

# Approaching evaluation in Co-Design pilots

## The challenge

DWP have been working with local authorities, Jobcentre Plus and local partners in five areas to develop Co-Design Pilots, testing new solutions in tackling worklessness and demonstrating effective partnership working. These have been taking place in a world where resources are incredibly tight and there is a premium on ensuring that new activities offer significant improvements in effectiveness and efficiency – and where appropriate can be spread and sustained more widely.

What's more, the local evidence base – compared to that for national employment programmes – is relatively underdeveloped, not least in considering cost-effectiveness of different approaches and wider social benefits of worklessness interventions. Measuring outcomes - hard and soft - and attributing success can pose real difficulties in a multi-agency context, not least where intended customers are amongst the furthest from the labour market.

The value of innovative projects can be lost if evaluation is not built in from the outset or at least a very early stage. If evaluation is left to a later stage, the evidence available may be weaker, and the innovations can lose they lose in power to influence mainstream practice. *This note was prepared for the Co-Design pilots, but has much wider possible application. It should be read in conjunction with Annex A in the [Worklessness Co-design Interim Report](#) which sets out a Cost Benefit Framework for Local Partnerships.*

## Approaching the evaluation of innovative projects

### ***The basis for evaluation***

Keys to the evaluation of innovative projects include:

- Are you clear in the reasoning behind your intervention(s), including cause and effect relationships?
- What is your understanding of the needs you are trying to address, and the case for action?
- What are the key assumptions in your proposed solution, that link what you intend to do, your context and the outcomes you want to achieve? (sometimes referred to as the 'theory of change')
- What evidence do you have to back your answers?
- Where evidence is lacking or underdeveloped, how will your approach test out your ideas and assumptions and generate new evidence?
- How will you judge the success of your pilot? In relation to:  
*Organisational change – eg:*
  - improved ways of working and mechanisms for collaboration?
  - streamlined mechanisms for employer engagement?

- improved service co-ordination around customer pathways?
- redesigning local services to complement the Work Programme?
- more flexible delivery by partners, tailored to need and opportunity

*Customer focus*

- higher levels of customer satisfaction with services (jobseekers; employers)

*Progression and outcomes for customers – eg:*

- increased employability and motivation of jobseekers?
- higher levels of take-up of mainstream employment and skills services?
- improved job outcomes rates and sustained employment

*Cost-benefit, efficiency and economy – eg:*

- better use of resources in targeting harder-to-help customers/ families with complex needs?

**Planning the evaluation**

- *What are you are going to evaluate?*
  - monitoring data and how well processes are working – to steer and improve the intervention?
  - outcomes for participants, in terms of progress they make towards – and into – sustained employment?
  - establishing a ‘counter-factual’ (that is, data from a comparable group or area or the individual’s own past employment history) to ascertain the net impact of the project?
  - fiscal costs and benefits (that is, the costs and savings to the public purse)?
  - wider economic and social costs and benefits?
  - added value from partnership working?
- *What analytical questions are you going to pose? Being clear about these helps steer the evaluation design. They may concern not only the scale of impact and who benefits, but also cost and efficiency questions along with questions to test your key assumptions and the probability of sustained outcomes.*
- *Who needs to be involved in the evaluation, and how? Beneficiaries? Partner staff in different roles? Independent evaluation experts? Others? And what will you be asking of them and what will they gain from their contribution?*
- *What information do you need to gather? This might include:*
  - demographic profile of programme participants, including gender; age; dependent children; housing sector; benefits claimed and time on these (all needed for robust cost-benefit analysis)
  - costs of service provision, including costs along the customer journey, where the focus is on improving overall efficiency in the delivery chain
- *What data might be difficult to obtain? Are there suitable, valid proxies you could use? For evaluation undertaken early in a project’s life, it may be necessary and appropriate to use secondary data to estimate sustained job outcomes and earning levels, based on comparable figures from other evaluations and monitoring.*
- *What will be the best and most cost effective methods to gather the necessary evaluation data? – such as:*
  - secondary data?

