

# **Evaluation of the Choose Work scheme on behalf of Chichester in Partnership**

Version 1.2

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## **Document Control**

# **Summary of changes**

This section records the history of significant changes to this document. Only the most significant changes are described here.

Version	Date	Author	Description of change
0.1	10.02.2014	R Warwick	Report framework
1.0	13.02.2014	R Warwick	First draft
1.1	17.02.2014	R Warwick	Internal review by Dr Michel Leseure
1.2	26.02.2014	R Warwick	Changes following meeting with Amy Loaring, CDC

Where significant changes are made to this document, the version number will be incremented by 1.0.

Where changes are made for clarity and reading ease only and no change is made to the meaning or intention of this document, the version number will be increased by 0.1.

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

A Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) report (Hasluck & Green, 2007) on previous work programmes states that:

Customers often face several interrelated factors that make it difficult for them to take up employment. ... The evidence points to the need for holistic approach rather than a one-dimensional approach to provision (p3).

It is clear the Choose Work Programme has been effective in providing an holistic approach to enabling people into work. Each individual is treated as such with attention given to finding out their hopes and aspirations and the challenges they face on the way. These challenges can be numerous and not immediately apparent.

The strength of the Programme lies in the flexibility and the time taken throughout the Programme to address these challenges and actively engaging with employers to find the most appropriate placement.

The Choose Work Coordinator is dedicated and enthusiastic, providing an individual service for both the customer and the work placement provider thus providing substantive personalisation from beginning to end.

As is often the case with successful small scale initiatives care needs to be taken when considering replicating the model elsewhere. It can be seen from an additional project currently being rolled out in Selsey that valuable learning from the Choose Work Programme is being considered and the service tailored to the distinctive needs to the area.

# 2.0 The Choose Work Programme

#### **2.1 Aims**

The Choose Work Programme was initially aimed at 18 to 24-year-olds with the objective of enabling them to obtain work experience they need to secure employment (Chichester in Partnership, 2012a). This is achieved by offering them work placements lasting between 2 to 8 weeks, whilst allowing them to receive benefits. It is understood that since the Programme started the age range of participants has increased.

The Programme became operational in January 2013 and is due to complete in January 2015.

## 2.2 Context of the Programme

#### 2.2.1 Unemployment in the Chichester area

Unemployment in Chichester District has traditionally been low. However between January 2006 and January 2010 Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants, an indicator of unemployment, increased from 900 to 1690 (Chichester in Partnership, 2012a) (Chichester

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in Partnership, 2012b) although as of December 2013<sup>1</sup> this figure stands at 955 (Office National Statistics, 2014).

In terms of the bigger picture the Institute of Fiscal Studies reported in 2011/12 that the UK spent over £200bn on social security benefits amounting to £3,324 per person, or 13.5% of GDP (Browne & Hood, 2012).

When it comes to Job Seekers Allowance alone, which amounts to only 2% of benefits and tax credit expenditure, this comes to £4.175bn. This works out as an annual cost of £3,482 per JSA claimant<sup>2</sup>.

Customers who use this programme face a number of barriers both as individuals and in the workplace: the former relating to lack of confidence, mental health and an image of 'worthlessness'; and, the latter relating to the cycle of no job without experience but one can't get experience without a job. The Programme therefore aims to break the cycle and to give participants confidence and support.

## 2.2.2 Choose Work service provision

With employer on costs the Programme comes to £11,880pa. This provides 16 hours per week. It is understood that this will shortly be increased to support underfunded provision in terms of coaching (see figure 1).

#### 2.3 Benefits and outcome measures

#### 2.3.1 Benefits

The council has identified a number of benefits of the Programme focused on the participants themselves, the local economy, Chichester District Council (CDC), and partner organisations (Chichester in Partnership, 2012a).

#### 2.3.2 Outcome measures

Outcome measures listed were (Chichester in Partnership, 2012a):

- within the first year
  - CDC offering 15 work experience placements who have been unemployed for less than 12 months
  - 25 young people supported into a work experience placement
  - o recruiting five local businesses (offering a minimum of two basements each)
- thereafter
  - 15 placements the year and work experience in ethos embedded into the council's culture
  - o a further 20 local businesses offering to placements the year

Since January 2014 these targets have been increased in line with additional resources dedicated to the programme.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The latest month for which figures are available.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Based on 1,199,000 claimants (Browne & Hood, 2012, p. 5)

## 3.0 Objective of the review

This short review aims to provide: 1) learning that could be applied whilst the project is still in progress; and 2) some early insights of overall project benefits.

