

Working for Families

Phase 1 Evaluation (2004-06)

Executive Summary

**Report to the Scottish Executive by the Employment Research Institute
Napier University, March 2007**



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WORKING FOR FAMILIES FUND PHASE 1 EVALUATION (2004-06)

Report to the Scottish Executive by the Employment Research Institute, Napier University, Edinburgh, March 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an evaluation of Phase 1 of the Working for Families Fund (WFF) covering 2004-06. WFF was established to invest in new initiatives to improve the employability of parents who have difficulties in participating in the labour market, specifically in employment, education or training. The Fund supported these parents through helping them find sustainable childcare solutions and through providing or accessing other relevant employability-related services. In rural areas, barriers created by poor transport, limited services and the lack of a critical mass of clients were also particularly important.

WFF contributes to the Scottish Executive's Closing the Opportunity Gap approach to tackling poverty and disadvantage, by improving rates of employment and economic activity, and to its commitment to eradicating child poverty within a generation.

WHAT IS THE WORKING FOR FAMILIES FUND?

The WFF programme focuses on disadvantaged parents, specifically:

- lone parents (who are pre-New Deal);
- parents who are on low incomes;
- disadvantaged parents with other stresses in the household that make it difficult to access and sustain employment, education or training, including disability, mental health and substance abuse problems.

The main support provided by WFF is based around 'Key Workers',¹ who support clients who wish to move into work, education or training through:

- helping them to improve their employability; and
- addressing the childcare and other practical barriers that stand in their way.

Clients are helped to improve their employability by establishing goals and producing a personal action plan that links them to the various types of employability support available locally. These may include: personal development courses to boost confidence and self-esteem; education and training to improve skills and qualifications; careers advice; money advice; and work experience – all helping the client to progress towards or into work. A second key element of WFF support is helping clients to identify and access the childcare they need at each stage. Often this takes the form of information and advice, linking them to an existing childcare place, but it may also involve financial assistance (e.g. paying one-off, 'upfront' nursery registration fees, or paying for childcare while a parent attends education or training, or paying for childcare for a short time until tax credits come through).

WFF was designed to complement, not duplicate or replace, existing services and to work with local childcare partnerships and employment and employability focused partnerships to fill gaps in provision for the WFF client groups. In some areas gaps in existing provision led to WFF developing additional employability related services, including short pre-vocational training, or helping clients to obtain driving licences, while elsewhere it has involved setting up additional, often more flexible, childcare services e.g. childminding and sitter services.

Support from WFF has centred around three key stages:

- Pre-employment - supporting parents to improve their basic employability skills, confidence and attitudes;
- At transition points - helping parents to make the transition into employment, education, substantial training or volunteering;
- Post-employment – support to sustain employment, for instance through a period of crisis such as a childcare problem. This has been offered both to

¹ The Key Worker model developed out of work undertaken by Glasgow City Council in the pilot stage.

parents who engaged with WFF at the pre-employment stage and have successfully moved into employment, and to parents who were already in work when they first approached WFF.

WFF has its origins in a small pilot in Glasgow and Dumfries and Galloway in 2003-04 which explored ways of addressing childcare barriers to employment. A key finding of the pilot was that a programme of this sort should provide parents with one-to-one mentoring and support to address the range of barriers clients experienced, as well as addressing childcare needs. When the subsequent WFF programme was established, ten local authorities (including the pilot authorities) were awarded funding for 2004-06 (Phase 1), developing services and projects building upon the key lessons from the pilot stage. These local authorities were Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee City, East Ayrshire, Glasgow, Highlands, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire.² Phase 2 extended WFF for another two years (2006-08) adding an additional ten local authorities (so totalling 20 rural and urban local authorities) and is the subject of a further on-going evaluation.

£50m of funding was made available for Phases 1 and 2 (2004-08), with over £12 million actually spent in Phase 1. Budget allocations were based largely on the number and proportion of children living in households dependent on key benefits (Income Support and Income Based Jobseekers Allowance), while the incidence of multiple deprivation and rurality was also taken into account.

