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Customer Satisfaction with Career Guidance: A Review of the Literature

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Executive Summary

Customer satisfaction remains an important outcome of career guidance. This paper updates the findings from a 2014/2015 review of the literature relating to customer satisfaction with career guidance services. The initial review identified over 15,000 papers for possible inclusion and a systematic process was applied to sift these down to 19 high quality papers that directly address the core issue of customer satisfaction with career guidance. This update adds material from a further three sources, most of which reinforce the original findings.

The review finds that reported levels of satisfaction with career guidance are typically high (ranging between 70-89%. However, it also reveals that there are challenges in measuring customer satisfaction in a consistent way and questions around the extent to which customer

Individual	• Who is the individual? What is their disposition and personal circumstances? • What is their expectation about career guidance? Do they have any prior experience? • What isssue/s are they bringing?
Contextual	• What are the logistical arrangements that support clients to access career guidance? For example, how do they book an appointment, how accessible is the venue and how long do they have to wait? • What is the environment within which the interaction takes place? e.g. is it light, warm, comfortable, etc.
Delivery	• Who is the adviser? How skilled are they, how personable and sympathetic? What do they look like? • What is the mode of delivery? Face-to-face, groupwork, telephone, online. Is a particular approach or method used? • What is the content of the delivery? What is covered or learnt?
Post-intervention	• How is the interaction followed up? • What life events and progression does the individual experience following the intervention?

satisfaction correlates with other desirable outcomes of career guidance, such as career management skills and progression to further learning and work.

The review sets out a model of factors that influence customer satisfaction (see below). The literature is discussed in relation to this.

The key findings from the review are as follows:

- **Customers' expectations** about the nature of the career support they are going to receive have an impact on the level of satisfaction that they report following the intervention. It is possible to influence these expectations both before they receive the service and at the start of the intervention (contracting).
- **Venues and providers of career support** may have an impact on the levels of customer satisfaction that are reported, in addition to the facilities available to customers within venues (e.g. digital access).
- Careers advisers' **satisfaction with their own jobs** correlates with customer satisfaction. Attention to staff satisfaction may therefore have positive impacts on the experience of customers.
- The **working alliance** between the careers advisers and their customer is a critical determinant of customer satisfaction. This is comprised of three main elements: counsellor/client agreement about the goals of the interaction; their agreement about the tasks leading to these goals; and their emotional relationship. Attending to advisers skills in building positive working alliances is likely to be an important aspect of improving customer satisfaction.
- Customers are more satisfied when they receive **new information which is directly useful to their career building**. Consequently, careers advisers need to be good at both finding information and employing it in ways that are relevant to their clients.
- Customers like to feel that they have had **enough time** with an adviser. There is also some evidence that **longer interventions** correlate with increased customer satisfaction.
- The **mode of delivery** makes a difference to levels of customer satisfaction. The evidence suggests that customers are most satisfied face-to-face, followed by telephone interactions and then online and digital services.
- The **measurement** of customer satisfaction is likely to have an influence on the levels of satisfaction reported. There are a range of instruments that can be used to measure customer satisfaction. Another important question is **when** that measurement should be taken.
- **Following up** with a customer after an interaction may have a positive impact on their satisfaction with the service that they have received.
- Measuring customer satisfaction and **seeking feedback** from customers should provide useful intelligence for service development.

- At present, there is **very little hard evidence** suggesting a clear link between customer satisfaction and the other outcomes that the National Careers Service is interested in (career management skills and progression to jobs or progression to learning).

Introduction

Customer satisfaction remains an important outcome of career guidance. Public services have a duty to attend to their customers and to ensure that they are happy with the services they receive. Measuring customer satisfaction offers one way to do this. Customer satisfaction research has emerged from the fields of healthcare and business over the last 30 years (Noble, 2010). It has included measurement and investigation of perceived performance, customer expectations, service quality, delivery, and the gaps and relationships between these concepts.

