



SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER:

71/2016

PUBLICATION DATE:

03/11/2016

Links between Outcome Data Collection across Supporting People and Tackling Poverty Programmes: A Scoping Report

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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Links between Outcome Data Collection across Supporting
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A Scoping Report

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Full Research Report: Arshi Iqbal (2016). Links between Outcome Data Collection across Supporting People and Tackling Poverty Programmes: A Scoping Report. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Supporting People programme is a Wales-wide programme that provides housing-related support to vulnerable people to help them find and keep a home. It is funded by the Welsh Government, who pays each local authority to procure services to meet local need in their area.
- 1.2 In 2015/16 the Supporting People programme provided £124 million of funding in order to help people to live as independently as possible. Supporting People supports a range of people, from older people to people fleeing domestic violence and those who are threatened with, or getting over, a period of homelessness as well as people with mental health needs, substance misuse needs or a learning disability. Frequently, the support needs of people accessing the services are complex and multi-faceted.

2. Research aims and methodology

- 2.1 Since March 2012 there has been a Supporting People Outcome Framework in place, designed to evidence the support that is being delivered and the impact of that support. The outcomes are part of a wider range of tools used to help Welsh Government understand how this budget is being used and also evidence the impact the Supporting People has in terms of helping prevent higher levels of expenditure in other areas, such as health. As part of the wider Tackling Poverty agenda, the Welsh Government is reviewing outcomes across a number of portfolios and how they could be better aligned. Some steps were taken in March 2016 to align the reporting periods of outcomes and further work on alignment is likely to continue. This short piece of work was undertaken between October 2015 and January 2016 to take a first look at:
 - i. the potential for overlap of outcomes between Supporting People and other Tackling Poverty Programmes; and
 - ii. how local authorities currently collect outcomes across Tackling Poverty Programmes.
- 2.2 In addition to Supporting People, the other Tackling Poverty Programmes in this study include:
 - **Communities First:** The Welsh Government's community-focused Tackling Poverty Programme. The programme supports the most disadvantaged people in the most deprived areas of Wales with the aim of narrowing the economic, education/skills and health gaps between the nation's most deprived areas and the more affluent areas, to alleviate persistent poverty.
 - **Flying Start:** The Welsh Government-funded 'early years' programme for families with children under four years of age who are living in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales.
 - **Families First:** The Welsh Government-funded programme developed in response to its child poverty strategy. The programme emphasis is on the prevention and early intervention for families living in poverty.

Additionally, this study looked at the Common Outcomes Framework: A number of local authorities were piloting this framework which includes common indicators for Communities First, Families First and Flying Start. (Please note: in February 2016 the then Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty took the decision, based on evidence from the pilot, not to

roll out the Common Outcomes Framework across the whole of Wales. However, fieldwork for this project had already been undertaken and the findings regarding the Common Outcomes Framework are still relevant to future alignment and are included here for completeness.)

2.3 The project was undertaken in two stages:

- (1) Mapping of Outcomes across all Tackling Poverty Programmes.
- (2) Interviews in six local authority areas with key local authority personnel from across the four Tackling Poverty Programmes and other relevant teams:
 - Families First.
 - Flying Start.
 - Supporting People.
 - Lead Delivery Body managers (Communities First).
 - Cluster managers for Communities First.
 - Housing Options.

2.4 Emails were sent informing the target participants of the nature of the research. A summarised list of topics the interview would cover was attached to the email. Of the 36 initially contacted, a total of 22 agreed to be interviewed. The table below explains how the interviewees cover Regional Collaborative Committee areas, as well as the Tackling Poverty Programmes (please note some interviewees covered more than one Tackling Poverty Programme).

Programme	Role of interviewee	RCC Area					
		North Wales	Mid and West	Western Bay	Cardiff and Vale	Cwm Taf	Gwent
Families First	Programme Manager	✓	x	✓ Same manager for FF and FS	✓ FF Programme co-ordinator designated to undertake interviews for all three programmes	✓	✓
Flying Start	Programme Manager	✓	x			✓ Regional collaboration officer representing FS and CF	✓
Communities First	Lead delivery officer	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Cluster manager	x	✓	✓	x	x	x
Supporting People	Programme Lead Officer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ (same manager for Supporting People and Housing Options)	✓
Housing Options	Programme Manager	x	✓	x	x	✓	✓

- 2.5 The project took a case study approach and so as such the findings reported here can only be considered indicative. The project raises some points for consideration but cannot be considered to be representative of the situation across all local authorities.
- 2.6 Descriptive analysis and thematic analysis was undertaken on the data collected via the interviews. The findings were then divided into three headings for analysis:
1. **Process and experience of data collection** and submission at the local authority level - including experience of using the Communities and Tackling Poverty Common Outcomes Framework for those local authorities who were early adopters. This included information about internal use of data and any resultant service change.
 2. **Operational working or team structure** including examples of joint working or establishing links between programmes.
 3. **Data collection systems** including information on what and how the systems were used.

