

Project Documentation

POST PROJECT EVALUATION DOCUMENT (PPE)

Choose Work Project

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Note: the completion of this document is only required for medium and large projects as defined by the project type matrix. The final version should be saved in a sub folder on the x drive under project management / project documentation.

Document History

Revision Date	Version	Summary of Changes	Reviewer(s)
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24/08/2016	1.1	Final draft	

Distribution

A final copy of the approved document will be distributed to:

Name	Job Title
Amy Loaring	Partnerships Officer

1. PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

This document provides a review of how the Choose Work project performed against the original intentions of the scheme.

It allows lessons learned to be passed on to other projects and ensures that provisions have been made to address all open issues and risks alongside follow on actions and recommendations where appropriate.

It also provides the opportunity to assess any expected outcomes that have already been achieved and/or provide a review plan for those outcomes yet to be realised.

2. ORIGINAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Choose Work scheme was originally introduced to help deliver Chichester in Partnership's 'Getting People into Work Strategy' (GPIW Strategy). Relevant priorities from both iterations of this Strategy are shown below:

Getting People into Work Strategy – 2012-2015

- *Reduce the length of time people are out of work; and in doing so;*
- *Increase the employment rate amongst those who are out of work; and*
- *Support local employers to recruit people they need to keep their businesses successful.*

Getting People into Work Strategy 2015 – 2018

- *To help those facing “social injustice” into work (e.g. ESA claimants, lone parents, older people, those in rural areas) by developing local support for residents seeking work or setting up their own businesses.*

- *To help those living in the Think family neighbourhoods to access employment support and to improve their skills.*
- *Helping people into full / better paid employment by getting them access to training and improving their work based skills.*
- *Using the opportunities that new technologies present, help people with caring responsibilities to stay or return to work.*
- *To increase workplace skills (such as interview skills, confidence and work place etiquette) in school leavers by embedding skills into the local curriculum.*

Delivery of the Choose Work project was reliant on funding from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Objectives were set to best reflect DWP's priorities and changed each year in line with changes to those priorities. The following is taken from the successful first funding bid submitted to DWP in October 2012 to cover the project period from January 2013 until January 2015.

The Council, on behalf of Chichester in Partnership will employ a Work Experience Co-ordinator who will be responsible for:

- *Identifying meaningful work experience placement opportunities within the council and working with managers to develop them.*
- *Determining and establishing referral and selection process with Job Centre Plus.*
- *Developing the content and framework for work experience placements.*
- *Overseeing and managing the council's work experience programme.*
- *Liaising with Job Centre plus and fulfilling reporting requirements.*
- *Embedding work experience within the Council's and partner organisations cultures.*
- *Work with partner organisations and local businesses to develop more work experience opportunities locally.*
- *Developing future routes for young people (e.g. further education, voluntary work, apprenticeships, training etc.)*

The project developed further and changed significantly in 2016. The following is taken from the successful fourth funding bid to DWP submitted in January 2016.

The proposal is to develop the very successful and highly valued Choose Work programme in line with the requirements of DWP and to provide the programme for another year until March 2017. This requires funding salaries of two part-time Choose Work Coordinators, at a combined total of 48 hours a week.

The Choose Work Co-ordinators will be able to launch a new Choose Work model, which will focus on Employment Support Allowance (ESA) clients, pre-assessment ESA clients and Income Support clients, as well as Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) clients who have additional health issues but do not qualify for ESA.

The focus of the delivery is providing a personalised service, unique to the needs of each client. The format for working with each client will be:

- *Engaging with the client*
- *Identifying client's needs*
- *Developing a personalised action plan*
- *Allocating to a Choose Work Pathway*
- *Measuring client's journey*

Throughout the process, Choose Work Co-ordinators keep clients engaged and are in regular email or telephone contact with them.

