

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 231

Employers and the New Deal for Disabled People

**Qualitative research,
Wave 2**

**Jane Aston, Rebecca Willison, Sara Davis and
Robert Barkworth**

A report of research carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies on
behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
The Authors	viii
Summary	1
1 Introduction	5
1.1 The evaluation	6
1.2 The first synthesis report	6
1.2.1 <i>Impact of the funding regime</i>	7
1.2.2 <i>NDDP awareness</i>	7
1.2.3 <i>In-work support</i>	7
1.3 Research into NDDP and employers	8
1.4 Summary of Wave 1 of the employer qualitative research	8
1.5 The Wave 2 qualitative research with employers	10
1.6 Summary of findings	11
1.7 The structure of this report	16
2 Research methodology	17
2.1 The research approach	17
2.1.1 <i>The Wave 1 research design</i>	17
2.1.2 <i>Considerations for Wave 2</i>	18
2.1.3 <i>Selection of Job Brokers</i>	20
2.1.4 <i>Compiling the employer sample</i>	21
2.1.5 <i>Constraints</i>	22
2.2 The research instruments	24
2.3 The achieved sample	25
2.3.1 <i>Sample characteristics</i>	25
2.3.2 <i>The interviewees</i>	26
2.3.3 <i>Implications and limitations</i>	27

3	Employers' experiences of employing disabled people and people with health conditions	29
3.1	Organisational context	29
3.1.1	<i>Equal opportunities and diversity issues</i>	30
3.1.2	<i>Experience of government employment programmes</i>	31
3.2	Employment of disabled people and people with health conditions	32
3.2.1	<i>Employers' understanding of disability</i>	32
3.2.2	<i>Employers' estimates of the numbers of employees with health conditions and disabilities</i>	32
3.2.3	<i>Occupations and roles</i>	34
3.2.4	<i>Types of disability or health condition amongst employees</i>	34
3.3	Employers' knowledge about health conditions and disabilities amongst their staff	35
3.3.1	<i>The quality of knowledge</i>	35
3.3.2	<i>How employers find out about health conditions and disabilities amongst their staff</i>	36
4	Benefits, constraints and adjustments	39
4.1	Perceived advantages	39
4.1.1	<i>Business benefits</i>	39
4.2	Perceived constraints	43
4.2.1	<i>Perceived financial implications</i>	43
4.2.2	<i>Difficulty in accommodating staff with a specific disability or condition</i>	45
4.2.3	<i>Differential treatment of staff</i>	46
4.3	Barriers to the employment of disabled people and people with health conditions	46
4.3.1	<i>Job search and application barriers</i>	46
4.3.2	<i>Post-employment barriers</i>	48
4.4	Adjustments and adaptations	49
4.4.1	<i>Experience of making adaptations and adjustments</i>	49
4.4.2	<i>Ability to assess needs</i>	52
4.5	Other sources of help, support and advice	53
4.5.1	<i>Internal support</i>	53
4.5.2	<i>External support</i>	54

5	Awareness of the New Deal for Disabled People	55
5.1	Awareness and knowledge of NDDP	55
5.1.1	<i>Reasons for low awareness and knowledge</i>	56
5.1.2	<i>How employers first heard of NDDP</i>	57
5.2	Employers' perceived level of involvement	58
5.2.1	<i>Known involvement</i>	58
5.2.2	<i>Unknown involvement</i>	59
5.3	Contact with Job Brokers and other intermediaries	59
5.3.1	<i>NDDP Job Brokers</i>	59
5.3.2	<i>Other organisations</i>	60
6	Employers and Job Brokers	63
6.1	Making contact	63
6.1.1	<i>Length of contact time</i>	64
6.1.2	<i>Reasons for initial contact</i>	64
6.1.3	<i>The approach</i>	66
6.2	Type of service offered	66
6.2.1	<i>Vacancy/recruitment</i>	66
6.2.2	<i>Job entry and settling in</i>	67
6.3	The working relationship	69
6.3.1	<i>Level and nature of contact</i>	69
6.3.2	<i>Understanding the employer</i>	74
6.3.3	<i>Problems and issues</i>	75
6.3.4	<i>Benefits to employers</i>	77
6.3.5	<i>Benefits to employees</i>	79
6.4	Outcomes	80
6.4.1	<i>The scale of recruitment</i>	80
6.4.2	<i>The ongoing working relationship with the Job Broker</i>	81
6.5	Impact of Job Broker contact on employers	82
6.5.1	<i>Awareness of potential support and assistance</i>	82
6.5.2	<i>Recruitment and employment practices</i>	82
6.5.3	<i>The future</i>	86
7	Summary and conclusions	87
7.1	A mixed picture	87
7.2	Good practice, or just practice?	88
7.3	Right person for the job	89
7.4	Moving up	90
7.4.1	<i>Factors encouraging a good Job Broker relationship</i>	90
7.4.2	<i>Factors inhibiting the development of a good Job Broker relationship</i>	91

Appendix A Approach letter 93

Appendix B Wave 2 employers’ discussion guide 95

List of tables

Table 2.1 Qualitative sample employer contacts, by Job Broker type
 and region of employer 22

Table 2.2 Characteristics of achieved sample 26

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Summary

This summary outlines the key findings of the second wave of qualitative research with employers regarding the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP). It was part of a comprehensive research and evaluation programme into NDDP, commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions and being carried out by a research consortium, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. This second wave of qualitative research with employers was carried out when NDDP had been operating nationally for two years. It follows on from the first wave, which was carried out 18 months previously, and is based on in-depth interviews with 50 employers, all of whom were known to have taken part in NDDP. These employers were selected on the basis that they were nominated by Job Brokers as examples of good practice. In addition, the research design ensured that the employers covered a range of geographical locations, employer types in terms of size, sector, etc., and types of Job Broker.

The main findings of the research are set out below.

Employers' perspectives and experiences

Most employers had equal opportunities policies or statements, and virtually all employers knew of the Disability Discrimination Act. However, the depth of knowledge varied widely, as did definitions of disability, with employers who were less experienced in recruiting and employing disabled people tending to take a more narrow view of disability. Recruitment of disabled people was mainly concentrated in low level skilled or semi-skilled work, and non-manual or very light manual work, although there were some exceptions to this. Employees with a range of impairments and conditions of varying severity were reported.

Employers felt fairly well informed about any disabilities or health conditions amongst their staff, although there were differences between visible and hidden disabilities. Employers reported that they would usually learn of a person's disability or health condition during the application process, either through a question on the application form, or as a result of adjustments needed to enable the candidate to attend an interview.

The benefits and constraints of employing disabled people

Perceived advantages were expressed generally in terms of business benefits and ethical practices. Specific benefits included reflecting the diversity of the community, providing a wider range of skills and perspectives, and a wider labour market from which to recruit loyal, hard-working employees.

A good proportion of employers reported no discernible disadvantages to employing disabled people. Where disadvantages were mentioned, these were specific to a particular situation or type of disability and role, rather than being a disadvantage of employing disabled people and people with health conditions as a whole.

Adjustments and sources of support

Financial implications were the most commonly cited constraints to employing people with health conditions and disabilities. These were expressed in terms of the costs of making adjustments, high sickness absence and, less commonly cited, a diminished rate of effectiveness by some staff with health conditions or disabilities.

More than three-quarters of the employers in the sample reported having made adjustments and/or adaptations both for existing employees and for those hired through NDDP. These included physical adaptations, for example to office furniture, specialist computer equipment and software, and adjustments to procedures, for example changes to job or role, changes to working hours, and changes to the level of supervision or support provided.

Larger organisations reported having access to internal sources of support, most usually human resources and occupational health, which they would approach before seeking advice outside their organisation. However, some employers had consulted external groups for help and advice in dealing with the needs of particular employees. These groups included disability generalists and groups with more specific remits involving, for example, a particular condition.

Employers' awareness of NDDP

There was a low level of conscious involvement in NDDP as a named initiative. Knowledge of, and involvement with, the Job Brokers who delivered it was higher, as was knowledge of the New Deal brand more generally (in line with deliberate policy, NDDP is not always delivered explicitly under its own name, and is sometimes delivered alongside other labour market initiatives, such as WORKSTEP).

Many Job Brokers concentrated the majority of their efforts on customers alone, and had little or no direct involvement with employers. Where employers had heard of NDDP specifically, this was often through existing contacts and networks, or through previous employment, colleagues or friends, rather than as a result of direct contact from a Job Broker.

The relationship between Job Brokers and employers

Contact between Job Brokers and employers had often been generated through NDDP, although some of the best-developed relationships predated it. There was considerable variety in the nature of these relationships, but as reported in Wave 1, initial contact was usually with reference to a specific vacancy; less frequently it was 'on spec.' contact regarding a customer. Job Broker services focused mainly on filling vacancies and recruitment, and employers were most usually reactive, whether this was regarding vacancies or support, following job entry. A number of employers reported ongoing contact with a Job Broker, which was characterised by a high level of interaction and a good amount of reported mutual understanding. In the closest relationships, other innovative partnership work had taken place, such as open days, tasters, etc.

Job Brokers provided an intermediary point of contact for customers and employers, and were seen as a 'safe' person with whom the customer could discuss concerns or problems. Having a central point of contact with the Job Broker emerged as having been important for some of the employers, for reasons including continuity, familiarity and trust. Major problems were seldom reported. Where any existed, they tended to be seen as areas for improvement rather than as disincentives to future involvement. Extra requirements from employers centred around more general contact, information, additional practical help with adjustments, training and settling in.

Outcomes of involvement in NDDP

Employers reported that recruitment assistance, particularly pre-selection, was an important benefit of involvement. Several employers commented that it was the provision of suitable candidates for the job, rather than the fact that it helped them to recruit people with health conditions and disabilities, that was key. Others wished to promote diversity in their organisation, or were using the programme as an additional route to employing disabled people and people with health conditions.

Several employers had employed just one NDDP recruit, but others had employed ten or more, with recruitment seeming to be potentially ongoing. Compared to the Wave 1 research, people with a wider range of health conditions and disabilities appear to have been employed through the programme. Contact between Job Broker and employer did not always result in an ongoing relationship, particularly when the number of recruits had been limited. However, several employers reported regular ongoing contact, for the purposes of supporting customers in post, and with a view to future placements.

The Job Broker interventions had clearly had a significant impact at the level of individual customers, particularly in terms of customer confidence and access to post-recruitment support which would otherwise not have been available. Some of the appointments would not have been made without the support of the Job Broker.

1 Introduction

The New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) is the major labour market programme for disabled people and people with health conditions who want to find work. It began as a small pilot programme in 1998, but was extended nationally in July 2001, and now forms a key part of the government's Welfare to Work strategy. The programme operates through a network of Job Brokers who aim to help people with health conditions and disabilities wishing to work and move from economic inactivity into sustained employment.

The main features of the NDDP national extension (referred to in this report simply as NDDP) are that it:

- is a voluntary programme;
- has a wide and broadly defined target population, including those on a number of incapacity benefits¹, and either not in paid work at all, or working for less than 16 hours a week;
- is delivered to customers through individual Job Broker organisations, rather than exclusively through government agencies. Organisations securing Job Broker contracts include voluntary and not-for-profit agencies, private sector companies and public sector organisations. They usually have a track record of working with people with health conditions and disabilities, and some specialise in working with people with a particular type of health condition or disability, for example mental health conditions;

¹ Qualifying benefits are: Incapacity Benefit (IB); Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA); Income Support (IS) with a Disability Premium; IS pending the result or an appeal against disallowance from IB; Housing Benefit (HB) or Council Tax Benefit (CTB) with a Disability Premium, or Disability Living Allowance (DLA), provided the recipient is not in paid work, or is in paid work for fewer than 16 hours per week and does not receive Jobseekers Allowance (JSA); War Pension with an Unemployability Supplement; Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) with an Unemployability Supplement; National Insurance credits on the grounds of incapacity; equivalent benefits to IB imported into Great Britain under European Community Regulations on the co-ordination of social security and the terms of the European Economic Area Agreement.

- aims to offer customers a choice of Job Brokers, with most areas being covered by more than one, and some areas being covered by as many as seven;
- encourages Job Brokers to explore innovative approaches in working with both customers and employers;
- focuses on sustained outcomes for participants, ie participants were working for at least 26 weeks out of the first 39 since they started their job;
- provides outcome-related funding to the Job Brokers, on the basis of customer registrations, job entry, and sustained employment.

1.1 The evaluation

The evaluation of NDDP is a comprehensive research programme with the aim of establishing the experiences of its stakeholders, the operational effectiveness and best practice aspects of the Job Brokers, and the effectiveness of the service in helping customers into sustainable employment. It is being carried out by a research consortium², and uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to cover the following distinct strands of work:

- a survey of the eligible population, looking at what they need from a programme like NDDP in order to help them move off benefits and into work;
- a survey of NDDP customers, to assess their experiences of participating in the programme;
- qualitative research with employers, together with a large-scale quantitative survey, to assess their experiences of recruiting, or potentially recruiting, under NDDP;
- case studies involving customers, Job Brokers, employers and Jobcentre Plus staff;
- impact and cost-benefit analyses.

1.2 The first synthesis report

The first synthesis report of the early findings from the various strands of research was produced in September 2003.³ It included the results from Wave 1 of the

² The consortium comprises: the Centre for Research in Social Policy, the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), the National Centre for Social Research, the Social Policy Research Unit, Abt Associates and the Urban Institute.

³ 'NDDP First Synthesis Report – Early Findings (2001)', Centre for Research in Social Policy, Department for Work and Pensions, Institute for Employment Studies, National Centre for Social Research, Social Policy Research Unit. Unpublished report ref. CRSP495S.

qualitative research with employers that was carried out by IES in 2001/02, which preceded the Wave 2 work with employers documented in this report.

A number of key findings emerged from the work included in the synthesis report, which are of particular relevance in setting the scene for this Wave 2 research with employers.

1.2.1 Impact of the funding regime

The funding regime for NDDP is outcome-related, hence Job Brokers receive most of their income for securing job entries and sustainable employment. The result of this regime for some Job Brokers was that they found it difficult to recover their costs from the programme, as many of the participants required a greater level of assistance than had been anticipated. The consequences of this were that there were higher caseloads for Job Broker staff, restrictions in the range and type of services for participants, and for employers, and that advisers sought to prioritise the more job-ready participants. Clearly, cutbacks of this type could potentially affect the ways in which employers perceived NDDP and the extent to which they had been involved.

The implications of this finding for the Wave 2 research with employers was that we might expect to find that the range of services available to customers, and particularly those known about by employers, might be more limited than would have otherwise been anticipated.

1.2.2 NDDP awareness

Wave 1 research with employers highlighted the fact that employers were aware of the New Deal brand more generally, but less aware of the existence of NDDP specifically. Similarly, the first synthesis report showed that just over half the potential participants of the programme were aware of it. However, this is to be expected, due to a deliberate policy not to promote NDDP as a brand. Job Brokers are encouraged to use their own names and service titles, and while they should use the NDDP logo, they do not have to refer to NDDP by name unless they choose to do so. This was, in part, a response to very early feedback in the life of the programme that the reference to 'disabled people' in the title was unhelpful, since many of the eligible population did not identify themselves with this term.

1.2.3 In-work support

The first synthesis report noted that, at the time of the research from which it was drawn, most of those participants who had moved into work had had little or no contact with the Job Broker after the point of job entry. The fact that this could change as Job Brokers developed more experience of delivering the programme was acknowledged, and although it was pointed out that some Job Brokers took an 'arms length' approach to contacting their customers once they entered employment based on their experience of what customers preferred, it was also felt that some customers would have benefited from more help and guidance. We might expect

these findings to be seen in the Wave 2 research with employers; for example, with evidence of surprisingly low levels of contact between customers and Job Brokers once customers had entered employment.

1.3 Research into NDDP and employers

Three separate but related pieces of research will assess the ways in which employers have been interacting with NDDP.

- In late 2002, qualitative research was conducted with 80 employers known to have recruited at least one NDDP customer. This provided early insight into how relationships with employers were developing. It is referred to in this report as 'the first wave' or 'Wave 1', and the main findings are summarised in Section 1.4.
- In late 2003, the second wave of qualitative research with employers was undertaken. This is the research reported here. It was originally intended to replicate Wave 1, but in view of the apparently low level of employer insight into the programme and its operations revealed in Wave 1, it was decided to focus this research on employers who had been more closely involved with the programme. How this was achieved is discussed in the next chapter.
- In early 2004, a large-scale quantitative survey of employers who had recruited under the programme was undertaken. At the time of writing, this research has not yet been published, but it will provide a more reliable quantitative assessment of the kinds of employer who have been taking part, their experiences of NDDP, and their views about working with Job Brokers.

1.4 Summary of Wave 1 of the employer qualitative research

Wave 1 of this research drew on qualitative interviews with 80 employers, of whom 90 per cent had recruited NDDP customers.

Overall, these employers reported that their experiences of recruiting and employing disabled people and people with health conditions had been mixed, but on the whole positive. They generally held fairly benign views on jobseekers with health conditions and disabilities, although only a few actively encouraged applications from them.

Accommodating people with health conditions and disabilities at work had most often only entailed fairly simple adjustments in how work was organised and undertaken. Physical adaptations (to furniture, equipment, and the working environment) were less common, but also fairly modest, although smaller or less experienced employers, generally viewed them as a bit more of a challenge. Large-scale physical adaptations were quite rare.

Awareness of the New Deal 'brand' was high, but of NDDP itself much lower. About a quarter of respondents knew about it unprompted, though rather more had vaguer ideas that something like it existed. In fact, although 90 per cent of these employers had recruited a NDDP participant, only just over half of them were aware that they had taken part in any kind of labour market initiative, and only one in five knew that they had hired someone who had been a NDDP participant.

The approach from Job Brokers most widely recalled by employers was of Job Brokers responding to an advertised vacancy on behalf of NDDP customers, with either a covering letter to the applicant, or a telephone call.

Apparently, unmediated approaches directly from the customer were also widespread, with no Job Broker involvement evident (to the employer).

Employers generally liked this relatively non-intrusive and unbureaucratic touch, because it left them in control, and did not compromise their recruitment and selection procedures or criteria. As a result:

- the individuals who were hired achieved this largely on their own merits, without the need for extensive Job Broker inputs to 'seal the deal'.
- their needs tended to be more easily accommodated (ie susceptible to fairly simple adjustments or adaptations), and in some cases their health conditions or disabilities were undisclosed.

Further Job Broker involvement was not always evident; previous research has indicated Job Brokers tend to concentrate on direct contact with customers rather than employers.⁴ Where involvement was evident it tended to involve assessment, advice, and guidance about any necessary adjustments and adaptations required at the hiring stage, plus a monitoring/liaison role in case any unforeseen problems developed which had not been evident on recruitment.

Most of our respondents did not know enough about their Job Broker to have formed a view about him or her. Those who did were mostly pragmatic, their views on the Job Broker derived mainly from their assessment of the calibre and suitability of the customers they referred, and these were mainly positive.

Reported problems of any sort were fairly uncommon; serious ones were quite rare. The main difficulties were:

- the occasional unsuitability of the candidates/ recruits put forward by the Job Broker;

⁴ 'New Deal for Disabled People: First Wave of the First Cohort of the Survey of Registrants (2003)', National Centre for Social Research and Centre for Research in Social Policy, report reference W180. And also 'New Deal for Disabled People: Findings from the First Wave of Qualitative Research with Clients, Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus Staff (2003)', National Centre for Social Research, Centre for Research in Social Policy and Social Policy Research Unit, report reference W169.

- a sometimes unfavourable contrast between the attitudes, helpfulness and availability of Job Brokers before and after the recruitment;
- a feeling among some that the onus fell too much on them to raise any developing problems with the Job Broker and, in some cases, to sort out any medium- or longer-term problems themselves.

We found few cases where Job Brokers had struck up longer-term relationships with employers; and did not find many striking examples of NDDP greatly influencing an employer to behave differently in the future. Most of these employers felt, on balance, that NDDP would not influence them one way or the other.

1.5 The Wave 2 qualitative research with employers

This report sets out the results from the second wave of qualitative research with employers. It draws on interviews with 50 employers, all of whom were known to have taken part in NDDP, and who had been nominated by Job Brokers as examples of good practice. It attempted to cover a range of geographical locations, employers in terms of size, sector, etc. and types of Job Broker. The detailed methodology is presented in the next chapter.

At the time the research was carried out, NDDP had been operating nationally for more than two years, and these interviews provided an opportunity to look closely at how the programme had developed over this time, and was now being delivered, from the employer perspective. In particular, we sought to explore the extent to which NDDP was influencing employers, the difference it was making to their recruitment practices, and to their workforce, and to look in detail at the types of relationships that existed between employers and Job Brokers. As far as possible, we focused on good practice employers (as nominated by Job Brokers) in an effort to explore which factors determined a successful Job Broker-employer relationship. We also looked at how this relationship was felt to be of benefit to both employers and to the customers recruited through the programme.

The second wave of qualitative research is reported in the following chapters, and covers:

- the organisational context, and experience of government employment programmes;
- prior experience of employing people with health conditions and disabilities;
- employers' attitudes to employing people with health conditions and disabilities;
- the advantages and constraints of employing people with health conditions and disabilities, including any adjustment considerations;
- employers' awareness of NDDP through the Job Broker service, and their perceived level of involvement;
- contact with Job Brokers and other intermediaries;

- how employers became involved with Job Brokers;
- the types of service offered by the Job Broker;
- the nature of the ongoing working relationship;
- any problems encountered as a result of involvement with NDDP;
- the benefits of having been involved with NDDP;
- hiring outcomes and the impact on the employer of having been involved in NDDP.

