



DWP Department for
Work and Pensions



JOB SEARCH SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONALS - 2009-11 Case Study

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Introduction: Background to the Government Initiative

In March 2009, in response to rising unemployment following the financial crisis of late 2008, the Government introduced an initiative to help newly unemployed people, particularly those who had been in jobs for many years, to navigate the challenges of job finding and support their search for new employment.

The initiative was run by DWP (Department of Work & Pensions). A UK-wide list of approved private sector suppliers was drawn up at speed with the help of professional trade associations such as REC (Recruitment & Employment Confederation). The training content and framework was set by DWP and costed on a per person basis.

JCP (Jobcentre Plus) offices were given details of the programme and allowed to refer people they judged potentially able to benefit. JCP were able to choose providers at their discretion from the DWP approved list.

Gordon Yates: Overview of Involvement in the Initiative

Gordon Yates is an independent consultancy specialising in office recruitment and training. Our long association with REC includes participation in training strategy and programme development for the recruitment industry.

When the job search initiative was announced, we were among the private sector providers nominated to DWP by REC.

The programme took about three months to get going. JCP offices needed to be briefed and given the necessary details. During May-June 2009 we only had 30 referrals. Thereafter however the programme gained rapid traction.

- July-September 2009 – 974 referrals
- October-December 2009 – 1,056 referrals
- January-March 2010 – 1,083 referrals

From April 2010 through to the closure of the two-year programme in March 2011, referrals gradually slowed as the job market began to improve. In all, we trained another 1,783 JCP customers during the second year.

Value Added: Anecdotal and Behavioural Evidence

Did this scheme make a difference?

At the macro-level we do not have access to DWP evaluation. However, we do note positive evidence from page one of the JCP annual report for 2009-10:

“We worked with national and local partners to develop short term programmes and services offering a wide range of personalised help and tailored support, which made a real difference to our customers. In 2009-2010 over 71,000 customers were helped by these additional programmes and services.”

- *Chief Executive Review, JobCentre Plus Annual Report 2009-10*

As one of the national/local partners mentioned, we can attest to the real difference this personalised help and tailored support made.

We know we were just one among many providers across the UK, each with their own means of delivery. We can only speak for the 5,000 or so job seekers we met and trained. For these people however, unequivocally, we know the scheme was both worthwhile and important.

In submitting this case study, we want to enrich the JCP macro-evaluation with a micro-perspective. Our position on the frontline of the scheme means we can illuminate how “personalised help and tailored support” was delivered, and the ways in which this “made a real difference”.

We still have the feedback from many of the JCP customers who attended our workshops. We share these in Addenda A and B. Additionally, perhaps uniquely, most of our own team are still in place today. We include their recollections in Addendum C.

We know that individual stories offer anecdotal rather than statistical support for the scheme. However, individual stories give big numbers a human face. The initiative inspired such an extraordinarily positive response that we felt it important to share them here.

The positive response we saw on a daily basis was not confined to JCP customers either – the reception among JCP frontline staff was also overwhelmingly encouraging.

During the period of the scheme, JCP offices were under intense pressure to support their unemployed customers via a range of initiatives and programmes. This scheme was one of many. There was local discretion over whether to use it and, if used, which approved provider to select.

We believe their reaction was telling.

In the first few months JCP offices were tentative and referral numbers were small. Numbers only began to increase – and indeed then increased rapidly – once feedback started coming back from job seekers.

Given local discretion, JCP decisions were entirely guided by job seeker feedback; providers delivering the most positive results were given priority. In our view, the rapid increase in referrals not only confirms that the scheme was valuable, but also provides an indication of which delivery approach worked best for JCP customers.

While Gordon Yates is a small, independent consultancy, by the height of the scheme we had become the eighth largest provider in the UK.

In consequence, our hope is that our approach may offer a useful template for other providers in the future. If so, we would like to share it with them: we remain a small consultancy and the needs ahead are likely to be enormous.

[Lessons Learned: Addressing Practical and Emotional Challenges](#)

Unlike our professional development training for companies, this programme presented distinctly different challenges.

One was the wide diversity of attendees, in terms of both age and career background. This required spending time to establish individual needs before each workshop (pre-workshop questionnaires – see Addendum D) and spending time on individuals during delivery.

Another challenge was motivation. Most attendees were receptive, but some were there reluctantly, only because JCP had made them come. It was good to get so much positive feedback from the latter group, when low expectations changed to surprise at how much was gained.

However, the biggest difference for us was the emotional aspect.

For the newly unemployed, and particularly for those made redundant after many years in settled employment, looking for new work presents not just a practical but also an immense emotional challenge.

