

Making it Work Edinburgh

Evaluation and next steps - a discussion paper

June 2018
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1. Introduction

The Making it Work Programme

Making it Work (MIW) was funded through the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) in Scotland's Supporting 21st Century Life programme designed to support the most vulnerable lone parents to progress towards or enter into sustainable employment.

MIW was delivered between 2013 to 2017 in five local authority areas in Scotland where there are high concentrations of lone parent families: Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire.

Funding from the BLF across Scotland amounted to £6.72 million. This was supplemented by additional levered funding and in kind support bringing the overall total to £6.94 million. In Edinburgh, match funding (in-kind) was provided by City of Edinburgh Council, One Parent Families Scotland and Capital City Partnership

MIW provided lone parents with intensive key worker support and involved tailored help with childcare, health and social care, housing and financial inclusion alongside sign posting to existing services. Participation in the programme was entirely voluntary.

This report

This report summarises an evaluation of the delivery, impact and legacy of the Edinburgh MIW programme. The research took place after the closure of Edinburgh MIW in August 2017. It aims to complement and build on existing evaluations, to identify good practice and lessons learnt from the programme and to highlight opportunities for future service provision in Edinburgh.

Methodology

The methodology involved both qualitative and desk research including a review of data sources. The report draws on the following sources:

- MIW Edinburgh monitoring reports and statistics
- client case studies
- the Edinburgh Partnership programme reports produced in years one, two and three of the programme by CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University and SCER, University of Strathclyde.
- the final Scotland wide Making it Work: Learning and Evaluation Contract Final Evaluation Report (2017) by CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University and SCER, University of Strathclyde.¹

¹ The Sheffield Hallam evaluations can be found at <http://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/reports>.

Semi-structured interviews held in December 2017 included:

- 11 former service users
- 2 former frontline development workers
- the lead partner– Capital City Partnership
- 2 representatives from the wider partnership group.

These were organised as:

- 1 x service users focus group discussions (7 individuals)
- 1 x service user face to face interview
- 2 x service user telephone interviews
- 2 x front line staff face to face interviews
- 3 x partner representative face to face interviews.

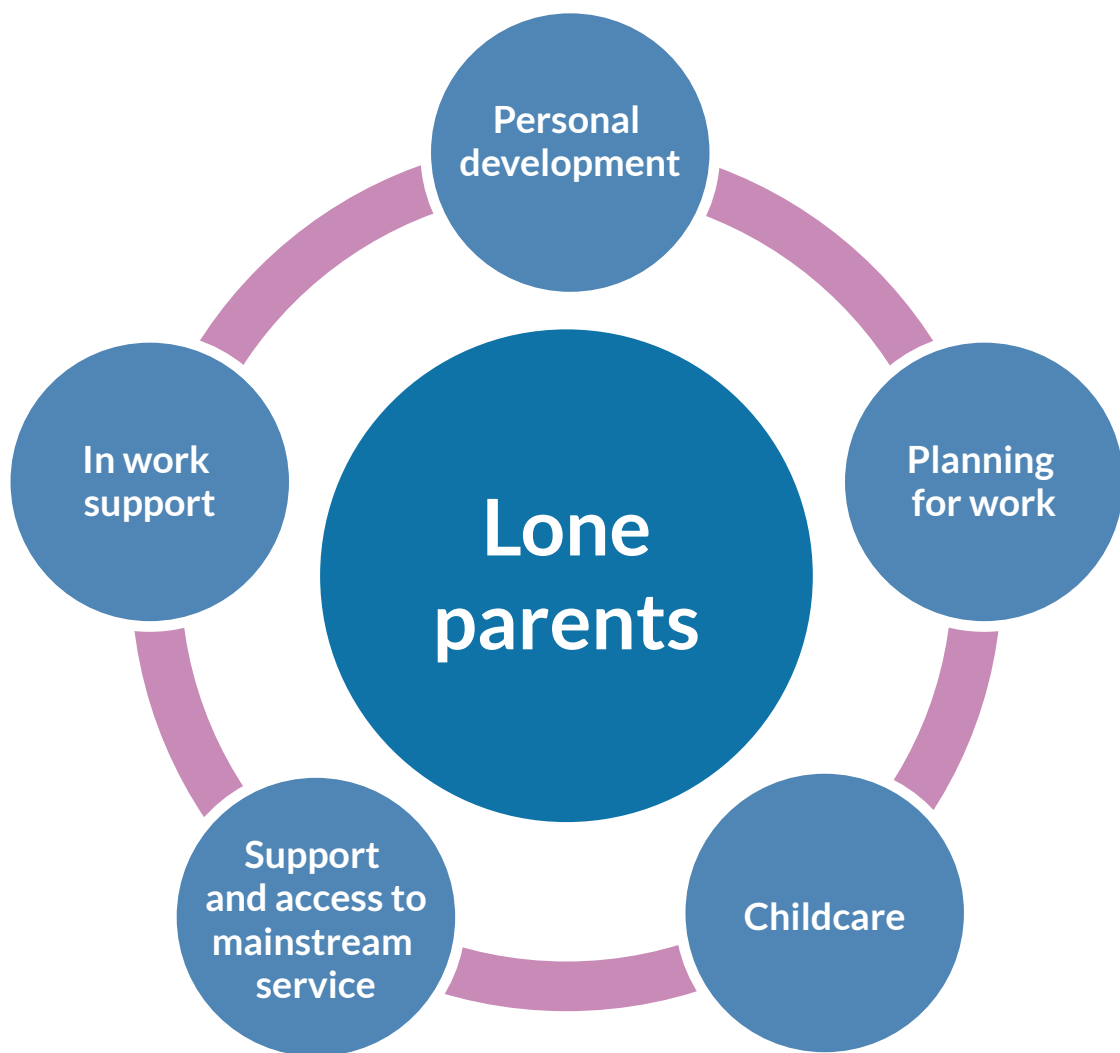
The rest of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 describes the MIW model and how it was designed and delivered in Edinburgh.
- Chapter 3 summarises key programme performance data and activities and value for money.
- Chapter 4 summarises evidence on client profiles and outcomes for ‘distances travelled’ over the course of the programme.
- Chapter 5 relates one lone parent’s story in detail and considers the legacy of the programme.
- Chapter 6 considers programme delivery: successes, challenges and learning points.
- Chapter 7 looks at the policy context and opportunities for future service provision.
- Chapter 8 contains the conclusions.
- Chapter 9 summarises considerations for future provision.

