



House of Commons

Committee of Public Accounts

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**Department for Work  
and Pensions:  
Delivering effective  
services through  
contact centres**

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**Fifty-third Report of  
Session 2005–06**





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Committee of Public Accounts

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**Department for Work  
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**Fifty-third Report of  
Session 2005–06**

*Report, together with formal minutes,  
oral and written evidence*

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## Summary

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The Department for Work and Pensions (the Department) delivers benefits, pensions and employment services to 28 million customers in Great Britain. The Department's agencies are increasingly using contact centres to deal with their customers, usually by telephone but also in some cases by fax, e-mail or post.

The Committee examined the performance of the 62 contact centres operated by Jobcentre Plus, The Pension Service and the Disability and Carers Service. Between them, they answered more than 33 million incoming calls, made 7 million outgoing calls, as well as handled 300,000 e-mails, 300,000 faxes and 4 million letters. The network of centres has been rolled out over a number of years. One consequence has been that there are more than 50 numbers to publicise, which can be confusing for customers. The Department does not have a target for reducing the number of telephone numbers but may establish a single number to act as a sign-post to other numbers.

While contact centres have been introduced in the interests of efficiency, the local office network has been reorganised, resulting in closures. The telephone is not a convenient means of contact for everyone, and should not be the only option available to the Department's customers. Pensioners can arrange a face-to-face meeting in their own home from the local service, but this option is not available for customers with a disability.

Not all customers attempting to call the Department's contact centres are successful in getting through to speak to an agent. In 2004–05, only 56% of calls were answered, which left 21 million calls unanswered. This level of service is not acceptable and the Department has acted to improve the rate of call answering. In the first half of 2005–06, the rate had improved to 84%. There is still scope for improvement and it is not yet clear whether recent improvements will be sustained in the longer term.

Customer surveys show a high level of satisfaction with the service provided when they get through. Some 97% of customers said the agent who dealt with them was polite, and 80% said their query was answered by the call. Contact centres can offer a valuable service to customers by helping to overcome the complexity of the benefits system, for example, by avoiding the need for customers to complete an application form, and possibly reducing the level of customer error as a result.

The Department's contact centres are constrained from operating efficiently by a number of limitations. For example, many agents were not originally recruited for contact centre work and have been redeployed from elsewhere in the Department on flexi-time contracts that do not match contact centre hours. In addition, the Department's different IT systems are not linked up effectively, so customers have to repeat information on a number of different occasions. In some cases information held on one IT system has to be printed out and input again into another IT system.

The Department has gaps in its cost data and management information that do not permit accurate quantification of the efficiency savings made by introducing contact centres. It is likely that these savings are substantial, as the average cost of processing a telephone call is around £3 whereas a postal transaction costs around £5. The Department believes it could

not have made £375 million of savings in staff costs without the efficiencies gained from contact centres.

On the basis of a Report<sup>1</sup> by the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Committee examined the Department, Jobcentre Plus and The Pension Service, on the cost-effectiveness and quality of service provided by the Department's contact centres and on their accessibility for customers.

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1 C&AG's Report, *Department for Work and Pensions: Delivering effective services through contact centres* (HC 941, Session 2005–06)

## Conclusions and recommendations

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1. The performance of the Department's contact centres was poor in 2004–05 and should not be allowed to deteriorate to that level again. In 2004–05, millions of calls were not answered promptly and over 20 million went unanswered. It is not yet clear whether improvements made in the last year will be sustained. The Department should extend to all (not just some) parts of the organisation demand forecasting tools, training staff in their use and sharing better good practice in the management of workflow between centres.
2. Implementation of the Customer Management System within Jobcentre Plus in 2005 was seriously flawed. Holding customer information in one place is a good idea but the Department (and Government more widely) should learn from the troubled roll-out of the system, which at times badly affected service to the public. In particular, it should not introduce systems which are not fully tested and without enough suitable staff being available and properly trained to use the system.
3. For some of the Department's customers, such as the frail elderly and some disabled people, the telephone is not always appropriate. The Department should examine whether alternative face to face services could be provided, where necessary, for some disabled customers, as The Pension Service does for its customers.
4. Contact centres appear to be helping the Department make efficiency savings but poor quality data makes it impossible to quantify the savings made so far. The use of contact centres has almost certainly led to savings in staff and accommodation costs but the extent is unknown since the Department does not have sufficiently robust data. We expect to see evidence of improvements in the Department's collection of accurate activity unit costs, for example to include increased disaggregation of elements such as IT and accommodation to site level to permit greater transparency and cross-agency comparisons, and increase incentives to make efficiency savings.
5. The Department has developed a 'balanced scorecard' tool of contact centre performance information but it needs to be further developed to measure performance for the whole process of handling customers, rather than just parts of it. For example, Jobcentre Plus should monitor not only the length of time from initial call to call-back, but also the time to first interview and then payment of benefit. All centre managers should use the balanced scorecard to manage the performance of their centre.
6. People ringing contact centres are often not aware of how much the call will cost them. By closing down local offices and requiring people to use call centres, the Department is transferring some of the time and money costs to the customer. The Department should advise customers what costs they will incur, and call centre operators should assess whether customers are 'emergency' cases as part of the routine conversation and offer to call back those who cannot meet call costs.
7. Failure to call back customers promptly can lead to delays in benefit payments and to financial hardship and distress. Jobcentre Plus arranges to ring customers back to take details for claims for Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support. Lengthy

delays in returning calls can affect customers badly and lead to increased levels of Social Fund Crisis Loans. Jobcentre Plus should reprioritise sufficient of its resources to meet consistently its target of 90% of call backs within 24 hours.

8. Some staff have flexible working arrangements which do not always meet the needs of managing a customer focused contact centre. Although family friendly employment policies are important, it is still essential that staff contracts meet the needs of the business. The Department should improve the match between staff core hours and peaks of demand in the contact centres by steadily reducing the proportion on contracts that do not fit business needs and encourage staff to agree revised contracts.
9. Having 55 telephone numbers, including 11 for pensioners, is confusing and makes it harder to market the Department's services. The Department should reduce the number of telephone numbers used by customers. Jobcentre Plus Direct should implement a single national number, and The Pension Service should aim to reduce the number of telephone numbers for pensioners by a third.

# 1 Accessing the Department's contact centres

1. The Department for Work and Pensions has introduced contact centres as the main channel of communication for many of its customers who wish to make or renew an application for benefit, seek advice, claim a pension, or look for a job. Contact centres are common in the private sector although there are some differences in the way they work. Private sector centres tend to use a wider mixture of methods of communication including telephone calls, e-mails, website forms, letters or faxes.<sup>2</sup> Currently, the Department's contact centres mainly use the telephone for most of their dealings with customers – 33 million outgoing calls in 2004–05, compared with 300,000 emails and 300,000 faxes. Private centres also tend to have more freedom in the mix of staff they employ, but the Committee was told that the public sector benefited from greater staff commitment and loyalty to customer service.<sup>3</sup>

2. We examined the performance of the 62 contact centres operated by three of the Department's agencies – The Pension Service, Jobcentre Plus and the Disability and Carers Service (**Figure 1**). Between them these services cost an estimated £190 million.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1: Details of the contact centres covered in this Report**

Executive Agency	Principal Services	Number of centres	Call answering (2004–05)
Jobcentre Plus	First Contact Officer (for claiming benefit); Jobseeker Direct	26	9.6 million calls answered (76%)
	Employer Direct	9	1.7 million calls answered (97%)
The Pension Service	Pensions Direct; State Pension Teleclaims; Pension Credit Application Line; Retirement Pension Forecasting	25	16.6 million calls answered (90%)
Disability and Carers Service	Benefit Enquiry Line; Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance Helpline	2	5.5 million calls answered (21%)

Source: C&AG's Report

2 C&AG's Report, paras 4, 5.22

3 Q 148

4 C&AG's Report, para 1.1

3. The Department's network of contact centres has been rolling out over a number of years. Between 2001 and 2004, there was a period of rapid growth, leading to a peak of 81 centres. There has since been some rationalisation which will continue. The Pension Service established 29 contact centres rapidly to deal with the introduction of Pension Credit, but is now reducing towards an end position expected to be 12 centres by 2010.<sup>5</sup>

4. Contact centres are a key part of the Department's overall programme of modernising welfare delivery and also securing the efficiency savings expected under the Gershon Review. The Department sees contact centres as one way of offering their customers choice in how they deal with them. It also considers that contact centres can offer a more convenient service, for example, for gaining an assessment of state pension entitlement quickly or for applying for Pension Credit and Housing Benefit in one call.<sup>6</sup>

5. As the centres have been established, customers have been encouraged to contact the Department by telephone in preference to visiting a local office. The latter are often no longer available. When Jobcentre Plus was created in 2002 it inherited around 1,500 offices from the former Employment Service and the former Benefits Agency. As part of the creation of the Jobcentre Plus network, 631 former offices have been identified for closure and 464 closed. Further offices are likely to close as a result of the decision to centralise benefit processing and for other reasons. Prior to the creation of Jobcentre Plus, work on pensions was carried out in some 450 social security offices. Under The Pension Service, this work was moved initially to 29 Pension Centres. Since January 2005 nine have closed and a further eight will close by April 2011.<sup>7</sup>

6. For many people, dealing with the Department via a contact centre is acceptable and convenient. For example, the Department reported that The Pension Service's 2005 customer survey had indicated that the telephone was the preferred medium for contact amongst a growing number of customers.<sup>8</sup> However, some groups – such as those with a disability, with mental health problems or who are frail and elderly – may have difficulties using the telephone.

7. Despite this, the Disability and Carers Service does not offer any face-to-face services to its 4 million customers. This contrasts with The Pension Service, whose contact centres are complemented by a local service, offering a home visit to customers.<sup>9</sup> Customers with a disability are potentially just as vulnerable as pensioners, but they appear to have been a lower priority for the Department.<sup>10</sup> A strong case can be made that they should have the option of dealing with the Department face-to-face. The Department's view is that it does not have the resources for making this choice available to customers with a disability. Instead it has sought to ensure that its contact centre processes are designed to take customers carefully through their application.<sup>11</sup>

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5 C&AG's Report, para 1.12

6 Qq 16, 18, 112

7 Ev 18-38; Qq 23-29

8 Q 43

9 C&AG's Report, Figure 8 and para 2.7; Q 78

10 Qq 88-93

11 Qq 62, 67

8. The Department does tailor some services for people with disabilities and has set up a team to look at whether contact centres can be more user friendly to such people. For example, all centres operate a text phone service. The Department also enables customers with disabilities to contact them through representative individuals or organisations.<sup>12</sup> However, the National Audit Office found that groups such as the Citizens Advice Bureau reported problems in dealing with some contact centres on a customer's behalf and found that the systems in place are not consistent and were subject to widely differing interpretations.<sup>13</sup> The Department explained that it does deal with intermediary organisations and has issued guidance to staff on how to deal with them.<sup>14</sup>

9. Knowing which number to call is not easy for some customers. There are at least 55 different numbers they could use when contacting the Department, including 11 for pensioners.<sup>15</sup> More than one number is necessary in order to provide a differentiated service for pensions, jobseekers and employers, and many of the 55 are for accessing the same Jobcentre Plus service from different parts of the country. But the Department acknowledged that, despite its efforts to publicise services, some customers found it hard to find the right number. It has no target for reducing the number of telephone numbers, but may consider introducing a single number to act as a sign-post to the others.<sup>16</sup> The problem of too many numbers is compounded by the limitations of the Department's technology, so that a customer who rings one service cannot be transferred to another service. This flexibility will not be available until 2008.<sup>17</sup>

10. An unacceptable number of customers' calls did not get answered in 2004–05, when the Department agreed its performance had been poor. The centres surveyed by the National Audit Office answered a total of 33 million incoming calls and made 7 million outgoing calls in 2004–05.<sup>18</sup> However, a further 21 million calls attempted by customers went unanswered.<sup>19</sup> Performance was particularly bad for the Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance Helpline.

11. Performance in many centres has since improved, with the call answering rate overall increasing from 56% in 2004–05 to 84% in the first half of 2005–06.<sup>20</sup> However, the performance of the Disability and Carers Service's Benefit Enquiry Line has deteriorated as a result of the increased attention on the Disability Living Allowance Helpline.<sup>21</sup> It is too early to say yet whether the improved performance will be sustained.

12. Customers are not aware of how much they are paying for their call. Only a few of the numbers are free to call, with the majority being 0845 numbers which are charged to

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12 Qq 67, 92; C&AG's Report, paras 4.23–4.24

13 C&AG's Report, paras 4.28–4.31

14 Qq 126–145; Ev 41

15 C&AG's Report, Figure 16 and para 2.13

16 Qq 63–65

17 C&AG's Report, paras 2.14–2.15

18 Q3; C&AG's Report, para 4

19 C&AG's Report, paras 4.10–4.11

20 *ibid*, Figure 25

21 Qq 123–125

landline users at the local rate. Mobile phone users commonly pay a much higher tariff, and for these customers even freephone 0800 numbers may be expensive, as only the Pension Credit Application Line is free to mobile users.<sup>22</sup> The Department explained there were problems with free cost calls as they can attract nuisance callers. However, it does not offer information to callers on the cost of their call, and it is up to the customer to say whether they might have difficulty in paying for the call. Where the customer advises the cost is prohibitive, the agent will offer to ring back and the Department is considering whether its agents should make this clearer at the start of the call.<sup>23</sup> The Department estimates the average cost to customers of calling some of its services using a landline telephone is as follows.<sup>24</sup>

**Figure 2: Estimates of the average cost per call for different services**

Service	Basis for calculation	Cost (p)
Pension Credit Application Line	Freephone number	Nil
The Pension Service	Based on average call of 6 minutes at 3p per minute	18
Pensions Direct/RP teleclaims	Based on average call of 6 minutes at 3p per minute	18
State Pension	In the three centres that take claims in one call, assuming average call 20 minutes	60
State Pension and Pension Credit teleclaims	From July 2006, assuming average call of 30 minutes	90
Disability and Carers Service	Average call duration from initial welcome and time spent in queue is 4 minutes, 14 seconds	13

Source: *The Department for Work and Pensions*

22 C&AG's Report, Figure 16 and paras 4.13–4.16

23 Qq 38, 103–109, 114–115

24 Ev 41

## 2 Managing contact centres to deliver a high quality and cost-effective service

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13. The Department's contact centres serve 28 million customers. To provide a high quality service contact centre managers must match demand with available resources, including staff, telephony and IT. Resources must be managed continuously to meet fluctuations in demand. Managers must also be able to monitor staff performance, including time taken on calls and on breaks, drawing on real time information.<sup>25</sup>

14. Customer satisfaction with the service provided is generally very high. In the National Audit Office survey of customers, 97% said they were dealt with politely, 86% that their call was dealt with in a reasonable length of time and 80% that their query was resolved in one call.<sup>26</sup> However, although the majority of customers are happy, given the large numbers using these services, a small dissatisfied proportion amounts to many tens of thousands of people and there is evidence that some find dealing with contact centres an alienating experience which does not help them deal with the complexity of the system.<sup>27</sup>

15. From the Comptroller and Auditor General's Report the Committee concluded that customers with a disability have received a worse service than other groups of customers.<sup>28</sup> In 2004–05 only 20% of calls to the Disability and Carers Service were answered and nearly 80% blocked, or abandoned by customers in frustration. The Department acknowledged that the previous service to customers with a disability had been unacceptable, but said the service has now been transformed through improvements in technology.<sup>29</sup> The number of customers who get through to the Disability and Carers Service at the first attempt had increased from 44% to 80%.<sup>30</sup>

16. Contact centres can help shield customers from the complexity of the benefits system. For example, making a call to a contact centre now replaces the need for customers to fill out a lengthy application form to claim Jobseeker's Allowance. The Pension Service also allows customers to make an application for Pension Credit and Housing Benefit in the same call, significantly reducing the burden on the customer.<sup>31</sup> This assistance ought to help the Department reduce errors caused by customers but it has not so far been able to quantify the effects.<sup>32</sup> However, it is a matter of concern that the accuracy of information provided by contact centres to customers scores lowest in mystery shopping exercises.<sup>33</sup> The Department has chosen to have staff fully trained on a few benefits rather than to have

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25 C&AG's Report, para 3.2

26 *ibid*, paras 5.5–5.9

27 Q 47

28 C&AG's Report, Figures 7, 17, 25, 27

29 Qq 93–96

30 C&AG's Report, para 5.19

31 *ibid*, Figure 13; Qq 112–113

32 Qq 82–85

33 C&AG's Report, Figure 42

a more generalist knowledge of all the benefits, in order to reduce the scope for erroneous advice.<sup>34</sup>

17. Jobcentre Plus has had a poor record of completing call backs to customers in a timely manner. Its performance statistics showed that the proportion completed in September 2005 within the 24 hour target was as low as 10% and in some centres, it took as long as two weeks to complete calls.<sup>35</sup> Call backs are an integral part of the process of applying for benefit, and a long wait results in delay to the customers' benefit payments. There is a fast-track application process available, but it is not drawn to the customer's attention in the contact centre script, from which agents are encouraged not to divert.<sup>36</sup> Where their benefit is delayed, customers may apply for a Social Fund Crisis Loan. Some 38% of such payments are currently made to cover living expenses while waiting for benefits or wages, an issue this Committee reported on in 2005.<sup>37</sup> The Department said its latest statistics showed that call back performance had improved greatly and by March 2006 over 67% were completed within 24 hours and 96% within 48 hours.<sup>38</sup>

18. Each service has its own targets for the speed with which calls are answered. In Jobcentre Plus Direct and Employer Direct, the target is to answer 80% within 20 seconds. This is in line with the current call centre industry standard. The Pension Service and the Disability and Carers Service aim to answer within 30 seconds. Only seven out of 58 sites responding to the National Audit Office survey actually met their target for speed of answering in 2004–05. The Department said its first priority is to try and ensure it meets its current targets and would then go further if it could within the resources available.<sup>39</sup> In particular, The Pension Service is keen to move to a 20 seconds target and the Department is considering whether the call answering time should be standard across all agencies.

19. Managing contact centres efficiently and effectively depends on making good use of the staff available, deploying them to meet fluctuating demand. Our predecessor's report in 2003 found that the Child Benefit Centre – at that time part of the Department for Work and Pensions – had staffing arrangements which poorly reflected the actual pattern of calls received, due to the redeployment of staff working flexi-time. The Committee recommended that staffing arrangements should reflect the pattern of calls received.<sup>40</sup> Despite this, around 70% of the Department's contact centre staff are on flexi-time contracts, whose core hours do not match the peaks of contact centre work.<sup>41</sup> Many agents have been redeployed from elsewhere in the Department. The Department said it is proud of its family friendly employment policies but recognises that more suitable staffing

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34 Q 121

35 C&AG's Report, Figures 28–29

36 Qq 48–55

37 Ev 39–40; 12<sup>th</sup> Report from the Committee of Public Accounts, *Helping those in financial hardship: the running of the Social Fund* (HC 601, Session 2005–06)

38 Qq 11, 59; Ev 39

39 C&AG's Report, para 4.12; Qq 36–37

40 20<sup>th</sup> Report from the Committee of Public Accounts, *Better public services through call centres* (HC 373, Session 2002–03)

41 C&AG's Report, paras 3.10–3.13

arrangements are needed. It is in discussions with staff and trade unions aimed at ensuring that working patterns are tailored to the needs of contact centres.<sup>42</sup>

20. Problems with the IT systems are limiting the efficient operation of the Department's contact centres. During a telephone call, agents have access to a number of different systems showing customer information. However, these are not sufficiently joined up and customers have to provide the same information on a number of occasions when applying for benefits or pensions, much of which is already held somewhere else by the Department.<sup>43</sup> Sometimes, information entered onto one IT system by the contact centre has to be printed out and input again onto another IT system.<sup>44</sup>

21. The average cost to the Department of handling a transaction by telephone is around £3, whereas by post it is around £5.<sup>45</sup> It is reasonable to conclude that the Department's contact centres are delivering improvements in value for money over the old paper-based systems. This is backed up by evidence of wider cost savings in the Department, but the Department was unable to be specific about the actual amount.<sup>46</sup> Introducing contact centres needs to be carefully managed to ensure that the Department's efficiency savings – including the contraction of the local office network – are not being made at the expense of customers.

22. The Department's cost data and management information is incomplete in a number of respects. For example, the information necessary to establish its full costs is not available, and it does not know how much it has saved directly as a result of introducing contact centres.<sup>47</sup> The Department does not have sufficient historic data to enable it to make operational forecasts of customer demand for its contact centres.<sup>48</sup> It also does not keep a record of how many people use its customer access points ('warm' phones) to call contact centres.<sup>49</sup>

23. The Department acknowledges that there are still gaps in its cost data and management information, but it is making improvements in its record keeping.<sup>50</sup> These improvements include the balanced scorecard, which will include a range of measures of performance including cost, customer service, customer satisfaction, staff productivity and absence rates. However, the data in the scorecard is currently not complete and it can only be used informally. The full scorecard will not be available to contact centre managers until 2007.<sup>51</sup>

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42 Qq 7–8

43 C&AG's Report, para 2.14; Q 83

44 C&AG's Report, paras 3.21–3.24

45 *ibid*, Figure 23

46 Qq 97–101, 110–111; C&AG's Report, Figure 13

47 Qq 97–99, 101–102, 110–111; Ev 39

48 C&AG's Report, paras 3.6–3.7 and Appendix 1, para 11

49 *ibid*, para 4.15; Qq 41–44

50 Qq 9–10

51 C&AG's Report, para 5.4

## Formal minutes

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**Monday 19 June 2006**

Members present:

Mr Edward Leigh, in the Chair

Mr Richard Bacon  
Greg Clark

Helen Goodman

A draft Report (Department for Work and Pensions: Delivering effective services through contact centres), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 23 read and agreed to.

Summary read and agreed to.

Conclusions and recommendations read and agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Fifty-third Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned until Wednesday 21 June at 3.30 pm.]