This paper updates the findings from a 2014/2015 review of the literature relating to customer satisfaction with career guidance services. It forms part of a series of papers initially produced to inform development of a Best Practice Programme for the National Careers Service in England and which now underpin the Continuous Improvement programme. At the time of the original research, the service had recently undergone a shift to an outcome-based funding model, with three outcome measures for the service (customer satisfaction, career management and progression to jobs and learning).

These measures have subsequently changed to include the possibility of claiming progression to learning and progression to jobs, thus emphasising the service as enabling people to enhance their skills and move out of long-term unemployment. The initial review was the first attempt to explore the literature on customer satisfaction with career guidance in a systematic way and, while its findings were of relevance to policy makers, service managers and practitioners as they worked towards the achievement of customer satisfaction, a number of its findings had wider applicability in promoting good customer service.

Methodology

This paper is part of an update to a series reporting the results of a literature review commissioned by the then Skills Funding Agency (now the Education and Skills Funding Agency) to inform development of a Best Practice Programme (now the Continuous Improvement programme) for the National Careers Service. The following five themes / questions were identified for the review to focus on:

1. What evidence exists which describes the **policies, systems and processes** that underpin the organisation of national careers services? [Internal Report to SFA]

2. How can careers services maximise **customer satisfaction**? [currently located here and also available here]

3. How can careers services maximise their impact on **career management skills**? [currently available here]

4. How can careers services maximise their impact on individual's **progression to positive learning and work destinations**? [currently available here]

5. How is effective **brokerage** between education and employers organised? [available here]

The original **policy review** was sent as an internal document to the SFA/ESFA and so was not included in the updating process for the National Careers Service. The **brokerage review** was initially intended to inform the work of the National Careers Service in relation to the 2013 skills strategy *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills,* which explicitly note the requirement for the National Careers Service at that time to 'play a proactive role in connecting employers, education institutions and local partners' to identify and promote opportunities for young people. This was a specific focus of the Inspiration Agenda, but is now more fully under the remit of the Careers & Enterprise Company

This paper updates the results relating to **customer satisfaction**. A set of core and secondary search terms were identified for this theme (Table 1). These were **applied to the indexes, databases** and search engines listed in Annex A.

Table 1: Search terms relating to customer satisfaction

Core search terms	Secondary search terms
• Career development • Career(s) counsel(l)ing • Career(s) guidance • Careers(s) advice • Guidance • Guidance counsel(l)ing • Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) • Lifelong guidance	• Customer(s) • User(s) • Client(s) • The above were used as search terms alone and then combined with the following terms: • Satisfaction • Reaction • Feedback

The initial search in 2014 produced a total of 26,600 results across all five research questions. The searching process in 2021 found 62 results across the three areas of career satisfaction, career management and career progression, the areas selected for updating.

On each occasion, the results of the search process were uploaded to EPPI-Reviewer 4, a software package designed to facilitate an iterative approach to reviewing the results of literature searches. The abstracts were then subject to a seven-stage review process aimed at filtering out duplicates, any unsuitable or non-relevant material, as well as studies considered not to be of sufficient quality (perhaps lacking an indication of method) for use in the full text review. An overview of this process is provided in Table 2, as well as the results from each of the stages.

Table 2: Summary of process for review of results

Stage:	First review (2014/15): Total remaining:	Update review (2021): Total new remaining
1. Full search results	**26,600**	**62**
2. Duplicates removed	**15,300**	**0**
3. Core search terms applied to Title and Abstract	**7,100**	**62**

Stage:	First review (2014/15): Total remaining:	Update review (2021): Total new remaining
4. First sift to remove unsuitable material: • Media items – e.g. TV / radio interviews and newspaper articles • Conference notes • Individual biographies • Non-research material • Items not relevant to careers • Non-English language material	**3,100**	**62**
5. First stage exclusion criteria applied to remove abstracts that were: **Pre-2000** • Not focussed on the provision of careers guidance, information or advice • Missing a methodology statement • Not of direct relevance to any of the five research questions	**326**	**50**
6. First stage coding applied to remaining abstracts covering: • Method – qualitative / quantitative / mixed • Country of study • Research question(s) of relevance	**326**	**50**
7. Second stage coding applied to abstract (where possible): • Research design • Target population • Implementation of research design • Quality of interpretation and conclusions Abstracts that, on further investigation, were deemed not to meet the quality criteria, were excluded at this stage.	**160**	**24**