2. The Making it Work model

Although each of the five MIW pilots varied in emphasis, approach and delivery, all of them developed programmes which aimed to provide holistic support to lone parents in order to address a range of barriers and challenges which parents face in moving into and sustaining employment. These were based on a common model of support, as outlined in Figure 1. This model was developed collaboratively through a series of seminars involving the Big Lottery Fund and key agencies with expertise in employability, childcare and direct support for lone parents in Scotland.

Figure 1: MIW model of support.



The model drew on the experience of previous programmes such as Working for Families (WFF). Although the WFF's programme was not targeted exclusively at lone parents support it did support very significant numbers of disadvantaged lone parents.² The WFF evaluation provides strong evidence for what works in terms of engaging with and supporting lone parents into education, training and employment. The Edinburgh WFF legacy - of infrastructure, partnerships, provision and learning provided a firm foundation for the development of MIW.

Key elements of the MIW model included a commitment to enabling parents to overcome the barriers to employment which they face; the importance of development workers who understood these barriers and were able to provide consistent, flexible and individual support; flexibility at a local level to allow services to develop in response to local resources and needs and a focus on community based provision in order to reach out to those unlikely to engage through other channels.

The programme had longer term funding to allow for sustained learning opportunities and progress, such as increased confidence and communication skills, as well as hard targets like entry into employment.

Central to the MIW approach was the importance of enabling parents to map out their own journey towards employment. To this end the programme was entirely voluntary and action plans were co-produced by parents and development workers. Co-production also informed strategic planning and the collaborative delivery of services. Drawing on the diverse expertise and services provided by partners, MIW aimed to provide a holistic, seamless service for parents where they could directly access the services they needed or be referred on to appropriate support.

The MIW Edinburgh Partnership

The Edinburgh partnership was developed out of a series of discussions between a wide group of potential partners, all initially contacted through Big Lottery's research into and launch of the MIW model. The final partnership group which emerged from these discussions included:

- Capital City Partnership (CCP) - leading the project and employing four MIW development workers based in host organisations, a project manager and administrator.
- Scottish Child Minding Association (SCMA) providing support for MIW clients to train and make the transition to childminding work with an ambition to address the under-provision of flexible childcare in some areas of the city.

2 McQuaid, D., Bond, S and Fuertes, V. (2009) Evaluation of the Working for Families Fund (2004-2008). Edinburgh: Scottish Government Social Research

- One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) - providing advice and guidance on childcare and benefits issues to lone parents, development workers and other MIW stakeholders through helpline services. OPFS also delivered training and support for the MIW team.
- Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOC) facilitating partnership and effective governance and engaging smaller third sector organisations working with vulnerable lone parents.
- City of Edinburgh Council, Employability and Skills Team providing intelligence and expertise on service provision (having previously led the 'Working for Families' programme in the city) and assisting with network building in the early stages of the programme.
- Other stakeholders involved in the development and delivery of MIW included Jobcentre Plus who provided lone parents with information about and made to referrals to MIW and Edinburgh College through representation from its Integrated Employability Service.

The MIW Edinburgh delivery model

From the outset MIW Edinburgh was committed to developing a delivery model which would be accessible to parents who are face multiple barriers to progressing into employment and who were less likely to engage in mainstream employability services. To this end they developed a service model comprised of four development workers based in different locations across Edinburgh where there are high levels of disadvantage.

The host organisations were:

- In North Edinburgh, over two sites: initially Royston Wardieburn Community Centre (RWCC) and later Muirhouse Millennium Centre, community centres providing a range of activities including a crèche and café
- Dr Bell's Family Centre, Leith, a community based family centre providing a range of activities including a crèche and café
- Gate 55, Wester Hailes: an employability service led by Edinburgh College based in a community hub providing activities including access to learning, training, employment
- Greengables Nursery School Family Centre in the south east of the city.

The development worker team was led by a project manager who was responsible to the key delivery partner, CCP. In addition, the development worker team were supported by members of the partnership team offering a range of support and advice.

Figure 2: MIW Edinburgh delivery model.



3. Programme activity and performance

This chapter summarises the available data on MIW Edinburgh's performance against targets and considers the key activities over the lifetime of the project.

Table 1: MIW Edinburgh's progress over the lifetime of the programme.³

Four-year project target	Achievement 2013-17
100 Lone parents will benefit from increased confidence, capacity and job specific skills and progress into employment	132 into employment
150 Lone parents will report increased awareness of the jobs market and improved employability skills	283 job search activity 368 interview skills and help with CV
50 Lone parents will progress into volunteering, education or vocational training	32 have progressed into volunteering 219 training courses undertaken 46 have enrolled at college
200 Lone parents will report increased confidence and personal skills (communication, action planning and goal setting) to inform their employability goals	456
300 Lone parents will be supported by a family support worker and will report increased awareness of their personal strengths, skills, weaknesses and other barriers to employment	456
40 Lone parents will be supported to sustain work for a minimum of 13 weeks	75

Table 1 above shows that the Edinburgh partnership made very significant progress over the lifetime of the programme in meeting, and indeed exceeding targets across a variety of outputs. It shows that as well as supporting lone parents into paid employment the programme helped parents engage with activities, like personal development, volunteering and training which are likely to help them move into sustainable employment in future. It also indicates the holistic nature of the support which service users received.