CDC's Corporate Plan targets the Choose Work scheme with providing 55 work experience placements in 2016/17 with 40% of those individuals securing employment at the end of the programme. In addition, the Choose Work scheme is aligned to the 'Support our Communities' Corporate Plan objective via its work to help improve outcomes for those living in Think Family areas.

3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

3.1 Outputs

Because of the changing funding requirements of DWP and the growth of the project, Choose Work was targeted with different objectives for each year of operation. Below is a breakdown of the targets and achievements for each year of the project.

Year of programme	Total cost to deliver	Targets	Achievements
2013-15	£14,630 (2013-14) + £20, 425.25 (2014-15) = £35,055.25	CDC to offer at least 15 work experience placements to young people who have been unemployed for less than 12 months	CDC offered 15 work experience placements
		Recruiting 5 local businesses/organisations to offer a minimum of 2 work placements each	30 companies offering work placements
		80 work experience placements	92 work experience placements delivered with 23 individuals (25%) finding employment afterwards
2015-16	£41,542	CDC to offer at least 50 work experience placements	CDC offered 66 work experience placements
		Recruiting 5 local businesses/organisations to offer a minimum of 2 work placements each	34 organisations engaged to offer work experience placements.
		Engage 120 customers	299 customers engaged and 39 workshops run
2016-17	£53,770	80 clients moved forward (assessed by the staircase method)	71 clients moved forward to date
		30 clients that are the farthest from the labour market supported to be more resilient	32 clients supported to date
		150 clients participated in engagement days	80 clients participated to date

3.2 Outcomes

Success of schemes to address worklessness is often quantified by reductions in the number of people claiming out-of-work benefits; mainly Job Seekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support. It should also be noted

that the Choose Work Co-Ordinators are already engaging with some people who are receiving Universal Credit, which will ultimately replace most of the currently relevant benefits when it is rolled out fully.

The tables below describe the relevant benefits and how they have changed in Chichester District (and compared to the South East region) over the life of the Choose Work project. All data is from the NOMIS website.

Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)	
Brief Description	Paid to working age people who are unemployed or working fewer than 16 hours a week but able to work at least 40 hours a week and actively looking for work.
Claimant numbers when Choose Work scheme started	1460 – Jan 2013
General trends over Choose Work period	Numbers have generally fallen, with slight increases in early 2014 and again, to a lesser extent in early 2015. Numbers reached a low of 540 claimants in September 2015.
Current claimant numbers	640 – July 2016
Trends compared to South East region	Consistently below the South East average and in general figures have risen and fallen in line with the South East region.

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)	
Brief Description	Paid to those who are not in work and have additional health needs. Claimants must undergo a Work Capability Assessment, which identifies what support they need and places them in one of two groups. The work-related activity group are expected to take steps to prepare for a return to work, including attending mandatory interviews with a personal advisor at the Job Centre. The support group is generally for those whose assessment concludes that their illness or disability severely affects their ability to work. They are not expected to prepare for work and do not have to attend interviews but may volunteer to do so if they wish. Some of those claiming ESA were previously claiming Incapacity Benefit before this was stopped between October 2010 and March 2014. ESA claimants are a priority group for Choose Work (since January 2016) and the GPIW Strategy (2015 – 18).
Claimant numbers when Choose Work scheme started	2620 - Feb 2013
General trends over Choose Work period	Fell during the first part of 2013 but rose again throughout 2014, reaching a peak of 2720 in February 2015.
Current claimant numbers	2680 - February 2016. Since more up to date figures are not yet available, the impact of the change in focus of the Choose Work scheme onto ESA claimants cannot yet be assessed.
Trends compared to South East region	Remained approximately 0.5 percentage points below figures for the South East region.