3. Key findings

Mapping of Outcomes

- 3.1 The first stage was to understand the extent of overlap in the outcomes collected for Supporting People and those collected by the other Tackling Poverty Programmes. This was complicated by the fact that while Supporting People has just the one level of outcomes, other Tackling Poverty Programmes have multi-levelled outcome systems, as illustrated in the table below. For example, Communities First has overarching outcomes akin to Supporting People, but contributing to these are numerous indicators.
- 3.2 The information collected is also related to the methodologies used within each programme, for example a number of programmes use RBA methodologies which provides a framework for the types of indicators that are to be collected. A performance measure is a measure of programme activity relating to the programme client group (e.g. how many sessions, how many clients engaged with), while the population indicators are proxies for the wellbeing of whole populations, whether or not they receive any service from the programme.

This stage of the project compared the outcomes of the Tackling Poverty Programmes against Supporting People, and then secondly explored whether the indicators, performance measures etc used across other Tackling Poverty Programmes could be used as indicators for Supporting People.

Table 1: number of outcomes and other measures per Tackling Poverty Programme

Tackling Poverty Programmes	Number of outcomes (and other measures)
Supporting People	11 outcomes
Communities First	17 outcomes 101 performance measures under these outcomes
Families First	4 outcomes 16 population indicators 19 national performance measures relating to the outcomes and population indicators
Flying Start	3 outcomes 7 indicators
Common Outcome Framework	3 main outcomes 22 population indicators 35 performance measures for the outcomes

- 3.3 Unsurprisingly, Supporting People has certain high level outcomes in common with all the Tackling Poverty Programmes. There is greatest overlap with Communities First, with 10 of the 11 Supporting People outcomes having direct and substantial overlap. For example, Communities First has the outcome *Promoting mental wellbeing*, which is all but the same as the Supporting People outcome of *Mentally healthy*.
- 3.4 There are overlaps with both Families First (six of the Supporting People outcomes overlap with those in Families First) and to a lesser extent Flying Start (having direct overlap with one of the Supporting People outcomes). The latter's focus on children specifically mean that direct overlap is less likely. The Common Outcomes Framework also overlaps with Supporting People, in six Supporting People outcomes. This is to be expected as the top level of outcomes in the Common Outcomes Framework are very broad, e.g. *Healthy, Thriving and Wellbeing*.
- 3.5 The project also looked in more detail at the indicators used across the Tackling Poverty Programmes to see the extent to which these indicators could also provide evidence for Supporting People outcomes. In this case, a distinction is made between 'direct' indicators, those which can directly (and potentially alone) provide evidence for a Supporting People outcome and 'partial' indicators while contributing towards evidence of the outcome, cannot provide robust enough indication alone.
- 3.6 For example, the Communities First indicator: *feel more positive about their mental health* is a direct indicator of the Supporting People outcome: *Mentally Healthy*. While the Communities First indicator: *cooks a fresh meal at least once a week* can contribute towards the Supporting People outcome *Healthy Lifestyle*, it would only provide a weak indication of the outcome and would have to be combined with others

for a stronger indication (as Supporting People providers would not be expected to monitor the type of food a client is eating).

- 3.7 The Supporting People outcomes that have the most direct overlap with the other Tackling Poverty Programmes are as follows:
- (1) Engagement in Employment (25 direct overlaps: 22 with Communities First and three with Families First).
 - (2) Engagement in Education and Learning (24 direct overlaps: 20 with Communities First and four with Families First).
 - (3) Managing Money (10 direct overlaps: nine with Communities First and one with Families First).
- 3.8 In general, the mapping found that the majority of indicators from across the three other Tackling Poverty Programmes which could be used as 'direct' indicators for the Supporting People Programme, came from Communities First. Again, this is unsurprising given that the majority of the indicators for Flying Start and Families First focus specifically on children and parenting, whereas Supporting People focuses on housing-related support.