³ Data derived from final September 2017 MIW Edinburgh quarterly partnership meeting report.

Value for money

When assessing value for money, it is essential to remember that Big Lottery Fund did not see job entry as the key or indeed only criterion of success. MIW was much broader than this, with personal progress and overcoming barriers seen as equally valid outcomes.

Nevertheless, analysis of the five partnerships as a whole by Sheffield Hallam shows the cost per job outcomes and the overall percentage of parents moving into employment - 30 per cent - were broadly in line with those achieved by other employability programmes. Direct comparison with other programmes is difficult because of differing models. Nevertheless, this result is very impressive given the barriers which MIW participants faced and their distance from the labour market.

In addition, Sheffield Hallam estimate the economic value of MIW job outcomes to be £11.5 million accrued through savings to the public purse and resulting growth in the economy. The focus on a broader set of outcomes also had wider economic benefits. They estimate a further £3 million gained through improved social value accrued as the result of outcomes associated with improved health and wellbeing such increased confidence, autonomy and better emotional wellbeing.⁴

4 CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University (2017) Evaluation of Making it Work: An assessment of Impact and value for money, available at <http://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/reports>.

4. MIW Edinburgh participants: profiles and outcomes

Participant Profiles

The MIW model was designed to reach out to lone parents who were likely to be furthest away from the labour market and face multiple barriers to moving into employment. This chapter considers whether MIW Edinburgh reached these parents and some of the outcomes achieved.

The following data provides a snapshot of service users - the 32 who responded to a Sheffield Hallam online survey of those joining the Edinburgh Programme between 11 November 2013 and 31 March 2014.⁵

The survey revealed that all 32 respondents were women, 14 of whom were aged 25-34. Nineteen had one child and eight had two children. Seven respondents considered themselves to have a disability and five said their disability or illness limited their activities. Two indicated that they have caring responsibilities for someone who has a long standing illness or disability.

All respondents said they received social security benefits and lived in rented accommodation (18 in the private sector). Twenty one said the highest qualifications they have are Standard Grades and two said they have no qualifications.

Labour market experience

Seventeen respondents indicated that they were *'Not working and looking for work'* in the four weeks before they started on the programme. Twelve said they were *'Not working and not looking for work'*. Most (24) said that they have had a paid job at some point. Nineteen stated that this was more than one (but less than five) years ago, and four indicated that they have not had a paid job for five years or more. Most (26) said they had experience of applying for jobs, 18 had attended a job interview and 14 had taken up training.

The profile described in this brief snapshot is similar to that found for participants across Scotland and provides good evidence for MIW successfully reaching out to lone parents who face multiple barriers.⁶

Sheffield Hallam concluded that *"This data has confirmed that many lone parents face multiple and complex barriers, and that the MIW partnerships have been effective in engaging lone parents who are unlikely to have been engaged through mainstream provision."*⁷

5 CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University and SCER, University of Strathclyde (June 2014) Making it Work: Edinburgh Annual Report

6 CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University and SCER, University of Strathclyde (2017) Making it Work: Learning and Evaluation Contract Final Evaluation Report, available at <http://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/reports>

7 Ibid.

What changed for parents after their engagement with MIW?

Sheffield Hallam also conducted baseline and follow up surveys at six and 12 months after parents had been supported by the MIW programme, to assess the distance travelled and outcomes. They considered changes in:

- perception of barriers such as job and childcare availability
- moving into employment
- developing relevant skills such as writing a CV and performing well at interviews
- developing employment related capabilities such as improved confidence, being better able to manage feelings
- health and wellbeing (including changes in financial circumstances).

The follow up surveys found that in Edinburgh 35 per cent of MIW participants moved into work. Across MIW as a whole, 30 per cent of service users moved into employment.

The follow up surveys also found that most service users reported improvements against a range of these measures, especially after six months. Outcomes at 12 months were more mixed. However, as the researchers pointed out this is unsurprising since those who face the most challenging barriers, were most likely to remain engaged with the programme beyond six months. Specific data for the Edinburgh MIW programme show similar outcomes.⁸

⁸ Pg. 54, Appendix 1 Edinburgh survey data, CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University and SCER, University of Strathclyde (2017) Making it Work: Learning and Evaluation Contract Final Evaluation Report, available at <http://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/reports>

5. Single parents' stories: impact and legacy

All the parents who were interviewed had different stories to tell. They were referred through a variety of sources, faced different barriers, they received individual support and achieved many different outcomes - like moving into work, going to college, improving their confidence or volunteering in their communities. Nevertheless, there were many themes which recurred and the following story gives a flavour of the activities and support which MIW offered to lone parents.

J is single mother with two children and was referred to MIW Edinburgh through Job Centre Plus, whilst claiming Income Support. We asked J to tell us about the support she received through MIW.

J said her first priority was to find a job. She took part in a series of self-development and job preparation courses, all of which had childcare attached. She said the courses really boosted her confidence which helped with attending interviews and eventually, getting a job.

She quickly found work as a care worker supporting clients with disabilities. Her development worker helped to arrange childcare to enable her to take up the job offer, assisted with her benefits (including ensuring that she was getting the right amount of tax credits) and helped her to register on the waiting list for social housing.

Although her priority was to get a job, J described the support she received to deal with isolation and poor mental health as equally important. When she first contacted the service, she said that she was very isolated, having moved from elsewhere. She had previously received support from Shakti Women's Aid, which she had found invaluable, but this had been time limited. She said she was withdrawn, staying alone at home.