In 2014/2015, of the 160 abstracts remaining following completion of this systematic review and coding exercise, 29 were identified as appearing relevant to the question on customer satisfaction. In 2021, a further 13 out of the 24 were selected for full review. The full-text copies of these papers were subject to a more in-depth review aimed at identifying the key emerging themes. At this stage, further studies were excluded from the review, as the full text revealed that they either reported on part of a study that was already included in the review or provided only weak, insecure or unsubstantiated findings.

The bibliographies of the studies identified as being of particular relevance to the topic were then reviewed to identify any additional material (including articles published before the year 2000) that would be suitable for inclusion in the review. A total of 19 studies were drawn on for the original paper, with a further four for the development of this paper, references for which are provided in Annex B.

Measuring customer satisfaction with career guidance

National Careers Service defines the Customer Satisfaction Outcome using two elements (as cited in the update to funding rules in March 2021):

- the acceptance of the Careers and Skills Action Plan (clearly identified next steps) by the Customer
- Customer satisfaction with the service provided to them

There is limited literature available looking specifically at issues relating to customer satisfaction with career guidance services. The material that is available is generally positive about the level of customer satisfaction that is reported following career guidance interventions. Table 3 provides an overview of the results of a series of quantitative studies that offer a comparable measure of customer satisfaction. Variations in sample sizes and methods means that it is not possible to ascertain an average or 'typical' level of customer satisfaction from these. However, they provide some useful benchmarks of which the National Careers Service should be aware.

Table 3: Levels of customer satisfaction reported in the literature

Study	Mode	Country	Sample size	Level of satisfaction
Deese (2002)	Employment and careers centre (various services)	USA	4,207	89%
Ting (2009)	Online career assessment	China/Hong Kong	92	87%
Head of Defence Statistics Health (2014)	3 day career transition workshop	UK	3,153	87%
BIS (2013a.)	Face-to-face and telephone career counselling	England	8,808	85% (84% for telephone)
BIS (2012)	Face-to-face and telephone career counselling	England	6,610	85% (84% for telephone)
Šverko *et al.* (2002)	Online career assessment	Croatia	2,064	82%
Noble (2010)	Face-to-face career development programme	USA	41	78-98% (on various measures)
Healy (2001)	Face-to-face career counselling	USA	153	78%
BIS (2013a.)	Online information	England	6,504	76%
Šverko *et al.*, (2014)	Career assessment	Croatia	1,945	70%
Klahr *et al.* (2020)	Face-to-face and telephone career counselling	England	9.,996	85%

Study	Mode	Country	Sample size	Level of satisfaction
OECD (2021)	Face to face, telephone, online and instant messaging	Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the USA	5,611	75%

One of the challenges in reviewing this literature is that there is no standard way to measure or even to define customer satisfaction (Noble, 2010). As a result, researchers have employed a wide range of questions and scales to measure this. For the purposes of Table 3, we have assumed satisfaction from any responses that implied satisfaction rather than dissatisfaction or indifference (e.g. summing responses to both 'satisfied' and 'very satisfied'). However variations between the different studies are likely to be related to the approach to measurement as well as to the level of satisfaction of the customers. The rest of this paper reviews the key determinants of customer satisfaction, but it is noted from the outset that no single model of delivery provided a clear guarantee of customer satisfaction.