1.6 Summary of findings

The findings of the second wave of research with employers are set out in full in Chapters 3 to 6, but the key findings are summarised here.

Chapter 3 covers employers' perspectives and experiences of employing people with health conditions and disabilities, and the main points to emerge are:

- Most employers had equal opportunities policies or statements, although there was variation by size, with smaller organisations being less likely to have formal policies, or to do monitoring. Almost all employers knew of the Disability Discrimination Act but the depth of knowledge varied widely.
- Definitions of disability also varied, with employers who were less experienced in recruiting and employing disabled people tending to take a more narrow view of disability, for example focusing on obvious physical impairments. Those with more experience of working with disabled people, often public sector or 'customer-focused' employers, took a broader view which encompassed a wider range of impairments and health conditions.
- Employing organisations reported that disabled people and people with health conditions worked in a range of occupations and levels, including senior management, and technical and professional roles. However, recruitment was mainly concentrated in low level skilled or semi-skilled work, and non-manual or very light manual work.
- Employees with a range of impairments and conditions of varying severity were reported. These encompassed people with physical impairments, mental health conditions, learning disabilities and long-term health conditions. In most cases, the condition or impairment had a modest impact on the person's ability to carry out the job. This impact lessened with appropriate adjustments.
- Employers felt fairly well informed about any disabilities or health conditions amongst their staff, although there were differences between visible and hidden disabilities, and hence the confidence reported may have been in part related to the fairly narrow definition of disability adopted by some of the employers. Customer-focused organisations, public and voluntary sector, often tried to create

an environment where employees would feel able to disclose health concerns, whereas large private sector organisations were often well informed due to more formal monitoring.

- In the absence of special circumstances, for example the applicant already being known to the employer, or being introduced to them through NDDP, employers felt they would usually learn of a person's disability or health condition during the application process. This was often through a question on the application form, or as a result of adjustments needed to enable the candidate to attend an interview. Formal health checks were rarer, and so it is questionable whether all health conditions would be disclosed at this point. Hence, there were instances when employers found out about an employee's disability or health condition once they were in post.

Chapter 4 looks at the benefits and constraints of employing disabled people and people with health conditions, and the adjustments which might typically be made. It shows that:

- perceived advantages were expressed in terms of business benefits, and the employer operating in an ethical manner, although the two were often interlinked. Specific benefits included:
 - reflecting the diversity of the community;
 - providing a wider range of skills and perspectives;
 - being open to employing disabled people gave a wider labour market from which to recruit;
 - disabled people had proved to be loyal, hard working recruits;
- in terms of disadvantages, a good proportion of employers reported no discernible disadvantages. Others reported that they had encountered difficulties but that these were specific to a particular situation or type of disability and role, rather than being a disadvantage of employing disabled people and people with health conditions as a whole;
- financial implications were the most commonly cited constraints to employing people with health conditions and disabilities. These were expressed in terms of the costs of making adjustments, high sickness absence and, less commonly cited, a diminished rate of effectiveness by some staff with health conditions or disabilities;
- the barriers which disabled people and people with health conditions themselves face fell into two categories: those experienced during the job applications stage, and those faced whilst in employment. At both stages, discrimination, or the fear of it, was mentioned, alongside the potentially reduced opportunities for people with some types of health condition or disability, and employers' lack of awareness of ways in which some health conditions and/or disabilities could be accommodated through adjustments and adaptations;

- more than three-quarters of the employers in the sample reported having made adjustments and/or adaptations both for existing employees and for those hired through NDDP. Physical adaptations commonly concerned office furniture, specialist computer equipment and software. There were also adjustments to procedures made in order to recruit or retain disabled employees and employees with health conditions, most notably changes to job or role, changes to working hours, and changes to the level of supervision or support provided;
- larger organisations reported having access to internal sources of support, most usually human resources and occupational health, which understood how their organisation worked, and hence employers usually said they would approach these services first;
- some employers had consulted external groups for help and advice in dealing with the needs of particular employees. These groups included disability generalists, for example Ability Net and Jobcentre Plus (Two Ticks disability symbol), but also groups with more specific remits, for example Repetitive Strain Injury specialists or the Back Care Centre. However, none of these services gave access to the potential recruits which could be provided by NDDP.

Chapter 5 considers employers' awareness of NDDP. The key themes are:

- All employers in the sample were known to have been involved in NDDP; however, there was a low level of conscious involvement in NDDP as a named initiative. Knowledge of, and involvement with, the Job Brokers who delivered it was higher, as was knowledge of the New Deal brand more generally.
- It appears that even with this cohort of employers, many Job Brokers are not overly employer-focused, concentrating much of their efforts on customers alone.
- In line with deliberate policy, NDDP is not always delivered explicitly under its own name, and is sometimes delivered alongside other labour market initiatives, such as WORKSTEP. In these instances, employers were unsure which programme their employees were involved in.
- Where employers had heard of NDDP specifically, this was often through existing contacts and networks, or through previous employment, colleagues or friends, rather than as a result of direct contact from a Job Broker.
- Employers reported having been involved with similar organisations to the Job Broker, including Jobcentre Plus, and specialist employment agencies. Voluntary sector organisations, in particular, tended to have a number of relevant organisations with whom they were in contact, through their local support networks.

Chapter 6 studies the relationship between employers and Job Brokers, among those 31 employer respondents who were aware of the programme and the Job Brokers working through it. The key points are:

- Contact with Job Brokers had often apparently been generated through NDDP, although some of the best-developed relationships predated it.
- Although there was considerable variety, the dominant pattern of these relationships looked remarkably similar to the ones reported in Wave 1. Specifically:
 - initial contact was usually with reference to a specific vacancy, more occasionally it was regarding a customer;
 - Job Broker services focused mainly on filling these vacancies, and recruitment;
 - employers were most usually reactive in their relationship with Job Brokers, whether this was regarding vacancies, or support following job entry.
- Despite this, a substantial number of employers reported ongoing contact with a Job Broker. This was characterised by a high level of interaction and what the employer felt to be a good level of understanding between them. In the closest relationships, other innovative partnership work had taken place, such as open days, tasters, etc.
- Specific, practical assistance to the employer around the time of job entry was appreciated by employers; this helped to lessen the administrative and time burden on those who had minimal experience of recruiting disabled people and people with health conditions.
- Job Brokers also provided an intermediary point of contact for customers and employers, and were seen as a 'safe' person with whom the customer could discuss concerns or problems.
- The importance of having a central point of contact within the Job Broker emerged as having been important for some of the employers, for reasons including continuity, familiarity and trust.
- Extra requirements from employers centred around more general contact, information, and raising the profile of their work. There were also requests for additional practical help with adjustments, training and settling in.
- Major problems were seldom reported. Where any existed, they tended to be seen as areas for improvement rather than as disincentives to future involvement. Such issues were mainly around the lack of contact following a placement, and hence support during the settling in period.
- In terms of benefits to employers, recruitment assistance, particularly pre-selection emerged strongly. Several employers commented that it was the provision of suitable candidates for the job, rather than the fact that it helped them to recruit people with health conditions and disabilities that was key. For others, it was the

opposite case; they wished to promote diversity in their organisation, or were already keen to employ disabled people and people with health conditions, and this was another way of doing so.

- Several employers had employed just one NDDP recruit, but others had employed ten or more, with recruitment seeming to be potentially ongoing. Compared to Wave 1, people with a wider range of health conditions and disabilities appear to have been employed through the programme. However, the roles to which people had been employed were similarly of a low level.
- Contact between Job Broker and employer did not always foster an ongoing relationship, particularly when the number of recruits had been limited. However, several employers reported regular ongoing contact, for the purposes of supporting customers in post, keeping abreast of developments, and with a view to future placements.
- The Job Broker interventions had clearly had a significant impact at the level of individual customers. Employers highlighted the confidence-raising aspects of the Job Brokers' work, together with their support following recruitment as having been key to some of the successful placements. Some of the appointments would not have been made without the support of the Job Broker.
- In some cases, Job Brokers had fostered relationships with employers who were already well disposed to, and experienced in, employing disabled people and people with health conditions. In such instances, the added value of the Job Broker work was at best in terms of volume of recruitment, rather than producing attitude or practice changes.
- The impact of the programme seems to have been greatest where Job Brokers could put forward a supply of suitably skilled customers to employers with high staff turnovers or regular vacancies. In these cases, it was the skills of the potential recruits, rather than the fact that they have a health condition or disability that attracted the employer. In this way, non-traditional employers of disabled people and people with health conditions were growing a more diverse workforce as a result of NDDP.
- Most of the 'aware' employers said they hoped to continue or extend their work with the Job Broker in the future, although this was qualified with reservations that candidates must be able to do the job. Among the most enthusiastic employers, time constraints were mentioned as being a barrier to being involved with Job Brokers as fully as they would like.

1.7 The structure of this report

This chapter introduces the research and the detailed methodology and resulting sample characteristics are set out in Chapter 2, providing a context for the research in the remainder of the report.

Chapter 3 examines employers' general views and experiences of recruiting and employing disabled people and people with health conditions.

Chapter 4 covers the perceived benefits and constraints with regard to employing disabled people and people with health conditions, together with a discussion of any adjustments and adaptations that have been made or anticipated as a result.

Chapter 5 looks at employers' awareness of NDDP, their knowledge of what the programme comprises, and their perceived level of involvement.

Chapter 6 explores in more detail the relationship between the employers and the Job Brokers, including the types of services they had been offered, the level of ongoing contact, and the impact they felt that the programme had had on them and their employees recruited through the programme.

Chapter 7 presents a summary of our findings and sets out our conclusions.

The appendices contain the initial approach letter used to recruit employers to the study, and the discussion guide.

2 Research methodology

This chapter sets out the details of the research and how it was carried out. Firstly, it outlines the research approach, showing how it builds on the first wave of the qualitative work with employers. Next this chapter considers the research instruments and the way in which they were used in the set-up phase, the fieldwork and the analysis. Finally we look at the achieved sample of employers who took part in the research and in the light of this, we consider the implications for the conclusions which can be drawn from this work.

2.1 The research approach

The role of the Job Broker in NDDP requires a dual understanding and appreciation of the needs of both their customers, and of prospective employers. The evaluation programme, of which this current research is a part, examines the ways in which NDDP is working from the points of view of customers, employers and Job Brokers. This report on Wave 2 of the qualitative research, examines the operation of NDDP as experienced by employers.

The second wave of the qualitative research with employers builds on the first wave which was carried out in 2002. It therefore examines, from the employer perspective, how the delivery of the programme has developed during that time. It also follows up issues raised in the first wave of the research. The qualitative work complements the large scale quantitative survey of employers who have had some interaction with NDDP, and those who have not, which will be reported on in 2005.

2.1.1 The Wave 1 research design

The report to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on the first wave of this research (Aston *et al.* 2002⁵) sets out the methodology adopted there in full, however, it is worth recapping some of the significant points here as they provided a basis for the approach adopted in Wave 2.

⁵ Aston, J., Atkinson, J., Evans, C., Davis, S. and O'Regan, S. (2002), 'Employers and the New Deal for Disabled People: Qualitative Research: First Wave', IES Report to DWP.

Wave 1 of the qualitative research involved 80 interviews with employers, of whom 90 per cent had employed NDDP customers. The research had been carried out in two sequential, even-sized stages:

- Because of time constraints, stage one sampled employers who had recruited NDDP customers from the central records of the NDDP programme, which is held by DWP, and updated regularly as Job Brokers inform DWP of new customers. However, a named contact at the employing establishment was not available.
- Stage 2 supplemented this by first of all selecting appropriate employers, and then approaching the relevant Job Brokers, asking them to identify a named individual whom they had dealt with in making the NDDP placement.

In both stages, the initial approach to employers was made by letter, which was later followed up with a telephone call to invite employers to be interviewed. For employers in the first stage, letters were addressed to a generic role, ie 'the manager responsible for recruitment'. In the second stage, letters were sent to a named individual, as supplied by the Job Broker. The Wave 2 procedure was deemed to be nominally superior, both in terms of the ease of persuading the employer to take part in the study, and ensuring that we had identified the right person to do so.

Interestingly, there seemed to be little difference between the two stages within Wave 1 in terms of employers' familiarity with NDDP. Overall, less than half had been aware that they had taken part in any labour market initiative, and only 20 per cent knew that they had hired under NDDP. However, we should not rule out an effect of the differing procedures used in stages one and two on employers' awareness of the programme. So although in most cases in Stage 1 we were fairly confident that we had identified the right person to interview about NDDP, we could not always be certain that this was so. Where employers reported they were not aware of NDDP or the Job Broker, we could not be sure whether this was because of their uninformed participation, or because we had not been able to trace another person in the organisation with whom the Job Broker may have worked more closely.

2.1.2 Considerations for Wave 2

The first wave of this research had clearly identified the need to secure a named contact within each employer organisation, as being more effective, far less time consuming and more reliable, than that the approach initially adopted. Thus, it was proposed that in Wave 2, named contacts within employing organisations should be obtained wherever possible to facilitate our approach, and to improve the likelihood of securing research participants. It was also felt that this approach would strengthen some of the conclusions which could be drawn from the interviews with employers. Since we would be certain that we were speaking to the most appropriate person in terms of Job Broker contact, we would be able to ascertain more about the extent of conscious and unconscious participation in NDDP amongst employers.

A targeted sample

However, the key change adopted for Wave 2 was to use purposive sampling to secure a particular kind of employer participant; those with whom the Job Brokers felt they had developed a 'good' or substantive relationship.

It was agreed with DWP that the second stage qualitative research should explore in depth the ways in which Job Brokers are interacting with employers, to examine, for example, which kinds of approaches and ways of maintaining contact are most effective from the point of view of employers. We agreed with DWP that to facilitate a deeper understanding of the Job Broker relationship with employers, the second wave fieldwork should be focused on employers who were likely to have had the most, and most positive, contact with Job Brokers. The research would then be able to explore in depth the process and outcomes of working with Job Brokers as a result of NDDP.

It was proposed that a targeted sample of 'best practice' employer contacts would be obtained from Job Brokers by DWP, and passed to IES. The criteria used to guide Job Brokers in selecting appropriate employers are shown in Section 2.1.3.

Scale

It was agreed with DWP that around 50 interviews would be carried out with employers, the majority of which would be face to face.

Employer characteristics

A study of 50 employers cannot claim to be representative of the many employers who have recruited an NDDP customer. Additionally, in the Wave 2 research it was decided to focus on employers who had been involved in NDDP 'best practice' from the point of view of Job Brokers. Hence, the sample was targeted towards particular participants of the programme, rather than being a random sample of NDDP employers. Nonetheless, our aim was to ensure that our sample would include a range of employers, displaying a variety of characteristics which would intuitively appear to have some bearing on employment policy, practice and day-to-day business operations. As in the first stage of our work, these were felt to be organisation size, sector, and type of business. Since this research is qualitative in nature, the results are indicative rather than representative, and no claims can be made about the numerical significance of any of the findings. However, the research did aim to provide coverage on all of the major employment characteristics within the achieved sample of responding employers, in order to account for the ways in which these distinguishing features might affect the experiences and perceptions of employers.

Because of a smaller sample than expected from which to draw our participants, in practice we had little control over the types of employers included in this research. However, the achieved sample still provides a good spread of employers across all of the variables outlined above.

Geographical location

The location of employers was determined by the location and geographical remit of the Job Brokers who were selected and approached on our behalf by DWP. It was felt important to include employers over as broad a geographical spread across England and Wales as possible, in order to encompass a range of labour market conditions, for example the tightness or otherwise of the labour markets, levels of unemployment, and the available skills amongst the workforce. We felt that it would also be desirable to have a mixture of urban and rural employers. The original list of Job Brokers approached fulfilled these criteria, as between them they covered most regions of England and some in Wales. In practice, we needed to make use of the whole sample we were given, in order to secure enough participants, we were restricted in the positive steps that we could take to ensure a good spread. Nonetheless, we are satisfied that reasonable geographical coverage in terms of location and setting was achieved.

Job Broker type

A key consideration in this second wave of the research was the type of Job Broker responsible for placing customers with employers. There were four distinct Job Broker types:

- Jobcentre Plus;
- private sector;
- voluntary group;
- disability group.

We felt that it was important to have contact from all four types of Job Broker represented amongst the participating organisations, to explore whether the type of Job Broker had any bearing on the way that the programme operated at a local level. This was the characteristic over which we had the least control, as it was entirely dependent upon the extent to which the various Job Brokers supplied us with employer contacts. As discussed later in this chapter (see Table 2.1) we were able to include employers nominated by all four types of Job Broker, although some types were better represented than others.

2.1.3 Selection of Job Brokers

The basis for selecting Job Brokers was mainly type of broker, and on effectiveness in placing customers into work. Thus, DWP provided IES with a full list of Job Brokers with an up-to-date summary of the numbers of registrations, jobs secured and jobs sustained. The list was divided into four sections, as follows:

- Jobcentre Plus;
- disability specialist charities and voluntary organisations;
- commercial providers;
- public sector employers and community groups.

Within each group, Job Brokers were selected according to their overall efficiency in placing customers in jobs, ie those with the highest ratio of jobs secured to registrations. Within these criteria, the sample was narrowed down to 30 in total.

Some further adjustments to this sub-sample were made to avoid over-concentration on organisations with several different NDDP contracts, to minimise the selection of very small Job Brokers, and to secure a good regional distribution of Job Brokers.

This strategy was adopted in order to produce a 'good practice' angle and to ensure that sufficient numbers of employer contacts would be provided by the Job Brokers, to be invited to participate in the research.

2.1.4 Compiling the employer sample

Job Brokers were asked by DWP for their assistance in identifying a sample of employers that they considered to be examples of good practice with regard to NDDP and Job Broker operation, for example:

- employers with whom Job Brokers had placed a significant number of customers;
- employers with whom Job Brokers felt they had built close working relationships;
- employers for whom Job Brokers had provided a significant amount of support and assistance.

A total of 30 Job Brokers spread across England and Wales was approached by DWP for this purpose. Each Job Broker was asked to supply ten 'best practice' employers, and individual named contacts within them. They were also asked to supply some nominal information about each, for example, size and sector of the organisation.

Sixteen of the Job Brokers responded to the DWP request, although not all of these were able to supply ten employer contacts. A total of 139 employer contacts were returned by the Job Brokers, and passed to IES by DWP. This sample, from which to draw participants for the study was less than half the size originally hoped for.

The potential sample size was further reduced by the need to pass a number of these 'good practice' employers to the sample required for the quantitative research. As we did not wish to approach employers twice, ie to take part in both the qualitative and quantitative research, we had to ensure that the sample for the latter did not under-represent these 'good practice' employers. Consequently, of the 139 employer contacts, 23 of them were randomly selected and passed over for the quantitative research. This left the qualitative study with a total of 116 good practice employers to approach with regard to participating in the research (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Qualitative sample employer contacts, by Job Broker type and region of employer

Job Broker Type	Region	No. of contacts
Disability group	Yorkshire & North West	4
Disability group	South East	10
Disability group	Wales	9
Disability group	North East	6
Disability group	South East	2
Jobcentre Plus	North East	10
Private sector	West Midlands, East Midlands, North East, North West	7
Private sector	East & East Midlands	9
Private sector	Wales	7
Private sector	North West	8
Private sector	East	8
Private sector	West Midlands	10
Private sector	South West	10
Private sector	East Midlands & Yorkshire	3
Voluntary group	West Midlands	6
Voluntary group	Yorkshire	7
Total		116

2.1.5 Constraints

The sampling procedures adopted were subject to some important constraints, which we note below.

Volume of returns from Job Brokers

When DWP approached the 30 Job Brokers they were asked to each supply contact details for at least ten of their 'good practice' employers. This would have yielded a total of 300 employers from which IES could select an appropriate sample to contact for the research. Based on the assumption that there is generally a one-in-three success rate in securing participants, we would have selected 150 employers from the total 300 to approach in order to secure 50 interviews. However, despite several reminders from DWP, only 16 out of 30 Job Brokers responded to the request for employer contacts. In addition, not all of the 16 Job Brokers who did respond were able to provide as many as ten contacts. The resulting return amounted to fewer than half of the expected total number of employer contacts, and it became clear that all of the usable employer contacts would need to be approached in order to try to obtain as many of the 50 interviews as possible during the timescale of the research.

The response from Job Brokers was disappointing, particularly as this stage of the work was undertaken on our behalf by DWP. However, there are reasons which might explain this. In Wave 1, preparatory interviews carried out with Job Brokers

prior to the mainstage fieldwork revealed that some Job Brokers were concerned that approaches to NDDP employers could break their customers' confidentiality. Similarly, in Wave 2, DWP reported that some Job Brokers did not want to forward employers' names for the research as they had spent a long time developing a good relationship and believed that doing so could risk breaking the trust they had built up. In addition, it seems that some Job Brokers did not want to draw attention to disability; preferring to focus on selling a person's skills rather than focusing on their disability or health condition.

In Wave 1, it seemed that in some cases, NDDP customers were hired without the employer being aware that their employee had taken part in the programme. Furthermore, in some cases this could mean that the employer was unaware that the employee had a disability or health condition, for example, the customer may have decided not to tell their employer in an effort to avoid potential discrimination. This is discussed more fully in the Wave 1 report, but the implications remained the same for the Wave 2 fieldwork.