- participant monitoring data?
- surveys?
- systematic participant feedback?
- interviews and focus groups?
- How are you going to consider questions of what would have happened without the intervention? Few places are likely to be able to afford sophisticated methods such as randomised control trials (where comparisons can be made between people supported and similar people who are not) – rather it is a case of using judgement across a range of other methods to establish a counterfactual position.
- Are there other evaluations which offer robust evaluations you can learn from? For instance, DWP programme evaluations using cost-benefit analysis? Other local authorities and partnerships?

### **Assessing 'soft outcomes' or 'distance travelled'**

- How will you measure distance travelled and 'soft outcomes' achieved by participants? eg, in:
  - key work skills, such as communication and problem solving
  - attitudes, such as increased levels of motivation, confidence and self-esteem
  - personal skills, including improvements in timekeeping, attendance
  - practical skills, eg, in self-presentation and managing money

Practice is well-developed in the homelessness field, eg, in use of *Outcomes Star* which maps progress against ten dimensions of skills and capabilities. RARPA (Recording and Recognition of Progress and Achievement) is well developed in adult learning circles.

- What can you draw on in setting a baseline?
- Where these methods are new, what will you need to do to embed the approach in working practices?

### **Monitoring**

- How are you planning to track participants in the programme?
- Are you putting in place systems for promoting referrals to relevant delivery partners?
- Have you built in personal consent arrangements for sharing data on individuals, and associated data security?

### **Drawing conclusions**

*When the time comes...*

- How are you demonstrating the *effectiveness* and *plausibility* of your approach?
- How are you demonstrating *efficient* use of public money? What alternative uses did you consider? Did you use a comparable approach in looking at these?
- Have you tested the logic behind the intervention? Do your assumptions stand up? Are there alternative explanations of changes you have observed?
- Have you carried out sensitivity analysis, reflecting inevitable uncertainties in the data?
- Drawing on the range of evidence, what is your judgment on what would have happened if the initiative had not been implemented?
- What have you learnt from the evaluation? What is there about the approach that warrants extending and sustaining?

## Resources

Cabinet Office (2007) The Magenta Book: Guidance notes for Policy Evaluation and Analysis [www.gsr.gov.uk/professional\\_guidance/magenta\\_book/index.asp](http://www.gsr.gov.uk/professional_guidance/magenta_book/index.asp)

CLG (2010) Valuing the Benefits of Regeneration - Final Report  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/regeneration/valuingbenefitsregen>

DWP (2008) Exploring a Distance Travelled approach to WORKSTEP development planning  
[www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report\\_abstracts/rr\\_abstracts/rra\\_566.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report_abstracts/rr_abstracts/rra_566.asp)

Institute for Employment Studies (2000) Guide to Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled [www.esf.gov.uk/docs/distance1.pdf](http://www.esf.gov.uk/docs/distance1.pdf)

DWP (2008) A cost-benefit analysis of Pathways to Work for new and repeat incapacity benefits claimants [http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report\\_abstracts/rr\\_abstracts/rra\\_498.asp](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report_abstracts/rr_abstracts/rra_498.asp)

DWP (2010) The Department for Work and Pensions Social Cost-Benefit Analysis framework: Methodologies for estimating and incorporating the wider social and economic impacts of work in Cost-Benefit Analysis of employment programmes  
[http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report\\_abstracts/wp\\_abstracts/wpa\\_086.asp](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report_abstracts/wp_abstracts/wpa_086.asp)

DWP (2011) Prototype Cost Benefit Framework for Local Partnership (Annex A to Worklessness Co-Design Interim Report)  
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/policy-publications/worklessness-codesign.shtml>

HM Treasury (2003) The Green Book: Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government  
[www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/data\\_greenbook\\_index.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/data_greenbook_index.htm)

Outcomes Star website [www.homelessoutcomes.org.uk/The\\_Outcomes\\_Star.aspx](http://www.homelessoutcomes.org.uk/The_Outcomes_Star.aspx)

Performance Hub (2007) The use of outcomes measurement systems within housing and homelessness organisations [www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=452](http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=452)

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*This is one of a series of resources produced as part of Local Government Improvement and Development's contribution to the DWP Worklessness Co-Design pilots.*

*Further briefings are available at <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=23548170> and the report on the DWP Co-Design Pilots at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/policy-publications/worklessness-codesign.shtml>*