Noble (2010) discusses some of the limitations of viewing customer satisfaction as a single statistic, arguing that it is more accurately understood as a **multi-dimensional phenomenon**. A number of researchers have therefore developed customer satisfaction indices or scales. Noble discusses these in the context of career development, citing the American Customer Satisfaction Index and a particular variant of this used by the U.S. Department of Labour, Employment and Training for the purpose of assessing customer satisfaction in career development centres. Massoudi *et al.*, (2008) also developed the ten question Satisfaction with the Intervention Scale (SWI), which was used by Masdonati *et al.* (2009). Another existing scale that may be relevant for some National Careers Service clients is Capella and Turner's (2004) instrument, which focuses on customer satisfaction in vocational rehabilitation. The initial review suggested that it would be valuable for the National Careers Service to explore some of these multi-dimensional scales in order to refine the ways in which it measured and monitored customer satisfaction. Given that customer satisfaction is a specific outcome measure for payment-by-results, it is not clear as to the extent to which services have also sought or been able to adopt such multi-dimensional approaches internally

Limitations of customer satisfaction research

Table 3 shows that levels of satisfaction with various forms of career support are generally high. However, high levels of satisfaction cannot on their own be read as an indicator of efficacy. For example, in looking at the relationship between customer satisfaction and the validity of career assessments, Crowley (1992) concluded that customer satisfaction was **largely unrelated to the quality of the intervention.**

Whilst customer satisfaction is obviously important, it should be recognised that it **does not have a straightforward relationship with the other two outcomes for the National Careers Service** (career management and progression to jobs or progression to learning). It is possible

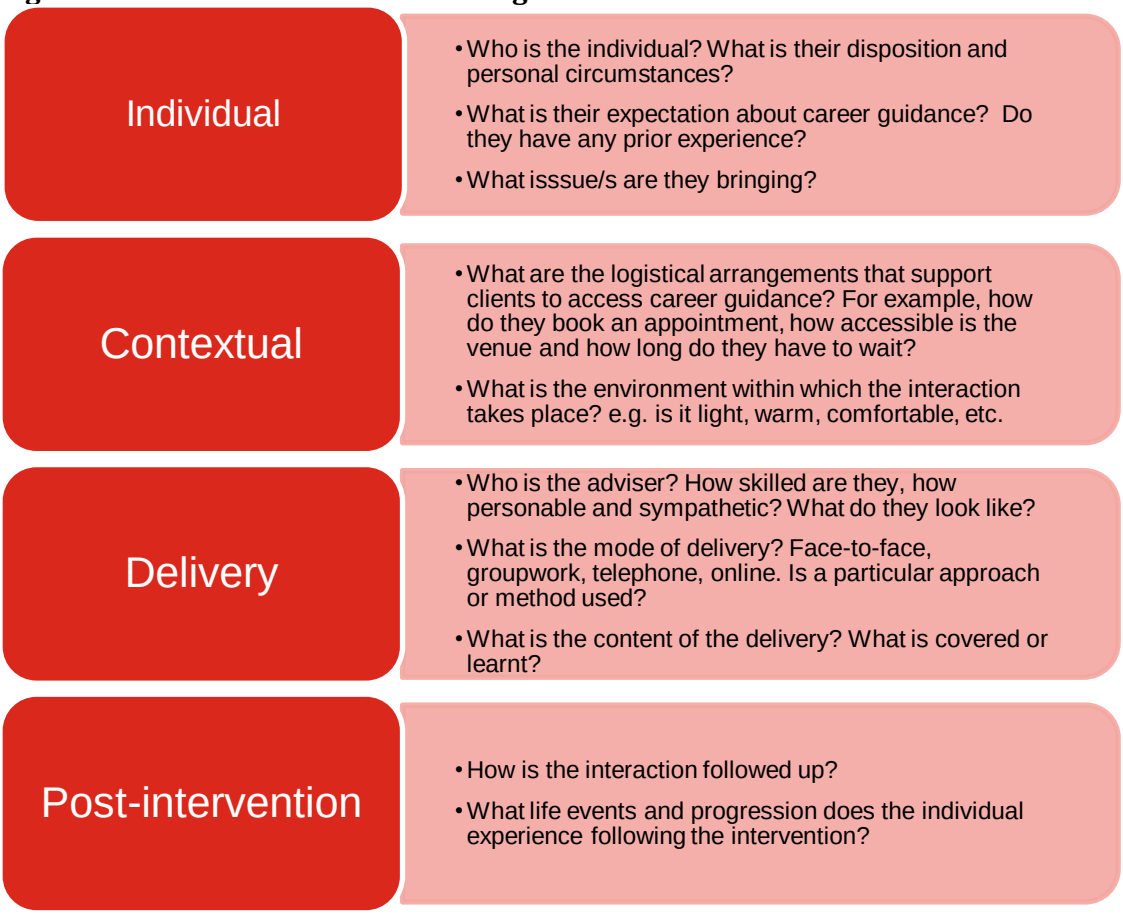
that people might like something that does not teach them any skills or help them to progress, and equally important to recognise that some people might not like something that actually proves to be quite good for them. Of course, it is also possible that these different factors are correlated and that customer satisfaction is a predictor of other forms of outcomes. The inter-relationships between these have not been well explored in the literature, although Healy (2001) found that customer satisfaction was correlated with take up of further learning opportunities. However, Healy found that customer satisfaction was also correlated with those customers who reported **no action** as a result of their interaction with a career professional. The relationship between the three outcomes will be a key area for consideration in the evaluation of the Best Practice Programme.

