

Evaluation of Making It Work in Glasgow: Summary

Background

Making it Work (MiW) is a national programme operating in 5 areas in Scotland. MiW targets lone parents with a child of 16 or under in receipt of any benefit and experiencing additional barriers to employment, which include disabilities, caring for someone with disabilities, a large family, living within a depressed labour market, living in chaotic circumstances and having little or no work experience and/or unemployed for at least two years. In Glasgow MiW began in June 2013 and finished in July 2016. It was delivered by a partnership of 6 organisations:

- Jobs and Business Glasgow
- One Parent Families Scotland
- Stepping Stones for Families
- The Scottish Childminding Association
- The Wise Group; and
- Rosemount Learning

The programme offered lone parents:

- Personal development support
- Support to help plan for work;
- Childcare, to allow them to participate in training and during the transition to work;
- Support to access mainstream services; and
- In-work support.

The evaluation aimed to assess the delivery, impact and legacy of the project in Glasgow. The methods were:

- A review of MiW monitoring data and documentation;
- Interviews with the MiW team and partners;
- Interviews with stakeholders; and
- Interviews with clients.

Key Findings

Delivery

The evaluation assessed the project's delivery. It found:

- MiW recruited almost double the numbers of lone parents than targeted. There is high demand among lone parents (and the organisations who refer them) for specialist employability support.
- The majority of lone parents who engaged were very disadvantaged in the labour market. For example, 63% were long term unemployed, nearly half had no work experience and a fifth had a chaotic lifestyle. Many had multiple barriers to work.
- MiW mostly exceeded its output targets.
 - 1340 clients were supported to develop an Action Plan and had employability needs assessed. This is above the target of 675;
 - 777 received Advice and Guidance, again this is above the target of 600;
 - 636 participated in work preparation to address barriers and develop employment related skills which is slightly above the target of 600;
 - 493 attended at least one training session, above the target of 300.
- 379 people or just over one in four participants moved into work after taking part in MiW. Although the numbers are above target, the proportion which moved into work at 27% was lower than the target of 32% of all clients to progress into a job. Nevertheless this is still above outcomes achieved by the Work Programme (11%).

- 455 clients took part in training. This was well in excess of the target of 75. Furthermore 409 clients attained a qualification; and 40 progressed into education, equal to the target.
- There were 136 clients in work at 26 weeks and 54% of the clients who received in work support were still in work. However as it was difficult to track all clients it is not possible to say with certainty how many jobs have been sustained.

Assessment of MiW Support

Pre-engagement and Engagement

Pre-engagement and engagement stages were important to the delivery of MiW and the numbers engaging indicate these worked well. The positive ways advisers and engagement workers responded to clients at initial meetings (and throughout their time on MiW) helped to sustain engagement. The way that MiW engaged with lone parents in their own communities was also important. It was also seen as attractive to clients and referrers because it provided specialist support. Consultees also felt the amount of work involved in engaging clients is not easily captured.

Initial Assessment

The lone parents accessing MiW needed support in a range of areas, not just around employability. The initial assessment seems to have worked well because advisers had a lot of empathy with the clients. Several clients interviewed described how they felt the advisers understood their circumstances and difficulties well.

Skill Development

Two types of training were provided in MiW: at the early stage of the pathway, training had a focus on personal and social development; later in the pathway, specific vocational courses were provided. There was positive feedback from clients about

both types of courses. The modifications to training, including keeping the days short and providing crèches seemed to have supported retention in training. The demand led and responsive nature of training provision met employers' and clients' needs well. Clients were positive about training alongside other lone parents and felt this developed peer support.

Work Preparation

Work preparation delivered employability skills and knowledge but was also important to help sustain clients' motivation to get into work; to enhance self-confidence and self-esteem; reduce feelings of isolation; and help clients feel better. The customised or case managed nature of the support available to lone parents through MiW was a key factor in success

Accessing Childcare

MiW addressed childcare issues in 3 ways: providing childcare when parents were at training; helping lone parents find childcare locally to fit in with their requirements and also covering the cost of the initial weeks of childcare when clients started work; and developing specific support to help lone parents become childminders. A perhaps unexpected benefit of the childcare offered at the training sessions was that it helped lone parents get used to putting their children into childcare.