Income Support (IS)	
Brief Description	Paid to people of working age on low incomes and/or working fewer than 16 hours a week and generally paid where the individual does not have to be available for full-time work (usually because they have childcare or other caring responsibilities). The individual must also not be eligible for JSA. Income Support claimants (particularly

	lone parents) are also a priority group for Choose Work and the GPIW Strategy.
Claimant numbers when Choose Work scheme started	510 - Feb 2013
General trends over Choose Work period	Apart from a spike in mid-2014, claimant numbers have generally fallen.
Current claimant numbers	440 – February 2016
Trends compared to South East region	Remained approximately 0.2 percentage points below figures for the South East region

While the trends shown above do paint a clear picture of falling numbers of out-of-work benefit claimants, it is impossible to attribute this to one particular scheme or initiative. Local schemes (including Choose Work) have undoubtedly played a part, but the national climate and policies set by Central Government will also have greatly affected these figures.

It should also be noted that the figures cannot tell the whole story of an individual's journey with the Choose Work scheme. The positive outcomes achieved for individuals, even if finding paid employment is not a realistic goal for them should not be discounted, although they are difficult to quantify.

As far as the success of the Choose Work scheme can be measured by the number of people finding work after engaging with it, it is relevant that, in the first 2 years of the scheme, Choose Work delivered work experience placements for 92 individuals, with 25% of those (23 individuals) finding work afterwards. In subsequent years, due to changes in the objectives of the project, information on how many 'Choose Workers' found employment after engaging with the scheme was not collected formally. However, informal feedback from the Choose Work Co-ordinator suggests that, 12 of those who have engaged with Choose Work so far this year are back in paid employment.

The current Choose Work scheme measures success on a case by case basis, focusing on whether or not individuals had been moved closer to the labour market and become better prepared for work. This is measured in part by the 'Staircase Method' (see below) and in part by the experiences of individuals. Case studies are available to show how the Choose Work programme has made a difference to individuals' employability. In some examples, a paid job was the outcome, in others, the individual was moved closer to the labour market through addressing some of the barriers to employment they were facing.

It must be noted that the scheme does not work for everybody and the Choose Work Co-ordinators do sometimes face challenges in moving some individuals towards employment. Case studies again demonstrate that in some cases, work placements are not successful. As well as not achieving a positive outcome for the individual, the risk in these cases is the breakdown of the relationship with the prospective employer/work experience provider.

3.3 Outcome Measures

Outcomes can be measured by the changes in claimant numbers for certain out-of-work benefits (see above). Although claimant numbers have generally fallen, it is

unlikely that this is solely down to the Choose Work programme. Claimant numbers have fallen generally across the South East so it is clear there are other factors at work, both regionally and nationally that have contributed.

For outcomes to be measured on a basis more meaningful to the individuals who engage with the scheme, the Choose Work programme currently measures clients' progress using the 'Staircase method'.

Each client will measure their Choose Work starting point at the 'staircase meeting', with stairs labelled from 1 – 10. As clients progress in their wellbeing, they progress up the staircase from 1 to 10. The picture language used with clients is focused on finding their way to the next step, not the top of the staircase. Through this process, Choose Work Co-ordinators aim to guide clients to formulate their own action plan and can measure client's progress throughout their journey.

3.4 Dis-benefits

None identified.

4. PROJECT COSTS

The table below shows the cost of the Choose Work scheme to the various funders for each year of the project.

Year of programme	DWP Grant Contribution	CDC Contribution	Total	Activities delivered for cost
2013-14	£9,630	£5,000	£14,630	1x Choose Work Co-Ordinator @ 16 hrs per week
2014-15	£9,630 £5,795.25	£5,000	£20,425.25	1x Choose Work Co-Ordinator @ 24 hrs per week
2015-16	£26,542	£15,000	£41,542	2x Choose Work Co-Ordinator @ 24 hrs per week each
2016-17	£38,770	£15,000	£53,770	2x Choose Work Co-Ordinator @ 24 hrs per week each with shift to a new model of Choose Work including Engagement Days, additional marketing and extra training/equipment
Total	£90,367.25	£40,000	£130,367.25	

The DWP funding application forms note that partner organisations (such as Coast to Capital LEP and Registered Providers) are asked to invest money or make contributions in kind (e.g. CV courses, career guidance, life coaching and motivational workshops). To date, partner organisations have declined to offer significant funding to the scheme, although many indicate that they value being able to refer their clients to such a locally based, thorough service (see below for further comments from partner organisations).

