gone on to use the tool, which is a decrease from Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (52%). Customers in London (53%) and those who have used Skills Health Check (57%) were more likely to have used the tool. Similar to the other diagnostic tools, usage was also higher among those with higher levels of qualifications and those aged 25-49.

The majority of these customers found the tool useful (90%), particularly those with an action plan (92% compared to 87% of those without).

4.3.5 Webchat

One in five customers (22%) were referred to Webchat by their adviser, similar to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021). Those more likely to be referred to the service were those aged 25-49 (25%), and those in learning (27%).

Amongst those who have been referred, a quarter (24%) have gone on to use the tool, which is a decrease compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (28%). Those in learning were more likely to have used it (37%) as were BAME customers (35%). Usage of this tool was lower among customers with a disability (18% compared to 26% with no disability).

Among those who used Webchat, nine in ten said it was useful (90%), with more than half (55%) rating it as 'very' useful. BAME customers were particularly likely to rate the tool as useful (93% compared to 86% of white customers).

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.

Six in ten telephone and face-to-face customers recalled having a Skills Action Plan drawn up (60%, down from 66% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)). Female customers (66%) were more likely than average to have a Skills Action Plan drawn up for them, as were those in work (64%), aged 25-49 (64%), and those with qualifications Level 2 and above (63%). In contrast, those with a disability (33%), and those aged 50 or above and at risk of unemployment (34%) were more likely than average (30%) to say they did not have an action plan drawn up. By region, those in London were more likely to report having an action plan drawn up (65%).

Furthermore, among face-to-face customers, those who had multiple meetings (66%) and who had the same adviser (67%) were more likely to recall a Skills Action Plan being drawn up. Similarly, telephone customer who had multiple calls (62%) 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 (56%) and those with a disability (55%) 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 38% reported that they had some involvement, which is in line with previous years. Female customers (53%) and those aged 25-49 (53%) were more likely to report having a great deal of involvement.

The majority of telephone and face-to-face customers who recalled having a Skills Action Plan found it useful (93%), consistent with previous years. Those aged 25-49 were most likely to rate it as 'very useful' (57% compared to 51% overall). Customers in learning (96%) were highly

likely to rate it as useful, as were those aged 18-24 and receiving benefits (94%) and those aged 18-24 and NEET (94%). Six 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 (21%), or they already knew the information (13%). Customers with a disability and those aged 50 or above and at risk of unemployment were more likely to rate the action plan as not useful (7% and 8% respectively).

4.4 Follow up actions

4.4.1 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 (39%). Email (24%) and telephone (16%) were the most common communication channels used for follow-up.

Customers aged 25-49 (42%), those in work (42%), and those with Level 2 and above qualifications (41%) and those with no disability (41%) were more likely than average to have received follow-up. In contrast, those aged 18-25 and receiving benefits (64%), 18-24 and NEET (63%) and those with a disability (60%) were more likely than average (58%) to have not had any contact since their initial contact. In terms of region, those in London (46%), East Midlands and Northamptonshire (47%) and East of England and Buckinghamshire (45%) were most likely to have received a follow-up as shown in table 4.2.

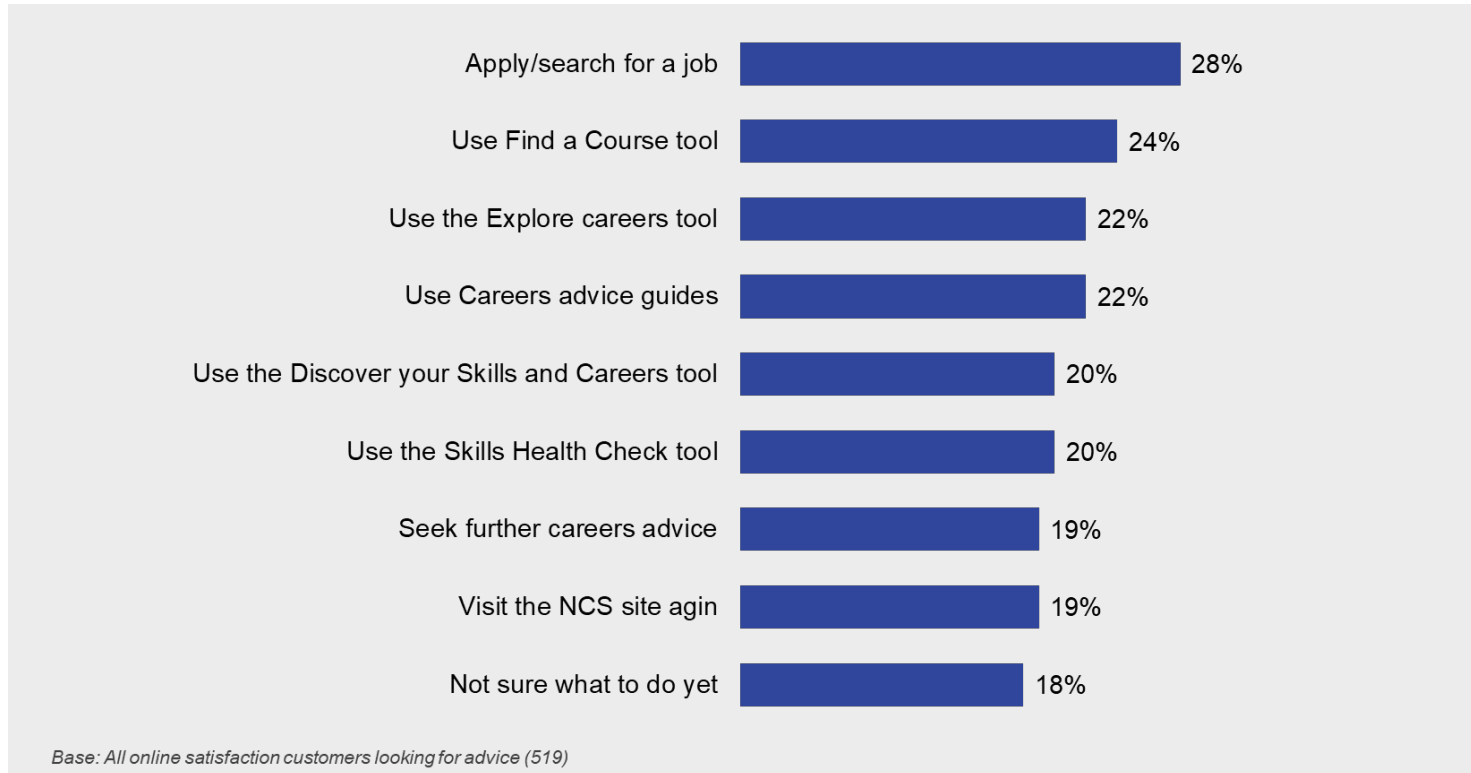
Table 4.2: Different types of follow-up customers have received by region

	Total	London	East of England & Bucks.	East Midlands & North.	Yorkshire & Humber	West Midlands & Staff.	South West & Ox.	South East	North West	North-East & Cumbria
Base:	7,285	934	677	671	874	924	735	811	890	769
No	58%	52%	51%	51%	57%	61%	60%	59%	67%	56%
Net: Yes	39%	46%	45%	47%	41%	36%	38%	38%	30%	41%
Yes – phone	16%	19%	18%	19%	15%	17%	14%	14%	14%	14%
Yes – email	24%	29%	29%	30%	23%	20%	22%	23%	18%	26%
Yes – face-to-face	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Yes – text	4%	3%	4%	4%	9%	3%	4%	6%	2%	6%

4.4.2 Follow up actions carried out by online customers

Online customers 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 (28%), using the 'Find a course' (24%), 'Careers advice' (22%), and 'Explore careers' (22%) tools and seeking further careers advice (19%).

Figure 4.1: National Careers Service online customers planned next steps after visiting the National Careers Service website (top mentions)



5 Customer Satisfaction

With the service adapting its offering with the easing of restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, satisfaction with the service remains very high. 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 (94%). 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 (90% of 20-24 year olds) and those that have a Skills Action Plan (92%). Among telephone and face-to-face customers, satisfaction with individual aspects of the service was high, especially the professionalism (96%) and helpfulness of their adviser (94%).

An important metric when assessing levels of customer satisfaction is likelihood of customers to recommend a service, and on this measure the National Careers Service continues to score highly in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), with almost nine in ten face-to-face or telephone customers either had already recommended or reported they would recommend the National Careers Service (88%).

Satisfaction with the National Careers Service website has remained in line with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), with almost six in ten satisfied with it (58%). A third of online customers (34%) said they had already recommended the National Careers Service, and a further four in ten (43%) said they would.

