



Why Serco Chose Policy in Practice's Better Off In Work Calculator to Deliver Key Work Programme Contractual Commitment

One of the conditions of Serco's minimum service offer for the DWP Work Programme contract is an undertaking that all customers get the opportunity to have a benefit calculation. Read why it chose Policy in Practice's software to deliver this commitment via its supply chain.

Overview

The Problem

Serco committed to giving every customer a Better Off In Work Calculation as part of its Work Programme contract with DWP. Ensuring its subcontracted supply chain had the tools and confidence to deliver was critical.

The Solution

Serco chose Policy in Practice's Universal Benefits Dashboard because 1) it's UC compatible, 2) it's easy to use and 3) it has intuitive functionality and help features.

The Benefit

Advisors feel energised and confident about customer meetings. 70% of advisors felt the tool would help them support customers better. Benefit calculations took as little as 1 minute and job matches as little as 2 minutes. Management of the subcontractors is easier as inbuilt MI shows usage.

The Problem

As one of the UK's leading outsourcing companies in the government services market, Serco delivers crucial business processes for local government. It is one of the current suppliers of the Work Programme for DWP.

Work Programme contracts are outcome based and they are paid on their effectiveness at getting people into work. As such, one of the conditions of Serco's minimum service offer for the DWP Work Programme contract is an undertaking that all customers are given the opportunity to have a calculation.

Serco identified that part of the journey to sustainable employment involves removing the barriers to employment, one of which is that quite often people don't think they're going to be financially better off in work.

In order to deliver on its minimum service promise Serco knew that it needed an effective better off in work calculator if it was to successfully challenge misconceptions of customers.

Serco delivers its contracts via fully subcontracted supply chain of thirty service providers. Research carried out by Serco revealed that many contractors feared that, in order to deliver frontline services really well, their advisors needed to have detailed and expert knowledge of the welfare system.

Many subcontractors were relying on free in work benefit calculators or specialist benefits advisors to help have conversations with customers about in work benefit entitlement.

Many staff didn't feel confident talking directly with customers about benefits or the calculations because they weren't always experts in the welfare system and what benefits customers could get.

Typically, meetings with customers were long and ineffective, often complicated rather than helped by benefit calculators that weren't user friendly. Reliance on specialist benefit advisors meant that the learning wasn't being brought in house.

The rollout of Universal Credit added extra complexity to the mix, and a tool that was also fully adaptable to Universal Credit was needed.



“The software is so user friendly and has a lot of really useful added features. It’s also the only one that’s UC compatible.”

“There are lots of intuitive features in there which mean that an advisor doesn’t have to be a benefits expert.”

“Any software is only as good as its implementation and the support we’ve had from the team to bed in the new service has been a massive benefit to us.”

Jemma Johnstone
Serco

The Solution

Serco’s Head of Performance for Welfare Services, Jemma Johnstone, invited Policy in Practice to present to the Senior Management Team. As a result, Policy In Practice’s Universal Benefit Dashboard was identified as the best solution and a trial with four subcontractors was carried out in August 2014.

Three key reasons why Policy in Practice’s software was chosen over other benefit calculators on the market were:

1. its inbuilt adaptability to Universal Credit
2. the simple usability of the software and
3. the inclusion of intuitive features such as tax credits calculations and the ability to save results for later.

Ultimately, the software was chosen because it helps advisors to quickly and clearly show customers the benefits they can get, how they can budget better and how much better off in work they would be. Advisors were finally able to set realistic job goals with customers, the first step on the journey of getting in to work.

As well as being Universal Credit compatible, the software also includes integration to Universal Job Match.

The feedback from the trial was overwhelmingly positive.

“It’s great, I tried to do as many customers as possible”

Advisors said that the software was so intuitive and easy to use. Fears about lack of expertise in the benefits system were removed as the step-by-step design with hover over tooltips and built in explanations gave advisors confidence.

“I am definitely getting a job now”

Advisors reported individual stories of customers’ responses. One told of a customer who was now aware exactly how many hours he’d have to work to be better off in work, while another reported being surprised at how much better off he’d be in work.