Organisational structure

- 3.9 From the responses, it emerged that in the vast majority of case study local authorities (five out of six), there are separate teams for the Families First, Flying Start, Communities First and Supporting People programmes. In one local authority, the Families First and Flying Start teams have been merged, while interviewees in two other local authorities stated that the Families First and Flying Start teams are under the same directorate or in the same department.

In two of the remaining three local authorities, the interviewees reported that the Families First and Flying Start teams sit in the same office or will be co-located in the same office along with the Communities First team in the future. Finally in the remaining LA, the interviewees mentioned that while Families First and Flying Start teams are linked, it could be possible to link more programmes in the future.

Data Collection

- 3.10 Key to understanding the process of outcome collection is an understanding of how local authorities collect and submit outcomes to the Welsh Government.
- 3.11 Information was obtained from 19 interviewees across the four Tackling Poverty Programmes from the six case study areas.

Frequency of Submission

- 3.12 The research found there is variation in the frequency with which the four programmes submit outcome information to the Welsh Government programme leads. Families First and Communities First teams in local authorities submit their data quarterly, Flying Start submit it termly (school terms) and Supporting People provide it on a six monthly basis. It is understood that since this study was undertaken, the alignment work being undertaken in the Welsh Government has started to consider the frequency of the outcome data collection.

Method of Submission

- 3.13 With the exception of the Communities First teams, where data submission is via the database collection system provided by the Welsh Government known as 'Aspireview', the other three programmes (Families First, Flying Start and Supporting People) submit the information using Excel spreadsheet templates specifically provided to them by the respective programme leads in the Welsh Government.

Experience of Data Collection at the local authority level

- 3.14 All interviewees were asked about their experience of data collection at the local authority level. Four of the 19 interviewees (two from Families First and one each from Communities First and Flying Start) reported no issues with the data collection process, adding that the use of databases provided clarity on the data collection requirements.
- 3.15 The most frequently mentioned issue with the process of data collection was the time and resource required to complete it. Six out of 19 teams (three Supporting People, one Flying Start and two Families First) considered the process to be time consuming or resource intensive. As a total of six Supporting People teams and four Families First teams were interviewed, this means that half of the Supporting People and Families First programmes in the six case study local authorities considered the data collection process to be time consuming. While this cannot be considered representative of all Supporting People and Families First teams in Wales, it provides an indication that time and resources are a potential issue for those collecting the data.
- 3.16 Five out of 19 interviewees were of the opinion that they are required to collect and submit too much information to the Welsh Government. These included two out of the four Families First and Flying Start programmes respectively, along with an interviewee from Communities First.
- 3.17 Specific comment was made of programmes, with two Families First interviewees perceiving the Families First framework as too broad and in need of refining while another interviewee from the Communities First team felt that the framework for their programme was overly prescriptive. One of the Flying Start interviewees felt the process was difficult because some of the data was being submitted to the LA and other data to the health board via different systems. This interviewee also suggested that use of a standardised data collection system across local authorities to submit information to Welsh Government may be of help.
- 3.18 The inability to gain information on the 'distance travelled' or on the difference being made by the programme for an individual service user, was reported by three interviewees from the Supporting People team and one interviewee from the Communities First programme. This was because currently data collected is largely quantitative, focusing on numbers and percentages. The interviewee from the Communities First team was also of the opinion that because the team works with 'hard to reach' clients, the time taken to reach targets such as getting them into employment takes longer. Therefore the numerical data collected does not reflect the intensity of the work done with these clients. Three out of the four respondents from Families First programmes commented on the aims of the Families First data collection framework. Two of them felt the information collected is not in line with the programme's principles, whilst a third suggested that the Welsh Government needed to clarify the definition of the term 'outcome'. Another interviewee from the Supporting People team was of the opinion that the data collected does not meet the objectives of the programme.

Experience of data collection for the Common Outcomes Framework

- 3.19 For the current research project, four of the six case study local authorities were Early Adopters of the Common Outcomes Framework. The researcher asked the interviewees in these local authorities about their experience of collecting data for the Common Outcomes Framework.
- 3.20 In one local authority, a single person spoke on behalf of Communities First, Families First and Flying Start teams and was of the opinion that because the three

programmes were already linked and the teams were aligned in their LA, using the Common Outcomes Framework was not burdensome.

