

# Caught in the Middle

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How employment advisers mediate between  
user needs and managerial demands in UK  
services

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## Declaration

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I declare that none of the work contained within this thesis has been submitted for any other degree at any other university. The contents found herein have been composed by the candidate, Christine Bertram.

# Acknowledgements

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***“The road to success has many tempting parking places.” (Unknown)***

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Traditionally, employment advice and guidance services in the UK have occupied distinct realms despite government efforts to align and integrate the education and skills and welfare-to-work frameworks. Conceptually, studies of front-line service delivery have often adopted a street-level perspective. This study offers a governance approach that focuses on how adviser behaviour is steered through managerial methods and how advisers steer user behaviour through the use of discretion and trust. The study explored how advisers mediated the tensions between managerial concerns and user needs to achieve policy goals, among others to turn service users into more active citizens. Based on 38 semi-structured interviews with service managers and advisers in combination with service characteristics and policy aims, a service typology was developed which was then applied to eight case study services. The analysis showed that employment advisers in the different service types applied very diverse strategies to achieve an outcome for the service user, but that within service types the strategies were similar. Due to the different service structures and advisers' varying ability to apply discretion, various kinds of trust could be established, which potentially allowed the advisers to influence a change of service user behaviour. This could range from highly coercive methods to empowering individuals. The findings showed that advisers were subject to similar pressures as they applied to service users when mediating managerial influences. There was evidence that ability to use discretion was a vital pivot point in how advisers mediated tension between the service demands and user needs. This in turn was related to the adviser's ability to achieve sustainable outcomes for the service user.

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# Abbreviations

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DfES - Department for Education and Skills

DWP - Department for Work and Pensions

ESF - European Social Fund

EU - European Union

JSA - Jobseekers' Allowance

NVQ - National Vocational Qualification

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Ufi - University for Industry

VCO - Voluntary and Community Sector Organisation

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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There has been a worldwide drive towards increased productivity in order to maintain and advance economic competitiveness. Supra-national organisations like the OECD, the World Bank and the EU have strongly encouraged national governments to increase economic activity through a series of strategies and reporting mechanisms, such as the European Employment Strategy (Bruttel and Sol, 2006, Mosher and Trubek, 2003). The key to global success is conceived according to neo-liberal principles such as maximising paid employment within the working age population in order to support top-heavy demographic profiles (see for instance European Commission, 2005). Successive UK governments have been particularly concerned with raising employment levels overall to 80 percent, including the raising of employment rates of lone parents, the ill or the disabled and older workers to unprecedented levels (DWP, 2006a).

However, relatively little attention has been paid to how this might be achieved in practice. Transitions into employment have become a key focus of state intervention and it is the advisers providing information, advice and guidance who are charged with achieving these ambitious aims. Front-line advisers are expected to confront citizens with new expectations about the terms of their engagement with the state as they mediate transitions into employment.

Knowledge of regulations, access to resources, and regular contact with service users have established advisers as a focal point for informing and influencing people's behaviour (Jewell and Glaser, 2006). Politically, the role of advisers has been seen to have much greater influence. *"It [employment advice and guidance] operates at the interface between the individual and society, between self and opportunity, between aspiration and realism. It facilitates the allocation of life chances."* (Watts, 1996: 351).

*As a result, employment advisers have been portrayed as mediators of inequality, ascribing to them the power to bring about changes in people's behaviour as well as socio-economic status.*

In the UK, employment advice has been delivered in two largely separate frameworks: the welfare-to-work framework and the learning and skills framework. Each framework has had its own legal context, separate service delivery structures and separate policy making institutions. Academically, each framework has had a strong, separate research tradition (see for instance Bimrose, 2006, Clasen and Clegg, 2006, Barker et al., 2005, Bennett and Millar, 2005, Sol and Westerveld, 2005a, CeGS, 2003, Finn, 2003, Mosher and Trubek, 2003, Goul Andersen, 2002a, Sarfati and Bonoli, 2002, Considine, 2001, Gati et al., 2001, Lødemel and Trickey, 2001, Rees et al., 1999,). A starting premise for this study is to consider which services would be available to individuals when faced with unemployment, redundancy, returning to work or a career change in the UK. For the purpose of this study, therefore, employment advice services are all those services which offer advice and support to adults in order to mediate transitions between different labour market statuses (Frade et al., 2006).

Under the New Labour government (1997–2007) services in the welfare-to-work framework, determined at UK level, followed a strict 'activation' rationale that connected the rights to Jobseekers' Allowance with the responsibility of actively looking for work, or with threats of sanctions if service users did not comply with this condition (Finn, 2003). The aim of programmes, such as the New Deals, was to help people (back) into work as quickly as possible based on the underlying rationale that the *"best welfare policy of all is work"* (DWP, 2006a: iv). The main programmes were a series of New Deals supplemented by, Employment Zones for example, which focused

on people with multiple barriers to work. These initiatives were complemented by two strategies 'making work possible', which focused on removing barriers to work such as the provision of childcare and 'making work pay', which provided incentives for people out of work in the form of tax credits to top up insufficient wages and the introduction of a minimum wage (Bennett and Millar, 2005, Millar, 2002). These programmes were delivered by a network of Jobcentre Plus offices in combination with contracted provision by private and voluntary and community sector providers (DWP, 2006a).

Services within the learning and skills framework fell under different jurisdictions, because the policy area of education and skills was devolved. Whilst there were separate policies and services in Wales and Northern Ireland, the study focused on service delivery in England and Scotland. Devolution had progressed the furthest in Scotland and there had been substantial policy developments in the area of learning and skills, whilst English policy fell under Westminster jurisdiction (Watts, 2006). Policies in both countries focused on the development of skills and the promotion of lifelong learning to match the demands of the global economy (Scottish Executive, 2001, DfES, 1998). However, while services in Scotland were delivered through an integrated service open to people of all ages and qualification levels and funded by the Scottish government, the delivery landscape in England showed diversified contracted provision and a segregation by age (Mulvey, 2006). Due to the complexity of service provision in England, this study focused on advice and guidance services for adults only.

However, a common concern for programmes in both frameworks was their mediation of labour market transitions and encouraging participation in the labour market. Additionally, there was an underlying economic rationale which was fuelled by

the impact of globalisation, the need to stay internationally competitive and the gap between the demand and supply of a highly skilled workforce (Bimrose, 2006). Moreover, advisers in both frameworks were charged with enacting policy and in so doing had significant responsibility in supporting the government's ambitions for an 'active' society.

The unique contribution of this study is the adoption of an integrated view of both delivery frameworks as it would be presented to a person out of work or at risk of unemployment. Moreover, it examines the adviser's role in mediating the competing demands of government policy and service user expectations and how these relationships are governed.

Conceptually, this study is interested in exploring how policy is enacted at the front-line. It is strongly influenced by Lipsky's (Lipsky, 1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy. This literature characterises the front-line worker as an administrator who, influenced by work and task pressures, has developed coping mechanisms which ultimately change policy (Brodkin, 2005, Wright, 2001, Sandfort, 1999, Lipsky, 1980). While this may still be the case to some extent, this study takes into consideration the changing policy context of contracted service provision and the expanded responsibilities of advisers in the delivery of personalised services. The study thus adopts a governance perspective, where governance means

*“the ‘steering’ of the subjects’ behavioural practices towards particular social and politico-economic goals via a set of institutions and processes that aim to maintain or change the status quo” (Carmel and Papadopoulos, 2003: 32).*

The study investigates how the contractual provision of services, strongly influenced by performance measurement and the provision of incentives on an organisational as well as an individual level, have ensured compliance with intended policy aims which are often enforced by the threat of sanctions (Clarke and Newman, 1997, Martin, 1997). However, there were also less stringent means to ensure compliance such as the building of a trusting relationship (Newman, 2001). In their new role, advisers were thus supposed to reconcile rights and responsibilities, support and control through their actions and mediate the tensions that would arise between adhering to programmatic requirements and to provide a service targeted to the needs of the user (Rosenthal and Peccei, 2006).

This study has been developed to offer a unique insight, examining how governance mechanisms operate at street-level. Moreover, it is designed to develop an understanding of how governance has shaped adviser-user relationships and how advisers are influenced by governance mechanisms in their work with service users.

## **Research questions**

The aims of the research will be achieved by answering the following questions:

- How do advisers in different kinds of services deliver employment advice to service users? What are the similarities and differences?
- How do managerialist methods control and steer advisers' work? What are the differences and similarities?
- How do advisers use discretion and build trust with service users? What are the similarities and differences?

## **Chapter outline**

The first chapter provides the policy context within which employment advice and guidance services are delivered. It outlines the developments of the two frameworks within which these services existed over the recent past. Policy developments under the Conservative governments (1979–1997) and more recently the New Labour government (1997–2007) have been taken into consideration. The focus on contracting out to a pluralist provider base has strongly influenced service delivery.

The second chapter provides an insight into the governance of service delivery by examining the literature. Recently the governance of employment services has received more academic interest, which has allowed a deeper insight into how governance frameworks influenced service delivery. Although a variety of governance frameworks were operational in UK service delivery, managerialism was considered the predominant form that governed the contractual relationships with service providers. The chapter also provides a discussion of some of the elements of managerial steering and control mechanisms, such as performance evaluation and incentive payments, because they have a strong influence on front-line personnel.

The third chapter examines the literature on the ‘softer’ factors influencing how advisers can deliver services. These included the use of discretion, the building of trust with the service user and methods to change behaviour. This was of particular interest, because the achievement of policy and service objectives required service users to change their behaviour. Thus, advisers had an important role in mediating these behavioural changes in their interactions with service users.



The methodological aspects of conducting this research are then taken into account. This included the justification for selecting a case study approach as well as the advantages of using a typology for the further analysis and presentation of the data. The chapter also provides a reflective account of the challenges faced during the research process, focusing in particular on data collection.

The next three chapters are concerned with the analysis and findings of the study. The selected case studies were introduced first to provide an insight into the variety of services available in the UK and secondly to give some contextual information for service delivery. Based on these case profiles, the typology was consequently developed and introduced.

In chapter six, the adviser-user relationship is analysed. This provides deeper insight into how advisers have used discretion to respond to user needs and built trust with service users. Ultimately, advisers were trying to achieve a behaviour change in service users to fulfil the aims of specific policies. In the last part of this chapter, this nexus of contextual factors, and the use of discretion and trust in attempting to change service users' behaviour are explored.

The last analysis chapter explores how advisers mediated the managerial framework within which they were operating. It analyses how performance measurement was used to shape adviser behaviour and how incentive pay was employed to reinforce or discourage certain behaviours. As with the adviser-user relationship, the elements combine to provide a picture of what kinds of trust were placed in the adviser and how this influenced their interactions.

Chapter 10 discusses the findings in the wider research context. It specifically examines the conditions and implications of a 'missing' service type in the UK context and explored the congruence of the developed typology with other guidance typologies. Lastly, it discusses the mechanisms of how advisers mediated competing policy and service user demands.

The conclusion reviews the findings in relation to the research questions that have guided this study. It provides an update on the changing policy context in the UK and suggests issues for further investigation which the study has raised.

## Chapter 2

### Policy context

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## **Introduction**

There has been a global drive to increase competitiveness and productivity through an expansion of economic activity, which is strongly supported by several supra-national organisations, e.g. the EU or the OECD. Underpinned by neo-liberal principles, national governments are strongly encouraged to maximise paid employment to support top-heavy demographic profiles (Bruttel and Sol, 2006, European Commission, 2005). Facilitating labour market transitions is therefore a vital strategy to support these aims. The initial premise for this study is the consideration of which services would be available to someone when faced with unemployment, redundancy, a career change or a return to employment. In the UK, this need for advice would be covered by services operating within two distinct policy frameworks. One is the welfare-to-work framework and the other is the learning and skills framework. Employment advice service provision has changed substantially over the last two decades with the Conservative government (1979-1997) and the New Labour government (1997–2007) imprinting distinct features onto these frameworks. This chapter provides the policy background for the remainder of the study. In particular, it contextualises the environment in which employment advisers act as mediators between the goals of government policy and the service user. It locates the concept of activation in combination with its changing conception of the working citizen in international context. The chapter introduces the two service frameworks, welfare-to-work and learning and skills respectively, focussing on their underlying rationales and funding arrangements. Following this, the political influences of the Conservative government as well as the New Labour government are discussed.

## **Frameworks of UK services**

Employment advice and guidance is a wide and diverse field in the UK. Indeed, the definition of what could be classified as information, advice and guidance during the period of study was not unanimous (see for instance the definitions used in CEDEFOP, 2005, Council of the European Union, 2004, DfES, 2003). There are two main frameworks for delivery. The first is the learning and skills approach which focuses on guiding the individual user towards education or employment. Due to devolution, there have been different approaches in England and Scotland within this framework. The second is the welfare-to-work perspective which takes a more 'active' approach in moving the user towards returning to work. Social Security is not a devolved policy area and the same policies apply throughout the UK.

When New Labour took office in 1997, the labour market was buoyant. Throughout the first years of the new millennium, unemployment was consistently at a comparatively low rate of approximately 5 percent. However, long-term unemployment (18 months or longer) was considered a problem (DWP, 2008c). In comparison to the rest of Europe, the employment rate was extremely high at well over 70 percent (ONS, 2010). In the two decades prior to 1997, employment levels of highly qualified workers had remained stable. However, the employment levels of people with low skills or no skills had fallen (Trickey and Walker, 2001). This can be seen in the context of an overall shift from a manufacturing based economy to a service and knowledge based economy and an increasing flexibilisation of the labour market in general (Evans and Williams, 2009).

## ***Welfare-to-work and activation 1997-2007***

In a climate of increasing labour mobility and job insecurity combined with a buoyant economy and low unemployment figures, New Labour set out to reform the welfare system in the UK (Walker and Wiseman, 2003). Part of this reform was a shift towards welfare-to-work policies based on the ideological belief that “*the best welfare policy of all is work*” (DWP, 2006a: iv) and a focus on “*matching rights with responsibilities*” (ibid). The link between rights and responsibilities was part of a bigger agenda to transform the conception of citizenship, which focused on activation, self-responsibility and most importantly, labour market participation, which will be discussed further below. The reforms carried out under the New Labour government focused on a ‘new welfare contract’. It was built around labour market participation as the centre-piece and offering “*work for those who can; security for those who cannot*” (DSS, 1998).

This formed the basis for activation policies. The aim of these policies was to end the ‘benefit dependency culture’ by encouraging, supporting or compelling people to find work in an effort to reduce public spending on social security benefits (DWP, 2006a). This was part of an overall reform agenda that set out to end child poverty and tackle social exclusion, that was also supported by offering tax credits to subsidise those with insufficient incomes and the introduction of a minimum wage to ‘make work pay’ (Bennett and Millar, 2005, Walker and Wiseman, 2003). It is questionable whether these policies had the intended incentive effects or whether they contributed to their overall aim of avoiding in-work poverty (Hirsch, 2009, Harker, 2006). Hyde et al. (1999) warned that the emphasis on the responsibilities of individuals and compulsion of these programmes underlined existing economic and social divisions. Elsewhere, Gardiner and Miller (2006) for example, showed that people in low wage

jobs, which were the more typical job outcomes for those moving from benefits into work (Gray, 2001, Tonge, 1999), sometimes employed other strategies to avoid poverty, for instance through employing family support to reduce living costs.

The underlying rationale of this reform is that of 'activation'. This is a contentious concept because of the different meanings assigned to it by different parties and contexts. It could mean a systemic activation which focuses on the wider issues such as changing the conception of citizenship to a more active one (see later in the chapter). Alternatively, it also can refer to activation of the individual, which has been the main concern of welfare-to-work policies, although both conceptions are closely linked. Activation in its widest sense meant that unemployment benefits were made conditional on job searching efforts, and thus followed a 'rights and responsibilities' approach (Clasen and Clegg, 2006). However, this can be accomplished by different means, as positive and negative activation depending on different ideological orientations (Barbier, 2004, Gilbert and Van Voorhis, 2001).

Positive activation revolved around the use of a period of unemployment to readjust a person's skills to the ever changing demands of the labour market (Clasen and Clegg, 2006). This approach was most common for instance in Denmark, where programmes emphasised training measures, participation in which was a citizen's right and duty (Goul Andersen, 2002b). Strongly influenced by US coercive 'workfare' approaches (Handler, 2004) activation, within the UK context, was conceptualised in a negative fashion emphasising compulsion and job-search requirements.

This development could be traced back to the Conservative era (1979-1997) where the 'stricter benefit regime', introduced in 1989, increased the conditionality upon job-search activities to those receiving benefits and being available to work (Finn,

1997). It threatened sanctions in case of non-compliance and coincided with a gradual reduction of positive training measures (Blackmore, 2001). In 1996 this was followed by the introduction of Jobseekers Allowance, which replaced unemployment benefit and income support (Finn, 1997). Jobseekers were now required to sign a contract, the Jobseekers' Agreement that outlined precise steps to be taken in the return to employment and allowed the advisers to mandate users to follow specific activities via a Jobseekers' Direction. Activation under New Labour (1997-2007) maintained the elements of coercion and threat of sanctions as set out by the preceding Conservative governments by following a 'work first' approach, which signalled an important cross-party consensus (Bryson, 2003, Theodore and Peck, 1999). However, the New Labour governments located this work first approach within a wider strategy to remove barriers to work and to make work pay (Millar, 2002).

The shift towards activation policies, namely the contractual obligation of people receiving unemployment benefits to look for paid (or sometimes voluntary) work (van Berkel and Borghi, 2008a) was, as the above discussion suggested, by no means a development unique to the UK. Since the late 1990s, activation policies have developed rapidly throughout Europe, Scandinavia and the English-speaking countries (Barbier, 2004, Handler, 2004, Goul Andersen, 2002b). The character of activation policies in these countries developed in relation to the mix of punitive and enabling elements, building on existing welfare traditions (Gallie and Paugam, 2000). Policy development was encouraged and mediated by the strategies of supra-national organisations such as the EU (via the European Employment Strategy) whose use of discourse and intervention to influence activation policy as a means to deal with wider societal problems (Bruttel and Sol, 2006, Mosher and Trubek, 2003) was considered by



some commentators as controversial and problematic (Crespo Suárez and Serrano Pascual, 2007, Serrano Pascual and Crespo Suárez, 2007).

The UK, along with the US and Australia, was at the forefront of promoting 'work first' active labour market policies (Lindsay and McQuaid, 2008, Bruttel and Sol, 2006, Finn, 2001). The main activation policy in the UK was a series of 'New Deal' programmes (beginning in 1997) which focused on population groups which were considered more difficult to help, including lone parents, young people, the long-term unemployed (18 months or longer), the disabled and older workers. These programmes offered personalised support that was attached to strict conditionality and the threat of sanctions if genuine employment offers were refused (Finn, 2003).

Increasing conditionality was another main feature of this new breed of welfare-to-work programmes. Benefit receipt was clearly linked to work related criteria, such as actively seeking work and mandatory attendance at work focused interviews and started to include groups which were previously not considered as unemployed, including lone parents, people with disabilities, or carers (Trickey and Walker, 2001). The New Deal programmes were supplemented by area-based initiatives (for instance, New Deal for Communities and Employment Zones), which were specifically targeted at areas of exceptionally high levels of deprivation to tackle the root causes of deprivation.

Evidence concerning the effectiveness of these programmes has been mixed. For instance, Blundell et al. (2003) concluded that the New Deal for Young People made long-term unemployment for young people less likely due to the options of subsidised employment, participation in an Environment Task Force, volunteering or a return to full-time education and training but questioned the longevity of the results.

On a more general level, there were concerns over people being 'churned' through the system due to the increased pressure on individuals to compete for low paid, insecure jobs (Clasen and Clegg, 2006, Gray, 2001), leading to frequent cycling in and out of benefits (Bruttel and Sol, 2006). These findings raised serious concerns over the suitability of these policies to offer sustainable employment and to 'make work pay'.

Welfare-to-work programmes have been mainly funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and until 2007 were contracted to external providers through Jobcentre Plus<sup>1</sup>. Between 2000 and 2005, the DWP spent on average £1.1 billion annually on employment programmes, including annual spending of about £400 million on New Deal programmes alone (DWP, 2006b), plus about £660 million on employment programmes for unemployed and disabled people (Jobcentre Plus, 2006). This constituted a substantial share of the overall budget at a time when pressures on the national budget were mounting through the perceived influences of globalisation and substantial demographic change for example due to an ageing population (Taylor-Gooby, 2002). Welfare spending needed to be justified in terms of its contribution to economic success, which made successful implementation and the effectiveness of the programmes a key concern (Taylor-Gooby et al., 2004). This led to a rapid expansion of evaluations to produce the input for evidence based policy making which in turn led to an increase in measuring and monitoring to demonstrate value for money (Cutler and Waine, 2000, Audit Commission, 1999). The contractual provision of services indicated

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<sup>1</sup> As part of a major reform of employment service delivery, the contracting out was managed by the Work, Welfare and Equality Group (WWE) and Commercial and Estates Directorate within the DWP from April 2007. This allowed Jobcentre Plus to focus on their role of providing direct services to customers (DWP 2007b). Interestingly, these services had been transferred from WWE to Jobcentre Plus only in 2005-2006 (Jobcentre Plus, 2006), emphasising the quickly changing environment in service provision.

a devolution of responsibility to the providers, whilst control was exercised from the centre (Jessop, 2000).

### ***Learning and skills***

In contrast to welfare-to-work policies, policies within the learning and skills framework were, and continue to be, a devolved policy area. Since 1997, policies in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland have developed independently (Watts, 2006, Watts and Dent, 2002). The extent of devolution in Scotland was far greater than in Wales and Northern Ireland and policy development in the area of learning and skills has been substantial (Watts, 2006, Hazell, 2000,). Policies in England fall under the decision-making power of the Westminster government. The focus will be on policies in England and Scotland, which will be discussed respectively.

### **Overview of English learning and skills policy**

In 1998, David Blunkett (Secretary of State for Education and Employment) outlined the following picture of the required attributes of the future workforce:

*“To achieve stable and sustainable growth, we will need a well-educated, well-equipped and adaptable labour force. To cope with rapid change we must ensure that people can return to learning throughout their lives. We cannot rely on a small elite: we will need the creativity, enterprise and scholarship of all our people.” (DfES, 1998: 1)*

There was a strong economic rationale behind the emphasis on skills improvement. While the labour market was buoyant, the low skills profile of the some parts of the population was causing concern. The rapid development of information

technology required a highly skilled, knowledge driven labour force (Bimrose, 2006) which would help maintain competitiveness on a global scale. Therefore, the improvement of the skills base was seen as vital. While the Green paper 'The Learning Age' (DfES, 1998) emphasised lifelong learning and the achievement of qualifications to stay competitive in an increasingly global market, it also contained strong ideological references to New Labour's conception of citizenship (see further below for a more detailed discussion). It emphasised responsibility for self-improvement and responsibility to contribute to society through work thus linking the strategy into the overall policy goals of New Labour.

Over the past 25 years, the provision of advice and guidance services in England has been based on an age division, with 'Connexions' providing services for young people under the age of 20. 'Connexions' services are however, not included for two reasons. Firstly, the study focuses on services for adults, and secondly they are excluded due to the complexity of the provider landscape in England. The adult market was served by a wide range of providers (called IAG partnerships) delivering services for people older than 20 years of age (Mulvey, 2006). Due to the variety of organisations involved in service provision, the delivery standards as well as availability of services varied greatly. The National Policy Framework (DfES, 2003), developed by a number of stakeholders including the Department for Education and Skills, Department for Work and Pensions, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)<sup>2</sup>, the

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<sup>2</sup> The LSC is a non-departmental public body which began work in 2001, taking over the roles of the former Further Education Funding Council and Training and Enterprise Councils ([www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk))

University for Industry<sup>3</sup> as well as Jobcentre Plus, addressed the concern with service quality by requiring 'matrix'<sup>4</sup> accreditation from provider organisations.

Until 2001, funding sources included a wide variety of organisations including local authorities, the employment service, the National Lottery, charitable and voluntary organisations as well as fees from individuals or employers (Wright et al., 2005). However, with the creation of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in 2001, the responsibility for managing learning and skills programmes in England, which include information, advice and guidance contracts, was shifted to the LSC. In 2005-2006, the LSC distributed funds of more than £34 million on adult information, advice and guidance alone to local authorities, public corporations and trading funds, further education colleges and other institutions, non-profit institutions, the private sector and other bodies and organisations (including government bodies) (LSC, 2006). At this point contracts were tendered on a regular basis and indeed private sector providers received a large part (15%) of the LSC's total budget of £34 billion (ibid).

### **Overview of Scottish learning and skills policy**

The rationale underlying the Scottish learning and skills framework is similar to the English context. Learning and skills are closely linked into Scotland's economic development policy with a view to competitiveness in the global labour market (Scottish Executive, 2005). The strategy of the Scottish Enterprise Network from 2001 suggested

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3 University for Industry was created in 1998 and put in charge of setting up learndirect. Learndirect information, advice and guidance services can be accessed over the phone and online. ([www.ufi.com](http://www.ufi.com))

4 Matrix is a generic quality standard for information, advice and guidance services in the public and private sector. It outlines qualification levels for advisers as well as general requirements for high quality service provision. (<http://www.matrixstandard.com/>)

*“The capacity to respond rapidly to the current and future needs of the Scottish labour market is critical to success in an age of lifelong learning. We must foster an environment where people can invest in their own educational achievement. Those economies most adept at matching supply and demand in the labour market will possess a key competitive advantage.” (Scottish Executive, 2001: 15).*

There has been a strong focus in the service design on self-responsibility in managing one’s career throughout the life course by providing the support necessary (Scottish Executive, 2005) reflecting New Labour’s conception as the ‘enabling state’ (for more details see chapter 4). Nevertheless, the strong economic rationale feeding into the provision of employment advice is clear.

In an effort to unify and homogenise guidance services within the learning and skills framework, the Scottish Government has taken a different route from the National Policy Framework in England, which was based on the horizontal integration of the various provider organisations. Scotland sought vertical integration in the form of an all-age one-stop shop service (Watts, 2006), which was a conscious political decision. The service, Careers Scotland, became operational in 2002 through a merger of more than 80 different organisations (Scottish Government, 2001). It is an all-age careers guidance service that is open to everyone no matter what their labour market position or skill level. This integrated approach was regarded as superior to the age-differentiated system operated in England, because it was designed to provide an integrated, easily accessible service throughout an individual’s lifespan with attention to the key transition points in a person’s life (Watts, 2005).

However, while provision in England was within a quasi-market system, Scottish policy has rejected the contracting approach, particularly in education and training. Instead, the provision was located within enterprise policy (Howieson and Semple, 2006) through an organisational link with Scottish Enterprise<sup>5</sup>. Scottish Enterprise administered funding provided by the Scottish Government which Careers Scotland negotiated on an annual basis, dependent on the achievement of targets (Watts, 2005).

### **Alternative funding**

Apart from national funding sources in England and Scotland, the European Union is a major provider of funding for guidance and support services. The European Social Funds (ESF), as well as programmes such as SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI, have a strong underpinning of guidance. Organisations in the public, private and voluntary and community sector access funding from these programmes to deliver services to various target regions or target groups. The voluntary and community sector, in particular, supplement service provision for their specific user groups using ESF funds (Rees et al., 1999).

The learning and skills frameworks in England and Scotland have different approaches in terms of provision. However, the strategic philosophy for both is an economic rationale which links employment advice closely to labour market policies and economic development. Watt (2005) cautions against having ambitious expectations of the contribution which learning and skills policies can make to overall

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<sup>5</sup> This status was in the process of change with Careers Scotland becoming an independent organisation just after fieldwork was completed. See Chapter 10 for more details.

economic productivity and future competitiveness. He concluded that only a strong link with demand-side policies would allow these initiatives to develop their full potential. Both learning and skills frameworks also show links to ideological considerations in terms of shifting responsibility to the individual and moral obligations to society as a citizen through participation in the labour market. These concepts will be further discussed in the following section.

## **Political influences on welfare provision**

At the beginning of the 20th century Labour Exchanges were established as a means of mediating demand and supply between workers and employers along with the introduction of compulsory unemployment insurance. The Labour Exchanges shared many features of the modern benefit administration, with means testing, regular signing requirements and conditionality similar to activation policies today (Price, 2000). The development of the post-war welfare state built on Beveridge's vision of a comprehensive 'cradle-to-grave' welfare system and operated on a commitment by both Labour and Conservative parties to the welfare state and Keynesian demand management (Evans and Williams, 2009, Glennerster, 2007, Page, 2007). However, the economic crisis in 1976 brought about a fundamental change due to the Labour government trying to contain public spending, the economy becoming a main policy concern and Keynesian ideas losing favour (Glennerster, 2007). Subsequent years were marked by substantial change with the Conservative party in government from 1979-1997, trying to 'roll back the state', emphasising individualism and neo-liberal marketised solutions to societal problems. They were followed by the New Labour government (1997-2007) which concentrated on activation as a means of solving wider societal problems within an expanded landscape of quasi-market provision. In the following sections, the main policy influences of New Labour on



welfare provision, with particular respect to employment and learning and skills policy, are discussed.

### ***Conservative influences on welfare provision***

Welfare provision underwent substantial change after the Conservative government took office. The period after the election in 1979 was dominated by rapid ideological change from interventionist corporatism to neo-liberalism with reduced state influence and a change in economic policy from Keynesian demand management to monetarism (Page, 2007). The dominant mechanisms which were used to implement this change were privatisation, marketisation and reliance on individualisation.

### **Marketisation and privatisation**

Public spending was identified by the Thatcher government as having a major role in contributing to the economic difficulties at the time, and therefore as social security spending took up the largest part of the government budget, it had to be curbed (Clasen, 1994). This was ideologically connected to breaking up the 'dependency culture', emphasising neo-liberal principles of self-reliance, the power of market-allocation and promoting choice. Markets were seen as a superior mechanism in the allocation of scarce public resources (Clarke and Newman, 1997) underpinned by the belief that marketised provision delivered higher quality services than large-scale bureaucracies, at a lower cost due to competition among providers.

Le Grand and Bartlett (1993a) outlined that a purely market based provision of welfare services was never implemented. Instead, a system of government regulated quasi-markets developed where private sector companies competed for funding

allocated by the government or state agencies. However, these quasi-markets mainly operated in health care and education (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993b), while in employment services it was mainly the provision of training that was subcontracted (Finn, 2005). By 1996, the public Employment Service had all but withdrawn from direct provision of training and assumed a role as an administrator of benefits with a reputation for promoting new initiatives with short implementation time scales (Finn, *ibid*). Contracts were introduced as methods of governance and subsumed in an agenda that followed the 'rolling back the state' paradigm, where the responsibility for tackling economic and social problems was devolved from the state to the private sector and the individual (Evans and Williams, 2009, Drakeford, 2007).

These developments can be seen as attempts of privatisation on two levels; on an individual level and within the wider public sector. For the individual, this meant a devolution of responsibility and risk, influenced by the neo-liberal values of individual liberty and freedom (Le Grand, 2003). However, from a public sector reform point of view there were two main forms of privatisation. Firstly, in a large scale cost-cutting exercise to contain public spending and raise funds, former state-owned industries such as water, gas and telecommunications were sold off on the stock market (Page, 2007). The biggest privatisation came in the form of giving council tenants the 'right to buy' which raised over £28 billion over a 13 year period (Timmins, 1995).

The second aspect of privatisation was to grant Executive Agency status to former government departments and thus effectively decentralise public sector management and responsibility (Pollitt et al., 1998). One example was the Employment Service, which was granted Executive Agency status in 1990 (Price, 2000). This move was founded on the belief that public sector management methods were

outdated and inefficient and that the application of business principles to public administration would provide further cost efficiencies. The agency was given semi-autonomous status, meaning it had freedom in operational matters but was to be held accountable in relation to its performance to the Secretary of State (ibid).

By contrast, the Careers Service, which provided careers advice in England and Scotland, was hardly affected by privatisation or marketisation until the 1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act. The Act enforced privatisation of statutory services and governance through contracts and targets. It was argued that this led to a loss in strategic coherence in guidance services in England due to extensive private provision (Mulvey, 2006, Watts, 2006). In Scotland, the impact of the Act was less severe. While competition was considered, Local Enterprise Companies and local authorities were invited to submit bids. If these bids were considered acceptable, the service was not referred to competitive tendering. In the end, none of the services were delivered by private providers (Howieson and Semple, 2006).

### **Individualisation**

Individualisation had the most far reaching implications for people. Conservative values centred very much on the significance of individual liberty and freedom. This was linked to the neo-liberal belief that everyone was the maker of their own fortune, because of an inherent belief that individuals operated according to self-interest and profit maximisation (Le Grand, 2003). In this way individuals contributed to the public good with further justification for marketised provision. Consequently, those reliant on benefits had a less than favourable image ('benefit scroungers' or the 'underclass') because they were portrayed as failing to contribute to the greater good (Drakeford, 2007). This was most visible in social security through the 'stricter benefit

regime', which saw the amount of benefits reduced, conditionality and compulsion increased, along with the expansion and tightening of sanctions in cases of non-compliance (Price, 2000).

These three features were closely linked and there was an expectation that they would contribute to more effective and efficient, high quality service delivery. Critically though, these measures did not increase labour market participation, nor was there a decrease in public spending on social security. Unemployment reached unprecedented levels during the 1980s and early 1990s while social security spending increased (Glennerster, 2007).

### ***New Labour's influences on welfare provision***

In 1997, the Labour government under Tony Blair won the general election. Having focused their election campaign on welfare-to-work issues, the Labour government maintained some elements of the Conservatives' public service reform such as the use of markets as an efficient means of service provision. At the same time, they were looking to solve modern problems such as an ageing society and increasing competitive pressure through globalisation by activating the individual; that is by basing help and support on a 'rights and responsibilities' approach (Davies, 2008). These formed part of a web of ideas, named the 'Third Way', as a response to these challenges by means of social and economic change (Walker and Wiseman, 2003). Out of this set of ideas, the most important for this study are the concepts of contractualism to reform the delivery landscape of welfare programmes, and the changing conception of citizenship as a means to influence individual behaviour.

## **Contractualism and expanded provider landscape**

New Labour maintained the practice of contracting out services. In addition to maintaining market structures and the involvement of the private sector in service delivery, there was an early commitment to co-operation with the voluntary and community sector (Home Office, 1998). This commitment to the expansion of delivery channels through inclusion of the voluntary sector was further strengthened in 2001, by a call for a *“promotion of alternative providers and greater choice”* (Blair, 2001) to supplement public service delivery, in order to provide better, more cost-efficient services with a strong user focus. The view that voluntary and community sector organisations (VCOs) could better address societal problems grew out of a belief that they were *“uniquely placed to reach marginalised groups”* (HM Treasury, 2002: 5) and to help users to be actively involved in their communities. VCOs thus had a major role to play in helping to transform ideas concerning citizenship. However, critics argued that the evidence to support these claims was rather limited (Davies, 2008).

Service delivery was regulated via contracts, and even though the government cautioned against overregulation in order not to destroy the VCO sector’s uniqueness (Davies, 2008), the focus on managerial features such as performance measurement and auditing could be seen as signs of increasing regulation of the sector (Alcock and Scott, 2007). Carmel and Harlock (2008) commented that it was exactly this form of regulating behaviour that might impact negatively on the value sets of VCOs, because a blanket approach to regulating contractual relationships within this wide and diverse sector might not produce the intended outcomes (Alcock and Scott, 2002).

The expansion of contractualisation has been viewed as maintaining a softer version of the market-led competition which the Conservatives introduced (Newman,

2001)<sup>6</sup>. However, there was also a view that contractualisation might only be a stepping stone to the full scale privatisation of public employment services (Finn, 2005). International evidence on quasi-markets with pluralist providers produced ambiguous results with outcomes differing according to institutional context, service type, provider types, or the extent of disadvantage the service user faced (van Berkel and van der Aa, 2005, Considine, 2000b,). Furthermore, some of the problems which contractualisation was supposed to solve, such as creaming (focussing help on those users that were closest to the labour market) and parking (delaying support to those with multiple barriers to work), a lack of help for the most disadvantaged as well as a lack of innovative approaches, persisted (van Berkel and Borghi, 2008b).

### **Rights and Responsibilities: The ‘active worker citizen’**

The concept of activation was one of the major themes of New Labour’s reform project (Clasen and Clegg, 2006, Clarke, 2005). This was developed within a wider transformation agenda of turning ‘passive’ welfare recipients into ‘active’ citizens through participation in the labour market. These ‘active worker citizens’ were viewed as governable subjects, reflexive and self-managed, subject to coercive measures to ensure collaboration (where necessary) and enacted through the social contract formulations of rights and responsibilities (Newman, 2007).

Contractualism with the individual, as the epitome of rights and responsibilities, was enacted in part through the Jobseekers Agreement<sup>7</sup> within welfare-to-work

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<sup>6</sup> A further expansion of contractualisation was recommended in the Freud report, which was published after the completion of fieldwork. The report recommended a prime contractor model which would provide individualised services to those hardest to help (Freud, 2007). It will be discussed in more detail in chapter 10.

<sup>7</sup> Jobseekers Agreements were introduced in 1996 under the Conservative government but were maintained as an important tool to monitor jobseekers’ behaviour (McKay et. al., 1999).

policies. However, due to the compulsion these contracts contained, the power basis shifted to the adviser at Jobcentre Plus, thus giving a public agency the means to control the behaviour of individuals (Freedland and King, 2005). This established the contract with the individual as a loosely concealed control and steering instrument to certify the rights to benefits in exchange for the responsibility of actively seeking work (Mosley and Sol, 2005). Critically, a contract with the individual conferred rights to a targeted personalised service and choice of service provider (Sol and Westerveld, 2005b).

This conditionality and the imbalance between rights and responsibilities (with a much greater emphasis on responsibilities than rights) is what led Dwyer to assert that

*“membership of the citizenship club and the welfare rights that it entails will only be available for those (able-bodied) individuals who agree to contribute positively and in an approved manner to the community that they inhabit” (Dwyer, 2000: 89).*

This excluded some individuals from welfare receipt and withdrew their right to welfare. Moreover, Newman (2007) contended that coercive activation strategies might constrain some individuals from achieving full citizenship status as part of the work force due to the dangers involved in entering a deregulated, flexible labour market. These considerations make the rights and responsibilities based approach to citizenship highly contentious, particularly with a view towards the potential of these activation policies to produce the intended outcome.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has located welfare-to-work and learning and skills policies in their political and historical context. Within the context of New Labour's 'Third Way', a complex set of policies aimed at reforming the social and economic environment in the UK, both policy frameworks, the welfare-to-work and the learning and skills framework respectively, have pursued an economic rationale to develop an active work-focused society into a globally competitive work force. Contractualism, with providers and individuals respectively, is a prominent feature and takes on the role of a steering and control instrument. The expansion of the provider structures to the voluntary and community sector in particular has raised questions with regards to the suitability of this approach, particularly the impact it might have on VCOs. Contractualism with the individual is the epitome of the rights and responsibilities agenda, where New Labour has sought to create the 'worker citizen' who would contribute to the greater good through paid work in exchange for the right to benefits. These developments provide the framework within which this study is located, particularly as it sets out the environment within which advisers operate.