## Witnesses

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**Wednesday 29 March 2006**

*Page*

**Mr Leigh Lewis CB**, Department for Work and Pensions, **Ms Val Gibson**,  
Jobcentre Plus and **Ms Janet Grossman**, The Pension Service

Ev 1

## List of written evidence

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Department for Work and Pensions

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Second Report	The regeneration of the Millennium Dome and associated land	HC 409 ( <i>Cm 6689</i> )
Third Report	Ministry of Defence: Major Projects Report 2004	HC 410 ( <i>Cm 6712</i> )
Fourth Report	Fraud and error in benefit expenditure	HC 411 ( <i>Cm 6728</i> )
Fifth Report	Inland Revenue: Tax Credits and deleted tax cases	HC 412 ( <i>Cm 6689</i> )
Sixth Report	Department of Trade and Industry: Renewable energy	HC 413 ( <i>Cm 6689</i> )
Seventh Report	The use of operating theatres in the Northern Ireland Health and Personal Social Services	HC 414 ( <i>Cm 6699</i> )
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Tenth Report	Jobskills	HC 564 ( <i>Cm 6724</i> )
Eleventh Report	Local Management of Schools	HC 565 ( <i>Cm 6724</i> )
Twelfth Report	Helping those in financial hardship: the running of the Social Fund	HC 601 ( <i>Cm 6728</i> )
Thirteenth Report	The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Tackling homelessness	HC 653 ( <i>Cm 6743</i> )
Fourteenth Report	Energywatch and Postwatch	HC 654 ( <i>Cm 6743</i> )
Fifteenth Report	HM Customs and Excise Standard Report 2003–04	HC 695 ( <i>Cm 6743</i> )
Sixteenth Report	Home Office: Reducing vehicle crime	HC 696 ( <i>Cm 6743</i> )
Seventeenth Report	Achieving value for money in the delivery of public services	HC 742 ( <i>Cm 6743</i> )
First Special Report	The BBC's investment in Freeview: The response of the BBC Governors to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2004–05	HC 750 ( <i>N/A</i> )
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Nineteenth Report	Department of Health: Tackling cancer: improving the patient journey	HC 790 ( <i>Cm 6766</i> )
Twentieth Report	The NHS Cancer Plan: a progress report	HC 791 ( <i>Cm 6766</i> )
Twenty-first Report	Skills for Life: Improving adult literacy and numeracy	HC 792 ( <i>Cm 6766</i> )
Twenty-second Report	Maintaining and improving Britain's railway stations	HC 535 ( <i>Cm 6775</i> )
Twenty-third Report	Filing of income tax self assessment returns	HC 681 ( <i>Cm 6775</i> )
Twenty-fourth Report	The BBC's White City 2 development	HC 652
Twenty-fifth Report	Securing strategic leadership in the learning and skills sector	HC 602 ( <i>Cm 6775</i> )
Twenty-sixth Report	Assessing and reporting military readiness	HC 667 ( <i>Cm 6775</i> )
Twenty-seventh Report	Lost in translation? Responding to the challenges of European law	HC 590 ( <i>Cm 6775</i> )
Twenty-eighth Report	Extending access to learning through technology: Ufi and the learndirect service	HC 706 ( <i>Cm 6775</i> )
Twenty-ninth Report	Excess Votes 2004–05	HC 916 ( <i>N/A</i> )

Thirtieth Report	Excess Votes (Northern Ireland) 2004–05	HC 917 (N/A)
Thirty-first Report	Northern Ireland's Waste Management Strategy	HC 741 (Cm 6843)
Thirty-second Report	Working with the voluntary sector	HC 717 (Cm 6789)
Thirty-third Report	The Royal Parks and the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain	HC 644 (Cm 6789)
Thirty-fourth Report	Returning failed asylum applicants	HC 620 (Cm 6863)
Thirty-fifth Report	The refinancing of the Norfolk and Norwich PFI Hospital	HC 694
Thirty-sixth Report	Tackling the complexity of the benefits system	HC 765 (Cm 6863)
Thirty-seventh Report	Inland Revenue Standard Report: New Tax Credits	HC 782 (Cm 6863)
Thirty-eighth Report	Channel Tunnel Rail Link	HC 727 (Cm 6863)
Thirty-ninth Report	Consular services to British nationals	HC 813 (Cm 6863)
Fortieth Report	Environment Agency: Efficiency in water resource management	HC 749 (Cm 6884)
Forty-first Report	The South Eastern Passenger Rail Franchise	HC 770 (Cm 6884)
Forty-second Report	Enforcing competition in markets	HC 841 (Cm 6884)
Forty-third Report	Delivery chain analysis for bus services in England	HC 851 (Cm 6900)
Forty-fourth Report	National Offender Management Service: dealing with increased numbers in custody	HC 788 (Cm 6900)
Forty-fifth Report	Employers' perspectives on improving skills for employment	HC 862 (Cm 6900)
Forty-sixth Report	Governance issues in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment's former Local Enterprise Development Unit	HC 918 (Cm 6879)
Second Special Report	The BBC's White City 2 development: The response of the BBC Governors to the Committee's Twenty-fourth Report of Session 2005–06	HC 1139 (N/A)
Forty-seventh Report	NHS Local Improvement Finance Trusts	HC 562 (Cm 6908)
Forty-eighth Report	HM Customs and Excise: Standard Report 2004–05	HC 874 (Cm 6908)
Forty-ninth Report	Corporation Tax: companies managed by HM Revenue and Customs' Area Offices	HC 967 (Cm 6908)
Fiftieth Report	Ministry of Defence: Major Projects Report 2005	HC 889 (Cm 6908)
Fifty-first Report	A safer place for patients: learning to improve patient safety	HC 831 (Cm 6908)
Fifty-second Report	Reducing brain damage: faster access to better stroke care	HC 911
Fifty-third Report	Department for Work and Pensions: Delivering effective services through contact centres	HC 1034
Fifty-fourth Report	UK Sport: Supporting elite athletes	HC 898
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Fifty-ninth Report	Improving poorly performing schools in England	HC 956
Sixtieth Report	Home Office: Resource Accounts 2004–05 and follow-up on Returning failed asylum applicants	HC 1079

Sixty-first Report	Crown Prosecution Service: Effective use of magistrates' courts hearings	HC 982
Sixty-second Report	The electronic monitoring of adult offenders	HC 997
Sixty-third Report	Delivering high quality public services for all	HC 1530

The reference number of the Treasury Minute to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number

# Oral evidence

## Taken before the Committee of Public Accounts on Wednesday 29 March 2006

Members present:

Mr Edward Leigh, in the Chair

Mr Richard Bacon  
Greg Clark  
Mr David Curry

Helen Goodman  
Mr Austin Mitchell  
Mr Alan Williams

**Mr Tim Burr**, Deputy Comptroller and Auditor General and **Mr Jeremy Lonsdale**, Director of Work and Welfare Value for Money Studies, National Audit Office, were in attendance and gave oral evidence.

**Mr Marius Gallaher**, Alternate Treasury Officer of Accounts, HM Treasury, was in attendance.

### REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL

#### DELIVERING EFFECTIVE SERVICES THROUGH CONTACT CENTRES (HC 941)

*Witnesses:* **Mr Leigh Lewis, CB**, Permanent Secretary, Department for Work and Pensions, **Ms Val Gibson**, Director of Contact Centres, Jobcentre Plus, and **Ms Janet Grossman**, Centre Operations Director, The Pension Service, gave oral evidence.

**Q1 Chairman:** Good afternoon. Welcome to the Committee of Public Accounts where today we are considering the National Audit Office's Report on the Department for Work and Pensions: *Delivering Effective Services Through Contact Centres*. We welcome Mr Leigh Lewis, who is the Permanent Secretary for the Department of Work and Pensions. Would you like to introduce your colleagues, please.

**Mr Lewis:** Chairman, on my right is Janet Grossman, who is the Centre Operations Director for The Pension Service, and on my left is Val Gibson, who is the Director of Contact Centres for Jobcentre Plus.

**Q2 Chairman:** I would like to start by paying tribute to your staff who are working in the contact centres. I know that many are very highly committed and are doing an excellent job under difficult circumstances, but there are some problems which we want to explore this afternoon. I know there are anticipated efficiency savings. The reference is in paragraph 1.7 which you will find on page 16. Mr Lewis, I want to know how you can deliver them in the context of four different strategic plans, I think I am right in saying, 55 different phone numbers, a fluctuating number of centres and 21 million unanswered calls? You are obviously going to make efficiency savings, what is going to happen?

**Mr Lewis:** Chairman, thank you. We are, of course, making efficiency savings and they are significant and substantial. I think overall the performance of our contact centres, although there have been some problems as the Report brings out, has been improving steadily. So far this year in 2005–06 it has been both on average and across the piece, good.

**Q3 Chairman:** I am going to come back to that because I know the record in 2004–05 was poor and has improved. I will let you have a chance to go into how things are getting better, do not worry. That is your answer, is it? These plans for efficiency savings in the context of 21 million unanswered calls are not going to cause even more confusion and chaos?

**Mr Lewis:** No, I do not think they are, Chairman. In some of our contact centres we did have some significant problems last year and that is brought out in the Report. This year we have had just 3% of the 30 million calls to us blocked and almost 90% of our calls answered. As the Report brings out, we have been steadily improving performance across the great range of our contact centres.

**Q4 Chairman:** Let us look to the future for a minute and look, please, on page 25 at figure 12, which is how you are going to roll out your new IT, your equipment and your processes. How are you going to ensure that your equipment and your processes are not obsolete by the time you bring them in?

**Mr Lewis:** I think in many cases we have got a very good track record of that. For example, anyone going into one of our new Jobcentre Plus offices, and we have rolled out over 700 of those to time and budget, will see the job point terminals there which now hold details at any one time of nearly half a million job vacancies. That is one example and there are many other of IT programmes which have gone in to time and to budget. We do have, within the Department, very strong control procedures working to the Board which look at all of our major IT developments and seek to ensure that they are proceeding as they should.

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 Department for Work and Pensions, Jobcentre Plus and The Pension Service
 

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**Q5 Chairman:** Let us look at what was happening in 2004–05 at figure 25 on page 49. You will see that some performances are truly appalling. If you look at the bottom you will see that with the Disability and Carers Service nearly 80% of calls had to be abandoned. I know you have made some good progress on that, have you not?

**Mr Lewis:** Yes, we have.

**Q6 Chairman:** But how do we know the improvement you are going to tell me about now is not a blip because you are pretty vulnerable, are you not?

**Mr Lewis:** In a big organisation you are always vulnerable to blips, but I think the blip was last year and not this year. What we have done with the Disability and Carers Service is fundamentally re-engineered the system. We have brought in new telephony, we have updated our IT, but most importantly—and I have been to Warbreck House myself to see it—we now have a very substantial overflow system which means that we are not dependent simply any longer on those people whose job it is to answer calls on the DLA helpline all of the time. We have a very large number of staff who are there at times which are not peak times doing other work but who can be brought into the loop at any point where demand begins to rise. Through a system that everyone in that building calls turrets, which refers to the headsets they wear, they can be brought into that operation. That is one of the reasons why we are now answering well over 90% of the calls to that helpline.

**Q7 Chairman:** Let us look at flexi time now, your staff and how they work. This is mentioned in paragraph 19 of the executive summary on page five. The problem is that flexi time is not suitable in many cases, is it, because staff there work when they want to rather than when the public want to call them? Why have you made so little progress since we last reported on call centres in dealing with people working flexi time and therefore at unsuitable times?

**Mr Lewis:** I will put this in context and then let me take your question head-on. What, of course, we are doing in the Department is seeking to reduce our staffing overall very substantially by 30,000 over a three year period. That does mean that, quite rightly, we are seeking to relocate some staff from roles where we no longer need them into roles where we are expanding and that includes our contact centres. Those staff have existing terms and conditions which we have sought to honour, not least because we are rather proud of our family friendly policies and some of the flexible working patterns that we have. But we have been engaged in all of our contacts centres in a process of discussion with our staff and our trade unions to ensure that the patterns of work and the patterns that we operate are ones which are suited to the contact centre environment. In many ways, flexi time, as long as it is within some bounds, is an advantage to us because our contact centres have very large peaks of demand at different times in the day and at different times in the week.

**Q8 Chairman:** That is fine for the new contract and you can say, “The peaks are this and we want you to work at this time on Monday morning when people have come back after the weekend”. The trouble is you have got a large number of people on old contracts and what worries me is we have looked at this already and there is not much point in us doing the work if the Department does not make any more progress?

**Mr Lewis:** I absolutely understand the point you are making, Chairman. I think we have been making real progress. In a number of places we have introduced new patterns of working. As you say, new staff are coming in on different contracts with review periods. It is a tribute to our staff in that they are remarkably flexible. Simply because they have flexi time arrangements does not mean that they operate them in an arbitrary way. Our staff care a great deal about their service to the customers, and we have an enormous amount of co-operation from our staff in adapting their flexi time to the needs of the centres and the customers.

**Q9 Chairman:** Will you look at the previous paragraph which talks about costing data. This is a baseline point and it is still very weak. Once again, you have highlighted this in the past and this is a problem which is apparently inherent in your Department, is it not? Of course, you will have read, with great interest, the speech I gave on the Budget yesterday, will you not, or have been briefed on it, as was the House, sitting breathlessly on my every word. Tell us something about your costing data.

**Mr Lewis:** I think our costing data is getting better, Chairman, I genuinely do. Forgive me, I have not read your words.

**Q10 Chairman:** Nobody else has either!

**Mr Lewis:** I will do so. You never have all of the data that you want, but we are getting better and better at having data not just in terms of the demand, but also increasingly we are getting cost per call minute data from more and more of our centres. We have a great deal of that in Jobcentre Plus. We have the balanced scorecard, which is referred to several times in the Report which I have looked at myself, it is online which is giving us stronger management data than we have ever had before. There are still gaps, as this Report makes clear, but we are not operating in a data-free environment in any way.

**Q11 Chairman:** Let us look at ringing people back. If people ring you, presumably sometimes they will want to be phoned back. Shall we look at figure 29 on page 53: “The proportion of call backs completed within 24 hours has increased since Jobcentre Plus Direct started keeping records in August 2005”. If we see your target, we would naturally assume that you would want to return 90% of the calls. You are way down below that. This could be crucial in the case of Jobcentre Plus. If you want to arrange an interview or something, you have got a pretty lamentable record. What is going on? How are you improving it?

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**Department for Work and Pensions, Jobcentre Plus and The Pension Service**


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**Mr Lewis:** My colleague, Val Gibson, may want to add to this. Chairman, there were some well documented problems in the summer of last year in terms of people making their first contact with Jobcentre Plus. The performance figures then, in terms of people having their calls answered and being rung back, were simply not good enough. We have said that very, very clearly and I say it again here today. The most recent figures—they are more recent inevitably than the ones in the Report here—show that in February, the last complete month, over 60% of call backs took place within 24 hours and over 90% took place within 48 hours. We are still not where we would like to be. But the situation, the problems we faced last summer, has been transformed out of all recognition.

**Q12 Chairman:** I think 3% of the nation's working population now work in contact centres, obviously mainly in the private sector. Does this Report not show that you are lagging far behind the private sector in the way you manage the contact centres.

**Mr Lewis:** No, I do not think it does. There are a number of instances in this Report which compare us directly with the private sector in terms of external benchmarks. We come out well overall against those benchmarks. Average cost per agent, we are as good as the industry's standard; turnover rates, we have lower turnover rates; the length of service of our staff is better than in the private sector and staff costs as a proportion of the total, we come in lower. I do not think this is one area where the public sector is being shown to be languishing way behind the private sector norm. I think we are well up with it. What we want to do is to improve further.

**Q13 Mr Mitchell:** I wonder if you are not just lamely imitating the private sector, short of handling funerals and interments by call centres in Bangladesh and Bangalore if it could. Here you see the private sector shifting to call centres, particularly banks and building societies, which are absolutely infuriating to deal with, where you would never get an answer. Most of the people you talk to seem half-baked. The Department thinks "here is a marvellous way of saving money, let us have some call centres up in the North particularly where we can get low paid chaps and chapes with nothing else to do and we can close down or contract most of the local offices".

**Mr Lewis:** It is simply not our policy to do that, Mr Mitchell.

**Q14 Mr Mitchell:** It was a way of economising, was it not?

**Mr Lewis:** No, it is not a way of economising. What we are trying to do in the Department is to offer—to use a slightly jargon-type word which I do not really like—different channels of communication to our customers. Let me give you a very good example of that. When I joined the Employment Service as its Chief Executive in 1997, the worst thing you could do was ring your local job centre, assuming you could find the telephone number, and ask if they could help you to find a job. What they would do is say, "You have to come into one of our offices and

look at the cards on the board". If you now ring our Jobseeker Direct service, and a third of a million people have found jobs through that service, you can be helped through our full range of jobs on the phone or you can do that on the net or you most certainly can still come back into our offices, which are much more friendly places than ever they were, and use those job point terminals. What we are trying to do is offer our customers some real choice in many cases.

**Q15 Mr Mitchell:** Yes, but you have got so many agencies with so many functions and it is much more complicated. If I can get the number and I ring my bank's call centre and say, "Can I have loan?", and they say politely, "No", but yours is very different. A lot of it is very personal, and a lot of people want personal contact. Your aim seems to be that anything that does not demand face-to-face contact is going to go eventually through the call centres. Surely that means a massive contraction of your local offices?

**Mr Lewis:** Again, that is not our intention and I do not think it is what is happening. If you look at Jobcentre Plus, we are offering far more and far better face-to-face services than ever we were through the New Deal, the New Deal for Lone Parents, and lots of other face-to-face services. The Pension Service, again—I have been out with colleagues from The Pension Service to meet pensioners in their own homes—offers that as an alternative. I do not want to just quote statistic after statistic, but the NAO's findings of what our customers who use our telephone service think of it are very encouraging indeed in terms of the quality of the service they think they are getting overall.

**Q16 Mr Mitchell:** As the Chairman said, the hours are convenient, but I am concerned about the number of functions the Department covers. I believe 55 separate numbers are far too many, is it not? Why can you not handle on initial contact all the basic simple things at the call centres and let the rest be handled by local offices?

**Mr Lewis:** What we are trying to do is to provide the service in a way which is most convenient for our customers. Of course, cost effectiveness is an example of that. It is not just the opening hours our customers thought were good, 97% felt the person they dealt with was polite, and 80% had their query resolved in one call. To give you one example again where I think we are offering something genuinely better through a contact centre, we are beginning to roll out in The Pension Service—and Janet Grossman can speak of that—the fact that as you come up to the state retirement age, in an increasing number of our centres you are now able to make one call in which you will have your state pension entitlement assessed over the telephone. At the end of a 20 or 25 minute call you can be told what entitlement you will get and a letter will go out confirming it. That replaces acres of form filling which you used to have to do.

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**Q17 Mr Mitchell:** Are you going to be able to get into a situation where you have got one number to ring and the answerers have one common system of information on the screen by them, as seems to happen, for instance, with the building society, and they can give you an answer straightaway, because 55 numbers is far too complex for a lot of people.

**Mr Lewis:** Certainly, we do not want to continue with 55 numbers. Can I put 55 numbers into context. If you sit in one part of the country, Manchester or Middlesbrough or wherever it is, you do not have 55 numbers because many of those numbers are the geographic numbers of your Jobcentre Plus call centre. For example, if you want to find a job, Jobseeker Direct on 0845 6060234, you can ring from anywhere in the country. We do want to make it simple and we do want to reduce the numbers, but one number, I think, is an unreal ambition. I do not think we will ever want to have one number which is the same for the employer wanting to give us a job vacancy or for the pensioner wanting to apply for pension credit, we do want some differentiation in this system, we have too much at the moment.

**Q18 Mr Mitchell:** Did you not rush into it a little too quickly in the sense that staff did not particularly want to do this work and did not join the Department to do call centre work which is fairly demanding? The turnover is high in most of the call centres I have heard about. It needs a more gentle—gentler than my questioning approach—rapport with people. They were not trained for that, therefore, since they were under-trained as well, compared with the private sector, the system got off to a bad start because you rushed into it too quickly.

**Mr Lewis:** I think there is always a trade-off, is there not, in seeking to deliver absolute perfection when you open up a new service. There are lots of quotes in this Report—again, you do not have to search hard through the NAO's Report to find favourable quotes—in terms of the Department and the services that it is offering and it has opened up. What I think we have done over the last few years is to have revolutionised the amount of choice, availability and service to our customers. In that process we have not got it all right. Going back, we would have tried to do some things better, we would not have gone through the problems that we experienced last summer in some of our centres, but I do not regret the fact that we have taken a series of decisions to seek hugely to expand the range of choice.

**Q19 Mr Mitchell:** Are the staff now happy?

**Mr Lewis:** I cannot sit here and say that every one of our staff is happy because you will too easily find some that are not. It is interesting, you mentioned turnover, our turnover is less than the industry norm in our call centres and the NAO Report says that is because they think our staff are, in general, well motivated and satisfied. Of course, there will be exceptions to that.

**Q20 Mr Mitchell:** I have forgotten what the problem was, but there was certainly a problem in the Grimsby Jobcentre. People had to ring Hull to

register for unemployment benefit. They had to make the first call to the call centre. It is not only the alien act of ringing Hull, which is like asking people to ring Transylvania as far as Grimsby is concerned, but it was the fact that they could not get through, the phones were not answered. There must be occasions like that when you have got a particular problem in a local office when your call centre system gets jammed up?

**Mr Lewis:** I wonder if I can, at this point, pass over to Val Gibson because I think she may be able to say more about the specific problems because they did exist, you are absolutely right.

**Q21 Mr Mitchell:** I think I wrote to you about that.

**Mr Lewis:** Indeed, I think you did.

**Ms Gibson:** As Leigh said, there were some specific problems in our contact centres dealing with claims to benefits during last summer and they are acknowledged in the NAO Report. The Report also acknowledges the improvements that have been made since then. We have achieved our target of answering 90% of all calls every month from November on. We are answering them quickly because every month from December we have achieved our target, answering rate of 80% in 20 seconds. I think we are now on top of the problem. It was a very difficult summer for customers. We know that many tried and could not get through. We worked quickly to resolve that, and we worked quickly in collaboration with colleagues in job centres and benefit delivery sections so that we could make sure that the customers got the service they needed and got their benefit paid.

**Q22 Mr Mitchell:** I cannot say that I have received a lot of complaints from my constituents because I have not, in fact, except that people find it difficult getting through. More importantly, older people who do not have a portable telephone, and often do not have a telephone at home, do not know what to do when they are told they will be rung back. What do they do?

**Mr Lewis:** If someone really does not have a convenient telephone then we will always deal with them in one of our offices face-to-face. It is as simple as that.

**Q23 Mr Bacon:** Mr Leigh, how many local offices have closed?

**Mr Lewis:** We are going through a process which followed from the merger of the then Employment Service and the then Benefit Agency to form Jobcentre Plus, and we are reducing from—Val Gibson may have the specific figures—around 1,500 local offices to around 1,000.

**Q24 Mr Bacon:** How many have closed so far, Ms Gibson?

**Ms Gibson:** I do not have the specific figures, but we can let you have them.

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**Q25 Mr Bacon:** This is a radical change to the pattern of work in the Department and in job centres. I would imagine that knowing how many offices have closed hitherto is a pretty important thing to know.

**Mr Lewis:** We have opened now about 750 of the new style offices.

**Q26 Mr Bacon:** Do you mean 750 contact centres?

**Mr Lewis:** No. If your question is about contact centres, I cannot absolutely answer the question.

**Q27 Mr Bacon:** It is not. What I am trying to find out is how many local offices have closed, which neither of you seem to know. Ms Grossman, do you know?

**Ms Grossman:** The Pension Service came out of 450 offices but developed a local service capability. We visit over 800,000 pensioners in their own homes where it is most convenient to them but we did transition from 450 offices into 29 call centres to begin with.