- 3.21 Another local authority reported that they had decided not to take part in the Common Outcomes Framework as joint working had already been underway between the Communities First, Families First and Flying Start teams. Also it was reported that a similar framework had been developed within the local authority before the Common Outcomes Framework was proposed. Therefore the decision was taken to continue with the local authority's approach and await the results of the pilot for the Common Outcomes Framework.
- 3.22 In the remaining two local authorities, responses were obtained from staff belonging to the Flying Start, Families First and Communities First programmes.
- 3.23 Five out of six interviewees perceived the data collection for the Common Outcomes Framework as difficult, mainly because the process of reporting outcomes was repetitive (or because, due to the different governance structure of the programmes, information collection was difficult).
- 3.24 Only one interviewee (from a Flying Start team) found the experience of data collection relatively easy. However, they did feel that the Flying Start programme was under-represented in the Common Outcomes Framework.
- 3.25 This opinion was also common in the fourth local authority where all interviewees from all three programmes considered that Families First and Flying Start were less able to contribute to the Common Outcomes Framework in comparison to Communities First who, it was felt, were more able to report on more measures.
- 3.26 It should be noted that since this research was undertaken the then Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty made the decision, following on from the pilot, that the common outcomes framework will not be rolled out further.

Data Collection Systems

- 3.27 The majority of the programmes in the case study areas use software systems to collect their outcome data, with six using only Excel spreadsheets. The type of system used differs across the programmes within the same local authority, for example one local authority uses Excel for Communities First but uses a combination of five other software systems for Families First, Flying Start and Supporting People.
- 3.28 In total there are 11 different systems being used across different programmes in the six case study local authorities. From the information gathered, it does not appear that any local authority had a preference for one particular system across all programmes. Apart from Excel which is used by all four programmes and PARIS which is used by one Families First and one Flying Start, there are no indications that either local authorities or Tackling Poverty programmes have systems in common.
- 3.29 There is some indication that local authorities are taking steps to join together to use the same systems, anecdotally the research was told that:

'It [the software] was available. I think LA1 started using it and then a number of Local Authorities bought on to the database and it was promoted internally in the Communities First arena..'

'LA2 had started on it [SNAP] themselves and we felt that the previous system that was just using the spreadsheet so time consuming and ineffective ...it was difficult to follow. LA2 offered to provide services and extend what they were already developing and it was agreed by other Local Authorities in the area that it was the way forward'.

- 3.30 When asked why a particular system had been chosen, four programmes reported that a number of options were considered and the selected system was deemed to be the best fit for their needs. Three programmes made their choice based on the chosen system being user friendly, while two cited the importance of a developer's track record in developing similar systems.
- 3.31 Interviewees were asked how long the current systems had been in use. Some systems were relatively new, having only been in use for five to six months while others were well established systems, the longest being in use for seven years. On average, systems had been in use for over three and a half years.
- 3.32 Of the software systems discussed during this research, nine were tailor-made to meet the programme data collection needs for each local authority. The exceptions are the YETI system used by one Communities First team and the TRIBAL system used by one Flying Start team, which were purchased off-the-shelf.
- 3.33 Although being able to tailor systems to local needs is useful, some interviewees pointed out that the aim was to provide standardised responses and to create uniform reporting. For example, the Communities First team in one local authority are developing a suite of appropriate indicators that can be chosen from to report against outcome measures. Another LA also mentioned although SNAP can be personalised, there was no need to do so because the data requirements were set by the Welsh Government.
- 3.34 The software developers or the main local authority who created or purchased the system, were the first points of contact in case the teams needed help or support with the system. In most teams (nine out of 15) the software company provided training to the respective team managers, and/or administrative staff.
- 3.35 Training took the format of in-house training, where the developers visited the local authority and illustrated how to use the software or where training was undertaken via video conferencing.
- 3.36 Once staff members at the local authority level were trained, they subsequently trained other people within the team or visited service providers to ensure they knew how to use the system. For example, a Supporting People team using SNAP held a workshop to explain the use of SNAP to other local authorities.

Internal Use of Data

- 3.37 All but one of the 19 interviewees reported that data collected as part of the outcomes process was used internally within their programmes, although the examples given refer more to the use of administrative or monitoring data.
- 3.38 The majority of interviewees (15 out of 18) reported that data was utilised internally to evaluate service performance. The most common approach (eight out of 18) was to identify projects or areas with particularly low/high uptakes and to examine the reasons for this. These eight responses were from two interviewees from each programme. Two responses seemed to suggest that data was used for needs mapping exercises.
- 3.39 Two Supporting People interviewees mentioned they use the data for routine review and monitoring visits to check the accuracy of data sent by service providers. This monitoring process had brought to light issues around IT, where systems were not as 'user-friendly' as they could be, and a requirement for further training for providers, on recording data correctly, both of which could then lead to better data collection.
- 3.40 The interviewees were then asked whether they could provide specific examples of where the internal use of data had resulted in service change. Responses were

obtained from three out of the five Communities First teams, and one each from the Families First and Flying Start teams.

