

European Social Fund: support for families with multiple problems

Call for evidence – summary of responses

4 July 2011

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European Social Fund: support for families with multiple problems

Introduction

Between 12 April and 6 May DWP ran an online call for evidence, to inform the policy design for employment related provision for families with multiple problems. This provision will be supported through DWP's European Social Fund (ESF) Co-financing arrangements.

108 responses were received, including 40 from local authorities, with further responses from charities, other government departments, employment related service providers, and local authority service provider organisations, such as family intervention services.

A summary of the key points and themes arising from the call for evidence is published below; it should be noted that this document does not represent an undertaking to implement any of the recommendations received.

In addition to the call for evidence, DWP also held a number of engagement events with local authorities and related organisations. A summary of the key points and themes arising from the engagement events is published in Annex A.

Summary of responses: call for evidence

1) Progress activities and measures

a) Do you think that the suggested progress activities and measures are appropriate?

Respondents expressed broad support for the progress measures and activities outlined. Common themes across responses included the importance of attitudinal work with this customer group; in particular, motivation and resilience were considered to be key areas in which customers would require support. A number of respondents made reference to the importance of holistic support that would address needs across the whole family, and also of the importance of personalised support that would address the needs of the individual. One respondent pointed out that the 'whole family' aspect of the support need not be limited to eligible customers.

There was wide support for the use of needs assessments and action plans, and agreement that ESF provision should fit into a multi-agency approach. There was concern, however, that ESF might duplicate locally available provision, and it was felt that providers should engage with Local Authorities in order to ensure that the support offered would be appropriate to local needs – suggestions ranged from informal engagement between providers and LAs to the development of formal inventories of locally available support.

One respondent was concerned that the level of skills support set out in the call for evidence was not appropriate to customer needs:

... a vast majority of the families in discussion do not have even have basic literacy and numeracy skills and this barrier needs to be recognised as a common theme for workless individuals and families in London.

There was a divergence of views, however, on the form skills support should take; some respondents felt that it should lead to recognised qualifications, but it was also suggested that the appropriate level of support for many of these customers would be at a pre-qualification level.

Some respondents stressed the importance of appropriate monitoring of interventions. It was recommended that DWP should think carefully about how to measure and define these outcomes, and it was suggested that independent evaluation should be incorporated into the assessment process. It was also stressed that outputs and outcomes would need to be clearly defined in order to be appropriately measured and validated.

One further theme to emerge was the importance of helping people take control of all aspects of their lives, rather than focusing purely on employment issues; without

addressing more basic needs, it was felt that customers would not be able to access and remain in employment.

Finally, it was recommended that with work experience and similar activities, DWP should ensure that there is flexibility to offer full-time and part-time opportunities without a person's benefits being affected.

b) Are there other measures we should consider?

A number of recommendations for additional progress measures were made. These included:

- mentoring and outreach support, including the use of a key worker;
- English language provision;
- measures to reduce social isolation and improve confidence, as families (particularly single parents) may feel cut-off from the wider community;
- support in job search techniques, and other job search issues such as how to manage the disclosure of convictions;
- health and wellbeing support, including engagement with mental health support;
- parenting skills, including parenting classes for parents who do not live with their children;
- substance misuse counselling;
- family mediation/counselling;
- financial inclusion measures, and measures to help customers deal with financial issues such as debt;
- digital inclusion measures, such as access to the internet;
- school truancy and disengagement support;
- support to promote engagement with services, such as registration with GPs;
- courses on emotional state (anger) management;
- self-employment support;
- in-work support and career progression support;
- extended work placements;
- small step action plans, which allow 'quick wins';
- confidence: both personal confidence in self and the family group. Also confidence in agencies and building trust;
- reduction in truancy;
- child care support information and facilities. This may be particularly important to enable several family members to find work at the same time, as they often provide childcare for each other;
- transitional employment at a social enterprise (supported by the programme) to build self-esteem and socialisation for work;
- support to manage the transition from caring to earning;
- measures for employer engagement specifically aimed at stimulating the supply of part time jobs, at both entry and intermediary level;
- financial grants may also be appropriate to finance clothing, travel, childcare etc. when starting work;

- housing support – identifying options, liaising with landlords – social and private, information on housing options;
- communication skills – support to develop team working and communication skills, conflict resolution, engaging with key family stakeholders e.g. schools, GPs
- growth sector specific training;
- support to help families deal with domestic abuse;
- recognition of job outcomes in which a customer works for less than 16 hours a week.

c) Do you have any views on how we can ensure that the support delivered by ESF providers to each family best complements current Local Authority activity?