## Chapter 3

# Governance in service delivery

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## Introduction

The conceptual framework for this study is rooted in the concept of governance. The aim is to investigate the ways in which different governance regimes emerge through the management and practice of advisers at street level (Lipsky, 1980). Governance, as a pattern of rule or the activity of ruling has a long lineage (Bevir, 2009). However, more recent academic interest can be located in the public sector reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, which were influenced by globalisation, wider socio-economic changes and the agendas of supra-national organisations. Governance has thus become “*a strategy to link the contemporary state to the contemporary society*” (Pierre, 2000: 52). The governance literature has explored, mapped and critiqued changes in the boundaries of state authority (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003).

A starting point could be seen in the public management reforms during the Thatcher era, where the governance literature engaged with public management reforms such as devolution (‘steering rather than rowing’), decentralisation and the proliferation of (quasi) markets and competition (see for instance Pollitt, 2000, Pollitt et al., 1998, Rhodes, 1997, Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993b, Osborne and Gaebler, 1992, Hood, 1991). In 1998, Stoker (1998) re-conceptualised governance as an organising principle or framework which allowed the analysis of how sets of actors with different power relations worked together on social issues, with the government taking the role of steering and guiding delivery agents using new tools and techniques, focussing on the rise of partnership working (Greve and Hodge, 2010, Pestoff and Brandsen, 2010, Clarke and Glendinning, 2002, Glendinning et al., 2002), contractualisation (Davies, 2008, Finn, 2005, Cutler and Waine, 2000), incentive management and a renewal of civil society (Clarke, 2005, Newman, 2001).

These developments were related to concurrent shifts in political thought towards the 'renewal of social democracy' (Giddens, 2000, 1998) which was core to New Labour's 'Third Way' approach to the organisation of public services and reform of the civil service (Horton and Jones, 1996). This new trend included a much wider range of actors into considerations of how their relationships are directed and steered. Thus governance refers to

*"the 'steering' of the subjects' behavioural practices towards particular social and politico-economic goals via a set of institutions and processes that aim to maintain or change the status quo" (Carmel and Papadopoulos, 2003: 32)*

The changing political and societal context has made governance a central part of government reform mechanisms that have as their goal to cope with these changes (van Berkel and Borghi, 2008a). Within the context of social policy, two broad distinctions of the concept of governance could be made, which Carmel and Papadopoulos (2003: 32) referred to as 'governance in the formal policy domain' and 'governance in the operational policy domain'. First, 'governance in the formal policy domain' was concerned with government strategies (at different levels) to deal with social and societal problems. In this context, the concept of activation could be considered as a governance mechanism (Berkel and Valkenburg, 2007).

Within the UK context and internationally, activation as a transformative governance mechanism in its diverse guises has received considerable attention (Serrano Pascual and Crespo Suárez, 2007, van Berkel and Valkenburg, 2007, Lødemel and Trickey, 2001). 'Governance in the operational policy domain' referred to the 'how' of policy making and took into consideration the relationships between different

actors in the provision of services and their delivery (Carmel and Papadopoulos, 2003). Academically, this substantive area covered a variety of aspects including the internationalisation of policy making (see for instance Büchs, 2007, Carmel et al., 2007), devolvement of decision making power to lower levels (Bonvin and Moachon, 2007, Stoker, 2004), the promotion of partnership working (Wiggan, 2007, Glendinning et al., 2002), processes of marketisation (Bredgaard and Larsen, 2008, Bruttel, 2005, van Berkel and van der Aa, 2005, Considine, 2000a, Clarke and Newman, 1997), as well as the contractually influenced relationships between state agencies, providers, front-line workers and service users (Brodkin, 2007, Wright, 2006, Freedland and King, 2005,). The academic interest in governance has kept pace with developments in the real world, and therefore this area of investigation remains a current research concern because of the rapidly changing policy environment.

This study is firmly located in the 'operational policy' domain of governance and more specifically it investigates the relationships between service providers, front-line workers and service users. However, the operational and formal policy domains were closely connected and should not be separated (van Berkel and Borghi, 2008b) because of how front-line advisers deliver services and how relationships with service users were developed. This was closely influenced by overall political goals and conceptions of how a particular problem could be solved. These macro-level government conceptions have been outlined in the previous chapter.

This chapter discusses the various forms of governance present in the UK service delivery context with particular reference to employment advice services, and outlines why the managerial model of governance was the most prevalent. This is

followed by a discussion of some elements of managerial governance, focussing in particular on performance measurement, targets and incentives.

## **Governance models in UK service delivery**

As highlighted in the previous chapter, there had been a progressive shift to more market based service delivery since the 1980s. When New Labour took office in 1997, the delivery structures were widened to further encourage private and, increasingly voluntary and community sector organisations (VCOs) to participate in service provision in an effort to capitalise on their special capacities to reach particular target groups (DWP, 2007a). The expanded set of provider organisations required a rethink of the governance of delivery systems away from monolithic structures and the rule of bureaucracy (Blair, 2001) towards, at least theoretically, partnership based models.

The analysis of different governance approaches to service delivery has received international attention. Considine (2001) compared different approaches cross-nationally and developed four distinct types of governance based on the source of rationality, form of control, primary virtue and service delivery focus. Table 1 (see p. 37) summarises the four types and their relevant orientations.

Whilst this provided a valuable insight on the developments internationally, Newman's (Newman, 2007) later study of governance in the UK context was much more current and specifically focused on the UK. According to her study, there were four types of governance that co-existed in the UK service delivery context: hierarchical, managerial, network and self governance. While these four types

**Table 1: Considine’s four types of governance**

	<b>Source of rationality</b>	<b>Form of control</b>	<b>Primary virtue</b>	<b>Service delivery focus</b>
<b>Procedural governance</b>	Law	Rules	Reliability	Universal treatment
<b>Corporate governance</b>	Management	Plans	Goal-driven	Targets
<b>Market governance</b>	Competition	Contracts	Cost-driven	Prices
<b>Network governance</b>	Relationships	Co-production	Flexibility	Brokerage

co-existed, there had also been a historical trajectory from the traditional hierarchies to the modern forms of networks. This will be outlined further in a brief discussion of the four types.

The hierarchical model of governance is best represented in traditional bureaucracy. Weber’s (Weber et al., 1991) ideal type view of bureaucracy was presented as an impersonal, top-down hierarchy based on rules and regulations, which allowed equity to prevail over individualism and thus produced efficient outcomes. This has been the preferred form of organising government agencies for decades (Wiggan, 2009). Interestingly, Weber (Weber et al., 1991) also addressed the use of coercion and discretion. Coercion was supposed to be strictly limited and the conditions of its use closely defined. This is an interesting notion, because it appears to allow the state to subject its citizens to coercive measures in order to achieve certain outcomes, which is not inconsistent with New Labour’s ‘carrot and stick’ approach. Discretion, in Weber’s view, was to be subordinate to the authority’s goals, and

officials' actions were supposed to be strictly rule bound. These points will be addressed in more detail in the following chapter.

Traditionally, hierarchical forms of governance in employment services provision were common (Price, 2000). For instance, the Benefits Agency (although this was not an employment service) and the Employment Service were bureaucracies which were governed top-down, were centrally organised and rule bound. Service users would all receive exactly the same kind of service according to the equity principle that dominated the public service ethos. However, in the 1970s and '80s the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery using bureaucracies was called into question in the face of declining tax revenues.

The prospect that private sector management methods would improve the efficiency of bureaucracies, made it necessary to give administrators 'the right to manage' and make them responsible for the achievement of results (Hughes, 1994). The main tools for bringing this shift about could be found in New Public Management. This included the introduction of performance targets, service quality measures, customer focus and performance related pay for front-line staff. Additionally, it involved the contracting of public service delivery through a market based, competitive process involving the private sector and the outright privatisation of public services (Watts, 2005). A wide-ranging debate, however, existed about whether New Public Management was indeed 'new' or whether it consisted of old concepts disguised in new terminology, a groundbreaking revolution or merely incremental changes to existing practices (see for instance Pollitt, 2000, Dunleavy and Hood, 1994, Hood, 1991).

Although this debate was never resolved, New Public Management practices found their way into public service delivery. A market system was seen as the solution to the ever increasing pressure on public spending. There was a view that supply and demand would regulate service delivery with only the most efficient and effective organisations surviving in a competitive market place (Langan, 2000). This meant that public service organisations were to compete for contracts with private for-profit and not-for-profit organisations.

Although a pure market system in the provision of welfare services was never implemented, a structure of quasi-markets was created which involved competition in a regulated and controlled environment, although this was mostly restricted to the education, health, and care sectors (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993b). After the New Labour government took office in 1997, for a short period contracting out became the most common type of quasi-market allocation of employment services in the UK, and indeed the UK used this mechanism more extensively than any other OECD country (Watts, 2005). However, after intensive forays into marketisation at the start of the New Labour government, service provision via quasi-markets developed incrementally, while other countries such as Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands pushed ahead (see for instance van Berkel and van der Aa, 2005, Bruttel, 2004, Considine, 2000a). When the fieldwork for this study was conducted, there was a substantial mix of delivery options, with public sector organisations acting as the main gateway to welfare to work programmes, and the private for-profit and not-for-profit organisations delivering specialised support to specific groups in the population (DWP, 2007a).



Despite this, the benefits of provider competition in employment service provision - such as better quality services and efficiency savings are highly debatable. International evidence has suggested that the focus on efficiency and effectiveness in quasi-markets was more a rhetorical construct than one based on factual evidence (van Berkel, 2010, Bredgaard and Larsen, 2008). Elsewhere, Brodtkin (2005) contended that within the US context, there was little evidence that contracting out produced the intended benefits to the government. Most importantly, Davies (2008) argued that, given the same conditions, public employment services were just as effective as, or even more effective than, their private and VCO sector competitors.

New Public Management was as much a political statement as it was a shift in organisational principles (Gray and Jenkins, 1995). The world over, right-wing, neo-liberally orientated governments trusted in the more efficient mechanisms of (quasi-) marketised provisions, privatisation and a shift to customer focused services (Hood, 1991). The available literature centred very much on the, "*promotional ('look at what we are doing') or how-to-do-it ('a guide to...')*" (Pollitt, 2000: 182) sides of public management reform and focused on either cross-national comparisons of policy change or individual case studies (Vigoda-Gadot and Meiri, 2008). With particular regard to employment services, Pollitt (2000) pointed out that broader evaluations of the impact of the new regime in welfare provision during the 1980s and '90s were rare, were focused on particular policies and were carried out in-house by government agencies, thus raising questions about their objectivity and rigorousness. Critically though, the perspectives and experiences of individuals implementing the reforms have been given little attention.

The involvement of the private sector in service delivery is nowadays complemented by an increased contracting of voluntary and community sector organisations to capitalise on their unique skills and expertise (DWP, 2007a). This widening of the delivery network has prompted an emphasis on new forms of governance beyond the plain market focus which managerial and hierarchical forms proposed, towards partnership-based networks. Partnerships were central to the New Labour 'Third Way' model emphasising collaboration and trust between the partners and weaker centralised control through government (Rummery, 2002). This new way of governance was intended to address the limitations of the mixed economy of welfare (Johnson, 1998) to remedy complex social, economic and political problems (Jessop, 2000).

Partnerships were promoted vertically (between government and service providers) and horizontally (between individual service providers on the local level) and usually involved some sort of contractual arrangement including performance targets and controls to determine how well the partnership was performing. In principle, the idea appears attractive; a mix of providers delivering a service using their particular expertise in a coordinated fashion to improve service quality and deliver better services with their own responsibility on how best to achieve this. However, there are questions to be raised about power relationships because contracting out has brought with it a wave of further sub-contracting. This often includes a mix of organisations then subjected to managerial regulations by the prime contractor.

The implications for the relationships between contracting organisations has gained growing academic interest. Carmel and Harlock (2008) found that the combination of providers triggered a normalisation process that stripped voluntary

service organisation of their value sets in an attempt to turn them into market-orientated service providers. This was due to the combination of performance measurement inherent in the contractual arrangement and the overpowering influence for-profit organisations had in the partnership. They further outlined, that this process effectively devalued voluntary and community sector organisations (VCOs) and diluted the uniqueness of their approach in dealing with their target groups in an effort to comply with the contractual requirements. Jackson (2010) has found that there was a substantial lack of understanding by public sector agencies as well as VCOs regarding each others' ethos, shape and decision making processes. This raised further issues which require theoretical exploration with regards to the organisational impact on VCOs' involvement in contracted service delivery and the governance of funder relations within these relationships. This particular aspect, however, was beyond the scope of this project.

Interestingly, the effective devolution of power to partnerships has not taken place. Rather there has been a power shift back to central government, towards centralised command and control structures based on distrust founded in a fear of potential underachievement by the partnership organisations (Newman, 2001). Instead of the involved partners creating devolved management structures, these networks were managed, steered and controlled externally through central agencies (Jessop, 2000). Rummery highlighted that a true form of partnership working did not exist in the UK context of welfare service delivery, but that they were

*"a mixture of quasi-market style incentives with bureaucratic, statist controls."(Rummery, 2002: 243)*

Self-governance would provide a highly autonomous way of service delivery based on strong organisational or professional values and ownership of the delivery process by the individual adviser (Newman, 2007). It would also involve the individual service users in the service delivery because services could be highly tailored to suit individual needs. However, the current context of centralised award and control structures in the contracting of employment services has reduced this governance model to mere rhetoric (Wiggan, 2009).

Considering that partnerships and network governance have never been fully realised or have been restricted to short-lived pilot programmes, the delivery of employment advice services was still very much dominated by the tenets of managerial governance within the framework of quasi-market provision involving a wider mix of providers (Wiggan, 2009). Performance targets, quality measures, customer focus and performance-related pay have formed the core of a managerial toolbox giving central powers the means to control and steer the providers and thus substantially influence service delivery. These are firmly integrated in the delivery contracts and since front-line advisers' work is directly affected by them, performance measurement and reward systems deserve a more detailed analysis.

## **Performance measurement**

While contracts allow the seemingly efficient allocation of tax money, it is important for the contracting agency to control whether contract requirements have been fulfilled. It was also essential to establish whether the contractor was indeed effective in its delivery (Martin, 1997). Thus the mechanisms of performance measurement were a means of legitimising delivery organisations just as they were legitimising government policies (Clarke and Newman, 1997).

The notions of performance measurement and performance management are often used interchangeably. Lebas (1995) for example, offered a separate definition for each with performance measurement consisting of key indicators that provide contextual and case specific information and performance management including activities that influence these contextual factors such as training, management style, attitudes and incentives. He also indicated that the two could not be separated because performance management created the context for performance measurement but was influenced by the outcomes of the measurement process. Within managerial governance, performance measurement and incentives form part of the same toolbox. Because of this close linkage, the term performance measurement will be used throughout this thesis.

The contractual provision of services has created a principal-agent relationship between funder and service provider. However, this relationship brought with it its own problems such as high transaction cost, regulation, performance evaluation and incentive mechanisms which might stifle innovation, leading to creaming and parking of customers, or cause a decline in service quality (van Berkel and Borghi, 2008b). Two of these problems, performance evaluation and incentive mechanisms, will be considered more closely due to their direct impact on front-line advisers.

Performance evaluation fulfilled a number of functions; it provides transparency about costs, highlights areas for improvement, and provides a basis for appraisal and evidence for incentives or sanctions which enables comparison or benchmarking between organisations and individuals (de Bruijn, 2002). In their influential work on public sector reform, Osborne and Gaebler (1992) emphasised the necessity for performance measurement within marketised provision, suggesting

*“What gets measured gets done”* (p.146). The central idea was the careful measurement of inputs against outputs and the comparison against targets and benchmarks to determine success and failure of an initiative and to maximise profit (Heinrich and Marschke, 2010).

During the 1980s and early '90s, performance measurement in the UK public sector was mainly output focused which caused more substantial problems. The focus on target achievement, and the often concurrent promises of performance rewards, encouraged perverse tactics such as parking of difficult to help service users or creaming of easily to place users (Burgess and Ratto, 2003). As a response, the government under Tony Blair brought increased attention to performance measurement and the quasi-market provision of services came to operate within the 'performance-evaluation nexus', a collection of governance institutions, continuous cycles of target setting, evaluation, auditing and policy adjustment (Clarke, 2004).

One of the key difficulties with performance measurement is defining what exactly gets measured. New Labour's continued focus on performance measurement required targets to be SMART that is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-tabled in order to give a clear measure of inputs, outputs and outcomes (Audit Commission, 1999). There was a rhetorical shift towards outcome based measures and a move towards more public accountability and a regulatory function of government (Newman, 2001). Interestingly, there remained a strong focus on measuring the Three Es, economy, efficiency and effectiveness which had been a focus of performance under the Conservatives, with a newly added emphasis on delivering value for money (Audit Commission, 1999). Underlying these programmatic shifts was a belief that performance measurement could deliver strong improvements in service quality and

efficiency. It was seen as the key to delivering value for money (Cutler and Waine, 2000).

However, measuring effectiveness and programme outcomes is problematic. Outcomes are difficult to define as a SMART target because they may be quite abstract (such as intended changes in attitude, or increases in confidence). Consequently, they are difficult to measure and could be neglected in favour of easier to measure outputs (Holloway, 1999). Flynn (2007) drew attention to the fact that in order to get reliable information about outcomes, performance measures and targets needed to remain stable over a longer period of time since the effects of some services might not become apparent immediately (Holloway, 1999). Whether this stability to provide reliable outcome information existed, particularly in the realm of welfare-to-work provision, is highly questionable in a world of rapidly changing policies.

The usefulness of performance measurement in the public sector and contracted services was not uncontested because an emphasis on performance measurement did not solve governance problems (Propper and Wilson, 2003). There was little indication that these measures were relevant to producing the desired outcomes or produced the desired efficiencies (Greiling, 2006). On the contrary, performance measurement, particularly in the public sector, had been found to commodify services further and to deprofessionalise front-line workers (Adcroft and Willis, 2005). This was due to the commercialisation of service provision and a shift from value-driven professional activities to complying with rules, regulations and target fulfilment. In a similar vein, Radnor and McGuire (2004) produced evidence that performance measurement mainly served as a diagnostic function rather than to help improve service delivery. There was growing evidence that despite a reorientation

towards outcomes, perverse tactics such as creaming and parking of service users to maximise profit was a common problem at a national and international level (Bruttel, 2004, Considine, 2003).

From an adviser perspective, an emphasis on measurable, hard targets had limitations because the tasks performed by advisers were highly complex and often involved discretionary decisions (Kouzmin et al., 1999). Due to the nature of the contracts, the need to control service providers, the complexity of adviser's work and a need to produce the necessary evidence for the various stakeholders, the government was measuring more and more with ever increasing levels of sophistication to ensure that services were delivering the intended outcomes (Propper and Wilson, 2003, Martin, 1997) While this seemed logical, since only measured things get accomplished (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992), it might in practice lead to unintended consequences such as a focus by advisers on the measured task only. Flynn (2007) argued that due to information overload, advisers might base their decisions on limited amounts of information. Alternatively, their decision-making might be influenced by strong policy messages. Thus their decisions might be targeted towards policies which had received particular emphasis whilst neglecting others, potentially producing unintended outcomes (Flynn, 2007). The combination of these factors has made more difficult the development of appropriate, relevant performance measures which go beyond mere output measurement.

Apart from the quantitatively orientated methods to assess performance, there are also those with a more qualitative focus. Reflective practice is one example which is prevalent in professions where the integration of theory and practice is essential, for example, nursing, teaching, counselling and, crucially, careers guidance (Fowler, 2003).



Reflective practice is an assessment method for practitioners which aims to help them to “*evaluate their interventions, question their assumptions, recognise their biases and prejudices*” (Irving and Williams, 1995: 107) either with the help of a supervisor or in self-assessment. From a managerial perspective this approach does not so much help to achieve numerical targets, but rather supports much more the delivery of a high quality service by evaluating continuously the validity of the professional’s actions with regards to the service user needs. Thus it prevented a purely task-orientated approach (Douglas, 1999). From a managerial perspective, this form of performance evaluation delivers on the premises of high quality service and customer focus. In addition, reflective practice is used to evaluate the actions of the professionals and the outcomes of their actions and therefore provide a more detailed insight into the effects of interventions.

There are multiple ways to measure performance. The most common is via targets. Although not uncontroversial, performance measurement has been accepted as a common feature in the contracting landscape. Performance measurement and in particular the fulfilment of targets are often directly linked to rewards for contractors.

## **Incentives**

Performance measurement has often formed the basis for incentives. These have been a common feature in private sector companies to reward target achievement. However, their introduction to the public and VCO sector has been a more recent development (Burgess and Ratto, 2003) which was expanded along with the shift to quasi-market service provision in the UK. Contracts produced a principal-agent relationship, with the government taking the role of the principal (purchaser) and the pluralistic mix of delivery organisations taking the role of the agent (provider)

(Johnson, 1998, Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993a). As agents, providers implemented policy on behalf of the government (Dixit, 2002). Monetary incentives are often used to motivate and steer the actions of the contractor on the macro-level, and similarly for the contractor to steer the actions of the front-line workers on the micro-level, towards the intended policy outcomes. This is based on the underlying assumption that organisations and individuals must at least have a partial interest in financial profit (Bartlett and Le Grand, 1993).

However, the usefulness of incentives has been questioned in connection with the perverse effects such as creaming and parking for profit maximisation as previously mentioned (van Berkel and Borghi, 2008b). They are also called into question with regards to the motivation of organisations and front-line workers. How advisers mediate the sometimes competing demands of the multiple stakeholders may depend on their motivation and ultimately impact on the intended policy outcomes.

There are a number of approaches to motivation and how it can be conceptualised. The most prominent from a psychological perspective is probably the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsically motivated behaviour is based on self-determination and internally located satisfaction through, for instance, mastery of a skill, personal satisfaction or, in the case of employment advisers or public service employees, the provision of a good service. Extrinsically motivated behaviour is based on achieving an external reward such as money or compliance with external constraints (Besley and Ghatak, 2005, Deci and Ryan, 1985). Le Grand (2003), who approached motivation from a public policy perspective, saw this dichotomy as insufficient since intrinsic and extrinsic motivation might be interdependent. In his view, intrinsically motivated behaviour might be motivated by

extrinsic rewards and vice versa. He, instead, distinguished between what he calls 'knights' and 'knaves'. He defined

- Knights as *"individuals who are motivated to help others for no private reward, and indeed who may undertake such activities to the detriment of their own private interests"* (ibid: 27) and
- Knaves as *"self-interested individuals who are motivated to help others only if by so doing they will serve their private interests"* (ibid: 27)

Le Grand's (2003) view disentangles the interdependence of the two motivators. However, it neglects the coercive impetus that extrinsic motivators such as organisational or program constraints might carry. An employment adviser might well be a 'knight' at heart, but may be forced by external constraints to comply with the expected or explicitly rewarded behaviour. Therefore, the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are preferred for this study.

The design of appropriate reward systems has been of some concern to researchers. There are several applications of performance related pay ranging from individualised payments, to bonuses for target achievement being spread equally among the team, to performance related pay not being used at all (Marsden, 2003). Besley and Ghatak (2005), for example, have shown that for 'motivated agents', that is individuals who are intrinsically motivated to perform a task, monetary incentives might not be necessary. Therefore, a reward system that is solely based on extrinsic, monetary rewards of an individual might not be conducive to improved performance.

Whilst the motivating effects of a future reward are indisputable, individual rewards may also function as a sanction if the performance level is not achieved, thus exerting much more coercive pressure on the individual (de Bruijn, 2002, Kohn, 1993). This in turn might lead to undesirable behaviour such as gaming, i.e. the manipulation of performance data by the agent. Such behaviour might be particularly prevalent where there was a minimum performance threshold with a bonus for exceeding the threshold (Dixit, 2002). While such an incentive scheme might be preferred by politicians because the risk of policy failure could not easily be spread, it is open to manipulation by the agent. Instead, team-based rewards or reinvestment in work environment improvements may be much more effective rewards in services which required complex task performances as was the case with employment advisers (Burgess and Ratto, 2003).

The task complexity of advisers' work brings with it another difficulty. Dixit (1997) argued that if a task outcome could be accurately observed it could carry a higher powered incentive, i.e. a more intrinsic reward, "*because the outcome is a better indicator of the effort one wants to motivate*" (p. 379). However, with complex tasks it can be difficult to define and observe the specific tasks. Therefore, in order to prevent focus on an easily observable task, organisations have had to resort to weaker financial incentives and install extensive, costly monitoring systems. This links back to the difficulties of designing appropriate outcome measures and the resort to more easily measurable outputs by principals. Burgess and Ratto (2003) concluded that poorly designed measures left little choice but to resort to weaker monetary incentives. Performance measurement and incentives are closely linked concepts and, as the previous discussion suggests, their design needs to be task specific to avoid unintended policy outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter locates the study conceptually in the governance literature, which has provided a broader conceptual framework than the traditional street-level theory approach used to analyse the different governance dynamics in the provider organisations. The chapter has reviewed literature on governance and governance types and specifically examined those types that were developed by Newman (2001) in the UK context. It has provided a short analysis of the existence of these types in service delivery and showed that the managerial governance perspective is the most relevant and applicable in the provision of employment advice and guidance services. Performance management and rewards are key parts of the enactment of managerial governance. Their implementation has had its difficulties due to inaccurate definitions of targets, difficulties in measuring and the potential for perverse behaviour to exploit performance rewards. Performance management is about steering and controlling service delivery, but it has also influenced advisers in their interactions with service users, for instance to limit the use of discretion (Brodkin, 2005, Baldwin, 1997). These 'softer' governance factors, such as the use of discretion, are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 4  
Governing individuals:  
discretion, trust and changing people

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## **Introduction**

So far, the 'hard' factors of managerial governance, performance measurement and rewards, have been considered. This chapter considers monitoring and steering mechanisms in relation to their impact on the interactions between advisers and service users. Advisers have been established as a focal point for informing and influencing user's behaviour (Jewell and Glaser, 2006) and politically, are portrayed as mediators of inequality in their role in allocating life chances (Watts, 1996). Transitions into employment have been established as key sites of state intervention and advisers are charged with mediating this process of confronting citizens with the rules of engagement. However, the ways in which advisers govern their relationships with service users and promote behavioural changes has received little attention so far. The following chapter will explore the 'softer' factors governing adviser interactions. The concepts of discretion and trust are discussed as a means to building a relationship with the service users. A discussion on how the ultimate policy goal of changing service user's behaviour into a more active one rounds off the chapter.

## **Discretion and street-level behaviour**

The use of discretion in service delivery has received considerable attention in academic literature. Proponents of discretion have argued for instance that giving front-line workers sufficient discretion to make individual decisions to achieve a clearly defined goal contributed to a high quality service (Gaster, 1999). Opponents have referred to problems with policy implementation which required stringent task definitions and controls to ensure intended policy outcomes and limited discretion to prevent arbitrary decision-making (see for instance Brodtkin, 2005, Baldwin, 1997, Young, 1981, Titmuss, 1971).

For the purpose of this project, a person has discretion “*whenever the effective limits of his power leave him [sic] free to make a choice among possible courses of action or inaction.*” (Davis 1974 cited in Adler and Asquith, 1981: 9). This definition highlighted two key aspects, which would be of concern throughout this study. Firstly, persons exercising discretion are limited in their actions by a regulatory framework set up by the organisation they worked for or by some other external power (in the context of this study the contractual obligations and organisational requirements). Secondly, the worker has a choice between possible actions. In some respects, these two aspects are contradictory, because on the one hand there are rules and regulations in place to direct and limit the individuals’ actions whilst on the other they have some decision-making freedom to use the discretion afforded to them, but also in deciding whether or not to follow the rules and regulations imposed on them.

This contradiction is at the heart of the pressures which advisers have to mediate. While it is generally acknowledged that some degree of control is necessary to prevent arbitrariness, Hasenfeld (1992) argued that reducing any highly complex task such as advisory work to a merely programmatic and procedural format would eliminate the human dimension and any opportunity to provide a personalised service would be forgone by “*treating people as innate objects without regard to their humanness*” (Hasenfeld, 1992: 4). The flexibility to react to individual needs was found to be important for successful policy implementation, especially where the aim was to bring about attitudinal and behavioural changes (Keiser et al., 2004, Maynard-Moody et al., 1990, Hill, 1969). With the introduction of managerial methods in service provision, mechanisms to control discretionary behaviour are firmly in place. Ironically, the introduction of these methods may be the cause of a wider spread of street-level behaviour where front-line workers develop coping mechanisms in order to comply



with the rigidly set frameworks and targets (Lipsky, 1980). Nevertheless, the purpose of this project is not to determine whether discretion should be restricted or not. In the context of welfare policies, the application of discretion is unavoidable. Rather as Adler and Asquith (1981) pointed out, it is necessary to examine discretion “*on the face-to-face-level*” (ibid, p. 10) to understand how managerial methods impact on the work of street-level staff.

The focus on the face-to-face level of discretion has waned somewhat since Lipsky’s (1980) groundbreaking study. Cutler and Waine (1997) attributed this to the shift towards quasi-market provision and managerial methods of control during the 1980s and 1990s in the UK, with a corresponding shift of research endeavours towards top-down evaluation approaches. More recently, however, there has been a revival in the US of street-level studies from a bottom-up perspective in the realm of welfare services delivery. For instance, Brodtkin (2007, 2001, 2000, 1997) focused particularly on adviser’s uses of discretion within changing organisational contexts. While Lipsky focused specifically on bureaucracies, it is important that Brodtkin (ibid) found that strategies among front-line workers in quasi-market environments did not diverge substantially from those in bureaucracies and that the old delivery problems persisted within new provision contexts. This supported the viability of Lipsky’s theory even within changed contexts. In a similar context, Moore (1990) examined different decision-making propensities based on adviser’s behaviour preferences. Scott (1997) took an experimental approach and determined that the level of organisational control, that is the extent of performance measurement, as well as service user characteristics, were significant factors influencing adviser decisions. These are key insights, since they highlight the importance of responsiveness to user needs and that

advisers consider this when making decisions. It also shines the spotlight again on managerial control versus user needs nexus which advisers mediate.

Whilst there is a plethora of approaches and theoretical developments elsewhere in the world, UK researchers have seemed reluctant to apply bottom-up perspectives to policy implementation. Studies of street-level behaviour in welfare services are rare and spread over a variety of academic fields, covering for instance social work and employment services. Most closely related to this study, was Wright's (2001) study of street-level advisers in Jobcentres in the UK. This compared official policy with its implementation by personal advisers. The observations focused on routine tasks, the introduction of a new policy, and adviser responses to performance measurement. Wright (2001) concluded that by applying street-level practices, advisers changed policies substantially by making them less active than intended by policy makers. Ellis et al. (1999) studied the uses of discretion by care worker teams when carrying out needs assessments, with particular regard to suitable methodologies to study this kind of behaviour. They concluded that street-level activities could not be fully assessed by the omnipresent top-down evaluations, but rather needed a bottom-up methodology. On the national level in particular, there appears to be a considerable gap in this kind of literature, regardless of whether it addresses the uses of discretion in face-to-face interactions from a methodological, implementation perspective or governance perspective as applied in this study.

## **Trust and trustworthiness**

Zaheer and Venkatraman (1995) showed that merely having the right governance structures in place on the macro and micro level did not necessarily lead to the desired procedural outcomes. Nevertheless they found that high levels of trust,

established through continuous interaction, impacted positively on the dynamic link between governance structures and processes. The advisers operated within managerial governance structures and implemented processes which produced an outcome for service users. The higher the trust relationship between the parties involved, the higher the likelihood of joint action between them (ibid). This means that a relationship based on trust allows the balancing of governance structures with processes to achieve positive outcomes. Conversely, if governance structures or processes gain predominance the other components may be adversely affected. The adviser is at the centre of this balancing act, being influenced on the one hand by managerial governance structures and on the other hand by the interaction process with the user.

This is particularly important in quasi-market environments, where as a result of managerial governance the inherent uncertainty and risk are managed through standardised frameworks, rules, regulations and measurement (Brown and Calnan, 2010). Trust may be considered the most cost effective means to control a contractual relationship. However, these relationships are often governed by an underlying distrust and a fear that one party might abuse its power (Gilson, 2006, Kramer, 1999); in this way parties may place themselves in vulnerable positions by trusting the other.

In order for one person to be trusted, they first have to appear trustworthy to the other. As Coulson (1998) highlighted, trusting someone was a voluntary, willing and therefore, conscious action. Trustworthiness can be created through different mechanisms such as reputation, third party endorsements and the individual's personal preferences (Coulson, 1998). In the case of front-line staff, this may be represented by continued interactions over a long period of time (reputation),

professional standards or professional degrees (third party endorsement), and the behaviour exhibited by the staff or service provider towards the user (personal preferences)<sup>8</sup>. These personal preferences could take three forms (Ben-Ner and Putterman, 2001):

- self-regarding preferences which focused on establishing a reputation,
- other-regarding preferences which focused on the concern for the well-being of the other person, and
- process-regarding preferences, which focused on the adherence to rules, norms and principles.

Braynov and Sandholm (2002) showed that if in contractual relationships one party's trustworthiness equalled the other party's trust social welfare could be maximised. This is an important finding when examining advisers who mediate the tensions between multiple stakeholders because it means that advisers may not be able to produce positive outcomes if this trust-trustworthiness balance cannot be established.

Trust could be conceptualised through an amalgamation of contexts interacting with each other, as proposed by Hosmer (1995). These contexts included amongst others individual expectations, interpersonal relations and economic transactions. One way of establishing trust is by fulfilling expectations. For example, the expectation both

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<sup>8</sup> Ben-Ner and Putterman (2001) pointed out how organisations tried to give themselves a human face to appear trustworthy to service users. Their findings highlighted that in the eyes of the customer, the front-line staff as representatives of the service, became the service, which was why for this discussion a separation of the service and the adviser was not necessary.

from the user and from the policy side is that the provider has delivered a service according to the user's needs whilst complying with contract specifications. When this condition is met, a trust relationship can be created in both directions (Coulson, 1998). There is an underlying vulnerability in trusting the other party to engage in an expected behaviour based on the associated risk that they may not. These factors when considered together reflected Mishra et. al.'s (1996) definition of trust which is widely used:

Trust was considered to be *“one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is (a) competent, (b) open, (c) concerned, and (d) reliable” (ibid, p. 265)*

Based on the differing motivations and aims of the provider organisations, it might be expected that those providers who have a strong focus on responsiveness to user needs would aim to build a strong trust relationship with the user. In contrast, in those organisations which are more responsive to policy considerations or aim at financial gain, the focus might be on building trust with the contract funder and less so with the service user. Trust building is a dynamic process which moves through various stages. Initial trust is usually established at a low level and then built up, but may also revert to earlier stages if trust is broken (Coulson, 1998). Lewicki et. al. (1996) identified three levels of trust in work relationships.

The first level (Lewicki et al., 1996) was calculus-based trust where the individuals were expected to comply with regulations and were under the threat of punishment if they did not. This view of trust relates closely to Hosmer's (1995) notion of economic transactions. In the adviser-user relationship, this could work on two different levels. For instance, in many welfare-to-work programmes, the user is

required to participate in a programme and if she or he does not comply with the requirements faces sanctions. Conversely, the adviser is expected to comply with programme and reporting requirements, which are all closely monitored in the performance measurement systems. For instance, if they fall behind or their performance does not measure up, they faced the threat of not receiving bonuses. Consequently, for both parties the threat of punishment has a strong impetus to comply because the potential cost would outweigh the benefits. Tyler and Kramer (1996) found this kind of trust strongly based on a rational perspective grounded in the assumption that people were risk averse and the violation of trust was costly and required sanctions. Thus as a minimum, people relied on everyone adhering to basic rules.

The next level (Lewicki et al., 1996) was that of knowledge-based trust. Here, information and regular exchanges between the parties involved allowed either side to predict the behaviour of the other side and a relationship was established. The key here was the repeated interaction of the parties involved. Again, this worked in two directions. The users could develop an understanding that if they provide the necessary information then solutions to problems could be developed and implemented based on personal preferences. For the adviser the constant exchange of information provides a consistent basis for their work. The exchange of information is not so much seen as a control mechanism but rather a means of support and an indicator if further help was needed. Thus, the collection and exchange of information is a means to identify problems to which solutions can then be developed on a joint basis. This brings about notions of cooperation and reciprocity which are key aspects of Hosmer's (1995) lens of interpersonal relations.

Identification-based trust (Lewicki et al., 1996) was considered the highest level. Here both parties involved had a deep understanding of *“the other’s needs, choices, and preferences and also [shared] some of those same needs, choices, and preferences”* (ibid: 123). This implied that both parties could act on behalf of each other. Whilst such a level of trust is typical for very intimate relationships (such as husband and wife), a similar level of trust could be developed between adviser and service user when sharing a similar background or the aim of the organisation is expressly targeted at a specific group within the population. This similarity of background gives the adviser the credibility so that they are able to understand the needs and preferences of their service users and might even act as role models. The adviser may even have been chosen to work for this organisation because he or she has successfully mastered the situation in which others find themselves.

Trust is an important mechanism in understanding social behaviour, especially when it comes to changing people’s behaviour. Trusting behaviour has been found to be the foundation for cooperation, and identification with a group or an individual has had a supportive effect (Brewer and Kramer, 1986). Thus, people who have established a trust relationship based on identification are much more likely to cooperate in activities aimed at behavioural changes since they feel a moral obligation (Kramer and Goldman, 1995, Dawes et al., 1990). These views apply particularly in the trust relationship between adviser and user, where the user has the possibility of continued interaction and is exposed to policy through the adviser practices. Conversely, Dirks and Ferrin (2001) concluded that in situations where trust was low, a highly structured context could mitigate potentially negative outcomes. This suggests that in environments where tasks were highly standardised and controlled and the context underwent constant changes, low trust levels can be expected. Importantly, this has

had particular implications for front-line advisers. It is suggested that, for instance, due to the low trust environment of mandatory programmes (based on the highly controlled and standardised context for advisers) the threat of sanctions has been a strong motivator for compliance, and thus a change of behaviour.

## **Changing people: achieving policy outcomes**

The concepts discussed so far interact to form a complex construct of how advisers mediate the differing demands on them. In their interactions and fulfilment of contractual obligations, they are supporting, sometimes indirectly, the ideological visions of active citizenship that the New Labour government outlined (as discussed in Chapter 2). However, Rosenthal and Peccei (2006) found that it is more likely that advisers' decision-making in their interactions would be mainly influenced by overarching policy aims, rather than by a combination of programme demands and their personal values as well as by the values of the organisations they were working for. It is therefore worthwhile examining the methods of how policies are aimed to contribute towards activating people as well as how organisational values may add to this goal.

The policy aim of activating citizens is particularly visible in the welfare-to-work policies. While in fields such as social work and health care there was a rhetorical emphasis on partnership and citizen involvement (Newman and Vidler, 2006, Northmore, 2001), the literature on welfare-to-work policies, both on a national and international level, emphasised their activation nature via the rights and responsibilities agenda. Participation was mostly mandatory and the use of sanctions as a threat was accepted practice to enforce compliance (see for instance Walker and Wiseman, 2003, Considine, 2001, Lødemel and Trickey, 2001, Tonge, 1999). The



emphasis on 'carrots and sticks', on incentives and sanctions, on rights and responsibilities highlighted the coercive nature of these policies (Dwyer, 2004, Cox, 1998).

