

**London School of Economics and Political Science**

**THE RESPONSIVENESS OF  
EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVISION  
TO THE NEEDS OF REFUGEES**

**Isabel Shutes**

**Thesis submitted to the Department of Social Policy of the London  
School of Economics and Political Science for the degree of Doctor of  
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## ABSTRACT

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Greater ‘responsiveness’ to the needs of service users has been called for as a central policy aim. In the context of employment service provision, this includes responding to the needs of refugees, amongst whom there are high levels of unemployment (Department of Work and Pensions, 2005a, 2006). However, despite the policy rhetoric, there has been limited analysis of the concept and the factors that influence provider responsiveness to users’ needs. While responsiveness has been conceived in terms of new lines of outwards accountability of providers to users, by directly responding to their needs and preferences (see Mulgan, 2000), there may be tensions between the performance systems in which providers operate and responsiveness in this respect.

The thesis considers (1) refugees’ experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of the public employment service (Jobcentre Plus) and third sector providers of specialist services to their needs; and (2) these providers’ experiences and perceptions of the factors influencing responsiveness to refugees’ needs. The findings emphasise variation in the *appropriateness* of provision to refugees’ English language needs, skills and interests. This is related to tensions between wider policy imperatives and organisational priorities in publicly-funded employment services; a performance system and incentive structure oriented towards short-term job outcomes; and directly responding to the needs of refugee clients.

The thesis concludes by arguing that where upwards accountability to public funders and central government departments predominates in performance systems, the responsiveness of providers directly to refugees’ needs is limited by these systems. In order to facilitate greater responsiveness to the employment-related needs of refugees, greater alignment between performance measures and refugees’ needs is emphasised, as is the role of information to refugee users on service provision. In addition, means of facilitating the involvement of refugees in decision-making processes concerning the allocation of resources to address their needs are considered.

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## GLOSSARY

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### 1. Qualifications

**National Qualifications Framework** The National Qualifications Framework sets out the levels at which different types of qualifications are recognised in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This includes National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). These levels run from ‘Entry Level’ (which precedes Level 1) to ‘Level 8’ (being the highest level of qualifications). Examples of the type of qualifications that relate to these different levels include:

**Level 6**

Bachelor degrees and graduate diplomas

**Level 5**

Diplomas of further and higher education

**Level 4**

Certificates of higher education

**Level 3**

A levels, NVQ Level 3

**Level 2**

GCSEs grades A\*-C, NVQ Level 2

**Level 1**

GCSEs grades D-G, NVQ Level 1

(Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2006).

**Entry Level qualifications**

‘Entry Level’ is the first level of the National Qualifications Framework (see above). Entry Level qualifications are offered at Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3 (being the highest) in a range of subjects, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (see below).

**ESOL qualifications**

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is one of the



strands of the government's 'Skills for Life' strategy that was launched in 2001, which aims to improve adult literacy and numeracy (Department for Education and Skills, 2001). The range of ESOL courses and qualifications (that were previously delivered) are being replaced by the new 'ESOL Skills for Life' qualifications, which were introduced in January 2005. These new qualifications are aligned to the national standards set out in the adult ESOL core curriculum (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2005).

### **Entry 1**

Entry 1 ESOL corresponds to a basic level of English proficiency, according to the adult ESOL core curriculum. With regard to speaking English, this refers to communicating "basic information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics" to:

- speak clearly to be heard and understood in simple exchanges
- make requests using appropriate terms
- ask questions to obtain specific information
- make statements of fact clearly

(Department for Education and Skills, 2007a)

### **Entry 2 ESOL**

Entry 2 ESOL is the next level above Entry 1 in English proficiency, according to the adult ESOL core curriculum. With regard to speaking English, this refers to communicating "basic information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics" to:

- speak clearly to be heard and understood in straightforward exchanges
- make requests and ask questions to obtain information in everyday contexts
- express clearly statements of fact and short accounts and descriptions
- ask questions to clarify understanding

(Department for Education and Skills, 2007b)

### **Entry 3 ESOL**

Entry 3 ESOL is the next level above Entry 2 in English proficiency, according to the adult ESOL core curriculum. It precedes a Level 1 qualification in English (see National Qualifications Framework above). With regard to speaking English, Entry 3 refers to communicating “basic information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics, using appropriate formality, both face-to-face and on the telephone” to:

- speak clearly to be heard and understood using appropriate clarity, speed and phrasing
- use formal language and register when appropriate
- make requests and ask questions to obtain information in familiar and unfamiliar contexts
- express clearly statements of fact and give short explanations, accounts and descriptions

(Department for Education and Skills, 2007c)

## **2. Jobcentre Plus provision**

<b>Career Development Loans</b>	This loan is intended to provide support with the costs of education and training, covering up to 80% of course fees as well as other costs. It has to be repaid once the individual taking the loan is in employment (Jobcentre Plus, 2006d).
<b>Action Teams for Jobs</b>	Action Teams for Jobs operate in areas with high levels of unemployment. The aim of the programme is to tackle the gaps in employment between the most deprived areas and other areas. It is aimed at client groups who may be reluctant to access mainstream Jobcentre Plus services (which may include refugees and those who have English language needs). Participation of Jobcentre Plus clients in the programme is voluntary. Some Action Teams are administered by Jobcentre Plus, while others are contracted out to private sector providers (Casebourne et al., 2006).

<b>Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA)</b>	ERA is a Jobcentre Plus ‘demonstration project’ aimed at testing a method for improving the labour market prospects of unemployed and low-paid workers (as opposed to a pilot project which tests a particular scheme prior to being launched) (Hall et al., 2005). It is aimed at unemployed Jobcentre Plus clients entering the New Deal 25 Plus and the New Deal for Lone Parents programmes, and lone parents in work receiving Working Tax Credits. The programme includes financial incentives (including financial assistance with training) for those entering work, combined with ongoing adviser support (over a period of up to three years) (Hall et al., 2005).
<b>Employment Zones</b>	The Employment Zones initiative is aimed at tackling high levels of long-term unemployment concentrated in particular geographic areas. Client groups who would be eligible to participate in the New Deal can instead participate in the Employment Zone programme (if this is being delivered in their area). In addition, other disadvantaged client groups, including refugees, can join the programme at any stage. In each Employment Zone area the programme is delivered by a single private sector provider, or by multiple private sector providers. These providers are responsible for assigning participants an adviser, and for administering any provision to which clients are referred (Hirst et al., 2006).
<b>New Deal programmes</b>	The New Deal programmes form a key part of Jobcentre Plus provision. There are different New Deal programmes targeted at supporting different client groups into work (including those listed below) (Jobcentre Plus, 2006d). Jobcentre Plus clients who participate in a programme are assigned a Jobcentre Plus adviser who is responsible for assisting the client throughout the programme, including the initial development of an individual action plan.
<b>New Deal 25 Plus</b>	The New Deal 25 Plus programme is targeted at long-term

unemployed people who are aged 25 and over. Participation in the programme is mandatory for those who have been claiming Jobseekers Allowance for 18 out of 24 months. Following the initial four-month Gateway period of the programme, participants can be referred to a range of types of provision under the six-month Intensive Activity period. This includes work placements, training for a particular job, job search training (e.g. interview practice) and job search assistance (help with applying for jobs).

**New Deal for Young People (NDYP)**

The NDYP is a mandatory programme for 18-24 year olds who have been claiming Jobseekers Allowance for six months or more. The programme includes a range of types of provision including those listed above (see New Deal 25 Plus).

**New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP)**

The NDLP is aimed at supporting lone parents into work. Unlike the NDYP and the New Deal 25 Plus, it is a voluntary programme and therefore lone parents claiming benefits are not required to participate in the programme at any stage. Lone Parents enrolled on the programme (who may be claiming Income Support as opposed to Jobseekers Allowance) are not required to look for work (i.e. this is not required by Income Support eligibility criteria), although they are required to participate in Work-Focused Interviews with Jobcentre Plus advisers.

**Work Based Learning for Adults (WBLA)**

WBLA is a voluntary full-time training programme aimed at people aged 25 and over who have been claiming Jobseekers Allowance or other benefits for six months or more. Participation in the programme can include referral to ESOL provision (under the Basic Employability Training option, which is aimed at those assessed as not meeting Entry Level proficiency). ESOL provision is for a period of up to 26 weeks. The programme can also include training for a specific job, working towards an NVQ qualification, or work experience

(Anderson et al., 2004). Refugees over the age of 25 can be referred to the programme immediately if they have English language needs (for ESOL provision) (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a).

**Work Trial Programme** This programme is available to Jobcentre Plus clients who are aged 25 and over and have been unemployed for six months or more. The programme is aimed at enabling clients to participate in a work placement for 15 days without losing entitlement to any benefits, including Jobseekers Allowance (Jobcentre Plus, 2006d).

### **3. Sources of funding of specialist providers**

**European Social Fund (ESF)** The ESF is one of the European Union Structural Funds programmes aimed at economic development and social cohesion across the European Union member states. The main purpose of ESF is to support the implementation of the UK National Action Plan on Employment (Department for Work and Pensions, 2004b). The overall objectives of ESF are to: help unemployed and economically inactive people into work; to provide opportunities for disadvantaged groups in the labour market; to promote lifelong learning; to develop the skills of employed people; and to support the participation of women in the labour market. Most ESF funding in England is distributed by Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council (and other organisations such as the Regional Development Agencies). These organisations co-finance their ESF programmes (i.e. providing match-funding to make up to 100% funding) (European Social Fund).

**European Refugee Fund (ERF)** The ERF is a European Union programme administered in the UK by the Home Office. The programme funds a range of initiatives aimed at supporting asylum seekers and refugees, including measures aimed at supporting refugees into work, for

a period of between 12 months and three years (Home Office, 2007b).

**EQUAL**

EQUAL is a European Social Fund programme, aimed at testing “innovative approaches” to addressing discrimination and inequalities in the labour market. It includes funding for initiatives aimed at ethnic minority groups and asylum seekers for a period of between two and three years (Ecotec, 2007).

**Neighbourhood  
Renewal Fund (NRF)**

The NRF is linked to the National Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and administered by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit of the Department for Communities and Local Government. It provides funding for a range of initiatives with the overall aim of tackling deprivation in the most deprived neighbourhoods. The NRF is allocated to local authorities, which are responsible for distributing funding to local initiatives linked to the aims agreed by Local Strategic Partnerships for addressing local area deprivation and disadvantage, including increasing local levels of employment (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001).

**New Deal for  
Communities (NDC)**

The NDC programme is linked to the National Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and is aimed at tackling deprivation in the most deprived neighbourhoods. It was launched in 1998 with a ten-year funding cycle. It provides funding through 39 targeted NDC local partnerships. These partnerships were given the flexibility of funding packages of local initiatives that were “best suited to meet the needs of their local areas”, e.g. across unemployment, housing, education, health, with the explicit aim of these initiatives being oriented towards locally-defined strategies (Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research Sheffield Hallam University, 2005).

**Single Regeneration  
Budget (SRB)**

The SRB was set up in 1994, bringing together programmes across a number of government departments with a view to streamlining funding for regeneration initiatives. It is targeted

at deprived areas and aimed at involving a range of local organisations across the public, private and third sectors in the management of local SRB schemes. SRB programmes are administered by the Regional Development Agencies (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006).

## INTRODUCTION

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Migration to the UK over the past decade has brought to the fore questions concerning welfare needs amongst new migrant populations and the responsiveness of welfare provision to those needs. Amongst refugees, high levels of unemployment have been highlighted by research. In addition, other patterns of labour market inequalities have been noted: despite the diversity of refugees' qualifications and employment experience before coming to the UK, their access to employment appears to be predominantly within low-skilled and low-paid types of work (Bloch, 2002b; British Refugee Council, 2001; Lindley, 2002; London Research Centre, 1999). While individual motivations and aspirations in relation to the labour market are complex, a strong motivation amongst refugees both to enter work and to enter work appropriate to their skills and experience has been underlined (Bloch, 2004; Charlaiff et al., 2004; Shiferaw & Hagos, 2002).

There are a range of factors that contribute to the labour market disadvantage experienced by refugees, including a lack of English language proficiency and non-recognition of qualifications and work experience acquired outside the UK (Bloch, 2002b; Bloch, 2004). This corresponds with the findings of wider research regarding the importance of English language proficiency and qualifications to individual employment outcomes, both in terms of access to employment, as well as labour market outcomes over time (McIntosh, 2003; McIntosh & Vignoles, 2000; Shields & Wheatley-Price, 2001). A need for adequate English language provision and other education and training, as well as information, advice and guidance on employment, have therefore been emphasised in terms of the type of service needs of refugees related to employment. There is, however, a diversity of needs amongst refugees, from those who have had no formal education and have greater English language learning needs, to those who have higher-skilled backgrounds and wish to re-qualify in their professions (Bloch, 2002b). While existing research has drawn attention both to the labour market disadvantage faced by refugees and to the type of needs of refugees in terms of employment-related services, there has been limited research which has explored the experiences and perceptions of refugees regarding the responsiveness of employment service provision to their needs, and the experiences and perceptions of providers in responding to those needs.



In the context of relatively high levels of employment in the UK overall, government policy has focused on tackling ongoing unemployment amongst particular groups (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006). This includes ethnic minority groups and refugees (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a). Current proposals regarding the future development of ‘welfare-to-work’ policy and employment service provision have called for approaches that are more responsive to the individual needs of those unemployed (Department for Work and Pensions, 2004a, 2006). This has encompassed recognition of the role of third sector providers<sup>1</sup> in delivering specialist services targeted at the needs of more disadvantaged groups (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006). In 2005, the government launched a first national strategy for refugee employment, which sets out to ensure that service provision addresses the needs of refugees, both through the public employment service (Jobcentre Plus) and through the involvement of specialist providers, comprising a range of third sector organisations whose services are oriented to refugees (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a; Jobcentre Plus, 2005). However, despite the rhetoric of greater responsiveness, there has been limited analysis of the concept of responsiveness to users’ needs, and specifically in the context of employment service provision.

Transformations in welfare provision, including more market-oriented and mixed economy systems, are conceived in terms of facilitating greater responsiveness to the needs and preferences of service users. This is on the basis that competition between providers for public funding creates financial incentives for responsiveness to users’ needs (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993b; Walsh, 1995). In addition, the involvement of the third sector in public service delivery has been conceived as allowing for services that are more tailored to the needs of disadvantaged groups (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006). At the same time, processes of decentralisation in the management, contracting and delivery of welfare provision have been allied with performance management systems, which are conceived as facilitating greater accountability of providers in the delivery of public services (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004a; Propper & Wilson, 2003; Walsh, 1995). The findings of research on the effects of performance systems point to a number of tensions with the principles underlying responsiveness to users’ needs, raising questions regarding the extent to which these systems facilitate greater responsiveness to the needs and interests of users. These tensions include the extent to which the engagement of third sector organisations in publicly-funded service delivery in meeting the targets and criteria attached to public funding results in

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<sup>1</sup> Voluntary and community organisations, not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises (see Chapter One, section 1.3.2).

more funder-oriented than client-centred approaches (Alcock, 2004; Lewis, 1996; Taylor, 2002).

The implementation of the New Labour government's 'welfare-to-work' agenda has taken place within a developing quasi-market system in which the public employment service (Jobcentre Plus) has become increasingly the purchaser of services from independent providers who compete for public funding in the delivery of Jobcentre Plus programmes for its clients or 'customers'. This has involved a move towards a mixed economy system, with the role of private and third sector providers alongside Jobcentre Plus being strongly emphasised in the welfare-to-work agenda (Freud, 2007). While more localised approaches to the planning of employment services have been advocated (Department for Work and Pensions, 2004a, 2006), within the context of these developments the delivery of employment services continues to be driven by a centrally-defined performance regime oriented towards the achievement of job outcome targets (Finn, 2005), with financial incentives for providers to achieve those targets through output-related funding.

The effects of job outcome-oriented performance systems, specifically, point to possible tensions with responsiveness to users' needs, and to users who face greater barriers to employment: first, in terms of the type of users whose needs are responded to, by encouraging selection of the most 'job-ready' individuals who are more likely to enable providers to achieve the job outcomes by which their performance is assessed and their services funded; and second, in terms of the type of services delivered, by encouraging providers to orient their services to finding the 'fastest way into work' for clients (Struyven, 2004). This draws attention to the potential conflict between this performance system and the responsiveness of providers in terms of whose needs get responded to: whether responsiveness is oriented predominantly towards the performance targets and policy agendas of the purchaser of employment service provision, or to the employment-related needs and interests of those unemployed, including refugees.

### **Research questions**

With regard to responsiveness to users' needs and the factors that influence provider responsiveness, the research aims to address both the empirical and conceptual gaps in the literature in the context of employment service provision for refugees.

The research addresses two main questions:

**1. How responsive do refugee clients perceive Jobcentre Plus and specialist providers to be to their needs?**

- What are their experiences and perceptions of responsiveness in terms of the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment?
- What are their experiences and perceptions of responsiveness to English language and other education and training needs?

**2. What are the factors that influence the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and specialist providers to the needs of refugees?**

- How do performance systems influence the responsiveness of providers?

**Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter One provides background data on the refugee population in the UK and refers to the literature on refugees and the labour market. It discusses the findings of research regarding the levels of unemployment amongst refugees, and refugees' participation in relatively low-skilled and low-paid employment. Barriers to the labour market and the related service needs of refugees are considered. These include a lack of English language proficiency and needs for English language provision; a lack of qualifications and work experience, or a lack of qualifications and experience recognised in the UK, and therefore related education and training needs; and a need for information, advice and guidance on employment. The organisation of employment service provision is then outlined with regard to Jobcentre Plus and specialist providers. The latter comprise third sector providers, including voluntary and not-for-profit organisations, that deliver a range of specialist employment-related services targeted at refugees, such as English language programmes, job search assistance, re-qualification programmes and work placements. It is argued that there has been relatively limited research that has explored refugees' experiences of employment service provision and their perceptions of the responsiveness of both Jobcentre Plus and specialist providers to their needs. Additionally, there has been limited research that has explored these providers' experiences of delivering services to refugees and their perceptions of the factors that

influence responsiveness to refugees' needs. There has, moreover, been very limited conceptual analysis of responsiveness to refugees' needs through employment service provision. In the light of the gaps in the literature, the research questions are outlined.

Chapter Two sets out the conceptual context of the analysis. It refers to how the concept of responsiveness has been articulated in policy agendas and in the academic literature in relation to public service reforms. It draws attention to differing relationships of responsiveness whereby, on the one hand, providers must be responsive to the individual needs of their service users or 'customers', while on the other, they must be responsive to the demands of purchasers and central government in terms of their accountability in the delivery of public services. Three dimensions of reform that have been advocated as mechanisms for greater responsiveness are explored: first, the use of quasi-markets in the funding and delivery of welfare provision; second, mixed economies and the involvement of the third sector in public service delivery; and third, the use of performance measurement. Possible tensions between and within these systems are highlighted with regard to the aim of responsiveness to users' needs. These dimensions are then explored in the context of employment service provision and the welfare-to-work agenda, drawing attention to the tensions between, on the one hand, a work-first policy imperative and, related to this, a job outcome-oriented performance regime, and on the other hand, the aim of improving the responsiveness of employment services to the needs of unemployed individuals and more disadvantaged groups. It is argued that there is a need for greater conceptualisation of responsiveness to users' needs in the context of employment service provision with regard to the performance system in which providers operate and the influence of that system, which this research aims to consider.

Chapter Three discusses the research methods. It addresses the reasons for adopting a qualitative approach in relation to the research questions and refers to the ethical issues of concern to the research. The sampling approach adopted is described, including accessing and selecting the specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus; and accessing staff and refugee clients of these providers to be interviewed. The research sample of providers, staff and refugee clients achieved is presented, and the limitations of the sample are discussed. The interview process is outlined, whereby semi-structured interviews were carried out with staff and refugee clients of Jobcentre Plus and the selected specialist providers. The data analysis and issues concerning the validity and reliability of the data are then discussed.

Chapters Four to Seven present the findings of the research in relation to the research questions. Chapter Four explores the experiences and perceptions of refugee clients regarding the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers to their needs in terms of the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment. It considers how respondents' perceptions of responsiveness to their needs were shaped by their education and employment backgrounds before coming to the UK and by their current interests. A typology is presented to account for the diversity of respondents' backgrounds and interests, ranging from those with higher-skilled to lower-skilled backgrounds. Respondents' experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers in terms of the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment are explored, drawing on this typology. Variation in responsiveness, both between Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers, and between the specialist providers, is considered regarding the level of advice and guidance provided, and the *appropriateness* of advice and guidance to refugees' skills and interests.

Chapter Five explores refugees' experiences and perceptions of responsiveness in relation to their English language and other education and training needs. The type of needs identified by respondents in this context are considered according to their skills and work-related interests. Respondents' experiences as clients of Jobcentre Plus are explored, focusing on the extent to which information was provided on training available through Jobcentre Plus, and the impact of regulations within the Jobcentre Plus system on respondents' participation in English language provision and other education and training appropriate to their perceptions of their needs. Regarding the specialist providers, variation in responsiveness is explored in terms of the extent to which information on education and training was provided; and the extent to which particular programmes delivered by the providers (such as work placements) were oriented towards refugees' needs in relation to their skills and interests.

Chapter Six focuses on the experiences and perceptions of staff of Jobcentre Plus regarding the factors affecting their responsiveness to the needs of refugees. It centres on the influence of a work-first policy imperative within the organisation, and a job outcome-oriented performance system, in terms of the tensions between achieving job outcome targets and responding to refugees' English language and training needs in relation to their skills and interests. In addition, the influence of resource limitations on responsiveness to refugees' needs is considered, including the limits to advisers' time; the limits to clients'

participation in full-time ESOL provision; and the limits to the type of training provision available through Jobcentre Plus.

Chapter Seven explores the experiences and perceptions of the specialist providers regarding factors affecting their responsiveness to refugees' needs. The profiles of the providers and their different sources of funding are considered in relation to a typology of funding regimes. These funding regimes include a reliance predominantly on one major source of public funding; a portfolio of funding sources, involving different sources of public funding; and a public/charitable/private funding mix. The chapter focuses on the effects of performance systems attached to public funding sources, exploring in particular the tensions between job outcome measures and related financial incentives attached to sources of funding through Jobcentre Plus and the responsiveness of the specialist providers to the needs of refugees.

Chapter Eight discusses the conclusions of the research with regard to the literature and refers to the implications of the findings for social policy. It explores the relationship between 1) refugees' experiences and perceptions of the relative responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers to their needs, and 2) providers' experiences and perceptions of the factors influencing their responsiveness. The tensions between, on the one hand, a work-first policy imperative in the provision of publicly-funded employment services, and on the other, responsiveness to refugees' need are highlighted. Related to this, the tensions between a performance system and incentive structure that is oriented towards short-term job outcomes and facilitating responsiveness to refugees' needs are underlined. These tensions centre on the type of refugees who providers are incentivised to assist; the level and type of employment-related assistance provided; and the extent to which service provision is oriented towards refugees' or purchasers' needs in terms of facilitating access to employment that is appropriate to the skills and interests of refugees on the one hand, or by placing refugees in any job on the other. With regard to the specialist providers, the influence of the mission-orientation of the providers on their responsiveness is considered, and related to this, the extent to which they were able to prioritise responsiveness to the needs of refugees through alternative funding regimes. Regarding the conceptual implications of the research, it is argued that where upwards accountability to the policy imperatives of central government and the purchasers of service provision predominates in performance systems and related incentive structures in employment service provision, responsiveness to users' needs will be constrained by these systems. With regard to the

policy implications for improving the responsiveness of employment service provision to the needs of refugees, these include greater alignment between performance systems and the needs of refugees; and the provision of information to refugees on employment-related providers and services. In addition, means of facilitating the involvement of refugees in decision-making processes are considered with respect to the allocation of resources to address their needs.

## CHAPTER ONE

### REFUGEES AND EMPLOYMENT-RELATED SERVICE NEEDS

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Existing research has found high levels of unemployment amongst refugees in the UK (Bloch, 2002b; Carey-Wood et al., 1995). Other patterns of labour market inequalities have also been noted, including the under-employment of refugees in low-skilled, low-paid jobs, with poor terms and conditions, irrespective of refugees' level of qualifications and work experience before coming to the UK (Bloch, 2002b; Dumper, 2002; London Research Centre, 1999; Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service, 2002). Although there are a range of factors that influence the labour market disadvantage experienced by refugees, a lack of English language proficiency and UK-based qualifications and work experience have been underlined in particular (Bloch, 2002b; Phillimore et al., 2003; Schellekens, 2001). A need for English language provision, other education and training provision, in addition to information, advice and guidance on employment, has therefore been emphasised in terms of the service needs of refugees related to employment. While government policy has called for employment services to address the needs of refugees in order to facilitate access to employment, there has been limited research which has explored refugees' perceptions and experiences of employment service provision in terms of responsiveness to their needs, and the perspectives of providers regarding the factors influencing responsiveness to those needs.

This chapter provides background data on the refugee population in the UK and discusses the findings of the literature on refugees and employment. Section 1.1 refers to the definition of a refugee and to data on the refugee population in the UK. Section 1.2 examines data on the labour market experiences of refugees, including levels of employment and unemployment, and the type of employment that refugees have been able to access in the UK. Section 1.3 draws on the findings of research regarding barriers to employment, including a lack of English language proficiency and a lack of UK-based qualifications and work experience, and the related service needs of refugees to address those barriers. Section 1.4 outlines the organisation of employment service provision, including the public employment service (Jobcentre Plus) that delivers statutory provision, and third sector providers that deliver specialist services targeted at refugees. It considers the findings of relatively limited research regarding refugees' use and experiences of



service provision. In the light of the empirical and conceptual gaps in the literature, section 1.5 outlines the main questions of the research.

## 1.1 Definition and socio-economic characteristics of refugees

### 1.1.1 The legal definition

The term '*refugee*' refers to a specific legal definition set out in the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which states that a refugee is someone who "owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country or ... is unwilling to return to it" (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951: 16). However, the interpretation of the Convention definition and the granting of refugee status is subject to considerable variation according to the asylum policy of individual governments, and "a host of categories and statuses have since been developed in different countries for people moving in a variety of 'refugee-like circumstances'" (Escalona & Black, 1995: 368).

With regard to the legal framework in the UK, in addition to refugee status a number of other legal statuses exist concerning those who are often referred to more generally as refugees<sup>2</sup>. '*Asylum seekers*' are those who have made an application to the Immigration and Nationality Directorate at the Home Office to be granted asylum (refugee status) and are waiting for a decision on their claim<sup>3</sup>. The length of time it takes to process a claim has varied considerably and until recently could take several years. Home Office data for 2002 indicate that 84% of applications received in 2001/02 had initial decisions within six months (Home Office, 2003: 9)<sup>4</sup>. As shown in Figure 1.1 below, an application for asylum may lead to the granting of refugee status, or to other outcomes for applicants who are not considered to meet the Convention criteria for granting refugee status. Before April 2003, the status of *Exceptional Leave to Remain* (ELR) was granted where it was considered unsafe to return an applicant to his or her country of origin due to the current situation in

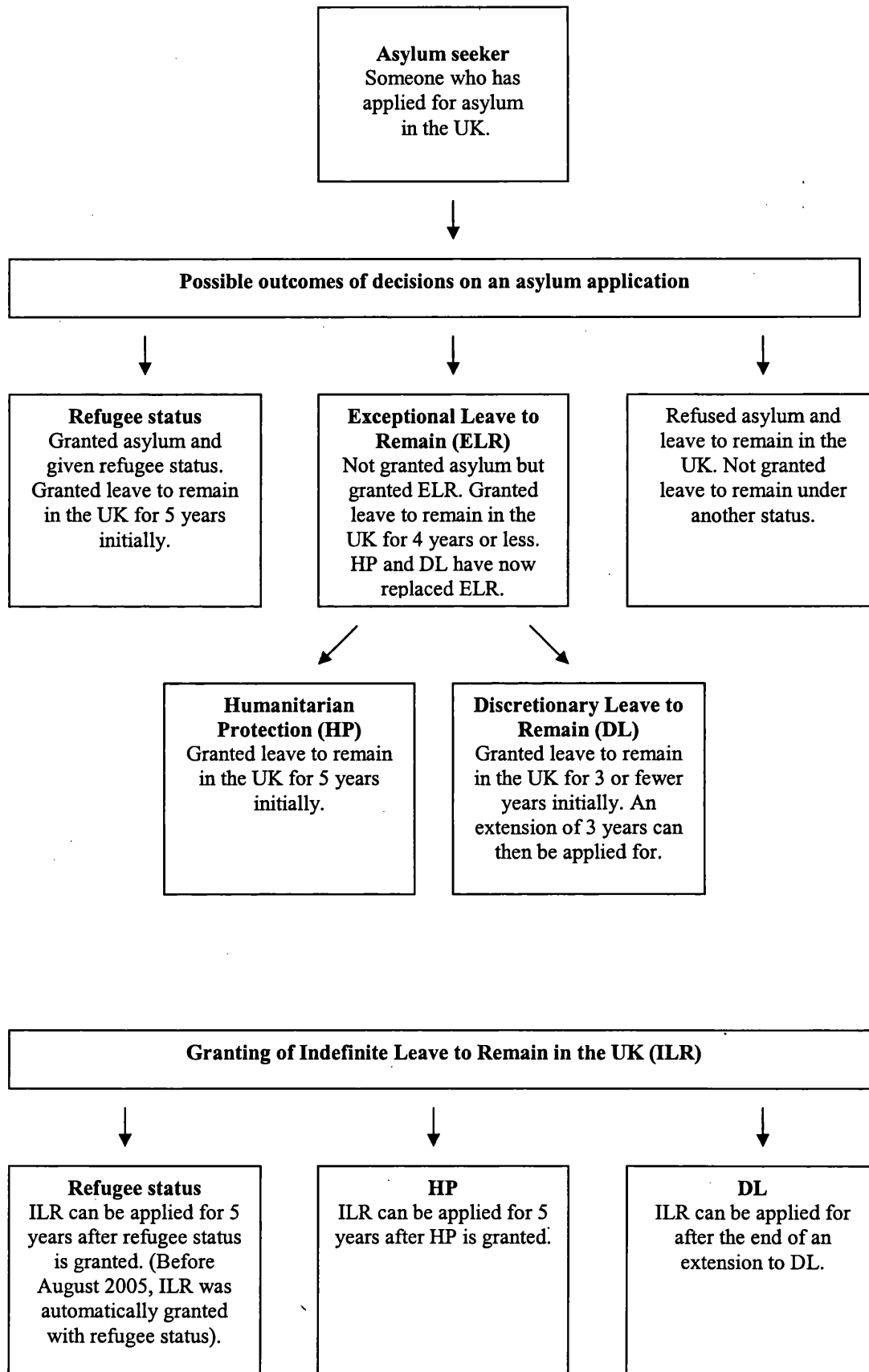
<sup>2</sup> Information from the British Refugee Council is drawn upon in this section (British Refugee Council, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Since April 2007, the new Border and Immigration Agency (an executive agency of the Home Office) has taken responsibility for asylum applications.

<sup>4</sup> The quality of the decision-making process has, however, been questioned by organisations such as Amnesty International, given that a number of initial refusals of asylum are subsequently overturned through the appeals process (Amnesty International, 2004).

that country, or was granted due to other exceptional circumstances. Since then, the statuses of *Humanitarian Protection* (HP) and *Discretionary Leave to remain* (DL) have replaced ELR. In addition, there are other legal statuses applied to various other groups in the UK, including those who entered under temporary protection programmes (such as Bosnian and Kosovo refugees), who are granted temporary admission to the UK, although they may also subsequently apply for asylum. The term ‘refugee’ usually refers to those who have been granted one of the above statuses, and is used as such in the context of this thesis (unless a distinction is made according to legal status).

Figure 1.1 The asylum process



The differing statuses relating to *refugees* and *asylum seekers* confer different rights and entitlements. Ongoing changes in asylum legislation in the UK in recent years have resulted in a diversity of legal rights amongst the population of refugees and asylum seekers, depending on the legislative context at the time of their arrival (Kelly & Joly, 1999)<sup>5</sup>. This includes differences in the length of time someone is allowed to remain in the UK. As shown in Figure 1.1, those granted *refugee status* were, until August 2005, immediately given *Indefinite Leave to Remain* (ILR) in the UK (i.e. permanent residency). Since then, those granted refugee status have been given leave to remain in the UK for five years initially, after which time ILR or an extension of leave to remain can be applied for (see Appendix 1 for further details). Those with refugee status or Humanitarian Protection can apply for family reunion<sup>6</sup> as soon as their status is granted, while those with Discretionary Leave can apply after being granted ILR.

Both Convention status *refugees* and those granted the *other statuses* referred to above have the same welfare rights and entitlements to services as other UK residents and citizens. By contrast, the rights of *asylum seekers* (waiting for a decision on their claim) have become much more restricted (Geddes, 2000). During the period in which an asylum seeker is waiting for a decision, he or she can apply for accommodation and financial support through the National Asylum Support Service (NASS)<sup>7</sup>. Those given accommodation through NASS are usually dispersed to regions outside of London and the South East. The dispersal system was introduced in 2000 following the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, with a view to relieving the pressure on local authority services within London, where asylum seekers before then had tended to settle because of greater access in this area to social networks (Bloch, 2002a). Asylum seekers are not immediately entitled to work. Prior to July 2002, asylum seekers who had been waiting for more than six months for a decision were allowed to apply for permission to work. This concession was then removed (partly on the basis of improvements in the time taken for an initial decision to be made). However, since February 2005, asylum seekers have been entitled to apply for permission to work if they have not received a decision on their application for asylum after 12

<sup>5</sup> Even when considering research on refugees who arrived in the UK between 2000 and 2005, there will be differences in legal rights amongst refugees relating to the specific legislation at the time of entry. For example, research in relation to the labour market has included both recognised refugees and asylum seekers within its sample, e.g. (Bloch, 2002a), since, prior to August 2002, asylum seekers had the right to apply for permission to work after six months of waiting for a decision on their claim.

<sup>6</sup> For immediate family members in countries of origin to join them in the UK.

<sup>7</sup> The former National Asylum Support Service, which was established by the Home Office in 2000, was until recently responsible for the provision of accommodation and financial support to asylum seekers. In April 2007 the functions of NASS were transferred to the new Borders and Immigration Agency.

months, following the implementation of the European Council Directive 2003/9/EC (British Refugee Council, June 2006)<sup>8</sup>. After being granted refugee status (or another status), refugees are entitled to apply for mainstream welfare benefits that are income or unemployment-related, such as unemployment benefit (Jobseekers Allowance) and housing benefit. They are entitled to work, which is stated in documentation a refugee receives from the Home Office.

### **1.1.2 The refugee population in the UK**

Data on the refugee population in the UK are limited as the immigration status of individuals is not recorded in data sets such as the Census (which records nationality, country of birth and ethnicity). The Home Office provides statistics on the annual number of asylum applicants, countries of origin, age, gender, and rate of recognition (number of applicants granted refugee status or other statuses). In addition, data on asylum seekers supported by NASS are available, which provide information on the area of residence of asylum seekers in NASS accommodation by region in the UK.

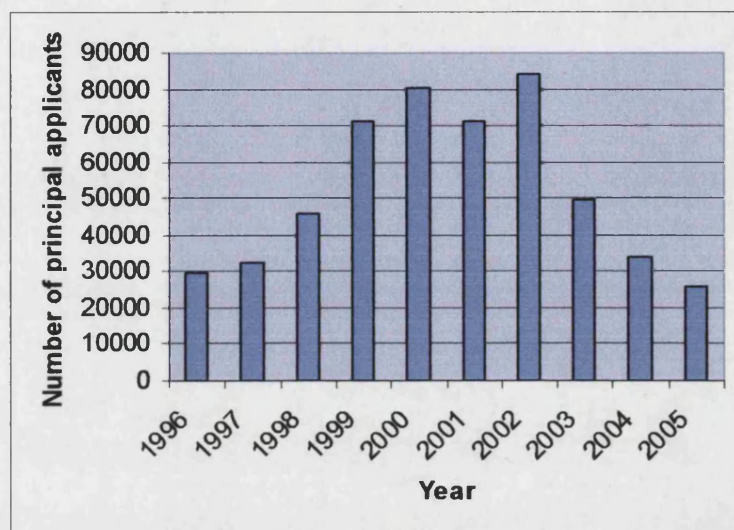
#### **Applications for asylum**

As shown in Figure 1.2, the number of applications for asylum in the UK rose steadily from 1996, to a total of 84,130 applicants in 2002, before starting to decline in 2003. This decline may reflect a number of factors, including changes in patterns of conflict in source countries of asylum applicants, as well as a UK asylum and immigration policy aimed at reducing the number of asylum seekers (Home Office, 2005b; Zetter et al., 2003).

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<sup>8</sup> The Directive states that “if a decision at first instance has not been taken within one year of the presentation of an application for asylum... Member States shall decide the conditions for granting access to the labour market for the applicant” (European Council).

Figure 1.2

**Applications for asylum in the UK, 1996 to 2005<sup>9</sup>**

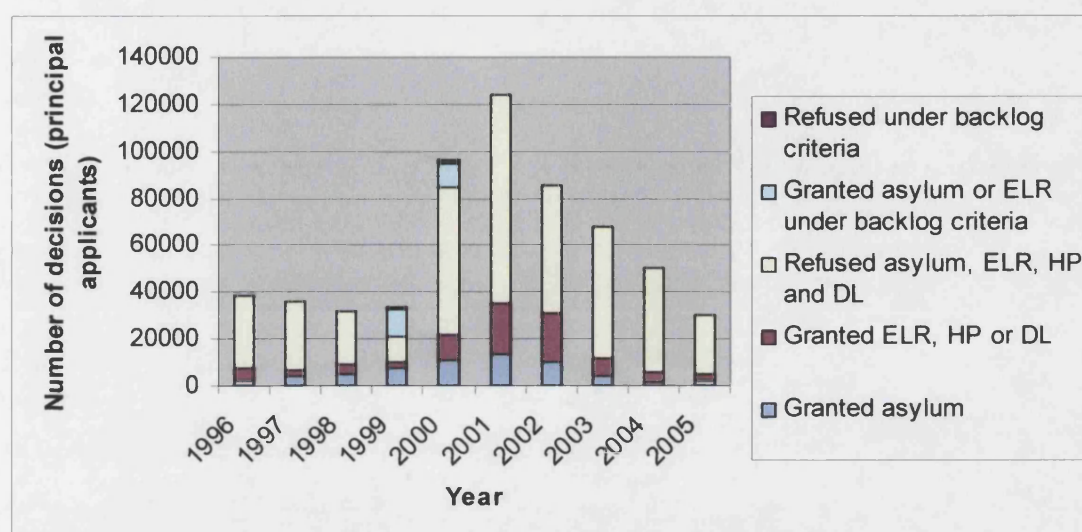
Source: Home Office, 2005a (Table 1.1: 31) and Home Office, 2006 (Table 1.1: 31)

Figure 1.3 below presents the outcomes of initial decisions by the Home Office regarding applications for asylum during the period 1996-2005. In 2004, of the 46,020 initial decisions that were made, 1,565 (3%) were granted asylum, 3,995 (9%) were granted Humanitarian Protection (HP) or Discretionary Leave (DL) (which replaced Exceptional Leave to Remain in April 2003), while 40,465 applications were refused asylum or HP or DL (88%). However, if the outcomes of asylum appeals received by the Home Office and determined by the Immigration Appellate Authority (IAA) are taken into consideration, a further 10,845 cases were either granted asylum or HP or DL in 2004 (see Figure 1.4).

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 8, Table 8.1, for full data.

Figure 1.3

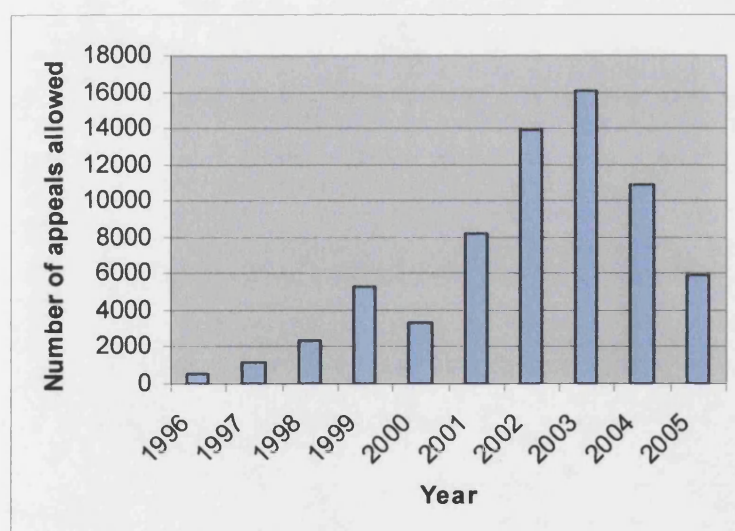
Outcomes of initial decisions on asylum applications, 1996 to 2005<sup>10</sup>



Source: Home Office, 2005a (Table 1.1: 31) and Home Office, 2006 (Table 1.1: 31)

Figure 1.4

Appeals allowed by the Immigration Appellate Authority, 1996 to 2005<sup>11</sup>



Source: Home Office, 2005a (Table 7.1: 58) and Home Office, 2006 (Table 7.1: 54)

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 8, Table 8.2, for full data.

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix 8, Table 8.3, for full data.

According to Home Office estimates, of the 33,960 applications for asylum made in 2004, a quarter resulted in either the granting of asylum (4%), the granting of HP or DL (11%), or in appeals that were allowed by the IAA adjudicators (10%). The estimate includes allowance for the outcomes of cases that may be reconsidered by the Home Office (Home Office, 2005a: 18)<sup>12</sup>.

### Countries of origin, age and gender

Regarding the countries of origin of refugees, a range of nationalities comprising countries across Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe and Latin America are represented amongst those recognised as refugees and granted asylum, and amongst those granted ELR, HP or DL (Home Office, 2005a, 2006). Of those cases recognised as refugees and granted asylum, the main nationalities in 1999 were Serbia and Montenegro<sup>13</sup> (80% of cases), Algeria (6%) and Iraq (4%)<sup>14</sup>. In 2001, they were Somalia (25%) and Afghanistan (20%), and in 2003 Somalia (43%) and Zimbabwe (23%) (Home Office, 2005: Table 3.1). With regard to cases where ELR, HP or DL was granted, the main nationalities in 1999 were Afghanistan (48%), Iraq (13%) and Sierra Leone (11%)<sup>15</sup>. In 2001, they were Afghanistan (37%), Serbia and Montenegro (10%) and Somalia (10%), and in 2003, Iraq (30%), Afghanistan (8%) and Somalia (8%) (Home Office, 2005a: Table 3.2).

Table 1.1 gives the age and gender of principal applicants for asylum in 2004<sup>16</sup>. The majority of applicants were young and male. At the time of applying for asylum, 82% were under 35 years old, 15% were between 35 and 49 years old, and 3% aged 50 or older. Seventy per cent of all applicants were male.

<sup>12</sup> Initial decisions on applications are sometimes reconsidered due to additional information or a change in the applicant's current circumstances or country of origin information.

<sup>13</sup> Serbia and Montenegro comprises the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Montenegro and the Province of Kosovo.

<sup>14</sup> Information relates to initial decisions (regarding principal applicants), excluding the outcome of appeals or other subsequent decisions. Information for 1999 excludes cases where asylum was granted under backlog criteria (where some cases were granted ILR in order to clear a backlog of applications) (Home Office, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Information relates to initial decisions (regarding principal applicants), excluding the outcome of appeals or other subsequent decisions. Information for 1999 excludes cases where ELR was granted under backlog criteria (Home Office, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Data on initial decisions on asylum applications (those granted asylum, HP or DL) are not given by age and gender.



Table 1.1

**Applications for asylum in 2004 by age and gender (percentages)**

	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Total
<b>Male</b>	68	72	71	69	65	55	46	23,660
<b>Female</b>	32	28	29	31	35	45	54	10,300
<b>Total</b>	6,205	9,165	12,630	2,865	2,225	500	370	33,960

Source: Home Office, 2005a (Table 5.2: 52)

**Region of residence in the UK**

Data on the regional distribution of the refugee population in the UK are not available since, as noted previously, data on immigration status is not recorded in data sets such as the Census. However, data on asylum seekers supported by NASS are available, which provide information on the area of residence of asylum seekers in NASS accommodation, or in receipt of financial support, by region in the UK. This may be used as the best available proxy for the location of refugees in the UK. It is, however, difficult to determine the location of refugees on the basis of the location of asylum seekers, given that secondary migration to other parts of the UK appears to be evident following the granting of refugee status, including migration to London from dispersal areas (Griffiths et al., 2005). In addition to NASS data, local authorities may derive their own estimates of local refugee and asylum seeker populations, drawing on local data sources (such as data on asylum seekers supported by social services in addition to NASS) (e.g. Greater London Authority, 2001).

According to Home Office data on asylum seekers supported by NASS, at the end of the first 18 months following the implementation of dispersal (at the end of December 2001), 40,325 asylum seekers (including dependants) were being supported in NASS accommodation and 25,310 were receiving subsistence only support (i.e. financial support but not accommodation<sup>17</sup>). The majority of those receiving subsistence only support were located in Greater London (71%). Amongst those in NASS accommodation, the main

<sup>17</sup> Some asylum seekers decide not to apply for accommodation in order to be able to stay in London (Griffiths et al., 2005), as they are not able to choose the location of accommodation through NASS.

regions in which they were resident were Yorkshire and Humberside (21%), the North West (20%), and the West Midlands (17%) (Home Office, 2003: 11). These were also the main regions where asylum seekers in NASS accommodation were located at the end of 2004, as shown in Table 1.2 below.

**Table 1.2**

**Numbers of asylum seekers (including dependants) in NASS accommodation by government office region (as at the end of December 2004)<sup>1</sup>**

	<b>Number of applicants</b>	<b>Percentage of England total</b>	<b>Percentage of UK total</b>
North East	3,920	12%	
North West	6,430	20%	
Yorkshire and The Humber	9,370	29%	
East Midlands	2,555	8%	
West Midlands	6,310	19%	
East of England	590	2%	
Greater London	1,455	4%	
South East	815	2%	
South West	1,065	3%	
<b>England total</b>	<b>32,500</b>		<b>80%</b>
<b>Wales total</b>	<b>2,345</b>		<b>6%</b>
<b>Scotland total</b>	<b>5,790</b>		<b>14%</b>
<b>Northern Ireland total</b>	<b>115</b>		<b>Less than 1%</b>
<b>Total (UK)</b>	<b>40,750</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>1</sup>Excludes unaccompanied asylum seeking children supported by local authority social services (estimated at around 6,000 in March 2005). Excludes cases that pre-date the establishment of NASS in April 2000, administered under arrangements with local authorities (estimated at up to 6,000 cases in March 2005). Excludes those in initial accommodation (5,080 at end of December 2004).

Source: Home Office, 2005a (Table 8.5: 66)

## 1.2 Labour market experiences

This section refers to levels of employment and unemployment amongst refugees, and to the type of work that refugees have been able to access in the UK.

### 1.2.1 Levels of employment and unemployment

National statistics on the rates of unemployment and employment of refugees in the UK are not available. While data on employment and unemployment included in the Census and the Labour Force Survey (LFS) identify individuals by nationality, country of birth and ethnicity, as indicated previously, immigration status is not recorded. Therefore, information is not provided on refugees as a group. Existing research (albeit relatively limited) does, however, provide data on the labour market experiences of refugees. This research is based on non-representative samples of refugees, relying on non-random sampling (given the lack of data sources on the refugee population), and is therefore limited in this respect. However, as will be discussed below, across the research there are similarities in the findings in terms of high levels of unemployment amongst refugees. This section will examine the data on refugees and employment. Where possible, comparisons will be made with data for the wider migrant (non UK-born) population in the UK and for the UK-born population. In addition, comparisons according to ethnicity will be drawn upon in order to examine the relationships between migration status, ethnicity and labour market inequalities.

A number of surveys have found low levels of employment amongst refugees. Research carried out by Bloch for the Department for Work and Pensions (based on a sample of 400 refugees<sup>18</sup> in five regions in England), found that only 29% were in employment (Bloch, 2002b). As mentioned previously, the sample was non-representative, having to rely on snowballing respondents through refugee community organisations (given the lack of possible sampling frames), and therefore inferences regarding the employment rate of refugees cannot be drawn from this percentage. An earlier national survey (of 263 refugees<sup>19</sup>) carried out by Carey-Wood et al. for the Home Office found similarly low levels of employment (Carey-Wood et al., 1995). Low levels of participation in employment amongst refugees in these surveys are matched with high levels of unemployment. According to the survey by Carey-Wood et al., amongst those respondents

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<sup>18</sup> Comprising those with refugee status, ELR, ILR, temporary admission, and naturalised British or EU citizens.

<sup>19</sup> Comprising those with refugee status or ELR.

who were economically active, 57% were unemployed. Local and regional surveys of refugees have found varying but similarly high levels of unemployment. A survey in London of 236 refugees and asylum seekers found 51% to be unemployed (London Research Centre, 1999). Other research on refugees in the London Borough of Newham (Bloch, 2002a), and the London Boroughs of Barnet, Enfield, Haringey and Waltham Forest (Africa Educational Trust, 2002) also found high levels of unemployment. Within Birmingham and Solihull, Phillimore et al. found only 10% of respondents (of a sample of 252 refugees and asylum seekers who were permitted to work) to be in full-time employment (Phillimore et al., 2003)<sup>20</sup>. As underlined previously, while these samples may not be representative of the refugee population, across the research the findings raise similar concerns regarding the unemployment experienced by refugees.

The apparent low levels of employment amongst refugees contrast with much higher employment rates for the migrant population as a whole in the UK and for the UK-born population: 64% and 75% respectively, based on LFS data for the year 2001 (Haque, 2002)<sup>21</sup>. This also contrasts with relatively higher employment rates for the ethnic minority population in the UK: 60% for the same year (Bloch, 2002b)<sup>22</sup>. Similarly, unemployment rates are considerably lower for migrants as a whole (7%) and for the UK-born (5%) (Haque, 2002). Lindley has used immigration statistics on refugee sending countries to identify refugees by country of origin and date of arrival in the UK in the LFS for the period 1995-2000, in order to assess the labour market performance of refugees and non-refugee migrants (Lindley, 2002). This measure is, however, problematic, given that individuals from some refugee sending countries will include people who entered the UK not only as asylum seekers but through other routes of entry during the same period. The analysis found refugees to exhibit higher unemployment propensities compared with non-refugee migrants and with the UK-born population.

There is significant variation in employment rates according to ethnicity. 'Non-white' migrants from ethnic minority groups have a much lower employment rate compared with 'white' UK-born individuals, whereas 'white' migrants have similar employment rates

<sup>20</sup> An additional 11% were students.

<sup>21</sup> Migrants in the analysis of the LFS by Haque are defined as born outside the UK, about half of whom have UK nationality.

<sup>22</sup> The research by Bloch draws on data on ethnic minority individuals from the LFS (2001) in order to make comparisons with its refugee sample. However, the LFS data include both ethnic minority individuals who are UK-born and those who are born outside the UK. Refugees may therefore be included in the LFS ethnic minority sample.

(Dustmann et al., 2003)<sup>23</sup>. Variation between refugees as a group has also been found according to ethnicity. Lindley found that there were no significant differences in unemployment propensities between white refugees and other white migrants, relative to white UK-born individuals (Lindley, 2002). Only South Asians<sup>24</sup> and ‘non-white’ individuals (UK-born, refugees and migrants) had higher unemployment propensities, indicating the significance of ethnicity in relation to labour market inequalities. Differences in levels of employment amongst refugees have also been observed according to country of origin (Bloch, 2002b); gender (with wider gender gaps observed than those found in the UK-born population) (Bloch, 2002b; Sales & Gregory, 1996); and UK region of residence (Bloch, 2002b). However, these variations are based on relatively small and potentially non-representative samples.

The level of employment amongst refugees appears to improve with length of residence in the UK. Bloch found a positive correlation between level of employment and length of residence: 36% (56 respondents) of refugees who had been in the UK for five years or more were in employment<sup>25</sup>, compared with 20% (37 respondents) of refugees who had been resident for less than three years<sup>26</sup> (Bloch, 2002b). While there is evidence of some improvement over time (albeit based on limited sample sizes), progression into employment appears to be very slow given refugees’ experiences of unemployment after several years of residence. According to a survey in London (of 236 refugees), more than half of the 40 respondents who had been in the UK for between five to eight years were unemployed (London Research Centre, 1999). Moreover, the increasing participation of refugees in the labour market with length of residence reveals little about the *type* work that refugees are able to access.

### 1.2.2 Participation in employment: type of work

Regarding participation in employment, research has highlighted the under-employment of refugees within a limited range of low-skilled jobs, with low pay and poor terms and conditions, despite holding higher level qualifications and having been employed in high-

<sup>23</sup> Based on LFS data for the period 1979-2000. Ethnicity categories that are used in the LFS (‘white’, ‘Black-Caribbean’, ‘Black-African’, ‘Black-other’, ‘Indian’, ‘Pakistani’, ‘Bangladeshi’, ‘Chinese’ and ‘Other non-white’) were grouped according to ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ categories by the researchers in order to consider the effect of ethnicity on labour market outcomes.

<sup>24</sup> South Asians (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi) were separated as a group in this research because of the higher levels of unemployment amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi individuals (although there are much lower levels of unemployment amongst Indians as a group).

<sup>25</sup> n=155 (number of respondents who had been in the UK for five years or more).

<sup>26</sup> n=185 (number of respondents who had been in the UK for less than three years).

skilled positions before coming to the UK (Bloch, 2002a, 2002b; British Refugee Council, 2001; London Research Centre, 1999). In the survey by Bloch, amongst those refugees who were employed at the time of the survey (114 respondents), a quarter were in temporary posts, of which the majority had taken the job because they could not find permanent work (Bloch, 2002b). Around one third were working part-time, more than half of whom were doing so because they could not find a full-time job. In addition, two-thirds of respondents who were employed at the time of the survey or had worked in the UK in the past (168 respondents) were or had been employed in only five areas: in catering, factory work, shop/cashier work, administration and interpreting/translation. Their employment in the UK was not commensurate with their skill levels, in terms of qualifications and work experience before coming to the UK: 56% of respondents aged 18 or over (212 respondents) had arrived in the UK with a qualification, of whom 23% had a degree or higher<sup>27</sup>. In addition, 50% of respondents (200 respondents) had been employed before coming to the UK, and in a wider range of jobs than their employment positions in the UK, including as doctors, teachers, dentists, engineers and accountants.

The hourly earnings of refugee respondents who were working were found to be 79% of those of ethnic minority people in the UK (Bloch, 2002b). Moreover, 11% (12 respondents) were earning less than the national minimum wage (£4.10 per hour at the time of the research), while 43% (45 respondents) were earning less than £6.00 per hour. Less than half were entitled to holiday pay. As emphasised previously, these findings are based on relatively small samples, which may not be representative of the refugee population and are therefore limited in this respect.

With regard to earnings differentials, analyses of the LFS data have found that migrants overall earn more than the UK-born population<sup>28</sup> and appear to be similarly distributed across occupations, with a higher proportion working in the service sector than the UK-born (Haque, 2002). However, Dustmann et al. indicate that there is a dividing line between 'white' and 'non-white' migrants. While white migrants have on average higher wages than white UK-born individuals with the same characteristics<sup>29</sup>, migrants from all ethnic minority groups have lower wages<sup>30</sup> (Dustmann et al., 2003). Lindley found that refugees

<sup>27</sup> The findings compare with 19% of the migrant (non-UK born) population as a whole estimated to hold a degree and 15% of the UK-born population (Haque, 2002)

<sup>28</sup> Although age differences need to be taken into account.

<sup>29</sup> White migrants from Commonwealth countries earn on average 20% higher wages than comparable UK-born individuals.

<sup>30</sup> Bangladeshi migrants were found to have the lowest relative wages.

earn less on average than non-refugee migrants, with a significant earnings penalty to white refugees, but no such penalty to white non-refugees (both male and female) (Lindley, 2002). However, for both refugees and other migrants, the earnings penalty for non-white individuals exceeded that for white individuals. Non-white male refugees were found to earn 21% less than their white refugee counterparts, and 12% less in the case of non-white female refugees. This again draws attention to the inter-relationship between migration status, ethnicity and labour market inequalities, which is difficult to assess in relation to refugees specifically given the lack of reliable data sources.

### **1.3 Barriers to employment and related service needs**

Various studies have found a lack of English language proficiency and a lack of UK-based qualifications and employment experience to be among the main barriers to employment faced by refugees (Bloch, 2002a, 2002b; Phillimore et al., 2003; Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service, 2002; Schellekens, 2001). There are, however, a range of other factors that appear to influence refugees' access to the labour market and their progression within it. These include local labour market conditions at the time of arrival (Bloch, 2002b; Valtonen, 1994), and legal status and the differing rights accorded to it (Bloch, 2001). The insecurity of legal status for asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their claim was shown by Bloch to inhibit their ability to begin the settlement process, affecting both their actual legal right to access the labour market and to access training as well as their psychological well-being and commitment to their place of residence (Bloch, 2001). In addition, racism and discrimination on the part of employers has been emphasised (Bloch, 2002b; Dumper, 2002; Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002). This section focuses on the findings of research concerning the influence of English language proficiency, UK-based education/training and work experience on refugees' labour market outcomes. Linked to this, it considers the employment-related service needs of refugees, including English language provision, other education and training, as well as information, advice and guidance on employment.

#### **1.3.1 English language proficiency and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) needs**

Much of the research on refugees has attributed high levels of unemployment and under-employment in low-skilled work (relative to qualifications and experience) to a lack of or inadequate level of English language proficiency. Although there remains little systematic data on the level of English language proficiency of refugees and other migrants, previous

surveys have provided data on refugee respondents' self-rated English language proficiency. A skills audit by the Home Office (of around 2000 refugees<sup>31</sup>) found that 31% of respondents considered their English skills (understanding, speaking, reading and writing English) to be fluent or fairly good (Kirk, 2004). However, there was much variation in the self-rated proficiency of respondents according to country of origin. With regard to spoken English, as Table 1.3 shows, 96% of respondents from Zimbabwe (where English is a national language) considered their spoken English to be fluent or fairly good. By contrast, 15% of respondents from Iraq and 19% of respondents from Somalia considered their spoken English to be fluent or fairly good, compared to 47% of respondents from Iraq and 50% from Somalia who considered themselves to speak no English.