On the practical front, the job market is ever-changing and, after a few years out of it, can seem terrifying and alien to new job seekers. Where and how to look? What to say in an application cover letter? How to prepare the all-important CV? Have interview expectations changed?

Practical support with these things was needed. But we realised that the emotional challenge of redundancy needed acknowledging too.

Self-confidence and self-esteem are damaged by redundancy. Rhythms of life established over many years disappear. Feelings of isolation and failure can disable response, however good the practical training.

A recurring theme from our workshops was of attendees welcoming the opportunity to meet others in the same situation, and discovering they were not alone. In many cases, we know contact details were exchanged and informal support groups established.

Practical job search skills can empower greatly – but only once confidence and belief are restored. The practical and the emotional need equal emphasis.

We sought to focus on each attendee as an individual. Pre-workshop questionnaires helped us prepare. Unlimited one-to-one post-workshop support was offered and, in many cases, gratefully taken up.

We think it was this human approach that brought such positive feedback from individual attendees and, in turn, from our JCP referrers.

Administration: How the Initiative was Set-up and Managed

While referrals were delivered through JCP offices, scheme payments were managed centrally by DWP. There was quite a lot of paperwork.

Some JCP offices were more aware of the scheme than others. Many struggled with administration. We tried to build relationships with JCP staff and give help and support where needed. For some, we prepared a local guide:

“Gordon Yates are trained specialists who have been established for over 60 years. We offer advice on every aspect of your customers' job search including CV advice, interview techniques, cover letters and many more tips.

How we work with Jobcentre Plus is simple: you call us with people who are looking for guidance on their job search, we book them into a workshop (we aim to book them an appointment within 1 week from you calling us, subject to availability). You send us an SL2 form before the workshop. We send you back an action plan after attendance summarising your customer's learnings and objectives.”

The SL2 form needed a customer signature. It was the prime documentary evidence needed by DWP to support submissions for payment.

Conclusion

Recruitment consultants spend their professional lives helping people to find jobs. They know better than anyone what a stand-out application, a stand-out CV, a stand-out interview looks like.

They also know the job market.

This training scheme proved how valuable these skills are when transferred to helping the newly unemployed get back into work.

It is all too easy for those made redundant to sink into despair and long-term joblessness, with all the economic and human cost this brings.

Our experience proves that if Government enables us, it doesn't need to happen. Ten years ago, the practical skills and hope we gave changed lives. They're needed again now.

Richard Grace

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Addendum A: Feedback via JCP from Workshop Attendees 2009-11

After doing supply in a primary school they offered me a job, which I gladly accepted and I have been appointed as a permanent member of the school. Thank you for your support for it did help me focus on what I wanted.

- Willesden JCP Customer (School)

I received a job offer following my interview last week. It is working for a city law firm – exactly what I wanted! Your seminar gave me the last piece of useful information and confidence I needed to get the job.

- Hammersmith JCP Customer (Law)

I am pleased to say, with thanks to your positive job search session, that I have now been offered a job within the NHS. I took onboard how one should portray themselves in a positive manner, as well as sending thank you letters / emails all along the application process.

- Bromley JCP Customer (NHS)

The session was energising and made me get on with the paperwork, to be honest I needed the push and the one to one hour afterwards was just right for me at that time. The hardest part of the application process is to sell yourself. After the session I realised how negative I had been and so looked again at my selling points! Finally I have a new job, as a teacher in a private school, so obviously I did something right!

- Willesden JCP Customer (Teacher)

The workshop was excellent and I came away with lots of ideas, particularly regarding my CV. I have already made a start and completely re-worked it. I'm really grateful that you offered to have a look at the finished result.

- Bromley JCP customer (former Head of Retail Buying for a premiership football club)

I got the job! They had received over 200 CVs for the vacancy and mine caught her eye. That is down to the work you put into completely remodelling my CV and for that you have my gratitude. Thanks for your time and effort, without it I would be still sitting at the bottom of the pile getting nowhere.

- Woolwich JCP customer (former labourer, now prison security guard)

Following my visit to Gordon Yates, I attend an interview and it pretty much went how you said it would! I really enjoyed the interview and he gave me such excellent feedback at the end I came out feeling very positive. Following that they offered me a permanent post. Wow I'm so excited and I'm so glad that the job centre sent me to Gordon Yates (You) I truly believe your tips and information helped me get through my interview.

- Brentwood JCP customer (Community services manager)

After my interview prep slot with you, I attended an assessment centre, and shortly after I was offered a full-time job. I have actually started work already, and I'm totally in love with the job. It's been great so far. I'll definitely be saying a special thank you to Doug, for his invaluable coaching before my interview; he's truly a star.

