

A GENERIC MODEL FRAMEWORK FOR **CLIENT CENTRED SOLUTIONS**

WELFARE TO WORK SERVICES FOR
DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE

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Produced for the **Client Centred Solutions Partnership** of, Intowork, West Lothian's Earn and Learn Project, and the Edinburgh Homeless Project

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY¹

Chapter One: Introduction

This project was funded by the European Union's EMPLOYMENT Community Initiative and was commissioned by three partner organisations (Intowork, West Lothian Council Strategic Services and the Edinburgh Homeless Project) against a backdrop of UK government concern to promote 'welfare to work'. Meanwhile, the experience of those working on the ground is that the New Deal programmes, which constitute the cornerstone of government welfare to work strategy, seem to be failing to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged people. The aim of this project was to explore the scope for developing a widely applicable 'generic' model approach to services to enable 'vulnerable' groups to obtain and sustain employment. Although the approach was to be generic, or general, the driving principle was that services should be client-centred, i.e. tailored to meet the particular needs of each client.

It was also intended that the report should provide a basis for taking forward three subsidiary objectives:

1. To influence how 'welfare to work' services are designed, drawing on best practice from the three projects and their complementary approaches;
2. To clarify the roles and inter-relationships of the different partner organisations and to demonstrate why the proposed model is relevant to each of them;
3. To influence the Scottish Executive's approach to European funding.

To achieve the aim and objectives the report sets out a model framework, providing a comprehensive overview of the types of **needs** to be addressed, the **process** to be gone through in moving towards increased employability and sustainable employment, and the **characteristics** of client-centred services. This then provides the context for agencies to evaluate where they fit in to that big picture, where partnerships need to be developed and where gaps exist.

The three projects that formed the focus of the research were:

- **Earn and Learn Post 16:** offering units in enterprise skills, problem-solving, independent living and core skills to pupils at the Bathgate Academy. It is closely linked to the Scottish Enterprise's "Get Into Enterprise" programme, which takes enterprise training out into the wider community.
- **Intowork's Employment Solutions Project:** comprised of an information service targeted at disabled people alongside networks for employers
- **The Edinburgh Homeless Project:** aiming to help homeless people into work, while developing partnership infrastructure.

In all, 26 interviews were conducted with clients, project employees, representatives from project partner agencies and employers. Additionally, 2 focus groups of clients

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were conducted. This report is based on evidence obtained from the fieldwork and from materials provided by the agencies involved.

Chapter Two: Needs Analysis

Client-centred solutions can only be achieved through an understanding of client needs. However, for 'welfare to work' to succeed, the needs of employers also have to be taken into account, where to do so furthers the interest of the client. The needs of clients and employers, and the barriers they confront, are key to defining the range of services required. This, in turn, sheds light on the needs of agencies and the barriers they confront in seeking to provide those services.

Clients: In the context of 'welfare to work' objectives, client needs are broadly classified as:

- Social – eg, for housing, health-care, income;
- Personal – eg, for confidence, self-esteem, motivation, stability;
- Employability – eg, for high quality relevant education and training, CVs, job-search skills;
- Employment – eg, for ongoing support, training, flexibility and tolerance;
- Service delivery – eg, for accessible information and premises, workers they trust, flexibility.

Central solutions include intensive one-to-one working with key-workers and mentors, and 'Circles of Support' where friends and family are brought together to ensure all are pulling in the same direction. Preferably, employers and co-workers should demonstrate flexibility and tolerance but there is a potentially thin line between flexibility to meet the specific needs of an individual and contravention of the equal opportunities principle of equal treatment.

The range of needs makes it very unlikely that any one agency will be in a position to address all of them. Partnership working therefore becomes necessary. However, professional and cultural barriers can make partnership working difficult. Roles are not always clear, leading to gaps, duplication and 'dumping' of responsibility. Funding structures do not support partnership working. Organisations competing for funding are unlikely to work well together. Funding is often short term, while partnerships take time to build. Furthermore, the nature of funding militates against the needs of clients for stability and flexibility. The high unit costs of supporting disadvantaged people are not always recognised – but neither are the costs of not intervening.

Employers: Employers' needs can be broadly classified as follows:

- Practical – eg, for information about legal responsibilities or the availability of aids and equipment, financial subsidies to underwrite risk ;
- Confidence – eg, for confidence in client group, that employing disadvantaged people can be successful;
- Employment – eg, for applicants with 'soft' skills rather than qualifications, ongoing support, carefully selected applicants;
- Service delivery – eg, for accessible information, minimal paperwork, intermediaries they trust.

Key solutions include the development of (possibly segmented) employer networks, enabling employers to acquire information, learn from each other and build confidence.

For agencies, there is not always clarity about the division of responsibility between them and the employer, for continued support once the client has entered employment.

