ECONOMIES OF HEALTHIER LIVES
RAPID EVIDENCE REVIEW: HOUSEHOLDS INTO WORK
Economies of Healthier Lives Rapid Evidence Review: Households into Work

1. This review focuses on the learning from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority’s (LCRCA’s) Households into Work Pilot Programme (HiW). HiW is one of a suite of programmes providing employment-related support in Liverpool City Region (LCR), including Ways to Work and the Work and Health Programme.

2. HiW differed in terms of the intensity of and the type of support provided and the client group being targeted. This review draws upon the evidence gathered by the University of Liverpool as part of the evaluation of the HiW Pilot Programme which took place between 1st March 2018 and 31st March 2020.

Employment innovation pilot projects across England

2.1. LCRCA was one of five combined authorities across England to launch a new pilot employment scheme as part of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP’s) Innovative Pilot Programme. In 2017, the Government announced that £35 million of funding would be made available for these new employment schemes within the combined authorities of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Tees Valley, Sheffield City Region, West Midlands, West of England and LCRCA, although the Sheffield programme did not go ahead. It was envisaged that the schemes would be delivered alongside
existing employment support on offer through agencies such as Jobcentre Plus.

2.2. In total, it was anticipated that the pilots would assist 18,000 people to tackle long-term barriers to work and in-work progression. The extent to which the combined authorities contributed to this target does however differ, given that each employment programme had a different focus. Whilst the LCRCA adopted a household-based approach for example, the focus of the other pilots was as follows:

- **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority** launched the ‘Health and Care Sector Progression Academy’ to train social care workers in the area, with the creation of 600 apprenticeships

- **Tees Valley Combined Authority** created a Tees Valley Hub to join up the services available to the individual and offer one-to-one support via key workers

- **West Midlands Combined Authority** tested the value of utilising social networks and social capital in removing barriers to paid employment

- **West of England Combined Authority** set up a new system which supported individuals trapped in low paid jobs to achieve in-work progression

### Households into Work Drivers and Programme Design

3.1. Launched in February 2018, HiW is a unique and innovative employment support programme. Jointly funded by the LCRCA and DWP, its aim was not just to help people find work but to help people get to a point where thinking of employment as a realistic option was a major step forward. The programme was voluntary and non-sanction led, and referrals could be made by any organisation working with an individual who might benefit from a place on the programme or by the individuals themselves.

3.2. Delivered by a team of Employment Advocates (EAs) who worked across the six LCR local authorities, the programme was delivered on an outreach basis with a target number for participation of 1,600 individuals in 800 households. The advocates provided people on the programme with 1:1 support, helping to tackle and resolve issues which were preventing them from seeking employment and for which they had limited/no access to people or services that might otherwise help them. The issues faced by participants are complex and varied including debt and finance, housing, mental illness, victim of domestic violence, addiction(s), isolation and disaffection. Until such issues are tackled, finding and sustaining employment is a very unlikely and unrealistic expectation.
3.3. People could remain on the programme for up to 12 months during which time the advocate would help the individual identify, prioritise and tackle the issues which were preventing them from seeking and sustaining employment. Unlike similar employment programmes, other members of the household were encouraged to join so that issues could be addressed collectively as well as individually. The premise was that adopting a whole household approach to address potentially complex needs was more likely to lead to a lasting solution when compared to alternative options which tend to work with the individual in isolation. Advocates also had access to flexible funding to purchase goods or services that could help the household progress towards the labour market.

3.4. To measure the changes in the individual’s circumstances over a period of time – which in the case of HiW, reflect the impact of the support provided by the employment advocates – the LCRCA commissioned the development of an assessment tool called Pathways Star. This was used to identify and prioritise issues across eight areas of the client’s life – Skills, Aspiration & Motivation, Stability, Money, Physical Health, Emotional Wellbeing, Family, Social skills, and Networks.

3.5. An improvement in the scoring of one of the eight assessment areas can then be used to evidence the achievement of a positive outcome for the individual e.g. helping to settle an individual’s level of debt by agreeing a payment plan with creditors, might remove the threat of eviction from the person’s home. This could then allow the individual to begin taking steps towards finding employment and, once employed, would be far more likely to sustain that employment.

**Characteristics of Client Group**

4.1. The Treasury Business Case underpinning the programme highlighted how national and local interventions have proved insufficient in addressing the complex and interlinked issues often associated with poor health and worklessness. With 130,000 LCR residents accessing out of work benefits, and around 100,000 of these in receipt of sickness benefits, this represents the highest rate of any economic area nationally (NOMIS Out of Work Benefit Area Comparison).

4.2. HiW was designed to support those individuals whose complex circumstances had formed a barrier to work. The figures shown in Table 1, show the range of support needs experienced by the client group.
Table 1. Self-reported support needs of 1,606 individuals at conclusion of the pilot stage of the programme, March 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Need</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Support Need</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental health issues</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>Drug misuse</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent (with children under 18)</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>Problem drinking</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has care responsibilities</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Sensory impairment</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parent</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>English is not first language</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic health condition</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>Care leaver</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim of domestic abuse</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>On community sentence</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless/temporarily housed</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Teenage parent</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning disability</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical disability</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Ex-armed forces</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-offender</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Asylum seeker</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in education, training or work (NEET)</td>
<td>12%</td>
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Figures provided from whole programme CRM. N=1,606

4.3. One of the strengths of the HiW programme was the flexibility inherent in the pilot, with EAs able to test different person-centred approaches and see what worked for their clients rather than being limited to a fixed menu of support options.