**Q28 Mr Bacon:** Mr Leigh, is it possible that you could write to the Committee with a note both on The Pension Service and on Jobcentre Plus with how many local offices you had to start with, how many you are planning to close, how many you have closed so far and how many there are still left to close? <sup>1</sup>

**Mr Lewis:** Most certainly. Can I make one point because it can sound as if we are cutting back hugely on the geographic scope. Often, what we have done is to close two offices almost literally where we had two offices on two different sides of the street and bring them into one.

**Q29 Mr Bacon:** I am sure you can put that in your note. If you would not mind saying where they are as well, including the ones you have not yet closed but are planning to close.

**Mr Lewis:** Most certainly.

**Q30 Mr Bacon:** You said, in relation to the Chairman's question about figure 25 on page 49, that the Disability and Carers Service was behind the others, but you have now fundamentally re-engineered the system, and there is new telephony. I must say, when I looked at that graph, it really struck me that the grey bar for the Disability and Carers Service, that is to say the calls that were blocked or the customers heard an engaged tone, was nearly 80%, far, far poorer than the others for the most vulnerable group, the disabled and the carers. What was the telephone service you had before? What was the system you had before? If you had to get rid of them to put new telephony in, you had to get rid of them to fundamentally re-engineer.

**Mr Lewis:** It was an inadequate one, self-evidently.

**Q31 Mr Bacon:** Was it one that you had installed for the purpose which then turned out to be unsuitable so you scrapped it?

**Mr Lewis:** It is one that had been inherited. The Disability and Carers Service only came into existence as a separate business relatively recently. It inherited telephony which was quite clearly not fit-for-purpose. The actual figure, 77% of calls were blocked in 2004-05 to the DLA helpline and people rang many times and did not get through. That was completely unacceptable, just to be clear. The transformation which has been achieved is a remarkable one, but it is a shame and a great pity that the service was as poor as it was in 2004-05.

**Q32 Mr Bacon:** Paragraph 4.8 says that only some of the contact centres have useful messages for the customers waiting in a queue. It seems a fairly simple thing to make sure that your queuing system provides messages and yet only some do. Why is that? When are they all going to do that?

**Mr Lewis:** In general, it says if you look on the same page, 4.9: "All the automated systems used by the Department comply with good practice. In particular, they have short scripts and offer useful information to the caller".

**Q33 Mr Bacon:** Are you saying that they all provide useful messages?

**Mr Lewis:** No, I am not saying every single one.

**Q34 Mr Bacon:** With respect, my question was not about whether they all had short scripts or not, my question was why do they not all have useful messages for the customer.

**Mr Lewis:** Picking up what other colleagues have said, we try to avoid what one does find in many commercial centres, which is when the number is answered you then get a bewildering array of, "If your call is about X press button one" and 15 minutes later, "If your call is about something else, press button 92".

**Q35 Mr Bacon:** People have topped themselves while they were waiting!

**Mr Lewis:** Indeed. We do not use that. In general, we try and answer the phone when it rings. I think that is one of the reasons why the great majority of our customers say they find getting through to us easy and convenient.

**Q36 Mr Bacon:** You mentioned your comparison with the private sector being quite favourable. In paragraph 4.12 it says: "Each agency has internal targets to answer customers' telephone calls within 30 seconds". Later on in that paragraph it says: "Answering 80% of calls in 20 seconds is the current call centre industry standard and the Department is considering whether to make this consistent across all agencies". You obviously have not done it yet. How far has your consideration reached and are you going to do it?

**Mr Lewis:** I would like to do it.

**Q37 Mr Bacon:** Is it a question of cost?

**Mr Lewis:** Yes, it is. Inevitably, before you take on a more demanding target you have to know that you have got the resources to be able to meet that target.

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I think our first priority, as my colleagues have said, is to try and ensure that we can hit our targets. Some of our businesses already have a target of 80% within 20 seconds just to be clear, and others have a target of 80% within 30 seconds. My priority is to get everyone meeting the current targets and then I would like to go further, but of course, there are resource considerations in that.

**Q38 Mr Bacon:** I would like to ask you about the cost of the calls because many of your customers, almost by definition most of them, are in frustrating circumstances, they are on low income. What would it cost to make all your calls free? Have you considered doing that?

**Mr Lewis:** Yes, we have. We do have some 0800 numbers. You will have seen that the Pension Credit application is an 0800 number. Almost all of our numbers are low cost calls, 0845, which are about three pence per minute. They are relatively low cost calls. If any of our customers tell us that the cost of the call, even at those charges, is prohibitive, then we will offer to ring them back. There are some real difficulties with having free cost calls because you do get an awful lot of what you might call nuisance calls made by people to 0800 numbers, so there are some balancing considerations. In general, there has been very little complaint or feedback from our customers about the cost of our 0845 calls.

**Q39 Mr Bacon:** Can I get you to turn your attention to page 52, paragraph 4.15. It talks about the “warm” phones that are connected to the contact centres which customers can use and are free. These are phones inside the Jobcentre Plus offices. I must say the first time I read this it looked slightly Kafkaesque that you go into what you think is the place you are going to get your service, where at least there still is a local office, and you are told to get on the phone to the contact centre. It also says that the customers do not use them because they do not like them because there is no privacy, which more or less destroys the point. First of all, would it not be very easy to create little booths which are soundproofed and there is a degree of privacy? Secondly, why on earth is this happening? Is it not slightly crazy that the staff in that local office are so unable to help you that the only thing they can tell the customer to do is “phone the contact centre”?

**Mr Lewis:** I think I am going to pass over to Val Gibson to take the specifics and, if I may, I will seek to add at the end to try and reach your general point.

**Q40 Mr Bacon:** Why are they called “warm”, by the way?

**Ms Gibson:** Our preferred term is “customer access” phone rather than “warm” phone. I think “warm” phone is a bit of a jargon term. The design of the customer access phones is that they should be in some sort of booth or acoustic hood to maintain privacy. We have not always been able to achieve that because of the estate’s considerations, but

where we can, that is the case. As far as it is not a little bizarre to come into an office and then be directed to the telephone service, it is a question of us trying to direct customers to where they are going to get the best help for their particular requirement.

**Q41 Mr Bacon:** Your customers tell you they are reluctant to use them unless absolutely necessary. Apparently, Ms Gibson, you are not able to provide data on them as to how much they get used.

**Ms Gibson:** We do not have statistics on how widely used they are.

**Q42 Mr Bacon:** Why not? One of the things you can very easily monitor is phone use. Everybody is familiar with phone bills, and if you have an office with 10 people in it, you can see who is using the phone the most and indeed even where they are calling. Why can you not easily provide data on how much they are used?

**Ms Gibson:** This is one of the self-help measures that we are offering to our customers, the other is the internet service. We do not measure currently the use of those customer access phones.

**Q43 Mr Bacon:** You are just repeating what is in this paragraph. My question is why can you not provide the data, not do you provide data or do you not. I already know that you do not, that is what it says in this paragraph, so repeating that does not really help me. What I am looking for is why do you not, given that with a telephone you pick it up, it makes a connection, you can measure that, it goes through a computer telephony integration, or whatever it is, and you can very easily write a routine to enable you to see, at the touch of a button, how much that phone is being used. Then you would immediately be able to make comparisons across the country and see why some are used more than others. Why do you not do that?

**Ms Gibson:** Certainly we can have a look at that. We have not found a need to do so up until now.

**Mr Lewis:** I think there is a risk that we will almost conclude that our phones are a bad thing. Paragraph 37 of the Report says: “Contact centres are playing a major role in the transformation of the DWP and have already expanded the range of the services that can easily be accessed by its customers whose satisfaction levels are generally high”. The Pension Service has just produced its 2005 Customer Survey which is very interesting. It shows that its pensioner customers increasingly want to use the telephone as their preferred medium of contacting The Pension Service. More are doing it as their preferred vehicle for contacting us as than was the case in 2003.

**Q44 Mr Bacon:** I am not disputing that phones can be useful as a medium of communication and I am not disputing why people have slated them, all I was saying in relation to paragraph 4.15 is that your customers appear to be reluctant to use them unless absolutely necessary. If you measured how much they are being used and looked at where they are being used more, where they are being used less, you

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might be able to figure out why. If you are spending money installing them and they are not being used, then that surely is a waste.

**Mr Lewis:** This is a very rarefied group of customers who come into our offices, normally for one purpose, and then, in a sense, ask about a different service. In those circumstances it is often better, rather than a member of staff whose job it is not trying to provide the service, for us to say, “If you use this telephone which is here in the office and ring this number, then you will be connected to a colleague who will be able to provide that service”. There are issues, in some cases, about whether we have got enough of those phones and they are sited perfectly *et cetera*, though colleagues who have been into our new Jobcentre Plus offices will know that the physical environment is vastly better than ever it was in the former Social Security office. This is quite a rarefied group of our customers.

**Ms Grossman:** I also wanted to add that the NAO Report pointed out that pensioners who use the telephone are our most satisfied customers, so we are clearly doing something right.

**Q45 Chairman:** I want to comment on that as you are sitting here, before this line of questioning gets forgotten about. I do not think it was an entirely full answer when you said you were entirely content with the service. Shall we look at paragraph 4.12 again which Mr Bacon referred to. There you have got a target of answering 80% of calls in 20 seconds. If you read further down the page you see that only seven of the 58 sites that reported data have achieved this target. This is very important—let us congratulate Ms Grossman, shall we—if we read her CV we see that: “Under Janet’s leadership, The Pension Service operations have improved efficiency and customer service, reducing staff numbers by 26% whilst improving service levels in the last 18 months”. She has done a fantastic job and I pay tribute to her. When we need to summon you back in a couple of years’ time, which I will obviously do, will you be able to tell us that Ms Grossman has been promoted and received a pay rise but those responsible for a lagging performance elsewhere have been sacked and moved on?

**Mr Lewis:** Without over-personalising—

**Q46 Chairman:** I only personalise when I praise.

**Mr Lewis:** Janet Grossman is good example that increasingly we have brought people with very serious expertise into the Department from other sectors. I am not satisfied with our performance in the speed of call handling right across the Department’s contact centres. If, however, you compare our 2005–06 performance to date with 2004–05, in every case we are increasing the proportion of calls that we are answering in all of our major businesses, Jobcentre Plus and The Pension Service, compared with where we were. To give you one example, in The Pension Service where the target is the industry standard of 80% within 20 seconds, we only achieved that in 56% of the cases in

2004–05. So far in 2005–06 we are at 80%, so we are hitting that target. My ambition is to hit it in every case.<sup>2</sup>

**Chairman:** Like you should. Thank you very much.

**Q47 Greg Clark:** Mr Lewis, the benefit system has become more complex in recent years and there are reasons for that which we understand. Call centres offer the opportunity to help people cut through that complexity, so I agree that the potential is significant. The experience from my own constituency call centre is that a large number of people come to me because they have been completely befuddled by the call centre process. So far from helping them through the complexity, it has proved to be a rather alienating experience. Is that something you would recognise?

**Mr Lewis:** I am absolutely sure that those of your constituents who have said that to you, that was their experience because people tell it as it is. I would not want to gainsay any one of your constituents. I am absolutely sure that there are times when our performance in explaining and answering customer queries is not as clear and not as good as it should be. It is worth saying that the NAO’s survey itself found that 80% of the customers they interviewed—this was their survey of our customers—said they had their query resolved in one phone call. One of the facts of life—and my last appearance before this Committee was to respond to the NAO’s Report on the complexity of the benefit system—is we have a very complex benefit system. At times, our contact centres can help because if we have contact centres with staff with the right training, they can cut through some of that complexity and help people to the service and the information that they do need. It is a tough job.

**Q48 Greg Clark:** That is what they should do. Can we look at this business of call backs, which I think has been a particular problem with Jobcentre Plus. Anyone calling Jobcentre Plus has presumably lost their job and they are about to claim benefits. They are at a point of crisis in their lives. The idea that we see on page 53 that whilst having a target of 24 hours it was often over 14 working days before people were called back, when people were in despair, they had lost their job and had got no benefits, the stress that must cause is enormous. Is it the case that they cannot claim benefits until they have had their interview at Jobcentre Plus?

**Mr Lewis:** I will ask Val Gibson to go through the system with you and explain it, just to be clear. The figures that you quote for some of the times that it was taking us to make call backs during last summer were unacceptable and they are vastly better now. It is and remains the case and was the case then that anyone who said, when they got through to our centre, they were in immediate hardship would have been dealt with on a fast track.

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<sup>2</sup> *Note by witness:* My original answer to question 46 was inaccurate. In 2004–05, The Pension Service answered 53.4% of calls within 30 seconds and not 56% in 20 seconds as I stated. I apologise that my answer was inaccurate.

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**Ms Gibson:** That is true. The process for a customer currently is that they make a short call to Jobcentre Plus where we determine their likely entitlement to benefit. That is followed with a call back, which is the Harper process, a 24-hour standard. At that call back, where it is appropriate we book a work-focused interview in their local job centre so that we can talk to them about work, resolve any final benefit enquiries and then process their claim. You are right to say that they cannot get their benefit until the call back has been conducted and, indeed, those later parts of the process.

**Q49 Greg Clark:** If you have got a phased delay there, it is crucial if people cannot claim their benefits.

**Ms Gibson:** Yes, it is. As Leigh said, we were in those sorts of difficulties. Indeed, now, anyone who is in personal hardship is entitled to be considered for an emergency payment.

**Q50 Greg Clark:** Is that the first question you ask?

**Ms Gibson:** It is not the first question we ask, but we would establish that within the call and, if so, refer them to the job centre.

**Q51 Greg Clark:** Is it part of the standard script?

**Ms Gibson:** No, it is not.

**Q52 Greg Clark:** People are unaware of this concession?

**Ms Gibson:** People may or may not be aware of the concession. They are certainly aware of their own circumstances and can represent those to us.

**Q53 Greg Clark:** You should be there to help them, especially with these stressful circumstances, to guide them through and tell them what they are entitled to. Your answer to that is they have three separate transactions that they have to make before they can get benefits. The fact is that there is somewhere in the system, a concession that if people are in hardship then they can get their benefits quickly, but you have to know about it, you have to be an insider. Perhaps, as a result of this, you have to be an MP to be able to advise them if there is a concession. Why is it not part of your script if this is to help people to immediately say to all the callers, "Are you in extreme financial difficulties and, if so, we can help". Why is that not part of the script?

**Ms Gibson:** Can I say something about what we are trialling at the moment in Grimsby which seeks to address some of the problems you are talking about.

**Q54 Greg Clark:** Yes, but before we do that, why is it not part of your script to offer people this opportunity to go straight to benefits?

**Ms Gibson:** It may not be part of the script but that does not mean it is not part of the interaction with the customer.

**Q55 Greg Clark:** The script is ordinary, it is very clear from this Report that you encourage and require people to stick to the script and the NAO made it clear that departures from the script result in

errors. The whole point of the context of the script is to get people to stick to it. This idea that they should leave that undermines the whole point of the context. It is individual discretion that needs to be exercised, they would be better off having face-to-face interviews, would they not?

**Mr Lewis:** Let me say one thing and then ask Val to say something. Again, this is inevitably a balance because if we were to ask every single customer in effect whether they would like to be fast-tracked then we would have to have the capacity and the capability to do that and that would inevitably be very resource intensive. What we do seek to do, however, is if there is any indication that a customer is in immediate financial need then they will be fast-tracked through the system.

**Q56 Greg Clark:** I submit that the Department has more resources than someone who has lost their job and needs to claim benefits. The idea that you pass on financial risk to your vulnerable customers to pay for, in effect, your failures if you cannot see them within 24 hours I think is unacceptable. Just to move on a little bit, you said that the figures had improved recently but on page 53 at table 28—table 28 is a month in the life of this call centre Jobcentre Plus—the footnote says "Data on the booking ahead period for call backs was only collected in August 2005 and September 2005. The Department no longer records this data." Is that inaccurate?

**Mr Lewis:** That data is of a different nature which is the period of time that elapses between the call back and the person coming into one of our offices. It is not the data on call back times which has very significantly improved.

**Q57 Greg Clark:** Can you explain that because this table is not about the figure you described, this is about the target, the number of days it takes to call back, so the footnote is related to that. Can I ask the NAO to explain the tables and the footnote I assume relates to the data in the table?

**Mr Lonsdale:** This is the detailed information from a number of Jobcentre Plus contact centres. As you say, over a short period of weeks the average call back period is shown in the middle and this is the range across the country.

**Q58 Greg Clark:** The call back data is no longer being collected, presumably it is the data in this table that you are no longer collecting?

**Mr Lonsdale:** We could not take it any further forward because the data was not available.

**Q59 Greg Clark:** There we are. That is my point, Mr Lewis.

**Mr Lewis:** I think what I will need to do is look into this because I most certainly have the data on call backs which I have been quoting to the Committee this afternoon. The data shows that our performance in call backs has very substantially improved and in February, so only one month ago—it is very much real time data—we made 64% of call backs within 24 hours and over 90% in 48 hours.

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**Q60 Greg Clark:** That data is crucial. I am pleased that you have it. It would have been good if the NAO had it since they were limited to this one. What I would ask, through the Chairman, is given this is so important, could you each month, say for the next 12 months, write to us with this monthly data because it really is crucial. I do not think people want to wait 14 days to get their benefits. I think that is unacceptable.

**Mr Lewis:** I will happily do that.<sup>3</sup>

**Q61 Helen Goodman:** I wonder if I could just go back to what you said earlier which is that people can always have face-to-face interviewing in extremis. Could you take a look at page 15, chart seven, which does not include face-to-face interviews as a means of delivery and only shows home visits for The Pension Service. Why does it not show home visits being available for the Jobcentre Plus other services and the Disability and Carers Services?

**Mr Lewis:** Quite simply because that is not part of what we offer to our customers save in highly exceptional cases. For reasons which probably the Committee can understand, we think it is very important still to be able to visit pensioners in their own homes in many circumstances. The sheer volume of our working age customers in Jobcentre Plus means that is not a service which we can offer within the resources which we have available. That is why it is very important that our other means of dealing with our customers in our working age systems, visits to our offices, through the telephone, and indeed, increasingly through email and through the internet are as effective as they can be. That is also why we have invested £2 billion in not just upgrading our offices but fundamentally transforming our offices so that they are good places for people to come in to.

**Q62 Helen Goodman:** I can see why what you say applies to employers and jobseekers which is why I did not include them in my question. I cannot see why that applies to Disability and Carers Service. I would have thought that for them the case for home visits was as strong as for pensioners, do you not agree with that?

**Mr Lewis:** I think in a perfect world I would like to be in a position to offer everyone of the many millions of people who have dealings with our Department in any one year the ability to have a service precisely in the way that they would have it delivered. The truth is that no more than any other major financial institutions or retail organisations with huge customer business can we do that because the resource costs of making that absolute and total choice available would exceed our ability to meet them. In terms of our Disability and Carers Service where we have gone to very considerable lengths to ensure that our telephone services, for example, when people ring to make a claim for disability living allowance, attendance allowance or carers allowance are very, very much focused on the customer in terms of going through the

circumstances of that customer, understanding them and helping them through the claims process. This is not a distant process. I have again listened myself to calls between our customers and our staff, and I have been hugely impressed by the care and trouble which our staff take to help those customers through their claim forms.

**Q63 Helen Goodman:** It is clear that contact centres and use of the telephone are efficient ways for both you and claimants and recipients in the majority of cases but the knack of getting this system right is to peel off at an early stage those people for whom a bog standard system is not going to work. Can we look at chart 16 on page 29, which is the one that shows that any individual has a choice of 22 different telephone numbers. Can I put it to you that you are expecting the claimant or the recipient to do the customer segmentation rather than the Department doing it? Would you accept that?

**Mr Lewis:** I think what I would accept is that we do not yet make it as easy for our customers as I would like to ascertain where to call, about what issue and on what day. At times our customers find it harder than I would like to access our services in terms of finding out the right number although we do go to very great lengths to publicise those telephone numbers.

**Q64 Helen Goodman:** I also accept that it would not be sensible to have the same telephone number for jobseekers as for pensioners but there is a vast array of numbers. I wonder if you could tell the Committee when you expect the non-Jobcentre Plus contact centre numbers to halve?

**Mr Lewis:** I cannot give you a simple answer to that question, not least because—I know it will sound a strange thing to say when we are talking about telephone numbers—I do not think I want to be in a numbers game. I want there to be as few numbers as is compatible with properly differentiating our services. Some of this is inevitably history and what has been built up over time. I do accept that we have more numbers than we should. For the great majority of these services nationwide, there is a single number. If you want to claim DLA or Attendance Allowance, there is a single number to call for that service. Our challenge is to make sure that single numbers are easily available and obtainable and we go to considerable lengths to secure that.

**Q65 Helen Goodman:** You do not think that it would be good to have one number where somebody could ring and find out about their winter fuel allowance and their Pension Credits and their pension?

**Mr Lewis:** Yes, I would like to explore the possibility that we might have say a single number which if it did nothing else could signpost, if you see what I mean, just as in terms of electronic government we are using the e-gov site increasingly as a signpost. I would like to look at the possibility of doing that. These things are not always as easy to deliver as they might immediately sound.

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**Q66 Helen Goodman:** Could I ask you to look at chart 17 on page 34. This shows the very high number of calls abandoned from the Disability and Carers Services. I think 90% were abandoned. Chart 25 on page 49 shows that even this year there is a problem with calls being abandoned and calls being blocked. If we turn to the charts on quality on page 55, you can see that more than 10% of contact centres have no services for people with mental health, 20% have nothing for people who are partially-sighted and more than 10% have nothing for people with speech problems. Could you say whether you think it is as realistic to use the telephone for people with disabilities as for the rest of the population and whether perhaps the very bad poor performance early on, when this service was introduced, is in fact not to do with the fact that those were run any differently or worse but because the client group was different and, therefore, it is worse in the sense that it is insensitive to that client group?

**Mr Lewis:** There are a number of elements, can I take some in turn and do please come back to me if I miss any of them out. It may sound a strange place to start, but can I say that I think there is a difference between a call which is blocked and a call which is abandoned because the terminology of abandoned suggests that it is almost inevitably a bad thing. When a call is blocked that is a bad thing, it means somebody tries to ring the number and they do not get through, they get the engaged tone and that is not the service we want to provide. A call abandoned may be abandoned for a number of reasons and all contact centres throughout the industry have a significant proportion of abandoned calls.

**Q67 Helen Goodman:** Mr Lewis, you do not need to go into that detail, I am asking you about sensitivity to people with disabilities?

**Mr Lewis:** My apologies but I was trying to respond to one element of your question. We do try hard to respond to the needs of people with disabilities. For example, you will see that in 100% of our call centres, we operate the text phone service. We have a group at the moment which is looking at whether we can make our contact centres, as all the Department's centres, more accessible and user friendly to people with disabilities. When we are dealing with a customer on the telephone if it becomes clear that we are dealing with someone who is not able to cope with that way of dealing with us then we will seek to make an alternative arrangement for helping that individual.