Table 1.3

**Spoken English language skills of refugee respondents by country/region of origin, in research by Kirk (Kirk, 2004)**

Ability to speak English					
	Respondent is able to speak English <sup>1</sup>				
	Fluently	Fairly well	Slightly	Not at all	Total
Far East	5%	24%	53%	18%	62
Iraq	2%	13%	38%	47%	1,014
Other Africa	8%	33%	35%	24%	175
Somalia	3%	16%	31%	50%	202
Zimbabwe	66%	30%	5%	0%	389
Other	8%	27%	46%	19%	98
All	16%	20%	31%	33%	1,940

Percentages do not always add up to 100 because of rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Excludes cases where no response was given.

Source: Kirk, 2004 (Table 2.7: 19)

<sup>31</sup> Who had received a positive decision on their application for asylum between November 2002 and January 2003 (50% were from Iraq, 20% from Zimbabwe, and 11% from Somalia).



As well as low levels of English proficiency, low levels of literacy in a first language have been found amongst some groups. The above survey found a significant association between respondents' literacy skills in their first language and literacy skills in English. While a high percentage of respondents from Zimbabwe said they could read and write fluently in their first language (86% and 85% respectively), and all could read and write to some degree, only approximately half of the respondents from Iraq could read and write fluently (51% and 48% respectively). Twenty one per cent could not read at all and 23% could not write at all in their first language. The figures were similar for respondents from Somalia. Little variation in self-rated English language and literacy skills was noted according to gender in this survey (for respondents overall), although other research has found gender differences (e.g Bloch, 2002b, with regard to higher levels of illiteracy amongst Somali women compared to men).

English language proficiency appears to be associated both with levels of employment amongst refugees and with the types of work of individuals. In the research carried out by Bloch, 52% of respondents who spoke English fluently were in employment, compared with 11% of those who spoke no English, as shown in Table 1.4.

**Table 1.4**

**Participation in employment of refugee respondents by spoken English, in research by Bloch (Bloch, 2002b)**

<b>Spoken English</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>Total</b>
Fluently	52%	48%	83
Fairly well	31%	69%	156
Slightly	14%	86%	133
Not at all	11%	89%	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>400</b>

Source: Bloch, 2002b (Table 6.3: 91)

Regarding the type of work, more than half of the refugee respondents who spoke English slightly or not at all and were employed were working in low-skilled jobs, including catering, factory work, cleaning and construction (Bloch, 2002b). One of the few studies to

have focused on the perspectives of employers (with experience of recruiting refugees) found that a low level of English amongst refugee job applicants was one of the main reasons employers mentioned for either rejecting refugees or placing them in lower skilled positions than their experience merited. A lack of English language skills was also considered to be a barrier to refugee employees advancing from lower to more skilled positions (Hurstfield et al., 2004).

Indeed, the importance of English language proficiency to labour market outcomes has been noted more widely. Dustmann et al. found that English fluency is strongly and positively associated with the probability to be employed, and with wages (Dustmann et al., 2003)<sup>32</sup>. On the basis of their analysis, they conclude that English language proficiency largely reduces differences in the employment and wage gaps between UK-born individuals and ethnic minority migrants. Similarly, Shields and Wheatley-Price found that fluency in spoken English significantly enhances the probability of being employed amongst ethnic minority migrants (Shields & Wheatley-Price, 2001).

Refugees with low levels of English proficiency have consistently identified English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision to be of primary concern when considering what assistance they would benefit from in order to access employment (Bloch, 2002b; Charlaff et al., 2004; London Research Centre, 1999). Other than simply wishing to be able to communicate better, being able to get a job was stated by 72% of refugees in the research by Bloch as their reason for learning English (Bloch, 2002b). A shortage of ESOL provision across the UK has been identified as inhibiting access to ESOL for refugees (Griffiths, 2003). Moreover, despite the expansion of ESOL provision in recent years, it has been emphasised that the level of ESOL on most courses is not sufficient to enable refugees to enter work (Griffiths, 2003; National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2006; Schellekens, 2001). Research carried out by Schellekens on provision for adults with ESOL needs (including refugees) found that amongst participants in ESOL provision funded through the former Further Education Funding Council, the former Training and Enterprise Councils, and the New Deal programme<sup>33</sup>, the majority achieved either no qualification or

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<sup>32</sup> Using data from the Family and Working Lives Survey (1994-95) and the Fourth National Survey on Ethnic Minorities (1993-94), which includes data on self-reported language proficiency for different ethnic minority migrant groups.

<sup>33</sup> The New Deal programme is delivered by Jobcentre Plus. See Glossary and section 1.3.1 of this chapter.

below NVQ Level 2<sup>34</sup>. By contrast, employers interviewed expected fluent English (except for a few low-skilled jobs such as cleaning) and considered NVQ Level 3 to be the minimum to get a job with low-level communication requirements (Schellekens, 2001)<sup>35</sup>. The research similarly emphasised the gap between the level of ESOL provision offered and the English language skills required to make the transition to other education and training, concluding that there is a need both for more intensive ESOL provision and higher level courses that enable progression routes.

With regard to levels of satisfaction with ESOL provision amongst refugees, Bloch found that refugees who had participated in ESOL were least satisfied with information about progression to further education, training or employment amongst ESOL providers (Bloch, 2002b). The main improvements respondents wanted included more ESOL provision, both in terms of the intensity of provision (number of hours a week) and the availability of courses (including classes at different levels). This suggests a need for both more intensive ESOL provision to adequately address English language barriers to employment, as well as more information, advice and guidance in relation to onward progression into employment or other education and training.

### **1.3.2 Education, training and work experience**

#### **Qualifications and work experience prior to coming to the UK**

There appears to be considerable diversity in the education and employment backgrounds of refugees before coming to the UK, not only between particular groups of refugees (according to country of origin) but also within them (according to gender and age) (Africa Educational Trust, 2002; Bloch, 2002b; Kirk, 2004). This includes both higher skilled individuals, who have higher-level qualifications and professional experience, and lower skilled individuals, who have had a limited number of years in education and have no qualifications. The Home Office skills audit of refugees found that while almost half of respondents (46%) had received ten or more years of education, 19% had received no formal education (Kirk, 2004). This compares with 99% of the UK-born population who

<sup>34</sup> Data sources were between 1997 and 1999. The Learning and Skills Council replaced the former Further Education Funding Council and the former Training and Enterprise Councils for the funding of post-16 education and training in England. See Glossary for details on the qualifications framework in the UK, including National Vocational Qualifications at Level 2.

<sup>35</sup> The government's skills strategy is focused on increasing English language and literacy skills in terms of the attainment of Level 2 qualifications (Department for Education and Skills, 2003).

have received ten or more years of education and less than 1% no education (Kirk, 2004: 8). However, there was considerable variation according to country of origin, as shown in Table 1.5. While the majority of respondents from Zimbabwe (89%) had received ten or more years of education, with only 1% receiving no education, only 22% of respondents from Somalia had received ten or more years of education, and 40% had received no formal education. Significant differences according to gender were also observed within some groups, in particular between women and men from Somalia: 55% of women had received no education (compared with 24% of men) and only 3% of women held qualifications (compared with 14% of men).

**Table 1.5**

**Years spent in education of refugee respondents before coming to the UK by country of origin, in research by Kirk (Kirk, 2004)**

	Years of education <sup>1</sup>						Total
	None	6 or less	7-9	10-12	13-15	16 or more	
<b>Far East</b>	9%	13%	11%	38%	9%	20%	64
<b>Iraq</b>	26%	35%	13%	11%	8%	8%	995
<b>Other Africa</b>	7%	12%	14%	23%	21%	24%	173
<b>Somalia</b>	40%	23%	15%	14%	6%	2%	202
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	1%	4%	6%	36%	31%	22%	382
<b>Other</b>	10%	16%	6%	33%	13%	21%	97
<b>All</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>1,913</b>

Percentages do not always add up to 100 because of rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Excludes cases where no response is given.

Source: Kirk, 2004 (Table 2.1: 8)

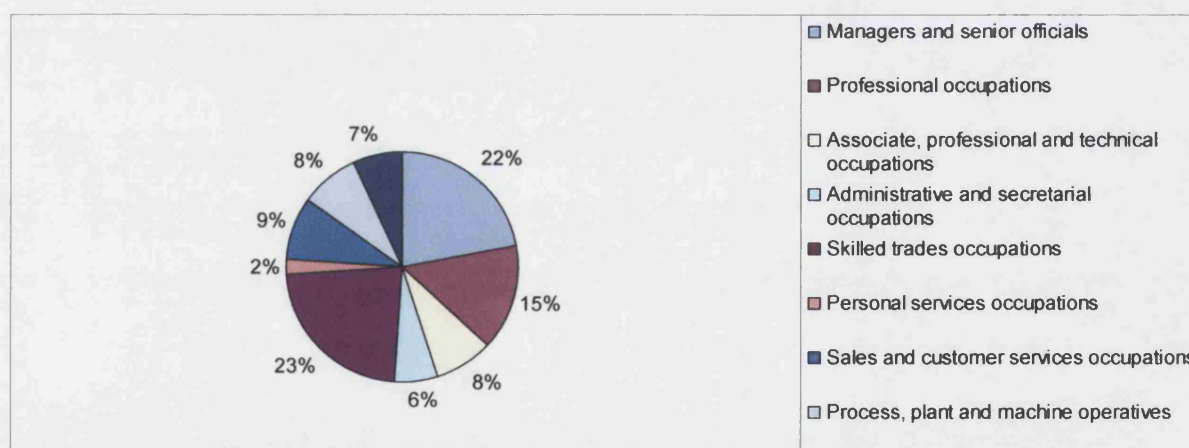
Forty two per cent of all refugee respondents in this survey held qualifications on arrival in the UK. However, this again varied according to country of origin, with only 8% of respondents from Zimbabwe not holding any qualifications before coming to the UK,

compared with 74% of those from Iraq and 86% from Somalia (the figures compare with 15% of the UK population at the time of the survey)<sup>36</sup>.

In terms of the employment experience of refugees before coming to the UK, 67% of respondents were either in employment or were self-employed before coming to the UK (similar to the percentage of the UK population in employment or self-employment at the time of the survey). Figure 1.4 shows the type of occupation of respondents who were working before coming to the UK<sup>37</sup>. Twenty two per cent were managers and senior officials while 23% were in skilled trade occupations (of which the two largest groups were shopkeepers and farmers). This compares with 15% of people in employment in the UK who were managers and senior officials and 12% who were in skilled trade occupations (based on the LFS during winter 2002/03) (Kirk, 2004).

**Figure 1.5**

**Occupation of refugee respondents who were working before coming to the UK<sup>1</sup>, in research by Kirk**



**N= 1,070**

<sup>1</sup>Excludes cases where no response was given.

Source: Kirk, 2004 (Table 2.4: 15)

Despite the diversity of refugees' education and employment backgrounds, this appears to have limited impact on labour market outcomes in the UK. Although refugees may hold

<sup>36</sup> Due to insufficient information given by over a third of those respondents who held qualifications, analysis of the level of qualifications held was considered unreliable by the researchers.

<sup>37</sup> The occupation respondents gave was classified by the researchers using the UK Standard Occupational Classification (Office for National Statistics).

professional or technical qualifications and work experience on arrival in the UK, their skills may have little bearing on their success in finding work. With regard to the London survey, whose sample (of 236 refugees) comprised largely skilled and qualified refugees and asylum seekers (91% had a degree or professional or technical qualification), respondents with previous qualifications and work experience were no more likely than others to have found employment in the UK (London Research Centre, 1999). This appears to be partly related to the difficulties faced by refugees in getting their qualifications and work experience recognised in the UK (Shiferaw & Hagos, 2002), as well as English language barriers referred to previously. As noted by Richmond, although a global market has emerged for professionals, managers, information technology experts and scientists in all fields, the skills of highly qualified migrants and refugees are severely under-utilised due to professional association barriers to full recognition of qualifications obtained outside the UK (Richmond, 2002).

Only a minority of refugees with qualifications appear to go through the process of trying to get them recognised in the UK (Bloch, 2002b; Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service, 2002). Reasons for not doing so vary. Lack of evidence of qualifications appears to particularly affect refugees who may not have or be able to obtain copies of certificates (Bloch, 2002b). A lack of comprehensive information and advice on re-qualification routes into the teaching profession was found by one specialist provider to be a barrier amongst refugees with teaching experience, with respondents referring to the difficulties of deciphering lots of different information and names of a range of agencies to contact (Refugees Into Jobs b, n.d). The length of time required to re-qualify and the costs involved have also been identified as inhibiting refugees from making use of their existing qualifications (Africa Educational Trust, 2002; Shiferaw & Hagos, 2002).

Even regarding qualifications and experience within unregulated professions, which do not require re-qualification, there appears to be the perception (amongst refugees) that British employers are sceptical about any qualifications and experience not acquired in the UK. In a survey carried out by Stopforth (based on a sample of 610 refugees drawn from the client base of two organisations providing advice and guidance services), only 20% of respondents thought that previous qualifications were either essential or very important in finding work, whereas 60% considered qualifications obtained in the UK to be essential or very important (Stopforth, 2002). Similarly, only 10% considered work experience before coming to the UK to be essential or very important, while 50% of respondents considered

experience of paid work in the UK to be essential or very important for successfully finding work in the UK.

### **Participation in education and training in the UK**

Refugees' perceptions of the importance of education and training obtained in the UK correspond with research which has indicated the positive influence of participation in UK-based education and training on employment. In Bloch's research, 67% of refugees who had previously participated in training in the UK were in employment compared with 25% of refugees who had not participated in UK-based training (Bloch, 2002b). However, although participation in training was positively associated with employment, the type of training was not always related to the type of employment taken up, and, as noted by Bloch, it was not clear whether training in itself led to employment. The influence of the type and level of qualifications and training obtained in the UK on the success of refugees in finding employment is unclear, in part because of the lack of data on the long-term employment outcomes of refugees. Shiferaw and Hagos found that refugees who had obtained graduate degrees in the UK (primarily those who arrived in the UK when relatively young) fared better in finding employment, while those who had obtained post-graduate degrees in the UK were not necessarily any more successful in finding employment or employment related to their qualifications (Shiferaw & Hagos, 2002). Stopworth found that refugees with a UK degree or postgraduate qualification and advanced level English had the highest rates of regular employment (Stopforth, 2002). Those with higher qualifications before coming to the UK were also the most likely to obtain higher qualifications in the UK. Regarding the influence of UK qualifications on the type of work refugees are able to access, Bloch found there to be an association between the levels of pay of refugees and the attainment of UK qualifications. Having a UK higher-level qualification (a first degree or post-graduate qualification from a UK university), increased the level of earnings of respondents substantially (Bloch, 2002b).

This compares with the findings of wider research on the importance of education and training to employment outcomes. Individuals with no qualifications are much less likely to be in work than those with higher-level qualifications. Green and Owen<sup>38</sup> indicate that fewer than three in four men in England (aged 25-49) with no qualifications are in

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<sup>38</sup> Using data from the 2001 Census.

employment, compared with around nine in ten of those with higher-level qualifications<sup>39</sup> (Green & Owen, 2006). For females, the respective shares are around one in two and four in five. There is evidence to suggest that only the attainment of qualifications at Level 3 and above has any real impact on the employment and earnings of adults, implying a need for education and training that leads to a higher level of qualifications in order to improve labour market outcomes (McIntosh, 2003)<sup>40</sup>.

Regarding refugees' perceptions of the value of participation in education and training in the UK, Bloch found that most respondents who were currently or had previously participated in education or training in the UK considered this to be useful, in terms of gaining skills, knowledge and experience (41 out of 47 respondents) (Bloch, 2002b). The majority of those who had not participated in training also indicated that they would be interested in training, and the majority who had done some training were also interested in additional training. A strong demand for participation in training amongst refugees was also found in other research (Charlaff et al., 2004). The main barriers identified by Bloch to participation in training<sup>41</sup> included a lack of information available about training, as well as not having an adequate level of proficiency in English. Eighteen per cent of refugee respondents (41 respondents) were not doing training because they did not know what was available, while an additional 7% (15 respondents) referred to nothing suitable being available and 6% (13 respondents) to not knowing what they were entitled to. A lack of childcare or childcare responsibilities were also cited by (predominantly female) respondents (Bloch, 2002b). As emphasised in relation to ESOL provision, this suggests a need for information, advice and guidance about education and training (as well as childcare facilities) in order to support refugees with the process of finding work, and finding work appropriate to their skills and interests.

### **Participation in work placements/voluntary work**

There is some research which has indicated the value placed by refugees on participation in work placements and voluntary work in order to acquire skills, contacts and/or work experience in the UK that might facilitate access to paid employment (Charlaff et al., 2004; Refugees Into Jobs a, n.d; Working Lives Research Institute, 2005). In the research by

<sup>39</sup> Higher-level qualifications comprise qualifications at NVQ levels 4 and 5 (first degrees, higher degrees and certain professional qualifications).

<sup>40</sup> See Glossary for reference to the qualifications framework in the UK.

<sup>41</sup> Based on focus groups with refugee community organisations, employment and training providers (comprising 29 respondents), and the survey of refugees.



Bloch, 29% of respondents had participated in voluntary work, while more than half of those who spoke English fluently had done so (Bloch, 2002b). Most had worked with other refugees and asylum seekers, indicating the importance of voluntary work within refugee community organisations. Indeed, the majority of those who were in voluntary work at the time of the survey were primarily doing it ‘to help refugees or the community’. Only two were doing it to find a job. Other research has found refugees’ motivations for participating in voluntary work to be more mixed, with practical support in finding paid work being one motivation in terms of gaining experience, building confidence, English language practice, and gaining contacts and references (Stopforth, 2002). Research on the experiences of refugee women volunteers found that while voluntary work was not a guarantee of employment, it provided access to information, advice and guidance on job opportunities, training, contacts, as well as work experience and references (Working Lives Research Institute, 2005). However, the lack of availability of a broader range of vocational work placements for refugees outside of the refugee voluntary and community sector has been emphasised as limiting the benefits of work placements as routes into employment, and into a wider range of types of jobs (Phillimore et al., 2003; Stopforth, 2002; Working Lives Research Institute, 2005).

### 1.3.3 Information, advice and guidance on employment

In addition to English language provision and other education and training, the need for refugees to be able to access information, advice and guidance on employment has been emphasised. Bloch found that information about where to find job vacancies and general information about methods of job seeking was mentioned (in addition to ESOL) most frequently by refugees regarding the of type of service provision they thought would be most useful to them to find the type of job that they would like (Bloch, 2002b). However, access to advice and guidance that is relevant to refugees’ skills and interests is also of concern. Research carried out by Refugees Into Jobs (a specialist provider of employment services) on the experiences of refugees with backgrounds in engineering emphasised the difficulties of gaining access to *relevant* advice and guidance (Refugees Into Jobs a, n.d). Advice and guidance on how to apply for work in this field (given that no re-qualification route exists) was considered vital by respondents. However, they faced the difficulties of knowing which organisations to contact amongst a range of different providers, and also found conflicting information and advice from different organisations to be an issue. This draws attention to the question of access to appropriate information, advice and guidance

on employment, according to the different fields of employment related to the skills and interests of refugees.

#### **1.4 Employment service provision**

Publicly-funded employment services form a central part of welfare provision in the UK and other industrialised countries. Thuy et al. describe the main functions of publicly-funded employment services in industrialised countries to include the following (Thuy et al., 2001). First, they provide job-broking services, which involves the matching of unemployed individuals to job vacancies (including the provision of information on job vacancies through computerised self-help services, as well as more direct assistance with the process of looking for and applying to vacancies). Second, they administer programmes to assist those unemployed into work, including job search assistance programmes (which involve training and help with CV writing, job applications and interview skills), education and training programmes, and direct job creation programmes (e.g. subsidised employment). A third function involves the administration of welfare benefits for those unemployed. In the UK, Jobcentre Plus is the public employment service. There are, additionally, a range of organisations within the third sector that deliver employment-related services for unemployed groups, including specialist services targeted at refugees.

This section refers to the organisation of employment service provision, including statutory provision through the public employment service (Jobcentre Plus) and specialist provision through third sector providers that is targeted at refugees. Research on refugees' use and experiences of provision is then considered.

##### **1.4.1 Jobcentre Plus**

Jobcentre Plus is an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions. It was established by the New Labour government in 2002, bringing together the former Employment Service and the former Benefits Agency, with the aim of making it fully operational across Britain by 2006. Its administrative structure comprises nine regions in England, in addition to Scotland and Wales, with management of local Jobcentre Plus offices, or 'Jobcentres', and the contracting of services being devolved to districts at the sub-regional level. Jobcentre Plus acts as both a purchaser and provider of services to

unemployed and ‘economically inactive’<sup>42</sup> individuals. It is responsible for the initial intake of clients (referred to as ‘customers’ by Jobcentre Plus), involving the assessment of eligibility for unemployment benefit (Jobseekers Allowance) or other income-related benefits (e.g. Income Support) and payment of those benefits. It also provides information on job vacancies, which can be accessed through computer-based ‘Jobpoints’ in local Jobcentres, through its website and through telephone services, and advice and guidance to those seeking employment through Jobcentre Plus advisers (Jobcentre Plus, 2003).

An unemployed person making an initial claim for Jobseekers Allowance is required to participate in a ‘Work-Focused Interview’ with a Jobcentre Plus adviser. During this interview the adviser is responsible for discussing the type of work the client is looking for and providing information on job vacancies and how to find work; as well as information on types of programmes available through Jobcentre Plus in order to address barriers to employment (Coleman et al., 2004; Jobcentre Plus, 2003). A ‘Jobseekers Agreement’ is drawn up, which refers to the types of work a client is looking for, the job search activities the client agrees to carry out, and any support Jobcentre Plus will provide. The client is then required to attend a fortnightly meeting to confirm eligibility for Jobseekers Allowance (that he/she is available to take up and is actively seeking work), and must also meet with an adviser again for a Work-Focused Interview after three months, six months, and then every subsequent six months, to discuss progress in looking for work and any assistance and Jobcentre Plus services required (Coleman et al., 2004)<sup>43</sup>.

In addition, Jobcentre Plus is responsible for administering a range of programmes to assist its clients into work, that are generally delivered by contracted providers, such as the New Deal programmes, Action Teams for Jobs and Employment Zones<sup>44</sup>. Under the New Deal programmes<sup>45</sup>, clients are assigned a Jobcentre Plus adviser, whom they are able to meet regularly to receive assistance with looking for work and with addressing barriers to work. The adviser is responsible for referring the client to other types of provision available under the programme to address barriers to employment. This includes job search training (e.g.

<sup>42</sup> Those who are claiming income-related benefits such as Income Support (e.g. lone parents with children under 16 years), those claiming disability-related benefits, or partners of benefits claimants.

<sup>43</sup> All non-Jobseekers Allowance clients making a claim for other benefits (e.g. Income Support) are also required to take part in a Work-Focused Interview at the outset of claiming benefits to discuss work prospects, barriers to work, information about in-work benefits, New Deal programmes and training (Coleman et al. 2004).

<sup>44</sup> See Glossary regarding Jobcentre Plus provision.

<sup>45</sup> e.g. the New Deal for Lone Parents, the New Deal for Young People and the New Deal 25 Plus. See Glossary for details of these programmes.

help with CV writing and interview skills), ESOL provision, work placements or other training. Participation in the New Deal 25 Plus is compulsory for Jobcentre Plus clients aged 25 and over who have been claiming Jobseekers Allowance for 18 out of 24 months. In some cases, referral to the New Deal programmes can be made immediately if this is considered appropriate under early eligibility criteria. This is the case for refugees (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a).

Jobcentre Plus district offices (within defined geographic areas) are responsible for planning the local delivery of New Deal and other programmes within their district, and contracting providers through competitive tendering. These providers include private sector organisations, some of which operate on a national basis and some on a regional or Jobcentre Plus district basis in the delivery of Jobcentre Plus provision. Third sector organisations, including those with charitable status, are also contracted for the delivery of Jobcentre Plus provision, as are some 'hybrid' organisations that are public-private partnerships (Davies, 2006). There is, however, very limited information regarding what proportion of contracted provision is delivered by the private sector compared with the third sector (Davies, 2006). It is, moreover, difficult to distinguish between the type of third sector organisations that are contracted, in part because the 'third sector' itself comprises a range of organisational forms (see section 1.4.2 below). Davies notes that this includes a number of large, national charities, such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Salvation Army. However, the extent to which smaller voluntary and community organisations, that provide specialist services for particular groups, are involved is unclear (Davies, 2006).

In addition to relationships with contracted providers, Jobcentre Plus is involved in a range of local, regional and national level partnerships with other agencies, aimed at co-ordinating the planning and delivery of related services. This includes working in partnership with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), which has been responsible for the funding of post-16 education and training provision in England since 2001<sup>46</sup>, and for the funding of ESOL provision through further education colleges. The LSC similarly operates through nine regional offices in England and, at the sub-regional level, through local LSC partnership teams. Joint planning between Jobcentre Plus and the LSC has been a requirement since April 2004, and takes place at the local level in the context of Local

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<sup>46</sup> The LSC took over the role of the former Further Education Funding Council and the Training and Enterprise Councils.

Strategic Partnerships. Other 'discretionary' partners that vary by local area may also include third sector organisations that work with specific client groups (Jobcentre Plus, 2004).

### **1.4.2 Specialist employment services for refugees**

While Jobcentre Plus is responsible for the provision of statutory employment services, there are, in addition, a range of organisations within the third sector that provide employment-related services to support unemployed people, including services targeted at refugees. The 'third sector' refers to a range of types of organisations, including voluntary and community organisations, other not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises (see Kendall, 2000; Nicholls, 2006; Nyssens et al., 2006). These organisations derive their funding from a mix of public, private and charitable sources, or through their own commercial activities. The term 'third sector' is used here to refer to voluntary and community organisations as well as other not-for profit organisations and project-based initiatives (see Aiken & Spear, 2005, for further discussion on third sector providers of employment services).

With regard to organisations that provide services for refugees specifically, these include primarily refugee voluntary and community organisations. While some refugee voluntary and community organisations may perform a number of different functions oriented towards the welfare of refugees (e.g. advocacy work), of which employment-related services is one area of their activities, others may focus entirely on the delivery of employment-related services. Other third sector organisations that deliver employment-related services for unemployed groups more generally are also involved in the provision of some specialist services for refugees. A variety of specialist employment-related services are also provided on a project basis, which may be developed in partnership with statutory agencies (e.g. further education colleges) or local authorities. There is, however, no centralised data on all the different organisations and initiatives that deliver specialist employment services for refugees as their principal area of provision or part of their provision (National Refugee Integration Forum Employment and Training Sub-Group, 2006).

Specialist providers deliver a range of different types of services aimed at assisting refugees into employment, which include the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment and training; ESOL provision; education and training programmes; work

placements; and mentoring schemes (National Refugee Integration Forum Employment and Training Sub-Group, 2006). The terms ‘specialist provision’ or ‘specialist provider’ are used in this research to refer to employment-related services, and providers of those services, that target refugees. This includes both providers that only deliver services for refugees, as well as providers that deliver some services targeted at refugees in addition to services for other client groups.

Many refugee specialist services have developed partly in response to the scale and complexity of needs amongst refugees, and partly in relation to opportunities for funding (Carey-Wood, 1997). Carey-Wood refers to the following rationale for refugee specialist services (Carey-Wood, 1997). First, refugees have a range of needs, such as English language learning and professional re-qualification, that mainstream services may not fully understand or cater for. Second, locally defined specialist services may be more responsive to individual needs, and can provide assistance with accessing mainstream services or providing additional services (e.g. English language courses tailored to refugees). Differences in terms of understanding about UK institutions, including the labour market, may require the provision of information, advice and guidance that is oriented to refugee groups. One of the main difficulties facing specialist provision concerns the nature of its funding. The development of services has depended upon the availability of various sources of short-term public funding, which may be targeted at particular services, such as employment, particular groups or geographic areas. Services have also largely depended on sources of charitable funding, which are extremely diverse (Carey-Wood, 1997). As noted by Carey-Wood, “the short-term nature of this funding assumes that initiatives which have proved themselves will then be able to access mainstream longer-term funding”, although there may be considerable constraints on access to mainstream public funding (Carey-Wood, 1997: 7).

Current sources of public funding of specialist employment-related initiatives include Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, particular programmes administered by the Home Office, regeneration funding (e.g. New Deal for Communities), funding through local authorities and Regional Development Agencies; as well as European funding such as the European Social Fund, the European Refugee Fund and EQUAL (National Refugee Integration Forum Employment and Training Sub-Group, 2006)<sup>47</sup>. Different funding streams all have different priorities and criteria in terms of assessing applications, and

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<sup>47</sup> See Glossary for reference to these sources of funding.

different systems for monitoring and making payments to funded initiatives. Evaluations of specialist initiatives are carried out separately, if at all, making it difficult to assess the impact of these services (National Refugee Integration Forum Employment and Training Sub-Group, 2006). Moreover, there has been limited research that has explored the impact of sources of public funding on the operation of specialist providers and their ability to respond to the needs of refugees.

### **1.4.3 The Refugee Employment Strategy**

In 2000 the government set up a National Refugee Integration Forum (NRIF), involving representations from different government departments, statutory agencies and voluntary organisations to coordinate the development and implementation of refugee integration initiatives, under its broader strategy for refugee integration (Home Office, 2005c). A sub-group on Employment and Training was established as part of the Forum. With a view to addressing the barriers to employment facing refugees, the government launched a first national strategy for refugee employment in 2005, 'Working to Rebuild Lives: A Refugee Employment Strategy' (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a), the implementation of which was to be monitored by the NRIF sub-group. Key aims of the employment strategy include: increasing refugees' use of Jobcentre Plus; making it more responsive to the needs of refugees; as well as supporting greater partnership with the third sector as providers of specialist employment services for refugees.

Ensuring that employment service provision addresses the needs of refugees is referred to in terms of two main strands of the strategy. First, it refers to ensuring that local partnership arrangements that exist at the Jobcentre Plus district level "respond to the needs of refugees" (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a: 11). This is defined as potentially involving refugee and community groups, the voluntary sector, further education providers, local authorities and employers, through partnership arrangements with Jobcentre Plus. Second, the involvement of specialist providers in terms of the referral by Jobcentre Plus of refugee clients with higher-skilled professional backgrounds to specialist sources of advice and guidance is also seen as crucial to address the diverse employment needs of refugees (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a: 13). In relation to this strategy, Jobcentre Plus has developed its own Operational Framework, which provides information and guidance for staff on supporting refugee clients, with the aim of providing refugees "with a responsive quality service that equips them with the skills they need to get jobs"

(Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a: 34). The stated aim is for Jobcentre Plus to respond to the needs of refugees through “a consistent standard of support that meets the needs and expectations of these customers [...] helping them to overcome barriers and progress into employment” (Jobcentre Plus, 2005: 7). In addition, working with voluntary and community organisations is seen as central to better understanding the needs of local refugee populations, and developing ways in which employment provision can meet those needs. This involves Jobcentre Plus responding to the needs of refugees through supporting the development of collaboration with third sector organisations.

Within this context, some initiatives are currently being developed by individual Jobcentre Plus offices and districts regarding the implementation of the refugee employment strategy (Jobcentre Plus, 2005). Examples of local initiatives include the involvement of staff from refugee organisations in the provision of information at Jobcentres (Jobcentre Plus, 2005); and creating a new role for Jobcentre Plus advisers to act as ‘Refugee Champions’ in providing support specifically to refugee clients, which has been implemented in Birmingham (McCabe et al., 2006). Jobcentre Plus has also developed a Nursing and Healthcare Employer Unit, which provides guidance to Jobcentre Plus advisers to help refugee health workers regarding entry to this area of employment in the UK (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a). As set out in the Home Office Refugee Integration Strategy, a Refugee Integration Loan is proposed, which will provide an interest-free loan for those with refugee status for ‘integration’ related activities such as vocational training, where provision is not available through Jobcentre Plus (Home Office, 2005c)<sup>48</sup>. It should be noted, therefore, that policy changes in specialist services targeted at refugees have been proposed or are currently being developed.

#### **1.4.4 Refugees’ access to employment service provision**

Access to Jobcentre Plus is primarily related to the process of an unemployed person making a welfare benefit claim, although all individuals seeking work are entitled to access information on job vacancies through Jobcentre Plus, irrespective of claiming benefits. With regard to refugees’ access, information on Jobcentre Plus and its services is sent by post when a person is granted refugee status. Once refugee status is granted, there is a period of 28 days in which the transfer from NASS accommodation and financial support to mainstream benefits has to be made. Contact with Jobcentre Plus would therefore be

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<sup>48</sup> The loan will be re-paid by deductions from benefits or by direct payments starting six weeks after it is issued.



expected to take place at this stage for those needing to claim benefits. As referred to previously, after first making a claim for Jobseekers Allowance, a meeting is arranged between a Jobcentre Plus adviser and the client in which the following topics may be discussed: a client's work prospects; their work experience and qualifications; ways of finding work; types of work; specific job vacancies; relevant Jobcentre Plus programmes; education or training courses; training they could receive with basic skills (literacy and numeracy); and in-work benefits (Coleman et al., 2004).

Refugees' access to other Jobcentre Plus provision is therefore dependent on being given information on relevant provision by advisers, and referral to that provision. Until recently, refugee status was not recorded by Jobcentre Plus on its Labour Market System database (a personal file for each client of Jobcentre Plus is created on this database, which records some individual characteristics such as age, gender, disabilities, lone parent status). There has, therefore, been limited data on refugees' access to and use of particular types of Jobcentre Plus programmes and services. However, in April 2004 a 'marker' for refugee status (through a client's voluntary identification) was introduced, in order to begin to monitor the number of refugee clients and participation in particular programmes (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a). This data has since begun to be recorded, although appears to be incomplete due to inconsistencies in being recorded by advisers (and is voluntary for clients) (McCabe et al., 2006).

With regard to specialist providers of employment services, given the range of organisations and initiatives and their non-statutory nature, it is less clear as to how refugees find out about these providers, and the extent to which specialist services are accessed. According to the survey carried out by Bloch, refugees appear to rely heavily on social networks (family and friends) in finding employment in the UK: 39% of refugees who were working or who had worked in the past found their current or most recent job through family or friends (Bloch, 2002b). Only 11% had done so through statutory agencies (including Jobcentre Plus). This was despite a general demand amongst respondents for employment-related assistance, including information about where to find job vacancies and general information about methods of job seeking. While use of community organisations was indicated by a very limited number of respondents, use of specialist providers more generally was not referred to in the research.

### 1.4.5 Experiences of employment service provision

There has been limited research which has explored refugees' experiences as clients of employment service providers and their perceptions of the responsiveness of providers to their needs, including in relation to the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment; and the provision of or referral to other appropriate services such as ESOL, training and work placements. This section explores the findings of existing research; this primarily focuses on Jobcentre Plus.

#### Information, advice and guidance

The findings of the research by Bloch draw attention to the limited knowledge amongst refugees of the types of provision available to them through Jobcentre Plus. Just under half of respondents who were looking for work had heard of any Jobcentre Plus schemes to support people into work (including the New Deal, Work Trials, Work Based Learning for Adults, Career Development Loans<sup>49</sup>) (Bloch, 2002b). Awareness of provision appeared to be associated with length of residence and English proficiency: 62% who had been in the UK for less than five years were unaware of any schemes, compared with 24% who had been in the UK for a longer period. Seventy three per cent who spoke English slightly or not at all lacked awareness, compared with 38% who were fluent/spoke English fairly well. This raises the issue of refugees' early access to information, including access for those with English language needs. Research by McCabe et al. on refugees' experiences of Jobcentre Plus within Birmingham<sup>50</sup> noted that refugee respondents considered Jobcentre Plus staff to have substantial workload pressures and to be unable to allocate sufficient time to provide advice and guidance to address their needs, which was particularly of concern for those with limited English proficiency (McCabe et al., 2006). There appear, therefore, to be questions regarding the adequacy of the level of advice and guidance available to refugees through Jobcentre Plus.

The findings of other research also raise questions in relation to the appropriateness of information, advice and guidance through Jobcentre Plus. Research by Phillimore et al. examined refugees' access to and experiences of ESOL, education, training and employment-related provision within the Birmingham and Solihull region (Phillimore et al., 2003). With regard to experiences of Jobcentre Plus, refugees referred to a lack of

<sup>49</sup> See Glossary for reference to Jobcentre Plus provision.

<sup>50</sup> Four focus groups were carried out in which 37 refugee respondents participated.

recognition by Jobcentre Plus advisers of their qualifications and previous employment experience. Some respondents felt that they had been discouraged by Jobcentre Plus advisers from considering their career options and were steered instead towards low-skilled jobs, receiving no information about vocational training or re-qualification routes. There was also the view amongst respondents that Jobcentre Plus did not have the expertise to advise those with professional backgrounds on career and training routes, while there also appeared to be a reliance on family and friends amongst respondents as sources of information on education and training. Similarly, research by McCabe et al. on refugees' experiences of Jobcentre Plus within Birmingham found a perceived gap between the job vacancies available through Jobcentre Plus and the (higher) skill backgrounds of refugee respondents (McCabe et al., 2006). A lack of consistency in the advice and support received through contact with Jobcentre Plus staff was also indicated in terms of seeing different staff and advisers during each visit to a Jobcentre (McCabe et al., 2006).

Research carried out by Hudson et al. has explored the perceptions and experiences of ethnic minority clients of Jobcentre Plus (Hudson et al., 2006)<sup>51</sup>, which included some refugees and other migrants within its sample of ethnic minority clients (although refugees were not identified as a specific focus of the research). They found that clients' levels of satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services were shaped primarily by access to an adviser on the New Deal programmes, suggesting the importance of access to an adequate level of advice and guidance through more regular contact with advisers<sup>52</sup>. Clients who had joined the New Deal for Lone Parents programme, through which they had regular contact with an adviser, expressed greater levels of satisfaction, compared with clients who had not yet joined a New Deal programme and as a result did not have access to a New Deal adviser, who expressed the most negative views about their interactions with other Jobcentre Plus staff<sup>53</sup>. The lack of time dedicated to clients and the lack of help provided by staff in the period before entering the New Deal (at which point clients are assigned an adviser) was found to have been particularly negative for those clients who had more complex needs and

<sup>51</sup> In terms of ethnicity, the sample included white individuals in addition to clients from different minority ethnic groups.

<sup>52</sup> Advisers on the New Deal programmes have greater time available for meetings with clients (Hudson et al., 2006).

<sup>53</sup> Lone parents are immediately able to join the New Deal for Lone Parents from the point of first claiming benefits (the programme is voluntary). By contrast, young people are eligible and are required to join the New Deal for Young People after six months of claiming benefits. Those over 25 years are required to join the New Deal 25 Plus after 18 months. Some groups considered to be more disadvantaged, including refugees, are entitled to join these programmes at an earlier stage. Clients who are not yet enrolled on a New Deal programme are still required to meet with Jobcentre Plus staff in the context of confirming their continued eligibility for benefits every two weeks, and with an adviser every six months for mandatory Work-Focused Interviews (Coleman et al., 2004).

were not looking simply for lower-skilled jobs, more frequently advertised through Jobcentre Plus computer-based services. These included ethnic minority clients with qualifications obtained outside the UK (amongst whom may, or may not, have included refugees).

Amongst clients who had access to an adviser on the New Deal, the one-to-one adviser support was highly valued. Satisfaction with adviser support was related to the extent to which clients felt that their needs were assessed by advisers, and the extent to which advisers assisted clients in addressing their needs. Clients found the services of Jobcentre Plus helpful where they considered their needs and barriers to work to have been correctly identified by advisers, and where appropriate support was provided. Amongst those who found their interactions with advisers not to be helpful, a lack of time given by advisers and a lack of interest in addressing their needs were referred to (which the researchers suggested may be a result of the heavy caseloads of advisers). In addition, not receiving appropriate help was referred to: clients felt they did not receive help that took account of their individual needs or their work aspirations.

Wider research regarding the experiences of other client groups has similarly emphasised tensions between clients' work aspirations and the assistance received by Jobcentre Plus advisers. Research carried out by Ritchie, which explored the perceptions and experiences of participants in the New Deal for Young People, found that most cases of dissatisfaction amongst participants regarding their meetings with New Deal advisers occurred when clients felt that their needs and aspirations were not being recognised by their advisers (Ritchie, 2000). Finn found that participants in the New Deal for Young People, while supportive of the assistance they were given by an adviser, emphasised that their motivation was to find a "reasonable job", defined as one that would offer employment security and opportunities for enhancing skills and earnings (Finn, 2003). They believed that they should be able to choose what work they did, as opposed to being expected to take short-term work or any "crap job" by advisers (Finn, 2003: 714). While some felt they had been pressured to consider jobs they did not want, most respondents emphasised that their advisers had taken their interests and career aims into account. Regarding clients with higher-skilled backgrounds, Nativel et al. found that these type of clients tended to perceive New Deal advisers as unresponsive, "if not irrelevant" to their needs (Nativel et al., 2002). This underlines the importance of individual aspirations and motivations in relation to employment when considering perceptions of the relative responsiveness of employment-

related services, such as the provision of information, advice and guidance, to the needs of clients, including refugees.

### **English language and other education and training provision**

Regarding participation in ESOL, job search training, and other training provision available through Jobcentre Plus, Bloch found there to be a low level of participation amongst refugees (only 13 of 400 respondents had participated in a scheme<sup>54</sup>) (Bloch, 2002b).

In terms of access to ESOL provision, Phillimore et al. found that refugees considered restrictions on studying full-time to be among the barriers to accessing ESOL provision (Phillimore et al., 2003). With regard to referrals through Jobcentre Plus in Birmingham to ESOL provision, research by McCabe et al. found refugee respondents to perceive provision to be inadequate, in terms of the intensity of ESOL provision and the lack of 'on the job' ESOL training and opportunities for work placements (McCabe et al., 2006).

In the research by Bloch, of those refugees who had participated in a training scheme, views about whether it was helpful varied, although most found the schemes to be neither helpful nor unhelpful, raising further questions regarding the appropriateness of the types of provision available through Jobcentre Plus. With regard to refugees and other migrants with English language needs, Schellekens has emphasised the need for vocational training in New Deal programmes, and not just general ESOL provision, in order to improve progression routes to employment (Schellekens, 2001). Staff of statutory agencies (including Jobcentre Plus and Connexions<sup>55</sup>) similarly felt that the biggest gap in service provision in addressing the difficulties faced by refugees was ESOL provision with a vocational focus (Phillimore et al., 2003).

Regarding training provision available through the New Deal programmes, Hudson et al. found there to be mixed views of the appropriateness of this provision amongst ethnic minority participants in the New Deal Programmes, which related to the type of training provision available, variability in the quality of provision, and the needs and aspirations of clients (Hudson et al., 2006). Courses available under the initial Gateway period of the programme that offered job search training and assistance were valued in particular by

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<sup>54</sup> Including Work Based Learning for Adults and the New Deal.

<sup>55</sup> Connexions provides advice and guidance to 13 to 19 year olds in England.

clients who were new to the labour market, including those who were recent migrants to the UK. However, amongst recent migrants, it was more difficult for some to benefit from this provision because of their English language learning needs. Although these respondents were participating in ESOL classes, they felt that they did not have sufficient English language proficiency to be able to start looking for work, and therefore job search training was less appropriate to their needs.

Amongst clients who were mainly New Deal for Young People and New Deal for Lone Parents participants, Hudson et al. also found that some had been referred to work-related courses and placements in particular fields, which they felt had improved their employment prospects (Hudson et al., 2006). By contrast, others, particularly those on the New Deal 25 Plus, felt that there was a lack of choice in the training provision available and were more negative about their experiences of provision. The researchers indicated that this may be due to less emphasis being placed on training and more on “speedier job entry” in the New Deal 25 Plus programme. In terms of the type of training, respondents participating in training were most likely to be involved in IT, retail or office skills, which seemed to be more readily available through the New Deal. However, those seeking training in skilled manual work (e.g. construction and carpentry) found the availability of these courses to be limited. Clients who wanted to pursue more specialist types of work were least likely to find the training they were looking for through the New Deal. Indeed, clients with higher educational qualifications considered the New Deal provision available to be inappropriate to their needs. This included migrants to the UK who had work experience and qualifications from outside the UK who felt that they were encouraged to take up unskilled or unrelated work by advisers and were unable to access types of provision (such as re-qualification programmes) that might enable them to utilise their skills. With regard to refugees, this raises questions concerning both the availability of and referrals to appropriate types of provision related to refugees’ skills backgrounds and employment interests.

### **Experiences of specialist providers**

Despite the emphasis on the role of specialist providers within the third sector in meeting the employment-related needs of refugees (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a), there has been very little research which has considered refugees’ experiences of specialist provision. Some specialist providers have carried out their own research with regard to the

needs of their clients (e.g. Refugees Into Jobs a, n.d; Refugees Into Jobs b, n.d). There has, however, been very limited academic research which has explored refugees' perceptions and experiences of specialist providers (in addition to Jobcentre Plus) with regard to the question of responsiveness to their needs.

### **Providers' experiences of addressing the needs of refugees**

In addition to refugees' experiences and perspectives, very little research has explored the perspectives of providers delivering services to refugees, and the constraints they may face in responding to the needs of refugees. Phillimore et al. explored the views of staff of statutory agencies (including Jobcentre Plus) as well as some non-statutory agencies in terms of delivering ESOL, education, training and employment services to refugees (Phillimore et al., 2003). Staff of statutory agencies felt that advisers within their organisation and other statutory providers did not have the resources (time) to deal with the range of barriers that prevented refugee clients from finding work. There was the view that a lack of long-term planning for the needs of refugees would inhibit statutory organisations from meeting their Public Service Agreement targets, which was hoped might prompt more resources and planning (Public Service targets are further referred to in Chapter Two, section 2.2.4). The inadequacy of the amount of time available to Jobcentre Plus advisers to meet with refugee clients, particularly in initial interviews with clients (which were supposed to be no longer than 40 minutes), was emphasised by Jobcentre Plus advisers in research by McCabe et al. (McCabe et al., 2006). Current performance targets – to place clients in a job and to carry out interviews with clients within the required timeframe – meant that advisers were working under tight pressure<sup>56</sup>.

Other constraints on responding to the needs of refugees include the inadequacy of ESOL provision: Jobcentre Plus advisers in the research by McCabe et al. referred to limitations to the availability of places on courses and to the intensity of courses in terms of the number of hours and duration. Restrictions on the participation of benefits claimants in full-time provision were also noted (McCabe et al., 2006). A lack of co-ordination between statutory and non-statutory organisations has also been indicated, which providers in research by Phillimore et al. felt could be resolved through better signposting of different services and a

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<sup>56</sup> The performance targets of Jobcentre Plus will be discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.3) and are presented in Appendix 2.

central source of information for both organisations and clients (Phillimore et al., 2003)<sup>57</sup>. There was the perception that refugees needed to be able to make informed choices about the range of programmes and assistance offered by both statutory and non-statutory organisations. The ability of organisations to network in this context was seen as vital. McCabe et al. similarly noted a lack of knowledge amongst Jobcentre Plus advisers about the range of refugee community and voluntary organisations and support available (McCabe et al., 2006).

With regard to specialist providers specifically, while there has been much policy emphasis on their role in providing additional support to refugees in the context of the refugee employment strategy, there has been limited research on the extent to which these providers are able to respond to the needs of refugees (McCabe et al., 2006), and factors affecting their responsiveness. Funding issues in terms of the capacity for non-statutory organisations to meet the needs of clients were raised by Phillimore et al., given that unlike the statutory sector these organisations were not connected into recurrent government funding and lacked the capacity to generate income easily, having to compete for ‘small pots of money’ (Phillimore et al., 2003). There has, moreover, generally been very limited conceptual analysis of responsiveness to refugees’ needs and the experiences of both specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus in the delivery of employment-related services to refugees.

## 1.5 Chapter summary and research questions

The literature on refugees and the labour market has emphasised both high levels of unemployment amongst refugees as well as difficulties in accessing types of employment appropriate to the qualifications and experience of refugees. A lack of English language proficiency and a lack of UK-based qualifications and work experience have been emphasised as barriers both to participation in employment and to accessing types of work appropriate to refugees’ skills and interests. This corresponds with refugees’ demands in terms of the type of services that they feel they most need to help them to access employment: including English language and training provision, as well as information advice and guidance on employment (Bloch, 2002b).

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<sup>57</sup> Non-statutory providers in this research comprised 12 organisations (including charities, not-for-profit organisations, private companies and a voluntary organisation) that delivered a range of services such as ESOL, IT skills and job search training.



While previous research has underlined the labour market disadvantage experienced by refugees, there has been limited research which has explored refugees' experiences and perceptions of employment service provision in responding to their needs, including both Jobcentre Plus and specialist providers of employment services. The findings of wider research draw attention to the importance of considering the education and employment backgrounds and work aspirations of clients in terms of their perceptions of the appropriateness of provision and the relative responsiveness of providers to their needs. There is, however, a lack of conceptual analysis of the question of the responsiveness of employment service provision to the needs of unemployed clients, including refugees. This concerns both refugees' experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of provision to their needs and providers' experiences and perceptions of the factors that influence their responsiveness to refugees' needs.

Building on the literature, the research aims to address these empirical and conceptual gaps in relation to the following research questions:

**1. How responsive do refugee clients perceive Jobcentre Plus and specialist providers to be to their needs?**

In terms of the type of employment-related service needs amongst refugees, given the emphasis in existing research on information, advice and guidance on employment, as well as English language and other education and training provision, responsiveness to needs will be explored in relation to these types of services:

- *What are refugees' experiences and perceptions of responsiveness in terms of the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment?*
- *What are their experiences and perceptions of responsiveness to English language and other education and training needs?*

**2. What are the factors that influence the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and specialist providers to the needs of refugees?**

- *How do performance systems affect the responsiveness of providers?*

The following chapter sets out the conceptual context regarding ‘responsiveness’, in relation to which the research questions will be addressed. As will be explored, this encompasses the relationship between performance systems and responsiveness, hence the inclusion of this dimension in the second research question.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM, WELFARE-TO-WORK AND RESPONSIVENESS TO USERS' NEEDS**

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Government proposals on the future of welfare-to-work policy and employment service provision have called for greater responsiveness to the needs of unemployed groups, by tailoring provision to meet individual needs (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006). These proposals relate to a much broader agenda of reform of public services, which emphasises responsiveness to the needs and preferences of users as a central aim (Aberbach & Christensen, 2005; Boyne et al., 2001; Flynn, 2002; Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993b). There has, however, been relatively limited analysis of the concept of 'responsiveness' and limited research that has explored responsiveness in the context of employment service provision, as discussed in Chapter One. This chapter sets out the conceptual context of this research, exploring how responsiveness has been defined in wider policy agendas and in the academic literature on public service reform, before then focusing on employment services specifically.

Section 2.1 examines how the concept of responsiveness has been articulated in policy agendas and in the academic literature. It draws attention to differing relationships of responsiveness whereby, on the one hand, providers must respond directly to the individual needs of the users or consumers of public services, while on the other, they must respond to the demands of public purchasers to whom they are held accountable in the delivery of services. Dimensions of public service reform that have been advocated as mechanisms for greater responsiveness are then explored in section 2.2. These dimensions include the use of quasi-markets; the role of the third sector in a mixed economy of provision; and the use of performance management systems. Possible tensions both within and between these mechanisms are highlighted with regard to responsiveness to users' needs. Section 2.3 then explores the welfare-to-work policy context of employment service provision. It considers the tensions between wider policy imperatives within the welfare-to-work agenda, and a related job outcome-oriented performance system, and the aim of improving responsiveness to the individual needs of those unemployed. The chapter concludes by arguing that there is a need for greater conceptualisation of responsiveness to users' needs in the context of

employment service provision with regard to the performance system in which providers operate and the influence of that system on responsiveness.

## **2.1 Conceptualising responsiveness to users' needs**

This section considers how responsiveness to users' needs has been defined in the context of the reform of public service provision.

### **2.1.1 The context of public service reform**

The welfare state in the UK and other industrialised countries has undergone fundamental changes over the past 20 years. In the UK, this has led to a shift from a primarily state-oriented to a more market-oriented and mixed economy system of welfare provision, involving public, private and third sector organisations in the delivery of publicly-funded services<sup>58</sup>. These transformations have taken place in the context of wider social and economic change in which the ability of the post Second World War welfare state to respond to welfare needs was challenged (Alcock, 2003). This challenge concerned both the ability of the state to respond to growing demand for welfare provision in terms of the capacity of public expenditure to expand to meet welfare needs, as well as its ability to effectively respond to those needs (Alcock, 2003). Within this context, quasi-market and private sector management approaches to the provision of welfare, referred to as the New Public Management (Ferlie et al., 1996; Hood, 1991), were adopted by the Conservative government in the UK during the 1980s and early 1990s, leading to the introduction of wide-reaching reforms across public services (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993a). These reforms all involved similar changes to the organisation of welfare provision: while public funding of welfare provision was still retained, the state became primarily a purchaser of services from independent providers competing with one another in a quasi-market (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993b). Contracts between public purchasers and independent providers became the means of managing the delivery of services in a more market-oriented welfare state (Deakin & Walsh, 1996; Stewart & Walsh, 1992).

The New Labour government that followed the Conservative government in 1997 was perceived as advocating a 'softer' approach to the use of market competition in the reform

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<sup>58</sup> However, a mixed economy of welfare has always been evident, with variation in the balance between the role of public, private and third sectors, over time and across different service sectors (N. Johnson, 1999).

of public services, defined as a 'Third Way' (Giddens, 1998; Surender & Lewis, 2004). This approach placed stronger emphasis on the notion of partnership and collaboration in welfare provision (Glendinning et al., 2002; Newman, 2001), although market competition has continued to be a key element of New Labour's agenda for public service reform (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2006). Within this context, the role of the third sector in a mixed economy of service provision has been underlined (Powell & Glendinning, 2002), both in the delivery of publicly-funded services and as a partner in the planning of services through a new 'compact' between the public and third sectors (Deakin, 2001; HM Treasury, 2002; Home Office, 1998). While advocating more localised approaches to the planning and delivery of services, at the same time the use of centralised performance targets has been a defining feature of the governance of public services under New Labour (Bevan & Hood, 2006; Dawson & Dargie, 2002; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004b).

These processes of reform have comprised a number of aims for improving public services referred to in the social and public policy literature, including increased efficiency, choice, equity and responsiveness to users' needs (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993b; Perri 6, 2003). Le Grand and Bartlett emphasise that much of the policy debate surrounding the reform of public services was framed in terms of a need to improve the responsiveness of service provision to the needs of users (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993b). Users became defined not as the passive recipients of welfare, but as 'customers' or 'consumers' with individual 'rights' to 'choice' of providers and services in meeting their needs (Deakin & Wright, 1990; Stewart & Walsh, 1992). This was evident in the context of policy under the Conservative government, including health and community care reforms, to which Le Grand and Bartlett refer. Improving responsiveness to users' needs has similarly been central to policy debate under the New Labour government (Newman, 2001). Reforming the delivery of public services to ensure that they are "responsive to the needs and preferences of individuals and communities" is emphasised in the Government's 2006 Budget (HM Treasury, 2006: 140). Developing "responsive public services" is similarly called for in the 2007 Budget (HM Treasury, 2007: 154), and in a Strategy Unit discussion paper on 'The UK Government's Approach to Public Service Reform', underlining the challenge for public services "to be more responsive to and better able to meet the needs of all users" (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2006: 18), alongside other policy aims such as greater efficiency by offering 'value for money'. Four main elements of reform are highlighted: top-down performance management ('pressure from government'); greater competition in public service provision; greater pressure from citizens (including through choice and voice mechanisms); and

measures to improve the capability and capacity of the public sector to deliver improved services (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2006: 23-24). The theoretical principles underlying the former two dimensions, market competition and performance management, will be discussed further below and in section 2.2 in relation to the concept of responsiveness.

### 2.1.2 Responsiveness to users' needs and the accountability of providers

Despite responsiveness being commonly referred to as a principal aim of transformations in welfare provision, there has been relatively limited discussion in the academic literature regarding how 'responsiveness' has been conceptualised in this context. Mulgan distinguishes between two relationships of responsiveness in the context of public services, with regard to the accountability of providers (Mulgan, 2000). The first refers to the responsiveness of public agencies to other actors within the political system, particularly to elected politicians aiming to control their activities. The second refers to the responsiveness of public agencies as providers of services to the needs of their clients. While the former relationship is a longstanding concern of democratic public administration, the latter, Mulgan argues, has featured prominently in the literature on public service reform. Market-type mechanisms, such as competition and choice, are advocated as a means of improving the responsiveness of providers to user needs and preferences. This form of responsiveness of service providers to the needs of users is conceived as an extension of the lines of accountability of public officials to citizens: "as well as being accountable '*upwards*' [emphasis added] through the hierarchical chain of managerial command, public servants, particularly those engaged in service delivery, are now also seen as accountable '*outwards*' [emphasis added], immediately to the public, through the requirement that they respond directly to their clients' expressed needs" (Mulgan, 2000: 568). The extent to which this relationship, as opposed to more traditional lines of political accountability, can be considered to improve responsiveness to users' needs will, however, depend on the mechanisms used to achieve this end (Mulgan, 2000).

For some, a focus on responsiveness to user needs in this context constitutes a shift in emphasis away from the responsibility of the state to address collective welfare needs, and the inter-dependency of citizens in this process, towards 'consumer sovereignty', whereby public services respond to the individual needs and preferences of users in ways that are analogous to the private sector responding to consumer demand (Aberbach & Christensen,

2005; Jordan, 2005; Newman & Vidler, 2006; Stewart & Walsh, 1992). Aberbach and Christensen argue that this represents a conceptual shift away from democratic institutions of elected representatives and traditional hierarchies in the administration of public services, privileging consumer sovereignty as a new channel of direct democracy (Aberbach & Christensen, 2005). The latter stresses individual expressions of preferences in an actual or simulated market. While recognising the problems of the more traditional hierarchical system of accountability, they argue that consumer sovereignty is also problematic with regard to the responsiveness of public services. Public services have to serve multiple interests. The assumption that financial incentives through competition will create the conditions for providers to act in users' interests ignores the tensions involved in terms of whose needs and interests get responded to in public service provision. Stewart and Walsh similarly argue that while traditional modes of political accountability may have been unresponsive to users, it does not follow that public services can be totally responsive to users, or that political accountability should be disregarded: "need, rather than demand, may have to be established in the public domain. For many activities in the public domain there is more than one customer whose interests have to be balanced" (Stewart & Walsh, 1992: 512).