The literature on organisational culture and psychology has used the concept of coercive persuasion to describe a similar situation which people taking part in these welfare-to-work programmes may encounter. Coercive persuasion is understood as a tactic which aimed to bring about a substantial change in behaviour or ideology using incentives and threats (Schein, 1999). Originally in the context of organisational change, Schein (ibid) described a process where through psychological and physical pressuring, constant labelling and stigmatisation, individuals were coerced into changing their behaviour and thinking. Simultaneously, sufficient incentives and threats were presented to prevent the individuals from leaving the organisation and thus maintaining control over them. According to Schein (ibid), the creation of a feeling of guilt was central to prompt the change of behaviour. Whilst this process may appear rather extreme in the context of welfare-to-work, its basic elements could be recognised within welfare-to-work provision including the use of incentives and sanctions, possible stigmatisation and labelling (Cole, 2008) and the continuous emphasis from the government side on work. Schein (1999) considered coercion as a weak form of eliciting compliance and behaviour change, for as soon as threats and incentives were removed, there was a high likelihood that individuals would revert to their former behaviour.

Empowerment, commonly accepted as giving someone or taking from someone the power to fulfil their own needs and wants (Servian, 1996) was another way of changing behaviour. It has close connotations with conceptions of the 'enabling state'

as advanced by New Labour (Lister, 2003) where the state provided opportunities to develop human capital, but it was the citizen's responsibilities to take up these opportunities (Bevir and O'Brien, 2001). This perspective has increasingly been adopted by professionals who aimed to help people improve their personal capacities to change their circumstances (Baistow, 1994). The process requires a sharing of responsibility between the adviser and the service user, and in this sense a sharing of power. Clarke (2005) commented that all of these policy conceptions of empowerment, activation and responsabilisation were closely linked and overall contributed to New Labour's changing citizenship perspective. Advisers enacted the processes of empowerment, activation and responsabilisation drawing attention to their, conscious or unconscious, contribution to achieve an overall ideological goal.

Hasenfeld (1972) distinguished between organisations which either process people or attempt to change people. People-processing organisations conferred a status onto people through classification and subsequent disposition over a short period. People-changing organisations aimed for behavioural change through socialisation, which took place over a longer period. Trust relationships, as discussed before, tend to facilitate cooperation from the parties involved but take some time to build. However, the organisational values of, for instance voluntary and community sector organisations are more geared towards building these kinds of relationships. These organisations were value-driven, not profit-orientated (Carmel and Harlock, 2008) and worker's in VCOs often shared similar experiences, personal characteristics and values as the individuals they were supporting and thus could establish trust more easily (Tonkiss and Passey, 1999). Newman (2001) suggested that relationships based on trust created commitment by the parties involved and therefore could elicit compliance without applying sanctions.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has established the adviser as a mediator between state interventions and service user needs. From a political perspective, advisers are ascribed the power to inform and influence people's behaviour and ultimately bring about changes in their behaviour and socio-economic status, which feeds into the policy goal of creating the 'active worker-citizen' (Newman, 2007). The chapter has conceptualised the mechanisms available to advisers to govern user behaviour in order to contribute to these higher level policy aims.

The chapter also examined the concepts of discretion, trust and changing people. These three concepts interact closely with each other and form part of the complex choices which advisers need to make in their interactions with service users. Discretion, the space advisers can occupy to make flexible decisions, is important for policy implementation where it involves changing people's behaviour. However, advisers are subjected to attempts to limit their use of discretion by the macro-level managerial influences such as targets and organisational procedures. The exploration of these issues from a bottom-up perspective has received little attention in the UK policy context so far.

Discretionary decision making can be viewed as a means to establish trust, particularly when considering the role of the adviser as a mediator between state intervention and service user. Different kinds of trust are defined and a link established to trustworthiness. Advisers have different methods of establishing trust which are closely connected to the macro-level influences of programme requirements and policies. A connection is then established between trust and influencing a person's behaviour. High levels of trust are a positive foundation to encourage compliance

without the use of threats because service users believe that the adviser can act in their own best interest. The political ideology endorses influencing behaviour through sometimes highly coercive measures as exemplified by the use of sanctions in welfare-to-work programmes (although it needs to be noted that programmes within the learning and skills framework are much less coercive). The changing citizenship conception under New Labour has also brought about an emphasis on empowerment and self-responsibility combined with activation. Empowerment in the sense of power sharing between adviser and service user which enables the user to improve their situation highlighted this shift in responsibility away from the state.

One of the main questions this study tries to answer is how advisers have used coercion and trust in combination with discretion to influence service users' behaviour. The extent to which advisers apply these processes is expected to differ greatly between the case study services. The following chapter will explain how these particular services were selected and which methods were used to answer these questions.

# Chapter 5

## Methods and methodology

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## **Introduction**

The study is rooted in the concept of governance and aims to qualitatively examine the ways in which different governance regimes emerge through the management and practice of advisers at street level. It is based on 38 semi-structured interviews with advisers and managers in eight case study services<sup>9</sup>. This chapter describes and justifies the methods used in this study. It also outlines key ethical considerations and gives a reflexive account of issues with which the researcher engaged with throughout the research process.

## **Methodological approach**

The study focuses on the experiences and qualitative accounts of 38 front-line advisers giving employment advice in eight different case study services. It takes an interpretivist, 'subtle realist' stance because it is concerned with understanding the social world from the advisers' point of view (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) and with explaining how advisers construct this reality. This approach has been strongly linked with qualitative research, offering a large degree of flexibility when collecting and analysing data and providing the opportunity to genuinely discover personal perspectives without imposing frames of reference on the research participants (Bryman, 2001).

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<sup>9</sup> The data for this project was collected within the "Guidance in Europe" project funded by the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci Community Vocational Training Action Programme (ES/04/C/F/RF – 80900). The project was a five country study investigating careers guidance for people out of work and at risk of unemployment in France, Spain, Germany, Slovenia and the UK. The project started in October 2004 and ended in September 2007. The researcher was part of the UK team. Detailed information and publications about the project can be found on the project website: [www.guidanceineurope.com](http://www.guidanceineurope.com).

Unlike positivist research, the interpretivist stance is not concerned with gathering purely factual information about the world 'out there', but rather focuses on how individuals actively create meaning (Silverman, 2006). The creation of meaning has been the point of much critique and debate because the positivist tradition of social enquiry assumes an objective approach to research, free of the personal values of the researcher. However, interpretivist research is based on an individual's understanding and knowledge of the world and how they reflect on it, including the researcher's values (Snape and Spencer, 2003). Thus, this kind of approach can never be objective and value free, because "*we are never interacting in a historico-socio-cultural vacuum, we are always embedded in and selectively and artfully draw on broader institutional and organisational contexts*" (Rapley, 2004: 26). This raises questions about the 'truthfulness' of the data and thus the validity and reliability of the study.

The need for reliable qualitative research should not be ignored (Kirk and Miller, 1986) and in response, some researchers (for example Bogdan and Taylor, 1975, Glaser, 1967) tried to formalise their methods, stressing the application of rigour to this 'softer' data (Snape and Spencer, 2003) to avoid 'dangerously impressionistic' results (Silverman, 1985). In order to address these issues, Kirk and Miller (1986) suggested four steps to establish 'trustworthiness' and Silverman (2006) recommended five methods to ensure validity. Triangulation has been advocated as a method to ensure validity (Denzin, 1970), based firmly on positivist influences. Triangulation involves the combination of multiple theories, methods, researchers and sources to "*produce a more accurate, comprehensive and objective representation of the object of study*" (Silverman, 2006: 291). However, actions and accounts by individuals need to be located in their particular contexts and different findings can be

expected to emerge from different methods and individual interpretations (Spicer, 2004). Thus triangulation would not deliver an objective 'total' truth which would be required to satisfy positivist criticism (Fielding and Fielding, 1986). Furthermore, there appeared to be no evidence that studies which applied triangulation produced more valid results (Sarantakos, 2005). In order to establish reliability for this qualitative study it is therefore not important to demonstrate accuracy and 'correctness' of the data, but rather to demonstrate that the methods used for data collection and analysis were appropriate for the research questions and that the research has been carried out in a "*thorough, careful, honest and accurate*" way (Mason, 2002: 188).

A solution to the dilemma of validity can be seen in what Hammersley (1992) described as 'subtle realism'. This position assumed that there could be no absolute knowledge about the validity of claims. Instead knowledge was composed of truths which individuals could reasonably assert within their beliefs. It further asserted that the social world existed independently of the individual's understanding and that making a claim did not impact on the social world in such a way that the claim would become true or false. Lastly, the aim of social inquiry was to represent reality rather than to reproduce it. Consequently, the representation of reality would only be accessible to the researcher through interpretations of the interview participant's responses. These responses could then be further interpreted by the researcher, accepting that different points of view lead to different understandings (Hammersley, 1992, Snape and Spencer, 2003). This ontological position addresses two criticisms brought against the use of interviews as a research method. Kitzinger (2004) raised concerns that interviews did not give direct access to facts and that they only gave indirect representations of personal experiences. Taking a 'subtle realist' stance does not require the elicitation of positivist influenced facts. In this study specific



consideration is given to the ways in which advisers chose to represent reality and often required further interpretation by the researcher.

## **Methods**

The study has used eight case studies based on semi-structured interviews to examine how advisers mediate tensions between managerial demands and user needs in different settings to allow meaningful comparisons by also including contextual information. Yin (2003) defined a case study as

*“an inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. [It] copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.” (pp. 13-14)*

The case study method has proposed a complete strategy from design to data collection and analysis. This method has been criticised as being unscientific due to a lack of rigour and its failure to deliver results which were universally generalisable (Hamel et al., 1993). However, unlike positivist research, the qualitative case studies used for this research do not aim to produce universal theories or to calculate frequencies. Case studies were used to expand and generalise theories which, according to Yin (2003), could be achieved based on a single case study. This study consists of eight case studies which examined the phenomenon across a variety of

services. Multiple case studies followed a similar logic to the replication of experiments. The replication of a case study either to produce a similar result or with the intent of producing a predictable variation has been carried out so that the results may be more compelling and may therefore be considered more robust (Yin, 2003). Thus the careful selection of suitable cases, which will be discussed further below, addresses some of the criticisms brought against case studies, namely the absence of rigour and the lack of replication.

Case studies may incorporate a wealth of information based on interviews, observations or documentary analysis. The inclusion of a variety of services is of great importance to the study and consequently a strategy which might have involved observation methods, with the potential to provide greater depth and detail, was deemed too complex and time consuming (Matthews and Ross, 2010). Instead, an approach based on interviews was preferred. This method allows a large amount of data to be collected time efficiently and provides a rich account of the individual advisers' perceptions (Silverman, 2006) while casual observations on site and the analysis of additional documents would supplement the interview data. In particular, semi-structured interviews are used. Their use is preferable over structured interviewing because they offer a high degree of flexibility when exploring topic areas while providing a structured framework to enable comparisons between the cases and to afford the participants a great amount of freedom in their responses. (Bryman, 2001).

## **Selection of Cases**

From a practical perspective, the selection of the cases which were examined required careful consideration to ensure that the data produced was meaningful and

capable of answering the research questions posed. The aim of the study is to produce an in-depth account of the experiences of employment advisers in different types of services and how these compared. This has required complex and detailed data. The key to selecting meaningful cases was related to the different types of services. As has been pointed out before, the landscape of provision of employment advice and guidance is extremely diverse in the UK context. This diversity consists of services provided by public sector organisations, private providers, quasi-public bodies and by voluntary and community sector organisations. Similarly, services can be mandatory or voluntary, they can focus solely on placing someone in work or might focus on skills development. In order to produce meaningful results for a multiple case study approach, Yin (2003) suggested to apply a replication logic to the selection of suitable case studies. This meant that cases should be selected in such a way that the analysis produced similar results or contrasting results as predicted at the design stage of the study.

After an initial mapping of the full range of services available, the study set out to capture the diversity of service provision in the UK context. Therefore, some of the cases selected have been pre-determined by the major policy interventions of the government within the two frameworks. This included five initial case studies. Three of them covered the welfare-to-work framework (New Deal, Work Area, Working Estate<sup>10</sup>), while the other two interventions can be associated with the learning and skills framework (Careers Scotland and Move On). The initial expectation was that the services would show broad similarities within each framework so that based on the

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<sup>10</sup> Please note that these names are pseudonyms to protect the service providers' identities and their employees (except for New Deal and Careers Scotland). A discussion on the use of pseudonyms can be found in the ethics section of this chapter.

replication rationale there would be similar results within the services of each framework and contrasting results to the other frameworks.

Following early analysis of the initial data, it became apparent that there were emerging issues which required additional interviews within the case study organisations. Furthermore, it emerged that target groups for the services as well as contextual factors might be influential in service delivery. Taking this into account, two further case studies were conducted which focused on vulnerable groups but could be situated within the Employment and Skills Framework (Redundancy Help and Lone Parent Advice). These two cases might provide contrasting information to the Working Estate case in the welfare-to-work group that had a joint focus on jobless people and inactive people. The third additional case study was conducted with a new service (Telephone Guidance) which applied a unique approach to delivering guidance over the telephone for all ages and can thus be contrasted with Careers Scotland which has been delivered face-to-face to a similar audience. Thus a total of eight case studies were selected which covered as broad a spectrum as possible of the employment advice and guidance landscape in the UK across the two policy frameworks.

However, to gain the detailed information required on how advisers mediated managerial demands in their work, it was necessary to speak to the individual advisers within the various services. It was assumed that the advisers held their own value sets and combined them with the values of the provider organisation. Through their interaction with the public, advisers were representing these organisational values. Additionally, they were charged with delivering the contracted provision which in turn became a key part of the provider organisation. Advisers as representatives of their organisations became the provider organisation or service in the eyes of the service

users (Ben-Ner and Putterman, 2001) and thus users simply experienced a service in their interactions. Consequently, the advisers would be the ones directly mediating the impact of contractual requirements in their interactions with service users. Therefore, they were the most suitable individuals to deliver information on the impact of managerial arrangements on their work and consequently also the organisation. However, in order to validate the information received from advisers and to establish further data points for comparison, additional interviews were scheduled with managers which would provide additional contextual information as well as specific information.

Having taken the time and the impact on the work schedule of the advisers into consideration, the researcher specified the number of people to be interviewed in each service (1 manager and 2-3 advisers) which would have produced 36 interviews. Given the limited time frame and the number of organisations to be included in the study, this seemed a manageable amount of interviews which would provide a sufficient amount of data to answer the research questions. However, the final selection of interview partners could not be influenced by the researcher. In some services, a selection would not have been possible due to their small size. This was the case particularly with voluntary and community sector organisations (VCO) whose relevant teams had just about enough personnel to gather the intended amount of data. Other organisations added additional interviews at their own discretion to give the researcher an opportunity to develop a fuller picture of their service's work. While the researcher aimed at keeping the number of interviews across the types of organisations roughly similar, this was not always possible. Table 2 (see p. 77) summarises the total number of interviews completed for each case study according to the individual's role (adviser / manager):

**Table 2: Final distribution of interviews across case studies**

	<b>Advisers</b>	<b>Managers</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Case 1 “New Deal”<sup>11</sup></b>	3	4	7
<b>Case 2 “Work Area”</b>	3	2	5
<b>Case 3 “Working Estate”</b>	3	2	5
<b>Case 4 “Careers Scotland”</b>	3	1	4
<b>Case 5 “Move on”</b>	3	2	5
<b>Case 6 “Redundancy Help”</b>	2	1	3
<b>Case 7 “Telephone Guidance”</b>	3	1	4
<b>Case 8 “Lone Parent Advice”</b>	3	2	5
<b>Total Amount of Interviews</b>	23	15	38

It is important to note that despite efforts to provide a representation of employment advice services available as completely as possible, the landscape of provision in the UK is far more diverse. However, the selected cases covered the main policy frameworks and target groups of government policy and thus allowed meaningful comparisons. As has been previously mentioned, the aim of the case study approach is not to provide universal generalisations, but to examine a contemporary phenomenon within its context and build on current theories.

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<sup>11</sup> Please note that these names are pseudonyms (except for the New Deal and Careers Scotland) to protect the service providers' identities and their employees according to the rationale laid out in this chapter.

## **Access**

After the initial selection of services, contact with the provider organisations was established to arrange the research visits which were planned to last one to two days each. Contact was established through different routes. For some providers contacts already existed through key informant interviews which were conducted for a different stage of the EU LEONARDO project. They were thus contacted again and asked whether they could facilitate access. These providers were happy to assist and in most cases, provided a new contact to a local gatekeeper who, based on the project information and the requirements of the researcher, selected a location for the interviews and made further arrangements.

In other cases, the researcher obtained a list of provider organisations for a specific programme online and tried to arrange a visit directly with the organisations. Here initial contact was established mainly through e-mail which contained detailed project information with follow-up phone calls to answer questions and negotiate access. This method of establishing contact was less successful because some organisations simply did not respond or persisted in referring the researcher to other members of staff without anyone in the organisation claiming responsibility for research requests. In these instances, the researcher abandoned the attempt to get access to that organisation after several follow-up phone calls. Nevertheless, persistence did pay off, suitable organisations were found and field visits were arranged with them accordingly.

As interviews were arranged through gatekeepers, the researcher had limited influence on the time frame available for interviews other than making an initial request regarding their duration (Lewis, 2003). Particularly in the public organisations,

interview schedules were often set-up by the person arranging the visit. In some locations this schedule was tightly monitored. In some cases, despite indicating that an interview would take up to 90 minutes, the researcher was granted access for less time than requested. This required the ad hoc adaptation of question schedules by adopting a strategy whereby some of the contextual questions were left out and the interview 'streamlined' by focussing on key questions. The adaptation of interviews was easily possible due to the flexibility which semi-structured interviews afforded the researcher (Bloch, 2004). Another strategy included disregarding time limits which the researcher felt uncomfortable about as she was aware that her research visit interrupted the interviewee's workday significantly.

Another consideration, particularly with the public service providers, was the extent to which the organisations 'selected' by the initial contact person were indeed willing to participate in the project. That is to say, how far were they indeed required or even ordered by higher authorities to take part in the project. This posed some ethical issues for the researcher as will be discussed below. But there was little choice but to comply with the issue and to ensure interview participants were consenting to the interviews. Whilst this issue was never openly addressed, there were clear indications that one office of the same organisation was clearly experienced with handling researchers ('we are the flagship office' – Manager, New Deal) while the other was more apprehensive towards the project which became apparent when a second visit needed to be scheduled and access to advisers was denied due to time constraints. Nevertheless, the access to those organisations through gatekeepers established a level of credibility for the researcher and the project which first had to be established with the directly contacted organisations. This was achieved by giving



detailed explanations of the project and its purpose during a process of negotiation which, as Neumann (2006) observed, is to be expected when trying to gain access.

Despite having successfully gained access the method of access through gatekeepers might have affected the researcher's acceptance in the organisation (Mason, 1996), as the examples above highlight, and might thus have affected the data which was collected. A more detailed discussion of this issue follows in the section on data collection. However, there was a clear difference in terms of access and acceptance between the different types of services, where particularly private and voluntary and community sector organisations seemed more enthusiastic their public sector counterparts.

As has been mentioned before, a second wave of interviews was conducted to address newly emerging issues and include the newly selected cases. Two organisations were accessed through experts (Redundancy Help and Telephone Guidance) while a third (Lone Parents Advice) was accessed directly. Gatekeepers were informed that interviews would take longer because the question schedules from the first and second tranche of interviews needed to be covered. There were no problems in arranging visits with this second group of organisations and no issues such as those encountered in the first wave, despite the longer duration of the interviews requiring visits to be spread over 2 to 3 days.

However, in the organisations which were re-visited some problems occurred with arranging the second visit. As mentioned before, one organisation denied access to the advisers in which case only a second interview with the managers could be conducted. Another organisation had closed down, because the service they were delivering had come to its contractual end. Consequently, the depth of the data from

those two organisations is not as detailed as for the organisations which went through both diets. Nevertheless, enough data was collected to allow comparisons between the services.

## **Ethics**

Ethical considerations are central to conducting any research project and at all stages during the project (David and Sutton, 2004). A number of research and professional organisations such as the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2006) have therefore developed guidelines for the ethical practice of research which outlines basic considerations to help the researcher make informed decisions when faced with ethical choices and dilemmas. The researcher has particularly been guided by the ESRC Research Ethics Framework (ESRC, 2006) when developing appropriate responses to ethical issues and the necessary choices throughout the course of the project. Many of the ethical aspects are closely inter-related (Bryman, 2001). The project received full ethical approval as required by the Department of Applied Social Sciences at the University of Stirling.

### ***Anonymity and Confidentiality***

There was concern regarding confidentiality and anonymity with some of the case study organisations due to the unique nature of the service provided. It was feared that there might be the opportunity for deductive disclosure whereby an organisation or interview participants could be identified based on traits and characteristics contained in the information supplied (Kaiser, 2009). The researcher had to weigh up risks for the service providers as well as the individuals in order to comply with the ESRC recommendations that sources of data need to remain confidential (ESRC, 2006). The difficulty lay in how to best protect the organisations

and the individuals without compromising any of the detail and richness of the data collected. The provider organisations which had participated in the research and caused the most concern were those which maintained national networks of offices (for example Jobcentre Plus or Careers Scotland) and could easily be recognised by an informed reader. It was felt that if local and locational information of the participating office was removed from the interview data, the identity of the participating office would be sufficiently protected. For all other case study services pseudonyms were used. This method of identity protection was considered sufficient by the Department of Applied Social Science Ethics Committee at the University of Stirling.

In order to protect individual respondents from potential harm due to critical comments, all characteristics which might help identify individual participants have been removed. Because the research was concerned with differences across service types, there was no need to identify the individual respondent other than their role, such as adviser or manager. Additionally, this research project will be publicised a substantial amount of time after the interview process. Considering the high turn-over rates in the employment advice and guidance sector, time introduces an unintended protection barrier, because many of the individuals who participated in the research may have moved on to other jobs.

To ensure privacy, it was attempted to hold interviews in a room separate from the participant's actual work space. In many organisations, the contact person had made arrangements to provide a quiet place for interviewing. However, in some organisations, interviews had to take place at the respondent's desk which was often integrated in an open plan office space. While respondents were assured that their identities would be protected in the research, the open plan set-up of offices did not

necessarily protect their privacy with regards to the opinions and insights revealed. This might have had an adverse effect on how freely the interviewees responded. However, the researcher believes that in the cases where the interview took place in this kind of setting, the respondent was less concerned about protecting their privacy. Possibly, this was because the respondents' position was known among colleagues and superiors and therefore they did not see the interview as an intrusion into their privacy or as a threat of potential repercussions in the workplace. Nevertheless, information gained in interviews was not shared with anyone to adhere to the assurances made when gaining consent.

### ***Informed consent***

In order to ensure that the interviewees participated voluntarily in the research, free from any pressure and threat, it was vital to gain their consent throughout their involvement in the project (David and Sutton, 2004). A prerequisite of putting the participant in a position to make an informed choice about their participation is to provide them with as much information about the research as they need. This might include information on the security and management of the data obtained in the interview, precautions about the protection of the participant's identity, how risks to participants and the researcher are managed (ESRC, 2006). An informed choice about their participation also includes the knowledge that they may withdraw from the research at any point of the project should they feel uncomfortable with certain questions or how the interview proceeds. Should this be the case, the decision to withdraw should be respected. The individual participant's well-being should always take precedence over the research project (ESRC, 2006, Marvasti, 2004). There were therefore a number of measures which the researcher took in order to obtain the informed consent of interviewees in the different organisations.

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewee received an information sheet with a brief introduction to the research which the researcher discussed with the participant. This information consisted of a general outline including the aims of the project as well as the assurance that the data obtained would be used in scholarly publications such as the researcher's thesis or journal articles. Additionally, participants were assured that the utmost care would be taken to protect their confidentiality and privacy as well as how data would be managed and secured. They also were given the option to withdraw from the research at any point without further repercussions. Subsequently, participants were asked for permission to be recorded. This included also the signing of a consent form (or the oral approval on tape) which included details on how data would be stored and managed. Interviewees were also given the opportunity before and after the interview to ask any questions which they might have in relation to the research project. None of the interviewees refused their consent or the recording of the interview. Occasionally, participants enquired about the use of the research and of the impact the research was expected to have which the researcher tried to answer truthfully.

Throughout the interview, the researcher checked periodically whether the participant was still comfortable with how the interview proceeded and with the content of the questions. Whilst none of the participants withdrew from the study or refused to answer a question, the researcher was aware when some participants had become visibly tense and it became apparent that the respondent was uncomfortable with the series of questions or the probing. In this case, the researcher decided to abandon the line of questions in favour of continuing the interview and maintaining the rapport which had already been established. In many cases, the participants

returned of their own volition to the abandoned line of questions at a later point in the interview and discussed the issue without further prompting.

Such reactions by the participants may also have been caused as a result of the 'selection' process. Due to the fact that most organisations had to be accessed through gatekeepers, the researcher was not involved in the selection of the actual interview participants. The individual participants within the services were often identified through line managers and thus their participation may not have been entirely voluntary, despite indicating their consent. This might have led to some participants representing the position of their employer rather than their own personal view. And whilst the researcher tried to be as sensitive as possible to signs that this might have been the case and tried to gain a more personal insight through careful probing, it cannot be assumed that all such instances were detected.

### ***Prevention of harm***

Prevention of harm conjures images of violence and physical threats. However, there are also psychological forms of harm such as stress. While it is not possible to identify neither all possible kinds of harm nor all situations in which people may experience harm (Marvasti, 2004), consideration needs to be given to this point and measures taken to avoid it. One way of doing so is to try to anticipate potentially harmful situations and develop appropriate responses.

The research method itself, in this instance the case study approach and a small number of interviews within each case study, may be a source of harm (David and Sutton, 2004). The potential for deductive disclosure has been highlighted previously. This may cause stress for the interview participant. However, precautions were taken

by informing the participant about how their identity would be protected through the use of pseudonyms, gaining their continued consent throughout the interview process and informing them of the methods of data management.

Answering questions which the respondents felt uncomfortable with because they feared repercussions from superiors if their opinion became known was another source of potential harm. This issue had been dealt with by obtaining the verbal consent of the participant throughout the duration of the interview and by giving them the opportunity to abandon interviews. However, the researcher also responded to signs of stress or anxiety by not further pursuing a question as has been outlined above. Questions where respondents displayed some anxiety revolved mostly around performance evaluation where it had an impact on reward payments or where such evaluations were seen as indicative of an employee's contribution to a service's performance. Here the researcher assured participants before and after the interview that the information shared with the researcher would not be made available to anyone else, and in particular not to superiors for evaluation purposes. In some cases questions where participants avoided succinct answers were also related to contract details and respondents might have felt they were disclosing information which was confidential. In such cases, the researcher tried to elicit this kind of information from the manager who would have a better grasp of what contractual information was confidential or through programme specifications and other information which was freely available online.

However, it is also worth noting that the researcher could be exposed to harm, mainly in the form of psychological pressure from, for instance, superiors of interview participants. During the course of the project, this did not materialise. However

precautions were in place to deal with this kind of problem. These included debriefings with thesis supervisors as well as assurances that in case of need, supervisors could always be approached for advice and support. In this way, some of the psychological impact of hearing customer stories or dealing with the stressful data collection task could be mediated.

Whilst in most locations, the environment felt secure, there were some obvious signs of expectation of violence on the part of the service providers in the form of security personnel. In some services, security personnel tried to blend in and be as inconspicuous as possible. In other services they had an intentionally strong and straightforward presence. In most provider offices, there were entry control systems through, for instance a receptionist. This allowed only registered visitors access to the relevant people. The researcher never witnessed any violent incidents at any single location. However, there were reports by some of the interview participants of frequent security incidents when visitors had to be removed by the security personnel or the police.

In order to additionally ensure the personal safety of the researcher while at the interviews or en route to the locations, several contacts (for instance, supervisors, contacts at the organisations, friends) were always informed about the researcher's interview schedule and travel arrangements. Contacts were also in possession of a mobile contact number so that in emergencies contact could be made on location.

### ***Data storage***

Where consent was given, interviews were recorded with the tape recorder clearly visible to the participant. None of the participants refused to be recorded.



However, in a few instances, recording was not possible due to background noise or time constraints (multiple, very short availability of the participant for instance). Here, extensive notes would be taken which were used to provide some context information. Interviewees were informed about how their interview data would be stored and treated at the beginning of each interview both verbally and in writing and asked for their written consent. The following procedure would be followed in terms of data storage and management.

Once the interview was complete, the researcher reassured the respondent that their interview would only be accessed by the researcher and her thesis supervisors (where this was deemed necessary) and an external transcriber who would have no further connection to the project. The transcriber was contractually obliged to maintain data security and anonymity of interview participants and contents. Thesis supervisors would only have access to the fully anonymised version of the transcribed data. Outside this group of people, data would not be accessible to anyone else.

The interview tapes were kept in a lockable filing cabinet at the researcher's office. To protect participants' identity, tapes were only labelled with a reference number. Notes from the interviews were also kept in a locked filing cabinet. Transcripts of the interviews were stored on a password protected university server and thus access was only available to the researcher. At the end of the project, the tapes will be erased to ensure compliance with data protection laws.

## **Interviewing and analysis**

The following section provides an account of how the data was collected and the challenges faced during this stage of the research. It will also outline the process of analysis and further steps to interpret the data.

### ***Interviewing***

The flexibility of the interview process was also reflected in the ways that rapport with the interviewee was established. Face-to-face interaction required the researcher to be more alert to body language and nuances in the questions and answers not only of the respondent, but also of herself. The ability to rearrange questions or deviate from the question schedule to involve the respondent and establish a relationship contributed to more accurate answers and interpretations (Shuy, 2003). Once rapport had been created, it also allowed the researcher to employ a more conversational style which was common in qualitative interviewing. It allowed the interviewee to express their views of what was important about a particular issue without the restriction of pre-formulated answers as in structured interviewing, while it also allowed the researcher to ask for clarifications and further explanations. This was particularly important because the researcher had little prior knowledge of the particular terminology used in some organisations or the specific processes within the programmes (for instance, the use of the word 'shop' with reference to their office or the time frames of when users would move to a different programme stage).

The use of *"language is key to the interview. It is the medium through which data is collected/ generated"* (David and Sutton, 2004: 89). However, the interview situation was a social interaction and consequently the personality of the interviewer as well as the environment in which the interview was conducted might introduce a

certain bias, due to different social relations between the interviewer and the interviewee (Fontana and Frey, 2005). Environmental influences could be controlled by the interviews taking place in the workplace of respondents, usually in a separate interview room to provide some privacy (for a more detailed account of the data collection, see the relevant section). However, the influence of personality factors on the interview quality could not be controlled since they were dependent on each individual respondent. Upon reflection by behaving in a professional manner and respecting respondents' time and work requirements, combined with appropriate amounts of small talk to establish a friendly basis for the interview, the researcher attempted to reduce some of the bias. However, interviewer subjectivity and influence was one of the main criticisms against the use of qualitative research and relates to previously identified positivist concerns about reliability (Steinke, 2004). Whilst this might be counteracted by using different researchers (Patton and Patton, 2002), a PhD project does not lend itself well to this approach as it is generally conducted by a lone researcher. Conversely, it could be argued that a lone researcher improves the rigour of the project due to personnel continuity and consistency of interviewing technique.

Qualitative data is only meaningful within its context (Marvasti, 2004). While a large amount of contextual data could be gathered through the interviews, it was supplemented, where possible, with casual observations. Whilst there was no intention to engage fully in observation, waiting times between interviews, for instance, helped to provide an understanding of the respective workplace and the structures within it. The accounts of the advisers and managers could loosely be cross referenced with observations thus reinforcing the interview data. Additionally, policy and programme documents, as far as they were available online, were also accessed to

confirm and contrast the interview data. Particularly the programme documents provided insights into the requirements and intended outcomes of the programmes.

The use of different data sources is common practice to ensure the consistency of information and thus make the research findings more robust. However, the question schedules used for the semi-structured interviews were initially developed and intended for an EU LEONARDO funded project on employment advice and guidance services in five European countries. Consequently, the questions were targeted towards the research questions of the LEONARDO project and not necessarily aligned with the research questions of this study. However, there was considerable thematic and conceptual overlap between the two projects, so that the topic guides used produced a large amount of usable data for this project. The complete alignment of the data with this project followed in the analysis stage, which will be discussed below.

In the actual process of collecting the data the researcher had to be aware of a number of issues. Personal characteristics of the interviewer may have an influence on how participants respond to questions (May, 2001). Fortunately, these differences could be mediated due to a well balanced mix of respondents. Semi-structured interviews require the interviewer to establish a rapport with the respondent so that the interview can flow properly and allow the researcher to acquaint herself with the service studied. At the same time, the method of semi-structured interviewing establishes a certain distance because the duration of the interviews is not sufficient to be fully immersed in the research setting (Bryman, 1989). Striking a balance between delving deeper into understanding the services and provision, whilst keeping an objective overview of the subject matter, was a challenge.

In order to establish rapport and conduct an information rich interview, the interviewer needed to be constantly aware of how the interview progressed. This included being aware which topics had been discussed and touched upon, if necessary making adjustments to questions, probing and rearranging to ensure that all questions were answered. Potentially interesting avenues needed to be explored, while at the same time there needed to be sufficient awareness of the duration of the interview in order not to get lost in a friendly 'ramble' because the situation of the advisers could all too readily be understood. The fact that the first language of the researcher is not English was an advantage in this case, because it required the researcher to focus on the content and process of the interview thus leaving little room to getting emotionally too involved with research participants.

Data was collected over a period of 13 months (November 2005 – December 2006). The length of this time period was determined by several decisions during the course of the project. The first round of interviews was arranged fairly soon after the start of the EU LEONARDO project, because contacts with some of the chosen services already existed. Consequently, the timing of appointments was mainly a factor of arranging transport and assembling the necessary equipment. Once on location, contacts had usually arranged some sort of a schedule that gave a rough guideline of interview partners. Some provider organisations were more structured and organised in their approach than others which might have been an indication that some organisations took part in research interviews quite frequently. While a highly structured approach offered great time savings and less of a burden on normal organisational processes, there was more time for casual chat and for gaining a feel for the organisations when the schedule was less structured.

A second tranche of interviews was scheduled after additional issues had emerged in an initial analysis indicating that some service types had not been included thus far and needed to be further explored in order to provide a more complete picture of employment advice provision in the UK. The second tranche would include visits to previous locations, as well as three new organisations, and a second question schedule (again developed within the framework of the EU LEONARDO project) would be used.

While contact had already been established with previously visited organisations, the process of arranging suitable interview times with them proved more difficult the second time. The researcher felt that some organisations considered themselves 'over researched' and were hoping that through delaying the process, the researcher would eventually abandon the second round of interviews. Once the researcher had an agreed date, the actual interviews went well and the respondents shared their opinion as freely as before. Organisations which were approached for the first time were quite keen on taking part in the project. In particular VCO sector organisations expressed a keen interest, perhaps because they might have felt it would support their work and provide exposure.

When piloted, the interviews took about 75 minutes to complete. However, when collecting the first wave of project data, it transpired that interview times differed substantially because some respondents were more talkative than others. It was considered whether organisations should be informed about the potentially longer duration of the interviews when gaining access in an attempt to disrupt their operations as little as possible. However, it became apparent that on average interviews took about 75 minutes as initially observed and therefore, no adjustments

were made. Indeed interview times varied from about 30 minutes which was a strongly abridged interview, to 2.5 hours when interviewing with an extremely talkative person.

As previously mentioned, some of the organisations established schedules when and with whom an interview was to take place. Sometimes this schedule had to be adhered to rather rigidly so that over-running on the allocated time was not possible. Thus some interviews ended prematurely. In one organisation particularly, the schedule was so tight that a highly abridged set of questions had to be used. This nevertheless provided valuable data. The situation itself provided invaluable insight into the work environment of the advisers and the pressures they had to mediate. However, the situation also presented the researcher with a dilemma, because she had to weigh up which questions would be most important to ask. It was also very difficult to establish rapport with the participant due to the short time frame. Consequently, the researcher contemplated returning to the service for a second round of interviews to complete the remainder of the topics. The attempted return was halted by management who did not allow a second round of interviews with advisers citing time constraints and impact on the service. Thus the researcher had to be content with the data gathered.

In another location, the researcher was required to cut the question schedule into smaller sections. Whilst this allowed all questions to be asked of the interview participant, it was somewhat difficult because at each new start of the interview, rapport had to be re-established and a new starting point needed to be found. Additionally, it was unclear how much time the participant would have because the interview took place between appointments with users. If the service user arrived, the

interview had to stop so that the adviser could attend to the user. While this was disruptive to the interview flow, it gave the researcher time to casually observe what was going on in the office, which provided a plethora of contextual information giving a deeper insight into the advisers' work environment. The previous examples were however exceptions, and usually the contact persons had made generous arrangements according to the researcher's requests.

For the second wave of interviews, the duration differed more substantially, because the services which were added to the research had to complete both topic guides whilst the services which were revisited only had the second question schedule to complete. Taking this into consideration, visits at new locations were scheduled to take two days. Similar challenges to the first wave of interviews occurred but the researcher was better prepared to deal with adjustments and cope with sudden alterations.

### ***Data analysis***

Data analysis is an integral part of any research project used to extract meaning from the data collected. But often it can not be distinguished as a separate stage in the research process because it starts from the moment the researcher contacts gatekeepers and interview participants (Bryman and Burgess, 1994). However, these subjective impressions jeopardise the quality of the research and therefore, an analysis strategy is required to ensure the robustness of the findings.

Initially, for each case study service a case description was developed as a general strategy to guide further in-depth analysis of theoretical concepts (see chapter 6). The case descriptions followed an overall structure which provided detailed



information about each case. After this the cases were assessed according to various criteria to examine whether there was potential for aggregation of cases into types that shared similar features. Based on this initial assessment a typology was developed that served as a guide for further analysis of the theoretical concepts. While the synthesis of cases into types makes the analysis more complex, it allows the exploration of wider theoretical aspects in a more easily accessible fashion (Yin, 2003). The use of a typology in interpretive approaches can be traced to Weber, who used his ideal types as a means to explain social actions (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

Initially, the researcher considered using a software package, such as NVivo, to carry out the actual analytical task. However, due to time constraints, it was deemed impractical to set-up and develop a full NVivo project. Additionally, while NVivo was superior for data management, it could be confusing during the coding and analysis stages. Instead a combination of methods were used to facilitate data exploration and analysis. The researcher used an approach similar to Framework as outlined by Ritchie and Spencer (1994). Framework was developed as an analysis approach particularly for applied policy research and offers a systematic process to synthesise and interpret qualitative data.

In order to conduct the analysis, the researcher first needed to refamiliarise herself with the data. Because the researcher had conducted all the interviews, wrote up field notes and partially transcribed the interviews, a good initial knowledge of the data existed. Observing time constraints, a large part of the transcription was outsourced. It can be argued that transcription is a form of interpretation of the data and in this case it was done by an outsider, which could potentially influence the quality of the interview data (Poland, 2003). Recognising this problem and as a means

to quality assure the data, the researcher read and listened to a sample of interviews to get a feeling for how the transcriber had transferred the spoken words into text. Additionally, this also served to fill in gaps where the transcriber had not understood properly what had been said, thus minimizing word transfer errors. Additional knowledge was gained through high level analysis of the cases for the EU LEONARDO project. However, this kind of analysis forced the researcher to focus on different issues and concepts and thus could only provide a rough guide. In order to re-focus and realign the familiarisation process with the PhD research questions, a select number of interviews was explored in greater depth and emerging themes and issues noted.