“I love it, it gives you everything”

Empowering people with knowledge about their circumstances and opportunities in a way that they understood, as a result of the calculator, became a positive, energising conversation between advisor and customer.

Following the successful trial Serco rolled out Policy in Practice’s software to all subcontractors from November 2014.



“The UBC has a better range of scenarios, for instance it takes into account the cost of free school meals.

“It has better information so you don’t have to guess - it can work out average rents and utilities consumption.”

Serco subcontractor

“I found the calculator very easy to use, particularly the basic visual results, which were easy to interpret.

“It’s also very quick to use so didn’t take up all our time during the meeting, which left more time to discuss the results with the customer.

“Also, as the system saves the results, customers can come back to me to amend any details without starting all over again.”

Serco subcontractor

The Benefits

Statistical results from the trial show that advisors take as little as 1 minute to do a budget calculation with a customer. In addition, advisors take as little as 2 minutes to perform the Job Match.

Perhaps most importantly, 70% of advisors felt satisfied that the tool would help them to support customers better.

For a prime organisation like Serco where the supply chain is 100% subcontracted, the calibre of the management reporting available was key. The Welfare Services team was keen to understand usage rates to determine value for money from the software. Identifying which areas of the supply chain are working well and where greater focus is needed is easily done via the built in usage monitoring functionality within the software.

The subcontractors who trailed the software fully recognised the benefit of the tool and were very keen to keep it after the trial ended.

The ultimate success factor of the DWP Work Programme is that a customer sustains work for a minimum of 13 weeks. Whilst it is still too early to secure robust, tangible results from the full rollout of the software, Jemma Johnstone has been delighted with the insights gained.

She says “What we do know is that, if a customer is more empowered, as a result of a good conversation with an advisor, they’re more likely to change their mindset and perhaps pursue a job.

“Certainly in the past, and I’ve experienced this myself, advisors almost feared having to use one of these calculators and that’s one of the biggest changes we’ve seen. Now advisors almost feel excited about doing in work budget calculations. They genuinely think, ‘Well, I can fill it in and I don’t need to be a benefits expert - I can challenge some perceptions and make a positive difference’. Which, of course, is a much more enjoyable and positive conversation to have with someone.”

The implementation of the new service and the onboarding of advisors is another important element of the success story.

Jemma Johstone said “The support that we’ve had from Policy in Practice is one of the things that sets the trial apart from other pilots we’ve done. The sheer proactive nature of the relationship makes a massive difference because there’s a lot of co-ordination to be done. It’s always felt like a very easy relationship and a very accommodating one.

“Any software is only as good as its implementation and the support we’ve had from the Policy in Practice team to bed in the new service has been a massive benefit to us.”



Policy in Practice believes change happens on the frontline.

Policy in Practice is the UK's leading social policy software and consultancy business.

We bridge the gap between policy development and its implementation by combining deep policy insight with practical frontline experience and technological expertise.

Deven Ghelani was part of the team who developed Universal Credit at Centre for Social Justice. He founded Policy in Practice in 2012 to make policy work for people. He saw how complex and process oriented the welfare system was and wanted to change that.

He set up Policy in Practice to communicate information to people on the frontline in a fast, user-friendly way, and help people to make the decisions that are right for them.

Our mission is to reduce poverty. We do this through simplifying the welfare system.

How We Can Help

Next steps

Book a software demo and request pricing details.

Call **+44 (0) 330 088 9242**

Email **hello@policyinpractice.co.uk**

Visit **www.policyinpractice.co.uk**

Software

Our software tools are accurate, fast, simple, and easy to use so that customers and advisors don't have to be policy experts to understand the welfare system.

We communicate information using clear visual charts, and focus on outcomes rather than process.

Our software includes:

- Universal Benefit Calculator
- Universal Credit Calculator
- Budgeting Calculator

Consultancy

Our team combines deep policy insight with practical frontline experience, and we have specific expertise in welfare policy.

Our clients commission us to help them tackle diverse problems such as forecasting the likely impact of future welfare reforms in specific geographic areas and facilitating data sharing between partners.