For these reasons, Martin argues that responsiveness and accountability should be seen as distinct concepts (J. Martin, 1997). Transactions between users/customers/consumers and public service providers are a limited element of the fundamental relationship between citizens and the state. Therefore, "decisions about the type or level of public services may be *influenced* by 'customer demand' but they will be *made* by those who derive their authority from the democratic process (whether at national or local level). In making those decisions, ministers (or those to whom they have delegated authority) will take into account other interests of citizens in their different roles: as taxpayers or voters for example" (J. Martin, 1997: 8).

While traditional forms of political accountability are clearly central to decision-making processes regarding the extent to which needs are addressed through government policy and the allocation of public resources, the structures and systems in which providers operate will also influence the relative responsiveness of providers directly to the users of their services. Considine emphasises that different welfare delivery systems will advantage different forms of responsiveness and accountability in relation to the competing needs and interests that providers must serve, including not only the needs of users, but also other

needs and interests, such as those of ministers or senior bureaucrats to whom providers are held accountable (Considine, 2002). Any analysis of responsiveness to users' needs therefore requires consideration of the influence of the wider policy context, and role of the state, on the type and level of publicly-funded provision, as well as the related systems in which providers operate, and the influence of those systems on responsiveness to users' needs, relative to other needs and priorities.

## **2.2 Dimensions of reform**

Two dimensions of reform have been central to transformations in welfare systems, as underlined above and in the literature on the New Public Management. On the one hand, the use of quasi-markets has been advocated on grounds of improving responsiveness to users' needs, by creating financial incentives for providers to respond to users' needs. On the other hand, the use of performance management systems has been advocated on grounds of improving the accountability of providers in service delivery. A third dimension of reform, which has been underlined more recently in the policy agendas of the New Labour government, concerns the use of mixed economies, including the involvement of third sector organisations in the delivery of publicly-funded services. There may, however, be tensions both within and between these dimensions of reform with regard to the aim of responsiveness to users' needs.

This section begins by identifying the theoretical rationale behind New Public Management approaches to public service provision. The tensions between the implementation of the above reforms and responsiveness are then explored.

### **2.2.1 New Public Management**

New Public Management approaches to public service provision are grounded in the principles of public choice theories of the problems of public sector bureaucracies (Boyne, 1998). These problems in part relate to the perception of public bureaucrats as motivated primarily by self-interest as opposed to public interest in welfare provision, and are associated with the remedies and approaches prescribed by New Public Management to the reform of public services. These approaches include: the decentralisation of public sector bureaucracies; the introduction of market structures; and the use of performance management systems, as described by Boyne (Boyne, 1998).



## Decentralisation

The first problem, according to public choice perspectives, concerns the large size of government agencies. One of the main criticisms of the post-war 'bureaucratic' welfare state was that the centralised public bureaucracies responsible for welfare provision were unable to adequately identify users' needs on their behalf as they could not have sufficient knowledge to know what the needs and preferences of individuals were. This, in part, was because they were perceived as being too 'remote' from the users of welfare services (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004a). The large size of public bureaucracies was considered to make them slower and less flexible in recognising and responding to service needs than agencies operating at a smaller scale. In addition, large bureaucracies were considered more able to wield monopoly power, leading to poorer quality services at higher cost (Boyne, 1998). Based on these principles, the decentralisation of public services was therefore advocated, by breaking up public bureaucracies into smaller units, which, in line with the principles of markets (outlined below) would compete with one another in the provision of services.

## Market structures

The second problem identified by public choice theories, to which Boyne refers, concerns the monopolistic structure of public services (Boyne, 1998). A further criticism of the post-war welfare state was that public service providers were unresponsive to the needs of their users because of the system under which they derived their funding. In commercial markets, private companies were considered to be 'incentivised' to respond to the needs and preferences of customers, from whom they derived their profits. By contrast, monopoly providers of public services were considered to be driven more by the internal needs and interests of the public sector bureaucracies through which they were directly funded, not by their users (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). This focus on the need for incentive structures in public service delivery to motivate providers to respond to users' needs relates to public choice perceptions of rational self-interested public bureaucrats who, within a monopoly, are under limited pressure to be responsive: "to the extent that bureaucrats are responsive to external pressures, they are more likely to pay attention to the desires of [self-interested] politicians than the needs of the public" (Boyne, 1998: 44).

Le Grand has argued that whether public service professionals are indeed self-interested 'knaves' or self-less 'knights', creating the conditions for those working in the provision of public services to be motivated to pursue the interests of users is a central element to the reform of welfare systems (Le Grand, 2003). The introduction of competition to public services through quasi-market reforms, including the separation of purchaser and provider, was advocated on grounds of creating those conditions through financial incentives for providers to respond to users' needs and preferences (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993a; Walsh, 1995).

As noted by Deakin and Walsh, the case for competition in improving public services is based on the dual assumption that without a competitive market structure the state cannot deliver services efficiently, and that the delivery of all goods and services is best undertaken through the market (Deakin & Walsh, 1996). Competition between providers is considered to enable responsiveness on the basis that it promotes greater allocative efficiency: services that meet the needs and preferences of users (Flynn, 2002). Allocative efficiency implies that where users have the means of 'exit' or 'choice', the option of alternative providers, providers will be incentivised to respond to users' needs and preferences. Without competition, providers can afford to be unresponsive (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993b). Responsiveness to users' needs will therefore be constrained if there is a lack of competition because there are not enough providers, or potential for competition because of a lack of opportunity for new providers to enter the market, and similarly a lack of choice (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993b).

### **Performance management systems**

The third characteristic of public bureaucracies, according to public choice perspectives, concerns an absence of reliable indicators of organisational performance (Boyne, 1998). In the absence of a market as a means of assessing performance there is a need for alternative mechanisms to monitor or control the behaviour of public bureaucrats. Because of the information asymmetry between public bureaucrats/providers and governments responsible for allocating public funds, to the extent that only providers know the actual cost of delivering a desired outcome through public services, bureaucrats are perceived as wielding power over politicians. Where they operate in a monopoly they are therefore able to charge higher prices than is required for service provision. On this basis, the use of performance

indicators is advocated in order to provide information that might allow politicians and the public to hold bureaucrats accountable for their activities (Boyne, 1998).

In the light of the above theoretical rationale underlying transformations in welfare systems, the implementation of the following dimensions of reform will now be explored in relation to responsiveness: the use of quasi-markets; the role of the third sector; and the use of performance measurement. Tensions both within and between these elements of reform and responsiveness to users' needs are considered.

### **2.2.2 Quasi-markets and the funding of welfare provision**

As noted above, market competition is conceived as fundamental to enabling responsiveness to users' needs on the basis that it creates financial incentives for providers to be responsive. However, as discussed in the literature, the introduction of market competition in public service provision through quasi-market mechanisms in reality rarely led to a transfer of purchasing power to the user in terms of from whom providers derived their funding (Stewart & Walsh, 1992; Walsh, 1995). Instead, it generally resulted in the creation of autonomous public agencies (e.g. NHS Trusts) acting on behalf of users in deciding which services to purchase from independent providers (Stewart & Walsh, 1992). Mechanisms for giving users more direct control over purchasing decisions were introduced in some sectors, such as the use of direct payments for the purchasing of social care (Leece, 2004), but overall are limited. Moreover, where funding is intended to follow the 'choice' of users, thus in theory creating incentives for providers to respond to users' needs, there may be a range of barriers restricting the ability of users to have a choice and to access providers or services that meet their needs and preferences. In the case of education, for example, this includes a school's capacity to respond to user demand for places, and ultimately the right of the provider in the case of some types of school to determine whose needs and preferences get responded to in relation to school admissions criteria (West, 2006).

As emphasised by Stewart and Walsh, the decision-making process regarding which providers and which services are contracted in public service provision is still predominantly producer or purchaser-led, rather than user-led (Stewart & Walsh, 1992). Decisions regarding the allocation of resources, such as the targeting of particular client groups or particular types of services, fundamentally affect whose needs get responded to

and to what extent. However, as emphasised by Deakin, these decisions are ultimately determined through the contractual relationship between the purchaser and provider, in which the user has little involvement (Deakin, 1996).

This raises the question of potential tensions between responsiveness to the needs of users and responsiveness to other organisational priorities in the purchasing and provision of services. In the context of community care, Rummery and Glendinning demonstrate how users' access to services (and therefore responsiveness to their needs) is affected by different gatekeeping processes (Rummery & Glendinning, 1999). These processes include 'managerial gatekeeping', which involves organisational decisions regarding the criteria for the rationing of resources allocated to the purchasing of (care) services, as well as processes of 'bureaucratic gatekeeping' carried out by those who have first contact with potential users of services. Regarding the latter, these processes may include both formal and informal eligibility criteria applied by frontline workers (e.g. receptionists or social workers) in deciding who has access to an assessment of needs, and the type of assessment that should be carried out. These gatekeeping mechanisms therefore also set the boundaries within which users' needs are responded to by providers, and will be influenced by wider policy agendas and organisational priorities, such as the prioritisation of cost containment.

### **2.2.3 The third sector and public service delivery**

In addition to the principles of competition, a key part of the New Labour government's approach to public service reform has concerned the use of mixed economies of service provision, involving public, private and third sector providers in the delivery of public services. With regard to improving responsiveness, a mixed economy has been advocated not only on the basis that competition between multiple providers will create incentives for responsiveness to users' needs, but that this diversity of types of providers will allow for greater responsiveness (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006; HM Treasury, 2006; Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2006). Given the role of third sector organisations in the provision of specialist services targeted at more disadvantaged groups, the involvement of third sector providers is conceived as playing a crucial part in improving responsiveness to the needs of those groups (HM Treasury, 2002, 2004b, 2006). This is referred to in part because third sector organisations are conceived as being motivated by a set of values, purpose or mission that is focused on meeting the needs of their service users (HM Treasury, 2004b). Indeed, Besley and Ghatak emphasise that the mission orientation of not-

for-profit (and also public sector) organisations is an important element to be considered in relation to incentive structures and motivation to act in the interests of users (Besley & Ghatak, 2003). They argue that an alignment between the mission of these organisations and the needs and preferences of users lessens the need for financial incentives for responsiveness.

Within this context, there has been recognition in policy agendas of the need to address potential barriers to third sector organisations competing alongside the public and private sectors for service delivery contracts and public funding (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006; HM Treasury, 2007). There has, however, been much debate within the academic literature and the third sector itself regarding the involvement of third sector organisations in public service delivery and the impact of contract-based public funding on the responsiveness of third sector organisations to their users' needs (Harris, 2001; Taylor, 1996)<sup>59</sup>. The extent to which competition for contracts privileges larger organisations and existing providers at the expense of smaller voluntary and community organisations has been questioned. Smaller voluntary and community organisations may not have learnt 'the rules of the game' in terms of the criteria for competing for contracts, or may be unable to accept the risk of entering into a contract-based relationship (Deakin, 1996). This raises further questions regarding the extent to which these organisations have been able to enter the market of publicly-funded service provision and, therefore, the extent to which the allocation of public funding in the purchasing of services is responsive to the needs of users served by smaller, more specialist organisations.

With regard to third sector organisations' experiences of delivering public funding, there may be tensions between contract specifications determined by purchasers and the mission or goals of third sector organisations to respond to the needs of their users. In the context of community care, Lewis refers to how contract specifications may determine and limit the type of users that voluntary organisations contracted to deliver services are able to work with, which may conflict with these organisations' ability to respond to the needs of existing users of their services (Lewis, 1996). Similarly, contract-based funding may affect the type of activities that these organisations can be involved in, where some activities such as advocacy do not adhere to the terms of the purchaser (Lewis, 1996). While public funding contracts may allow for more secure sources of funding, and therefore potentially

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<sup>59</sup> As discussed in Chapter One (section 1.3.2), the 'third sector' refers to a range of types of organisations, including voluntary and community organisations, not-for-profits and social enterprises.

greater sustainability of service provision by third sector organisations, they may distort the type of services that these organisations aim to provide, leading to mission-drift in terms of their own objectives and goals (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004).

It has been argued, therefore, that too strong an adherence to contract principles may put at risk the distinctive contribution of voluntary and community organisations to meeting the needs of more disadvantaged and excluded groups (Charity Commission, 2007; Taylor, 2002). This highlights the potential tensions between the accountability of third sector organisations to the public purchasers or funders of their services, and accountability to their users by responding to users' needs and interests. As emphasised by Lewis, a reliance on contracts for funding may privilege increased accountability to the purchaser in the first instance, while blurring internal and external lines of accountability of the organisation to users and executive committees (Lewis, 1996). This draws attention to possibly conflicting priorities facing third sector organisations: between upwards pressures to meet the priorities of public agencies responsible for funding/purchasing services and responsiveness to users.

These debates relate to broader concerns regarding the extent to which 'resource dependency' (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and the type of funding environments in which third sector organisations operate influence their development (Aiken, 2006; Alcock et al., 1999). Alcock et al. refer to the effects of different funding regimes in terms of the experiences of voluntary organisations as applicants for and recipients of funding from different sources (Alcock et al., 1999). A distinction is made between 'portfolio funding' (where two or more funders are of similar importance to the organisation); a 'single predominant funder' (where one main funder contributes); and 'major funder/minor funder' (where there is an imbalance of importance between two main funders). While a reliance on one predominant funder was found to create greater vulnerability to the changing priorities of that funder, a mix of funding enabled organisations to better negotiate such changes. A greater mix of funding, however, also created greater demands on resources to meet the administrative requirements and timescales of different funders. While access to multiple funding streams may therefore reduce the dependency of a provider on a particular funder, and therefore pressure to orient the organisation towards meeting the priorities of that funder, this may also create difficulties in having to respond to multiple funders' demands in balance with the needs of users. In this respect, providers may face pressures to adhere to multiple lines of upwards accountability.

### 2.2.4 Measuring the performance of providers

Processes of decentralisation in public services have been accompanied by the use of performance management systems to reassert control over decentralised units (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004a). Based on the principles of New Public Management, performance management systems are intended to improve the accountability of providers in the delivery of publicly-funded services and are now widely used to mediate contractual relations between public purchasers and public, private or third sector providers (Propper & Wilson, 2003). Such systems involve the setting of performance standards or targets, evaluating service provision against these measures, and implementing a set of rewards and sanctions to providers on the basis of their performance in relation to the measures (Felstead, 1998). Performance targets have been fundamental to the New Labour government's approach to improving public services (Cutler & Waine, 2000; Newman, 2001): what Bevan and Hood refer to as 'governance by targets' (Bevan & Hood, 2006). Centrally-defined performance targets are set out in the Public Service Agreement of each government department, which are attached to budgetary resources allocated by the Treasury, and form the basis for measuring the performance of public services within this context (HM Treasury, 2004c). Dawson and Dargie argue that since the late 1990s under New Labour there has been a change of emphasis from competition to performance targets as a mechanism of control of providers, as both the contracting out of services and partnership working in service delivery have become increasingly tied to the achievement of performance targets (Dawson & Dargie, 2002).

The use of performance regimes has sought to focus on outputs or outcomes in improving public services<sup>60</sup>. Carter et al. note that the two terms are used inter-changeably (Carter et al., 1992). They prefer to distinguish between 'outputs', which they define as the short-term outcomes of a provider's services (such as the number of pupils passing exams), and 'outcomes', defined as the broader impact of service provision (such as the impact of a better educated population on society). Pollitt and Bouckaert refer to both outputs and outcomes as being conceived as contributing to whilst being more precise measures than broader policy aims (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004b), such as a more educated population. As will be discussed in the following section, particular outputs (such as placing a client in work) are attached to public funding for employment services as a means of orienting service provision towards the attainment of Public Service targets (including targets for

<sup>60</sup> Rather than inputs (e.g. the number of pupil enrolments in a school).

increasing levels of employment)<sup>61</sup>. There are, however, both methodological and conceptual concerns regarding performance measurement, including in relation to the aim of improving responsiveness to users' needs.

Regarding methodological concerns, as discussed by Propper and Wilson, it is usually what they refer to as 'gross outcomes' that are measured and used as an indicator of performance (Propper & Wilson, 2003). Gross outcomes refer to outcomes measured at a particular date, such as the number of participants in a training programme entering employment at the end of that programme. Outcomes are gross as they do not take into account what might have happened if the participant had not participated in that programme (i.e. the training programme participant may have entered employment anyway without participating in the programme). Moreover, they do not take into account the difficulty encountered by the provider in assisting a particular client, although this can in part be addressed by adjusting for observed characteristics of an individual (outcomes can be adjusted for more disadvantaged groups). Measures of the value-added of a programme (e.g. skills gained as a result of participating in a training programme) are difficult to use because of the problems associated with establishing a counterfactual (what would have happened in the absence of participation in the programme). Measuring net impact is also complicated by the difficulty of measuring net outcomes, such as skills acquired through a programme (e.g. confidence and communication skills), which may be difficult to quantify. Although 'gross outcomes' are used as indicators of performance, they are short-term measures which ultimately can only be used as a proxy for long-term impact, such as the sustained employment of a programme participant (Propper & Wilson, 2003).

Regarding conceptual concerns, how the performance of providers is defined, and the relative importance given to different types of performance measures, raises the question of the extent to which the needs of different users are reflected in performance systems. Propper and Wilson (Propper & Wilson, 2003) and Dixit (Dixit, 2002) emphasise that public organisations have to serve several masters or 'principals', unlike the single principal in the private sector<sup>62</sup>. These principals include the users of their services, politicians, and the funders of their services, which often require providers to achieve several ends. However, as Stewart and Walsh emphasise, performance measurement is central to the political and policy process and therefore how outcomes are defined and

<sup>61</sup> As will be discussed in section 2.3, the terms output and outcome are used inter-changeably in the context of Jobcentre Plus performance systems, and are referred to as such in this thesis.

<sup>62</sup> The share-holders of a private company.



measured will serve some interests as opposed to others (Stewart & Walsh, 1992). This draws attention both to the intended and unintended consequences of performance systems.

In terms of the type of users whose needs are addressed, where there are incentives for providers to achieve particular performance measures, such as examination results, providers may be encouraged to select out those users with greater needs who may be less likely to enable a provider to achieve these measures (West, 2006)<sup>63</sup>. Performance systems may also influence the type of providers that are funded and the type of services delivered. With regard to third sector organisations, Alcock has argued that the pressure to adhere to a performance targets regime can influence the kind of activities developed by third sector organisations as well as the groups that are targeted to work with (Alcock, 2004). In the context of the former Health Action Zones (HAZ)<sup>64</sup>, the need to 'pick winners' was found to have implications in terms of which projects were funded by the HAZ, with some projects that targeted black and minority ethnic groups facing a lack of funding support as they did not 'fit' with achieving top-down targets. The pressure to achieve short-term outcomes that comply with the timeframe of performance systems, may, moreover, conflict with the realities faced by frontline staff in securing social and economic improvements within deprived areas and in relation to more disadvantaged groups, which is a long-term venture (Alcock, 2004).

Furthermore, the resources required to adhere to performance systems, and different systems where funding is received under a number of different programmes, can create demands that are particularly difficult for smaller voluntary and community organisations to meet (Alcock, 2004), as highlighted previously regarding the demands of multiple funding contracts. These systems may therefore conflict with the aim of improving responsiveness in terms of the involvement of third sector organisations if some organisations are excluded from access to public funding sources in this respect. As emphasised by Rummery, the pressure to show upwards accountability to central government according to a top-down performance regime can overwhelm the voluntary and community sector's capacity to pursue its own objectives (Rummery, 2002). This again raises the question of the extent to which responsiveness to users' needs may be obscured as a result.

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<sup>63</sup> Although it is argued that, in theory, perverse incentives for client selection or cream-skimming can be averted if funding is weighted so that higher payments are made to providers for potentially more disadvantaged users (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993b).

<sup>64</sup> An area-based initiative that ran from 1997 to 2006, which was partly aimed at involving third sector organisations in the planning and delivery of services.

An additional issue concerns the conflict between competing public service priorities in the context of performance regimes. Where responsiveness to users' needs is recognised as an explicit aim of performance agendas, it may nevertheless conflict with other aims, such as performance targets for 'efficiency' or cost containment in service delivery. With regard to reforms in community care, Martin et al. found that while performance targets were intended both to improve responsiveness to clients' needs as well as to achieve cost containment, top-down directives, such as the threat of disciplinary action for staff overspending their budgets, set the organisational priorities through which cost containment was given precedence by care managers over the needs and interests of their clients (G. Martin et al., 2004). They note that while the incentives of the performance system may have operated successfully in ensuring compliance with budgetary restraint, this was at the expense of responding to clients' needs. Thus, "where the procedures of that system are determined primarily by the need for financial restraint and practical efficiency, efforts to harness the (knaveish) inclinations of practitioners succeed only in relation to meeting these organisational outcomes, so that more client-centred outcomes become of marginal relevance" (G. Martin et al., 2004: 483). There may therefore be tensions within a performance regime and incentive structure that requires the adherence of providers to demands and priorities that conflict with 'outwards' responsiveness to users' needs.

### **2.3 Welfare-to-work and responsiveness to the needs of users**

In the light of these broader conceptual concerns regarding public service reform, this section explores responsiveness to users' needs specifically in relation to employment service provision. It discusses, first, the policy context of employment services regarding the government's welfare-to-work agenda and, related to this, the orientation of the performance system towards job outcome targets. Second, it considers the emphasis in current policy debates on improving responsiveness to the needs of the users of employment services through more 'client-centred' approaches. The potential tensions between a system oriented towards short-term job outcomes and the stated aim of greater responsiveness to the individual needs of unemployed clients, and particularly the needs of more disadvantaged groups, are considered with regard to the empirical findings of research on the effects of job outcome-oriented regimes.

### 2.3.1 The welfare-to-work agenda and a job outcome-oriented regime

A major element of welfare reform in the UK and other industrialised countries in recent years has been the implementation of ‘welfare-to-work’ or ‘active labour market’ policies, with a view to reducing levels of unemployment and economic inactivity (Clasen & Clegg, 2003; Finn, 2000; Peck, 2001). These policies have involved both the provision of programmes to support those unemployed or economically inactive into work, and tax and benefit reforms to support people in low-paid work (Nickell & Quintini, 2002). While these policies have been implemented across industrialised countries, the type of active labour market programmes that have been developed have differed in their approach. Daguerre (Daguerre, 2004) and others (e.g. Finn, 2003; Lodemel & Trickey, 2000) distinguish between programmes based on a ‘human capital’ approach, which tend to involve more voluntary participation of unemployed individuals (more common in continental and social-democratic welfare states), and those based on a ‘work-first’ approach, where participation is compulsory (more common in Anglo-Saxon welfare states, including the UK and USA, albeit with differences evident in the dynamics of welfare-to-work policies between these countries (see Peck, 2001)). While the aim of the former is to address skills development in order to improve long-term employment outcomes, the latter work-first approach emphasises job placement in the short-term, regardless of the type or quality of the work (Daguerre, 2004).

An active labour market strategy has been at the heart of the New Labour government’s approach to employment service provision, through which the right of those unemployed to claim welfare benefits (including Jobseekers Allowance) has become increasingly attached to the ‘responsibility’ to actively look for work and participate in programmes for assistance into work. As emphasised by Finn, “this ‘synthesis’ would require individuals to compete for and obtain jobs but also would invest in improving the ‘employability’ of those furthest from the labour market” (Finn, 2003: 711). Daguerre notes that the initial implementation of this strategy in the UK was ambivalent in the context of certain programmes, such as the New Deal, in terms of its emphasis on a human capital or a work-first approach (Daguerre, 2004). While the introduction of the New Deal placed greater emphasis on training than any previous policies, participation in the programme was also compulsory for certain groups (e.g. young people) according to length of time claiming benefits, with the use of benefits sanctions for non-compliance. Moreover, the development of the New Deal programme adopted a much stronger work-first approach, with an

increasing emphasis on the engagement of unemployed individuals in job search activities before access to training provision would be considered (Daguerre, 2004; Finn, 2003).

The work-first policies of New Labour have been criticised for their authoritarian approach to increasing employment, whereby unemployed people are disciplined into competing for low-paid, low-skilled jobs in a deregulated labour market by making welfare benefits such as Jobseekers Allowance conditional (Grover & Stewart, 1999). Additionally, it has been argued that this approach may do little to address labour market inequalities experienced by particular groups, including ethnic minorities, in terms of disparities between levels of employment and earnings over the long-term (Ogbonna & Noon, 1999). Research has suggested that participation in low-skilled, 'flexible' work with poor terms and conditions (e.g. temporary contracts) has little impact on the sustained employment or labour market mobility of individuals in terms of improvements in earnings and the type of work in which they are employed over time. White and Forth found that unemployed individuals who found flexible jobs (defined as part-time, temporary jobs at a lower skill level than previously held), were more likely to stay in these type of jobs (White & Forth, 1998). Less than one in four of those entering part-time jobs were in full-time jobs at the end of the five-year period of the research<sup>65</sup>. This was found to be a result of constraints on access to more permanent full-time work rather than the preferences of individuals. These findings point to wider issues regarding the extent to which welfare-to-work policy is oriented to supporting improved outcomes in the long-term, and responsiveness to the needs of unemployed individuals in this respect, including through training, rather than simply the placement of individuals in any job in the short-term. Indeed, there has been increased policy attention towards the future role of employment services in supporting employment retention and advancement as opposed to focusing solely on placing those out of work in a job (Hoggart et al., 2006).

### **Dimensions of reform**

The implementation of welfare-to-work policy in the UK and other countries has been accompanied by fundamental reforms to the organisation of publicly-funded employment services. As in other service sectors, the stated aims have been to bring about improvements in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of provision, including greater

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<sup>65</sup> The researchers looked at individuals who were unemployed in 1990-92 and examined their experiences over the following five years (to 1995-97).

responsiveness to the individual needs of those unemployed (Considine, 2000; Struyven, 2004; Struyven & Steurs, 2005).

Whereas in the past employment-related services were delivered by a monopoly public employment service, the introduction of competition has created a more complex set of institutional arrangements between the public employment service and a range of contracted providers from public, private and third sectors (Considine, 2000; Thuy et al., 2001)<sup>66</sup>. Elements of a quasi-market system in employment services have largely been confined to the use of multiple providers that compete for funding in the delivery of Jobcentre Plus provision. While mechanisms for user choice have been a key element of reform in other service sectors, they have been implemented to a limited extent in employment services (Struyven, 2004)<sup>67</sup>. Mechanisms for choice have been piloted in the case of the Multiple Provider Employment Zones programme, where lone parents were given a choice of providers (amongst those contracted to deliver the programme), and were able to switch between providers or withdraw from the programme. However, an evaluation of the programme found choice to be limited in this context (Hirst et al., 2006)<sup>68</sup>.

Crucially, in the context of welfare-to-work policy, as described above, the reform of employment services has taken place in relation to an overarching aim to create what Finn refers to as an 'employment-first welfare state' (Finn, 2003, 2005). In relation to this aim, Finn describes three central developments in employment service provision during the 1990s, which have continued under the New Labour government (Finn, 2005). First, there is an emphasis on work incentives for those unemployed, including conditional access to benefits based on the 'responsibility' to look for and take up any available work. Second, there has been an implementation of a work-first regime with greater emphasis on 'work-focused' programmes aimed at immediate job search. And third, there is a performance regime oriented towards immediate job entry. At the same time, a stronger local dimension in the planning of services through the New Deal and other programmes has been advocated by New Labour as enabling service provision to respond better to local labour market conditions and to individual needs (Nativel et al., 2002). A combination of both contractual relationships as well as partnership arrangements between Jobcentre Plus and

<sup>66</sup> See Chapter One (section 1.3) for further details on the organisation of Jobcentre Plus and contracted provision.

<sup>67</sup> See Elliot et al. (Elliot et al., 2005) with regard to the use of choice mechanisms within the Job Network system in Australia in contrast to the UK.

<sup>68</sup> Lone parents who were aware that there was more than one provider available tended to make their choice on the basis of proximity to home, while most clients joined the provider they did because they did not have enough or any knowledge about other providers in the area.

other providers and local agencies have been promoted in this context (Finn, 2000). However, as emphasised by Considine and by Peck, despite the efforts made to allow for more 'localised' approaches, the UK system of employment service provision remains strongly centralised in terms of its performance regime (Considine, 2000; Peck, 2001).

Performance within the Jobcentre Plus system is measured in relation to achieving central government targets for employment, which are set out in the Public Service Agreement of the Department for Work and Pensions (HM Treasury, 2004a). For the period 2005 to 2008, these Public Service targets include increasing the employment rates of disadvantaged groups<sup>69</sup>, and reducing the gap between employment rates for these groups and the overall rate. This involves the use of 'job outcome' targets, which refer to the number of Jobcentre Plus clients who enter employment<sup>70</sup>. Jobcentre Plus has recently changed from a system of 'job entry targets' to 'job outcome targets' (since April 2006), which has involved changes in systems for recording data on clients who enter employment (see S. Johnson & Nunn, 2005)<sup>71</sup>. Job outcome targets are used across the various decentralised levels of service provision within Jobcentre Plus. Jobcentre Plus districts, individual Jobcentres and Jobcentre Plus advisers operate within an incentive structure oriented to achieving job outcomes through a job entry points system. This incentive structure is weighted according to different priority groups, with greater value being given, for example, to achieving job outcomes for lone parents and for clients living within the most deprived geographic areas with higher levels of unemployment (see Appendix 2).

Job outcome targets are transferred to contracted providers by attaching a fixed proportion of funding to job outputs through a system of output-related funding. Job outputs are defined in terms of clients participating in a programme funded by Jobcentre Plus who enter employment during that programme or shortly after leaving it (which until April 2006 was set at 13 weeks). A proportion of funding for each client enrolled in a programme is paid to the provider on the basis of that client entering employment. The model therefore

<sup>69</sup> Lone parents, ethnic minority groups, people aged 50 and over, those with the lowest qualifications, and those living in wards with the highest levels of unemployment.

<sup>70</sup> See Appendix 2 for reference to Jobcentre Plus performance targets.

<sup>71</sup> Under the job entry target system, Jobcentre Plus advisers were required to prove that a Jobcentre Plus intervention had taken place in order to claim points for placing a client in work. This created incentives for advisers to refer clients to Jobcentre Plus schemes, even if this was unnecessary or inappropriate. In addition, it discouraged referrals to organisations that were not contracted by Jobcentre Plus. Under the job outcome target system, data from Inland Revenue will now be used to indicate clients who have entered employment (although advisers are still required to meet targets for placing clients in work). Providers contracted by Jobcentre Plus will still be required to provide evidence of job outputs for claiming payments (i.e. funding attached to those outputs).

includes financial incentives for providers to achieve these outputs within the programme period. Further details on the definition of job outputs used in Jobcentre Plus funded provision, and the timeframe in which outputs have to be achieved, are given in Appendix 3.

### 2.3.2 Towards more ‘client-centred’ approaches?

In the context of the ongoing reform of employment service provision in the UK, there has been an increased emphasis on the development of more ‘client-centred’ provision that responds to the individual needs of unemployed people (Finn, 2000; Nativel et al., 2002). This was evident in the implementation of the New Deal, with the role of ‘personal advisers’ being advocated as allowing for more ‘personalised’ provision, tailored to the needs of individual clients (Ritchie, 2000)<sup>72</sup>. More recently, policy debate on the future of welfare-to-work has further emphasised a need for employment service provision to better respond to the individual needs of those unemployed. This debate has taken place within the context of government targets for further increasing the employment rate to 80% overall, and, as noted above, for increasing the employment of more disadvantaged groups where high levels of unemployment persist (Department for Work and Pensions, 2004a, 2006). Responsiveness to individual needs is therefore conceived in terms of enabling more effective approaches to assisting clients into work, which address barriers to work that they may experience.

Within this context, Jobcentre Plus is currently undergoing a period of change regarding its structure and services (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006; Freud, 2007). The organisational priorities of Jobcentre Plus, referred to in its Business Plan for 2006-7, include transforming Jobcentre Plus services by “changing the shape of our business to meet customers’ needs” (Jobcentre Plus, 2006b: 11). Policy proposals have referred to responding to clients’ needs both by allowing Jobcentre Plus districts to have greater control over planning an appropriate range and type of provision to suit their clients and local labour markets; and by enabling Jobcentre Plus advisers to work more closely with clients to tailor provision to meet individual needs (Department for Work and Pensions, 2004a). With regard to the latter, the relationship between Jobcentre Plus advisers and clients is conceived as ‘empowering’ the individual client to address his or her needs through appropriate provision: “to ensure that people are better able to make personal

<sup>72</sup> Clients enrolled on a New Deal programme are assigned an adviser, who is responsible for providing ongoing assistance to that client, aimed at his or her individual needs.

choices to overcome their own barriers to work” (Department for Work and Pensions, 2004a: 3). Policy documents, including ‘Building on New Deal: Local Solutions Meeting Individual Needs’, have emphasised plans to introduce greater flexibility for Jobcentre Plus staff and contracted providers “to meet the needs of individual clients and to suit the requirements of local labour markets” (Department for Work and Pensions, 2004a: 1).

In addition to the role of Jobcentre Plus advisers in delivering a more ‘personalised’ approach to assisting clients and referring them to appropriate provision, the use of a mixed economy of providers in the delivery of Jobcentre Plus services, including third sector organisations, is considered a means to enabling more responsive provision (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006; Freud, 2007). The involvement of third sector providers of specialist services for more disadvantaged client groups is defined as central to improving responsiveness to the particular needs of those groups, by tailoring provision to their needs. Within this context, emphasis has been placed on supporting the role of specialist providers: “more needs to be done to develop the pool of specialist, often small voluntary sector providers on whom we rely to deliver services to the most disadvantaged people” (Department for Work and Pensions, 2004a: 37).

Despite the policy rhetoric of increased responsiveness to the individual needs of those unemployed in the context of employment service provision, there has been limited analysis within the academic literature regarding this aim. Struyven and Steurs refer to increasing responsiveness to users’ needs as one of the main objectives of market-oriented reforms and their implementation in the context of employment services in industrialised countries (Struyven & Steurs, 2005). They define responsiveness in relation to the economic rationale for greater allocative efficiency: to achieve outcomes which best fit the needs and preferences of users (Struyven & Steurs, 2005: 237). According to this perspective, responsiveness is said to have improved if the service matches the needs of clients more closely. The correct identification of an unemployed client’s needs and referral to appropriate services and providers is therefore considered central to promoting responsiveness to those needs (Struyven & Steurs, 2005).

This draws attention to how ‘needs’ are defined in this context. Countries such as Australia and the Netherlands have developed tools for measuring the ‘distance’ between a job-seeking client and the labour market (in terms of the barriers to entering employment) in order to classify individuals into different target groups, on which basis they are then



referred to particular trajectories of assistance<sup>73</sup>. In the UK, the process of assessing a client's needs and referral to particular programmes through Jobcentre Plus is carried out in the context of interviews between Jobcentre Plus advisers and clients. The allocation of resources through the purchasing of provision from contracted providers, and the referral of clients to that provision, is targeted at client groups that are defined as having greater needs in terms of facing greater barriers to employment and amongst whom higher levels of unemployment are evident (including, for example, the long-term unemployed).

Responsiveness to the needs of unemployed clients therefore involves gatekeeping processes both in terms of the rationing of services to which resources are allocated through Jobcentre Plus, and in terms of interactions between advisers and clients and the application of criteria for referrals to appropriate provision. Regarding the latter, there may be conflicting influences on advisers concerning the extent to which they are willing or able to be responsive to clients' needs. Rosenthal and Peccei draw attention to the conflicting roles that Jobcentre Plus advisers are required to perform in relation to their clients (Rosenthal & Peccei, 2006). On the one hand, they must respond to the needs of their clients as the 'customers' of employment services, while on the other, they must ensure that clients adhere to their responsibilities as 'obligatees' of welfare benefits to actively look for employment. These conflicting roles point to tensions between a wider work-first policy imperative in the delivery of employment services and the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus advisers to their clients' needs.

With regard to a performance regime oriented towards short-term job outcomes, there may also be tensions between this system and responsiveness to users' needs, particularly to the needs of more disadvantaged clients. Stuyven and Steurs refer to the unintended consequences of job outcome-oriented systems (Struyven & Steurs, 2005). They emphasise that if incentives are weighted towards achieving job outcomes in the short-term, providers are encouraged to engage in cream-skimming or selecting the most 'job-ready' individuals who are more likely to enable them to achieve these outcomes. Similarly, they are encouraged to 'park' the least job-ready: making less effort to assist those who are less likely to enter work in the short-term. In addition, an incentive structure that is primarily oriented towards job entries in the short-term may encourage providers to find the "fastest

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<sup>73</sup> A distinction is usually made between new jobseekers (the short-term unemployed) and the long-term unemployed, with the latter group being targeted for assistance on the basis that this is the most efficient use of resources (the short-term unemployed are more likely to re-enter employment regardless of any assistance) (Struyven, 2004).

way into work” for clients in order to achieve the outcomes by which their performance is assessed (Struyven, 2004: 32). This may therefore create disincentives for providers to invest in training for clients because it is not certain that this will result in a job placement and therefore payment for the resources invested. However, as noted by Struyven (Struyven, 2004) and others (e.g. Ogbonna, 1998), training may be more appropriate to achieving suitable employment outcomes for clients in the long-term. This underlines the potential conflict between the orientation of performance systems and incentive structures towards job outcome targets, and the aim of responding to the needs of individual clients, and to the needs of more disadvantaged clients in particular.

### **2.3.3 Tensions between job outcome-oriented regimes and responsiveness**

This section examines the findings of research regarding the effects of job outcome-oriented systems in the delivery of employment services. The use of output-related funding in employment services and the effects on providers has been explored primarily by research carried out in the USA and Australia, while some research in the UK refers to systems in place prior to the establishment of Jobcentre Plus. Therefore, the findings relate to different programmes and delivery systems. These differences concern the type of outputs that are attached to funding, which may be entirely focused on the attainment of jobs or may be oriented towards other outputs such as qualifications, or both. The weight of financial incentives linked to outputs also varies across programmes and delivery systems. Under the Jobs and Training Partnership Act (JTPA) system in the USA<sup>74</sup>, within some states 30% of payments for programme participants were attached to job outputs achieved within 30 days of programme completion (Felstead, 1998: 47). Similarly the weight of funding linked to a particular type of output varies. While under some programmes output-related payments may be solely made for job outputs, under others payments are made for a mix of outputs e.g. jobs and qualifications. Financial incentives for achieving a particular output can be introduced by linking higher payments to that output. Under the former Training and Enterprise Council ‘Training for Work’ programme in the UK, output payments for participants who got a job within 13 weeks of completing the programme were double those for participants who entered full-time education or attained an NVQ

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<sup>74</sup> The JTPA programme was a federally-funded programme in the USA to support unemployed welfare claimants into employment, that was locally administered with the contracting of local providers for service delivery.

Level 2 qualification (Felstead, 1998: 32)<sup>75</sup>. Financial incentives can also be attached to outputs achieved for more disadvantaged groups. Under the Australian Job Network system, bonus payments were available to providers for placing long-term unemployed participants in jobs (Dockery & Stromback, 2001).

The findings of research on the effects of job outcome-oriented systems draw attention to tensions with improving the responsiveness of providers to the needs of more disadvantaged groups. These tensions are categorised below in terms of: the type of clients who are selected by providers; the type of services that are provided; and the type of employment outcomes that are achieved.

### **Type of clients**

Job output-related funding in employment services has been found to create perverse incentives in terms of encouraging providers to engage in cream-skimming. Cream-skimming refers to the selection of those clients who are most likely to enable providers to perform well according to the job outputs by which they are assessed. This form of selection therefore contributes to greater 'deadweight loss' (payments for outcomes for those who may have entered employment anyway, without any assistance) and limits the amount of assistance directed to clients most in need (Dockery & Stromback, 2001). Research on the JTPA programme in the USA found substantial evidence of cream-skimming of clients by providers at the enrolment stage of the programme (Cragg, 1997; Heckman et al., 2002). Financial incentives attached to job outputs encouraged providers to select the more 'job-ready' individuals. Characteristics of those less likely to be enrolled by providers included being black, with low levels of educational attainment, from lower income families and without recent employment experience. Evidence of cream-skimming was also found amongst providers of Intensive Assistance programmes for the long-term unemployed under the Australian Job Network system. Providers were reluctant to attract Indigenous Australian clients due to the perception that placing them in jobs would be difficult and therefore unlikely to produce a funded output (Dockery & Stromback, 2001).

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<sup>75</sup> The Training for Work programme was a government-funded programme administered by the former Training and Enterprise Councils that was aimed at enabling unemployed adults to gain National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and employment through the provision of training and work placements.

With regard to the UK, cream-skimming was found amongst providers contracted by the former Training and Enterprise Councils, with those clients considered 'high risk' in terms of achieving job outputs being selected out by providers from participation in their programmes (Gray, 2000; Rolfe et al., 1996). More recent research in the context of Jobcentre Plus provision has also found evidence of client selection. In the Jobcentre Plus Ethnic Minority Outreach programme (EMO)<sup>76</sup>, cream-skimming was noted amongst contracted providers (Barnes et al., 2005). The most disadvantaged participants, i.e. those considered to be the least 'job-ready', such as those without recent employment experience, often obtained employment as a result of their involvement with an EMO provider, but this was well beyond the 13-week period where this could be claimed by the provider as an output. In the second year of the pilot, as a result of the increased emphasis by Jobcentre Plus on achieving job outputs, projects began to prioritise working with clients considered to be more likely to access employment in the short-term (i.e. those perceived as being more 'job ready'): around half of the participants had recent employment experience (having left their last job in the previous six months), while only 16% had been out of work for two or more years. Casebourne et al. found that under the Action Teams for Jobs programme<sup>77</sup>, the use of output-related funding for private provider-led teams was seen by providers as incentivising working with 'easier-to-help' clients (Casebourne et al., 2006). There was considered to be little incentive to work with clients with multiple barriers as no payment was made for 'distance travelled' in terms of clients' improved ability to access work, by helping those with greater needs make progress in accessing employment.

### **Type of services**

Job output-related funding may also create perverse incentives in relation to the type of services provided to clients. An emphasis on job outputs in funding has been found to encourage providers to focus on types of provision that are more likely to enhance their attainment of these outputs, involving a shift away from education and training services, such as language courses, vocational training and work experience, towards job search provision (Dockery & Stromback, 2001; Donahue, 1989). The introduction of output-related funding through the former Training and Enterprise Councils in the UK was found

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<sup>76</sup> A Jobcentre Plus pilot programme aimed at assisting unemployed clients from ethnic minority groups into employment. A 'Partners' Outreach for Ethnic Minorities' service has since been launched by Jobcentre Plus (from 2007 to 2008) to provide support targeted at non-working Pakistani and Bangladeshi partners in low-income households in the most deprived areas of cities with high ethnic minority populations, to be delivered by contracted private and voluntary organisations.

<sup>77</sup> See Glossary for reference to this programme.

to lead to the provision of training courses more likely to achieve immediate job outcomes, while some providers reduced or even closed down training which did not quickly result in jobs for participants (Felstead, 1998). Gray also found that the emphasis on job outputs encouraged providers to dismiss skills development in favour of getting clients a job in the short-term, regardless of whether or not that job was relevant to the training already taken by a client (Gray, 2000). Casebourne et al. found that the use of output-related funding was perceived by private providers within the Action Teams for Jobs programme<sup>78</sup> as incentivising them to get a client any job, regardless of whether or not it was the most suitable job in the medium to long-term for the client, or something in which the client was interested (Casebourne et al., 2006).

### **Type of outcomes**

The type of services provided relates to the question of the type of employment outcomes achieved. Research in the UK on the effectiveness of employment-related training programmes for minority ethnic groups found that job output-related funding encouraged providers to focus on placing clients in employment in the short-term rather than providing them with skills which may have greater impact in improving their employment opportunities over the long-term (Ogbonna, 1998). Regarding the type of employment that clients are placed in, research on provision contracted by the Training and Enterprise Councils found that the emphasis on job outputs in funding encouraged providers to focus on placing clients in types of employment where these outputs were easier to secure. The majority of job outputs in some TEC delivery areas were generated in only one or two areas of employment where training costs were relatively low (Felstead, 1998).

With regard to the New Deal for Young People, Finn found that upward pressures in terms of performance targets were considered by Jobcentre Plus advisers on the programme to pose potential constraints on addressing the individual needs of clients (Finn, 2003). Advisers interviewed as part of the research (carried out in the initial stages of the programme) expressed concern that, as the programme developed, its focus on more individual-oriented assistance aimed at trying to develop a relationship with clients and addressing barriers to employment was being replaced by greater emphasis on placing clients into unsubsidised jobs, driven by performance targets. Similarly, providers contracted to deliver provision available under this programme expressed concerns that

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<sup>78</sup> See Glossary.

linking more of their funding to achieving job entries would lead to young people being encouraged to take jobs that were not of interest to them, when they might benefit more from participating for longer in an option on the programme (such as training or work placements).

While short-term job outcomes achieved within the timeframe of a programme are used as an indicator of impact<sup>79</sup>, they have been found to be inaccurate as an indicator of long-term impact in terms of the employment outcomes of clients over time (Felstead, 1998; Heckman et al., 2002). Heckman et al. found that outputs used in the JTPA system<sup>80</sup> had either a negative or zero correlation with long-term impact on employment and earnings<sup>81</sup> (Heckman et al., 2002). There is therefore the danger that financial incentives attached to short-term performance measures may focus providers on a set of criteria unrelated to long-term employment outcomes (Heckman et al., 2002). Moreover, these incentives may bear little relation to improving responsiveness to the needs of unemployed clients if providers are encouraged to place those out of work in *any* job, irrespective of the needs and interests of those unemployed.

## 2.4 Chapter summary and conclusion

This chapter has considered how responsiveness to users' needs has been defined in policy agendas and in the academic literature on the New Public Management and the reform of public services. Within this context, responsiveness has been conceived in terms of extending the lines of accountability of providers to users, through the requirement that they respond directly to users' needs and preferences within a more market-oriented system of welfare provision (Mulgan, 2000). This, however, may obscure the wider influences on responsiveness, including government policies that may conflict with directly responding to users' needs and interests, as well as delivery systems that may advantage responsiveness to some needs more than others (Considine, 2002). While performance management systems have been advocated on grounds of improving provider accountability in public service delivery, there may be contradictions between ensuring the upwards accountability of providers to public purchasers and central government, and the aim of improving responsiveness to users in terms of directly responding to their needs.

<sup>79</sup> In part because they provide immediate data to providers and funders (Felstead, 1998).

<sup>80</sup> These outputs included the employment and hourly wage of participants on completing the programme, and employment and weekly earnings 13 weeks after completion.

<sup>81</sup> Long-term impact was measured by the employment status and earnings of programme participants over 18 and 30 months after completing the programme.

In the context of employment service provision, the orientation of the performance regime is primarily towards the achievement of centrally-defined job outcome targets, with financial incentives for providers to achieve those targets through output-related funding. The findings of research with regard to the effects of a job outcome-oriented regime draw attention to possible tensions between this regime and responsiveness to users' needs: in terms of the type of clients whose needs are responded to, the type of services that are provided and the type of employment outcomes that are achieved.

These broader tensions in relation to 'responsiveness' form the conceptual context in which the specific questions of this research regarding the responsiveness of employment service provision to the needs of refugees will be addressed.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODS

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This chapter describes the methods used in the collection and analysis of the data. Section 3.1 outlines the reasons for adopting a qualitative approach in relation to the research questions. Section 3.2 considers the main ethical issues of concern to the research, regarding the informed consent of participants, the benefits of the research, and the anonymity of participants. Sections 3.3 to 3.5 refer to the data collection process. Section 3.3 describes the preliminary research carried out, including discussions and preliminary interviews with key informants to identify emerging themes. Section 3.4 describes how the sample of refugee clients and staff of specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus was generated, and the limitations of the sample achieved. Section 3.5 focuses on the process of carrying out the interviews and issues affecting the data collection. The final section describes how the data were analysed and considers the reliability and validity of the data.

#### 3.1 A qualitative approach

The research comprised semi-structured interviews with refugee clients and with staff of specialist providers of employment services for refugees and of Jobcentre Plus. A qualitative approach was adopted given the nature of the research questions, which were concerned with the experiences and perceptions of the actors involved in employment service provision. Specifically, the questions address: 1) refugees' experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of providers to their needs; and 2) the experiences and perceptions of staff regarding the factors influencing providers' responsiveness to refugees' needs in relation to the systems in which service delivery takes place (see Chapter One, section 1.5). The concerns of the research were therefore both contextual and explanatory (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ritchie, 2003): to explore the experiences of refugees as clients of employment service provision and their perceptions of responsiveness to their needs; and to understand the factors that influence the responsiveness of providers from the perspectives of staff, regarding the context in which providers operate. Semi-structured interviews with refugee clients and staff of employment service providers were therefore intended to allow for more 'information-rich' and exploratory accounts of interviewees' experiences and perceptions.



The qualitative nature of the research was similarly intended to build on the findings of existing studies. As discussed in Chapter One regarding the literature on refugees and employment, existing quantitative research has found high levels of unemployment amongst refugees, as well as low levels of use of Jobcentre Plus provision and a reliance on social networks in finding employment (Bloch, 2002b)<sup>82</sup>. Given these findings, a qualitative approach was therefore considered to be complementary, allowing for more in-depth exploration of refugees' experiences and perceptions as clients of employment service providers in terms of responsiveness to their needs, as well as the perceptions of providers involved in this process.

While recognising that there are differing ontological and epistemological perspectives aligned with qualitative research (e.g. see Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Schwandt, 2000), the use of qualitative methods within the context of this research was decided upon on grounds similar to the position set out by Ritchie, that relate both to concerns of interpretivism and 'pragmatism' (Ritchie, 2003). First, respondents' own interpretation, and differing interpretations, of the research issues were of critical concern: i.e. refugees' perceptions of responsiveness to their needs and providers' perceptions of factors influencing responsiveness. Second, the researcher's interpretations were also of importance in synthesising and comparing the perspectives of respondents, and, through the analytical process, employing and developing concepts or theories concerned with "the processes and structures that form part of the context of, and the explanation for, individual behaviour or beliefs" (Ritchie, 2003: 267). The research intended to analyse respondents' perceptions and experiences in relation to the concept of responsiveness, as discussed in Chapter Two, thereby further developing the concept. Third, with regard to 'pragmatic' grounds for the methodological approach, as emphasised by some researchers (e.g. Patton, 2002; Pole & Lampard, 2002; Seale, 1999; Snape & Spencer, 2003), qualitative interviews with staff and clients were appropriate to the type of research questions and provided a means of generating more exploratory, in-depth data on the units of analysis (the experiences and perceptions of refugee clients and staff of employment service providers), as complementary to existing quantitative data. The type of interviews used in the research and the reasons for this are discussed in more detail in section 3.5 in relation to the interview process.

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<sup>82</sup> As discussed, there is relatively little research which has explored use of specialist employment service providers specifically.

## 3.2 Ethical issues

Ethical issues of concern to this research have been raised both in the wider research methods literature (e.g. Kvale, 1996; Lewis, 2003; Silverman, 2000; Wiles et al., 2005) and in the literature on research with refugees specifically (McDowell & Pittaway, 2004; Temple & Moran, 2006). These issues include obtaining participants' informed consent to be involved in the research; the nature of participants' involvement and the benefits of the research; and the anonymity of participants.

### 3.2.1 Informed consent

The involvement of the specialist providers in the research was first discussed with senior members of staff in each case. After making initial contact by telephone, an information sheet on the research (outlining the research topic, timetable, intended outcomes etc.) was emailed to them (see Appendix 4). Where possible, a meeting was held to discuss the research and the involvement of the provider before any research interviews were requested or arranged. In the case of some of the providers (located in the North East of England), this was done by telephone. The meetings and telephone conversations allowed for the 'terms' of the providers' consent to participate in the research to be discussed: for example, ways in which the research might be of use to the provider and mechanisms for feedback on the findings (as discussed in section 3.2.2).

The consent of individual members of staff and refugee clients to be interviewed needed to be negotiated initially through a gatekeeper within each specialist provider. The gatekeeper was either the member of staff who was first contacted in each provider, or another member of staff to whom the researcher was referred to discuss setting up the research interviews<sup>83</sup>. The reliance on gatekeepers in the research process may be problematic given the potential power relationship between a gatekeeper and interviewees, and thus the influence gatekeepers may have on an interviewee's consent (Wiles et al., 2005). Other members of staff might have felt obliged to participate in a research interview because they were told to do so by senior colleagues acting as gatekeepers. Similarly, clients might have felt under obligation to take part if the provider of services that they may have relied upon requested their participation. To try to address this issue, after the gatekeepers in each of the specialist

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<sup>83</sup> With regard to the specialist providers, gatekeepers were sometimes interviewed as part of the main interviews with staff, given the relatively small number of staff within some of these providers.

providers had discussed the research with potential interviewees (staff and clients), before carrying out an interview the purpose of the research was again discussed with each individual interviewee and it was verified that they were willing to participate (see below for further details).

With regard to the refugee client interviewees specifically, the need to clarify understanding of the research context raised particular issues of concern, some of which have been discussed in the emerging literature on research with refugees (e.g. Temple & Moran, 2006). First, it was important to provide adequate information to refugee clients and the opportunity to discuss the research before obtaining ‘informed’ consent to be interviewed, particularly given potential language barriers. While an information sheet in English on the research was provided to gatekeepers in arranging some of the interviews (see Appendix 4), it could not be assumed that this information was disseminated to or adequately understood by clients<sup>84</sup>. During the course of the preliminary interviews, it was apparent in two cases that, despite indicating that the research was being carried out by a PhD student, the interviewees thought that the research was being carried out for Jobcentre Plus. This was problematic given the negative experiences of one of the interviewees with Jobcentre Plus, where it was necessary to stress the independence of the research from Jobcentre Plus. In the context of the main data collection, there was the opportunity to arrange some interviews by first holding a group discussion about the research with clients who were attending training sessions/classes on the premises of two of the specialist providers. This was found to be beneficial in enabling potential interviewees to better understand the context of the research by first asking questions about who the researcher was and why the research was being carried out, which some may have felt more comfortable doing as a group than individually, before they decided whether or not they would agree to be interviewed.

A second issue concerned the need to adequately discuss the nature of the research interview with interviewees before obtaining their consent. Hostile encounters with immigration or other officials in the UK (in addition to experiences in countries of origin) may make some refugees reluctant to be formally interviewed by unknown individuals such as researchers, or to be tape-recorded in this context (Bloch, 1999). As mentioned

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<sup>84</sup> Interviews were only carried out with clients who were relatively proficient in English (according to the gatekeepers’ judgement). However, as discussed in section 3.5.2, the level of proficiency was variable amongst interviewees and it could not be assumed that written information provided in English was fully understood.

previously, an information sheet on the research was provided in advance to potential interviewees (via the gatekeepers in each specialist provider), explaining who the researcher was, why the research was being carried out, what the data would be used for, and specifying the anonymity of respondents. At the outset of any interview, before verbally obtaining an individual's consent to be interviewed, the purpose of the interview and what it would cover was explained, and it was emphasised that interviewees would not be identified by name in the reporting of the data. Individuals were asked if they were comfortable with the interview being recorded (the reasons for doing so were explained<sup>85</sup>), and were given the option of it not being recorded, in which case written notes would be taken (written notes were taken in five interviews, as noted in section 3.5.1).

It was decided not to request written consent as the process of signing a consent form may have been worrying for interviewees, given previous experiences<sup>86</sup>. Although only obtaining verbal consent may be considered inadequate, it has been argued that the consent of participants cannot, in any case, be assumed simply on the basis of obtaining this in writing at the outset of an interview (Wiles et al., 2005). A third issue, therefore, concerns the potential need to re-address the consent of an interviewee during the research process. As recognised in the literature on research with refugees (e.g. McDowell & Pittaway, 2004), the experience of the asylum process and the difficulties encountered in establishing life in the UK may be traumatic and upsetting for refugees to recount in a research interview. Given that the topics covered in the interviews with clients focused only on issues concerning their experiences of employment service provision, it was not anticipated that this would be distressing for interviewees. However, in the course of carrying out the preliminary interviews it became clear that for some interviewees reflecting on their experiences of employment service provision and trying to find work in the UK was at times upsetting, and indeed for some involved reflecting on their personal circumstances more generally. In the course of the interview it was therefore important to emphasise to interviewees that they did not have to discuss anything they did not wish to and that they could stop the interview at any stage. However, those interviewees who clearly found it upsetting to reflect on particular experiences emphasised the importance of having the opportunity to talk about them.

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<sup>85</sup> The reasons for recording an interview were to obtain an accurate record of the discussion and full detail of the interviewee's views and experiences.

<sup>86</sup> It has been argued by some researchers (e.g. McDowell and Pittaway, 2004) that the emphasis placed on the signing of consent forms by Ethics Committees is highly inappropriate for most forms of research with refugee populations.

### 3.2.2 Participants' involvement and benefits of the research

Ethical concerns regarding the need to consider the potential of research to benefit refugees have been raised within the context of recent research seminars (e.g. the ESRC seminar series on Eliciting the Views of People Seeking Asylum and People with Refugee Status<sup>87</sup>). McDowell and Pittaway define research with the potential to benefit refugees as including, for example:

- Research that provides evidence of the impact of government and social policy;
- Research that feeds back and disseminates findings in accessible ways to communities;
- Research that enables participants to better advocate for improvements in their circumstances (McDowell & Pittaway, 2004).