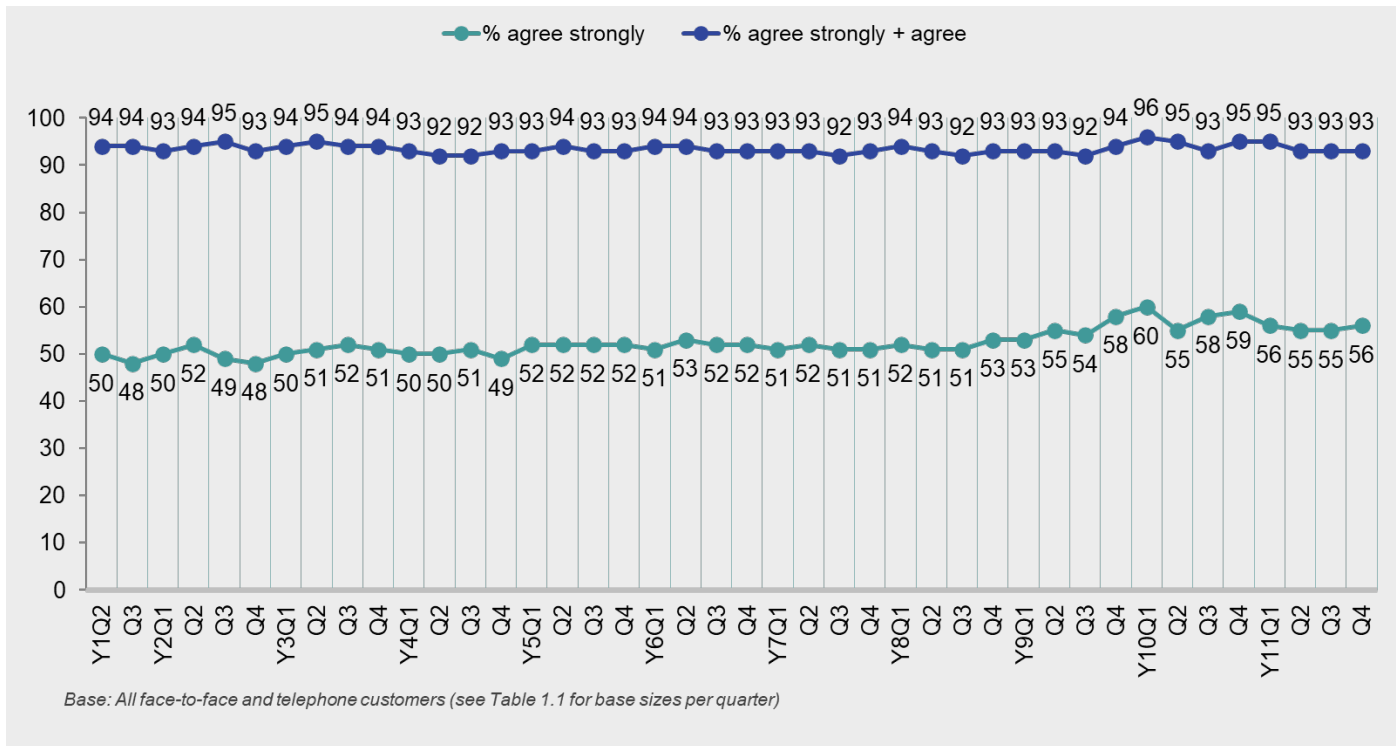
This chapter examines customer satisfaction with the National Careers Service. As well as overall satisfaction, it explores satisfaction with more specific aspects of the service ranging from logistical issues, such as the timing of appointments, to views on the quality of the advice received and, on 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 (May 2020 to April 2021) customers agreed that it was good (94%), while only a small minority disagreed (5%). Ratings have been consistently high over time (Figure 5.1).

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



There were some variations by customer group, as follows:

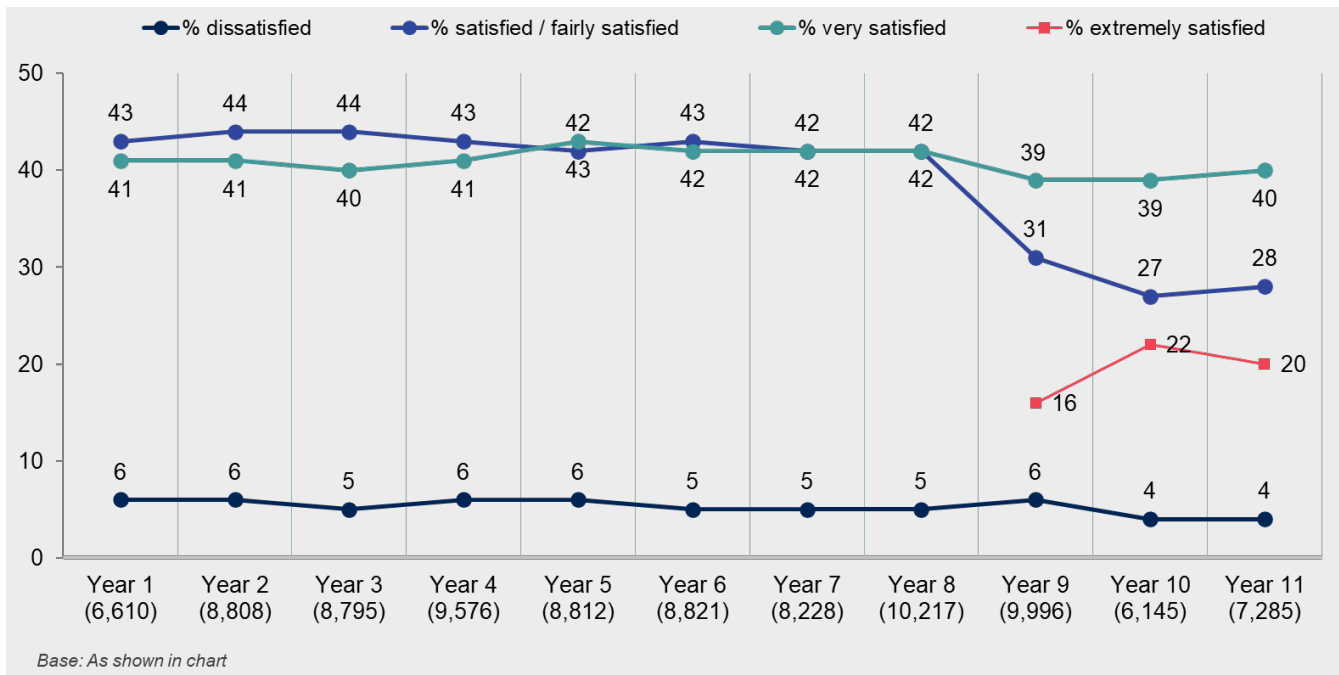
- By age group, younger customers were most likely to agree the service was good (97% of those aged 18-24) while those aged 50 plus were the least likely to agree (91%)
- NEET customers aged 18-24 and customers aged 18-24 receiving benefits were more likely than average to agree that the service was good (97% and 96% respectively)
- Customers with a disability were less likely to agree the service was good (92% compared to 94% with no disability), as were those aged 50 or over at risk of unemployment (91%)
- 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 had a Skills Action Plan (96% compared to 89% 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 (94% compared to 92%)
- Face-to-face customers who had multiple meetings were more likely to rate the service as good if they had the same adviser (97% compared to 93%).

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%), which remains consistent with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021). 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 customers¹⁰



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

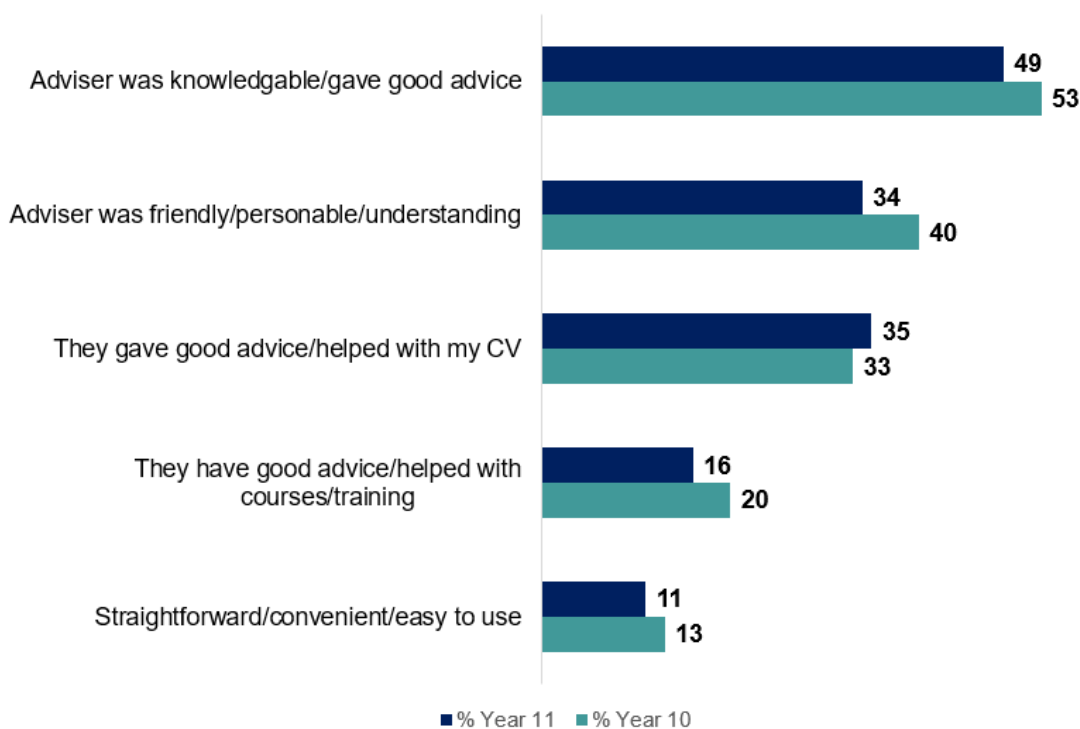
- Young customers were more likely to be satisfied than older customers, with 91% of 18-24-year-olds being satisfied compared to 84% of customers aged 50 plus.
- Female customers were more likely to be satisfied (89% compared with 87% male customers).
- NEET customers aged 18-24 were more likely to be satisfied with the service (92%) as were customers aged 18-24 receiving benefits (91%).
- Customers aged 50 or above and at risk of unemployment were less likely to be satisfied (85%).
- Customers with qualifications of Level 4 or above were less likely to be satisfied (86%) and more likely to be dissatisfied (5%).

¹⁰ 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.

- Customers with a disability were less likely to be satisfied than customers without a disability (86% compared to 89%).
- Face-to-face customers who had multiple meetings were more likely to be satisfied with the service (92%, compared to those who had one meeting, 87%)
- Telephone customers who spoke to the same adviser where they have had multiple calls were also more likely to be more satisfied (89%, compared to those who did not, 84%).
- By region, customers in the North-East and Cumbria (90%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (90%) were the most likely to be satisfied.
- 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, 86%) or agreeing a Skills Action Plan (92% compared to 80% 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 (49%), while the other main reasons were that the adviser was friendly, personable, or understanding (34%), gave good advice or helped with their CV (35%), or gave good advice relating to courses or training (16%). As shown in figure 5.3, these responses were very similar to those seen in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), although the proportion of customers giving these reasons was lower this year.

Figure 5.3: Top reasons for satisfaction with service, Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) and 11



Base: All telephone and face-to-face satisfaction customers who are satisfied (Year 10; 5,416, Year 11; 6,405)

Among the small proportion of dissatisfied customers (5%), 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 (54%).

“[They] gave a few useful links, but they didn’t call me about jobs or anything – when I tried to organize another meeting to see if there was other jobs or other updates they just showed me the links again

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

“[I had] one meeting and no follow up, last follow up was 2 months after first meeting.