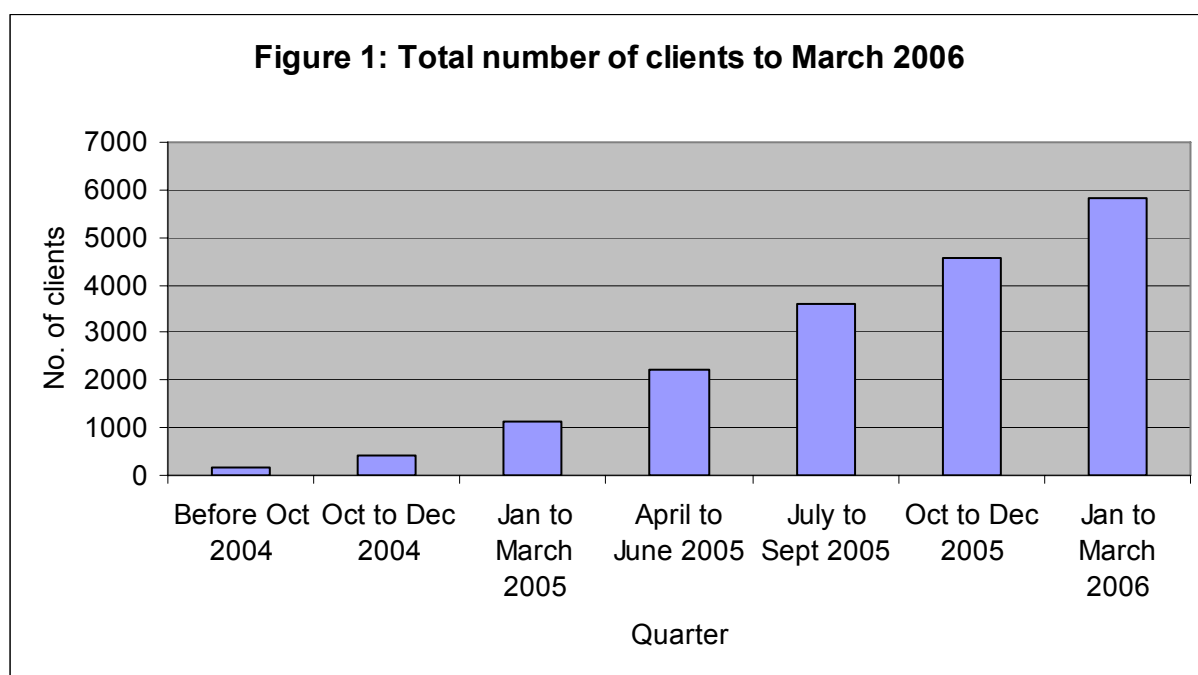
The main report only considers activity in Phase 1 (2004-06), focusing on the key aspects of the fund, the clients involved, the outcomes, and conclusions and recommendations. A series of Technical Annexes provides further detailed information.

² The criteria for choosing these local authorities were reasonable, although one local authority was omitted due to its small size. It has, however, been included in Phase 2.

MAIN FINDINGS

CLIENT DATA

A total of 5808 clients were registered across the ten Phase 1 local authorities up to 31st March 2006. It generally took a considerable time (around 6 months) for the local authorities to recruit their full complement of staff, establish effective networks and partnerships with other local and national agencies, set up initial projects and market their services to potential clients. So the number of new clients was 1141 in year 1 (to March 2005) and 4667 in year 2 (Figure 1). Given the relatively slow start-up period, overall, these numbers of new clients appear reasonable.³



How Clients Came to WFF

All participation in WFF by clients was voluntary. So local partnership working and joint working were extremely important to the recruitment of clients and referrals to WFF were generated from a wide range of agencies. In particular 20% of referrals