**Q68 Helen Goodman:** What is your long-term target for the number of cases that are dealt with over the telephone?

**Mr Lewis:** There is not a single target of that kind. I make no apology for there not being a single target of that kind because I think what we are trying to do within the resources that we have available is offer our customers the maximum amount of choice. I do not want to get into face-to-face good, telephone bad, because, as this Report shows, we are delivering a vastly better service to the vast majority of our

customers than ever we were in the past. My ambition is, within the resources available to me and the Department, to go on offering people maximum choice and maximum convenience. At the risk of trespassing on your patience, I do want to repeat that this Report shows that the vast majority of our customers who use those telephone services find them convenient, easy to use and ones that they welcome.

**Helen Goodman:** I think I acknowledged that at the outset. My concern is with the small proportion of people for whom that is not the case but unfortunately I have come to the end of my time.

**Q69 Mr Davidson:** You have a number of call centres in the South East. It has been the experience of this Committee over a long period that call centres and other activities in the South East tend to be the most expensive and least effective. Why have you still got any there?

**Mr Lewis:** We have only got one. If we go to appendix four, we have only one remaining call centre in London or the South East, in Hastings. For the rest, all of our call centres have now moved from London and the South East.

**Q70 Mr Davidson:** I was operating off appendix three which obviously has been Tipp-Exed out in your copy.

**Mr Lewis:** Indeed. Appendix four illustrates call centres that were going to close but this is a moving target.

**Q71 Mr Davidson:** Let us see if you can do as well with the other questions that I have got. Taking up Pension Credit, on page four at paragraph 10, you are using your contact centres to phone people up, to pursue them, as it were, about taking Pension Credit. Presumably you have not had a 100% success rate?

**Mr Lewis:** No.

**Q72 Mr Davidson:** Can you clarify for me whether or not there are any particular reasons why you have not been successful by using the phone system to pursue people for Pension Credit. I would have thought that you would always get virtually, entirely a 100% clean-up rate.

**Mr Lewis:** I wonder if I may ask Janet Grossman to answer that.

**Q73 Mr Davidson:** Because that is a hard one!

**Mr Lewis:** No, I think we are rather proud of what we have done on Pension Credit where we have now got 2.7 million—

**Q74 Mr Davidson:** I understand that, you still have not got everybody, I would have thought you would have everybody by this method?

**Mr Lewis:** No and that is why I wanted someone with absolute detail to answer your question. We are proud of what we have achieved so far.

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**Q75 Mr Davidson:** As you should be.

**Ms Grossman:** I would like to say that we make every opportunity to contact the customers. We have done it through press ads, we have done it through voluntary organisations and by the telephone.

**Q76 Mr Davidson:** I know that.

**Ms Grossman:** Sometimes our research shows that quite a few pensioners are frankly too proud to take benefits. We try to make sure that they know that this is what they are entitled to and it is their right to have it. We try to persuade them to take up the benefit and we would be happy to provide that research to you.

**Q77 Mr Davidson:** Let me be clear, yes I can understand that, it is an ideological objection almost. I can understand that and accept that you cannot do anything about it. I want to be clear that there are no procedural difficulties because I have certainly had the complaint from a number of my constituents at various times, who have filled in the forms, they are too complex and all the rest of it. I want to clarify whether or not you have had a number of people who contacted you by phone telling you that no, they were not going to do it because even by phone it was too complex?

**Ms Grossman:** Our Pension Credit application line is highly successful in answering the calls and the customer feedback we have is positive. For instance, instead of filling out the entire form by hand—

**Q78 Mr Davidson:** I understand that, I want to be clear that the feedback you are getting from people who are refusing to pursue Pension Credit after you have contacted them by phone is solely because of this ideological objection to taking what they see as charity.

**Ms Grossman:** It would be wrong to say solely. Where people are not comfortable on the phone, again, we have visited over 800,000 pensioners in their own homes. We also offer information points and other mechanisms to reach them.

**Mr Lewis:** We also operate, it is worth saying, with a range of partner organisations.

**Q79 Mr Davidson:** I understand all of that. You still do not have 100% and I want to be clear whether or not the shortfall is solely those who are, as it were, ideologically opposed to the concept of taking charity or whether or not there is still something else that could be done to reach those people?

**Ms Grossman:** There is more to be done and we are transforming our business as we speak, making it easier and shorter for customers.

**Q80 Mr Davidson:** I understand that. Can I come to the question of reducing complexities. We have pursued this, and it is not addressed directly in here. I am wondering whether or not the changes that you have introduced and the way in which you have contacted people have led you to draw any particular conclusions about ways in which complexity could be reduced that perhaps were not being immediately obvious when you were operating

a paper-based system. Are you seeing the same things again by using this system or is there something new that has been revealed to you?

**Mr Lewis:** I think what has been revealed to us is that well-trained staff with a good understanding of the system can help our customers navigate their way through a complex benefits system which is harder to navigate with the best written leaflets in the world and the best produced forms in the world. Human beings can help other human beings to navigate their way through a system, so I think we have learned that. There are inevitably some risks which can go with that which we have to guard against because the benefits system that we have, and which we have discussed in this Committee, is one in which probably no single member of staff can ever understand the entire complexity of every benefit. Therefore we also have to be careful that our staff, in an effort to be helpful, do not unwittingly mislead our customers into, for example, thinking that they are not entitled to a benefit that they may be entitled to being delivered by another part of the business, for example. It is a trade-off but I have no doubt that well-trained staff operating sympathetically through our contact centres are helping many more people to get the benefits to which they are entitled.

**Q81 Mr Davidson:** Can I be clear then. Are you saying to us that perhaps we should not be as worried as we were before about complexity either deterring people or stopping them getting their way through the system because if you are operating this methodology then that does allow staff to take people through it and therefore the problem is perhaps not as difficult or as large as we thought it was, it is simply a question of now that we have discovered a new method of dealing with it, it drifts away or peels away?

**Mr Lewis:** No, I do not think I am saying that because, in a sense, what I am saying is this is a way of treating the symptom rather than the cause. I think we should go on being concerned, as this Committee has been, and as the NAO has been, about the complexity of the benefit system and seeking to reduce that complexity.

**Q82 Mr Davidson:** Fraud and error, in terms of cases dealt with by this system, is there evidence that fraud and error is reduced? I can understand why error due to complexity could be reduced but I can also understand that fraud might be increased because of the degree of anonymity and you cannot tell by somebody's eyes if they are lying to you and things like that. Do you have any feedback on that which you can help us with?

**Mr Lewis:** No, I have no feedback. I do not know the answer to your question to be straightforward about it. I am very willing to see if the Department does have any evidence which might suggest that there is an impact in that way. Certainly in terms of reducing what we call customer error where the customer gets it wrong but with absolutely no fraudulent intent, simply because they do not understand the system, then I think our contact centres should be helping. As I said to the Committee before, it is an absolute

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ambition of the Department to go on reducing error. We have been very successful in reducing the levels of fraud, I now want us to be as successful in reducing the levels of customer and official error.

**Q83 Mr Davidson:** In terms of customer error, people are obviously, on occasions, going to forget a certain amount of personal data. I remember paying dearly for the fact that I could not remember how long I had been married recently. Do people who are dealing with these matters have access to the range of data you already have on clients and, if not, why not?

**Mr Lewis:** They do not and it is one of the things we are working on. They do not in every case have access to every piece of data that the whole of the DWP will hold on an individual because much though we would like it, our systems are not at the moment as joined up as in a perfect world they would be. Having said that, and again I have seen this myself in operation, they do have access to very large amounts of data. I have seen a call come in and someone telling me it is Mr Smith, and saying "Can you confirm your address to me, Mr Smith" and the address we hold for that person is on the screen. "Have you got your national insurance number", that is there, details of their last claim are on the screen immediately so we have lots of ability to corroborate.

**Q84 Mr Davidson:** We ought to expect a considerable decrease in errors and indeed in fraud in this system?

**Mr Lewis:** I do not want to over claim because the problem of fraud and error in a system with as many customers as we have is—

**Q85 Mr Davidson:** You are always going to have it, but given what you are saying I would have thought that would allow quite a considerable reduction and we ought to be expecting that.

**Mr Lewis:** I am very much expecting and not simply expecting because expecting suggests that I am simply, as the Permanent Secretary, waiting in the hope that it will happen. One of the things, for example, that I said to the Committee that I was going to do, and I most certainly have done, is establish a task force in the Department specifically charged with reducing levels of customer and official error.

**Q86 Mr Davidson:** Can I ask about the question of contracting out. In terms of dealing with capacity overload and so on, you were contracting out a small amount of work. Are there any lessons that you have learned from that? Was it the same standard, the same quality, better, cheaper or worse?

**Mr Lewis:** In general, our contact centres are run by our own staff though often our providers will provide the infrastructure because that is normally provided by them. Almost all of our call centres are run by our own staff.

**Q87 Mr Davidson:** I know that but in chart 19 on page 36 "coping with peak flow", there is an element there of contracting out excess work. I wanted to clarify what the conclusion of that was. Is that something that you wish to seek to eradicate because it turned out to be more expensive with more errors, or was it much better than that? I want some sort of comparison.

**Mr Lewis:** I have not got that information if I am going to be straightforward. As you can see from this, it is a very small element, we have only used that in 3% or 4% of cases. I will seek to identify whether we have got any learning from that which will help to answer your question.<sup>4</sup>

**Q88 Mr Williams:** I was interested in your answer to Helen Goodman on the disabled and if I understood it correctly you said you could not afford to provide a home visiting service because of the numbers involved, and I see there are four million of them. In that case, why do you provide it for pensioners when there are 11 million of them?

**Mr Lewis:** I think, inevitably, when you are running, be it in the public or the private sector, a very, very large customer service business, you are always balancing what you might like to be able to provide in a perfect world with what you are able to provide in the real world in which you are operating.

**Q89 Mr Williams:** I understand that but I am asking why have you decided that the disabled shall not have that capability or even the capability of going to the local centre?

**Mr Lewis:** We think that for our pensioner customers, many of whom are—

**Q90 Mr Williams:** I am asking about the disabled.

**Mr Lewis:** I apologise because I am seeking to answer your question. We have had to prioritise where we put the capability to make home visits and at the moment—

**Q91 Mr Williams:** You are saying they are not a priority?

**Mr Lewis:**—we have given that priority to our pensioner customers because some of them are very elderly and inevitably find dealing with this in other ways very difficult.

**Q92 Mr Williams:** Some of the disabled are very ill. I find that a very strange priority. Everybody has priority over them.

**Mr Lewis:** Can I say one other thing which is very relevant to our customers and that is that we absolutely enable customers who have disabilities, which make dealing with this difficult, able to operate through representatives or other organisations. We go out of our way to accommodate that as a means of helping in those cases.

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<sup>4</sup> Ev 39

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**Q93 Mr Williams:** Not only do you not provide them with the home visit that you provide for pensioners and you do not provide them with the local visit that you provide for pensioners, but you also provide this crappy telephone system where they only get 20% access in their attempts to contact you whereas the pensioners get 90%. Do not you think when you take that together, only 20% successful telephone contact and then the non-availability of local centres and home visits, that you could be seen as severely neglecting a certain group that are particularly in need?

**Mr Lewis:** The fact that last year 77% of people who attempted to ring the DLA helpline had their calls blocked was simply unacceptable. It was not an acceptable way to run that part of this Department's business.

**Q94 Mr Williams:** I am sure they are sorry about that and are glad to hear your apology but what are they to do in the meantime?

**Mr Lewis:** I gladly give it. What I would like to say is that we have worked extraordinarily hard to reverse and transform that situation, and we have reversed it and transformed it.

**Q95 Mr Williams:** Transformed it to what level now?

**Mr Lewis:** To the level where well over 90% of people are having their calls answered which is well above the target, the industry standard.

**Q96 Mr Williams:** That is a verifiable figure?

**Mr Lewis:** Yes, it is.

**Q97 Mr Williams:** What about the costs? From your point of view, are you making a saving switching? I assume this is the purpose of the call centre system. What savings do you make and how does that work out if there is such a figure for the customer?

**Mr Lewis:** We are making savings and indeed the NAO Report says that we are delivering improvements in value for money as a result of our contact centres and to quote, "We now have the potential to deliver more".

**Q98 Mr Williams:** How much?

**Mr Lewis:** With our contact centres we are saving very substantial amounts of public resources.

**Q99 Mr Williams:** Very substantial is fine, but how much?

**Mr Lewis:** There is not a single figure which says what our contact centres are contributing. We are, for example, reducing the total number of the Department's staff by 30,000 over a three-year period and dealing with our customers more efficiently through contact centres is one major part of our meeting our efficiency challenge.

**Q100 Mr Williams:** As long as they are not disabled?

**Mr Lewis:** But, and it is a point that I want to emphasise, it is also about offering our customers better service and the message of this Report is overwhelmingly that is what we are doing. We are

offering the vast majority of our customers not only a service which is less costly to the taxpayer, but one which is better and more accessible to them.

**Q101 Mr Williams:** We have been making substantial savings, where is the figure? This is an accounting Committee, give us the figure?

**Mr Lewis:** I can certainly give you the figure. The NAO Report says that the average cost of dealing with a phone call is £3, the average cost of dealing with a letter that comes into one of our offices is £5. That gives you some indication of the scale.

**Q102 Mr Williams:** It does not always mean a telephone call would be a substitute for a letter, does it?

**Mr Lewis:** Indeed, it does not. To give you one other example, because I think we should be pleased and proud, if I may say so, of some of the savings we are making, 97% of our customers are now paid directly into their bank accounts and, as this Report says, our ability to effect that change through calling them on the telephone was a major way of reducing that.

**Q103 Mr Williams:** That is a different matter from what we are taking about, we are talking about the means of delivery here and I do not want you switching off onto other areas. I am dealing with costs at the moment. How far have your cost savings been achieved by transferring the cost to the customer? The customer now has to pay the cost of phone calls. A pensioner, for example, probably has a free bus pass or something like that, what are the costs to your customers of contacting you by phone, for example, not per minute but per item?

**Mr Lewis:** That inevitably does depend on the length of time the customer spends on the telephone.

**Q104 Mr Williams:** That is surprising, yes.

**Mr Lewis:** For our 0845 numbers, and that is the low-call service that we offer to the great majority of our customers, that is 3p per minute.

**Q105 Mr Williams:** I know it is 3p per minute. I can understand the argument for you offering a lower rate, but they are still paying for a phone call they were not paying for before and you do not know how many minutes they have to pay for or how many times they have to make it.

**Mr Lewis:** In some cases, we will sound as if, and perhaps we are, Mr Williams, having almost an altercation which I regret in this sense—

**Q106 Mr Williams:** I think we are.

**Mr Lewis:**—if you take another instance in order to find a job in the old style Employment Service—

**Q107 Mr Williams:** I am sorry I am not talking about jobs I am talking about the cost to your average customer, for example, a disabled person, of having to contact you by phone because you are not willing to make any other means of contact available to them.

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**Mr Lewis:** If a customer makes clear that the cost of the call, even on a local charge, is something which they have difficulty with, we will call them back in every case. If you would permit me to finish one point—

**Q108 Mr Williams:** They phone you to tell you they cannot afford a phone bill.

**Mr Lewis:** Inevitably somebody has got to make the first phone call, otherwise we will not have any contact at all. In many cases, what we are able to do now is prevent people making long and expensive journeys into our offices which cost them vastly more. For example, a third of million people have found work through Jobseeker Direct for the price of a local phone call and that, it seems to me, is good value for us and for them.

**Q109 Mr Williams:** I am sure it is good value. I am not looking at that, I am trying to look at the area where I am particularly concerned about, the most vulnerable people who are absolutely dependent on your services. You cannot, as yet, show me that you are not imposing a cost on the disabled but that you are supplying them with a vastly inferior service.

**Mr Lewis:** In some cases, of course, we use totally free numbers, 0800 numbers. In every other case, bar people calling us from abroad in some very unusual circumstances, we use low cost call numbers and in every case if an individual when we answer the phone says “I am worried about the cost of this call”, we will call them back. I am not sure with the best will in the world I can help much more than that.

**Q110 Mr Williams:** My final point, coming back to the question of how much you are saving, you said £3 for dealing with a case by phone as compared with £5 by letter. What about the gross saving coming back to that? What is the financial evidence of the precise benefits of the changes you have made?

**Mr Lewis:** What I will do is I will write to the Committee and give them details of our overall financial envelope in which we are operating.

**Q111 Mr Williams:** You came here to an accounting Committee where we talk about money and you do not have with you the information to answer the most basic and simple thing: how much is it costing and how much was it costing. That should be straightforward, should it not?

**Mr Lewis:** Be that as it may, I will write to you with that information.<sup>5</sup> I have all the costs in front of me of our call centre operation. I think it is virtually impossible to disaggregate that completely from the Department’s total budget but I will make the best effort that I can to provide the Committee with that information.

**Mr Williams:** We will look forward to it.

**Chairman:** You have sparked some interest because all of my colleagues have supplementary questions. Mr Mitchell?

**Q112 Mr Mitchell:** I trust you have the information on housing benefit. Is that housing benefit for council tenants which is verified by the ODPM as well?

**Mr Lewis:** Perhaps Janet Grossman might talk about that because one of the things that we have done is enable pensioners in particular to apply for both Pension Credit and housing benefit in one phone call.

**Q113 Mr Mitchell:** Both housing benefits, not only in the private sector?

**Ms Grossman:** If a pensioner is entitled to housing council tax benefit, we have done an outreach programme in conjunction with the local authorities to make sure that they are getting the benefits that they are entitled to. It has been highly successful and we are able to do that in one call and also passport them to their benefits.

**Q114 Mr Mitchell:** Are they giving any running total as to what it has cost them so far as they yammer on?

**Mr Lewis:** Sorry, can you just help me with the question?

**Q115 Mr Mitchell:** I have got a complex query and I talk for an hour. Am I told at the half hour point, “Well that is 90p”, if it is 90p. Are they given any indication of what the call is costing?

**Mr Lewis:** I do not think that they normally are. Janet, can you help me on that?

**Ms Grossman:** We publicise our numbers and those rates are established nationally but we do not, it is fair to say, pre-describe how much it is costing.

**Q116 Mr Mitchell:** I know you get more calls in Yorkshire than in the South. What information does an operator have on a screen beside them? When I went into the Halifax Building Society, I was horrified by the fact that a pretend call from me brought up all sorts information, some of it derogatory flashed up on the screen, like having missed two payments and having asked for a mortgage increase which had been refused. What information does the operator have in these cases?

**Mr Lewis:** Generally quite a lot of information in the sense that normally for the benefits which they are dealing with, they will have our history of dealing with that individual. They will have the payment history for our interaction, our dealings with that customer.

**Q117 Mr Mitchell:** The Report gets a bit mystical when it talks about the eventual staffing reductions but the union is clearly worried that there are going to be substantial job losses. I do not know whether you have had any agreement on the level of staff losses you are expecting or aiming at but when it says that staff reductions are to be seen in a wider context of the largest public sector organisation in the country and the IT has to be reviewed as one of the largest change programmes in Europe I begin to get a bit suspicious. Either that distinction is quite wrong or you are expecting some massive outcome. Have you an agreed outcome with the unions?

<sup>5</sup> Ev 39

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**Mr Lewis:** It would be wrong to say because I am sure if our trade union colleagues were here they would most certainly say that the outcomes are not agreed with them but we have very public targets set by the Government for both the overall level of financial savings in the Department and a reduction in our headcount of 30,000.

**Q118 Mr Mitchell:** You are only saying that to try and blame me, are not you?

**Mr Lewis:** No, I am not seeking to blame anyone. That is simply the case now.

**Q119 Mr Bacon:** Mr Lewis, I would like to return to this question of the delay in payment because there is a delay in returning the call which means there is a delay in the interview. Mr Clark explored this question to some extent. The Report says that the interview will usually take place with Jobcentre Plus within four working days, but in practice, the NAO found that the researchers said for some customers the delay from the initial call until they receive their first payment of benefit can be a matter of weeks. Can you say how many customers have had to apply for social fund crisis loans because of delays in organising an interview?

**Ms Gibson:** No, I do not have that information available to me.

**Q120 Mr Bacon:** You do not know how many social fund crisis loans are made?

**Ms Gibson:** The information is available and we can let you have that very quickly.<sup>6</sup>

**Q121 Mr Bacon:** If you could write to us with that, we would be grateful. My second issue is about staff-training. It has prompted us to look over the nature of your training. I was surprised to hear my local Citizens Advice Bureau telling me not only that the DWP locally will refer people to the CAB as far as the question of telling the DWP offers the jobcentre cannot but also a common complaint when you phone up or when you are in the jobcentre is they will say, "the person who deals with that is not here today, I only deal with disability living allowance or Jobseekers Allowance, I do not deal with income support, the income support person has to deal with that." The way apparently the training works is in 13 modules you do income support and nothing but income support and you know an awful lot about that but nothing about the others. In addition to having a high level of competence in each of these areas, would it not be sensible for all of your staff to start with a module that explains, in overall terms, the range of benefits so that they at least know something about Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support, disability living allowance, Housing Benefit and so on before they go on to getting greater expertise.

**Mr Lewis:** I think this illustrates one of the genuine dilemmas we face. The Report by the NAO on the complexity of the benefit system makes clear that we have a hugely complex benefit system, many

different benefits and even within those individual benefits there are often very, very complex rules. You have a choice as an employer, either you try and give your employees a little knowledge about a very large number of things or you try and give them a lot of knowledge about a small number of things. In general, we veer towards the second of those because we do not want to give misleading or wrong information. What we try and do is ensure that our staff can signpost people to the sources of information where they do not have that themselves. I would worry, as the Department's Accounting Officer, if we had a lot of staff with a little knowledge, given the famous quotation, I think, that it can be a dangerous thing.

**Q122 Mr Bacon:** Do you ever worry as the Accounting Officer, and I asked Sir Richard Mottram this question, that the nature of the benefits system is itself so complex that it makes it nearly impossible for you to do your job as Accounting Officer? I am thinking particularly, for example, of housing benefit which is administered with varying degrees of success around the country because local authorities do have varying degrees of success going from the very good to the appalling. The design of the system—this is where we as a Committee come up against the membrane of the policy but we do not know—inhibits your ability to account for the use of public money effectively, efficiently and economically.

**Mr Lewis:** There is no doubt that one of the reasons why there is error in the system is the complexity of that system. Both our staff make errors and our customers make errors and if the system was simpler we would make fewer errors. We have done a lot, as I explained to the Committee I hope at my last appearance before it, to make the system simpler but the iron law in general tends to be that simpler benefits are more expensive benefits because they are less differentiated and that is the dilemma that all governments of all colours struggle with.

**Q123 Greg Clark:** We have been concerned about the performance of the Disability and Carers Service with all of these blocked calls and you assured us that the performance had improved recently, hence the Report indeed talks about a renewed emphasis on customer service. "Renewed" seems a strange word. The Report also makes clear at figure 27 page 51, that as the helpline has improved in terms of accessibility, the Benefit Enquiry Line has got worse?

**Mr Lewis:** Yes, it has,

**Q124 Greg Clark:** Why?

**Mr Lewis:** Partly because with the Benefit Enquiry Line, which is a very general service, in a sense, there was a conscious decision taken by the senior management of the Disability and Carers Service to concentrate on improving the Disability and Carers helpline, the one that was in the most difficulty.