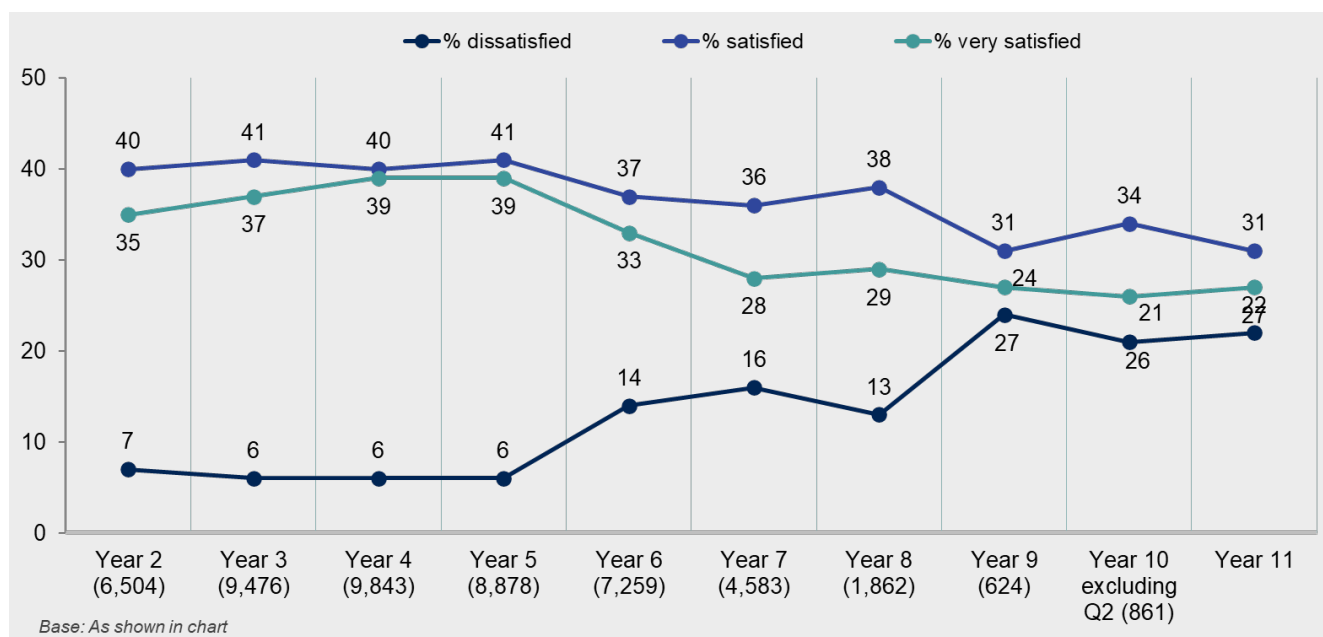
- There was criticism of not being helped to get a relevant course or training (17%).

“I [was] not given a course wanted to do

Some customers wanted help with their CV and felt the support they received was insufficient (14%).

“[The] CV sent to me was terrible, there was spelling mistake, they said it will take few days but took 3-4 weeks to sent it back to me *Online customers* 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 and Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) there was a significant decline in satisfaction (58% and 59% respectively). In Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), satisfaction with the online service remained in line with the previous two years, with 58% satisfied with the service (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4: Ratings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction amongst online customers



There were some notable differences among online customers:

- Satisfaction was highest among BAME customers (72%, compared to white customers, 56%).
- Satisfaction was lower among customers with no disability (51% compared to 63%).
- Customers in learning were more likely to be satisfied than those in work (72% compared to 59%).
- Customers with qualifications below Level 2 (75%) were more likely to be satisfied with the website than those with qualifications Level 2 and above (55%).
- Single parents were the most likely key group to be satisfied (79%), with 45% 'very' satisfied.

A fifth of customers (22%) were dissatisfied with the website. The main reasons for dissatisfaction are summarised below:

- The most common reason for dissatisfaction was due to website instability (28%). In particular, customers experienced issues with the website crashing, with error messages of the service not working, and issues with the webchat.

“Everything that was listed on the website didn't work. Every link just came up with 'bad gateway'. This is very poor and not helpful at all to anyone.”

- Some customers felt that the information provided was too general and not tailored enough to their needs (20%).

“[The website] did not provide the training I needed”

- Another reason for dissatisfaction was due to issues with the tools, such as the 'Discover your skills and careers' and 'Skills Health Check' tools (13%).

“The tool kept on crashing and returning to the start, and thus [I] wasn't able to complete”

“When going through the skills health check I would answer a question only for the next question to be the same as the previous one only with my previously given answer no longer being given as an option. In short it was a complete waste of time and provided no help”

- However, a quarter of customers who were satisfied with the service (26%) said that they liked the website because it was easy to use, a further 21% felt that the website had helpful and relevant information and 15% 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 decreased from Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

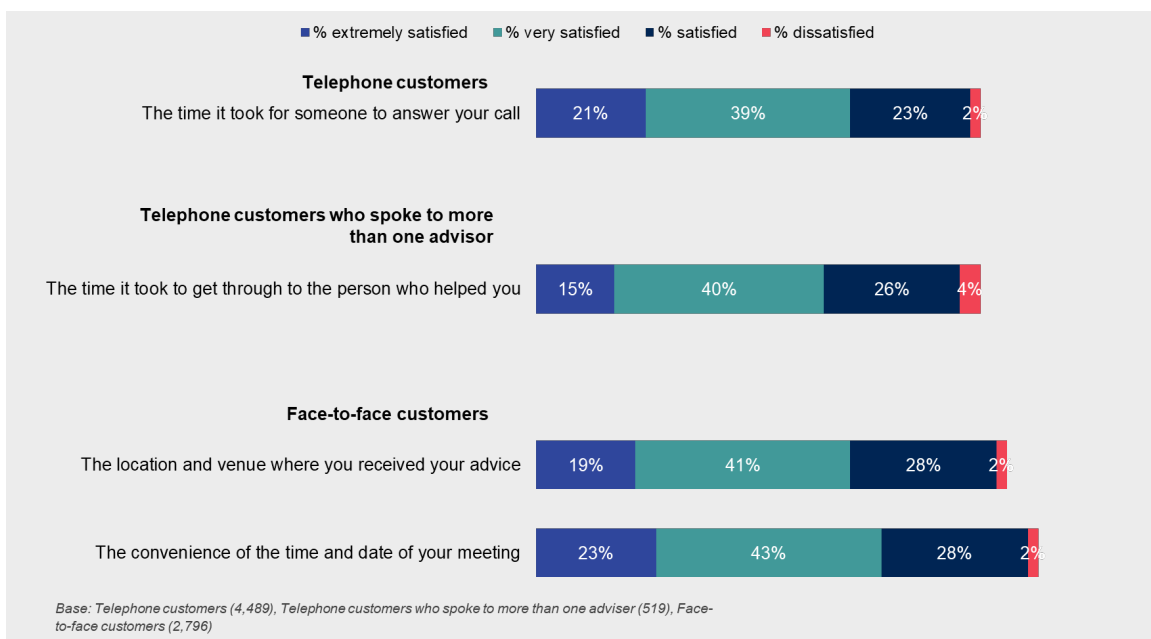
“[I liked its] Ease of use and the formatting or information on site”

“I am amazed at the quality of information and guidelines available on this website. If not for this website, I would have had to spend a lot of money to access many of the information being offered for free.” “The free training course are excellent. These helped me in diversifying my skills set and getting me back to 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).

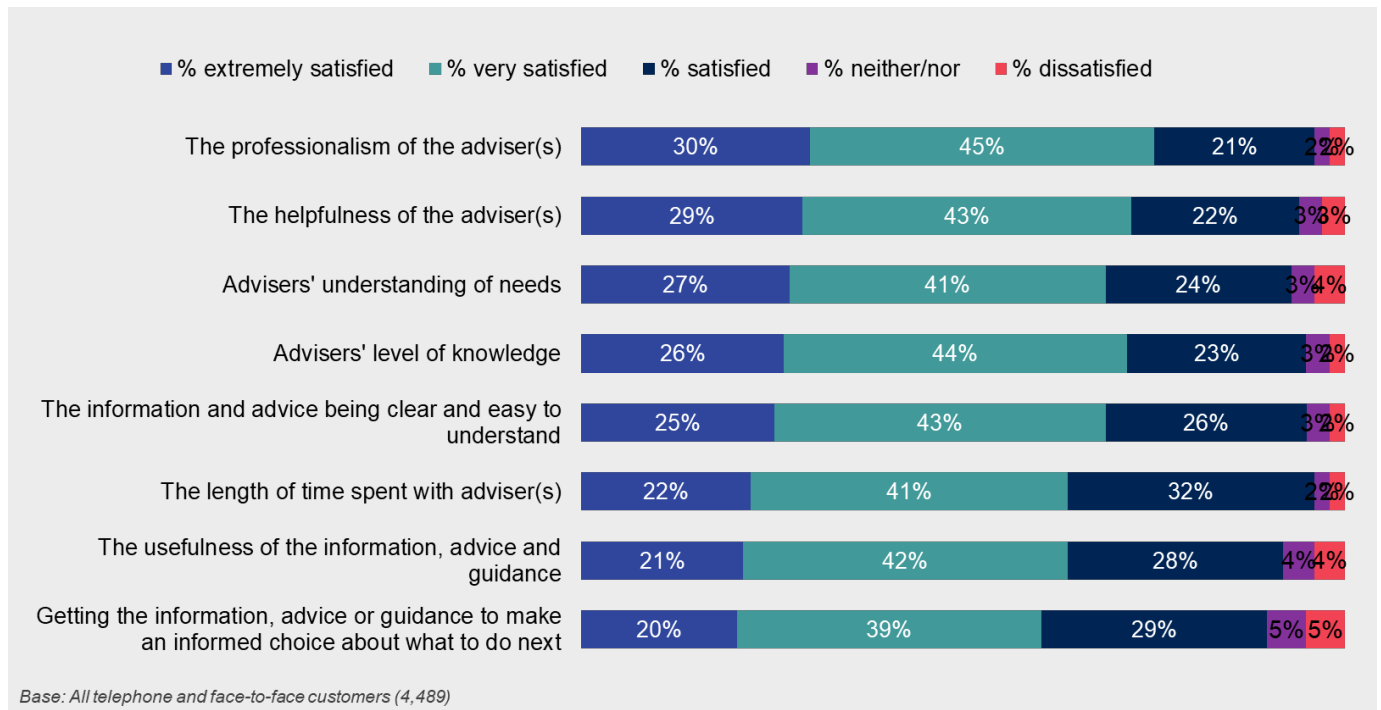
Figure 5.5: Customer satisfaction with logistical arrangements



Over eight in ten (83%) telephone customers were satisfied with the time it took for someone to answer their call. Amongst telephone customers who spoke to more than one adviser, 81% were satisfied with the time it took to get through to the person who helped them, which is a decrease compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (86%).