The Troubled Families project has identified a set of headline costs for individuals or families engaging with certain services, to enable Local Authorities and other bodies to estimate how much money is saved when certain outcomes are avoided. Some of

the figures provided are relevant when a person who had previously been workless finds work. Relevant savings are shown in the table below.

Cost/Saving detail	Main agency making the saving	Unit	Estimated cost/saving
First order fiscal benefit from a workless Employment and Support Allowance claimant entering work	DWP/JCP	Per claimant	£8956
First order fiscal benefit from a workless Incapacity Benefit claimant entering work	DWP/JCP	Per claimant	£8598
First order fiscal benefit from a workless Job Seeker's Allowance claimant entering work	DWP/JCP	Per claimant	£8219
First order fiscal benefit from a workless lone parent entering work	DWP/JCP	Per claimant	£6723
NEET - average cost per 18-24 year old not in education, employment or training	Multiple	Per year	£4492

Other possibly relevant cost savings include those related to crime and offending, anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, drug/alcohol misuse, homelessness and mental health. It is possible to argue that finding work can make a previously workless individual less at risk of any or all of these, although this is often conjecture and difficult to quantify with any certainty.

It is worth noting that the agency standing to make the most financial savings from getting workless people into work is the DWP (and Job centre Plus), who are responsible for administering out-of-work benefits.

5. PROJECT PLAN

Not applicable to this project.

6. PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Feedback from those involved with Choose Work

Feedback about the project has been sought and received from a number of scheme partners. The comment below is from DWP, a key funder of the scheme.

“Choose Work has... become a very valuable addition to internal DWP provision that is now able to assist claimants across all benefit types with a tailored pathway of support, determined by their needs. At a time when the numbers of customers claiming Jobseekers Allowance has been continually falling, the flexibility and expertise of the Choose Work co-ordinators has enabled DWP to confidently refer claimants with more complex needs such as those with caring responsibilities and health conditions in the knowledge that they will be treated empathically whilst at the same time having a focus on how to improve their employability chances and move into work which provides a cost benefit to not only DWP and Chichester District Council, but a multitude of other agencies who also provide support and assistance.”

Grant Funding Officer – DWP

In addition, feedback has been sought from those who support the scheme by referring their clients to it. However, some key partners who refer to Choose Work (including the local Job Centre Plus and West Sussex County Council Children's Centres) have yet to comment.

"I have been referring into Choose work for the past 2 years. I found the Choose Work Co-Ordinators to be very passionate in what they do and this really reflects in the service they deliver to my customers. Communication is always constant and they get back to me on the same day. They have worked with a challenging group of people with placing them in a work placement with positive outcomes. Working with partners is paramount to me as I cover a large area. By referring my customers to Choose work I have been able to meet my KPI'S."
Employment Support Officer – Affinity Sutton HA

CDC Officers directly involved with the Choose Work project (Amy Loaring – Partnerships Officer and Steve Hill – Choose Work Co-Ordinator) have come up with their thoughts on the Choose Work Project and their learning from it. These are shown below:

What would we have done differently?

- *Start with the holistic/ journey approach from the start*
- *Reduce the amount of paperwork*
- *Better work with local businesses*
- *Choose Work being better known within the different services of CDC (some departments more willing to engage than others)*

What have we done well?

- *The name and branding – it is trusted by its users, very good reputation locally*
- *Being holistic and listening to participants*
- *Treating people as people not numbers*
- *Employing "people centric" people to the posts*
- *Joint funding has giving us great flexibility and adaptability (we can work with anyone who needs help not restricted by DWP restrictions.)*
- *Made it very low cost and effective*
- *Community events and workshops are run well, popular and low cost*
- *Good relationships with partners*

What did we not do well?