³ The number of *new* clients taken on each quarter was relatively constant after the first six months (excluding a drop around Christmas and New Year). This suggests little or no fall in demand for WFF services, although capacity constraints in the supply of WFF services appear to have limited some growth. (It should be noted that many existing clients still needed support as times went on, so pressure on resources grew even though the number of new clients may not have risen).

came from Job Centre Plus, indicating both good joint working and the presence of some potential gaps in the availability of specific support for many of the WFF client group. Self-referrals (21%) were also important, especially in the initial start up phases of WFF, indicating effective local marketing and possibly a high level of self-motivation among many clients as they independently sought WFF support to move into work, training or education. However, as WFF developed, 'word-of-mouth' became more prominent in recruitment as clients told their family, friends and neighbours about the services.

Client Characteristics

The vast majority of WFF clients were drawn from the target groups. Key client characteristics (at the time they first registered for WFF) included:

Lone parents (pre-New Deal) -

- The majority of WFF clients were female (93%) or lone parents (72%).
- The children of clients were relatively young with 95% having one or more children aged under 12 years living in the household and 48% having a child aged under 3 years old (a much higher percentage than the Scottish average).

Parents who are on low incomes -

- 61% of clients lived in households where nobody was in paid employment.
- Many clients lived on a very low household income with 48% either claiming Income Support or having a partner/spouse claiming Income Support.
- The income of those in employment was low with 80% earning under £200 per week take home pay and 33% of clients earning under £100 per week.
- The economic activity of clients was varied with 37% of clients 'at home, caring for children', 28% in employment (either full-time or part-time), 16% registered unemployed, and 11% in training or education.

Particularly disadvantaged parents -

- WFF clients had low levels of qualifications compared to the Scottish average with 67% of clients having qualifications equivalent to SVQ Level 2 or lower

and 32% having either no qualifications or qualifications below SVQ Level 1 (compared to 15% with no or below SVQ level 1 qualifications in Scotland).

- Of the 72% not currently in paid employment, most had been unemployed for a considerable time, with 78% not having worked for one year or more and 28% not having worked for over 5 years.
- A significant proportion indicated at least one of a number additional stresses, e.g. mental or physical health problems, disabilities, debt or money issues, housing problem, criminal record etc.
- The local authority areas where WFF was delivered had high levels of multiple deprivation according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Six Local authorities had more deprived data zones than the average, and the two rural areas had around a third of Scotland's most deprived data zones in terms of accessibility. A high proportion of the clients of WFF came from the most disadvantaged areas.

What did WFF Clients Want to Achieve?

When registering, clients were asked the top three goals they would like to achieve by participating in WFF. They⁴ responded:

- to access childcare more easily (44%);
- get off benefits (30%);
- enter training or education (29%);
- learn new skills (27%);
- move into full-time work (24%);
- complete a training or education course (24%); and
- move into part-time work (23%).

Barriers to Employment

Clients engaging with WFF suffered multiple barriers to entering or remaining in employment, education or training. These extended far beyond childcare issues,

⁴ This question was asked of clients who sustained contact with WFF projects for at least one month (these accounted for 72% of all clients registered with WFF).

indicating that a flexible and holistic approach, as developed by WFF, was required in order to meet their varied needs. The major barriers identified by clients were:

- 80% indicating caring responsibilities (with 68% citing childcare responsibilities, 57% the cost of childcare and 40% its availability);
- 71% feeling that opportunities or skills were a barrier (especially a lack of skills, qualifications, experience or confidence - each cited by 30-40% of respondents);
- 33% stating that transport was problem (especially in rural areas, and with over 25% citing an inability to drive); and
- 43% recording they had 'other issues' preventing them (mainly 20% with Benefits issues and 19% with money/debt problems).