She said the group work gave her the chance to meet other single parents and make friends – some of whom are still friends now, after the closure of the programme. She said she also received one to one support from her development worker. She emphasised how important it was to have someone she felt she could phone when she was feeling low.

“Apart from the help you can always talk... There were times when I called and told her I am feeling somehow that everything that I have forgotten is coming back and during that chatting I would learn new things. Life is a learning process ... It's not just financial, the chatting really helped me.”

J explained that her development worker also introduced her to mindfulness practice as a tool to help reduce stress. J said she was surprised at how effective it was and still uses an online resource, when she feels very stressed.

Talking about some of the most important aspects of the support she received, she highlighted being given choices and one to one support.

“MIW helped me a lot, one of the parents I met told me ‘You are a strong woman!’ and I told her ‘I didn’t do it on my own. MIW helped me a lot. MIW helped me choose this, MIW helped me choose this..., because they are helping... with having somebody there, having an organisation that is supporting you, it takes your mind off things you don’t need to worry about any more’ ...”

J said her long term aim to train as a nurse. Her development worker had advised her about this and had assisted her with her college application. She had made two separate applications and been accepted both times. However, she had to turn down both offers because she found it impossible to arrange childcare to fit in with the course. Finding childcare was really hard because one child was in nursery and the another in school, so she needed flexible and pre and afterschool childcare to manage her attendance. She said she was still determined to go to college but was resigned to having to wait until both children were in school when she hoped arranging childcare would be easier.

Difficulties with accessing flexible childcare was causing her ongoing problems with her work. Her agency had recently threatened her with the sack because she had been unable to fulfil her 16 hrs per week contract for three weeks, due to lack of childcare. She also had problems with tax credit overpayments, very high heating bills and was still living in temporary accommodation after four years.

We asked J about the impact of the closure of MIW

“Some of those single mothers, it’s really going to affect them a lot just like its affecting me because I really need their help and they are not there! I need their help with tax credits and even the housing...Some of them are not speaking up just like I was myself before ... just accepting what they have but if they could just come out a bit they will be able to express what they need to say.”

We asked if you could design the prefect replacement project how would it work?

“It would work just like MIW. It was a great support in every way. I would encourage it and give it 100 per cent” She said it should be specifically for single parents *“because I know what I go through on my own and you can meet other single parents”*

All the parents who took part in interviews and the group discussion were very positive indeed about the support they had received and the impact that their engagement with MIW, had on their families lives.

Common themes were the importance of being able to make choices and direct their own journey towards employment, in contrast to their experiences of mandatory DWP programmes. They especially valued the intensive, tailored, one to one support (both practical and emotional) provided by development workers.

Improvements in health and wellbeing - like greater self confidence and self-esteem, better emotional wellbeing and better self-efficacy were also common themes. These were often linked to the support they received from development workers and opportunities to meet and interact with other lone parents, to form new friendships and develop peer support networks.

Some parents also highlighted that childcare provision on the premises, in a supportive and friendly environment, gave them (and their children) the confidence to try out childcare for the first time, an essential first step on their journey to employment.

Legacy

MIW Edinburgh leaves a lasting legacy. The most important aspect being the impact on the lives of parents, like J, who found that engaging in the programme empowered them to make positive changes in their lives.

J's story described earlier, points to the need for continuing 'in work' support for some parents to help them sustain employment and progress toward longer term goals. As part of the winding up of MIW, over one hundred previous service users (including J) who had moved into work, were contacted to ascertain if they needed further support. The response rate was around 15 per cent. Additional services were provided to those who sought this, with the key issues being managing debt and finding the time and support to move beyond entry level jobs.

Building social capital and influencing policy

As well as supporting individuals, MIW has also impacted in positive ways on communities, through building social capital and influencing policy.

Muirhouse Minis, located at Muirhouse Millennium Centre, is a mother and toddlers group run by two mothers who were referred to MIW North Edinburgh by Jobcentre Plus. Recognising the lack of provision within their own community, the two mothers set up the group on a voluntary basis with support from their development worker and resources donated by the local community.

'Minis' offers weekly sessions which have flourished. The sessions help to build confidence, reduce isolation, and increase personal capacity. They enhance toddlers early learning and interaction and contribute overall to family well-being.

In North Edinburgh, a group of parents also broadened out their activities to campaign on issues affecting their lives as single parents. They focused especially on the difficulty in finding and sustaining work and the devastating impact of homelessness caused by the benefit cap. In the course of their campaign members of the group found the confidence and developed the skills to make public speeches and to take part in film making, activities which many people would find quite daunting.⁹

“My name is G., I have two daughters and try to provide everything I can for them. I apply for up to 20 jobs a week but struggle with childcare as do most of us... I took part in making film about the reality of trying work while you’re a lone parent, it was shown over several venues in the local area and had a great response from local councillors. I have supported families facing homelessness or who are already homeless by attending a deputation at the City Chambers and meeting an MSP at the Scottish parliament. I am a strongminded person who is not frightened to speak up for my friends and their children...”

Single parent campaigner

“I heard one of the young women give a speech about her experiences as a single mum at the closing celebration. She was great, a very powerful speaker. It was clear to me that we were not just helping individuals... supporting them to develop the skills and confidence to progress into employment, but that we were also building social capital.”

Partnership member.

The networks and relationships which were built up during MIW in North Edinburgh also formed the basis for a new, independent project - Low Income Families Together (LIFT), located at Muirhouse Millennium Centre. The ethos and aims of LIFT very much draws on the MIW model. It is managed by the former MIW development worker and a core group of participants, who developed their skills and confidence through, are now either working or volunteering with LIFT.

