

Making a Charter work for jobseekers

The discussion guide

Introduction – 5 mins

- Introduce subject and explain client is Consumer Focus.
- Outline purpose of the groups – to provide feedback on the service people receive from Jobcentre Plus. Mention there's a 5-minute break in the middle.
- Explain client presence (in Manchester), confidentiality, tape recording etc.
- Ask respondents to introduce themselves to the group – first name, bit of info on their household, their favourite ever film.

How they feel as consumers – 5 mins

- Ask people to mention their favourite business, and why they choose it. Could be a shop, an online retailer, a local restaurant – anyone from Marks & Spencers to a bakery round the corner. Someone they love buying from.
- Explore what people are valuing – product or service/what is sold or how it's sold.
- In this context probe on the importance of the seller/customer relationship.
 - To what extent is customer service important?
 - Is it important for some things and not for others? Examples?
- How do they feel as customers generally in terms of the service they receive on a day-to-day basis?
 - Is day-to-day service in the UK as good as it is at (READ IN GOOD EXAMPLES FROM ABOVE)

Overall experience of Jobcentre Plus (10 mins)

- We want to talk about Jobcentre Plus now. We'll get into details later on, but overall, how do you feel about the service you receive from them? FLIPCHART
 - Good points
 - Bad points
- How do they compare to (USE AN EXAMPLE OF GOOD SERVICE MENTIONED EARLIER)?
 - Where do they fall short?
 - And what if anything do they do the same – are there any good similarities?

OUTLINE WE'RE NOW GOING TO TALK ABOUT THESE ISSUES IN A LOT MORE DETAIL. WE'RE TRYING NOT TO FOCUS ON HOW QUICKLY THEY GET YOU BACK INTO WORK, AS THAT'S AFFECTED BY LOTS OF ISSUES OTHER THAN HOW GOOD THEIR CUSTOMER SERVICE IS, BUT WE ARE VERY INTERESTED IN HOW THEY HELP YOU ALONG THE WAY, HOW THEY SUPPORT YOU AS YOU LOOK FOR WORK AND HOW THAT CAN BE IMPROVED.

Mapping individual experiences (35 mins)

- We'd like you to think about your experience with Jobcentre Plus, from the first day you contacted them to now. Take a pad and pen, and we'd like you to map your experience from then until now, marking all the key times you've seen them or contacted them, what was important about that moment, and how you felt it went.
- GIVE EXAMPLE – REGISTERING WITH A DOCTOR
 - First of all you register at a new doctors, and there are forms to fill in
 - Then you might have a routine appointment that isn't urgent, such as you or children getting a vaccination
 - Then there might be a more urgent need for an appointment, where you want to see them that day etc
- Think about all the key moments in your dealings with Jobcentre Plus, what you wanted from them, and how they could have done it better. It might be they could have treated you differently, or given you better information etc WRITE DOWN ON PADS.
- TAKE SOME EXAMPLES AND FLIPCHART A COMPOSITE JOURNEY BASED AS FAR AS POSSIBLE ON ALL THEIR EXPERIENCES.
- Taking each of these key moments, what (else) should Jobcentre Plus be doing at each point? WRITE ON FLIPCHART
- Thinking about your experience with Jobcentre Plus, what sort of words describe how they generally interact with you or treat you? FLIPCHART
- And what are the words that best describe how you would like them to interact with you or treat you? FLIPCHART
- DISCUSS HOW CLOSE THE TWO LISTS ARE, AND WHY THERE ARE ANY GAPS (IF THERE ARE).
- (IF NOT ADEQUATELY COVERED ALREADY) What other services or information, aside from job opportunities, do you think Jobcentre Plus offer?
- READ OUT FULL LIST OR JUST FILL IN GAPS.
- To what extent have they told you about these or offered them or information about where to access them?
- Now, can you each come up and take a coloured dot for each of these main areas of help or information (different coloured dot for each of the 5 services listed below), and stick it along our mapped journey according to when it would have been most useful for you to be told about each one.
- Stickers for:

- Employment opportunities
- Financial support and benefits
- Help with CVs, interview techniques etc
- Training and learning new skills
- Coping with debt and other household bills
- Bear in mind some people don't like being overloaded with information all in one go, so you might not want to be told about all of them at the first meeting, though if you think this would be best then by all means stick your stickers there.
- GIVE RESPONDENTS A FEW MINUTES TO COME UP AND MAP IDEAL POINTS OF INFORMATION.
- Now, can you do the same again, but this time stick the sticker at the point where you actually were told about them or offered them. If you weren't told about them but would have liked to have been, stick the sticker at the bottom of the chart.