**Q125 Greg Clark:** It is a matter of policy that the Benefit Enquiry Line should deteriorate?

<sup>6</sup> Ev 39–41

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**Mr Lewis:** It was a matter of judgment that senior management had to prioritise where they wanted to effect the biggest improvement most quickly. I can tell you, because those figures for the Benefit Enquiry Line are again simply not good enough, I make no pretence about that, they have now improved dramatically without any corresponding deterioration in the Disability and Carers helpline. In the most recent month, for example, February, 85.3% of calls were answered. There has been a dramatic improvement in the performance of that particular helpline. It is a good example, I think, that the price of delivering improved service is a constant vigilance and I am absolutely determined that we are not going to see a repeat of some of the problems that we suffered last year.

**Q126 Mr Davidson:** Can I turn to the section on page 57 about third parties reporting the difficulties in representing customers' interests. I have got quite a number of centres in my area, CABs, legal centres and so on and so forth. They frequently deal with the least competent people, those with the most chaotic lives who cannot do the things that you and I would find pretty straightforward to deal with. Therefore, I am a bit alarmed that this seems to be one of the areas where not as much progress as perhaps should be being made is being made. In particular, the bottom of paragraph 4.29 where it says, "... one Jobcentre Plus contact centre said it would not deal with intermediaries at all." There is an issue there I would have thought.

**Mr Lewis:** Yes there is, and I have asked for information about that because when I read that sentence I too was alarmed. There are two possible explanations, one is they did not quite understand the question that they got from the National Audit Office—

**Q127 Mr Davidson:** That is reassuring.

**Mr Lewis:**—or simply that they are out of order because the answer that they gave that they would not deal with intermediaries at all, if indeed that is their policy, is plain wrong and we have taken steps to rearrange this.

**Q128 Mr Davidson:** I must confess that I would have thought one of your staff would have checked that for you before you came to the meeting here today. Can I go on to paragraph 4.30 where there seems to be the issue again of "... requirements and systems are not consistent ..." That seems to be a worry as well, does it not?

**Mr Lewis:** Yes, we do put out a lot of guidance to try and ensure that our staff do understand the position which applies both when we are dealing with formal representatives where an individual has asked someone else to act for them or representative organisations.

**Q129 Mr Davidson:** If you are putting out lots of guidance, there presumably should not be a lack of consistency?

**Mr Lewis:** No, there should not but, again, and this is a reality of dealing with very, very large dispersed organisations—

**Q130 Mr Davidson:** I understand that. If your own staff cannot understand your own guidance, what hope is there for humanity in a sense. You are meant to be publicising things to people to make it comprehensible and your own staff cannot understand the guidance you are giving them on issues of access.

**Mr Lewis:** It is either that they do not understand or they have not received it. I accept your point.

**Q131 Mr Davidson:** That is even less reassuring.

**Mr Lewis:** It is absolutely our responsibility as the senior management to try and ensure that all of our offices and all of our staff are following guidance. When you have, as I do, 115,000 staff in over 1,000 offices, it is hard to get absolute consistency.

**Q132 Mr Davidson:** I would accept that. However, I did get the impression from reading this that this was more than one member of staff out of however many zillion you have. I get the impression that it is more of a widespread issue. In 4.31 it has got the bit there about "... some intermediaries report repeated problems ..." Is there a dialogue between yourselves and, say, organisations like CAB, Money Matters and legal centres? Presumably these questions must constantly come up from them to you. Why then have they not been resolved?

**Mr Lewis:** First of all, just to reassure you there is a very substantial dialogue between us and a whole set of intermediary organisations including, in particular, the Citizens Advice Bureau and, indeed, we are seeking to offer a secondment opportunity into the taskforce that is seeking to reduce error and simplify the benefits system to the CAB. We work very co-operatively together both at local level and nationally, and we are continually seeking to ensure that our contacts with the CAB and other intermediary organisations are as good and as effective as they can be.

**Q133 Mr Davidson:** Why are they still complaining?

**Mr Lewis:** We live in an imperfect world in which we operate through many thousands of human beings in many thousands of locations every day and getting perfection is hard but that does not absolve us from the responsibility of trying to do our very best.

**Q134 Mr Davidson:** The final point I want to raise, the final clause of paragraph 4.31 says, "... further simplification is not possible if it is to protect customer information." It implies that you have reached a state of perfection beyond which it is not possible to go. I would be interested to hear whether or not these groups with whom you have a close relationship accept that. In my office I have the same sort of issues sometimes with government departments but very often some relatively simple security steps, such as phoning them back, can

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provide reassurance. This is one of the most worrying elements for me given the nature of so many of my constituents.

**Mr Lewis:** We face a dilemma in the sense that we are subject to two competing pressures and we were trying to get both of them right every day. One of them is to hold information about our customers securely, because it is very private information, and not to allow that to get into the wrong hands. That is a major obligation on us. The second is to help our customers, and those who they are asking to help them and represent them, to be able to access our systems and get support from us. It is hard to get those two perfectly in balance and sometimes we are equally criticised when information is released about a customer and it transpires that that customer had not authorised the release of that information. That is why we try and operate the procedure.

**Q135 Mr Davidson:** Can I ask the National Audit Office whether or not they came across any example of that?

**Mr Lonsdale:** Of information being released?

**Q136 Mr Davidson:** Yes, anybody complaining?

**Mr Lonsdale:** Certainly not in this study but it is an issue for the Department and there is a serious problem with information being released to people that do not have the right to it. It was not something that we picked up on this study though.

**Q137 Mr Davidson:** It did not come up in this at all?

**Mr Lonsdale:** Not that I recall but it is an issue we know about more generally.

**Q138 Mr Williams:** Just following on from what Ian asked earlier, the one Jobcentre Plus contact centre that said it would not deal with intermediaries at all, you immediately gave a very clear indication that they were wrong. What did you do about it?

**Mr Lewis:** My understanding is—but if I am wrong I will correct this answer because I do not want to mislead this Committee—with the National Audit Office we have taken steps to identify that office and make sure they are operating correctly. If I am wrong about that I will let you know.

**Q139 Mr Williams:** Did you not think we might ask about that? You said immediately I saw it I said to myself that was wrong. If it was me coming here and knowing what this place can be like, I would be inclined to say who is it and they must be told tomorrow to stop it because when was this Report actually prepared seemingly?

**Mr Lonsdale:** The information was finally approved at the end of February. This reference relates to a survey that we undertook in the autumn and we can definitely, with the Department, identify straightaway who gave this response.

**Q140 Mr Williams:** Has the Department asked you?

**Mr Lonsdale:** The Department has the data.

**Q141 Mr Williams:** It has the data?

**Mr Lonsdale:** In the course of discussing the Report—

**Q142 Mr Williams:** You do not know whether you have been in touch with them to tell them they have got to stop?

**Mr Lewis:** I believe we have but I do not want to mislead this Committee, that is something I would very strenuously seek to avoid.

**Q143 Mr Williams:** Do you remember which centre it was?

**Mr Lonsdale:** We have not got it here, but we can provide it straightaway.<sup>7</sup>

**Q144 Mr Williams:** If you can let us have the list. Then the 12% who did not answer, that is even more puzzling because it could well be that the one is not the only villain and the others decide to keep their heads down and say nothing. Has anybody identified the 12% who did not reply and what has been done about those? Is any attempt being made now to get them to provide the information?

**Mr Lewis:** I have not done that, just to be clear. This was a survey which the NAO carried out but I have not done that.

**Mr Lonsdale:** I was going to say we can also provide the list of those.

**Q145 Mr Williams:** Will you let us have a list of those bodies.<sup>8</sup> Some Members may want to follow up if they happen to be in their constituency areas and I am sure, Mr Lewis, you will want to follow up and make sure that they are not hiding anything.

**Mr Lewis:** Indeed.

**Q146 Helen Goodman:** Mr Williams asked you earlier about the cost of the current scheme to the claimant. You know the average cost of the calls; you know the average length of the call costs and you know the average number of calls made for the different categories of claimants. I wonder, therefore, if you could give us a rough average estimate of the costs falling on people in the disability and carers category and pensioners?

**Mr Lewis:** I cannot do that now but I have offered to write to the Committee to give you our best estimates of the economies that we have made through the moved contact centres. I will attempt to give that information to you at the same time.<sup>9</sup>

**Q147 Chairman:** You were telling us a moment ago about the 115,000 people who you employ. The trouble is that large numbers of them are not delivering money to the deserving, they are dealing with the complexity of the system. This was taken up by a recent Report by the Work and Pensions Committee, our sister Committee, on efficiency

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<sup>7</sup> Ev 41

<sup>8</sup> Ev 41

<sup>9</sup> Ev 41

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savings and Jobcentre Plus. It refers on page 27 to this Committee and to what Sir Richard Mottram, your predecessor said, “if you want an honest discussion, it is a reality official errors have gone up because of organisational churn.” For instance, when you brought in your customer management system you did not have enough people trained to deal with it, did you? This is mentioned in paragraph 12. Do you want to say anything about what Sir Richard said, to make it clear to us that you are getting a grip on this Department?

**Mr Lewis:** In that same Report there are some quotes that I made personally to the Work and Pensions Select Committee and I would prefer to rest on what I said.

**Q148 Chairman:** We will leave it at that. Ms Grossman, this is a sort of overview, you have obviously come from the private sector and you have had 20 years experience in this call centre world. It seems that you are perhaps the face of the new Civil Service, people who are experts in project management rather than giving intelligent answers of why things have gone wrong. Give us your overview of the difference between the public and the private sector and what the public sector can learn from the private sector in the call centre world?

**Ms Grossman:** In the private sector you have a lot more leeway in terms of the mix of staff that you employ and the mix of staff you can employ. We have taken a very established workforce and supplemented that with people we have hired with specific skills. As a fair employer with family-friendly policies—that I always did not have to follow in the private sector—that makes it a

challenge. However, in the public sector, I have found the commitment of staff to be head and shoulders above what I ever experienced in the private sector. There is more loyalty to customer service, they are here for the right reasons and I think our turnover demonstrates that. In terms of the pace of change, I think because of the size of Government that does pose some risk. However, the way we manage that risk in terms of manageable chunks of risk, consistent approaches and processes and learning from one another is the secret to success. I think the more we collaborate on what is working in the Department, the more we can prevent things that are in trouble.

**Q149 Chairman:** Thank you. I think that is a very good point to stop. Thank you, Mr Lewis, for what you told us this afternoon. You said that the majority are satisfied with the service but you recognise with 40 million callers that still leaves tens of thousands of people who receive inadequate service, so you can expect a very hard-hitting report.

**Mr Lewis:** Can I say one last thing. Inevitably your questions and the Committee’s questions rightly have focused on areas where we are not performing satisfactorily, have not, and I have been very clear that I accept, and the Department accepts, responsibility. This Report, however, is fundamentally a positive Report. It says, “The implementation of contact centres has already achieved cost savings, more are expected to follow. The vast majority of customers report that the service is delivered by a polite agent within a reasonable time and the follow-up services are good.” This is a success story in Government.

**Chairman:** You have had the last word. Well done.

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 Supplementary memorandum submitted by the Department for Work and Pensions
 

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*Question 28 (Mr Richard Bacon): Closures and planned closures of Jobcentre Plus and Pension Service local offices*

*Jobcentre Plus*

At its inception in 2002 Jobcentre Plus inherited a network of around 1,500 offices from the former Employment Service and the former Benefits Agency. As part of the creation of the new Jobcentre Plus network, a total of 631 former Employment Service and Benefits Agency offices have been identified for closure and 464 have closed. I include a list of the 464 offices which have closed and the 167 identified for closure.

In addition, some further offices are likely to close over the next year as a result of a decision to centralise benefit processing in a smaller number of offices and some further closures may take place for other reasons.

*The Pension Service*

Before the creation of Jobcentre Plus work on pensions was carried out by the then Benefits Agency in some 450 Social Security offices. Following the creation of Jobcentre Plus, and the separate Pension Service, this work was migrated into 29 Pension Centres. Since January 2005 the Pension Service has ceased to operate from 9 of the 29 centres and is planning to cease to operate from a further 8 as follows:

- 1 centre from October 2006;
- 1 centre from March 2007;
- 5 centres from March 2008; and
- 1 centre from April 2011.

The locations of offices are detailed as follows:

\* Where an office is not marked as “Closed” it has been identified for future closure

<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
East Midlands	Derbyshire	Bakewell	BAKEWELL, King Street, Bakewell	Closed
East Midlands	Derbyshire	Eckington	ECKINGTON, High Street, Eckington	Closed
East Midlands	Derbyshire	Ilkeston	2 Nestfield Rd, Ilkeston, DE7 8TW	Closed
East Midlands	Derbyshire	Long Eaton SSO	MARKET PLACE, NG10 1LT	Closed
East Midlands	Derbyshire	Matlock	The Phoenix Centre, Lime Grove Walk, Matlock, DE4 3FD	Closed
East Midlands	Derbyshire	New Mills	NEW MILLS, Woodside Street, NEW MILLS	Closed
East Midlands	Derbyshire	Shirebrook	Shirebrook PVS, 58 Patchwork Road, Shirebrook, Mansfield, Notts, NG20 8AL	Closed
East Midlands	Leicestershire	Leicester	90 Highcross St., Leicester	Closed
East Midlands	Leicestershire	Leicester	Aquis House, 211 Belgrave Gate, Leicester	Closed
East Midlands	Leicestershire	Loughborough	10 South St., Loughborough	Closed
East Midlands	Leicestershire	Wigston	27 Leicester Road, Wigston	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Boston JC	136 West Street, Boston, PE21 8RG	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Grantham JC	6–7 Peters Hill, Grantham, NG31 6QB	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Holbeach JC	55 High Street, Holbeach, PE12 7HF	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Horncastle JC	The Old Couthouse, North Street, Horncastle, LN9 5EA	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Lincoln High Street JC	280–281 High Street, Lincoln, LN2 1LL	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Lincoln Wigford House DO	Wigford House Brayford Wharf East, Lincoln, LN5	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Mablethorpe JC	Tennyson Road, Mablethorpe, LN12 1HE	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Oakham JC	1st Floor, PO Building, Market Square, Oakham, LE15 6DT	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Skegness JC	3–5 Briar Way, Skegness, PE25 3NZ	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Sleaford JC	3–4 Market Place NG34 7SD	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Sleaford SSO	3–4 Market Place NG34 7SD	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Spalding SSO	Holland House, Holland Road, Spalding, TE11 1UL	Closed
East Midlands	Lincolnshire & Rutland	Stamford SSO	Horseshoe Lane, Stamford, E11 1UJ	Closed
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	Corby SSO	Crown House, 52 Elizabeth Street, Corby, Northants, NN17 1YS	Closed
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	Kettering SSO	Northampton House, Station Road, Kettering, Northants, NN15 7HH	Closed
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	Northampton SSO	Beaumont House, Cliftonville, Northampton NN1 5BE	Closed
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	Northampton SSO	Ashby House	Closed
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	Towcester JC	4–5 Sponne House, Towcester, Northants, NN12 6BY	Closed
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	Wellingborough JC	1 Queen Street, Wellingborough, Northants, NN8 4YZ	Closed
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Beeston Caller Office	Crown Buildings, Station Road, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 2AH	Closed
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Hucknall JC	55/57 High Street, Hucknall, Nottingham, NG15 7AW	Closed
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Mansfield Byron House JC	Byron House, St Peters Court, Commercial Street, Mansfield, Notts	
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Mansfield ONE Office	Victoria Street, Mansfield, Notts, NG18 5RN	
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Netherfield JC	143 Victoria Road, Netherfield, Nottingham, NG4 2HT	
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Newark SSO	Mill Gate, Newark, Notts	Closed

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<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Nottingham, Castle Boulevard JC	1 Castle Boulevard, Nottingham, NG7 1FY	
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Nottingham, Castle Court JC	Castle Court, 59 Castle Boulevard, Nottingham, NG7 1FR	
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Nottingham, Castle Gate SSO	Gate House, 70 Castle Gate, Nottingham, NG1 6AP	
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Nottingham, David Lane SSO	David Lane, Basford, Nottingham, NG6 0JT	
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Nottingham, Victoria Centre JC	50 Milton Street, Nottingham, NG1 3GL	
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Ollerton ONE Office	Ollerton ONE Office, (above Gordon Davis chemist), Forest Road, New Ollerton, Newark	
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Ollerton SSO	Newark & Sherwood Council Offices, Sycamore Road, New Ollerton, Notts, NG22 9PN	Closed
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Retford SSO	Bridge Gate, Retford, Notts,	Closed
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Watercourt JC	116–118 Canal Street, Nottingham, NG1 7HF	

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<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
East of England	Bedfordshire	Dunstable District Office	Icknield House, 40 West Street, Dunstable, Beds LU6 1TA	Closed
East of England	Bedfordshire	Dunstable SSO	The Old Post Office, 67 High Street North, Dunstable, Beds, LU6 1JF	Closed
East of England	Bedfordshire	Leighton Buzzard JC	3 West Street, Leighton Buzzard, Beds, LU7 1DA	Closed
East of England	Bedfordshire	Luton Jobcentre	Phoenix House, 4 Mill Street, Luton, Beds, LU1 2NA	Closed
East of England	Bedfordshire	Luton Regional Training/DMA	26–30 Cardiff Road, Luton, Beds, LU1 1PW	Closed
East of England	Cambridge	Cambridge JC	Henry Giles House, 73 – 79 Chesterton Road, Cambridge, CB4 3BQ	Closed
East of England	Cambridge	Huntingdon, DEFFRA	Chequers Court, St Germaine Street, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire	Closed
East of England	Cambridge	March JC	Marwick House, Station Road, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 8XA	Closed
East of England	Cambridge	Peterborough JC	Frobisher House, 72 Westgate, Peterborough. PE1 1RR	Closed
East of England	Cambridge	Peterborough Park Rd SSO	126–128 Park Rd., Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE1 1QZ	Closed
East of England	Cambridge	Peterborough Woodham House	Woodham House, 55 Broadway, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE1 1RN	Closed
East of England	Cambridge	St Neots JC	54 Market Square, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 2BD	Closed
East of England	Cambridge	Wisbech SSO	Albion House, Albion Place, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE13 1AN	Closed
East of England	Essex	Clacton	Harlech House, Carnarvon Road, Clacton On Sea, CO15 6QR	Closed
East of England	Essex	Colchester	Southway House	Closed
East of England	Essex	Grays SSO	Crown House, Crown Road, Grays	Closed
East of England	Essex	Harlow	Mitre Buildings, Kitson Way, Harlow	Closed
East of England	Hertford	Bishop Stortford CAP	East Hertfordshire District Council, 1 The Causeway, Bishop Stortford, CM23 2EN	Closed
East of England	Hertford	Bishop Stortford JC	43A South Road, Bishop Stortford, CM23 3JG	Closed
East of England	Hertford	Hatfield Caller Office	Gracemead House, Woods Ave, Hatfield, AL10 8EY.	Closed
East of England	Hertford	Hatfield JC	Aragon House, The Common	Closed
East of England	Hertford	Hemel Caller Office	1 Waterhouse Street, Hemel Hemstead, HP1EX	Closed
East of England	Hertford	Hemel Hempstead JC	Lawn Lane, Hemel Hempstead	Closed

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East of England	Hertford	Hertford SSO	Sovereign House, Hale Road, Hertford, SG13 8ED	
East of England	Hertford	Hitchin Crown House JC	Crown House, Bridge Street, Hitchin, SG5 2DE	Closed
East of England	Hertford	Hitchin Portmill House JC	Portmill House, Portmill Lane, Hitchin, SG5 1DQ	Closed
East of England	Hertford	St Albans JC	54–56 Victoria Street, St Albans, AL1 3HZ	Closed
East of England	Hertford	Watford JC	Caledonian House, 39–55 St Albans Road, Watford WD17 1 SQ	Closed
East of England	Hertford	Welwyn Garden City JC	15 Howardsgate, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6BU	Closed
East of England	Norfolk	Diss SSO	Mount Street, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 4QF	Closed
East of England	Norfolk	Great Yarmouth SSO	Yarmouth House, 30 Yarmouth Way, Gt Yarmouth, NR30 2QZ	
East of England	Norfolk	Kings Lynn SSO	Priory House, Austin Street, Kings Lynn, PE30 1 EB	Closed
East of England	Norfolk	Kings Lynn SSO	Bishops Lynn House, Tuesday Market Place, Kings Lynn, PE30 1AN	
East of England	Norfolk	Norwich SSO	Baltic House, Mountergate, Norwich, NR2 1QB	Closed
East of England	Norfolk	Norwich SSO	Chantry House, Chantry Road, Norwich, Norfolk	Closed
East of England	Suffolk	Bury St Eds	Bury St Edmunds JC, The Cornhill, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1BE	Closed
East of England	Suffolk	Ipswich	Ipswich Jobcentre, 2 Portman Road, Ipswich, IP1 2DG	Closed
East of England	Suffolk	Ipswich Jobshop	Ipswich Jobshop, Museum Street, Ipswich	Closed
East of England	Suffolk	Sudbury SSO	Sudbury Caller Office, The Old Bakery, King Street, Sudbury	Closed

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London	Brent, Harrow & Hillingdon	Burnt Oak	Burnt Oak JC, 93–95 Burnt Oak Broadway, Burnt Oak, Edgware	Closed
London	Brent, Harrow & Hillingdon	Cricklewood SSO	Cricklewood SSO, 249–253 Cricklewood Broadway	Closed
London	Brent, Harrow & Hillingdon	Harrow	Harrow Garden House JC, 5 St Johns Rd., Harrow	Closed
London	Brent, Harrow & Hillingdon	Uxbridge SSO	Uxbridge SSO, Colham House, Baker Rd, Uxbridge	Closed
London	Central London	Bloomsbury SSO	Tavis House, 1–6 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9NB	Closed
London	Central London	Edgware Rd JC	182 Edgware Road, London, W2 1ET	Closed
London	Central London	Euston SSO	1 Melton Street, London, NW1 2ER (9 Melton St, 194 Euston Rd.)	Closed
London	Central London	Finsbury Park SSO	199–201 Seven Sisters Road, London, N4 3NG	Closed
London,	Central London	Holborn JC	289–293 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7HZ	Closed
London	Central London	Hornsey JC	431 Hornsey Road, London, N19 4DU	Closed
London	Central London	Kensington JC	198–200 Kensington High Street, London, W8 6BA	
London	Central London	Kensington SSO	Charles House, 375 Kensington High Street, London, W14 8QL	Closed
London	Central London	Notting Hill SSO	Westbourne House, 14–16 Westbourne Grove, London, W2 4RH	
London	Central London	Swiss Cottage JC	120 Finchley Road, London, NW3 5JB	Closed
London	Central London	Upper Holloway JC	North Star House, 556–564 Holloway Road, London, N7 6JP	Closed
London	Central London	West End JC	195–197 Wardour Street, London, W1F 8AQ	Closed
London	Central London	Westbourne Park JC	369 Harrow Road, London, W9 3NA	