Job Brokerage

Job brokerage was an important element of MiW which, alongside the training seems to have helped support clients into work. It was helpful that job clubs were focused on lone parents, as this helped them engage. It was not helpful to promote clients as 'lone parents'. It may be that when client reach this stage in the pathway, they could move onto mainstream job brokerage services that exist already in employability services. The types of jobs brokered were had a close fit with the sector specific training delivered by

MiW. They were generally low skilled, 'entry level' jobs. Many of the clients found it difficult to earn enough to make it worth their while financially to work full time, so commonly the lone parents were offered 16 hour contracts. Some employers started to offer 16 hour contracts to accommodate the MiW clients. Employers had positive views about the MiW clients they recruited.

Aftercare

All MiW clients who moved into work were referred to an aftercare worker who provided support, but also had a role to find additional skills training. Around 60% of clients who moved into work accessed some kind of aftercare support. Consultees and clients reported that aftercare was an important part of MiW support, as it could help people to sustain employment. However, some of the workers felt that more resources could have been allocated to aftercare as there was only one aftercare worker. An important part of the aftercare was the availability of a budget for in-work training to help clients that had moved into work to increase their skills and progress in the labour market. This was available for up to 6 months after clients had left MiW. The majority of the training was delivered between 3 and 6 months after the client started work and they felt settled.

Areas for Improvement

On balance the MiW model in Glasgow worked well. There were a small number of areas where there could be improvements. These fell into the following areas.

- Although the MiW model aimed to empower lone parents to look for childcare themselves, this was sometimes challenging for lone parents and led them to rely on family or informal care, despite advisers suggesting that this might not be the best option. Some way of mentoring

selection of childcare might help here.

- Some consultees felt it would have been good to have had a key worker to keep contact with the client all along the pathway.
- Larger caseloads than expected meant that the aftercare and job broker workers were stretched, More resources could be allocated to this element of the MiW pathway in the future.
- Some consultees, while acknowledging the impact of having funding to pay for travel and childcare for the initial weeks of work, felt this was '*not realistic*' and could create difficulties when it was withdrawn.
- Consultees felt the MiW approach offers potential to work with the family as a whole as the engagement of lone parents can lead to a positive impact on the children. If a similar programme was to be developed in the future it would be good to monitor and evaluate these kinds of outcomes.

Unexpected Benefits

Some of the unexpected benefits flowing from the programme include:

- The development of peer support among lone parents attending training;
- Improvements in health and wellbeing reported by lone parents; and
- Increased confidence about using childcare.

Good Practice

The evaluation identified aspects of good practice developed in Glasgow as the following.

- **Model of delivery** – a partnership and pathway approach which meant that right support was delivered to lone parents when they needed it.
- **Voluntary, not mandatory** participation.
- **Flexible timescale.**

- **Skilled and experienced staff.**
- **Professionalism** of staff. They were seen as **responsive** and **reliable** and kept in touch with clients to ensure progress.
- **Tailored support.** This very important as lone parents are a very diverse group.
- **Holistic support** – to assist with the range of support lone parents need.
- Flexible and higher level of **funding** available.
- Availability of **aftercare (or in-work) support.**

Legacy of MiW on Partners

MiW had partnership working arrangements at a strategic and operational level as partners were members of the strategic board and also provided staff to work in the MIW staff team. At an operational level the MiW team worked well together. There was good communication in the team and efforts made to create shared objectives.

Involvement in the MiW partnership appears to have had some positive impacts on the partners' own organisations, including increasing knowledge and understanding of the issues lone parents face, considering how they could offer more targeted and tailored support for lone parents in the future, seeing the value of an

integrated package of support and the benefits of offering childcare at training.

Lessons Learned

There are a number of lessons that flow from the experience of delivering MiW in Glasgow. It seems clear that lone parents (and other vulnerable groups) can benefit from a targeted and tailored approach. This can be more important at the early stages of progression, but it is useful to provide a specialist input at all stages of progression into the labour market.

Particular types of support seem to be especially useful for lone parents as a client group. These include:

- Advisers who have good empathy with lone parents;
- Childcare provision linked to training;
- Links to money advice services;
- Training alongside other lone parents; and
- Voluntary participation.

There are strong benefits from organisations working in partnership with others to provide support along a pathway of progression. It is critical to involve partners with the appropriate expertise to provide specific support at each stage of the pathway.