- Clapham JCP customer (finance officer)

I did find the training day very helpful and am sure will be most useful as I have already updated my CV. After being a little sceptical, did enjoy my time! Please pass on my thanks to the team. They were very up-beat and encouraging and I think most of us should have gained a little/or big lift.

- Bromley JCP customer (retail/customer services)

I am so impressed because I went to several CV workshops at university so I thought I knew most of the important elements. However I discovered I actually do/did make several mistakes.

- Shepherds Bush JCP customer (marketing)

Well, the role you helped me with on telephone coaching, I GOT IT. I started on 20th Sept and have been there 2weeks already and it is going fab. I did have 2 offers that week but my preference was Sungard and as I was immediately available they got me to start the next week. I had a few face to face interviews before Sungard's telephone interview, but what I really needed help with was being able to express myself on the phone as well as I did face to face. Had I not done the coaching session with you, I don't think I would have passed the first hurdle of the telephone interview. I just wanted to THANK YOU SO MUCH.

- Edgware JCP customer (administrator)

Addendum B: Direct Feedback from Workshop Attendees

"...just wanted to send a quick email to thank you all again for taking the time and the effort to help me find work. The information you all gave me was invaluable and you all made me feel very welcome and important."

"...and the other people that you all see are as appreciative as I am because you provide a very worthwhile service and do it all with a smile."

"It was a pleasure to meet all of you. The day was helpful and will hopefully prove useful for the future."

"The advice I received was absolutely invaluable and I am very sure it will stand me in good stead."

"Thanks for the wonderful tips and guidance and they were very useful..."

"It was a productive day and learned a few new ways to approaching questions in interviews."

"I would like to take this opportunity in saying THANK YOU to you all for Monday. It was very informative and most enjoyable."

"The whole team was very polite, friendly natured and well informed on their own topics, which is very difficult to come by these days..."

"The session was indeed very helpful... I have re-done my CV and it looks great."

"Thank you very much Caroline, I cannot tell you how your help has affected me, I am feeling very much more confident and in control of my life since you have assisted me and helped me to put my thoughts into proper focus. I think I must have been suffering from the shock of the redundancy because I have spent the last three months in a sort of daze of lack of confidence and self esteem. I shall endeavour to put all that behind me now and move forward to a brighter future. I shall let you know if I am successful, with warmest wishes"

"Thank you for the mock interview on the phone the other week - I found it very helpful. I also found the workshop useful."

“I remember you asking me to update you about how I got on. Well, I didn't actually get the job with the financial ombudsman but the next day I had an interview with a local criminal defence solicitors firm and was successful in securing the role of a 'court caseworker'. This job actually suits me much better than the financial ombudsman role – it is a permanent and criminal law is my preferred practice area. The pay is not great to begin with but there is potential to progress plus the people seemed really genuine in the interview. Anyway, I digress... thanks for your help!”

“I write to thank you for leading the Jobsearch Support training day so ably and for taking us through the topics in such an engaging and involving manner. I will amend my CV and, as you offered, send it to you for your comments. Again, my thanks to you, to Ms Tomazou and to Amy for a useful session.”

“I attended the GY Interview Training Workshop yesterday (Tuesday 17 August), with Caroline as Trainer. Very helpful, thorough, and with lots of fresh ideas; I plan to put these into practice in the near future. Thank you also to: yourself, Simon, (and any other!) who were Involved in the co-ordination and communications aspect of this course.”

“It was great to have such an insight into the recruitment process. I'm feeling refreshed and energised towards tackling the job market again, equipped with some fantastic tips!”

Addendum C: Gordon Yates Team Personal Recollections

(Meet the team - <https://www.gordon-yates.co.uk/consultants>)

Jo Tomazou – Joint MD and Head of Training & Recruiting

As operations director I have looked after both recruiting and training at GY since 1989.

After qualifying as a professional business coach in 2006 I began developing a wide range of professional development courses to extend the GY training offer. In 2008 clients began talking to us about looming redundancies and I started developing outplacement as a further service for clients, to help their people to find new jobs.

In designing these courses, it quickly became apparent that much of the content related directly to recruitment and that a lot of the skills and support needed were readily transferable from our recruitment team.

When REC got in touch in March 2009 about the DWP contract we had all the materials ready to go.

We started with a few referrals and initially conducted one-to-one sessions in our interview rooms but the numbers started increasing and suddenly one-to-one sessions weren't viable, so a group training model was developed. For attendees this seemed to work better, giving them a chance to share each other's stories and feel less isolated.