Over nine in ten (93%) face-to-face customers were satisfied with the convenience of their appointment time and over eight in ten customers were satisfied with the location and venue where they received their advice (88%), which is an increase compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (84%), perhaps reflecting that those who prefer face to face meetings are now able to have this option following the easing of restrictions due to the pandemic.

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 (96%). 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.

Figure 5.6: Satisfaction with information and advice from the service

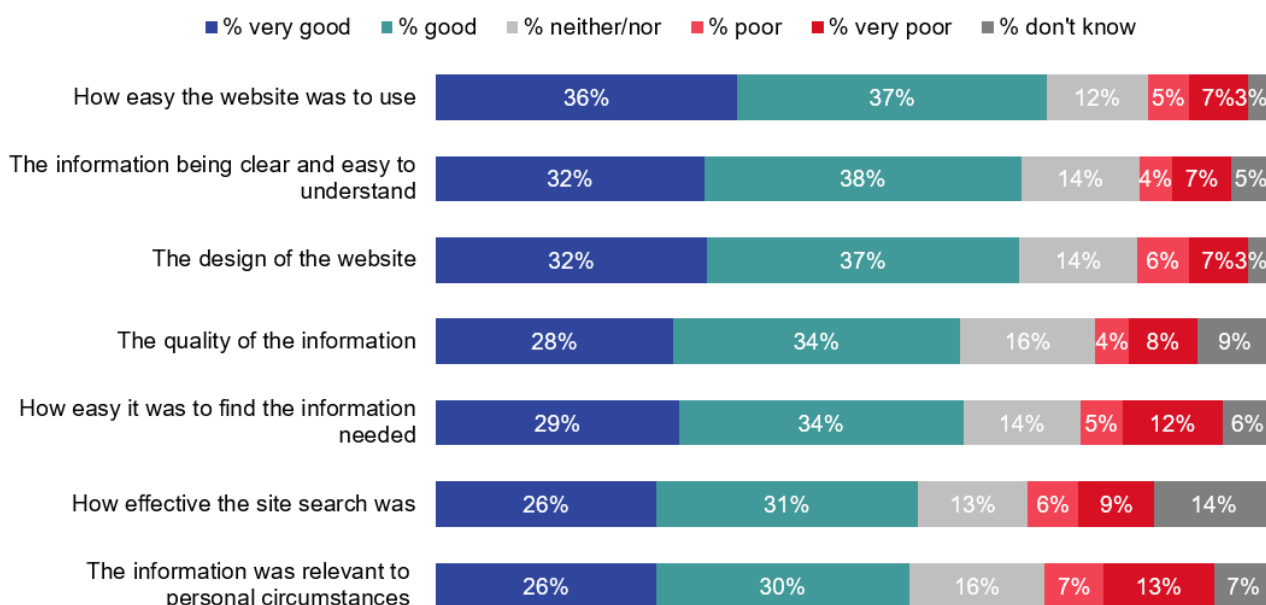
Although satisfaction across all the measures was consistently high, there were some variations between customer groups, as detailed below:

- 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 helpfulness of the adviser (97% compared to the average, 94%).
- Younger customers aged 18-24 were more likely to be satisfied on all several measures than older customers, particularly those aged 50 or over.
- Customers who had a disability or were aged 50 and above and at risk of unemployment were the customer types most likely to be dissatisfied with the different aspects of the service.
- Customers who were 18-24 and receiving benefits and who were 18-24 and NEET were more likely to have higher levels of satisfaction on several measures. They were significantly more likely to say they were satisfied with the following measures: the helpfulness of the adviser, the advisers' level of knowledge, that the adviser understood your needs, the information was clear and easy to understand, the usefulness of the information, advice and guidance, that they got the information, advice or guidance to make an informed choice about what to do next, and the adviser's knowledge of jobs and training opportunities in your local area.
- Customers who spoke to the same adviser if they had multiple face-to-face or telephone meetings tended to be more satisfied.

5.4 Satisfaction with the different aspects of the website

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 (70%). Customers were least positive in relation to the effectiveness of the site search (58%), and the information being relevant to customers personal circumstances (57%). These ratings are very similar to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

Figure 5.7 Ratings on various aspects of the website



Base: All online satisfaction respondents (587)

The key variations between customer groups, are detailed below and are similar to the differences in Wave 10:

- Customers whose first language is not English were more positive about most parts of the website. For example, 74% said it was easy to find the info you need, compared to 61% of those whose first language is English. Similarly, 75% rated the quality of the information as good compared to 60% of customers whose first language is English.
- BAME customers were more likely than white customers to rate as good the easy of finding information (74% compared to 61%), and the quality of information (76% compared to 60%), how easy the website was to use (81% compared to 72%), the design of the website (80% compared to 67%), how effective the search was (64% compared to 48%), and that the information available was relevant to my personal circumstances.
- Customers aged 16-24 were more positive about most aspects of the website. For instance, 73% rated the ease of being able to find information as good, compared to 65%

of customers aged 25-49 and 86% said the website was easy to use, compared to 72% of customers aged 25-49.

- Customers who were in learning were more likely than those in work to rate as good how easy the website was to use (85% compared to 73%), how easy it was to find the information they needed (75% compared to 62%), and the quality of the information (74% compared to 60%).
- Those with qualifications under Level 2 were more likely than average to be positive about all aspects of the website, with up to a 20-percentage point difference between those with level 2 and the average.

5.5 Recommending the National Careers Service

5.5.1 Face-to-face and telephone customers

In total, around nine in ten customers either had recommended the Service or said that they would recommend it (88%). This is a slight decrease compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (91%).

The following groups were more likely than average (88%) to say that they either had recommended or would recommend the Service:

- Younger customers (92% of 18–24-year-olds, compared to 84% of those aged 50 plus).
- Customers who have visited the National Careers Service website in the past three months (90%).
- Those who have Level 2 or higher qualifications (89%).
- Those who are aged 18-24 and NEET (93%) and those who are 18-24 and receiving benefits (92%).
- Those who had engaged with National Careers Service tools such as the Skills Action Plan (93%) and the Skills Health Check (92%).
- Those who had one adviser if they had multiple telephone calls (89%) or face-to-face meetings (93%)
- Those were satisfied with the website overall (93%).

5.5.2 Online customers

Over a third of online customers have already recommended the National Careers Service website (34%), similar to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (37%). Additionally, a further four in ten said they would recommend the National Careers Service website to friends, family, or colleagues (43%), in line with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (45%). Four in ten (39%) said they would not and 18% were unsure.

BAME customers were more likely than average to say that they have recommended the National Careers Service (43% compared to 31% of white customers).

5.6 Improvements to the National Careers Service

5.6.1 Face-to-face and telephone customers

The majority of face-to-face and telephone customers could not think of any improvements that the National Careers Service needed to make (66%), in line with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021). The two main suggestions for improvements remain consistent with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), with customers desiring more tailored help (7%), and more follow-up after initial meetings (8%).

“More careers guidance as opposed to how to write a CV or covering letter, more direction.”

“Some of the skills tools are a little generic.”

“More follow up calls and more direct or specific information.”

Younger customers aged 18-24 (74%) were most likely to be happy with the service and suggest no improvements, perhaps because they were the age group most likely to be satisfied with the service. In terms of key groups, those 18-24 and receiving benefits (78%), 18-24 and NEET (77%) and with qualifications under level 2 (74%) were the most likely to say they could not think of any improvements.

5.6.2 Online customers

When asked how the website could be improved, four in ten (38%) of website visitors felt that the website was fine as it is, which is a decrease compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (46%). A quarter (25%) said they were not sure how it could be improved. The most common suggestions for improvements included improving the layout and making it easier to navigate (8%), improve the skills test tool (5%), and have more information on careers and job profiles (4%) and training courses and qualifications (4%). These suggested improvements are further illustrated by the verbatim comments below:

“The site crashed repeatedly so gave me no useful information at all”

“Improve the search function so that it works more effectively when you apply filters”

“The website got stuck in an endless loop about cookies and I couldn't progress any further”

6 Customer Progression

Overall, Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) has seen an increase in employment progression and a slight increase in the levels of learning progression compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), likely related to the impacts of COVID-19. 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 69% in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), broadly in line with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (71%).

Over four in ten customers (56%) achieved employment progression, an increase from the 44% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), which could reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the job market. Those with higher qualifications, those between 18-24 years old, and those without a disability were more likely to achieve employment progression than average. Ninety-four 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, which was highest amongst younger customers (18-24, 98%).

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.