To summarise, as in Wave 1, we could not approach employers overtly as evaluators of NDDP, instead, we invited them to take part in research of a more general nature, 'employers' experiences of recruiting and employing disabled people and people with health conditions.' Job Brokers were made aware that our methodology ensured we would not break the confidentiality of their customers. In spite of this reassurance, some Job Brokers may still have been reluctant to pass on the contact details of employers with whom they had placed customers. For others, issues such as time pressure or staff changes within the Job Broker operation, resulting in a lack of continuity and knowledge of previous customers, may have prevented a response to the DWP request.

Employer characteristics

As discussed in Section 2.1, whilst this research was qualitative in nature, and therefore did not aim to be representative, we hoped to be able to consider a range of independent variables when securing the sample of employers, including location, size, sector and Job Broker type. In the event, the sample was so small as to preclude any systematic selection. However, we monitored employment characteristics amongst the achieved sample as the fieldwork progressed. Despite the sample constraints, we nonetheless managed to secure participants who covered all of the key variables we wished to take into account.

Timescale

The fact that Job Brokers responded more slowly than anticipated, in some cases requiring several reminders, had knock-on effects for the fieldwork. It had originally been hoped that all fieldwork would be complete by the end of 2003, however, in order to secure the maximum number of interviews possible from our sample, fieldwork continued until the end of January 2004.

2.2 The research instruments

An introductory letter was sent to all 116 employer contacts. This letter outlined the study as research being undertaken for the DWP on employers' views and experiences of recruiting and employing disabled people and people with health conditions. It did not mention NDDP specifically, as employers' awareness and knowledge of this was a research question and we did not wish to alert employers who had hitherto not heard of the programme. The purpose of the letter was to make employers aware of the research before they were contacted by telephone by an IES researcher. A copy of the letter is included at Appendix A.

Employers were contacted by telephone shortly after they would have received the letter, to see if they were willing to participate in the study. Wherever possible a face-to-face interview was arranged.

The substantive interviews were conducted using a semi-structured discussion guide which was devised by IES and approved for use by DWP. The discussion guide is included at Appendix B.

The guide was laid out in the following sections:

- An introductory section to explain the research.
- General background on the employer.
- Experience in recruiting and employing people with health conditions and disabilities.
- Awareness of NDDP.
- Involvement with NDDP.
- Working with Job Brokers.
- Usefulness and contribution of NDDP.
- A section for employers who did not think they had been involved in NDDP and had no knowledge of the Job Broker.

The discussion guide was designed to provide some contextual information about the employer and then to probe in particular, employers' experiences of working with Job Brokers. Being semi-structured, it was flexible to allow the interviewers scope to concentrate on particular areas of interest and pursue other issues if and when they emerged.

Interviews were taped and subsequently written up, or extensive notes were taken during the interview. All interview notes were written up in full, before being coded and analysed using Atlas.ti software. Atlas.ti allowed us to systematically analyse a large number of complex interviews, drawing together emerging and recurring themes. It also enabled us to examine the findings by the key variables such as employer type, to explore whether these affected the way NDDP was operating and the way it was perceived.

2.3 The achieved sample

Our telephone contacts to secure participation revealed that the majority of our employer contact details were correct and up-to-date. The fact that 50 interviews were achieved from a sample of 115 shows a good participation rate, somewhat higher than would often be expected. We attribute this to:

- in most cases, having a named contact within the organisation;
- the sample being targeted towards good practice employers;

Most of the non-responses were caused by:

- our named contact having moved on, with no suitable replacement available;
- employers' refusal to participate, because of lack of interest or lack of time.

2.3.1 Sample characteristics

The characteristics of the achieved sample are shown in Table 2.2. The table shows that, in spite of having very little control over the selection of participants, in the main, good coverage was achieved across all of the variables.

In terms of the size of employing organisations participating, just under half of our interviews were within relatively large organisations, some of which had several thousand employees overall. Some of these interviewees were able to speak for the organisation as a whole, although others talked only in terms of the team or department in which they worked. However, even in these cases, interviewees usually had access to the wider procedures and support systems generally available in large organisations. Just under one-third of our interviewees worked in medium-sized organisations, and one-fifth were in small organisations, some of which were micro businesses. Hence, the research encompassed organisations ranging from those with thousands of employees, to those employing just one or two people.

Coverage in terms of the type of organisation was also good, with an even split between private sector, and public or voluntary organisations. Public sector organisations were most usually also large, although we also have some large private sector organisations in the sample. Voluntary organisations were often community-based groups or charitable organisations, often with a focus on assisting disadvantaged groups, including those targeted by NDDP.

Most broad regions of England were covered and there were also interviews in Wales, and these cover a range of local labour markets. Organisations having had customers from all four Job Broker types were represented in the interviews. Voluntary groups, disability groups and private sector companies were well represented, with smaller numbers of Jobcentre Plus Brokers. This was as a result of the response we received from Job Brokers for the purposes of compiling the sample.

Table 2.2 Characteristics of achieved sample

	N	%
Employment size		
small (under 25)	10	20
medium (25-100)	16	32
large (over 100)	24	48
Sector		
public sector	15	30
private sector	25	50
voluntary sector	10	20
Business activity		
Production sector	15	30
Service sector	35	70
Location		
North East	5	10
Yorkshire	6	12
West Midlands	8	16
London & South East	12	24
East Midlands	4	8
East	3	6
Wales	6	12
North West	2	4
South West	4	8
Job Broker type		
Jobcentre Plus	4	8
Private sector	22	44
Voluntary group	13	26
Disability group	11	22
Total	50	100

2.3.2 The interviewees

At the start of this work, Job Brokers were asked to identify employers they felt were examples of their good practice. They were also asked for the named contacts with whom they had placed customers, within these organisations. Consequently, we had named individuals nominated by Job Brokers to whom we wrote, following up with a telephone call. At this point we found that in a minority of cases, the nominated individual was not available, usually because they had left the organisation. In this case, we tried to ascertain whether there might be someone else, perhaps their replacement or a colleague with whom they had worked closely, who would be suitable for our purposes, and would be willing to take part. Using this approach, the

majority of our interviews (42) were with interviewees nominated by Job Brokers and eight were with a stand-in.

The roles of our interviewees included personnel managers, line managers and supervisors, managing directors, business owners, contract managers and office managers. They generally had recruitment responsibilities, together with a mixture of line management, human resources policy and operational duties.

2.3.3 Implications and limitations

At this stage, there are some implications arising from the methodology and achieved sample that are worth highlighting.

First, we achieved a good spread across all of the variables in terms of organisation type and location. However, the Job Broker types represented in this research are less evenly represented. Private sector providers are over-represented, and services provided through Jobcentre Plus are under-represented. This should be borne in mind when reading the rest of this report.

Second, the impact of the way in which the sample was constructed must be considered. In line with the aims of this second wave of the qualitative research, Job Brokers were asked for their assistance in providing us with lists of good practice employers with whom they had worked. As a result of this we would expect our sample to comprise employers with whom Job Brokers had had the closest relationships. As later chapters show, many of our interviewees reported that this was the case; relationships had been built up over time between the employer and Job Broker, which benefited both. However, there were many other cases where such contact was regarded by the employer as quite minimal. In still others, it appeared to have been non-existent, since the interviewee was not aware of the Job Broker at all. We already knew that all of the employers in our sample had taken part in NDDP, and in the majority of interviews we knew that were speaking to the right person about this. Hence, when our interviewees were unaware of the Job Broker or having taken part in NDDP, it must mean that they had been unknowing participants of the programme, and that the Job Brokers had been working primarily, or wholly, with the customer, and not with the employer.

3 Employers' experiences of employing disabled people and people with health conditions

This chapter examines the general views and experiences of our employer sample towards the employment of disabled people and people with health conditions, and reflects the more general discussions that occurred at the beginning of the interviews. It sets the context for the remainder of the report which focuses more specifically upon the New Deal for Disabled People. This chapter consists of three sections which examine:

- the organisational context, ie awareness and experience within these organisations of equal opportunities policies, legislation and public employment programmes;
- their experience of employing people with health conditions and disabilities; including employers' understanding of what constitutes a disability, the volume and types of health conditions and disabilities amongst their employees;
- the extent of employers' awareness of people with health conditions and disabilities amongst their staff.

3.1 Organisational context

This section considers general equal opportunities and diversity issues such as formal policies, knowledge of the Disability Discrimination Act, and experience of government employment programmes. Each interview started with a general discussion in this area to establish the organisational context of the employers and their experience and knowledge of public programmes, before focusing more specifically on employees with a disability or health condition and NDDP.

3.1.1 Equal opportunities and diversity issues

Equal opportunities policies

Many of these employers had some kind of formal equal opportunities or diversity statement, often as part of their broad conditions of employment or human resources policies. However, this varied by the size of the organisation.

The small employers (with under 25 employees) rarely had a formal policy, and nor did they undertake any overt monitoring of recruitment. A commonly cited reason for this was that it did not seem worthwhile or necessary to them when they had so few employees. Therefore, in small organisations the emphasis placed on 'equality' in recruitment and employment seemed to be influenced largely by the individual within the organisation who was responsible for recruitment and selection.

Almost all of the medium and large employers had an equal opportunities policy. In the majority of cases, this was one policy encompassing various diversity issues, although a few large organisations had separate statements on disability, race and gender. However, the monitoring of the impact of these policies and of applicants with health conditions or disabilities seemed to be more varied. These large organisations were also most likely to formally monitor recruitment and retention of disabled people, although so too were medium or small organisations that were part of a larger organisation, for example a training organisation that is part of the local council. Those who did monitor disability among applicants and employees seemed much more confident in believing that their equal opportunities statements were having a definite impact on their business. Where monitoring did occur it was largely through statistics collected from disability questionnaires given to applicants and/or interviewees, or from questions added to application forms.

Where equal opportunities policies existed they were largely displayed in staff handbooks but also were sometimes on company intranets.

The Disability Discrimination Act

Almost all of our employers knew of the Disability Discrimination Act. However, the level of knowledge varied widely.

Again, large and medium-sized organisations seemed to be overtly concerned that they should comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and to be seen to be complying with it. Therefore, their level of knowledge of the Act was fairly high. The Act appeared to have focused managerial attention upon how compliance could be achieved, particularly in organisations which had large human resource functions or a dedicated diversity officer.

In some cases, particularly small organisations, only the name was familiar. In these organisations, typically there was a general recognition that the Act meant that they could not discriminate against disabled people, albeit without much knowledge of the detail. In these cases, although knowledge of the provisions of the Act was poor, simply knowing that the Act existed seemed to have had a positive effect, by

focusing attention on the issue of disability discrimination and making employers keen to be seen as equal opportunities employers so as not to fall foul of the law.

Two Ticks – Jobcentre Plus disability symbol⁶

Around half of the employers in the sample were users of the Jobcentre Plus Two Ticks disability symbol. The users were slightly more likely to be in larger organisations, where more than half used the symbol. A quarter had not heard of Two Ticks at all.

3.1.2 Experience of government employment programmes

Early in the interviews, the issue of government employment programmes was discussed in broad terms. The employers were simply asked if they had taken part in any government employment programmes but were not prompted with any programme names. Experience of NDDP was discussed more specifically with the employers later in the interviews (and this will be discussed in Chapter 5).

Just over half of the employers, unprompted, said they had taken part in a public employment programme of some kind. However, under one-third said they had taken part in NDDP. This confirms our finding from Wave 1 that, although we know that all our sample had actually recruited under NDDP, their participation was often unrecognised. This point is highlighted by the fact that employers who said they hadn't been involved in NDDP sometimes said that they were not completely sure, or mentioned being involved in a similar programme such as WORKSTEP. Around one-third said they had taken part in one of the other New Deal programmes, most commonly the New Deal for Young People. A few employees mentioned programmes such as Modern Apprenticeships and 'Youth Training Schemes'.

Private sector organisations were more likely to say they had taken part in NDDP with well over one-third saying they had been involved. Additionally, a few public sector organisations had had some involvement with Job Broker organisations prior to NDDP, and this may be why they were less likely to specifically identify how a employee with a disability or health condition may have come to them. Small organisations were unlikely to say they had taken part in NDDP.

The small number of interviews carried out with an individual who was not the original contact named by the Job Broker showed, unsurprisingly, a lower level of awareness of participation in NDDP than was the case where we spoke to the Job Broker's original contact. Around one-fifth stated that they had taken part.

⁶ The Two Ticks symbol is used by employers to show they are positive about disabled people's abilities. Jobcentre Plus award the symbol in recognition of an employer who has agreed to meet five commitments regarding the recruitment, employment, retention and career development of disabled people.

3.2 Employment of disabled people and people with health conditions

This section looks at the disabled people and people with health conditions employed within the organisations, and deals in turn with employer understanding of what constitutes disability, the scale of employment of people with health conditions and disabilities, the types of health condition or disability these employees had, and the roles they worked in.

3.2.1 Employers' understanding of disability

Employers' understanding of disability varied widely among our employers and the definitions described here are based upon the initial reactions of the respondent before discussing the Disability Discrimination Act definition.⁷

Many smaller employers – those with little experience of employing disabled people and people with health conditions, or those who said they were not aware of much of the detail of the Disability Discrimination Act – seemed to focus upon a more narrow understanding that usually involved physical impairments that were very 'visible'. Larger public sector organisations seemed able to take a broader view in line with their being aware of the Disability Discrimination Act and the definition of disability it describes. 'Insider' organisations, who worked on disability issues, and with disabled people and people with health conditions, were more likely to offer a broader view that was based upon experience as well as the Disability Discrimination Act definition.

The key to understanding disability seemed to be experience. Those with little experience used a narrow definition based largely upon physical disability. The more experienced an organisation was at working with disabled people and people with health conditions (whether they were employees or customers of the organisation) the broader their definition, encompassing people with a wide variety of health conditions and disabilities.

3.2.2 Employers' estimates of the numbers of employees with health conditions and disabilities

We encountered considerable variety in the ways in which these employers estimated how many people with health conditions and disabilities they employed. In a few organisations, it was not possible to ascertain the number of people with health conditions and disabilities in employment. Furthermore, despite describing to interviewees the Disability Discrimination Act definition, the employers interviewed may also have used very different definitions to arrive at the number of people with health conditions and disabilities employed. Their estimates did not include people

⁷ The Disability Discrimination Act definition of disability is a physical or mental impairment that has an adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The effect should be substantial and long-term.

who had not informed their employer of any health condition or disability. There were also cases where an employee has a health condition or disability in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act definition, but does not consider themselves disabled.

For the reasons already discussed, the numbers in this section should be treated with some caution. However, many employees were able to give some estimation of the number of employees with a health condition or disability.

The number of employees with a health condition or disability varied hugely among our organisations, from one (interestingly, in this case, a company that only had one employee) to around 80 employees. Exact numbers or proportions of staff were often difficult to ascertain, particularly from large organisations who found it hard to say how many employees there may be in the whole workforce as well as those with disabilities or health conditions. It would seem that their greater commitment to monitoring numbers was often simultaneously offset by a more subtle understanding of what exactly constituted a long-term health condition or disability, rendering their data less definitive in their eyes.

Almost all of our employers were able to give some estimation of how many of their employees had a health condition or disability, although some said they had 'at least' the specified number and believed there could be more they did not know about. Small or medium-sized organisations seemed to be able to be more specific about how many disabled people and people with health conditions they employed due to the interviewee being personally aware of the people in their organisation and not relying on gathered statistics as in larger organisations. There were also one or two examples among our employers where almost all of the staff employed has a disability or health condition, for example operations set up by disability groups or local councils, specifically to employ disabled people and people with health conditions.

As already discussed, awareness of NDDP was fairly low. Therefore, our employers were not always able to distinguish those who had come to them through NDDP from those that had come through general recruitment or other employment initiatives. It is difficult to ascertain the proportion of their disabled employees that arrived with them through NDDP. However, of those who were able to say, the proportion varied from one-sixth to all of their employees with a health condition or disability. However, we were only able to ascertain this information from a small minority of employers, and those we did get the information from were mainly small or medium-sized organisations.

3.2.3 Occupations and roles

These employing organisations had recruited disabled people and people with health conditions into a variety of occupations and roles, from low level unskilled or semi-skilled work, through to higher level professional and technical roles. However, the employees were concentrated in:

- low level unskilled or semi-skilled roles (largely clerical, customer service and retail);
- non-manual or very light manual work.

Despite this, there were several notable examples of higher level staff (for example a senior manager, a CAD designer, a TV programme editor) and of light to heavy manual workers (for example a landscape gardener, drivers, factory workers). There were a few examples of people being moved from heavier manual work to lighter work as a result of developing a health condition or disability, for example a fork lift truck driver changing roles to a warehouse operative.

3.2.4 Types of disability or health condition amongst employees

Employers reported a wide variety of types of disability and health conditions of varying severity among their workforces. These consisted of:

- **Physical disabilities** – a wide variety of physical impairments were cited. Employees with hearing impairments were particularly prevalent, with about one-third saying they had staff with a hearing impairment. Only two employers said they employed a wheelchair user. Other examples of employees with physical impairments include people with a visual impairment, people with mobility or dexterity impairment, and people with a chronic back condition.
- **Mental health conditions** – many employees reported having staff who have a mental health condition, the most commonly cited condition being depression.
- **Learning difficulties** – such as dyslexia.
- **Long-term health conditions** – such as heart conditions, diabetes, epilepsy, arthritis and ME.

In most cases, a disability or health condition was reported to have had only a small or modest impact on a person's ability to carry out their job effectively, and this seemed to lessen somewhat in those cases where employers reported having made adjustments to the job or circumstances to help the individuals concerned. There was some suggestion that employees with a health condition or disability needed to take more time off work, particularly those with a long-term health condition or a mental health condition. However, this was more widely reported for staff who had developed a health condition or disability once in post, than for staff recruited with an existing disability or health condition.

There were examples where employing one person with a specific impairment had increased the confidence of an organisation in employing more people with the same impairment. In some cases, it was also reported that impairments had not required as many adjustments, or affected the employee's ability to do their job as much as the employer had originally anticipated. This increased the confidence of the employer in recruiting another employee with the same impairment.

It would seem that there were many more people within our employing organisations with minor, or hidden, disabilities or health conditions, of which our interviewees were not aware, and clearly respondents could not comment on the extent or character of this 'grey area'.

3.3 Employers' knowledge about health conditions and disabilities amongst their staff

This section examines how employers had found out about disability and health conditions among their staff, and the quality of their knowledge.

3.3.1 The quality of knowledge

Employers felt they were relatively well informed about any health conditions and disabilities amongst their staff. However, there was a distinction between impairments and conditions they could see, and those that were hidden. Their insight into the former was generally regarded as strong; however, the existence of the latter meant that some of them did not feel fully informed. The confidence of some employers that they were well informed about disabilities and health conditions among their staff may also have been partly due to some of them having a very narrow definition of disability that only included physical, or the most severe, impairments.

We noted some marked sectoral differences between how *important* organisations felt it was to be informed:

- Some 'insider' organisations with an interest in disability (which were largely public sector or voluntary) tended to put a lot of effort into finding out about their employees' health status in order to offer them help and assistance. It seemed to be part of their ethos to create an environment where employees would feel able to disclose disabilities and health conditions without fear of discrimination.
- Within the private sector, there tended to be a greater reliance on the employee to inform the employer of their health. This is not to say that, once disclosed, such organisations felt any less responsible to offer help or support, but simply that they appeared rather more passive about finding out. However, large private sector organisations were often well informed due to more formal monitoring processes, and many also wanted to be aware for health and safety reasons.

3.3.2 How employers find out about health conditions and disabilities amongst their staff

The majority of employers said that they would find out about health conditions or disabilities among applicants and employees through a formal method at some point during the application process. However, the effectiveness of this procedure ought not to be exaggerated, as most of our respondents conceded that some disability or health conditions went unreported within the organisations.

During application or recruitment

There were several ways in which employers said they would find out about health conditions or disabilities among applicants or potential recruits. At this stage, the process of finding out was more formal than it would be if a health condition or disability became apparent once an employee had taken up their post. The most common methods were:

- An equal opportunities monitoring section on the application form or a section on health. Often this involved questions about how much time off sick a person has had in the past 12 months, or sometimes a direct question about any health conditions or disabilities. This method was particularly common among large private sector employers and in the public sector. In some cases, information collected in this way was only collated on an anonymous basis (ie it was for monitoring purposes only) and, therefore, would not be linked to the employee. In these cases, the recruiter remained unaware that a particular individual might have reported a health condition or disability.
- After someone had been selected for interview, a few employers reported writing to them, or telephoning, to ask if they had any special requirements or needed any help in order for them to attend the interview. This could lead indirectly to the discovery of a health condition or disability.
- Some organisations, particularly smaller organisations with less formal data collection methods, did not find out until the interview stage. In some cases, it was reported that a person had a visible health condition or disability, and, therefore, this was discovered as a matter of course. Some, however, found out by more formal methods at interview stage, either through asking specific questions about health during the interview, or by providing a health questionnaire to be completed by the applicant.
- In a small minority of cases, an occupational health check was carried out, as a matter of course, for all staff being offered jobs; particularly when the job is physically or emotionally demanding, for example when recruiting paramedics.
- There were a couple of cases in very small organisations where the employee had been known to the employer previous to their being employed (for example a friend or relative). Therefore, they were already aware that the employee had a disability or health condition.

- There were a couple of cases of public sector training organisations where employees had previously been learners, and so the employers were aware of their disability or health condition before they applied for, or started, work.

In most cases, a combination of the above methods led to the discovery of a health condition or disability amongst applicants and potential recruits.

Finding out once an employee was in post

Of course, there were cases where a person's disability or health condition was not disclosed through these formal methods, or where the condition appeared or deteriorated only after appointment. In these cases it is most likely to be discovered, if at all, through sickness absence from work or when difficulties arose for an employee in trying to carry out their job. The methods of discovering a disability or health condition once a person was in post tended to be more informal than the processes already discussed (although larger companies tended to have more formal processes for dealing with and following up on sickness absence).