Some organisations (e.g. the British Refugee Council) have emphasised the need for researchers to more actively collaborate with and involve organisations working with refugees as active participants in the research design and implementation process, as a means of developing research projects that have the capacity to benefit refugees. Nevertheless, the process of defining what is beneficial and who should benefit from the research is problematic (McDowell & Pittaway, 2004). There may be competing definitions of 'benefit' between participants: in the context of this research, for example, between and amongst specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus, and between and amongst individual refugee clients and individual members of staff. Whilst accepting that research without tangible benefits beyond adding to knowledge and theory should not be rejected simply because it does not have explicit linkages with practical outcomes, McDowell and Pittaway argue that researchers should nevertheless carefully consider all risks and benefits for participants. Although opportunities for actively involving participants (both staff and refugee clients of the providers) in the design of this research were somewhat limited, given the resource constraints of PhD research (which ultimately served the researcher's own PhD purposes), the question of benefit to participants was reflected on during the course of the preliminary research (see below).

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<sup>87</sup> Held by the University of Salford between 2002-2003.

### **Specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus**

It became apparent when carrying out preliminary research discussions that some specialist providers were approached regularly by postgraduate students and other researchers wanting to carry out interviews with refugees for their research, which some felt reflected the growing 'fashion' for research on refugees. They emphasised that in some cases where they had been involved in previous research projects they had received no feedback on the research findings, and felt that it had been a demand on their time and resources with little benefit to their organisation. In order to try to address the issue of benefit to the providers the following steps were therefore taken:

- Through preliminary discussions with members of staff of the specialist providers, issues that they felt were of relevance within the general topic of the research were drawn out, in order to take this into consideration in developing the research questions.
- In each specialist provider there was a member of staff who was a main contact in carrying out the research. As well as facilitating the data collection (i.e. setting up interviews), that person was consulted and given feedback during the course of the research.
- An interim summary of the preliminary research findings was produced and sent to the specialist providers (in which respondents were anonymous). This was partly done to obtain feedback from the providers on the preliminary findings and also to try to accommodate differences between the research timetable (including the time required to analyse the data) and the timetable required to meet providers' needs and/or maintain their interest in the research findings. One specialist provider, for example, wished to receive feedback on the preliminary findings of the client interviews in order to potentially feed into an evaluation that they were carrying out of their services.
- The emerging findings were presented in ways that might enable discussion with those directly involved in policy development and service provision in this area. A presentation was made at a meeting of the National Refugee Integration Forum's sub-group on employment (which included representatives of the Department for Work and Pensions, Home Office, Jobcentre Plus and specialist providers of employment services). Presentations were also made in other seminars that

members of staff of Jobcentre Plus, the Department for Work and Pensions and specialist providers attended.

- An executive summary of the research was sent to the specialist providers and to Jobcentre Plus and the Department of Work and Pensions.

## Clients

With respect to the potential benefit of the research to the refugee participants, it was hoped that the research might be of use/interest to the providers and other relevant organisations involved in the development of employment service provision for refugees. However, it was of little direct benefit to the refugee clients involved, and therefore other means of recognising and reciprocating their contribution to the research needed to be considered:

- Where appropriate, information was given on the names and contact details of other providers that might be able to offer relevant information, advice and guidance to interviewees (e.g. for those seeking professional re-qualification routes).
- During the preliminary interviews with clients, interviewees were offered a (very limited) contribution of five pounds<sup>88</sup> to thank them for their participation in the interviews. However, some interviewees appeared to be embarrassed by this and emphasised that they did not want any payment for being interviewed as they were happy to take part in the research. Therefore, it was decided to offer interviewees five pounds as a contribution to travel expenses (in some cases travel expenses were paid for by the provider), emphasising that travel expenses were covered by the research budget<sup>89</sup>.

Regarding the involvement of refugees in the research, some researchers/organisations (e.g. British Refugee Council) have been strongly critical of research 'on' refugees that fails to involve refugees as active participants in the research design process. While recognising these concerns, the reasons for and means of participation of refugees in research need to be reflected on carefully. Indeed, some participants may not wish to be more actively involved beyond participating in a research interview, e.g. given the demands on their time that this may require. Similarly, more participatory approaches may be more appropriate to some types of research project than others (e.g. those that are able to adequately resource

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<sup>88</sup> Offering a voucher was decided against because of potentially negative connotations with the previous distribution of vouchers as welfare payments to asylum seekers.

<sup>89</sup> This was facilitated through a grant for research expenses as part of an ESRC PhD Studentship.

the contribution of participants). Although staff of the specialist providers were consulted in the course of carrying out the research, clients' involvement was essentially limited to their participation in the preliminary key informant discussions and the main research interviews. Where possible (i.e. if contact details were still available), clients were also sent a letter to thank them for their contribution to the research together with a summary of the findings. It was originally intended to involve clients from each provider in a presentation/discussion of the research findings. However, this was not carried out partly because of the difficulties of contacting clients again more than a year after the research interviews had taken place, and also partly because of the difficulties of maintaining their anonymity in the research.

### **3.2.3 Anonymity of participants**

In order to ensure that respondents remained anonymous in the research, the following steps were taken. Recorded interviews and interview transcripts were not shared with any other party and, in storing the data, full names of interviewees were not indicated on either digital interview files or transcripts. In the reporting of the findings, the names of refugee respondents were changed (a false name was given to each respondent). Individual Jobcentre offices of Jobcentre Plus where staff were interviewed were not identified. Members of staff of Jobcentre Plus were not identified by name, and each respondent was given a numeric label. Similarly, none of the specialist providers were identified in so far as each was given a false name.

### **3.3 Preliminary research**

London and the North East of England were selected as the research sites for generating the research sample, taking into consideration: the area of residence of refugees in the UK; the location of specialist providers; and the implications of the dispersal system.

There is no accurate data on the area of residence of refugees in the UK (see Chapter One, section 1.1.2). Although data on the area of residence of asylum seekers can be obtained from National Asylum Seeker Support Service (NASS) records (kept by the Regional Consortia for Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support Services<sup>90</sup>) regarding those asylum seekers who have been provided accommodation or subsistence only support within the

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<sup>90</sup> The Regional Consortia were set up alongside the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to coordinate the dispersal of asylum seekers (from April 2000) to those regions involved.



respective regions (including Greater London and the North East), the area of residence of an asylum seeker after he/she has been granted refugee status (or another legal status) is not recorded. Various national, regional and local estimates have been made of the refugee and asylum seeker population (e.g. Africa Educational Trust, 2002; Aldous et al., 1999; Greater London Authority, 2001) using combined national Home Office and local data sources. Around 85% of all refugees and asylum seekers in the UK were estimated to be resident in London in the survey carried out by Carey-Wood et al. (Carey-Wood et al., 1995). A similar percentage of refugees and asylum seekers are expected to continue to reside in London (Greater London Authority, 2001), although this may have declined to a certain extent following the introduction (from April 2000) of the system of dispersing asylum seekers away from London and the South East to other parts of the UK. It is, however, difficult to assess the extent to which asylum seekers once granted refugee status continue to reside in the area to which they were dispersed or instead migrate to London, where they may have better access to social networks (as noted previously in Chapter One, section 1.1.2). London was therefore selected as one of the research sites, given that a high proportion of refugees in the UK are estimated to be resident in London (Carey-Wood et al., 1995) and, as a result, it is the location of a range of specialist providers of employment services for refugees.

In addition to London, it was decided to include a research site that was one of the main dispersal areas. Government policy on the dispersal of asylum seekers aims to enable successful asylum applicants to settle in dispersal areas (Home Office, 2005c). It was therefore considered important to incorporate and reflect on the experiences of employment service providers and refugee clients of these providers in a dispersal area. The North East was selected because it is one of the main dispersal areas (as referred to in Chapter One, section 1.1.2). In contrast to London, the North East might be expected to have relatively fewer or more recently established specialist providers of employment services, given the more recent settlement of refugees in the area through the dispersal system. Refugees might therefore have different experiences of specialist services in this context. An additional research site was therefore intended to facilitate a broader sample of refugee clients of employment service providers, and of staff of these providers, not confined to one geographical location, such as London.

Preliminary research was carried out between July and October 2004 in London and the North East. This involved the following:

- Establishing contact and holding discussions with key informants within the research sites in order to inform the development of the research questions. This involved discussions with individual members of staff of nine London-based and eight North East-based organisations that were engaged in policy concerning refugee employment (locally or nationally) and/or the direct provision of employment services to refugees<sup>91</sup>. Regarding the latter, these discussions also served as preliminary interviews with staff of specialist providers. Written notes were taken and some discussions were recorded.
- Reviewing relevant national and local policy and services documentation as part of the above process.
- Carrying out three pilot interviews with refugees who had experience of employment service provision in order to pilot and revise a topic guide. These interviewees were clients of one of the organisations contacted during this phase of the research. A further set of preliminary interviews with refugees who were clients of specialist providers and/or Jobcentre Plus were then carried out to identify emerging issues pertaining to the research questions and to further develop/re-define those questions. This comprised 12 interviews (six interviewees were accessed through one provider based in London, and six through four providers in the North East). Some interviews were arranged in advance via the providers, while others were carried out by visiting the providers' premises in order to meet clients. All preliminary interviews with clients were recorded, except for one where the client did not wish to be recorded and written notes were taken.
- Preliminary interviews that were recorded were transcribed. The transcriptions and discussion notes from this first phase of the research were then reviewed in order to identify emerging themes. On the basis of this preliminary analysis, the research questions were re-defined and the interview schedules for the staff and client interviews were further developed before carrying out the main research interviews.

### 3.4 Research sample

This section refers to the process of developing the research sample of refugee clients and staff of specialist providers and of Jobcentre Plus who were interviewed as part of the primary data collection. Section 3.4.1 outlines the final research questions and

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<sup>91</sup> Of these 17 organisations, 12 were providers of employment-related services.

corresponding units of analysis. Section 3.4.2 describes the approach taken in order to generate the sample, and the limitations of that approach and of the sample achieved. Section 3.4.3 provides details on the sample.

### 3.4.1 Units of analysis

The units of analysis in the research were refugee clients of specialist providers and of Jobcentre Plus; and staff of specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus. Table 3.1 presents the final research questions and the units of analysis in relation to each question. Question one concerns the experiences and perceptions of refugee clients of specialist providers and of Jobcentre Plus, while question two concerns the experiences and perceptions of staff of the specialist providers and staff of Jobcentre Plus.

**Table 3.1**

#### **Research questions and units of analysis**

Research questions	Units of analysis	
	Specialist providers	Jobcentre Plus
1. How responsive do refugee clients perceive specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus to be to their needs?	Refugee clients	Refugee clients
2. What are the factors influencing providers' responsiveness to the needs of refugee clients?	Staff	Staff

### 3.4.2 Sampling approach

Given that the research intended to explore the experiences and perceptions of refugee clients and staff of both specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus, it was necessary to first identify and access a selection of specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus offices (Jobcentres) within the research sites (London and the North East), and subsequently to generate the main research sample by accessing staff and client interviewees through these providers. The different stages of this process are discussed below.

## Selection of the providers

### *Specialist providers*

Specialist providers of employment-related services were first identified through discussions with key informants and through relevant policy and services documentation during the preliminary phase of the research (as referred to in section 3.3). This was necessary given the range of organisations/providers that exist within the third sector that might offer specialist employment services for refugees, and the lack of comprehensive information on these organisations (as emphasised by the National Refugee Integration Forum Employment and Training Sub-Group, 2006). Although there was limited scope for introducing criteria for selection (given the limited number of specialist providers in the North East, and selection being partly dictated by which specialist providers would agree to participate in the research), the selection of the specialist providers attempted to provide examples of organisational diversity within the third sector. This concerns the providers' sources of funding (including public funding from Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council, funding from charitable trusts and from the private sector); size (number of staff and clients); and length of establishment. The diversity of the specialist providers selected was intended to allow for exploration of factors that might affect service delivery and responsiveness to refugees' needs, including the funding environments and performance systems in which they operated. It also allowed for exploration of refugees' experiences of different types of specialist providers and types of employment-related services.

With regard to the North East, relatively few providers of employment-related services that specifically targeted refugees were identified by informants. This was perceived to be because the refugee population of the North East had only relatively recently been of concern to local service providers as a result of dispersal, and service provision in the area of employment had therefore only recently begun to develop. Regarding London, given the greater size of its refugee population, there are several organisations within the voluntary and community sector providing employment services for refugees. Informants identified both more established and more recent providers operating in this area.

Amongst the specialist providers that were identified, four were selected (two in London and two in the North East) for interviews with both staff and clients (see above regarding the criteria used). This was considered to be a manageable number of providers, with a view to interviewing a minimum number of staff and clients from each provider in order to achieve a balance between the quality of the interviews (more in-depth data) and the quantity that could be realistically achieved within the timeframe of the research. After carrying out the research interviews with staff of these four providers, it was subsequently decided to select a further three specialist providers for interviews with staff only. This was in order to allow for a potentially wider range of specialist provider staff perspectives regarding the emerging findings in relation to the second research question. As discussed in the literature on qualitative methods (e.g. Patton, 2002), although a minimum sample was specified at the outset of the research, it was necessary to develop that sample during the course of the fieldwork (albeit to a limited extent) as particular findings emerged, in order to further explore emerging issues.

### *Jobcentre Plus*

As discussed in Chapter One, Jobcentre Plus is the national statutory employment service. It operates through local offices (Jobcentres) that are managed at a district level, although the delivery of Jobcentre Plus programmes, including the New Deal, is sub-contracted at the district level to a range of private and third sector providers. Unlike the specialist providers, the organisation therefore comprises a number of different local offices (i.e. Jobcentres) throughout the UK, and within London and the North East, at which its clients are registered according to their area of residence.

In order to access interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff, it was necessary first to contact the relevant section of the Department for Work and Pensions to inform them about the research and to approach a Jobcentre Plus district-level contact with their authorisation. The contacts in both London and the North East then negotiated access to individual Jobcentres and staff. The selection of the Jobcentres was essentially determined by the Jobcentre Plus district contact, although, given the focus of the research, access was requested to Jobcentres in areas where refugees were amongst their local client base and where one or other of the specialist providers in each research site was located (to potentially account for locally specific issues around employment service provision). The Jobcentres through

which staff were then interviewed comprised three Jobcentres in one London district and one Jobcentre within a North East district.

### **Accessing staff and refugee client interviewees**

#### ***Specialist provider staff***

After approaching the specialist providers to discuss the research and their involvement, interviews with staff were arranged through a member of staff who acted as a contact person and a gatekeeper in each provider (as referred to in section 3.2.1). Interviewees included staff with experience of advising refugee clients as well as those with managerial responsibilities (e.g. responsibility for funding contracts) who might have differing perspectives regarding the factors affecting the responsiveness of their organisation to the needs of refugees, according to their particular role and experiences. A minimum of three interviews with staff in each provider were anticipated in order to allow for potentially different perspectives between staff<sup>92</sup>. Given that the number of staff in the North East specialist providers was limited, all members of staff were interviewed. As there were more than two advisers working within the London specialist providers, the selection of those who were interviewed was determined by the gatekeeper within the respective provider (issues concerning selection bias in this respect will be addressed in section 3.4.3).

#### ***Specialist provider clients***

Access to refugee clients through the specialist providers was carried out through a combination of the following three approaches. The first approach involved a gatekeeper (member of staff) within each specialist provider making contact with clients to discuss the research and arrange interviews. The second approach involved the gatekeeper making contact with clients initially and, if a client was willing to be interviewed and agreed to their contact details being passed on, the client was subsequently contacted directly to discuss the research and arrange an interview. The third approach involved accessing clients by attending training sessions/classes in which they were participating on the premises of the provider. As such, a more opportunistic or emergent sampling approach (Patton, 2002) was adopted in order to take advantage of other possibilities for recruiting

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<sup>92</sup> Although, as explored in Chapter Seven, the research found similarities in staff perspectives regarding the factors influencing responsiveness.

client interviewees, while potentially addressing issues concerning selection bias by not solely relying on a gatekeeper. This approach included attending a work placement training session where a general discussion was held with clients about the research and their views on some of the issues before asking if they would be willing to be interviewed individually. English language classes were also attended, during which a general discussion was held with clients before individual interviews. This proved to be a successful means of accessing interviewees by enabling clients to first meet the researcher and find out more about the research (as noted in section 3.2.1).

Given that access to refugee clients was dependent partly on staff of the providers acting as gatekeepers, the selection of the clients interviewed was also in part carried out by the gatekeepers in discussion with the researcher. This poses potential problems with selection bias, given that gatekeepers may have been inclined to approach those clients with whom they had a good relationship (and who may therefore be likely to view favourably the responsiveness of that provider to their needs). However, in the context of the third approach outlined above, it was possible to access some clients directly<sup>93</sup>, which may have helped to mitigate this bias (although the use of the different approaches depended largely on what the provider in question was willing to facilitate in terms of making contact with its clients).

In the selection of clients, the following criteria were taken into consideration:

- *Immigration status*

The client had been granted refugee status (or Exceptional Leave to Remain, Humanitarian Protection, or Discretionary Leave) in the UK<sup>94</sup>. The research did not include asylum seekers in the sample given that asylum seekers are not legally permitted to work<sup>95</sup>.

- *Relationship with the provider*

The client was registered or had recently been registered with the respective provider. Clients were either participating in particular programmes or were in contact with the provider for advice and guidance (most clients selected who were

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<sup>93</sup> This approach was adopted in the context of two of the specialist providers.

<sup>94</sup> Some of the providers also delivered services to asylum seekers, other migrant and minority ethnic groups.

<sup>95</sup> Although an asylum applicant can now apply for permission to work if after 12 months they are still waiting for a decision on their application.

not currently enrolled on a particular programme, including those who were employed, continued to be in contact with the provider for information, advice and guidance). The intention was to explore experiences of service provision in relation to the specialist providers with refugees who had relatively recently made use of the providers' services.

- *Gender, countries of origin and skills backgrounds*

The aim was to try to achieve a balance across the clients selected in terms of gender, country of origin, education and employment background. This was with a view to being able to reflect on potentially different needs amongst refugees and experiences in relation to employment services, in particular given the diversity of education and employment backgrounds emphasised in the literature and the implications this may have in terms of type and level of needs (see Chapter One).

In order to achieve a balance of perspectives, a sample of between five and eight clients in each provider was planned, whilst also allowing for the number of interviews achieved to vary in part according to the amount of time gatekeepers were able to commit to assisting the research by contacting clients and helping to set up interviews. Although it was recognised that the sample of clients selected would in part reflect each provider's own particular client base, the purpose of the research was not to achieve a representative sample of individual provider's clients given that the research was not concerned with generalisations about the experiences of clients of each provider. Moreover, it was not intended to achieve a representative sample of the wider refugee population, given the qualitative concerns of the research, nor would it have been possible to do so due to the lack of data on the refugee population in the UK (as discussed in Chapter One).

### *Jobcentre Plus staff*

Access to Jobcentre Plus staff was more complex than was the case for the specialist providers. As mentioned previously, this required first making contact with and getting authorisation from an appropriate section of the Department for Work and Pensions. The name of a member of staff was provided by the Department for Work and Pensions for the respective Jobcentre Plus districts in London and the North East, who was subsequently contacted in order to request his or her cooperation with the research and the facilitation of interviews with Jobcentre Plus advisers who had experience of advising refugee clients.



Staff interviewees were therefore selected by these district contacts who acted as gatekeepers. Again, this poses potential problems with selection bias, e.g. gatekeepers may have been inclined to approach staff who they thought would give favourable views of Jobcentre Plus and its services. Given that staff could only be approached in this way (i.e. they would not have agreed to be interviewed without authorisation from a senior member of staff), there were few other options for accessing staff. Staff interviewed did, however, talk critically about the context in which they worked (and were assured of anonymity before being interviewed).

Whilst it was originally intended to interview a minimum of ten Jobcentre Plus advisers, in order to allow for breadth of perspectives across a spread of Jobcentres within the research sites, this proved difficult because of the limited time the gatekeepers were able to commit to assisting with the research by contacting staff and setting up interviews (particularly given that this was not Department for Work and Pensions commissioned research). In addition to Jobcentre Plus advisers, two contracts managers who had experience of contracting services that refugees were referred to were also interviewed. As issues concerning performance targets and output-related funding in service delivery emerged in the course of the research, it was appropriate to explore this further with staff responsible for managing contracts with providers, as well as with Jobcentre Plus advisers.

#### ***Jobcentre Plus clients***

It was decided not to access refugees who were clients of Jobcentre Plus directly through the Jobcentres where staff were interviewed. This was primarily because refugees approached in this context may have felt uncomfortable being interviewed, given the negative experiences some refugees appear to have had with Jobcentre Plus, which became apparent on the basis of the preliminary research interviews with refugees. It was therefore important that the research was not associated with Jobcentre Plus. In addition, given that the research was not commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions, obtaining authorisation and the willingness of Jobcentre Plus staff to cooperate with recruiting clients for interviews would have been very difficult, as this would have raised issues concerning data protection in relation to Jobcentre Plus clients. Moreover, at the time of the research, clients registered with Jobcentre Plus were not identified according to whether they had refugee status, although a 'marker' for refugee status has since begun to be recorded (as noted in Chapter One, section 1.4.4).

Given these issues, clients of the specialist providers who were interviewed were asked if they had experience of using Jobcentre Plus. If so, the interview also addressed their experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus to their needs.

### 3.4.3 Sample achieved and limitations

Table 3.2 presents a matrix of the research sample achieved through the process described above.

**Table 3.2**

#### **Research sample**

<b>Research site</b>	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Staff interviews</b>	<b>Client interviews</b>
London	Specialist provider 1	3	5
London	Specialist provider 2	3	8*
North East	Specialist provider 3	3	8
North East	Specialist provider 4	3	7
London	Specialist provider 5	1	
London	Specialist provider 6	1	
London	Specialist provider 7	1	
London	Jobcentre Plus	4	(11)**
North East	Jobcentre Plus	3	(13)***
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>28</b>

\* Of the preliminary interviews carried out, three were subsequently included alongside the main research interviews in the data analysis. Although the interview schedule for the main interviews was revised, the preliminary interviews still covered the main topics of concern to the research.

\*\* Of the 13 client interviewees from Provider 1 and Provider 2, 11 were also clients of Jobcentre Plus (see page 120 regarding use of Jobcentre Plus).

\*\*\* Of the 15 client interviewees from Provider 3 and Provider 4, 13 were also clients of Jobcentre Plus. The sample of refugee clients of Jobcentre Plus is therefore contained within the sample of refugee clients of the specialist providers.

The specialist providers that participated in the research (Providers 1 to 7 in the above table) included four providers that were the primary focus of the research, where both staff

and clients were interviewed (Providers 1 to 4). As discussed previously, interviews were also carried out with staff of an additional three specialist providers (Providers 5, 6 and 7).

The limitations of the sample reflect, in part, some of the issues discussed previously in relation to the sampling approach. By obtaining a sample of refugee clients of specialist providers and of Jobcentre Plus through only four specialist providers, the sample is essentially restricted to the experiences of a relatively small number of clients of a very limited number of providers. Although some of the respondents had experience as clients of other employment-related service providers, the sample essentially allowed for data to be collected on respondents' experiences in relation to four specialist providers, and Jobcentre Plus where relevant. The sample is therefore only able to serve the purposes of a qualitative study by exploring a small number of cases in order to gain more in-depth data on respondents' experiences and perceptions. This is with a view to generating a more detailed exploration of the perceptions and experiences of refugees as clients of employment-related providers, and, on this basis, conceptual analysis of the responsiveness of employment service provision to the needs of refugees. It is not possible, nor is it intended, to make inferences about the experiences of the wider population of refugee clients of specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus based on this sample. Indeed, there are considerable difficulties in trying to obtain a representative sample of refugees, given the lack of data on the refugee population in the UK (as discussed in Chapter One).

Similarly, the sample of staff of specialist providers is limited to staff of only a small number of providers (the four providers where clients were also interviewed, and an additional three providers). Given that one of the strategies of qualitative research is to triangulate perspectives (Flick, 1998) in order to provide deeper insight into context-specific experiences and perceptions, the sample therefore potentially allowed for more in-depth data on both staff perspectives as well as clients' perspectives of responsiveness to employment-related needs. However, again the intention was not to make inferences on the basis of this sample regarding the experiences of specialist providers, particularly since specialist providers encompass a diverse range of organisations within the third sector. The qualitative nature of the research allowed for exploration of the *context* in which providers operate in order to develop conceptualisation of the factors/systems that may influence responsiveness to refugee clients' needs.

The sample of staff of Jobcentre Plus is more limited than was originally intended, given the difficulties discussed previously of accessing Jobcentre Plus advisers. Nevertheless, the sample achieved allowed for the triangulation of Jobcentre Plus staff perspectives with the perspectives of refugees as clients of Jobcentre Plus, and with the perspectives of staff of the specialist providers (as explored in Chapter Eight).

### **Characteristics of the specialist providers**

The specialist providers comprised a range of types of organisation, funded through different sources and delivering different types of specialist services to refugees (and in some cases services to other unemployed groups). An overview of the specialist providers where interviews were carried out with both staff and clients (specialist providers 1 to 4 in Table 3.2) is given below. The providers' names have been changed in order to protect their anonymity. Further details on the specialist providers are presented in Chapter Seven, including the additional three providers where interviews were carried out with staff (specialist providers 5 to 7 in Table 3.2).

#### ***TRAIN***

TRAIN was a registered charitable organisation that had a long history of providing specialist employment, education and training services targeted at refugees and asylum seekers, having been established over 20 years ago. It offered a range of employment-related services to refugees at the time of the research.

#### ***EMPLOY***

EMPLOY was a not-for-profit company<sup>96</sup> that delivered programmes for unemployed groups (primarily minority ethnic groups, who formed a high proportion of the population of the local area), including Jobcentre Plus contracted provision. It had recently set up a specialist project to assist refugees with entering work. The project targeted refugees who had recently received refugee status.

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<sup>96</sup> The term 'not-for-profit' is not a legal status (unlike charitable status). It is used here to refer to an organisation that is constituted as a company limited by guarantee but does not have shareholders (i.e. it does not distribute profit to its members). However, the term not-for-profit, like the 'third sector', is often applied to a range of different organisations (including both social enterprises and voluntary organisations), as discussed in Chapter One.

## ***WORKS***

WORKS was a charitable organisation that was established to provide training to disadvantaged young people who were unemployed. It had recently set up a specialist project to provide a one-year (and subsequently six-month) subsidised work placement programme for refugees, in order to assist refugees with entering employment.

### ***ELLA Project***

The ELLA project was set up in 2003 under the Single Regeneration Budget and the New Deal for Communities (funding that was administered by the local authority and New Deal for Communities local partnership<sup>97</sup>). Although the project was aimed at unemployed people in the local area who had ESOL needs, a large proportion of its clients were refugees.

## **Characteristics of refugee clients**

### ***Country of origin, age and gender***

The 28 refugee clients who participated in the research were from a range of countries of origin represented amongst the source countries of applicants for asylum in UK during the period 2000-2005 (Home Office, 2005a, 2006). Eighteen of the respondents were male and 10 were female. While respondents' age at the time of interview varied, most were between the age of 30 and 44 years (for details see Table 3.5).

### ***Immigration status, length of residence and region of residence in the UK***

Twenty six respondents had been granted refugee status (two of whom had arrived through family reunion as dependants of principal asylum applicants, after their husbands had been granted refugee status in the UK); one had been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) through an amnesty (for asylum applicants with children) in 2004; and one had been granted Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR). Except for the latter, all respondents had Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK. All respondents were entitled to work. Respondents

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<sup>97</sup> See Glossary.

had mostly received refugee status (or ELR and ILR) during the period 2000-2004, except for two respondents who had received refugee status in 1995 and 1996. Most had also arrived in the UK during the 2000-2004 period, except for five who had arrived between 1998-99 and four who had arrived between 1991-96.

At the time of interview, 13 of the respondents were resident in the Greater London region and 15 were resident in the North East region, which corresponded with the location of the specialist providers of which they were clients.

### ***Education and employment***

There was a diversity of education and employment backgrounds amongst the respondents, including those with lower-skilled and those with higher-skilled backgrounds in terms of qualifications and employment experience before coming to the UK. At the time of interview, 19 respondents were unemployed and nine were employed (eight were in full-time employment and one in part-time employment<sup>98</sup>). Chapter Four presents further details on respondents' backgrounds and on their current employment interests.

### ***Use of Jobcentre Plus***

Of the 28 respondents accessed through the specialist providers, 26 were also clients, or had previously been clients, of Jobcentre Plus. Clients of Jobcentre Plus are defined as those respondents who were currently or had previously been claiming benefits through Jobcentre Plus, in which case they would have been entitled or indeed obliged to use the services of Jobcentre Plus, such as participation in Work-Focused Interviews with Jobcentre Plus advisers to discuss looking for work<sup>99</sup>. Of the two respondents who had not claimed benefits, the partner of one had previously claimed Jobseekers Allowance, and the partner of the other was in full-time employment. Of the 26 who had claimed benefits, most had received Jobseekers Allowance (23 respondents). Table 3.3 presents the number of respondents who were claiming benefits at the time of interview or had previously done so, and were therefore interviewed regarding their experiences and perceptions as clients of Jobcentre Plus.

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<sup>98</sup> 21 hours a week.

<sup>99</sup> As discussed in Chapter One (section 1.3.1), benefits claimants are required to attend Work-Focused Interviews with Jobcentre Plus advisers. Although non-claimants are entitled to visit a Jobcentre and use Jobcentre Plus computer-based services to access information on job vacancies, they are not entitled to participate in Jobcentre Plus programmes.

**Table 3.3**

**Refugee respondents currently or previously claiming benefits through Jobcentre Plus, and type of benefit claimed\***

<b>Type of benefit</b>	<b>Currently claiming benefit</b>	<b>Previously claimed benefit</b>	<b>Total</b>
Jobseekers Allowance	8	15**	23
Income Support	2***		2
Incapacity Benefit	1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>26</b>

\* N=26 (two refugee respondents had not claimed benefits through Jobcentre Plus).

\*\* Seven of the respondents who had previously claimed Jobseekers Allowance had stopped within the previous six months (from the time of interview) as they were currently participating in a full-time subsidised work placement (i.e. they had not entered employment).

\*\*\* Both respondents were lone parents.

### ***Use of the specialist providers***

All of the 28 refugee respondents interviewed in the research were approached through the specialist providers (specialist providers 1 to 4 in Table 3.2) as clients of the providers. As shown in Table 3.4 below, those who were unemployed at the time of interview (19 respondents) were either participating in a programme delivered by one of the specialist providers, and/or participating part-time in a further or higher education programme, and/or looking for work with the assistance of one of the specialist providers. Regarding those who were working at the time of interview (nine respondents), most had found work relatively recently (three were just about to start a job) and were still in contact with the respective specialist provider for information, advice and guidance.

Full data on the characteristics of the sample of refugee clients are presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3.4

**Current status of refugee respondents at time of interview**

<b>Current status at time of interview</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>19</b>
Participating in a specialist provider work placement programme	7
Participating in a specialist provider ESOL and job search training programme	6
Participating part-time in further education and training	4*
Participating part-time in higher education	2**
<b>Employed</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>

\* Two respondents who were participating part-time in further education/training were also participating in a specialist provider work placement programme.

\*\* One respondent who was participating part-time in higher education was also participating in a specialist provider work placement programme.



**Table 3.5****Characteristics of refugee respondents<sup>1</sup>**

The names of respondents in this table have been changed.

Respondent	Age	Gender	Country of origin	Year of arrival in UK	Year received refugee status <sup>2</sup>	Before coming to UK			Spoken English on arrival <sup>5</sup>	Education/ training in UK <sup>6</sup>	Current employment status
						Education <sup>3</sup>	Employment status/ previous experience	Skills background <sup>4</sup>			
Uzay	44	Male	Turkey	1999	2000	Secondary	Labourer	L-S	No	-	Unemployed
Patrick	36	Male	Togo	2000	2003	First degree	Senior manager	H-S	Yes	FE certificate in management	Customer services assistant
Desta	30	Female	Ethiopia	1996	2000	Secondary	No employment experience	L-S	No	Business start-up training	Unemployed
Marina	46	Female	Russia	2001	2003	Higher degree	Travel representative/ Researcher	H-S	No	-	Unemployed <sup>7</sup>
Petar	42	Male	Kosovo	2000	2004	Secondary	Baker	L-S	No	-	Unemployed
Layla	39	Female	Iran	2002	Family reunion, 2002	FE diploma	Nursery assistant	M-S	No	Beauty therapy course	Shop assistant (about to begin)
Alim	43	Male	Turkey	1998	2004	Secondary	Restaurant/ Farm work	L-S	No	-	Unemployed
Biniyam	38	Male	Ethiopia	1990	1994	First degree (not completed)	Full-time student	H-S	Yes	First degree, Masters in computing	Senior computing officer
Mehmet	26	Male	Turkey	2003	2004	FE diploma (not completed)	Full-time student/ Electrician	M-S	No	-	Catering assistant
Rashid	31	Male	Afghanistan	2002	ELR, 2002	First degree	Bank clerk	H-S	No	-	Dairy operator
Raul	33	Male	Angola	2003	2004	First degree (not completed)	Secondary school teacher/ student	H-S	Yes	NVQ Level 3 Accounting (ongoing)	Unemployed <sup>7</sup>

Respondent	Age	Gender	Country of origin	Year of arrival in UK	Year received refugee status	Before coming to UK			Spoken English on arrival	Education/ training in UK	Current employment status
						Education	Employment status/ previous experience	Skills background			
Emmanuel	29	Male	Ivory Coast	2003	2004	FE (diploma)	Business owner (exports)	H-S	Yes	IT course	Unemployed <sup>7</sup>
Zamira	29	Female	Albania	2004	Family reunion, 2004	First degree, post-graduate diploma	Medical assistant	H-S	Yes	Trying to get qualification recognised	Unemployed
Pirro	39	Male	Albania	2001	2003	First degree	Primary school head teacher	H-S	No	Access course in Social Work (ongoing)	Unemployed/ part-time student
Kuda	44	Male	Zimbabwe	2002	2002	First degree	Secondary school teacher	H-S	Yes	A-Level Mathematics (ongoing)	Unemployed <sup>7</sup>
Adrijana	30	Female	Kosovo	1999	2003	Secondary	No employment experience	L-S	No	-	Unemployed
Damir	33	Male	Croatia	1999	2004	Secondary	Agricultural worker	L-S	No	-	Shop worker
Kamole	46	Male	Democratic Republic of Congo	2002	2003	Higher degree	University lecturer	H-S	No	-	Equality and diversity officer
Amira	35	Female	Iraq	1999	2000	First degree	Engineer	H-S	Yes	Engineering courses (ongoing)	Unemployed
Therese	23	Female	Democratic Republic of Congo	2003	2003	FE (diploma)	Accountant	M-S	No	Pitman diploma in Accounting	Administrative assistant
Kalifa	23	Female	Somalia	2001	2001	No formal education	Worked in family-owned shop	L-S	No	-	Unemployed
Jeremy	40	Male	Zimbabwe	2000	2004	FE (diploma)	Secondary school teacher	M-S	Yes	-	Unemployed <sup>7</sup>

Respondent	Age	Gender	Country of origin	Year of arrival in UK	Year received refugee status	Before coming to UK			Spoken English on arrival	Education/training in UK	Current employment status
						Education	Employment status/ previous experience	Skills background			
Jean	46	Male	Democratic Republic of Congo	2004	2004	First degree	Bank manager	H-S	No	-	Unemployed
Chuma	37	Male	Zimbabwe	2002	2004	University diploma	Primary school teacher	H-S	Yes	-	Unemployed <sup>1</sup>
Hamid	31	Male	Sudan	2003	2004	First degree	Pharmacist	H-S	Yes	Post-graduate diploma (ongoing)	Unemployed <sup>1</sup>
Mirjeta	35	Female	Albania	2002	2004	First degree	Accountant	H-S	No	Learndirect IT and accountancy courses	Unemployed
Florence	32	Female	Sierra Leone	1991	1998	First degree (not completed)	Full-time student	H-S	Yes	Degree (ongoing)	Refugee adviser
Ezhan	43	Male	Turkey	1996	ILR, 2004	Primary	Farm labourer	L-S	No	Learndirect IT course	Unemployed

<sup>1</sup> The table does not include data on the specialist provider of which respondents were clients so as to protect the anonymity of respondents.

<sup>2</sup> Or other status as indicated (including Exceptional Leave to Remain; Indefinite Leave to Remain; and entry to the UK through family union as the dependant of a principal applicant granted refugee status).

<sup>3</sup> Respondents who indicated they had completed secondary education had completed their schooling at different ages (this varied between 13 to 16 years). Where Further Education (FE) or a First Degree is indicated as 'not completed', the respondent was participating in this level of education during the period before coming to the UK.

<sup>4</sup> Lower-skilled (LS), mid-skilled (MS), higher-skilled (HS). These typologies of respondents' education and employment backgrounds are discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>5</sup> Proficiency in spoken English on arrival in the UK is on the basis of respondents' self-rated proficiency. Where 'Yes' is indicated, this varied between some respondents who indicated that they were fluent and others who felt they had a basic level of proficiency.

<sup>6</sup> Current or previous participation in education or training programmes in the UK (not including ESOL courses). Type of programme is indicated. All respondents who were not proficient in English on arrival in the UK had participated in ESOL courses. It was not possible to determine what level of English language proficiency had been attained.

<sup>7</sup> Respondent was unemployed but was participating in a subsidised work placement at the time of interview (i.e. was not registered unemployed).

### 3.5 Interview process

#### 3.5.1 Type of interview

The different types of qualitative interviews are categorised within the literature as more or less structured/unstructured. Patton, for example, distinguishes between the ‘informal conversational interview’; the ‘general interview guide approach’; and ‘the standardised open-ended interview’ (Patton, 2002). This categorisation of interview type has, however, been criticised by some researchers, given that most interviews (including those referred to as unstructured) have some sort of structure, and that a combination of structured and unstructured approaches may be used during a particular study as well as during the same interview (Pole & Lampard, 2002). Within the context of this research, at the stage of the preliminary research (as discussed previously) informal conversational interviews were carried out with informants. This allowed for exploration of issues as they emerged in discussion with informants. A more standardised approach was adopted for the preliminary interviews with clients, using a semi-structured interview schedule of themes and potential questions to cover in each interview. This was intended to allow for some consistency of topics and questions across interviews to facilitate the process of carrying out the interview (by providing a schedule of questions that could be drawn on where relevant, whilst not precluding additional topics and questions or the re-wording of questions appropriate to each interview). The use of a semi-structured schedule was also considered to be appropriate when interviewing refugee clients with varying levels of English language proficiency so as to ensure that the wording of questions was clear<sup>100</sup>.

The interview schedules for the main research interviews with clients and staff were developed on the basis of the preliminary research (and are included in Appendices 5 to 7). The schedules were semi-structured (for the reasons described above), including a set of topics, related questions and probes. They were used more as a guide or checklist, and therefore a more ‘general interview guide’ approach was adopted. This enabled topics to be explored appropriately: if a respondent started to address a particular issue at an earlier stage in the interview than it appeared in the interview schedule, the topic could be explored then, rather than sticking rigidly to the format and sequencing of questions set out in the interview schedule.

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<sup>100</sup> The pilot interviews with clients also served to highlight questions that were unclear to respondents.

The interview schedule for the client interviews was intended to address the research questions relating to refugee clients' experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers to their needs. Topics explored included (see Appendix 5 for details):

- Respondents' employment backgrounds before coming to the UK and their current work-related interests and aspirations;
- Initial access to employment service providers (including Jobcentre Plus and specialist providers);
- Experiences of the specialist provider (of which they were a client) and (if relevant) Jobcentre Plus in relation to the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment;
- Experiences of particular services provided such as ESOL, training programmes and work placements;
- Respondents' views regarding how helpful the services and staff of the providers were in relation to their needs, as well as views regarding services they felt they needed but had not received.

The interview schedule for the interviews with staff of the specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus was intended to address the research question relating to the factors influencing the responsiveness of providers to the needs of refugee clients<sup>101</sup>. Topics explored included (see Appendices 6 and 7 for details):

- Background information on the provider (e.g. sources of funding; type of services, type of clients);
- The process of referral of refugees to the provider;
- The process of assessing the needs of clients and provision of particular services (e.g. information, advice and guidance, ESOL, training, work placements, job search assistance);
- Experiences of and views on what facilitates/constrains how the needs of refugee clients are addressed (topics that emerged in the preliminary research and were further explored in the main interviews included output-related funding systems).

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<sup>101</sup> Two schedules were used for specialist provider and Jobcentre Plus staff. Although they covered the same topics, some of the questions were specific to Jobcentre Plus services.

The main period of interviewing for the research took place between October 2004 and July 2005 in London and the North East. Face-to-face interviews with staff were carried out at the specialist provider/Jobcentre Plus premises. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. All the interviews were tape or digitally recorded except in the case of three of the Jobcentre Plus staff interviews where written notes were taken as the interviews were carried out in an open-plan office (it was felt that recording the interview in the presence of other staff might have affected the respondent's openness to discuss some topics). Interviews with clients were carried out privately in a room on the premises of the specialist providers, except for one which was held at a client's home with his family present<sup>102</sup>. The interviews lasted between 20 minutes and one hour and were tape or digitally recorded, except for two interviews where the respondents did not wish to be recorded and written notes were taken.

### 3.5.2 Issues affecting the data collection

#### Language

All the refugee interviewees spoke English, although with varying levels of proficiency. Given the resource limitations of the research, it was not feasible to use interpreters. This, unfortunately, inhibited the extent to which respondents who were less proficient in English were able to fully participate in the interview and express their views and experiences, and the extent to which it was possible to probe these respondents. Therefore, some interviews were much shorter in length and less in-depth data were obtained than was the case with respondents who were more proficient in English. Nevertheless, it was important to include refugee clients with lower levels of English language proficiency in the interview process in order to take into consideration their perceptions with regard to the responsiveness of providers to their needs, particularly given the central importance placed on addressing English language needs, as discussed in the literature (see Chapter One). Moreover, some respondents who were less proficient in English indicated that they wanted to practice their English and that participating in an interview served this purpose for them. In one interview, with a respondent who spoke French, the respondent chose to communicate partly in English and partly in French (which was understood by the researcher). In interviews where the use of English was more difficult for a respondent, it was particularly important to try to clarify the researcher's understanding of the respondent's statements to

<sup>102</sup> Clients who no longer regularly visited the provider (because they were employed) were asked if they would prefer to be interviewed in another location (e.g. café or home) that might be more convenient.

avoid misinterpretation (e.g. by asking the respondent to confirm what had been understood to have been described).

### **Reliance on respondents' memory and recall**

Interviews with clients about their experiences of Jobcentre Plus relied upon respondents' recollection of their past experiences as clients from when they first came into contact with Jobcentre Plus up until the present. This was similarly the case with regard to experiences of the specialist providers. Therefore, there may have been difficulties concerning respondents' recall of particular experiences (e.g. first contact with a Jobcentre Plus adviser) and the sequencing of events (e.g. referrals to particular types of provision). This appeared to be evident in the case of two respondents who seemed to have experienced meetings with New Deal advisers, given that their participation in the New Deal 25 Plus would have been mandatory due to the length of time they had been claiming Jobseekers Allowance (see Chapter Four, section 4.3.3). However, they did not distinguish these meetings from earlier Work-Focused Interviews with Jobcentre Plus advisers. Difficulties concerning respondent recall in relation to different types of meetings with Jobcentre Plus advisers have been noted in other research on clients' experiences and perceptions of Jobcentre Plus provision, such as Quarterly Work-Focused Interviews for lone parent clients (see Ray et al., 2007).

The research questions explored in this research through the interviews with refugee respondents were primarily concerned with respondents' perceptions of the extent to which Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers were responsive to their needs, exploring their perceptions at the time of interview of past as well as current experiences with these providers.

### **Socio-economic and cultural influences**

Regarding the interview process itself, some issues concerning gender, religious and cultural practices were observed that affected interactions with interviewees. For example, in one pilot interview with an Eritrean male interviewee, there was very little eye contact, which indicated to the researcher that the interviewee felt uncomfortable during the interview, although it was subsequently learned that this form of eye contact is viewed as disrespectful in Eritrea. A Somali male interviewee appeared to be less open and



comfortable in disclosing his experiences, in contrast to a female Somali interviewee who, despite having more limited proficiency in English appeared to be more comfortable in conveying her experiences. Previous research with refugees has tried to mitigate the potential effect of these differences on the interview process by using interviewers who are from the same country of origin as the interviewee (Bloch, 1999), as well as for language reasons. This was not possible in the case of this research. However, while socio-economic and cultural influences clearly shape the interview process, creating a sense of 'sameness' amongst interviewer and interviewee may not necessarily facilitate more comfortable conditions for the interviewee. For example, some interviewees were potentially less reticent about discussing their experiences with the researcher specifically because of not being from the same country of origin. As emphasised by Bloch, refugees may be reluctant to be interviewed by people with whom they share the same national/ethnic origins for fear that they may disclose their views and experiences to family or friends (Bloch, 1999).

### **3.6 Data analysis**

Although the full analysis of the data was carried out after the period of interviewing, the process of analysis took place during the period of the preliminary research and beyond. As mentioned previously, this involved reflecting on notes of discussions with key informants and transcriptions of preliminary interviews, which served to identify emerging themes. This section refers to the process of coding and analysing the full interview data. It also addresses issues concerning the reliability and validity of that data.

#### **3.6.1 Use of NVivo**

All recorded interviews were transcribed. The data therefore comprised transcripts and written notes (where the interview was not recorded) of interviews with refugee clients and with members of staff of the specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus. The analysis of the data involved three approaches. First, transcripts and notes were read and re-read for familiarisation with the data. At this stage, notes were made on emerging themes in relation to the research questions, and relevant sections of the transcripts were highlighted. Second, a more detailed and systematic analysis of the client and staff interviews was carried out to identify cross-sectional themes. NVivo2 was used to carry out the full coding of the data. The advantages of using qualitative data analysis software were that it facilitated the organisation of the data and the coding process, making it easier to compare texts according to one or multiple codes, and therefore the process of identifying patterns across the data.

The use of NVivo also allowed for the input of attributes (characteristics or variables) relating to each respondent, which facilitated the analysis of the experiences and perceptions of particular respondents according to a given set of attributes (e.g. education and employment background of refugee clients).

Using NVivo, an initial thematic framework was developed for the preliminary coding of the transcripts/notes of interviews with clients and with staff. Two separate frameworks were developed to facilitate the analysis in relation to the research questions (which treated staff and clients as separate units of analysis). At this stage, the two frameworks were based on topics referred to in the interview schedules as well as any themes that had already emerged from the preliminary analysis of the data. On the basis of further analysis in relation to each theme, the data were coded according to a set of more refined themes ('tree nodes'). With regard to the analysis of the staff interviews in relation to factors affecting responsiveness to clients' needs, the coding framework included broader themes, such as 'output-related funding', 'performance targets'. The data analysis process involved the development of a further set of sub-themes ('child nodes') under each of the broader themes, by which the data were subsequently coded (e.g. 'client selection' under responses to output-related funding). Regarding the refugee client interviews, a coding framework was similarly developed on this basis. This included some of the following themes: 'access to providers'; 'advice and guidance' (under which included 'appropriate advice and guidance'). Searches were then carried out of coded data in the following ways: according to an individual theme or sub theme (an individual 'node' or 'child node') in order to review in detail data in relation to particular themes (e.g. information, advice and guidance on employment); according to a combination of themes ('nodes' or 'child nodes') in order to reflect on the relationship between those themes (e.g. performance targets and organisational agendas, in the case of the staff interviews); and according to a combination of particular attributes of the respondents and a theme (e.g. higher-skilled background and lack of advice and guidance).

The third approach to the analysis of the data involved preparing case summaries for each of the refugee respondents, which included background data on that client and a summary of their experiences and views regarding their use of the services of the specialist provider and Jobcentre Plus. These case summaries enabled a more holistic analysis of each individual client's background, experiences and perceptions, in addition to a more thematic analysis of the data on a cross-sectional basis (as described by Ray et al., 2007).

### 3.6.2 Reliability and validity of the data

The extent to which the concepts of reliability and validity can be applied to qualitative research is subject to differing perspectives within the qualitative methods literature (Seale, 1999; Silverman, 2000, 2001). While some researchers have applied these terms (e.g. Peräkylä, 1997), others have used different concepts that are considered more appropriate for assessing the quality of qualitative research, such as ‘authenticity’ and ‘trustworthiness’ (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The quality of this research is reflected on below on the basis that validity and reliability are of relevance to assessing the quality of qualitative research, although different approaches to addressing these concerns will be used from those of quantitative research.

Regarding the validity of the data analysis, the following approaches identified by Silverman were adopted: the constant comparative method; comprehensive data treatment; and deviant case analysis (Silverman, 2000). The constant comparative method requires an emerging theme or hypothesis to be tested out through additional cases in the course of the data collection. In this research, preliminary analysis of a first set of interviews (the preliminary research) sought to identify emerging themes. In the case of providers, the effects of output-related funding on how providers operated in delivering services to refugees emerged as a prominent theme. This theme was further explored through additional interviews with staff of specialist providers through the course of the data collection process. Carrying out a preliminary analysis of the data allowed for initial themes to be explored further to reflect on the validity/relevance of those themes in the context of other interviewees’ experiences and perceptions. In addition to the data collection process (carrying out interviews), the constant comparative method was adopted through the coding/analysis of the data (interview transcripts). Having identified a particular theme in the context of one or more respondents’ views and experiences, further cases (transcripts) were analysed to examine that theme.

This second process relates to the principle of comprehensive data treatment, which requires all data to be incorporated in the analysis to avoid anecdotalism (only selecting data that fits an analytic argument) (Silverman, 2000). By using NVivo in the data analysis, all of the data (the transcripts and interview notes) were systematically coded according to a set of themes/categories. This required multiple reading/coding of the data as sub-themes

emerged. A comprehensive examination of the data also allowed for what Silverman defines as 'deviant cases' to be analysed (Silverman, 2000). This involves exploration of cases which do not 'fit' a particular theme or analytic argument. For example, in the analysis of the transcripts of interviews with refugee clients, when exploring perceptions of advice and guidance on employment, a lack of advice and guidance that was appropriate to the skills and interests of respondents appeared to be a key theme across the cases. However, by examining and coding all the data in relation to advice and guidance 'deviant cases' emerged in which more mixed perceptions were apparent (as discussed in Chapter Four, section 4.3.3). Analysis of these cases provided greater understanding of the relationship between the timing of the provision of advice and guidance and differences in these respondents' perceptions.

Regarding the reliability of the data analysis, the principle of inter-coder agreement (Silverman, 2000) in coding and analysing the interview transcripts was not possible given that coding was carried out by one researcher. However, multiple examination of the data in terms of re-reading and coding the transcripts allowed for critical reflection on the consistency of the interpretation and coding of the data. An alternative to inter-coder agreement can be to seek out other interpretations of the data (Becker & Bryman, 2004). The researcher's interpretation of the data was discussed with the PhD supervisor, as well as with other researchers through presentations and informal discussion on the findings, and in the context of meetings/seminars at which representatives of other specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus were present. This also facilitated critical reflection on the data analysis.

With regard to the principle of being able to replicate a study to ensure reliability, this chapter has sought to describe the stages of the research process in order to make explicit how the data were generated. This is distinct from the notion that if the research were to be replicated the same findings would be generated (Becker & Bryman, 2004). An inductive approach to the interpretation of the data was employed in the research. This involved analysing the data in relation to particular concepts in the literature, and dimensions of those concepts. In order to make as explicit as possible the conceptual interpretation of the findings, the conceptual context of the data analysis is outlined in Chapter Two. While the presentation of the findings in Chapters Four to Seven is clearly based on the researcher's interpretations of the data, the full range of typologies and categories identified across the data of respondents' experiences and perceptions (in relation to the research questions) are explored. These include the different skills backgrounds of refugee clients and the different

dimensions to their experiences and perceptions of accessing information, advice and guidance on employment (as explored in Chapter Four). The conceptual interpretation/discussion of the findings in relation to the literature that is drawn upon in Chapter Two is presented in Chapter Eight.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESPONSIVENESS AND THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE ON EMPLOYMENT

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Struyven and Steurs define responsiveness to clients' needs in the context of employment service provision in terms of the extent to which the services provided match the needs of the client (Struyven & Steurs, 2005). The extent to which a service matches the needs of the client raises qualitative issues regarding clients' perceptions of their needs and the appropriateness of provision to those needs. As discussed in Chapter One, in terms of the type of service needs amongst refugees in relation to employment, research has indicated a need for information, advice and guidance on employment. There has, however, been limited analysis of refugees' perceptions of the extent to which their needs for information, advice and guidance are addressed through Jobcentre Plus and specialist providers. Wider research has drawn attention to how perceptions of the appropriateness of advice and guidance through Jobcentre Plus are related to the level of qualifications of clients (Hudson et al., 2006; Ritchie, 2000) and the type of work they may be interested in finding (Finn, 2003). The diversity of refugees' backgrounds in terms of their education and employment experience before coming to the UK raises questions concerning how responsiveness to their needs in the context of the provision of information, advice and guidance may be shaped by refugees' backgrounds and current work aspirations. With these issues in mind, this chapter explores the findings of the research regarding refugee respondents' experiences and perceptions of responsiveness to their needs in relation to the provision of information, advice and guidance through Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers. The analysis is based on the interviews with 28 refugee clients of specialist employment service providers, 26 of whom were also clients of Jobcentre Plus (see Chapter Three, Tables 3.2 and 3.5). The names of the respondents referred to have been changed.

Section 4.1 examines respondents' education and employment backgrounds before coming to the UK, and their current work-related interests and aspirations. It sets out a typology of respondents' backgrounds (categorising respondents as higher-skilled, mid-skilled, and lower-skilled), which is drawn upon in exploring the relationship between respondents' backgrounds and interests and their experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers to their needs. Section 4.2 considers how

respondents initially accessed Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers, and their ability to access information on providers in this context. Sections 4.3 and 4.4 focus on respondents' experiences as clients of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers and their perceptions of responsiveness to their needs in terms the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment. Two main dimensions to the relative responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers are explored: first, the level of advice and guidance provided; and second, the appropriateness of information, advice and guidance to the skills and interests of respondents. Section 4.5 summarises the findings regarding refugees' perceptions of responsiveness to their needs for information, advice and guidance on employment, and how this was shaped by their backgrounds and employment interests.

#### **4.1 Refugees' education and employment backgrounds and interests**

There was a diversity of education and employment backgrounds amongst the respondents. This diversity was similarly reflected in the refugee samples of other research (e.g. Bloch, 2002b; Kirk, 2004)<sup>103</sup>, as discussed in Chapter One, including those with higher level qualifications and professional employment experience and those who had received limited formal education. For the purposes of the analysis, basic typologies of respondents' backgrounds were adapted from those developed by Shiferaw and Hagos (Shiferaw & Hagos, 2002). Shiferaw and Hagos examined the different routes into employment amongst a sample of 30 refugees. They distinguish four common patterns (based on their sample and other research) in relation to refugees' backgrounds:

- those who arrive in the UK at a young age and have not had any paid employment experience in their country of origin;
- professionals who would need to be licensed and registered to practise their professions in the UK;
- those with a higher qualification (e.g. degree) with managerial, administrative and other professional employment experience;

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<sup>103</sup> Based on a sample of 1,981 refugees, Kirk found there to be a diversity of educational backgrounds in terms of qualifications held, level of education (based on number of years in education) and literacy, and a diversity of employment backgrounds in terms of previous occupations (Kirk, 2004). The sample was drawn from asylum applicants who received refugee status or Exceptional Leave to Remain between November 2002 and January 2003. More than half of the respondents were from Iraq, which was one of the principal countries of origin of asylum applicants during this period. The sample was therefore not intended to be representative of the refugee population as a whole, but indicated a diversity of educational backgrounds amongst respondents, including differences according to country of origin and gender.

- and adults with no qualifications (who have had little or no formal education), who may have manual employment or no employment experience.

The typologies used in this research, as described below, categorise respondents as lower-skilled, mid-skilled, and higher-skilled, according to the level of education respondents referred to participating in/completing before coming to the UK<sup>104</sup>. Respondents' employment experience before coming to the UK was also reflected on within these categories. Further details on respondents' education and previous employment before coming to the UK, on which these typologies are based, are given in Table 3.5 in Chapter Three. In addition, respondents' self-perceptions of their level of English language proficiency on arrival in the UK are referred to within these categories. While these are relatively broad categories, they facilitated exploration of respondents' backgrounds and interests in relation to their experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers to their needs.

### **Higher-skilled backgrounds**

Refugees with higher-skilled backgrounds (16 respondents) had either obtained a higher-level qualification (a first degree or post-graduate qualification) or had been participating in a degree programme during the period before they left their country of origin to come to the UK (and had therefore been unable to complete the degree). Those who had been employed before coming to the UK (all except those who had been full-time university students) had held professional, managerial or administrative positions (in addition, one respondent owned a business in agricultural exports). Respondents with experience in regulated professions (as referred to by Shiferaw & Hagos, 2002) had previously worked in teaching and health sectors. Those with managerial, administrative and other professional backgrounds included, for example, one respondent who had been an engineer, one who had been an accountant, and another who had been a bank manager. Refugees with higher-skilled backgrounds varied in terms of their level of English language proficiency on arrival in the UK (according to respondents' perceptions of their level of proficiency). This ranged from those who were fluent in English (primarily respondents from African countries, such as Zimbabwe, where English is a national language); those who had some knowledge of

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<sup>104</sup> Some respondents had been in the process of participating in university degree programmes immediately before leaving their country of origin, and therefore had not completed these programmes.



English (having studied the language previously); and others who had no knowledge of English.

### **Mid-skilled backgrounds**

Refugees who were identified as having mid-skilled backgrounds (4 respondents) had participated in further education (beyond the age of 16 years) for which they had attained qualifications (a diploma was referred to). One respondent had been participating in a programme before he left his country of origin to come to the UK and had therefore not completed it. Their employment experience included administrative work, childcare/nursery assistance, teaching, and skilled manual work (one respondent had been training as an electrician). None of these respondents had any knowledge of English language on arrival in the UK.