There are additional reasons to be cautious about the use of customer satisfaction as a key performance metric. For example, Healy (2001) found that customer satisfaction did not make clients more likely to continue to access career support and to complete the course of interviews that they had begun. In other words, **the satisfied were as likely to drop out as the unsatisfied**. Millar and Brotherton (2001) found careers advisers' judgements about how satisfying interviews were to be largely independent from clients' judgements. This suggests that caution should also be used when inferring levels of customer satisfaction from careers advisers' perceptions of their interactions with customers.

Key determinants of customer satisfaction

The literature highlights some factors that have been found to be determinants of customer satisfaction, as well as some approaches that might be useful in increasing levels of customer satisfaction with career guidance services. **Figure 1** provides an overview of these and the sections that follow look at the evidence for each in more detail.

Figure 1: A model of factors influencing customer satisfaction



Individual factors

It is possible that a client's demographics may influence their likelihood to report satisfaction with career guidance interventions. However, at present, there is only patchy empirical evidence, the key findings from which are summarised below.

- **Age:** Šverko *et al.*, (2014) did not find any differences in satisfaction levels for three age groups of young people (elementary school, high school and university). However, Noble (2010) and Klahr *et al.* (2020) found that older people were less likely to be satisfied.
- **Disability:** Noble (2010) did not find a difference in levels of satisfaction between those who identify themselves as disabled and those who do not. By 2020, however, and using data from customer satisfaction surveys about the National Careers Service, Klahr *et al.* found that customers with a disability were less likely to be satisfied than those who did not.
- **Education:** Noble (2010) found that more educated people were more likely to report satisfaction with the services that they received. However, drawing on national customer satisfaction surveys, BIS (2012) and Klahr *et al.* (2020) found that the opposite was true, with those with lower levels of qualification more likely to report satisfaction.

- **Gender:** Most studies found no differences in levels of satisfaction between men and women. (Healy, 2001; Noble, 2010). However, in 2020, Klahr *et al.* found that female customers were more likely to be satisfied than their male counterparts.
- **Race:** Although none of the earlier studies had explicitly noted this, Klahr *et al.* (2020) found that customers from ethnic minority backgrounds reported higher levels of satisfaction with online careers guidance, than did white customers.

Clients bring considerable expectations about the nature of guidance when they interact with a guidance professional. Incongruence between these expectations and the actual nature of a guidance interaction is thought to negatively affect the interaction and lead to lower client satisfaction (Whitaker *et al.*, 2004). In particular, clients tend to under-estimate the level of personal commitment that is required and over-estimate the expertise of the professional. The hope is that the expert can 'sort out my career' rather than viewing a guidance interaction as a spur to personal agency. However, it is possible to influence these expectations either prior to the interaction (client preparation) or at the start of the interaction (contracting, see the next section).