Respondents agreed that services differ from area to area, and that a 'one size fits all' approach would not be suitable for this support. For example, while the majority of respondents advocated a multi-agency approach, and expected ESF support to fit into existing multi-agency structures, one Local Authority respondent felt that it would be more appropriate for the provider to lead on setting up a multi-agency structure in their area, as they do not currently have one in place.

In order for the support to be successful it was felt that a close working relationship would be required between providers and Local Authorities both at an operational and strategic level. One respondent suggested that the best way to achieve this would be to ensure that strategies for joint working are identified in the bidding process.

It was suggested that social housing providers will be among the key agencies that these families interact with, and so a strong relationship between ESF providers and social housing providers will be important.

A number of London based Local Authorities made reference to the London Councils proposal to the DWP, through which ESF support would be commissioned through London Councils commissioning process, rather than the DWP's Framework for Employment related services. DWP has responded to this proposal separately. Other Local Authorities made similar suggestions, such as taking a lead role in commissioning or managing contracts, or pooling DWP and Local Authority budgets.

One respondent suggested that the link with the LA needs to be by referral once the families' wider issues have been stabilised. This could be done as part of a sustainable exit strategy with on-going support and reinforcement of their improved lifestyle maintained. Family members would then be able to approach their barriers to work effectively, with their entrenched behaviours treated.

It was suggested that providing networking events for prospective ESF providers and local authorities at the procurement stage would be beneficial for both parties

Effective information sharing was identified as a key method of ensuring that ESF provision was appropriate and adding value to other locally available provision.

2) Family characteristics

a) How do you currently identify which families need support? What criteria do you use?

This question revealed the variety of processes local authorities have in place. Some authorities have well established and integrated processes in place to identify families with multiple problems across agencies. One authority, for example, already identifies families through a number of key resource panels and forums including:

- Multi Agency Safeguarding Panel;
- Gangs Action Panel;
- Housing Vulnerable Adults Panel;
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference;
- Children's Resource Panel including special educational needs;
- Common Assessment Framework (CAF) Panel;
- Learning Disability Partnership.

Social services, youth offending teams, anti-social behaviour teams, social housing providers, debt advisers and children's centres were also identified as key points of referral. A number of authorities cited the Common Assessment Framework as a key resource for identifying these families.

It is clear from the responses that different authorities use different criteria in order to identify which families are in need of support. For example, one authority refers families for additional support when they have three or more needs, identified from a basket of indicators. Another authority includes the additional criteria that the family must have one child or young person in the family, have had engagement with at least four agencies, and have had agency involvement for at least twelve months. Further authorities have further criteria, and a number of them are currently in the process of drawing up new criteria against which families with multiple problems can be identified.

One respondent set out that it was important not to be too prescriptive in defining the family unit, as for many people in this customer group the traditional family unit is very fragmented, and support is given by 'informal family members' instead.

b) How many families with multiple problems do you help currently? What are the likely numbers per year over the 2011-13 period? Might the existence of complementary support from an ESF provider raise that number?

The number of families supported varies between authorities. While relatively low numbers of families are formally supported through family intervention services, there can still be a high degree of need. One County Council explained that their Family Intervention Project (FIP) works with around 50 families a year, and their Family Nurse Project (FNP) works with a rolling cohort of 175 families:

However these two specific projects are just the tip of the iceberg ... On top of this there are teams within the Children's & Families Services that routinely work with families who will have multiple problems ... For example in the last year there are at any one time on average 400 children subject to Child Protection Plans; 500 Looked After Children; the Youth Offending Team has around 1,000 open cases; there are 1,600 Children in Need; 1,200 young people aged 16-18 who are NEET or Not Known; 1,500 persistent absentees from school; 3,000 open cases to probation; an estimated 4,000 disabled children; 11,000 police callouts relating to Domestic Violence; 11,000 [council owned] properties classed as 'non-decent' and a further 27,000 private rented properties classed as 'non-decent'; an estimated 46,000 adults suffer from common mental health problems.

Many of these issues and outcomes are interlinked, with families and individuals suffering many at once. The exact overlap is currently unknown and is being investigated but early analysis indicates that there are likely to be many thousands of households that are receiving multiple services from the local authority to address these needs.