- 3.41 In one Communities First programme, the interviewee reported that the sharing of data identified duplication or gaps and programme changes have been made as a result. Another interviewee from a Communities First cluster remarked that the outcomes data from five clusters was submitted to the local authority. Discussions on the results of this data have led to a proposition to start a new project related to mental health in their Communities First team.
- 3.42 Other interviews presented examples of how good use of data had led to change, but as mentioned above, this was not specifically outcomes data. More typically, administrative or monitoring data was referred to. For example, an interviewee from the Flying Start team stated that attendance issues were identified from the data, which enabled attempts to be made to increase attendance. Similarly an interviewee from the Families First team reported that a contract for an outreach service was terminated due to low uptake identified in the internal data.

Sharing of information

- 3.43 The sharing of information appears to vary across teams and local authorities. In one local authority, the Communities First and Flying Start teams reported they share outcome information across teams. Conversely, in another local authority an interviewee reported limited sharing of information.
- 3.44 In three of the remaining four local authorities, interviewees reported that information regarding referrals is shared with the aim of identifying and removing duplication of services. Two of these interviewees were from Supporting People teams and two were from Communities First teams. One member from a Supporting People team gave a specific example saying that there is a central contract register in their local authority which enables them to identify if multiple teams are funding one external provider.

Links between teams

- 3.45 Interviewees in all six local authorities stated that there are links between the Families First, Flying Start and Communities First programmes. However, with respect to links with Supporting People teams, at the time of this research, seven out of 19 interviewees across four local authorities stated that initial discussions are being held to develop links with the Supporting People team in their local authorities. Of these seven, three were from the Families First programme, two from Supporting People programme and one each from the Communities First and Flying Start programme respectively. Interestingly, in one of these local authorities while the interviewee belonging to the Families First team reported that they were beginning to make links with Supporting People, the interviewee from the Flying Start team stated that they have had links with the Supporting People team from the beginning and refer clients on to them to discuss their tenancy needs.
- 3.46 An interviewee from the Supporting People team in one LA mentioned there were plans to link the Supporting People team with the Communities First team, specifically for the employment pathway.
- 3.47 Two interviewees from the Families First and Communities First teams respectively reported that presently there were no links between their team and the Supporting People team in the remaining two of the six local authorities.
- 3.48 Variation was also observed in the type and extent of links between programmes. Four interviewees across two local authorities reported that networking events or

workshops were held so that all the four Tackling Poverty teams became familiar with the services that each of them provide.

- 3.49 Five interviewees across four local authorities reported that meetings are held or special groups are set up to either explore how to form links or strengthen the existing links across all four Tackling Poverty programmes. These groups ranged from collaborative working groups to programme-specific advisory or commissioning groups.
- 3.50 While there are few working links currently, there is work underway to build links between the various teams and ensure there is awareness of the work of each, across all four programmes.
- 3.51 Interviewees in all six local authorities provided 10 specific examples of joint working which are given in the table below. Amongst the four programmes, Families First appears to have the most links to other Tackling Poverty programmes, as of the 10 joint working examples provided, Families First are involved in seven. Although one programme run by Flying Start is funded by Supporting People, there were no other examples of joint working with Supporting People. In these six case study local authorities, one interviewee from a Supporting People team stated that service users in one area are signposted on to groups run by the Communities First team in that area.

Table 2: Examples of joint working

Name/description of programme	Programmes	FF	FS	CF	Supporting People
Parenting programme	FF and CF	✓		✓	
'Putting families first'	FF and CF	✓		✓	
Family facilitation team funded through FF work in CF cluster	FF and CF	✓		✓	
'Early years' programme	FF and FS	✓	✓		
Midwifery service across all over the LA, not just FS area	FF and FS	✓	✓		
In the past FF worked with young people who came out of prison or care	FF and other	✓			
'Super dads'-activity	FF, tenancy support unit, drug and alcohol programme	✓			
CF health team in cluster work with FS team for cookery programme developed	FS and CF		✓	✓	
One service 50-50 between FS and CF (not to be funded in the future)	FS and CF		✓	✓	
FS nurseries have parent facilitator projects	FS project funded by SUPPORTING PEOPLE and Tenancy Support Unit	✓			✓

- 3.52 Interviewees were asked to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of collaborative working. Seven interviewees belonging to four local authorities provided responses. Two interviewees from different local authorities remarked that with decreasing resources, aligning programmes and sharing workloads was beneficial. However they were of the opinion that while joint working had strengths, there needed to be clarity around which of the four programmes was best placed to deliver the project, as it was important to identify where the expertise lie. Moreover, with joint working, any reduction in funding to one programme could affect the other programme.
- 3.53 Two interviewees with Communities First teams had positive opinions regarding joint working at a ground level. However, one interviewee from the Families First team felt that due to variation in programme guidance and funding cycles, jointly commissioning projects with Communities First and Families First was difficult (as the two programmes worked in different geographical areas).