When clients had a review six months after initial registration they generally reported that all the barriers were less of an issue than at the time of registration, for instance:

- Childcare issues were perceived as less of an issue for over 57% of clients;
- Over half of clients identifying a lack of qualifications, skills, experience or confidence as a barrier, now stated that these were less of an issue;
- Between 20% and 30% of the clients who had identified transport as a barrier stated this was less of a problem;
- Over 56% of clients who had identified Benefits or debts as a barrier stated these were less of a problem.

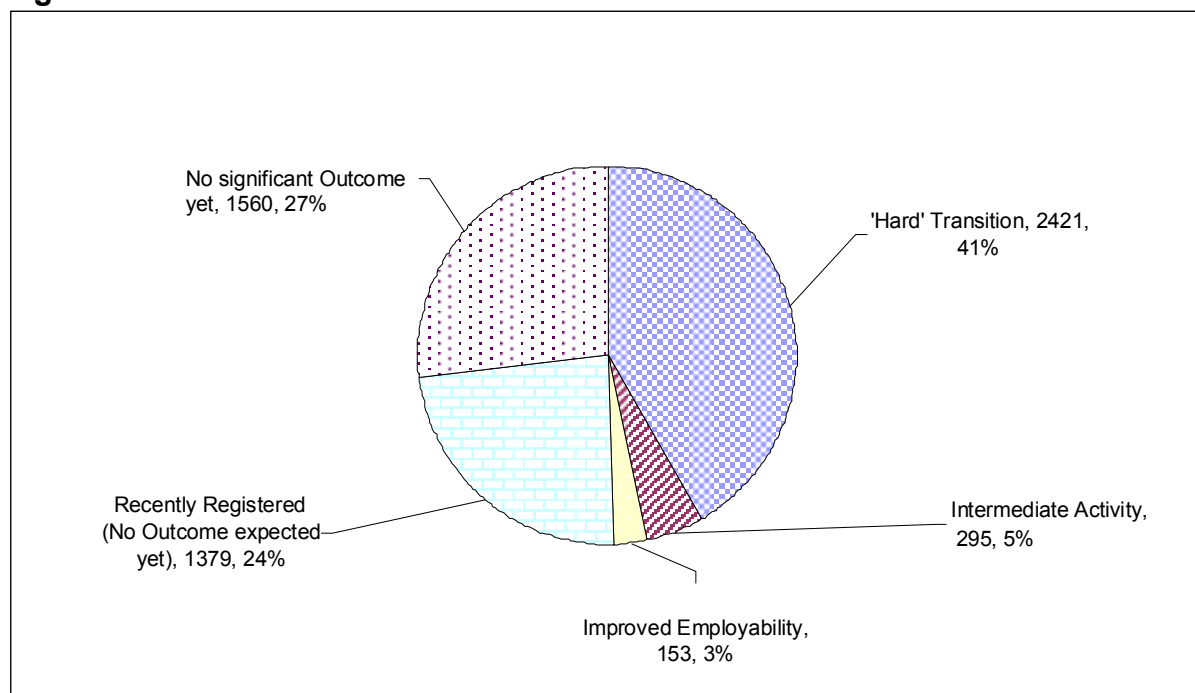
The improvements by clients in reducing these barriers, together with evidence elsewhere in the report, suggest that the holistic approach of WFF is successful in addressing the varied needs of a large number of clients.

OUTCOMES - WHAT HAPPENED TO CLIENTS?

In total, just under half (49% or 2869) of all clients during Phase 1 had achieved an identified outcome, improving their employability and making progress towards sustained employment, training or education, by 31 March 2006 (and many of the

others achieved outcomes after that date).⁵ This progress was tracked using a mixture of three 'levels' of indicators (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Outcomes for WFF clients



The outcomes were:

- 41% of all clients achieved 'hard' outcomes - i.e. a transition of moving into full- or part-time employment; improving or sustaining employment; or entering or completing education or accredited training courses lasting 6 months or more. Of these 19% (472 people) moved into a full-time job and 24% (568) in a part-time job, 13% (324) sustained employment (e.g. were able to continue in current employment having faced a recent 'crisis' which threatened this employment), 10% (247) improved employment or achieved another employment-related outcome (including 3% who reduced their hours) and 34% (810) entered/completed or sustained education or accredited training of a least 6 months duration.