The next step consisted of the construction of a thematic framework. The thematic framework allows data to be reviewed and referenced according to key themes which had previously been established (for instance, discretion) and issues that emerged at the familiarisation stage (for instance, trust). It was important to recognise that the development of a thematic framework required judgements to be made in terms of the salience of ideas and potential connections between topics (Matthews and Ross, 2010).

Once the themes had been established, they were applied to the data. It was quite difficult to stringently apply the thematic framework to the data because initially the themes were quite broad and required further refinement which in turn required a review of already treated transcripts. Thus the application of the thematic framework was an emergent and iterative process but which also allowed first insight into connections between themes. During this process, salient quotations from respondents were physically highlighted and catalogued according to the thematic

framework for subsequent illustration and exemplification of findings. This process of highlighting and cataloguing allowed easy retrieval of the relevant passages, while keeping the data within their context so that the potential for misinterpretation could be reduced (Bryman, 2001).

The next step consisted of the primary aggregation of data, where data from individual cases was categorised under their type in tables. This allowed for comparison of themes within types as well as across types and the synthesis of the data. This process required close attention to the similarities within each type but it was also important to keep track of any differences. This supported two aims. Firstly, it strengthened the validity of the typology. And secondly, it required the researcher to look for reasons as to why these differences occurred and thus strengthened the robustness of the analysis and the overall project. The writing of the analysis then followed a pre-determined structure that allowed for in-depth analysis of the theoretical concepts within and subsequently across types. This allowed the gradual building up of a larger picture which piece-by-piece answered research questions and helped to achieve the overall aim of the project.

## **Conclusion**

The focus of the study was to provide an in-depth qualitative exploration of how advisers mediated the tensions between service user needs and managerial demands. It uses 38 semi-structured interviews in 8 case study offices to address this question. The chapter located the study in an interpretivist, 'subtle realism' framework and refuted positivist criticisms such as the lack of reliability, validity, generalisability and rigour. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the main method to collect data because they facilitated the collection of in-depth information while allowing

sufficient flexibility to react in an ad-hoc manner to changing interview circumstances, for instance abridged interview times. The chapter also provided a reflexive account of the data collection process and considered the impact of access through gatekeepers as well as ethical considerations, such as deductive disclosure of case study providers or interview participants. The chapter concluded with an account of the data analysis process, which was facilitated through the creation of a typology. The following chapter provides details of the creation of the services typology.

## Chapter 6

# Developing a typology from case study profiles

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## **Introduction**

Employment, advice and guidance services in the UK were delivered in two distinct frameworks, the welfare-to-work framework and the learning and skills framework. As a result, the provision landscape was very diverse in terms of which organisations provided services, their target groups and the qualification profiles of the advisers. This diversity was actively supported by the New Labour government to draw on the unique benefits each organisation could provide (Blair, 2001, Home Office 1998). The following sections will provide a map of employment advice and guidance provision, followed by in-depth profiles of the case study services used in this study. Emerging patterns from the profiles, supplemented by contextual and theoretical considerations, will be used to develop a typology of advice and guidance services in the UK.

## **Mapping the UK employment advice landscape**

In the UK in the early Twenty-first Century a plethora of organisations provided employment advice and guidance. The following sections provide a brief map of services available in the UK<sup>12</sup>. This map was informed by the starting premise of this study, which also later informed the choice of the case study services. It focused on considering which services were available to individuals faced with unemployment, redundancy, returning to work or a career change in the UK. For the purpose of this study, therefore, employment advice services were all those services that offered advice and support to adults in order to mediate transitions between different labour market statuses (Frade et al., 2006).

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<sup>12</sup> This map was derived from a mapping exercise carried out for the 'Guidance in Europe' project. The results of this exercise were reported in the UK national report (Wright et. al., 2005) and further synthesised in a comparative report (Frade et. al., 2006).

One of the providers was Jobcentre Plus, the UK's public employment service. While this may not seem an obvious consideration at first, Jobcentre Plus was the first point of call when an individual was faced with unemployment due to its administrative function in the distribution of unemployment benefits. Labour market related advice was provided within the different New Deal programmes, which were targeted at specific audiences (for instance New Deal for Young People, New Deal 25+ or New Deal for Lone Parents). Access to these programmes was usually mandatory. Advice was dispensed by 'Personal Advisers' who were public servants.

Specific services within the New Deal programmes, which focussed for instance on training or improving employability (for example CV writing), were subcontracted to a range of providers including private companies and voluntary and community sector organisations. Interestingly, while the co-operation with Jobcentre Plus fell under the welfare-to-work scheme, some of these services also had contracted provisions under the learning and skills framework. This broadened their user base, because Jobcentre Plus users were mandated to make use of the service, while the provision within the learning and skills framework offered voluntary access, but was often targeted at people with low skills profiles (below NVQ2). Advisers in these services had different qualification profiles, with specific guidance related qualifications only essential where organisations were required to hold the guidance sector specific 'matrix' quality accreditation.

Services under the learning and skills framework were provided by a wide range of organisations, including voluntary and community sector organisations, further education colleges, training companies, adult and community education providers, local authorities, higher education institutions and private guidance providers. These

services were provided via a variety of means including face-to-face delivery, online or over the telephone. Access to these services was voluntary and initiated by the service user, and broadly focused on all age groups, although in England the provision was differentiated by age groups. The 'Connexions' service was specifically targeted at young people, while a wide range of providers delivered services for adults. In some of these organisations, advisers were qualified to postgraduate level in guidance specific fields and this was a condition of their ability to practice. In other services, advisers held qualifications in line with the 'matrix' requirements, while others did not see qualifications as essential to provide advice, but encouraged their staff to develop these skills.

Unions, particularly in England were also sometimes a source of employment advice. Union Learning Representatives in England advised their co-workers on learning and skills development. However, they often closely co-operated with other local guidance providers (TUC Learning Services, 2005). In Scotland, unions did not see themselves as guidance providers but closely collaborated with other employment advice providers. Access to all these services mentioned before was free of charge, whether they were mandatory services under the welfare-to-work framework or voluntary access services under the learning and skills framework. There were also some paid services (see for instance Jackson et al., 2001). However, these usually did not target an individual directly, but were rather focused on an organisational level to provide advice for instance with redundancies or executive recruitment. These services were not taken into consideration for this study, because an individual could not access them directly in a strict sense.



This study focused on employment advice services for adults only and therefore, services such as 'Connexions', which were particularly targeted at young people were not included. A starting premise for this study was to consider services available to individuals faced with different labour market transitions in the UK. This perspective drove the selection of case studies which included services from the welfare-to-work as well as the learning and skills framework to represent the full spectrum of services which were available to guide a service user's decision making. Consequently, the services studied were of a diverse nature. They included services that were provided by public, private and voluntary and community sector organisations, services that could be accessed voluntarily or were prescribed by government policy and differed widely in the size of their organisation. The following section gives an overview of the case study services and a range of criteria will be used to describe the services in more detail. These are:

- the nature of the service and the organisation: including the mode of access to the service, funding arrangements, the type of provider organisation and organisational goals
- the service organisation and staffing: including the size of the organisation, staff qualifications and management structures
- the service delivery: including the kind of service interactions that take place and the service environment

## **The Case Study Service Profiles**

### ***Service 1: New Deal***<sup>13</sup>

#### **Nature of the organisation and the service**

New Deal was provided by Jobcentre Plus throughout the UK. The organisation was hierarchically structured, with centralised policy decision-making. Decisions on contracting of service providers were also mainly made by a central office so that the local offices only had limited ability to influence what additional services were available to service users. When fieldwork started Jobcentre Plus was in the process of being rolled out nationally. This process had started in 2002 and was nearing its completion and the re-branding exercise was almost finalised. During the second wave of fieldwork the restructuring and all re-branding were complete.

Access to this service was mandatory for people aged 25 and older who were unemployed for 18 out of the preceding 21 months. Service users were automatically transferred to the service within the organisation and notified by post that they had to attend an interview. The service was funded by the government through taxes and as such there was an obligation to prove that the money was spent effectively and efficiently.

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<sup>13</sup> Please note that service names are aliases chosen to protect the participants' anonymity except in the cases of the New Deal and Careers Scotland, which could be easily identified by the knowledgeable reader. However, participants' anonymity was protected by not disclosing the location of their offices.

## **Service organisation and staffing**

At the office level, there was a service manager and an adviser manager who oversaw the front-line advisers. Responsibilities of the service manager included the analysis of the management information provided on a daily basis, acting as a liaison with the district level and over-seeing local provision. The adviser manager scheduled adviser-user interactions and generally oversaw the adviser's diaries, dealt with IT problems and observed adviser-user interactions on a regular basis.

Advisers in the case study services were all public service employees with varying backgrounds before they had joined the organisation. Upon joining, they had received intensive training on the administrative side of the service and quick training on interview techniques. First port of call for advisers in the office would be the adviser manager.

## **Service delivery**

The service consisted of a series of interviews which the service user was mandated to attend. If the users failed to attend the service they faced sanctions which ranged from a withdrawal of benefits for one day in the first instance to complete withdrawal in the third instance (*"three strikes and you are out"*). After 26 weeks of directed job searching users attended a Gateway interview where they would be directed towards a mandatory activity for another 22 weeks before they returned to the organisation. These options consisted of training courses or work placements depending on what was available and depending on who the organisation was sub-contracting to. The most common training courses at the case study service were joinery, painting and decorating, and occasionally an office administration or IT course.

## ***Service 2: Work Area***

### **Nature of the organisation and the service**

This service was contracted by a private provider. Originally a recruitment agency, the provider had branched out into delivering service contracts for various target groups, including long-term unemployed, lone parents and people with health issues. The organisation had a central office where decisions about which tenders to bid for were made. If successful, a local team was then established. Using this strategy, the provider had developed a UK-wide network of service delivery offices holding a wide range of contracts.

Access to Work Area was mandatory for people who were unemployed for 18 out of the preceding 21 months who were 25 years of age or older, or who were unemployed for 6 months if they were between 18 and 24 years. The service was located in a large city with a strong industrial pedigree. In the 1980s, the city suffered large scale redundancies during the closure of its manufacturing industry from which it was only slowly recovering. As a consequence, the average period of unemployment for service users who were mandated to the service amounted to 11 years. Service users were randomly assigned by Jobcentre Plus to one of three providers according to a percentage allocation of service users. The case study service was allocated at random to 25% of service users, while the main provider was assigned 50% and the other contractor dealt with the remaining 25%.

As this indicates, the funding for the service was provided through contracting from the Department for Work and Pensions. The contract ran for a duration of three years and the provider was paid the majority of money based on outcomes. The

provider received smaller amounts of money for each user entering the service to cover basic overhead costs, as well as payments when users moved from stage one to stage two, with a larger payment made when the user moved into employment. By far the largest payment was allocated to a sustainable employment outcome which meant that a user had stayed in employment for 13 weeks.

### **Service organisation and staffing**

The case study office had eight advisers, one dedicated administrator, an operations manager and an accounts manager. The operations manager was responsible for running the office and the contract, while the accounts manager liaised with local employers to create job opportunities for the service users. The advisers were initially drawn in a big recruitment exercise and emphasis was placed rather on their personal qualities and that they fit with the team, the organisation and the nature of the service. Advisers did not necessarily have a qualification in information, advice and guidance, although some had backgrounds in human resource management or counselling, at the same time though, one adviser used to be a police officer and another a teacher. This had changed by the second wave of fieldwork, by which point a number of advisers had achieved vocational qualifications and a number of advisers were working towards qualifications. The overall number of advisers also increased to 10. However, there was still considerable attrition. There were only two advisers still working at the service who participated in the initial wave of fieldwork and the local service management had changed completely.

## **Service delivery**

Service users received mandatory referrals from Jobcentre Plus and referred to the service. Once initial contact was established either through a personal visit or a phone call by the user, an appointment was set up with an adviser who had free capacity on their case load. The customer then attended a group induction session and an initial 60 min where the customer's needs were established. The service used a 'dream job approach' to find out which type of work, hours and industry would suit the users best and this method also got them to think outside of the box. Interestingly, service users in this service were called 'members'. Indeed, users accessed the premises through a security guarded entrance bearing much of a resemblance to a private members club.

The service was organised in three stages. The users were moved through these stages at specific points in time during their claim. During the initial four weeks on the service, the user had to attend the Jobcentre for their regular 'sign-ons' to receive their benefit payments as well as the case study service for the intervention. Once the service user was moved to stage two in week five, Jobcentre Plus transferred Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) payments to the service provider and the user only had to attend the meetings with the adviser, where the sign-ons were completed. While payment of JSA was transferred to the provider, the power to sanction the user for non-compliance stayed with Jobcentre Plus. The provider had to build a case and show that the customer had not complied with directions. Stage two lasted for 26 weeks and the adviser and the user would work together on removing barriers to work and finding suitable employment. This collaboration sometimes included 'soft barrier' courses which were developed and delivered in-house and addressed issues such as CV

writing, interview skills and confidence building. Other provisions (for instance short courses) were contracted as required. Furthermore, the service user attended regular meetings with the adviser to review action plans and job search goals and actions. In these meetings, the adviser and user identified issues that needed to be addressed for the user to return to work.

The last stage was voluntary where the customer could choose to stay with the service provider for a further 22 weeks. Much of the same processes were followed and the service user also had access to the provider's resources. However, JSA payments were transferred back to Jobcentre Plus and the user had to appear at Jobcentre Plus for regular sign-ons.

The provider used a variety of incentives to encourage users to return to employment. To facilitate a job start or interview attendance, the advisers could access a discretionary fund to pay for clothes, transport or even cover bills until the service users received their first pay check. Initially, the provider also offered a 'find your own job' grant of £100, which the users received when they took the initiative and found employment for themselves. This was not part of the contract but was the policy of the organisation. However, this practice was stopped. Once the user had entered and sustained employment for 13 weeks, they were eligible for a payment of a lump sum of £300, which was covered by the contract. For these initial 13 weeks of employment, the provider also employed a retention specialist who would provide in-work support if service users faced difficulties in managing their new regime.

### ***Service 3: Working Estate***

#### **Nature of the organisation and the service**

This service was provided by the same organisation as Work Area, but in a different city. This was a deliberate decision because one programme was delivered in Scotland and the other in England. Even though a comparison of England and Scotland was not a core aim of the fieldwork, it was important to understand the relationships between providers and service users. The service was a two year pilot programme specifically focused on highly deprived areas. The case study location fitted that criterion, being in the middle of a major urban regeneration project with a large percentage of ethnic minority residents. Unemployment and inactivity were considered relatively high in the area. Customers were eligible to access the service only if they lived within a specified postcode area.

There were two strands to the service, a mandatory and a voluntary strand. The mandatory service users were referred by Jobcentre Plus if they had been unemployed for six months and lived within the specified postcode area. The voluntary service users were reached mostly through outreach work within the local community and canvassing local residences as well as word of mouth within the community. Voluntary users were often inactive and not in receipt of benefits and therefore not required to look for work.

The service was funded through a pilot contract by the DWP for a period of two years. Funding for this period was in excess of £2 million, which was considered an extremely large amount of money for a service contract like this. But it depended largely on the successful job retention of service users that the provider would be able



to achieve this sum. As with the previous service, the provider was given a small amount of money to cover overhead costs, and then again smaller increments for moving service users from stage to stage. A larger amount was received when the user entered employment and the largest share was paid out on job retention for 13 weeks.

### **Service organisation and staffing**

Locally the service was managed by an operations manager and an account manager. The operations manager covered everything to do with the local delivery of the contract, while the account manager liaised with employers and sub-contracted local providers. Additionally, there was a local 'quality champion' who cross-checked documents that were submitted for claims to the DWP, so that swift and smooth payment could be ensured.

There were eight personal advisers in the offices with different work experience and backgrounds. Some were experienced within the organisation. Others had human resource management backgrounds. Due to the largely ethnic minority population in the area, a large proportion of the advisers were fluent in more than one language which facilitated communication with the service users. The office had experienced some attrition with the service originally having been run by a different management team. The operations manager pointed out that advisers were selected based on their motivation to achieve results and their fit with the team.

## **Service delivery**

Mandatory service users that fitted the postcode criterion and other eligibility criteria were automatically referred to the provider by Jobcentre Plus and had to report there within a specified period of time. Mandatory users could be sanctioned for not complying with their action plans and directions, although the adviser needed to build a case and sanctions were then referred back to Jobcentre Plus. Voluntary users accessed the services on their own account. They usually made contact with the provider and then followed the same procedures as mandatory users. However, the elements of compulsion and compliance present in the mandatory strand of the service did not apply to voluntary users. Equally, there were no time constraints for voluntary users. It was worth noting though that the voluntary users were those that were harder to reach and sometimes also harder to help due to specific barriers, most frequently language problems.

The service user then received an appointment for an initial interview with one of the advisers who had capacity on their caseload. The initial interview took around 60 minutes. The adviser, along with the user, set up a case file and, as in Work Area, used a 'dream job' approach to explore potential avenues. An action plan was developed with actions for the service user, which was mandatory for mandatory users. The adviser then booked a subsequent meeting at a time that the adviser thought most beneficial for the customer.

Advisers indicated that they made appointments for users more frequently the closer they were to the labour market in order to brief them and provide them with additional support as needed. The length of these subsequent interviews also differed depending on the needs of the customer and could range anywhere from five minutes

to two hours. Within the initial meeting the adviser also identified barriers and pathways to addressing them, which included the in-house provision of so called 'soft barriers' courses which covered CV writing, interview skills, telephone manners and confidence building among others. Users could also be directed to external provision with a local provider if there was, for instance, an English language need. The initial interview and the period of time where the barriers were diagnosed made up Stage 1. This stage took up to four weeks, although for some customers this time period was shorter.

Once an action plan was established, the service user was moved on to Stage 2 which had a maximum duration of 6 months. The advisers then built an individual strategy with the service user and worked with them on a one-to-one basis. The aim was to get the service user into sustainable employment as fast as possible, while dealing with their barriers.

After Stage 2, service users could select to either stay with the service for another 22 weeks or to return to Jobcentre Plus. One of the advisers reported that that about 80% of service users returned to Jobcentre Plus, either to escape the rather strict regime at the provider organisation or because the service could not deliver any additional support that would help them get into work. There was also a financial aspect because users were not eligible any longer for certain bonuses, such as travel expenses, if they stayed on. Those that stayed on were rather close to the labour market.

*"A lot of people on my follow on do eventually go into work and they just need that little extra time frame to be able to support themselves, have the support when they go into work." (Adviser, Working Estate)*

The service did provide retention support for service users. There were also considerable financial incentives for service users to maintain employment for 13 weeks which advisers actively use as a selling point for the service.

*“They get a £50 bonus if they find a job from us. After three months they get £100 bonus from us and £500 from the Jobcentre. That’s after three months. After six months they get another £750 from the Jobcentre. It’s a real helpful tool in the final persuasion when they’re edging away, I don’t know if I want to do this.” (Adviser, Working Estate)*

As in Work Area, service users were called ‘members’ and a similar situation with access existed. Security personnel guarded the front entrance to the premises, while the office lay out itself was practical and open with dedicated areas for job searching, waiting, in-house training and the adviser desks.

### ***Service 4: Careers Scotland***

#### **Nature of the organisation and the service**

This service was delivered by a large organisation in Scotland, which, according to the service manager, could be considered a quango due to its funding structure. In 2002, over 80 different careers guidance services were amalgamated into this one organisation to ‘declutter’ the complicated and convoluted careers guidance landscape that had existed until then. When fieldwork was carried out in 2005, there was still restructuring and reorganisation going on. There was a lot of education about the goals and the nature of the organisation communicated to employees to integrate the various contracts, approaches, philosophies and management structures that the vast

number of different organisations had followed previously. Managers of the service considered the integration of all these organisations as a great success and accomplishment.

The goal of the service was to provide an all-age careers guidance service with voluntary and free access. The only mandatory service users were 16-18 year olds who were not in education or employment (NEET) and benefits (although this specific group was not the focus of this study). They were mandated by Jobcentre Plus to attend the service on a regular basis to encourage them to take up employment or return to education. Access to the service was provided through different channels. There were offices in almost every bigger town throughout Scotland and guidance material could also be accessed through the organisation's website.

At the time of the fieldwork, funding was provided through the Scottish Executive. The provider directly negotiated targets and the associated funding with the government and report to them directly. However, the funding was administered through Scottish Enterprise in an effort to save costs on administration and make use of Scottish Enterprise's expertise<sup>14</sup>.

The main services provided by the organisation included, but were not limited to:

- career planning to help service users make informed choices about their career choices.

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<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, the Scottish Executive was renamed the Scottish Government. There has also been a separation of Scottish Enterprise Careers Scotland after a funding scandal at Scottish Enterprise.

- employability skills which included support in approaching the labour market through courses, CV writing and interview skills, etc.
- employer services which included among others, help and support in case of redundancies, legal support, as well as career planning support for other organisations.

### **Service organisation and staffing**

The case study office was split up in two locations. One location was the customer facing site, the so called 'shop', which was constantly staffed with four advisers. Advisers attended the shop on a rota basis and each of them had to attend for a certain amount of time according to their other duties, which included general careers guidance at schools or involvement with local labour market projects. The second site consisted of an office building where advisers had a permanent desk and took care of their administration tasks. This site was not frequented by customers. Through this structure there was a clear separation between the front-line advice service and the managerial side of the organisation.

All advisers were qualified careers advisers (postgraduate level). Due to the amalgamation into one organisation, there were many different work styles and specialisations among advisers. Some saw themselves as specialist adult advisers, whereas others saw their remit more broadly. Under the umbrella of the new organisation they all were supposed to cover all aspects of the service according to the all-age nature of the integrated service. The organisation employed people to train as careers advisers. However, if they did not pass their degree course, they were not allowed to deliver careers guidance and were assigned more administrative functions.

## **Service delivery**

Service users accessed the service voluntarily to seek help with careers decisions. Some had made use of the service's website before and needed additional advice after, for instance, some unsuccessful job interviews. The 'shop' was equipped with a number of computer terminals which allowed access to the organisation's website with online resources. Other careers information and job search sites could be accessed as well. Furthermore, there was a large selection of careers guidance books as well as a broad range of leaflets giving information about working in specific industries.

When entering the 'shop', the service user was greeted by an adviser and the purpose of the visit established. In most cases, the user was directed to the self-help resources after a short explanation of what was available and the recording of some details of the service user. The local adviser occasionally checked with the service user if they found the information suitable or if they needed any help. The service manager commented that according to procedure, the vast majority of service users did not receive in-depth guidance but rather used the self-help with light support. The intention was that only about 4% of service users actually had an in-depth discussion with a careers adviser, although advisers commented that they applied this more flexibly. The self-help service could be accessed for as long as necessary, where as an in-depth interaction with an adviser would take a maximum of 60 minutes.

Advisers outlined that most users accessed the service only once to solve a specific problem. In the rare event, that a user returned the procedure was that users were not guaranteed to see the same advisers due to the rota system. The adviser then accessed a case file, which was stored on a database system. In practice,

however, the adviser who had previously consulted with the user sometimes gave the service user a rough idea when he or she would be in the office again, so the user could time the visit and continue consulting the same adviser.

### ***Service 5: Move On***

#### **Nature of the organisation and the service**

Move On was provided by a small voluntary and community sector organisation. The original focus of the organisation was to support migrant workers from Italy in their move to the UK and during their initial time in the country. Doing this work the organisation had built up a detailed knowledge of the local labour market and how to support workers in the transition to sustainable employment. In an effort to expand their funding base, the organisation sub-contracted Move On provision from a main contractor. The contract for Move On was renewed yearly and payment was based on achievement of certain targets. The service manager, however, did point out that as long as they achieved their targets on average, payments would be received. At the time of the first visit, the organisation was contracted to see 43 eligible service users per month, which was increased to 48 by the second visit.

A notable change in the organisational structure occurred between the two fieldwork visits, when the service provider merged with another, bigger voluntary sector organisation that had similar aims and a similar target group, but a more stable and established funding structure. By the time of the second visit, the provider was fully integrated with the other organisation, but continued with the Move On contract and providing its previous support for migrant workers.



## **Service organisation and staffing**

The service was led by one manager who was also a co-founder of this organisation. There were two advisers, an administrator, who helped with job searching occasionally, and two volunteers, who helped out with administrative matters and job searching. The employee and payment structure was very much based on volunteer time and contribution.

*“But in fact we are, well I am paid part-time [...] and the two advisors, I mean [Adviser 1], well she’s a volunteer really, she’s paid, because she’s doing the accounts and advising she is paid for the accounts, for doing the accounts, well [the administrator] is full-time and [Adviser 2] well he’s here full-time but he’s a volunteer, he’s paid for part-time really. And [woman] is a volunteer, she’s here three days.” (Manager, Move On)*

The manager and one adviser were fully qualified careers advisers, although they partially qualified abroad. The second adviser was working towards an NVQ2 in Advice and Guidance, whereas the other volunteers did not have any qualifications with regards to advice and guidance.

The staff situation had changed dramatically after the merger. The staff, including the manager, had changed completely. The new manager had a background in anthropology and was working towards an NVQ2 in Advice and Guidance, together with a volunteer adviser.

## **Service delivery**

Service users were referred to the service by the local Jobcentre Plus office if their qualification level was below NVQ 1. The interaction was supposed to be 20 min long and was considered a one-off intervention. However, the interventions often took longer according to the service user's need. The service consisted of advice with regards to job searching (CV, interviews) and also information on improving skills, depending on what the service user asked for.

According to the service manager, referral from the Jobcentre and therefore access to the service was voluntary and the users often walked in to the service office to see if they could be helped immediately, or made an appointment. The provider's policy, as outlined by the manager and the advisers, was that they were seen by whoever was available and the adviser then addressed the issues the service user had. In the rare event that users returned for additional information or support, they saw the same adviser as before.

## ***Service 6: Redundancy Help***

### **Nature of the organisation and the service**

Redundancy Help was a pilot project which was fully funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) for 3 years and focused on employees that were under threat or had recently been made redundant. The pilot programme covered the Scottish Enterprise area (South and Central Scotland), while the Highlands & Islands region of Scotland could not be included due to EU funding restrictions. The service was delivered within the same organisational framework as the Careers Scotland. The

service was intended to fill the gaps that were not covered by a programme that addressed large scale redundancies. The aim was thus to be able to provide a seamless service for employees affected by redundancies. Access to the service was voluntary and dependent on whether the organisation that was making employees redundant notified the service. Even so, employees still had the option of whether or not to make use of the service.

While the service had targets to achieve (which were built into the project bid), these targets appeared flexible and the project manager indicated that they had been revised occasionally based on insights from the programme implementation.

### **Service organisation and staffing**

The service was delivered by the advisers from Careers Scotland, who were all qualified careers advisers. Most of them had substantial experience in working with adults. These advisers were seconded for part of their time to the pilot. Each office throughout the South and Central region of Scotland had at least one adviser who was responsible for delivering Redundancy Help, if it was triggered.

Advisers reported to their local line manager on their general work but also including their work on Redundancy Help, and also reported to the project manager to feedback information and experiences.

### **Service delivery**

The service delivery was triggered through a redundancy. However, whether the advisers were active depended on the size of the redundancy and whether it would trigger a response from the service that covered the large-scale redundancies.

According to the service manager, the definition of 'large-scale' differed widely between regions. In some offices, it could be as little as one person being made redundant whereas in other regions it could be as high as 500. The way advisers found out also differed widely. Advisers recalled that sometimes a company phoned up and asked for support, sometimes there was information in the local newspaper and the advisers approached the company and offered support. At other times, the advisers only learned after the redundancy when a worker came to one of the offices of the Careers Scotland service, at which point the service user received the regular service that was provided there.

The advisers and the manager explained, that the service consisted, at a minimum, of a presentation that informed the employees about the services that were available to them, benefits that they could apply for and contained a lot of sign posting to organisation offering support. This presentation took place at the company that was making employees redundant. If advisers were given some lead in time, they could work over a longer period of time with employees that wanted support. Advisers then delivered careers advice on the company premises during the employees working hours. This often included advice on a career break, re-training and re-orientation, or support with job searching and preparation for interviews. The content of the interaction depended largely on the service user's needs.

If the redundancy occurred with insufficient lead in time or the employees were not finished with their career planning with the adviser, the advisers explained that service users were directed to the local premises of the Careers Scotland service where they were supported by a careers adviser.

## ***Service 7: Telephone Guidance***

### **Nature of the organisation and the service**

This service was delivered by a third sector organisation that mainly contracted information, advice and guidance services from various providers which included the Learning and Skills Council as well as the BBC, for instance. The organisation was unique in that it provided mainly contact centre services for various contractors. Since access to the service originated from the service user through a phone call, the service was entirely voluntary in nature. The aim of the service was *“to empower people through information”* (Manager, Telephone Guidance).

The organisation was split over two sites, of which only one site was included in the project. The organisation had been involved in delivering the Telephone Guidance since 1999. Initially a small team of 30 employees started delivering the service. At the time of the fieldwork, the team had grown to about 250 employees across the two sites of which about 200 were on the adviser team at different levels. The remainder were managerial staff and administrative support. Advisers worked full-time, part-time or just hourly.

The organisation sub-contracted the service from the University for Industry (Ufi), who held a remit from the LSC as well as the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The service had key performance indicators to fulfil, which were constantly monitored and adjusted through close co-operation with Ufi. According to the manager, the service took between 700,000 to 800,000 phone calls per year across the two sites.

## **Service organisation and staffing**

There were three levels of advisers. Information advisers solely provided information to the caller which mainly consisted of sign-posting to various education resources and providers. These advisers were qualified to NVQ2 in Call Handling. The service manager described them as the face of the service, because any phone call was initially taken by them and then fielded to competent staff if the query was more complex. The next level was the Learning Adviser who was able to provide information on funding opportunities, and can direct callers to skill diagnostic tools as well as advise on whether skills might be transferable to other careers. Learning Advisers were qualified up to NVQ 3 in Advice and Guidance. The new service that the organisation provided was the in-depth careers advice. This was provided by Careers Coaches, who were internally also referred to as Lifelong Learning Advisers. These advisers often had previous experience in advice and guidance, or if that was not the case, they were working towards an NVQ 4 in Advice and Guidance. To satisfy initial demand, qualified careers advisers were hired, but the usual pathway was progression through the organisation from an Information Adviser to a Careers Coach. Progression was only possible upon completion of the relevant qualifications.

## **Service delivery**

Telephone Guidance was accessible seven days a week from 8 am until 10 pm due to demand and feedback from service users. The manager described, that callers were fielded to one or the other site based on where an adviser was available first. Initially, an Information Adviser received the call and assessed the situation and then transferred the call to the first available, suitable adviser.

The general policy as described by the manager intended that the in-depth guidance service was mostly targeted at service users with low qualification levels (below NVQ 2), who were eligible for up to three interactions of about 30 minutes each. However in practice, advisers did not turn away users with higher qualification levels, but did not automatically offer the two additional interactions and a written action plan. Advisers explained, that it was expected that higher qualified users would keep notes for themselves, while the action plan for lower qualified users were also used to inform colleagues about the contents of the previous interactions. In subsequent interactions, the service user did not necessarily speak to the same adviser.

The manager and advisers outlined, that the actual content of the interaction depended on the needs of the service user. In some cases this was advice on a career switch or a discussion about career prospects in a certain industry. The advisers outlined that they checked with the service user whether the information they provided was what the user was looking for to keep the interaction as closely focused on the user's needs as possible. If the service user was eligible, the adviser offered an action plan which was then either e-mailed or post mailed to the user. If desired, this triggered a follow up call a couple of weeks later to check on their progress and any further support needs.

## ***Service 8: Lone Parent Advice***

### **Nature of the organisation and the service**

This service was delivered by a large third sector organisation which operated primarily in the West of Scotland. With more than 600 employees in a large network of offices, also offering childcare and development opportunities, the service was quite substantial<sup>15</sup>. The aim of the organisation was to provide support and advice for lone parents, which included not only their return into employment, but also included legal, psychological and financial advice. The aim of the Lone Parent Advice service was to support lone parents into employment through advice, support and skill building. To fulfil this goal, the organisation offered training courses, for instance in child care. Access to the service was completely voluntary and service users, particularly those receiving individual support, could stop the process at any point in time.

Funding for the service was provided through the organisation. The advisers were contracted internally to deliver 'employability' modules to course participants, which were then billed to the course budget. Individual consultations were covered by the organisation's budget. There was also an EU funded project which focused specifically on retention support for lone parents, but this was not part of the research project investigation.

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15 After completing the interviews with the service manager and the advisers, the organisation had to file for bankruptcy. This came as a complete shock, as there had been no signs or indications by the advisers and the service manager with regards to financial problems. The service shut down over night, leaving many people unemployed and lone parents who were in the middle of completing qualifications unable to complete their courses.



## **Service organisation and staffing**

Advisers for Lone Parent Advice came from various backgrounds, including a camera woman, a previously unemployed lone parent, and an adviser with Working Estate. There was not necessarily a focus on qualifications as an adviser, but rather on whether the adviser was enthusiastic about the work they were going to do and the way they would work with the service users. The unifying feature among all advisers as well as the manager within the Lone Parent Advice service was that they were lone parents. There were four advisers with the service, of which one had line managing responsibilities based on experience, as well as an overall service manager who also oversees the employment retention programme.

## **Service delivery**

Advisers and managers commented that the service was delivered wherever suited the service user best. This included, for instance, the local library, a café or the service user's house. The manager outlined a process where the service users often approached the organisation for support with something else, for instance legal advice or child care, and perhaps indicate that they were considering returning to work. They were then referred to one of the advisers, who would then make an appointment. The content of the subsequent interactions depended entirely on the service user's needs and could consist of confidence building, identification of barriers to work, information on courses or intensive support with job searching and interview skills. The service was highly personalised and interviews took place at times and durations that suited the service user best. Advisers mentioned that if a service user felt they could not continue with the process, they stayed in touch with the user but did not pressure them to follow through with their plan to return to work.

A second strand of the service, what advisers called 'employability advice', was delivered in a group setting and was generally part of a vocational training course. Advisers explained that the various modules were delivered on a monthly basis with the continuity of a dedicated adviser. The modules included but were not limited to CV writing, interview skills, assertiveness training, as well as salary negotiations and time management. Advisers targeted the course modules towards the group of people attending the work shop (for instance, a group of teenage mothers). If the participants needed individual support, the adviser made an appointment and addressed the issue as mentioned above.

## **The Services Typology**

The case study services were specifically chosen for their diversity and to represent the full spectrum of service provision available within the UK. However, this diversity made a meaningful analysis difficult if it was solely based on service attributes. The emergence of patterns, their similarities and differences were difficult to ascertain due to their great variance. A useful tool to facilitate the analysis was a typology which grouped similar services together based on certain features. This allowed a more detailed analysis on several levels. On the one hand, within a certain type similarities and differences could emerge more easily and allowed the comparison of similar kinds of services. On the other hand, the comparison across types allowed the drawing of a bigger picture. At this level, patterns of interactions could be spotted and theories potentially confirmed or amended.

Considering the variety of case study services, there were a number of possibilities to establish a meaningful typology. Services could be structured along organisation types (for instance, public, private and third sector organisations).

Another consideration was the structuring with regards to funding sources. Equally, a comparison according to the relevant framework (welfare-to-work or education and skills) appeared initially viable. A more recent analysis by (Personnaz et al., 2007) developed a typology based on the nature of the service which was applicable in a cross-national context. However, all these approaches did not produce a clear structure that allowed an insight into how advisers mediated the tensions between their managerial requirements and their interactions with service users because of frequently changing organisational structures, approaches to service delivery and shifting funding structures.

The construction of the typology was based on the emerging themes from the initial analysis, taking also into consideration the contextual factors as well as the theoretical concepts underpinning the study. The initial analysis of the case study services, as presented before, suggested that the most consistent factors across services were the mode of access (mandatory or voluntary) and whether services were largely standardised or focused on the service user's needs. The mode of access was somewhat influenced by the framework that the programme fell under, whether it followed the more stringent welfare-to-work strand or the education and skills framework. There was also a policy rationale, which stated that users of some services should be compelled to participate, while in other services users should be enabled and supported, suggesting more voluntary participation. The creation of more user-defined services was one of the key tenets of managerial governance mechanisms (Gray and Jenkins, 1995), so the use of this dichotomy seemed pertinent to the analysis from a theoretical perspective.

While the development of types made the analysis as such more complex because it required the additional analytic step to establish the types, choosing the most consistent factors across services allowed an in-depth exploration of the theoretical concepts in a more accessible way. The interpretation of the findings could also be presented in a more structured way and thus revealed similarities and differences between cases within as well as across types.

Based on the above profiles, the services can be placed along two 'axes', creating four quadrants. The horizontal 'axis' covers service access, whether it was voluntary or mandatory. The vertical 'axis' has standardisation and user definition at its extremes. The four quadrants thus created combinations of these aspects and illustrated the extent to which these services exhibited certain features, for instance if they were high on standardisation and low on mandatory access for instance. When applied to the service profiles, the quadrants look as follows:

**Table 3: The services typology**

	<b>Mandatory Access</b>	<b>Voluntary Access</b>
<b>Standardised Service</b>	New Deal Work Area Working Estate	Careers Scotland
<b>User-focused Service</b>		Move On Redundancy Help Telephone Guidance Lone Parent Advice

There are four possible types:

- a mandatory-standardised type,
- a voluntary-standardised type,
- a voluntary-user defined type, and
- a mandatory-user defined type.

It was interesting to note that the latter type does not seem to be populated with services in the UK. This was because the centralised nature of the UK policy context and the current provision environment do not allow such a combination. Mandatory services were mainly found within the welfare-to-work provision. These kinds of policies were centrally steered by the UK government, and programme content and provision was highly standardised and defined. A mandatory – user defined service would require a transfer of responsibility to a lower level organisation that was able to manage a programme targeted to specific user needs as well as allowing the service user to be involved in the decision-making process. Within the context of the introduction of consumerism in the UK policy context, there had been an attempt to transform the ‘passive’ welfare recipient into an ‘active’ customer and citizen with rights and responsibilities. However, theorists (Potter, 1994, Clarke & Newman 1994) argue that the transfer of power that would be necessary to complete this transformation has been incomplete and therefore, this approach failed to actively involve service users in shaping public services. The services typology appears to confirm this argument with the lack of a service in the mandatory- user defined type.

An example where such a service type can be found is in the Nordic countries, where the legal basis for user participation has been created (Van Aerschot, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

Diversity in the provision of employment advice services was actively supported by the UK government to supplement public service delivery in order to provide high quality services with a strong user focus (Blair, 2001). This chapter supplied a map to the service provision landscape in the UK. The service profiles revealed quite a structured picture of what kinds of employment advice services were provided within the UK context. The diversity of the services required the construction of a typology to conduct a meaningful analysis of the different cases. The typology allowed for a more structured approach to the data analysis and provided a framework to discover similarities and differences of the front-line governance of service provision in the diverse employment advice landscape. The typology will allow both an insight into the subtle differences among services of the same type. At the same time, the comparison across the types will reveal, it was hoped, the substantial differences in how advisers in these various service types governed service users, and how their work was steered and controlled by governance approaches.