### **Lower-skilled backgrounds**

Respondents with lower-skilled backgrounds (8 respondents) were mostly clients of EMPLOY (see Chapter Three, section 3.4.3, for reference to this specialist provider). Refugees with lower-skilled backgrounds are referred to by Shiferaw and Hagos as unqualified adults who have little formal education (Shiferaw & Hagos, 2002). In this research, only one respondent categorised as having a lower-skilled background had received no formal education. Most had generally left school between 13 and 16 years of age and did not have any qualifications. Some had previously worked in shops or restaurants, or had been farm labourers. Also included in this category is one female respondent who had left school at this stage without any qualifications and had not subsequently had any employment experience because of being occupied with childcare responsibilities. None of the respondents with lower-skilled backgrounds had any knowledge of English language on arrival in the UK.

### **Employment interests and aspirations**

Nineteen respondents were looking for work in the UK at the time of interview, while nine were in paid employment (most had found work relatively recently, including three who were about to start a job). Regarding those employed, the type of jobs included administrative work, shop work and computing (see Table 3.5, Chapter Three).

Respondents' employment-related interests and aspirations since coming to the UK (both those who were unemployed and those who were in work at the time of interview) generally reflected their education and employment backgrounds in terms of the type of work that they had been doing and their level of education before coming to the UK. Regarding those with higher-skilled backgrounds, almost all wanted to find work related to their level of education or the field in which they had previously been employed. This was particularly the case for those who had professional backgrounds and had worked for several years in their profession. This included two respondents who had been secondary school teachers in Zimbabwe who wanted to re-enter teaching in the UK. Another respondent, Amira, had been an engineer in Iraq and similarly wanted to find related work in this field. Hamid, who had been a pharmacist in Sudan, was also hoping to find work appropriate to his background. While those with higher-skilled professional backgrounds did not necessarily consider it possible to find work at a level comparable to their previous positions, they were interested in finding work that was relevant to their experience even if they had to look for lower level positions in order to be able to re-enter their fields or move into another related area of work. Although some had previously taken up temporary lower-skilled jobs, such as factory work, since living in the UK, because of the difficulties of accessing employment in their fields, they had left these jobs in order to be able to try to pursue employment related to their skills and interests, and expressed a strong motivation to do so.

Those with managerial and administrative backgrounds, including Jean who had been a bank manager, also wanted to utilise their skills but were generally considering a wider range of types of employment, including lower-level administrative positions. Only one respondent (Rashid) with a higher-level qualification (a degree in economics) who had previously worked as a bank clerk, emphasised that he had wanted to find work as quickly as possible in the UK and, as he had been restricted by his level of English proficiency, had been looking for lower-skilled types of work that he felt were easier to enter (at the time of interview he had recently started work as an operator in a factory). Respondents who had been in the process of studying a degree before coming to the UK emphasised that they were initially concerned with continuing in higher education. This included Florence who had been participating in a humanities degree before coming to the UK and had wanted to begin a degree in human resources in the UK in order to be able to enter related work.

Refugees who had mid-skilled backgrounds were generally interested in finding administrative or shop work in the UK. Amongst those with lower-skilled backgrounds, there was some variation between (male) respondents who were more interested in finding work in the short-term and (female) respondents who lacked employment experience prior to coming to the UK (either because they were relatively young at the time or because of childcare responsibilities) who were interested in developing their English proficiency through ESOL provision and participating in other training that might provide a route into particular types of work (including administrative and shop work, childcare and self-employment in hairdressing). The former respondents were primarily concerned with finding stable employment (as opposed to a particular type of job). They generally did not want to spend much time on ESOL programmes, other than for a period necessary to develop what they considered to be an adequate level of English to be able to successfully find work. However, some also indicated an interest in participating in vocational training (e.g. plumbing, IT, and to obtain a Heavy Goods Vehicle licence) in order to have the qualifications/accreditation needed to enter some skilled manual or administrative jobs. This included Uzay, who had previously worked as a farm labourer before coming to the UK and wanted to obtain a Heavy Goods Vehicle Licence in order to be able to apply for this type of work. The latter group included Kalifa, who had received no formal education in Somalia, who expressed a desire to improve her English and to go on to find shop work or to get help with training to enter work in childcare. Some female respondents emphasised the hours of work as being of primary concern in terms of the type of work they were interested in, as they did not want to work night shifts (e.g. in supermarket work) because of childcare responsibilities or transport difficulties and concerns for their safety (being unable to drive).

## **4.2 Access to employment service providers**

This section focuses on respondents' experiences of initially accessing Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers. It looks at the processes through which they accessed information on both Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers and the processes of referral to these providers. All refugees interviewed in the research were clients of specialist providers and therefore had evidently been able, at some point, to access one or other of these providers. However, routes of access varied, including the role of respondents' social networks; organisational networks between specialist providers and other agencies; or referrals through Jobcentre Plus.

### 4.2.1 Access to information on Jobcentre Plus

All respondents<sup>105</sup> indicated that they had found out about Jobcentre Plus before or soon after being granted refugee status<sup>106</sup>. Some noted that they had been informed about Jobcentre Plus when they received a positive decision on their asylum claim from the Home Office, receiving written information by post. Others referred to being informed through Social Services or, in the case of those respondents who were living in the North East, the organisations involved in the provision of asylum seeker services under the NASS system (including providers of accommodation for asylum seekers). Some refugees also referred to informal sources of information, including relatives who had been resident for longer periods of time in the UK. In terms of the timing of access to Jobcentre Plus, visiting a Jobcentre took place at a relatively early stage: generally before or shortly after respondents had received refugee status. Reasons for visiting a Jobcentre concerned primarily the need to make a claim for mainstream welfare benefits (Jobseekers Allowance or Income Support) when NASS support ended<sup>107</sup>. Respondents' use of Jobcentre Plus as a provider of employment services was therefore obligatory for those needing to access welfare benefits.

### 4.2.2 Access to information on specialist providers

While access to information on and referral to Jobcentre Plus appeared to be a relatively straightforward process, respondents' experiences in relation to the specialist providers (and other non-statutory providers of employment-related services that were referred to<sup>108</sup>) were much more varied. Their experiences differed in terms of the processes through which they had accessed information or had been referred to specialist providers. These processes involved respondents' social networks; organisational networks between specialist providers and other agencies; and referrals through Jobcentre Plus on the basis of a contractual relationship between Jobcentre Plus and one of the specialist providers.

<sup>105</sup> Including the two respondents who had not been clients of Jobcentre Plus (who had not claimed benefits through Jobcentre Plus).

<sup>106</sup> Or Exceptional Leave to Remain (in the case of one respondent), or after arriving in the UK through family reunion (joining husbands who had been granted asylum).

<sup>107</sup> Those who had not needed to claim benefits also referred to visiting a Jobcentre solely to look at job vacancies advertised.

<sup>108</sup> Other employment service providers that respondents indicated they had been in contact with included a charity and a local authority co-ordinated project that provided non-specialist employment services (i.e. for unemployed people but not targeted at refugees specifically).

## Social networks

Some respondents commented on the lack of availability at an early stage after receiving refugee status of comprehensive information on the range of employment service providers, and the difficulties of knowing *how* to access this information. This was particularly of concern to those with higher-skilled backgrounds who emphasised their need to access appropriate information, advice and guidance about how to begin the process of finding work related to their particular qualifications and experience, which they had been unable to access through Jobcentre Plus (as will be explored in section 4.3).

Some referred to the difficulties they had faced in finding out about specialist providers initially, due to a lack of English language proficiency and/or a lack of familiarity with systems in a new country of residence<sup>109</sup>. Social networks, comprising refugees' friends and other acquaintances, appeared to have acted as an important informal source of information for those with higher-skilled backgrounds (in both London and the North East) in finding out about specialist and other non-statutory providers. Indeed, in some cases it was only through informal processes, by word-of-mouth, that a respondent had been able to access information on specialist providers. This was the case for Amira, who had previously worked as an engineer in Iraq before coming to the UK in 1999. She had relatively little knowledge of English when she arrived, and joined a part-time ESOL course for six months at a local further education college in London while her asylum claim was being processed. After receiving refugee status a year later (in 2000), although she wanted to find a job, she then spent two and a half years primarily caring for her youngest son (who was under two years old at the time) because she was unable to access childcare<sup>110</sup>. During this time she participated in various part-time IT courses at a further education college. She referred to the difficulties she had experienced during this period in terms of accessing information on where to go for advice and guidance on employment in her field. It was not until some time after arriving in the UK that she eventually found out about TRAIN through an Iraqi friend, which offered the type of assistance that she needed (see Chapter Three, section 3.4.3, for reference to this specialist provider).

<sup>109</sup> While some respondents (from Zimbabwe) indicated that they were fluent in English when they came to the UK, they did not know how to find out about which organisations could help them to look for work.

<sup>110</sup> She had tried to find a nursery but had been unable to find one that accepted children under three years old.

*"I didn't know about any organisations. How do you know about some organisation if no one tells you, no one gives you some papers. You know, you come to this country, you are just lost, so many things, so many people, but you don't know how to get the information. You have to go after it, or search. I didn't know that there's an organisation that can help me. After I think three years, three and a half years, I saw some Iraqi friends and one of them, she told me that there's an organisation [TRAIN] ... And I came here."*

(Amira)

Although she referred to having had a meeting with a Jobcentre Plus adviser after she started looking for work, with whom she discussed her experience in engineering, she was told by the adviser that the Jobcentre did not have information on jobs in this field, but was not referred to another organisation for assistance. It was not until she visited this specialist provider that she was then referred to a job search programme for refugee engineers, delivered by the provider (and to other external training and a work placement in this field).

This lack of early access to information on specialist providers was similarly experienced by other respondents with higher-skilled backgrounds who were not inhibited by a lack of English language proficiency or childcare in terms of their ability to begin to look for work. Kuda, who had worked as a secondary school teacher in Zimbabwe, was fluent in English when he arrived in the UK (in 2002) and, as a result, was able and wanted to look for work at a comparatively early stage. Although he was granted refugee status two months after arriving in the UK, it took a further six months before he actually received documentation from the Home Office and therefore evidence of his entitlement to work. During this time, he tried to find out about how he might enter work in teaching by contacting various schools in the North East regarding possible vacancies, but was told that he needed to have UK-based teaching experience. He then visited private recruitment agencies, where he was told that they could only help him to apply for factory work as he did not have any UK experience. It was only through friends that he then found out about a local authority support team for asylum seekers and refugees, which he visited for advice, and subsequently another local authority-funded employment project that then referred him to WORKS (see Chapter Three, section 3.4.3, for reference to this specialist provider). Although he had met with a Jobcentre Plus adviser after receiving refugee status (when he made a claim for Jobseekers Allowance), he had not received any information on any specialist or other employment-related providers through the Jobcentre. He indicated that

the adviser had tried to help him apply to local schools, but he was similarly unsuccessful, and emphasised his need for advice and guidance on how to go about re-entering teaching or related work. The difficulties of knowing how to access information on the network of different organisations that provided employment-related services therefore inhibited access to a potential range of providers for advice and guidance.

*“There are organisations which provide all that kind of [employment-related] information, but the thing is sometimes the information doesn’t reach the people so that they know where to go, which way to turn when they want a particular kind of help. But the organisations are there.”*

(Kuda)

Whilst social networks were perceived by staff of some of the specialist providers as a crucial means of refugees finding out about employment service provision, and gaining trust through personal recommendations regarding which provider to approach, a reliance on these informal mechanisms meant that access to information on providers for some respondents was dependent on them having access to the ‘right’ individuals with knowledge of a particular provider. Gaining access to individuals with this knowledge in some cases took several months or years, in relation to the process of respondents’ settlement. A lack of established social networks to rely upon at the outset of arriving in the UK, combined with a lack of formal mechanisms for accessing information (e.g. through their local Jobcentre), therefore prolonged the process of access to specialist providers for advice and guidance. For those with higher-skilled backgrounds this in turn prolonged the process of access to *appropriate* information, advice and guidance on employment, related to their backgrounds and interests, and therefore, in some cases, beginning the process of re-training in order to re-enter their fields. The above respondent (Kuda) and others therefore emphasised the need for information on different employment service providers (not just Jobcentre Plus) to be provided to refugees when they are granted refugee status in order to assist this process of access to specialist and other providers for advice and guidance.

### **Networks between specialist providers and other organisations**

Respondents’ experiences of accessing information on specialist providers also involved navigating through different organisational networks. Early access to specialist providers

was facilitated where respondents had been referred by statutory agencies, other service providers, refugee and other third sector organisations, that they had come into contact with during the process of applying for asylum or soon after they received refugee status. This included referrals from ESOL teachers, refugee organisations, further education college advisers, and (in the case of the North East respondents) housing officers, local authority asylum seeker and refugee support services, and other third sector employment service providers.

One of the specialist providers in the research (the ELLA Project) had a working relationship with a local authority ESOL Service, which was responsible for coordinating ESOL provision across the local further education colleges. The services of this specialist provider had been established as a result of an identified need for employment-related services amongst ESOL students (who were primarily refugees). Respondents who were clients of this provider had generally participated in ESOL classes through which they had then been informed about the provider and its services, and had therefore made a relatively seamless transition from ESOL to a specialist provider for other employment-related services. Emmanuel, who had a background in business, referred to the assistance he had received in this respect in terms of this progression from ESOL to the ELLA Project.

*“When they pushed me up to Entry 3 [level of English language provision<sup>111</sup>] and my teacher saw I was learning, she contacted [ELLA] to explain to them about me.”*

(Emmanuel)

By contrast, clients of WORKS, which delivered a work placement programme, had generally accessed information on the provider through a broader range of referral routes. This included referrals from local authority asylum seeker and refugee support teams, community support workers, and other third sector organisations that delivered employment-related services. They had generally been in contact with a wider range of organisations for employment-related assistance before coming into contact with this provider.

### **Referrals through Jobcentre Plus**

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<sup>111</sup> See Glossary for reference to the Entry Levels related to ESOL qualifications.



As referred to previously, most respondents had visited a Jobcentre soon after receiving refugee status in order to apply for welfare benefits. Although Jobcentre Plus, as the statutory provider of employment services and benefits, might potentially act as a central point of contact in providing information and referring refugee clients to specialist providers, only respondents who were clients of EMPLOY had been referred by Jobcentre Plus. Other than in this case, respondents generally perceived Jobcentre Plus advisers to have little knowledge of any specialist providers, which may partly explain a lack of provision of information on or referral to specialist providers.

*“They don’t know a thing about organisations that help refugees. And it would be really helpful if they give the names of these organisations to people who are new to this country, if they say come here, we will help you but you have many choices, go there and maybe you can get more help, or help in different ways.”*

(Amira)

With regard to EMPLOY, a contractual relationship existed between the provider and Jobcentre Plus whereby new benefit claimants who had recently received refugee status were referred by Jobcentre staff to this provider for employment-related assistance and ESOL provision. Respondents who were clients of this provider therefore accessed the provider at a relatively early stage as a process for referrals was in place through this contractual relationship with Jobcentre Plus. However, these respondents did not appear to have received any information from Jobcentre Plus (or from EMPLOY to which they were referred) about *other* specialist providers they could access for assistance. Overall, processes of accessing information on specialist providers therefore appeared to take place primarily in the context of social and organisational networks *outside* of the Jobcentre Plus system. Respondents felt that clearer information should be provided on the different type of organisations, in addition to Jobcentre Plus, that delivered employment-related assistance. This included both refugees with higher and lower-skilled backgrounds, who either felt that they had needed more assistance with looking for work than Jobcentre Plus offered, or more appropriate advice and guidance of relevance to their skills and interests, as will be explored below.

### **4.3 Provision of information, advice and guidance: experiences of Jobcentre Plus**

This section focuses on respondents' perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus to their needs regarding the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment. Three main dimensions were identified in relation to respondents' experiences and perceptions. The first concerns those respondents who felt that they had very limited contact with Jobcentre Plus staff and had received limited advice and guidance on employment. The second concerns those who had also received limited assistance, but felt at the same time that they were being pressured by Jobcentre Plus staff to apply for low-skilled jobs that were inappropriate to their backgrounds and interests. The third concerns a few respondents who had more mixed experiences and perceptions, which indicated tensions between these respondents' needs and the point at which they had been able to access advice and guidance through Jobcentre Plus. The relationship between respondents' skills backgrounds and employment interests and their perceptions of responsiveness to their needs is explored.

#### **4.3.1 Limited advice and guidance**

Most of the respondents were claiming (or had previously claimed) Jobseekers Allowance. The type of contact they referred to with Jobcentre Plus therefore included first meetings with an adviser after making a Jobseekers Allowance claim (a Work-Focused Interview); coming into the Jobcentre for fortnightly meetings to 'sign on' and confirm eligibility for Jobseekers Allowance; and subsequent Work-Focused Interviews with advisers (see Chapter One, section 1.4.1, regarding the process of Jobcentre Plus services that clients go through, and also Chapter Six, section 6.1). One respondent had joined the New Deal for Lone Parents (through which participants are assigned an adviser) and referred to more regular contact with an adviser. However, those who were not participating in a New Deal programme would not have been assigned an adviser. Although eight of the respondents had joined the New Deal 25 Plus, this had been arranged for administrative purposes through WORKS, as participation in the New Deal programme was necessary in order for the provider to be able to claim the New Deal employers' subsidy (which partly funded its work placement programme). Most of these respondents had not, therefore, had contact with a New Deal adviser as they had only joined the New Deal 25 Plus programme in order to be able to participate in this work placement programme. This was except for two respondents who appeared to have already been in contact with New Deal advisers (given

the length of time they had been claiming Jobseekers Allowance, this would have been mandatory).

### Adviser support

Perceptions of the lack of responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus to respondents' needs partly related to the very limited contact respondents generally had with Jobcentre Plus staff. This dimension of the relative lack of responsiveness to clients' needs for advice and guidance was typified by respondents' reference to advisers as being very busy, with many clients to see, and not having the time to discuss their particular needs. This was the case irrespective of respondents' English language proficiency, which might have affected interactions between staff and clients. While some respondents indicated that advisers had asked them about their qualifications and employment experience, they felt that they had received very little *advice and guidance* on finding work in the UK. The lack of follow-up from an adviser after participating in a Work-Focused Interview was emphasised in this respect.

*"She [the adviser] makes interviews with many, many people, and she has nothing private for me. Just like any person. An interview, so on and so on, what's your qualification. Then I have never seen her again."*

(Hamid)

The limited contact with advisers appeared to be related to respondents' perceptions of Jobcentre Plus as unresponsive to their needs for advice and guidance. Jobcentre Plus staff were considered by some respondents to have little interest in providing them with advice and guidance on employment. Rather, they were perceived as focused on administering benefits claims and checking that respondents were looking for work, given that contact with staff was generally limited to the context of coming into the Jobcentre every two weeks in order to confirm eligibility for Jobseekers Allowance.

*"I remember just going there every Tuesday to sign, and they ask you 'are you looking for a job?' I say 'yes, I'm looking for a job'. They don't advise you."*

(Patrick)

*"The Jobcentre just says 'have you found a job?', nothing else when I visit them."*

(Pirro)

Some of the respondents indicated that they had been informed by advisers about where to look for job vacancies, including the use of computer-based Jobpoints in the Jobcentre and local newspapers. This information was perceived as useful in finding out about available jobs in some cases where respondents were looking for lower-skilled types of work. However, regardless of the type of job respondents were looking for, they felt that they needed a greater level of assistance to enable them to successfully apply for vacancies, including those who were looking for lower-skilled jobs through Jobcentre Plus sources.

Rashid had started to look for work soon after he arrived in the UK (in 2002)<sup>112</sup>. Although he had a degree in economics and had previously worked as a bank clerk in Afghanistan, he emphasised his desire to find work quickly and had therefore been looking for “any job”, including factory work. He referred to having limited knowledge of English when he arrived in the UK, and had participated in a part-time ESOL course at a further education college for three months during the time he was waiting for a decision on his asylum claim. When he first visited the Jobcentre for a meeting with an adviser (when initially claiming Jobseekers Allowance) he was given information on some job vacancies and was told how to look for further vacancies through Jobcentre Plus sources, but subsequently received no other assistance with the process of applying for jobs, which he felt he had needed. Although he appeared to have had difficulties communicating with employers due to a limited level of proficiency in English at the time, he had not been referred to participate in further ESOL provision.

*“First time I went [to the Jobcentre] they gave me the number of a company. They said you can call this number [regarding a vacancy]. When I rung the company my English was very low, I didn’t know how to speak. When I spoke with the reception I said ‘hello, my name is Rashid’. They didn’t understand what I said. That’s why sometimes they [employers] refused me because I couldn’t speak. I would just ring and say I am looking for a job. Sometimes they ask me what kind of job. I didn’t know what to tell them, what kind of job I’m looking for. [...] The adviser in the Jobcentre said ‘we can’t do anything for you, you should look in newspaper, also use machine in Jobcentre’. I did many times but I can’t find a job from the Jobcentre.”*

(Rashid)

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<sup>112</sup> He was granted Exceptional Leave to Remain six months after arrival.

The respondent continued to visit the Jobcentre every two weeks (to sign on for Jobseekers Allowance) for over a year, but did not appear to have received any further support from an adviser, or referral to Jobcentre Plus contracted providers for job search assistance, or referral to other relevant providers. During this time he was referred by his former ESOL teacher to a specialist provider (ELLA) for assistance, where he enrolled on an ESOL and job search training programme, and participated in a two-week work placement arranged by the provider. He subsequently found a job as an operator in a dairy that was advertised through Jobcentre Plus, although the assistance that he had received in applying for the job (with contacting the employer and completing the application form) had been through this specialist provider.

With regard to refugees with higher-skilled backgrounds who were looking for work related to their experience, as will be discussed in section 4.3.2 below, there was the perception amongst refugees with higher-skilled backgrounds that Jobcentre Plus advisers lacked the capability to provide them with advice and guidance, given their lack of knowledge of respondents' fields of employment. There was, however, also the perception amongst those with lower-skilled backgrounds and with lower levels of proficiency in English that there was a limit to the assistance that Jobcentre Plus advisers could offer. Uzey had been a farm labourer in Turkey. Although he indicated that advisers had given him information on other types of jobs that he could apply for, he considered there to be a limit to the support that they could give him in finding a job since he felt that his level of English proficiency was inhibiting him from successfully applying to vacancies<sup>113</sup>.

### **Job search training**

Respondents emphasised the need not simply for information on job vacancies, but for advice and guidance on the UK labour market, including training on recruitment practices such as CV writing and interview skills, in order to be able to successfully apply for vacancies. This type of assistance was perceived as being unavailable through Jobcentre Plus. Although contracted private and third sector providers deliver job search training and assistance to Jobcentre Plus clients through programmes such as the New Deal (and through ESOL provision), most respondents did not recall being informed about any job

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<sup>113</sup> Although he had been participating in ESOL classes.

search provision available to them, other than those who had been referred to ESOL. Moreover, none had been referred to non-contracted specialist or other third sector providers of employment services for advice and guidance.

Patrick, who arrived in the UK from Togo in 2000, and was already proficient in English, emphasised refugees' need for this assistance in order to be able to begin the process of applying for jobs. At a first meeting with an adviser at the Jobcentre (when he applied for Jobseekers Allowance) he referred to being asked about his qualifications and work experience, but received no advice and guidance or referral to job search provision, other than being told to use the Jobpoints in the Jobcentre to look for vacancies. Although he then visited the Jobcentre regularly to sign on for Jobseekers Allowance, and on these occasions was asked by staff if he was still looking for work (as part of procedures to confirm eligibility for Jobseekers Allowance), he referred to having received no other assistance or information on Jobcentre Plus programmes. He emphasised the limitations to the advice and guidance through Jobcentre Plus, compared with his experiences of a specialist and another third sector provider (that delivered employment-related services).

*"If you are new or a foreigner in this country you need assistance to get through and get a job. I know some people don't know how to make a CV. It's very difficult. The Jobcentre doesn't provide you with anything like that. I know [another third sector provider] and [ELLA] provide you that: how to make your CV, how to use the computer, how to fill an application form as well. If you go to the Jobcentre they don't help you to fill an application form, or give you any help honestly."*

(Patrick)<sup>114</sup>

Where respondents had received job search training and assistance through Jobcentre Plus contracted providers<sup>115</sup>, perceptions of responsiveness in terms of the appropriateness of this assistance were shaped by respondents' English language needs. The relevance of the *timing* of this assistance was questioned by some, given that they had been obliged to engage in job search activities (including contacting employers and applying for jobs) at the outset of referral to ESOL even though they had, at the time, limited English proficiency.

<sup>114</sup> After subsequently visiting the ELLA Project, he was referred to a business management course at a further education college and was assisted by the provider with applying for jobs and attending interviews until he successfully found work as a customer services assistant.

<sup>115</sup> Primarily in the context of referrals to ESOL provision as Jobcentre Plus contracted providers of ESOL programmes are required to deliver this alongside ESOL.

There was the view that their needs would have been best met by focusing primarily on improving their English language proficiency before starting to apply for jobs, as this was a pointless and demoralising process with poor English language communication skills (this issue is returned to in section 4.4).

#### 4.3.2 Lack of attention to clients' backgrounds and interests

Amongst respondents with higher-skilled backgrounds, there was the perception that Jobcentre Plus advisers were simply unable to provide them with advice and guidance that was appropriate to their skills and interests because advisers lacked the necessary knowledge of their fields of employment, including teaching and engineering, (as was similarly noted in research by Phillimore et al., 2003, see Chapter One, section 1.4.5). Information on job vacancies through Jobcentre Plus was considered to be of little relevance to their needs as they felt it primarily concerned low-skilled jobs rather than work in areas related to their skills and interests. They therefore felt that contact with an adviser was of limited value, other than to find out about benefits and in-work entitlements provided by Jobcentre Plus.

*"The Jobcentre, they have cleaners, office work, these things, they don't have specific engineering work. But I went there and talked to them - that I wanted to do this [engineering] work and I'm finishing this course - and they said that we can't do it here, all the jobs are in these fields, but they said that we will help you if you get a job, we'll give you some money to start or to buy something if you've got an interview."*

(Amira)

*"The Jobcentre is helpful not in terms of finding jobs but [are] in terms of helping you how to get into the system, because there is a system you have to get into; you need a national insurance number. All those things you know through the Jobcentre."*

(Kamole)

More negative perceptions of a lack of responsiveness in relation to clients' skills and interests concerned experiences of being pressured by advisers to apply for low-skilled jobs (packing jobs in factories and cleaning jobs were referred to). Again, this generally (but not exclusively) concerned respondents with higher-skilled backgrounds who perceived their needs in terms of acquiring an adequate level of English proficiency and/or re-training in

order to obtain a UK qualification that might enable them to access jobs related to their skills and interests. Their experiences therefore highlighted tensions between these clients' definitions of their employment-related needs in relation to their skills and interests, and the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus to those needs. This tension was emphasised in the context of a Jobseekers Agreement being drawn up during respondents' first meeting with an adviser (after making a Jobseekers Allowance claim), regarding the type of jobs they were looking for. Mirjeta had worked for eight years as an accountant in Albania before coming to the UK in 2002. She had participated in an ESOL course and an IT course while she was waiting for a decision on her asylum claim, and was hoping to be able to find work related to her experience after she received refugee status in 2004. With this in mind, she was keen to continue to develop her English proficiency and participate in other training in order to obtain qualifications in accountancy that were required by UK employers. She emphasised the lack of recognition of her experience and aspirations when discussing a Jobseekers Agreement with an adviser.

*"I said 'I want to apply for administration, IT and accountancy'. [...] He [the adviser] said to me 'no, you can put one of them cleaner'. And you can see exactly he's writing cleaner [on the Jobseekers Agreement]. He wrote it and gave to me like this, exactly like this to sign, 'if you not sign, go back to Halifax' [where the respondent had previously been living in NASS accommodation]. I was so under pressure to do this. But you could see - administration, accountancy and cleaner.[...] I have a lot of qualifications, a lot of experience, and they said to me go and find a job like a cleaner."*

(Mirjeta)

A lack of attention to clients' skills and interests was considered by respondents to be related to their limited level of English proficiency when they met with advisers.

*"When I went for the first time at the Jobcentre I can't speak like I'm speaking now. So they chose some jobs for me. Like working in the factory, factory packer, something like that. I never worked in that!"*

(Emmanuel)



There was also the view that advisers were encouraging respondents to enter low-skilled jobs as this was an easier option for them, despite this conflicting with clients' qualifications and previous experience and their aspirations to re-enter related work.

*"For the Jobcentre it's easy, they say you can go and work in the factory or clean the streets. But I have two degrees in Journalism and Language Studies, and I was a head teacher for five years. I can't do something like cleaning now."*

(Pirro)

Despite the lack of responsiveness of advisers to clients' needs in relation to their backgrounds and interests, there was the perception that respondents lacked any 'choice' or control over their circumstances, given their need to claim welfare benefits through Jobcentre Plus and the English language barriers to re-entering work related to their skills and interests. Regardless of their particular work aspirations, however, they considered applying for lower-skilled jobs to be a pointless activity given their need to improve their English proficiency before they could successfully find work in general.

*"When I went to Jobcentre they said for me to do a packing job. I didn't do that in my country. I didn't do that! Now I am obliged to do that because I have to find a job... The Jobcentre tells me I must apply for jobs, but no one will interview me."*

(Jean)

While a lack of responsiveness in relation to the skills and interests of respondents was considered by some to be influenced by their limited proficiency in English, other respondents with higher-skilled backgrounds who were fluent in English when they arrived in the UK similarly referred to a lack of responsiveness in this respect. Florence, originally from Sierra Leone, had been studying for a humanities degree before coming to the UK and had wanted to continue with a degree programme. She felt that Jobcentre Plus advisers had simply ignored her interests and had encouraged her to look for jobs that in their view were "suitable", underlining tensions between her perceptions of the type of work she needed assistance with and those of advisers.

*"I found that obviously the Jobcentre was not for me. You go to the Jobcentre, you talk to the advisers about what you want to do, what they will tell you is, if you bring a particular job to them, they will tell you instantly, 'oh I don't think that will be suitable*

*for you', without actually assessing the individual to see whether they are capable of doing this or whether they could refer the individual to training, for a re-qualification process to be able to go into these jobs. No, they will just tell you 'no, that is not suitable for you'. And they will choose something else that they think is more suitable for you. Not actually guiding you through making decisions."*

(Florence)

Jobcentre Plus advisers were perceived as being concerned with getting respondents "any job" regardless of clients' experience and interests because they wanted to "get rid of" clients as quickly as possible. This was emphasised by Kamole who had previously worked as a university lecturer, but did not speak any English when he arrived in the UK in 2002 (although he was proficient in several other languages).

*"I feel they are not really... well, if they want you to find a job they are not caring about what sort of job you are going to get. You just feel like they want to get rid of you because, according to their opinion, now you've got enough money from them they want to get rid of you, so they will give you any job, if there is any, just to get rid of you, without looking at what sort of person you are, what can you achieve. They don't care about you. That's why I say they are not helping people to find a job."*

(Kamole)

A few respondents indicated that their advisers had discussed their qualifications and employment experience with them, and had acknowledged the type of work that they were interested in, such as teaching, which was initially registered on their Jobseekers Agreement. However, they appeared to have received little advice and guidance from an adviser, and had not been referred to any relevant programmes to enable them to actually make any progress in being able to access employment in their chosen field. Where these respondents were unable to find employment after six months of having started to claim Jobseekers Allowance, advisers informed them that they would have to 'choose' other, lower-skilled types of work, such as factory packing or cleaning. The respondents emphasised in particular the lack of, and the need for, greater direction in terms of advice and guidance at the outset, after receiving refugee status, and also for advice and guidance that was oriented towards the particular needs of clients according to their different skills and employment interests.

*“When people get status, ILR<sup>116</sup>, they should be classified in a way. Those who have qualifications, they should be given help in their areas. And those who don’t... Just facilitate and sort things and give people as they need. Because people want to work. They need more direction according to their needs.”*

(Hamid)

### 4.3.3 Delayed assistance

Where more mixed experiences and perceptions of Jobcentre Plus were apparent, these related to variation between respondents’ initial contact with advisers in the first year of claiming benefits, and subsequent contact with New Deal advisers at a later stage. One respondent referred to subsequently joining the New Deal for Lone Parents, through which she had more regular contact with an adviser. Two others appeared to have been referred onto the New Deal 25 Plus (which would have been mandatory, given the length of time they had been claiming Jobseekers Allowance).

A more negative perception of Jobcentre Plus in terms of responsiveness to their needs was associated with *earlier* experiences of contact with advisers, both in terms of the limited contact they had experienced and the lack of advice and guidance appropriate to their skills and interests. However, there were more positive perceptions about the assistance they had received from advisers who they had subsequently encountered through the New Deal for Lone Parents or, in the case of the latter two respondents, after more than 18 months of claiming Jobseekers Allowance. In this context, advisers were perceived as providing more appropriate assistance in terms of acknowledging respondents’ skills and the type of work they were interested in. They were also considered to have provided a more adequate level of assistance in terms of referrals to different types of provision, including job search training and assistance, and to provision that was considered to be appropriate to clients’ employment interests (as discussed in Chapter Five, section 5.4.2).

Although these experiences relate to a limited number of respondents, they highlight potential tensions in the timing of referral to programmes and responsiveness to refugee clients’ needs for advice and guidance. The support of a Jobcentre Plus personal adviser is

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<sup>116</sup> As noted in Chapter One (section 1.1), successful asylum applicants are no longer immediately granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK, but are given temporary leave for five years, after which time ILR can be applied for.

targeted at New Deal client groups<sup>117</sup>. Refugees are entitled to early referral to the New Deal programmes (if this is considered appropriate by an adviser in the context of a Work-Focused Interview and, crucially, if they are made aware of this). However, as very few respondents had participated in the New Deal (this was not mandatory for those who had not been claiming Jobseekers Allowance for less than 18 months), it was not possible to explore the extent to which contact with advisers on these programmes might be related to perceptions of greater responsiveness in terms of the provision of advice and guidance, and appropriateness to refugees' skills and interests<sup>118</sup>.

#### **4.4 Provision of information, advice and guidance: experiences of specialist providers**

As discussed previously, most respondents had first come into contact with the specialist providers after having already made contact with Jobcentre Plus (for the purposes of claiming benefits). With regard to the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment, respondents' experiences and perceptions of the relative responsiveness of these providers comprised the following dimensions. First, there was a greater level of advice and guidance with the process of looking for work (which respondents contrasted with the lack of assistance from Jobcentre Plus). Second, respondents referred to more appropriate advice and guidance in terms of greater attention to their backgrounds and interests. And third, in the case of some respondents, the inappropriateness of the timing of job search assistance and more limited attention to clients' backgrounds and interests was apparent. The first dimension cuts across the four specialist providers. The second relates to TRAIN, WORKS and ELLA, while the third is specific to the experiences of respondents who were clients of EMPLOY.

##### **4.4.1 Greater level of advice and guidance**

In contrast to the limited information, advice and guidance on employment referred to by respondents in the context of Jobcentre Plus, the specialist providers were generally perceived as providing a much greater level of assistance. This assistance included the

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<sup>117</sup> Clients not participating in the New Deal are also required to meet advisers in the context of Work-Focused Interviews.

<sup>118</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, while Hudson et al. found ethnic minority clients of Jobcentre Plus who had contact with a New Deal adviser to be more positive about their experiences of Jobcentre Plus than those who had not yet joined a New Deal programme, not all those who were New Deal participants were satisfied with the assistance they had received (Hudson et al., 2006).

provision of information on job vacancies as well as assistance with applying to those vacancies by an adviser. Ongoing support from an adviser and job search training were also referred to. Each is discussed below.

### **Information and assistance with applying to job vacancies**

Across the specialist providers, respondents referred to advisers helping them to search for job vacancies through the internet and local newspapers, while some also indicated that staff would additionally contact them by telephone regarding vacancies that might be of interest. While those with lower or mid-skilled backgrounds (as well as one respondent who had a higher qualification) who were looking for lower-skilled types of work indicated that they had used the Jobcentre as a source of information on vacancies, they referred to the additional assistance of specialist provider staff in terms of discussing particular vacancies with them and giving advice on the appropriateness of a vacancy to their circumstances. Layla, for example, had been interested in finding shop work. Although she had participated in a work placement in this area, at the end of which she had been offered a job, she had been unable to take it because of the hours it involved (primarily night shifts). She did not drive and was therefore restricted by transport and safety issues in terms of the hours she could work. She felt that staff of ELLA had helped her in looking for vacancies that were appropriate to her circumstances (and had, at the time of interview, just started a job at a local supermarket).

*“She [the adviser] is always looking for jobs for me in the computer. All the time when I need help to find a job she gives me advice, if the place is good for me. [...] Because I can’t go, for example, to a factory, because all factories are really far away and I don’t have a car. I can’t drive at the moment.”*

(Layla)

There was also the perception amongst those with higher-skilled backgrounds of a greater level of assistance with the process of looking for work through the specialist providers. As will be discussed in section 4.4.2, in the case of TRAIN, WORKS and ELLA, of central importance were perceptions of the *appropriateness* of information, advice and guidance on work related to their skills and interests.

## Adviser support

Both lower and higher-skilled respondents valued the level of contact they had with staff within the specialist providers, and the time that staff were able to give to assisting them, in contrast to Jobcentre Plus advisers. As explored previously, Jobcentre Plus was referred to by some as a “big organisation”, whose advisers were more anonymous and busy, with little time to see clients given their larger caseloads. By contrast, the specialist providers were referred to as smaller organisations, whose advisers were better informed and more “careful”, with more time to see their clients. The ongoing support respondents had received from an adviser was particularly valued. However, the level of advice and guidance that respondents considered themselves to need varied. For some, responsiveness to their needs concerned the provision of information on relevant job vacancies, while for others it concerned a greater level of support and encouragement from an adviser. Regarding the former, Kamole, who had previously worked as a university lecturer, referred to the assistance he had received from ELLA through staff who had contacted him regularly regarding vacancies in which he might be interested.

*“The [provider] is good in terms of giving you more information about what is going on, that is what I really have from [the advisers]. Because they’ve got my details, they have my CV, they know about my history, and so if they see something which they can pass to me, or they just inform me – ‘look there is this, what do you think?’ – I say ‘OK, I can apply for it’. This is how they’ve been helping me all the time.”*

(Kamole)

After having participated in a work placement (carrying out research), he subsequently successfully applied for a job as a policy officer, which he found out about and was helped to apply for by staff at this provider.

More face-to-face contact and support was perceived as particularly important by those who were less clear about their work options and needed guidance in this respect. Those with higher-skilled backgrounds referred to assistance they had received through TRAIN with assessing their career options, and advice and guidance on relevant education and training (see Chapter Five). The ongoing nature of the need for advice and guidance in terms of the time it might take to be able to access work relevant to clients’ interests was also noted. Likewise, consistency in the relationship between a client and an adviser, in

terms of the adviser's knowledge of a client's background, was emphasised. This was underlined by Florence, who referred to the ongoing support of her adviser, including helping her to present a portfolio of her previous education in order to be able to apply to universities; and assisting her during her studies to look for employment.

*"I had a one-to-one contact with my adviser, so any time that I go there I was able to see that same person, so she was able to follow up my case because she knew me better, we had enough contact, enough interaction, so she knew exactly who she was dealing with. And I felt very comfortable because I had been dealing with this person from the word go. So that was a very big help to me."*

(Florence)

### **Job search training**

In addition to the assistance they had received from staff with the process of looking for and applying for jobs, respondents emphasised the value of job search training programmes that they had participated in through these providers. These programmes included general job search training in CV writing and interview skills (referred to by clients of TRAIN, EMPLOY and WORKS); job search training with integrated ESOL support (ELLA); and job search training oriented towards particular professions, e.g. health and engineering (TRAIN).

Refugees with lower-skilled backgrounds emphasised the importance of the job search training they had received in providing them with sufficient orientation regarding work practices and the workplace environment in the UK. Damir, for example, who had been a farm labourer before coming to the UK, referred to the importance of this type of support that he had received from WORKS in giving him an understanding of what to expect in the workplace. This gave him greater confidence before starting a work placement in shop assistance for a large retailer.

*"That's very important for somebody when you start, if you didn't work ever in England. How to act with people. With the Jobcentre, I know almost nothing."*

(Damir)

Those with higher-skilled backgrounds who were clients of TRAIN valued the specialist job search training in particular, as it offered them a much more focused orientation towards finding employment in their professional field. This was emphasised by Amira, who had an engineering background and had experienced relatively limited contact with the Jobcentre as she had been informed by an adviser that Jobcentre Plus was unable to support her in finding work in a professional field (as referred to in section 4.3.2).

*“When I came to [TRAIN] I saw an adviser and they told me that there was a course, a job search course. And they told me that it’s good if I entered it for engineers, because I told them that I’m an engineer. And the course was very good. They told us about the labour market, many jobs and in which area. It was specifically for engineers. I learnt a lot of things from it that I didn’t know about before. How to do my CV [...] And they helped me how to show my skills, or if I go to an interview. We even did [trial] interviews. It was really helpful.”*

(Amira)

Although higher-skilled respondents generally perceived there to have been a greater level of assistance through the specialist providers, a few with particular professional backgrounds emphasised that the quality of advice and guidance through these providers was not always adequate, given that advisers did not have sufficient knowledge of or expertise within their professional field.

*“Sometimes they [advisers] lack information, they lack experience, because the majority of the people advising in the advisory area are [European] Social Funds people. They don’t have any idea of engineering work [...] That kind of professional advice nobody gives you in refugee organisations because they don’t have a clue. All these people are not engineers, you need engineer people there, and obviously it’s difficult to put an engineer into being a refugee adviser, but having the right information is really important.”*

(Biniyam)

However, those with professional backgrounds indicated that when staff of the respective specialist provider did not have the information or expertise required, they had been supportive in assisting these clients to access information through other sources.



#### 4.4.2 Greater attention to clients' backgrounds and interests

In contrast to the perceived lack of responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus in relation to respondents' backgrounds and interests, highlighted in particular by higher-skilled respondents, those who were clients of three of the specialist providers (TRAIN, WORKS and ELLA) perceived these providers to have been much more responsive in terms of taking into account their skills and interests in the provision of advice and guidance on employment. In this sense, they felt that they had some choice over the *type* of employment that they could pursue in their interactions with staff. This contrasted to some respondents' experiences of drawing up a Jobseekers Agreement in the context of Jobcentre Plus.

Raul, who was a client of WORKS, was already proficient in English when he arrived in the UK. Although he had been studying a degree in politics before coming to the UK, he had decided that he wanted to gain qualifications in accountancy in order to pursue employment in this field, and had therefore started a related NVQ course. His perceptions of the responsiveness of this provider to his needs emphasised the attention given to his choices in terms of the type of jobs he was interested in, before he enrolled on their work placement programme.

*"My very first day when I met [the advisers], it was an interview to identify my needs first before they could integrate me in the project. Because a lot of people they come and say I want to work, but maybe they don't know how to identify their own fields of work, what they want. And to me, I had already two aims, one is to work in administration or accounting, but accounting was my first choice because that is what I'm doing [studying] and I want to gain experience in that."*

WORKS had subsequently arranged a work placement for him, carrying out administrative work for a finance team in a building society.

While the attention of staff to the backgrounds and interests of clients was mainly emphasised by higher-skilled respondents, lower-skilled respondents who were uncertain of the types of work that they might pursue in the UK also valued the support they had received in making their own decisions in this respect. Damir, who had worked as a farm labourer before coming to the UK, emphasised a sense of 'choice' in terms of the support

he had received through WORKS in deciding between different types of jobs in which he was interested in gaining experience through a work placement:

*“Of course there is much, much more support with [WORKS] than with the Jobcentre. I have the opportunity and [staff] told me that I can choose between these two placements; if I want I can wait, that I don’t need to go to [one of the placements]. And you are happy if somebody tells you that, that you don’t need to go if you don’t like. ...That’s also, you know, that’s lots of help for somebody, that you have opportunities, you don’t need strictly to do one job, or if you don’t like to do that, there are other choices. And they help you to understand a little better about what you want to work; what kind of job is that.”*

(Damir)

#### **4.4.3 Inappropriate job search assistance/ more limited attention to clients’ interests**

While there was generally a positive view towards the job search assistance respondents had received from the specialist providers, there was also the perception that job search assistance was not always appropriate to respondents’ needs. This related to the level of English language proficiency of respondents at the time of participating in job search provision. This was the case amongst some of the clients of EMPLOY, which delivered job search assistance alongside ESOL provision<sup>119</sup>. These respondents had no knowledge or very limited knowledge of English when they were referred to the provider through Jobcentre Plus. They had, however, been required to participate in weekly job search sessions organised by the provider immediately after enrolling on ESOL provision (regardless of their level of English proficiency). While they emphasised that they were interested in finding employment, they felt that applying for jobs at the outset of the programme had been a pointless activity, given that they had very limited English proficiency.

In addition to a mismatch between the timing of job search assistance and the level of English language needs of respondents, there was perceived to be a mismatch between job search assistance and other education and training needs. Mirjeta, who had a higher-skilled background in accountancy, indicated that she had indeed received a lot of information on job vacancies and job search assistance through the provider. However, she felt that this

<sup>119</sup> ESOL provision was funded through Jobcentre Plus, which requires job search assistance to be delivered as part of its programmes.

was of limited use to her in the short-term as she did not have the qualifications and experience that were specified in job vacancies in administrative work in order to be able to successfully apply for these posts. Her perceptions of her needs concerned gaining some work experience through a work placement or voluntary work, as well as gaining some accountancy qualifications, before she could benefit from assistance with applying for jobs related to her background and interests.

Others emphasised limited responsiveness to their needs in terms of being pressured by staff to apply for jobs, despite this conflicting with their perceptions of their needs to focus on improving their English language proficiency and/or to participate in training in order to be able to apply for jobs that they were interested in pursuing. Adrijana, who had no previous employment experience before coming to the UK because she had been occupied with childcare responsibilities at the time, was interested in finding work as an administrative assistant or receptionist once her English proficiency had developed. She emphasised her need to achieve an adequate level of proficiency in English, and wanted to take up voluntary work in order to gain some work experience and to practice English in this context. She felt that the advisers at this provider were “pushing” her to apply for cleaning jobs in the short-term rather than supporting her in terms of developing the skills needed to apply for jobs that she was interested in pursuing.

*“They asked me what kind of job I wanted to do. And I said ‘I want to be a receptionist’, that’s my hope. [...] And they said, ‘you must go to work, cleaning and packaging’. And I said ‘I don’t want’. Cleaning, packaging it’s - no. I clean everyday. I have to package things in my home to keep away from children, all day. I don’t like that job. [...] I know a receptionist needs time, it needs experience, but I said I can work voluntary to have experience.”*

(Adrijana)

#### 4.5 Chapter summary and conclusion

This chapter has explored the research findings regarding refugees’ experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers to their needs in relation to the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment. Perceptions of responsiveness were found to be shaped partly by the education and employment backgrounds of respondents, by their current work interests and aspirations,

and by their level of English language proficiency, in terms of both the level of assistance needed and the appropriateness of advice and guidance. The following dimensions of responsiveness were found, encompassing differences and similarities between and amongst refugees' perceptions and experiences of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers.

First, regarding the level of advice and guidance provided, respondents highlighted the lack of support with the process of trying to find work through Jobcentre Plus. This contrasted with experiences and perceptions of the specialist providers, where there was generally perceived to be a greater level of assistance from staff with the process of applying for jobs, as well as greater support through job search training programmes. However, the appropriateness of job search assistance to clients' needs related to the level of English language proficiency of clients at the time, given perceptions of the inappropriateness of job search assistance amongst some clients of EMPLOY who lacked sufficient English language skills at the time to be able to enter work.

Second, regarding the extent to which advice and guidance was appropriate to respondents' backgrounds and interests, there were tensions between higher-skilled respondents' perceptions of their needs in relation to their qualifications and experience, and the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus to those needs. These tensions concerned either a lack of advice and guidance oriented to the types of employment they were interested in; or pressure to apply for low-skilled jobs unrelated to respondents' skills and interests. The advice and guidance received through TRAIN, WORKS and ELLA, by contrast, was perceived as being more oriented towards the skills and interests of respondents. This was emphasised both by higher-skilled and lower-skilled respondents. However, amongst clients of EMPLOY, there were similarities between clients' experiences of this provider and experiences of Jobcentre Plus to the extent that some (with lower-skilled backgrounds) felt pressured by staff to apply for any low-skilled jobs that conflicted with the types of work that they were interested in pursuing. This variation between, on the one hand, a focus on the needs and interests of respondents, and on the other hand, a pressure to apply for any jobs in the short-term relates to respondents' experiences of the relative responsiveness of the providers to English language and education and training needs, as will be explored in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESPONSIVENESS TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING NEEDS

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In addition to information, advice and guidance on employment, English language and training provision have been identified among the main types of service needs of refugees in relation to employment, as discussed in Chapter One (section 1.3). There is, however, a diversity of English language and other education and training needs amongst refugees. This includes refugees with higher-skilled backgrounds and professional experience who may need to achieve a higher level of English language proficiency and/or re-qualify in order to access employment related to their skills; and also refugees who have had no formal education and may have literacy needs in their first language in addition to English language learning. Welfare-to-work policy and the provision of employment-related services through Jobcentre Plus has involved a predominantly 'work-first' approach, in which the primary emphasis has been on placing people in work in the short-term (Daguerre, 2004, Finn, 2003). This approach has been driven by the use of job outcome targets as a means of assessing the performance of Jobcentre Plus and contracted providers (Daguerre, 2004; Finn, 2003, 2005). At the same time, there has been an emphasis on the need for more 'client-centred' approaches in the delivery of employment services, which allow for services to be 'tailored' and 'responsive' to the needs of unemployed individuals, including English language and skills barriers to work (Department for Work and Pensions, 2004a, 2006). This raises the question of the extent to which employment service provision is responsive to the English language and other education and training needs of refugees in the context of a performance system oriented primarily towards short-term job outcomes.

With these issues in mind, this chapter explores the findings of the research regarding refugees' experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and specialist providers to their English language and other education and training needs. As discussed in Chapter One (section 1.4.1), Jobcentre Plus is not responsible for mainstream English language, education and training provision (which are funded by the Learning and Skills Council). However, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), training and work placement schemes are available through Jobcentre Plus programmes, such as the New Deal, to which clients may be referred. In addition, advisers may assist clients with

accessing external (non-contracted) providers for participation in ESOL, education and training programmes. With regard to the specialist providers in the research, the provision of ESOL and training services varied. This included the provision of ESOL and job search training (by EMPLOY and ELLA); IT skills courses (EMPLOY), a business start-up course (TRAIN), health and safety training (EMPLOY and ELLA); and assistance with arranging work placements (TRAIN, EMPLOY, WORKS and ELLA). Additionally, TRAIN offered advice and guidance on education and training, while all the providers offered general assistance with referring clients to mainstream education and training provision (e.g. further education college programmes). The focus of this chapter is on respondents' experiences of the education and training services of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers.

Section 5.1 focuses on respondents' perceptions of their English language and other education and training needs in relation to their backgrounds and the type of work that they were interested in pursuing. Sections 5.2 and 5.3 explore respondents' experiences and perceptions of responsiveness to their English language needs with regard to Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers, focusing on restrictions on the duration of clients' participation in ESOL provision. Experiences and perceptions in relation to other education, training and work placement provision are then examined. With regard to Jobcentre Plus, section 5.4 centres on limitations to responsiveness to training needs: first, in terms of the lack of information on training provision available through Jobcentre Plus; second, in terms of the lack of information on agencies that might provide advice and guidance on education and training; and third, in terms of regulations restricting access to full-time education and training provision through mainstream providers. Regarding the specialist providers, differences between these providers are explored in section 5.5 according to the extent to which provision was perceived as being oriented towards the skills backgrounds and employment interests of respondents. Section 5.6 summarises the chapter findings and conclusion.

## **5.1 Refugees' perceptions of their English language, education and training needs**

Given the diversity of respondents' backgrounds in terms of their previous education and employment experience before coming to the UK, and, related to this, the diversity of the types of work they were interested in pursuing (see Chapter Four, section 4.1), their perceptions of their English language, education and training needs varied. Respondents' perceptions of needs focus on their reflections on when they first came into contact with

Jobcentre Plus and with the specialist providers, and subsequently, including at the time of interview. Some who had higher-skilled backgrounds, particularly those with professional backgrounds (e.g. in teaching), emphasised their need to participate in further or higher education programmes in order to attain UK qualifications, including undergraduate degrees, that were required in order for them to be able to re-enter work in their fields<sup>120</sup>. Others with managerial or administrative backgrounds emphasised their need to participate in IT, accountancy or administration related courses, partly to gain new IT skills and partly to attain a UK qualification which they felt was required by employers. A few respondents who had been participating in undergraduate degree programmes before coming to the UK had wanted to resume their studies as part of their career plans. Higher-skilled respondents who lacked English proficiency when they arrived in the UK additionally emphasised their need to participate in ESOL provision to acquire a higher level of English proficiency before they could then access other education or training. Moreover, they emphasised a need to acquire a higher level of English in terms of the type of employment they wanted to pursue.

Amongst lower-skilled respondents, some expressed an interest in taking up vocational training (childcare, IT, business-start up training, and courses in skilled manual areas of work such as plumbing were referred to) as a route into related employment. Others were not interested in participating in education or training beyond ESOL, as they found studying difficult (some felt they were too old to “go back to school”) or emphasised they were more interested in finding full-time work in the short-term. However, all respondents with lower-skilled backgrounds (who had no knowledge of English on arrival in the UK) emphasised their need to develop what they referred to as a basic level of English proficiency in order to be able to successfully enter work in general.

## **5.2 Responsiveness to English language needs: experiences of Jobcentre Plus**

All of the respondents who lacked English language proficiency on arrival in the UK had already accessed ESOL courses through further education colleges or community organisations prior to coming into contact with Jobcentre Plus (i.e. during the period in which they were asylum seekers). However, most had continued to participate in ESOL after receiving refugee status as they indicated that they did not yet have an adequate level

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<sup>120</sup> Some respondents who had been teachers had tried to get their qualifications (first degrees) recognised in the UK, but had been informed that their qualifications were equivalent to a lower level UK qualification.

of proficiency. After first coming into contact with Jobcentre Plus (to make a benefit claim), this involved participating in part-time (less than 16 hours a week) ESOL courses through further education colleges. Respondents who were clients of EMPLOY had, by contrast, been referred by Jobcentre Plus to this provider where they had participated in a full-time six-month ESOL programme (ESOL provision delivered by the provider was funded by Jobcentre Plus). A few other respondents indicated that they had been referred by Jobcentre Plus advisers to other full-time ESOL programmes delivered by contracted providers for six months.

Respondents' experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus to their English language needs in terms of referrals to ESOL provision centred on the following issues: first, the timing of referrals by advisers and the tensions between access to full-time provision versus an emphasis on clients finding (low-skilled) jobs in the short-term; and second, restrictions on the duration of clients' participation in full-time ESOL, and therefore limitations to the extent to which provision adequately met their needs.

### **5.2.1 Access to full-time ESOL**

While respondents had been able to access part-time ESOL provision prior to coming into contact with Jobcentre Plus (or the specialist providers), they felt that they continued to face English language barriers to finding work. Some indicated that they were subsequently referred by an adviser to participate in a full-time ESOL and job search programme as a result of still being unemployed (after a period of between six and 12 months of claiming benefits). This draws attention to the appropriateness of the timing of access to full-time ESOL (as opposed to part-time provision through mainstream providers), if referral took place *after* a period of unemployment following initial contact with Jobcentre Plus.

By contrast, as mentioned above, respondents who were clients of EMPLOY had been referred by Jobcentre Plus to the provider after first making a benefit claim, where they had participated in ESOL provision. Referral to full-time ESOL had therefore taken place at the outset of coming into contact with Jobcentre Plus. However, a few of these respondents felt that Jobcentre Plus advisers had placed greater emphasis on them getting work in areas where English language proficiency was less needed, such as factory work, rather than refer them to ESOL. The experiences of one respondent highlighted the conflict between her perceptions of her English language needs and the approach taken by the adviser she met



with (after making a claim for Jobseekers Allowance). While she considered her level of English to have been inadequate to be able to find work, and had wanted to participate in ESOL provision in order to be able to try to find administrative work, she felt that the adviser had tried to “push” her to apply for factory jobs initially rather than refer her to ESOL. The apparent ‘work-first’ approach of the adviser was conveyed by the respondent in terms of the emphasis placed on her finding a job immediately, underlining tensions between Jobseekers Allowance regulations requiring claimants to be looking for work and the respondent’s perceptions of her needs.

*“She [the adviser] said ‘yes, you can do packaging, language doesn’t need for that’. [...] I said ‘I need the language’. After she said, ‘OK you can speak to an adviser for schools’. After he came and he said, ‘you speak in English very well’. And I said ‘no, because I know lots of times I make mistakes’, I don’t say that correct some tenses. [...] And he said ‘you speak it very well’. Maybe I speak, you understand what I’m saying, but if I write no one’s going to know what I write or what I said. [...] And they send me to school here, but they say you can’t say I’m in school, you must say I’m looking for job.”*

(Adrijana)

## 5.2.2 Regulations restricting participation in full-time ESOL

Respondents referred to limits to the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus to their English language needs in terms of regulations restricting access to and the length of time they could participate in full-time ESOL. This concerned a maximum limit of six months to participation in full-time ESOL contracted by Jobcentre Plus; and benefits regulations that prohibited participation in full-time ESOL through non-contracted providers (e.g. further education colleges).

With regard to clients of EMPLOY (who had participated in full-time ESOL delivered by this provider) and others who had been referred by Jobcentre Plus to ESOL programmes, programme regulations that limited their participation in full-time provision to six months<sup>121</sup> were considered to inhibit the extent to which they were able to develop an adequate level of English language proficiency in order to be able to successfully enter employment. While not all respondents necessarily wanted to continue with full-time

<sup>121</sup> The provision of ESOL through the Work Based Learning for Adults programme (under the Basic Employability Training option) is limited to 26 weeks (see reference to this programme in Glossary).

