

Findings from the Work Choice evaluation and lessons for the future

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Today's presentation

Evaluation findings and recommendations on:

- Access
- Delivery
- Commissioning

Methodology

- Two linked evaluation strands; programme and commissioning.
- Two waves of research; Early Implementation in 2011 and Steady State in 2012.
- Total of 633 interviews, 3 focus groups and 98 survey responses.
- Views gathered from providers, participants, employers, DWP, JCP and SROs.

Access to Work Choice

Need to further clarify who Work Choice is for:

“It is actually specifically for the really severe, disabled customers who need the long-term support. That’s where we use Work Choice.” (DEA)

“I think it is aimed at people who are almost job ready, not anybody that’s too far away from the job market.” (DEA)

Access to Work Choice

“Initially I thought Work Choice was for anybody that needed a great deal of support but I’ve changed my mind over time. It’s not for people who need a great deal of support because... they are going to take a lot longer to get into work and probably after six months they won’t have found a job.” (DEA)

Access to Work Choice

Need to review ESA referral processes and reiterate the route from WP to WC:

“An ESA customer that’s transferred from IB... they come and see me and I’ll refer straight to the Work Programme. That’s it, it’s not good.” (JCP Adviser)

“Once they’re on Work Programme, they’re on Work Programme. You can’t get off.” (JCP Manager)

Access to Work Choice

Need to review operation of the SRO route:

“It’s a good thing that we have organisations that can refer direct to the programme... Some people don’t want to go to the Jobcentre.” (Provider)

“We haven’t gone out to look for [SROs] because of the volume of referrals coming through. We didn’t necessarily need them.” (Provider)

Access

Key access challenges for the new DWP strategy highlighted by this evaluation are:

- Who should specialist disability employment provision be for?
- How can these disabled people best be identified?
- How can we best facilitate access to provision for these disabled people?

Work Choice delivery

Need to continue to develop provision in line with recognised best practice:

“It’s totally individual.” (Provider)

“It’s very flexible and I believe the support we get here is tremendous, it’s very, very good.” (Participant)

Work Choice delivery

Need to continue to develop and focus on employer engagement:

“It’s that level of negotiation with the employers that I think is what’s driving the job starts.” (Provider)

“It’s very much about being an advocate with the employer and developing a relationship.” (Provider)

Work Choice delivery

Need for supported businesses to look at adopting an ILM approach:

“We take them on a six-month contract... we’ll give them work experience and within a month or two the Work Choice team starts placing them with other employers for work trials. This is working really well... I normally manage to place 90% into permanent employment” (Supported Business)

Work Choice delivery

Need to recognise the benefits of a separate specialist disability programme:

“[On Work Programme] we’ll be making up our mind in the first meeting if this person is going to get a job and if they’re not we’ll be doing the bare minimum we can. Whereas on Work Choice we’d strive to help and improve people” (Provider)

“Work Programme is not suitable for supporting disabled people with significant needs” (Provider)

Delivery

Key delivery challenges for the new DWP strategy highlighted by this evaluation are:

- How can providers best be supported to deliver and share best practice?
- How can quality best be assured?

Work Choice commissioning

Need to consider how to accurately capture and maintain records on providers:

From 214 WORKSTEP and Work Prep providers...

...to 67 Work Choice providers?

25 new entrants to specialist provision?

121 non bidders and 51 unsuccessful bidders?

Work Choice commissioning

Need to consider mechanisms to encourage more open competition within contracts:

“Offering extra market share to the existing supply chain would probably be the preferred option... it’s just about managing that risk” (Prime provider)

Work Choice commissioning

Need to consider the position of smaller specialist organisations:

“There’s not a lot of room for the more serious or in-depth specialisms because it is quite expensive” (Provider)

Work Choice commissioning

Need to continue to recognise the importance of service fees for specialist provision:

“With a programme like Work Choice we can invest upfront and have some level of security... the level of investment that we can place into this is more focused and greater” (Provider)

“If the programme was solely outcome-based funding, many providers would walk away from it” (Provider)

Work Choice commissioning

Need to consider the impact of the level of prime management fees on delivery:

“It’s quite unrealistic to take a 35% management fee when you get very little from it... it is taking money from the front line” (Provider)

“That money comes out of our current provision... it’s taking money away from customers” (Provider)

Commissioning

Key commissioning challenges for the new DWP strategy highlighted by this evaluation are:

- How can beneficial diversity in supply chains be encouraged?
- How does specialist provision need to be funded?

Any questions or comments?

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