4 Benefits, constraints and adjustments

This chapter looks at how these employers viewed the balance of advantage and disadvantage in employing people with a health condition or disability, and the adjustments they had made. The questions asked of the respondents covered the following areas:

- business benefits resulting from recruiting disabled people and people with health conditions;
- constraints and difficulties associated with recruiting from this target population;
- barriers for disabled people and people with health conditions when taking up work;
- experience of making adjustments to enable staff with health conditions or disabilities to carry out their tasks;
- support, both internal and external, provided to employers to recruit and employ staff with health conditions or disabilities.

4.1 Perceived advantages

The respondents were asked: *'Does employing disabled people or people with health conditions have any benefits to the business?'* Many reported that benefit was indeed derived from recruiting people with health conditions and disabled people, although few seemed to have thought about this systematically before they were asked. Thus, it was only on further exploration that it emerged that benefit was gained in a variety of different ways. These benefits are discussed at length below, but it should be stressed that few respondents provided an unprompted list.

4.1.1 Business benefits

The variety of advantages reported could be a function of the variety of organisation type surveyed, from the voluntary sector through to the private sector.

Diverse skills and perspectives

Some employers expressed the view that their employees who had a health condition or disability brought skills, knowledge, and abilities to the organisation, which had been gained as a result of their health condition or disability, and were not so common amongst their non-disabled staff. These diverse skills had the effect of improving the level of service provided by the organisation in question, which often tended to be in the caring sector, where the recipient of the service had a health condition or disability themselves.

There were several reported instances of staff with health conditions or disabilities having skills that enhanced the service provided by the organisation. The skills that these employees offered were gained by them as a direct result of their own disability but these same skills have been shown to be transferable to the labour market:

In terms of benefits, the deaf lady has brought new skills into the organisation, as she can sign. She has taught some of the other staff. This skill is very useful in terms of meeting the business objective.

(Housing sector)

The most commonly cited skill that people with health conditions and disabilities brought to the organisation was that of understanding better the diverse needs of customers. Some of the employers credited this increased understanding of the customer with a disability or health condition to the fact that the employee had a similar condition:

'Employing disabled people, especially blind people, has a great benefit for the organisation. This is because if you have an insight into blindness, your level of understanding, and therefore service, will be greater.'

(Charitable organisation)

Also expressed was the view that experiencing a certain health condition or disability, and the understanding gained from this, was transferable to other health conditions or disabilities:

'Employing disabled people definitely helps the organisation. They are more aware of the issues that face disabled people in society.'

(Recruitment organisation)

Reflecting the diversity of the local community

The idea that employing staff with health conditions and disabilities benefits the organisation by the workforce reflecting the diversity of the local community, was raised by several employers. This benefit was framed in several different ways, the most common of which was having a visibly diverse workforce. This idea tended to be raised by private sector retail organisations, as a couple of such organisations stated:

'Advantages – reflects the customers, shows them it's a caring and responsible organisation, it's good PR.'

'Reflecting the local community in the staff employed makes good business sense.'

There were also employers who stated that reflecting the local community in the workforce was a benefit but did not state it in terms of 'bottom line' or positive public relations. Instead, the opinion expressed was that reflecting the community was the right thing to do:

'[I] think that employing people with an obvious physical disability is good on a social level, it's good to have difference and diversity.'

(Manufacturing company)

Related to the above idea, some respondents thought that reflecting the local community in terms of disability and health conditions was all part of the diversity agenda. And by employing people with health conditions and disabilities they were demonstrating their commitment to this agenda:

'It's also good for the Council as it's showing that we are inclusive, we're not just talking about it, but we are showing it.'

(Local council)

Employers not only saw a benefit in terms of raised profile with customers, but also among existing and potential staff. Being an equal opportunities employer tended to put a positive message out to these groups as well:

'It shows that we don't discriminate, that there are opportunities, and that people can all bring something to the job, their disability aside.'

(NHS Trust)

'She [the woman with the hearing impairment] also helps out with job fairs and that's good for members of the public to see. They feel that we are a more inclusive employer and other deaf people can feel more confident about working.'

(Local council)

Organisational learning

If, as suggested above, employing staff with health conditions and disabilities brings in a more diverse set of skills and knowledge to an organisation, then it may be that these skills spread further within it. We found some evidence that such skills and knowledge were being transferred to other employees, and so it appears that some organisations were learning from the staff with health conditions and disabilities. Employers reported this process occurring both in a formal and informal manner. In terms of formal methods, some staff with health conditions and disabilities had delivered internal courses or training in areas such as disability awareness. However,

the most common way for this to occur was in an informal manner:

They gave a man who used a wheelchair a week's work experience:

'...he helped them with their access audit, and made them all think about how viewers with disabilities might perceive the way disability is portrayed on television.'

(Television production company)

Several employers reported that their able-bodied staff learnt from their co-workers who had a disability or health condition, as is evident above. Employers also reported that this learning could positively impact upon the business:

'There are benefits to employing disabled people, for example, if we can't accept diversity in our staff group, how can we accept the diversity of those we care for?'

(Care home)

Increased potential labour market

A few employers recognised that being open to employing people with health conditions and disabilities increased the pool of possible candidates, which is especially important in a tight labour market or areas where particular skills are in short supply. Those employers who did not consider such applicants would be missing out on potential staff. Linked with this was the idea that the consideration of candidates with health conditions and disabilities could quite possibly result in employing better quality employees:

'To the extent that other employers do discriminate, if we don't, then they can recruit a higher calibre person than average among disabled people.'

(Recruitment organisation)

It might be thought that this effect would also be evident to employers in labour markets which were not so tight. However, this did not seem to be the case in this sample, and it may simply be that the labour market conditions had acted as a catalyst for those respondents citing it, while other employers in easier circumstances had not made this connection.

Quality hires

Of importance to organisations, besides the knowledge, skills and abilities a new employee has, is how they perform in the organisation, and for how long.

A common theme to emerge is that employers felt that disabled employees show a high level of commitment and loyalty to the organisation that hires them. Interviewees reported that this loyalty and commitment meant that employees with health conditions and disabilities are, as a result, hardworking, and have low sickness absence and high retention rates:

'I think that people with disabilities can be more reliable. The average turnover for a call member of staff would be 18 months. The people we have here with disabilities working in the same job would have been here three and a half years...we have no absence issues with our disabled employees. I think the biggest advantages we get from people with disabilities or health problems is loyalty; they've stayed with us, they're flexible, and they've worked extra hours if we've needed them to.'

(Charitable organisation)

Employers also held the view that this high level of commitment is a result of being indebted to the organisation for being given employment:

'The disabled employees they have in store are extremely loyal and hardworking. They really appreciate being given a chance and repay this with loyalty.'

(Retail organisation)

4.2 Perceived constraints

As well as benefits to the business, respondents were also asked about potential difficulties: *'Are there any disadvantages to employing disabled people and people with health conditions?'* Confirming the finding of the first wave report, employers in this sample again tended to speak at greater length about the disadvantages they associated with employing people with health conditions and disabilities. It seems that this may be the case because of an asymmetry between perceived advantages and constraints/problems; in our respondents' discourses, the latter were discussed as more tangible, practical, immediate and overt considerations, whereas the former took longer to make themselves felt, were cumulative in effect, and were perhaps more easily overlooked.

At the same time, we found that a sizeable minority of employers reported that there were no disadvantages to recruiting staff with health conditions or disabilities; furthermore, this minority was greater in size than those who reported there being no advantages. Also of note is that the disadvantages described tended to be specific to certain disabilities or health conditions in certain job roles, rather than a disadvantage relating to employing people with a disability or health condition in general.

4.2.1 Perceived financial implications

Several employers thought there would be additional financial considerations when employing staff with health conditions and disabilities, and attributed this to several causes. The most common of these was the cost of making adjustments to the working environment in order to accommodate employees with certain health conditions or disabilities. Of those who cited the cost of adaptations as being disadvantageous, only a few provided concrete examples where the cost had been prohibitive. More tended to view this as a hypothetical disadvantage, and some to discount it on these grounds. Thus, an example of the latter:

'The bottom line could be said to be the cost of making adjustments, but X felt this was a cynical view, so he felt there weren't any disadvantages.'

(Educational establishment)

The view that adjustments could simultaneously impose additional financial costs on an organisation, but it was nevertheless still necessary to carry them out, was reiterated by an employer in a not-for-profit organisation. This employer said that some of the more financially viable parts of the company had funded adjustments to enable the organisation to accommodate the needs of disabled employees.

This view was, however, not typical and it was found that, especially among smaller private sector organisations, the potential cost of adaptations was an issue:

'The main problem with employing disabled people is cost. We are a small company and cannot really afford any extra expenditure. Funding for adjustments or special equipment is vital.'

Another perceived cost implication mentioned by employers was that of sickness absence, which included employees having time off work to go to medical appointments. Concern about this disadvantage did not seem to be as widespread or pronounced as it was in the previous research, with only a few of these employers raising this as a concern. However, this issue was still raised and it still tended to centre on either unpredictability (for example, for mental health conditions) or acceleration (for example, if an employee's condition worsened).

It should not be thought that even potentially large cost implications were necessarily off-putting for all employers. Although only a single instance, one employer raised the important issue of employing staff in the knowledge that they have a terminal illness. This employer hired a member of staff with a terminal health condition. This employer was fully aware that hiring this individual would probably have financial consequences for the organisation, but he reported that he genuinely believed in the work the Job Brokers are doing, and felt that hiring this individual was the right thing to do.

The final potential cost implication to be raised was that of a diminished rate of effectiveness and productivity by some staff with disabilities and health conditions. This concern was only raised by large private sector organisations. Some of these described the lower effectiveness as a temporary setback which was eventually overcome, such as staff with learning difficulties taking a greater amount of time to become fully trained. However, some employers thought that some staff with health conditions and disabilities would never achieve the same levels of productivity as their non-disabled colleagues, which could also have an implication on the role of co-workers.

4.2.2 Difficulty in accommodating staff with a specific disability or condition

A second kind of constraint identified by respondents was that they sometimes felt unable to accommodate a potential member of staff into a specific role because of the nature of their disability or health condition. There were no roles identified that excluded all people with disabilities or health conditions, and employers were of the opinion that the potential employee could be accommodated in another part of the organisation.

This inability to accommodate a person with a particular health condition or disability fell into one of three categories, the first of which is that the organisation could not afford to carry out the adaptation required. This is particularly the case in terms of physical disability, where the cost of adaptation seemed to be most prohibitive:

We wanted to employ a lady who has MS and used a wheelchair. We needed to put a lift in, which would have cost £30,000 but we could only secure £1,000 from government.

(Transport organisation)

This problem of access for people with physical disabilities was also encountered by several employers, who despite adaptations to their own premises, could not guarantee that partner organisations and customers would do likewise, so that they could not employ people who were wheelchair users.

The second area is where there was no obvious adaptation that would enable somebody with a certain disability or health condition to perform the role. This seemed to be quite a rare scenario given the range of possible adaptations available, although we did manage to capture some examples. In fact, one of our respondents, who worked for a charitable organisation, said that they start with the notion that all roles can be accomplished by all people and only one per cent of jobs exclude people with a certain disability or health condition. An example of this was a NHS mental health trust employing a member of staff who herself had a mental health condition. Unfortunately, the work environment had exacerbated the employee's condition, and she concluded that this was not the appropriate sector for her. Another example was an employee who had epilepsy, whose condition deteriorated when she started working in the job.

The final scenario is when there are no possible adaptations but where an adjustment, such as a change of job or a redefined role, could ensure the continued employment of the member of staff. Larger organisations, as well as having more resources to carry adaptations, are also resource rich in terms of the roles they can offer members of staff. This option was significantly less open to recruits where the employer was recruiting to a fixed role, and had little or no incentive to change it to something different for the advantage of an individual to whom the organisation had no obligation.

4.2.3 Differential treatment of staff

Another third area of potential constraint reported by employers was the concern that they needed, or might need, to treat staff with a health condition or disability differently from non-disabled staff. Most employers surveyed felt that they had to be far more aware of the needs of their staff who had a health condition or disability than would be the case for a non-disabled employee. The process of assessing an employee's needs was another task to be undertaken by the line managers, who, it was suggested, sometimes had neither the ability nor the resources to do it effectively.

A few employers also reported that they had to manage some disabled people and people with health conditions differently. An example of this was an employer who recounted that a member of his staff who had depression had to be treated with more 'tender loving care' than other staff, as placing too many demands on him could worsen his condition. Another employer reported that he had a member of staff who had been hostile to customers, as a result of the health condition, so he decided to send the staff member on an anger management course. One organisation surveyed employed lots of members from a specific disabled community, which was a small and close-knit community. This resulted in line managers being unwilling to challenge a member of this community, as the chairman of a disciplinary hearing would, in all likelihood, be well known to the staff member.

It should be said that among these organisations there was generally a marked willingness to try and accommodate all people, regardless of any additional needs. Nevertheless, alongside this was an awareness that whilst this was not impossible, it could still be a challenging undertaking.

4.3 Barriers to the employment of disabled people and people with health conditions

As well as asking the employers about any perceived disadvantages they faced when recruiting people with health conditions and disabilities, their perception of the issues facing these people was also sought. We asked, *'In your experience, what sort of issues do disabled people and people with health conditions typically face when taking up work?'.* This question provoked discussion in two areas: barriers during the job search and application stages, and barriers on being employed.

4.3.1 Job search and application barriers

The first barrier to be identified at this stage was the reduced opportunities for those with a health condition or disability. It was suggested that the pool of available jobs for somebody who has a health condition or disability is diminished because:

- their health condition or disability may mean that they cannot carry out the job;
- the employer may be unaware of possible adaptations and adjustments to accommodate the candidates needs; or
- of employer prejudice.

As has been discussed already, these employers felt that there are few job roles, which cannot be adjusted to accommodate the needs of people with health conditions and disabilities. The employers in the sample used here have all been involved with recruitment of people with a health condition or disability but they recognised that their situation was not typical and there will be some employers that have not yet considered or experienced recruiting disabled people or people with health conditions:

'The biggest barrier to a disabled person is the perception of the employer, and the employer focusing on the disability rather than the ability of the applicant.'

(Charitable organisation)

The tendency to focus on the disability is a theme that several of these employers reported; one of whom had schizophrenia himself and had been on the receiving end of discrimination because of a previous employers' ignorance of the condition and the bad publicity it has had in the media. He described the barrier as follows:

'It's people's perceptions as well; they think that if they employ someone with a bad back they will be off sick all the time. We employ XXXX, who has a bad back, and he's never off ill.'

(Charitable organisation)

The other barrier identified as important at this stage, and which may in part result from the previous barrier, was that some people who have a health condition or disability have lower confidence and less experience than non-disabled applicants, which would affect their success in the application process.

Several employers thought that people's lack of confidence and limited experience could be because they have been precluded from the labour market due to their health condition or disability. Other respondents claimed that the confidence of people with a health condition or disability could be lowered as they had far more to be anxious about when applying for a job:

'It must be hard for people with disabilities when trying to enter employment. They are dealing with a perception that they might let the employer down, that their work will be sub-standard, with physical access issues, some people might have to go for regular health check-ups and might be anxious about having to do that.'

(Manufacturing organisation)

A final aspect of the confidence barrier is that of financial security. Several employers reported that employees, before they recruited them, had been on benefits. These employers thought that the person with a health condition or disability could sometimes be taking a gamble by starting a new job, as it could have implications for their financial security if the job did not work out. It was suggested that this could be a further source of stress in the application process.⁸

⁸ Evidence from previous research on NDDP registrants supports this. 'New Deal for Disabled People: First Wave of the First Cohort of the Survey of Registrants (2003)', National Centre for Social Research and Centre for Research in Social Policy, report reference W180.

4.3.2 Post-employment barriers

Of course, getting the job is not the end of the process, and our respondents reported that there are potential barriers which might disrupt the settling in process for all their new recruits. In their view, recruits with a health condition or disability were likely to face just the same barriers as any other recruit, but frequently with additional ones. These could be fairly trivial, and not requiring any input from the employer, or they could be substantial. As some of our interviewees have reported, not all the people with a health condition or disability recruited by them had remained in the job, although they did not often know the precise reason(s) for their departure.

Respondents felt that a positive factor in helping new recruits to settle in and to maintain their job, was that a proper assessment of their particular needs had been carried out. It was conceded that some employees would not want to disclose the full nature of their health condition or disability, as they might think this information could be used to discriminate against them. This was regarded by many of them as an unfortunate situation which they tried to overcome, but felt that they were not entirely successful in doing so. Some of the larger organisations advocated a formal process whereby the employee notified their occupational health specialists of their needs. They were best placed to make a professional judgement about the best way to accommodate such needs, and would feed back to line or departmental managers as to what adjustments or adaptations were needed to be made. It was suggested that this could be achieved without disclosing the full extent of the disability. The smaller firms, who did not have the occupational health function, said that the best approach was to have a culture of being open and honest, so the needs of the individual could be considered.

Almost as common a route to identification of such needs was their gradual appearance as individuals settled into doing the job. Our respondents conceded that such needs may not even have been recognised by the individuals when they applied for, and took on, the job in question, or they may have been suppressed. Nevertheless, the reality of actually doing the job, and meeting its requirements and the working environment, was regarded as a fairly strong test of an individual's real needs, and an important, if indirect, route to establishing an individual's needs.

In addition to the potential needs which might arise from any reluctance to disclose (on the individual's part) or establish (on the employer's one) any needs which the recruit might have, there remains the capacity of the employer to provide them. Among these employers, the former problem (establishing needs) ranked more important than the latter (meeting them). This is not to say that they felt they could meet any need in any job, but rather, that for the most part, taking into account the kinds of health condition or disability with which they were most accustomed to meet, and the kinds of jobs and working environments with which they dealt, they were reasonably confident about their capacity to accommodate their employees' needs.

Another part of the settling in process is forming relationships with co-workers. Several employers were concerned that employees with a health condition or disability faced a possible barrier here as co-workers might hold prejudices, or think that working with a person with a health condition or disability would negatively impact on their workload.

4.4 Adjustments and adaptations

As with the first wave of qualitative research, we sought information from our respondents about their perceptions and experiences of introducing and administering the kinds of adjustments and adaptations which their employment of staff with a disability or health condition had required. For these purposes, we defined *adjustments* as changes in procedures, behaviour and ways of working, on the part of either the employee with a health condition or disability, or colleagues, in order to ensure the job or the environment could accommodate their needs. By *adaptations* we mean physical changes to the workspace, which, similarly, ensures the job or environment could accommodate their needs.

4.4.1 Experience of making adaptations and adjustments

Most of these respondents reported that they had put into place some form of adaptation or adjustment in the workplace. This includes changes for existing employees, as well as new hires, either through NDDP or otherwise.

Physical adaptations

In general discussion of physical adaptations, many employers would begin by saying whether or not their building was accessible to wheelchair users. Perhaps this is a result of wheelchair users and the adaptations that accommodate their needs being highly visible and so quick to come to mind. However, in fact, making a building accessible to wheelchair users was not the most common adaptation to be put into place by organisations. Those organisations that had made their buildings wheelchair accessible tended to be larger and/or to have buildings which were accessed by the public, so there was already a much wider element to adaptation.

The most common adaptation concerned office or workplace furniture, and there were many examples of this, such as desks and chairs that can accommodate a wheelchair user or people with a back condition; large or 'talking' computer monitors for people with a visual impairment; typing support for a person with arthritis; footstools; minicom systems; and amplifiers. These low cost adaptations were fairly familiar to, and used by, many organisations to good effect, with, for example, one organisation responding to the needs of a visually impaired member of staff, with a 'talking monitor' enabling them to have responsibility for the intranet at the organisation.

There were other frequently used adaptations as well, such as voice recognition software on PCs, and vibrating or visual alarms to alert staff with a hearing impairment.

Less common adaptations include voice recognition software used in elevators; Braille printers and signs; translating machines; the ability to make job application by audiotape; use of fax machines to communicate to staff with a hearing impairment; and staff uniforms fitted with induction loops.

It would seem that a relatively wide range of adaptations had been employed by the respondents, albeit that the most common were in the 'furniture' category. Furthermore, respondents had apparently made adaptations with a good deal of success; no employer complained about problems they had encountered in introducing such adaptations during the discussion of them.

Large-scale physical adaptations, such as putting in lifts and making buildings wheelchair accessible, were put in place by fewer organisations. There was also a significant minority of respondents who were worried that the cost of introducing such adaptations, perhaps into buildings which would not easily accommodate them, and a smaller number with working environments, which could not readily be adapted to accommodate people with certain types of disability. This tended to be a concern to the smaller organisations which, as a result, could not offer unconstrained employment to wheelchair users.

Adjustments to procedures and jobs

We observed several types of adjustment made to procedures and jobs, in order to accommodate the needs of people with health conditions and disabilities. These adjustments tended to cluster within three major types:

- change of job role;
- change in working hours or practices;
- change to level of supervision or support provided.

Employers seemed to be more reliant on using adjustments rather than putting into place the more costly alternative of an adaptation. Several employers were enthused by their ability to make these low-cost and simple adjustments whilst deriving very positive results from them.

Change of job role

The most common method of adjustment was that of changing the employee's job role so that they could accomplish all parts of their new job description.