#### This will include:

- A review of the job seeker's experience of the Programme and how this has affected their ability to move into work.
- Features of the Programme that enabled the above to occur. In other words, what
  the participants valued, or indeed were frustrated with, that affected their ability to
  find employment.
- Interfaces between this Programme and other work Programme initiatives.

The review will not include the cost effectiveness or other quantification of the initiative's outcomes, see appendix 2.

## 4.0 How the review was carried out

The following formed the approach to the review:

- A targeted review of the literature on work programmes, particularly research reports commissioned by the Department of Work and Pensions (and those cited by them).
   This offered a comparative context for evaluation.
- Interviews to evaluate the process undertaken and the interaction with participants and employers. This provided primary evidence of how the Programme was running, see appendix 3 for Question Set. Those interviewed on 10<sup>th</sup> February, 2014 were:
  - Steve Hill, Work Experience Co-ordinator, Economic Development (Partnership Projects), Chichester District Council.
  - Hierlei Edwards, Grant Funding Provision Adviser, Department for Work and Pensions.
- Assessment of the regular reports that were carried out as part of the Programme.
   This provided a 'real time' view of how the programme was running.
- Assessment of the narratives of the individuals who in the Programme. This
  provided a perspective of the customer's view of the programme, see appendix 1.

Due to the constraints of this review face-to-face interviews with participants was not possible.

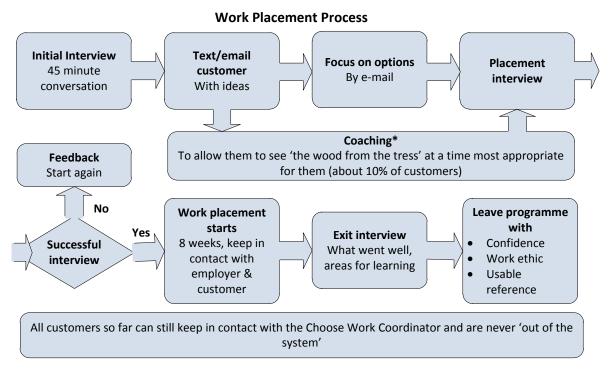
Given the relatively low numbers of people on the Programme so far no conclusions could be drawn on the breakdown of customers who used the service.

# 5.0 What is involved in the Choose Work Programme

Each customer would expect a highly personalised service that would start with the work placement coordinator getting to know the individual, including the hopes and dreams and the nature of any constraints. The following chart describes a 'process' that a typical customer might expect, see figure 1.

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Figure 1



\*Currently under-funded

Although this might indicate a rigid flow this is far from the case with customers' needs being individually catered for as can be seen in the narratives in appendix 1.

This process is enabled by developing relationships with work placement employers in the local vicinity.

# 6.0 Findings

## 6.1 The data

In the context of 995 people in the Chichester area receiving Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) from the start of the Programme in January 2013<sup>3</sup>:

- 49 people have officially been on the Programme.
- c120 people have had some form of interaction with the Choose Work Coordinator, this might take the form of an informal meeting or telephone and email support
- 71% are now off benefits
  - o 23 have found work
  - o 12 are not claiming benefits
  - o 14 are still claiming benefits
- 47% of people having found a permanent job.
- 30 companies having been involved offering work placements

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Source: Choose Work Coordinator and CDC Policy Officer, February 2014

16 hours per week Choose Work Coordinator

These figures have met or exceeded benefits listed in the business case (Chichester in Partnership, 2012a).

## 6.2 The customer, their needs and how these are responded to

There is no typical profile of a Choose Work customer, people range from those with degrees to others with literacy and numeracy problems. Customers also presented with a range of health problems from autism to motor neuron disease (MND); whilst others presented with low confidence from being out of the job market for a number of years. Other reasons include caring responsibilities, broken relationships, previous poor career advice as well as troubled backgrounds and may not immediately be apparent<sup>4</sup>.

Considerable effort is placed upon finding out what customers wants to do with their lives and to understand difficulties and problems, this forms the focus of initial consultations. Occasionally problems only become apparent further into the process including at least one whilst on work placement. Appendix 1 gives a range of the types of people involved in the Programme, how they were helped.

An important element that customers' value is the coaching and support that they receive. There is considerable variance in the length and nature of this coaching support, sometimes only becoming apparent when an issue arises that the co-ordinator or even the customer was unaware of. This element, as shown in Figure 1, has been largely underfunded, a situation that is being addressed as of January 2014. Sensibly this will broaden the nature of the coaching to group coaching and peer to peer support.