6.1 Overview of the extent of progression

6.1.1 Defining progression

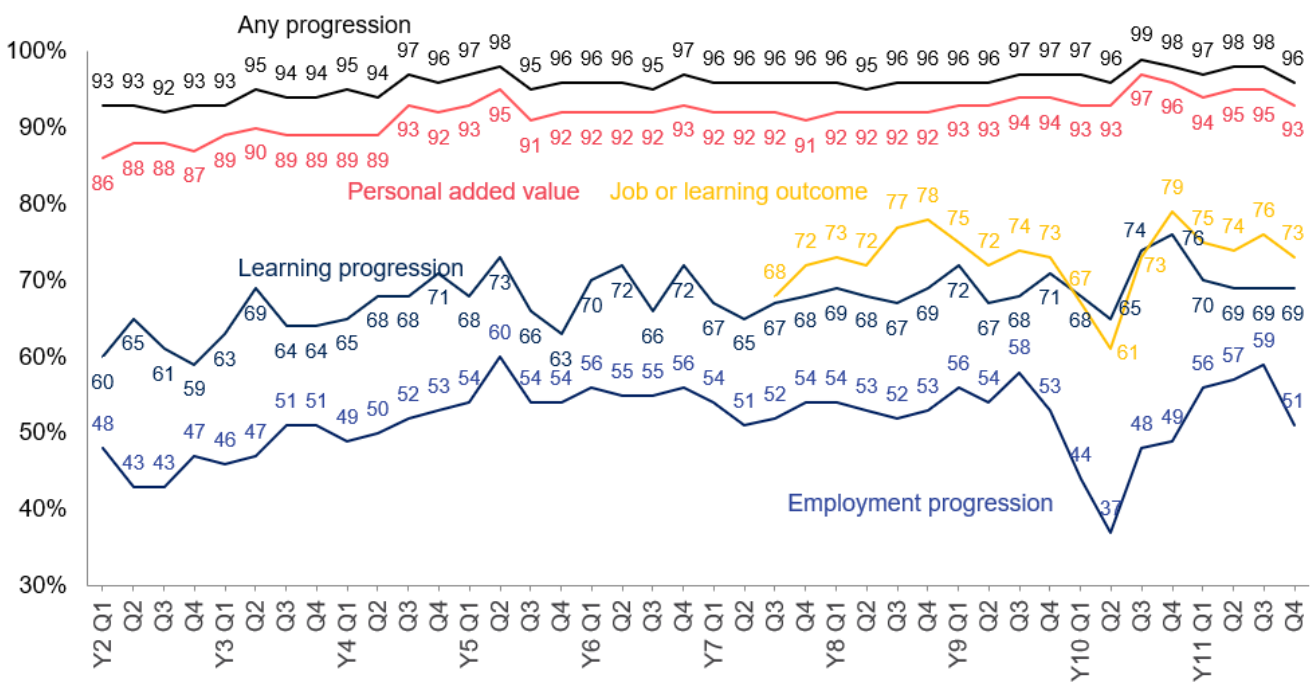
Three core Key Performance Indicators are used to determine progression levels of National Careers Service customers six months after their intervention with the service:

- 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 it¹¹.

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 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), there has been a significant increase across employment progression (56%, compared to 44% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)), which could reflect the recovery of the job market following the COVID-19 pandemic. Positively, the other Key Performance Indicators have remained consistent since Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

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 (5,586)

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

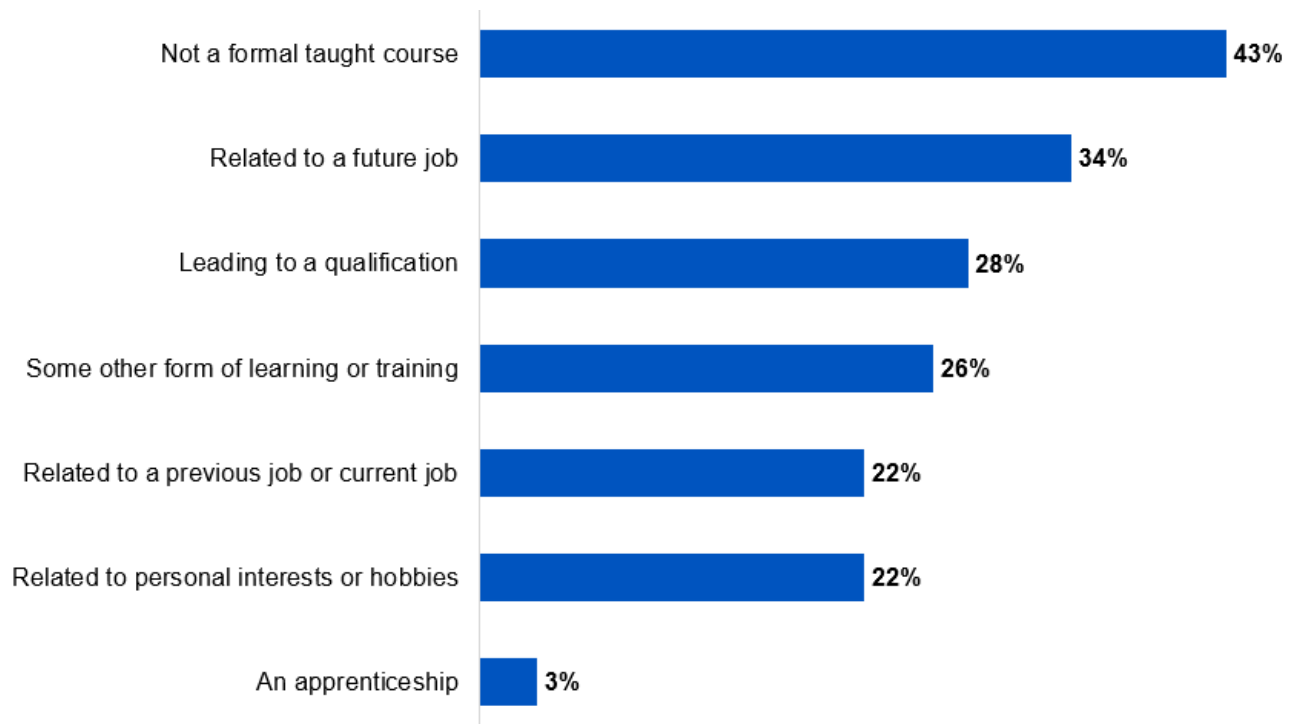
In total, 69% of face-to-face or telephone customers achieved some form of learning progression, which is broadly consistent with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (79%). Figure 6.2 details the different forms of learning and training customers have undertaken since their contact with the service.

Customers had taken part in various types of training or learning, most commonly learning that was not part of a formal, taught course (43%, a decrease compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), 46%). The proportion of customers undertaking learning leading to a qualification

¹¹ 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'.

has once again decreased slightly to 28% from 31% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), and 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 (5,586)

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

- Those with higher qualifications: 75% of those qualified to Level 2 or above, compared with 61% of those with qualifications below Level 2.
- Younger customers (73% of those aged 18-24, compared to 70% of those aged 25-49 and 63% of those aged 50 plus).
- Customers without a disability (71%) compared with disabled customers (66%).
- BAME customers (74%) compared to White customers (67%).
- Customers whose first language is not English (72%, compared to those whose is, 69%).
- Customers who are based in London (72%).
- Customers who are 18-24 and NEET (73%).

Overall, learning was consistently lower among customers who were aged 50 or above, who had a disability, who had been unemployed for 12 months or more, 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 (89% said this was very or fairly important).
- To progress in a current job or career (88%).
- To raise qualification level (86%).
- To help get a job or change job (84%).
- To obtain a qualification (76%).
- To help change career (72%).

Among customers who had done any learning or training in the intervening six months, a fifth (21%) obtained a qualification, similar to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (20%). A further 8% received credits towards a qualification. Almost two thirds (65%) did neither of these, and 4% said they did not finish their qualification, which is also consistent with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

Over half (56%) considered that their National Careers Service adviser had contributed to their decision to do the learning or training. This view was more prevalent among younger customers (67% aged 19 or younger), female customers (59%), customers who do not speak English as a first language (62%) and single parents (63%).

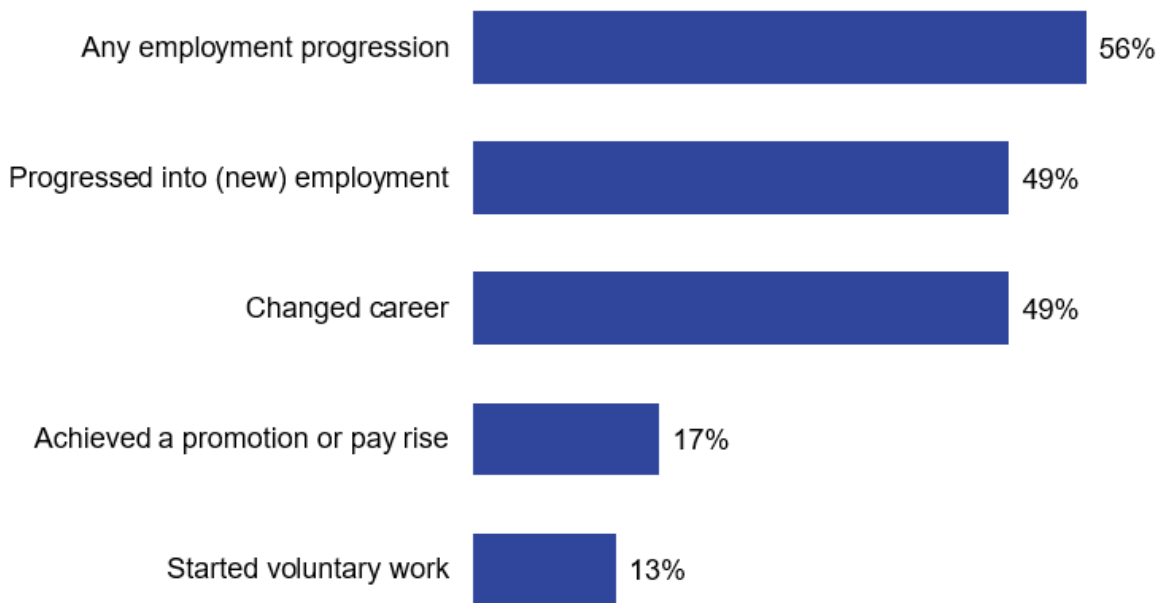
6.3 Employment progression among face-to-face and telephone customers

6.3.1 Overall employment progression

In total, 56% of face-to-face or telephone customers achieved some form of employment progression, an increase from 45% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021). This is most likely explained by the increase in employment opportunities in certain sectors following the easing of restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 6.3 shows the types of employment progression achieved¹².

Almost half face-to-face and telephone customers had found a new job or role in those six months (49%), a large increase when compared to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (37%). This is like a reflection of the increase in job opportunities and employment after the pandemic. Amongst those who found a new job or role, half (49%) changed their career. Over one in ten took up voluntary work (13%) and 17% achieved a pay rise or promotion.

¹² 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.