9 Parents took part in the STV documentary Scotland’s Hidden Homelessness.



“If you tell parent you’ve got to take a job, any job and you just push and threaten them obviously it’s not to going to work because if they have barriers they need help to overcome, all the bullying in the world won’t work.”

6. MIW delivery: successes and challenges

Outcomes for parents

Interviews with both front line staff and partners demonstrated a high level of commitment to the ethos of co-production. When asked what was the most important element in delivering the good outcomes reported by both parents and external evaluators, they said empowering parents, focusing on their issues and aspirations and giving them choice and agency, rather than prescriptive, mandatory and standardised approaches.

“The main thing was that we could support parents in the way they wanted. There were targets of course, but there was never any pressure to meet them. It was always about asking parents about what their needs were.”

Frontline staff member

“The starting point was always what parents came to you with. Whilst there was an employability focus, there was also very much a family support approach. It was about working with parents on what they came with and self-identified. It was not about saying ‘Yes, I appreciate you have a problem with housing but I’m not here to solve that’.”

Partnership member

“If you tell parent you’ve got to take a job, any job and you just push and threaten them obviously it’s not to going to work because if they have barriers they need help to overcome, all the bullying in the world won’t work. But if you say to a parent how do you want to improve your life for yourself and your kids then they are going to engage with that because at the end of the day everyone wants a better life for their kids don’t they? Everyone can relate to that.”

Frontline staff member

One partnership member commented that having excellent front line staff was critically important. *“Front line staff were committed to this approach, they were empathetic and they understood the wider social and political context of the work, all of which was key to the success of the project.”*

Other key factors highlighted by staff and/or partners were:

- the strong commitment from the Big Lottery towards the co-production ethos
- that the model design was evidence based and developed in collaboration with organisations which had extensive expertise in this area
- the focus on community based delivery
- that the management framework included of targets not only employability but equally, skills and capabilities and wellbeing
- the opportunity to build peer support networks and break down isolation and
- that the access criteria were not overly restrictive in terms of client profiles or geographic areas.

Innovation and community engagement

The Edinburgh MIW Partnership was committed to developing a genuinely co-produced, holistic and accessible service for parents. Initially partners had envisaged that host organisations in the community would employ the new development workers so that they would be embedded in those teams. None of the partners would be directly engaged in direct service delivery.

Ultimately, however, it was agreed that there should be a single employer to enable consistency in terms management and conditions of employment for staff. The dispersed model based across the diverse host agencies was implemented and managed through service level agreements with each.

This structure had both benefits and challenges. On the plus side, developing a completely new MIW organisation with a progressive ethos and a commitment to learning from what works meant that staff had a high level of autonomy and agency.

“The freedom to just go ahead and develop a project from scratch and being trusted to do that... that was fantastic.”

Frontline staff member

Staff commented that they were able to experiment with different approaches and adapt to parents needs and local conditions. As a result, although each location developed somewhat differently depending on parents, staff and local conditions, outcomes for parents were of a high standard across all locations.

One staff member commented on how she appreciated the opportunity to access training in coaching skills which she said enabled her to develop more effective support for parents. Others developed in different directions, for example, focusing on group work which had positive outcomes for both individual service users and wider impacts within the local community as discussed above.

One partner commented that there were differences in how the programme's presence impacted on the various host organisations. In the two community centres it had a marked impact. MIW brought new families into the centres and in some instances, as described above parents went on to volunteer at the community centre and develop new services. In contrast, there was less crossover in the employability hub. Another partner stated that this was disappointing as co-location in an employability hub could have resulted in more collaboration and sharing of good practice.

Managing demand

The focus on flexible, client led, individual support in combination with staff working on their own in dispersed locations was challenging and staff sometimes felt overwhelmed.

"You are there to break down barriers but there are loads of barriers...We were trying to do everything. Drug issues, homelessness. Doing a job of 10 people. You could be at the DWP in the morning and helping someone with an alcohol problem in the afternoon. That was very difficult to manage."

Frontline staff member

This was exacerbated when the project manager had a long-term absence. The situation was eased somewhat when CCP put in place more consistent support and engaged external support to work with team on sharing practice and learning from each other.

Staff felt that additional training and support in the earlier part of the programme would have enabled them to manage the high levels of demand and the challenges of supporting clients who were sometimes dealing with very distressing personal and family issues. Some also commented that building in more formal opportunities for peer support across the dispersed team would have helped. This would help engender an ethos that gave guaranteed space for staff welfare and avoid a pressurised culture of having to meet client demand and needs all the time.

Referrals and specialist support

The front line staff all developed strong working relationships with local agencies including welfare and housing advice, where they referred clients in need of specialist services. One team member commented on the importance of appropriate referral mechanisms.

“I made strong links with agencies like Bethany who provide homelessness advice and the local welfare advice workers. That gave me confidence ...and it was important for parents. If you say Jean will help you with your benefits, I know her, she’s nice, people will go. If you just say here’s a phone number and tell them to make an appointment, nothing happens.”

Frontline staff member

Staff commented that dealing with welfare issues, and their distressing impacts on lone parent families at a time of rapid change, including rising numbers of sanctions and the introduction the benefit cap was particularly challenging.

Resources were a critical issue and one staff member commented that in her area there was a two to three week waiting list for welfare benefits advice. For parents, facing homelessness or without money to live on, that was too long, so she had to intervene in the meantime.

These issues are of course, not unique to this model. There are inevitably tensions involved in aiming to provide a holistic, client centred service within limited resources, but these become more acute when staff are working as individually in diverse locations.

“I certainly accept that the front end it needed to be a generalist service but when someone comes in ‘Here’s the letter I got about the benefit cap and discretionary housing payments’, if you ask staff to commit fully inevitably they are going to commit fully and get embroiled in all of that and become quite knowledgeableand in an ideal word if you had a bigger project ... if you were designing it from scratch... you would have ready access to all the experts you needed and pull those folk into the team.”