## Chapter 7

### Steering the service user

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## **Introduction**

Politically, front-line advisers are portrayed as focal points to mediate government policy, inform, and influence service user's behaviour (Jewell and Glaser, 2006). The study is rooted in the concept of governance and aims to examine the ways in which different governance regimes emerge through the management and practice of advisers at street level (Lipsky, 1980). This chapter examines the adviser-user relationship and how advisers delivered employment advice to the service users. In particular, these interactions were an expression of how advisers governed the relationship and tried to balance managerial demands with relationship processes to achieve a behaviour change. The nature, quality and content of this relationship was central to the outcome of the service, particularly where this involved changing people's behaviour (Hasenfeld et al., 1974).

In order to explore how advisers in the different service types tried to change people's behaviour, the building blocks of establishing the relationship between the service user and the adviser in the various case study services needed to be explored. The analysis of similarities and differences among services of the same type produced a footprint for the type. This was then used to compare the implications for the adviser-user relationship and how advisers negotiated the underlying tensions across the different types.

The character and dynamics of the adviser-user relationship were closely connected. Dynamics of the interaction define the character of the service and vice versa. The nature of access to the service, mandatory or voluntary, potentially sets an initial tone for the dynamics of the interaction. The pre-defined aspects of a service, for instance availability of training courses or set moves from one stage of the



programme to another, set boundaries to how advisers could use discretion. Trust in a person's actions and capabilities were a way of ensuring compliance with requirements and thus had a direct bearing on the outcomes a service might produce (Newman, 2001). The underlying assumption was that if an adviser could successfully balance the managerial demands with responsiveness to user needs, they were in a position to establish trust and elicit compliant behaviour that would, in turn, produce the intended behaviour change in the service user (Zaheer and Venkatraman, 1995). The following sections set out to examine this assumption within the service types.

## **Discretion**

First the concept of discretion was analysed within the different service types in order to capture the similarities and differences of the services that make up a type. As discussed earlier, discretion is a contested concept and in varying contexts has different definitions. For the purpose of this project, an adviser has discretion:

*“whenever the effective limits of his power leave him[sic] free to make a choice among possible courses of action or inaction.” (Davis, 1974 cited in Adler and Asquith, 1981: 9).*

This definition was deliberately chosen, as it is quite broad in order to capture the uses of discretion in the different types of services. The uses of discretion were expected to differ substantially. The following sections examine the use of discretion within the four service types.

## **Mandatory-standardised type services**

Services in this group were often standardised and left little room for flexibility and the use of discretion for advisers. The limitations that curtailed adviser's flexibility in the New Deal, for instance, included time limits for interviews which advisers reported they strictly adhered to, as well as checklists that advisers worked through in an interaction. Although there were time restrictions for advisers in the Work Area and Working Estate services, they did not appear to adhere as strictly to the restrictions but rather focused on the user's individual needs. The advisers described adapting frequency, length and content of the interactions according to how close the adviser perceived the user to be to the labour market. Advisers in Working Estate pointed out that they saw users more often but for a shorter time if they were close to applying for jobs and getting interviews. However, they also indicated that as much as they tried to focus on the individual's needs and providing individual support, the programme guidelines always took precedence. This meant that advisers in Work Area and Working Estate worked with a strong focus on returning users to the labour market and moved users from stage to stage at specific points in time as required by the programme guidelines (with the exception of the voluntary users in the Working Estate where advisers had more leeway).

Despite this, it seemed that advisers in these two services were more flexible than advisers in other services of this type, for instance, in selecting measures to support the user. Advisers highlighted that, if, for example, users needed a forklift license to increase their chances for employment, the provider could buy-in the service and send the user to the course. Additionally, advisers had discretionary funding available that could be used to reimburse travel expenses or to help with the purchase

of interview clothes or work wear. Advisers appreciated this additional support and flexibility because they felt they could make a real difference to people's lives and support them in their transition to work. In fact, advisers were eager to point out that their work, despite providing a similar service to that of The New Deal was distinctly different from that of an adviser there:

*"... I see myself as adding a bit more of a personal touch than the Jobcentre can and ultimately helping people more than the Jobcentre can [...] and the intervention that I do here is much more than sort of sign here right okay on you go, I will try to explore every avenue possible for people..." (Adviser, Work Area)*

In contrast, advisers said that interactions between advisers and users in the New Deal were highly structured and followed a pre-defined pattern with little deviation from user to user. This made interactions between advisers and users seem rather mechanical and advisers indicated that it impacted on their motivation and ability to provide a targeted service:

*"It's just like... you're like a robot, I mean, you just come in, you've got your list printed in front of you and you just get on with it basically."*  
*(Adviser, New Deal)*

This inflexible and rule-bound way of working translated into the interactions with service users. Advisers had limited options to, for instance, send service users onto courses. The New Deal advisers highlighted that mainly due to lack of financial resources they were unable to respond to user's requests to be sent on courses such as painting and decorating, because these courses were not contracted by the

provider. This led to users being sent onto courses that were not necessarily suitable or helpful to them. The mandatory nature and strict timeline of the service required the user, as well as the adviser, to comply with the measure if they did not want to risk being sanctioned. The fact that the adviser was potentially threatened by sanctions may appear strange, yet there was the threat of a performance downgrade if the adviser did not adhere to service requirements. This highlights the restrictions advisers in this service were operating under. Previous literature has shown that performance evaluation is one of the tools that can limit adviser's discretion and increase service standardisation from a managerial level (McKevitt, 1998). The use of these tools will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

In contrast to the New Deal, advisers in the Work Area and Working Estate services in particular appreciated the opportunity to respond on a more personal basis to the user and develop an individual approach to the user's needs. The fact that their interactions were not governed by a standardised framework was seen as positive because it gave advisers a certain degree of control over maintaining a relationship with the user.

*"It's very much left up to us, which is what I like. I find that if we did have a framework it wouldn't work very well because every person is completely different and you need to be softly, softly with some people otherwise they'll disappear [...] and you've got no control over helping them out." (Adviser, Working Estate)*

This was an interesting aspect, bearing in mind that each service user in the end represented a monetary premium for the provider, and thus retention within the service at a minimum was crucial for the service's financial profitability. Thus the

provider, through its advisers, was very eager to retain service users, which it was more likely to do if they could approach each user on an individual, targeted basis. This suggested that while advisers used discretion to respond to service user's needs, they also needed to use this discretion to maximise their service's profit.

The language used by services in this group to refer to their users was also worth exploring. The widespread use of the 'customer' language in the New Deal implied that service users had a choice and indeed decision-making power. It implied that the user had flexibility in planning their actions and selecting choices that were adequate for their situation and even of switching the service provider if the service provided was not satisfactory. This suggested that to some degree the adviser had the discretion of a 'sales person' to make offers that would entice the customer (Clarke and Newman, 1997). Indeed, Jobcentre Plus Customer's Charter outlines:

*"We aim to help people to be more independent. We will work with you to make sure your job options are realistic and will encourage and support everyone to work if they can. We will also try to help you get any training you need." (Jobcentre Plus, 2009: 1)*

However, this was not reflected within the reality of service provision as advisers described it. Service user's choice and decision making powers were characterised by advisers as being bound by very narrow margins and thus the user's decision making capacity was limited. One adviser described a situation where a service user had acted pro-actively and enrolled in a college course and the advisers did not have the power to integrate the college course into the service provision even though the college course might have greatly benefited the service user. Advisers had to point out that the programme requirements took priority over any other

involvements. Indeed, the only way for service users to evade the programme requirements was to effectively sign off of benefits, which of course was not advisable for some service users due to their financial or personal situation. Advisers were not given the flexibility to react to such circumstances on an individual basis and thus had to tell the users:

*“...Look, if you want to continue [with the course], what I suggest you do, you go out there and find a part time job to be able to sign off the benefits to continue that. If not, you will have to give up your training to comply with [the service].” (Adviser, New Deal)*

This quote outlined some further issues. One was the pressure that was applied to the user to comply with the programme requirements to avoid sanctioning despite the programme potentially being a less desirable option. This is discussed in more detail in the section on changing people’s behaviour. Another issue was that advisers saw the benefit of the user being on a college course and trying to find ways around strict programme compliance by advising the user to sign off. Whether this was entirely in the interest of the service user is questionable. The adviser’s behaviour mirrors Lipsky’s (1980) theory of street-level behaviour where bureaucrats made discretionary decisions and thus changed the policy outcome. In this example, the intended policy outcome was to help the service user return to work as quickly as possible. In the short run, the adviser’s actions removed the person from the benefits register and only in the mid-term a potential return to work. Nevertheless, these moments appeared to be rare in the New Deal provision and advisers were mostly bound to the strict rules and control and thus had very limited opportunity to provide a service targeted to the user’s needs.

Advisers in the Work Area and Working Estate services referred to service users as 'members'. This evoked images of an exclusive club and certain rights and responsibilities associated to the membership of a club. Membership in this context awarded the service users a degree of importance and suggested they were an integral part of the service. Indeed, the user was much more involved in the decision making process. Advisers and users co-operated in the creation and implementation of action plans that were built around the users' needs. Within the meetings with the user, the adviser had the flexibility to decide what actions were most appropriate to allow the user to gain sustainable employment. This was, however, limited by the programme guidelines which provided strict boundaries what could and could not be done. This suggested that while advisers had more flexibility in the actions that could be taken and that user involvement in the decision making process was increased, the idea of membership was not fully realised. This result was similar to the customer rhetoric in New Deal. Advisers in the New Deal felt the need to revert to street-level tactics in an attempt to be responsive to users' needs which was not necessary for advisers in the Work Area service who had the necessary flexibility albeit within very narrow margins.

The adviser-user interactions in all mandatory-standardised services were recorded on IT systems, which were also used to track user progress. Advisers saw the data recording on the system as very time consuming and the focus on paper work was reported to negatively impact on the adviser's ability to focus on the service user.

*"... it was all focused on getting the paperwork right, that you can't always sort of... concentrate on the member [...] because you're so focused on the paperwork because you know it's just gonna keep coming back to you..." (Adviser, Work Area)*

The task of tracking user progress was thus a highly bureaucratic process and enforced hierarchical rule following. Advisers said these processes combined with the requirements to move users from stage to stage in the service, whether they were ready to move on or not, sometimes limited their ability to provide a service that was truly focused on the user's needs. Voluntary service users in Working Estate were the exception. Advisers here had some flexibility about when to move a user to the next stage. While advisers tried to be responsive to user needs and provide a personalised service, they were very clear from the start that service guidelines would take priority over the user's needs as this quote highlights:

*"... sell them the fact [...] that you are here for them, that you are gonna try and help them, you know, you're not a big bad Jobcentre, you know, at the same time you have to make them realise that you have guidelines that you have to work by and if push comes to shove, the guidelines have to come first." (Adviser, Work Area)*

This emphasized that advisers were very aware that they were working for a private organisation and that compliance with service requirements was essential to secure the funding for the organisation. However, it did not prevent advisers from looking at cases on an individual basis and use the discretion they had to the benefit of the user.

### **Voluntary-standardised type services**

Standardisation in this service type was introduced through channelling service users towards self-help tools. A service manager outlined that the delivery strategy foresaw that the actual number of cases where advisers acted in their professional role



as careers advisers and provided in-depth one-to-one guidance was supposed to be relatively small (only about 4% of service users) and should generally only be available to those with a very low qualification profile. The remainder of the service users would be channelled to access self-help tools or given minimal support. The manager further commented that the main tool, which users were advised to use was the Career Planning Journey which consisted of a number of steps to complete when making a career choice or change. While this not only introduced a certain degree of standardisation, it also removed the service user from personal interaction with an adviser to a certain extent.

This was a form of standardisation that advisers were very critical of because they felt it infringed on their identity as professional advisers and was devaluing their specialised knowledge. Indeed, some advisers expressed a concern that a push to further standardisation in an effort to deliver the same service in every location would lead to a 'McDonaldisation' (c.f. Bourgeault et al., 2001) and advisers were very keen to point out that

*"... careers guidance isn't burgers and chips..." (Adviser, Careers Scotland)*

In the existing guidance literature, Watts (2005) highlighted a trend towards more standardised self-help tools, while in line with the OECD view of a differentiated service delivery model, seemed at odds with the actual content of the Career Planning Journey, which was used to determine career planning needs in a personal interview. In a personalised interview, the adviser would be able to build a relationship with the service user and respond to their needs, but this process also required multiple meetings to allow a complete assessment of the service user's situation and needs.

Therefore, it was questionable how personalised the service really was given the direction of the majority of users to self-help tools and a lack of continuity in the adviser-user relationship based on the proposition that any adviser should be able to help any service user based on their recorded case file. Advisers recognised these developments and were applying street-level tactics to circumvent these limitations.

*“... if I had spent a long time with them and they needed to come back, I would say to them, ‘This is when I’m available. Either call back then or phone me to make an appointment to see me’, rather than them dropping in and starting again with somebody else who doesn’t know their background...” (Adviser, Careers Scotland)*

Indeed, there appeared to be a very strong current that despite the managerial emphasis on using the Career Planning Journey, advisers flexibly responded to individual’s needs. Thus, advisers were actively disobeying managerial instructions in order to maintain some of their specialist professionalism and discretion. While they reported that they used the planning tool where possible, advisers took the discretion to apply it flexibly according to where in the planning process the user was and what kind of support the user needed. If a user was clearly struggling with the decision making process, advisers said they took the time to provide more in-depth services whether the user fell into the specified 4% group or not.

*“Somebody once said ‘OK, this is the Career Planning Journey, but sometimes it’s like a bit of a jelly, you have to mould it according to how the individual is.’ And quite clearly, if they are just sitting there and being like ‘I don’t get this. This just doesn’t make sense’ we are having to re-check on how we approach it.” (Adviser, Careers Scotland)*

Advisers appeared quite concerned with the individual's needs and they would support the service user whether they were part of the specified in-depth target group or not. However, at the time the interviews took place, the organisation was still evolving and the focus of service managers might have been on getting the business model right rather than ensuring that the service was indeed standardised as intended. Advisers quite clearly tried to work around the increasing inflexibility and standardisation in order to maintain their professional identity as careers advisers and apply their specialist knowledge to the benefit of the users. This had implications for the advisers in terms of performance measurement, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Clearly though, the envisaged model of adviser-user interaction through extensive support only for those qualified raises questions regarding the ability of the service to deliver a truly personalised and individualised service that it anticipated. If the majority of users were left with no or minimal support through face-to-face interactions, a targeted service provision may not be delivered despite the advisers' best efforts to work around it.

### **Voluntary- user-defined type services**

The use of discretion in the voluntary-user defined services varied somewhat often due to the nature of the service. The majority of services, however, did show quite a large degree of responsiveness to user needs through the use of discretionary measures and advisers' ability to respond flexibly to a user's individual situation.

Access to these services was completely voluntary and users often had a specific need for support or information when they approached the service. Advisers said they responded flexibly to user's enquiries. However, some services were somewhat restricted to specific target groups, such as people at the verge of

redundancy or users with a low qualification profile. Nevertheless, advisers said they often provided the service to everybody that approached them. For instance, one adviser mentioned that he felt a certain obligation to provide the service to non-qualifying people, because they asked for help and because of that, advisers in his organisation felt it would be morally wrong to charge the user for the service, which they were technically expected to do.

For example, advisers in the Telephone Guidance service said they advised some users on how to gain access to multiple guidance sessions even though they did not qualify for the full service based on their qualifications. This demonstrated where advisers actively circumvented service requirements to respond to user needs, even though it might have been financially detrimental for their organisation. This was interesting because it showed obvious signs of the type of street-level tactics that (Lipsky, 1980) ascribes to bureaucrats. While street-level bureaucrats developed these tactics as a way to cope with high workloads and stress at work, it is also possible that advisers in voluntary-user defined services had different motives. These may have included personal experience or moral concerns with turning someone away who was looking for help. This was supported by the fact that the programmes these advisers provided were contracted and therefore, they had targets to achieve which theoretically meant that they had to focus mainly on eligible service users to maximise their profit and time. This suggested that advisers in voluntary user-defined services might have been motivated differently from advisers in other service types. This will be discussed in the later chapter on how advisers negotiated the tensions of their work.

This became particularly obvious in the service that the Lone Parent Advice service provided. Most advisers shared the experience of lone parenthood with the

service users and thus felt a strong obligation to support other lone parents based on their own experience and their own success. This feeling appeared so strongly that advisers went out of their way to help the service users as the following example shows:

*“... It’s probably not my vocational guidance remit to take a client to go into... she wanted to go in and register with some recruitment agencies but she didn’t really want to do it herself and that’s not really my remit. But because [...] it was a big step for her... it’s a judgement call and I thought, right, OK. So the first two, I went in with her and the second one I said, I’ll wait outside, you go up the stairs... [...] So sometimes although that’s not really in our remit, it took an hour and the difference was amazing. [...] We can do those wee things that make all the difference.” (Adviser, Lone Parent Advice)*

This indicates that advisers in this service did have a large degree of discretion that they could freely apply. It was up to them (“a judgement call”) to determine what and how much of an effort they made and there were no programme limitations that narrowed down the margins for response.

The Redundancy Advice service was somewhat exceptional. Due to the nature of the service and the short notification times, advisers did not have much discretion. On short notice, advisers said they usually only delivered a standardised presentation with information and pointers of where users could find help and indicated first steps to take after redundancy. If the timeframe allowed for one-to-one interactions, advisers had discretion to respond to the user’s need. This ranged from emotional support by arranging in-depth counselling sessions to in-depth careers advice for those

that were ready to move on with their careers or a referral to the more general careers services that advisers were associated with.

The analysis above showed that advisers in mandatory-standardised case study services had a relatively small margin of discretion, even though there were variances between the services in this type. Their discretion was often limited by tools and service features that drove standardisation. Advisers in voluntary-standardised services used their discretion quite proactively and tried to maintain a greater level of flexibility despite an ever increasing drive towards standardisation and attempts to channel advisers' interactions. The group of the voluntary-user defined services showed some variance as well, but overall the advisers said they responded to users' needs in a targeted fashion. The analysis of the use of discretion for each type is summarised in the following table:

**Table 4: Use of discretion in the service types**

	<b>Mandatory-standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-user defined type</b>
<b>Use of discretion</b>	Limited	Proactive, but moderate limitations	Very few restrictions, targeted to user needs

## **Trust and compliance**

Trust was pointed out by many advisers as being central to their relationship with users. It is considered an important mechanism to understand social behaviour, especially where it is linked to achieving compliance and behavioural changes (Kramer and Goldman, 1995, Dawes et al., 1990, Brewer and Kramer, 1986). Therefore, Braynov

and Sandholm (2002) saw trust as an exchange relationship that allowed the maximisation of social welfare if equal levels were exchanged. Mishra's definition of trust has been widely used (Mishra et al., 1996):

*"one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is (a) competent, (b) open, (c) concerned, and (d) reliable. " (p.265)*

According to this definition competence, openness, concern and reliability are central to a trusting relationship. Advisers in all three types were keenly aware of these characteristics as the following examples show:

*"They've got to be able to trust you because you're giving them some quite direct objectives that are going to change their lives effectively. They've got to be able to trust you to know that you know what you're doing. So you've got to have the confidence to do that." (Adviser, Working Estate)*

*"I use examples from my life to clarify ... you know, to highlight different things in the course and so obviously [Manager] will use different ones and [Adviser] will use different ones but I think that's really important because if you don't give a little bit of yourself, then nobody's gonna trust you..." (Adviser, Lone Parent Advice)*

These quotes emphasized the complexity of developing a trusting relationship. In each one, several different characteristics of trust were addressed. In the first example, the adviser highlighted competence (knowing what you are doing) and

concern (giving them objectives that will change their life). The second adviser placed the emphasis on openness and concern (examples from their own life, giving of themselves). As a result, it appeared that different types of trust were more associated with different types of service provision. This outcome was mainly derived from the mode of access to services as well as from the extent of user focus of the service.

Going back to Mishra's (1996) definition, many users who accessed the services were already in a vulnerable position due to their worklessness, impending redundancy or inactivity, for instance. Trusting the adviser required the service user to take additional risks, for example by sharing highly confidential information. Although taking these risks, "*is voluntary: it involves willingness, not compulsion*" (Coulson, 1998: 14). As a consequence, it was fair to ask if trust could at all exist between adviser and user in a programme that was compulsory and threatened the user with sanctions. There may be the potential for trust in this kind of relationship, but the kind of trust that was exhibited by mandatory service users as opposed to voluntary service users could be expected to differ greatly.

In order to further explore this point, different types of trust were examined, which have been identified in the governance and organisation studies literature (Newman, 2001, Lewicki et al., 1996). These types are:

- *Calculus-based trust*: assured consistency of behaviour because individuals feared the consequences of non-compliance;
- *Knowledge-based trust*: is based on information and a history of interactions that allows each actor to anticipate the behaviour of the other;



- *Identification-based trust*: is based on an understanding of the other's wants and needs and creates a long-lasting, loyal and mutual relationship.

These types of trust are not mutually exclusive and might be expected to co-exist or evolve in different service types. The following sections explore the different types of trust which existed in the different case study services.

### **Mandatory-standardised types of services**

Organisations that fell into the mandatory-standardised group mostly offered compulsory programmes where users were coerced under threat of sanctions to comply with programme requirements. Advisers in this group of organisations were very adamant about making it clear to the user from day one of the interaction that they would face sanctions such as benefit cuts or even benefit withdrawal. This placed the service user under constant stress and threat. These arrangements established conditions for 'calculation-based' trust, within which users were expected to comply for fear of the consequences.

The environment in which the majority of interactions took place potentially added to the stress. The offices in all mandatory-standardised services were open plan arrangements that offered little privacy with a clear division of power exemplified through the arrangement of office furniture. The extent to which the office environment was used to encourage or discourage trust differs between organisations in this quadrant.

In one extreme example, the service users were visually reminded that they were not trusted by the service provider through the presence of uniformed security guards on the premises. For example, during the data collection the researcher observed that even though the guard tried to blend in with the day to day business by chatting to service users and advisers or by doing little chores such as fetching coffee, the presence of someone in uniform created an uneasy feeling of constant monitoring and control. The guard was a physical manifestation of the distrust exhibited against the service user, indeed anyone in the office, and that, if necessary, compliance would be enforced. The researcher herself was reminded by the guard a number of times not to leave her belongings out of her sight because they might either be removed or stolen. This was detrimental to helping to create a relaxed and comfortable environment where a trusting relationship could be established. This kind of arrangement countered several key parts of the definition of trust, namely openness, concern and reliability.

Other organisations in this group used the physical environment much less to demonstrate a power differential. Even though security personnel were present on location in the Work Area and Working Estate services, they were physically removed from the area where interactions with users were taking place. This created a much more relaxed and friendlier atmosphere. Indeed advisers indicated in interviews that a large part of their work consisted of establishing trust with the user right from the start. Advisers were very clear about the purpose of establishing this kind of relationship, which was to achieve compliance without having to apply pressure.

*“And so with everybody you’ve got to have a different approach however it’s going to work with them. If they’re comfortable with the*

*strict bit, well they may not be comfortable with it but it's going to work better if you do the strict bit, with the people you don't need to do that with, there's no need. It's a softer approach and a friendlier approach to gain trust. That will work a lot better." (Adviser, Working Estate)*

In the Working Estate service, advisers said it did not matter to them whether the service users were mandatory or voluntary users when looking to establish trust. However, advisers were very clear that, particularly with mandatory users, the rules and regulations were given preference at any time. This could potentially have a downgrading effect and push the relationship more towards a calculus-based level of trust, because the threat of a sanction in case of non-compliance was clearly present. At the same time though, advisers did not have the power to sanction service users directly. Advisers had to build a case against the service user and then refer the case back to Jobcentre Plus for sanctioning. As a consequence, advisers looked much deeper into what was behind a user's non-compliance with the programme.

*"Well we basically have to have a wee chat with them and say to them, you know "What the matter, how are you not doing this?" because some of them it is a cry for help, but it's picking up on it. So it really depends... like I say it just always depends on the individual, it's what we can do for them at the time. You can... if they're not complying you can also give them a Job Seeker's direction, which basically means they have to comply with it, if they don't then they can be referred back to the Job Centre and action taken against them." (Adviser, Work Area)*

This process required advisers to develop genuine concern for the individual's situation and to explore what could be done to help the user. This could have

potentially alleviated for some of the negative impact of the mandatory access. However, the motivation behind the concern was questionable. Ultimately, it could not be determined from the data whether the individual adviser was genuinely concerned with the service user, or whether there was a strictly managerial rationale behind the concern, because a user that was referred back to Jobcentre Plus was lost income for the organisation, although it could be a combination of both.

Despite the drawn out process of sanctioning and the efforts to develop a relationship with the service user, the dominance of the service regulations over user needs strengthened the view that the threat of sanctions had persistent impact on the type of trust that could potentially be developed. Although there was potential, particularly with voluntary users in the Working Estate service to enable knowledge-based trust, the nature of access to the service and the threat of sanctions pointed to a trust relationship that was predominantly calculus-based.

The analysis of this type indicated that the environment in mandatory-standardised services appeared to more suitable to produce calculus-based trust, although to a greater or lesser extent depending on the service. This was due to the threat of sanctions exerted from the service regulations as well as the physical threat of punishment through security personnel on the premises.

### **Voluntary-standardised type services**

The type of trust that could be established in services that fell in the voluntary-standardised quadrant was difficult to determine. According to a manager in the case study service, a large number of service users were channelled towards self-help resources (about 70%), a much smaller proportion could receive some additional

support (about 16%) and only a small minority received in-depth guidance (4%). Users that were channelled towards self-help and additional support had very little interaction with the advisers and therefore, to determine a type of trust based on knowledge and building a relationship might be a bit far stretched. For the small minority that received in-depth guidance, the establishment of a relationship might well have been possible. Access to the service was entirely voluntary. There was no fear of sanctions, and consequently no potential coercion of the user towards compliance.

The advisers spoke of being at the “shop” where they interacted with users. The idea of a shop was quite vital here because it described most of the interactions between advisers and users. Users came in and were offered an opportunity to browse the materials available or use the self-help tools. Advisers said that they occasionally checked with them whether they had questions and needed support. This bore strong similarities with a high street shopping experience. As a consequence, there was little room to establish a truly personal relationship between adviser and service user. Added to that was the use of an IT system where case notes were recorded, meaning that any adviser who was on site could deal with any service user if they returned. This again limited the chances for continued interaction between adviser and user and thus made it difficult to establish more personal types of trust.

It was important to note though, that the most likely form of trust that could be established between adviser and user was knowledge-based. In this case, trust was not based on continued interaction and knowledge accumulated about each other. This form of knowledge-based trust was rather based on the knowledge by the service user that advisers were professionals and thus based on their training, knowledge and

experience were capable of addressing the user's problem. Conditions of competence, openness and reliability were most important in the establishment of trust between adviser and user in this case. Indeed, advisers were aware of their status as professionals and that users were seeking out their help specifically because they were professionals. At the same time, advisers were highly concerned with the increased standardisation of the service by directing service users towards self-help tools. This signified the erosion of their status and identity as professionals and the consequences this had on their interactions with users as the following quote illustrates.

*"... if you go to the doctor with a pain in your stomach or whatever, you want the doctor to diagnose and try and sort the problem. If the doctor just hands you a dictionary of medical terms and says, try and ...[...] try and solve the problem yourself, which is kind of in a sense what ... some of this is about sort of thing but, to me, that's ... maybe that works for some people but a lot of people ... you've got to give them help, support and advice cos then the bottom line for me is ... what role do I have?"*  
(Adviser, Careers Scotland)

The service was entirely voluntary, attending the service and working on a problem area as such was already an act of compliance, one that could not be enforced though. Additionally, advisers said that if they provided in-depth guidance it was strictly the user's responsibility to follow up any suggestions received from the adviser. However, these suggestions were derived from an interaction with the user, where the user could form an impression of the knowledge and experience of the adviser. Thus, the most likely type of trust that could be established in voluntary-standardised services was knowledge-based.

## **Voluntary-user defined type services**

Organisations that fell into the voluntary-user defined group could not establish compliance through force because access to their services was entirely voluntary. This removed any form of calculation-based trust, due to the lack of coercive methods to ensure compliance. Still, the case study services exhibited widely different ways of establishing various types of trust with the service user. In a few cases advisers had little opportunity to establish more evolved types of trust due to the timing of the interactions.

In the Redundancy Help service, advisers said they often called in on short notice and could only deliver an informative presentation to a large audience. Clearly, in such a setting, trust with an individual was difficult to establish. If the timeframe allowed for individual interactions, advisers said they provided a one-to-one session. However, advisers described that in those interactions they were often concerned with helping people cope emotionally with redundancy rather than getting into the details of careers advice. In these one-to-one interactions, knowledge-based trust could perhaps be established. However, advisers were very aware that the timeframe and the situation left service users little choice but to trust in their ability as careers guidance professionals rather than establishing relationship over time based on personal knowledge.

Advisers in the Telephone Guidance service faced a similar situation which was due to the nature of the service provision. The service had an inherent anonymity because advisers and users could not see each other. Additionally, users might choose not to provide their name. This was an interesting case, because it was widely assumed that anonymity might be a deterrent for trust because trusting a complete stranger

potentially bore a lot of risk. The issue has been explored extensively by game theorists and linked to a number of personality traits such as an individual's affinity to risk (Eckel and Wilson, 2004). However, Eckel and Wilson could not find any substantive connections. Consequently, other factors might be more influential. Indeed, in their experiments, participants did not have control over the situation while users of the Telephone Guidance service were in control. They could end the conversation by simply hanging up, something that happened every now and again as advisers reported. Additionally, the anonymity might afford the caller with some security to share their problem and thus be more open. As a consequence, the anonymity of the phone delivery method might be beneficial to establish trust and not a deterrent.

Indeed, throughout their interaction, advisers said they tried to establish a continuous rapport with the user in order to ensure that the user was comfortable with the conversation and with the topics that were addressed. Advisers worked with the user on an action plan. They were thus establishing a basic form of knowledge-based trust building on the user's knowledge about the competence (qualification) of their service and openness and concern for the user's problem.

Move On and Lone Parent Advice were two services that were provided by voluntary and community sector organisations. Most of the advisers in these organisations had personal experience of the situation their users were in. They shared either a background in migration or had experience of being a single parent. This potentially formed the basis of the third type of trust which was identification-based trust. Due to their personal experience, advisers were able to anticipate the problems facing their service users and empathise with them. The ability to empathise with the service user was considered extremely important by advisers in these organisations to



ensure the user's compliance and their willingness and ability to change something about their situation as the following quote exemplifies.

*"... what we do is much more based on ... you get to know each other cos if we can know each other and trust each other, then the whole thing's gonna work out ... better." (Adviser, Lone Parent Advice)*

*"I mean because I had the same experience [...] if I can give them this information I'm really happy to do it. Because when I was here, I came the first time, they gave me all of this kind of information also, I found it useful and I would have found it a bit annoying if they told me [...], no, I can't give you this information because I can give you only job information." (Adviser, Move On)*

Additionally, advisers said they took the liberty to support the service user even if it was outside the service remit, if they felt it made a difference to the user's life and enabled them to take charge. One of the main aspects related to this was the continuity of working intensively with a single adviser over a period of time so that indeed a personal relationship could be established.

*"... it's probably ... probably not my vocational guidance remit to take a client to go into ... she wanted to go in and register with some recruitment agencies but she didn't really want to do it herself and that's not really my remit. But because this lady ... it was a big step for her ... it's a judgement call and I thought, right, OK. So the first two, I went in with her and the second one I said, I'll wait outside, you go up the stairs ... she was handing in her CV and a covering letter [...] so by*

*the end of it, she was fine. But it's just about having that security blanket for that one step." (Adviser, Lone Parent Advice)*

Advisers in these organisations delivered on all aspects of trust:

- *Competence* through their personal experience of having successfully mastered a similar situation as well as additional training,
- *Openness* through addressing a service user's problems individually and taking the time to focus on them,
- *Concern* through supporting the individual in particular situations that may even be outside the service remit as well as showing empathy, and
- *Reliability* through a continued interaction on a one-to-one basis.

Voluntary-user defined services, and particularly Move On and Lone Parent Advice, were the only services who addressed the complete range of trust attributes. They were able to establish a high level of knowledge-based trust and potentially even identification-based trust could be established.

However, trust was not a unilateral occurrence. As Coulson (1998) highlighted, trusting someone, in this case the adviser, was a voluntary, willing and therefore, conscious action. For the user to trust an adviser or a service, they had to appear trustworthy to them in the first place. Trustworthiness could be created through various mechanisms such as reputation, third party endorsements and the individual's personal preferences (Ben-Ner and Putterman, 2001). In the case of advisers, this might be represented by continued interactions over a long period of time

(reputation), professional standards or professional degrees (third party endorsement), and the behaviour that was exhibited by the adviser or the service towards the user (personal preferences)<sup>16</sup>. These personal preferences could take three forms (Ben-Ner and Putterman, 2001):

- *self-regarding preferences* which focus on establishing a reputation,
- *other-regarding preferences* which focus on the concern for the well-being of the other person, and
- *process-regarding preferences* which focus on the adherence to rules, norms and principles.

All three forms were generally present in the case studies, but some were stronger than others depending on the service or adviser. Based on the analysis above, the different quadrants would fall into the following types.

Mandatory-standardised programmes exhibited a strong propensity towards process-regarding preferences. This was due to having to follow rules and principles dictated by the service. This was exemplified by advisers having little discretion to respond to user needs and putting programme requirements first.

Voluntary-standardised programmes covered the self-regarding preferences because they were built on the professional reputation of the advisers. The example

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<sup>16</sup> Ben-Ner and Putterman (2001) pointed out how organisations tried to give themselves a human face to appear trustworthy to service users. In the eyes of the service user, the advisers as representatives of the service, became the service, which was why for this discussion a separation of the service and the adviser was not necessary.

here was the Careers Scotland service, where it was pointed out that the trust advisers were able to establish was not furthered by the environment or the way interactions were conducted, but that other factors such as looking for advice from a professional had a bigger influence.

Voluntary-user defined services fell in the other-regarding preferences category. As shown, the advisers exhibited a large amount of concern towards the user and sometimes made extra efforts outside of their remit to help the user. They were personally involved in the cases of the individual user and a strong relationship was developed.

Summarising the outcomes of the analysis above, it appeared that in the mandatory-standardised case studies conditions were more conducive to establishing calculus-based trust, rather than promoting higher levels of trust. This was due to the constant threat of sanctions and physical displays of distrust and supported by the mostly process-regarding preferences of advisers. In the voluntary-standardised case study service, mainly knowledge-based trust could be established based on the adviser's credentials as a trained guidance professional, which demonstrated the self-regarding preferences of advisers. Whereas in the voluntary-user defined case studies, advisers appeared to be able to establish knowledge-based trust through continuity in their interaction or their personal experience and exhibiting strong other-regarding preferences, which in some cases could also lead to identification-based trust. Table 5 (see p. 164) summarises these findings.

**Table 5: Types of trust in the service types**

	<b>Mandatory-standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-user defined type</b>
<b>Type of trust developed</b>	Calculus-based trust	Knowledge-based trust	Knowledge-based trust/ Identification-based trust
<b>Personal preferences of adviser</b>	Process-regarding preferences	Self-regarding preferences	Other-regarding preferences

It was interesting to note, that the type of trust an adviser was able to establish and the connected personal behaviour preferences of advisers seemed to be linked to the extent of programme standardisation. The more a programme was standardised the less opportunity for the advisers to establish more personal forms of trust. The two (extreme) cases of The New Deal and Lone Parent Advice highlighted this in particular. In The New Deal the environment, the programme, the interaction, every single part of the service was standardised and controlled. The mandatory requirement to comply with the programme allowed only the existence of calculus-based trust, which was exacerbated by the adviser's following processes closely. At the other end of the spectrum, there was the Lone Parent Advice where advisers empathised with service users, addressed problems on a highly individual basis and even selected locations for the interactions based on user preferences, thus laying the foundation to a highly trusting relationship. This corresponds to findings by Newman (2001) who pointed out that

*“While calculus-based interactions tend to produce compliance, identification-based relationships tend to produce high levels of personal engagement and commitment” (p. 101).*

These findings highlight that services that were capable of producing high-level commitment of and engagement with the service user seemed to be in a better position to encourage changes in the service user’s behaviour.

## **Changing people: persuasion, self-responsibility and empowerment**

While on the surface, the different case study services had particular goals such as reintegrating people into the labour market or providing them with information and guidance about their career choices, all of these programmes shared an underlying goal of changing people’s behaviour and their perceptions about themselves. The extent to which a person was willing to change their life was dependent on their motivation to do so, as well as the extent to which they were supported in this step. These were key issues that were constrained by a number of factors both internal and external to the various services. The analysis from the previous sections suggested that the types of trust and trustworthiness among the different service types varied substantially. Based on the service type and the different forms of trust, it could be suggested that the organisations in the three quadrants aimed to change people in different ways and using diverse methods, with arguably widely varying results. Following, the ways in which the services tried to change people’s behaviour will be examined.

## **Mandatory-standardised type services**

Programmes in the mandatory-standardised quadrant followed a very strict activation routine, offering the service user incentives while threatening them with sanctions if they did not comply. Indeed, some advisers in these case studies shared and supported the activation rationale of the policies when they outlined in their interviews that users simply needed someone to push them to make a change to their life. One adviser in the New Deal saw his role specifically to change people's mind set.

*"They go on a programme, they come out and say ... I never knew this programme was so interesting, now I want to be available to look at jobs in admin. So you see, all those are like ... you've been able to change the customer's mind frame, you see and that's what it's all about, trying to change their mind frame to get them into something, even though they've never wanted to do it before." (Adviser, New Deal)*

Expressing this view, advisers supported the labelling of the user and the justification of sanctions. It could be argued that, in the eyes of the adviser, the user was already strongly labelled and stereotyped ("*they can go on to things but they're not willing so they just need a little push*" (Adviser, New Deal)) and consequently it was acceptable to the adviser to use threats and punishment to force users to take up an activity they had previously not intended to pursue. At the same time though, due to financial constraints, advisers were only able to offer limited opportunities for people which led in some cases to users being sent onto qualification courses that were unsuitable for them. This seemed quite ironic in light of the New Labour government's intention to encourage, persuade or even compel people to change their behaviour and try to improve themselves by becoming active, self-motivated citizens through a

wide variety of training, support and advice instead of remaining passive welfare recipients (DWP, 2007a, Dwyer, 2000). However, if a service user had personally recognised a need for change and enrolled in a college course, it was possible that the adviser told them to withdraw from the course in order to meet programme requirements.

*“...Look, if you want to continue, what I suggest you do, you go out there and find a part time job to be able to sign off the benefits to continue that. If not, you will have to give up your training to comply with New Deal.” (Adviser, New Deal)*

This seemed to create quite a paradox for the service users because on the one hand, they were pushed into changing their lives, while on the other hand they were severely restricted in how they were allowed to change them. They had to follow a government prescribed change process where change was allowed but only within strictly defined boundaries.