We started using an offsite location in Regent Street to run the sessions. Our training team gave basic training to our experienced recruiters on the training plan (the schedule), the material and how to train – in other words, a crash course in 'train the trainer'.

The numbers kept building and soon we were running two groups per day of up to 14 people. We were able to secure short-term additional space here in Argyll Street to run the sessions so brought everything back inhouse from the Regent Street location.

Carrie switched her role to start going out to the job centres. She and I went to Stratford JCP a lot (lovely Trish was there) and we also had meetings with JCP staff in other offices. Bournemouth JCP was like the head office from memory and Lucy and I went on one or two meetings there to keep close to all the region.

As the job market began picking up and referrals started to slow, we moved recruiters back to their recruitment desks and our training team gradually took over the whole programme.

GY's training was given great feedback (mostly) because it was thorough and worth the government's money. Some providers were offering very little and this is why the JCPs referred frequently, hence the increase in numbers quite quickly. We put effort into building relations with JCP people. They have a hard job and I know this was something they appreciated.

The filing system remains in place, stored in shared/training/archive/DWP. All the stuff related to DWP we stored in there including all the training materials in case we ever needed it again...

Sarah Mustafa – Director and Head of Temp Team Services

We trained such a variety of people, a complete range of ages and experiences – I remember training many very senior executives who had not been on the job market for decades; creating a CV let alone preparing for an interview was completely foreign and daunting for them.

What we provided was a really thorough and honest service – the candidates we assisted left with hope and courage, and knowledge and understanding. The door was always open for even more help and advice and that was regularly used, in fact we helped secure work for some of these job seekers that had attended our workshops.

Many of us involved back then are still here with GY now, with even more knowledge and experience 12 years later of the job market – and all the skills and knowledge needed around job searching and securing work.

Claire Pearson – Associate Director

Recruiting skills were massively important when training - we were telling them honest and correct info about the market.

Ages - young to old! Career backgrounds - we had lots of admin and support but also varied too.

Some didn't want to come but we won them over (mostly) and most were very grateful.

I think we gave the candidates hope and motivation - also seeing how many others were in the same situation too. They connected and some even became friends.

We gave out our emails too after the sessions and helped with new CVs after the course; interview tips and cover letters; it just didn't stop after the training session.

I remember going to the job centres as some didn't really understand, so we went in and explained it to them and told them the benefits; they became our clients and we had to work with them to make sure the signatures and forms were correct.

We trained all types of candidates; mostly on CVs; and interviews tips. I still have my folder of training material!! Post DWP some of the people become candidates and I placed a few...

Caroline Hartwell – Training Consultant

My experience was a bit different to others as I spent most of my time working in job centres delivering sessions and working with DWP staff.

Some job centres allocated me a desk and I sat and waited for referrals to come over to me and I talked them through the service and offered them some free advice.

It got to the point where the staff were asking me to complete the referral forms (which I politely declined to do for legal reasons!)

I remember that being there to explain and help was important. Job centre staff had so many other pressures and some saw this as another form to have to complete when they were already so busy.

We delivered sessions to all levels of employees (we even had ex-builders etc. join us) and they all found it useful in some way. We were also part of the backing young Britain campaign which we helped deliver in a couple of job centres:

<https://bdaily.co.uk/articles/2009/07/30/backing-young-britain-campaign-launched>

I just remember helping so many people all around London and the job centre staff being grateful for the support.

Amy Bater – Temp Consultant

I joined GY in August 2010 when the scheme was beginning to slow down a bit. My first role was to take over the admin and handle referrals from the job centres.

We kept records of attendees each week, we also wrote down attendee comments from the feedback forms and sent them back to the job centres in a weekly report.

I remember that it was predominantly professionals who were out of practice in applying for jobs.

Lots of them were not used to job boards and ‘modern’ ways of job searching.

We still have all the documents on the system so could easily run these courses again at a day’s notice.

Paul Grace – Accounts & Payroll Manager

I remember spreadsheets and lists: our spreadsheets, DWP lists (or maybe the other way around). A good vibe around the place. Because it was DWP and job centre driven - the clientele were not always grateful to be there – attendance was compulsory. But despite all of that, being constantly surprised at the wonderful feedback that kept coming back. So many desperate to have any and

every edge in getting back to work and embracing what this half-day package gave them - hope AND practical skills.

Kay Cox - Reception

Like Paul I remember the busy-ness of it all more than specifics – keeping precise records, getting signatures to confirm attendance, a real mix of people.