- *Following up with people can be difficult, they are not mandated to keep in touch.*
- *Large caseloads with limited staff*
- *Changing outcomes every year because we are reliant on DWP funding*
- *Increased marketing of service*

Individuals who engage with the Choose Work programme are regularly asked for feedback on their experience with the scheme. Their comments are available, but feedback is overwhelmingly positive from those Choose Workers who choose to give it. Employers who have engaged with the Choose Work Programme, (including CDC teams), also tend to give very positive feedback.

Aside from comments from those directly involved in it, the Choose Work scheme, has been independently reviewed by Dr Rob Warwick from University of Chichester. This review was undertaken in February 2014, after the first year of the project. Where relevant, comments from that review are referred to below.

Strengths of the Scheme

The scheme is very popular among those who have engaged with it. Feedback from participants, employers and local partners who refer clients to it is overwhelmingly positive. Its positive impact at CDC specifically has been felt in some teams, with some Managers saying that recruiting Choose Workers has saved them time and money on the recruitment process. Notable successes at CDC include Planning Admin, Environmental Health and Careline teams. There are 8 members of current CDC staff who have joined through the Choose Work scheme.

The holistic approach has been successful and popular. Moving people forward and closer to work without the pressure of having to find paid employment as an end point has made the process far more accessible for some people. They have been able to benefit from developing their work-related skills, which is a better outcome for them than avoiding engaging with schemes altogether. The detailed and individual-specific nature of the engagement also has the benefit of uncovering and addressing barriers to work that the individual is facing, (for example low level physical or mental health problems, lack of confidence, caring responsibilities and/or troubled backgrounds).

The positive nature of the individual service and intensive coaching the Choose Work Co-Ordinators provide was noted in the 2014 review of the scheme and plans to expand on this (which has subsequently happened) were looked on favourably. That review also referred to a research report into DWP's own work programme, noting that their advisors regretted not being able to offer a personalised service to all those engaging with them. In this respect, Choose Work is filling a gap in the service provided by DWP through the local Job Centres.

The separation from the Job Centre has been beneficial. The Choose Work Co-Ordinators are able to devote time and attention to people and deliver an individual service that Job Centre staff are not able to do in the time they have available. The focus of the Job Centre is on getting people into any paid employment, while the Choose Work Co-Ordinators can spend time finding out an individual's goals and helping them work out a plan to reach them. As noted in the 2014 review, having their engagement with Choose Work separated from the Job Centre and free from any possible sanctions related to their benefit payments was positive for those engaging with the scheme.

Despite the benefits of this separation, it is clearly important that positive relationships with the Job Centre, as the main source of referrals to the scheme, are maintained. As noted in the 2014 review, the Choose Work Co-Ordinators have built up effective working relationships and communication with Job centre staff and DWP management and this has continued since then.

Potential Issues

While positive for those engaged with the scheme, the individual-specific nature of how Choose Work is delivered makes it hard to quantify success as it will look different for each person. In the early days of the scheme, success could be measured by the number of people finding work after having engaged with the scheme (and this success was achieved to some extent) but with the shift in emphasis away from numbers and onto individual journeys the collection of facts and figures to demonstrate success has been scaled back. Although the number of people 'moved forward' by the scheme so far this year can be quantified (71 to date), it is less clear what long term impact the scheme has had on them.

The wider positive impact of the scheme, even on those who have found paid employment after it, is also hard to measure. Particularly in the early days of the scheme, when the focus was more on getting people into work, those choosing to engage with Choose Work were often actively looking for work anyway. Engaging with the scheme is evidence of their willingness to develop their skills and improve their chances of finding work so it is impossible to say whether or not these individuals would have found work without the help of the Choose Work scheme.