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London	City & East	East Ham Central JC	Heron House, Heigham Road, London, E6 2JR	
London	City & East	Hackney JC	Spurstowe Terrace	Closed
London	City & East	Isle of Dogs JC	Snowdon House, Meridan Gate, Marsh Wall, London, E14 9FG	
London	City & East	Plaistow SSO	Francis Ho., 760 Barking Rd., London, E13 9PH	
London	City & East	Poplar JC	307 Burdett Road, London, E14 7EP	Closed
London	City & East	Shoreditch JC	57 Kingsland Road, London, E2 8AQ	
London	City & East	Stoke Newington SSO	52–58 Arcola Street, London, E8 2DL	
London	City & East	Victoria Park JC	72–74 Mare Street, London, E8 4RT	Closed
London	Lambeth, Southwark & Wandsworth	Balham	Balham JC, 122–126 Balham High Rd.	
London	Lambeth, Southwark & Wandsworth	Battersea	Battersea JC, Beechmore Rd., Battersea Park Rd.	Closed
London	Lambeth, Southwark & Wandsworth	Borough	Borough JC, 92–94 Borough High St.	Closed
London	Lambeth, Southwark & Wandsworth	Brixton SSO	Brixton SSO, 245 Stockwell Rd., Stockwell	Closed
London	Lambeth, Southwark & Wandsworth	Dulwich JC	Dulwich JC, 95–105 Lordship Lane	Closed
London	Lambeth, Southwark & Wandsworth	Dulwich SSO	Dulwich SSO, 29–35 Lordship Lane	Closed
London	Lambeth, Southwark & Wandsworth	Oval (Gateway House)	Oval JC, Gateway House, 11 Milverton St.	Closed
London	Lambeth, Southwark & Wandsworth	Peckham	Peckham JC, 14–16 Peckham High St, Peckham	Closed
London	Lambeth, Southwark & Wandsworth	Putney	Putney JC, 329–339 Putney Bridge Rd., Putney	Closed
London	North East	Ilford JC	Cranbrook House	
London	North East	Leyton JC	Grosvenor Park	Closed
London	North East	Leytonstone	Leytonstone Action Team for Jobs, High Road	Closed
London	North East	Leytonstone JC	Kirkdale Road	Closed
London	North East	Romford JC	St Georges House, Eastern Rd., Romford	Closed
London	North East	Seven Kings JC	High Rd., Seven Kings	Closed
London	North London	Barnet SSO	Raydean House, 15 Western Parade, Barnett,	Closed
London	North London	Edmonton SSO	St Georges Chambers, 23 South Mall, Edmonton, London, N9 0BW	
London	North London	Hendon JC	2A Rundell Crescent, London, NW4 3DA	Closed
London	North London	Mill Hill JC	Lyndhurst House, 120 Bunns Lane, London, NW7 2AR	Closed
London	North London	Tottenham JC	Scotland Green House, 624 High Road, Tottenham, London, N17 9TL	
London	North London	Wood Green JC	128 Mayes Road, London, N22 6SY	
London	North London	Wood Green Jobline	Lymington Avenue, Wood Green, London, N22	Closed
London	South East London	Bexleyheath JC	304, Broadway, Bexleyheath, DA6 7EX	
London	South East London	Catford JC	62–66 Rushey Green London, SE6 4JD	
London	South East London	Erith JC	7 Queens Road, Erith, Kent, DA8 1TW	
London	South East London	Greenwich Park SSO	110–114 Norman Road, Greenwich, SE10	

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London	South East London	Lewisham JC	9 Holbeach Road, Catford, London, SE6 4TH	Closed
London	South East London	Sidcup JC	15 Market Parade, High Street, Sidcup	
London	South East London	Woolwich Arsenal JC	15 Spray Street, Woolwich, London, SE18 6AS.	
London	South East London	Woolwich Riverside JC	115–123 Powis Street, Woolwich, SE18 6JE	
London	South London	Beckenham JC	2 Beckenham Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 4PH	
London	South London	Bromley JC	Chelsea House, 26 Market Square, Bromley, BR1 1NA	
London	South London	Bromley SSO	1 Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent, BR2 0TS	
London	South London	Colliers Wood JC	105–109 High Street, Colliers Wood, London, SW19 2HR	
London	South London	Croydon SSO	Concord House, 454–458 London Road, Croydon, CR9 2RG	
London	South London	Crystal Palace SSO	9 Cargreen Road, London, SE25 5AE	
London	South London	Kingston JC	Eve House, Adam Court, Eden Street, Kingston, KT1 1SX	
London	South London	Mitcham JC	246–248 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 3YZ	
London	South London	New Addington JC		Closed
London	South London	Sutton JC	240, High Street, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 1PA	
London	South London	Twickenham SSO	121–125 Heath Road, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW1 4BE	Closed
London	South London	Wimbledon SSO	Ravensbury House, 3 Palmerston Road, London, SW19 1PG	
London	South London	Wimbledon Hill JC		Closed
London	West London	Acton JC	199 The Vale, Acton, London, W3 7QS	Closed
London	West London	Acton SSO	Government Buildings, Bromyard Avenue, Acton, London, W3 7GS	Closed
London	West London	Chiswick JC	319–327 Chiswick High Road, Chiswick, London, W4 4HH	Closed
London	West London	Ealing SSO	Candy House, 21 The Mall, Ealing, London, W5 2QS	Closed
London	West London	Fulham (Wyfold Road) JC	Wyfold Road, Fulham, London, SW6 6SH	Closed
London	West London	Hounslow JC	Craneshaw House, 8 Douglas Road, Hounslow, Middlesex, TW3 1DA	Closed
London	West London	Southall SSO	Merrick House, Block E, Middlesex Business Centre, Bridge Road, Southall, Middlesex, UB2 4AB	Closed

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North East	City of Sunderland	Houghton JC	Broadway House, Frederick Place, Houghton Le Spring, DH4 4DL	Closed
North East	City of Sunderland	Pallion JC	53 St Lukes Tce., Pallion, Sunderland, SR4 6NG	Closed
North East	City of Sunderland	Washington Caller Office	Coniston House, Washington	Closed
North East	Durham	Barnard Castle JC	Mission Hall, 51 The Bank, Barnard Castle	Closed
North East	Durham	Chester le Street JC	143 Front Street, Chester le Street	Closed
North East	Durham	Consett Caller Office	5 Medomsley Road, Consett	Closed
North East	Durham	Durham SSO	Milburngate House, Durham	
North East	Durham	Newton Aycliffe JC	Churchill House, Beveridge Way, Newton Aycliffe	
North East	Durham	Peterlee JC	Ridgemount House, Bede Way, Peterlee	Closed

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North East	Durham	Seaham JC	Caroline House, St Johns Square, Seaham	Closed
North East	Durham	Seaham SSO	Caroline House, St Johns Square, Seaham	Closed
North East	Durham	Stanley SSO	Townley House, Stanley, DH9 0AQ	
North East	Durham	Wingate JC	27 Front Street, Wingate	Closed
North East	Gateshead & South Tyneside	Birtley	Pinetree Centre, Durham Rd, Birtley, Chester le Street	Closed
North East	Gateshead & South Tyneside	Jarrow (Caller Office) SSO	Grange Road	Closed
North East	Northumbria	Berwick Castlegate JC	56–58 Castlegate, Berwick upon Tweed, TD15 1JT	Closed
North East	Northumbria	Newburn	Newburn Jobcentre, High Street Newburn, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE15 8LN	Closed
North East	Northumbria	Newcastle	St James House	Closed
North East	Northumbria	Newcastle	Newcastle City Jobcentre, New Croft House, Market Street East, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 6ND	Closed
North East	Northumbria	Newcastle SSO	Saxon House, Byker, Newcastle	Closed
North East	Northumbria	North Shields	Unicorn House, North Shields	Closed
North East	Northumbria	West Moor	West Moor Jobcentre, 80 Great Lime Road West Moor, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE12 7AL	Closed
North East	Northumbria	Whitley Bay	Roxborough House, Caller Office	Closed
North East	Tees Valley	Hartlepool JC	Bovis House, 7–9 Victoria Road, Hartlepool, TS24 7SE	Closed
North East	Tees Valley	Middlesbrough Crown House JC	Central 1, Crown House, 5 Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, TS1 1TX	
North East	Tees Valley	Middlesbrough Grange Road JC	Central 2, Ground Floor, 36 Grange Road, Middlesbrough, TS1 5BQ	
North East	Tees Valley	Middlesbrough South JC	Dalby House, Dalby Way, Coulby Newham, TS8 0XZ	Closed
North East	Tees Valley	Redcar SSO	Dawson House, 11 Ridley Street, Redcar, TS10 1RG.	Closed
North East	Tees Valley	Stockton SSO	Tees Buildings, 10–16 Bridge Road, Stockton, TS18 3BU	Closed

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North West	Cheshire & Warrington	Chester Norroy House JC	Nuns Road, Chester, CH1 2NB	
North West	Cheshire & Warrington	Congleton Caller Office	Caller Office	Closed
North West	Cheshire & Warrington	Crewe Prince Albert St JC	Prince Albert Sreet, Crewe, CW1 2DG	Closed
North West	Cheshire & Warrington	Ellesmere Port JC	110–114 Whitby Road, Ellesmere Port, South Wirral, L65 0EL	Closed
North West	Cheshire & Warrington	Ellesmere SS Caller Office	St Thomas' House, Whitby Road, Ellesmere Port, South Wirral.	Closed
North West	Cheshire & Warrington	Macclesfield SSO	Craven House, Churchill Way, Macclesfield, SK11 6AA	Closed
North West	Cheshire & Warrington	Nantwich JC	Wellington Road, Nantwich, CW5 7BG	Closed
North West	Cheshire & Warrington	Sandbach JC	40A Congleton Rd, Sandbach, CW11 0DH	Closed
North West	Cumbria	Kendal JC	Beezon Rd., Kendal	Closed
North West	Cumbria	Whitehaven JC	Catherine St., Whitehaven	Closed
North West	Cumbria	Whitehaven SSO	Mark Hse, Strand St., Whitehaven, CA28 7LQ	Closed
North West	Cumbria	Windermere JC	District Bank House, Windermere	Closed
North West	East Lancashire	Accrington SSO	Melbourne House, Accrington	
North West	East Lancashire	Barnoldswick		Closed

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North West	East Lancashire	Burnley	Burnley Jobcentre, Bankfield, Burnley	
North West	East Lancashire	Great Harwood	Great Harwood Jobcentre, Hesketh Street, Great Harwood	
North West	East Lancashire	Rawtenstall SSO	Social Security Office, Unit 21, The Precinct, Rawtenstall	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester Central	Cheetham SSO	Cheetham SSO, Cheetham Parade, Cheetham Hill, Manchester	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester Central	Levenshulme JC	Levenshulme JC, 1 Matthews Lane, Levenshulme, Manchester	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester Central	Old Lane, Openshaw SSO	Openshaw, Old Lane, Openshaw, Manchester	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester Central	Rusholme JC	Rusholme JC, Great Western Street, Rusholme, Manchester	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester Central	Sale SSO	Dalton House, Dane Road, Sale, M33 7AJ	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester Central	Salford Action Team	8th Floor, St James' House, Pendleton Way, Salford, M6 5FW	
North West	Greater Manchester Central	Salford JC	Trafford Road, Salford, M5 3AD	
North West	Greater Manchester Central	Southcourt Action Team		Closed
North West	Greater Manchester Central	Swinton JC	16 Station Road, Swinton, M27 2EP	
North West	Greater Manchester Central	Wythenshawe JC	Wythenshawe JC, Longley House, Longley Lane, Wythenshawe, Manchester	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester East	Ashton Under Lyne SSO	Crown Buildings, 2 Booth Street, Ashton under Lyne	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester East	Denton JC	68 Hyde Road, Denton, M34 3AA	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester East	Failsworth SSO	160 Oldham Road, Failsworth, Manchester, M35 0RA	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester East	Hyde JC	Beech House, New Beech Street, Hyde, SK14 2LS	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester East	Marple JC	Ist Floor, Co-op House, Stockport Road, Marple	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester East	Middleton JC	Othen House, 7 Oldham Road, Middleton, Manchester, M24 1BX	
North West	Greater Manchester East	Shaw JC	Dale Street, Shaw, Oldham, OL2 8RN	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester East	Stockport	Apsley House	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester East	Stockport	High Street, Stockport	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester East	Stockport JC	Wellesley House, 30 Wellington Street, Stockport, SK1 6BE	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester West	Bolton Gt Moor Street JC	Gt Moor St., Bolton, BL3 6DT	
North West	Greater Manchester West	Farnworth Caller Office	Town Hall, Lower Market St., Farnworth	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester West	Hindley JC	Liverpool Road, Hindley, Wigan, WN2 3HH	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester West	Horwich JC	Brunswick St, Horwich, BL6 7JA	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester West	Leigh JC	1, Twist Lane, Leigh, WN7 4BZ	
North West	Greater Manchester West	Westhoughton JC	29–31 Market St., Westhoughton, BL5 3AG	Closed

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North West	Greater Manchester West	Wigan Hallgate JC	62–64 Hallgate, Wigan, WN1 1AB	Closed
North West	Greater Manchester West	Wigan SSO	Brocol House, 71–73 King Street, Wigan, WN1 1EB	Closed
North West	Greater Mersey	Crosby Jobcentre	Crosby Jobcentre, South Road, Crosby, L22 3YN	Closed
North West	Greater Mersey	Huyton (Poplar Bank)	Huyton Jobcentre, Poplar Bank, Liverpool, L36 9FN	Closed
North West	Greater Mersey	Newton Le Willows JC	Newton Le Willows, 1A Borrton Rd., Newton Le Willows, WA10 1ER	Closed
North West	Greater Mersey	Runcorn Bridgewater JC	Runcorn Bridgewater, 83 High St, Runcorn, WA7 1AX	Closed
North West	Greater Mersey	Runcorn Halton Lea JC	Runcorn Halton Lea, Rutland House, Halton Lea, WA7 2ET	Closed
North West	Greater Mersey	St Helens, Barrow St JC	Barrow House, Barrow St., St Helens WA10 1RF	Closed
North West	Greater Mersey	St Helens, College St JC	63 College St, St Helens, WA10 1TH	
North West	Greater Mersey	Widnes JC	5 Widnes Rd, Widnes, WA8 6AB	Closed
North West	Lancashire West	Bamber Bridge JC	Station Road, Bamber Bridge, PR5 6TT	Closed
North West	Lancashire West	Blackpool North SSO	Mexford House, Mexford Avenue, Blackpool, FY2 0XN	Closed
North West	Lancashire West	Fleetwood JC	Parcs Court, Cop Lane, Fleetwood, FY7 6HU	Closed
North West	Lancashire West	Kirkham JC	25 Poulton Street, Kirkham, PR4 2AA	Closed
North West	Lancashire West	St Annes JC	St Georges Rd., Lytham St Annes, FY8 2AN.	Closed
North West	Lancashire West	Thornton JC	21–23 Fleetwood Rd North, Thornton Cleveleys, FY5 4BN	
North West	Liverpool & Wirral	Bebington	Bebington, 41a New Chester Road, New Ferry, Wirral, Merseyside, L62 1HN	Closed
North West	Liverpool & Wirral	Belle Vale JC	304 Childwall Valley Road, Belle Vale, Liverpool, L25	Closed
North West	Liverpool & Wirral	Birkenhead (C)	Birkenhead (Central), 4–6 Milton Pavement, Grange Precinct, Birkenhead, Wirral, L41 2YF	Closed
North West	Liverpool & Wirral	Breckfield SSO	58 Breckfield Road South, Liverpool 6	Closed
North West	Liverpool & Wirral	Liverpool City JC	Tithebarn House, Silkhouse Lane, Liverpool, L1	Closed
North West	Liverpool & Wirral	Stoneycroft JC	121–133 Green Lane, Liverpool, L13	Closed
North West	Liverpool & Wirral	Toxteth JC	172 Park Road, Liverpool, L8	Closed
North West	Liverpool & Wirral	Walton JC	Church Rd, Walton, Liverpool, L4	

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<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
Scotland	AGDI	Ardrossan SSO	CSP, Princes Street, Ardrossan	Closed
Scotland	AGDI	Ayr JC	Carrick Street, Ayr, KA71NT	
Scotland	AGDI	Castle Douglas JC	Carlingwark Street, Castle Douglas, DG7 1HD	Closed
Scotland	AGDI	Cumnock JC	33–43 Townhead Street, Cumnock, KA18 1JZ	
Scotland	AGDI	Cumnock SSO	59 Glaisnock Street, Cumnock, KA18 1BY	
Scotland	AGDI	Dumfries SSO	124 Irish Street, Dumfries, DG1 2AW	
Scotland	AGDI	Girvan SSO	CSP, Montgomery Street, Girvan, KA26	Closed
Scotland	AGDI	Irvine SSO	44 Bank Street, Irvine, KA12 0HL	

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<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
Scotland	AGDI	Kilmarnock Action Team	East Ayrshire Action Team For Jobs, 28a Nelson Street, Kilmarnock, KA1 1BA	Closed
Scotland	AGDI	Kilmarnock JC	17 Grange Street, Kilmarnock, KA1 2DF	Closed
Scotland	AGDI	Kilwinning JC	129 Main Street, Kilwinning, KA13 6AR	Closed
Scotland	AGDI	Largs JC	2–4 Lade Street, Largs, KA30 8AZ	Closed
Scotland	AGDI	Largs SSO	2 Seamore Street, Largs, KA30 9AP	Closed
Scotland	AGDI	Lockerbie JC	134–136 High Street, Lockerbie, DG11 2BX	Closed
Scotland	AGDI	Newton Stewart JC	6–8 Queen Street, Newton Stewart, DG8 6JL	Closed
Scotland	AGDI	Sanquhar JC	Queensbury Square, Sanquhar, DG4 6BY	Closed
Scotland	AGDI	Stranraer SSO	80 Ashwood Drive, Stranraer, DG9 7PF	
Scotland	AGDI	Troon JC	93 Templehill, Troon, KA10 6BQ	Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Bathgate JC	19 South Bridge Street, Bathgate, EH48 1TU	Closed
	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Dalkeith JC		Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Edinburgh City SSO	38 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh EH38JP/ Argyle House, 3 Lady Lawson Street, Edinburgh EH3 9SH	
	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Galashiels JC		Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Haddington JC	22 Hardgate, Haddington, EH41 3JR	Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Hawick SSO	Duke Street, Hawick, TD9	Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Haymarket SSO	12 Clifton Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5EX	Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Kelso JC	28 The Square, Kelso, TD1 7HX	Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Leith JC	1–3 Leith Walk, Edinburgh, EH6 8SD	Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Livingston SSO	Ochil House, Owen Square, Livingston, EH54	Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Loanhead JC	7 Polton Road, Loanhead, EH20 9BX	Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Peebles JC	35 Northgate, Peebles, EH45 9BN	Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Portobello JC	21–23 Windsor Place, Edinburgh, EH15 2AF	Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Portobello SSO	275 Portobello High Street, Edinburgh, EH15 2AQ	
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Torphichen Street JC	24–26 Torphichen Street, Edinburgh, EH3 8JP	Closed
Scotland	Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders	Wester Hailes SSO	Westside Plaza, Murrayburn House, Edinburgh, EH14 2SP	Closed
Scotland	Forth Valley & Fife	Alloa CSP	Bank Street, Alloa, FK10	Closed
Scotland	Forth Valley & Fife	Boness JC	83–93 North Street, Boness, EH51 9PT	Closed
	Forth Valley & Fife	Boness SSO	East Pier St.	Closed
Scotland	Forth Valley & Fife	Cowdenbeath SSO	12 Factory Road, Cowdenbeath, Fife KY4 9SQ	
Scotland	Forth Valley & Fife	Denny JC	133–137 Church Walk, Denny, FK6 6HS	Closed
Scotland	Forth Valley & Fife	Dunfermline JC	79–83 High Street, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 7DR	Closed
Scotland	Forth Valley & Fife	Falkirk JC	Grahame House, Weir Street, Falkirk, FK1 1LF	Closed
Scotland	Forth Valley & Fife	Falkirk Jobshop	8–14 High Street, Falkirk, FK1 1EY	Closed

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<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
	Forth Valley & Fife	Falkirk PAU		Closed
Scotland	Forth Valley & Fife	Glenrothes CSP	North Street, Glenrothes, Fife, KY7 5NA	Closed
Scotland	Forth Valley & Fife	Inverkeithing JC	25 Hope Street, Inverkeithing, Fife KY11 1LW	Closed
Scotland	Forth Valley & Fife	Leven SSO	Walton House, Victoria Road, Leven, Fife, KY8 4RN	Closed
Scotland	Forth Valley & Fife	Montrose SSO	77–79 Murray St., Montrose	Closed
	Forth Valley & Fife	St Andrews CSP		Closed
Scotland	Forth Valley & Fife	Stirling JC	Wallace House, Maxwell Place, Stirling, FK8 1JU	Closed
Scotland	Glasgow	Anniesland JC	31 Herschell St, Glasgow, G13 1HX	Closed
Scotland	Glasgow	Auldhouse JC	43–47 Cogan Road, Glasgow, G43 1BJ	
Scotland	Glasgow	Bridgeton JC	40 Main Street, Glasgow, G40 1LZ	Closed
Scotland	Glasgow	Craigton SSO	1479 Paisley Road West, G52 1SY	Closed
Scotland	Glasgow	Cranstonhill SSO	67 Minerva Street, G3 8LP	Closed
Scotland	Glasgow	Glasgow Central JC	50–58 Jamaica Street, G1 4HY	
Scotland	Glasgow	Glasgow City JC	87–97 Bath Street, G2 2EE	
Scotland	Glasgow	Glasgow City SSO	174 Pitt St., G2 4DZ	Closed
Scotland	Glasgow	Laurieston JC	101–109 Devon Place, G41 1RL	
Scotland	Glasgow	Laurieston SSO	159–181 Pollockshaws Road, G41 1PW	
Scotland	Glasgow	Maryhill SSO	1455 Maryhill Road, G20 9JA	
	Glasgow	Partick JC		Closed
Scotland	Glasgow	Pollok SSO	590 Nitshill Road, G53 7SS	
Scotland	Glasgow	Provan SSO	25 Stepps Road, G33 3NG	Closed
Scotland	Glasgow	Shettleston JC	1682 Shettleston Road, G32 9AN	Closed
	Glasgow	Springburn		Closed
Scotland	GMOS	Banff—p/t caller	c/o Community Centre, Bridge Street, Banff	Closed
Scotland	GMOS	Elgin	Elgin JC, 74/76 South Street, Elgin	Closed
Scotland	GMOS	Macduff – p/t caller	c/o Health Centre, Duff Street, Macduff	Closed
Scotland	Grampian & Tayside	Blairgowrie SS CSP	Leslie St., Blairgowrie	Closed
Scotland	Grampian & Tayside	Forfar SS CSP	Station Road, Forfar	Closed
Scotland	HICC	Alexandria CSP	9 Mitchell Way Alexandria G83 0LW	Closed
Scotland	HICC	Alness JC	60 High Street, Alness, Rossshire, IV17 0SG	Closed
Scotland	HICC	Benbecula		Closed
Scotland	HICC	Clydebank SSO	245 Kilbowie Road, Clydebank, G81 2JL	Closed
Scotland	HICC	Dumbarton JC	6–8 Bridge Street, Dumbarton, G82 1SN	
Scotland	HICC	Fort William SSO	10 Tweedale High Street, Fort William, PH33 6QZ	
Scotland	HICC	Inverness Metropolitan House JC	31–33 High Street, Inverness, IV1 1JD	
Scotland	HICC	Nairn JC	79A High Street, Nairn, Invernessshire, IV12 4BW	Closed
Scotland	HICC	Portree SSO	Bayfield Road, Portree, Isle of Skye, IV51 9EN	Closed
Scotland	HICC	Thurso JC	Traill House, 7 Olrig Street, Thurso, KW14 7BJ	Closed
Scotland	HICC	Thurso SSO	17 Rotterdam Street, Thurso, KW14 8AB	Closed
Scotland	HICC	Wick SSO	Government Buidings, Girnigoe Street, Wick, KW1 4HL	Closed
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Airdrie CSP	86 Graham Street, Airdrie	Closed
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Bellshill JC	417 Main Street, Bellshill	Closed