In the case of both clients and employers, solutions (strategies to meet needs) can be divided into:

- **Practical:** To provide information, co-ordinate fragmented services, etc;
- **Personal:** To build confidence, self-esteem, motivation, etc.

Chapter Three: Stages Of The Welfare To Work Process

Needs are then integrated into the 'welfare to work' process. A series of service delivery stages to the welfare to work process were identified. These stages are discussed as they apply to clients and to employers. Solutions identified in Chapter Two are organised as they apply to each stage, under the headings of 'practical' and 'personal', depending on the types of need that they meet. Details of solutions are expanded where necessary to show how they meet needs at that particular stage.

For clients, their key worker and mentor may play a role throughout the process, although this role will change to reflect evolving needs. There was very substantial evidence of the difficulties caused by the operation of the benefit system as clients move from one stage to another. Despite reform of the social security and tax systems intended to facilitate entrance into the labour market, the 'benefits brake' remains a powerful deterrent to improving employability and entering employment.

Key points relating to each stage can be summarised as follows:

1. Definition of client group:

- **Clients:** The model would seem to be relevant to all client groups. To some extent it will be relevant to anyone wanting to improve their employability. However, agencies normally define their client group in terms of particular characteristics and geographical catchment area. Both have implications for partnership building and for ensuring that no one slips through the net due to poor dovetailing.
- **Employers:** Employers may be segmented according to locality, sector, size of organisation, etc. This may be useful for marketing purposes, as a precursor to the matching of client to employer later on and to ensure that services to employers reflect their particular needs (ie are 'client-centred').

2. Access to services

- **Clients:** Access is clearly key to the success of the model. Premises need to be accessible, convenient and user-friendly. One-stop shops, where various services and social facilities are located together, can encourage client use and facilitate partnership working between agencies. Information about services also needs to be accessible. Referrals between agencies require each to be thinking holistically about the client's needs. GPs and social workers were cited as particular examples of professionals who often seemed not to see their roles as extending towards thinking about their clients' employability or employment needs.
- **Employers:** The plethora of agencies can make it difficult for employers to access services. Centralised employers networks can therefore have advantages for agencies and employers wishing to access each other.

3. Profiling procedures

- **Clients:** As needs evolve over time, profiling needs to be seen as an ongoing process rather than a one-off event. An integrated assessment or profiling procedure is needed to reduce duplication. Circles of Support may form part of the profiling process.
- **Employers:** There is little evidence that systematic profiling of employers occurs in order to identify their support needs. Instead it is used to match a particular client to a suitable employer.

4. Pre-employment services

- **Clients:** Various needs may have to be addressed before clients can enter employment. A client-centred approach is feasible throughout, eg the meeting of social needs through Person-Centred Planning. With regard to training, there was evidence that employers valued core, transferable skills and 'soft' social skills more than 'knowledge'-based qualifications. Bespoke training targeted at particular industries could be successful, perhaps particularly once core and 'soft' skills had been acquired. Initial contact with employers at this stage could be helpful in building the confidence of each in the other.
- **Employers:** Training needs to be targeted on managers, co-workers and new staff coming in to the company. It should cover such matters as legal obligations under anti-discrimination legislation and information on what support (eg aids and equipment) is available. Voluntary sector placements can be helpful in increasing understanding of the client group and agency.

5. Entrance into the labour market

Paid work in a commercial setting is just one positive employment-related outcome. Others include participation in further education, voluntary work or employment with social firms.

From this stage, the focus is on getting the relationship between client and employer off to a good start, rather than on separate strategies to support and prepare each which should have occurred at earlier stages. Giving clients and employers a choice of carefully selected 'partners' seemed to work better than attempts at 'arranged marriages' between designated individuals. Work trials or voluntary work were helpful ways of increasing the confidence of each in the other. The 'benefits brake' was found to be particularly acute at this stage. Both client and employer benefited from ongoing support from the key-worker. Employers' networks were also helpful support mechanisms for employers.

6. In-employment services

Ongoing support is important to promoting sustainability. Problems may arise where the job does not adequately reflect or use the clients skills, leading them to feel undervalued and demoralised, attitudes of work colleagues, new needs for flexibility, eg in moving from part-time to full-time work or vice versa. Agencies recognise the importance of ongoing support to clients but are not always funded to provide it and anyway would not want this to become a permanent arrangement. Moreover, Trades Unions and employer's associations may be other, more appropriate, sources of support.

7. Career progression.

Career progression can be important to sustainability, in that people may be prepared to endure an unsatisfactory job as a stepping stone to one which is more satisfactory.

Again, there is an issue of where responsibility lies for this stage. However, it is good practice for employers to offer ongoing training to their employees.