The extent and character of change to job role was dependent on the nature of the person's disability or health condition and the job in question, but in practice, it had varied from a minor redesign of a job to offering an alternative post. An example of minor role change was the removal of lifting duties for an employee who had a back condition. In the health sector, an employee could not lift folders from the shelf, so that it was arranged that any notes she required would be placed at the appropriate height by a colleague. This arrangement is very informal in nature and does not require the redrafting of job descriptions but was still an effective method to prevent relapse.

Another example involved a person with dyslexia entering an organisation as a receptionist. In this case, the job was changed for a new incumbent rather than an existing member of staff who had developed a health condition or disability. Part of this role was to type letters, but the employer had rearranged it so that the new employee was not obliged to carry out this task as part of her remit.

At the other end of the scale were situations in which a person's health condition or disability could not be accommodated in their existing role. In one instance, in a retail organisation, an employee had a stroke, which meant that she relied on a wheelchair if long distances were to be covered. She did not want to have to use the wheelchair at work, so her role was changed from shopfloor-based to office-based so that she could manage without the wheelchair.

We also found a number of instances where redeployment was offered but rejected by the employee or potential employee (ie someone who had applied for a particular post, but was offered another). An example of this involved a forklift truck driver who had a physical disability, and was offered a different role because of this. An issue here was that redeployment could result in a lower salary, as forklift truck driving was a skilled job.

Change in working hours or practices

This was the second most reported type of adjustment, and again had been quite widely undertaken. There are several ways that an employer can go about changing the hours of a worker. Perhaps the most common, particularly where employers used flexible working patterns, was that the total number of hours worked did not change but the start and stop times changed.

Flexibility without reduction in hours was widely reported to be a useful mechanism as it does not have any salary implications on the employee, yet allows the employee greater flexibility to manage their condition as necessary. Employers acknowledged that people with a health condition or disability will sometimes require medical appointments and this flexibility allows for appointments to be met. Another reason why employees requested flexible hours was so that they could make suitable arrangements for transport to and from work, as people with a physical disability may have greater mobility issues than other employees. Other employers managed the transport issue by having a specific transport policy, and some employers even guarantee to take employees with a physical disability to and from work.

Not only can the employer be flexible in when the employee works their hours but also in the number of hours worked. Several employers offered staggered return-to-work programmes, whereby the employee gradually builds up the hours they work as their condition improves. We did not, however, observe this used in the case of new employees.

Level of supervision or support provided

A concern which several of our respondents raised with us was that a greater administrative burden was already placed on managers in terms of time spent in assessing needs and implementing appropriate changes. Whether readily, or perhaps as an unforeseen consequence of hiring an individual with a health condition or disability, many of our respondents also reported that their managers had adjusted their style and ways of working to provide more support for employees with a health condition or disability.

These respondents reported spending more time supervising or providing support to staff with a health condition or disability, but these examples were fairly diverse and idiosyncratic in nature, with each being reported by only a minority of respondents. Examples of such support include:

- developing a transport plan to help employees with a health condition or disability, travel to work;
- offering rehabilitation programmes to people who have been ill;
- providing signers at meetings and interviews;
- offering generous sick pay.

A few employers also reported that people with learning difficulties often took longer and require more help to get through company training programmes.

4.4.2 Ability to assess needs

Employers were also asked whether they were confident in their ability to assess needs and implement any appropriate adjustments or adaptations.

The vast majority of employers reported that they, indeed, felt confident in assessing needs and making adaptations and adjustments. There are several factors that could explain this:

- Several of the organisations are in existence to provide support to people with a health condition or disability, so their role as a service provider is evident in their internal human resources policies and practices. Working with this customer group also promoted general awareness by the employer of adjustments required by staff with a health condition or disability.
- In addition, several companies reported that they had simply learnt by doing, in an ad hoc manner. They have had the experience of recruiting a number of staff with a health condition or disability over a series of years and are now well equipped to meet the needs of all staff.
- Finally, there were those large organisations, which have centralised human resources and occupational health departments. This gives the local branch of the organisation resources to fall back on when they are required to assess employees' needs and make any necessary changes.

Several organisations reported consulting other sources of help, both internal and external, when assessing needs and making adjustments. As discussed above, many organisations spoke of the importance of the process of assessing needs, and that it was necessary to be open, honest and to the point when trying to gather information about needs. But even with good information from the assessment process, employers needed to consult more widely to find out about the most suitable adaptations and adjustments.

One employer seemed better placed than most others in its ability to assess needs, and especially its ability to make adaptations and adjustments. This example is worth recounting here as, although it is case study in nature, it does provide a good model for the employment of people with health conditions or a disability.

The employer is an NHS Trust which had recruited more than 50 staff with a health condition or disability in the past two years. This level of success was attributed by the interviewee to the Trust's unique position in being able to assess need, implement adjustments and adaptations, and also provide staff with an environment where they can receive treatment for a health condition or disability. As a result, this could be achieved without disrupting their work schedules too much, as everything was readily available on site.

4.5 Other sources of help, support and advice

An important consideration in assessing the impact of NDDP, is to inquire what would have happened if the programme had not been running. One of the ways of doing this is to see what other forms of support, help or advice are known to employers, how well they are used, and how far this enables them to support staff with a health condition or disability.

In contrast with the previous wave of employer interviews, these employers seemed to be very well informed about the varying groups they could contact to get support or advice about a particular issue. This seems to reflect their significantly greater level of experience in hiring and employing staff with health conditions and disabilities than was seen in the previous cohort. Many employees seemed to be aware of, and when necessary to go directly to, an expert organisation (for example repetitive strain injury group) to find out about an issue, rather than going through a generic disability group.

4.5.1 Internal support

We found that the larger organisations, in both the public, private and charitable sectors, had much better access to internal support groups, such as occupational health and human resource departments. However, the input from these departments varied greatly between specific organisations. In some cases, they would be a resource that managers could tap into for advice about certain conditions or impairments and adjustments. However, in other organisations, they would be more hands-on. For example, in the health sector, all assessment of needs was

carried out by occupational health departments, which then reported back to the line manager about what adjustments were to be made. This role was seen as important in retaining the confidentiality of the employee and the intricacies of their disability or health condition. In other organisations, human resource departments would give advice to the line manager about the legal responsibility to make reasonable adjustments.

These internal sources of support and advice were generally well thought of by our respondents. It was suggested that, especially in the larger organisations, internal support such as occupational health specialists would have a thorough understanding of how the organisation worked, and were, therefore, able to provide relevant insight into how best to make adaptations. However, it was also suggested that the emphasis of internal support services was on responding to a person's disability once they had joined the organisation. Hence, occupational health and human resources departments were not generally felt to have a remit to actively target disabled job applicants.

4.5.2 External support

These employers also seemed to consult external groups, but mainly in seeking advice and guidance, rather than in an effort to find applicants with a health condition or disability. A number of organisations had been consulted:

- AbilityNet – a charity that works in the field of assistive technology for disabled people. It provides free technical support to its disabled clients, and consultancy for employers on workstation, software and web accessibility.
- WorkAble – works in partnership with employers to support disabled achievers in developing careers which reflect their abilities.
- Specialists such as the Back Care Centre, and Repetitive Strain Injury specialists.

In addition, Jobcentre Plus initiatives and programmes were also consulted:

- Two Ticks disability symbol – the Two Ticks symbol is used by employers to indicate a positive commitment both to people who are disabled and to potential customers. Any organisation using the symbol must make five staff and customer-focused commitments.
- Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisors (DEAs).
- The Access to Work programme – this offers practical advice and help to disabled people and employers. There is also a grant available through Access to Work towards any extra employment costs that result from a person's disability.

This list is not exhaustive but it gives an idea of the types of organisation consulted. What is not clear, however, is whether or not NDDP Brokers put employers in touch with these organisations, or whether employer involvement with NDDP led them to find out if there were other types of advice available to them. It seems reasonable to conclude that awareness of such organisations, and their use, was fairly well established independently of NDDP, as they had frequently been in place for some years, and usually predated the introduction of NDDP.

5 Awareness of the New Deal for Disabled People

Chapter 3 examined employers' experience, knowledge and perceptions of government labour market programmes of all kinds. This chapter looks more specifically at employers' awareness and knowledge of, and participation in, the NDDP programme itself.

It looks in turn at:

- employers' awareness and knowledge of the NDDP programme;
- their perceived level of involvement in NDDP;
- employers' level of contact with Job Brokers and other intermediaries.

5.1 Awareness and knowledge of NDDP

In spite of the fact that all employers we spoke to were known to have recruited at least one NDDP customer at their organisation, and that they had been identified by NDDP Job Brokers as best practice employers, their awareness and knowledge of NDDP was, nevertheless, generally quite low. In all, less than half of all employers we spoke to had any level of awareness of NDDP and of these, only a small minority could say with any confidence what the programme entailed. Those employers with some level of awareness of NDDP tended to be:

- from larger establishments/organisations;
- those individual respondents named and nominated by the Job Broker, ie not a stand-in;
- those whose Job Broker was a private organisation, who actively marketed the programme in their area.

These findings correspond with the results from the first wave and are not wholly surprising. We would expect larger establishments and organisations to have specialist staff (or a specialist department) who would be well informed and up to date on issues relating to recruitment and employment programmes and, therefore, be more likely to know about NDDP.

We would also expect those employers nominated to take part in the research by the Job Broker (and, therefore, those who had a close relationship with them) to know much more about the programme than those who were a 'stand-in' interviewee.

Finally, employers who were in an area where Job Brokers were generally more proactive in advertising their services, would be more likely to have heard of the programme and consequently be more knowledgeable about it.

What is perhaps surprising is that there is no indication from this result that employer awareness of NDDP might be increasing over time (although this could only be properly confirmed through a much larger quantitative piece of research). Furthermore, if these employers are the ones who have been most exposed to the programme, then we could hardly expect awareness to be higher among those who have had less exposure.

5.1.1 Reasons for low awareness and knowledge

As with the first wave of research with employers, there appeared to be several different reasons for this modest level of recognition.

One of the main reasons for employers' lack of knowledge and awareness of the programme appears to be because Job Brokers are not particularly employer-focused. They seem to be much more focused on working with their customers (the applicant) behind the scenes, ie helping them with application forms, training, etc. They appear rarely to provide substantial support to employers (this will be discussed more in Chapter 6), and often the only way an employer finds out that their new employee has had help from a third party, or is involved in NDDP, is after the event.

'One of our employees came through them without them getting in touch with us; he just went through the whole interview process and was taken on with their help behind the scenes. We didn't know they were helping him until he was recruited and told us himself.'

(Large, private, retail employer)

Another reason is that the NDDP programme is not always delivered separately from other programmes that the Job Broker may be delivering. This may well explain, for example, why employers who had been working with a Jobcentre Plus Job Broker were largely unable to identify NDDP as a separate programme. It may also not always be delivered under its own name. Therefore, employers may be confused as to what programme their employee is taking part in, and indeed may believe that it is something completely different.

'I haven't heard of it. I know that we have some people employed through some scheme or other; I don't know what it is though.'

(Large, private employer)

'I don't think any of our employees have actually come through the NDDP; we tend to use a scheme called WORKSTEP.'

(Medium, public employer)

'Quite a few of our staff are employed through XXXXXX [a specialist agency – not Job Broker in this instance], I think on a sort of work experience scheme.'

(Large, public employer)

'I haven't employed anyone who is on NDDP, not to my knowledge anyway. We do have several New Deal people working here, but they mostly come from the New Deal for Young People and New Deal 25 plus.'

(Medium, private employer)

This goes some way in explaining why many employers mentioned other programmes such as WORKSTEP or Work Trials when asked about NDDP.

Much is done to provide information on NDDP at a national level, including materials and leaflets in Jobcentres, customer mailouts, a national helpline and a website giving information on each Job Broker's services by location. However, the primary promotion of NDDP is designed to come from the Job Broker, who does not necessarily have to use the NDDP name in its promotional materials. This deliberate policy explains why many employers tended to be aware of the names and activities of particular Job Brokers, but not of NDDP itself.

5.1.2 How employers first heard of NDDP

Those employers who were aware and had some knowledge of the programme, were also asked how they had first heard about NDDP. Some employers mentioned that they had heard about the programme through their local Job Broker but this was only in a few cases. In general, employers had mainly heard about NDDP indirectly, through:

- previous employment, through colleagues or through family and friends; and
- existing contacts/networks.

We discuss these in turn.

Through (previous) employment/colleagues/family and friends

Many of our respondents heard about NDDP through colleagues at work (those who had had some dealings with the programme before), or through a previous

employment position. In one particular case, the employer first found out about NDDP through their new general manager, who had used NDDP to recruit someone in their previous role:

'Our general manager has used that particular scheme before in a previous position... It worked quite well so we thought we would try it.'

(Large, private employer)

'I used to work for the Jobcentre and one of my members of staff came from [the Job Broker]. He was on a sheltered placement and worked for me for seven years, so I knew about them for several years before I started here... So basically I usually know about most the schemes they are running.'

(Large, private employer)

Existing contacts/networks

Voluntary organisations, or those organisations that dealt directly with people with health conditions and disabilities, were much more likely to have heard about NDDP through existing contacts/networks that they used, which may include, in a small minority of cases, the Job Broker themselves.

'I have heard of NDDP, through a partner from one of our networks. We haven't been involved with the scheme directly though, I just know about it.'

(Small, voluntary employer)

This goes some way to explain why awareness and knowledge of NDDP is low. Unless employers have close links with existing networks or have heard of the programme through friends, colleagues or family, they seem considerably less likely to be aware of the programme, even though their organisations have recruited from it.

5.2 Employers' perceived level of involvement

In order to establish whether or not employers actually perceived that they had taken part in the NDDP programme, we asked them if they could recall if they had had any involvement with NDDP. As perhaps expected from the low level of awareness and knowledge of the programme, many employers were unsure or thought that they had not, while a few were adamant that they had not taken part in it. We know, of course, that this is not the case.

5.2.1 Known involvement

In all, a fairly small number of employers were certain, or indeed fairly certain, that they had taken someone on through NDDP. These tended to be employers from:

- larger organisations;
- private sector organisations.

Some employers found out that they had taken someone on through NDDP after the event, ie the new recruit told them about it once they were employed or when they needed some form of support.

5.2.2 Unknown involvement

The rest of the employers we interviewed were either unsure about their involvement with the NDDP programme or, in some cases, were adamant that they had not been involved.

There were, however, a significant number of employers (20) who were aware of the Job Broker but not aware of the NDDP programme. The remainder were either unaware of both the NDDP programme and the Job Broker, or had heard of NDDP but did not think they were involved in it in any way. It appeared that many of these employers knew there were organisations that helped people with health conditions and disabilities back into work, but were sure that they had not taken part in anything like that. It, therefore, seems that many of the employers we interviewed could either not remember that they had taken part in the NDDP programme or had done so without realising it. For example, some employers mentioned that they had not heard of the NDDP programme, but then went on to mention that they had taken someone on from the Job Broker.

'Haven't heard of NDDP, but we have taken someone on from [the Job Broker].'

(Small, voluntary employer)

It would seem then that either direct contact with a Job Broker, or receipt of advertising material generated by them, is one of the main routes through which employers are brought into the programme, albeit not always in the full knowledge of how this is being orchestrated.

5.3 Contact with Job Brokers and other intermediaries

In order to determine the levels of contact between employers, Job Brokers and other intermediaries, all employers were asked if they had had any contact with their local Job Broker or with any other organisations/agencies that dealt with disability issues. These are each discussed in turn.

5.3.1 NDDP Job Brokers

Although some employers were adamant that they had not taken anyone on under NDDP, many did mention that they had been in contact with a Job Broker, especially when prompted with the Job Broker name. In all, there were 31 employers who said that they had been involved with a Job Broker or who had taken part in the NDDP programme (and, therefore, had had some contact with their Job Broker).

Further discussion suggested that this contact appeared to be minimal in some cases, and many employers could recall only one specific, and usually isolated,

occasion. These employers had mainly been contacted by the Job Broker in response to a specific job vacancy (this will be discussed more in Chapter 6) or they had themselves actively sought out a employee with a health condition or disability by approaching the Job Broker directly. In several of these cases, the employer respondents appeared to know of, and perhaps to have had dealings with, the Job Broker pre-NDDP. There were some employers (12 in total) who were sure that they had not heard of, or had had any contact with, the Job Broker at all and these tended to be employers from smaller organisations.

5.3.2 Other organisations

Employers were asked whether they had any contact with other organisations that offered support for recruiting/employing disabled people and people with health conditions. Around half of the employers we interviewed had some knowledge and involvement with other organisations. These tended to be employers from:

- voluntary organisations;
- larger public or private organisations.

The types of organisations that employers mentioned when asked about alternative sources of advice and support were:

- local networks;
- Jobcentre Plus;
- other organisations, agencies or charities concerned with disability or vulnerable groups.

Informal local networks

Employers from voluntary organisations or those organisations dealing with people with health conditions and disabilities or other disadvantaged groups, often turned to organisations they knew through their local networks to help them with support and advice. These were often informal, but in some cases involved more formal groupings (for example Employer Associations, regeneration and other local partnerships, etc.) Because of the type of work they did, they felt confident that they would know who to turn to or where to find the information they needed.

Jobcentre Plus

Employers from mainly smaller organisations, including some from voluntary organisations, mentioned that they used Jobcentre Plus when they needed help or advice about employing people with health conditions and disabilities. These employers would use Jobcentre Plus as their 'first port of call' and would expect to be referred on if Jobcentre Plus could not help them.

Other organisations

Employers from larger private or public sector organisations and those from voluntary organisations, mentioned having some contact with other agencies who might also be Job Brokers, but were known to the employers from outside, and often predating, NDDP. They included national and local organisations and agencies that had offered advice and support, sometimes on an ongoing basis.

Overall, employers seemed to make little distinction between NDDP Job Brokers and other organisations they may have dealt with. For the most part, this seemed to be because NDDP-supported interventions were subsumed into the Job Brokers' continuing work in a way that was indistinguishable on the employer's part. As a result, many employers could recall dealing with organisations or employing disabled people and people with health conditions, but were not clear as to the name of the organisation they used or the programme under which they employed the person. Most employers who could recall taking on a person with a health condition or disability through this route, were more likely to know the name of the individual they worked with rather than the organisation name or programme name per se.

'He was helped back into employment through his mentor; her name was Sue. I can't remember where she was from now.'

(Large, public employer)

Lack of awareness about the NDDP programme generally, meant that employers had no reason to distinguish between organisations and Job Brokers. From the employers' perspective, they are all seen as doing the same job, ie all helping people with health conditions and disabilities into employment.

While on the one hand, this may represent a subtle means whereby public intervention can work through existing providers with established links to employers, it may also be worth mentioning at this point, that some employers did feel that there were too many organisations offering advice and support. They felt that this often confused them as they were unsure who to turn to:

'There are other organisations that help disabled people... but they can be very hard to get hold of. I think all these organisations should be collated together, there should be a central point of disability services so people know where to go.'

(Voluntary organisation, small employer)

6 Employers and Job Brokers

This chapter considers, in more detail, the ways in which Job Brokers and employers have interacted through the NDDP programme. In the main, it necessarily focuses on employers who were aware of the Job Brokers, and, therefore, able to discuss the level and nature of contact they had had with them, and the impact they felt this had had.

As discussed in the previous chapter, although we knew that all of the employers we interviewed had recruited through NDDP, not all of the employers themselves were aware they had been involved, nor did they always report any contact with, or awareness of, a Job Broker. Of the 50 employers interviewed, 12 said they were unaware of both NDDP and the local Job Broker, and seven reported that they had heard of NDDP but did not believe they had been involved in it. We were obviously unable to pursue questions about engagement with NDDP through the Job Brokers with this group.

This left 11 employers who knew that they had been involved with NDDP, and 20 who reported involvement with the Job Broker, but didn't realise that this was through NDDP. These 31 employers constitute the respondents for most of the discussion in this chapter.

The chapter looks in turn at:

- making contact;
- type of service offered;
- the working relationship;
- outcomes;
- impact of Job Broker contact on employers.

6.1 Making contact

This section considers how long employers and Job Brokers had been in contact with each other, why the initial contact was made, and the nature of the first approach.

6.1.1 Length of contact time

Employers had been in contact with Job Brokers for differing lengths of time, but it was clear that NDDP had provided an impetus which had brought about many of these contacts. Thus, many reported that initial contact was made around two years ago. Others said that contact had been established more recently, for example, within the last year.

Less frequently, contact had predated NDDP, either through other initiatives that the Job Broker had been involved in delivering, or through more general contact in the local community. Employers reporting this type of established track record with Job Broker organisations tended to be voluntary sector groups, for whom tapping into existing networks was a key part of their work. Occasionally, employers reported that they had known about the Job Broker organisation through a previous position, through colleagues, or for personal reasons, for example through friends or family links. In all of these instances, a relationship, or at least some level of awareness, had already been established prior to the start of the NDDP work, which could later be built on.

6.1.2 Reasons for initial contact

A number of reasons were given by employers which they felt had provided the initial impetus for contact between their organisation and the Job Broker. These were:

- Job Broker-initiated: in response to a specific vacancy;
- Job Broker-initiated: general NDDP marketing;
- employer-led contact.

These are discussed in turn.

Specific vacancies

Some employers reported that initial contact was made because of a specific vacancy that they or their customer had seen, and felt could be suitable. Here, Job Brokers came into contact with employers at different stages of the recruitment process; some contacted employers (usually by telephone) straight away to discuss whether the job would be appropriate for their customer, and to see whether the employer would be willing to consider them for the role. In other cases, the Job Broker had come into contact with the employer at a later stage of the recruitment process, perhaps after the application form had been received by the employer and prior to interview, or after the job had been offered, to assist with making any necessary arrangements. In some instances, this type of contact was an isolated event, but in others, it was the start of interaction on a more regular basis.

