

EVALUATION OF PARENTS, CHILDCARE AND EMPLOYMENT (PaCE)

Process and Outputs Evaluation Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In January 2018, the Welsh Government (WG) appointed OB3, Dateb and People and Work to undertake an evaluation of its Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) programme.
- 1.2 PaCE is a Welsh Government programme designed to tackle poverty through sustainable employment. It is delivered in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions and is intended to complement local authority led programmes aimed at families. PaCE is part funded under the European Social Fund.
- 1.3 PaCE aims to provide individual support to out of work parents who consider childcare to be their main barrier to accessing employment and/or training opportunities.
- 1.4 The intention is that, through intensive support provided by PaCE advisers, parents will receive the help they need to access childcare that will enable them to take-up training and employment options. PaCE is also intended to address the cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming; sustainable development; and tackling poverty and social exclusion.
- 1.5 PaCE was launched in July 2015 and will run until March 2020. Over a five-year period, PaCE is expected to support 8,278 individuals and has a total budget of some £13.5 million.

2. Research aims and methodology

- 2.1 The three aims of the evaluation can be summarised as follows:
 - to consider whether the programme is being implemented as expected
 - to assess the programme's effectiveness in helping participants achieve sustainable outcomes
 - to assess the veracity of the Theory of Change underpinning the programme.
- 2.2 The evaluation is being undertaken in two stages between March 2018 and January 2020. This is a summary of the first report which considers whether the programme is being delivered as intended, the characteristics of participants and the nature of support delivered as well as the programme's

performance to date. A future report will explore the effects of the programme and consider the value for money which PaCE represents.

3. Key findings

Policy Context

- 3.1 PaCE is being implemented against a rapidly evolving policy context. The Welsh Government's 2018 Employability Plan endorses an individualised approach to employability support and makes a commitment to developing bespoke solutions for those in greatest need. The Employability Plan heralds the establishment of an Employment Advice Gateway that will act as a brokerage for various employment-related interventions and the Welsh Government's Working Wales employability programme specifically identifies PaCE as part of its new employability support structure.
- 3.2 At the same time, the Welsh Government's flagship Childcare Offer, which will provide 30 hours' funded early education and childcare provision for three to four year olds, is being rolled out. Alongside the Childcare Offer, the Welsh Government has launched a capital grant programme to support the integration and improvement of childcare services across Wales.

Programme Structures

- 3.3 It was intended that PaCE staff would work closely with local authority Family Information Services and other key organisations to promote PaCE and to reach target participants. PaCE managers and advisers have sought to cultivate relationships with family support infrastructures within their areas, though the strength of those relationships and degree of interaction varies from one local authority area to another.
- 3.4 PaCE operates in parallel with Communities for Work (CfW) and advisers in many areas work closely with CfW colleagues. PaCE also operates alongside a number of regional employability projects and it can be difficult for referral agencies to keep abreast of the different programmes available. PaCE stands alone among employability programmes, however, in that it is the only one focused primarily on childcare.
- 3.5 PaCE was launched in a fairly low-key way and marketing has been limited since then, relying primarily upon adviser contact with partners and potential clients. This means that the programme is not as visible as it might be to partners or potential clients.
- 3.6 PaCE advisers work from a range of community settings, though access to facilities such as Families First or integrated service centres has not been as great as anticipated, leading to a sense of frustration among some that PaCE has not become as well integrated into the local family support landscape as had been expected. They do, nevertheless, continue to explore new locations for and approaches to outreach working.
- 3.7 Advisers make significant use of Jobcentre Plus (JCP) premises. There are advantages to this in that JCP premises represent convenient locations for some clients, provide advisers with easy access to DWP databases, allow advisers to interact with and promote PaCE to work coaches and to be immediately available to prospective clients visiting JCP offices. However, an over-reliance on JCP premises may also be preventing advisers from integrating as fully as they might into local family support networks and from reaching parents who do not visit JCP.

Profile of Participants Engaged

- 3.8 Fewer individuals aged 25 and over than had been expected have engaged with PaCE, though slightly more individuals aged 16-24 have done so. Engagements across both age groups have been a little stronger in West Wales and the Valleys than in East Wales.
- 3.9 The numbers of participants engaged varies considerably from one local authority area to another. This would seem to be attributable to a number of factors such as: the quality of advisers'

relationships with JCP work coaches; PaCE's integration with wider family support infrastructures; the balance between the time spent by advisers in JCP offices and outreach locations; staff turnover; and the way in which individual advisers work and their ability to connect with partners and prospective participants.

3.10 Whilst no engagement targets were set beyond those for people aged 25 and over and those aged 16-24 it is notable that:

- the overwhelming majority of participants have been women
- the majority of participants have been aged 20-34
- a disproportionately low number of participants have been drawn from black and ethnic minority groups
- a large majority of participants have been drawn from single adult households
- a higher proportion of participants than the general population have had work limiting health conditions
- the overwhelming majority of participants hold no qualifications above level 2.

3.11 Welsh speakers represent a greater proportion of participants in some areas than others.

Participant Barriers and Motivations

3.12 A number of contextual or structural factors influence parents' engagement with the labour market. These fall into three main categories: childcare; qualifications and skills; and factors such as a lack of reasonably paid job opportunities within reasonable travel distances.

