

## Jobcentre Plus

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### UNITED KINGDOM

The creation of Jobcentre Plus was the result of a major reform initiated in 2001, which created an organisation supporting unemployment benefits, job searches and vacancy management. The Jobcentre Plus model aims to support people to find employment as soon as possible and to prevent long-term unemployment. Work coaches in local Jobcentre Plus offices act as a single point of contact for jobseekers, guiding them through individualised, locally designed services. Jobcentre Plus works in partnership with community groups, providers and employers to develop services that respond to local needs and labour market demand. The work coach role has seen significant changes over the last decade and has moved to a more autonomous role, providing a range of services to support jobseekers.

#### Name of the PES

Jobcentre Plus (part of the Department for Work and Pensions)

#### Scope of measure (a pilot project or a national reform)

As a result of national reform, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was created in 2001, followed by the creation of the Public Employment Service's Jobcentre Plus scheme later that same year. Prior to this, there were two separate organisations, the Department for Employment and the Benefits Agency (which paid benefits including disability & ill health benefits). This separated out the job matching and job search activities from the benefit claims processing. The merging of these two organisations created one point of contact for individuals seeking unemployment benefit (Jobseekers Allowance) and engaging in job search activity.

#### When was the practice implemented?

The reform to set up Jobcentre Plus was introduced in 2001. This was further updated in 2016 by the roll out of the Universal Credit scheme aimed at supporting not only unemployed but also employed individuals. In order to provide more personalised, tailored support, approaches such as the Work Coach Delivery Model (implemented in 2016) and the Flexible Support Fund (implemented in 2011) (both described below) were implemented in Jobcentre Plus offices.

#### What was the driver for introducing the practice? Was it internal or external?

The intent was to streamline services so that all job search activities could be done under one roof (driven both by internal and external factors).

#### Which organisation was involved in its implementation?

Jobcentre Plus is a government-funded agency, part of the Department for Work and Pensions. There are around 380 Jobcentre Plus offices (local PES offices) in 34 Districts. District managers are responsible for external partnerships with public, private and voluntary organisations. Within the operational delivery system of Jobcentre Plus there are also Contact Centres for initial benefit claims and Benefit Delivery Centres to process payments.

#### Which groups were targeted by the practice?

All people of working age seeking a job

#### What were the practice's main objectives?

Jobcentre Plus aims to support jobseekers to find a job as early as possible and to prevent long-term unemployment. Personalised support will be enhanced via the Work Coach Delivery Model, which was introduced throughout 2016 (this is explained further below). Local partnerships between Jobcentre Plus, community organisations and employers ensure that services are tailored to individual and local needs.

What activities were carried out?	Initial claims and interviews are undertaken through a hybrid system, involving the jobseeker making digital and face-to-face contact with a work coach. The rights and responsibilities of the jobseeker are outlined in the Claimant Commitment, which is a two-way agreement between the jobseeker and the work coach. Discussions are focused on job guidance, job search and training, but also on personal circumstances and barriers to employment (such as health issues, lack of confidence or caring responsibilities). The work coach can seek advice from a Disability Employment Advisor or Work Psychologists in relation to possible medical conditions. The frequency of meetings depends on the needs of the individual and can vary from daily, weekly or fortnightly meetings. Once personal barriers are identified, the work coach can arrange in-house and external support depending on individual needs. In every Jobcentre Plus District (responsible for several local PES offices) a local partnership team works together with a number of stakeholders to develop services that address the needs of jobseekers and employers. These services are then provided by Jobcentre Plus offices within each District. In addition, the Flexible Support Fund gives a degree of local autonomy to the PES to support individual and local needs; work coaches are autonomous in how they assist individuals through this fund, giving access to a range of support mechanisms to help a jobseeker address specific barriers to work.
What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?	The roll-out of around 380 Jobcentre Plus offices from 2001-2007 required EUR 2.2 billion (GBP 1.9 billion) <sup>1</sup> to change the infrastructure of service provision.
What were the source(s) of funding?	National funding
What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?	The creation of the Jobcentre Plus model was accompanied by a significant modernisation of service delivery including office refurbishments, modernised IT systems, performance monitoring and enhanced job matching. In terms of service delivery, the Work Coach Delivery Model was introduced in 2016 to create personalised support for jobseekers via one single coach.
What outcomes have been identified?	Based on empirical analysis <sup>2</sup> , Jobcentre Plus helped to reduce the number of people on out-of-work benefits and therefore effectively increased the labour supply in the UK. Estimates suggest that around 40 000 to 65 000 more jobseekers moved from benefits to employment per year after the Jobcentre Plus approach was rolled out. Over the period 2001 to 2015 this led to direct welfare benefit savings of around EUR 4.7 billion (GBP 4 billion) and indirect gains through increased tax payments of around EUR 2.2 billion (GBP 1.9 billion). Due to an increase in labour, Jobcentre Plus is likely to have increased Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 0.1 %.
What are the lessons learnt and success factors?	The UK has been affected by economic downturns in recent years. The flexible approach at local level, with an emphasis on partnerships, has helped the PES to respond to national and local challenges. Work coaches remain crucial to the effective development of good practice. With the roll-out of Jobcentre Plus in the early 2000s, their role was reshaped from 'advisors' with a very prescriptive role, to 'work coaches' with a capacity to decide, together with the jobseeker, on individualised support. Work coaches follow a positive approach in their discussions with jobseekers. They focus on the abilities of the individual rather than disabilities, and they focus on future job outcomes. In addition, categorising individuals into short-term or long-term unemployment is now avoided, preventing marginalisation of individual jobseekers. In order to enhance individualised support, partnerships are continuously strengthened. For example, the PES currently seeks to improve cooperation with the health sector in order to provide better support for people with health-conditions. A Joint Work and Health Unit has been established, and it is working with health care providers at District PES level to develop more streamlined services.

1 Conversions to EURO are based on the exchange rate at time of writing - 30 November 2016.

2 Riley, R.; Bewley, H.; Kirby, S.; Rincon-Aznar, A.; George, A. (2011), *The introduction of Jobcentre Plus: An evaluation of labour market impacts*. Department for Work and Pensions. Research Report No 781.



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