There was considerable variety, and some uncertainty, among our employer respondents about how and why such a one-off contact had led to a more established relationship. The professional competence of the Job Broker, the

willingness of the Job Broker to initiate further contact, the extent to which the employer actually sought to employ people with health conditions and disabilities, and so on, were all mentioned. However, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that for most of these employers, the key factor underpinning the prospects for future relationships was the suitability of the potential recruit for the position in question. For the most part, this turned on the employee's skills, experience and commitment, and the 'fit' between these and the employer's needs. In effect, the more the Job Broker acted as a good source of suitable and reliable applicants for vacancies, the less likely the employer was to be put off by worries about the individual's health condition or disability, and the more likely they were to put themselves out to find ways of accommodating that disability and to take part in a developing relationship with the Job Broker.

However, this did not necessarily lead to a developing relationship. Some employers had had relatively minor contact with Job Brokers, and it was only when prompted with the name of the local Job Broker that it emerged that they had had any contact at all. This was usually with regard to a particular potential recruit or employee, for example the Job Broker would briefly be in touch with the employer, perhaps to assist a customer through the recruitment process, or to help them settle in to work.

NDDP marketing

There were instances when Job Brokers had made contact with employers, to build links generally, and raise employers' awareness of the services they offered. This was often followed later by ongoing contact, or contact made for more specific reasons, for example with regard to a particular vacancy or customer. For example, in one case, a Job Broker contacted a large retail organisation initially to introduce NDDP as a programme of helping disabled people into employment, and to gauge how the employer felt about becoming involved. After this initial contact had been established, the Job Broker would telephone whenever he felt he had a suitable customer for them.

There were also examples of employers being contacted by Job Brokers initially to discuss the types of vacancies they might have, with a view to building up a relationship in the future, or with a particular customer in mind.

Employer-led

Although most usually the initial contact had been made by the Job Broker, there were a few examples where employers had made the first contact, either to seek advice on a specific matter, or to make links more generally with the Job Broker organisation. These approaches did not appear to be prompted by NDDP; in fact, it was more likely to be to tap into the range of potential community-based services offered by the Job Broker, rather than being as a result of any particular programme with which they were involved. There were occasional instances where employers had been introduced to the Job Broker through other agencies with which they were already involved, for example Business Link.

6.1.3 The approach

As discussed in Section 6.1.2, the approach was usually made by Job Brokers to employers, for example in response to a specific vacancy and a customer who they felt could be suitable, or to make employers generally more aware of the services that they offered. However, there were a few examples where employers had made the first approach to the Job Broker, although not necessarily specifically to recruit through the NDDP programme. One example of this was a voluntary organisation that made the initial contact with the Job Broker when they were starting to establish themselves in the community, and hoped to establish a partnership. In this case, the Job Broker was a private sector organisation involved in delivering a range of labour market programmes and initiatives.

The initial approach by the Job Broker was generally in the form of a telephone call, although employers had occasionally become aware of the Job Broker through a letter, for example, supporting a customer's application.

The reaction to approaches by Job Brokers was mainly positive, although for some employers it was difficult to disentangle their reactions to the initial approach from their subsequent reactions after having been involved in the programme as a whole:

'We have used them a lot and therefore would say we are glad they contacted us.'

'I was pleased they contacted us, they have helped us a lot.'

Some initial reactions were more neutral, for example *'I didn't mind being contacted'* while others were very enthusiastic, for example *'I thought it sounded excellent'*. A few interviewees had particular or personal reasons to want to become involved, for example, one of our interviewees had a disabled son and was, therefore, very keen to participate. Other organisations mentioned business or social consciousness motivations as being behind their reaction: for example, one organisation said they would be happy to be approached about any such issues as they were always looking for new opportunities to employ within the local community and to establish links with people who may not traditionally apply for their jobs. Others, particularly those facing tight or difficult local labour markets, were more inclined to welcome any opportunity to explore a new, and potentially useful, source of labour supply, that they had not been able to tap into previously.

6.2 Type of service offered

The employers interviewed, reported a range of services from the Job Broker, mainly centred around recruitment, job entry, and the settling in period following this.

6.2.1 Vacancy/recruitment

As was found in the first wave of the study, these NDDP/Job Broker-aware employers most commonly became involved with NDDP as a result of vacancies or recruitment. In fact, 17 of the 31 'aware' employers talked about having first been

involved with Job Brokers in this way, and for most employers it continued to be a key part of the service they received. Examples ranged from one-off contact regarding a specific customer or vacancy, to Job Brokers who stayed in frequent touch, ringing whenever they felt they might have someone suitable.

Many of the employers talked about the sourcing and pre-screening of candidates that were available from the Job Broker. This was seen to be a particularly good part of the service offered, and for some it was the most useful element. The extent to which the Job Broker was felt to understand the needs of the employer was obviously an important factor in the perceived success of pre-screening (this is discussed more fully in Section 6.3.2):

'It's good to know that there is someone out there who knows who we are and what we do, and can therefore offer us the right type of person for the job.'

Honesty about the customer in question and what they realistically could and could not be expected to do, was felt to be very important. Some employers said they particularly liked this aspect of the work done by the Job Broker.

There were also a few examples of employers who, already having established good relationships with Job Brokers, would ring them when they wished to recruit. One such organisation asked the Job Broker to provide suitable customers to take on a temporary basis over the busy Christmas period, with a view to employing them on a permanent basis afterwards, if suitable hours were available.

6.2.2 Job entry and settling in

Some of the employers had experience of Job Brokers assisting with job entry and helping customers to settle in, although (as was found in our first wave of research) this was not always the case, with some recruits not requiring such assistance and being unwilling to have the Job Broker further involved. In most cases, assistance tended to be concentrated around the period when the customer started work, and this usually dropped off over time as recruits became more established and settled in their jobs.

There were some examples of fairly intensive interaction between Job Brokers and employers around this time, where particular needs arose, adjustments were made, or funding applied for. Such employers had welcomed the advice on job design and the needs of recruits, which helped to ease their transition into work. In some instances, very specific practical help was provided which was greatly appreciated by the employer.

For example, following a performance review, a newly employed NDDP customer disclosed that his dyslexia (which had never been formally diagnosed) might be causing him problems. As a result, the Job Broker arranged and paid for the customer to have a dyslexia test. After this, in the employer's words: *'When you know what you are dealing with, you can understand it a bit more and take it on board'*. Another Job Broker had arranged a signer for the interview. They also advised on providing hearing loops, and assessed the working environment to make

sure it would be safe for the customer to work in. In a further case, a Job Broker provided training sessions when the customer first started work, and were in frequent contact during the transition process.

In a few cases, there was quite frequent contact of a more general nature, to check that things were going smoothly for the customer in their new job. Here, Job Brokers could operate in a mediating role between customer and employer during the settling in period, with the Job Broker being seen as a 'safe' person with whom the customer could discuss any concerns they had:

'What happens sometimes is that people tell their contact things they wouldn't necessarily tell us, and then the contact can come and tell us that they are worried about this or that, or that this has been mentioned, and it's a good way for us to check if everything is okay without the person worrying about it. So that works out quite well really. For our full-time members, a support worker comes in once every four or five weeks; for the person we have over the Christmas period, a contact comes in twice a week just to make sure that we're happy and the guy that's with us is fine.'

Contact from Job Brokers was not always so frequent, but this was not usually viewed negatively by employers. Sometimes they only felt they needed a check that all was going well, and a courtesy call or occasional informal feedback sessions were sufficient. In such cases, employers knew they could contact the Job Broker for more help if they needed to, but had not felt it was necessary as the recruit was settling in well enough. Some employers mentioned that their own internal procedures should ensure that the employee was settled in to the role, and that they had access to sources of internal support, to which they would first turn if any difficulties did arise. However, they were also supportive of any visits made by the Job Broker to their customer once they were in post, and felt that this was beneficial to the customer in terms of reassurance that they were adapting well to their role, and being confident that they had an independent source of help and support if they needed it:

'For the first six months we used to have these regular review meetings with [the Job Broker]. They would follow up with [the customer] after our monthly reviews. We didn't really need any other advice or help from them, we had our own personnel department for that... They did offer help and told us that they could give us advice if we needed it. I did feel that they were not only there for [the customer] but for us too.'

Some employers said they knew that Job Brokers had done some preparation with customers before they started work, which had probably helped them to settle in, and also some assessment work with customers once they had started. There were instances where although employers were aware of this, they had not been involved, other than allowing the employee time to meet the Job Broker.

However, there were also cases in which employers felt that Job Brokers could have done more to help people settle in, and this was particularly highlighted where those recruited through the programme did not work out.

For example, one employer felt that they would have benefited from more advice on the recruit's specific needs, so that they could have made adjustments that would perhaps have helped the customer to stay with the organisation. Another felt that once a customer had started work, it had become apparent that the particular working environment was simply not suitable for them; that they had not been well matched to the job.

It seems that the employers did not necessarily know about all the contact between the Job Broker and the individual. However, occasionally, employers felt that the Job Broker did not provide enough accessible support to the customer or the employer once they had made the placement:

'Although they would come up with the clients, once here they tend to dump them. They also tend to bring their problem cases to us for us to sort out. My personal feeling is that they are more interested in financial aspect rather than the human aspect. They tend to dump people. I think that they write to the employee they've placed once a month, asking how it's going and what support they might need, etc. Again, some people can't read anyway and can't understand that letter. They tend to wash their hands of them.'

Amongst the employers who were aware of NDDP and the existence of Job Brokers, these views were relatively rare. But it should be borne in mind that we were only able to ask 'aware' employers about the help that they had received from Job Brokers. Since 19 employers interviewed were unaware of NDDP and/or having had any interaction with it, it can be assumed that they had minimal or no contact with Job Brokers. However, given the opportunity, they could perhaps have benefited from the types of services offered by Job Brokers. Of course, the confidential nature of the customer and Job Broker relationship may have prevented this, where customers preferred that their employers did not know that they were NDDP participants.

6.3 The working relationship

This section considers the working relationship between Job Brokers and employers, and covers:

- level and nature of contact;
- understanding the employer;
- problems and issues;
- benefits to employers;
- benefits to employees.

6.3.1 Level and nature of contact

Much of the ongoing contact between Job Brokers and employers appeared to be with regard to particular vacancies and potentially suitable customers, or for the

purposes of ensuring placements were progressing well, and that customers and employers had access to everything they needed. Hence, the level and nature of contact was, in part, related to the volume of vacancies, the number of NDDP customer placements, and the frequency with which issues requiring external support arose. Examples of the ways in which this could vary were given in the last section, and can be categorised here as:

- one-off;
- sporadic;
- ongoing.

These are discussed in turn.

One-off contact

The working relationship between Job Brokers and employers was sometimes confined to a one-off instance, turning wholly on a particular vacancy or employee, or a flurry of activity around a particular placement, with little or no contact thereafter, until the next time:

'We don't see them much after we've taken someone on. They usually bring someone over to us, we interview them, if we decide to take someone on we arrange a work prep, and that's usually the last we hear of [the Job Broker].'

For the most part, this seemed to be all that employers felt had been required by the individual circumstances:

'Haven't been in contact for a while, but I know they are there.'

When there was little prospect of further placements with a particular employer, there was clearly less motivation for Job Brokers to stay in close contact. Where all went well with the placement that had been made, the lack of ongoing contact was generally not an issue for the employer concerned.

Occasionally, though, one-off contact was not felt to be sufficient, especially where additional support needs were identified once a customer had started work. Some employers mentioned that they would have liked more advice on adjustments, or felt they would have benefited from more ongoing contact, for example to keep abreast of the range of available support. Whereas large organisations were able to rely on internal support systems to address these issues, medium-sized and small organisations were more reliant on outside support, such as that provided by Job Brokers. Hence, for small and medium-sized employers, any needs that had arisen that were not dealt with by Job Brokers were felt more keenly than was the case for large employers, unless they had well established external support networks.

Sporadic

In other instances contact was sporadic, or as and when a particular trigger arose. Several employers described situations where there had been limited contact,

usually with regard to a particular recruit or recruits, over a period of a few months following their placement. Often, the contact was mainly via the customer, rather than directly with the employer themselves, although occasional check-ins with the employer could also be a part of this contact.

This type of contact was usually associated with the job entry and liaison role of the Job Brokers, and often ended after about six months, once the employee was more fully integrated. An example of this was a customer who was placed with a large public sector organisation. Following the appointment of the customer to the role, the Job Broker worked mainly with the customer on a fairly regular basis, to support him through the transition to work. Contact with the employer was more occasional throughout this period, involving a couple of meetings in which the customer's progress was reviewed. In another instance, the employer reported that there was contact with the Job Broker when any problems arose.

Ongoing contact

A number of employers provided evidence of more frequent or ongoing contact with Job Brokers. Given the 'good practice' nature of our sample, we hoped and expected to find this, and indeed, such relationships were more common in Wave 2 than Wave 1, where the sample was less targeted.

There were two main reasons for ongoing contact: firstly, for the purpose of keeping both parties updated on particular situations and customers; and secondly, to keep the Job Broker abreast of the employer situation more generally, ie with a view to future placements in the informed light of the employer's developing, and potentially changing, needs. It tended to have occurred either where lots of employees had been placed through Job Brokers, or where a large proportion of the workforce had a health condition or disability in, for example, specialist voluntary organisations.

The model of ongoing contact was characterised by a frequent and high level of interaction, which resulted in an understanding relationship being built up between employer and Job Broker. However, Job Brokers sometimes went beyond the standard model of helping and supporting people into work, for example, by liaising co-operatively with employers in a variety of imaginative ways.

For example, one employer, part of a fashion retail chain, spoke of the fairly informal, friendly relationship they had with the Job Broker. They had received lots of advice from the Job Broker on a variety of matters, spoke regularly with the Job Broker on the telephone, and the Job Broker often dropped into the office to see the staff and catch up. They felt that the Job Broker was always on hand to help them with any difficulties. Another employer, this time in the finance sector, reported benefiting from a range of help from the Job Broker, although recruitment was the primary focus. They organised work placements which could become permanent posts if the individual was suitable, and helped with adjustments or loaned equipment to enable trial sessions with their customers. In addition, they helped the employer to organise recruitment open days for people with health conditions and disabilities, which have proved successful.

In a final example, a voluntary organisation concerned with disability issues told of how they had a very close relationship with the Job Broker, consisting of weekly meetings and a high level of contact through other methods, including email, although they felt that face-to-face contact was definitely the most successful. A large proportion of this organisation's employees came through the Job Broker, and this was the driver behind such close, ongoing contact. They were also involved in a wider WORKSTEP network which met once a month, and, hence, were used to working in partnership with a range of community organisations.

The influence of individuals at the Job Broker organisation

Several of the employers specifically mentioned that relationships had been built up with particular individuals within a Job Broker organisation, rather than with the Job Broker as a whole. The advantages of this were that employers felt that they had a central point of contact with whom they could communicate over time. The Job Broker representative could get to know how the employer worked, what they were looking for and also be aware of all interaction between the Job Broker and employer in the past. This appeared to be one of the most fruitful ways of fostering a good ongoing relationship. Indeed, there were reports of particular individuals' dedication and enthusiasm having been the key to building a successful relationship.

However, there were disadvantages, in that if the key individual moved from the post, the relationship with the Job Broker could break down. One example of this was a large retailer, which had a very positive relationship with an enthusiastic Job Broker representative. It resulted in several placements, and a raised awareness of the NDDP programme and the benefits it offered to employers and potential employees alike. Unfortunately, this lasted for only four months, at which point the individual concerned appeared to have left the Job Broker organisation. The employer reported that there had been no contact from anyone else at the Job Broker's since then. Hence, the promising start, and the good relations that had been quickly established, were not continued through what would appear to be a lack of follow-up by the Job Broker organisation. Another employer commented that they dealt with one dedicated contact at the Job Broker, who had now left, and that they would now have to build up a new relationship with someone else. It is inevitable that individuals working within Job Brokers will move jobs from time to time. However, it seems important that where good relationships have already been established, steps should be taken to ensure they are continued and preserved.

It is highly likely that a similar situation can arise from time to time when contacts within the employer organisation move jobs, although our interviewees could not, for the most part, be expected to be aware of the extent to which this happened.

What else do employers require?

A good number of the employers reported that the contact with the Job Broker, and the support that they had received, was sufficient for their needs. They tended to fall into two categories – first, those who had not encountered any problems or issues,

or who had had less contact with the programme in general (and had clearly given less thought to it as a result), perhaps through having taken on only one or two employees. The second group were those who had high levels of contact and close relationships with their local Job Broker, and, therefore, felt fully aware of the way that they operated:

'I think that the whole thing, working with disability agencies, has been very successful. I will continue using the Jobcentre and the other agencies. I think that as I know them so well and what's on offer they don't really need to improve their services to me, but they could improve their profile more generally.'

However, there were also suggestions for ways in which Job Brokers could improve their services. These included:

- more frequent contact;
- more information on the range of Job Broker services available;
- advice on funding;
- more help with specialist equipment and adjustments;
- training for recruits;
- higher profile of Job Broker organisations, to raise awareness.

In some cases, employers were quite clear about specific ways in which services could be made more suitable, usually as a result of having encountered situations in the past which had raised particular needs. One employer summed up several ways in which they felt they could be helped further by Job Brokers:

'We think they should come in and do the training with them; have the support worker with them; work alongside the employee. We would also like more information on how to sort out our adaptations at work; we don't know who to go to for this type of information. I also think we need more in-depth information on a person's disability. What type of learning disability they have, what does it involve? We have one chap here with a learning disability who swears a lot, which can be a problem as he is working on the shop floor. We didn't know about this, we should have been informed as to exactly what his learning disability involved and what problems this may bring for us.'

Some employers would have liked more ongoing support once the employee had started work, rather than just at the time of the placement, to deal with any issues that arose over time – for example, if additional health conditions came to the fore. However, amongst others, there was a sense that it was difficult to say what else might help, without knowing what was actually available. These employers often requested more information, or more frequent contact, so that they could build up a better picture of what was potentially on offer to them:

'These services are a very good idea, but they need to be publicised more. We would use them more if we knew about them.'

6.3.2 Understanding the employer

As was observed in the report on the Wave 1 research, an important facet of developing an effective, close relationship between Job Broker and employer is that the Job Broker should be recognised to be 'employer-friendly', and appreciative of employers' concerns and circumstances. In the first wave, many of the employers had had contact with the Job Broker over a fairly limited time period, perhaps not long enough to have formed a view on this point. The Wave 2 research was able to draw on employer-Job Broker relationships for the purpose of NDDP, of up to two years.

We found that in general, NDDP and Job Broker-aware employers felt that their needs were understood by the Job Broker, although there were a few cases where this was not so. Unsurprisingly, the amount of faith put in the Job Broker's ability to understand employer needs was related to the closeness of the working relationship. Akin to the findings of Wave 1, those employers who had experienced more limited contact with their Job Broker seemed to have fewer expectations of the ways in which such a relationship might benefit them.

Where a well established relationship existed, feedback on the services the Job Broker provided was in the main, very positive. In these instances, employers usually felt confident that Job Brokers were acting with a good awareness and appreciation of their needs. One employer spoke directly of how the quality of the relationship was 'absolutely key to the successful implementation of programmes like NDDP.' Another talked of the benefits of having a dedicated relationship with one organisation; it meant that there was no need to re-explain their situation to the Job Broker in great detail on successive occasions, as they would need to with more ad hoc advice and support.

There were a few instances where employers felt that they had not been given enough information about the recruit, most particularly their condition and their resultant needs. However, one employer qualified this by saying that although this situation had arisen in the past, they now ensured that they obtained the information they needed.

It seems that once the Job Broker-employer relationship passes a certain stage of maturity, an implicit level of trust can develop. In some cases, this could negate the employer's need to know much about the potential employee before taking them on. For example, an employer with a close working relationship with their Job Broker trusted their judgement to select appropriate people for the organisation, and hence did not feel it was necessary to know all the details of a customer's particular disability or health condition:

'It doesn't bother us that they don't always tell us about a person's health problem or disability. I think we have a good enough relationship with [the Job Broker] to know that they are not going to offer us anybody who is not right for this job.'

Here, then, it is the Job Broker's knowledge of the organisation, and the different occupational demands and requirements arising from the work it does, rather than the advice they could give as specialists in employing people with health conditions and disabilities, that was particularly attractive to the employer. There was another instance of a Job Broker providing potential recruits who were skilled and vocationally suitable in a tight labour market. This also focused on individuals' advantages in the market rather than on providing assistance to accommodate their disabilities or health condition. The employer had found that customers from the Job Broker were more motivated than those from Jobcentre Plus, and that they had generally been pre-sorted to some extent by the Job Broker to ensure they possessed the appropriate skills to do the job. Other employers commented that potential employees sent to them by the Job Brokers, were more suitable than those sent by other agencies and Jobcentre Plus, particularly in terms of their motivation. However, they did not always have the necessary skills.

Organisations occasionally felt that Job Brokers were pushing unsuitable employees towards them, although matching was reported to have been better through Job Brokers than through some other agency routes. There were isolated examples where employers felt that Job Brokers needed to be more aware of their needs as an organisation, both in terms of the people they required, and the way that they recruited.

6.3.3 Problems and issues

In the main, employers reported that no problems had arisen through working with the Job Broker, and that the methods used had, in their experience, worked well. One employer contrasted the approach of the NDDP Job Broker with that of other agencies:

'If agencies are too pushy then it puts me off a bit. One person has given us unsuitable candidates previously. There is a big difference in the way she acts and the way the gentleman from [the Job Broker] operated.'