Partnership member

“I don’t know if there was enough capacity built into the model, I know there was a project manager and staff but ... but to actually allow for there to be really effective working as a team. ... I think if you want to make that sort of model work effectively you have look at the resource that needs to go into the host organisation to enable them to be able to participate fully.”

Partnership member

Partnership development and support

In addition to providing advice, guidance and strategic oversight of the programme, partners engaged in activities to support the programme on the ground, to influence policy and to promote good practice and learning. These included hosting a City of Edinburgh Council seminar to promote the model and disseminate learning; producing an impact statement, providing helpline support and welfare benefits training for staff and hosting a celebration event to mark the end of the project.

“When we started looking at it in 2011 things were very much better than they are now. We almost got the model right but not quite. If we had known what was coming, we might have done some things differently ...It is not a criticism because we couldn’t see the future. Things were bad enough for the cohort we wanted to support then. We didn’t realise how bad things were going to get In terms of social welfare.”

Partnership member

Childcare

Providing access to and funding for transitional childcare was essential to the good outcomes for participants and the success of MIW. It played a critical role in enabling parents to take up group work, training activities, undertake voluntary work, gain work experience and move into education. Childcare provision on the premises, in a supportive environment also gave many parents (and their children), the confidence to try out childcare for the first time.

In addition to this bespoke provision, the Scottish Child Minding Association (SCMA) aimed to enhance employment and increase childcare in the areas of poor provision, through offering support and training to enable MIW participants to become local childcare providers. However, few parents were recruited, and SCMA left the partnership part way through the programme.

Staff and partners both offered views on why this aspect of programme had not worked as well as had been envisaged and expressed concerns that many MIW participants were too far away from the labour market to make the leap into self-employment. One partnership member stated that, in addition, it didn’t really fit with the overall ethos, which was about offering parents’ choice rather than suggesting career paths.

Another partner stated that perhaps a much more radical approach might have suited the programme better. For example, supporting parents set up collective enterprises like cooperatives so that burdens and responsibilities were shared and parents were not isolated at home.



“Providing access to, and funding for, transitional childcare was essential to the good outcomes for participants and the success of MIW.”

Learning points

The experience of MIW Edinburgh shows that the MIW model resulted in good outcomes for single parents - in employment, progression towards employment and improved health and wellbeing - despite considerable challenges. These successes and challenges, offer useful learning opportunities for future commissioning and programme design and delivery.

Whilst embedding dispersed, individual staff in community settings enabled the programme to reach out to vulnerable parents, it also meant there was a much greater need for staff training and support.

In addition, pressures on front line staff and the programme as a whole, were intensified by a rapidly changing policy and legislative landscape. The impact of the rising numbers of benefit sanctions (and towards the end of programme, the benefit cap) especially had a very negative impact on many service users and consequently on the programme.

These stresses meant that there was an increased the need for good communication. To ensure that partners could take appropriate strategic responses to changing circumstances, there was need for them to be kept apprised of changes on the ground. Equally, to ensure that staff had the best practice and evidence available to support their work, they needed to be kept up to date with policy and practice developments and across the range of areas of expertise which partners brought to the programme.

Wider policy and practice

It should be borne in mind that some of the challenges discussed in this section point to the need for wider strategies to support single parents. J's story provides an instructive example. Despite progressing into work, she has difficulties in sustaining employment due to, amongst other things, a lack of appropriate childcare and good quality, well paid employment; she also faces ongoing 'in-work' poverty, inadequate welfare benefit support and a lack of affordable housing. Whilst she has ambitions to move in to better quality employment, similar barriers prevent her from taking up the education she needs to move towards realising her potential.

Many of these barriers are the consequence of fundamental inequalities in access to the labour market and public services. So, even the most successful holistic approach to employability can only provide partial solutions. Whilst it is important to understand the challenges which MIW faced, it is equally important to appreciate the limitations of what employability services like MIW can achieve, unless they form part of wider strategies to address fundamental inequalities.

7. The policy context and future opportunities

Historically, Women onto Work (WOW), although not a lone parent-specific service, had provided some employability support to single parents in Edinburgh. Unfortunately, WOW closed in 2015, and since the closure of MIW in August 2017, there has been no substantial replacement programme providing single parent specific employability services in the city.

All the partnership representatives, staff and service users interviewed wanted to see the development of services which would continue to provide good outcomes and support for single parents.

Partners highlighted the learning opportunities which MIW provided. One stressed that there was a need for the learning from MIW to be cascaded to mainstream employability and family services. Given the good outcomes in relation to improved health and wellbeing, there were important lessons for the health services especially.

One partner commented that services should include in-work support for lone parents - support with the transition in to employment and help to progress, once they are in work.

Another noted a need for better engagement with corporate employers. For example, learning from programmes like the previous 'Marks and Starts' in Glasgow, where OPFS in partnership with Gingerbread (England & Wales) and Marks and Spencer, ran a very successful four year lone parent job taster scheme, which resulted in good numbers of job starts for participants.

Another partner commented that the co-production model, where parents are empowered to map out their own journeys to work, and the evidence for good outcomes from this approach, could provide a useful model for developing a more effective DWP claimant commitment for benefit claimants.

One partner said that following the closure MIW, there was an urgent need for targeted lone parent provision within Edinburgh.

"Simply because the need is great... (across the board) doesn't mean you shouldn't have a focus on single parents ... we need to work with single parents because they are twice as likely to be in poverty...and the difficulty with broadening it out is that there are very special circumstances which apply to single parents like very different rules around benefits and conditionality..."