Whitaker *et al.* (2004) propose showing clients a video explaining what to expect prior to participation in guidance. Using a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) methodology, they found that informing clients' expectations about career guidance had the effect of increasing their personal commitment, whilst reducing their expectations about counsellors' expertise.

Contextual factors

Healy 's (2001) study identified a number of logistical factors that customers would like to see addressed in order to increase their satisfaction with the service received. These included improved parking and increased availability of access (more appointments). However, BIS (2012; 2013a.) makes the argument that these 'hygiene' factors do not correlate strongly with satisfaction and that, while they can lead to dissatisfaction if not well performed, they contribute relatively little to positive customer satisfaction. Noble's (2010) findings broadly support this. However, she did find that the length of time between engaging with the programme and the date of the appointment did affect customer satisfaction (meeting sooner was more satisfying).

Deese (2002) compared customer satisfaction with career services delivered in community colleges with those that were delivered in employment centres. She found that customers rated their experience within community colleges as significantly better than their experience in the employment centres. This was despite the fact that essentially the same service was being delivered. Although this finding is not necessarily directly transferable to the National Careers Service it is interesting to consider Deese's findings in the light of the locations that the service is delivered. Deese accounts for the disparity in customer satisfaction between colleges and employment centres by the difference in the physical appearance of the two contexts and their relative convenience, as well as more substantive factors like staff training and the availability of resources. Deese's findings also suggest that, while the focus of employment centres was essentially on short term placement, the focus of the careers services within the community

college setting was around lifelong learning. She argues that this ideological difference between the two contexts was also likely to account for some of the difference in customer satisfaction.

Research undertaken on the National Careers Service has reinforced Deese's findings around community-focused delivery. An evaluation of National Careers Service partnership delivery (BIS, 2013b.) found that customers preferred getting support in community settings that were more comfortable and familiar to them. Customer satisfaction was also linked to the facilities available when engaging with careers guidance. BIS (2013b.) found that customers reported satisfaction with their experience when it enabled them to access computers to search for jobs and contact employers, indicating that it was not just the familiarity of the environment that was important, but what was available within the space that also impacts the level of customer satisfaction.

Delivery factors

There are a number of features of **delivery** that have been found to correlate with customer satisfaction and these are outlined below.

- The level of **job satisfaction of the counsellor** has been found to be significantly related to the customer satisfaction of the client (Capella and Andrew, 2004).
- A focus on **contracting** with the client and clarifying objectives (Healy, 2001).
- The quality of the **working alliance** (Masdonati *et al.*, 2009). Masdonati *et al.* (2014) argue that working alliance is comprised of three main concepts: counsellor/client agreement about the goals of the interaction; their agreement about the tasks leading to these goals; and their emotional relationship. In other words, the working alliance comprises both agreement over process and the strength of the inter-personal relationship. Horvath and Greenberg (1989) have developed an instrument that measures the strength of the working alliance. As Masdonati *et al*. (2014) point out, however, counsellors and clients often rate the working alliance differently. Madonati *et al's* (2014) empirical investigation of the relationship between working alliance and customer satisfaction suggest that the former is a strong determinant of the later. This includes a range of factors about the relationship between the counsellor/adviser and the client e.g. feeling that you have been listened to (Healy, 2001; Millar and Brotherton, 2001), trusting that advisers are helpful and professional (BIS, 2012; 2013a.), and viewing advisers as approachable and knowledgeable (BIS, 2013b.) Klahr *et al.'s* (2020) survey of National Careers Service's customers emphasised this point, highlighting that customers' main reasons for satisfaction related to the individual advisors that customers dealt with.
- Customer satisfaction has been found to be related with the provision of **useful information and advice that supports progression**, particularly where this introduced ideas that the individual had not thought of themself (Healy, 2001; Millar and Brotherton, 2001; BIS, 2012, 2013a.). Healy's (2001) participants also raised this issue, requesting more job-specific advice and assistance in finding a job placement. More recently, in an international survey of adults in 2021, the OECD found that satisfaction levels were highest amongst adults whose guidance services were supported by labour market information and were tailored to their needs.