However, in terms of the way contact was made by agencies in general, and how it could be improved, this employer added:

'Sometimes when they ring it's not convenient. The best way to make contact is probably what they are doing now, but we need decent notice and realistic timescales.'

This employer also suggested that pre-screening meetings between the employer and Job Broker, to discuss a customer's suitability for the role prior to the actual interview with the customer might be helpful.

Where issues had arisen, there was little evidence to suggest that they had put employers off being involved with Job Brokers in the future. In fact, employers usually viewed such issues as areas for future improvement, rather than reasons not to be involved. For example, one employer felt they could have been better informed prior to interview about the nature of the customer's disability. In this case, the

customer was a wheelchair user, but the employer was not told of this by the Job Broker. Hasty arrangements had to be made to change to a suitable interview room when they arrived for the interview, which the employer found rather embarrassing. Despite this, the employer spoke about the programme with enthusiasm, and hoped to be able to continue working with the Job Broker in the future.

Inevitably, not all placements had worked out well, and whilst some employers did not necessarily see this as being a problem, others felt that unsuitable candidates pointed to 'room for improvement in terms of the Broker's understanding of the needs of the employer'. There were also instances where such problems had indeed been resolved over time, and had led to an improved relationship between Job Broker and employer.

Financial issues

There were a few comments regarding financial issues; benefits for the employees, financial incentives for the employer, and the costs of making adjustments. One employer reported that advice about benefits that customers had received from the Job Broker had not been accurate. This had caused some problems through employees working too many hours to receive the benefits they had expected, although this had now been resolved. Several employers interviewed felt that if employees recruited through this route were not completely effective, then there should be financial support for employers in the form of a subsidy, or some other financial incentive for them to invest their time in the programme. Another, a small employer, felt that cost was a barrier to employing people with a disability or health condition, and that funding needed to be made available for adjustments and specialist equipment. Some employers were very clued up about such financial issues. However, the extent to which employers were aware of the financial resources available to them varied greatly.

Not enough contact

One case highlighted a lack of contact from the Job Broker following the placement, which had left the new employee without suitable equipment. The employer intended to address this, but because of recent changes within the organisation, there had not been time. It seems that additional assistance from the Job Broker on this point would have been appreciated. Another employer, whilst finding the Job Broker very helpful, had subsequently found dealing with Access to Work, in order to get help on equipment and interpreters, to be difficult and time consuming – in fact, the employer had ended up paying for interpreters itself. This employer had received some help from the Job Broker in dealing with Access to Work, but would have liked more.

A small, family-run business wanted to find out more about the local Job Broker organisation before employing someone through it. As the Job Broker interaction had been with the customer rather than the employer, the employer rang the Job Broker to check out the position and how the programme worked, but this enquiry was not well received:

'The lack of communication; it was non-existent. I rang them up and asked them for some information on what type of organisation they were and I was told that I might be an employer but I had no right to ask any questions. I just wanted to know about the organisation, I hadn't heard of them. The Jobcentre gave me a brief outline, but [the Job Broker] didn't want to give me any information. It felt like a slap on the hand.'

Through the information from Jobcentre Plus, the employer was reassured that the programme was 'legal and above board' and was able to take on the person as a result; but they did not like the way they had been treated by the Job Broker.

Time consuming

Some employers felt that the process of employing someone through a Job Broker could be more time consuming than the usual recruitment methods, although as one employer said:

'Anyone could potentially be as time consuming, so it's swings and roundabouts really.'

Raise Job Broker profile

One employer felt that it was difficult to find out about the support that is available to people with a health condition or disability. It suggested that this might be particularly so when Job Brokers or specialist employment agencies, in competition with each other for outcome-related funding, may not always work co-operatively with each other, with the best interests of their customer at heart. Another felt that the profile of Job Broker organisations needed to be raised, through, for example, presentations, advertising, and attending association meetings and business breakfasts.

6.3.4 Benefits to employers

A variety of benefits to the relationship with Job Brokers were cited by employers. These could generally be grouped into three categories:

- recruitment;
- support;
- promoting diversity.

In this section, we extend the sample, such that the views of those employers who were not aware that they had taken part in NDDP, and had not heard of the Job Broker, are also considered. When told of the range of services offered by Job Brokers, many of them felt that they could potentially benefit from this type of contact.

Recruitment

Several employers had found the screening process undertaken by Job Brokers for suitable customers to be particularly useful. It had provided them with a shortlist of

suitably skilled, motivated people to consider for their vacancies. A reasonably developed relationship between employer and Job Broker had extended this advantageous relationship through improving the Job Broker's understanding of the employer's needs and circumstances, and increasing the readiness of the employer to consider future applicants from a source which had served them well in the past. They were also able to gain some insight from the Job Broker into employees before taking them on, making the appointment seem less risky. Some employers had found that they had been able to save time by recruiting through the Job Broker, or that the Job Broker had helped the appointment process to go smoothly. One employer said that using the Job Broker was cheaper than recruiting through the open market.

Support

A good number of employers talked about the benefits of the support available from Job Brokers, both during recruitment and afterwards in the form of ongoing support as and when additional needs arose. This follow-up support was described as invaluable in helping some employees to stay in post, although many did not appear to need it. However, even when support was not necessarily required, employers liked to know that there was back-up available for any problems that emerged. A further benefit was that employers found the Job Brokers a good route to simplifying the process of getting specialist help.

Promoting diversity

Some organisations felt that the Job Brokers were a good avenue to use to attract and recruit more people with health conditions and disabilities. Several mentioned the benefits of having a diverse workforce that reflected the community. With this in mind, but on a more pragmatic note, one employer said that the programme was a way of making employing people with disabilities cost effective. Others felt that through having been involved with a Job Broker, they were now more generally aware of the ways in which they could be more flexible, for example, by retaining the skills of people who become disabled in post, by redeploying them to different roles.

One employer said that they had found the programme good in terms of retention: those who had been recruited through the programme tended to stay.

'Unaware' employers' views

Nineteen employers who had had some interaction with NDDP had no knowledge of having taken part in NDDP and did not report any contact with a Job Broker regarding recruiting or employing disabled people. They were, therefore, unable to provide any insight into the details of how NDDP had operated in their organisation. Instead, the way that the programme operated was explained to them, and they were asked whether they felt it was a programme that could benefit them.

Most said that they would at least be interested in finding out more about the programme, although several expressed reservations about whether the roles in

their organisation would be suitable for disabled people and people with health conditions (often they used a fairly narrow definition of disability).

Some employers felt that the sorts of services available from the Job Broker should be better publicised, and that it was hard to know what would be useful to them without being aware of what was on offer. Others agreed that there were specific aspects of service that they could find useful, for example, there was interest in pre-screening and selection services, advice on adjustments, and support during the settling in period.

Several employers felt that they already had all their recruitment needs met through existing channels; usually standard internal procedures but, occasionally, also through other agencies. Others commented that for such a programme to work, Job Brokers would have to be aware of the circumstances and needs of the employer, and take these into account. Several employers reported having had contact with outside agencies in the past, but had found this aspect of the contact to have been problematic.

From the responses given by these 'unaware' NDDP participants, it seems that there is potential for Job Brokers to increase the availability of their services.

6.3.5 Benefits to employees

Employers were asked about the benefits they felt that such a programme afforded the employees who were recruited through it. Issues of confidence and support emerged as being key for customers of the programme. For example, customers knew that there was support available to them which they could call on to help them settle in to address any problems they might encounter. This was particularly helpful for customers who had been out of work for long periods of time, or who had health conditions which also affected their confidence.

Some employees had been taken on who would probably not have got the job in the absence of NDDP. For example, one recruit said that he would not have had the courage to ring up about the job himself, so the assistance from the Job Broker had been crucial in getting him into employment. A large public sector employer described how the situation was perhaps even more polarised for some customers:

'There are lots of good people who... thought they would never work again without the Job Broker.'

Finally, there was some evidence to suggest that where a more developed and trusting relationship had developed between employer and Job Broker, this could be transmitted to the potential employee. In such circumstances Job Brokers could encourage potential recruits to be more open about their disability or health condition and likely needs, by reassuring them that the employer in question would not discriminate against them on these grounds. As we have seen, employers regarded this as the best means of identifying and providing the kinds of adaptations and adjustments such a recruit might require.

6.4 Outcomes

This section looks at the outcomes of the NDDP programme – the volume and types of recruitment made through it, and the nature of the relationships between employers and Job Brokers that have resulted.

6.4.1 The scale of recruitment

Numbers employed through the programme

Around one-third of the employers were able to be fairly specific about the numbers they had recruited as a direct result of Job Broker activity. The reported scale of recruitment through NDDP was not particularly large, and some had taken on just one person through the programme. Quite a few employers had taken on three or four employees, and a couple reported that they had recruited ten employees or more with the help of their Job Broker. It should be remembered that employers may not have been aware of all of the employees recruited through NDDP.

Types of health conditions and disabilities amongst NDDP recruits

Employers reported having recruited people with a range of disabilities and health conditions through Job Brokers. These included:

- physical disabilities, for example people with mobility impairments;
- sensory disabilities, for example visual impairments, hearing impairments;
- learning difficulties, for example dyslexia;
- mental health conditions, for example depression;
- other long-term health issues, for example ME, asthma, back conditions, heart conditions.

A small number of employers were not certain of the nature of their employees' disabilities or health conditions.

In the Wave 1 research it was noted that many of those employed through NDDP had mental health conditions and learning difficulties – fewer had physical disabilities. Compared to this previous research, these employers seem to have recruited people with a wider range of impairments. This may of course be as a result of our sample which was targeted towards good practice.

Roles recruited

The roles to which Job Brokers' customers were recruited tended to be fairly low level, such as clerical roles, call-centre work, and customer-service roles. There were some isolated examples of progression from these: for example, one customer had been employed as a careworker but had since been promoted, and another was recruited to sales work, but had progressed to manage a small team.

6.4.2 The ongoing working relationship with the Job Broker

As we have indicated above, some employers reported that an ongoing working relationship with the Job Broker did not really exist, as contact had been fairly minimal and only for the purposes of a particular customer's recruitment and/or settling in period. Such employers tended to have recruited only one or two people through the programme. There were occasional instances when Job Brokers got back in touch with employers, following a period of silence – for example, to ask permission to use a particular customer for their publicity material – but aside from that, contact had not been maintained. This was not felt to have been an issue though, since such employers did not identify any particular gaps in the services they had received. However, some of them did not appear to be particularly aware of the full range of services that were potentially on offer to them, which may have made it difficult for them to envisage the effect that greater contact could have had, or might have in the future.

At the other end of the scale were those employers with whom Job Brokers had established regular, ongoing contact. It seems logical that frequent contact would, in general, be maintained for instrumental reasons, and this was usually found to be so. These employers had often employed several Job Broker customers, hence, the Job Broker had a concrete reason to stay in touch, ie to provide support, monitor progress and ensure that placements were working out well. In addition, employers with whom vacancies arose fairly frequently gave the Job Broker a good reason to keep in touch, ie they were an ongoing source of potential placements for their customers. Some of these particularly close ongoing relationships had been established over a number of years, and predated the NDDP programme.

In some instances, it seems that Job Brokers may not have been fully capitalising on the relationship built with an employer during the recruitment and settling in period. Although not all employers had a regular stream of vacancies, if the Job Broker maintained at least some level of contact with the employer, even when there was no particular reason, it would at least keep Job Brokers in employers' minds, so that when opportunities did arise, they would think to contact their Job Broker. There were occasional examples of this, although it was often due to the employer and the Job Broker organisations being linked in other ways, for example by both being part of the council.

It should be remembered that something over one-third of our total of 50 nominated 'good practice' employers had had some interaction with the programme but had not heard of NDDP or the Job Broker. Clearly, in these instances, no explicit relationship had been struck up between Job Broker and employer. It is likely that some of these cases were as a result of customers' requests to protect their anonymity as participants of the programme. However, there may be instances where this was not so, and where opportunities for future partnerships between Job Brokers and employers have been lost.

6.5 Impact of Job Broker contact on employers

This section looks at the impact of the Job Broker, and the NDDP programme they deliver. We wanted to know what difference it had made to these employers, whether it had changed the way they operated, and if this was likely to be sustainable in the future. It examines the awareness that employers have as a result of their involvement, then turns to whether the programme has had an impact on their recruitment and employment practices. Some emerging patterns of impact are drawn out, and employers' perceptions of how they hope to be involved in the future are considered.

6.5.1 Awareness of potential support and assistance

As has been referred to earlier in this chapter, of the 50 'good practice' employers who participated in this research, only 31 reported having been involved with NDDP or the Job Broker. The other 19 employers had not realised they had had some interaction with the programme, and so were unable to talk about the impact it had had on them. Of those 31 who reported having been involved, their awareness of what was available to them from Job Brokers varied. As might be expected, in general, the more contact that employers had had with Job Brokers, the more they were aware of the range of services that Job Brokers could provide. Hence, those with close Job Broker relationships seemed to feel confident that they knew about the range of services on offer.

However, this was by no means a universal position. One employer, responsible for a small team within a large organisation, had had fairly limited contact with the Job Broker, regarding the only customer she had been involved in taking on through NDDP. She felt that it would be useful to know more about the Job Brokers that exist, their links and what they could offer. As a large organisation, they had a human resources department, but human resources no longer became actively involved in recruiting on the ground as the organisation had become very devolved. They were now responsible for their own recruitment, and would benefit from an increased awareness of the resources available to them in the community.

Another employer spoke of how they felt that Job Brokers needed to raise their profile in the community more generally:

'I also think that going along to presentations and meetings, and advertising what they do, would help a lot. Going to business breakfasts, association meetings, etc. or getting good news stories in the paper would help them no end. They need to raise their profile.'

6.5.2 Recruitment and employment practices

Here we consider how far the relationship with the Job Broker and NDDP had made any difference to the ways in which these employers typically behaved in respect of jobseekers with disabilities and health conditions.

Difference made to individuals

The numbers employed through the programme were discussed in the section above, but it is important to consider whether these individuals would have been recruited by the organisation regardless of NDDP. On balance, it seems that in some cases at least, NDDP has been a critical factor. Employers reported that they felt these appointments would not have been made without the interventions of the Job Broker:

'It helped us to recruit a number of staff, and those people probably wouldn't be with us today without it. So it's made a difference to us, and to them it's been a tremendous benefit.'

'The scheme is very useful as we have employed some good people through it, who might not have contacted us otherwise.'

Customer confidence emerged again as an issue here:

'One of the most important functions of the Broker is to increase the client's confidence, and placing them with organisations like ours helps this process.'

Other employers felt that the mediating role of Job Brokers had played an important part in ensuring the success of the placements, and in some cases, in ensuring the employees were retained within the organisation.

Difference made to recruitment and employment practices

Not all recruits through the programme had necessarily worked out, but this had not generally created bad feeling or a reluctance to recruit again through the Job Brokers. Virtually all of the employers who were 'aware' participants said that they would be willing to use the programme in the future:

'Okay, in this particular case, it didn't work for us but the principle did.'

Even fairly minimal and brief involvement was capable of raising employers' awareness of the Job Broker route as a way of employing in the future.

It was clear that the individuals involved on behalf of the Job Broker were able to have substantial sway with employers, given the right attitude. If they came across as dedicated to what they were doing, but also pragmatic about employers' needs, then their enthusiasm could influence employers and change the way they thought and acted in the future. One employer, part of a large retail chain, spoke of the impact a Job Broker contact had had on her in this way:

'He was fantastic, excellent, he was just a nice guy, passionate about his clients, and that came through. It was about caring, that's what it was really, he really wanted to make a difference and that rubs off on you. He was the first person that opened my eyes to encouraging disabled people, switched me on to it. He had pure enthusiasm, but he was also very realistic about what we were as a business, he was aware of health and safety implications.'

Unfortunately, this particular individual appeared to have left the Job Broker after only a few months, but his efforts had already left a lasting impression on the employer:

'I was lucky to start with, it's good as this contact left a positive impression on me so I still see it in a positive light. I'm sure he's done a lot of good, and it won't be just me he's spoken to. I've discussed it with the other stores he's contacted, maybe they weren't sure about getting involved but I was able to tell them that I'd had a positive experience through being involved. Perhaps I helped to get other stores on board.'

There were reports of how the Job Broker work had simplified the process of recruiting people with health conditions and disabilities, particularly amongst employers who hitherto had little experience of such matters. One employer said that they would not really have thought about specifically trying to recruit disabled people and people with health conditions if it hadn't been for the Job Broker. This was balanced against others that were already 'insider focused', ie were well disposed to employing people with health conditions and disabilities – for example, a mental health trust, which actively encouraged applications from people with disabilities and health conditions, due to the focus of their work. In such cases, the Job Broker provided an additional and expedient route to do this, but was not changing the focus or ethos of the organisation.

Some organisations reported that the Job Broker interventions had impacted quite significantly on their recruitment. For example, one employer said that around ten of their total 50 recruits had come through the Job Broker. This employer was actually more interested in the screening and skill matching than in the expertise on health conditions and disabilities that the Job Broker could provide, and was not one of the 'insider focused' organisations described above. Here, the work of the Job Broker had clearly made a difference to the proportion of disabled people and people with health conditions employed in that organisation. Another employer reported that the number of people with health conditions and disabilities employed by the organisation had increased since the Job Broker had become involved two years ago. They felt that it would be 'a great loss' if the Job Broker discontinued the work.

Emerging patterns

It is clear from the evidence presented in this chapter that much depends on the closeness of the Job Broker and employer relationship, and that this is built up over time. However, there seem to be several models emerging that illustrate the way that NDDP is operating in practice:

- Job Brokers working with organisations already well disposed to employing disabled people and people with health conditions;
- Job Brokers raising awareness of the benefits to employers of recruiting through them, for example, pre-screening for suitably enthusiastic and skilled people in a tight labour market;

- Job Brokers providing crucial support to, and information for employers around the process and issues of employing people with health conditions and disabilities, who were inexperienced in such matters;
- Job Broker interventions increasing the success of placements that may well have happened anyway;
- Job Brokers being pivotal in the recruitment and retention of particular individuals for reasons including confidence, adjustments and support requirements;
- Job Brokers changing the attitude of organisations towards employing disabled people and people with health conditions.

There is one more model which is implicitly derived from the finding that 19 employers were unaware of their involvement with NDDP:

- Job Brokers focus their attentions on customers, and have no contact with the employers who recruit them.

Amongst this last group, it was difficult to assess the direct impact that NDDP had had on the organisations. However, another possibility could be inferred from this model, which is that Job Brokers concentrate on the customer, and only contact employers when they need to. Hence, the impact of NDDP on these employers was that as a result of the programme, they recruited someone who, without the support of a Job Broker, may have found it more difficult to secure employment.

Other sources of these services

An evaluation of the impact of NDDP as delivered through the Job Brokers also needs to consider whether employers felt they would have been able to access these services elsewhere.

Not all employers had interacted solely with the Job Broker. As we have seen, large organisations usually mentioned internal sources of support including human resources or personnel departments, occupational health departments and specialist helplines to which they could turn to for advice on how to deal with, for example, support needs or related situations which arose, although not usually about ways of recruiting people with health conditions and disabled people in particular.

Other organisations, including public, private and voluntary sector organisations had also had contact with other agencies doing similar work to the Job Brokers. Some had been involved in specific programmes, for example WORKSTEP. Specialist agencies and Jobcentre Plus (not those designated as NDDP Job Brokers) were also mentioned by a number of employers as having been a similar source of recruitment, and to a lesser extent, ongoing support. At best, it seems that all agencies in the area pull together to provide a cohesive service. Whilst this was not always the case, comments from one employer showed that it was possible:

'(A specialist agency) and the Jobcentre provide us with a lot of advice. I've been talking to someone recently about Access to Work. They provided us with a very good selection of staff. I'm very happy with them all. There's very good networking in this area, we are very proactive and everyone knows each other, which is good.'

6.5.3 The future

Some of those who had not had heavy involvement with the Job Broker thus far, said that they would like to expand this in the future. One employer, a large private sector organisation with an interest in promoting diversity across the workforce, spoke of how she had found the contact she had had as being 'very rewarding so far.' She hoped to be able to work with the Job Broker more in the future.

As always, time pressures presented a significant barrier to promoting partnerships between Job Brokers and employers. For example, a voluntary sector organisation said that they would like to work more proactively and more innovatively with the Job Broker, for example, doing workshops, etc. but as there were more pressing day-to-day issues to be dealt with, they had not had the time. As a result, contact in the past has tended to be in response to specific vacancies, and it is probable that this would continue in the near future at least.

There were also instances where employers used the Job Broker quite heavily as a major source of employees, had found this to be very suitable for them, and intended to continue this.

One employer felt that suitability of the customer would always be the primary motivating factor for involvement in the future. Use of the Job Broker route would be in addition to their existing recruitment procedures, and would depend entirely on whether the customer was a 'good fit' for the job. In fact, this pragmatic attitude was a fairly common one, and in addition, some employers mentioned that they would always need to advertise their posts in accordance with their policies. However, all employers said that given the right circumstances, they would recruit through the Job Broker again.

7 Summary and conclusions

The previous chapters have restricted themselves to setting out the findings of our interviews with these 'good practice' employers. They have not sought to infer lessons or implications from these findings or to place any particular interpretations on them. Indeed, it is a characteristic of qualitative research that small sample sizes offer only a limited basis for drawing such broader conclusions.