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<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Blantyre JC	1 Boswell Drive, Blantyre	
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Cambuslang JC	24–32 Somervell Street, Cambuslang	
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Carluke JC	33 Hamilton St., Carluke	
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Cumbernauld SSO	2 Tryst Road, Cumbernauld, G67 1JW	Closed
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	East Kilbride SSO	Murray House, Murray Road, East Kilbride, G75 0JY	
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Kilsyth JC	2a Station Road, Kilsyth	Closed
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Kilsyth SSO	2a Station Road, Kilsyth, G65 0AD	Closed
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Kirkintilloch CSP	76 Townhead, Kirkintilloch, G66 1JN	Closed
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Lanark SSO	Atholl House, Bannatyne Street, Lanark	
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Larkhall CSP	30 Union Street, Larkhall	Closed
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Larkhall JC	47–49 Claude Street, Larkhall, ML9 2BL	
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Motherwell JC	8 Mason Street, Motherwell	Closed
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Rutherglen SSO	Mitchell Arcade, Rutherglen	Closed
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Shotts JC	Dyfrig Street, Shotts	Closed
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Shotts SSO	Dyfrig Street, Shotts	Closed
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Uddingston JC	51 Bellshill Road, Uddingston, G71 1BW	
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Wishaw CSP	156–160 Main Street, Wishaw	Closed
Scotland	Lanarkshire & E Dumbarton	Wishaw JC	96 Kirk Road, Wishaw, ML2 7NS	Closed
Scotland	RIAB	Helensburgh Jobcentre	52 West Clyde St., Helensburgh, G84 8BU	Closed
Scotland	RIAB	Johnstone BA SSO	Johnstone BA	Closed
Scotland	RIAB	Linwood Jobcentre	Linwood, Burnbrae Avenue, Linwood, PA3 3DD	Closed
Scotland	RIAB	Oban	Oban, Albany Street, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4AH	Closed

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<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
South East	Berkshire	Bracknell JC	1st Floor, Eagle House, The Ring, Bracknell, RG1 1XN	Closed
South East	Berkshire	Newbury SSO	Hill View House, 21 West House, Newbury, RG14 1BE	
South East	Berkshire	Slough JC	Prince’s House, 15 High Street, Slough, SL1 1DY	Closed
South East	Berkshire	Wokingham JC	Garth House, 53 Denmark Street, Wokingham, RG40 2AY	Closed
South East	Bucks/Oxon	Banbury JC	Banbury Jobcentre, 47 South Bar, Street, Banbury, Oxon	Closed
South East	Bucks/Oxon	Bicester JC	Bicester Jobcentre, 19–21 Manorfield Road, Bicester, Oxon	Closed
South East	Bucks/Oxon	High Wycombe JC	High Wycombe Jobcentre, Buckingham House, Desborough Road, High Wycombe, HP11 2DP	Closed
South East	Bucks/Oxon	High Wycombe SSO	High Wycombe Social Security Office, Newman House, Oxford Road, High Wycombe, HP11 2DW	Closed

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South East	Bucks/Oxon	Milton Keynes JC	Milton Keynes Call Centre, Lloyds Court, 9 North Tenth Street, Milton Keynes, MK9 3EL	
South East	Hampshire	Alton JC	Alton Jobcentre, 1st Floor, Wey River House, 22 High Street, Alton, Hants, GU34 1BP	Closed
South East	Hampshire	Andover JC	Andover Jobcentre, Chantry House, 38 Chantry Way, Andover, Hants, SO10 1NA	Closed
South East	Hampshire	Basingstoke JC	Basingstoke Jobcentre, Verum House, New Street, Basingstoke, Hants, RG21 7DN	Closed
South East	Hampshire	Fareham JC	189–199 West Street, Fareham, Hants, PO16 0TB	Closed
South East	Hampshire	Gosport JC	Gosport Jobcentre, South Street, Gosport, Hants, PO12 1ER	Closed
South East	Hampshire	Havant JC	Havant Jobcentre, 33 East Street, Havant, Hants, PO9 1HP	Closed
South East	Hampshire	Liphook JC	Liphook Jobcentre, 7 Headley Road, Liphook, Hants, GU30 7NS	Closed
South East	Hampshire	Lymington JC	Lymington Jobcentre, 55 High Street, Lymington, Hants, SO41 9AH	
South East	Hampshire	Portsmouth JC	Portsmouth (Central) Jobcentre, Lake Road, Portsmouth, Hants, PO1 4DU	
South East	Hampshire	Portsmouth SSO	Portsmouth Caller SSO, 27 Guildhall Walk, Portsmouth, Hants, PO1 2RY	
South East	Hampshire	Romsey JC	Romsey Jobcentre, 3–4 Dukes Mill Centre, Romsey, Hants, SO51 9PJ	Closed
South East	Hampshire	Shanklin JC	Shanklin Jobcentre, 1 Steephill Road, Shanklin, Isle of Wight, PO37 6NH	Closed
South East	Hampshire	Southampton JC	Southampton (C) Jobcentre, 61–64 High Street, Southampton, Hants, SO14 2DP	
South East	Hampshire	Southampton JC	Southampton (B) Jobcentre, 119 High Street, Southampton, Hants, SO14 2HO	
South East	Hampshire	Woolston JC	Woolston Jobcentre, 12 Hazel Road, Woolston, Southampton, Hants, SO2 7GA	
South East	Kent	Dartford SSO	Crown Buildings, Home Gardens, Dartford, DA1 1UQ	Closed
South East	Kent	Deal	16–18 Queens Street, Deal, CT14 6ET	
South East	Kent	Faversham JC	3 Queens Parade, East Street, Faversham, ME13 8AH	
South East	Kent	Folkestone JC	Palting House, Trinity Road, Folkstone, CT20 2RH	Closed
South East	Kent	Gillingham JC	5 High Street, Gillingham, ME7 1BE	
South East	Kent	Gravesend JC	51–53 New Road, Gravesend, DA11 0AD	
South East	Kent	Maidstone, Gabriels Hill JC	38 – 40 Gabriels Hill, Maidstone, ME15 6JE	Closed
South East	Kent	Maidstone, Rocky Hill JC	London Road, Maidstone, ME16 8PY	Closed
South East	Kent	Maidstone SSO	Medvale House, Mote Road, Maidstone, MA15 6AH	
South East	Kent	New Romney JC	75 High Street, New Romney, TN28 8AP	Closed
South East	Kent	Rochester JC	7–9 Crow Lane, Rochester, ME1 1RF	
South East	Kent	Sevenoaks JC	Lady Boswell House, London Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1AS	Closed
South East	Surrey	Epsom (LA) Town Hall	Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5BY	Closed
South East	Surrey	Esher JC	3 High Street, Esher, Surrey, KT10 9RS	Closed
South East	Surrey	Guildford JC	Crossweys, Millbrook, Guildford, Surrey, GU1 3HY	Closed
South East	Surrey	Weybridge JC	32 Baker Street, Weybridge, Surrey, KT13 8AT	Closed

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South East	Surrey	Woking SSO	Lynton House, Station Approach, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7PT	Closed
South East	Sussex	Bognor Regis JC	62–64 High Street, Bognor, West Sussex, PO21 1TL	Closed
South East	Sussex	Brighton Pavilion JC	13–15 Old Steine, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 1EX	Closed
South East	Sussex	Brighton Regent JC	21 Upper North Street, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 3EL	Closed
South East	Sussex	Eastbourne JC	1–3 Langney Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 3QF	Closed
South East	Sussex	Hove JC	Britannia House, Kingsway, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 4QY	Closed
South East	Sussex	Worthing IRC	Unit 15–16 Hazelwood Industrial Estate, Hazelwood Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN14 8NP	Closed
South East	Sussex	Worthing South JC	2–6 South Street, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 3AB	Closed

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<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Barnstaple	Regent House, Queen Street, Barnstaple	Closed
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Barnstaple	4 Moxhams Court, 4 Silver St., Barnstaple	Closed
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Camborne Advice Shop	Trelowarren Street, Camborne, TR14 1AD	Closed
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Exeter JC	National House, Queen Street, Exeter	Closed
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Falmouth Neighbourhood Office	Killigrew Street, Falmouth, TR11 3PN	Closed
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Hale JC	52 Fore Street, Hale, TR27 4D	Closed
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Isles Of Scilly SSO Caller Office	Buzza Street, St Mars, Isles Of Scilly, TR21 0HX	Closed
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Newquay SSO Caller Office	Trevena Terrace, Newquay, TR7 1LD	Closed
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Penzance JC	Penlowarth, Penzance, TR18 2NU	Closed
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Plymouth	2–4 Buckwell Street, Plymouth	
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Plymouth	4 Hoegate Street, Plymouth	
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Plymouth SSO	Durley House, 5–11 Millbay Road, Plymouth	
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Plymouth SSO	Crownhill Court, Tailour Road, Crownhill, Plymouth	Closed
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Saltash SSO	27 Fore Street, Saltash, PL12 6AF	Closed
South West	Devon & Cornwall	Teignmouth	Teignmouth, Devon, TQ14 8AZ	Closed
South West	Dorset & Somerset	Boscombe JC	744–748 Christchurch Road, Boscombe, BH7 6BX	Closed
South West	Dorset & Somerset	Bournemouth Bracken House	14–16 Christchurch Rd, Bournemouth, BH1 3NW	
South West	Dorset & Somerset	Bournemouth JC	181–187 Old Christchurch Road, Bournemouth	
South West	Dorset & Somerset	Bournemouth SSO	20–28 Cotlands Rd, Bournemouth, BH1 3RS	
South West	Dorset & Somerset	Bridgwater (Jobcentre—West Quay)	West Quay House, Bridgwater (DO Training CFIS).	Closed
South West	Dorset & Somerset	Frome SSO	North Parade (PCO)	Closed
South West	Dorset & Somerset	Poole JC	2nd Floor, Brownsea House, 10 Dolphin Centre, Poole, BH15 1SP	Closed
South West	Dorset & Somerset	Street	The Cross, Street	Closed

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South West	Dorset & Somerset	Taunton JC	Quantock House, Taunton	Closed
South West	Dorset & Somerset	Wellington	High Street, Wellington	Closed
South West	Dorset & Somerset	Wemouth JC	Town Bridge House, St Thomas Street, Wemouth, DT4 8TF	Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Amesbury JC	The Arcade, Earls Court Road, Amesbury, SP4 7L	Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Cinderford SSO	32 Market Street, Cinderford, Glos, GL14 2RX	Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Cirencester JC	Forum House, Southway, Cirencester, Glos, GL17 1LW	Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Coleford JC	4 Mushett Walk, Coleford, Glos GL16	Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Coleford JC	Lords Hill Coleford, Glos GL16 8BD	Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Corsham JC	15 High Street, Corsham, SN10 0ES	Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Dursley Annex	21A Parsonage Street, Dursley, Gloucestershire, GL11 4BW	Closed
	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Dursley JC		Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Gloucester JC	37–41 Southgate Street, Gloucester, GL1 1TX	
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Ldney JC	Regent Street, Ldney, Gloucestershire, GL15 5RW	Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Melksham JC	10 to 14 Church Street, Melksham, SN12 6LS	Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Salisbury JC	Avon House, Avon Approach, Salisbury, SP1 3XP	Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Stroud JC	54–56 London Road, Stroud, Glos, GL5 2AD	Closed
	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Swindon	Paxton House	Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Swindon JC	Wessex Court, Clarence Street, Swindon, SN1 2LN	Closed
South West	Gloucester, Wilts & Swindon	Warminster JC	28 Station Rd, Warminster, BA12 9ND	Closed
South West	West of England	Bath Strahan House	Strahan House, James Street West, Bath, BA1 2DW	
South West	West of England	Bristol Broadweir	7–11 Broadweir, Bristol, BS1 3AZ	Closed
South West	West of England	Bristol Central—Nelson Street	22 Nelson Street, Bristol, BS1 2LD	
South West	West of England	Bristol Filton	Church House, Church Road, Filton, Bristol, BS12 7BP	Closed
South West	West of England	Bristol Knowle	Unit 31, Broadwalk Shopping Centre, Wells Road, Knowle, Bristol, BS4 2QU	Closed
South West	West of England	Bristol Westbury on Trym	Meachin Court, Church Road, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol, BS9 3EF	Closed
South West	West of England	Keynsham	11 The Centre, Keynsham, Bristol, BS31 1ED	Closed
South West	West of England	Midsomer Norton	POW’s Orchard, Midsomer Norton, Radstock, BA3 2H	Closed
South West	West of England	Southmead Caller Office		Closed

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Wales	Bridgend, Rhondda, Cynon, and Taf	Aberdare Jobcentre	Victoria Square, Aberdare	Closed
Wales	Bridgend, Rhondda, Cynon, and Taf	Ferndale Jobcentre	High Street, Ferndale	Closed

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Wales	Bridgend, Rhondda, Cynon, and Taf	Porth	Porth Jobcentre, Hannah Street	Closed
Wales	Bridgend, Rhondda, Cynon, and Taf	Porth	Ex-BA	Closed
Wales	Bridgend, Rhondda, Cynon, and Taf	Tonypandy Jobcentre	River View, Tonypandy	Closed
Wales	Bridgend, Rhondda, Cynon, and Taf	Tonyrefail	Crown Buildings, Tonyrefail	Closed
Wales	Cardiff & V	Llantwit Major JC	Hayes Room, Town Hall Square, Llantwit Major, CF619SD	Closed
Wales	Eastern Valleys	Abertillery SSO	Portland Street, Abertillery, Gwent, NP13 1XG	Closed
Wales	Eastern Valleys	Bargoed JC	Oldway House, Gilfach Street, Bargoed, CF81 8XP	
Wales	Eastern Valleys	Blackwood JC	81 High Street, Blackwood, NP12 1YX	
Wales	Eastern Valleys	Brynmawr JC	114 Worcester Street, Brynmawr, Gwent, NP23 4XX	Closed
Wales	Eastern Valleys	Ebbw Vale JC	Ty Gantre, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale, NP3 6XG	Closed
Wales	Eastern Valleys	Merthyr Tydfil JC	Glebeland Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8AU	Closed
Wales	Eastern Valleys	Newbridge JC	Ashfield Road, Newbridge, NP11 4QW	
Wales	Eastern Valleys	Pontlottyn JC	10 River Road, Pontlottyn, Bargoed, CF81 9PN	
Wales	Eastern Valleys	Risca JC	66-67 Tredegar Street, Risca, Newport, NP11 6YE	
Wales	Eastern Valleys	Treharris JC	3 Bargoed Terrace, Treharris, CF46 5RB	Closed
Wales	Eastern Valleys	Ystrad Mynach JC	22 Penallta Road, Ystrad Mynach, CF83 7AP	Closed
Wales	North West Wales & Powys	Bangor SSO	339 High Street, Bangor, LL57 1YA	Closed
Wales	North West Wales & Powys	Barmouth JC	Post Office Buildings, King Edward ST, Barmouth, LL42 1PB	Closed
Wales	North West Wales & Powys	Beaumaris JC	Masonic Chambers, Margaret Street, Beaumaris, LL58 8DW	Closed
Wales	North West Wales & Powys	Blaenau Ffestiniog JC	46 High Street, Blaenau Ffestiniog, LL41 3AA	Closed
Wales	North West Wales & Powys	Caernarfon JC	Penrallt, Caernarfon, LL55 2HN	Closed
Wales	North West Wales & Powys	Holyhead JC	Park Street, Holyhead, LL65 1DA	Closed
Wales	North West Wales & Powys	Llandrindod Wells SSO	Spa Road, Llandrindod Wells	Closed
Wales	North West Wales & Powys	Llangefni Arcadia Building JC	Arcadia Building, Llangefni	Closed
Wales	North West Wales & Powys	Llangefni High Street JC	33-35 High Street, Llangefni, LL77 7NA	Closed
Wales	North West Wales & Powys	Machynlleth SSO	PCO	Closed
Wales	North West Wales & Powys	Newtown JC	Ladywell House, Newtown	Closed
Wales	North West Wales & Powys	Pwllheli SSO	Penlan street, Pwllheli	Closed
Wales	S.E. Wales	Cwmbran SSO	Cwmbran, Glyndwr House, The Mall, Cwmbran, Gwent NP44 1XR	Closed
Wales	Swansea Bay	Cymmer JC	16 Station Rd, Cymmer, Port Talbot SA13 1JB	Closed
Wales	Swansea Bay	Glynneath JC	16 High Street, Glynneath SA11 5BU	Closed
Wales	Swansea Bay	Morrison JC	52-54 Woodfield Street, Morrison SA6 8BW	
Wales	Swansea Bay	Pontardawe JC	25 High St, Pontardawe, AS8 4JA	Closed
Wales	Swansea Bay	Port Talbot SSO	Cymric House, Bethany Square, Port Talbot SA13 1PQ	Closed

<i>* Where an office is not marked as "Closed" it has been identified for future closure</i>				
<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
Wales	Swansea Bay	Swansea SSO	Oldway House, Rutland Place, Swansea, SA1 1JA	
Wales	West Wales	Ammanford JC	Crown Buildings, Hall Street Ammanford, Carmarthenshire, SA18 3BW	
Wales	West Wales	Cardigan PCO	Crown Buildings, Napier Street, Cardigan, Ceredigion, SA43 1EF	Closed
Wales	West Wales	Fishguard JC	Crown Buildings, Brodog Lane, Fishguard, Pembrokeshire, SA65 9NT	Closed
Wales	West Wales	Garnant JC	26 Dynevor Road, Garnant, Ammanford, Carmarthenshire, SA18 1NP	Closed
Wales	West Wales	Haverfordwest SSO	Cherry Grove, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA61 1NS	Closed
Wales	West Wales	Lampeter JC	Govt Buildings, Pontfaen Road, Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA48 7BN	
Wales	West Wales	Lampeter PCO	Govt Buildings, Pontfaen Road, Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA48 7BN	
Wales	West Wales	Llandeilo JC	1 King Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, SA19 6AD	Closed
Wales	West Wales	Llandyssul JC	Bizerta House, Wind St, Llandyssul, Ceredigion, SA44 4BH	
Wales	West Wales	Llandyssul PCO	Bizerta House, Wind Street, Llandyssul, Ceredigion, SA44 4BH	
Wales	West Wales	Neyland JC	36 High Street, Neyland, Pembrokeshire, SA73 1TE	Closed
Wales	West Wales	Pembroke Dock SSO	Devonshire Road, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock, Pembrokeshire, SA72 6XY	
Wales	West Wales	Tenby JC	Ruabon House, South Parade, Tenby, Pembrokeshire, SA79 7D	Closed
Wales	West Wales	Tumble JC	Tumble	Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Cefn Mawr JC	Crane Street, Cefn Mawr, Wrexham LL14 3AB	
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Colwyn Bay JC	Coed Pella Road, Colwyn Bay, Conwy	Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Conwy JC	13 High Street, Conwy LL32 8DE	
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Denbigh JC	34 – 36 Vale Street, Denbigh, Denbighshire, LL16 3BE	Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Denbigh PCO	35 – 36 Vale Street, Denbigh, Denbighshire, LL16 3BE	Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Flint SSO	Flint House, Church Street, Flint, CH6 5AY	Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Holywell JC	Crown Buildings, Coleshill Street, Flintshire, CH8 7UP	Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Llangollen JC	32 Castle Street, Llangollen, LL20 8BR	
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Llangollen PCO	33 Castle Street, Llangollen, LL20 8BR	Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Llanrwst JC	6 Denbigh Street, Llanrwst, Conwy LL26 0LL	Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Llanrwst PCO	7 Denbigh Street, Llanrwst, Conwy LL26 0LL	Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Mold JC	St Davids Lane, Mold, Flintshire CH7 1LH	Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Prestatyn JC	129, High Street, Prestatyn, Denbighshire LL10 9SA	Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Ruthin PCO		Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Shotton PCO		Closed
Wales	Wrexham & NW Coast	Wrexham JC	16 Lord Street, Wrexham, LL11 1EJ	

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<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Armoury Road, Jobcentre	Armoury Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, B11 4RL	Closed
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Cumberland House JC	Cumberland House, 200 Broad Street, Birmingham, B15 1AY	Closed
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Edgbaston SSO	Clarendon House, Duchess Road, Birmingham, B16 8YX	Closed
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Erdington JC	Acorn House, 196 High Street, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 6TL	
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Erdington SSO	224–232 High Street, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 6ST	
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Handsworth JC	140 Holyhead Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 OAF	Closed
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Handsworth Jobshop	184–186 Soho Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 9LR	Closed
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Heartlands JC & District Office	71 Aston Road North, Aston, Birmingham, B6 4EA	
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Jobbuster, c/o Erdington JC	Jobbuster, c/o Erdington Jobcentre, Acorn House, 196 High Street, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 6TL	Closed
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Northfield Jobshop	Northfield Jobshop, 821 Bristol Road South, Birmingham, B31 2PA	
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Selly Oak JC	Harborne Lane, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6SP	Closed
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Small Heath JC	337–339 Coventry Rd, Small Heath, Birmingham, B10 0SN	Closed
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	South Yardley SSO	2140 Coventry Road, Sheldon, Birmingham, B26 3JQ	Closed
West Midlands	Birmingham & Solihull	Sparkhill SSO, Sparkhill	Poplar Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham, B11 1UP	Closed
West Midlands	Coventry & Warwickshire	Cheylesmore JC	Cheylesmore Jobcentre, Friars Road Coventry, CV1 2HJ	
West Midlands	Coventry & Warwickshire	Coventry	Park Court	Closed
West Midlands	Coventry & Warwickshire	Coventry	Copthall House	
West Midlands	Coventry & Warwickshire	Coventry	Bankfield House Job Centre, 163 New Union Street, Coventry, CV1 2QQ	
West Midlands	Coventry & Warwickshire	Kenilworth	Kenilworth Jobcentre, 7 Abbey Court, Abbey End, Kenilworth, CV8 1HQ	Closed
West Midlands	Coventry & Warwickshire	Leamington Spa	Leamington Jobcentre, Jephson House, Newbold Terrace, Leamington, CV32 4EH	Closed
West Midlands	Coventry & Warwickshire	Nuneaton	Nuneaton Jobcentre, 12 Vicarage Street, Nuneaton, CV11 4DP	Closed
West Midlands	Coventry & Warwickshire	Rugby	Rugby Jobcentre, Railway Terrace, Rugby, CV21 2EU	Closed
West Midlands	Dudley & Sandwell	Cradley Heath JC	Whitehall Road, Cradley Heath, West Midlands, B64 5BQ	
West Midlands	Dudley & Sandwell	Halesowen JC	Little Cornbow, Halesowen, West Midlands, B69 8YX	
West Midlands	Dudley & Sandwell	Kingswinford JC	10 Townsend Place, Kingswinford, DY6 9LJ	Closed
West Midlands	Dudley & Sandwell	Merryhill Jobshop	Merryhill Jobshop, Unit 16A, Merryhill, Brierley Hill, DY5 1SH	Closed
West Midlands	Dudley & Sandwell	Smethwick SSO	Church Hill Street, Smethwick, B67 7AF	
West Midlands	Dudley & Sandwell	Stourbridge Caller Office	Scotland House, 169 Lower High Street, Stourbridge	Closed
West Midlands	Dudley & Sandwell	Wednesbury JC	1–2 Floor, Woden House, Market Place, Wednesbury, WS10 7AG	Closed
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Burslem	Duncalf Street, Burslem, Stoke on Trent ST6 3LH	
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Burton JC	Crown House, New Street, Burton on Trent, DE14 3SN	
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Cannock JC	Beecroft Court, Beecroft Road, Cannock WS11 1LB	
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Cheadle JC	57 Chapel Street, Cheadle, Stoke on Trent ST10 1DX	