- Feeling that the careers adviser has spent **enough time** with you (Millar and Brotherton, 2013). Noble (2010) found that total time was weakly (but not significantly) correlated with satisfaction. BIS (2012) found that, for telephone customers, the length of time spent talking to the adviser correlated with the level of customer satisfaction. Healy's participants also requested more time with the counsellor (although BIS, 2013a., did not find time to be a strong *predictor* of satisfaction).

- Linked to this, having **multiple meetings** with a careers adviser appears to relate to increased levels of customer satisfaction, particularly if meetings were held with the same adviser (Klahr *et al.*, 2020).

- The **mode of delivery** may also influence the level of customer satisfaction. There was no evidence in the studies that provided a comparison between one-to-one and group services in terms of customer satisfaction. This is likely to be an important area to explore further through the Best Practice Programme. BIS (2012) found that face-to-face customers consistently rated themselves more satisfied with different aspects of the interaction than telephone customers. However, the overall level of customer satisfaction through the two modes was very similar, while levels of satisfaction with online services were typically lower than those found with face-to-face services. Williams (2018) also found that face to face interactions were found to be most valued by students accessing careers provision in colleges, and they placed a lower value on specialist websites and information leaflets/booklets.

- In relation to online delivery, BIS (2013a.) found that service users wanted websites that were **easy to use, reliable and provided detailed information**. One key element of this is the effectiveness of the site search tool. They found strong correlations between customer satisfaction and the ease of using the website, the quality of information and the information being clear and easy to understand.

Post-intervention factors

The point at which customer satisfaction is measured has a strong bearing on the results. The level of satisfaction reported 10 minutes after completion of an intervention is likely to be very different to that reported 10 years later. For example, 87% of ex-service men and women who took part in a three-day career transition workshop expressed satisfaction immediately following the intervention (Head of Defence Statistics Health, 2014). Six months later, the level of satisfaction had dropped to 82%. The relative significance of the interaction in the life of the customer is likely to change over time and their ability to judge its impact will also be different. In the period between the intervention and the measurement of satisfaction, the individual may encounter both further interactions with the career adviser or associated resources (follow up) as well as changes in their own life e.g. getting a job (life events).

Following up a careers intervention has the potential to reinforce the initial impact of an intervention. Follow up is also popular with customers. For example, Healy's (2001) participants asked for more follow up subsequent to their engagement in a programme of career counselling interviews. Klahr *et al.* (2020) found higher levels of dissatisfaction amongst customers who reported a lack of follow up from advisers. The issue of delivering efficient and effective follow up

remains a challenge for the National Careers Service and Prime Contractors have adopted a number of approaches to this activity as they seek to enhance their customer service and the achievement of positive outcomes for individuals .

Interestingly, Gati *et al.* (2006) have found that customer satisfaction for users of a career assessment varies depending on the outcome. Based on longitudinal research they found that people are more likely to report satisfaction with a career assessment tool if they have gone into one of the careers that they were recommended to go into.

A final, but important, post-intervention issue relates to the willingness of careers service providers to listen to the voices of their customers and to use this feedback to develop services (Howieson and Semple, 2000). The evidence from many of the studies discussed in this paper suggests that the process of collecting and responding to customer feedback can create a virtuous circle on customer satisfaction.

Conclusions and implications

Despite the relatively limited extent of the literature, there are still a number of findings in this review that may be useful in informing the development of the National Careers Services and enhancing customer satisfaction.