However, in this chapter we do set out what we believe to be the main conclusions which may be drawn from the findings. We recognise that there may be other interpretations placed on them, and we concede that the evidence base is both small and partial. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to offer our conclusions on this basis, and in our view it would be remiss not to offer them. The reader should, therefore, take these considerations into account in forming their view of the strength and validity of the conclusions which follow.

7.1 A mixed picture

In designing the sample for this research we asked a varied group of NDDP Job Brokers to provide us with the 'top ten' employers with whom they had placed NDDP customers. We suggested that this might include:

- employers with whom they had secured relatively large volumes of hires under NDDP;
- employers with whom they felt they had established a good working relationship;
- employers for whom they felt they had provided a particularly good or extensive service;
- employers with whom they had successfully placed recruits with particularly severe impairments, or those requiring more extensive or deliberate support in settling into the new job or workplace.

We deliberately offered fairly wide scope for them to choose, as we did not want to unduly constrain what they, the Job Brokers, felt constituted 'good practice'.

We were somewhat surprised by the extent to which a good proportion of the resulting employer sample perceived their participation in NDDP in ways remarkably similar to those from the earlier and random sample in Wave 1, 18 months previously, ie:

- they had hired NDDP customers, without knowing them to be so, without contact with, or knowledge of, the Job Broker in question, and sometimes without recognising that the individual in question had a health condition or disability at all;
- their awareness of the programme was minimal, and not infrequently gleaned from sources other than the Job Broker;
- their recognition of the Job Broker and the role they might play was low, and sometimes non-existent;
- the extent of post-recruitment support received was fairly modest.

None of this is to deny that at the other end of the spectrum, this sample did include employers who were well aware of the programme; had an ongoing and positive relationship with the Job Brokers; had recruited NDDP customers repeatedly through the Job Broker and had benefited from their provision of post-recruitment support and advice about any necessary adjustments/adaptations. For us, the surprise lay in the fact that more (indeed most) of the sample did not display these characteristics.

Clearly, the fact that some of the sample displayed these characteristics (while virtually none from the first wave did) shows that Job Brokers are capable of, and are being successful in, building more direct, stronger and deeper links with employers in delivering the programme. We go on to explore the conditions which seem to us to support and encourage (and conversely to discourage) these more substantial relationships.

For the moment, our conclusion is that while time and growing familiarity will allow and encourage better relationships to develop between employers and Job Brokers, it might be unrealistic to expect that these will account for a significant proportion of the job placements under the programme, or that they are a necessary or natural progression for Job Brokers to make.

7.2 Good practice, or just practice?

There, nevertheless, remains a difficulty in interpreting how it could be that several of these Job Brokers had proposed to us, as examples of good practice, employers (in some cases, named individuals) who did not seem to have heard of them, and were certainly not in any form of conscious relationship with them at all.

We suggest two explanations for this:

- Job Brokers perceive the ‘hidden-hand’ approach (ie jobseeker-led, vacancy-responsive, no/minimal direct contact with employer) to constitute good practice, provided that it fulfils at least one, or more of the following criteria:
 - that individuals are successfully hired through these means, and that they settle into the jobs without undue difficulty;
 - that Job Brokers who are aware of particular employers are models of good practice in terms of hiring disabled people, and are confident that they can send prospective recruits there in the knowledge that they will be dealt with appropriately, with no need to intervene, unless the potential recruit informs them otherwise;
 - that significant volumes of NDDP customers can be successfully placed in the organisation concerned without the need for closer contact.

There was considerable evidence from Wave 1 that the first of these is quite possible (albeit with the twin constraints that employers are aware of how to respond to individuals’ particular impairments or disabilities, and that they are willing to make reasonable adjustments as necessary to support the recruit). There is some evidence from the present research that the latter was also beginning to happen. Although few of our employer respondents had hired very large numbers under the programme, there was certainly evidence of repeat hires beginning to build up.

- An asymmetrical relationship: Job Brokers typically handle relatively small numbers of NDDP customers, whereas some employers have very high turnover, which requires them to hire relatively large numbers of recruits. In this way, for example, a large supermarket might be regarded by the Job Broker as an important source of jobs for NDDP customers, while the contribution to overall labour supply from that source might well be regarded as minimal. This explanation seemed to us to be quite important and relatively common in explaining why so many of these employers were so vague about their relationship with the Job Broker; for them it accounted for a relatively small proportion of their workforce.

7.3 Right person for the job

It is quite clear from these discussions with employers that even for the relatively low level and fairly unskilled jobs to which they had recruited among NDDP customers, they, nevertheless, often had quite extensive lists of selection criteria, involving a mix of educational attainment, vocational skills, work experience, and personal characteristics. These might be explicit or implicit, or a mix of both, and the list might be longer or shorter according to the formality brought to the process by the employer, and the level of skill/seniority which the vacant post entailed.

This research suggests that a key condition which the Job Broker needed to meet, both for the one-off hidden-hand placement under NDDP, and for any more extensive relationship, was to understand these selection criteria, and to have

applied them to the jobseeker before submitting them for the vacancy. In other words, a prior condition for Job Brokers to operate effectively with employers, which comes before their specialist insights into health condition and disability issues, is their regular job-broking ability and experience.

Leaving aside those employers who positively sought to employ disabled people and people with health conditions, it was the presentation of individuals with the right skills, qualifications, experience and personal characteristics to get and do the job in question, which ultimately formed the basis for an ongoing relationship between employer and Job Broker. Their ability to help with any needs the potential recruit might have on account of their disability was certainly also valuable, but entirely irrelevant if the former requirements were not met.

In short, the skill and insight which the NDDP Job Broker might bring to the regular business of job broking (quite independently of the disability-related aspects) seem to be a key ingredients in their success with employers. It is only on the basis of having been presented with the right person for the job that employers are likely to move on to consider any needs which that person may bring with them.

7.4 Moving up

To the extent that Job Brokers might wish to build more substantive relationships with employers, it is worth asking under what conditions they can best do so. This research has been able to identify both a range of factors which encourage/facilitate such a relationship, and conversely one which might discourage or undermine it. We look at them in turn.

7.4.1 Factors encouraging a good Job Broker relationship

The research suggests that the following points had been helpful in building a relationship with employers beyond the simple, hidden-hand, approach.

- Links with the employer which predated NDDP were extremely helpful, and while these cannot be retrospectively manufactured, they could be usefully deployed where they existed.
- Job Brokers should introduce themselves to the employer at an early stage in the recruitment process, (for example by ringing up on behalf of a potential applicant) even if they took no further part in the exercise.
- Face-to-face meetings between the employer and Job Broker were particularly helpful, although they could be aside from any particular recruitment exercise.

A central point of contact within the Job Broker's was greatly appreciated by employers – an individual who could get to know the employer and their circumstances. The experience, enthusiasm and dedication of Job Broker representatives was also influential:

- where there were no opportunities for regular placements into a flow of vacancies, some means of maintaining ongoing visibility was important, perhaps through regular or occasional meetings, etc.;
- where there is ongoing contact, momentum is built up so employers know where to go to access recruits, support, advice, etc.;
- trust between the employer and Job Broker may be built up through suitable pre-screening of candidates, help with job entry and ongoing support, problem solving, etc. Once the relationship has reached a certain level of maturity, employers become confident that Job Brokers:
 - know the sorts of people who will be suitable for them; and
 - can help them with any needs such individuals might have.

7.4.2 Factors inhibiting the development of a good Job Broker relationship

Clearly, the absence of some of these positive factors will discourage or undermine the development of good relationships, but in addition we observed several further factors which could be influential in this way.

- Where Job Brokers work only with customers and not employers, there may be less of a sustainability effect produced within the employers' organisations beyond the impact of that individual. Although the particular individual may impress the employer enough to bring about a shift in attitudes, there is less chance to change recruitment practices, or attitudes more widely. Similarly, no opening is created for publicity about NDDP or Job Brokers' services.
- Employers may not feel that they require Job Broker support, ie they have their own internal support structures and processes, for example human resources, occupational health, etc.
- Lack of employer knowledge and awareness of the services the Job Broker might offer. This is a vicious circle; if employers do not know what might be available then they do not know where to seek advice or what to ask for.
- How and where Job Brokers target their contact, for example in large organisations that are highly devolved, working with individual line managers means that awareness of the Job Brokers' services probably stays within that small team, and the overall impact is diluted.
- Relying on the employer to make the first move. Once a NDDP customer is hired, the lack of proactive contact between the Job Broker and the employer might not be sufficient to alert the Job Broker to problems arising subsequently. Even when they said they would have liked additional support, these employers had rarely taken significant proactive steps to obtain this from the Job Broker.

- Even if no problems emerge, lack of follow-up contact from a Job Broker once they have placed a customer, could create bad feeling and leave employers feeling potentially exposed.
- Pushing unsuitable customers onto employers – we encountered few examples of this amongst the Job Brokers, whose matching skills were generally contrasted favourably with other similar agencies.
- Key individuals leaving from the Job Broker's or the employer's organisation can mean that the relationship they have established quickly deteriorates. As job mobility can hardly be forecast or reduced, Job Brokers need to have some strategy on hand for managing any handover.

Appendix A

Approach letter

Date as postmark

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Dear

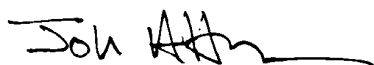
Recruitment and Employment of Disabled People

I am writing to invite you to take part in a research study which our Institute is carrying out for the Department for Work and Pensions. The research is concerned with finding out how employers such as yourself regard people with disabilities and health conditions as recruits and employees. You will know, I am sure, that people with disabilities and health conditions form one of the largest groups of people outside employment. It is important that employers' views and experiences are taken into account in considering how best to help people with disabilities and health conditions to enter the world of work. That is what our research will do.

I can assure you that the research will be entirely confidential; we never name any organisation or individual who has taken part in our research. Participation in the research is entirely voluntary, but I do hope that you will want to take part as you can help us to take employers' views fully into account. Taking part will involve a short interview with one of our researchers, who will visit you for the purpose. It should last only about an hour, and we will organise it at a time which is convenient for you.

A researcher will contact you shortly to see whether you can help, and to make arrangements for the interview. However, if you have any queries about what is involved, please feel free to contact my colleague Jane Aston, on 01273 873648.

Yours sincerely



John Atkinson
Associate Director

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Appendix B

Wave 2 employers' discussion guide

A. Introductory section

Thanks for participating.

Describe purpose and nature of the research in general terms, without at this point mentioning the programme:

IES is carrying out this research for the Department for Work and Pensions. It is looking at:

- the employment of sick and disabled people;
- employers' views and experiences (if any); and
- the use, and usefulness, of provision to support sick and disabled people in getting and keeping jobs.

This is one of around 50 interviews which are being carried out with a range of employers across the country.

Stress confidentiality of the discussion, their organisation will not be named or identifiable.

Explain that we'd like to get some general background about the organisation, stress that we only want to spend five or ten minutes doing this.

Note for interviewers:

It is important that we try to distinguish between support and contact through NDDP and support provided through other programmes and channels, for example Access to Work, WORKSTEP, Jobcentre Plus.

B. General background on the employer

General background about the organisation to provide context for later questions. The aim here is to ascertain what kind of employer this is, the general character of their employment policies/practices, their circumstances in their labour market, etc.

The respondent

1. What is the level and position of the respondent?

The organisation

2. What is the main business activity of this organisation?
3. Approximately how many employees?
4. What job types do your employees undertake?
5. General trends in employment (growth/shrinkage) in the last couple of years

Recruitment

6. Volume and regularity of recruitment?
7. How easy is it to fill vacancies?
Are there differences between occupations?
8. What are the main recruitment methods used?
9. Who is responsible for recruitment and employment decisions/implementation?
10. What is your role in recruiting?

Equal opportunities

11. Do you have an equal opportunities and/or diversity policy?
If yes, are you familiar with the content of this policy?
12. Does this policy have an impact on:
 - the day to day running of your organisation?
 - recruitment and selection procedures?
13. Are there any processes to monitor its impact?
14. Are there any processes in place to ensure the policy is followed?
15. Is sickness and disability covered within your equal opportunities and/or diversity policy or is there a separate policy?
16. Are you aware of any specific responsibilities that you have as an employer under the Disability Discrimination Act?

17. Do you recognise the disability, 'Two Ticks' symbol? Do you know what this symbol means?

Experience of public programmes

18. Has this organisation taken part in any employment programmes?

for example *NDYP, ND25+, ND50+*

NB: Do not prompt on NDDP. If respondent mentions it, note, and say would like to come back to this.

C. Employing sick and disabled people

Extent of experience

19. Do you employ any sick and disabled people at present?

- How many?
- What jobs/occupations/roles are they employed in?
- Has this changed over the past 18 months to two years?

Recruitment

20. Does the organisation actively encourage applications from sick and disabled people?

Are there any specific methods to do this?

for example disability symbol, links with specialist disability organisations (Job Brokers may be mentioned here).

21. Does employing sick and disabled people have any benefits to the business? Explore.
22. And are there any disadvantages to employing sick and disabled people? Explore.
23. Are there any particular types of disability or illness, which your organisation would find difficult to accommodate in the workplace?
24. How would you normally find out that an applicant or employee had a sickness and/or disability of some kind?
- *In advance*: rely on observation/obvious, question on application form, ask at interview.
 - *Formal check*: Through medical or health assessment.
 - *Alerted through experience*: time off sick, job-related difficulties, need for adjustments/adaptations.
 - Others?

Barriers, adjustments and adaptations

25. In your experience, what sort of issues do sick and disabled people typically face when taking up work?
26. And what issues are there for you as an employer when you employ sick and disabled people?
27. In general, what kinds of steps (adjustments or adaptations) might you take to make it possible to recruit/retain a sick and/or disabled person? (for example adaptations to the physical environment and also non-physical adjustments such as changes in job role).
28. How confident are you about:
 - your ability to identify/assess such needs;
 - your ability to identify/implement appropriate adjustments or adaptations.

D. Awareness of NDDP*The aim here is to check on:*

- conscious/overt participation in NDDP;
- uninformed participation through recruiting under it, or links with a JB; and
- interviewers may need to explain that NDDP stands for New Deal for Disabled People.

Awareness and conscious involvement

29. Have you heard of NDDP?

If yes, how did you first hear of NDDP?

- Was told of NDDP by Jobcentre Plus.
- Through national advertisements by Jobcentre Plus/DWP.
- Through local advertising by Job Broker.
- Other?

30. Have you had any involvement with NDDP?

31. What do you know about it?

Uninformed participation (ask if negative above)

32. Are you aware that sick and disabled applicants may receive help/support and advice from groups representing sick and disabled people?

If yes, explore what they know.

Awareness of JB's and other intermediaries

33. Have you had any contact with any of these organisations about employing sick and/or disabled people? for example:

- Jobcentre Plus
- LOCAL JOB BROKERS.....you may need to prompt with the name here
- Any other organisations – disability, advice, etc.

We are mostly interested in the past 18 months to two years.

If they have not been involved with NDDP or Job Brokers, go to Section H – 'Not involved with NDDP'

E. Getting involved

Concentrate here on relations with the specific Job Broker if acknowledged.

If respondent doesn't recognise the Job Broker name we have, ask about relationship with their main intermediary... make sure you get the name.

If no specific organisation, ask more broadly about the one(s) they do recognise.

34. How long have you been in contact with the *Job Broker/sick/disability organisation*?

- Longer than two years? ie before the NDDP.
- Or has contact been made since/as a result of NDDP?

Approaches

In this section we need to establish if the Job Broker contacted the employer, or vice versa, and how/why this was done.

35. Tell me about how you got involved with the NDDP or the Job Broker:

If Job Broker contacted them:

36. Who made contact with you? Name/role/organisation

37. How did they contact you? Why did they contact you?

- Vacancy led.
- individual employee/jobseeker led.
- General marketing.
- NDDP marketing.
- Other.

38. What was your response?
39. How did you feel about having been approached?
Why?
40. Were you glad they had contacted you? Or would you have rather not have been? Why?
41. Do you think the approach could have been done better?
How?
Would it have changed your reaction?

If employer contacted the Job Broker:

42. Who did you contact? Name/role/organisation
43. How did you know about them?
44. Why did you contact them?
45. What was the response?

All

46. In the past two years, have you recruited anyone under the NDDP, or through LOCAL JOB BROKER?

If Yes, carry on below – 'Scale of recruitment'

If No, ie they have not recruited anyone under NDDP, or through the JB, go to Section F 'Contact with Job Brokers'

Scale of recruitment

Wherever possible, distinguish between support funded by the NDDP, and support funded by other programmes such as Access to Work.

47. How many people have been recruited under the NDDP/through Job Broker (in the last two years)?
48. What kinds of conditions do they have? (typically, if many)
 - What sort?
 - How severe?
 - How restrictive?
49. And what jobs/occupations/roles were they recruited to? (would they typically be, if many)

50. Do you feel the Job Broker provided enough information on the conditions these people have/had? If no, did you feel you were misled?
51. Do you plan to recruit again under the NDDP/through the Job Broker? Explore
52. Any emerging patterns?

Probe on volume, character and development of relationship

- *None*: only one recruit offered/taken so far.
- *None*: only one, and declined any further offers.
- *Ad hoc*: occasional, one-offs, all-depends.
- *Growing*: increasing volume, different vacancies/disabilities.
- *Developing*: more trust/mutual insight, wider range of support, etc.

F. Working with Job Brokers

Wherever possible try to distinguish between contact under NDDP, and contact under other programmes such as WORKSTEP, or, where applicable, through mainstream Jobcentre Plus functions

Type of contact

53. Over the last two years what kind of contact have you had with LOCAL JOB BROKER? for example

Vacancy/recruitment specific:

- providing advice;
- providing recruits;
- selection & pre-screening candidates;
- preparing recruits for work;
- advising on job design/role;
- advising on recruits needs.

Job entry:

- induction;
- helping recruits to settle in;
- on going liaison with you;
- providing ongoing support with employees. If so, for how long?
- (short-term = 0-13 weeks, medium term = 14-26 weeks, long term – over 26 weeks);
- training/coaching/mentoring.

Assessing and assisting in the provision of additional needs, (if any):

- assessing additional needs;
- help with adjustments and adaptations;
- Job Broker directly providing funding;
- Job Broker helping the employer to access external funding.

Anything else?

54. For each type of contact, discuss:

- How useful (to the employer) was this type of contact?
- How helpful (to the recruits)?
- How effective was the JB in delivering it?
- Have there been any difficulties?

55. Did the Job Broker help with access to any other services or support?

for example other activities outside NDDP, links with other agencies, support organisations, sources of funding outside NDDP, for example DPTC.

Working relationship

56. How frequently has there been contact between you and the Job Broker?

for example sporadic, frequent, ongoing, re specific vacancies or employees, generally keeping in touch, etc.

Do you contact them or do they contact you?

By telephone, in person, etc.?

57. What kind of contact works best for you?

58. Have there been any problems?

- If yes, how resolved?
- Any emergent problems?

59. How would you describe the working relationship that you have with the Job Broker?

for example how established, how formal, how easy, etc.

60. Has the nature of the relationship been built up or changed over time?

61. Are you still in contact with the Job Broker?

62. Are you contacted by other agencies/organisations in a similar way? How do you feel about being contacted in this way?

G. Usefulness and contribution

63. How useful have you found the contact you have had with the Job Broker?

How did it help you?

What were the most helpful aspects?

Was help directed at staff in human resources or the employees line manager?

64. How much did you feel that they understood the circumstances and needs of you as an employer?

65. To what extent did you feel that the contact was custom made to meeting your needs and the needs of the recruit?

66. If the Job Broker service was not available, are there other places/organisations from whom you feel you would be able to get similar help/service?

Who/where?

What difference did it make?

67. How much difference has contact with the Job Broker made? To you and also to the recruit?

68. Do you feel that your contact with the Job Broker helped you to recruit/retain disabled employees?

If yes, how much?

And to recruit good quality employees?

69. Without the Job Broker intervention, who would have got the job?

Would they have been likely to have sought a sick and/or disabled applicant anyway?

Would the job/role have been the same?

70. How much do you feel that your contact with the Job Broker has enabled you to retain these employees?

Problems

71. Have there been any problems with working with the Job Broker that we have not already mentioned?

Have they been addressed? How?

72. Have there been any issues/problems that the Job Broker could not help you with?

Have they been resolved? How?

The future

73. Would you consider recruiting using this method in the future? Alongside existing methods? Or as a stand alone method?
74. Can you suggest any ways in which the Job Broker service to you could be improved?
75. Are there any other issues you would like to cover?

THANKS & CLOSE**H. Not involved with NDDP**

Would support or advice from an external agency specialising in the employment of sick and disabled people make you more likely to employ sick and disabled people?

76. Have you heard of the NDDP?
77. What do you know about it?
78. Have you had any involvement? (If yes, return to previous sections and explore!).

If they didn't know about it: The NDDP is a national government programme which aims to support people on incapacity benefits to move into work. It is a voluntary programme, which is delivered through a network of Job Brokers, which are locally based organisations (in the public, private or voluntary sector) which provide support and advice to sick and disabled people on seeking and entering work, and where appropriate, they also work with employers to help them in recruiting sick and disabled people. The programme has a variety of names at a local level.

79. The sort of assistance that Job Brokers offer can include:
 - providing advice;
 - providing recruits/selection/pre-screening;
 - preparing recruits for work;
 - helping employees to settle in;
 - help with adjustments and adaptations;
 - access to funding;
 - providing ongoing support to employees.
80. Which of these do you think might you benefit from? Why?
81. Do you get this type of support elsewhere?

82. Would you consider employing a sick and/or disabled person through this scheme?

Explore

83. Do you foresee any problems with this scheme?

Explore

84. Are there any other issues you would like to cover?

THANKS & CLOSE