4.4. Clients were able to work with their EA to co-produce bespoke action plans, drawing in a range of services and activities which were part of the LCR’s wider social infrastructure.

Key Features of the programme

5.1. LCRCA took the learning from Troubled Families (Household Approach), Working Well (Key Worker) and the Youth Employment
Gateway (Personalised Budgets) and combined them to create the HiW programme.

5.2. Household Budget. Each household was allocated a budget of £1,000 which EAs were able to draw upon to support their client’s progression towards the labour market. These payments might address work-specific barriers, such as a lack of tools or equipment which were needed to take up a specific role, or much more general barriers which impacted on clients’ abilities to move forwards in their lives, such as rent arrears or debt. The household budget could also be used to buy in services which would support the client but which were not otherwise available, such as counselling support and mental health advice, or financial and legal advice, as well as for subsistence, childcare and transport costs.

5.3. Household Approach. The programme aimed to provide support for the whole household. As the pilot progressed the definition of the household moved beyond the idea of a single address to include friends who shared similar experiences.

5.4. Employment Advocate. A distinctive and innovative feature of the HiW Programme was the design of the Employment Advocate role. Unlike previous Employment Programme roles, which seek to progress participants into work via skills-based interventions alone, the role of the Employment Advocate was to work alongside clients through their 12 months on the programme to address broader issues within their household including debt, emotional health and physical well-being, which have formed a barrier to them accessing the labour market.

5.5. In the paragraphs below, we discuss the role of EAs and their approach to delivering the programme.

Programme Delivery: Employment Advocates

6.1. In comparison to other employment service provision e.g. Jobcentre Plus where colleagues are mainly office based, there is some mobility and flexibility in-built in the EA role. As the programme is designed to engage with hard-to-reach groups, this mobility and flexibility is an essential element of the role.

6.2. The job description for EAs highlighted the flexibility that they would have in shaping the pilot programme in response to client needs, and the importance of being able to quickly establish relationships and build trust with clients, to enable clients to get the maximum benefit from the programme.

6.3. Within the team of EAs, there is a broad mix of skills, with colleagues drawn from support work in mental health, nursing, benefits services, prohibition services, social work, training and guidance services, and public and private sector led employment programmes.
Figure 1. Households into Work example of client circumstances and interventions.

6.4. Development of the EA role enabled HiW to provide a much more person-centred approach to service delivery than existing provision. By using a process of co-production, it placed clients at the centre of its decision making. Rather than simply sign-posting HiW clients to other relevant services, the HiW team acted as Advocates for their clients – supporting them to access other services, speaking to other organisations on their behalf, and ensuring they received the support that they needed.

6.5. This often meant scoping-out wider provision including that provided by the public, private and community sectors within the LCR, to find the appropriate support for clients who had often been withdrawn from statutory provision. Novel approaches including gym memberships, gardening projects and healthy eating courses were used alongside debt management, counselling and training to support clients to address their barriers.

6.6. These novel approaches, alongside the support from the EA and the non-sanction led ethos of the programme, removed the fear of trying from a client group who had become used to bearing the emotional disappointment and the financial impacts of failure (benefit sanctions).

6.7. Figure 1 above is a worked example of a client’s journey on the programme. The graphic provides a snapshot of the complex and interlinked issues the client was experiencing, the mix and balance of support provided, and the outcomes achieved on the programme.
Table 2. Performance Summary: March 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 2 Target (March 2020)</th>
<th>Actual (March 2020)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Households who started on the programme</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Households where individuals completed at least one agreed activity</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number making significant improvements / moving close to work</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved into employment (16 hours per week for 4 weeks)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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6.8. This bespoke offer and person-centred approach was replicated across the client group and enabled HiW to surpass each of its four high-level targets at the conclusion of the pilot phase in March 2022. As Table 2 shows, this included the target for those moved into employment (16 hours per week for 4 weeks), where the target of 20% of clients was significantly exceeded.

6.9. This was achieved with a client group which resides at some distance from the labour market and faces multiple barriers. The success of HiW is in part based on the programme’s commitment to reaching out to clients in their own environment, recognising that many face barriers to engaging with services when they appear remote or intimidating. The consistent, trusted one-to-one support provided by the EAs was key to clients achieving and sustaining outcomes.

Key learning points from the HiW pilot

7.1. Place matters – knowledge and experience of working in a particular locality is a key determinant of what works when dealing with complexity. EAs used their knowledge of the local ecosystem of provision, working across multiple agencies to address the complex needs of their clients: effectively adopting a whole system approach which translated the work of multiple organisations into a single source of person-centred service provision.

7.2. The importance of the Employment Advocates to the delivery of the programme and the client experience – in particular, their ‘flexibility, mobility, originality and autonomy’. Their outreach approach helped to engage those who would not have engaged with mainstream provision and their person-centred advocacy opened
up a wider network of support for clients by introducing them to a range of services within the wider city region ecosystem of social infrastructure.

7.3. Trust – looking across the HiW Programme, trust is a key theme: from the initial willingness of the DWP to support innovation by devolving resources; to the collaboration between partners of different types and scale; and the relationships between practitioners and programme participants, which were key to creating improved outcomes for the client group.

7.4. Time – making a real impact on multiple barriers takes consistent effort over a prolonged period of time, with consistent and dedicated practitioner support.

**HiW post pilot**

8.1. Following on from the completion of the two year pilot phase of the programme in March 2020, HiW was extended for a further two and a half years. In July 2022, the LCR’s Strategic Investment Fund approved a further 15 months of funding which secured delivery of the programme up until March 2024. HiW is now seen by the LCRCA as a key component of its levelling up plans.
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