5 MINUTE BREAK

Developing customer charter (20 mins)

- Now, thinking about everything we've spoken about, and thinking about your experience with Jobcentre Plus and how this compares to how you would like it to be, what are the key principles they should always keep in mind when dealing with you?
- FLIPCHART KEY PRINCIPLES. ONLY IF NECESSARY, PROMPT WITH EXAMPLES SUCH AS:
 - Making appointment for times that suit me
 - Talking through written information as well as just giving it to me, making sure everything is easy to understand
 - Listening to my views as well as offering their own
 - Proactively tell me what services or information is available, don't wait to be asked
 - Try to provide the same person for all my dealings with them etc.
- NOW TRY TO DRAW OUT SOME OVERALL PRINCIPLES RATHER THAN DETAILED ONES e.g. BE PROACTIVE NOT REACTIVE, TREAT ME AS AN EQUAL etc

Mapping charter to DWP Customer Charter (25 mins)

- Now can you each look at this Customer Charter – this is the charter for the Department of Work and Pensions, the Department that is responsible for Jobcentre Plus. HAND OUT CHARTER AND READ THROUGH.
- Can you read through and think about it in terms of how well you think it matches how you would like to be treated by Jobcentre Plus. Write on it if you like, or just think and we can talk about it in a minute, highlight bits you think are good, and bits you

think are missing, or bits you don't understand or bits you think don't actually tell you anything.

- GIVE THEM A FEW MINUTES TO ABSORB IT.
- How well do you think it reflects the key points you listed earlier on? REFER TO THE KEY PRINCIPLE THEY DEVELOPED.
- Can your key principles be added to this to improve it, or do you think it needs to be rewritten from scratch? If so, why and how?
- What do you think of the Jobcentre Plus having this charter in the first place?
 - Good idea, bad idea?
 - Good in principle not in practice? Why?
 - Just something they hang on a wall?
 - If so, how could it be brought to more meaningful life?

Current Charter (10 mins)

- Looking back at the DWP customer charter, take another couple of minutes to read through it again.
- Now, how well do you think it is written; aside from what we've just said are its strengths and weaknesses in terms of what it promises, is it easy to understand?
- Does it get its message across clearly? AVOID DISCUSSING ITS SUBSTANCE AGAIN, AND FOCUS ON HOW IT SAYS IT. If not, give examples of why not.
- What would you do next if you didn't think they had kept their side of the bargain?
- Have any of you seen this before in the Jobcentre Plus, or had it mentioned?
- How do you think you would actually use this charter?
- What do you think it is there for?
 - Probe whether it is there for the Jobcentre's benefit or theirs?
- What impact do you think it actually has on the service you receive?
- And what impact do you think it possibly could have?
- Explore the (probable) gap – what could make the difference between it not making a difference and it actually improving things?

Wrap up (5 mins)

- We've talked a lot in detail about the service you receive from Jobcentre Plus, and how this matches up to what you would hope it provides. Overall, how close do you think they are to providing a really good, personalised service?
- What one thing do you think they could do better in order to make you happier with the service they provide, aside from the offer of the perfect job at a cracking wage!

- Outline the research is being fed back to the DWP, including at a meeting with the Employment Minister, Jim Knight MP.
- Outline that we will be phoning a handful of people to follow up some of the experiences you've just talked about, based on whether you mentioned at the recruitment stage whether you would be happy to be contacted again.
- CHECK IF THERE IS ANYONE WHO SAID NO AT RECRUITMENT STAGE, BUT WOULD NOW BE HAPPY FOR US TO CONTACT THEM IF NECESSARY.

THANK AND CLOSE