Partners identified several wider strategies, whose ambitions and aims provide future opportunities for development. These are discussed in more detail in the following section below

Fair Start

From April 2018, the newly devolved Scottish employability support service, Fair Start, will be rolled out. The Scottish Government has described the key principles which will underpin this new service in *Creating a Fairer Scotland: A New Future for Employability Support in Scotland*.¹⁰ These are that employability services should be:

- designed nationally but adapted and delivered locally
- designed and delivered in partnership
- offer a flexible, tailored, ‘whole person’ approach
- responsive to those with high needs
- involve a drive towards real jobs
- funded to support job outcomes and progression towards work.

While the commissioning framework is now in place, there remains scope to influence the design and delivery of services on the ground. As Sheffield Hallam have pointed out, these principles are closely aligned with the ethos of MIW – so there is much to be learned from the successes of – and challenges encountered – by MIW.¹¹

Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017¹² sets out targets to reduce child poverty in Scotland and requires Ministers to set out a national child poverty action plan describing what they will do to meet those targets.

Section 9(3) states the national plan “*must, in particular, set out what (if any) measures the Scottish Ministers propose to take in relation to: (j) children living in single-parent households*”

The statistics on child poverty make the case for action to support lone parents clear. In Scotland 31 per cent of single parent families were living in poverty in 2014 /15, almost double the 16 per cent of couple families in poverty. There have also been sharp rises in the rate of poverty in lone parent families over the last two reported years.¹³

10 Scottish Government (2016) *Creating a Fairer Scotland: A New Future for Employability Support in Scotland* <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00498123.pdf>

11 CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University and SCER, University of Strathclyde (2017) *Outcomes from Making It Work – Lessons and Challenges for Scotland’s Future Employability Services*, available at <http://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/reports>

12 Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2017/6/crossheading/delivery-plans-and-progress-reports/enacted?view=interweave>

13 Scottish Government, *Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland: 2015/16* <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/03/2213/6>

“(g) the availability and affordability of childcare and the facilitation of— (i) the employment of parents (with remuneration that is sufficient to secure an adequate standard of living), and (ii) the development of the employment-related skills of parents”

These are all areas where single parent families experience greater barriers than couple families, and where the MIW Programme has shown to provide significant benefits.

“(b) children living in households whose income is adversely affected, or whose expenditure is increased, because a member of the household has one or more protected characteristics,”

Over 90 per cent of single parent families are headed by women and evidence shows that single parents have been disproportionately and adversely impacted by social security changes. For example, recent research revealed that changes in universal credit entitlements from 2013 to 2020 will see single parent families lose £2,380 per year compared to couple families - who will lose £160 per year over the same period.¹⁴

(k) arrangements for setting the amount of the revenue support grant payable to each local authority in order to ensure that resources are directed for the purpose of contributing to the meeting of the child poverty targets.

The Act also places a duty on each Local Authority and each relevant Health Board to produce local child poverty action plans and reports. These must set out what each will do to contribute to meeting the child poverty targets and report on progress.

Single parents face multiple barriers to employment, are almost twice as likely to be in poverty as two parent families, they suffer economic penalties as single parents and the vast majority face gender inequality. Therefore, to make progress on the child poverty targets there is a need, at both a national and local level, to prioritise services which can effectively support single parents to move towards and enter into good quality employment.

¹⁴ Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), The Austerity Generation <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/austerity-generation-promise-greater-rewards-work-broken-under-universal-credit-families-chi>

Edinburgh Economy Strategy

The Edinburgh Economy Strategy sets out actions to be taken by the Council and partners over the next five years to help deliver good growth for everyone in Edinburgh. These are summarised in a ten point plan and point four is to “*Deliver new approaches to tackling the barriers that reinforce worklessness, poverty, and inequality*” including “*Piloting a multi-agency Intensive Family Support Service*”¹⁵

As described above, to tackle *the barriers that reinforce worklessness, poverty, and inequality* therefore, there is a need to prioritise services which can affectively support single parents when designing and delivering the new intensive family support services.

¹⁵ Edinburgh City Council, Edinburgh Economy Strategy, January 2018, http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/news/article/2419/a_strategy_to_tackle_poverty_and_inequality_in_edinburgh

Other City of Edinburgh Council strategies

City of Edinburgh Council, Council and democracy, Proposals - improve quality of life

These include a priority to ‘support vulnerable children and their families’ and ‘develop personalised, joined up and preventative services’¹⁶

Edinburgh Children’s Services Plan 2017 to 2020

Strategic Outcome 4 of the Children Services Plan¹⁷ states that *Equity amongst children and young people and their families will be advanced.*

The success of MIW, in terms of outcomes for parents and in reaching vulnerable families, suggests that targeting funding and direct support to single parents seeking work, education or training would be an important route to meeting the objectives in both the Council democracy proposals and the Children’s Services Plan.

The Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Region Deal

The Edinburgh City Region Deal is an agreement between the Scottish Government, the UK Government, and regional partners. Collectively, they have committed to an of investment over £1.1bn over the next 15 years.

Their heads of terms agreement states

“A key driver for the investment in this deal is the opportunity to address inclusion across the region. Prosperity and success is not universal ...: 21 per cent of children are living in poverty; there is a lack of ... affordable housing; and too many people are unable to move on from low wage/ low skill jobs. The deal will address these issues, create new economic opportunities, and is expected to provide up to 21,000 new jobs.”¹⁸

Again, to effectively tackle child poverty and support people to move on from low/ wage low skill jobs, measures targeted at single parents should be part of these initiatives. The City Deal offers an ideal opportunity to make investment choices focused on these measures.