The 2014 review notes that the success of the scheme is largely due to *'the enthusiasm and dedication of the Choose Work Co-Ordinator, who has a personal drive to treat people as people'*. Since then, another passionate individual has been recruited to the Choose Work team. The new coaching element of the scheme is also reliant on the particular skills of the current post-holder. As noted in 2014, while the level of dedication shown by these individuals is to be welcomed and encouraged, this could become a constraint if the scheme were to be replicated, either because one of the post-holders had to be replaced, or if the scheme were to be scaled up.

The problems of scaling up such a locally defined scheme were also raised in the 2014 review. As well as the difficulty of employing enough appropriately dedicated and able people, there is the problem of responding to the, potentially very different, local employment climate if the project were to be replicated somewhere else. In another area, even within Chichester District, the barriers to work faced by individuals could be very different, likewise the needs of local employers.

The scheme does not work for everyone. Some groups have been identified as hard to engage or keep engaged with the Choose Work scheme. Younger, unemployed people (who have often never worked) and those living in rural areas do not seem to engage as well with the scheme as others.

Performance against original objectives

The first years of the Choose Work scheme were focused on getting people into work, mainly through the co-ordination and promotion of work experience opportunities and successful engagement with local employers. This is in line with the priorities identified in the relevant version of the GPIW Strategy (2012 – 2015). For these years, the scheme met or exceeded the targets set and either delivered or made significant progress towards delivering all the objectives set out for the Choose Work Co-Ordinator in the successful funding bid to DWP.

The GPIW Strategy was refreshed in 2015 and the priorities for DWP funding also changed. The objectives of the Choose Work scheme changed in line with both of these, with the focus shifting to a more holistic, individual approach and working with disadvantaged groups (ESA claimants, lone-parents, older people and those from rural areas). Since early 2016, the Choose Work scheme has been delivered with a focus on these groups. Monthly workshops have been held in Midhurst, Petworth and Fernhurst and more are planned for this year. There has also been engagement with those living in Think Family areas (as per GPIW Strategy 2015 – 18), with referrals coming from the Think Family key worker and events being held in some Think Family areas (Chichester East, Tangmere and Selsey), with more planned. The targets set for the scheme for this year have been met already or are on course to be met over the course of this year.

The Choose Work scheme has yet to deliver on the target assigned to it as part of CDC's Corporate Plan, although there is still some time left for this to be done.

7. FURTHER ACTION / CONCLUSIONS

Overall, Choose Work can be shown to make a very positive impact on those who engage with it. Feedback from participants, employers and local partners who refer clients to it is overwhelmingly positive and the social benefits to the individuals who engage are clear. However, the scheme can only help those who choose to engage with it and there are still some groups where the potential benefits have not yet been realised. It is also difficult to establish whether those who choose to engage (and are therefore actively seeking help to become employed) would have achieved similar levels of progress without the Choose Work scheme.

The financial benefits associated with getting workless individuals back into work are significant, but generally not realised directly by CDC. With changes in DWP funding structures and local priorities, it seems likely that further funding from them cannot be relied upon.

Although partner organisations are positive about the impact of the scheme, they have not offered any funding for it at this stage. If Choose Work is to remain running as a partnership project, meeting the objectives of Chichester in Partnership (as set out in the GPIW Strategy), then other partners should be approached for a more significant funding contribution to better demonstrate the value they place on the project's outcomes.

If the decision is made for CDC to fund the scheme in its entirety, the benefits available would need to be clearly demonstrated to be meeting CDC's strategic objectives in order to justify the use of CDC resources.

8. REVIEW PLAN

- Further engagement of Choose Work with priority and harder to reach groups (those living in rural areas, Think Family Areas and younger unemployed people)
- Review reporting and monitoring of relevant facts and figures to better quantify the successes of the scheme (progress made by individuals), even if getting back into paid employment is not a realistic final goal.
- Objectives for the Choose Work scheme should be set in line with the priorities of those organisations that fund it. If partners offer funding for Choose Work as an LSP project, it should meet the objectives of their GPIW Strategy. If CDC decides to fund it, Choose Work should prioritise meeting current and future Corporate Plan and other CDC strategic objectives and targets.