Another county council estimated they had 750-800 families with complex needs, but potentially more than 10,000 families with multiple problems, who were vulnerable to becoming 'complex', according to the council's criteria.

It was agreed that complementary support from an ESF provider would allow authorities to improve the coverage of families with multiple problems receiving support.

c) How large are these families? What is the average number of over 16s in a family

There was no clear answer to this question. Relatively few organisations held data, and there was wide variation where data was held. Anecdotal responses also varied widely. To a large degree, the answers to this question may depend on the criteria used by authorities to identify families, the organisations and boards within authorities that tend to identify the families, the nature of support that is currently available within authorities and differences in the make up of families across authorities.

d) How many members on average are on out of work benefits?

The majority of respondents did not hold data on this issue. Where data was held, it suggested a high proportion of adults in families with multiple problems being on out of work benefits – generally between three quarters and all adults in these families. While the figures are indicative of high levels of benefit being claimed, for the reasons given in answer to c), above, they are not directly comparable.

e) For funding reasons, it may be necessary to prioritise inclusion across geographical areas. How should families be prioritised for this support within Local Authorities, and what criteria would you use?

A number of authorities already focus support on areas with high levels of deprivation and child poverty. The majority of respondents suggest targeting support could be done using some form of geographical indices of deprivation, although some felt that it was better to target support solely on family need.

f) In the experience of your Local Authority/organisation what are some of the common characteristics found in these families?

A variety of characteristics were identified, including:

- low educational attainment or special educational needs;
- mental health issues;
- acute and chronic illness, disability and infirmity;
- child protection issues;
- poor parenting;
- truanting/poor school attendance/exclusion;
- social isolation/limited support networks;
- debt and financial issues, including escalating rent arrears/poor financial literacy;
- drug and alcohol misuse;
- marriage, relationship and family breakdown;
- domestic violence;
- poor quality and overcrowded housing;
- long term worklessness/limited work experience;
- involvement in anti-social behaviour/poor relationship with neighbours;
- young people with caring responsibilities;
- pet nuisance/neglect;
- release from prison or long term stay in hospital;
- history of homelessness/no settled accommodation;
- abusive childhood;
- lack of self-confidence/motivation/aspiration/encouragement;
- low skills;
- involvement in offending/criminal records;
- language and cultural barriers;
- teenage pregnancy;
- lone parenthood;
- sense of lack of control of the issues in their lives and how to resolve them;
- childcare issues;
- transport issues;
- little access to technology;
- multiple interventions from a variety of agencies/lack of trust in these agencies/lack of meaningful engagement or compliance
- fear of leaving benefits.

g) In the experience of your Local Authority/organisation what work-related issues would our support need to address?

Common suggestions included:

- attitude/self-esteem/self-confidence;
- low skills, including basic literacy, numeracy and English language ability;
- lack of work experience, and associated work skills e.g. time-keeping, relationship with employers;
- childcare, and attitudes to childcare;
- underlying issues, including mental health issues;
- job search skills, interview skills etc.;
- transport issues;
- presentational issues, including clothing.

3) Referral mechanisms

a) Are family intervention services the most appropriate mechanism for referral?

b) Where local authorities do not run family intervention services, where should referral sit?

There was general agreement that family intervention services would be an appropriate point of referral. While some respondents felt that they would be appropriate as the primary point of referral, others felt that it was important that other organisations would also be able to refer:

The supplier could use Social Housing Providers, GPs Surgeries (particularly relevant as NHS Reforms take effect), Primary Care Trusts, Traditional Education Providers and local Third Sector Organisations. A certain proportion of outreach/self referral generation will widen the customer base and help to fully embed the service in the desired locality.

Other respondents suggested Sure Start, children's centres, social work teams, the probation service, the police, Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, the voluntary sector and the Citizen's Advice Bureau. A number of respondents made reference to the importance of a multi-agency approach.

c) What information should be supplied to support the referral i.e. previous activities/support given to the customer/family?

Suggestions included:

- personal details (e.g. name address, telephone number, age etc.);
- Common Assessment Framework, if completed;
- current and previous provision with which a customer has engaged;
- educational background and qualifications;
- employment history;
- a reason for referral;
- health conditions;
- barriers to employment;
- housing situation;
- history of offending/anti-social behaviour/drug or alcohol misuse etc.;
- details of other family members;
- child protection issues;
- risk assessments, particularly of customers with a background of violence, anti-social behaviour, health issues etc;
- languages spoken and English level;
- name of agencies involved with family, including point of contact.