⁵ Note that no specific targets for outcomes were set for Phase 1, as, due to the slightly different nature of the programme in each area, the early estimates in local authority proposal documents were only considered as indicative and so were not gathered in a consistent manner into an overall total.

- A further 5% achieved progress through participating in 'intermediate activities' such as voluntary work, non-accredited training, on-the-job training, work placements etc., although they had not achieved a transition;⁶
- A further 3% of clients recorded progress by improvements in their employability skills and characteristics, such as confidence, measured on a series of Likert Scales⁷, at their six month review, although they had not achieved a transition.

Of the remaining clients, almost half (24% of all clients) had registered in the six month period before 31 March 2006. Given the nature of many WFF clients (far from the labour market and requiring sustained support), many would not be expected to have made a move into work etc. in this timeframe. Since no 6-month review had been undertaken for these clients, it is not possible to say whether there has been an improvement in their employability as measured by their improved confidence etc.

Of the remaining 27% with no significant outcome, 9% of clients were inactive or had left WFF, which was quite a low percentage, as many of these clients may have considered that they were not ready for moving towards work etc. and, of course, participation was entirely voluntary. Others clients had not yet carried out their overdue six month review of progress. It should be noted that many of this group are likely to have positive outcomes after 31 March 2006 (i.e. during Phase 2).

⁶ Note that figures for this activity are likely to be below the actual level of activity undertaken, since completion of the monthly monitoring form where these were recorded was not mandatory in Phase 1 due to a primary focus on 'hard' outcomes.

⁷ Improvements in employability were measured by responses to a series of 10-point Likert scales completed at the initial registration with WFF and again 6 months after registration. Three scales from the original forms were included in order to measure these improvements in employability: 'How would you rate your job skills (in relation to the type of work you are looking for or would like to do?); 'How confident are you when meeting new people?'; and, 'If you are not currently in work, how confident do you feel about starting work'. An improvement was registered if a client indicated a positive improvement on one or more of these scales.

Cost/Benefit Analysis

The time period for evaluating Phase 1 of WFF is short as the programme started relatively slowly and also many WFF clients need a considerable length of support to achieve progress. Further outcomes for clients were expected after the end of Phase 1 (and have since been achieved as measured in the on-going Phase 2 evaluation). Hence it is difficult, at this stage, to judge the cost effectiveness of WFF and the relative effectiveness of different types of projects and support for different types of clients within WFF.

The costs of WFF funding per client need to take account of the slow start-up period when set up costs were incurred but there were relatively few clients. Hence Year 2 (2005-6) provides a more reliable estimate of costs. In Year Two figures for costs per WFF client engaged on the programme were estimated to be £1,955. For this year, the overall costs per client who had a transition into work, education or substantial training were around £4,000. (It is expected that these costs may fall in the future as fewer of the clients will have been on the programme for short periods of time and there will be some economies of scale as numbers rise.) These costs exclude those of training and support from non-WFF sources. A more accurate estimate of the medium term costs per transition will be possible using data from Phase 2.

A comparison control group was set up across the 10 local authorities with 107 randomly chosen parents with roughly similar characteristics, but who had not received support from WFF. The comparator study showed that their moves into work, training or education were very limited compared to WFF clients. Although there were a few differences between WFF clients and the control group characteristics, this broadly suggests that much of the increase in employment, training or education of the WFF clients is likely to be attributable to WFF support rather than to other changes that would have happened anyway.

Measuring the relative performance of WFF against other programmes is not straightforward due to differences in types of clients, circumstances, outcomes, policies and methodologies. However, results appear comparable to, and indeed

slightly better in terms of achieving employment, other employability related projects for harder-to-help clients such as The New Futures Fund (where 51% of clients during their second phase achieved a positive output on a broad definition - with 15% of these entering employment or self-employment, lower than for WFF).