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<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Hanley JC	Cannon Street, Hanley, Stoke on Trent, ST1 4ED	
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Leek JC	32 Derby Street, Leek, Staffs, ST13 6JG	
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Lichfield SSO	Guardian House, Birmingham Road, Lichfield, Staffs, WS13 6JC	
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Newcastle-u-Lyme JC	Blackburn House, The Midway, ST5 1Q	
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Rugeley JC	Crown Building, Sandy Lane, Rugeley, Staffs, WS15 2BD	
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Stafford Caller Office	Victoria Park House, Victoria Road, Stafford, ST16 2AB	
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Stoke JC	Fleming Road, Stoke on Trent, ST4 4AG	
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Stone JC	35 High Street, Stone, Staffs, ST15 8AJ	
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Tamworth Caller Office	Victoria Road, Tamworth, Staffs	Closed
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Uttoxeter JC	4 Trinity Square, Uttoxeter, Staffs, ST14 8TH	Closed
West Midlands	The Marches	Droitwich JC	Clarendon House, 16 St. Andrews Street, Droitwich, WR9 8DY	
West Midlands	The Marches	Evesham JC	23, Vine Street, Evesham, WR11 4SA	
West Midlands	The Marches	Hereford JC	Bath Street, Hereford, HR1 2LG	
West Midlands	The Marches	Ledbury JC	Bye Street, Ledbury, HR8 2AB	
West Midlands	The Marches	Ludlow (Castle St)	Castle Street, Ludlow, SY8 1AU	
West Mids	The Marches	Ludlow (Tower St)	Ludlow Jobcentre, Tower Street, Ludlow	Closed
West Midlands	The Marches	Pershore JC	Head Street, Pershore, WR10 1DD	Closed
West Midlands	The Marches	Redditch JC	Threadneedle House, Alcester Street, Redditch, B98 8AP	
West Midlands	The Marches	Stourport JC	29, Bridge Street, Stouport, DY13 8UR	
West Midlands	The Marches	Worcester Elgar House JC	2nd Floor, Elgar House, Shrub Hill, Worcester, WR4 9EE	
West Midlands	Wolverhampton/ Walsall	Aldridge JC	31 High Street, Aldridge, WS9 9LX	Closed
West Midlands	Wolverhampton/ Walsall	Darlaston JC	Pinfold Street, Darlaston, WS10 8TD	
West Midlands	Wolverhampton/ Walsall	Wednesfield JC	49 High Street, Wednesfield, WV11 1ST	
West Midlands	Wolverhampton/ Walsall	Wolverhampton, Burdett House	Snow Hill, Wolverhampton, WV	
West Midlands	Wolverhampton/ Walsall	Wolverhampton, Derwent House	Derwent House, Waterloo Street Wolverhampton	

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<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
Yorks & Humber	Barnsley, Rotherham & Doncaster	Doncaster BA Area Training Centre	First Floor, Duke Street, Doncaster, DN1 3EA	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Barnsley, Rotherham & Doncaster	Doncaster Princegate JC	Princegate House, Princegate, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN1 3XT	
Yorks & Humber	Barnsley, Rotherham & Doncaster	Goldthorpe JC	26-28 Doncaster Road, Goldthorpe, S63 9DD	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Barnsley, Rotherham & Doncaster	Hoyland JC	2nd Floor, Town Hall, High Street, Hoyland, S74 9AB	
Yorks & Humber	Barnsley, Rotherham & Doncaster	Mexborough JC	Adwick Road, Mexborough, S64 0DA	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Barnsley, Rotherham & Doncaster	Rotherham SSO	Portland House, Mansfield Road, Rotherham, S60 2EA	Closed

\* Where an office is not marked as “Closed” it has been identified for future closure

<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
Yorks & Humber	Barnsley, Rotherham & Doncaster	Thorne Caller Office	Orchard Street, Thorne, DN8 5EQ	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Bradford	Bradford Law Russell House SSO	63 Vicar Lane, Bradford BD1 5SX	
Yorks & Humber	Bradford	Bradford Vicar Lane JC	38 Vicar Lane, Bradford BD1 5TA	
Yorks & Humber	Bradford	Keighley JC	1st floor, 151 Alice Street, Keighley, BD17 7DN	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Calderdale and Kirklees	Dewsbury (Empire House)	Dewsbury, Empire House, Wakefield Old Road, Dewsbury, West Yorks, WF12 8EA	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Calderdale and Kirklees	Dewsbury (YH)	Dewsbury, Floors 2 & 3, Yorkshire House, South Street, Dewsbury, WF13 1JT	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Hull & E Riding	Beverley Caller Office		Closed
Yorks & Humber	Hull & E Riding	Bransholme JC	51C Goodhart Road, Bransholme, Hull, HU7 4DF	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Hull & E Riding	Bridlington	Crown Building, Quay Road, Bridlington, YO16 4LS	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Hull & E Riding	Driffield JC	43–44 Middle Street, South Driffield, East Yorkshire, YO25 6PS	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Hull & E Riding	Goole SSO	Burlington House, North Street, Goole, DN14 5QZ	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Hull & E Riding	Hull Essex House JC	Manor Street, Hull, HU1 1YB	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Hull & E Riding	Hull Queens House JC	44–46 Paragon Street, Hull, HU1 3NZ	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Hull & E Riding	Withernsea Caller Office	27 Arthur Street, Withernsea, HU19 2AB	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Leeds	Leeds Dysons Chambers	12–14 Briggate, Leeds LS1 6EP	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Leeds	The ONE Centre	The ONE Centre, 2 Great George Street, Leeds, LS2 8LB	
Yorks & Humber	Leeds	Otley JC	Charles Street, Otley, LS21 1BJ	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Leeds	Pudsey JC	Park House, Park Square, Pudsey, LS28 7YZ	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Leeds	Rothwell JC	76–80 Commercial Street, Rothwell, Leeds, LS26 0QE	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Leeds	Stanningley JC	Leeds & Bradford Road, Stanningley, LS28 6LR	Closed
Yorks & Humber	North Yorkshire	Harrogate DEA and NDLP Location	21 Station Bridge, Harrogate, North Yorkshire	Closed
Yorks & Humber	North Yorkshire	Harrogate JC	Cophall Bridge House, 1 East Parade, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG1 5LJ	Closed
Yorks & Humber	North Yorkshire	Malton SSO (Caller Office)	43 Wheelgate, Malton, North Yorkshire, YO17 0HZ	Closed
Yorks & Humber	North Yorkshire	Ripon SSO (Caller Office)	6 Bedern Bank, Ripon, North Yorkshire, HG4 1PE	Closed
Yorks & Humber	North Yorkshire	Scarborough SSO	17–19 Market Street, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO11 1EZ	Closed
Yorks & Humber	North Yorkshire	Selby SSO (Caller Office)	Abbey House, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 0PG	Closed
Yorks & Humber	North Yorkshire	Whitby SSO (Caller Office)	Golden Lion Chambers, Golden Lion Bank, Whitby, North Yorkshire, YO21 3BS	Closed
Yorks & Humber	North Yorkshire	York Clifford Street JC	5 Clifford Street, York, North Yorkshire, YO1 1PS	Closed
Yorks & Humber	North Yorkshire	York Disability Service Team	Rougier House, 5 Rougier Street, York, YO1 1HZ	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Sheffield	Bents House SSO	Sheffield North West, Bents Green House, 40–50 West Street, Sheffield, S1 3TL	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Sheffield	Chapelton JC	Chapelton, Crown Buildings, 52–54 Loundside, Chapelton, Sheffield, S35 2FZ	Closed

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\* Where an office is not marked as "Closed" it has been identified for future closure

<i>Region</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Closed?</i>
Yorks & Humber	Sheffield	Chesham Hse SSO	Sheffield South West, Chesham House, 15 Charter Row, Sheffield, S1 3EE	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Sheffield	Peel House	Sheffield (Peel Hse), Peel House, 1 West Bar, Sheffield S3 8PQ	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Sheffield	Rockingham Court	Sheffield (Rockingham Crt), Rockingham Court, 152 Rockingham Street, Sheffield, S1 4EB	Closed
Yorks & Humber	South Humber	Grimsby, Viking House JC	51 Church Street, Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire, DN32 7DD	Closed
Yorks & Humber	South Humber	Scunthorpe Bridge House JC	Station Road, Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire, DN15 6PY	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Wakefield	Normanton JC	King Edward Street, Normanton, WF6 2BB	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Wakefield	Pontefract Enterprise House SSO	Enterprise House, 22–26 Horsfair, Pontefract, WF8 1RG	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Wakefield	Pontefract Hirst Yard SSO	Hirst Yard, Pontefract	Closed
Yorks & Humber	Wakefield	Pontefract King Charles II House SSO	King Charles II House, Headlands Road, Pontefract, WF8 1DD	Closed

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*Pension Centres Divested between January 2005–March 2006*

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- 1 Liverpool
  - 2 York
  - 3 Plymouth
  - 4 Derby
  - 5 Wrexham
  - 6 Wolverhampton
  - 7 Norwich (Kingfisher)
  - 8 Nottingham
  - 9 Norwich (Baltic)
- 

*Pension Centres to be Divested between April 2006–March 2011*

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- 1 Blackpool
  - 2 Walsall
  - 3 Birmingham
  - 4 Bath
  - 5 Glasgow
  - 6 Newcastle Upon Tyne (National Pension Centre)
  - 7 Stockton
  - 8 Dearne Valley
- 

*Pension Centres as at April 2011*

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- 1 Motherwell
  - 2 Burnley
  - 3 Stockport
  - 4 Warrington
  - 5 Swansea
  - 6 Cwmbran
  - 7 Dundee
  - 8 Newcastle Upon Tyne (London Pension Centre)
  - 9 Seaham
  - 10 Newcastle Upon Tyne (International Pension Centre)
  - 11 Leicester
  - 12 Newcastle Upon Tyne (NPFTC)
-

*Question 60 (Greg Clark): Monthly data on call backs from Jobcentre Plus contact centres for the next 12 months.*

DWP Response

The February and March 2006 figures for call backs from Jobcentre Plus Contact Centres are:

	<i>Within 24 hours</i>	<i>Within 48 hours</i>
February 2006	3.5%	90.1%
March 2006	67.6%	95.9%

We will continue to provide this data to the Committee, as requested, on a monthly basis.

*Question 87 (Mr Ian Davidson): Were any lessons learned from contracting out excess work*

This question arose from Figure 19 in the NAO Report which showed how the Department's contact centres cope with variations in workload. The very small element shown against "contracting out excess work" represented two contact centres that had said in their response to the NAO survey that they did this. On further investigation it is clear that both had misinterpreted the NAO's question and had been referring to the fact that at times of peak demand some of their calls are redirected to other DWP contact centres. Neither centre in fact contracts out excess work outside of DWP.

*Questions 110 and 111 (Mr Alan Williams): Savings that have been achieved through the introduction of contact centres.*

Information on the precise level of savings that can be directly and specifically attributed to the extended use of contact centres is not available. Our contact centres are part of the end-to-end process by which we deliver services to our customers. We are establishing new and radically transformed business models that may involve contact centres, separate processing centres and a network of local face-to-face outlets while, at the same time, making significant changes to the supporting IT infrastructure and our estate.

Business cases were constructed on the basis of the model as a whole rather than on individual components and disaggregating the savings attributable to one part of the process is not possible with the data available to us.

What we can say is that contact centres are contributing in a significant way to both the delivery of an improved and improving service to our customers and to increases in productivity and efficiency that the Department must make if it is to live within its budget. The headcount reductions we have already made are equivalent to annualised savings of £375 million and the reductions we have already made in our estate are equivalent to an annualised saving of £40 million.

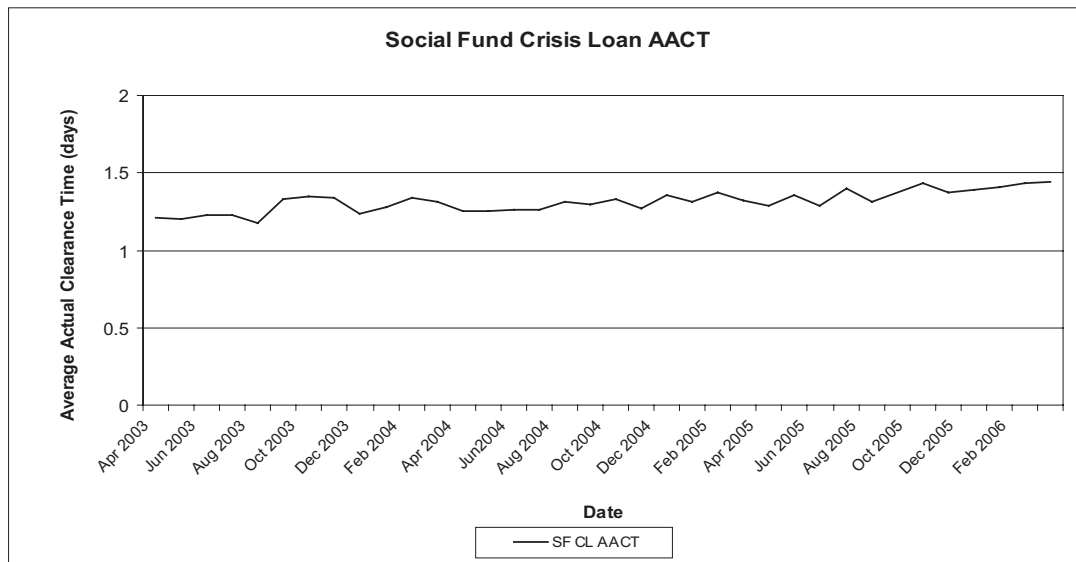
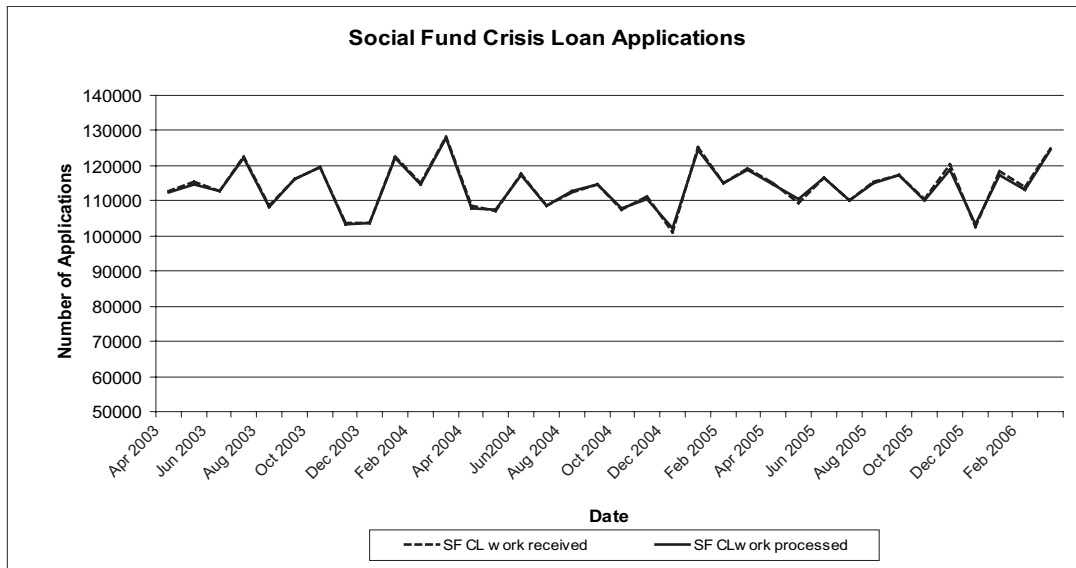
It would be wrong to claim that these savings are directly and solely attributable to contact centres but we can say with certainty that such savings would not have been possible without their extensive use

*Questions 119–121 (Mr Richard Bacon): Data relating to the number of social fund crisis loans*

In terms of contact centres, emergency payment requests are dealt with in the following way:

- if a customer states that they are suffering financial hardship during the inbound call then staff are advised to try to book an immediate call back to complete the claim form. If this is not possible then staff will notify the relevant benefit processing centre to ask them to consider an interim payment or Social Fund referral; and
- if a customer states that they are suffering financial hardship when we complete the outbound call then contact centre staff aim to arrange for an emergency interview at the local office to progress the claim urgently. If this is not possible then contact centre staff will book the first available appointment and then pass on the customer's details onto the relevant benefit processing centre for them to consider an interim payment or Social Fund referral.

The spreadsheet on page Ev 40 details the number of social fund crisis loan applications and the clearance time from April 2005 to March 2006. Both the volume and clearance times remained relatively stable throughout this period



**MIS Year Report, ending March 2006**

*Jobcentre Plus Top Level*

	Apr 2005	May 2005	Jun 2005	Jul 2005	Aug 2005	Sep 2005
	T	T	T	T	T	T
SF CL work received	115,206	109,286	116,608	110,061	115,306	117,451
SF CL work processed	114,811	110,473	116,566	110,178	115,037	117,365
SF CL AACT	1.29	1.36	1.29	1.4	1.31	1.37

*Jobcentre Plus Top Level*

	Apr 2004	May 2004	Jun 2004	Jul 2004	Aug 2004	Sep 2004
	T	T	T	T	T	T
SF CL work received	108,455	107,148	117,575	108,428	112,567	114,734
SF CL work processed	107,990	107,318	117,131	108,798	112,792	114,757
SF CL AACT	1.25	1.25	1.26	1.26	1.31	1.3

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*Jobcentre Plus Top Level*

	<i>Apr 2003</i>	<i>May 2003</i>	<i>Jun 2003</i>	<i>Jul 2003</i>	<i>Aug 2003</i>	<i>Sep 2003</i>
SF CL work received	112,818	115,270	112,957	122,473	108,512	116,349
SF CL work processed	112,417	114,766	112,627	122,349	108,145	116,198
SF CL AACT	1.21	1.2	1.23	1.23	1.18	1.33

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*Questions 142–145 (Mr Alan Williams): What action the Department has taken where NAO identified a Jobcentre Plus office which stated that they would not deal with intermediaries at all; and the action that has been taken, if any, on the 12% of contact centres not responding to the survey question?*

The Committee asked for further information regarding the response given by one Jobcentre Plus contact centre to a question in the NAO survey around dealing with intermediaries.

The contact centre in question (Blackburn) had stated that the customer has to be present when a third party is acting on their behalf. This response is factually correct if it is simply a case involving a third party (ie where the customer is represented but needs to be present to verify authenticity) but does not cover situations where the customer has an authorised representative (known as an “appointee”) acting on their behalf on an on-going basis. The centre’s response was based on a misunderstanding of the wider context of the question posed.

We have sought assurances from each of our centre managers that they are fully aware of and compliant with the processes we have in place to deal with the wide range of third party issues.

It was reported by the NAO that 9 contact centres (12%) did not respond to Q18 on the survey regarding intermediaries. Five of the offices concerned have now closed but we have confirmed with the others that they do follow the correct procedures when dealing with third parties.

*Question 146 (Helen Goodman): Estimated costs falling on people in the disability and carers category and pensioners*

*Pensioners:*

The following is based on customer calls from landlines:

- Pension Credit Application Line (PCAL)—This is a freephone number with no cost to the customer;
- The Pension Service—the average cost, based on an average call duration of 6 minutes at a cost of 3p per minute, is £0.18;
- Pensions Direct/RP Teleclaims—the average cost, similarly based on an average call duration of 6 minutes at a cost of 3p per minute, is £0.18;

As part of The Pension Service Transformation programme, three of our pension centres currently take claims for State Pension from start to finish in one single phone call. The average call duration is 20 minutes and costs approximately £0.60 based on a cost of 3p per minute.

The next stage of our Transformation Programme, to be introduced from July 2006, will enable all of our centres to offer teleclaims to State Pension and Pension Credit. We estimate that a call will average 30 minutes and, based on current costs, a customer will pay £0.90 for this call.

If a customer indicates they are concerned about the cost of a call we would always call the customer back. We are currently considering whether we should make this clearer at the outset of the call.

*Disability and Carers:*

The cost to the customer to contact DCS has been calculated using 2004–05 data as follows:

The average call duration from the initial welcome/IVR message and including time spent in the queue is 4 minutes 14 seconds, at a cost of 3p per minute this equates to a total cost of £0.13.

*Supplementary question from Mr Richard Bacon:*

Mr Bacon sought further information on the number of full time and part time staff who left as a result of the office closures (through redundancies, early release, retirement etc).

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Early Release Packages</i>		<i>Transfers to Other Govt Depts</i>		<i>Resignations</i>		<i>Transfers to CSA from The Pension Service</i>		<i>Transfers to Jobcentre Plus from The Pension Service</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>F/T</i>	<i>P/T</i>	<i>F/T</i>	<i>P/T</i>	<i>F/T</i>	<i>P/T</i>	<i>F/T</i>	<i>P/T</i>	<i>F/T</i>	<i>P/T</i>	<i>F/T</i>	<i>P/T</i>
	Pensions	180	29	198	9	89	8	603*		340	169	1,410
Jobcentre Plus	237	163	989*	N/K	1,578*	N/K			—	—	2,804*	163
<b>Total</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>1,187</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>603*</b>		<b>340</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>4,214</b>	<b>378</b>

\* It is not possible to split these figures between full time and part time.