While the programmes were dominated by the strong activation rationale, advisers in Work Area and Working Estate supported this rationale less in their work with users. Despite being partially restricted in what they could do, advisers tried to approach each service user individually and respond to their individual personality.

*“It’s very much left up to us, which is what I like. I find that if we did have a framework it wouldn’t work very well because every person is completely different and you need to be softly, softly with some people, otherwise they’ll disappear and get a job or whatever and you’ve got no control over helping them out. Or with some people you actually have to*



*be quite tough, especially the younger ones who've not maybe had the discipline of finding a job before. They don't understand what's involved so you've really got to set a timetable for them." (Adviser, Working Estate)*

It was interesting, that the advisers, despite focusing so much on the individual's characteristics, still talked about control. This was the adviser's control over the user and thus signified that despite all attempts, there was still a strong view that the user was not capable of helping themselves and needed someone else to have control over helping them out by providing incentives and if necessary use sanctions. And while advisers placed a strong emphasis on establishing trust with the user to ensure their compliance in order to encourage change, the control factor over the user was substantial.

While the same objective was present for the voluntary users, the impetus on the "stick" was less because users could potentially simply walk away and advisers again would lose control over them. This effectively meant a financial loss for the company and consequently, it was extremely important from financial point of view to maintain a good relationship with the service user.

The organisations in this quadrant had a quite active approach to changing people that was dominated by a hierarchical and controlling relationship. The adviser was in charge and the ways in which the user was made to change differed merely in the extent of the overt or more covert use of incentives and sanctions. To what extent these organisations were indeed capable of engendering the intended kind of change in the user and the sustainability of this change was highly questionable. Indeed, the literature on organisational culture and psychology used the concept of coercive

persuasion to describe a similar situation that service users in these mandatory services found themselves in. Coercive persuasion was understood as tactics that aimed to bring about a substantial change in behaviour or ideology through the use of incentives and threats (Schein, 1999). In the context of organisational change, Schein described a process where through mental and physical pressuring, constant labelling and stigmatisation, the individual was coerced into changing their behaviour and thinking against their own values. Simultaneously, sufficient incentives and threats were presented to prevent the individual from leaving the organisation and thus keeping control over them. The feeling of guilt was central to prompt the user to change their behaviour.

Interestingly, Dwyer (2000) used exactly this triad of encouragement, persuasion and compulsion to describe the methods to make people change their behaviour in order to become responsible citizens. The service users in the mandatory programmes were exposed to the constant language of activation delivered by the advisers, other service delivery organisations, the media and policy makers. The language produced a division between them (the service user) and us (the law abiding citizens). As the quote from the adviser above outlined, labels and stereotypes which ultimately stigmatised the service user were quickly at hand. Stigma produced feelings of guilt, shame and inferiority (Goffman, 1963) which ultimately lead users to believe that something was wrong with their behaviour and change needed to occur. The incentives offered to change that behaviour and the mindset (that work was essential) included tax benefits and additional allowances while the all present threat was benefit removal. Thus, advisers were placed in a position where they could control the individual and users complied with what was asked of them to either gain the incentives or avoid the punishment. However, this was a very fragile state.

*“To make stable changes at this level requires more than behavioral change. It requires the learner to reframe the situation, to learn new concepts and to develop new attitudes and new ways of thinking and feeling, or the behavior changes will not last once the immediate incentives are removed.” (Schein, 1999: 169)*

Thus the extent to which organisations in the mandatory-standardised quadrant were able to sustainably change an individual’s behaviour was rather limited. The lack of trust due to the predominantly calculus-based relationship and the process-regarding preferences of advisers were severe inhibitors in changing the service user’s behaviour.

### **Standardised-voluntary type services**

The service in the standardised-voluntary quadrant appeared to attempt to turn service users into their own career managers by placing the onus on the self-responsible user. This was in alignment with New Labour’s conception of the responsible citizen. This vision entailed that individuals had a duty to take responsibility for their own and society’s well-being through being an active member of the workforce (Dwyer, 2000). The services provided to the users should support and reinforce this view by providing opportunities to be an active citizen.

Particularly the aspect of developing a self-responsible user was mirrored in the service provision in the standardised-voluntary quadrant. Because access to the service was voluntary, the service user had to be self-motivated to even consider using the service. Going to the “shop” or accessing the online resources required some effort

and thus, accessing the service in itself was already an expression of taking responsibility.

The methods used in service provision added to this conception. The majority of users were directed towards self-help resources and toolkits and only checked on periodically. These toolkits included highly standardised tools for career planning and one of the advisers pointed out that

*“... once people knew how to plan their career, then they could do it themselves. They don’t need to keep coming back to speak to us because they know how to look at their skills and their interests and then to look at the job and what skills and what that job demands and match it up. So if people understand that, then they have gained that knowledge and also, you know, if you ... if people write a CV for themselves instead of us doing it for them, then they’ve learned a good skill ... (LAUGHS)” (Adviser, Careers Scotland)*

The aim of the whole service, as the adviser summed up, was to enable the user to become their own, self-sufficient career planner who could use the tools provided to get into work or change careers and thus continue to contribute to society through work.

It also indicated a strong shift of responsibility from the state to the user. In using the service, they were educated to handle career decisions independent of the help of a professional. Indeed the advisers started to teach the tools and the use of standard methodologies in schools, so that once the pupils became adults they would have the skills to manage their career and take responsibility for it. So eventually, in a

long-term vision, all adults could be independent and rely on themselves and only the younger generations would need to be taught and educated. In the short run, the success of changing adults into the independent, self-responsible service user might not be as far reaching. In the long run, however, it might be quite an ingenious plan to subtly shift more responsibility onto the individual. Although this was a rather futuristic and somewhat unrealistic vision due to ever changing societies and political movements, it was a good example of how political ideals were attempted to be implemented in daily life.

### **Voluntary-user-defined type services**

Empowerment, participation and co-operation were the key aspects of services in the voluntary- user defined quadrant, although with a different emphasis depending on the service. Empowerment had strong connotations with “power” and the process of empowerment often referred to people giving or taking the power to fulfil their own needs and wants (Servian, 1996). The service users in this quadrant were, however, recognised as being in low power positions, due to their social status (lone parenthood, low qualification levels or being on the verge of redundancy). The organisations in this quadrant focused on an advocacy approach which provided those service users with support to enable them to follow their own interests, find fulfilment or satisfy their own needs. An interesting point to note was that, due to the voluntary access to these services, users had already empowered themselves by identifying a need and taking a step to seek advice and help. The empowerment approach of those services should be understood in more general terms of enabling the user to follow through and support the user throughout the duration of the service with regards to the ultimate aim to facilitate a transition between various labour market statuses.

The strongest focus on empowerment could be found at Lone Parent Advice, which was partly determined by the provider's purpose to support lone parents and do advocacy work on their behalf. There appeared to be a very strong buy-in by the advisers rooted in a deeper understanding of the service user's situation. All of the advisers and managers that participated in the interviews in this service were lone parents themselves and therefore had first hand experience of the impact of lone parenthood. As a consequence, they viewed the service users as individuals who were in quite a vulnerable position and needed all the support they could get to help them. Advisers saw service users as their equals and thus did not create a power differential like for instance advisers in The New Deal. This lack of power differential might also be due to the voluntary nature of the service.

Because of the personal experience of the advisers, some of them felt quite passionately about their work and government policy or rather the lack of support from government and thus felt compelled to support users.

*"I work with vulnerable women and vulnerable people who, for many different reasons, are not employable. [...] the reason tends to be that they are lone parents [...] or they are girls who got pregnant at school, have no education and therefore when their children go to school, they have nothing to do, you know, they're not only caught in a benefit ... hideous benefit trap which is a really ... which is another thing that I'm ... I just can't believe that the government lets all these women get caught in these benefit traps that they cannot get out of." (Adviser, Lone Parent Advice)*

Because of this shared experience, similar personal characteristics and the high involvement of advisers, they were potentially delivering a higher service quality (Spicker, 1984) which might lead to more sustainable employment outcomes for the service users.

Advisers said that the process of changing the service user's self-perception could be very slow and gradual, because the service user was in charge of the progression. The service user determined for instance where meetings took place (for example a local café or the library) and the advisers offered some guidance in relation to the frequency of meetings and how to approach certain issues. From the start, this put the service user in a position of power because they were in control and by determining meeting times they are able to fulfil their own needs. The adviser then responded to those needs by providing relevant advice as the following quote highlights:

*"So I travelled to [a town] and I went to meet a client there in a café, [...] and then we had a meeting which was specifically about interview technique and about finding her the right job. [...] So we probably did about an hour and 20 minutes on... just discussing..." (Adviser, Lone Parent Advice)*

Advisers indicated that if a service user did not feel ready to return to work, they would not do well at whatever job they attempted to do. Thus advisers felt that it was highly important for them to let the user drive the process and be in control at all times. Indeed, advisers said that if a user felt overwhelmed with the whole development because of changing circumstances and wanted to take a break, they

gave them the space to take their time and offer their support whenever the user needed it. This again put the user in charge of the situation.

*“... if I’m making all those efforts and they basically don’t turn up 3 times, then I leave them a message saying, here’s my number and I send them out my card and stuff like that and ... and I say, you’ll have to contact me now, I won’t do the chasing any more ... because if you’ve turned up 3 times in some library in [a town] and you’re waiting for them and they don’t turn up, you can’t ... other people are losing out. [...] But after that, I will always leave a telephone message and I will send out to their home address my card saying, you know, please feel free to contact me when you’re ready and if there’s anything I can help you with.” (Adviser, Lone Parent Advice)*

According to advisers the positive experiences of managing small tasks and achieving small goals contributed immensely to the overall personal development of the service user and gave power to the user over their situation while offering support throughout this process. Thus the attempts at changing the service user focused on personal development and supporting users to realise their potential without applying pressure. This might encourage a more sustainable change in the user’s behaviour and self-perception and more sustainable choice to return to employment which complies with Schein’s (1999) findings on the removal of coercive measures.

A similar approach was used by the Move On service. The adviser provided targeted information to the service user which enabled them to, for instance, apply for a job or improve their interview skills. It was a co-operative approach because the adviser and user worked closely together when building a CV for example, or



discussing employment options. Similar to advisers in the Lone Parent Advice service, many advisers at Move On had personal experience of migration and based on that had a determination to provide advice and support for people in a similar situation. However, the main difference was that the Move On service was often a one off interaction to get a CV fixed or obtain information. This did not allow the advisers to build up a relationship over time and be as responsive to the user's needs as the user might have identified the initial need differently from what appeared necessary. While the user was still in charge of the situation by identifying their need, the make up of the service prevented them from fully benefitting from the support available. Although, this was where the advisers made discretionary decisions and offered another appointment to the service user.

Additionally, the appointment system and the interaction at the organisation's offices limited flexibility in terms of responding to user's timing or other needs. Because most of the interaction was restricted to a one-off meeting, the adviser was mainly in a position to enable the user to change their self-perception and fulfil their needs, but they were not able to provide the full support and follow through the whole process that would fully empower the service user and put them in control of the service provision. Indeed, it was down to the user to implement the suggestions and use the information independently. Implementing the suggestions and using the information would have been the final step in fully empowering the user to take control, but a lack in support with that final step (as it was available in the Lone Parent Advice service), prevented some of the users to actually follow through with their return to employment.

*“Well a few clients, we gave them all the information they wanted, on the follow up we said are you working, oh no, are you on training, no, do you want to come back here, oh yeah, and then why don’t you, well really I didn’t look for a job, I didn’t leave my seat.” (Adviser, Move On)*

Therefore, while the service was able to offer the information and advice and enable the user to change their situation, it was questionable how effective the changes really were because it came down to the individual’s motivation and determination. The lack of personal support in the implementation phase of the advice and guidance service might limit its ability to contribute fully to a person’s change process.

The Redundancy Help service presented somewhat of an exception. Due to the nature of the service and the short response times, advisers were not in a position to initiate a long-term change in a service user. However, advisers were very aware of this fact and saw themselves more as a first point of support for people facing redundancy and providing some emotional support for those affected. Advisers said that if users felt ready to move on the adviser would provide the general careers guidance service.

*“... as well as allowing people to tell their story and [...] help people address issues around redundancy and their feelings, you know, to do with their emotions concerning redundancy, so it would only be when people themselves feel they’re ready to look forward, [...] we would be jointly trying to help them plan [...]. So you have to help them, as far as you can, address the emotion.” (Adviser, Redundancy Help)*

The way advisers saw their work bore similarities with the approach Lone Parent Advice was taking. To them it was important that the individual was emotionally ready to move on and look for a job. Pushing someone to move on, in the advisers' view, did not lead to a long term satisfactory outcome for the individual if they had not gone through the process of coping emotionally with their redundancy. One of the advisers pointed out, that emotionally dealing with redundancy followed similar stages as a grieving process and could involve emotional mood swings from denial, depression and desperation to anger. If a user was still coping with any of these stages, advisers doubted that the individual was ready to make an objective assessment of their skills and to move on to new employment.

Advisers were aware that in the majority of cases, the briefness of their interactions did not allow the opportunity to support the service user throughout the process. However, they did see themselves as enablers of the process for users to move on and potentially initiate a process where the user followed a wish for a career change or change of employment field. Empowerment as used in the sense of the definition above was therefore limited and the effects of the service on a long-term change of the person's self-perception may not have been immediately clear. The aim of the service was not necessarily to achieve long-term changes but rather to provide immediate support to cope with the event of redundancy and to provide first pointers in a new direction. It was left to the service user's motivation to follow through and thus the ability of the service to bring about changes in the service user was limited.

Telephone Guidance was an interesting case because at the point of access, the service user had already empowered themselves by taking action to address their needs. Again, access was voluntary and thus motivated by the service user. The users

were driving the process and had full control over what information to share and what advice they sought. This implied that the service users already had a basic idea of what their needs were and they were seeking the support to follow through. At this stage, the users were already empowered because through the phone call they were addressing their information needs and were advocating for themselves throughout the conversation. The interaction of the adviser and the user was strongly user-guided and the user at any point had the power to end the conversation. The adviser was highly involved in the conversation to determine the best action plan together with the user. This differed from the provision of the Careers Scotland service in that the adviser went through the experience together with the user. While this bore strong elements of empowerment and co-operation, in the end the adviser was only providing a tool for the user to independently act on. The opportunities for follow ups were limited (only for qualifying users and only three times) and therefore the relationship and the support remained virtual. Thus, while there were some elements of empowerment such as the focus on the user's situation and a personalised action plan, the responsibility to follow through was left with the users and they had to be sufficiently motivated to accept that responsibility. Similar to the Redundancy Help service, Telephone Guidance provided initial pointers where to start with a change in the person's self-perception, but through the call and the decision to seek professional advice, the service users had already empowered themselves and the change process had already started. However, the opportunities to change the user and their perception were clearly limited and dependent on the user's motivation to continue with the process.

The analysis above highlights the different ways advisers in services were trying to change the service user's behaviour. There appeared to be clear differences

between the serviced types. Some used highly coercive methods, while others acted more supportive of the individual’s needs. Table 6 summarises the various approaches for the service types.

**Table 6: Change methodologies in the service types**

	<b>Mandatory-standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-user defined type</b>
<b>Method to initiate behaviour changes</b>	Coercive Persuasion	Independent, self-responsible service user	Empowering the individual

Despite this differentiation, some service providers had realised the underlying potential for conflict and unsustainable outcomes. In the Work Area and Working Estate services, for instance, advisers tried to implement a more user-led approach by working towards the user’s dream job. The extent to which this was possible was limited by the service requirements and organisational goals. Despite their vastly different approaches, similar tensions for advisers appeared in the other service types as well. How these requirements restricted adviser’s abilities will be discussed in the following chapter. Nevertheless, the situation created a dilemma for the adviser which way to follow: focus on the individual or follow the service and organisational requirements?

## **Conclusion**

The study employed a governance perspective to examine the ways in which different governance regimes emerge through the management and practice of front-line advisers. This chapter applied the typology developed in the previous chapter to

the case study services, which all used different approaches to achieve the goals of their services and positive outcomes for the service users. The analysis showed consistency among the services in each type, with only smaller deviations which were due to the different approaches.

Specifically, this chapter examined how advisers in the different types of services delivered employment advice to service users through the use of discretion and building of trust. This provided an insight into how they were trying to achieve the overall policy goal of changing service user’s behaviour and the methodologies involved. Table 7 provides an overall summary of the previous analysis.

**Table 7: Summary of the analysis on discretion, trust and change methodologies in the service types**

	<b>Mandatory-standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-user defined type</b>
<b>Use of discretion</b>	Limited	Proactive, but moderate limitations	Very few restrictions, targeted to user needs
<b>Type of trust developed</b>	Calculus-based trust	Knowledge-based trust	Knowledge-based trust/ Identification-based trust
<b>Personal preferences of adviser</b>	Process-regarding preferences	Self-regarding preferences	Other-regarding preferences
<b>Method to initiate behaviour changes</b>	Coercive Persuasion	Independent, self-responsible service user	Empowering the individual

The analysis showed that each service type exhibited distinct qualities with regards to the use of discretion, the type of trust that is developed between adviser

and user, the personal preferences of establishing trustworthiness with the user and the method to initiate behaviour change. These results could be interpreted from two different perspectives. On the one side were issues concerning mainly the influences on the adviser. They were represented through how advisers use discretion and the preferences advisers in the different types of services adopted to establish trustworthiness. On the other hand, there were the user-centred issues of establishing trust and changing the service user's behaviour. These were also a representation of the tensions an adviser negotiated: the restrictions placed on advisers' discretion versus the various ways to establish trust and a relationship with the service user. As such, these issues were then like two sides of the same coin. Each side representing a different image while only together they will produce value.

On the side that represents issues influencing the adviser, Lipsky's (Lipsky, 1980) theory of street-level behaviour was useful. It suggested that front-line staff developed coping behaviours to deal with particularly restrictive service requirements and pressures applied to them. In the analysis this was exemplified through the use of discretion by the adviser as well as the personal preferences to establish trustworthiness which could be seen as an expression of the task focus of the adviser. This included an underlying assumption that the adviser wanted to respond to service user's needs, which was confirmed in many interviews across the different service types.

Advisers in mandatory-standardised services acted in an environment with restricted discretion and their preferences were focused on process compliance. These advisers were very likely to employ street-level tactics to enact some discretion or to achieve a positive outcome for the service user. However, in order to cope with service

demands, their personal preferences focused mainly on procedural issues - advisers tended to prioritise service requirements over user needs. In contrast, advisers in voluntary-user focused services used a large degree of discretion to focus on user needs and their preferences exhibited the same direction. For these advisers, there did not seem to be a need use street-level tactics. Advisers in the voluntary-standardise case study service showed a mixture of the two extremes. They used discretion proactively, but its use appeared to get more and more restricted. Their personal preferences focused on their identity as a professional and the knowledge and recognition this inhabited. As a result, there was some application of street-level tactics in an effort to achieve a positive outcome for the service user while maintaining their professional independence and identity.

When looking at ways to establish a relationship, a similar picture developed. In mandatory-standardised services the establishment of trust was based on a fear of sanctions and the reliance on a mutual code of conduct. The adviser would follow procedures and the service users in turn would do what was asked of them. This pointed to highly coercive methods to ensure compliance with the service demands and to initiate behaviour change. Again, the voluntary-user defined services had an opposite approach. Advisers established trust through their reputation, through their qualifications or through similar life experiences as the service user. Change in the service user was based on focussing on the user's readiness to make a change to their life and empowerment and support to enact this change. Again, voluntary-standardised services covered a middle ground relying mainly on establishing trust through their reputation as professionals, while equipping the service user with the tools to manage their careers independently. These two sides of the coin put together suggested that the more restricted discretion and the more process focus prevailed,



the more trust would be based on following procedures and enforced compliance, which overall amounted to a strongly coercive mechanism to change service user's behaviour. The ways in which these organisations attempted to change service user's behaviour mirrors Hasenfeld's (1972) distinction of people-processing and people-changing organisations.

The extent of adviser's ability to use discretion appeared to be a vital pivot point in how advisers could mediate tensions between the service demands and user needs. The links between discretion and managerial methods to control and restrict discretion have been well established (McDonald and Marston, 2006). They represented another field of tension that advisers were negotiating and thus had an influence on how advisers delivered their service. These managerial methods to steer adviser behaviour are the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter 8

### Advisers being steered

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## **Introduction**

Chapter 7 applied the services typology to the adviser-user relationship. It examined how advisers steered service user behaviour and ultimately attempted to change their behaviour through the use of discretion and trust. The focus of this chapter is the analysis of how adviser behaviour is steered when delivering services. Employment, advice and guidance services are increasingly contracted to various provider organisations. In order to ensure that the providers fulfil their contractual obligations a plethora of measurement and control mechanisms are applied that monitor not only the provider's performance, but also steer adviser behaviour. McDonald and Marston (2006) identify methods such as performance measurement and incentive pay as ways to control adviser behaviour. These methods are enacted by the service or line manager who thus is the personified representation of these otherwise depersonalised methods. This follows a similar logic as outlined in the previous chapter where the adviser acts as a representation of the service. The aim of this chapter is to identify how managerial practices were used to steer adviser behaviour in the case study services.

The use of discretion and the building of trusting relationships with the service user have been identified as vital ingredients to sustainably change user behaviour. Consequently, the managerial methods that govern adviser behaviour are of great interest. The control and steering mechanisms determine the extent of discretion available to the adviser when interacting with the user and also provide incentives or disincentives to use this discretion. Thus they are setting the boundaries within which the advisers can operate to influence the service user's behaviour.

Therefore, this chapter will examine what methods of performance measurement were used in the different service types to shape adviser behaviour. This will be followed by an analysis of how incentive pay was used to reinforce this, and lastly by an account of how these two methods combined to represent kinds of trust placed in the adviser and how this influenced adviser behaviour.

### ***Performance evaluation***

Pidd (2008) outlines that one of the reasons for performance measurement is to maintain central control when service provision is decentralised or subcontracted, as was the case in the majority of the case study services. Thus performance evaluation could be used to assess the extent to which an adviser complies with the specific purpose of the service. Performance is understood as a measure of how well or poorly a person or organisation fulfils a set task (de Bruijn, 2002, Martin, 1997). However, performance evaluation includes a multitude of indicators, often in combination. Liu and Mills (2007) refer to five different measures, which could be used at various levels to evaluate performance:

- *money measures*: include cost and profit
- *time measures*: focus on timetables and the amount of backlog
- *work measures*: include quantity and quality of the work
- *effect measures*: focus on attainment of certain standards or changes in staff or customer behaviour
- *reaction measures*: include peer evaluation and customer feedback

In addition, targets are a prominent feature in service provision and a key ingredient in performance measurement. Targets can be set at different levels, for instance by the agency that provides funding or by the provider who then might cascade it down to the individual adviser. Targets often serve managerial purposes and form the basis of incentive payments (Liu and Mills, 2007), which will be discussed further below. The following sections will apply the various kinds of measurements to the service types, with a particular view to the use of targets. This will show how these managerial tools were used to influence adviser behaviour in the different service types and to compare and contrast them.

### **Mandatory-standardised type services**

Case study services in this category had quite highly developed evaluation mechanisms including all types of measures but with a very strong focus on money measures and time measures. Data for work measures, effect measures and reaction measures were also collected, but there appeared to be less managerial emphasis on them. In some cases, they were even removed from the adviser directly. A case in point was the recording of job entries at New Deal, which had been transferred to the Inland Revenue Service and statistics were no longer collated at provider level.

Cost and money measures were at the centre of these mandatory-standardised services because they were often financed using public funds. There was therefore an underlying need to demonstrate that the money was spent effectively and the service provided efficiently. For contracting providers there was also the need to make a profit, which was often their prime motivation for contracting the service. For instance, in two services in this group, there was a requirement of 95% accuracy when submitting claims for contracted services, which advisers did not seem to contest

much but rather accepted as part of their job. Other examples of the focus on cost included the need to move the service user through the programme stages, and a drive to get people signed-off benefits, as the quotes below highlighted:

*“So best possible results for me are people coming in and I’ve spoken to them and it’s given them a wake up call, having signed on for 18 months before coming to New Deal and they sign off, I see that as a result.”*  
*(Adviser, New Deal)*

*“They look at what they refer to as overstayers where the main 2 stages within the company, stage 1 and stage 2. If we have someone who goes over 28 days, that’s an overstayer and they then retract any future money that they pay us for that client. So we would then miss out on placement, retention bonus, retention payment if they are one day over that”* *(Manager, Work Area)*

This fed then into adviser behaviour when interacting with the service user. Often, the requirements to move the user on to the next stage and to stick to the rule book were considered superior to the needs of the service user if there was potential financial harm to the organisation. This created one of the key tensions that advisers had to negotiate. There appeared to be a conflict of interest for the adviser even with the proposed organisational methodology to support service users. It was indeed surprising to hear advisers in the Work Area and Working Estate services speak of supporting the user into their dream job and to find sustainable employment, and yet being required to adhere to strict time frames and to avoid overstayers. There was a clear discrepancy between the methodological approach of the provider to work with

service users and the financial focus of the organisation, which made their commitment to supporting the user appear like little other than lip service.

Time measures were the tool that impacted most on the advisers' ability to interact with customers, although they were handled differently in the various services. In all of the case study services of this type, time measures were connected with work measures. All services in the mandatory-standardised group used a diary system. The diaries were in some services not managed by the individual advisers, but rather by a third party. Thus advisers were merely acting as fulfilment agents and their responsibility for organizing their own work day appeared to have been taken away. This was more pronounced in the New Deal, where advisers had to follow a strict regime and customer interactions were of a prescribed length. Extending a meeting was often impossible because the next service user was already waiting. In order to avoid backlog and keeping with the customer flow, the advisers were thus required to cut interactions short. The following extract highlights the extent to which time measures influenced advisers' work:

*"A: Well, we're entitled to spend 30 minutes for a normal, subsequent interviews and initial interviews are one hour. So initial interview's one hour, any other interview's always 30 minutes.*

*I: And if you see that is over the 30 minutes will you tell the client to come back next day for drop-in or...?*

*A: Well the thing is, if I see I'm going over 30 minutes and I have my other customers in, I'll just try and see if I can rebook your appointment for you as soon as I can...*

*I: So you will cut it short if you...?*

*A: Yeah, I can cut it short, yes.”(Adviser, New Deal)*

This was closely connected with the adviser having to conduct a prescribed amount of interviews per week. In the New Deal, advisers reported individual caseloads of 35 interviews per week, plus drop-in customers and other administrative business that needed to be taken care of. The targets were located at the individual level and each adviser was responsible for fulfilling these. There was potential for conflict because the advisers were not in charge of their own diaries and consequently had no means of controlling their work flow. Thus they were fully dependent on a third party arranging their schedules while they were personally held responsible for achieving a pre-set target. How advisers were controlled and held responsible is discussed below.

Similarly to advisers in the New Deal, those in the Work Area and Working Estate services had little control over their initial interviews with customers. They talked of a scheduling system where the adviser with the lowest caseload was given a number of new customers. While this system helped to avoid customer creaming by individual advisers, it did not take into account whether the current caseload of the adviser had a high number of hard-to-help service users who required extra attention. This would suggest that, despite the focus on supporting service users individually and a promise to respond to their specific needs, the service user could be considered a standardised unit that could be helped in a fixed measure of time (both in the short term and the long term), with a constant product through put and a fixed cost per unit (the cost of the service or the potential maximum reward that could be gained from moving the service user into work). While this might appear to be a dramatic



exaggeration, advisers in the New Deal expressed feeling like robots on a conveyor belt which reinforced the image of unit production measures and time and cost considerations in achieving the production requirements.

Indeed advisers followed checklists to ensure they had covered all items on their lists, as this adviser pointed out:

*“We have a checklist to ensure that we’ve done or set all the relevant markers, yes, and see that we’ve asked the person about the necessary requirements. We do have a checklist.” (Adviser, New Deal)*

In order to ensure the advisers’ compliance with the prescribed time frames and interview formats, individual advisers in the New Deal were monitored using a ‘Red-Amber-Green’ system. The system was an effect measure which put advisers into three categories, Red, Amber and Green, depending on how they performed against certain benchmarks. If the performance fell within certain boundaries, a green ‘light’ was given, if there was a perceived cause for concern an ‘amber’ rating was applied, and if targets were missed, the marking was ‘red’. The line manager portrayed the tool as a support tool, to help advisers improve their work:

*“It’s not about disciplinary or things. Obviously, you know, if you are giving that feedback to the adviser month in, month out and after 3 or 4 months they’re still doing the same thing, you know, it will lead to inefficiency action in the end anyway but initially it’s supposed to be a tool to help and support the adviser. And that’s what we use it as. It’s not being used just for inefficiency.” (Manager, New Deal)*

On closer inspection, however, it was more a tool to direct and correct adviser behaviour. The advisers perceived the tool as rather threatening and there had been many complaints about it. Advisers believed that the tool did not adequately reflect their activities and interactions with the service users and, more importantly, was indeed counterproductive to providing good customer service. As this adviser explained:

*“Things are not really done properly because it’s as if you’re working more for the organisation rather than offering appropriate customer service, but you’re just trying to do things just to satisfy the management.” (Adviser, New Deal)*

This statement summarised the frustration that advisers often experienced at the limitations the service imposed on them. Even though they might want to provide a good service to the customer and tried to circumvent some of the measures, they appeared severely bound by the managerial requirements. In the end, advisers in the New Deal seemed simply to adhere to the rules in order not to disadvantage themselves or simply to secure their job.

A similar picture developed in the other mandatory-standardised services. Advisers in these services found that the evaluation system did not adequately account for the actual work that had been carried out to help a customer. The focus on moving a service user into employment overshadowed the help and support an adviser could provide in an attempt to fulfil the company methodology of moving people into their dream job. An adviser in the Work Area service commented:

*“Because a lot of the time ... they don’t take into account ... the amount of work that can be involved ... with a member. So it might take you 6 months to place that person but look at all the work you’ve done in 6 months or ... you might not place that person but you’ve still done a lot of work with them and maybe just as much as get them a bank account, building up their self confidence, [...] But that isn’t really taken into consideration” (Adviser, Work Area)*

This quote pointed towards an inadequacy of the performance measures. The adviser suggested that performance measurement focused mainly on quantitative achievements and did not take into account the qualitative improvements for service users. The number of people moved into work was prioritised over the ‘distance travelled’ in the users’ journey towards the labour market. Ironically, the management information system that was used to record and assess advisers’ work was called “Discovery” suggesting that the journey should take precedence over the destination.

Within the individual performance measurement system, there was a strong focus on sustainable employment. One adviser described the management’s attitude:

*“Our operations manager assesses us on caseload management and placements and then how many of those placements ultimately stay in work. I think [our line manager] and our current ops [operations] manager are the same in that they would rather we got the quality of placement as in someone’s gonna have sustainable employment instead of getting 50 placements a month and it only lasts 2 or 3 weeks sort of thing. They would rather it was less placements and they lasted beyond the 13 weeks or were permanent.” (Adviser, Work Area)*

The focus on moving people into employment strongly overlapped with the prioritisation of work as the solution to many social problems as portrayed by New Labour. The overlap became particularly apparent when considering the target groups for Work Area who mostly consisted of people with multiple barriers to employment.

The same adviser continued to outline which elements exactly were targeted to measure their performance

*“Well, there’s a team target and there’s an individual target as well. So basically we say if everybody hits their individual, they should hit the team target ... so everything’s targeted ... you know, even down to how many people have a bank account.” (Adviser, Work Area)*

The overarching focus on a team target on top of the individual target was potentially a very powerful tool to direct adviser behaviour. While it might have appeared that due to the team focus, the pressure on the individual was reduced if underperforming in a given time period (taking into account seasonal fluctuations of the labour market, etc.), there appeared to be a moral element of letting the team down if the targets were not fully achieved. One adviser pointed out:

*“I think personally ... I know myself there’s been more months I’ve achieved or over achieved target than I’ve under achieved. If there are months where I underachieve, I think I know myself it’s due to the caseload I have or the time of year. I tend not to beat myself up about it because I know there’s nothing much I can do about it. But then at the same time there is that disappointment if it impacts the team.” (Adviser, Work Area)*

Even though advisers were fully aware that their work was highly subject to external influences rather than their own ability, managers were able consciously to apply peer pressure to motivate advisers. It was a 'good cop, bad cop' approach, where in fact the manager portrayed himself as the good cop offering help and support if the adviser faced problems. The team represented the 'bad cop' who would lose respect for the failing individual. A manager described his approach as follows:

*"That's the best way, to be honest, because all of us are going to fail if one person fails an element of our business, it has a knock-on effect. And everyone's very clear about that. I try to get people to take accountability, not only for themselves but for the programme that they're in and I think it's one of my methods that's always worked for me as a manager because I can sit there and say to you "that's not working" and you feel to me, you feel that you're letting your manager down, and that's not a good thing. However, when you feel like you're letting your colleagues down, and your colleagues feel like we're failing because of this, I'm here to help you, if you don't ask me I can't. And that makes me frustrated because we're not doing what we should be. That's even worse feeling because letting me down is an element of fear, in a way, because I'm your line manager who can go to HR, you can do a number of things, even though that's not the kind of person I am. When you sit with your colleagues and you're losing respect, and the self respect element gets questioned, it gives that bigger drive to really move forward and what we try to do as individuals is give everyone guidance on how to achieve." (Manager, Working Estate)*

The impact of this approach on the individual adviser was potentially immense because it questioned the value of the individual to the team. While on the surface, the manager made his method appear to take pressure off the individual because goals and targets were spread across the team, each individual was in fact put on the spot and had to 'fight' for the respect of their co-workers. This strategy had the potential to put psychological pressure on the individual adviser because of the negative impact on self-esteem and self-respect that the manager outlined if advisers failed to achieve. Conversely, this method potentially caused a lot of strain between advisers because the manager presented himself as the one person able to help, as opposed to gaining help from understanding colleagues.

The work environment these measures created in the mandatory-standardised services were not to everyone's liking, and advisers in both services commented on the considerable frustration and churn this brought about. All services in this type had a substantial turnover of advisers. This could be observed even over the short period of time over which the fieldwork for this project took place. One adviser commented that over a period of two years since their service had existed, out of a team of 10 advisers, only two were left from the team that started out. The management team in this service had also changed completely over this period of time.

In mandatory-standardised case study services, there appeared to be a strong focus on hard performance measures fixed on money and quantity. Both of them were strictly accounted for and the responsibility for achieving them was almost completely devolved to the individual. In some of the services, the added psychological pressure of letting the team down might also have had an impact on the self-esteem and self-respect of the advisers. Overall, it seemed to contribute to an environment where the

service user might easily be reduced to a factor of production while the main focus was on achieving business standards. This view was supported by advisers who thought of themselves as robots. The job satisfaction that could be gained in such an environment was questionable, and indeed was questioned by many advisers as the high turnover in these services suggests.

### **Voluntary-standardised type services**

In voluntary-standardised services performance measurement was also quite highly developed, although with less emphasis on monetary measures. This might have partially been due to the fact that service access was voluntary and thus to a large extent driven by the service user. However, this did not mean that there were no targets. Quite the opposite was true; there were extensive, quantitative targets. One manager pointed out that there were targets for individual advisers consisting of various age groups and client sectors, and that essentially there were targets for everything. These were used to establish an evidence base to justify the service's existence and secure continued funding through the government.

According to some advisers, there had been a dispute over the individual targets and they were supposed to be abandoned. However, some advisers reported that they were still applied:

*"She [manager] emailed us ... these are the current targets. We've got individual targets but we shouldn't have ... they came to an agreement that there would be no individual targets. So myself and [colleague] obviously will be taking this to a functional manager to discuss this cos this has been agreed that there will be no personal targets. However,*

*they use the phrase ... contribution to the team. [...] but again [manager] emailed us with something that these are the current team targets, green is good, red is bad ... (Adviser, Careers Scotland)*

This suggested that the evaluation of advisers' work based on quantitative targets was hotly contested. There appeared to be similarities to the Red-Amber-Green tool used in one of the mandatory-standardised services. Work measures, outlining the quantity and the quality of advisers' work, appeared to be of particular importance in this service in terms of the quantity of users seen and the social groups they belonged to. But advisers strongly disagreed with the focus on numerical targets because they felt it had a negative impact on their ability to deliver quality. This discrepancy was also reflected in a somewhat paradoxical approach to evaluating advisers through the use of targets as well as monitoring and support approaches.

Advisers were supported in regular group meetings in what was called 'reflective practice'. It provided advisers with a forum to discuss cases they found interesting or wanted to ask a colleague's advice about a problem.

*"... we do this what they call kind of self reflection. ... I think that's the only way you can do it effectively ... to reflect on, just say the interview went just horribly wrong or bad or something ... you're then like, is this me, is this something I did, was it something out of my control, is there something I can change here ... that would come from yourself. I think somebody who's experienced and is maybe good at their job and maybe is caring and committed would do that anyway.... So there's no point in trying to have some sort of endless bureaucracy ..." (Adviser, Careers Scotland)*



This indicated that while advisers appreciated this kind of support, in their view reflective practice should be an integral part of their professional practice and not something that needed to be imposed by management and used as a managerial tool. This contrasted strongly with the manager's point of view that presented reflective practice as a development tool for the adviser leading to continuous improvement and thus an increase in service quality. The manager also used observations to ensure service quality combined with the provision of feedback. She described her evaluation work as follows:

*"The internal standards would be, you know, things like ... we use quite a lot of observation. So, you know, for example, as a team leader, I observe career ... all the careers advisers in my team carrying out interviews with clients and I write written reports about all of them, so not just those that are new or those that are still training but all of them in the team and that allows us to compare quality and for me to share good quality with others in the team or to make suggestions to people on how the quality of their interviews could be improved." (Manager, Careers Scotland)*

The interesting point to note is that while this did provide support for the advisers when talking through cases and receiving feedback, the manager used these reports also to 'compare quality', which implied that these observations were part of their performance evaluation. The observations could therefore be seen as a double edged sword. On the one hand, they were a support tool and used as a reactive measure, while on the other hand they provided management information that would impact on the adviser's evaluation and in the end on their bonus pay. Ultimately, even,

the manager pointed out that continuous failure to act on recommendations and accept support would lead to dismissal. So, there was a clear indication that support for advisers had a double function.

This contradiction was perceived quite critically by advisers, particularly the more experienced ones. They felt that these kinds of methods, and especially observations, infringed on their professional identity and came close to insulting their professional capacity. At the same time, they were very aware that the observations were used to assess their work and their performance. One adviser explained his frustration:

*“I mean, I’ve been doing this job for quite a number of years, for good or bad, I think you always kind of maybe self develop or whatever. However, if somebody’s sitting in a corner assessing your interview ... it’s ludicrous that they’re doing that to experienced people who’ve been here 20 years plus. I think that’s quite ... something.” (Adviser, Careers Scotland)*

Overall, the service presented quite a contradictory picture in terms of the use of performance evaluation methods. The methods appeared to clearly focus on work measures to assess quality and quantity, but their combination with adviser support tools seemed to produce some tensions. Advisers were quite aware of this ambiguity of control and support. While the management view was one of providing support and thus reactively responding to advisers’ needs, from the advisers’ perspective there was a strong sense of control and infringement on their professional knowledge. Thus, the service seemed to be a somewhat uncomfortable combination of the focus on cost and targets seen in the mandatory-standardised services, and a focus on support and

development of both the adviser and the service user. This produced a tension-filled work environment which got intensified by the way the organisation was constantly evolving and changing.