A few were dismissive from start to finish. Others started dismissive and changed to grateful. Lots with absolutely no idea about how to apply for a job so everything being so useful. Some just happy feeling they were doing something positive in such difficult times.

Nadia Sharif – PA to MDs

Like Kay, I remember this being a lifeline to a lot of candidates.

Some attendees could have done with smartening up a bit but looking underneath all that I know many were scared about the uncertain future. But GY being GY we rose above defensive barriers and tried to help them.

I remember being involved in the admin side and being there to meet and greet these candidates from all backgrounds and all walks of life. The thing I remember the most is that some of the people we met were from manual jobs or jobs that GY would never recruit for and this was their first experience of a ‘West End Consultancy’ and ‘Consultants’.

I remember a lot of them looking nervous and worried, being thrown in at the deep end of unemployment in a job market where it was hard to even get in front of an interviewer. I think most appreciated just being heard, being listened to and then us reaching out to them and helping them write a good CV and perform as well as they could in an interview. We definitely did that and for many I know we contributed in a small way to their future careers.

It would be brilliant if DWP could run a similar programme again, because 12 years on I think we would be in an even better position to help them. Having been through it the first time we have all the training material and all the experience to make it work again. I’d love for us to be able to contribute in a meaningful way and help get the economy back on its feet again.

Addendum D: Pre-attendance Questionnaire 2009-11

(This document was given to attendees to send in before their workshop, and allowed us to tailor training to individual needs.)

GORDON · YATES

Pre-attendance Questionnaire for your Jobsearch Support Training Day

Thanks for taking the time to fill this in. The information you provide will help ensure the session you are going to attend is individually tailored to meet your needs.

Name:

Your Current Job Status

Briefly describe your current situation:

Your Job Search

What kind of work are you looking for?

How would you describe your current job search (please be specific in terms of what has happened to date)?

How are you approaching the search/or plan to approach the search?

What is working well?

What isn't working so well?

Your session

Typically, the sessions will include: CV advice, job search methods, the covering letter, tailoring your application towards speculative enquiries or advertising responses, the interview process and how to make yourself stand out in a competitive marketplace.

Is there anything else you would like included (we will do our best to accommodate)?

Please feel free to add anything else you think is relevant for your Career Consultant to know to help them plan for your session.

Thank you
Gordon Yates

Addendum E: GY/DWP Course Notes and Guidance for Job Centres

The Gordon Yates/JCP partnership

We run two group sessions per day (morning – 9am – 12.30pm and afternoon – 2pm – 5.30pm) and each Gordon Yates Training Session includes:

- Goal setting
- Creating an effective CV
- How to approach the job search – methods to use
- Writing a tailored ‘covering letter’
- Speculative applications tips and techniques
- Making yourself stand out in a crowded market
- Types and styles of interviews
- Frequently asked questions
- Building interview confidence and assurance
- The follow up process – how to make it work
- Personal Action Plan setting

Introducing the Gordon Yates team

Please be assured of a positive efficient warm welcome EVERY time you call us with a referral.

Simon Flockton is your main point of contact for all JCP bookings however we all help when calls come through at once so you may also speak to:

Mairead Barden, Claire Pearson, Cara Deane, Sarah Mustafa, Caroline Hartwell, Claire Pickerill, Kyle Wagner, Heather Hardie, Lucy Wilson, Kay Cox, Nadia Sharif

How we will manage your individual referrals:

- You call through whilst your customer is with you and we brief your customer about the content of our training course. We also answer any questions they may have.
- We book them on to the course and can usually make this appointment an immediate one.

- You issue the SL2 and the job seeker brings this to the training course.
- We send you the Personal Action Plan together with the SL2 copy post the training session.
- We inform you of any 'no shows' (we call them on two occasions to try and rebook before we do this).

Our pledge to effectively working in partnership with you:

- At all times we will offer you a friendly, helpful and efficient service.
- We will regularly keep in touch and supply any information you require.
- On-site training can be organised at your convenience.
- We will 'pop in' and see you to express our individual thanks for your referrals.

Addendum F: Post- attendance Action Plan - GY/DWP 2009-11

(This document was given to attendees after their workshop to encourage planned action. Points 1-4 were recorded and fed back to their job centre staff member. The document thereafter became a starting point for our own individual post-attendance support to attendees.)



Personal Action Plan - Jobsearch Support

Name:

An action plan must be SSMART – stretching, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound.

- 1) Learnings from your training today

- 2) How are you going to put these into practice? (list specific points)

- 3) Who or what will help you?

- 4) By when?

- 5) Achieved?
Please tick once completed and put the date

- 6) Not achieved?
(What has stopped you?)