Chapter Four: Characteristics of Client-Centred Services

Drawing on the previous two Chapters, this Chapter identifies a number of characteristics of client-centred services. They should:

- Be client-led;
- Avoid stereotyping;
- Take a holistic view of needs and the welfare to work process;
- Address both practical and personal barriers;
- Prevent problems from arising;
- Address barriers in the right order;
- Ensure commitment to partnership working;
- Address environmental and geographical barriers;
- Have realistic time-scales and objectives;
- Maintain momentum;
- Promote continuity and stability;
- Be flexible;
- Recognise the needs of employers.

Finally, service-providers should:

- Believe in people's capacity to change.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The concluding chapter provides an overview of themes and issues. It reviews how the model described meets the aim and takes forward the subsidiary objectives of the client-centred solutions project.

An overview of themes and issues

From this study, a number of themes and issues emerge;

- Inadequacies of the New Deals;
- The importance of one-to-one work;
- The importance of high quality, relevant training and education;
- The continuing need for benefit reform;
- The implications of a tailored approach for equal opportunities;
- The importance of partnership working;
- The difficulties provoked by funding structures;
- The importance of a common and coherent approach across agencies;
- The need to support, 'educate' and nurture employers;
- The need to clarify roles and responsibilities of agencies on moving into employment.

Aim: a widely applicable 'generic' model

It is not the case that services must be either universal or targeted, but that different approaches are appropriate at different levels of service design and at different stages

of the welfare to work process. It is vital to distinguish between where a generic approach and where a tailored approach is most likely to be successful, eg in minimising stigma while ensuring services meet the needs and aspirations of each individual. The model spans the spectrum from most general – in terms of the applicability of the framework to the range of services and client groups – to most tailored – through enabling the closest possible match of services to the individual's evolving needs and aspirations.

Subsidiary objectives

1. To influence how 'welfare to work' services are designed, drawing on best practice from the three projects and their complementary approaches;

The model seeks to be influential through basing its proposals on the views of those directly involved; providing a common, holistic framework for strategic planning within and across partner organisations; disseminating the good ideas and approaches encountered; making the case for change to funding structures; presenting material in a way which can be of practical use to agencies.

In developing the model, we learnt the following from the experience of the three projects and their partners in various ways, eg:

Earn & Learn: The importance of early intervention; the value of enterprise skills and core generic skills and the potential for wider application of this approach; the importance of treating young people as capable; the value of personal development to pupils with a range of academic ability; that if education fundamentally evolves it could better prepare pupils for a changing labour market.

Intowork (including Intowork West Lothian): The importance of working with employers; the value of employers' networks; the value of Circles of Support; the importance of support continuing beyond the point of entry into the labour-market; the importance of profiling being two-way and ongoing.

The Edinburgh Homeless project: The value of partnership working; that a lengthy time-scale is needed to establish partnership working and to achieve positive employment-related outcomes for people with chaotic life-styles; how important it is that this is recognised by funding regimes; the value of peer identity in reducing alienation and building confidence; the value of mentoring.

2. To clarify the roles and inter-relationships of the different partner organisations and to demonstrate why the proposed model is relevant to each of them;

The roles and inter-relationships of different partnership organisations are far from straightforward. The inter-connections between different types of client need, between practical and personal needs and solutions, and of the different agencies that existed to meet each were not always explored. There was a strong desire to involve social workers and GPs more closely in holistic partnership working. Where key agencies, such as the DSS/ Benefits Agency, did not take a client-centred approach, the workload of other agencies increased.

In any given geographical area, the partnerships that need to be in place will vary in as much as agencies themselves will vary. Nonetheless, the overall aim of achieving holistic welfare to work service provision remains. To assist agencies to evaluate and

develop their own services and to provide a basis for partnership mapping an agency tool-kit based closely on the model framework was devised (see Appendix 4). This takes the form of a series of proformas for agency use. These should help identify what pieces of the jigsaw the agency possesses and where it needs to build partnerships with those that hold other pieces if holistic service provision is to be achieved.

3. To influence the Scottish Executive's approach to European funding.

There is much that needs to be done to redefine the relationship between funders and agencies, in particular to develop a series of indicators and targets which promote client-centred solutions while giving funders confidence that they are getting 'value for money'. For example, relying on hard outcomes within short time-scales will undermine client-centred solutions. Funding (and local authority budgets) needs to be task-led. Further exploration is needed of how this may best be achieved. Overall, there are strong arguments for funding to promote capacity building, not just within individual agencies but between them in order to strengthen partnerships.

The way forward

We hope that readers will contribute responses based on their experience, as a means of continuing the research and of enabling the model to be strengthened. Most importantly, we hope that this will further debate on how best to achieve the objective we all share, of facilitating the inclusion of disadvantaged people into the labour market in ways which respect their dignity and enable them to fulfil their potential and their aspirations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

**For a copy of the full report please contact
Diana Sinclair at Intowork.**

**You will be able to download and comment on the full report
from our Internet site from early 2001.**

www.intowork.org.uk/ccs

**If you have any problems with this, or would like further
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