### **Voluntary-user-defined type services**

The performance evaluation tools used in this service type were quite diverse. Systems ranged from quite complex ones at the larger service providers (Redundancy Help and Telephone Guidance) to loosely framed formats of performance evaluation at smaller ones (Move On and Lone Parent Advice).

While work measures were applied in most services of the voluntary-user defined type, their focus was on service quality rather than on the quantity of service users. This might appear somewhat contradictory because the services that had contracted targets (Move On and Redundancy Help) were paid based on target achievement and should have a clear interest in securing the contractual payments. However, as the example below highlights, the quality as well as the focus on individual needs was rated higher than potential financial gains:

*I: The only thing you could do is, like, base it on the number of calls that...*

*M: You could do, but then what that then influences is people have quicker calls and push the call through, and that's something we absolutely don't want. And we don't measure call length, we have it as a benchmark, but that's not a target. We would not target them on call length because, to me, that's about compromising quality. And just*

*before you think, oh God, I've got another three calls to get before I get my target, it becomes about how many calls you've answered rather than the richness of service that you've offered." (Manager, Redundancy Help)*

This exchange highlighted some other factors in connection with targets that some advisers, particularly in the voluntary-standardised service, had pointed out. There appeared to be a perception that targets lead to a decline in service quality, and therefore the service users and their needs became subordinated to fulfilling targets.

In some services, arrangements with regards to targets seemed disjointed between the specific service's goal and the greater organisation's goals placing advisers in a difficult position. In the Redundancy Advice Service, the advisers did not have personal targets because their provision of service was dependent on redundancies. The manager explained that while targets had been set on an organisational level, they were not passed on to advisers. Rather managers would review what they wanted the service to achieve and adjust the reporting targets in compliance with the funder's requirements. The manager described the process as follows:

*"M: No. When the project was set up, it was done on kind of best guesstimates and so, you know, what research was available appeared to indicate that it would be sensible to have a training target because part of what we wanted to do was encourage people to get into training, take training to help them get back into employment. Over the first 2 years of the project we realised that a lot of the time, people ... go back into similar type of employment and therefore will not need any*

*training. So our original kind of assumption was not as appropriate as we thought it was. [...] We do still record training but it's just not a target anymore [...] so we changed the targets in the third year. [...] We just did our best at guessing at what proportion [...] we thought they would be and we try to meet that and we monitor whether we're meeting them." (Manager, Redundancy Advice Service)*

At the same time, advisers in the Redundancy Advice Service often did not exclusively cover this kind of service. They were also involved in delivering the Careers Scotland service, which subjected them to the performance evaluation for that service. However, to an extent, they were detached from the targets their adviser colleagues had to achieve. They conceded that their work as redundancy advisers allowed them to count the service users against targets the mainstream provision needed to meet. This effectively meant double counting. As one adviser highlighted:

*"I: So but that... then your work counts towards the targets of your team that you would normally work with?*

*A1: It counts towards the targets of the team but it also counts towards the number of beneficiaries that we... that we were projected to meet in each quarter for ESF funding finance.*

*A2: I mean there are targets, kind of national targets for [the Telephone Guidance], the sort of numbers, yeah, the targets were agreed with, you know, the bids... [...] and there were targets for the project, demanding targets and numbers into employment and numbers into training, and such like.*

I: *So in a way it's kind of double counting them?*

A2: *Yeah. " (Advisers, Telephone Guidance)*

In other cases, targets did not seem to carry great importance. For instance, in the Lone Parent Advice service there were no targets because advisers were contracted in house to deliver employment advice and support, while the Move On service was relying on the fact that over the contracted period the number of service users they were supposed to consult would even out; thus they would comply with their contract. This suggests that in the voluntary-user defined case study services advisers were not exposed to the same kinds of pressure to fulfil contracted targets as their counterparts in the other service types. They could focus more on the actual delivery of the service and the needs of the service user.

However, the lack of targets did not mean that advisers were not subject to individual evaluations. These often consisted of reaction measures and were based on peer evaluation, personal support and development. A prime example was the Lone Parent Advice service, where advisers would train and support each other and get together on a regular basis to develop the materials they used in delivering the service.

*"So when we came together, we thought, that is the most important part of the service we should be offering is consistency. So we started off with the Personal Development Workshops and we've got the 5 of them together now and they're the ones we'll be evaluating in November to look at what went right, what went wrong, what's the evaluation saying, how did we feel it went because that's important as well, you know, that whatever your gut feeling is and your instinct about how*

*that day went and if something really wasn't right, what was it. [...] but we do try and sorta meet regularly and evaluate what we're doing."*  
*(Manager, Lone Parent Advice)*

This suggested that the focus on support and consistency were seen as influencing service quality with the service user in mind.

While this way of peer evaluation appeared rather basic, the Telephone Guidance service had a much more complex and sophisticated system of supporting their advisers. This included a monthly meeting with their manager where they would review phone calls that the adviser had selected, as well as regular reviews with a randomly assigned peer. Advisers highlighted that the process was seen as welcomed and educational:

*"[...] we actually get call monitored, [...] all of our calls are recorded. [...] Our team support, which is our co-ordinators and the team support advisers as well will listen to a range of our calls [...] as to how we've sustained the interview, [...] have we empowered the client for instance, [...] this is all actually measured and marked. [...] you're not getting grades for it but ... always open to discussion, it's always open to suggestion from either colleagues or from our team support as well. [...] It's usually 8 a month, but at least 4 a month that I'm getting [...], my line manager will discuss 4 of my calls with me every month [...]... we actually have what we call peer mentoring as well where ... [...] I would be paired with a colleague and one of us would be designated as the person to have their call listened to and we would ... so if I had particularly call that I'd like somebody to listen to because I felt there*

*was a difficult moment in there or that I wasn't handling it too well ...  
[...] so I've got an hour, right, to talk with a colleague about it, give the  
colleague the call so that they can listen to it [...] our reflective approach  
is actively encouraged here.*

*I: So you don't actually experience ... the peer reviews and the support ...  
you don't experience that as sort of pressure or anything?*

*A1: No. We've actually been calling out for it ... most advisers have been  
asking for this and more and more and more ... (Adviser, Telephone  
Guidance)*

Overall, performance evaluation in the voluntary-user defined services focused much more on reactive measures to support advisers to ensure service quality. Although the individual services had quite diverse ways of assessing adviser's performance, a mere focus on work measures based on quantitative evaluation did not seem of primary concern. Rather advisers were given the freedom to react to service users' needs.

While a multitude of evaluation methods were used across the case study services, there were some that seemed to be applied predominantly in each service type. Table 8 (see p. 208) summarises these findings.

Performance measurement often fed into incentive payments and rewards. The use of incentive pay in the service types will be examined more closely in the next section.



**Table 8: Performance evaluation measures according to service type**

	<b>Mandatory- standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary- standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-user defined type</b>
<b>Focus of performance measurement</b>	Money measures Time measures	Work measures Reaction measures Effect measures	Reaction measures Effect measures

## ***Reward systems***

Performance evaluation often formed the basis for rewards. These were often monetary, although there were potentially other ways to reward employees. Rewards could be seen as motivators to encourage certain behaviours or to achieve certain targets. Behavioural psychology distinguishes between extrinsic and intrinsic motivators, with the underlying assumption that a behaviour that is intrinsically motivated (a desire to perform a task for its own sake) is much more sustainable than extrinsically motivated behaviour (motivated by the receipt of a contingent reward, i.e. money) (Benabou and Tirole, 2003). For some individuals, incentive payments may be a powerful extrinsic motivator to make them behave in a certain way. However, advisers in the various organisations might not only be motivated by extrinsic factors but also by intrinsic motivators such as the freedom to apply discretion and develop their skills and abilities, or even by a certain degree of altruism (Armstrong, 2009). The following sections examine what reward systems were used in the various service types and whether they favoured intrinsic or extrinsic motivation.

### **Mandatory-standardised services**

In mandatory-standardised service types, incentive payments were the predominant reward method. The incentive payments were closely linked to

achievement of targets and outcomes of performance evaluation. For instance, in the New Deal, the Red-Amber-Green system was one of the major factors to determine whether an adviser would receive a bonus payment or not. This was seen as highly controversial by the advisers, particularly with regards to the fairness of the assessment of their work. Advisers felt the evaluation of their work did not follow a holistic approach and was focused strongly on numbers rather than providing a good service. The close connection of hard indicators to incentive payments indeed appeared to encourage a focus on target achievement rather than individuals. This was not surprising given the nature of the provider organisation and its need to prove that money was spent efficiently and effectively. The reward system was focused on individual adviser achievement and as provided incentives for compliance with expected or explicitly rewarded behaviour. This conforms to the definitions of a mainly extrinsic reward as outlined by Besley and Ghatak (2005) and Deci and Ryan (1985).

The picture was similar in the Work Area and Working Estate services. However, monetary rewards were not focused on individual achievement but rather had a team focus. If the team performed well, then advisers were offered rewards. These bonuses were connected to different categories and the team needed to fulfil all targets to be eligible for a bonus payment. A manager described the make-up of indicators to determine incentive pay as follows:

*"M: Any bonus structure that's arisen within the company is paid out on various issues with placements, quality and retentions. If we don't meet all three of those categories, then we don't get any bonus.*

*I: Is that a bonus for the whole team or just for a specific individual?*

*M: They're not individual, it's just the whole team." (Manager, Working Estate)*

This exacerbated the pressure on the individual to achieve their targets for the team. While on the surface, this method of linking rewards with team targets seemed to address more intrinsic factors such as self-respect and community, these very values are also called into question. This was due to the link of the whole team's performance with the incentive payment. As one manager pointed out above, if one link failed the whole team was going to fail. This externalised motivation by directing it to maintaining colleagues' respect. As mentioned earlier, managers actively made use of this moral obligation to contribute to the team and not to let colleagues down and thus held quite a strong tool in their hands to steer adviser behaviour. While the service's focus as a whole was slightly more targeted towards the individual user, the high degree of standardisation still maintained a strong focus on hard indicators. The rewards system combined both numerical targets as well as moral pressures and thus also had a coercive nature and was mainly focused on extrinsic motivation.

Not unexpectedly, the reward systems in the mandatory-standardised case study services appeared to subject the advisers to a similar 'carrot and stick' approach that the service user was subjected to. The carrot consisted of the potential bonus payment and sometimes also simply to keep one's job, while the stick was represented by performance evaluation and failure to receive a reward.

## **Voluntary-standardised services**

The rewards system in Careers Scotland appeared to send a very mixed message to advisers. The support system in place functioned also as a management information system which ultimately influenced monetary rewards for advisers. However, this was controversial among advisers because of a perceived lack of fairness in assessment:

*“But I just think there are some people more aware of it all the time ... you know, that there is this performance ... somebody got a 1 and a big bonus and, you know, why did I not get a 1? Why are they better than me ... and things like that. So I don’t think it’s a very good system. It’s all so ... it’s a forced ... enforced distribution as well, so there are only so many percent can get a 1, so many percent a 2, so many percent a 3.”*  
*(Adviser, Careers Scotland)*

The existence of a distribution curve for the reward payments might be the cause for difficulties in itself because it allowed arbitrariness in determining bonus payments when advisers were close in their individual performance. Even though basic guidelines were set out, there was room for the service manager to assign someone to a higher or lower reward group based on distribution requirements, which potentially would be limited if the reward system was based on fixed criteria. Although the manager might be somewhat flexible with the distribution percentages, the room for arbitrariness was undisputable.

This caused some insecurity among advisers and may even have disenfranchised them from the service aims and the purpose of the support and

evaluation system. Indeed, some advisers trusted more in their personal judgement and ability than relying on performance evaluations. Thus some advisers were highly critical of incentive payments, particularly also in connection with their view of their own experience and professionalism. One adviser described this dilemma:

*I: How much of an impact does like the performance related pay have on say how big of a difference does it make?*

*A: I don't know. Well ... (PAUSE) ... for me personally, it makes a difference but I mean, obviously if people are getting benchmarked... there's 3 benchmarks if people know the benchmark system ... 1, 2 and 3. I got a 3. The reason I got a 3 was I think it was said that I don't cover the breadth of work that other people cover but then I'm a specialist adviser but it's probably cos I'm a bit of a dinosaur and don't quite fit the ... you know, I don't dot the Is and cross the Ts on that system sort of thing. In theory, the people who do dot the Is and cross the Ts will maybe get a benchmark 1 or if they go the extra mile, they get the 1. I think they would hope that any kind of ... if they got a benchmark 3, then they'd say, well, I need to change my ... you know ...*

*I: My approach.*

*A: Or I need to follow more the career planning journey to the N<sup>th</sup> degree and have to do X, Y and Z and hopefully next year they'll get a benchmark 2 or benchmark 1.*

*I: So for you it's more like your standard is your personal expectation and not what the company tries to impose on you.*

*A: That's not a bad thing ... honestly " (Adviser, Careers Scotland)*

This also hinted at issues on how advisers behaved and reacted to pressures to make them adhere to the standardised model the service was in the process of implementing. There also seemed to be a sense of being discriminated against in the adviser's comments due to the fact that the adviser did not want to adapt to the increasingly standardised provision requirements.

Due to the ranking system that reward payments were based on, the system carried a coercive undertone while the support measures in place seemed to highlight more the satisfaction of helping 'a difficult case'. Some advisers in the organisation seemed to place a higher value on this more intrinsically motivated approach and thus exhibited more resistance towards the increasing standardisation of the service as the example above showed. However, overall, the service seemed to move more to extrinsically motivated rewards which were controlled through both targets as well as support functions.

### **Voluntary-user defined services**

The overarching commonality across the voluntary-user defined services was the complete absence of incentive payments. One manager summarised quite poignantly a view that many advisers and managers in this service type expressed:

*"I: Do Advisors get performance related pay or do they just get a flat amount of money?"*

*M: No, flat rate yeah.*

*I: Okay, so there's no additional incentive or potential frictions because I'm working so much better than you are?*

*M: No. And there's an argument that says that works well, sometimes it doesn't. I mean, I've come from places where performance related pay was used and some competition is good, but it can become as unhealthy as it is healthy. But I think what works here, is the advisers' commitment to their calls and because every call is so different, I don't know how you could introduce performance related pay." (Manager, Telephone Guidance)*

This kind of approach to rewards seemed to put the individuals and their needs before numerical targets, allowing the advisers to focus on the service user without the pressure of having to achieve targets. Certainly, any extrinsic motivator appeared to be removed and the commitment of the adviser, as the manager above put it, was channelled into each customer. The reward seemed to be more intrinsically focused on gaining satisfaction from helping an individual or seeing an individual progress towards employment. Any numerical target setting would undermine this focus on the service user and therefore lead to a lack of commitment on the part of the adviser to achieve a positive outcome for the service user.

This was also apparent in other services of this type, for instance when advisers in the Lone Parent Advice service spoke enthusiastically of small successes they had achieved with service users and could recall in detail the steps the individual had

taken. Another example of an intrinsic motivation was an adviser who explained how he enjoyed his job by giving people information:

*"I do enjoy giving them the more information they have ... because I have more books, I have more information, specific information that they can't find on the internet. ... So if I give them more than they have they're oh, they are happy. And I'm really happy, it's like, yeah, you see, that's my job." (Adviser, Move On)*

The Redundancy Help service, again, was an exception because advisers were subject to the performance evaluation according to the Careers Scotland service. However, advisers felt that their work with people at the brink of redundancy carried quite some importance, and they gained satisfaction from helping an individual cope with the thought process of redundancy; this could be considered more intrinsically focused.

In summary, monetary rewards were used to different extents in the service types. At one end of the spectrum, there were somewhat coercive systems that seemed to favour extrinsic motivations in the mandatory-standardised service types. At the other end, there were services that were characterised by a complete absence of monetary rewards and that seemed to favour intrinsic motivations gained through job satisfaction and an altruistic viewpoint. Table 9 (see p. 216) summarises the outcome of analysis over the various service-types:



**Table 9: Rewards and favoured motivation in the service types**

	<b>Mandatory-standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-user defined type</b>
<b>Reward system</b>	Coercive system based on monetary rewards	Increasingly coercive system based on monetary rewards	Support based system with no monetary rewards
<b>Favoured motivation</b>	Extrinsic motivation	Increasingly extrinsic motivation	Intrinsic motivation

This leads now to the discussion of how these performance measurement and rewards systems encouraged or discouraged certain adviser behaviour. The way these systems were used indicates the extent to which the service providers trusted their advisers to deliver the intended outcome.

### ***Trust and enforcing behaviour***

Performance evaluation and rewards were used to steer adviser behaviour much in the same way that advisers tried to influence user behaviour, although in this case it did not so much concern life changing choices but rather adapting, steering and enforcing an organisational service template. In the same way that trust and trustworthiness could be established between the adviser and the service user, the management systems applied to steer and control advisers could be seen as measures to establish trust between the adviser and the service provider.

The potential of performance evaluation and rewards as proxies for trust and trustworthiness has been confirmed by Creed et. al. (1996):

*"[...] whatever level of trust or mistrust is evident in their [managers'] actions may well be reciprocated. Moreover, managers design reward and control systems that are visible displays of base levels of trust or mistrust within departments or the organization as a whole." (p. 19)*

The following sections examine how performance evaluation and reward systems encouraged or discouraged a trusting relationship between the adviser and the service as a whole. This will help to further highlight tensions that advisers mediated in the various service types.

### **Mandatory-standardised type services**

The performance evaluation measures in mandatory-standardised services were very much process focused. The strict attention to cost and profit measures and fulfilment of targets as well as the rigorous assessment of advisers using the 'Red-Amber-Green' tool were testament to that. Advisers expressed their concern with this mode of evaluation, highlighting issues such as the fairness of the assessment methods, and expressing a feeling that they were mainly working towards the managerial aspects and not for the customer. One adviser complained:

*"... like the practical side of it rather than just looking at paperwork or ... you know, how many customers didn't attend their interviews, why didn't they attend them, what action did you take. We know what action we're supposed to take but I don't know ... I feel at times you're sort of like marked down unnecessarily." (Adviser, New Deal)*

Indeed measures such as the 'Red-Amber-Green' tool highlighted a level of distrust among colleagues; advisers did not want to take on service users from a colleague's caseload for fear it could impact on their own rating due to errors in the case file processing. An adviser summarised the main concerns as follows:

*"We think it's unfair because what happens is ... for instance if there was a previous adviser that maybe ... hadn't set the customer's cues to certain weeks once on the New Deal and then they saw that customer the following week, if the manager went in and checked my work and saw that the cues weren't set ... I would then be marked down. So I said, well hold on, no, no, no ... that's not fair because I didn't see that customer initially so why am I being penalised for that? So they said ... well, basically, as the adviser you have to check that everything is correct for the customer." (Adviser, New Deal)*

The adviser was held completely responsible for fulfilling the procedural aspects of dealing with the service user while the performance evaluation tools appeared to coerce the adviser into following these procedures. One of the advisers highlighted a somewhat vicious cycle that these methods created:

*"Cos I mean, if the advisers aren't measured, they could be coming in here and doing exactly as they please, you know, what they're offering the customer may not actually be relevant to them." (Adviser, New Deal)*

The adviser highlighted a detachment and lack of relevance from what they were doing which then meant there needed to be measures that enforced the adviser

to behave in a certain way. Consequently, there needed to be an evaluation system to ensure that these procedures were followed. Due to the nature of the system, advisers felt treated unfairly and seemed to be moving further away from caring about the service and concentrating primarily on the process. This concurs with the findings of Benabou and Tirole (2003) who report that monetary incentives might lead to a feeling of dehumanisation in workers.

The adviser's comments could also be interpreted differently. A lack of trust in the adviser's abilities from a managerial point of view limited what advisers would be allowed to do, as the reference to "knowing what they are supposed to do" pointed out. While it needed to be recognized that the data collected by the provider was also used to establish evidence for the funders, it was not necessarily perceived this way by advisers who only felt the personal consequences of not complying with what was asked of them.

This was a particularly good example of managerial methods limiting professional discretion (McDonald and Marston, 2006). From the adviser's point of view, performance evaluation was not necessarily considered a negative influence. However, due to the strong focus on performance, the chance to exercise professional discretion to achieve a positive outcome for the service user was completely removed.

Evaluation measures in the Work Area and Working Estate services focused less on a rating system, but the introduction of peer pressure to make advisers comply with processes and to achieve their targets fulfilled a similar function. While in the New Deal control was moved to the managerial realm, in these two services the control was to some extent devolved to the advisers. One manager described this process:

*“I: Right. So they’re basically checking on each other?”*

*A: That’s right. That’s the best way, to be honest, because all of us are going to fail. If one person fails an element of our business, it has a knock-on effect. And everyone’s very clear about that. I try to get people to take accountability, not only for themselves but for the programme that they’re in...” (Manager, Work Area)*

Clearly, this devolution of controlling vital aspects of the service, while portrayed as ‘looking out for each other’ by the manager, had more of a ‘spying on each other’ quality to it. On the surface the controlling mechanisms appeared to be supportive, however they potentially created some opportunity for distrust among colleagues due to peer pressure. Advisers reported there was constant checking - for instance in morning meetings - if anyone was having problems with fulfilling their targets and if the team was on target. This was enhanced by the quality manager ensuring the procedural margin of error for submitting claims was achieved because only submitted claims were the ultimate proof that a target had been achieved.

In the mandatory-standardised services, rewards such as performance pay followed along similar lines and appeared to act as a strong factor to direct adviser behaviour. In all services, achievement of targets either individually or collectively had a direct impact on the receipt of a bonus payment. Conversely, if targets were not achieved then the reward would either be reduced or not issued at all.

The case study services under this type appeared to use rather strict measures to ensure advisers complied with service procedures. They were closely related to the coercive persuasion approach (Schein, 1999). As the examples above show, there was

consistent pressure to adhere to the procedures under threat of punishment (i.e. a low rating, loss of respect from peers). This pressure was continuously enforced through the ongoing evaluation and measurement processes. Advisers were, however, offered a carrot for changing their behaviour and complying with what was asked of them in the form of incentive payments.

It was questionable though to what extent this reward and control system worked effectively considering the high attrition rates in these services. Indeed, there was evidence from advisers who had switched to other services (for instance voluntary-user defined services) because they could not be motivated by monetary rewards or disliked the high pressure environment. One adviser talked about her discomfort working in a high pressured environment:

*“I found that [Work Area] was a bit too much like commercial recruitment. [...] I moved there because it was more money and my son has got a learning difficulty and he had left school, so I was then able to get a full time job cos I’d only been working round about his school hours. So I went to [Work Area] because I thought that was an extension of what I was doing except with a different client group, but it wasn’t and I wasn’t completely happy. It was very fast paced. So when this job came up, which it is like a step back again to do the actual hands on vocational guidance, I jumped at it.” (Adviser, Lone Parent Advice)*

The findings suggested that the environment in mandatory-standardised case study services was more conducive to applying similar methods to steering advisers as they applied to service users. As with the users, it was questionable to what extent

advisers would adhere to processes and procedures if the coercive measures were removed.

### **Voluntary-standardised type services**

The service in this category took a split approach to building trust with advisers. On the one hand, there were coercive measures such as the rating system that influenced incentive payments. The systems in place appeared to enforce a growing standardisation and rewarded compliance. Thus it was a very calculus-based approach to building trust between the two parties through a focus on procedures. There were set rules that advisers and service provider were expected to adhere to. On the other hand, the service valued the professional knowledge of qualified advisers. This sent a rather mixed message to advisers, which as earlier quotes highlighted might create some tensions between the professional identity of the advisers and the procedural requirements the service set out. However, there also seemed to be an issue with organisational change. Schein (1999) highlights that coercive measures are frequently used to bring about organisational change.

This was quite an interesting juxtaposition, because the service would only allow qualified advisers to interact with service users. The organisation placed a high emphasis on the adviser's competency and knowledge, which added to the credibility of the service. Thus the service focused on knowledge based trust in the adviser. Conversely though, the service was sending out a constant message of control and standardisation by enforcing the use of a standardised tool, which completely negated the trust in the professional competencies of the adviser and seemed to build more on calculus-based approaches to trust. Additionally, the use of supportive tools in adviser

evaluation which were then used to determine incentive payments enhanced the potential for conflict even more.

The way advisers coped with this situation varied widely among those interviewed. Some were happily complying, because they thought there had to be a good reason for it. One adviser commented on her reasoning:

*“You’re a qualified careers adviser ... (PAUSE) ... I suppose after that, it’s just ongoing training and self development to make sure that you keep up to date with what’s going on and everything and ... it’s all about accepting change because we’ve gone through an awful lot of change and, you know, there are some people probably who just don’t want to change and they just want to do things the way they do things and have always done things ... (LAUGHTER) ... whereas my view is ... well, if Careers Scotland are telling me to do it this way because they have a good reason for that, then I’ll do it that way (LAUGHS)” (Adviser, Careers Scotland)*

In contrast, others were more or less actively resisting change and placed rather high emphasis on their competencies and professional identity. This often led them into conflict with the performance evaluation system. This situation, too, overlapped somewhat with how the service conceptualised the service user and tried to change the user’s behaviour. The service focused on educating willing individuals to steer their own future in the work place using a pre-approved methodology and providing additional support where necessary. Similarly, this view could be applied to advisers. On the one hand, the performance evaluation system rated advisers and tried to create individuals that adhered to a pre-approved methodology to steer and



support a service ideal. On the other hand, it provided support to the individual adviser via observations and reflective practice. However, there was a key difference. While the change in the user was completely self-motivated and there was no means for the advisers to enforce this change, the advisers were subject to enforcement via performance evaluation systems. Thus the trust that was built between the adviser and the service provider appeared to be oscillating between knowledge-based trust based on the adviser's professional knowledge, and calculus-based trust based on enforced adherence to the new standardised methodology and constant organisational change.

### **Voluntary-user-defined type services**

The complete lack of incentive payments, the somewhat lose focus on targets as well as the more support focused functions of performance evaluation suggested that the voluntary-user defined services took a wholly different approach to building trust. Trust was based on knowledge and identification with the service based on an overarching aim to enhance and maintain a focus on the service user and the quality of service provided to them.

This could be seen, for instance, in the continuous support and improvement of the adviser's own qualifications in the Telephone Guidance service. The service actively supported and encouraged advisers to expand their knowledge base in the work place by, for instance, offering work-based NVQ assessments at various levels. A similar approach could be seen in the Move On service, where advisers were concurrently attending courses to improve their skill base, although this might have been a requirement of the contract. Nevertheless, the focus on adviser's knowledge ensured an interest in the personal development of the individual. Personal support was

provided through management and peers when dealing with difficult cases. This enhanced service quality and the individual's confidence in interacting independently and flexibly with service users.

This support and encouragement, combined with the discretion awarded to the adviser to react to service users' needs, displayed a strong commitment by the service to the individual. Expanding knowledge was considered a form of empowerment, and thus by placing trust in advisers' knowledge and helping them to expand their competency, the organisations appeared to focus very much on empowering the individual.

The Redundancy Help service targeted the adviser's knowledge as well, relying on their ability to deal with crisis situations and providing support. However, there was also the influence of their general attachment to Careers Scotland, which introduced somewhat coercive measures, even though advisers pointed out that the effect was minimal. Also, there was some slight element of standardisation in the service provision (the information packs put together by advisers and the standardised presentations). But advisers needed to be able to respond flexibly to the individual service user's needs within the, sometimes extremely short, time frame available to them. Thus there was a much higher emphasis on the knowledge of the individual adviser, and their professional identity as a qualified adviser became much more important to the service's image over all.

The Move On and Lone Parent Advice service had a more identification-based approach to building trust. Advisers in these two services often shared a similar background with the target audience of the service. Thus they could relate to the aim of the service on a personal level, due to being a lone parent or a migrant worker for

instance. Some of the advisers had, in fact, used the respective service themselves and therefore completely bought in to the service's goals. Similarly, the service management placed a certain amount of trust in the adviser's personal experience, making their ability to motivate and support peers in a similar situation much more credible. Professional knowledge was not necessarily integral to the service provision. Advisers were rather considered role models and ambassadors of how the service had empowered them to, for instance, return to work as a lone parent. To the service user, the experience of being a lone parent themselves, also lent a certain credibility as well as knowledge to the adviser which was recognised by the service managers.

As such the services relied very much on the advisers' knowledge and personal experience. These provided the basis for the advisers having the freedom to react flexibly to user needs while providing them with sufficient credibility that they were capable of dealing successfully with a service user. The supportive character of peer evaluations empowered advisers to improve and adapt their practices all with a view to enhancing the experience for the service user. Thus changing behaviour did not become an enforced exercise but it was rather a view to self-improvement and taking charge of one's own development.

Overall, the various service types appeared to use different approaches to build trust and ensure compliance with service procedures. The analysis showed that these ranged from highly coercive and calculus-based methods in mandatory-standardised services to those that focused on knowledge and identity-based forms of trust and individual empowerment in voluntary-user focused services. The result of the analysis is summarised in Table 10 (see p. 227).

**Table 10: Types of trust and compliance in the service types**

	<b>Mandatory-standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-user defined type</b>
<b>Type of trust</b>	Calculus-based trust	Calculus-based trust and knowledge-based trust	Knowledge-based trust and Identification-based trust
<b>Methods to ensure compliance</b>	Coercive methods	Coercive and supportive methods	Supportive and empowering methods

## **Conclusion**

This chapter applied the services typology developed in Chapter 6 to the examination of the ways in which managerial practices were enacted to govern adviser behaviour in the case study services. The use of performance evaluation and reward systems were examined to establish similarities and differences in the various service types. They also served as proxies to determine what type of trust could be established between the adviser and the provider organisation and how this was used to direct adviser compliance towards intended behaviours, similarly to the methods used to steer service user behaviour.

The results of the analysis showed that the different concepts covered a continuum across the service types. For instance, performance evaluation systems in the types of services ranged from highly sophisticated and complex systems to more loosely formulated approaches. Reward systems, motivations, trust and methods to ensure compliance followed a similar pattern. The extremes were occupied by mandatory-standardised services on the one end, and voluntary-user defined services on the other. Voluntary-standardised services covered a middle ground and seemed to

be somewhat of a hybrid in terms of the methods used to govern adviser behaviour.

Table 11 summarises the results of the findings.

**Table 11: Overview of concepts governing the adviser-management relationship in the service types**

	<b>Mandatory- standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary- standardised type</b>	<b>Voluntary-user defined type</b>
<b>Focus of performance measurement</b>	Money measures Time measures	Work measures Reaction measures Effect measures	Reaction measures Effect measures
<b>Type of trust</b>	Calculus-based trust	Calculus-based trust and knowledge-based trust	Knowledge-based trust and Identification- based trust
<b>Methods to ensure compliance</b>	Coercive methods	Coercive and supportive methods	Supportive and empowering methods
<b>Reward system</b>	Coercive system based on monetary rewards	Increasingly coercive system based on monetary rewards	Support based system with no monetary rewards
<b>Favoured motivation</b>	Extrinsic motivation	Increasingly extrinsic motivation	Intrinsic motivation

There appeared to be consistency in the managerial measures used to steer adviser behaviour, how these were applied, and the kind of trust that might be established between the adviser and the service provider. The consistency was particularly striking in mandatory-standardised services where, despite supposedly different methodological approaches to helping the customer, the methods used to control adviser behaviour and achieve outcomes were remarkably similar. In the mandatory-standardised case study services, the work environment of the advisers was often influenced by a notable presence of pressure on the individual to perform

according to requirements and an underlying level of distrust and peer pressure. Compliance was enforced through monetary reward systems that were based mainly on numerical targets.

In contrast was the situation in the voluntary-user defined services with their dispersed forms of target setting and performance evaluation. However, in all these case study services, there was a strong underlying current to support individual advisers in their work to allow them to do a 'better' job, which would ultimately facilitate the service user's transition into work. These services seemed to be able to build more on knowledge-based trust as well as identification-based trust, which appeared to build a stronger commitment of the adviser to deliver the service. This commitment could be based on advisers gaining satisfaction and motivation out of doing their work as such. Many advisers in this service type commented on the satisfaction they gained from small progress their service users made.

Careers Scotland provided mixed picture, where advisers were supported in their roles as professionals through peer review and other measures. However, the managerial methods used, such as individual target setting and a strong focus on monetary incentives, seemed to direct adviser behaviour in a much more generic and standardised way and thus detracted from their role as professionals. This seemed to indicate that the provider organisation only placed a limited extent of knowledge-based trust in the adviser with a strong undercurrent of calculus-based trust. The resulting mix of intrinsic motivation gained through the satisfaction of delivering qualified advice and the extrinsic motivation through incentive payments and standardisation created additional tensions for advisers. The responses of advisers to these tensions were equally mixed. This might also factor in the constant change the service provider underwent. Coercive measures have been linked with continuous

organisational change (Schein, 1999) which might be another reason why these tensions for advisers arose.

Interestingly, the way the provider organisations in mandatory-standardised services tried to enforce advisers' compliance with procedures bore striking similarities with the way the advisers conceptualised and interacted with the service user. The mandatory-standardised services showed strong coercive tendencies, with an outright carrot and stick approach to make advisers comply with the service methodology. The sustainability of such an approach has been questioned by the advisers themselves and there appeared to be strong tendencies among advisers to depersonalise their service provision from their own personal attitudes. This concurs with findings by Deci and Ryan (1985) who found that workers became bored and reactive instead of proactive when offered monetary incentives, and thus a depersonalisation of the task occurred. Even though advisers did not speak of boredom in their work, they referred to mechanical processes and robotic task performance, which bears strong similarities to Deci and Ryan's conceptualisation.

The voluntary-standardised service again covered a peculiar middle ground, by trying to focus on the adviser's competence as a professional while at the same time enforcing a predetermined service methodology. This was similar to the user relationship in that the individual was supported to make independent decisions through the application of a standardised tool. However, in contrast to the service user, the adviser was subject to coercive measures via a rating system and the connected incentive pay.

This could strongly be distinguished from the voluntary-user defined services that focused on empowering the individual adviser to react to the service users' needs

flexibly using their own personal experience as a knowledge base as well as a source of credibility. The focus was very much on developing the individual through providing additional knowledge (qualifications) and peer interactions. This allowed advisers to take charge of the interaction with the users with confidence, without being subjected to the coercive pressure of target achievement. This was similar to the focus on empowering the service users to take charge of their lives, with advisers sometimes going out of their way to provide the necessary support. As suggested earlier, this approach may have a much more lasting effect in ensuring advisers' compliance because there was personal identification and engagement with the service goal.

The findings from the previous chapter combined with this chapter appear to mirror each other. Within the case studies, there seemed to be a tendency that in more standardised services coercive measures were used to steer the service user as well as the adviser. Conversely, in services that allowed the advisers discretion to focus on service user needs, the steering methods for adviser behaviour appeared much more supportive. The ability to apply discretion seems to be a vital pivot point in how advisers mediated the tensions between service user needs and service demands to achieve a positive outcome for the service user.

The positive outcome, could take different forms in the various services. In the mandatory-standardised services, the main focus was on the take up of employment whereas in the other service types, a positive outcome could be that the user made first steps and approaches to returning to the labour market. Newman (2001) highlights the instable character of outcomes produced by the application of coercive measures. Indeed, more recent research suggested that while more coercive services



are successful in moving people off employment benefits, the employment outcomes are less stable and often accompanied by negative wage effects (Petrongolo, 2009).

This mismatch of policy and practice presents a potential problem. The work focus of current policies was undoubtedly clearly addressed in mandatory-standardised services. However, the aim of advisers to reintegrate service users into sustainable employment that allowed them to take on their role as working citizens continuously and to 'make work pay' was difficult to achieve. The policies seemed rather more geared to support short-term changes in and out of employment as Petrongolo's (2009) study outlined. Additionally, with the focus on money and time measures in these services, advisers did not appear to have much capacity to aim for sustainable outcomes. Their focus was to move a user into employment as quickly as possible to fulfil their targets and maximise financial profit for their provider organisations (see p. 138 ff).

This was not a completely surprising finding. Struyven and Verhoest (2005) have found that in systems that are highly focused on performance evaluation, advisers are more likely to let their work be dominated by these process controls, which leaves less room to focus on user needs. This mismatch then forms the basis for a continuation of the cycle where users are coerced into low pay and unstable employment, taking wage cuts in the process (Petrongolo, 2009). This in turn affects their families through the increased possibility of in-work poverty (Millar and Gardiner, 2004).

This would suggest that a focus on the specific needs of service users could produce much more stable and sustainable employment outcomes, which in the long-run would have the potential to address the low pay, in-work poverty cycle. However,

a complete shift to only supportive policies would be unlikely and from a political viewpoint could not be combined with the predominant ideology of activating people. A possible solution to break this dilemma could be the creation of services in the mandatory-user defined quadrant of service types, which in the UK was not populated.

Services of this kind would combine the mandatory elements such as actively searching for employment, with the targeted personal support that was delivered by voluntary-user defined services allowing the service user active participation in their support measures. A first attempt to move service provision towards this quadrant has been made with the introduction of the Jobseekers Regime Flexible New Deal in 2009, which contained elements of increasing conditionality combined with access to additional support measures and the handover to intensive support services after 12 months of unemployment. The programme was still in its initial implementation, but first evaluation findings indicated that, if advisers were given the discretion and flexibility envisaged in the programme, positive sustainable outcomes could be achieved (see Knight et al., 2010).

This chapter concludes the series of analysis chapter. Chapter 6 introduced the case study services and a typology to facilitate the analysis the similarities and differences across service types was developed. Chapters 7 and 8 analysed in detail the mechanisms how advisers governed service users and how adviser behaviour was steered in service delivery. The following chapter discusses the findings of these three chapters in relation to the wider theoretical context of the governance literature by focussing on the mechanisms that advisers use to mediate the field of tension between service user needs and managerial demands.

## Chapter 9 Discussion

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## **Introduction**

The study set out to examine how employment advisers mediated tensions between managerial demands and service user needs. In order to facilitate the analysis and to compare and contrast the services a typology was developed. The previous chapters presented the application of the typology to the case study services, focussing on how advisers mediated tensions between service user needs and managerial demands. When applied to the case studies, the findings showed that advisers applied a wide variety of strategies to achieve the specific outcomes of their services within the contractual and organisational parameters. However, these strategies were similar within each type.

This chapter discusses these findings in relation to the wider governance literature. Firstly, it discusses the lack of mandatory-user defined services in the UK context, which became apparent in the development of the typology. Secondly, it contends that discretion is a vital pivot point in how advisers mediate tensions between service user needs and managerial demands and that how advisers apply their discretion has implications for the personalisation of services. Thirdly, the findings, and particularly the typology, are discussed in the context of currently existing governance typologies by Newman (2001) and Considine (2001) and suggests that hybrid types are more and more prevalent. Lastly, the discussion focuses on the mechanisms that front-line advisers apply when mediating the fields of tension between service users and managerial demands.

## **The lack of mandatory-user defined services**

When constructing the services typology it appeared that in the UK context there were no services covering the mandatory-user defined quadrant (see Table 3, p. 131). If this service were developed within the welfare-to-work tradition, it would be provided within a policy area that was centrally steered by the UK government, where programme provision was highly standardised and controlled. In contrast, a mandatory-user defined service would require the devolution of decision-making and programme design power to the lower levels. Decentralising this kind of decision-making power would mean the end of a unified service under equity principles. It would require a shift from mere rhetorical partnership working to actual joined-up governing at the local level (Rummery, 2002) if such an approach was to work.