Firstly, it is important to note that all of the research in this area suggests that there is good reason to expect high degrees of customer satisfaction. The studies identified report overall satisfaction levels of between 70-89%. While the figures presented in Table 3 are not directly comparable with each other, the National Careers Service and its predecessor organisations in England seem to be reporting some of the higher levels of satisfaction (based on those who used the service and responded to requests for feedback). Consequently, if satisfaction with the service drops below 80%, there would be reasonable cause for concern. Conversely, if the service has ambitions to move customer satisfaction up to 90% or higher, it will be breaking new ground in achieving that level of satisfaction. It is likely that marginal differences in the levels of customer satisfaction between the studies examined in this paper can be accounted for, at least in part, by a variation in approaches to measurement.

If the National Careers Service is to continue its focus on maintaining or increasing levels of customer satisfaction, serious consideration should be given to the following issues:

- Customers' **expectations** about the nature of the career support they are going to receive have an impact on the level of satisfaction that they report following the intervention. It is possible to influence these expectations before they receive an intervention (for example, through the Customer Charter) and at the start of the intervention (contracting).
- Different **venues and providers of career support** may have an impact on the levels of customer satisfaction that are reported, in addition to the facilities that are available to customers within venues (e.g. digital access).

- **Careers advisers' satisfaction with their own jobs** correlates with customer satisfaction. Attention to staff satisfaction may therefore have positive impacts on the experience of customers.
- The **working alliance** between the careers advisers and their customer is still a critical determinant of customer satisfaction. This is comprised of three main elements: counsellor/client agreement about the goals of the interaction; their agreement about the tasks leading to these goals; and their emotional relationship. Attending to advisers' skills in building positive working alliances is likely to be an important aspect of improving customer satisfaction.
- Customers are more satisfied when they receive **new information which is directly useful to their career building.** Consequently, careers advisers need to be good at both finding information and employing it in ways that are relevant to their clients.
- Customers like to feel that they have had **enough time** with an adviser. There is also some evidence that longer interventions correlate with increased customer satisfaction.
- The **mode of delivery** makes a difference to levels of customer satisfaction. The published evidence suggests that customers are most satisfied face-to-face, followed by telephone interactions and then online and digital services. It remains to be seen what the impact has been of wholescale changes to digital provision during the Covid pandemic and the subsequent more mixed economy that has resulted, no detailed empirical studies of this (and ongoing situation) have yet been published.
- The **measurement** of customer satisfaction is likely to have an influence on the levels of satisfaction reported. There are a range of instruments that can be used to measure customer satisfaction. Another important question is **when** that measurement should be taken.
- **Following up** with a customer after an interaction may have a positive impact on their satisfaction with the service that they have received.
- Measuring customer satisfaction and **seeking feedback** from customers should provide useful intelligence for service development.
- At present there is **very little hard evidence** which suggests a clear link between customer satisfaction and the other outcomes that the National Careers Service is interested in (career management skills and progression to learning and progression to jobs).

Annex A: Sources

The search terms were applied to the following **indexes, databases and search engines**:

- Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)
- ASLIB Index to Theses
- Australian Education Index (AEI)
- British Education Index (BEI)
- EBSCO Business Source Premier
- EBSCO Electronic Journals Service
- Emerald
- ERIC
- Expanded Academic ASAP (via InfoTrac)
- Greynet (The Grey Literature Network Service, including the OpenGrey repository, containing over 700,000 bibliographical references to grey literature produced in Europe)
- Library Plus
- Proquest Database Collection
- PsycArticles.
- PsycINFO (EBSCO)
- Social Policy and Practice (http://www.spandp.net/)
- Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) 1970-
- Social Science Research Network (SSRN)
- Sociological Abstracts
- Taylor and Francis
- Web of Knowledge
- ZETOC (Electronic Table of Contents from the British Library)

Some of the above list were searched at the same time using Library Plus and other multiple search tools.

Following the database searches, added additional references were added from previous literature based studies and from researchers' own bibliographic databases e.g. CiteULike.

Annex B: References

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