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

Base: All progression telephone and face-to-face customers (5,586)

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

- Those with higher qualifications: 61% of those qualified to Level 2 or above, compared with 49% of those with qualifications below Level 2.
- Younger customers (56% of 18-24-year-olds, compared with 50% of those aged 50 plus).
- People who had been unemployed for less than 6 months (70%).
- Customers whose first language is English (57% compared to 53% of those whose first language is not English).
- Customers without a disability (61%) compared with disabled customers (44%).
- NEET customers aged 18-24 (69%, compared to the average, 56%).

Those who were unemployed at the time they first contacted the service were more likely than those in employment or learning to have experienced employment progression (60% compared to 53% and 57% respectively). However, it is noticeable that those who have been unemployed for a shorter period of time are far more likely to have experienced employment progression, highlighting the difficulty of getting back into employment for the long-term unemployed. Seven in ten of those unemployed for less than 6 months experienced employment progression, in contrast with 60% of those unemployed for between 6 and 12 months and 48% of those unemployed for more than 12 months.

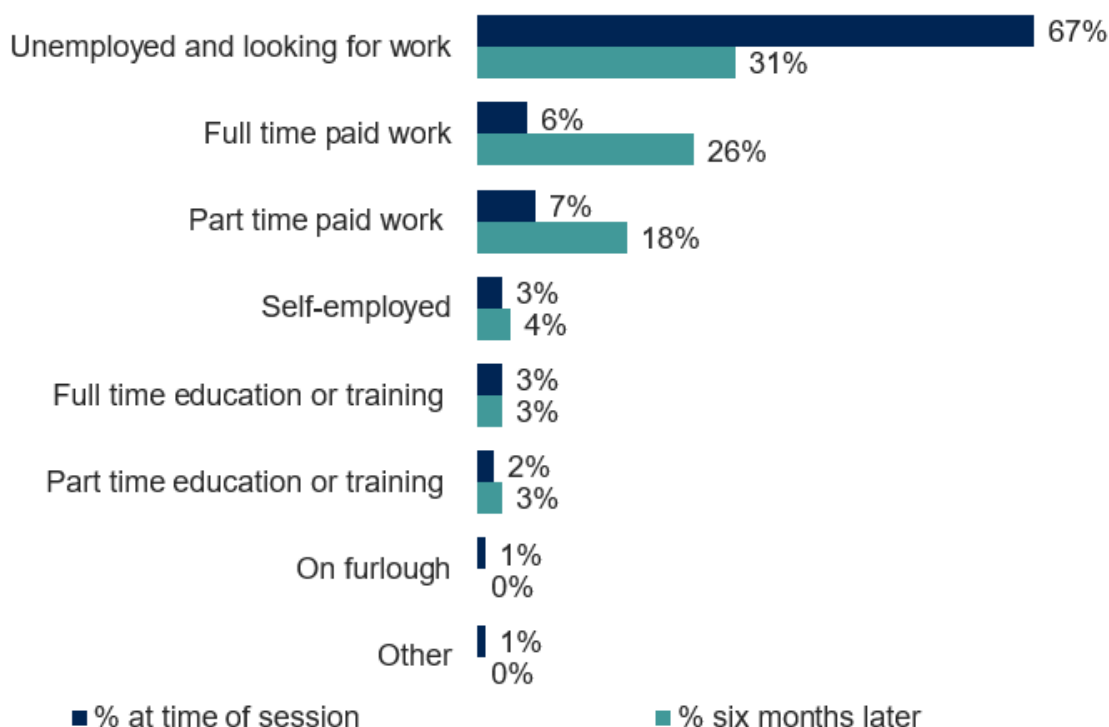
Customers who had achieved any employment progression were asked to what extent their interaction with the National Careers Service adviser had contributed to this. Half agreed the adviser had an impact (50%). Those with qualifications below level 2 were more likely to agree their adviser had helped them achieve this employment progression than those with higher qualifications (56% compared to 49%). Female customers (52%) and those aged 18-24 (54%) were also more likely to attribute their employment progression partly to the support offered by advisers.

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 (67%). Just over a quarter of customers were in full-time work (26%), and two in ten were in part-time work (18%) with the remainder in learning (5%) or doing something else (10%), 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 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), there has been an increase in the number of people who are in work six months on (48%, compared to 41% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)).

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 (5,586)

There were large increases in employment among the different customer groups (Table 6.1). For example, more than seven 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 (38%, compared to 5% at the time of their session). There were also huge increases into employment (+54 percentage points) among 18-24-year olds who were NEET¹³ at the time of their initial interaction with the service.

The number of customers with level 1 or below qualifications in work more than tripled six months on (43%, compared with 12% at the time of their adviser session). A similar pattern was seen amongst customers aged 20-24, where four times as many were in work after 6 months compared with at the time of their adviser sessions (59%, compared with 15%).

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 half (51%) six months on.

Table 6.1, also, highlights that compared with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) the proportion who have gone into work within six months has increased, across all customer groups.

Table 6.1: Changes in employment status among key customer groups

Customer group	ULW = Unemployed and looking for work	Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021)			Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)		
		Status at point of contact with National Careers Service	Status 6 months after contact	Change (ppts) ¹⁴	Status at point of contact with National Careers Service	Status 6 months after contact	Change (ppts)
18-19 year olds (461)	ULW	72%	31%	-41	55%	30%	-25
	In work	11%	50%	39	20%	36%	16
	In education	10%	9%	-1	15%	18%	3
20-24 year olds (1,108)	ULW	71%	25%	-46	67%	41%	-26
	In work	15%	59%	44	16%	40%	24
	In education	7%	8%	1	9%	10%	1
Aged 50 plus (1,484)	ULW	70%	38%	-32	67%	46%	-21
	In work	16%	41%	25	21%	37%	16

¹³ NEET customers are those Not in Employment, Education or Training (at the point at which they had a meeting with their adviser).

	In education	2%	2%	-	2%	2%	-
Aged 50 plus and unemployed or at risk of redundancy (1,082)	ULW	95%	45%	-50	90%	54%	-36
	In work	5%	38%	33	9%	34%	25
	In education	0%	2%	2	0%	1%	1
Customers with a disability (1,778)	ULW	63%	36%	-27	60%	44%	-16
	In work	13%	33%	20	18%	28%	10
	In education	3%	5%	2	4%	6%	2
Below Level 2 quals (597)	ULW	70%	37%	-33	64%	50%	-14
	In work	12%	43%	31	15%	29%	14
	In education	6%	6%	-	5%	5%	-
Unemployed for more than 12 months (1,320)	ULW	100%	51%	-49	100%	68%	-32
	In work	0%	32%	32	0%	13%	13
	In education	0%	4%	4	0%	5%	5
18-24 NEET	ULW	91%	31%	-60	88%	48%	-40
-1,224	In work	0%	54%	54	0%	33%	33
	In education	0%	5%	5	0%	7%	7
Single parents (850)	ULW	60%	30%	-30	59%	39%	-26
	In work	17%	42%	-25	22%	35%	13
	In education	5%	6%	1	5%	6%	1

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:

- Among face-to-face customers, the proportion who were unemployed and seeking work dropped by half over the six-month period, from 66% to 33%. The proportion in work (including self-employment) doubled, up from 18% at the time of their session to 47% six months later.
- Just under half of telephone customers were in work six months after their first interaction (49%), increasing from 17%. There was a corresponding fall in the proportion that was unemployed, from 67% to 31%.

Amongst those whose employment status had changed since their initial appointment, half (50%) said that their adviser played a role in this. This was more common among those with qualifications lower than level 2 (56%) younger customers aged 18-24 (54%), and BAME customers (55%).

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

6.4.1 Overall Personal Added Value

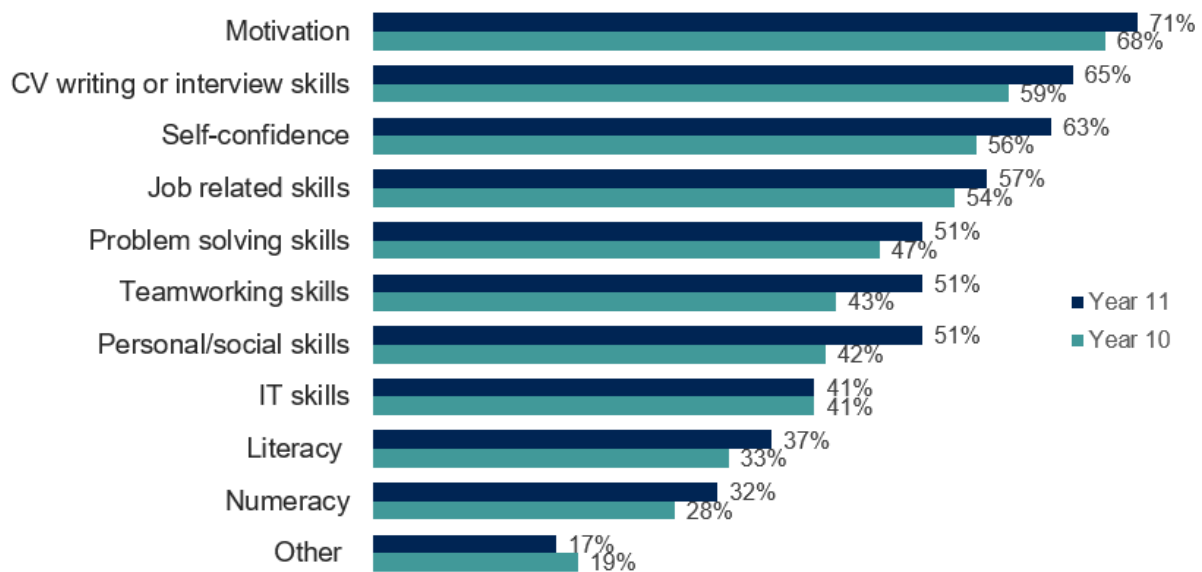
As in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), almost all customers said that they had gained some form of Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service (94%). Similar to the learning and employment progression, younger customers were more likely to say they had gained Personal Added Value with 99% of those aged 18-24 compared to 95% of those aged 50 or above doing so.