The New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) evaluation found that, of 8107 parents attending for interview in the Phase One Prototype, 3393 (42%, broadly comparable to the wider 'hard' outcomes of WFF) had moved into employment, although only 20% of these (645 or 8% of the total) were considered additional – i.e. they would not have moved into employment without the programme. Although support received was less than in WFF, at this level of additionality the programme was almost neutral in terms of costs to the Exchequer. Hence WFF, with the qualifications made above, appears to be reasonably effective compared to roughly similar types of programmes.

While it is too early to make conclusions, preliminary indications for WFF suggest that the government exchequer benefits (e.g. higher taxes contributed and lower benefits paid) plus the wider long term benefits for participants (including increased life time earnings, mental health and other benefits to parents and children etc., although costs in terms of stress of employment on the household also need to be considered) are likely to be higher than the financial costs of WFF.

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of WFF has involved a number of key features discussed below.

Management through Development/ Economic Development

WFF funding and implementation was channelled through Economic Development departments in all except one local authority. Focusing services on the end goals of progress towards work, education or training, rather than intermediate services such as childcare provision *per se*, appears to have been successful. This approach: focused the remit of projects clearly upon employability and getting people into

appropriate work, training and education; clearly signalled to clients, other agencies and other local authority departments that the aim of support was improved employability; was able to build upon existing skills in employability and in partnership working in the area of employability and upon existing partnerships with key service providers; and used staff who 'spoke the same language' with other employability orientated agencies. To ensure childcare barriers were addressed it also required joint working with childcare specialists and bodies and in most areas close links were made with local Childcare Partnerships as well as local providers.

Partnership Working

Projects and services in each local authority area were developed in partnership with a range of existing service providers. Effective partnerships with other services were vital in order to:

- develop projects and services efficiently and effectively and avoid duplication;
- provide appropriate services for clients with multiple, specialised support needs (e.g. for whom support for skill development, substance abuse and childcare issues could each be provided by a different agency);
- attract the referral of clients from other agencies to WFF.

Many areas carried out extensive mapping exercises of existing services at the beginning of the development period in order to determine availability of existing childcare provision and employability related support, and to identify any gaps that could potentially be filled by WFF. These areas were able to strategically determine what projects needed to be developed from an early stage. This generally avoided establishing projects that had to be later abandoned due to lack of demand, problems with delivery organisations etc. Other areas that did not carry out such a thorough exercise at the beginning, often found that such a review of services became necessary and carried out the mapping at a later stage.

Key Worker Programmes

'Key Worker' programmes were those that used dedicated link workers (offering 'outreach' or peripatetic service to clients within a community) who formed the main point of contact for an individual client. This provision was central to the WFF programme across all the local authority areas, except one (which was taking steps in 2006 to adopt a form of Key Worker model). The Key Worker programmes were the 'hub' of the delivery of WFF in local areas.

Key Workers took a 'holistic' perspective of the client and worked to build up a trust relationship, becoming familiar with their personal and employability issues. The Key Workers acted as a support, giving advice and guidance where they were competent to do so and linking the client into other specialist services where needed, while remaining in contact with the client throughout their time with WFF. In addition, in most local areas key workers also provided assistance to develop tailored packages of childcare to suit their clients' needs.

The Key Worker approach would appear to be particularly effective since many of the positive client outcomes can be linked to Key Worker involvement (most clients with WFF have contact with a Key Worker) and specifically 46% of clients registered through a Key Worker programme achieved a 'hard' outcome compared to 30% on non-Key Worker projects (although these figures need to be taken with care as in many areas most or all of clients were registered through Key Worker projects but received assistance from others).

Other Types of Support Projects

Whilst WFF began as a programme designed primarily to break down childcare barriers for disadvantaged parents, most clients had multiple barriers to overcome; therefore a holistic employability service approach was developed to provide continuous support to help parents towards, into and after employment, education or training. Early on in the implementation of WFF it became apparent that additional

support was required for parents in areas such as personal development, money advice and transport.