A number of respondents said clear advice on data protection issues would be needed.

4) Delivery features

a) Please describe any good practices or key delivery features you would strongly recommend.

Common themes to emerge from responses included the importance of key workers, outreach work (potentially achieved through co-location with other services, such as children's centres), and mentoring. Respondents stressed that support should be holistic, flexible, and tailored to the needs of families and individuals within families. Effective partnership and multi-agency working, and signposting to support from other organisations were also seen as key, as was the alignment of ESF and other support in the area.

Other responses included:

- robust and accurate needs assessments;
- effective action planning/working together with families to write action plans;
- effective use of targets and monitoring;
- case conferencing/family group conferencing;
- targeting disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
- information sharing protocols;
- 'warm handovers';
- remaining involved with families for as long as they require support.

5) Ongoing involvement

a) In addition to identifying and referring customers, what ongoing role could Local Authorities play once the ESF support is in place?

A common theme in the responses was that the strategic role of local authorities should revolve around ensuring services are joined up and operate in a complementary nature, to bring together partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

At an operational level it was agreed that local authorities could continue to engage with family progress through case conferencing and information sharing.

A number of respondents suggested local authorities should have a role in monitoring and evaluating ESF provision, and in sharing best practice.

Other suggestions included:

- a role in arbitration between providers and customers;
- a role in publicising ESF provision;
- a role in providing potential employment and work experience opportunities;
- a role as potential subcontractors;
- providing access to LA premises where appropriate;
- co-care plans between services, and inter-agency aftercare plans;
- ensuring providers report to local strategic forums;
- identifying gaps in service provision;
- taking a role in the tendering process.

6) Other issues

a) Are there any other issues which you think the DWP should consider, as part of the policy design and implementation?

Other issues raised included:

- it is important to give the programme sufficient time with each family to succeed;
- there should be a mechanism to report individuals who are clearly 'playing the system' and not engaging with the programme in a way that is moving them closer to real work;
- DWP should ensure that pockets of deprivation in traditionally 'richer' areas are not overlooked;
- the third sector and social enterprises should be involved;
- networking events for providers, authorities and other relevant parties should be set up;
- it would be preferable to have one prime provider per contract package area, rather than two as is the case with the Work Programme;
- there should be a seamless transition from ESF family support to other employment provision;
- there needs to be clarity on how this provision will interact with the Work Programme;
- subcontractors would prefer it if DWP worked with prime providers on the framework to produce a standard Expression of Interest form;
- there needs to be a clear, defined process of how success is to be measured;
- in areas where a low volume of referrals are expected, there may be a disincentive for providers to make sufficient investment;
- DWP should consider the link between ESF 14-19 support and ESF family support;
- DWP should consider what incentives there are for families to take part in the project;
- DWP should consider 'front-loading' payments to a greater degree than in the Work Programme;
- DWP should consider what steps to take to prevent participating customers becoming 'the working poor';
- any paperwork should be simple and come with straightforward guidance, to avoid confusion among providers and other organisations.

7) Further engagement

Would you be willing to be involved in further discussion on this issue?

The majority of respondents were willing to be involved in further discussion.

Annex A

Summary of Local Authority engagement Events

In addition to the Call for Evidence, DWP held engagement events with local authorities and related organisations on March 4, April 11, and April 18.

The two events in April followed the same format as Call for Evidence; this was to ensure that no delegate at the engagement event would receive additional information that might provide a commercial advantage when DWP puts the contracts out to tender.

The event held in March focussed on the role local authorities could play in ESF provision.

Engagement event – March 4

This was attended by delegates from the DWP, the Department for Education, local authorities, the Local Government Association and London Councils.

It was agreed that:

- identification of families with multiple problems should be local authority led;
- this approach would be equally applicable in Community Budget and non-Community Budget areas;
- DWP should consider whether local authority views could be included in the pre-specification stage of the contracting process;
- agreement and protocols would be required on data sharing;
- DWP should consider using three different outcomes as part of the funding model: starts, 'soft outcomes' and employment.

Engagement events – April 11 and April 18

These events were attended by delegates from the DWP, the Department for Education, local authorities, the Local Government Association, the Greater London Authority and London Councils.