In a 2011 Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) qualitative research report into the Department's own work programme (Newton, et al., 2011, p. 101) personalisation was seen as critical. In the report they distinguish between two forms of personalisation: procedural and substantial. The former referring to a selection of pathways and interventions customer may be pointed to after discussions with officials. The latter being an intervention tailored directly to the individual's needs, for example advice and support that match the goals and aspirations of individuals and support addressing individual needs. In the DWP study the *substantial personalisation* approaches were focused on those with more complex needs whilst the rest were grouped according to broad categories. The report states that: '... advisers regretted that they were not able to provide more opportunities for specific training to meet individual needs' (Newton, et al., 2011, p. 102). This is in contrast this with the Choose Work Programme where all participants receive a substantial degree of personalisation.

Although, as figure 1 indicates, there is a broad process each customer is treated as an individual. Care is taken from the start to understand hopes and aspirations as well as constraining factors and to match these to a suitable work placement role.

In a research article on the role of welfare and work programmes as a route out of poverty the author (Newman, 2011) stresses the importance of empowering unemployed people to shape and develop their progress into work including skills and career progression. The nature of the personalisation and active involvement of the customer in the Choose Work

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> See JP case study. Appendix 1

Programme would indicate that it has been effective in increasing employability, confidence and motivation. This was evidenced discussions with the Choose Work Coordinator and from the accounts of people who have been through the Programme, see appendix 1.

Typically customers are recruited directly from the local Job Centre where the Choose Work Coordinator has built up a number of effective relationships. Whilst this accounts for approximately 80% of referrals proactive steps have also been taken to identify people who would benefit from the Programme from the Register of Social Landlords, Chichester College, the Council's magazine and website as well as word-of-mouth.

## 6.3 Work placement employers

So far 30 employers have been involved from sectors that include filmmaking, music, car maintenance, museums, agriculture, conservation, hair and beauty as well as Chichester District Council itself. This has been based upon developing proactive relationships with employers and drawing on informal networks.

The building up of effective relationships with employers has previously found to be challenging with Job Centre staff being reluctant to take on this role (Hasluck & Green, 2007, p. 4). These relationships are not straightforward particularly for smaller organisations, whereby problematic placements affect future possibilities requiring a further build-up of trust and confidence. It is understood that this is complicated further, from an employer's perspective, by the number and range of programmes seeking work experience (ranging from work programmes to education).

## 6.4 Constraints and scalability

The success of the Choose Work Programme is based largely in part to the enthusiasm and dedication of the Choose Work Coordinator who has a personal drive to 'treat people as people' and is of the view that once a person has had an involvement with the Programme that they are a part of it is the life. This personal enthusiasm is obviously to be welcomed and nurtured. However such personal dedication can be rare and may be an important constraint should the scheme be replicated on a large scale, for example nationally or superregionally, that said this is not a unique position the small and successful programmes.

It is understood that a similar programme this been instigated in Selsey, an area of local deprivation, with a similar *modus operandi* that will also include also business development and a number of pop-up shops. This approach to tailored incremental programme development, paying attention to previous experience and how these are to be reconciled with specific local needs, is to be welcomed.

#### 6.5 Interfaces beyond the Programme

Key interfaces with the Choose Work Programme includes the local Job Centre (and DWP) and local employers.

As previously stated relationships seem to be effective at a personal level between the Choose Work Coordinator and Job Centre staff as well as DWP management. It is clear that the constraints on some DWP programmes, particularly for the long-term unemployed, have affected some customers' engagement with the Choose Work Programme.

It is understood that the distinctiveness (or brand) of the Choose Work Programme, with a different ethos from those offered by the DWP, was welcomed by customers, particularly

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having the resource to fully understand their needs and the separation of their participation from possible sanctions.

Given the challenge of 'changing the system' that is in operation nationally the Programme can only look to implement limited small-scale local actions to improve interfaces between Choose Work and the Job Centre. This has been done in the form of developing effective relationships and communications so as to enable people to make full use of the Programme when they are available to do so.

## 7.0 Discussion

The Choose Work Programme has adopted a very human and tailored approach to support people into work by providing appropriate work placements that gives them confidence, a 'work ethic' and a practical reference. It is clear that this is appreciated by the customers of the Programme.

From DWP's own sponsored research and other literature cited this type of substantive personalisation is seen to be effective although harder to achieve when scaled up, for example nationally. This personalisation also extends to developing a network of employers who would be willing to offer work placements, thus enabling an effective fit between the customer's needs and wishes and those of the employer.

The success of this Programme seems due, at least in part, to the dedication and enthusiasm of the coordinator. Should the Programme be extended beyond that currently envisaged it is this enthusiasm that will be challenging to 'replicate' particularly on any large scale. A similar project is being rolled out in Selsey with an additional one being considered for Midhurst. This incremental programme development, learning lessons along the way, is to be welcomed particularly when it comes to the necessary process of tailoring the service to local needs and ensuring appropriately dedicated and able staff and employed.