ESOL beyond six months (some who had received more limited number of years of education indicated that they found it difficult to study English on a full-time basis), those who did felt that there was a lack of flexibility regarding the duration of provision in relation to their needs. Respondents who had wished to continue full-time beyond the six-month period of this programme were told by a Jobcentre Plus adviser that they would have to wait a further six months before they could be referred back to full-time ESOL provision<sup>122</sup>. Although they were entitled to continue to participate in *part-time* ESOL courses through further education colleges<sup>123</sup> (depending on the availability of places), because of the '16-hour rule' they were unable to enrol on full-time programmes through non-contracted providers. This regulation limits the participation of Jobseekers Allowance claimants in education and training to less than 16 hours a week because of the requirement to be actively seeking and available to take up full-time employment<sup>124</sup>.

The six-month limit to the duration of full-time ESOL (contracted by Jobcentre Plus), combined with the 16-hour rule, were perceived as limiting responsiveness to the needs of both higher and lower-skilled respondents. Those with higher-skilled backgrounds indicated that they needed more intensive ESOL provision for a longer period of time in order to achieve an appropriate level of English proficiency that would enable them to go on to attain UK qualifications and to access jobs appropriate to their skills and interests. Limiting their participation in full-time ESOL provision to six months was considered by some to have simply prolonged the period it would take for them to develop an adequate level of English proficiency. This was emphasised by Pirro, who had a degree in Journalism and Albanian Language and Literature and had been a head teacher in a secondary school in Albania before coming to the UK. After he received refugee status in 2003 he was referred by Jobcentre Plus to EMPLOY, where he participated in full-time ESOL for six months. At the end of the programme he was told by a Jobcentre Plus adviser that he would have to wait a further six months before he could be referred back to full-time provision. He then did some voluntary work and decided to join a part-time IELTS Level 2 course<sup>125</sup> at a further education college, with a view to eventually starting an undergraduate degree programme. He felt frustrated that the 16-hour rule had inhibited him

<sup>122</sup> The six-month limit to participation in ESOL will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

<sup>123</sup> ESOL is provided free for those with refugee status who are unemployed.

<sup>124</sup> See Chapter Two, Availability for Employment, of the Jobseekers Allowance Regulations (Statutory Instrument 1996/207).

<sup>125</sup> International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

from developing an adequate level of proficiency and attaining a UK qualification in a shorter period of time, which he considered to restrict his ability to successfully enter work.

*“Without English and a qualification you can’t look for work so it’s stupid to have a 16 hour restriction”.*

(Pirro)

Those with lower-skilled backgrounds, one of whom was illiterate in her first language, also emphasised that they needed more time to be able to acquire a sufficient level of English to be able to look for work. However, some indicated that they found learning English in a classroom setting on a full-time basis to be difficult, and would have preferred to have had the possibility of gaining work experience through a work placement or voluntary work that combined ESOL teaching with gaining “practical” work experience that might lead to employment.

### **5.3 Responsiveness to English language needs: experiences of specialist providers**

As discussed in Chapter Four, most respondents had accessed the specialist providers after having already made contact with Jobcentre Plus<sup>126</sup>. There may therefore have been some variation between respondents’ level of proficiency in English at the point at which they accessed Jobcentre Plus and the point at which they subsequently accessed the specialist providers. Respondents who were clients of EMPLOY indicated that they had very limited knowledge or a basic level of English when they were referred to the provider by Jobcentre Plus. By contrast, most of the respondents who were clients of TRAIN, WORKS and ELLA indicated that they were proficient in English (albeit with varying levels of proficiency) when they accessed these providers. Indeed, the programmes of most of the specialist providers, other than EMPLOY, were primarily oriented to refugees who were already relatively proficient in English and therefore in a position to be able to participate in these programmes and look for work<sup>127</sup>.

The experiences of clients of EMPLOY, who generally appeared to have had greater English language needs when they accessed this provider, centred primarily on welfare benefits regulations that restricted the length of full-time ESOL to six months (as discussed

<sup>126</sup> As indicated, access to Jobcentre Plus took place soon after respondents had received refugee status as this was necessary in order to claim mainstream welfare benefits when National Asylum Support Service assistance ended.

<sup>127</sup> As indicated by staff of the providers. See Chapter Seven for further details.

above). These regulations set the boundaries within which the provider was able to address the English language needs of these clients (as noted above, clients were not permitted to continue full-time beyond six-months, despite this being perceived by some as inadequate to develop their English language skills sufficiently). Although respondents who were clients of TRAIN, WORKS and ELLA had either a basic or higher level of English proficiency when they initially came into contact with these providers, some emphasised the English language difficulties that they continued to face in finding employment. ESOL that was integrated in a job search programme delivered by ELLA was valued in enabling clients of this provider to continue to develop communication skills oriented towards taking up a job (e.g. developing telephone skills). Respondents who had participated in a work placement programme through WORKS also referred to the benefits of this programme in terms of not only gaining work experience but the opportunity to develop their English language skills in a work context. However, some felt that there was a need for more opportunities for ESOL teaching to be integrated in the programmes of these specialist providers, e.g. in the context of work placements or training, as they felt that their level of English language proficiency was still a barrier to them successfully entering work.

#### **5.4 Responsiveness to other education and training needs: experiences of Jobcentre Plus**

Respondents' experiences of accessing education and training provision, in addition to ESOL, varied. In a few cases, those who were proficient in English when they arrived in the UK had been able to find out about education and training provision by contacting further education colleges and enrolling on courses directly<sup>128</sup>. However, most respondents who had participated in other education or training referred to the assistance of some of the specialist providers in accessing provision. Very few referred to any assistance they had received through Jobcentre Plus.

Experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus to respondents' education and training needs centred on the following limitations to responsiveness. First, there appeared to be a lack of information on what education and training provision was available through Jobcentre Plus programmes, such as the New Deal. Second, there was a lack of referral to relevant agencies responsible for training-related provision (e.g. local

<sup>128</sup> These were part-time courses and were generally IT skills courses, although one respondent was participating in an A-Level maths and another was participating in an NVQ in accountancy, which they had found out about directly through a further education college.

Learning and Skills Councils). And third, benefits regulations restricting access to Jobcentre Plus provision were indicated, as well as those restricting access to full-time provision through mainstream education and training providers.

#### 5.4.1 Information on Jobcentre Plus provision

Other than ESOL, few respondents had been informed about (or recalled being informed about) any education and training provision available through Jobcentre Plus programmes, such as the New Deal. In addition, none of the respondents reported having received any information from advisers on work placements, either in the context of Jobcentre Plus programmes or through external providers. In some cases this may have initially been because of respondents' low level of English proficiency when they first came into contact with a Jobcentre Plus adviser, given that advisers may have considered other training or work placements to be inappropriate to the needs of those who primarily required ESOL assistance. However, not all respondents lacked English proficiency when they first had contact with Jobcentre Plus. Moreover, respondents did not appear to have subsequently received any information on education or training provision through Jobcentre Plus programmes. There was, therefore, a lack of awareness amongst respondents of the type of programmes available through Jobcentre Plus, and thus the possible types of provision that might address their needs.

Indeed some respondents felt that Jobcentre Plus limited its assistance to ESOL provision and did not provide any other training-related assistance.

*"It has no special programmes to help people back into work. Why do they push people to go just for ESOL? At the same time people should do professional training like building or something that will lead to a proper job."*

(Pirro)

There appeared to be both a lack of awareness on the part of respondents in terms of their entitlements to different types of provision, as well as possibly on the part of advisers, given that some respondents appeared to have not been informed or to have been misinformed about their entitlements. One respondent, Marina, referred to having wanted to take up voluntary work in addition to studying English, as she felt that this would have given her the opportunity to gain some UK-based work experience and to practise her

English. She had discussed this with an adviser but was informed that she was not allowed to take up voluntary work as she had to find paid employment (although she subsequently found out through a refugee community organisation that she was entitled to take up voluntary work without this affecting her Jobseekers Allowance claim). At a later stage, after her English had improved, she then found out about the Work Trial programme<sup>129</sup> through information leaflets at the Jobcentre. She was interested in the possibility of participating in the programme and had tried to find out more about it through an adviser, but appeared to have received little information on how to join the programme:

*"I remember, I got information about Work Trial from the Jobcentre. For two or three weeks you have the chance to get a job. But they didn't give me this chance. And I didn't get any answers to my questions. I said 'what about this Work Trial period. I'd like you to send me to a Work Trial period'. Nothing."*

(Marina)

#### 5.4.2 Participation in Jobcentre Plus provision

Given that very few respondents had participated in any training provision through Jobcentre Plus, experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of provision to respondents' needs in this respect could not be explored. The few respondents who had received training assistance were positive about this type of provision in relation to their needs. One respondent, Hamid, had been given assistance with training fees through a scheme, after having discussed his background in pharmacy with an adviser and his interest in gaining a related post-graduate qualification<sup>130</sup>. As a result, he had just begun a part-time two-year diploma at a university. He felt that his adviser at Jobcentre Plus had been very supportive in helping him in this respect. Another respondent was participating in the New Deal for Lone Parents, through which she had been referred by her adviser to a full-time business administration course. Interestingly, although she felt that her adviser at Jobcentre Plus had helped her to access appropriate provision, in relation to her particular work aspirations and interests (she wanted to become self-employed in hairdressing), she felt that staff of the contracted provider to which she was referred were more focused on getting her to apply for any jobs, irrespective of her interests.

<sup>129</sup> See Glossary for details on this programme.

<sup>130</sup> The programme through which he received assistance was the Employment Retention and Advancement programme, which at the time of the research was being piloted through some Jobcentre Plus districts. See Glossary.

*“They had job search activities, and it was part of our course that we have to, we have to show them that we have sent our CVs. I told them I had explained to my adviser that I don’t want to go into admin [...] because I want to have my own business. But my teacher told me that I had to play the game. So I had to pretend that I had actually sent my CVs. So that’s what I did. It wasn’t only me actually, all of us we had this pressure. It was kind of a procedure. Every Friday we would put ‘I have sent to this company three of my CVs’.”*

(Desta)

Although limited to one respondent, her experiences shared similarities with the experiences of some respondents who had participated in ESOL provision through EMPLOY, as well as some higher-skilled respondents regarding their interactions with Jobcentre Plus advisers. These similarities concern the extent to which clients felt that they had been encouraged to apply for any jobs in the short-term, regardless of whether those jobs matched the skills and interests of clients.

#### **5.4.3 Referral to advice and guidance on education and training**

With regard to those respondents who had backgrounds in particular professions such as teaching, there was the view that Jobcentre Plus advisers were unable to offer advice and guidance on education and training provision of relevance to their needs. This was considered to be partly because Jobcentre Plus did not offer any provision in relevant types of training, and partly because advisers lacked knowledge about particular professions, unlike some specialist providers (see Chapter Four, sections 4.3.2 and 4.4.1, regarding the lack of advice and guidance relevant to engineering in the case of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist assistance available through TRAIN in this field). However, the lack of advice and guidance provided directly through Jobcentre Plus was compounded by a lack of referrals to other agencies for advice and guidance on training routes into particular types of work. This was considered by some refugees to have prolonged the process of access to particular programmes in order to acquire qualifications needed to be able to pursue jobs related to their skills and interests.

*“If at least somebody had told me, if I’d got information where and who to approach, what I would have done is to find out what exactly the situation is, what kind of jobs are*

*available, what opportunities there are for education. I would definitely have gone to register at [the further education college]. Right now I might be going to the university, I would not have wasted time."*

(Kuda)

#### **5.4.4 Benefits regulations/eligibility criteria restricting participation in education and training**

Some respondents referred to constraints on the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus to their education and training needs in terms of Jobcentre Plus programme eligibility criteria that restricted their access to education and training provision available through Jobcentre Plus; and regulations that restricted access to full-time provision through mainstream education and training providers. Regarding the former, a lack of entitlement to access types of training provision in which respondents wanted to participate was indicated. One respondent, Rashid, referred to being informed by an adviser that he was not eligible for training provision through Jobcentre Plus because he had not been claiming Jobseekers Allowance for a sufficient period of time<sup>131</sup>. This appeared to also have been the case for Uzay, who had been referred by an adviser to an ESOL and job search training programme delivered by a contracted provider. Two months into the programme he found a temporary job working as a driver for a Turkish business. When the job ended and he returned to the Jobcentre (and started to re-claim Jobseekers Allowance), he asked an adviser about getting help with training in order to obtain a Heavy Goods Vehicle driving licence, so that he could apply for this type of work. However, he was told by the adviser that he would have to wait six months before he was eligible for further assistance. As he had needed to make a new claim for Jobseekers Allowance (after his previous claim ended when he took up temporary employment), he would not have been entitled to training provision under programmes such as Work Based Learning for Adults, given that this provision is targeted at those who have been claiming Jobseekers Allowance for six months or more<sup>132</sup>.

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<sup>131</sup> Refugees, in principle, can be referred to the New Deal 25 Plus or Work Based Learning for Adults programmes under early eligibility criteria, through which they can take up training provision. However, standard referral to the New Deal is aimed at clients who have been claiming Jobseekers Allowance for 18 out of 24 months. Eligibility criteria for participation in Work Based Learning for Adults is targeted at those who have been claiming Jobseekers Allowance for six months or more (Jobcentre Plus, n.d).

<sup>132</sup> Although, in principle, refugee clients can be referred under early eligibility criteria (Jobcentre Plus, n.d).



Others indicated that they had been told by advisers that they would have to wait for six months before they were eligible for training provision (other than ESOL) as they had recently participated in a six-month ESOL programme through Jobcentre Plus<sup>133</sup>.

With regard to regulations restricting access to full-time education and training, the 16-hour rule (see section 5.2.1) was also considered to have limited responsiveness to education and training needs. Some respondents indicated that they wanted to participate in full-time education in order to obtain a UK qualification, which they felt was required by employers on the basis of job specifications. As was emphasised in relation to English language needs, the 16-hour rule was considered to prolong this process of obtaining skills and qualifications, thus prolonging the period in which they were able to address the barriers they faced to accessing employment. This concerned refugees who had higher-level qualifications and experience before coming to the UK, who wished to obtain a UK-based qualification in order to enter work related to their experience. However, it also concerned respondents with lower-skilled backgrounds who wanted to participate full-time in vocational training as a route into employment. They felt that there were limited options in terms of the type of work they could successfully apply for without participating in some form of training.

## **5.5 Responsiveness to education and training needs: experiences of specialist providers**

Respondents' perceptions of the responsiveness of the specialist providers to their education and training needs centred on the following processes: first, experiences of the provision of information, advice and guidance on education and training, including referrals to education and training provision; and second, participation in training and work placement programmes delivered by the specialist providers. In the context of these processes there was variation between the specialist providers in terms of the extent to which clients felt that these providers were responsive to their needs, as will be explored.

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<sup>133</sup> Interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff indicated that participation in ESOL or other types of training provision was limited to six months in a 12-month period. Therefore, advisers were not able to refer clients to more than one programme within this period (although one adviser indicated that, in principle, a "business case" for re-referral could be made). This restriction on access to provision was referred to in terms of budgetary constraints (see Chapter Six, sections 6.2 and 6.3).

### 5.5.1 Information, advice and guidance on education and training

Respondents' perceptions of the responsiveness of the specialist providers (of which they were clients) related to the extent to which they were provided with information, advice and guidance on education and training provision appropriate to the types of work they wanted to pursue; as well as the relevance of programmes delivered by the providers to their particular interests.

#### **TRAIN**

Clients of TRAIN were very positive about the advice and guidance they had received in relation to their skills and interests. All except one had higher-skilled backgrounds, including within the fields of engineering and health. These respondents emphasised their need for careers advice and guidance in order to be able to make appropriate decisions regarding education or training, either with a view to resuming undergraduate studies that they had begun before coming to the UK or re-qualifying in the UK in order to re-enter employment related to their experience. The support of this provider was valued particularly in enabling them to understand the education system in the UK and how they might resume their education, including how to find out about appropriate courses and financial assistance.

The importance of advice and guidance on education and training to those with higher-skilled backgrounds was emphasised, for example, by Biniyam, who had been 22 years old and studying for a degree in mechanical engineering when he left Ethiopia and came to the UK. He stressed his need for advice and guidance on the UK education system and labour market with a view to being able to resume his studies and begin a career in a relevant field. The advice and guidance he had received from TRAIN, he felt, had enabled him to know how to begin this process, while providing him with support and encouragement in doing so.

*"When I came to [TRAIN] I didn't know where to go, I didn't know which college to go to, I didn't know how to apply, because everything was new for me, everything. And at that age I was vulnerable, homesick, it was a new experience in this country. [...] My advice was really where to start. Because I didn't know, my background was mechanical engineering, and I was really looking for something related."*

Referral to education and training provision, either to mainstream providers (e.g. further education colleges or universities) or other specialist providers, was also considered by respondents to have supported them in terms of enabling them to access particular programmes of relevance to their backgrounds and interests. Amongst those with higher-skilled backgrounds, a greater level of assistance in terms of facilitating their access to higher education was needed in some cases. Florence, who had been participating in an undergraduate degree when she left her country of origin, referred to the difficulties of having no documentation of her previous qualifications, and being unable to apply to an undergraduate degree programme as a result. She referred to the assistance of TRAIN with supporting her to find ways of presenting her educational achievement in order to be able to apply to the degree programme she was interested in pursuing.

### ***ELLA***

Clients of ELLA, including those with managerial and administrative backgrounds, also referred to the assistance they had received in terms of being referred to courses delivered by mainstream further education providers. In contrast to respondents with particular professional backgrounds (such as teaching or engineering), they were not looking to re-enter higher education or to re-qualify in particular professions. Their needs centred more on updating their IT skills or acquiring a UK-based management/administration related qualification in order to apply for administrative types of work. Patrick had been a business manager before coming to the UK. He indicated that he had been referred to a further education college to participate in a business management course. In addition, he participated in the job search training programme delivered by ELLA and eventually was successful in finding work as a customer services assistant.

### ***EMPLOY***

The extent to which respondents who were clients of EMPLOY felt that their education and training needs had been addressed by the provider contrasted to experiences and perceptions of the above providers. These respondents mostly had lower-skilled backgrounds and had a limited level of English proficiency when they accessed the provider (in contrast to clients of the other providers). As emphasised previously, most were primarily concerned with improving their English language proficiency when they

first came into contact with the provider. Therefore, at the time of interview, other training provision was of less concern in terms of their immediate needs. However, those who had higher-skilled backgrounds were also interested in participating in further education at the time of interview, with a view to gaining qualifications in order to enter work related to their previous experience, such as accountancy. Others who lacked previous employment experience or qualifications (including those who were relatively young or had been occupied with childcare responsibilities before coming to the UK) were also interested in taking up some form of vocational training leading on from ESOL.

Amongst those with lower-skilled backgrounds who were interested in vocational training, a lack of information on training through the provider was emphasised. In addition, some felt that staff had pressured them to apply for any jobs rather than assist them with accessing training. This was the case for Ezhan, who had been a farm labourer in Turkey, who felt that he needed to take up some form of training in addition to ESOL, referring to IT or plumbing as possibilities, with a view to being able to access better paid work. He considered his work options to otherwise be limited to low-paid jobs, such as factory work or jobs within the local Turkish community, with few opportunities for ‘moving on’ into better types of work.

*“If you don’t have skills then you get very little. They say just find a job, start from the first stage and you will move on, but how if they don’t train you?”*

(Ezhan)

Those with higher-skilled backgrounds similarly emphasised a lack of information, advice and guidance on education and training through the provider, and a reliance on friends for information.

*“[They] didn’t give me any information on training either. A friend of mine was doing an access course in Social Work so I decided to do this and go to the university, but I don’t know how I’m going to be able to go to university at the end of this.”*

(Pirro)

However, others felt that they had been able to access information on courses directly through further education colleges, and did not need assistance from the provider in this respect. The main constraint on addressing training needs was considered by one

respondent (Mirjeta), who had a background in accountancy, to be not the lack of the provider's assistance but the pressure from Jobcentre Plus advisers to take up lower-skilled jobs such as cleaning in the short-term, as referred to in Chapter Four (section 4.3.2).

### 5.5.2 Experiences of specialist programmes

Other than ESOL and job search training, work placements were the main type of provision delivered by the specialist providers in which respondents had participated. This included all of the respondents who were clients of WORKS (the specialist provision delivered by WORKS was solely oriented towards arranging work placements); five of those who were clients of ELLA (who had participated in work placements arranged by the provider); two who were clients of EMPLOY (who had carried out a work placement at this provider); and one who was a client of TRAIN (that had arranged for her to do a work placement). Those who had participated in this type of provision (as well as those who had not) viewed it very favourably in terms of addressing their needs for gaining UK work experience. Participating in a work placement was seen as giving them the chance to develop their understanding of work environments in the UK, and to develop confidence and communication skills. It was also seen by some as enabling access to employers and the possibility of gaining paid employment as a result of being able to "prove" their skills to an employer.

#### *WORKS Project*

Respondents who were clients of WORKS, which delivered a project that was set up specifically for the purpose of arranging work placements as a route into employment for refugees, were extremely positive about the programme in terms of providing them with the opportunity to gain work experience in areas of work that were relevant to their skills and interests. The extent to which these respondents felt that this provider had been responsive to their needs was therefore related to their backgrounds and interests, and the relevance of this type of provision to helping them find jobs that they were interested in pursuing. This was particularly emphasised by those with mid to higher-skilled backgrounds.

Therese, who was 23 at the time of interview, had worked as a junior accountant before coming to the UK in 2003. She had no knowledge of English when she arrived and enrolled on a part-time ESOL course at a further education college. When she received refugee

status two months after arrival, she was referred to a third sector organisation that provided employment services, through which she did a 20-week work placement in administrative and finance work. At the same time, she was referred to a six-month course in accountancy. At the end of the placement she was still looking for work and was referred to WORKS to participate in its six-month work placement programme. Through this programme she participated in a placement at a bank, working in its finance team, and was offered a job by the company before the end of the placement. Her perceptions of the responsiveness of this provider, as well as the previous provider she had been in contact with, centred on the appropriateness of the programme to her needs in enabling her to gain work experience and a qualification related to her skills and interests.

Respondents with lower-skilled backgrounds emphasised the responsiveness of this type of provision to their needs in terms of enabling them to gain practical experience and contact with employers that might provide a route into paid employment. Damir, who had been a farm labourer before coming to the UK, had participated in some IT courses in addition to ESOL before he was referred by a refugee support worker to the work placement programme delivered by WORKS. After participating in a placement in shop assistance work, he was subsequently offered a job. He felt that he had been able to demonstrate his skills through the placement unlike in the context of a job interview.

*“From my point of view it’s everything, because if I need to go to some other company they are going to ask me lots of those questions I don’t like. And these people have already seen how I work so they don’t need to ask me these questions. And so for me that’s very important to be somewhere where they can see me at work.”*

(Damir)

While the assistance of this provider was particularly valued overall in facilitating work placements appropriate to the needs and interests of clients, some respondents felt that the length of placements (six months) was inadequate, and felt that they needed to participate in placements for one year to be able to gain sufficient UK-based work experience to successfully apply for jobs<sup>134</sup>. Others also emphasised that responsiveness to their needs was a cumulative process, and that participation in work placements in addition to other

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<sup>134</sup> WORKS had originally offered work placements for a period of one year when it first set up this programme. However, it had subsequently been required to reduce this period to six months because of being unable to access further funding that would finance longer placements.

types of provision, such as gaining a particular qualification, was needed to be able to successfully enter employment appropriate to their skills and interests.

## **5.6 Chapter summary and conclusion**

This chapter has explored the research findings regarding respondents' experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers to their English language, education and training needs. Perceptions of needs related to the skills backgrounds, work aspirations and interests of respondents (as discussed in section 4.1 in Chapter Four). Those with higher-skilled backgrounds, in particular those with professional experience (e.g. in engineering or teaching), emphasised a need for advice and guidance at an early stage on re-qualification routes, in order to re-enter work related to their experience. This concerned further and higher education programmes. Those with managerial or administrative backgrounds emphasised a need to acquire new IT skills or to gain a UK-based qualification required by employers (e.g. in accountancy) in order to be able to apply for administrative types of work that were interested in pursuing. Amongst those with lower-skilled backgrounds, some emphasised a need for vocational training as a route into particular types of work that they were interested in (such as skilled manual work, childcare and administrative work).

With regard to English language needs, while most respondents who lacked English language proficiency had accessed part-time ESOL provision before coming into contact with either Jobcentre Plus or the specialist providers, those who had been referred to full-time ESOL provision through Jobcentre Plus emphasised restrictions on the duration of provision as limiting responsiveness to their English language needs. Experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus to other education and training needs centred on the following limitations to responsiveness. First, there was a lack of information on the types of training provision available through Jobcentre Plus programmes. Second, there was a lack of referral to other training providers for assistance. Third, there were benefits regulations and eligibility criteria that limited participation in education and training provision to six months within a 12-month period, which appeared to have prevented advisers from referring clients' immediately on to other Jobcentre Plus training assistance following ESOL. The 16-hour rule, whereby those claiming Jobseekers Allowance are only entitled to participate in part-time education or training (less than 16 hours a week), was also perceived as inhibiting respondents from addressing education and

training needs by restricting their access to full-time education and training programmes through mainstream providers.

Respondents' perceptions of the responsiveness of the specialist providers to their education and training needs varied between these providers. This variation related to the extent to which they were provided with information, advice and guidance on education and training provision; and the relevance of programmes delivered by a provider to their particular skills and interests. Clients of TRAIN, who mostly had higher-skilled backgrounds and interests, valued the information, advice and guidance they had received through the provider on relevant further and higher education programmes. By contrast, some clients of EMPLOY, including both those with lower-skilled and those with higher-skilled backgrounds, referred to a lack of information, advice and guidance on education and training, despite their perceptions of their need to participate in training in order to enter work related to their interests.



## CHAPTER SIX

### FACTORS AFFECTING RESPONSIVENESS: EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF JOBCENTRE PLUS STAFF

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This chapter focuses on the findings regarding the experiences and perceptions of Jobcentre Plus staff of the factors affecting their responsiveness to the needs of refugees<sup>135</sup>. Responsiveness is considered in relation to the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment within the context of meetings between Jobcentre Plus advisers and clients following a client's initial claim for Jobseekers Allowance; and referrals to ESOL provision and to other education and training provision. The chapter is divided as follows. Section 6.1 focuses on factors affecting responsiveness in relation to the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment. It explores tensions between clients' needs and welfare benefits regulations, as well as the organisational priorities of Jobcentre Plus. Section 6.2 focuses on factors affecting responsiveness to English language needs, including regulations restricting the duration of ESOL provision. Section 6.3 explores factors affecting responsiveness to other education and training needs of refugee clients, including limits to the types of provision available, and tensions between performance targets and education and training needs. Section 6.4 summarises the findings and concludes the chapter.

#### 6.1 Information, advice and guidance on employment

Staff interviewed in the research indicated that most of their refugee clients had been referred to Jobcentre Plus through Social Services or National Asylum Support Service (NASS) accommodation providers; or clients had received information on Jobcentre Plus services by post when they were granted refugee status. The role of Jobcentre Plus outreach workers (who visit organisations providing services to refugees and asylum seekers in order to assist refugees making initial benefit claims) was also referred to in the context of the North East as a means of initial referrals to the Jobcentre. This section focuses on the experiences and perceptions of Jobcentre Plus staff regarding the factors affecting their responsiveness to the needs of refugees in relation to the provision of information, advice

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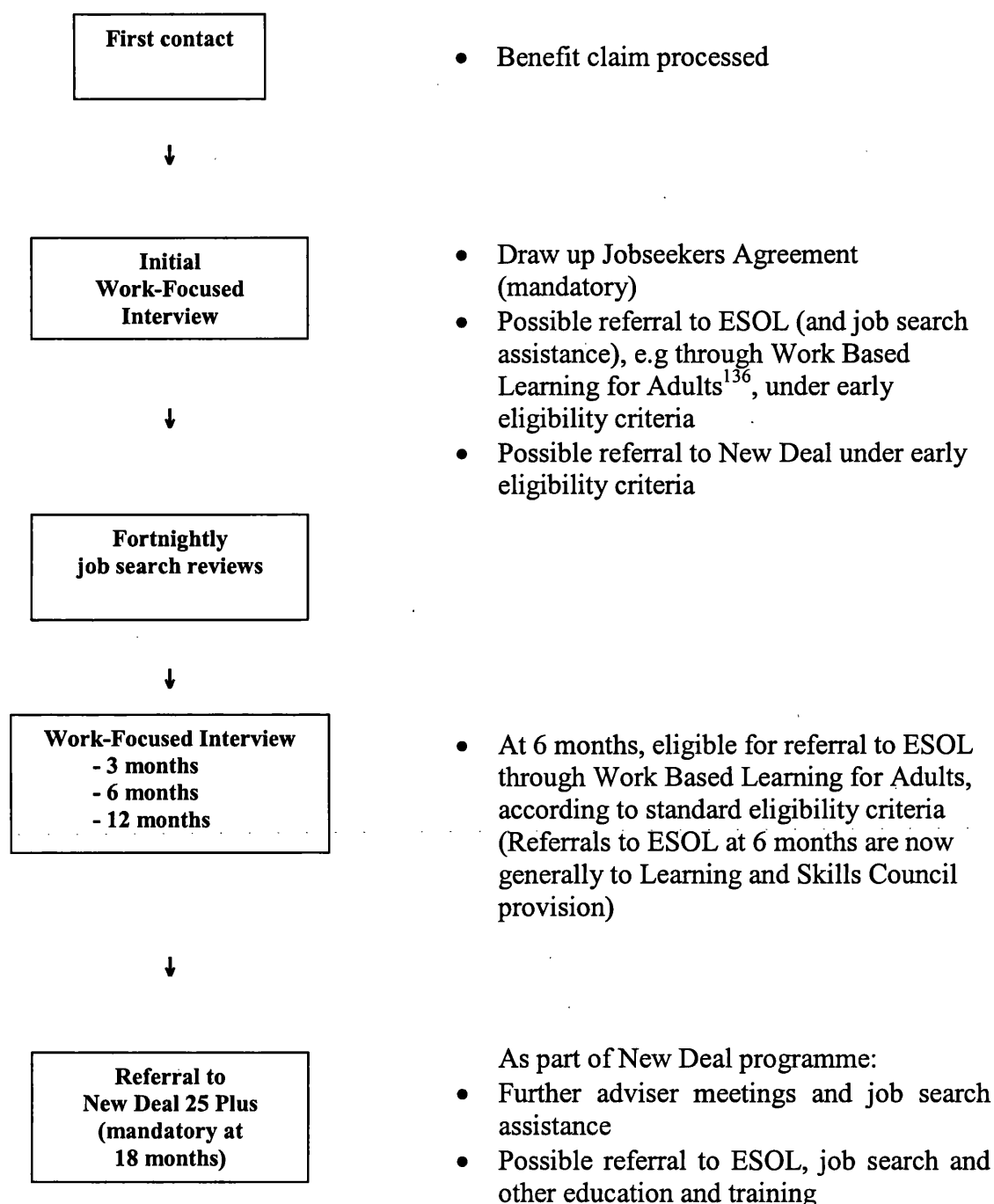
<sup>135</sup> The findings concern refugees claiming Jobseekers Allowance. The majority of the refugee respondents in the research were either at the time of interview claiming Jobseekers Allowance, or had claimed Jobseekers Allowance in the past (see Chapter Three, Table 3.3).

and guidance on employment. This is explored in the context of meetings between Jobcentre Plus advisers and refugees after making a claim for Jobseekers Allowance. As referred to in Chapter One (section 1.4.1) and illustrated in Figure 6.1 below, these meetings or 'Work-Focused Interviews' take place at the initial stage of a client making a Jobseekers Allowance claim (they are supposed to take place within four days of a claim being made) (Coleman et al., 2004). During this meeting a Jobseekers Agreement is drawn up. Further contact with advisers then takes place in a Work-Focused Interview after three months, six months and 12 months. After 18 months, participation in the New Deal 25 Plus is mandatory (through which clients are assigned an adviser and further contact takes place).

Some advisers interviewed in the research came into contact with refugee clients within the initial year of claiming Jobseekers Allowance, while others were responsible for New Deal programme participants. The former corresponds with the contact most of the refugee respondents in the research had experienced with advisers (as very few appeared to have participated in a New Deal programme). In addition, refugee respondents had experienced contact with other Jobcentre Plus staff during the fortnightly job search reviews they were required to attend to confirm eligibility for Jobseekers Allowance and review progress with job search activities.

Figure 6.1

**Jobcentre Plus: employment service process (for clients claiming Jobseekers Allowance)**



Source: based on process described by Coleman et al. (Coleman et al., 2004: 4-7), the Refugee Employment Strategy (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a), and from Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed in the research.

<sup>136</sup> See Glossary for reference to Jobcentre Plus provision, including Work Based Learning for Adults.

The perceptions and experiences of Jobcentre Plus staff underlined the following factors influencing responsiveness to refugees' needs: the 'work-first' criteria attached to benefits entitlements; the orientation of Jobcentre Plus organisational priorities to the achievement of job outcome targets; and resource limitations in terms of the time available to advisers to assist individual clients.

### 6.1.1 Jobseekers Allowance regulations: a work-first approach

Some of the advisers interviewed in the research were, at the time of interview, responsible for meeting clients after they had made a claim for Jobseekers Allowance, which involved drawing up a Jobseekers Agreement. These respondents emphasised that many of the refugee clients who they saw at this stage had very limited proficiency in English. ESOL provision was therefore considered to be a primary concern regarding the type of services that clients needed<sup>137</sup>. However, staff emphasised that they had to explain to clients that they were required to look for work, irrespective of their English language needs, which involved getting clients to 'choose' three types of jobs that were listed in their Jobseekers Agreement. Because of clients' limited proficiency in English, the types of jobs that they could choose to include on a Jobseekers Agreement were considered to be limited to low-skilled jobs where English language skills were less needed.

*"We do have difficulties when we're drawing up what is known as a Jobseekers Agreement. We've got to put down three types of jobs that the customer agrees to look for, and normally if there's no English, normally it's down to jobs that don't need English. Jobs like packing, cleaning and factory work basically. Especially if they have no skills."*

(Adviser, 1)

Regardless of the difficulties a lack of English might create for clients in terms of their ability to successfully find work at this stage, staff emphasised that clients had "to be seen to be looking for work" as this was a requirement for Jobseekers Allowance eligibility. While advisers referred to being sympathetic to refugee clients with English language needs, nevertheless they were required to enforce these criteria. As a means of negotiating between this requirement and the English language needs that restricted clients' access to employment in the short-term, one adviser indicated that she would suggest to clients that

<sup>137</sup> As shown in Figure 6.1, clients can be referred to ESOL provision through Jobcentre Plus immediately, under early eligibility criteria for provision under e.g. Work Based Learning for Adults.

they look for jobs such as cleaning or kitchen work, which did not require much English proficiency at the outset, while they could have more options at a later stage, as their English improved. The extent to which a client was “pushed” towards immediately applying for low-skilled jobs was considered by the adviser to depend on the discretion of the individual adviser.

*“I’m a lot softer than some advisers. Some of them I’ve seen will give them a handful of jobs and tell them they have to apply for them or their JSA [Jobseekers Allowance] will be cut.”*

(Adviser, 4)

Some respondents also felt that higher-skilled refugees who had limited English proficiency sometimes wanted to look for lower-skilled jobs because of the difficulties of finding work relevant to their experience.

### **6.1.2 Tensions between organisational priorities and the appropriateness of job search assistance**

The organisational priorities of Jobcentre Plus to place its clients in work in the short-term were perceived as conflicting with the English language needs of some clients, and the realities faced by advisers in terms of the difficulties of placing clients who lacked adequate English proficiency in work. With regard to the provision of job search assistance to refugees with English language needs, there was the perception that there were limited possibilities for helping clients who lacked an adequate level of English to find work.

*“In the adviser sessions you have to look to see what jobs are available for them, but it’s very limited if someone speaks little English. The majority of the time it’s very difficult to get people to look for work. [...] Even for delivery in a warehouse they need to speak good English so there are not many options.”*

(Adviser, 5)

The English language needs of refugee clients therefore conflicted with the priority given to placing clients in work in the short-term. Respondents referred to clients being largely dependent on accessing jobs within their respective communities where English language skills were less needed. Moreover, some advisers referred to being dependent themselves on these sources of employment as a means of placing refugee clients in work.

*“Well, we encourage the refugees that have language barriers to get family or friends that are more fluent in their language to help them look for work, maybe not so much in the English community but in their community where they have employers that speak their own language. We try to get them to approach those types of employers. We do also try to market those type of employers into the Jobcentre too.”*

(Adviser, 3)

Sources of employment within local ethnic minority and refugee communities included catering: one adviser referred to local restaurants and take-aways owned by residents originally from Iran, where she felt a large proportion of young male refugees in the area found work. Although some other sources of low-skilled employment were also referred to by respondents as being accessible to clients, including factory, cleaning and catering work, they indicated that it was increasingly difficult for clients with poor English skills to access even relatively low-skilled jobs because of employers' demand for basic English language skills and other training.

*“Before, the easier jobs to get for male refugees were warehouse, but warehouse jobs are becoming harder now because employers are asking for the more technical side of things - you must know computing skills, you must speak English - and because of the safety aspect of things. It was easier before, when all these things weren't involved in that job area, it was easier to get them in, but now it's getting harder.”*

(Adviser, 3)

*“Sometimes within their own community they find out about vacancies - that seems to be where most people get work, in low-skilled jobs, like in a kebab shop. A lot of the refugees have high qualifications and experience in their own country, but they can't use it here. It's hard because it all stems from an employer's point of view that someone can't speak English.”*

(Adviser, 5)

While advisers felt that their focus was to find clients work as quickly as possible, they perceived this to be limited to a narrow range of low-skilled jobs for refugees who lacked sufficient English language proficiency, irrespective of their qualifications and experience. There was some concern, however, regarding the sustainability of the sources of

employment accessible to clients with low levels of English proficiency. One adviser referred to clients “coming in and out of the system” as they found temporary agency jobs in factories but returned to claiming Jobseekers Allowance shortly after.

### 6.1.3 Limits to advisers’ time

The limited amount of time that Jobcentre Plus staff could give to individual clients who were not enrolled on a New Deal programme (through which a greater level of assistance is targeted) was also perceived as influencing the extent to which advisers could assist refugees in looking for work. Staff time was considered to be particularly limited in the context of contact outside of Work-Focused Interviews (which involved a ten-minute meeting with a member of staff every two weeks when a client came into the Jobcentre to sign on for Jobseekers Allowance). Regardless of a client’s English proficiency, some advisers emphasised that their role in terms of the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment was relatively limited for clients who were not participating in the New Deal. While they were able to refer clients to look for job vacancies on the Jobpoints in the Jobcentre, and could help them by contacting employers to arrange an interview, they felt they were unable to do much more than this. Job search assistance was considered to be primarily delivered by contracted providers. However, this depended on the client being referred by an adviser to a particular programme for job search assistance (e.g. attached to ESOL provision or through the New Deal).

A lack of knowledge of other non-contracted providers that delivered job search assistance, and the lack of time advisers had to find out about other providers, appeared to influence referrals to specialist providers for assistance. Some respondents referred to EMPLOY (that was funded through Jobcentre Plus) and also to WORKS as other local providers to which clients could be referred. However, there seemed to be little awareness about other specialist or non-contracted providers. In the context of the North East, one adviser felt that clients were able to find out about other organisations providing employment-related assistance through NASS accommodation providers, but Jobcentre advisers did not have the time to be in a position to find out about and inform clients about the range of other local providers they could access. A contracts manager interviewed emphasised that there were initiatives providing specialist assistance to refugees funded by Jobcentre Plus through the European Social Fund, but similarly indicated that advisers might not be aware of all of these

initiatives in addition to mainstream programmes as they did not have the time to find out about them.

## **6.2 Responding to English language needs**

### **6.2.1 Regulations restricting the duration of full-time ESOL**

As referred to above, respondents emphasised that many of their clients lacked English language proficiency and therefore needed to be referred to ESOL provision after a first meeting with an adviser. Advisers interviewed in one Jobcentre Plus district indicated that they could refer clients to have an English language assessment, which was carried out on site within the Jobcentre by an independent assessor. In another district, advisers would either refer clients to a contracted provider for an English language assessment or refer them directly to ESOL provision. While advisers were able to refer clients to ESOL provision contracted by Jobcentre Plus, the extent to which provision adequately addressed the level of English language needs of clients was considered to be limited by regulations. These regulations concern those referred to by refugee clients (as discussed in Chapter Five, section 5.2.1) that restricted participation in full-time ESOL to a maximum of six months (26 weeks). There was therefore an alignment between the views of advisers and the views of refugee respondents in the research. Clients who wished to continue in full-time ESOL beyond the six-month period were required to wait a further six months before advisers could refer them back to full-time provision. Otherwise, advisers indicated that they could only refer clients to continue with part-time provision (less than 16 hours per week) through non-contracted providers, such as further education colleges, because of the 16-hour restriction on Jobseekers Allowance claimants' participation in full-time education and training.

During participation in a six-month programme, staff emphasised that clients were expected to be actively looking for work (as a condition of receiving Jobseekers Allowance) and to have acquired a level of proficiency in English that was sufficient to be able to enter a job by the end of a programme. However, they considered six months to be insufficient for many of their refugee clients, who were unable to develop an adequate level of proficiency in English within this period, referring to clients who had returned to the Jobcentre following participation in a six-month programme. This was particularly the case for clients who were illiterate in their first language (high levels of illiteracy amongst



female Somali clients were referred to) and needed to start with pre-ESOL learning<sup>138</sup> before they could benefit from other ESOL provision.

*“I think quite often they start from a very low level ... So if they’re starting at that sort of low level, after 26 weeks they’re not going to be significantly advanced.”*

(Adviser, 2)

A fixed limit of six months was therefore considered to restrict Jobcentre Plus advisers from adequately responding to the particular needs of individual clients, in terms of referring clients to ESOL provision for a period of time that was appropriate to their different learning needs.

*“The difficulty is that a lot of customers are illiterate in their own language and so you need to address this first. Someone who is illiterate is going to have far greater needs and more difficulties in learning English than someone who may already be able to speak a bit of English. People have very different educational backgrounds which inevitably means they need different levels of learning support.”*

(Manager)

### **6.2.2 Tensions between job outcome targets, output-related funding and responding to English language needs**

The experiences of staff highlighted tensions between responsiveness to the English language needs of refugees and the orientation of Jobcentre Plus organisational priorities and targets towards placing clients in immediate work. Although clients were entitled to continue with part-time ESOL provision, advisers emphasised that they had to adhere to the ‘work-first’ priorities of the organisation and try to place clients in jobs. This was despite a potential conflict of interest in terms of being responsive to the needs and interests of clients regarding their English language learning.

*“They [clients] have to be available for full-time work when they’re doing that [part-time ESOL]. Our emphasis from above is that we get people into jobs, so there can be a bit of a conflict of interest there. From their point of view they probably would benefit*

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<sup>138</sup> Pre-ESOL provision is oriented towards clients achieving a basic level of literacy.

*from improving their English further. From our point of view we're paying them benefit and we're told that we've got to try and get them a job.*

(Adviser, 2)

In addition, the job outputs attached to Jobcentre Plus funding (see Chapter Two, section 2.3, and Appendix 3) were considered to discourage contracted providers from taking referrals of clients perceived as having greater language needs. One adviser referred to the case of a female Somali client who had been illiterate and therefore had made limited progress in improving her English proficiency at the end of the six-month period of an ESOL programme. The adviser had made a “business case” for funding her participation in a further six-month programme (although he indicated that he was no longer able to do this). However, the contracted provider that he contacted felt that the client’s level of English was too low for the provider to be able to assist her, and she was subsequently referred to a Somali community organisation for a part-time ESOL course.

A Jobcentre Plus contracts manager felt that there was little incentive for contracted providers to take referrals of clients who were illiterate, given their level of needs, as it was unlikely that such clients would enable them to meet their job outputs. Although the respondent indicated that technically a provider could not refuse a referral, she felt that providers inevitably avoided such referrals as they were very “performance driven”, given that they would lose their contracts if they did not meet job outputs. She was concerned, therefore, that providers were not adequately responding to the needs of more disadvantaged clients because of the risk this entailed.

*“These are the people who will really fall down and get lost in the system and end up in the informal economy because no one can take the risk to support them.”*

(Manager)

### **6.3 Responding to education and training needs**

Respondents’ perceptions and experiences of factors affecting their responsiveness to other education and training needs of refugees concerned the following issues. First, the level of ESOL needs of some clients were considered to prevent referrals to other education and training or work placements, including the programmes of some specialist providers. Second, limitations to the types of education and training provision to which clients could

be referred, both in terms of what was available through Jobcentre Plus contracted provision and a lack of flexibility or organisational support for making referrals to external training provision, inhibited responsiveness in terms of referrals to appropriate provision. Third, and related to the former issue, there was perceived to be a lack of a focus in general on education and training needs within the organisational priorities of Jobcentre Plus, which were considered to be primarily directed towards achieving job outcome targets in the short-term.

### 6.3.1 Level of ESOL needs

Staff indicated that while refugee clients were eligible for early referral to the New Deal programmes if this was appropriate<sup>139</sup>, which included an education and training option as part of the types of provision attached to the programme, they felt that it was of little value referring clients to the New Deal if they did not have an adequate level of English to be able to participate in this type of provision. In particular, the compulsory nature of participation in the different elements of the programme (including required job search activities) was considered inappropriate for refugees with limited English proficiency. Advisers therefore appeared to have not referred clients to this programme as it was considered inappropriate to addressing the needs of refugees in some cases.

A limited level of English proficiency amongst some refugee clients was also perceived as restricting some clients' access to programmes through other external providers. Given the requirement of some specialist providers for clients to have a certain level of proficiency in order to participate in their programmes (including work placements and other training), Jobcentre Plus advisers were unable to make referrals to this type of provision for those clients with a limited level of English.

*“We’ve got hard-to-help customers who want to work and the [work placement programme delivered by WORKS] meant that if they spoke English then there was something for them to do. But at the end of the day though, it’s the barrier of English that’s the real problem for our customers.”*

(Adviser, 5)

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<sup>139</sup> Refugees claiming Jobseekers Allowance are entitled to join the New Deal 25 Plus programme at an earlier stage than the standard requirement of 18 months of claiming Jobseekers Allowance (at which point participation is mandatory).

Not all refugee clients were considered to be restricted by a low level of English language proficiency, and in these cases advisers indicated that they could refer them to other types of provision available under Jobcentre Plus programmes such as the New Deal, including training and work placements. However, there appeared to be limitations to the types of provision available.

### 6.3.2 Limits to the types of provision available

The types of education and training provision available through Jobcentre Plus programmes, such as the New Deal or Work Based Learning for Adults<sup>140</sup>, were referred to by some respondents as relatively limited (although contracted provision varies between Jobcentre Plus districts). A contracts manager in one district emphasised that training provision was relatively short-term, given that longer-term training (more than six-months) was generally not an option for clients. Advisers referred to a limited range of courses available through contracted provision, including basic IT courses; training to obtain an HGV (Heavy Goods Vehicles) driving licence; bus driving; and taxi driving. The one New Deal adviser interviewed in the research also referred to a 26-week access course in music (for those wishing to enter the music industry) and a 26-week childcare course (which involved a work placement and NVQ Level 2 assessment) that were offered under the New Deal.

With regard to work placements, advisers indicated that providers contracted to deliver ESOL provision could arrange this, but this was difficult given the limited English language proficiency of clients. Voluntary work or two-week work placements were also offered under the New Deal, but it was considered to depend on the individual adviser as to whether or not a client was made aware of this. Moreover, the type and duration of work placements were relatively limited: a work placement programme at a local supermarket and at an airport were, at the time of interview, being delivered under the New Deal programme in one of the respective Jobcentre Plus districts, which included two weeks of training in customer skills followed by a four-week work placement in retail or catering at the airport.

Limitations in the availability of training provision were considered to be related to increasing budgetary constraints within Jobcentre Plus. Some advisers felt that whereas in

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<sup>140</sup> See Glossary.

the past they had been able to refer clients to a wider range of types of provision, this was becoming increasingly limited as a result of budgetary decisions.

*“What we have available now within the Jobcentre has become very limited. I think there were constraints on budgets. When I started doing this job six years ago, we had a vast amount of training provision. We had links with colleges; numerous different training organisations; and we could provide lots of different opportunities for training. But it’s all shrunk and I believe from what I’ve been told it’s going to shrink even further in the coming year.”*

(Adviser, 2)

Although education and training provision was not considered by staff to be the main remit of Jobcentre Plus, the limitations of contracted provision were perceived as preventing them from referring refugee clients to a wider range of training courses in order to gain qualifications and skills. This affected responsiveness both to the needs of higher-skilled clients who wanted to re-train in order to gain UK qualifications needed to enter employment relevant to their experience; clients with experience in skilled manual work (e.g. electricians and plumbers) who needed to acquire qualifications to be able to apply for jobs in their field; as well as clients who had no qualifications or transferable employment experience (e.g. farm labourers), who wanted to access vocational training:

*“We have refugees from Eastern Europe and they’ve worked in car electronics and they want to do the same type of job over here. But sometimes it’s difficult because of the qualifications and restrictions on working. So it is difficult, and some of them would want to go to college to get a qualification so they could continue in that type of work here. But we can’t help them because we don’t have that type of course to help them in that way”.*

(Adviser, 3)

### 6.3.3 Tensions between New Deal regulations and education and training needs

The New Deal programme, which includes an education and training option, was perceived as being inflexible regarding the types of provision clients could participate in because of the compulsory nature of participation in the different stages of the programme<sup>141</sup>. Under

<sup>141</sup> Very few refugees in the sample of this research were participating in a New Deal programme.

the New Deal 25 Plus, following the initial Gateway period of the programme, participants are required to complete a New Deal option through the second-stage 'Intensive Activity Period'. This involves the referral of a client to a contracted provider for full-time employment-related provision for a period of up to six months to address a client's needs (which might include job search training, a work placement, or education and training). Because of the mandatory nature of participation in this type of provision, one New Deal adviser referred to cases where clients, who were already participating in a course (that both the client and adviser perceived to be more suited to the client's needs), were required to leave that course in order to participate in a New Deal option.

*"There's a total conflict of interest here. It's a tremendous bone of contention and I think, it concerns me a lot as well, in that we have people who go to the [local further education college], for example, and they enrol on a part-time course. Now it may be something that's going to be very beneficial; it could be a childcare course or something to do with nursing, access to nursing or something like that. [...] Now it's not possible for them really to do a college course and to do a New Deal option. So it comes to a stage where they have to give up the course that they're doing at the college, which is going to be probably more beneficial to them, and do our New Deal option."*

(Adviser, 2)

Similarly, staff of some of the specialist providers referred to the difficulties they had encountered with Jobcentre Plus advisers who had taken refugee clients off their specialist training programmes (e.g. for health workers) in order to enrol them on mandatory provision under the New Deal 25 Plus, even if the type of provision under the New Deal was perceived by clients as unsuited to their needs.

*“We had two dentists who were actually going to take the IELTS<sup>142</sup> course, who were doing the IELTS course with us, and that course is mainly so that professionals are able to practice, and because they were New Deal and they were on the mandatory period, they were just taken off the course and sent to an ESOL class that was irrelevant, and because it was mandatory there was nothing anybody could actually do.”*

(TRAIN)

The participation of clients in a wider range of education and training provision (beyond what was contracted under the New Deal programme) was also limited due to participation in education and training under the New Deal being restricted to a period of six months. The vocational training programmes through mainstream education and training providers, in which some clients were interested (e.g. for skilled manual work, such as plumbing) took longer than this period to complete. However, it was not possible to extend full-time provision for individual clients under the New Deal, as was indicated had been the case in the past. Moreover, the emphasis of Jobcentre Plus was considered by advisers to be on short-term ‘work-focused’ training aimed at placing clients in employment as quickly as possible, as opposed to participation in longer-term types of education and training provision through mainstream providers such as further education colleges. This was primarily related to budgetary constraints within Jobcentre Plus.

#### **6.3.4 Lack of organisational support for education and training**

Regarding the early referral of refugees to education and training provision under the New Deal, one manager indicated that while this was in principle possible (as refugees are entitled to referral under early eligibility criteria), in practice this was governed by the budgets of Jobcentre Plus districts. Where budgetary constraints took priority, referrals to a particular type of provision would normally only be considered after a period of job search activity had taken place: the emphasis being to try to place clients in work before any training or other provision.

Regarding the wider range of types of education and training available through mainstream providers, technically advisers were able to make a “business case” to their managers for

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<sup>142</sup> International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Refugees training to re-qualify e.g. as doctors are required to first pass IELTS exams.

referring clients to non-Jobcentre Plus contracted training provision, if they considered this to be appropriate. However, work pressures in terms of the difficulties of caseload management, combined with a lack of organisational support for referrals to education and training, were seen as acting as disincentives for making referrals to external provision.

*“Well, they do say we can make a business case, but it’s not something that’s encouraged and I personally haven’t done it because it’s such a... it’s an aggravation to try and get it through. Particularly, I mean, you’ve got lots of people to see and we do our best, but if you’ve got to make a business case and go into the detail, and it doesn’t fit in the system well and it’s not encouraged.[...] I mean we tell the people [Jobcentre Plus district management] what type of provision we want, and if they can put it on a stream and it’s available we can tap into it, that’s fine, but we can’t sort out a contract and everything. We can’t, we’ve just got too much of a workload”.*

(Adviser, 2)

The system in which advisers operated in terms of addressing the particular education and training needs of clients therefore inhibited responsiveness, given the difficulties of referring clients to appropriate types of provision. Rather than be restricted to provision contracted under programmes such as the New Deal, there was the perception that it would be more effective for advisers to have access to a ‘pot of money’ for individual clients, that could be used to purchase training provision that was appropriate to a client’s needs and interests.

*“What we’d prefer is if we had a pot of money, if somebody said for each client there’s £2,000 you can spend, and if we saw a course that was going in a particular college that we thought would be beneficial for that particular person, we could use that money for it. But I think it’s a conflict again of jobs against training”.*

### **6.3.5 Tensions between job outcome targets, output-related funding and responding to education and training needs**

A “job outcome driven” performance agenda was perceived by some advisers as encouraging them to prioritise these targets even where this conflicted with the needs and interests of a client. One adviser referred to cases where refugee clients were interested in pursuing a particular type of job related to their experience and interests, or participating in training in order to gain skills and qualifications that might enable them to successfully find



a job more generally. The need to achieve job outcome targets, however, was seen as taking precedence over what a client wanted, and to this extent the adviser felt that he was sometimes inclined to encourage clients to apply for jobs that were not relevant to their interests.

*“You do find that sometimes the targets make you just focused on the target and not focused on what the client wants. Because you find that some clients are pushed towards some things that aren’t what they want, but because of your targets you just think, oh I’ll get them into this.”*

(Adviser, 3)

This prioritisation of job outcome targets over the needs of clients was also considered to impact on providers contracted by Jobcentre Plus, to which advisers had referred clients for particular types of training provision. One adviser referred to one of his refugee clients, who was participating in childcare training through a contracted provider. The client had been frustrated by her experience of being encouraged by staff of this provider to look for and apply to job vacancies in areas such as shop work that were unrelated to her interests and the type of training. The adviser emphasised, however, that from the perspective of the provider it was necessary to do this in order to achieve the job outputs that it was contracted to deliver, or it risked losing its contract with Jobcentre Plus. Responsiveness to job outputs attached to funding therefore appeared to take precedence over responsiveness to the particular training needs and work interests of the client.

On the one hand, the remit of Jobcentre Plus and the performance system in which Jobcentre Plus staff and contracted providers operated was considered by respondents to be oriented towards placing clients in work as quickly as possible, not into education or training provision. However, on the other hand, they perceived there to be a tension between performance targets and responsiveness to clients’ needs to the extent that refugees’ participation in education or training might enable them to access better types of work in the long-term. Better types of work were defined as more “sustainable” by respondents, with better prospects of a client remaining employed as opposed to returning to benefits. For some, this also related to types of work appropriate to the skills and interests of clients.

An emphasis on achieving job outputs was also considered to affect the type and quality of contracted training provision. One adviser perceived there to have been a reduction in the types of training and the types of providers contracted within the respective Jobcentre Plus district, as a result of the emphasis in Jobcentre Plus funding streams on achieving job outputs.

*“The training providers have got very strict objectives for getting people into work, and if they don’t get people jobs, or people as a result of their courses don’t get jobs, they lose their contract. The [further education college] was a good training provider, but it wasn’t getting the job outcomes. People were getting qualifications, which probably a bit further on would enable them to get employment and be very useful to the community, but because they weren’t immediately getting jobs they lost the contract.”*  
(Adviser, 2)

A primary emphasis on achieving job outputs was therefore seen as influencing the types of training delivered under programmes such as the New Deal.

The short-term orientation of performance systems, in terms of achieving immediate job outcomes, was perceived as inhibiting a more ‘client-centred’ approach towards education and training needs in relation to employment outcomes over the long-term. While greater attention to training might facilitate access to a wider range of types of employment, therefore allowing for greater responsiveness to the interests of a client, it was felt that a more ‘client-centred’ approach in this respect would require a shift in the focus on short-term job outcomes within the performance agenda driving Jobcentre Plus.

*“If we’re putting people onto courses, which in the long-term are going to help them, in the short-term we’re not going to get the same results as far as getting people into jobs is concerned. So it depends whether people are prepared to take the longer term view for the benefit of the individual and the country as a whole, or if they’re looking for the short-term gain, which... I can’t see the system is ever going to change. I think they want the short-term, they want results now rather than in the future. But if that could be addressed then yes, it would be better”.*  
(Adviser 2)

The performance system was therefore perceived as inhibiting rather than creating incentives for advisers to be responsive in terms of acting in the client's interests.

*"If we're looking at the interests of the individual, then from the individual's point of view they'd like to get further training and a qualification that would lead them onto a job that they wanted to do, which they're happy doing, then in the long-term it's probably going to result in a better thing for the community and for them. But, you know, short-term they'd have to change the structure of the way that we're appraised, because we've got job targets."*

(Adviser 2)

This perceived tension between job outcome targets and training needs was considered to be compounded by conflicting performance targets across different statutory agencies, including Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). This was referred to by a Jobcentre Plus contracts manager as creating constraints on these different agencies effectively working together, and therefore constraints in responding to the inter-related service needs of refugee clients in terms of English language provision, other education and training, and employment.