Questions asked followed the format of the call for evidence. Some of the key points raised in the two engagement events are set out below:

- Delegates agreed that the relationship between providers and local authorities was vital, and that DWP should work to ensure that ESF support aligns with locally available support;
- Different local authorities will have different processes in place to identify families with multiple problems, and different priorities in supporting these families. There may not be a single point of contact for providers to deal with under current arrangements. Delegates agreed that ESF support should be flexible enough to accommodate differences in local processes;
- Delegates agreed that it was important that ESF support was integrated with other support available locally. This might be done by integrating ESF support within existing multi-disciplinary support teams;
- Delegates suggested that attitudinal measures, including resilience and work ethic, would be key in supporting these families into work;
- There was strong support for the key worker model;
- Delegates suggested that the fit with other provision, such as the Work Programme, and the handover of customers from ESF to the next programme would be important;
- Delegates suggested that we run regional stakeholder engagement sessions, such as 'speed dating' events, to enable networking between LAs and framework providers;
- There was a request for greater sharing of provider Management Information with local authorities, in order that local authorities can better align support;
- Delegates suggested that local authorities who are not part of the subcontracting process should be able to help judge providers' tenders;
- Delegates suggested DWP should consider 'informal family' relationships as well as 'formal family' relationships, when deciding who is eligible for ESF provision;
- There was strong support for aligning ESF provision with locally available provision;
- Delegates suggested that when creating eligibility guidelines, DWP should consider families with multiple problems who may fall below the radar, such as those with caring responsibilities;
- Delegates suggested that although the landscape of locally available support will be changing, local authorities should still be able to identify families through core support such as social housing and social services;

- There was broad agreement that proposed progress measures and activities were focusing on the right areas;
- Delegates suggested that DWP should consider at what point ESF support should be made available on a family's journey. It was felt that the support may be appropriate as the next step for families completing Family Intervention Projects or similar support.

Annex B

List of organisations that responded to the call for evidence

3SC

Access to Business

APM UK

Association of Greater Manchester Authorities

Audit Commission

Avanta

Barnardo's

Barnsley Council

Bedfordshire Probation Trust

Birmingham City Council

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole Employment and Skills Board

Brighton & Hove City Council

Calderdale MBC

Calico Enterprise

Campbell Page

Capacity

Central Bedfordshire Council

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Children North East

Coalfields Regeneration Trust

Cornwall Council

CSV

East Durham College

Eastbourne Borough Council

The EC Roberts Centre

Family Action

Hampshire County Council

Harrow Council
Mr D. Hardie
The Harvest Housing Group
Home-Start UK (on behalf of Home-Start schemes in Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City)
Housing Action
Hull Children's Board
Hull City Council
G4S Welfare to Work
Greenwich Council
Greater Manchester Police
Groundwork UK
Interface Associates
Islington Council
JCP North East Yorkshire & Humber District
JCP Wolverhampton Crown House
Leeds City Council
Learndirect
Leicestershire Together (LSP)
Life Balance Ltd
Lincolnshire County Council
Liverpool City Council
Liverpool City Region Employment and Skills Partnership
London Borough of Enfield
London Borough of Haringey
London Borough of Lambeth
London Borough of Southwark
London Councils
Luton Borough Council
LVSC
MAXIMUS Employment & Training UK
Ministry of Justice
MOVEON east

National Housing Federation
Nelson Trust
North Eastern Local Enterprise Partnership
North Staffs YMCA
Nottinghamshire County Council
Nottinghamshire County Council, Economic Development Service
Nottinghamshire YMCA
Oldham Family Crisis
Partnership Community Safety Team
Pertemps People Development Group
Poplar HARCA
Portsmouth City Council
The Prince's Trust
Prospects Services Ltd
Recycling Lives
Reed in Partnership
Remploy Ltd
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
The RNIB Group
Sarina Russo Job Access
Serco (Welfare to Work)
Shaw Trust
Sheffield City Council
Shropshire Council
Skills Training UK
The Social Partnership
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Somali Community and Cultural School
Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Stoke on Trent City Council
St Loye's Foundation
Sunshine Charity

Take Three Days

Tomorrow's People

Tyne Gateway Child Poverty Project/The Tyne Gateway Trust

Walsall Council

Wandsworth Council

Warrington Borough Council

Warwickshire County Council

West Lindsey District Council

Westminster City Council

Wolverhampton City Council

Work Dimensions

Women Like Us

Working Links

York Council

Zest