In terms of quantified benefits outlined in the business case, namely recruiting local employers into the scheme and placements taken up at CDC and elsewhere, these have been met or exceeded.

Given the importance of personalisation in both the customer and the work placement employer sides of the process any future study might usefully consider a maturity framework to focus on these essential elements. The development and deployment of this might be a useful technique to facilitate the application of the model elsewhere.

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# Appendix 1: Narratives form those involved in the programme

The following narratives are taken from the regular monitoring reports of the Choose Work service (Hill, 2013). They show the diverse nature of people who use the service and the differing nature of what success looks like. There is one example of where a placement did not work out indicating the difficulty in determining a customer's 'life story' and how this might come to affect the placement.

#### People on the programme

#### SL - DVD Project

SL has successfully completed her placement and Chichester District Council is now in possession of a splendid new manual handling training film. The DVD is likely to be used by other local authorities, too and may be the first in a suite of such films made by CDC.

The Butterfly FX, a Hampshire-based film company, mentored and guided SL during the process, providing the equipment and film crew, too.

Part of the purpose of the placement was to provide SL with a more local network of film-making support (she is a recent Film graduate).

She has also been receiving *Life Coaching support from Steve Hill* (as a FREE additional part of the Choose Work scheme, provided by Steve on a voluntary basis).

Life Coaching has enable SL to begin to realise her ambitions to build a 'portfolio career' using her film-making skills, and transferable skills. She is in the process of researching a film-making business, making videos for family events.

The development of SL's business will hopefully be enhanced by a 'Let's Do Business' course, provided via the local Job Centre Plus.

#### AC - CDC Web/GIS Team

AC has been developing his part-time computer repair business, with support from Steve Hill and the Web/GIS Team at CDC.

At the time of writing, AC has been working on his life goals in order to decide clearly what he needs to do next.

He also feels more confident in his job application and interview skills and is applying for a couple of IT jobs with CDC, to augment income from his fledgling business.

#### GM – Music Fusion, Havant (and local studios)

GM has used Choose Work to understand more clearly, the local music studio landscape. He has been working (on Choose Work placement) with Music Fusion in Havant and has also spoken with Chichester-based studios, to understand the real world of setting up on your own. He has also been in communication with SoCo Music Project in Southampton, with a view to working a few sessions at their Hightown Studio.

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#### FJ - Southbourne Junior School

FJ wanted a placement as *Classroom Assistant at Southbourne Junior School*. A local girl, with an interest in education, FJ had already worked for Southbourne Infant School, but didn't know how to get into the Junior school.

Choose Work managed to set up an 8-week placement for FJ, but when she went for her interview for the placement, Head Teacher Luke Hanna, decided to offer FJ a two-month paid position, filling in for a Classroom Assistant.

So, FJ didn't actually begin her Choose Work placement, but benefitted (and continues to benefit) from being part of Choose Work.

How? Well, it may seem strange that FJ couldn't contact the Junior School herself, especially as they share a campus and FJ knows people from the Infant side. The thing is, FJ has self-confidence issues and finds it hard to get her point across when talking to adults that she doesn't know.

To help address these issues, FJ has been working with Steve Hill to support her in overcoming her low confidence. In fact, FJ is keen to push herself into situations that she finds uncomfortable and words of encouragement and strategies for dealing with times when confidence needs boosting are all she needs. But, before she came into contact with Choose Work, this support was not available.

FJ has taken control of her future and is planning to join an agency that provides 'supply' Classroom Assistants to schools.

## LD - CDC Planning Admin and Stonepillow Restore

Looking for a confidence boost and a career change into Administration, LD came to Choose Work fired-up to make a change in her life.

She went in at the deep end, with a 4 week placement with the Planning and Development Control team at CDC – the sharp end of Admin – and is completing her time with Choose Work at the excellent charity Stonepillow, where her understanding and empathy with homeless people will combine with her developing admin skills and experience.

#### MD – Q Hair and Beauty

A new departure for Choose Work. As our reputation for developing real opportunities that count for local unemployed people, we were approached by local Hairdressing business 'Q' Hair and Beauty to provide a Choose Work placement as a trial for Michaela.

MD from 'Q' Hair and Beauty was also offered a 'Work Trial' for Michaela, but decided on a Choose Work placement instead due to the flexibility and proven success of Choose Work locally.

The 'forward-focused success' drive of Choose Work, and the fact that Choose Work can offer Coaching and other support for people on placement, also appealed to MD, an advocate of staff development, and she is now championing the scheme to other local hair and beauty providers.