¹⁶ [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20004/council_and_democracy/1354/proposals - improve quality of life](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20004/council_and_democracy/1354/proposals_-_improve_quality_of_life)

¹⁷ The Edinburgh Children’s Partnership Children’s Services Plan 2017 to 2020 <http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/childrensservicesplan>

¹⁸ UK Government (2017) City Deal: Heads of Terms for Edinburgh and South East Scotland <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/city-deal-heads-of-terms-for-edinburgh-and-south-east-scotland>

8. Conclusions

This evaluation found that Edinburgh MIW achieved good outcomes for single parents who faced multiple barriers to progressing into work. Qualitative evidence was exceptionally good - all the parents who took part in interviews and the discussion were very positive about the support they had received and the impact that their engagement with Edinburgh MIW had on their families' lives.

In terms of delivery, Edinburgh MIW took a committed and quite radical approach, developing a model which required innovative partnership building and service delivery. The resulting programme was very much embedded in local communities and this gave opportunities to develop innovative practice which contributed to the success of the programme.

MIW Edinburgh also faced challenges, not least as a result of wider political and social changes, during the lifetime of the programme. In particular, the rising number of benefit sanctions imposed on parents and, towards the later part of the programme, the introduction of the benefit cap which had an extremely negative impact on the lives of many of the families engaged in MIW. Given the resources available, this resulted in additional pressure on staff and the programme as a whole.

It should be borne in mind that many of the challenges discussed in this report point to the need for wider strategies to support single parents. Many of the barriers which single parents face are the consequence of fundamental inequalities in access to the labour market and public services. In this context, it is important to appreciate the limitations of what employability services like MIW can achieve, unless they form part of wider strategies to address fundamental inequalities.

Despite these challenges however, the evidence clearly shows that Edinburgh MIW was successful in meeting, and indeed exceeding, specific targets and the wider aims and objectives. MIW Edinburgh was successful in getting 35 per cent of participants into employment. But equally as important, the programme also helped parents engage with activities, like personal development, volunteering and training which are likely to help them move into sustainable employment in future. Significantly, many parents highlighted the positive health and wellbeing impacts of participating.

In terms of employment outcomes, MIW performed as well as many other employability programmes, which is particularly impressive given that the evidence also suggests that MIW was successful in reaching parents who were some distance from the labour market. Equally impressive, given the emphasis on intensive one to one support, is the fact that MIW costs per job outcome were similar (and indeed less in some cases) to several other employability programmes. The potential wider social value impact also suggests significant additional financial benefits.

Currently, following the closure of MIW, there is little targeted employability support for single parents in Edinburgh. At the same time there are several policy and legislative frameworks, both local and national, whose aims and objectives could be supported through the provision of such services. To effectively tackle child poverty, and the barriers that reinforce poverty and inequality more widely, there is a need to prioritise services which effectively support single parents to progress towards and into good quality employment and meets their aspirations for themselves and their families. The successes and lessons learned by MIW Edinburgh provide good evidence about how to achieve these goals.

“It was clear to me that we were not just helping individuals...supporting them to develop the skills and confidence to progress into employment, but that we were also building social capital.”



9. Considerations for future provision

Design and Delivery

Future design and delivery should be evidence based, including drawing on lessons and good practice from MIW. Both the qualitative and quantitative evidence shows that MIW achieved good outcomes for single parents who faced multiple barriers to progressing into work. Important factors in achieving these outcomes were:

- the strong commitment to empowering single parents to map out their own journey to employment, focusing on their aspirations and giving them choice
- the one to one tailored, pre- and post-employment, intensive support provided by development workers
- the availability of bespoke childcare to enable parents to engage in MIW activities
- the opportunities for single parents to develop peer support networks, break down isolation and build social capital
- the focus on community based delivery enabling MIW to effectively reach lone parents who were less likely to come into contact with mainstream services
- the partnership delivery which facilitated the provision of a holistic service able to respond to parent's needs
- a management framework which included targets not only for employability but equally, skills and capabilities and wellbeing
- delivery by trusted organisation(s) with a track record in community based delivery and experience and understanding of the barriers and issues facing single parents.

Additional factors which would support future programmes to be more resilient include:

- early upfront and regular training for front line staff
- a strong emphasis on regular formal (and informal) and opportunities for front line staff to seek appropriate support in relation to difficult and distressing cases
- clear guidance on referral protocols for staff, particularly in relation to complex and/or distressing case work
- while maintaining the key worker model, sufficient staff resources so that expertise, especially within critical areas, is available within the programme team - facilitating both referrals and knowledge and skill sharing within the team

- clear channels of communication between partnership members and the staff team including:
 - structures which facilitate channels for staff to feed emerging social policy issues to partners (e.g. systems of regular social policy evidence gathering and reporting) and
 - procedures for ensuring that staff teams are updated on relevant policy, practice and evidence on a regular basis.

Planning and commissioning

The good practice and learning from MIW Edinburgh should be integrated into wider employability provision, including the Scottish Government Fair Start programme.

As part of the national Child Poverty Plan, the Scottish Government should set out measures and appropriate resources for Local Authorities and other stakeholders to support single parents to progress towards and enter sustainable employment.

The City of Edinburgh Council and NHS Lothian should, as part of their joint duties to produce a Child Poverty Plan, set aside adequate resources to fund and deliver targeted employability support to single parents.

As part of the Edinburgh Economy Strategy, the City of Edinburgh Council and partners should prioritise services which can affectively support single parents, when designing and delivering the new intensive family support services.

To progress the City of Edinburgh's Children Services Plan (particularly Strategic Outcome 4), the City of Edinburgh Council should look to fund and deliver holistic services which address the many barriers keeping single parents from finding and sustaining paid work.

To progress their Council and democracy proposals to 'support vulnerable children and their families' and 'develop personalised, joined up and preventative services' the City of Edinburgh should target funding at direct services for single parents seeking work, education or training.

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