*"We're all working within different boundaries and timetables, which creates a lot of complications. The remit of the LSC is about learning, about qualifications and training, whereas our ethos is about getting people into work. If we're working to two different objectives the question is who gives in? It's very difficult to work in partnership when we're driven by different agendas and different targets."*

(Manager)

In addition, the emphasis on job outputs in the funding of Jobcentre Plus provision was considered to restrict the type of providers contracted to deliver services, since only particular types of provider were able to successfully apply for Jobcentre Plus contracts. The emphasis on job outputs in funding streams was considered to exclude voluntary and community organisations in particular. A Jobcentre Plus contracts manager indicated that all of the contracted provision within their district was through a limited number of private sector providers, as voluntary and community organisations were unable to compete for funding because of being unable to deliver the number of job outputs required by Jobcentre

Plus. This therefore limited providers, whose services were oriented towards refugees, from access to funding.

*“You always tend to get the main providers bidding because they have the flexibility and resources to get in an expert bidder, whereas the voluntary organisations don’t have this so they don’t always do their bid the justice it deserves. There is the capacity issue as well, in terms of whether the smaller voluntary organisations can actually deliver the numbers we are looking at. So we do say we want to work with refugee community organisations, but RCOs [Refugee Community Organisations] aren’t treated any differently from any other agency - they still need to meet the criteria [...] That’s the main problem for the small providers, although they make all the difference in terms of the provision of services for certain groups.”*

(Manager)

There was considered to be a conflict, therefore, between an emphasis on “value for money” in terms of the number of job outcomes achieved, and involving specialist providers that might be better placed to assist some refugee clients. While pilot programmes or the European Social Fund allowed for specialist initiatives to be funded by Jobcentre Plus, these were considered to be one-off initiatives that were limited to the extent that they were not then funded as part of Jobcentre Plus mainstream provision.

#### **6.4 Chapter summary and conclusion**

This chapter has explored the findings of the research regarding the experiences and perceptions of Jobcentre Plus staff of the factors affecting their responsiveness to the needs of refugees. These factors were explored in relation to the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment; and the referral of clients to ESOL, and other education and training provision.

Regarding the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment in the context of meetings between advisers and clients, the following factors were found to influence the extent to which advice and guidance was provided, and the type of work to which job search assistance was oriented.

The criteria attached to Jobseekers Allowance, requiring claimants to be actively looking for work, and the role of advisers in enforcing these criteria, influenced the type of work that assistance was directed towards – low-skilled jobs such as factory and cleaning work – given the difficulties of placing clients who lacked English proficiency in other types of work in the short-term. While there were tensions between organisational priorities for placing clients in immediate work and the English language needs of clients (which inhibited access to work in the short-term), strategies for adhering to a job outcome-oriented performance regime included relying upon clients finding work within local ethnic minority and refugee communities or in a limited range of low-skilled jobs where English language proficiency was less needed. The limits to the time available to advisers to assist individual clients (who were not participating in the New Deal) also inhibited the level of advice and guidance that could be provided.

Regarding responsiveness to the English language needs of refugees, and particularly to those with greater language needs, regulations restricting the duration of a client's participation in full-time ESOL through Jobcentre Plus limited responsiveness in this respect. In terms of referrals to other education and training, the ESOL needs of clients were considered to inhibit referrals to training or work placement provision available through Jobcentre Plus programmes, given the need for an adequate level of proficiency to participate in other types of provision. However, for refugees with greater proficiency in English, limitations to the types of training provision available through Jobcentre Plus, and a lack of organisational support for early referrals to training and to a wider range of types of training through mainstream providers, appeared to constrain responsiveness. This was in terms of referring clients to types of training provision appropriate to the types of work they wished to pursue.

There were tensions between the performance system in which advisers operated and responsiveness to refugees needs, both in relation to the provision of information, advice and guidance on employment, and referrals to ESOL and training provision. An orientation towards achieving job outcomes in the short-term appeared to place pressure on advisers (and contracted providers) to focus on placing clients in work, even where this conflicted with the needs and interests of clients (including their participation in education and training).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### FACTORS AFFECTING RESPONSIVENESS: EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF SPECIALIST PROVIDERS

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Wider research on the effects of job outcome-oriented systems, as discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.3.3), raises the question of the extent to which responsiveness to the needs of clients may be distorted by the prioritisation of short-term job outcomes in employment service provision. This chapter focuses on the experiences and perceptions of staff of the specialist providers regarding the factors affecting their responsiveness to the needs of refugees, which relate to the funding regimes in which the specialist providers operated in terms of the performance outputs attached to sources of public funding. Section 7.1 gives an overview of the specialist providers in terms of their type of services and sources of funding. Section 7.2 considers providers' perceptions of the main 'tensions between government policy agendas, related outputs attached to particular public funding sources, and responsiveness to the needs of refugees. The effects of output-related funding, and job outputs attached to funding through Jobcentre Plus in particular, are then explored in sections 7.3 and 7.4. These effects concern the type of refugee clients providers' services are oriented towards and the type of services delivered. In both cases, the influence of output-related systems on responsiveness to refugees' needs in relation to their skills, English language needs and employment interests are explored. Section 7.5 examines the experiences of providers regarding sources of public funding that were considered to be more flexible in terms of enabling responsiveness to the needs of refugees. Section 7.6 summarises the findings and concludes this chapter.

#### 7.1 Background and sources of funding of the specialist providers

As referred to in Chapter Three (section 3.4.3), the specialist providers in the research included four providers that were the primary focus of the research, where both staff and refugee clients were interviewed. Interviews were also carried out with staff of an additional three specialist providers. The specialist providers comprised a range of types of organisation, funded through different sources, and delivering different types of services to refugees. While some of the providers only delivered programmes for refugees, others delivered programmes oriented towards other unemployed groups. This included

EMPLOY, that delivered programmes to (primarily minority ethnic) unemployed people (comprising basic skills, IT skills and ESOL provision); WORKS, that also delivered programmes to support young unemployed people into work; the ELLA Project, that delivered ESOL and job search training for minority ethnic groups with ESOL needs; and CASA, that delivered services not only to refugees but to other migrants. Background information on the four main providers and an overview of the other three is presented below.

### *TRAIN*

As indicated in Chapter Three (section 3.4.3), TRAIN was a registered charitable organisation that provided a range of education, training and employment-related services targeted at refugees. These included: a drop-in service for refugees for information and advice on education, training and employment (including information on further and higher education programmes and on sources of financial support); general job search training courses (including support with CV writing and applying for jobs) and specialised job search training courses (targeted at refugees with experience in particular fields, including engineers and healthcare professionals); a business-start up course; a mentoring scheme (through which refugee clients were assisted by refugees who had entered work in particular fields); and a grant scheme for health professionals needing to re-qualify to re-enter their field. Its services were funded through a number of different sources. At the time of interview, these included funding through Jobcentre Plus (European Social Fund co-financing); the Learning and Skills Council; the London Development Agency; the European Refugee Fund and EQUAL<sup>143</sup>, as well as charitable sources.

Although staff of the provider emphasised that their advisory services were open to all refugees, they felt that most of their clients tended to have higher-skilled backgrounds. Most of the training services of the provider were aimed at refugees with particular professional backgrounds (including engineers). In general, clients were considered to already have a relatively higher level of proficiency in English. Refugees who had ESOL needs and visited the provider for advice and guidance were referred to further education colleges and other providers delivering ESOL programmes. In terms of length of residence in the UK, clients ranged from those who had more recently arrived in the UK to those who had been living in the UK for several years.

<sup>143</sup> See Glossary for reference to these sources of funding.

## ***EMPLOY***

EMPLOY provided a range of programmes for unemployed (primarily ethnic minority) groups, including a specialist programme to which refugees could be referred when they first came into contact with Jobcentre Plus that was funded by Jobcentre Plus. The project was aimed at addressing preliminary barriers to employment (such as accessing housing); providing information, advice and guidance on employment (including job search assistance); and addressing ESOL and other education/training needs (such as IT skills training). Clients enrolled on the project could be referred to participate in other programmes that the provider delivered. This included primarily ESOL and job search training (help with CV writing, and looking for and applying for jobs). In addition, the provider delivered other training programmes that comprised basic skills (numeracy and literacy), IT, and work placements. Refugees were also amongst the clients who participated in these programmes. These programmes were also primarily funded by Jobcentre Plus (through the New Deal 25 Plus and Work-Based Learning for Adults<sup>144</sup>), although the provider had received some funding from the Learning and Skills Council and also other sources in the past (European Social Fund and Single Regeneration Budget<sup>145</sup>).

Staff of the provider considered most of their refugee clients to have lower-skilled backgrounds, with a limited level of proficiency in English when they initially registered with the provider. Most of the provider's refugee clients, by nature of the project, had been living in the UK for a relatively short period of time and had generally received refugee status less than a year before registering with the provider.

## ***WORKS***

WORKS was a charitable organisation that provided training to disadvantaged young people who were unemployed. It established a specialist project in 2003 to provide a one-year subsidised work placement programme for refugees, in order to assist refugees with entering employment. It subsequently applied for other sources of funding in order to extend the project for a further year, offering subsidised work placements for a reduced

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<sup>144</sup> See Glossary for reference to Jobcentre Plus programmes.

<sup>145</sup> See Glossary regarding these sources of funding.



period of six months<sup>146</sup>. The project involved a mix of funding from private sources (a local business), Jobcentre Plus (through the New Deal 25 Plus programme, which offered a subsidy to employers providing subsidised employment, i.e. a work placement, to a New Deal participant for six months), and the European Refugee Fund<sup>147</sup>. Because it had managed to negotiate funding through the New Deal 25 Plus programme, all of its clients had to initially be registered on this programme in order for the project to be able to claim the employers' subsidy. However, most of its clients were referred to the project through other sources (including other non-statutory employment service providers, local authority refugee support teams) and were subsequently registered on the New Deal for administrative purposes. Clients were considered to include both refugees with higher and lower-skilled backgrounds in terms of their previous education and employment experience. All were relatively proficient in English, as this was considered essential for clients to be able to participate in and benefit from a work placement, and an English language proficiency assessment was carried out with all prospective clients to assess their suitability for joining the programme.

### ***ELLA Project***

The ELLA project was established in 2003 with sources of funding from the New Deal for Communities and the Single Regeneration Budget (funding that was administered by the local authority)<sup>148</sup>. At the time of interview, it had continued to receive funding through the New Deal for Communities and had also received some funding through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. The project had been set up as a result of an identified need by the local ESOL Service for follow-on employment-related services for ESOL students. Although the project was aimed at all unemployed people in the local area who had ESOL needs, a large proportion of its clients were refugees. The project offered advice and guidance on employment, education and training; an ESOL and job search training programme (including help with CV writing, training in interview skills, telephone communication skills); some other training with ESOL support (such as IT skills training and training to obtain a health and safety certificate); the arrangement of work placements; and other social and cultural events to support clients' settlement in the local area. Refugee clients were considered to include a mix of both refugees who had no qualifications, some of whom and experience in lower-skilled types of work (such as farmer labourers), and

<sup>146</sup> The reduction in the length of the programme was determined by its funding.

<sup>147</sup> See Glossary.

<sup>148</sup> See Glossary for reference to funding sources.

those with higher-skilled backgrounds. All clients had a basic level of proficiency in English that was considered appropriate to be able to begin the process of looking for work, and most had been referred to the provider following their participation in ESOL provision<sup>149</sup>.

### **Other specialist providers**

With regard to the three other specialist providers whose staff were also interviewed in the research (whose names have been changed to CASA, RAISE and Refugee Network), these providers were all charitable organisations that provided services for refugees (CASA also provided services for other migrants). These providers were funded through a mix of public and charitable sources, as discussed below.

#### ***CASA***

CASA delivered general advice and guidance to asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants concerning their range of needs (e.g. on immigration, welfare entitlements and housing), in addition to employment, education and training advice. At the time of interview, it delivered ESOL classes, IT skills training, and a programme aimed at supporting refugee healthcare professionals into work.

#### ***RAISE***

RAISE focused primarily on employment and training services for refugee women, which included some ESOL provision, a mentoring scheme, and job search assistance.

#### ***Refugee Network***

Refugee Network delivered employment, education and training services, in addition to other activities oriented towards refugees and asylum seekers, including advocacy work and advice and guidance on the asylum process and on welfare entitlements.

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<sup>149</sup> The provider usually required clients to have an Entry Level 3 equivalent of English language proficiency (see Glossary for reference to ESOL qualifications and Entry Levels).

## Funding regimes

The specialist providers in the research operated in a mixed economy of sources of funding, including public, private and charitable sources. Different funding regimes, as referred to by Alcock et al. (Alcock et al., 1999) (see Chapter Two, section 2.2.2), can be distinguished according to the type and mix of sources of funding of the providers (at the time of the research).

### *Single predominant funder*

EMPLOY and ELLA can be defined as operating in the context of a single predominant funder (or ‘major funder/minor funder’), to the extent that their services for refugees (and other services for unemployed groups in the case of EMPLOY) were mainly funded through one principal source of funding. In the case of EMPLOY, this concerned public funding through Jobcentre Plus, both for its programme targeted at refugees, and for other programmes that it delivered, including ESOL provision and IT skills training. Although it had accessed other sources of funding through the Learning and Skills Council (and through other sources in the past), staff interviewed perceived Jobcentre Plus to be a primary source of funding. ELLA was predominantly funded through the New Deal for Communities (although it had also subsequently obtained a proportion of funding through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund).

### *Portfolio funding*

The other specialist providers can be distinguished as operating more in the context of a portfolio funding regime, to the extent that they had received more than two sources of funding for their programme(s). As referred to previously, in the case of TRAIN this comprised multiple public funding sources and also charitable sources for its different programmes. Public funding sources included Jobcentre Plus funding that is attached to the European Social Fund programme<sup>150</sup>; funding through the Learning and Skills Council (that is also attached to the European Social Fund programme); funding through the London Development Agency; and funding through the European Refugee Fund. In the case of WORKS, its specialist programme comprised a mix of public and private funding sources

<sup>150</sup> See Glossary. The European Social Fund is co-financed by public funders (including Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council) who administer the proportion of the programme that they are responsible for co-funding.

(as referred to above), which included some funding through Jobcentre Plus. CASA was funded through more than one charitable source (including through the Community Fund<sup>151</sup>), and at the time of interview received funding through the Department of Health (a broader range of public funding sources such as the European Social Fund had also been obtained in the past for previous programmes). RAISE had a mix of charitable and public sources of funding, including Jobcentre Plus funding (attached to the European Social Fund); the Learning and Skills Council (attached to the European Social Fund); and the Association of London Government (now London Councils). The Refugee Network was funded through a mix of public funding sources. At the time of interview, its employment-related services included funding through the Learning and Skills Council (attached to the European Social Fund) and the Association of London Government (now London Councils).

With regard to these providers' experiences of accessing funding through Jobcentre Plus, four had received funding through Jobcentre Plus at the time of interview; one had received funding previously; and one other had considered applying for Jobcentre Plus funding. The reliance of providers on Jobcentre Plus funding varied. Although most had accessed a mix of funding sources, EMPLOY relied primarily on mainstream funding from Jobcentre Plus, to the extent that most of its programmes were contracted by Jobcentre Plus, although it had also received some additional funding through the Learning and Skills Council. ELLA was the only provider that had not received or applied for any funding through Jobcentre Plus.

## **7.2 Tensions between policy agendas, funding regimes and the needs of refugees**

Providers' perceptions and experiences of factors affecting their responsiveness to the needs of refugees were conveyed in terms of the following dimensions. First, tensions between the government policy agendas driving different public funders were emphasised. Second, respondents referred to the administrative demands that multiple sources of public funding placed on providers. And third, tensions between the outputs attached to a particular source of public funding and the needs of refugees were underlined. These dimensions are explored below.

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<sup>151</sup> Administered by the National Lottery Charities Board.

### 7.2.1 Conflicting policy agendas

Providers with experience of different sources of public funding emphasised the difficulties of working with multiple public funders in terms of the different government policy agendas and performance targets driving their funding streams, and the impact this had on the design and delivery of specialist services for refugees. Differences in policy agendas between funders were referred to primarily in relation to Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Whilst the welfare-to-work agenda of Jobcentre Plus was perceived as being driven by job outcome targets, the skills agenda of the LSC was perceived as being driven by qualifications targets. These agendas were seen to be pulling providers (seeking or delivering funding from Jobcentre Plus and the LSC) in opposite directions, given that the focus of Jobcentre Plus funding on achieving job outcomes in the short-term was potentially in conflict with the focus of LSC funding on achieving Level 2 and above qualifications outputs<sup>152</sup>. Staff of one provider (EMPLOY) emphasised the tensions between placing clients who had recently received refugee status and had a low level of English language proficiency in low-skilled, full-time employment, with less opportunity to continue ESOL or other training, and the need to provide an adequate level of ESOL provision that would enable clients to obtain Level 1 English language proficiency and to advance to other education and training to obtain Level 2 qualifications.

### 7.2.2 Administrative demands of multiple public funding sources

In addition, some of the specialist providers with experience of managing more than one source of public funding (TRAIN, EMPLOY, RAISE and Refugee Network), particularly in the context of a portfolio funding regime, considered the different delivery systems of public funders to place too great an administrative burden on providers. Sources of public funding that were referred to included Jobcentre Plus, the LSC, the London Development Agency and the European Social Fund. Each source involved different monitoring requirements and timetables. Providers with experience of delivering multiple sources of public funding felt that the need to direct greater resources towards the administration of different funding streams had, as a result, diverted resources from the development and delivery of their services for refugees. In this respect, the administrative demands of

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<sup>152</sup> Qualifications relating to different levels, such as Level 2, are set out in the National Qualifications Framework (see Glossary). The government's first White Paper on developing a national skills strategy sets out targets for increasing the number of adults with a Level 2 qualification, including Level 2 English language skills (Department for Education and Skills, 2003).

multiple funding sources were perceived as limiting the time they could commit to responding to the needs of refugee clients.

*“Each of those agencies has a different agenda and you have to try to fulfil their agenda as well as trying to do your job and meet the rules of ESF [European Social Fund]. So in terms of delivery it is a lot more difficult. In terms of monitoring requirements it is hell, because each agency has different rules, different ways of reporting, different times of reporting, some of them are monthly, some of them are quarterly, it’s totally different. So the amount of resources that we have to put into just paperwork is unbelievable.”*

(TRAIN)

### 7.2.3 Outputs attached to public funding

Central to providers’ perceptions and experiences of the effects of public funding on responsiveness to refugees’ needs were tensions between the outputs attached to particular sources of public funding and the needs of refugees. This concerned primarily job outputs attached to funding through Jobcentre Plus, although qualifications outputs attached to funding through the Learning and Skills Council were also referred to.

Providers regarded the European Social Fund as one of the main programmes through which third sector providers were able to access funding from Jobcentre Plus and/or the LSC (as co-funders). This was as a result of recent changes in the administration of the European Social Fund in the UK, through which different co-funders, including Jobcentre Plus and the LSC, became responsible for the allocation of funding through their own European Social Fund programmes (since 2003) (European Social Fund). However, Jobcentre Plus and the LSC were perceived by providers as having imposed their own agendas for funding employment and training provision on the European Social Fund, which had created a much more restrictive set of criteria for accessing this source of funding than had previously been the case.

Whereas this source of funding was perceived as having been relatively flexible in the past, with the overall aim of supporting disadvantaged groups to access employment, the involvement of Jobcentre Plus and the LSC had resulted in the introduction of output-related systems linked to the targets of Jobcentre Plus and the LSC. Some providers felt

that this had created a shift of focus towards fitting their services into the agendas of these statutory agencies. This was perceived as creating tensions for them in responding to the needs of refugees. With regard to Jobcentre Plus funding, these tensions centred on the need to focus provision on achieving a fixed proportion of job outputs amongst the beneficiaries of a programme, and achieving those outputs within the timeframe of funding for a particular programme. With regard to the LSC, they centred on the need to orient ESOL and training provision towards the attainment of specific qualifications that related to LSC targets.

At a broader level, output-related systems were perceived by some specialist provider staff as being part of a vertical relationship of accountability of providers to funders. Within this relationship, one respondent emphasised that the provider was considered by public funders to be only accountable to them, to the exclusion of its clients. The perceived lack of awareness amongst public funders, including Jobcentre Plus, of the needs of refugee clients was considered to further exclude the interests of clients from this funder-provider relationship.

*“My experience is that some agencies don’t know enough about their clients, large funders. They think that because they give money to you it’s a one-sided relationship. They manage you, you are accountable to them, and that’s the relationship. They don’t feel it is a partnership, that it’s a relationship that needs to be built up, that they should listen to you or consult with you from time to time. [...] They have the power and it’s as simple as that. You get the money, I dictate the agenda, you follow the agenda. And I think it’s a recipe for disaster.”*

(RAISE)

With regard to staff of the six providers that had either received or considered applying for Jobcentre Plus funding<sup>153</sup>, their perceptions and experiences of delivering Jobcentre Plus funding highlighted two types of risk that this entailed in relation to the job outputs attached to this funding. One was a financial risk in terms of the consequences of not being able to achieve job outputs and, as a result, not being paid the proportion of funding attached to those outputs. The other was a risk to the mission or goals of the provider and its services for refugees: the risk of changing the purpose of its services in order to comply with the outputs attached to Jobcentre Plus funding.

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<sup>153</sup> All except ELLA.

Amongst these providers the following effects were observed in terms of responses to these risks. First, regarding the type of refugee clients whose needs are addressed, processes of client selection by providers were taking place in order to achieve these outputs. Second, regarding the services provided, some providers appeared to be placing refugee clients in more accessible types of employment where English language skills or other qualifications are less needed in order to achieve outputs; or were facing pressure to do so regardless of the needs and interests of clients. Related to both processes was the exclusion of some providers from accessing Jobcentre Plus funding for their services because they were unable or did not wish to comply with these output-related performance measures. The influence of output-related funding on the responsiveness of the specialist providers in this respect is explored below.

### **7.3 Type of refugee clients**

The first main influence of outputs attached to sources of public funding, through Jobcentre Plus primarily and also the Learning and Skills Council, in terms of the responsiveness of the specialist providers to refugee clients' needs, concerns the type of clients to which services funded through these sources were directed.

#### **7.3.1 Skills background and English language needs of clients**

The type of refugee clients that the specialist providers perceived their services to be oriented towards differed in terms of the English language needs and skills backgrounds of clients (as indicated above), which in part reflected differences in the type of services that they provided. EMPLOY considered the majority of its refugee clients to have relatively low-skilled backgrounds and to have English language needs (including some with no knowledge of English when they first registered with the provider). ELLA, CASA, RAISE and Refugee Network also delivered ESOL provision alongside other employment-related services (e.g. ESOL integrated into job search training or training for healthcare professionals). They considered their clients to have a mix of educational and employment backgrounds, although clients enrolled in employment-related services were perceived as having a basic or higher level of proficiency in English. By contrast, TRAIN considered the majority of its clients to have higher-skilled backgrounds. Other than advisory services, most of its programmes were oriented towards clients who were already proficient in English. Refugee clients of WORKS were similarly relatively proficient in English, as this



was considered necessary for them to be able to participate in the work placement programme delivered by the provider.

### **7.3.2 Jobcentre Plus funding, outputs and selection**

With regard to Jobcentre Plus funding, job outputs were perceived to create difficulties in terms of a need to select the type of refugee clients that programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus were oriented towards. The level of job outputs that providers were required to obtain through Jobcentre Plus funding was considered to be very difficult to achieve when working with refugee clients in general, given the barriers that refugees faced to accessing employment and the length of time it might take as a result for clients to enter work. In particular, the timeframe in which job outputs had to be achieved, referred to as the ‘13-week rule’, was considered to be too restrictive. The 13-week rule concerns the requirement for clients participating in a particular programme to have entered work during or within 13 weeks following the end of that programme in order to be counted as an output for the purposes of payments to the provider (see Appendix 3). Providers emphasised that it was not realistic to require job outputs to be achieved within this period of time, given that 13 weeks was a very short period following completion of a programme to expect refugee clients to be able to successfully find work. While respondents emphasised the difficulties in general faced by refugees as a group in terms of entering employment, differences amongst refugees were also emphasised. These differences concerned the diversity of needs amongst refugees in terms of their education and employment experience; levels of proficiency in English; and the types of provision that they required.

In the case of EMPLOY, which delivered ESOL and job search provision funded by Jobcentre Plus, the provider indicated that 30% of payments for programme participants were attached to job outputs. Staff emphasised that it was very difficult for some clients who were participating in this provision to access employment within the timeframe of the programme (26 weeks) and the subsequent 13-week period, given the relatively low levels of English language proficiency of clients when they joined the programme, particularly those who were illiterate. Although clients made progress in terms of developing their English proficiency during the programme, the level of proficiency achieved within this period was considered to be generally insufficient to be able to access employment, other than jobs within clients’ ethnic communities where English language proficiency was less needed. With regard to TRAIN, which delivered a job search programme for refugees with

engineering backgrounds that was funded by Jobcentre Plus, although clients were proficient in English, it was nevertheless difficult for them to be able to enter this *type* of employment within the timeframe of the programme, given the length of time it might take for refugees to access employment in this sector.

Jobcentre Plus funding therefore carried a financial risk for providers working with refugees because of the consequences of not being able to achieve job outputs in the timeframe of the programme and, as a result, not being paid the proportion of funding attached to these outputs. As a means of risk avoidance, two types of processes of client selection were referred to by providers that delivered or had considered applying for Jobcentre Plus funding. These processes involved ‘selecting in’ refugees perceived to be the most “job-ready” (those who were perceived to be more likely to be able to enter work in the short-term) and ‘selecting out’ the least job-ready in applications for and in the delivery of Jobcentre Plus-funded programmes in order to achieve outputs.

The first type of client selection occurred at the pre-application stage for Jobcentre Plus funding. One provider (CASA), that had been unable to apply for Jobcentre Plus funding in the past because of the financial risk involved, was intending to focus a future application for funding towards those clients who were perceived as job-ready, in so far as they were considered to be at a stage where they were more likely to be able to successfully find work, in order to ensure that outputs could be achieved. This involved having to devise a system for funding initial stages of service provision for clients through other funding sources, while only using Jobcentre Plus funding for those clients who were at a stage where it could be guaranteed that they would be able to enter employment. The system was, however, dependent on the provider being able to access other sources of funding in order to be able to support clients at earlier stages within this overall package of assistance. Although the provider intended to continue to support refugees with greater needs (such as those with greater English language needs) using other sources of funding, it considered it to be too great a risk to apply for Jobcentre Plus funding for such clients, although they may have been amongst those who were most in need of assistance.

The second type of client selection occurred at the stage of enrolment of clients onto programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus. The pressure to meet job outputs in order to receive funding in full was considered by some of the specialist providers as creating incentives for cream-skimming clients, in terms of only enrolling refugees who were likely to enable a

provider to achieve the required outputs. A respondent from EMPLOY, which delivered ESOL and job search provision, described how staff had internally discussed the need to avoid taking referrals from the Jobcentre of refugee clients seen as “difficult cases”, including those who were illiterate or older in age, because of the pressure to meet the job outputs attached to funding.

*“I had to very sadly tell my team we’ll have to select, or discriminate. The ones who probably need most help, who are not job-ready, might not give us an output. Well, sorry, let somebody else look after you, if there is somebody else. So what we are doing, it’s a kind of a filter.”*

(EMPLOY)

Given that the provider was largely dependent on Jobcentre Plus for its funding (as discussed previously), it considered itself to be under pressure not only to achieve outputs but to exceed them. This pressure related to concerns to out-perform other local providers of Jobcentre Plus contracted provision in order to maintain ongoing contracts with Jobcentre Plus. The needs of the provider to maintain its sources of funding therefore conflicted with the needs of potential refugee clients.

### 7.3.3 Avoidance of Jobcentre Plus funding

The demands of Jobcentre Plus output requirements meant that some providers were in effect excluded from applying for Jobcentre Plus funding because they felt that the financial risk involved in not meeting these outputs was too great. Two of the providers indicated that in the past they had not attempted to apply for Jobcentre Plus funding because of this risk, while one other had previously received funding and had decided not to apply again because of the financial losses it had experienced as a result of being unable to achieve outputs within the 13-week post-programme period. Although only a proportion of funding for a programme was attached to job outputs (30%)<sup>154</sup>, these providers and others that had received Jobcentre Plus funding emphasised that it nevertheless posed too great a financial risk for small voluntary organisations to be able to engage with, given the nature of their client groups and the limited financial capacity of their organisation to offset risk.

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<sup>154</sup> The proportion of job outputs attached to sources of Jobcentre Plus funding varies, but is usually a 30/70% split between outputs and inputs (number of participants enrolled on a programme) (Jobcentre Plus, 2006c).

*“An organisation like ours isn’t big enough to carry that risk. If you were a bigger organisation, you might be able to offset one thing by another, you know loss-leaders, but we can’t afford to do that”.*

(CASA)

As a result, they felt that they were excluded from being able to compete for Jobcentre Plus funding unless they changed the nature of their services by focusing on those clients who were guaranteed to achieve outputs within the 13-week timeframe. They were therefore restricted in accessing funding *because* of their focus on refugee clients who were considered to have greater needs.

*“The pressure with the Jobcentre Plus contracts is that you have to find people a job within 13 weeks [...] And if you think about it, even for ordinary people, 13 weeks is not a long time to find a job. Even for qualified people. And that’s what has proved so difficult to meet. And that’s what puts pressure on providers to just say, ‘well we can’t do it’.”*

(Refugee Network)

Some of the providers considered it to be impossible to apply for mainstream funding through Jobcentre Plus without distorting the orientation of their services towards the needs of their clients. A decision not to apply for mainstream funding therefore also related to a concern to maintain the purpose of their services: to avoid the risk of distorting the mission of their services by having to comply with job outputs and the requirements of funders. The prospect of having to practice cream-skimming in order to meet unrealistic job outputs was perceived by one provider (CASA) as a reason for not seeking funding from Jobcentre Plus in the past. The provider cited the 13-week rule as one of the main reasons why it had been unable to seek Jobcentre Plus funding for its programme for refugee healthcare workers previously, as it would have involved having to focus provision solely on the most job-ready, to the exclusion of more disadvantaged refugee clients in order to achieve outputs within this timeframe.

*“If somebody hasn’t got an IELTS<sup>155</sup> qualification that can take quite a long time to get. Now you could say, OK, raise the entry level for the people coming in so you can guarantee the output at the end, but then you’d be changing the nature of your programme. You’d be really turning a lot of people away, and you’d just be putting people through a programme just to get the money kind of thing. They wouldn’t be the people who really need it.”*

(CASA)

### **7.3.4 Learning and Skills Council funding, outputs and selection**

In addition, the effects of qualifications outputs attached to funding from the Learning and Skills Council were referred to by some of the providers in terms of needing to orient provision towards refugees with a certain level of proficiency in English in order to be able to achieve these outputs. This was referred to by Refugee Network in terms of only delivering ESOL and other training programmes for clients who had Entry Level 2 or 3 English proficiency<sup>156</sup>, given the difficulties of working with clients with lower levels of proficiency in achieving English language and other qualifications outputs, as such clients would require much longer-term provision. Similarly, RAISE emphasised that it was unable to access LSC funding for its programmes that were aimed at refugees with very low levels of English language proficiency because those with greater English language learning needs would be less likely to be able to obtain any English language qualifications within the duration of a programme.

## **7.4 Type of services provided**

### **7.4.1 Tensions between job outputs and the English language needs and employment interests of clients**

Job outputs attached to Jobcentre Plus funding, and the 13-week rule in particular, were considered to be inappropriate not only in failing to take into account greater levels of disadvantage faced by refugees in terms of entering employment, but also in failing to take into account a diversity of service needs amongst refugees. The diversity of refugees’ ‘needs’ was defined by respondents according to English language needs (between refugees

<sup>155</sup> International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Refugees training to re-qualify e.g. as doctors are required to first pass IELTS exams.

<sup>156</sup> See Glossary regarding the Entry Levels attached to English language qualifications.

who were illiterate and those who were fluent in English); education and employment backgrounds; and also mental health needs.

*“Even when you look at refugees as a client group there are grades there, from illiteracy in their own language, to refugees who are doctors and nurses. So when you’re comparing...it’s a very broad brush, saying 30% or 25% [job outputs], without taking into account their history or the disturbances they might have gone through. All sorts of factors come into it.”*

(EMPLOY)

Providers therefore indicated a conflict between, on the one hand, the need to comply with job outputs required by Jobcentre Plus in order to access funding and, on the other, develop their services with a view to addressing the particular needs of clients. Addressing the particular needs of clients included providing assistance oriented towards types of employment that were *appropriate* to refugees’ backgrounds and interests. Assessing the performance of a provider on the basis of job outputs obtained in the short-term (within the timeframe of a particular programme) was therefore perceived as too rigid a system as it failed to reflect the range of services and programmes that different clients might need to progress through in order not only to access employment, but particular types of employment.

### **Responding to the needs of higher-skilled refugees**

The experiences of TRAIN highlighted tensions between the orientation of its services towards assisting refugees with professional backgrounds through the process of accessing employment appropriate to their skills, and the perceived orientation of Jobcentre Plus as a funder to get clients into any work in the short-term.

*“We’ve been struggling a lot with Jobcentre Plus because their objective is to get people into employment no matter what, no matter what level, no matter what is the preparation [education] of the person, and our objective is to get people into meaningful employment that can make them feel fulfilled. So, for example, if they are doctors we would do anything we can to encourage them to get re-qualified, even if it takes four years.”*

(TRAIN)

The orientation of job outcomes attached to Jobcentre Plus funding to place clients in any available jobs in the short-term was therefore considered to be in conflict with the mission or goals of the provider's services: to assist clients into employment that was appropriate to their skills and interests. Regarding a Jobcentre Plus-funded training and job search programme for refugees with a background in engineering, the 13-week rule attached to job outputs was perceived by staff of this provider as placing pressure on both the provider and local Jobcentre staff with whom they liaised to assist clients into more accessible jobs that were unrelated to their background and interests, or to the purpose of the programme. Despite the orientation of the programme to the engineering sector, staff continued to receive information on job vacancies for cleaners from the Jobcentre for programme participants.

*"We are working with qualified refugees with many years of experience [...] But the Jobcentre doesn't care whether we are actually trying to get these people back into their profession, all they are asking about is whether these people have found a job."*

(TRAIN)

The provider had tried to negotiate with Jobcentre Plus regarding the 13-week rule, emphasising that it was unrealistic given the length of time that it might take for job-seekers in general, and for their refugee clients in particular, to access employment within this sector. Although respondents felt that Jobcentre Plus contracts managers with whom they liaised were sympathetic to their views, they emphasised that Jobcentre Plus staff were constrained by their need to achieve job outcome performance targets, and had little power to change the system in which they operated.

*"I had conversations with people from Jobcentre Plus saying, 'we understand your position, you understand our position, just give us anything, even if it's one person who has a part-time job for a few weeks, just give it to us, we just need statistics'. And they're very sympathetic, but they have to report to a higher level where maybe people are not that sympathetic, where people are just looking at the statistics."*

(TRAIN)

Staff of TRAIN and other specialist providers emphasised that they did not disagree with the use of targets and outputs in the management of their services. However, they felt that

funding and performance systems needed to take into account the diversity of clients' needs. This included the diversity of refugees' backgrounds and interests and therefore the type of employment to which the provider's services were oriented, and thus the potentially longer-term process involved in facilitating access to employment.

### **Responding to the needs of refugees with lower levels of English proficiency**

The extent to which providers were able to negotiate between the demands of a funder to achieve particular outputs and the needs of refugee clients appeared to be partly related to the funding regime in which they operated. In the case of EMPLOY, which was more dependent on Jobcentre Plus sources of funding for its programmes, the pressure to achieve job outputs within the timeframe of its ESOL and job search programme (six months) for clients with relatively low levels of English proficiency affected the type of assistance provided. This involved focusing on placing clients in more accessible, lower-skilled types of employment where English language proficiency and other qualifications and employment experience were less needed, in order to achieve job outputs. Staff of this provider referred to having to depend largely on facilitating access to low-skilled and relatively low-paid jobs within clients' different ethnic communities, where English language proficiency was less needed, in order to achieve job outputs within the required timeframe of its programme (26 weeks) or 13 weeks following completion.

*"Their language skills are very poor. People with poor English who make applications stand little chance. Even in the most basic of jobs, like working in a kitchen, they need to be able to communicate with people [...] The only jobs we can look for them are warehouse work, kitchen assistant jobs, or labouring work. [...] For refugees with only Entry Level 1 English<sup>157</sup>, they can't get work in a British company. So we're trying to get them work within their communities. The only chance I have is homing in with their own community and trying to find a job that way for them, with their own community where they've got communication. But they pay them very low."*

The provider operated in an area in which there were established Kurdish communities that provided sources of employment, such as catering or shop work, for its Kurdish refugee clients. While the provider was able to achieve the job outputs it was required to meet, staff

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<sup>157</sup> See Glossary for reference to English language qualifications and Entry Levels.



emphasised that this was primarily a result of certain client groups, such as Kurdish refugees, being able to access work within their ethnic communities.

*“A lot of Turkish Kurdish clients are getting work in their own communities. We have almost 45% job outcomes, but if you look at this it’s mainly Turkish people.”*

Although the provider was therefore able to meet job outputs on the basis of clients finding work within their ethnic communities, this was confined to a limited area of employment.

Staff of this provider perceived there to be a lack of emphasis by Jobcentre Plus on outputs that related to skills development, including English language proficiency, given that the provider was not credited for clients’ achievement of a certain level of proficiency in English. They considered the extent to which the provider’s ESOL provision could address the English language needs of clients to be restricted by the length of the programme (six months). Extending the programme to one year full-time was considered necessary in order to enable clients in general to develop a basic level of proficiency.

In addition, the need for vocational training for some clients was also emphasised in order to facilitate access to a wider range of types of employment. Amongst the clients of this provider, some had experience in skilled manual work, such as plumbing, carpentry and construction work, and wanted to access vocational training in addition to ESOL in order to be able to obtain UK qualifications to be able to find work in these fields. However, staff felt there was very little they could do to address these needs within the remit of their funding. While they were able to refer clients to participate in part-time courses through further education colleges, they considered participation in training to be inhibited because of fees and the length of time that part-time training involved (given that clients were required by Jobseekers Allowance regulations to be immediately available to take up full-time employment).

#### **7.4.2 Avoidance of Jobcentre Plus funding**

In response to the constraints job outputs posed on a provider’s ability to orient its services towards the needs of its clients, in terms of supporting access to types of employment appropriate to their skills and interests, some providers avoided engaging with Jobcentre Plus as a principal funder. WORKS, which delivered a work placement programme for

refugees, emphasised that if they were to apply for mainstream funding from Jobcentre Plus they would be forced to focus on placing their clients in any low-skilled jobs in order to comply with the emphasis of Jobcentre Plus funding on short-term job outcomes, which might conflict with their clients' needs and interests in relation to employment. This would therefore conflict with the goals of the provider itself.

*"I think if we wanted to access mainstream funding we would have to change the focus of what we do [...] It creates conflicts for us from the point of view of the company, not just the project, because our rationale is to help people, not just to fit in with what's needed in the local labour market. There are other projects in the area which are very much 'let's get you into a job regardless', even if it's stacking shelves in a supermarket. You know, they've got a degree and it doesn't matter as long as we get you into a job. And this project has never been like that and we would not want it to be so."*

(WORKS)

The specialist work placement programme of the provider was part-funded by Jobcentre Plus through the employers' subsidy under the New Deal 25 Plus programme (as referred to in section 7.1). However, this source of funding was not attached to job outputs as clients participating in a work placement were registered as being in subsidised employment.

#### **7.4.3 Tensions between qualifications outputs and responding to English language and training needs**

Respondents of the specialist providers that had either received or tried to apply for LSC funding<sup>158</sup> referred to the difficulties of accessing and delivering LSC funding in relation to ESOL and training provision for refugees. With regard to accessing funding, this was referred to in terms of the emphasis placed by targets within LSC mainstream funding on the attainment of specific qualifications (e.g. NVQ Level 2 qualifications), or by prioritising particular groups, which did not necessarily correspond with the type of training provision that some of the providers had developed for their refugee clients. One provider (CASA) had been delivering a programme to assist refugees with experience in nursing to re-enter related employment. While the programme had been developed in relation to the profile and interests of their clients, the provider had been unable to access mainstream funding through the Learning and Skills Council because it did not "fit" with the agenda of

<sup>158</sup> All except for WORKS and ELLA (i.e. five of the seven specialist providers).

the funder, in terms of delivering a particular qualification or being oriented to a particular group that met the funder's priorities.

*"We're not running the right qualification. It's got to be an NVQ, or it's got to be with a young group. For the nurses programme we tried to get LSC funding - we did have LSC funding but not from mainstream money, from development money - we tried again for mainstream but they said there's nothing, we didn't fit anywhere."*

(CASA)

TRAIN had developed a job search training programme and a business start-up course for its clients, but had similarly been unsuccessful in accessing mainstream funding through the LSC because of not delivering qualifications-oriented training provision.

*"We deliver a two-week job search course, which is not accredited. It's very practical, it goes straight to the problem that our clients are going to face out there: it teaches them how to write a CV, an application, it teaches them about shortages in different areas, because we do job search courses for different professions so we could focus on health or whatever, but it's not accredited. We don't have a qualification, so that's one problem. We have a business start-up course, which again is extremely practical. We are the only agency delivering such a tailor-made business start-up course for refugees. Again, it's not accredited. It's out of our experience that we've been delivering this for years and it's been extremely successful with ESF [European Social Fund]. But, it's not relevant for LSC because it doesn't lead to a specific qualification."*

(TRAIN)

There was therefore perceived to be a mismatch between, on the one hand the type of provision that some providers had developed (using other sources of short-term funding through non-mainstream funding streams such as the European Social Fund), which they felt had been in response to the training needs of their clients (e.g. the re-qualification of health workers) and, on the other hand, the type of provision that LSC mainstream funding was oriented towards in terms of meeting this funder's set of targets. Those providers that had been able to access non-mainstream LSC funding (e.g. European Social Fund co-funding) referred to the difficulties even within this context of having to match their services to LSC qualifications targets. For example, TRAIN referred to the LSC trying to attach qualifications outputs to funding for its ESOL referral service. This resulted in the

administrative complexities of the provider having to ‘prove’ qualifications outputs achieved for clients who had been referred to ESOL provision. In order to do so, staff had needed to make weekly visits to the ESOL providers to which referrals had been made in order to chase up copies of client attendance records. Because the provider was unable to obtain all the paperwork necessary to demonstrate these outputs it lost the attached proportion of funding.

### **7.5 Experiences of more ‘flexible’ sources of public funding**

In contrast to perceptions and experiences of Jobcentre Plus and LSC funding, other sources of public funding were perceived as being more flexible in terms of not requiring specialist providers to comply with particular outputs that conflicted with the purpose of the type of services that they delivered. The extent to which public funding sources allowed for *appropriate* outputs and targets was therefore related to providers’ perceptions of factors that facilitated responsiveness to refugees’ needs. Other sources of funding referred to include the New Deal for Communities and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, through which ELLA was funded; and the European Refugee Fund, through which WORKS was part-funded. Previous experiences of receiving funding through the European Social Fund (before it was administered by Jobcentre Plus and other co-funders) were also referred to in this context<sup>159</sup>.

With regard to New Deal for Communities and Neighbourhood Renewal funding, these are national programmes that fund area-based initiatives, targeting wards that are amongst the most deprived in the UK. Decision-making regarding the allocation of funds within the eligible local areas is devolved to local level partnerships. Staff of ELLA perceived this source of funding to be attached to a set of locally-defined objectives to support the regeneration of the area (which relates to the remit of these funding streams) and to support disadvantaged groups. These broad objectives were considered to have enabled the different aims of the project to fit within the remit of this funding stream, without distorting the orientation of the services it provided. This orientation included supporting the inter-related employment, training and ESOL needs of clients, alongside other needs, such as their settlement in the local area.

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<sup>159</sup> See Glossary regarding these sources of funding.

*“The key criteria are helping people access employment, working with people who are from deprived groups, so people who obviously face a lot of barriers, and that’s pretty much everybody we work with. And then of course there are things like supporting cultural activities, which again is something that we’re very involved in as part of the holistic process. It’s not a case of ‘right you’ve got enough English, let’s help you find a job’, it’s about helping them integrate into the community and participate actively in the community as a whole as well.”*

(ELLA)

Although targets formed a central part of reporting on the delivery of other sources of funding, including the New Deal for Communities and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund as well as the European Refugee Fund, staff referred to these targets and outputs being developed by the provider in relation to the needs of refugees and the purpose of its services, as opposed to by the funder. Moreover, funding was not attached to these outputs and therefore did not pose a financial risk for the providers concerned.

The inappropriateness of job outputs attached to Jobcentre Plus funding as a means of assessing the performance of providers was also contrasted to the previous system under the European Social Fund (prior to it being administered by Jobcentre Plus as a co-funder). This system was referred to as having allowed for a more qualitative approach to performance assessment that was perceived as better able to demonstrate the process of a client’s progression through different services that were appropriate to their needs.

*“The set up [previously] was we wrote our programme, we said how we were going to run it, and we just reported on how we were delivering. And instead of just reporting the numbers and what they are doing, you could also give a narrative where we were actually able to state the different services that they are going through. So, it was a more flexible system.”*

(TRAIN)

Although these other sources of public funding were perceived as being more flexible in terms of not being attached to fixed outputs defined by the funder, they provided limited funding for specialist providers to develop their services beyond individual projects. The “stop-start cycle” of attracting short-term funding from non-mainstream sources was considered to be a major hindrance to providers in developing specialised services for

refugees beyond one-off projects. Projects that came to the end of their period of funding under a particular programme, including the European Refugee Fund, faced difficulties in continuing to attract funding under that programme or from other programmes, as providers felt that projects were then considered by funders to be no longer “innovative”. This was referred to as leading to a cycle of “reinventing the wheel” amongst employment-related services for refugees, which inhibited a more strategic approach to service provision.

*“The problem with all these sorts of programmes is they’re always telling you that you have to do something ‘innovative’. And the point is there are only so many different things you can think up every year. And it’s not a good way of embedding things. If it works, you can’t say we need more money to roll this out as a national programme, so it becomes a one-off. So you see a lot of this is about re-inventing the wheel. You have one good project, and you give it funding for one year, or two years and if you’re really lucky three, and then at the end of it that’s it, isn’t it. And then you have to go out and look for some more projects, or you don’t have any funding at all. So it doesn’t become good practice.”*

(CASA)

Moreover, the need for individual providers to continually seek new sources of funding was considered to be very difficult, as they did not have the resources (e.g. staff time) to be able to do this without it detracting from focusing on the delivery of their existing services for refugees.

Given the difficulties associated with accessing and delivering funding from Jobcentre Plus as the mainstream funder of employment-related services, there was perceived to be a lack of commitment to actually integrating specialist service provision for refugees within mainstream public employment services. There was therefore considered to be a tension between, on the one hand, government policy on the role of specialist providers within the third sector in the provision of employment services for refugees, and on the other, the lack of attention to facilitating this through public funding systems.

*“I think the real issue is whether we think refugees need specialist provision. And while everyone agrees we do, nobody wants to fund it. Including the DWP [Department for Work and Pensions], or the Home Office. So they’re quite happy to fund isolated projects, but they’re not prepared to do it on the national scale. And I think that’s a*

*real problem. Because projects and training providers are constantly chasing applications and funding rounds and little pots of money that are going to make a difference.”*

(RAISE)

As a result of a lack of integration within mainstream funding, service provision for refugees was perceived as being limited by an adhoc, project-based approach. Although not having to rely upon Jobcentre Plus sources of funding appeared to facilitate responsiveness in so far as providers were not restricted by the job outputs attached to this funding, not accessing Jobcentre Plus funding posed issues for the long-term sustainability of their services.

## 7.6 Chapter summary and conclusion

This chapter has explored the findings of the research regarding specialist providers' experiences and perceptions of factors affecting their responsiveness to the needs of refugees. These factors concerned predominantly the outputs attached to public funding for employment-related services, including funding through Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council.

With regard to Jobcentre Plus funding, job outputs and the 13-week rule in particular were perceived as inappropriate in terms of being very difficult to achieve for refugee clients, particularly for those with English language needs for whom access to employment might be a longer-term process. They were also perceived as being inappropriate in terms of a primary orientation towards placing clients in any employment in the short-term. This orientation affected the responsiveness of service provision to the needs of refugees in the following ways. First, it influenced the type of refugees to whom services funded by Jobcentre Plus were directed, in terms of the selection of the most 'job-ready' refugees to the exclusion of those with greater needs in applications for Jobcentre Plus funding and in the recruitment of clients to Jobcentre Plus-funded programmes in order to be able to achieve job outputs. Second, it influenced the type of services provided and the appropriateness of services to clients needs. In the case of EMPLOY, pressure to achieve job outputs in the short-term conflicted with responding to the English language and other vocational training needs of refugees with lower-skilled backgrounds, in favour of placing them in low-skilled jobs in refugees' ethnic communities where English language skills and

other training or qualifications were not required. The pressure faced by providers to place clients in work in the short-term also conflicted with the purpose of specialist provision aimed at refugees with higher-skilled experience (such as engineering).

The funding regimes in which providers operated appeared in part to be related to the influence of outputs attached to a particular source of public funding (including Jobcentre Plus funding) on the responsiveness of the provider to the needs of refugee clients. Where Jobcentre Plus was perceived as being a dominant source of funding for a provider (as was the case for EMPLOY), the provider's need to achieve job outputs in order to maintain this source of funding appeared to affect the extent to which the outputs of the funder predominated over the needs of some refugees, given the pressure it faced to place clients in work in the short-term. By contrast, other providers who operated in the context of a portfolio funding regime (such as CASA), had tried to develop strategies for negotiating between the demands of job outputs and the needs of refugee clients. At the other end of this continuum regarding the relationship between funders, providers and their clients, some providers (such as WORKS) had chosen to avoid mainstream sources of Jobcentre Plus funding in order not to distort the orientation of their services towards the needs of their clients, in terms of assisting refugees into *appropriate* types of employment.

Providers' perceptions and experiences of the outputs attached to public funding through Jobcentre Plus and the LSC raise the underlying question of whose needs these systems facilitated responsiveness towards. This will be explored in the following final chapter in the light of the conceptual issues set out in Chapter Two.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### RESPONSIVENESS TO REFUGEES' NEEDS: CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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The literature on the experiences of refugees in the labour market has drawn attention both to high levels of unemployment and to participation in predominantly low-skilled and low-paid types of work (Bloch, 2002b; Carey-Wood et al., 1995; Lindley, 2002). Amongst the range of factors that may contribute to the labour market disadvantage experienced by refugees, a lack of English language proficiency and recognition of non-UK based qualifications and work experience have been highlighted in past research (Bloch, 2002b; Shiferaw & Hagos, 2002). With a view to tackling unemployment amongst refugees, government policy has called for greater responsiveness to the needs of refugees in the context of employment services, both in terms of responding to refugees' needs through Jobcentre Plus services, and by involving third sector providers that deliver specialist services targeted at refugees in this process (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005a). Within the wider welfare-to-work agenda and the broader policy context on public service reform, greater responsiveness to the individual needs of unemployed groups, and the users of public services more generally, has been articulated as a central aim (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006; HM Treasury, 2007; Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2006). There has, however, been limited conceptual analysis of responsiveness to the needs of the users of employment services and the factors that influence this process, which this research has aimed to address in relation to responsiveness to the needs of refugees.

The concept of responsiveness, as explored in Chapter Two, is located in the context of wider debates on the reform of public services. The shift towards more market-oriented systems in welfare provision is conceived as facilitating greater responsiveness by establishing financial incentives, through competition, for providers to respond to users' needs and preferences (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993b). The use of mixed economy systems has been an additional dimension to current policy agendas, which is partly conceived as improving responsiveness by allowing for the involvement of third sector providers in public service provision that deliver specialist services oriented to the needs of more disadvantaged groups (HM Treasury, 2004b). These dimensions of public service reform have also been accompanied by the use of performance management systems in service

delivery. Performance measurement, based on the principles of New Public Management, has been advocated on grounds of improving the accountability of providers in the delivery of public services (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004a), and has been a central feature of public service provision under the New Labour government (Bevan & Hood, 2006; Cutler & Waine, 2000). In the context of employment services, this has involved a performance regime oriented towards the achievement of job outcomes, with financial incentives for providers to achieve those outcomes through output-related funding. The findings of this research, and the wider literature explored in Chapter Two, draw attention to the tensions between this performance regime and responsiveness to users' needs, and to refugees' needs specifically. As will be discussed in this final chapter, these tensions reflect broader issues regarding performance systems and incentive structures in employment service provision, and the extent to which they may conflict with responsiveness, as conceived in terms of outwards lines of accountability of providers to users by directly responding to their needs.

This chapter discusses the conclusions of the research with regard to the research questions and the issues drawn out in the literature, and considers the implications for social policy. It explores the relationship between 1) refugees' perceptions of their needs and their experiences and perceptions of the responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and the specialist providers to those needs, and 2) providers' experiences and perceptions of the performance systems and funding regimes in which they operated in terms of the factors affecting their responsiveness to those needs.

The chapter is divided as follows. Section 8.1 focuses on the tensions between responsiveness to refugees' needs and other policy imperatives in the context of publicly-funded employment service provision. Related to these wider policy imperatives, section 8.2 considers the tensions between a performance regime and incentive structure oriented towards short-term job outcomes and responsiveness in terms of directly responding to refugees' needs and interests. Section 8.3 addresses the extent to which alternative funding regimes influenced the relative responsiveness of the specialist providers to refugees' needs. In the light of the research findings, section 8.4 discusses the concept of responsiveness in relation to provider accountability. It is argued that where upwards accountability to the policy imperatives of central government and the public purchasers of service provision predominates in the performance system and incentive structure, the responsiveness of providers to users' needs will be restricted by this system. The final

section concludes with the policy implications of the research for facilitating responsiveness to refugees' needs in employment service provision.

### **8.1 Tensions between responsiveness and a work-first policy imperative**

The responsiveness of welfare provision to users' needs is dependent, in the first instance, on the allocation of public resources to address those needs. According to market principles, allocative efficiency – the allocation of resources so as to reflect users' needs and preferences – is assumed on the basis that either the user becomes the direct purchaser of provision or that the purchaser acts on behalf of users in allocating resources to services that meet their needs and preferences, as discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.2). This calls into question the competing needs and interests that influence decision-making processes regarding the allocation of public resources. In the context of wider policy imperatives, such as the demand for cost containment in welfare provision, Rummery and Glendinning emphasise how both managerial and bureaucratic gatekeeping processes interplay in restricting access to welfare services (Rummery & Glendinning, 1999). Similarly, the analysis of Martin et al. points to the extent to which responsiveness to users' needs will be subsumed by other organisational priorities in this respect (G. Martin et al., 2004).

In the context of publicly-funded employment service provision and responsiveness to the needs of refugees, the findings underline these tensions between wider policy imperatives, organisational priorities and responsiveness. The New Labour government's approach to the reform of the welfare benefits system and employment service aimed to create an 'employment-first welfare state' with three notable dimensions to this policy agenda, as discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.3). First, there has been a coupling of social rights to welfare benefits to 'responsibilities' to actively look for and take up any available employment. Second, the emphasis on work-focused approaches to provision is aimed at immediate job search and job entry. And third, there is a performance regime oriented towards job entry in the short-term (Finn, 2005). Refugees' experiences of responsiveness to their needs, and providers' experiences of the factors influencing responsiveness, are contextualised within the implementation of this broader policy agenda. The rest of this section explores the first and second of the dimensions to this agenda regarding the tensions between, on the one hand, a work-first policy imperative, and on the other, responsiveness to the needs of refugees in relation to their skills and interests.

### 8.1.1 'Customer' responsiveness vs. welfare obligations

The tensions between a wider work-first policy imperative and the responsiveness of employment service provision through Jobcentre Plus to refugees' needs are highlighted in the context of the relationship between refugees and Jobcentre Plus advisers. Conditional access to Jobseekers Allowance according to the terms of a Jobseekers Agreement requires Jobcentre Plus advisers to perform conflicting roles in relation to the users of Jobcentre Plus (see Rosenthal and Peccei 2006). On the one hand, they must respond to users as 'customers' by tailoring provision to meet individual needs to address barriers to employment, and on the other, they must ensure that as the 'obligatees' of welfare benefits, users adhere to their 'responsibilities' to take up any available work.

The terms of conditional access to welfare benefits in an 'employment-first welfare state' potentially conflict with responsiveness to refugees' English language, education and training needs, and to their interests in relation to the labour market. With regard to higher-skilled refugees, their need to acquire an adequate level of English proficiency and/or to participate in education or training, in order to be able to access types of employment relevant to their skills and interests, conflicted with advisers' implementation of a Jobseekers Agreement, on the basis of which some clients were pressured to apply for low-skilled jobs that were more accessible with a view to immediate job entry. Similarly, for lower-skilled refugees, their needs and preferences to participate in ESOL provision and other training, in order to be able to access 'better types' of jobs, also conflicted with the requirement of advisers to place clients in immediate employment. To this extent, refugees' experiences of Jobcentre Plus were more as the 'obligatees' of welfare benefits than as 'customers' whose individual needs were responded to.

These tensions between the needs and interests of refugees and their experiences of Jobcentre Plus in terms of the type of jobs to which they were directed corresponds with the findings of other research (relating to participants in the New Deal for Young People and to ethnic minority clients), as discussed in Chapters One and Two (Finn, 2003; Hudson et al., 2006). The perspectives of refugees also draw parallels with those of Jobcentre Plus advisers in the research regarding the pressure advisers perceived themselves to be under to place clients as quickly as possible in work. For refugee clients with limited English proficiency, this was restricted to a narrow range of low-skilled types of employment, such

as cleaning and factory work, or low-skilled and low-paid work within some refugees' ethnic communities where English language skills were not required.