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Michaela was offered a paid job within 2 weeks of starting her placement.

### People left before the programme because they found a job

AC I met her on 24 October and lined her up for a placement with Harvey Monaghan and the Web/GIS Team at CDC. She got a job in Swindon (her chosen location) before the placement interview.

## Problems with a placement - Went 'AWOL'

[We] developed an interesting partnership with a farm in response to an interview with Choose Work candidate, JP – who came to us via the disability adviser.

[The employer] was offering a short placement leading to a paid job. However, JP had other issues in his life that prevented him from starting the placement. In fact, he didn't tell the farm, or me or his adviser. He simply disappeared. [The disability adviser] finally tracked him down and found out that he wouldn't be starting the placement.

JP had a communication problem as well – something that we didn't know when we started working with him – he doesn't answer the phone or respond to messages from any telephone number that he doesn't recognise. I guess most of us do the same thing, except that with Joe answering or not answering unscheduled phone calls wasn't a choice, it was something he mentally couldn't handle.

The problem for Choose Work in this situation, is the breakdown in goodwill in our relationship with the partner who will be providing the placement. Will they be so willing to take on a Choose Worker in the future?

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# **Appendix 2: Terms of Reference**

The following forms the Terms of Reference <sup>5</sup>agreed between Amy Loaring, Chichester District Council and Rob Warwick, Chichester University.

#### **Brief overview**

As a result of Chichester in Partnership's 'Getting people back to work' strategy the 'Choose Work' initiative was developed, funded and commenced in November 2013. This included the appointment of a part time work experience coordinator to find appropriate work placements. It is understood that this is funded for two years and was initially focused towards 18-24 year olds, although the scope has since increased. The objective of the work placements is to provide valuable work experience with local employers so as to further develop an individual's 'work culture' and to enhance their CVs.

## Objective of this review

The two year initiative has just past its halfway mark. This short review aims to provide: 1) learning that could be applied whilst the project is still in progress; and 2) some early insights of overall project benefits. This will include:

- A review of the job seeker's experience of the programme and how this has affected their ability to move into work.
- Features of the programme that enabled the above to occur. In other words, what the participants valued, or indeed were frustrated with, that affected their ability to find employment.
- Interfaces between this programme and other work programme initiatives.

The review, comprising of a short report, will be qualitative in nature and will not include cost/benefit analysis or other quantification of the initiative's outcomes.

#### **Approach**

The following inter-connected factors will be considered: 1) the employers and placement providers, 2) the experience of people seeking work, and 3) the service provided by the work experience co-ordinator and the project overall.

The review will comprise of the following inputs:

- Initial business case documentation including Chichester District Council's 2012-15 'Getting People into Work' strategy.
- Regular project reporting information (which is currently understood to be monthly).
- Feedback and narratives that have been written by those on the programme.
- Data and statistics provided by Job Centre Plus (including any comparative data if available)
- Interviews with the Work Placement Coordinator and the Job Centre liaison officer.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Excluding costs

# **Appendix 3: Question areas explored in interviews**

The following question area formed the basis for semi-structured interviews.

## Question Set 1: 'facts and figures' about the programme

- 1. How long has the programme been:
  - a. running
  - b. will continue to run
- 2. How many:
  - c. people in the programme
  - d. people are on waiting lists
  - e. employers are signed up to the scheme
- 3. Quantitative facts (e.g. employment rates etc)
  - f. JSA in distract today
  - g. Follow up people who are now in
    - i. Full time employment
    - ii. Education

## Question Set 2: how the programme is working

- 1. Describe the typical profile of a person who has been through the Choose Work programme, including:
  - a. previous existing barriers to employment (education, health etc)
  - b. the variety of people in the programme
  - c. how they have been chosen (nature of any bias towards difficult or more straightforward people for placement)
- 2. Describe how you engage with employers, including:
  - a. how would you get them interested
  - b. the benefits that they perceive being part of the programme
  - c. reservations and bad experiences
  - d. the benefits from being involved in the programme
- 3. Describe the constraints and the scalability of the programme if it were to be adopted elsewhere
- 4. Drawing on a typical example explain to me your interactions with a 'typical' user of the service, including:
  - a. the span of time from beginning to end,
  - b. the nature of that interaction (e.g. issues to do with trust, motivation, scepticism, enthusiasm etc)
  - c. the number and nature of interactions you have with,
    - i. the person,
    - ii. the employer
- 5. How would you describe:
  - a. success
  - b. failure
- 6. Describe the interfaces between your programme and others (for example those that the DWP run) including:
  - a. areas that work well
  - b. frustrations and constraints

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