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Department for Work and Pensions

Work Programme Live Running Memo

To: Work Programme Providers

From: Matthew Garlick
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Memo Serial Number: 137

Date: 4 December 2013

Subject: **WORK PROGRAMME EVALUATION ACTIVITY
IN 2014**

Action: For Information

Timing: Immediate

Background

In 2011 the Department commissioned a consortium led by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to evaluate commissioning, delivery, customer experience and performance of the Work Programme. Research has been ongoing throughout 2012 and 2013, with significant contributions from organisations across the welfare-to-work sector.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the evaluation so far, either by participating in interviews, completing surveys or providing other forms of data. The information gathered continues to improve our understanding of delivery and providers' experiences of the DWP commissioning model.

Summary and action

The third and final wave of evaluation fieldwork will begin shortly; following a similar schedule of activities to waves 1 and 2 (i.e. research at national and local level with Work Programme participants and DWP, Jobcentre Plus and provider staff). This memo explains the research to be conducted and what it may involve for respondents.

Please note the key waves of research activity and what might be involved for customers and staff in all delivery organisations.

Please cascade this information throughout your supply chains so that staff and customers understand that:

- a. this is part of DWP's official Work Programme evaluation; and
- b. they may be approached by members of the research consortium to participate in qualitative interviews or surveys.

Approach

The evaluation is configured into two main strands:

- Commissioning – Led by the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI/Inclusion) this strand focuses on the understanding changes in the provider market and the way it is managed nationally by DWP and more locally by the prime providers. This includes looking at organisations outside the supply chain (e.g. unsuccessful bidders and supply chain leavers).
- Programme delivery – Led by IES, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) and the Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU) this strand focuses on how services are delivered and what customers think about the help they have received.

Researchers from all organisations within the consortium are involved in both strands so your customers and staff could be contacted by Inclusion, IES, SPRU, NIESR or GfK NOP.

Remaining fieldwork in 2013

A fourth and final wave of qualitative interviews with customers will begin in the next few weeks. Depending on when interviews can be agreed with participants this is likely to continue into January 2014. This will only involve participants from selected Jobcentre Plus districts.

Some of the participants the researchers intend to speak to will have recently completed the Work Programme and returned to Jobcentre Plus. The remainder will be customers who have been interviewed before and have agreed to be contacted again. These customers will be between 12 and 18 months into the programme so many will be in work.

Schedule of fieldwork in 2014

National customer survey (follow-up)

The first official Work Programme customer survey involved interviewing 4,700 customers between 6 and 9 months after they had started the programme. The next customer survey will be conducted by GfK NOP between January and March 2014 and will aim to follow up around 1,900 of these customers, this time interviewing them after they have completed the full, two-year programme period.

I understand that several providers are planning to conduct their own customer research next year. To minimise confusion and overload for customers and staff it would be very helpful if you could avoid conducting similar research, especially surveys, between January and March 2014. Any research you conduct thereafter should avoid targeting the same cohort of customers (i.e. those who started the programme between January and March 2012). This is as important for your response rates as it is for the welfare of programme participants.

Online survey of subcontractors (commissioning)

The next Work Programme subcontractor survey will be conducted in May 2014. It will explore supply chain management, financial and other commissioning related issues, focusing on changes that have taken place in the previous year.

Prime providers have been extremely supportive for each of the online surveys conducted so far, helping me to identify the right organisations to contact in order to maximise response rates. However, these have still fallen below expectations, so your role in raising awareness of these surveys throughout your supply chain is absolutely critical; these constitute a primary source of feedback for ministers and policy officials.

A request for updated Tier 1 subcontractor referral data

All prime providers kindly responded to my request, dated 26 July, for data on monthly referral volumes to Tier 1 subcontractors in each CPA. This has been extremely valuable and will inform several strands of the evaluation. In 2014, I would like to request similar information, this time for the 2013/14 period so that we can assess the ongoing evolution of the supply chain through to the end of the evaluation period.

National qualitative research

In April and May, researchers across the consortium will start approaching provider staff to arrange the next wave of qualitative interviews. As with waves 1 and 2, this final wave will involve telephone interviews with all 18 prime providers and around 50 interviews with organisations that have never bid, have bid unsuccessfully for a Work Programme contract or have left the supply chain since early 2012.

Area-based qualitative research

The prime provider interviews will be followed by research with DWP and subcontractor staff in selected contract package areas. The focus this time will be on supply chain development and commissioning rather than frontline service delivery. As a result, the number of interviews conducted will be significantly less than it was in 2012 and 2013. Interviews will be conducted between May and July, and arranged at providers' convenience.

Online provider survey (programme delivery)

Evaluation fieldwork will conclude in September 2014 with a final online survey of providers. This will be a follow-up to the programme delivery survey conducted last September. Again, this will target all providers who have delivered services to participants.

Key dates

Key dates to note are:

Dates	Fieldwork task
December 2013	Wave 4 of the (area-based) qualitative customer study
Jan – March 2014	Wave 2 of the national customer survey
May 2014	Request for 2013/14 Tier 1 subcontractor referral data
	National online subcontractor survey (commissioning)
May – July 2014	Qualitative telephone interviews with all 18 prime providers
	Qualitative interviews with unsuccessful bidders, non-bidders and supply chain leavers (national)
	Area-based qualitative research with DWP/Jobcentre Plus and provider staff (commissioning focused)
September 2014	National online survey of providers (programme delivery)

If you have any questions or would like further information about the research please consult your DWP Account Manager or contact me direct using the email address or telephone number below.

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