3.13 Childcare related barriers include:

- difficulty in sourcing appropriate childcare
- childcare not being uniformly available across Wales
- difficulty in finding childcare outside standard working hours (e.g. in the evenings or at weekends)
- difficulty in finding Welsh-medium childcare
- difficulty in finding care for children with additional needs
- poor awareness and understanding of childcare options
- the logistical challenges of arranging childcare to tie in with work commitments, particularly for more than one child or for children with additional needs
- a perception that that childcare is expensive and a lack of awareness of the support available
- individuals' choice to be stay at home parents even though they believe that it will be important that they return to work once their children reach a certain point.

3.14 Qualifications/skills related barriers include:

- a lack of qualifications or of relevant recent qualifications
- a lack of work-related skills
- a lack of recent work experience/a track record of working.

3.15 Participants' motivation for engaging with PaCE differ from one individual to another, but many have a genuine desire to find work. The points at which individuals' youngest child turns three and five appear to be catalysts for some joining PaCE, either to prepare for or to start looking for work.

Participant Journey

3.16 A majority of participants were referred to PaCE by JCP, with the point at which JCP seeks to move single parent Income Support claimants onto Jobseeker's Allowance representing an important watershed.

3.17 Advisers each work in a slightly different way, though the core elements of the service provided by every adviser include:

- Diagnostic assessment: which involves advisers checking individual's eligibility and getting to know participants and understanding their circumstances, their ambitions and the factors holding them back from working.
- Action planning: which involves exploring and agreeing a way forward with participants.
- Better off calculations: which involves advisers showing participants how much better off financially they would be in work, taking account of their likely incomes, the effects upon benefits received and costs that will be incurred e.g. of childcare.
- Mentoring and coaching: which involves working with participants to create CVs and look for jobs. It also involves encouraging and reassuring participants in ways tailored to each individuals' needs.
- In-work support: which involves advisers helping participants deal with the bureaucracy and emotional challenges of making the transition into work.

3.18 Employability interventions facilitated via PaCE include:

- Training: ranging from short courses to provision leading to recognised qualifications. Whilst participants were generally satisfied with the training they received, it is clear that provision is not equally accessible in all parts of Wales and some participants were not able to access the kind or level of training they wanted.
- Work related placements: a minority of participants have undertaken work related placements in order to gain experience and to have something to put on their CVs. Those who had were overwhelmingly positive about the experience.
- Barriers Fund: limited use has been made of the barriers fund to help overcome final cost related barriers to work.
- Childcare support: less use than anticipated has also been made of support to meet childcare costs, primarily because parents have been able to rely on other sources of support or to fit PaCE activities and work around school/nursery hours.

Emerging Outcomes

- 3.19 Over a third of all participants have progressed into work, substantially more than the 20 per cent that were expected to do so.
- 3.20 There are differences in the proportion of participants progressing into jobs from one area to the other, reflecting the point at which the programme was launched in different parts of Wales and variances in the job outcomes generated by individual advisers.
- 3.21 Almost half of participants progressing into jobs did so having been involved with PaCE for three months or less and a fifth progressed into jobs having been involved with PaCE for between three and six months.
- 3.22 Those progressing into work tend to go into entry level jobs in two occupational categories: 'sales and customer service' and 'caring, leisure and other services'.
- 3.23 Those progressing into work tend to secure permanent contracts, with most working around the 16 hours a week mark.
- 3.24 Few participants have achieved qualifications upon leaving PaCE.
- 3.25 Similarly, few have progressed into education or training upon leaving PaCE.
- 3.26 Fieldwork would suggest that PaCE has wider effects upon participants and their families beyond enabling them to progress into work, education or training, or to gain qualifications.

4. Recommendations

4.1 The report concludes by making 18 recommendations that revolve around:

1. Continuing to improve programme processes.
2. Providing local authority partners with six monthly local performance updates.
3. Meeting with local authority family service teams on an annual basis to explore how the programme might be better integrated with wider family services.
4. Exploring whether there might be scope to capitalise more fully on outreach opportunities.
5. Ensuring that the roll out of the Universal Credit does not compromise advisers' access to DWP clients' records.
6. Ensuring that advisers are given allowances to meet incidental costs of doing their jobs.
7. Working closely with those involved in the implementation of the Welsh Government's Employability Plan and engaging with colleagues responsible for the roll out of the Employment Advice Gateway.
8. Updating the programme's communication and marketing strategy to:
 - identify and target parent segments with appropriate messages
 - establish a stand-alone PaCE web-site
 - provide a feed of promotional materials to partner organisations.
9. Undertaking a 'deep-dive' review of practices in high performing areas in terms of client engagements in order to identify good practice that can be shared with advisers.
10. Targeting Income Support claimants with children approaching three and five with marketing messages tailored to their specific situations.
11. Liaising proactively with local learning providers to help participants find suitable training and assembling groups of participants to allow the Welsh Government's retained provider to put on viable courses.
12. Reallocating some of the budget set aside for childcare costs in order to fund more training, including at level 3 and above.
13. Considering the possibility of allocating local training budgets.
14. Recording work and volunteering placements accurately in the participant database.
15. Taking a consistent approach to exiting participants from PaCE.
16. Exploring the reasons for differences in job outcome conversion rates between areas.
17. Reviewing the likelihood of participants who have been on the programme for 12 months or more progressing into employment and considering whether they might be better served by other interventions.
18. Piloting an element of time limited in-work support in selected local authority areas.

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Full Report: OB3 (2018) Evaluation of Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE): *Process and Outputs Evaluation Report*, Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 69/2018.

Available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-parents-childcare-employment-project/?lang=en>

Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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