While the hope for this kind of service would be more sustainable employment outcomes with the prospect for progression, several problems would require consideration. The first problem is how to ensure and measure successful implementation. The creation of meaningful performance measures for the services available in the UK was a difficult and complex affair (Holloway, 1999). A localised service that provided individualised solutions, as opposed to the personalised services that appear to be mainly a rhetorical construct in the welfare-to-work context, would require a locally adapted set of indicators to allow this kind of measurement, making the task of performance measurement infinitely more complex and benchmarking against other localities difficult. The second problem, and possibly the more important one, lies in how to avoid potential inequality, not only in personal treatment, but also geographically. For example, areas that already suffered from high levels of deprivation might not have sufficient funding available to provide individualised solutions. Crucially, on a more structural level, there might not be sufficient work or

training opportunities available in these geographical areas to cater for the individual's needs (Theodore and Peck, 1999). These would be issues that needed careful consideration, if such a service type should be created.

## **Discretion and the illusion of personalisation**

The findings showed that advisers in mandatory-standardised services, and particularly in the New Deal, would have appreciated more flexibility to respond to users' needs. In some cases advisers had to resort to creative tactics at street-level to circumvent programme restrictions and accommodate for instance a service user's own efforts in skills improvement. However, adviser rule-breaking was not always in the best interest of the user because, for example, if it involved 'signing off', which meant forgoing 'passported' benefits. Advisers often attributed these practices to the restrictions placed on them through the task standardisation of their work enforced by performance monitoring tools. Advisers talked about 'robot-like' work suggesting a depersonalisation of their tasks and detachment from service user needs, which prevented them from providing a high 'quality service'. This was an observation shared by Bowman and Horne (2010) who concluded that the focus on procedural aspects effectively prevented advisers from delivering a personalised service. This was a very important point given the policy focus on 'personalisation'. The introduction of mandatory-user defined advice could thus not only be beneficial to the user, but there might also be benefits to advisers' working conditions due to wider opportunities for fulfilling user needs and more interesting and enjoyable work tasks.

There have been attempts at allowing front-line advisers more discretion, for instance, the 'adviser flex' pilots within the new Jobseekers Regime Flexible New Deal introduced in 2009. These programmes showed great success initially; however, over

time advisers there reported more and more restrictions in what they were allowed to do within their 'flexibilities', effectively restricting and standardising what could be done (Knight et al., 2010). This raised questions over whether the government would actually allow the true personalisation of services within the mandatory welfare-to-work programmes, and particularly within the public employment service. Early indications of the new coalition government's Work Programme indicated that help for individuals requiring more intensive and personalised support to break down barriers to work would be contracted to the private and voluntary sectors (Finn, 2010), making a decline in standardisation in the adviser's work in the public agencies unlikely.

Examples from Nordic countries have shown that this type of service could be implemented and produce successful results. However, in the Nordic countries the orientation of newer activation policies did not follow the 'coercive' model, but were rather built on an 'enabling' model of building human capital (van Aerschot, 2008, Bonvin, 2007, Julkunen and Heikkilä, 2007, van Berkel, 2007). Therefore, for these policies to work successfully a re-orientation of activation and detachment from the image of the 'worker citizen' would be necessary, towards policies that capture individual needs and individuality and reflect this in the citizenship image.

## **Governance typologies**

While the services were provided within a managerial governance framework overall, at street-level a wider set of governance types appeared at work. Newman's (2001) four governance types could be applied to the service types and the ways in which advisers mediated their relationships between programme demands and user needs. In the mandatory-standardised case study services, the structured use of the 'carrot and stick approach', albeit in a somewhat hierarchical fashion, combined with

contractualism with the service user in the form of Action Plans, for instance, could be most closely linked to the managerial governance type. The incentive system used for advisers assumes an interest in profit maximisation which also tied in with this type. There was also an influence of hierarchical governance through performance evaluation. Self-governance, based on the professional values of advisers as well as the drive to educate the service user to be a self-reliant active citizen, could be linked to voluntary-standardised service. However, this type also showed some features of the managerial type (the use of financial rewards for advisers, for instance) as well as hierarchical governance in the form of performance evaluation. Lastly, the overall influence on voluntary-user defined case studies could be determined as network governance, where advisers and users as well as advisers and management collaborated to produce an outcome. However, there were also strong influences of organisational and group values found in the self-governance type. These outcomes would suggest an amendment of Newman's governance types in terms of their applicability to street-level governance.

An alternative way to examine the findings would be a mapping exercise of the service types with Considine's (2001) governance typology (see also Considine and Lewis, 2003). When mapped onto Considine's most closely matching governance types, an ambiguous picture developed because the two typologies did not produce consistent results. Table 12 (see p. 240) shows how the services typology would map onto Considine's and Newman's typologies, with the most prevalent type listed first.

The mapping exercise of the study findings to Considine's (2001) typology produced an outcome similar to the exercise with Newman's (2001) governance types. In both cases, pure cases of the stipulated types did not exist. However, this does not



mean that one or the other typology should be discounted. It would rather suggest that due to the rapid change in this policy area, governance mechanisms and types might have evolved and thus created new hybrid types of governance, as also suggested by van Berkel (2010).

**Table 12: Mapping the services typology onto the Considine and Newman typologies**

Services typology	Service	Considine typology	Newman typology
<b>Mandatory-standardised services</b>	New Deal	Procedural/Corporate	Managerial/ Hierarchical
	Work Area	Corporate/Market	
	Working Estate	Corporate/Market	
<b>Voluntary-standardised services</b>	Careers Scotland	Corporate/Network	Self-governance/ Managerial governance/ Hierarchical governance
<b>Voluntary-user focused services</b>	Move On	Network/Corporate	Network governance/ Self-governance
	Redundancy Help	Corporate/Network	
	Telephone Guidance	Network	
	Lone Parent Advice	Network	

This overlapped with findings from a recent study by Considine and Lewis (2010), where they found that a hybrid of the corporate-market type (target and competition focused) was the most consistent across the study, with network governance (relationship focused) the least stable. Unsurprisingly, the majority of their UK adviser participants identified the corporate type as their main influence, where

target fulfilment dominated front-line work. However, Considine and Lewis (ibid) also suggested that network types possibly served as a transitional strategy to cope with organisational change and were more context dependent. Findings from this study, however, could add another explanation to the instability of this type. While the influence of private sector management methods in contractual relationships affected advisers' work and their organisational value sets, particularly in the voluntary-standardised and voluntary-user defined services (Carmel and Harlock, 2008), advisers sometimes gave greater value to their personal experience and the particular needs of the service user than to compliance with managerial methods. However, they were exposed to a continuous struggle and therefore the balance between compliance with managerial methods and attending to user needs was constantly shifting.

## **Caught in the middle**

This study applied a governance perspective, where governance was understood as a set of steering mechanisms to change or maintain behaviours or the status quo (Carmel and Papadopoulos, 2003). Advisers occupied a middle ground because they were governed by their organisations through managerial demands and programme specifications, while also governing service users by making decisions, using discretion and building trust. Advisers had to mediate the demands of being steered towards compliance while also being responsive to user needs to achieve behavioural changes in service users.

### ***Managerialism versus discretion***

McDonald and Marston (2006) concluded that managerial governance mechanisms restricted the use of discretion. Similarly, Taylor and Kelly (2006) argued that in quasi-market environments rule bound behaviour overruled discretion due to

the emphasis on control and steering mechanisms. The results of this study confirmed these results, however, only for some service types.

For the mandatory-standardised case study services, the findings from McDonald and Marston (2006) and Taylor and Kelly (2006) appeared applicable. However, in some of the cases study services, for instance the New Deal, advisers applied street-level tactics to circumvent these restrictions and exercise some discretion, giving credibility to Lipsky's (1980) findings. In other services of the same type, for instance Working Estate, advisers had more opportunity to act flexibly, but even they pointed out that managerial requirements would always take precedence over specific user needs, if a choice between the two was required. This suggested that advisers hardly mediated the tensions between managerial demands and service user needs in the mandatory-standardised case study services. If they did attempt to mediate them, the findings showed that the most likely way of doing this appeared to be creative tactics at street-level, which potentially produced outcomes that the original policy did not intend (such as users entering precarious employment and benefit situations to remain on courses).

The findings from the voluntary-standardised case study services suggested a mix of mediating methods. Some advisers happily complied with steering the user towards standardised tools thus adhering with managerial demands. However, some advisers actively resisted this drive towards standardisation, based on their self-perception as a guidance professional. These individuals seemed prone to apply street-level tactics in an effort to continue to provide a user-focused service, by for instance delivering a 1:1 interaction when the user should have been directed towards a self-help tool. However, the increasing standardisation of the service hinted at a slow

deskilling of the adviser's task, which could effectively lead to deprofessionalisation. This concurs with findings from a study with nursing professionals working on telephone helplines (Fältholm and Jansson, 2008), which in its task complexity and professional ethos bore strong similarities to careers guidance. The advisers were therefore constantly battling between maintaining "*old hierarchies of work and knowledge, as well as new economies*" of service delivery (Charles-Jones et al., 2003: 72). In this context, some advisers also raised the problem of 'McDonaldisation' (Bourgeault et al., 2001), where people were made to fit the service and the same service offered to all. Advisers in this type of service were thus constantly mediating between professionalism as defined by the service and professionalism as defined by their occupation. Their mediation between managerialism and discretion was therefore also a mediation process to maintain their professional identity.

In stark contrast, advisers in voluntary-user defined case study services had a considerable amount of freedom to provide a service targeted to the individual's needs. Managerial steering mechanisms hardly impacted on their work; in some services (for instance Lone Parent Advice), there was no performance measurement. In those case studies where performance measurement existed, advisers often disregarded the restrictions these applied to the service due to a perceived moral obligation to the service user. They thus behaved 'knightish' (Le Grand, 2003) because they did not necessarily take the financial implications for themselves or the provider into consideration, but were motivated by their personal or a shared experience to help the individual. The mediation process between managerial demands and service user needs appeared to be dominated to a large extent by advisers' intrinsic motivation.

These findings suggested two dominant views in the steering and conceptualising of front-line advisers in the case study types. On the one hand, they can be understood very much in the tradition of street-level bureaucrats. Their main task was the application of rules and regulations with the ability to apply narrowly defined discretion, which in turn required careful management (Brodkin, 2007, Lipsky, 1980). On the other hand, front-line advisers could be seen as professionals who required autonomy to apply their professional skills and capabilities in an effective way (Kirkpatrick et al., 2005). It is worth keeping in mind though, that the extent of advisers' professionalism differed strongly between the services and was often connected with a qualification in the substantive field of advice and guidance.

### ***Trust and compliance***

The type of trust between adviser and service user appeared to exert great influence in the way advisers could achieve compliance from the service user, and thus work towards a behavioural change. Goddard and Mannion (1998) asserted that long-term relationships built on trust and cooperation were an attempt to solve the principal-agent problem in contractual relationships. Chapter 4 highlighted the different types of trust that could be established in adviser-user relationships based on the extent of discretion available to the adviser. Findings confirmed Goddard and Mannion's (1998) assertion. The voluntary-user defined services focused on establishing a relationship with the service user, which appeared to build on identification-based trust. The cooperative nature of the service allowed the user to make the transition into employment at their own pace with the hope of creating more sustainable employment outcomes. More importantly, the interaction of the adviser with the managerial requirements mirrored the trust relationship with the user. In highly standardised services, trust relationships were merely calculus-based,

influenced by the underlying threat of punishment. In contrast, the cooperative evaluation methods of more user-focused services allowed knowledge-based trust to be built. Thus, the nature of the trust relationship could be seen as supportive of solving the principal-agent problem, particularly in the face of multiple principals. It could be argued that the type of trust that could be established either forced the adviser to make a cut-throat choice between principals or allowed the balancing between the competing demands of managerial requirements and service users, confirming findings by Zaheer and Venkatraman (1995). There was also an economic rationale to endorse balanced principal-agent relationships. Gilson (2006) for instance, considered them more cost effective due to the lack of a requirement for expensive monitoring and auditing systems. A more balanced approach would contribute to cost savings, which were vital considering the large-scale budget cuts being implemented from 2010 onwards.

Moreover, recent findings by Bowman and Horne (2010) from an Australian study and by Sainsbury (2010) from a UK study confirmed the findings of this study concerning compliance and process-focus, respectively. Bowman and Horne (2010) outlined that services that enforced compliance, as practised in the mandatory-standardised service type, made the successful delivery of user-focused services nearly impossible, particularly in a quasi-market environment where control and performance evaluation were prevalent. Sainsbury (2010), in turn, concluded that the process-focus prevalent in mandatory-standardised services hindered the personalisation of service delivery. Essentially, these findings questioned the capability of these policy interventions to deliver sustainable employment outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the findings relative to conceptual literature as well as empirical research findings. It established that the implementation of a mandatory-user defined service within the welfare-to-work tradition would require a re-orientation of the approach to welfare-to-work policies from 'coercion' policies to 'enabling' policies. This would also require the full decentralisation of decision-making power to the local level, which would require a re-consideration of partnership working. It also examined the congruence of the services typology to the governance typologies of Newman (2001), Considine (2001, 2010) and Considine and Lewis (2003) and found that the service types led to the assumption that advisers operated within hybrid forms of these governance models. Lastly, the chapter discussed how advisers mediated the tensions between managerial demands and service users' needs and concluded that there are strongly differing mechanisms at work in the service types. Essentially, the mediation processes could be located within the street-level bureaucracy literature for the mandatory-standardised case study services. Advisers were seen as administrators that applied discretion in a narrowly defined margin that needed to be carefully managed. In contrast, in the two other service types advisers were governed as professionals who needed autonomy to apply their skills. However, particularly in the voluntary-standardised case study service, advisers operated in a context of constant struggle to maintain their professional identity.

Chapter 10 draws together the main points of the study and outlines its contribution to academic knowledge. It also provides an overview of the more recent developments in the policy fields of welfare-to-work and education and skills since the fieldwork for this study was conducted and proposes areas for future research that emerged from the study.

# Chapter 10

## Conclusion

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This study set out to examine qualitatively how employment advisers in different services mediated tensions between managerial demands and service user needs. These employment advice services were delivered within two policy frameworks, welfare-to-work and education and skills, which each have their distinct policy making processes, institutions, legal contexts, delivery structures and research traditions. The study's unique contribution is in the integrated exploration of services in both delivery frameworks as they were available to those out of work or at risk of unemployment. Conceptually, the study adopted a governance perspective instead of the more traditional street-level perspective. In doing so, it offered a unique insight into how governance mechanisms operate at street-level in different service types. These types were developed based on 38 semi-structured interviews in eight case study services. The findings showed that advisers applied similar steering mechanisms to achieve compliance from service users as were applied to steer their own behaviour. When mediating tensions, advisers' in coercively orientated service types appeared likely to apply street-level tactics to support user needs. In other service types advisers seemed to not only mediate between managerial demands and user needs, but were also engaged in a mediation process to maintain their identity as guidance professionals. In the context of the wider governance literature, the study confirmed findings of recent studies by Considine and Lewis (2010) and van Berkel (2010) which suggested that governance types in employment services have moved towards more hybridised forms.

This chapter provides a more detailed summary of the study outlining the research questions and conceptual basis, methodology and findings. Since the completion of data collection in 2007, the policy fields of welfare-to-work and education and skills have developed substantially, including a change in government.

The resulting policy changes and potential policy developments under the new government are considered. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

## **Summary**

The study examined advisers' work from two angles to understand how they mediated competing demands. Firstly, it investigated how advisers interacted with service users and how they were able to use discretion. This was then connected to building trust and influencing people's behaviour. Secondly, it examined how performance measurement and incentives influenced advisers' work and how they acted to steer adviser behaviour. These two pressures constantly interacted and advisers responded to these competing demands differently in the case study services.

Advisers in the mandatory-standardised case studies had relatively small margins of discretion when interacting with service users, although there were slight variances within this type. Their ability to use discretion was often limited by the service structure and tools that ensured standardisation. Even though advisers tried to work around limiting programme requirements, they did not seem to take wider implications for the user into consideration, such as the loss of 'passported' benefit payments (e.g. housing benefit, council tax benefit). This implied a stronger focus on compliance with managerial demands than on user needs. In voluntary-standardised services, advisers used their discretion proactively, despite increasing attempts to standardise and channel their interactions. In some instances, advisers even actively resisted the increasing pressure of performance measurement based on their perception as a professional. In contrast, advisers in voluntary-user defined services faced very few restrictions in their ability to use discretion. They could focus on user

needs and make 'judgement calls' regarding their actions, with managerial pressures having little influence on their decision making.

Service structures and the extent to which discretion was used allowed different kinds of trust to be established. This seemed strongly linked to programme standardisation. Those services that had limited scope to apply discretion operated in an environment that appeared more conducive to establishing calculus-based trust, which used the threat of sanctions to enforce compliance, rather than higher forms of trust. The voluntary-standardised case study service established knowledge-based trust relationships. This enabled advisers to respond flexibly to service user needs because their judgement as professionals and the recognition of their qualification had strong credibility with service users. Through continuous interaction to build a relationship with the service user, responding flexibly to their needs as well as personal experience (in some cases), advisers established knowledge-based trust and sometimes even identification-based trust in the voluntary-user defined services. These different kinds of trust relationships formed the basis for influencing the service users' behaviour.

The methods to change service users' behaviour varied from highly coercive treatment to empowering strategies that encouraged individuals to be independent. The nature of the service as well as the extent of discretion and trust available to the adviser had a strong influence on the available method. In the mandatory-standardised services users were coerced into compliance with programme requirements. Even though coercive persuasion may seem a rather strong approach in the context of employment advice services, the elements of producing guilt through the emphasis of paid work as a means to full citizenship as well as the carrot and stick approach

warranted a comparison to this method. The education towards self-responsibility and independence that was the main method of voluntary-standardised services had high congruence with New Labour's conception of the self-responsible worker citizen. These services also exhibited a close connection with New Labour's self-conception of the enabling state that is providing the support for transitions into the labour market. This suggested that the underlying aim of the service followed a deliberate policy design given that the creation of this particular case study service was based on a conscious political decision by a Labour government. Empowerment was one of New Labour's focal elements, again within the construct of the enabling state. In voluntary-user defined services, this meant supporting the individual so they could take charge of changing their lives. Empowerment in the adviser-user relationship was enacted in a sharing of power when determining the course of action to improve the service users' personal situation, in most cases through a transition into work or sometimes education. However, in these case study services, the outcome was not solely based on policy considerations, but a result of the combination of organisational context and advisers' personal experiences and attitudes towards supporting the user.

A set of focal measures helped to assess the methods used to evaluate adviser behaviour. In mandatory-standardised services, the assessment tools focused on cost and profit as well as time measures. These performance measures were highly output focused and could be determined via clearly measurable targets. Measures focused on the quantity and quality of work, changes in behaviour or attainment of standards, as well as peer evaluation, dominated performance measurement in voluntary-standardised services. While there was some focus on measurable outputs through the inclusion of quantity measures, softer evaluation methods including peer assessment or self-reflection were a common feature in this case study service. The studied

services in the voluntary-user defined services exhibited a similar set of performance measures, but lacked the quantity-orientated measures.

These performance measures fed into the reward systems operational within the service types. These reward systems carried with them assumptions about how individuals could be motivated. A coercive reward system based on monetary rewards operated mainly in mandatory-standardised services and was closely linked to target fulfilment. It also contained the potential threat of job loss in case of underperformance and in some cases peer pressure to fulfil a target. These systems assumed that individuals were mainly extrinsically motivated through money. In voluntary-standardised services, extrinsically focused monetary rewards replaced more and more the intrinsically focused satisfaction gained by fulfilment of the adviser's professional role. Even though performance measures that determined rewards included support-based features, such as reflective practice, the emphasis on target fulfilment appeared to grow steadily. In contrast, voluntary-user defined services operated support-based systems that offered no financial reward. Reward systems in these services relied on advisers' motivation to help the service user or that they gained motivation through providing a quality service.

The combination of performance evaluation methods and reward systems allowed the trust placed in advisers to comply with service demands and their ability to deliver the desired outcome to be analysed. Output focused measures and clearly defined targets, the fulfilment of which determined a financial reward, indicated a calculus-based trust relationship with advisers. The offer of financial reward for target fulfilment was a coercive method to enforce compliance with service procedures. Calculus-based trust and knowledge-based trust were prevalent in voluntary-

standardised services. This was determined through the use of output measures in combination with financial rewards to coerce advisers into compliance. However, the use of measures focusing on service quality and the application of professional knowledge counteracted the coercive methods to a certain extent. Lastly, knowledge-based trust and to a certain extent identification-based trust were extended to advisers in voluntary-user defined services. This was based on the supportive measures applied to ensure compliance with service outcomes.

Overall, advisers in the different service types experienced similar pressures to enforce compliance with service requirements that they applied to the service user. Advisers in mandatory-standardised case studies had little room to mediate the tensions between managerial demands and service user needs due to the coercive nature of the service and the highly standardised steering methods. In contrast, advisers in voluntary-user defined services experienced decision-making freedom and could thus adjust their focus to the most important areas that would benefit the service user. The lack of coercive methods allowed them to work with service users towards service's aims thus potentially achieving much more sustainable transitions into work or training due to the voluntary compliance of the user. Advisers in voluntary-standardised services were in a peculiar situation. Some of them applied their discretion based on their professional knowledge and actively resisted the increasing standardisation and the associated coercive strategies. Others happily complied with the managerial demands and coercive measures, even though they questioned this approach from a professional perspective.

Concerning the typology, the findings showed consistency of the strategic approaches within each type. The consistency of the outcomes added to the reliability

of the analysis and the suitability of the typology for the analysis of the case study services.

## **Recent policy developments**

The policy areas within which employment advice services operated were fast changing environments. Since the fieldwork was conducted in 2005/2006, there have been substantial developments in both frameworks. Following, these developments are briefly discussed and their potential implications are considered, particularly with a view to newer developments under the coalition government.

### ***Developments in welfare-to-work policies***

In 2007, David Freud, investment banker by trade, reported to the government on his vision for the future of welfare-to-work (Freud, 2007). His findings and recommendations included:

- Contracting support for the hardest to help on an outcome-based model via prime contractors. Jobcentre Plus would retain 'ownership' of the benefit recipients and provide a baseline service, while "there would be freedom between the provider and the individual to do what works for them" (Freud, 2007: 6). Rewards for contractors were supposed to be commensurate with the 'value to society' of the person who entered the workplace in terms of benefit expenditure saved. Prime contractors would be responsible for 'marshalling' a suitable set of subcontractors.
- Highlighting fiscal gains, boosting Gross National Product and decreasing benefit spending in working towards an 80 percent employment rate. This was supposed to be achieved by up-front investment in longer term

prime provider contracts, which were supplemented by outcome-based payment mechanisms that would focus incentives on those hardest to help.

- Increasing conditionality for lone parents with progressively younger children and introducing conditionality for other groups, for instance people with a disability.
- Introducing a single working age benefit to eliminate unemployment and poverty traps due to benefit system complexity.

The report continued the strong emphasis supply-side economics and the 'worker citizen' based on increasing conditionality in exchange for benefit rights, for which it was highly criticised (Grover, 2007). Following the recommendations of the Freud report, conditionality for lone parents, for instance, was increased with the age of the youngest child triggering the requirement to actively search for work gradually moving down to 7 years by October 2010. The new coalition government has announced that this will be lowered even further to the age of 5 by 2012 (DWP, 2010b).

Furthermore, there was an expansion of quasi-market contracting. The 2008 'Commissioning Strategy' outlined changes in the welfare delivery market over the coming years, which focused on improving performance. The expectation was that up to 80 percent of DWP business would be conducted by 'a stable core' of providers (DWP, 2008a). Following the report recommendations, a 'prime provider' model was implemented which invited large, 'successful' private companies (including multi-national corporations) to bid for area-based service delivery contracts (Piggott and



Grover, 2009) where they were encouraged to further sub-contract to local public, private and voluntary, and community sector organisations (DWP, 2007c). However, the way this increased marketisation has progressed has been categorised by some commentators as increased privatisation because the market for employment services has quickly been covered by a small number of prime contractors with smaller roles for other providers (Grover, 2009).

Subsequently, the Flexible New Deal (FND) was introduced in April 2009, which replaced the New Deal for Young Persons, New Deal 25+ and Employment Zones. It was based on a stronger framework of rights and responsibilities to activate people by offering personalised and responsive support (DWP, 2008b). This approach combined the baseline support with intensive support by private providers as recommended by Freud. However, in contrast to Freud's recommendation, support was not front-loaded at the start of the claim, but was rather intensified over the duration of the claim through progressively increasing conditionality. After 12 months of unemployment, benefit recipients were then handed over to a private provider, a prime contractor, who was operating a 'black box' approach to supporting the individual back into work. Early evaluations (Knight et al., 2010) of the FND showed that the programme suffered substantially from the adverse effects of the recession with greater amounts of people signing on requiring a wider range of support needs. As a response, additional support services were introduced (Support for Newly Unemployed and the 6 Month Offer) at short notice. The first customers were moved on to private providers in October 2010. First evaluation findings (Vegeris et al., 2010) showed that the implementation was accompanied by some problems specifically surrounding the introduction of software tools and communications with the providers. The assessment of service user experiences was in progress.

Shortly after coming to power in May 2010, the new coalition government published its 'Work Programme' (DWP, 2010a). The new proposals for benefit eligibility stipulated maintaining, if not increasing, the level of conditionality applied to jobseekers. This represented to a large extent the continuation of the activation strategy the New Labour government had set out, highlighting the importance of labour market participation within a rights and responsibilities framework. However, there were strong deviations from the old policy direction in terms of programme delivery. The current range of programmes was to be replaced by the single integrated 'Work Programme' based on a single working age benefit. The delivery of the new benefit was to be based on a decentralisation of administration powers to the local level (ibid). For the delivery of the 'Work Programme', a marketised system was envisioned which would focus more strongly on outcomes of 'getting people back into work' (Finn, 2010). The biggest change was concerning people facing multiple barriers, who would be referred directly to private contractors, effectively shifting responsibility for this group of people completely away from the state. This could be seen as either a refocusing of Jobcentre Plus resources on those they are best placed to help and capitalisation on the capacities of, for instance, private or voluntary sector organisations. Conversely, it could also be seen as an abandonment of those hardest to help by the state in a continuation of Thatcherite views that were reinforced under New Labour (Clarke, 2005).

The concept of abandonment gains further strength when the contextual parameters within which these policies were conceived are taken into consideration. The new coalition government was under pressure to achieve cost savings and departments were asked to reduce expenditure by 25 percent on average with particular pressure being placed on the Department for Work and Pensions to reduce

the 'welfare bill' (Curtis, 2010). Throughout their proposals for the 'Work Programme', policy makers highlighted the need for cost savings and efficiencies, for instance through the increased use of ICT systems (DWP, 2010a). The likely impact of this new age of austerity could be a cut in the amount of benefit payments as well as further increases in the pressure to find work and conditionality in an effort to reduce expenditure on benefit payments. This development has already taken place with changes to the annual up rating formula for Jobseekers' Allowance (McKay, 2010). On the delivery side, it would be imaginable that provisions that were covered by Jobcentre Plus could be completely devolved to local authorities as has been the case in Denmark (Bredgaard and Larsen 2009). This would allow the government to devolve financial risk and unpopular policy choices to the local level, while maintaining central control over the general direction of policy. For the adviser's role, it could possibly mean a further increase in their responsibilities through a wider margin of discretion, if responsibility is indeed localised and local solutions found.

### ***Developments in the learning and skills framework***

Shortly after fieldwork was finalised, Careers Scotland was uncoupled from Scottish Enterprise and for a short time became an independent, non-governmental body. However, this independence was short-lived, because in 2008, there was a further amalgamation of four major providers of advice, guidance and skills development services: Careers Scotland, University for Industry Scotland, and the skills intervention branches of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. These organisations formed a new non-departmental public body called 'Skills Development Scotland', which was responsible for *"catalysing real and positive change in Scotland's skills performance by linking skills supply and demand more effectively and helping people and organisations learn, develop and utilise these skills to greater*

*effect*” to stay competitive in the global economy (SDS, 2010: 1). Thus the strong link to Scottish economic development persisted and was further emphasised. A direct link into employment policy under the welfare-to-work agenda was, however, still omitted.

In England, the Learning and Skills Council was dissolved in 2008 and replaced by two separate agencies: the Young People's Learning Agency and the Skills Funding Agency. Thus, the age division in service delivery in England would persist. Services for adults (19 years and older) were going to be delivered within the new ‘Next Step – Adult Careers and Advancement Service’ which was launched in August 2010. Its main aim was *“not just to help people into jobs, but to help break the cycle of low skills, short-term jobs and low wages”* (IAG Review, 2010: 1). The service was going to be demand-led focused on both individuals and employers with the aim of closely linking employment and skills. Provision was contracted to a variety of providers who delivered the service online, face-to-face and over the phone on area-based contracts (SFA, 2010).

## **Future Research**

Based on the findings of this study and building on international evidence (Considine and Lewis, 2010, Van Berkel, 2010) that new hybrid-forms of governance at street-level could have developed due to the changing policy environment, it would be useful to study to what extent these hybrid forms are indeed manifested within the UK context and how they influenced policy implementation. This would provide further insight into the changing landscape of service governance in quasi-market environments, particularly under the new coalition government.

The new government proposals (DWP, 2010a) for benefit eligibility stipulated maintaining, if not increasing, the level of conditionality applied to jobseekers in combination with a decentralisation of programme design and administration powers to the local level. It would be extremely interesting to examine how advisers mediated these changes. There was also an outright stipulation towards behavioural changes that this new policy pursued. It could be assumed that local adaptations allow advisers greater discretion and thus would produce more sustainable outcomes, as the findings from this study suggest.

Given this potential decentralisation of service design powers under the new 'Work Programme', it would be pertinent to investigate to what extent the devolution of this capability would be conducive to the creation of mandatory-user defined services, which were non-existent in the UK context. A comparative case study with a service in one of the Nordic countries that operate such services could compare and contrast the contextual, political and ideological pre-requisites.

Within this new policy environment, the provider landscape was changing substantially. The prime provider model, where a small group of large organisations dominated the contracts and further sub-contract delivery to local organisations, including for instance local councils, voluntary and community sector organisations, or self-employed consultants, was particularly bound to influence the challenges that front-line advisers faced substantially. It would therefore be interesting to examine how advisers in the sub-contracted organisations mediated tensions between their organisational goals, contractor goals and service user needs, particularly with respect to the findings from Carmel and Harlock (2008) on the impact on values in the voluntary sector in a climate of increased contracting. Within this context, it would

also be interesting to study the adviser-user relationship in more detail to determine how the further increasing conditionality stipulated in the Work Programme impacts on the advisers' ability to influence user behaviour.

Not only could it be stipulated that the prime contractor model changed front-line delivery, it also impacted on the dynamics between the main contractor and local sub-contractors. An investigation with regards to changing conceptions of partnership working would be of particular use to determine whether there has been substantial change from the predominantly rhetorical partnership that Rummery (2002) suggested to more joint working and cooperation.

This study examined how advisers mediated tensions between managerial demands and service user needs in employment advice services in the UK. Advisers were the executive agents of government policies. Even though this study was conducted in a different political context, the basic premises of conditionality, personalisation and quasi-market provision continued to be an issue in this quickly changing policy field which was supported by a strong cross-party consensus. Thus examining how advisers were governed and how they governed service users remains a pressing research topic for some time to come.

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# Appendix I

## Question Schedules

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## **Tranche 1**

### **Question Schedule: Service Manager**

#### ***Overall picture about the organisation***

Could you just briefly outline, when your organisation was founded and by whom?

What is the legal status of your organisation?

Who are the main stakeholders?

What's the organisational structure (how many layers)?

Could you describe the main activity of your organisation?

On what legal basis do you provide your services (own offer, contract)?

Who develops the frameworks within which you are working? Who controls what you are doing?

Do you have a specific strategy to differentiate yourself from your competitors in terms of users, staff profiles? Expand.

Do you follow a specific strategy on how to attract a specific group of users?

If so, what is that strategy?

What is the ratio between direct provision and contracting?

Could you expand on future development plans of your organisation?

Could you tell a bit about your relation with competitors? Is there any co-operation?

What is the position of the stakeholders in your organisation? How are they involved in the development and daily business of your organisation?

How do the stakeholders see the future development of the guidance market? How do they think it should evolve? How do you position your organisation in this market?

#### ***Specific programme***

*Is the guidance service subcontracted from another agency (PES etc.)?*

*What are the conditions and how is your work controlled?*

*Is part of the guidance service subcontracted to another agency?*

*If yes, what are the conditions; what are the modes of control?*

How is the service funded? Who provides funding and where do you see key-problems?

Who is the service aimed at? (target groups)

How do you approach the target groups and recruit them to your service?

How do you differentiate the different needs of your client group? Do you employ a triage system?

What does a typical cycle the user goes through look like?

Where are they referred from (and with what documents), what does the first interview consist in, in the provider organisation, how are they referred to this programme, again with what document etc.

How many users do you have per year/month? Are there seasonal differences?

### ***Information in relation to staff***

Which professional groups do your staff fall into?

What qualification levels do they typically hold?

Could you describe their role in the guidance service?

What are the contractual agreements with staff (employment status, payment...)?

Do you assess your staff on a regular basis? How is that done? How often? What are the outcomes of such an assessment?

What kind of dynamics do you think this creates among staff?

How many users does a staff member on average advise?

What is the degree of specialization of counsellors (information versus guidance; a mix of services; some specific targets versus all publics)?

### ***Quality assurance and controlling***

Are there any obligations you need to fulfil in relation to your funders? If so, what are they and how are they enforced?

Do you work towards any quality standards? How are they controlled for and evaluated?

### ***Outcomes***

What are the intended outcomes of the guidance service?

What is considered a positive outcome according to your funder's criteria?

What would you or your staff consider a "positive outcome"?

How do you evaluate positive outcomes in terms of quality criteria?

Within that framework do you aim for a particular client group?

What has the biggest impact on the quality of the outcomes e.g. costs, time per client...?

***Background information from the point of view of the provider***

Major change in the regional/local provision of guidance services (all services or only service under review) between 2000 and 2005

Assessment of change (improvement/deterioration)

Main elements of necessary improvement for the future with regard to

- regional/local context
- legal/institution framework
- profession aspects
- users perspective

**Tranche 1**

**Question Schedule: Staff Members**

*Could you just briefly state your name, job title and the organisation you are working for?*

*What is your academic and professional background?*

How would you define “careers guidance”?

Could you describe a “normal” work day? (Check on distribution of admin/ counselling/ controlling)

What are the main elements of the service you are providing (profiling, advising...)?

Do you follow strict guidelines on how to provide guidance? (i.e. a work plan, check list)

Who decides on guidance services and activation measures in individual cases (standardized rules or discretionary decisions?)

Are you free to select certain measures over others?

What is the relationship between guidance and activation measures?

How is lifelong learning reflected in the service you are providing?

Who assesses the need for guidance services? Or do most of the clients come to you on their own terms?

So, there are (no) sanctions or incentives for non-participation and participation?

Are you able to select clients with a specific profile or are they assigned to you?  
How would you describe your role and purpose as a careers adviser?  
Do you mostly provide individual guidance or do you also deliver groups sessions?  
How long does a guidance session take on average?  
How often does a customer return?  
How do you monitor a client's progress? Do you monitor clients at all? (contract/  
integration plan)  
What happens, if a client is not making an effort to work towards the goals of the  
guidance process?  
How crucial is guidance in the process of finding a job?  
From your perspective: how would you define a positive outcome of the service you  
are providing?  
How do you evaluate outcomes? Are there certain indicators or measurements that  
you apply?  
Which quality criteria are applied within your organisation?  
How does that affect your work?  
If there was an opportunity, how would you improve or change the service provided?

## **Tranche 2**

### **Question Schedule: Managers**

#### ***Quality of service***

What are key components of a good quality service?  
What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the service? How would you  
change it?

#### ***Users***

What do you count as a good quality outcome for users?  
Which factors influence the outcomes that your users experience?  
What do you think your customers need most when joining your programme/service?  
Does this change over time?  
What do you think users expect from the service?

To what extent do you think your service meets those needs?

Is there a way for you to determine a change in user's behaviour/ situation? If yes, how do you recognise it?

### ***User input***

How do you collect feedback from your users about the quality of the service/programme and its outcomes for them? What do you do with this information?

Please provide a specific example of something that has been changed as a result of input from service users.

Are the users involved in the design of your service? Should they be? How?

### ***Ensuring Quality: accreditation, professional standards, monitoring***

Which quality assurance frameworks does your organisation operate within? Are these internal (organisation/ programme specific) or external (accreditation) frameworks?

Do internal and external quality standards complement each other or are there tensions between them?

How clearly are internal/ external quality standards defined and communicated (both from and within your own organisation and from external contractors, if applicable)?

Do you apply indicators strictly or is there some room for your own interpretation?

Do you have any input into the design of quality standards or the indicator measures?

### ***Evaluation***

How is the success/ performance of your programme currently measured?

Who determines how success/ performance is measured?

What are the consequences of favourable/ unfavourable evaluation of the programme?

If the method of evaluation was to change, which parts of the system would you retain and which would you change (and why)?

Are quantitative indicators sufficient or should they be supplemented/ replaced by qualitative indicators? Do you have any suggestions which?



## **Tranche 2**

### **Question Schedule: Advisers**

#### ***Quality of service***

What are key components of a good quality service?

What do you personally do to ensure that you provide a good service?

What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the service? How would you change it?

Does the assessment of your own work have an impact on the service you are delivering? If so, how?

#### ***Users***

What do you count as a good quality outcome for users?

Which factors influence the outcomes that your users experience?

What do you think your users need most when joining your programme? Does this change over time?

What do you think users expect from the service?

To what extent do you think your service meets those needs?

Is there a way for you to determine a change in user's behaviour/ situation? If yes, how do you recognise it?

#### ***User input***

How do you collect feedback from your users about the quality of the service/programme and its outcomes for them? What do you do with this information?

Please provide a specific example of something that has been changed as a result of input from service users.

Are the users involved in the design of your service? Should they be? How?

#### ***Ensuring Quality: accreditation, professional standards, monitoring***

Which quality assurance frameworks does your organisation operate within? Are these internal (organisation/ programme specific) or external (accreditation) frameworks?

Do internal and external quality standards complement each other or are there tensions between them?

How clearly are internal/ external quality standards defined and communicated (both from and within your own organisation and from external contractors, if applicable)?

Do you apply indicators strictly or is there some room for your own interpretation?

Do you have any input into the design of quality standards or the indicator measures?

How does compliance to those quality assurance frameworks impact on your work? (i.e. more paper work, less time with clients)

### ***Evaluation***

How is the success/ performance of your programme currently measured?

Who determines how success/ performance is measured?

What are the consequences of favourable/ unfavourable evaluation of your programme?

If the method of evaluation was to change, which parts of the system would you retain and which would you change (and why)?

Are quantitative indicators sufficient or should they be supplemented/ replaced by qualitative indicators? Do you have any suggestions which?