In terms of key groups, those who were more likely to have gained Personal Added Value include those aged 18-24 and NEET (98%). Again, customers without a disability were more likely than those with a disability to report they had gained Personal Added Value (96% compared to 91%).

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 remain consistent with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), although the proportion of customers reporting most of these skills has increased. The top skill that has been developed was increased motivation (71%, up from 68% in Year 9), followed by improvements in CV writing or interview skills (65%), self-confidence (63%) and job-related skills (57%).

Figure 6.5: Skills and personal development outcomes

Base: All progression telephone and face-to-face customers (Year 11, 5,586; Year 10, 4,415)

Broadly, in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), there was a pattern where telephone customers were more likely than face-to-face customers to report having developed their skills. However, in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), this pattern has not emerged. However, similar to Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), other groups of customers are consistently more likely to report having developed skills:

- Younger customers, particularly those aged 19 or younger. For example, 72% said they had improved their personal or social skills compared to 36% aged 50 or above.
- Customers with no disability. For example, 54% of customers with no disability reported they had improved their problem-solving skills compared to 45% with a disability.
- Customers who do not speak English as their first language. For example, 73% said they had improved their confidence compared to 60% of those whose first language is English.
- BAME customers. For example, 58% of BAME customers said they have improved their team-working skills compared to 48% of white customers.

Amongst those who had developed their skills in some way, over half (55%) said that their adviser helped them to do this, which is a slight increase from Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (52%). Female customers (58%), those with lower than level 2 qualifications (60%), those aged 18 or 19, those whose first language is not English (60%), those unemployed for more than 12 months (58%) and those who were single parents (62%) were all more likely to say that their adviser helped them.

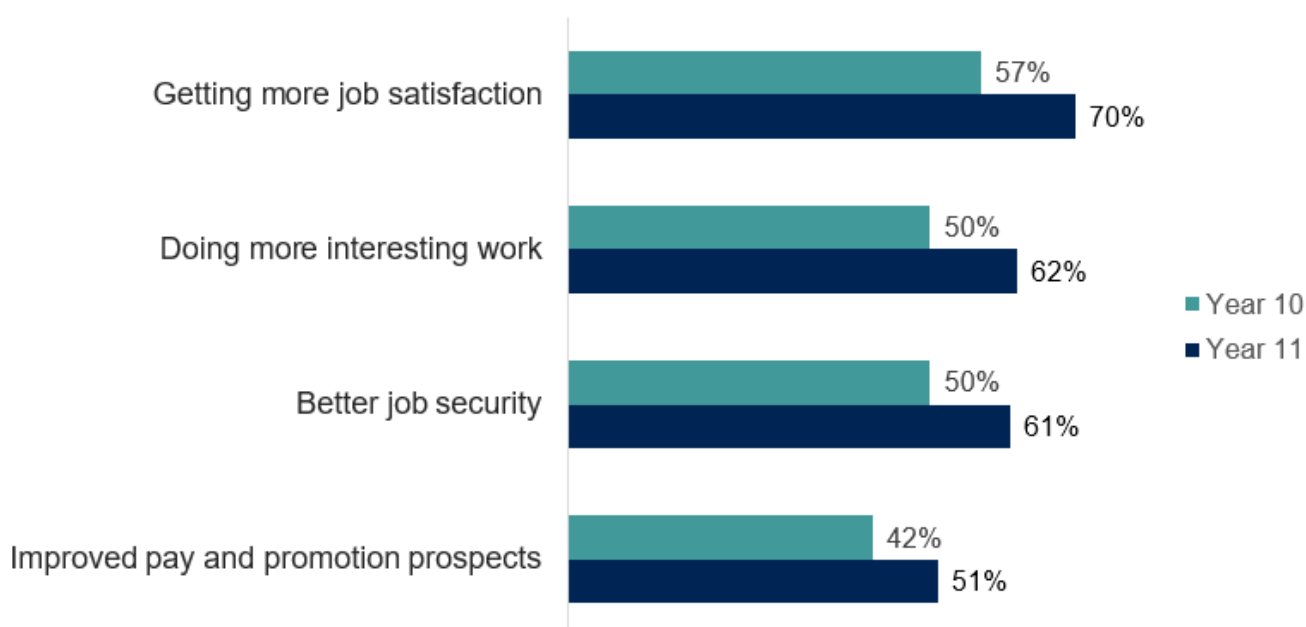
The Personal Added Value key performance indicator also includes those who, in the past 6 months, have increased their ability to make decisions about the future in terms of career,

training or learning had improved over the past six months. Eight in ten (80%) said that their ability to do this has increased, including 43% who said it has increase 'a lot' and 37% saying 'a little'. Female customers (46%), single parents (48%), customers aged 18-24 and NEET (46%), customers whose first language is not English (52%), BAME customers (50%), and those with no disability (47%) 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 (Year 11 = 2,712; Year 10 = 1,720)

It is noticeable that the proportion of customers who identified these positive changes at work has increased significantly since Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), with a ten-percentage point increase for job satisfaction and a nine-percentage point increase for more interesting work. Customers' perceptions of job security and pay and promotion prospects had also increased. There are likely to be a number of reasons for this, although it seems reasonable to deduce that some of this increase is a reflection of employers and the workplace adapting following the pandemic, and possibly feeling more secure about the future.

As seen with other outcome areas, younger customers were more likely to identify these positive changes with those aged 18-24 being between 20 and 30 percentage points higher across all the positive changes.

Customers whose first language is English were also more likely than those whose first language is not English to report increased job satisfaction (71% compared to 64%), greater job security (62% compared to 57%), and that their pay and promotion prospects had improved (54% compared to 38%). White customers were more likely than BAME customers to report that their pay and promotion prospects had improved (53% compared to 47%).

Customers with qualifications below Level 2 were less likely to say they are doing more interesting work (59% compared with 64% of those with Level 2 qualifications or above).

Almost half of 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 (49%), an increase from 40% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021). This was more common among female customers than male customers (54% compared to 46%) and among those for whom English is not their first language (54% compared to 48% of first language English speakers).

6.5 Career management skills

Altogether, over nine in ten of face-to-face and telephone customers reported developing career management skills during the six months since their contact with the National Careers Service (95%). This included:

- 82% who reported that their awareness of work/career opportunities had increased over the past six months;
- 79% who said that their awareness of learning or training opportunities had increased;
- 79% who reported that their motivation to find work or change career had improved;
- 78% said that their interest in learning had increased.

In terms of customer groups, those who were 18-24 and NEET were more likely to say their awareness of work opportunities had increased (90%). Female customers were more likely than male customers to feel more motivated to find work (81% compared to 77%), as were customers whose first language is not English (84% compared to 77% of English as first language customers). Customers whose first language is not English were also a lot more likely to say their interest in doing more learning had increased, with 62% saying their interest had increased 'a lot' compared to 38% of English as a first language customers.

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 and the North-East & Cumbria (90%).
- Customers were also more likely to agree that the quality of the service was good in the North-East and Cumbria (97%) and in Yorkshire and Humber (95%),
- North-East and Cumbria and Yorkshire and Humber were also more likely than average to say they have or would recommend (91% and 90%). Whereas London customers were less likely than average to say they have or would recommend the service (86%).
- There has been a return to high levels of satisfaction to the logistical elements of face-to-face meetings that had seen a fall in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).
- Satisfaction with the advisers and the quality of information and advice is high and fairly consistent across regions.
- There was little variation across region in terms of progression, with all having high levels.

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.

- The South East (32%) and South West (32%) had a higher than average share of customers aged over 50.
- The North-East and Cumbria (58%) and the North West (58%) had a relatively high proportion of male customers.

- Customers in London (66%), the South East (66%) and the North-East and Cumbria (67%) 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	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:	7,285	934	677	671	874	924	735	811	890	769
18-24	26%	21%	23%	28%	30%	30%	22%	23%	28%	34%
25-49	47%	56%	50%	47%	42%	47%	46%	45%	48%	41%
50+	26%	23%	28%	25%	28%	23%	32%	32%	24%	25%
Female	45%	52%	47%	44%	44%	44%	47%	46%	41%	39%
Male	53%	47%	52%	55%	54%	55%	52%	52%	58%	58%
Below Level 2	12%	10%	13%	9%	12%	13%	12%	13%	12%	13%
Level 2 and above	64%	67%	65%	67%	62%	61%	65%	63%	63%	66%
In work	18%	18%	21%	22%	19%	15%	17%	16%	21%	14%
Unemployed	62%	66%	59%	53%	60%	63%	62%	66%	60%	67%

7.2 Satisfaction

7.2.1 Overall satisfaction

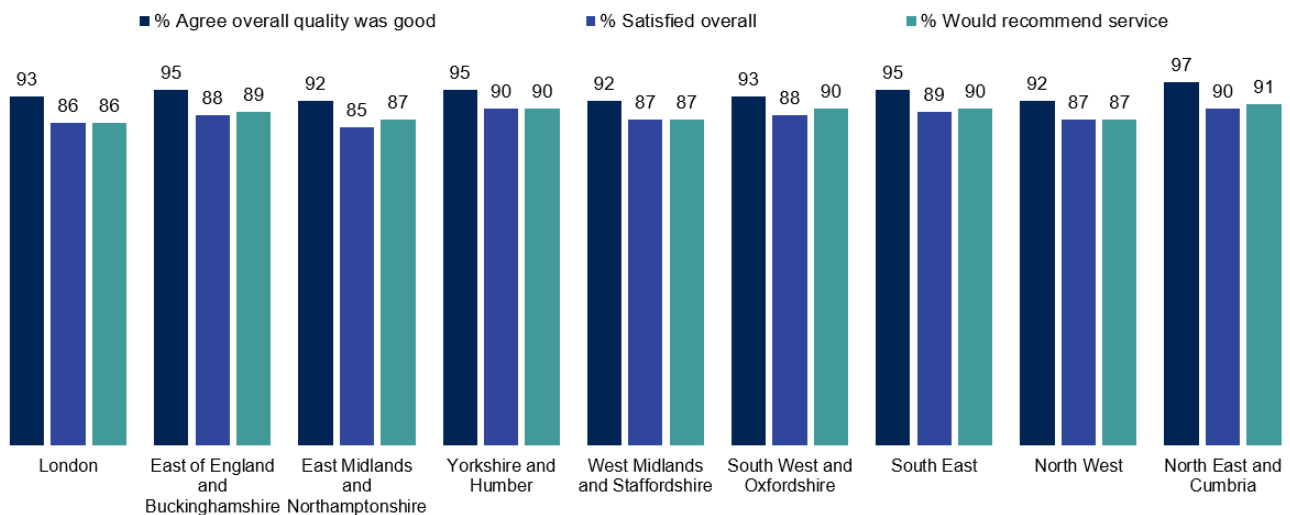
Overall perceptions of the Service were consistently positive across the contracting areas. There were very few statistically significant differences in relation to overall satisfaction, perceived service quality, or whether customers had recommended or would recommend the service (Figure 7.1).