This points to the underlying conflict between a work-first approach towards entitlement to Jobseekers Allowance and to employment-related services, and responsiveness to refugees' needs: whether refugees are coerced into low-skilled and low-paid jobs to fulfil a work-first agenda aimed at immediate job entry, or provided with 'client-centred' assistance that is oriented towards facilitating access to a broader range of types of employment in the labour market. Both the perspectives of Jobcentre Plus advisers and refugees in the research underlined the restricted employment 'choices' for those with limited English proficiency and a lack of UK qualifications and employment experience. Responsiveness to refugees' needs by facilitating access to a broader range of types of employment, through ESOL, training and other types of provision, was therefore constrained by the perceived upwards pressure of the organisational priorities of Jobcentre Plus on placing clients in any available work in the short-term.

### **8.1.2 Cost containment vs. appropriate provision**

Tensions between responsiveness and wider policy imperatives are additionally reflected in the availability of appropriate services to which refugees can be referred. As emphasised by Martin et al. (G. Martin et al., 2004) and Rummery and Glendinning (Rummery & Glendinning, 1999), where organisational needs for cost containment conflict with responding to the needs of users, the responsiveness of frontline workers to users' needs is likely to be subordinate to these organisational priorities. The responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus advisers to refugees' needs, such as referral to ESOL provision for an appropriate length of time, or to training relevant to their skills and interests, similarly takes place within a context in which access to appropriate services is restricted by wider decision-making processes where organisational priorities for cost containment may take precedence.

Decision-making at different managerial levels within Jobcentre Plus (regarding the purchasing of provision), as well as at the level of central government (in relation to eligibility criteria restricting access to welfare benefits) determine the rationing of the duration of full-time ESOL provision through Jobcentre Plus to six months, regardless of whether this length of provision was adequate in relation to refugees' level of ESOL needs.

In addition, they determine the privileging of short-term ‘work-focused’ provision over longer-term training; and the 16-hour rule which inhibits the ability of those claiming Jobseekers Allowance to access full-time education and training on the basis that they should be available and actively looking to take up employment immediately. Other gatekeeping processes can be identified in terms of the limited time available to advisers to provide an adequate level of assistance to refugees, with a greater level of assistance targeted at longer term benefits claimants. This includes the time to find out about specialist services or to make referrals to external training provision, which has to be balanced with other demands on advisers’ time in relation to their caseloads. Gatekeeping processes at these different levels, shaped by wider policy imperatives and budgetary constraints, therefore set the boundaries of responsiveness to refugees’ needs.

## **8.2 Tensions between responsiveness, performance regimes and incentives in employment service provision**

Responsiveness to users’ needs in welfare provision, as advocated in the context of the New Public Management, is based on the principle that financial incentives through competition for public funding will facilitate greater responsiveness of providers to the needs of users (as discussed in Chapter Two, section 2.2). The rationale for incentive structures is to direct service provision towards the needs and interests of users, rather than the interests of self-serving public bureaucracies. With regard to performance measurement, this draws attention to underlying contradictions between the use of performance systems with a view to enabling greater upwards accountability of providers to government, and the principle of responsiveness directly to users.

The provision of publicly-funded employment services has been accompanied by a performance regime and incentive structure that is oriented towards the achievement of job outcome targets in relation to the government’s welfare-to-work agenda. Within this context, there are performance-based incentives for Jobcentre Plus advisers to achieve these outcomes, as well as financial incentives for contracted providers (referred to in Chapter Two, section 2.3). This section focuses on the third dimension of an ‘employment-first welfare state’ referred to by Finn (Finn, 2005) – a performance regime oriented towards immediate job entry – and the unintended and intended effects of job outcome-related incentives on responsiveness to refugees’ needs. The section considers, first, the type of clients whose needs are, or are not, responded to; and second, the type of services and employment outcomes delivered.

### 8.2.1 Type of clients: responsive to refugees with greater English language needs?

The findings of this research raise the question of whether job outcome-related incentive structures create incentives, or disincentives, for Jobcentre Plus advisers and providers to be responsiveness to the needs of refugees. Struyven and Steurs have referred to the unintended consequences of an incentive structure that is primarily oriented towards achieving job outcomes in the short-term, whereby providers are encouraged to cream the most ‘job-ready’ who are more likely to enable them to achieve these outcomes, and to make minimal effort to assist those who are less likely to enter work in the short-term (Struyven & Steurs, 2005). These potential effects of job outcome systems have been found to occur in the context of wider studies on employment and training provision, as discussed in Chapter Two. Regarding the type of users whose needs get responded to, the findings of this research highlight the unintended consequences of a job outcome-oriented regime on responsiveness to the needs of refugees as a client group, and to refugees with greater needs in relation to English language learning.

Job outputs attached to Jobcentre Plus funding created financial *disincentives* for some specialist providers to respond to the needs of refugees who were perceived as a ‘risk’ to providers in terms of achieving these outputs, including those refugees with greater English language learning needs who were less likely to be able to access employment within the timeframe in which outputs had to be met<sup>160</sup>. Thus, to the extent that the orientation of Jobcentre Plus funding primarily towards job outputs encouraged providers to direct these resources towards the more ‘job-ready’ refugees – as a means of addressing their own needs to avert the financial risk associated with job outputs – responsiveness to refugees’ needs was constrained by the performance regime and incentive structure in which providers operated.

The wider literature discussed in Chapter Two similarly suggests that the use of financial incentives attached to job outcome measures through output-related funding may encourage providers to ‘select out’ unemployed individuals with greater needs in order to be able to achieve job outputs within the required timeframe and to avert the financial risk to the provider. While it could be argued that the proportion of funding attached to job outputs is

<sup>160</sup> Although, in some cases, refugees with greater English language learning needs were explicitly selected out of the services of the specialist providers, given that their services were oriented primarily to assisting those who had a sufficient level of English proficiency to be able to look for work and participate in the type of services offered by the provider, thereby mitigating this risk.

weighted in favour of input-related funding<sup>161</sup> in order to balance the risk to providers, the perceptions and experiences of specialist providers in this research indicate that this type of funding still entails considerable financial risk to small, third sector organisations whose services are oriented towards more disadvantaged and therefore ‘riskier’ client groups. Client selection – one response to this risk – could, in theory, be addressed by allocating higher payments to providers for more disadvantaged groups (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993b). However, the findings indicate that selection *within* a group (between refugees who have different skills backgrounds and different levels of English language learning needs) may still result in those with greater needs being selected out if providers are sanctioned for not achieving job outputs within the required timeframe of a programme.

Jobcentre Plus advisers are not able to select the type of clients that they assist<sup>162</sup>. However, given that assessment of their performance is also primarily directed towards achieving job outcome targets, in the context of high caseloads and constraints on the time available to advisers to assist individual clients, there is an incentive to focus more effort on assisting those clients who are perceived as more likely to be able to enter employment, and less effort on those perceived as less able to find work. The perceptions of advisers in the research regarding the limited possibilities of finding work for refugees who lacked an adequate level of English language proficiency draw attention to the extent to which there were incentives to assist refugees with English language needs.

Again, according to quasi-market perspectives, incentive structures could be weighted towards those with greater needs in order to ensure responsiveness to more disadvantaged groups (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993b). As indicated in Chapter Two, the incentive structure within the Jobcentre Plus system (the job entry points system) is weighted towards particular ‘priority’ groups and more deprived geographic areas on this basis. Refugees at the time of this research were not defined as a priority group within the job entry points system, although they were introduced as a priority group for the 2005 to 2006 period. The research, however, suggests that such incentives may be insufficient to facilitate greater responsiveness to refugees’ needs.

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<sup>161</sup> e.g. the number of participants enrolled on a programme.

<sup>162</sup> Since all benefits claimants are required to participate in Work-Focused Interviews with Jobcentre Plus advisers.



With regard to refugees with English language needs, the perceptions of both refugee respondents and Jobcentre Plus staff concerning the restrictions on access to full-time ESOL provision, point to not simply a lack of incentives to assist refugees, but rather the inadequacy of the duration of ESOL provision to address those needs. Responsiveness to refugees with greater English language needs may therefore be restricted in this respect, despite the weighting of incentives within the job entry points system towards refugees. This underlines the primary influence of the extent to which sufficient resources are allocated to address the level of needs of refugees, and the extent to which refugees are entitled to access appropriate provision to address their needs, as emphasised previously.

### **8.2.2 Type of services and outcomes: responsive to refugees' needs and interests?**

Where incentives are primarily oriented towards job entries in the short-term, providers are encouraged to find the “fastest way into work” for clients (Struyven, 2004: 32). This highlights the potentially conflicting aims of government policy: whether the aim is to improve responsiveness to the needs of unemployed groups in relation to training and the employment interests of the individual, or to focus primarily on finding the fastest way of placing them in any available work. It therefore raises broader concerns regarding the extent to which employment services respond to the needs of disadvantaged groups, with a view to tackling factors contributing to labour market inequalities over the long-term (Ogbonna & Noon, 1999). Moreover, it underlines the centrality of the effects of decision-making processes at the level of the state regarding policies to address welfare needs, in contrast to market-type relations between providers and individual users. To the extent that job outcome incentives underpin a work-first approach to employment service provision, there may be tensions between the *intended* consequences of the performance regime and incentive structure in which providers operate, and responsiveness to refugees' needs. These tensions concern the gap between the type of services that are provided and the type of employment outcomes that refugees may wish to attain, if Jobcentre Plus advisers and contracted providers are encouraged to place refugee clients in any available job in the short-term rather than to orient their services towards the training needs of clients related to the jobs that they wish to pursue.

With regard to the first research question, the research findings underline the importance of refugees' skills backgrounds and their employment interests and aspirations in relation to their perceptions of their needs and the relative responsiveness of Jobcentre Plus and the

specialist providers to those needs. Regarding the second research question, the experiences of Jobcentre Plus and specialist provider staff emphasise the influence of performance systems on responsiveness to those needs, drawing attention to the conflict between a job outcome-oriented system aimed at moving clients as quickly as possible into work, and facilitating access to a broader range of types of work appropriate to refugees' skills and interests. While the intended consequences of the performance regime may be for advisers and contracted providers to find "the fastest way into work" for those claiming benefits, including refugees, this nevertheless conflicted with refugees' needs to the extent that the fastest or indeed the only route into work in the short-term for those who lacked English proficiency or UK-based qualifications, appeared to be low-skilled jobs such as cleaning and factory work or other low-paid jobs within refugees' ethnic communities. The research therefore highlights tensions between the orientation of public funding for employment services towards ensuring responsiveness to performance targets for increasing levels of employment, and the principle underlying the concept of responsiveness that incentives should be directed towards the needs and preferences of users.

### **8.3 The influence of alternative funding regimes**

Policy agendas have additionally called for the role of third sector organisations in a mixed economy of public service provision to facilitate responsiveness to the needs of users (HM Treasury, 2004b, 2007), as discussed in Chapter Two. In the context of employment services, the role of third sector organisations in the provision of specialist services targeted at meeting the needs of more disadvantaged groups, including refugees, has been emphasised (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006; Freud, 2007). This role has in part been advocated on the basis that third sector organisations are motivated by a set of values and purposes oriented to meeting the needs of the users of their services (HM Treasury, 2004b). Besley and Ghatak have argued that where not-for-profit organisations are organised around a particular mission that matches the needs and preferences of users, there is less need for financial incentives to motivate them to be responsive to users' needs and preferences (Besley & Ghatak, 2003).

However, as discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.2.2), the involvement of third sector organisations in the delivery of publicly-funded services may, conversely, distort their mission or the purpose of their services, both in terms of the type of clients targeted and the type of services delivered (Lewis, 1996). The relationship between third sector

organisations and public funders or purchasers therefore raises questions regarding the extent to which greater responsiveness to the demands of funders is privileged over the needs of users. Past research has explored how different funding environments affect the operation and development of third sector organisations (Aiken, 2006; Alcock et al., 1999). As discussed in Chapter Seven, the specialist providers in this research operated in the context of different sources of public funding (from local, regional, national and European levels), as well as through non-public sources (including charitable and, to a limited degree, private sector sources). The findings draw attention to the influence of different funding regimes on the relative responsiveness of the specialist providers to the needs of refugees.

Regarding the different funding regimes referred to by Alcock et al. (1999), in the context of a funding regime marked by a *single predominant funder*, as was the case for EMPLOY, a reliance on Jobcentre Plus sources of funding influenced the responsiveness of the provider to refugees' needs to the extent that responsiveness was constrained by the job outcome-oriented terms of funding through Jobcentre Plus. The needs of this provider to meet job outputs in order to receive funding attached to those outputs, and to be able to successfully compete for Jobcentre Plus contracts, set the boundaries in which responsiveness took place: the priority being to achieve the required job entries within the timeframe of a Jobcentre Plus-funded programme. By adhering to the work-focused terms of this funding, clients were obliged to apply for jobs when they lacked English language proficiency, and potentially to apply for jobs they were not interested in. While this may have met the needs and interests of the funder, Jobcentre Plus, to achieve job entries within the timeframe of the programme, and the needs of the provider to be competitive in attracting funding, it conflicted with a more client-focused approach according to the needs and preferences of some of the provider's refugee clients.

By contrast, in the context of a *portfolio funding* regime, as was the case for most of the other specialist providers, where two or more funders were of similar importance to these organisations (including different sources of public funding in some cases and a mix of public-charitable and public-private sources in others), some specialist providers were able to negotiate a balance between the needs of funders and the needs of their clients. In the case of CASA, this appeared to be facilitated by access to alternative sources of funding for less 'job-ready' refugee clients, while targeting Jobcentre Plus funding to those clients who were more likely to be able to enter work in the short-term.

However, the extent to which specialist providers prioritised the needs of their refugee clients over the demands of funders may relate more to the extent to which they were motivated by the mission or purpose of their services, rather than by the incentive structure attached to a particular funding regime. The prioritisation of refugee clients' needs in relation to the purpose of the provider's services was emphasised by staff of TRAIN in terms of orienting assistance towards types of employment that were appropriate to the skills and interests of refugee clients, in spite of this conflicting with the demands of Jobcentre Plus as a funder. At the other extreme, some specialist providers chose not to seek funding through Jobcentre Plus because of the potential for mission-distortion, requiring a shift towards achieving the demands of the funder for short-term job entries at the expense of responding to refugees' needs.

The findings therefore draw attention to the relevance of the mission-orientation of organisations to the concept of responsiveness, regarding the motivations of some of the specialist providers *in spite of* the incentive structure accompanying (Jobcentre Plus) sources of public funding. The findings also point to potential tensions between financial incentives and mission-orientation in the context of employment services, specifically in relation to responsiveness to the needs of refugees. To the extent that providers are financially rewarded for placing clients in work according to the terms of Jobcentre Plus as a funder (within the timeframe of a particular programme), some specialist providers that are unable or do not wish to adhere to a short-term job outcome-oriented regime may be potentially excluded from access to this source of public funding because of the financial risks involved or the risk of mission-distortion to their organisation and its services. This has implications for responsiveness to the needs of refugees if some specialist providers are excluded from the market of publicly-funded employment services *because* they are motivated to privilege the needs and interests of their clients, in terms of the orientation of their services, over those of the purchaser (Jobcentre Plus).

Financial incentives attached to job outputs in Jobcentre Plus funding may ensure that some providers respond to these incentives in order to access this funding. However, this may conflict with the aim of facilitating the involvement of third sector organisations on the basis that they are 'user-focused' in their orientation. This raises broader issues that go beyond the scope of this research, including the influences on the mission-orientation of the specialist providers; and how competing needs and interests, both between different users and between users and other actors (e.g. funders), are negotiated in the development of

these organisations and their services. As will be argued below, central to these issues and to the concept of responsiveness to users' needs is the relationship between responsiveness and the accountability of providers.

#### **8.4 Responsiveness and accountability to users**

Criticisms of the modern welfare state were based on the assumption that it was responsive more to the needs and interests of 'public bureaucracies', and less to the needs of users. The use of market structures in welfare provision has been conceived in terms of facilitating greater responsiveness to users' needs by introducing financial incentives for responding to users' needs through competition (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993b). In addition, performance management systems have been conceived as contributing to responsiveness by placing 'upwards pressure' on providers through top-down performance targets to strengthen the accountability of providers (HM Treasury, 2006; Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2006).

Within this broader context of transformations in welfare provision, the concept of responsiveness has been defined as an extension of the lines of accountability of providers of publicly-funded services to users by directly responding to their needs, in addition to traditional lines of 'upwards' accountability of providers to other actors within the political system (Mulgan, 2000). However, while providers might be expected to be responsive both to the needs of users and to the demands of other actors to whom they are accountable, including public purchasers, as emphasised by Considine, different systems will advantage the needs and interests of some over others (Considine, 2002).

With regard to the performance system attached to public funding for employment services, the research highlights the extent to which this system may constrain the responsiveness of providers to users' needs, and to refugees' needs specifically, while privileging responsiveness to other competing needs and interests related to wider policy imperatives. This draws attention to the conflict between the principles of New Public Management that emphasise greater responsiveness of providers directly to the individual needs and preferences of users, and the implementation of performance systems directed towards greater upwards accountability of providers in service delivery. To the extent that funders or purchasers are driven by the needs of users, then it might be assumed, in theory, that ensuring upwards accountability to purchasers through performance regimes will result in greater responsiveness to users' needs. However, with regard to the needs of refugees, the

research points to the conflict between ensuring the adherence of Jobcentre Plus advisers and specialist providers to a performance regime that is oriented towards top-down performance targets aimed at short-term job outcomes, and improving responsiveness to refugees' English language, education and training needs, and related employment interests.

While current policy debate on new governance processes has advocated greater engagement of users and citizens in the planning of services (e.g. HM Treasury, 2007), in the context of employment service provision the performance regime remains ultimately directed towards centrally-defined performance targets. The extent to which refugees' needs are excluded from how provider performance is defined and measured thus calls into question the extent to which the accountability of providers on the purchaser's terms conflicts with responsiveness to refugees as users. The findings point to a lack of 'outwards' lines of accountability to refugees as users of employment services concerning the nature of the performance regime and incentive structure. By contrast, the providers' experiences suggest what Hoggett has described as the reassertion of centralised control over decentralised units and contracted providers (Hoggett, 1996), with a greater degree of centralised as opposed to consumer sovereignty in the context employment service delivery.

This draws attention to the tensions between ensuring upwards accountability of providers through performance targets to purchasers and to central government, and outwards accountability to users in terms of directly responding to their needs and preferences. Where the needs of the purchaser to achieve Public Service targets, and the needs of the provider to achieve related outputs in order to access funding, conflict with the needs of users (or particular groups of users, such as refugees), then accountability to purchasers is likely to constrain responsiveness to those users' needs. As emphasised in the wider literature on the third sector explored in Chapter Two, a reliance on public funding contracts may result in the increased accountability of third sector providers to public purchasers, while distorting accountability directly to their users (Lewis, 1996; Taylor, 2002). To this extent, the performance regime under which employment service providers are held to account may therefore create new lines of upwards accountability to 'public bureaucracies' regarding the terms of access to funding, rather than the conditions or incentives for responsiveness to the needs and preferences of unemployed individuals as the users of employment service provision.

The findings point to the limitations of reducing responsiveness to users' needs to a relationship between individual providers and users/consumers within a market-type system to the extent that this obscures the *wider* accountability structures that influence responsiveness to users. As emphasised by Aberbach and Christensen (2005), these structures concern the broader political system and policy processes in which responsiveness to the needs of citizens through public services is negotiated. Where provider accountability to central government departments and public purchasers rather than to users predominates in performance systems, the extent to which different users' needs are adequately reflected in performance systems and related policy agendas is of central importance. To this extent, decision-making processes at the level of the state, as opposed to at the level of market-based interactions between providers and individual users, appear to be fundamental to the question of responsiveness to the needs of refugees in welfare provision.

At the same time, other managerial and bureaucratic decision-making processes through which the needs and interests of users are negotiated by providers are also of relevance to the concept of responsiveness. With regard to public organisations, such as Jobcentre Plus, these decision-making processes may ultimately privilege the demands of central government departments, to whom they are accountable. By contrast, some third sector providers may be less constrained in this respect in terms of their ability to negotiate between the demands of public funders and the needs of particular users, although as discussed previously this may in part be dependent on alternative funding sources.

To the extent that the relative responsiveness of providers to users' needs and preferences is influenced by the lines of accountability of providers to users as well as other actors (e.g. public purchasers, government departments), that shape both how their performance is defined and how their resources are allocated, then responsiveness to users should be conceived as related to rather than distinct from accountability.

## **8.5 A more responsive approach to employment service provision**

In the light of the above conclusions, this final section considers the policy implications of the research for facilitating responsiveness to the needs of refugees. With regard to the system of employment service provision, the policy implications centre on: first, the

alignment between performance measures and the needs of refugees; second, the provision of information to refugee users; and third, the allocation of resources to types of services and providers appropriate to refugees' needs. Central to the policy implications is the relationship between responsiveness and accountability to users.

### **8.5.1 Greater alignment between performance measures and refugee users' needs**

The findings imply the need for greater alignment between the measures by which providers' performance is assessed and the (different) needs of refugee clients in the context of employment service provision. In the light of the multiple actors whose needs and interests publicly-funded service providers have to serve, Propper and Wilson have argued that there is a need for a range of performance measures, both in terms of what gets measured and why or for what purpose (Propper & Wilson, 2003).

The findings suggest a mismatch between a primary focus on job outcome measures and the type of service needs of refugees. Job outcome measures for providers delivering ESOL provision may conflict with the aim of encouraging providers to support refugee clients in terms of their language learning needs, if the emphasis is on placing clients in work in the short-term (e.g. within the timeframe of an ESOL programme). This includes supporting refugees who may have greater language learning needs, such as those who are illiterate, who may be less likely to improve their English language proficiency to a sufficient level in the short-term to be able to access employment. A primary focus on placing clients in work in the short-term may also encourage Jobcentre Plus advisers and providers in receipt of public funding (through Jobcentre Plus) to focus on placing clients in more accessible low-skilled jobs, even if this conflicts with refugees' perceptions of their needs in terms of the type of work they wish to pursue. In this sense, a primary focus on job outcomes may also conflict with responsiveness not only to the needs and preferences of individual refugees, but with wider policy agendas aimed at increasing the level of qualifications and literacy amongst the adult population (Department for Education and Skills, 2003).

This suggests the need for greater coordination across performance systems in publicly-funded services relevant to the needs of refugees. Better horizontal coordination between, on the one hand, the performance targets of the Learning and Skills Council aimed at improving English language skills and the attainment of qualifications, and on the other hand, the employment targets of Jobcentre Plus, might enable providers to better respond to



refugees' needs by allowing for a more coherent set of indicators in the delivery of relevant services. Greater coordination might therefore avert the experiences of some specialist providers, as discussed in Chapter Seven, of being pulled in opposite directions by adhering to multiple regimes of upwards accountability to these different public funders.

An additional issue concerns the timeframe in which providers are required to achieve the indicators by which their performance is assessed. As emphasised by Alcock (2004), pressures to meet short-term outputs within the timeframe of funding for a programme may conflict with the timeframe faced by providers in tackling disadvantage amongst particular groups, which may be longer-term ventures. Responsiveness to refugees' needs in terms of facilitating access to a broader range of types of employment, appropriate to their skills and interests, may imply longer-term approaches that combine both a greater level of advice and guidance as well as referrals to different trajectories of services to support access to different types of work (as discussed further below regarding the type of service needs of refugees). A more flexible/longer-term timeframe by which the performance of providers is assessed may therefore be required in order to adequately respond to refugees' needs.

### 8.5.2 Information to refugee users

According to the principles underlying the use of performance data in service delivery (as discussed in Chapter Two, section 2.2.1), this information is needed to enable both government and the public to hold providers to account in the delivery of publicly-funded services. This draws attention to the relationship between responsiveness and accountability: whether performance systems in employment service provision facilitate responsiveness in terms of outwards lines of accountability directly to users, or simply upwards accountability to central government departments. Current policy proposals have referred to Public Service Delivery Agreements<sup>163</sup> incorporating mechanisms "that enable citizens to have a real say in the decisions that affect their experience of public services and enable them to hold those services more directly to account" (HM Treasury, 2007: 154). This includes the provision of data on the performance of local services to enable greater 'bottom-up pressure' to improve services. With regard to refugees' experiences in this research, measuring the performance of providers according to job outcome indicators appeared to bear little relation to improving responsiveness to their needs or accountability

<sup>163</sup> Central government departments are required to develop Service Delivery Agreements, which refer to how they will deliver the performance targets set out in their Public Service Agreement.

to them as users. Indeed, performance data in this context served no function as information for refugee users.

Both this research and the findings of Bloch (Bloch, 2002b) emphasise an information gap concerning refugees' awareness of types of provision to which they are entitled. This includes Jobcentre Plus provision available through the New Deal and other programmes, and also the types of provision and assistance available to them through specialist providers. The findings therefore underline the need for greater provision of information to refugee users and potential users on the system of employment-related service provision; the different types of providers that deliver relevant services, and the types of programmes and support that are available. Better information on service provision, and access to that information, may therefore play a more useful role for refugees in need of those services than the type of data provided through the performance system of Jobcentre Plus. The importance of the provision of information, advice and guidance is explored further below.

If the performance system is to serve an information function for refugees and other users then this suggests that the needs and priorities of different client groups should be reflected in decision-making processes regarding how providers' performance is defined. While there may be existing means of assessing user satisfaction with the services of Jobcentre Plus, such as Jobcentre Plus customer satisfaction surveys (see Dowson et al., 2004), these are relatively limited mechanisms for user 'voice' in a performance system which is ultimately defined in relation to central government targets. The current 'Cities' initiative that is being piloted by the Department for Work and Pensions, involves the establishment of local employment consortia, comprising Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, third sector organisations, employers and other relevant local organisations, with a view to developing locally-agreed priorities and strategies for tackling unemployment amongst disadvantaged groups and within more deprived areas<sup>164</sup>. While such policy initiatives have emphasised greater responsiveness to the needs of unemployed groups, it is less clear, however, as to the extent to which they will allow for the setting of locally-agreed performance measures. Mechanisms such as user groups, involving different client groups amongst the users of Jobcentre Plus services and other employment-related services, and

<sup>164</sup> The Cities Strategy is an initiative aimed at addressing high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity in particular geographic areas and amongst particular groups. It is intended to bring together local authorities, statutory agencies, including Jobcentre Plus, the private and third sectors through local consortia to develop a more coordinated approach to the setting of priorities, pooling of funding and development of different types of support. It is currently being piloted through 15 pathfinder cities and towns (see [http://www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/cities\\_strategy.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/cities_strategy.asp)).

the involvement of third sector organisations with experience of working with particular client groups, including refugees, might allow for performance systems to be defined in ways that are appropriate to addressing the needs of particular groups. This might also provide performance data that is more user-focused in terms of its purpose, as opposed to simply data that serves as a mechanism for upwards accountability of providers to public purchasers and government departments.

### **8.5.3 The allocation of resources to refugees' needs: access to appropriate types of services and providers**

In addition to the above, the research has implications for the system through which resources are allocated to users' needs, and the extent to which that system facilitates refugees' access to services and providers that are appropriate to their needs. If the principles underlying New Public Management approaches are to be followed in terms of funding being allocated so as to better reflect users' needs and preferences (as opposed to the interests of 'public bureaucrats'), the research suggests that the allocation of public resources for employment services at the local level should be able to follow different needs and preferences. Policy proposals on the future of welfare-to-work and employment service provision have emphasised the need for greater flexibility at the local level in the planning and delivery of services in order to better respond to local needs, including enabling Jobcentre Plus advisers to provide a 'menu' of provision tailored to individual needs (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006). Refugees' access to appropriate services and providers (discussed in Chapters Four and Five), and the provision of appropriate services (discussed in Chapters Six and Seven), was restricted by information barriers and also by the work-first terms of criteria applied to the purchasing of provision; to clients' access to provision; as well as the performance regime.

### **Information, advice and guidance on employment**

The findings (discussed in Chapter Four) imply the need for refugees to have access to a greater level of advice and guidance on employment and relevant services. This includes refugees' access to an adviser, and the ongoing assistance of an adviser, from an early stage, following initial contact with Jobcentre Plus. It also requires Jobcentre Plus advisers to have the capacity in terms of time and knowledge to inform and advise refugee clients on the different types of provision available to them through Jobcentre Plus and through other types of providers, including specialist providers, in order to refer refugee clients to

appropriate services. The use of specialist advisers within Jobcentre Plus (as is the case for clients with disabilities) in districts where refugees are amongst local client groups might facilitate this process (as has started to be piloted through the role of advisers as ‘Refugee Champions’<sup>165</sup>). However, where individual Jobcentre Plus advisers do not have the capacity to provide adequate information, this might also be facilitated by group information sessions for refugees at the first point of contact with Jobcentre Plus, involving specialist providers, and also local training providers and other relevant agencies. The experiences of refugee clients referred to in Chapter Four also highlight the importance not simply of access to advice and guidance through refugee specialist providers within the third sector, but in addition, a wider range of public organisations and professional bodies that are able to provide information on particular fields of employment (e.g. in the health and engineering sectors) relevant to their backgrounds.

### **English language and other education and training provision**

With regard to the referral of refugees through Jobcentre Plus to English language provision, the research suggests the need for the removal of eligibility criteria that restrict refugees’ participation in full-time ESOL programmes for an appropriate length of time. Given the emphasis placed by both refugees and advisers in this research, and in other research (McCabe et al., 2006; Phillimore et al., 2003), on the need for more intensive English language provision, limiting full-time ESOL to six months may fundamentally restrict responsiveness to English language needs and to different levels of language learning needs. Likewise, the findings point to other gatekeeping processes that limit refugees’ access to education and training provision in terms of Jobseekers Allowance eligibility criteria that prohibit participation in full-time education and training for those claiming Jobseekers Allowance. While the application of these criteria in the rationing of resources may serve the purpose of other priorities, such as cost containment in the face of budgetary constraints, they nevertheless place limitations on the extent to which providers are able to assist refugees to develop English language skills, re-train in particular professions or acquire other qualifications that relate to their skills and interests. Moreover, they have resource implications if refugees’ access to employment is constrained as a result of restrictions on their access to appropriate services and assistance.

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<sup>165</sup> See Chapter One (section 1.4.3).

## Work placement programmes

The findings of this research and other studies (Bloch, 2002b; Stopforth, 2002; Working Lives Research Institute, 2005) suggest the need to enable refugees to access a broader range of types of employment-related provision, including work placements, that might assist refugees into employment. Work placements were perceived by both refugees with higher and lower skilled backgrounds in this research as playing an important role in responding to a range of needs: by providing an environment in which to further develop English language and other skills; to demonstrate existing skills to employers; gain practical work experience; build confidence; and develop contacts with potential employers (as discussed in Chapter Five). There appeared to be very limited opportunity for accessing this type of provision in terms of their experiences of Jobcentre Plus. As emphasised by Jobcentre Plus advisers, adequate ESOL provision may be of greater importance initially for refugees with English language needs. Nevertheless, the allocation of resources to programmes that combine English language provision with work placements suited to the range of skills and interests of refugees might enable more comprehensive approaches to the employment-related needs of refugees. However, a critical issue highlighted by refugee respondents, both in relation to ESOL and work placement programmes, concerns the *length* of provision: whether refugees have access to provision for an adequate length of time appropriate to their needs.

## Type of providers

Regarding choice of providers, refugees are potentially able to ‘exit’ mainstream provision through Jobcentre Plus by accessing specialist provision through a patchwork of third sector providers that are funded through a range of different sources. They may therefore be able to access other types of providers that they perceive as better responding to their needs than the support provided to them through Jobcentre Plus. However, this is in spite of rather than because of the system through which public funding for employment services is allocated, given that funding does not directly follow users’ needs and preferences. Indeed, with regard to the experiences of some of the specialist providers (discussed in Chapter Seven), the level of responsiveness of providers to refugees’ needs may in part be dependent on their ability to access alternative sources of funding outside of this system. This, however, has implications for improving the responsiveness of publicly-funded employment services to the needs of refugees if some third sector providers best placed to

address those needs are excluded or selected out from public funding because of the job outcome-oriented criteria attached to that funding. More flexible funding systems might therefore be required to enable specialist providers to enter the market of publicly-funded employment services, without this requiring adherence to a performance regime that conflicts with responding to the needs of the users of their services.

### **Employment services and user involvement in decision-making processes**

While one of the principles of market-oriented systems in public service provision is to create greater choice for users of services appropriate to their needs, the allocation of public funding for employment services is determined by decision-making processes on the part of the purchaser, Jobcentre Plus. Refugees' experiences of employment service provision explored in the research draw attention to a system that appeared to facilitate little choice over the type of services that they may wish to access, such as the type of training provision appropriate to their skills and interests.

This suggests that within the Jobcentre Plus system there should be greater attention to mechanisms for user involvement in decision-making processes regarding the allocation of public funding for employment services, with a view to improving responsiveness to users' needs. At the individual level (including in the context of the relationship between advisers and individual clients), this could potentially involve the use of individual budgets to enable clients to exercise choice over different types of services according to their needs. The use of local employment consortia under the Cities initiative, as referred to above, might also allow for channels through which the collective needs of different client groups are represented in decision-making regarding the allocation of resources to particular types of provision. With regard to refugees, this might include the involvement of third sector providers with experience of working with refugees as well as user groups involving refugees. Again, this points to the relationship between responsiveness and accountability. While decision-making regarding the level of public resources allocated to respond to the needs of service users, including unemployed groups, may ultimately be determined by those who derive their authority from the democratic process (J. Martin, 1997), decision-making at the local level as to how these resources are utilised in the planning and delivery of services might better involve the groups of users, including refugees, for whom government policy seeks to develop more responsive services.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **REFUGEE STATUS, ELR, HP, DL AND INDEFINITE LEAVE TO REMAIN**

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#### **Refugee status**

Those granted refugee status are given leave to remain in the UK for five years initially, after which time Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) or an extension to the period of leave to remain in the UK can be applied for. Those granted refugee status prior to August 2005 (but after July 1998) were immediately given ILR. Prior to July 1998, ILR could be applied for four years after refugee status was granted (Kelly & Joly, 1999).

#### **Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR)**

Those granted ELR (before August 2005 when it was replaced by HP and DLR) were given leave to remain for four years or less, after which time ILR could be applied for. Prior to July 1998, those with ELR had to wait seven years before they could apply for ILR (Kelly & Joly, 1999).

#### **Humanitarian Protection (HP)**

Those granted HP (since August 2005) are granted leave to remain for five years initially, after which ILR can be applied for.

#### **Discretionary Leave to Remain (DL)**

Discretionary Leave to Remain in the UK is granted for three or fewer years initially, after which an extension of three years can be applied for, and subsequently ILR can be granted.

#### **Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)**

Under current legislation, ILR is usually granted if the conditions in an applicant's country of origin have not improved. Recent legislation now requires those applying for ILR to pass an English language and 'Life in the UK' test, which is required for applications for British citizenship (Home Office, 2007a). This requires applicants to have English language proficiency equivalent to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Entry Level 3. Those who do not have this level of English proficiency are required to participate in English language and citizenship classes (through further education and community

colleges) in order to apply for ILR (see Glossary for reference to the qualifications framework, including ESOL qualifications, in the UK).



## APPENDIX 2

### JOBCENTRE PLUS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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Jobcentre Plus performance indicators are published in its annual Business Plan and reported on in its Annual Report. For the period 2007 to 2008 its performance targets comprise the following (see Jobcentre Plus, 2006a, 2006b):

#### **Job Outcome target**

This target measures the number of people entering work (since April 2006, Inland Revenue employment data has been used to identify when Jobcentre Plus clients start work). It is based on a points system that is weighted towards priority groups. Each client group is awarded between one and 12 points.

Priority group one (with the highest points score of 12), includes lone parents out of work, participants in the New Deal for Disabled People, and other clients who are claiming 'inactive' benefits (e.g. Income Support, Incapacity Benefit).

Priority group two (with a points score of 8), includes clients who have been claiming Jobseekers Allowance for six months and other disadvantaged clients (which since the 2005 to 2006 period includes refugees).

Priority group three (with a points score of 4), includes clients who have been claiming Jobseekers Allowance for less than six months.

Priority group four (with 2 points), includes unemployed clients not claiming benefits.

Within each client group, an additional set of points are awarded for the most disadvantaged wards (with the highest levels of unemployment and unemployed groups).

#### **Monetary Value of Fraud and Error target**

This target is aimed at reducing financial losses in benefits payments due to error and fraud.

**Employer Outcome target**

This target is aimed at improving Jobcentre Plus recruitment services to employers in terms of filling job vacancies successfully, within a timescale required by the employer, and in terms of employers' level of satisfaction with the type of clients referred to vacancies (measured by use of an employer survey).

**Customer Service target**

The customer service target is aimed at meeting standards set out in the Jobcentre Plus Customers' Charter and Employers' Charter, including: how quickly telephone and face-to-face queries from clients are dealt with; the accuracy of information provided to clients through telephone and face-to-face interactions; the relevance of services to customers needs and circumstances; and the accessibility of information (measured by use of a customer satisfaction survey).

**Interventions Delivery target**

This is a new target aimed at measuring if Work-Focused Interviews for clients receiving Jobseekers Allowance or Incapacity Benefit, and lone parents receiving Income Support, are being carried out within set timescales.

**Average Actual Clearance Time target**

This target is aimed at improving how quickly benefits claims from clients are dealt with.

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **JOB OUTCOMES AND OUTPUT-RELATED FUNDING IN JOBCENTRE PLUS CONTRACTED PROVISION**

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Jobcentre Plus Guidance for contracted providers refers to job outcomes in terms of the following (see Jobcentre Plus, 2006c):

For provision contracted under Jobcentre Plus programmes (e.g. New Deal), the definition of a job outcome for the purposes of output-related payments to providers is:

Programme participants who enter a job (or jobs) that:

- is at least 16 hours work a week
- begins within 13 weeks of the participant leaving the provision
- is expected to last for at least 13 weeks

Under the new definition, which applies to new contracts with providers (from 1 April 2006), employment should begin within 6 weeks of the participant leaving provision. For inactive customers and Jobseekers Allowance customers on Progress to Work/Link Up, employment should consist of at least 8 hours work a week, and for Jobseekers Allowance customers not on Progress to Work/Link, at least 16 hours. (See Chapter 4, Funding Guidance, and Annex 7.)

For European Social Fund provision that is co-financed by Jobcentre Plus, participants should enter employment within 13 weeks of leaving provision (for contracts prior to April 2006), and within 6 weeks (for contracts from April 2006). (See Chapter 12 European Social Fund)

Providers are required to produce evidence for job outcome payments claimed. This includes letters and signatures from employers.

## APPENDIX 4

### RESEARCH OUTLINE

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#### Employment Service Provision for Refugees

##### **Purpose of the research**

The research is being carried out as a part of a PhD programme in the Department of Social Policy at the LSE (London School of Economics and Political Science). The PhD is being supervised by Professor Anne West at the LSE, with funding from the Economic and Social Research Council.

The aims of the research are:

- To explore refugees' experiences of accessing employment related services and their experiences of different types of assistance through mainstream and specialist providers.
- To explore the experiences of both Jobcentre Plus and specialist service providers in delivering employment related services for refugees.

##### **Research methods**

- Initial interviews will be carried out with key informants (including statutory and non-statutory agencies working with refugees in the area of employment services, and with refugees) to explore their experiences and issues relating to the research.
- Further interviews will be carried out with members of staff of specialist providers of employment services for refugees and with members of staff of Jobcentre Plus. The interviews will look at experiences of delivering services for refugee clients, in relation to their needs.
- Further interviews will also be carried out with refugees who are clients of these providers. The interviews will look at their experiences of accessing employment related services, and of use of the services of both specialist providers and Jobcentre Plus.

All interviews are strictly confidential and the information given will only be used for the purposes of this research. Participants in the research will be anonymous and will not be named in any reporting of the findings of the research.

### **Timetable and outcomes**

The main research interviews will be carried out between January and April 2005. Following the analysis of the data (autumn 2005), the preliminary findings of the research will be discussed with providers participating in the research to receive their feedback. The research findings will be presented and disseminated in a summary report. A full report on the research will be submitted as a PhD thesis to the University of London in 2006-2007.

### **Contact details**

PhD student: Isabel Shutes

Email: [i.h.shutes@lse.ac.uk](mailto:i.h.shutes@lse.ac.uk)

Tel: 07963 800 931

Department of Social Policy

London School of Economics and Political Science

Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (REFUGEE CLIENTS)**

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**Name of client:**

**Name of provider:**

**Date:**

**Place:**

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#### **1. Warm-up**

- When did you arrive in the UK?
  - What were some of the difficulties you faced when you first arrived here?
- 

#### **2. English language proficiency and access to ESOL provision**

- Did you speak any English when you arrived?
  - Did you find out about any English courses when you arrived?
  - How did you find out about these courses (referrals? other? who?)
  - Did you have any difficulties finding out about them?
  - Did you manage to enrol on an English course? When was that? Did you face any difficulties enrolling on an English course?
  - How long was the course; number of hours?
  - Did you have any difficulties completing the course? What were they?
-

### 3. Employment needs and interests and access to providers

- When did you feel you were able to start to look for work in the UK?
- What sorts of work were you interested in doing? Why was that?  
(probe on area of work and respondent's background including previous work experience)
  - Were you working before you came to the UK?
  - What was the last job you did (position and area of work)?
  - If no, what were you doing?
- How did you begin the process of looking for a job?
- What were some of the difficulties you experienced?
- What sort of help do you think you needed?

#### *Probe on use of employment providers*

- Can you tell me about any organisations you contacted for assistance?
- 

### 4. Referral to and use of Jobcentre Plus

- Did you visit Jobcentre Plus?
- How did you find out about Jobcentre Plus? When did you find out about Jobcentre Plus?
- Did you experience any difficulties visiting a Jobcentre for the first time (e.g. language barriers)?
- What happened when you visited the Jobcentre for the first time? (experiences with Adviser; Jobseekers Agreement)

- What sort of assistance did the Jobcentre adviser give you?

***Probe on:***

**a) Needs assessment/ advice and guidance**

- Did the adviser discuss English language learning with you? (referral to an English language assessment?)
- What information were you given on English courses?
- Did the adviser ask you about your qualifications and previous work experience?
- What information were you given about your employment options?
- What information were you given about Jobcentre Plus programmes?
- Were you given any information about education or training? (If relevant) What information were you given about getting your qualifications recognised in the UK?
- Were you given any information on other organisations that provide employment/training assistance (which ones)? Did the Jobcentre refer you to any of these organisations?
- How useful was the information and advice you received from the Jobcentre?

**b) ESOL**

- Type (e.g. through Work Based Learning for Adults); name of provider; level; number of hours; length of ESOL programme? (as much info as possible)
- How useful was the programme? Why was that?
- Did you have any difficulties completing the programme?



- Did you have to look for work while you were on the programme? How did you feel about this?
- What job search assistance was provided? (see section below)
- Were you given any assistance to help you access other education, training or work placements? How useful was the assistance? Why was that?
- What happened at the end of the programme?  
(Were you able to find a job - area of work – or take up other training?)

**c) Other education or training**

- Type (through Jobcentre Plus programmes, e.g. WBLA Basic Employability Training; New Deal Education and Training Option; or mainstream courses?); name of provider; number of hours; length of programme; qualification obtained?
- How useful was the programme? Why was that?
- Any difficulties completing the programme?
- Any English language support provided during the training programme? Job search assistance provided? Any assistance provided to help you access work placements?  
(How useful/ Why?)
- Do you think that the programme helped you in being able to get a job? Why was that?
- Was it helpful in finding the sort of job you are interested in?
- What happened at the end of the training?  
(Were you able to find a job - area of work – or take up other training?)

**d) Work placement**

- Type (through Jobcentre Plus programmes, e.g. New Deal?); area of work; number of hours; length of placement
- How useful was the placement? Why was that?
- Did you have any difficulties completing the placement?
- Any English language support provided while you were on the placement? Job search assistance provided? Any assistance provided to help you access education/training? (How useful/Why?)
- Do you think that the placement helped you in being able to get a job? Why was that?
- Was it helpful in finding the sort of job you are interested in?
- What happened at the end of the work placement?  
(Were you able to find a job - area of work – or take up other training?)

**e) Job search assistance**

- Type and length of assistance (e.g. information on job vacancies; assistance with writing CVs; completing applications; contacting employers; interview skills).
- Do you think that the assistance helped you in being able to get a job? Why was that?
- Was it helpful in finding the sort of job you are interested in?

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was there any additional assistance you felt you needed from the Jobcentre but was not provided?</li> </ul> |
|--|

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## 5. Referral to and use of specialist provider

- How did you find out about (name of provider)? (use of social networks, RCOs, referrals through other providers?) When did you find out about it?
- Did you experience any difficulties visiting this agency for the first time, e.g. language barriers?
- What happened when you visited the agency for the first time?  
(Access to an adviser?)
- What sort of assistance did they provide you with?

### *Probe on:*

#### **a) Needs assessment/ advice and guidance**

- Did the adviser discuss English language learning with you? (referral to an English language assessment?)
- What information were you given on English courses?
- Did the adviser ask you about your qualifications and previous work experience?
- What information were you given about your employment options?
- (If relevant) What information were you given about getting your qualifications recognised in the UK?
- Were you given any information about education or training?

- Were you given any information on other organisations that provide employment/training assistance (which ones)? Did the agency refer you to any of these organisations?
- How useful was the information and advice you received from the agency?

**b) ESOL**

- Type; level; name of provider; number of hours; length of ESOL programme? (as much info as possible)
- How useful was the programme? Why was that?
- Did you have any difficulties completing the programme?
- Did you have to look for work while you were on the programme? How did you feel about this?
- What job search assistance was provided? (see prompts)
- Were you given any assistance to help you access other education, training or work placements? How useful was the assistance? Why was that?
- What happened at the end of the programme?  
(Were you able to find a job - area of work – or take up other training?)

**c) Other education or training**

- Type; name of provider; number of hours and length of programme (through agency of other provider?) Qualification obtained?
- How useful was the programme? Why was that?
- Any difficulties completing the programme?

- Any English language support provided during the training programme? Job search assistance provided? Any assistance provided to help you access work placements? (How useful/ Why?)
- Do you think that the programme helped you in being able to get a job? Why was that?
- Was it helpful in finding the sort of job you are interested in?
- What happened at the end of the training?  
(Were you able to find a job - area of work – or take up other training?)

**d) Work placement**

- Type (area of work); number of hours; length of placement
- How useful was the placement? Why was that?
- Did you have any difficulties completing the placement?
- Any English language support provided while you were on the placement? Job search assistance provided? Any assistance provided to help you access education/training? (How useful/Why?)
- Do you think that the placement helped you in being able to get a job? Why was that?
- Was it helpful in finding the sort of job you are interested in?
- What happened at the end of the work placement?  
(Were you able to find a job - area of work – or take up other training?)

**e) Job search assistance**

- Type and length of assistance (e.g. information on job vacancies; assistance with writing CVs; completing applications; contacting employers; interview skills).
- Do you think that the assistance helped you in being able to get a job? Why was that?
- Was it helpful in finding the sort of job you are interested in?

- Was there any additional assistance you felt you needed from this agency but was not provided?

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## 6. Use of other agencies

- Have you visited any other organisations for employment or training assistance? (e.g. FE colleges; RCOs; other voluntary organisations; private recruitment agencies)

*Probe on experiences*

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## 7. Background information

1. Nationality
2. Country of birth – were you living there before coming to the UK?
3. Gender
4. Age
5. Date of arrival in UK
6. Immigration status:
  - Refugee status (Indefinite Leave to Remain)

- Exceptional Leave to Remain
- Granted ELR and subsequently Indefinite Leave to Remain
- British citizen
- Other

How long did it take to get your asylum claim processed? When did you get a decision?

(If relevant, did you apply for permission to work while you were an asylum seeker?)

7. Language and literacy skills

- What is the main language that you speak?
  - Can you read and write in that language?
- Do you have any English certificates/qualifications (level)?

8. Education and qualifications (before coming to the UK)

- What education did you have before you came to the UK?
  - Age you left education
  - Any qualifications?
- Did you have any specific training before you came to the UK?
  - Any qualifications?
- Did you try to get your qualifications recognised in the UK (outcome)?

9. Current economic status

- If in employment:
  - job title; area of work
  - full or part time (if part time, are you looking for full time work?)

- temporary or permanent (if temporary, are you looking for permanent work?)
  - declared/ undeclared
  - length of time in current job
- If not, main activity:
  - unemployed (looking for work)
  - student (full or part time; type of course)

10. Housing, area of residence

- Which area do you currently live in? How did you come to live there?  
(How long have you lived there?)
- Household composition  
(children etc.)



## **APPENDIX 6**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (SPECIALIST PROVIDER STAFF)**

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**Organisation:**

**Position of respondent:**

**Date:**

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#### **1. Background information on the provider and specialist services for refugees (any reports or other documents?)**

- When, how, why it was established
- Structure/management of provider
- Type of services in the area of employment, education and training
- Who are your services targeted at?
- Number of clients? Main countries of origin, gender
- Do you work with asylum seekers and refugees?
- Skill levels (English language proficiency, qualifications and previous work experience)
- Type of needs

#### **2. Process of referral to provider**

- How do refugees find out about your organisation/services?  
(dissemination of information, outreach activities)
- Are they referred to you by any agencies (Jobcentre Plus, other statutory, voluntary, community organisations)?
  - Which ones, why?
  - What sort of relationship do you have with these agencies?  
(formal partnership, funding links?)

- At what stage do refugees usually contact you?  
(length of residence in UK)
- Are there any English language barriers to taking referrals? Other barriers to clients accessing your services?

### **3. Provision of services**

- What happens when a client visits you for the first time?

#### **a) Needs assessment, advice and guidance**

- Do they have access to an adviser?
  - What are the main issues that an adviser will discuss initially with a client?
  - Are there any issues that you think are specific to refugee clients?
  - How often do clients see an adviser?
- Are clients referred to any other agencies for information, advice and guidance?  
(Which ones, why/why not?)

#### **b) ESOL**

- How do you address the English language needs of clients?  
(provision of information on ESOL courses, provision of courses, referral to courses)

#### **Provision of courses (if relevant)**

- Are there any difficulties in addressing the needs of clients with different levels of English proficiency? What sort of difficulties?
  - Do you think the length of ESOL is sufficient for clients to be able to look for work or to access other training?

### **Referrals**

- Are there specific ESOL providers that you refer clients to?
  - Which ones, why?
- Do you experience any difficulties assisting clients to access or continue to participate in ESOL courses?
- What assistance do clients receive at the end of a course?
  - Follow-up, referral to other agencies for assistance?

### **c) Education and training**

- What sort of education/training assistance are you able to provide?  
(information, provision of courses)
- Are you able to refer clients to courses provided by other organisations?  
(which ones, why/why not?)
- How long are clients able to participate in education/training courses (full or part time)?
- What assistance do clients receive at the end of a course?  
(Follow-up?)

- How do you decide on the type of training to provide? What affects the type of training you deliver?
- To what extent do you think your courses are able to help clients to find work?

**d) Work placements/ voluntary work**

- Are you able to assist clients to access work placements or voluntary work?  
(type or work, length of placements)
- Do you experience any difficulties in assisting clients to access work placements?  
Any difficulties in finding placements appropriate to their previous qualifications and experience?
- How effective are these placements in helping clients to find paid employment?

**e) Job search assistance**

- What sort of job search assistance do you provide?  
(information on job vacancies, CV writing, interview skills etc.)
- What are some of the difficulties you experience trying to assist clients to find work?
- How far are you able to assist clients to find work appropriate to their previous qualifications and experience?

***Probe on any other services***

**4. Source of funding**

- How are your different services funded?  
(main sources of funding)
- How do the criteria for funding affect the type of services you are able to plan and deliver?
- How are your services monitored and evaluated? What targets/outputs are you required to meet by your funders?
- Do these outputs/targets affect the ways in which you are able to assist refugees? In what ways?
  - Do they affect assistance to address refugees with particular needs? What sort of needs? In what ways?
- Do funding sources affect working with other agencies to assist refugees (e.g. referrals)?

## **5. Other factors affecting service provision**

- Probe on possible other constraints/facilitators to address refugees' needs
  - Resources (e.g. level of funding, number of staff, staff time)
  - Experience of staff (training issues)
  - Regulations

## **6. Inter-agency relationships/networks**

- What are your experiences of working with Jobcentre Plus, other statutory, private, voluntary sector agencies?
- Do you face any difficulties in working with these agencies?

- What are your experiences of working with employers with regard to refugee clients?

## **APPENDIX 7**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (JOBCENTRE PLUS STAFF)**

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**Position of respondent:**

**Jobcentre Plus district:**

**Date:**

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#### **1. Process of referral to JCP**

- How do refugees initially find out about their local Jobcentre?  
(dissemination of information, outreach activities)
- Are they referred to you by any agencies (statutory, voluntary, community organisations)?
  - Which ones, why?
  - What sort of relationship do you have with these agencies?  
(formal partnership, funding links?)
- At what stage do refugees usually contact you?  
(length of residence in UK)
- Do clients have any difficulties visiting the Jobcentre because of English language barriers? Are there any other barriers?

#### **2. Provision of services**

- What happens when a client visits you for the first time?

**a) Needs assessment, advice and guidance**

- What are the main issues that you discuss initially with a client?
  - Are there any issues that you think are specific to refugee clients?
  - Do you face any difficulties in assessing the needs of refugee clients and providing advice and guidance?
  - How often do clients see an adviser?
- Do you refer clients to any other agencies for information, advice and guidance (e.g. specialist providers)?  
(Which ones, why/why not?)

**b) ESOL**

- How do you address the English language needs of clients?  
(referral to Basic Skills assessment, ESOL through which JCP programmes?)
- Are there specific ESOL providers that you refer clients to?
  - Which ones, why (contractual/ funding links)?
  - Are clients able to participate in courses provided by other organisations which are not contracted by JCP?  
(why not?)
- Are there any difficulties in addressing the needs of clients with different levels of English proficiency? What sort of difficulties?
  - Do you think the length of ESOL is sufficient for clients to be able to look for work or to access other training?
  - Do you think it is sufficient to be able to access work or training appropriate to their skills?



- Do you experience any difficulties assisting clients to access or complete ESOL courses?
- How long are clients able to participate in ESOL courses (full or part time)? Are there any restrictions on their participation?
- What assistance do clients receive at the end of a course?
  - Follow-up, referral back to JCP? Job search assistance? Referral to other JCP programmes?

***Probe on access to New Deal and other programmes – relevance for refugees***

**c) Education and training**

- What sort of education/training assistance are you able to provide (which programmes are clients referred to, type of training)?
- Are there specific training providers that you refer clients to?
  - Which ones, why (contractual/ funding links)?
  - Are clients able to participate in courses provided by other organisations which are not contracted by JCP? (why not?)
- How long are clients able to participate in education/training courses (full or part time)?
- What assistance do clients receive at the end of a course?  
(Follow-up?)
- How far do you think existing programmes are able to address the needs of refugee clients?
  - Probe on relevance of types of training; length of training

- To what extent do they help them to find work (type of work)?

**d) Work placements**

- Are you able to assist clients to access work placements?  
(type of work, length of placements)
- Do you experience any difficulties assisting clients to access work placements? Any difficulties in finding work placements appropriate to their previous qualifications and experience?
- How effective are these placements in helping clients to find paid employment?

**e) Job search assistance**

- What sort of job search assistance do you provide?  
(information on job vacancies, CV writing, interview skills etc.)
- Are there any difficulties in assisting clients to find work?
- How far are you able to assist clients to find work appropriate to their previous qualifications and experience?

**Any other services delivered to refugee clients?**

**3. Performance assessment**

- How are your services monitored (monitoring of refugee clients)?

- How are they evaluated?
- What targets are advisers required to meet?
- What targets are individual Jobcentres required to meet?
- How is your funding related to these targets?
- Do these targets affect the ways in which you are able to assist refugee clients? In what ways?
  - Do they affect assistance to address refugees with particular needs? What sort of needs? In what ways?
- Do targets affect the ways in which you are able to work with other agencies? (such as those that provide employment or training services to refugees but are not contracted by JCP?)  
  
(do targets restrict your ability to refer clients to other statutory/voluntary agencies?)

#### **4. Other constraints on service provision**

- Probe on possible other constraints to address refugees' needs
  - Resources (budgetary constraints; staff time)
  - Experience of staff (training issues)
  - Regulations

#### **5. Inter-agency relationships/networks**

- What are your experiences of working with other statutory, private, voluntary sector agencies with regard to targeting refugees?
- Do you face any difficulties in working with these agencies?

- What are your experiences of working with employers with regard to refugee clients?

## APPENDIX 8

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**Table 8.1**

**Applications for asylum in the UK, 1996 to 2005**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Total number of principal applicants</b>	29,640	32,500	46,015	71,160	80,315	71,025	84,130	49,405	33,960	25,710

Source: Home Office, 2005a (Table 1.1: 31) and Home Office, 2006 (Table 1.1: 31)

**Table 8.2****Outcomes of initial decisions on asylum applications, 1996 to 2005**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Granted asylum</b>	2,240	3,985	5,345	7,815	10,595	13,490	10,255	4,300	1,895	2,225
<b>Granted ELR, HP or DL</b>	5,055	3,115	3,910	2,465	11,420	21,600	21,015	7,550	4,170	2,930
<b>Refused asylum, ELR, HP and DL</b>	31,670	28,945	22,315	11,025	62,720	89,115	54,305	55,890	43,990	24,730
<b>Granted asylum or ELR under backlog criteria</b>	—	—	—	11,140	10,325	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Refused under backlog criteria</b>	—	—	—	1,275	1,335	—	—	—	—	—

Source: Home Office, 2005a (Table 1.1: 31) and Home Office, 2006 (Table 1.1: 31)

**Table 8.3****Appeals allowed by the Immigration Appellate Authority, 1996-2005**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Total number of appeals determined by the Immigration Appellate Authority</b>	13,790	21,090	25,320	19,460	19,395	43,415	64,405	81,725	55,975	33,940
<b>Number of appeals allowed</b>	515	1,180	2,355	5,280	3,340	8,155	13,875	16,070	10,845	5,880

Source: Home Office, 2005a (Table 7.1: 58) and Home Office, 2006 (Table 7.1: 54)

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