The WFF programme therefore developed a range of distinct projects to help with childcare and to address other barriers. Specific issues addressed through distinct projects included: transport; improving access to training; volunteering; health and disabilities, money advice, supporting young parents, parents in education, lone parents, outreach with hard to reach groups, childcare subsidy schemes, developing childcare workers, developing childminders, flexible childcare and crèches. There were, however, relatively few projects directly working with employers and in future this might be an area for development so as to more directly attempt to better meet the combined needs of employers and WFF clients and help address the labour demand side.

The distinct projects aimed to fill gaps in existing services and offer important services to clients in helping them more into or closer to employment, education or training that would not be available otherwise, thereby making WFF more effective. They normally did not work in isolation but rather as joined up services to ensure interlinking client support. Hence the types of project developed in different areas varied depending on: the existing service provision; types of partnerships with existing providers; and perceived client needs/demand within an area.

Flexibility

The WFF programme was implemented by the Scottish Executive in a flexible way, allowing local authorities to adapt their proposals in the light of experience. This was particularly important as WFF was a new programme where there had been little experience of linking childcare and employability on this scale. This flexibility sometimes led to requests as to whether or not certain activities were acceptable, and occasionally there were limited delays in agreeing this, but this became less of an issue over time as experience grew.

Learning

An important feature of the implementation of WFF was the continuous learning and sharing of information, experience and ideas. The Scottish Executive facilitated quarterly meetings of the ten local authorities to discuss common issues. A sharing of good practice conference was held part-way through Phase 1. Statistics on client numbers, characteristics, sources of referrals etc. were regularly shared, usually on a quarterly basis, so local authorities and projects could identify trends and patterns across the whole of WFF, compare their own figures and take any action they considered relevant.

The data for each project, and each local authority area, were gathered using widely available, standard database software so areas could easily analyse their own data in ways that suited them and their decision making processes. Quarterly summary reports of monitoring data were also produced and put onto the Scottish Executive and Employment Research Institute websites for ease of access. Should WFF be continued, or local authorities wish to continue using the database in the future then consideration should be given to developing it in a web-based format.

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The Working for Families Fund represents an important attempt to develop innovative, targeted support to help overcome the barriers to work faced by disadvantaged parents. Overall WFF was worthwhile in assisting a significant number of clients to make real progress into and towards work, education or training.

The programme successfully focused support on disadvantaged parents in the target groups, who were among the most disadvantaged parents in Scotland (e.g. in terms of levels of qualification, Benefit dependency, low income and being long-term unemployed etc.).

In total 5808 clients were recruited voluntarily to the programme in 2004-06. This is a reasonable level of client registration in the time period, especially given the slow start-up of projects.

Just under half (49%) of all clients had made progress towards sustained employment, training or education, by 31 March 2006 (and many of the others achieved outcomes after that date). 41% of all clients achieved 'hard' outcomes (including 19% of them moving into a full-time job, 24% into a part-time job and 34% entering/completing or sustaining education or accredited training of a least 6 months duration). In addition, 5% of all clients improved their employability through intermediate activities (such as short-term training) and 3% recorded higher employability levels through increased confidence etc. These outcome figures seem relatively good, compared with other generally similar types of projects, and over time these figures will increase.

The combination of childcare, Key Worker, employability and other support for disadvantaged parents appears to have assisted many to improve their employability and return to work, training and education.

Key Worker approaches appear to have been successful as they have been able to provide: continuity and a single contact and support point for clients during their whole time with WFF; a supportive, individually tailored and relatively holistic service (including accessing other projects and services where necessary) in order to meet a wide range of client needs; and resources to access appropriate childcare and some relevant employability services.

Placing the development and implementation of WFF in Development/Economic Development departments appears to have been a successful strategy, particularly due to the primary focus on employability and related outcomes.