Satisfaction was significantly higher than average in Yorkshire and Humber and the North-East and Cumbria (90% and 90%), consistent with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) for Yorkshire (91%) and the North-East (90%).

Customers were more likely to agree that the quality of the service was good in the North-East and Cumbria (97%), in line with the Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) finding (98%), and in Yorkshire and Humber (95%), which is also in line with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (95%).

With regards to likelihood to recommend service, North-East and Cumbria and Yorkshire and Humber were more likely than average to say they have or would recommend (91% and 90%). London customers were less likely than average to say they have or would recommend the service (86%).

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



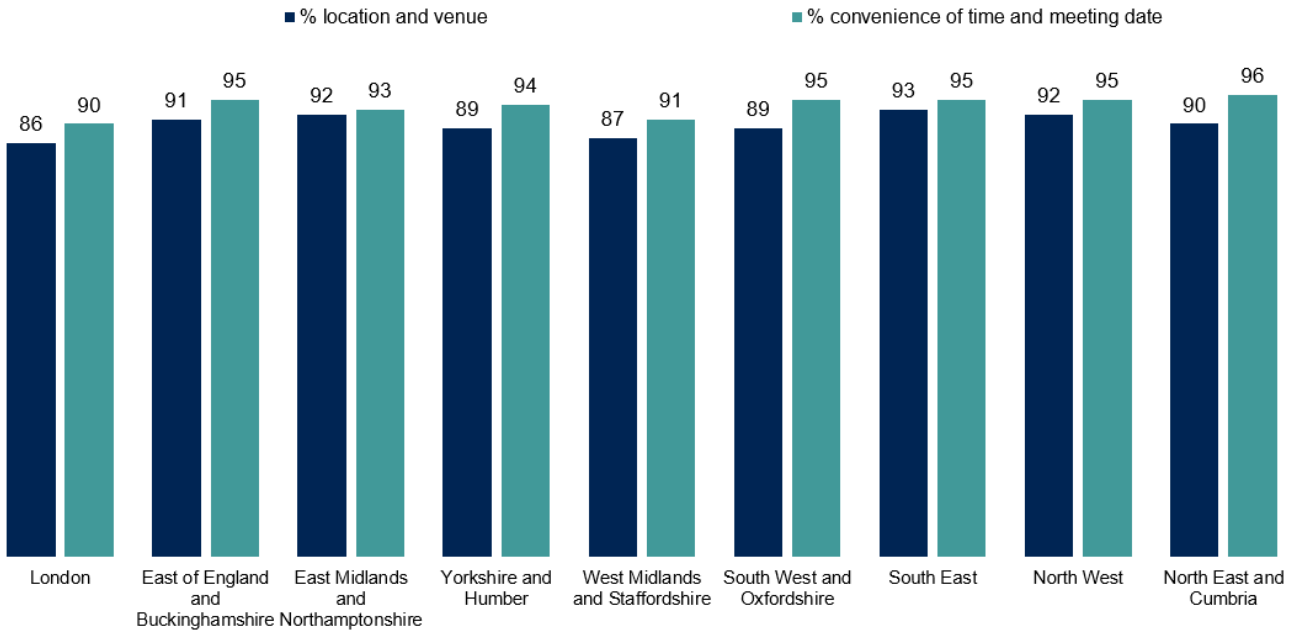
Base: All telephone and face-to-face customers (7,285)

7.2.2 Satisfaction with operational aspects and the adviser

After seeing a drop in certain areas of satisfaction in the logistical elements of the service, there has been a return to high levels of satisfaction amongst face-to-face customers in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021). London was the only region that saw a lower than average satisfaction with the location and venue (86% against 88%). However, many regions saw returns to high level in satisfaction, after seeing large drops in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021). The South East saw

satisfaction in the location and venue of the customers’ meeting rise to 93% from a drop to 74% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), and the East Midlands and Northamptonshire saw a rise to 92% from a drop to 74% as well in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021). This suggests that face-to-face services are returning to previous seen levels of satisfaction in the logistical elements.

Satisfaction with the time and date of the customers’ meeting remained high, with only London



Base: All face-to-face customers (3,131) and all face-to-face and IAG customers (6,462)

(90%) and the West Midlands (91%) seeing a lower than average satisfaction (93%). The overall results were in line with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (93% and 94%).

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

Satisfaction with the adviser continues to remain very high, and areas that saw a drop in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) have showed signs of recovery in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021).

In Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), there were very few differences by region in satisfaction with National Careers Service advisers:

- Customers in the North-East and Cumbria expressed higher levels of satisfaction with their adviser’s level of knowledge (96% compared to 93% overall).
- Customers in the North-East and Cumbria and Yorkshire and Humber also had higher levels of satisfaction with their advisers’ understanding of their needs (95% and 94% compared to 92% overall).

Table 7.2: Satisfaction with the adviser by area

	All	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:	7,285	934	677	671	874	924	735	811	890	769
Length of time with adviser	94	94	94	94	95	93	95	95	93	96
Professionalism of adviser	96	94	97	95	97	96	96	97	95	97
Helpfulness of adviser	94	93	95	93	95	92	94	95	94	96
Adviser knowledge	93	92	94	91	94	92	93	94	93	96
Adviser understood needs	92	89	93	90	94	91	92	93	92	95

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 Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021). 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	London	East of England and	East Midlands and	Yorkshire and Humber	West Midlands and	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	94	93	96	92	95	94	93	95	94	97
IAG was useful	91	90	91	89	92	90	90	92	90	93
Got the IAG to make informed decision	88	86	90	87	88	88	88	88	87	91

7.3 Progression and career management skills

Almost all customers in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) (97%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months following their intervention (as discussed in Chapter 6), which is exactly in line with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (97%). 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	London	East of England and	East Midlands and	Yorkshire and Humber	West Midlands and	South West and Oxfordshire	South East	North West	North-East and Cumbria
Base	5586	719	538	556	627	702	517	673	691	563
Any positive outcome	97	97	97	97	98	98	97	97	96	97
Learning progression	69	72	70	69	68	68	68	69	68	69
Employment progression	56	55	58	58	57	53	60	59	52	57
Personal Added Value	94	94	95	94	95	95	93	95	94	94

Across each of the regions, none were significantly lower for learning progression though London customers were significantly more likely to experience learning progression (72%).

Customers in the North West were significantly less likely to experience employment progression than average (52% vs 56%), but those in the South East were significantly more likely to experience it (59%)

Variation across regions in personal added value was minimal, with all having a high level of progression within this.

8 Conclusions

After the challenges of COVID-19 during Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), the Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) findings show that the service has been able to recover in areas where satisfaction and progression fell and remain at a high level. Customer satisfaction remains high (88%) and the overall rating of the quality of the service was high (94%), in line with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (95%). Additionally, whilst recommendation of the service also continues to remain high with nearly nine in ten customers saying that they had already or would recommend the National Careers Service (88%), this represents a slight fall from Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (91%).

The customer groups that have been consistently satisfied with the service year on year include younger customers (90% of 20–24-year-olds) and those that have a Skills Action Plan (92%). Those who had the same adviser, if they had multiple telephone calls or face-to-face meetings also were higher than average (89% and 92%). Among telephone and face-to-face customers, satisfaction with individual aspects of the service was high, especially the professionalism (96%) and helpfulness of their adviser (94%).

The majority of face-to-face and telephone customers could not think of any improvements that the National Careers Service needed to make (66%), in line with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (64%). The two main suggestions for improvements remain consistent with Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), with customers desiring more tailored help (7%), and more follow-up after initial meetings (8%).

In Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021) three fifths (58%) of website users were satisfied with the website, compared to one fifth who were not satisfied (22%). These levels of satisfaction remain in line with the results of Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021), suggesting that the website has continued to remain useful for users across the pandemic (59% were satisfied and 22% were not satisfied in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)). Of those customers who were dissatisfied with the website, three in ten (28%) 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 relevant information and problems relating to the Skills Health Check. Improving the website stability could be an area of improvement to increase satisfaction among online customers, which remains an issue from Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

Three in five (59%) of website users reported this was the first time visiting the site. The main reason for visiting the site was information on jobs/careers or apprenticeships. Online customers reported that just under half (48%) got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website.

Overall, there has been an increase in employment progression in Year 11 (May 2021 to April 2021), after seeing notable falls in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) (56% compared to 44%). This is likely due to the impact that the pandemic had during Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021).

Those with higher qualifications (61% of those qualified to Level 2 or above, compared with 49% of those with qualifications below Level 2), younger customers (56% of 18-24 year olds, compared with 50% of those aged 50 plus), and customers who had been unemployed for less than 6 months (70%) were more likely to experience some form of employment progression.

Progression of softer skills, such as personal added value (94%), continue to remain stable (95% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)), which suggests that customers have been continuing to develop their skills throughout and after the pandemic. In addition, learning progression remains in line with the previous year (69% compared to 71% in Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021)), suggesting that customers are continuing to take up learning opportunities as they did during the pandemic.

Optimistically, all face-to-face and telephone customers (98% and 97% respectively) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months since their call/meeting, in line with the Year 10 (May 2020 to April 2021) findings. Ninety-four 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.

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For more information

3 Thomas More Square
London
E1W 1YW

t: +44 (0)20 3059 5000

www.ipsos.com
<http://twitter.com/ipsos>

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Juliette Albone

Associate Director
Juliette.Albone@ipsos.com

David Thompson

Research Manager
David.Thompson@ipsos.com

Noah Coltman

Graduate Research Executive
noah.coltman@ipsos.com