Effective joint working between employability, childcare and a range of other services in each area was important both in developing local strategic and operational partnerships and in assisting frontline service delivery.

There was a long lead-in time for many projects. In particular, childcare infrastructure projects could be expensive, have a long development time and be subject to considerable paper-work (e.g. that involved in Care Commission approval). Setting up a service from scratch, as opposed to buying into an existing similar service from within or out with the local area, could also be more costly and time-consuming.

There was an issue as to the extent that some distinct projects were required to be set up through WFF, in addition to the Key Worker programmes. Key Workers in themselves were able to deal with a wide range of clients and those that needed particular support could often be referred to specialist services in the local area. Questions emerged as to the necessity of some types of projects, e.g. volunteering projects where there were existing services and demand among WFF clients appeared to be low. However, the flexibility of WFF funding meant that other projects could be developed in response to emerging needs being identified, e.g. money advice projects. Some projects might be relevant in some areas but not in others, for instance it might not be necessary or practical to operate specialist Key Workers in some areas but in others, the demand and geography made these worthwhile. Generally, early mapping of existing services (as outlined above) was valuable in helping to determine the need for separate projects.

A further recurring question was the extent to which WFF should be solely responsible for funding specific projects that had a broader impact beyond WFF clients: for instance, community engagement outreach projects that signposted clients to a range of services, working with employers to develop work-life balance or childcare services and some childcare infrastructure projects. (It should be said that some of these projects were jointly funded). Developing close partnerships with other local services to develop funding packages is particularly valuable here. However, as WFF develops, there are questions as to the range of projects that it is appropriate to be funded via WFF, what could be developed in partnership and what is out with the remit of WFF, and greater clarity is required.

The overall conclusion is that Working for Families appears to have made a significant improvement in the employability of disadvantaged parents.

Recommendations

The recommendations from Phase 1 are as follows. (Some have already been adopted in Phase 2):

Greater recognition should be given to the long lead-in and start-up times required for programmes such as WFF, with account taken of the impacts upon budgets, timing of the programme and expected outcomes.

WFF should continue with a focus in the Development/Economic Development departments of local authorities. However, local partnerships with employability and childcare bodies and organisations providing other services, at both strategic and operational, frontline delivery levels, should continue to be progressed and their importance should be stressed.

The focus on the Key Worker models of providing consistent, flexible and tailored support on employability *and* childcare issues should be continued. In addition, the developing Key Worker models should continue to be investigated on an on-going basis, with lessons identified and distributed widely among interested parties. It would also be useful to investigate providing Key Workers with more formal specific training or support in condition management, as used in other employability projects for clients relatively far from employment, such as 'Pathways to Work'.

Due to the relatively long start-up time, and hence limited periods that most clients have been supported by WFF, further analysis of outcomes by types of projects and of clients should be continued using data from Phase 2. This should include what appears to work best.

Continued investigation into the importance of different types of support (e.g. transport, forms of confidence building etc.) should be, and are being, carried out in Phase 2. In particular more projects directly working with employers, which might attempt to better meet the combined needs of employers and WFF clients should be encouraged and investigated.

Clearer targets, concerning client numbers and expected outcomes based upon knowledge from Phase 1, should be set for any future WFF local authorities and projects, as they have been in Phase 2.

More information on non-‘hard’ outcomes (such as consistent intermediate activities like short term training) should be gathered. However, the prime targets should be ‘hard’ outcomes (such as moves into or sustaining work, substantial training and education) rather than on ‘softer’ outcomes. (This does not deny the high value of ‘soft’ outcomes, but the focus should be on major improvements in the position of clients).

Greater childcare information should be collected, and consideration should be given to altering the annual Census of Children’s Daycare and Pre-school Education Centres so it can assist in providing a basis for a consistent, longitudinal picture of childcare supply and cost, in order to assist in the development and evaluation of the effects of increases public expenditure on childcare. This might also be of use to parents and childcare providers.

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