Links between Supporting People and Housing Options teams

- 3.54 As part of the research, information was gathered regarding the extent of the links between the Supporting People teams and the Housing Options teams in the six case study local authorities.
- 3.55 Responses were obtained from six interviewees from the Supporting People teams in local authorities (of which one interviewee managed both the Supporting People team and the Housing Options team in their local authority). Interviewees from the Housing Options teams in two local authorities also provided responses. In total eight interviewees provided information across six local authorities.
- 3.56 When interviewees were asked about the links between the Supporting People teams and the Housing Options teams, interviewees in five local authorities commented that there were good links between the teams and that they had close working relationships.
- 3.57 Moreover, apart from one local authority, the Supporting People and the Housing Options teams were co-located in the same office within their local authorities.
- 3.58 Interviewees from the Supporting People teams in three local authorities confirmed that they shared information with the Housing Options team. One interviewee gave a specific example of how monthly reports of new referrals and uptake submitted by Supporting People providers to the local authority are shared with the Housing Options team.

Referrals between Supporting People and Housing Options teams

- 3.59 According to the interviewees, the Housing Options teams made referrals to the Supporting People teams in all six case study local authorities. In one local authority, Supporting People funded a young person's Housing Officer who took referrals from the Housing Options team, and in another LA it was reported that a Housing Options representative sat on the Supporting People planning group.
- 3.60 However of the six who took part in this project, three interviewees stated that Supporting People made referrals to the Housing Options team. One of these reported that the LA had a Single Point of Access Officer who was trained to identify those who could be at risk of homelessness.

Monitoring of Referrals

- 3.61 Information regarding how referrals were monitored was obtained from four interviewees across different local authorities. Two interviewees from the Supporting

People team reported that databases were used to track the service users once they have been referred by Housing Options. Information such as age, gender and need is recorded and service users were followed from the time of initial referral until they accessed support. The other Supporting People interviewee reported that the Supporting People team reviewed the time taken from the point of referral to acceptance into the programme along with the duration of service provision.

- 3.62 From the Housing Options team, an interviewee stated that they felt monitoring of referrals needed to be improved in their LA Supporting People team. In another local authority, the staff from the Housing Options team reported that the SPURS database was used to record information and once referrals were made to Supporting People, the Supporting People team linked with the tenancy management team and the Housing Options team no longer monitored referrals.

4. Conclusions/Recommendations

Conclusions

- 4.1 This project was short scale and offers a first look at some of the potential issues and area for consideration in aligning Supporting People with the other three Tackling Poverty programmes. The conclusions made here summarise what the project found, but are indicative only and cannot be taken to definitively represent the situation across all 22 local authorities in Wales.
- 4.2 The project found variation in the structure of outcomes and in the number and level of supporting indicators (performance measures etc) across the four Tackling Poverty programmes. There is also an issue of language specifically whether terms such as 'performance measures', 'indicators' and 'measures' can be used interchangeably and be considered essentially the same. This ambiguity would need to be resolved if further alignment is to go ahead.
- 4.3 However, the mapping exercise undertaken would suggest that closer alignment between Communities First and Supporting People could be possible. Although there was less direct overlap, alignment would also be possible across all four Tackling Poverty programmes, albeit with some flexibility. The study found that alignment could potentially help to alleviate some of the reported issues with time and resources, as outcomes could be collected once and used across multiple programmes. The shared outcomes would have to equally evidence all Tackling Poverty programmes and this may prove difficult given the very specific focus of Families First and Flying Start on young children and families.
- 4.4 At the time of this research being undertaken, there were differences across the Tackling Poverty programmes in terms of when data was submitted and the periods this covered from financial year to school years. Since this study was undertaken, alignment work continues to be undertaken in the Welsh Government to align the frequency of the outcome data collection. However, due to the nature of the programmes' full alignment of the periods covered has not been achieved. In addition to this, as the majority of Tackling Poverty programmes use Excel to submit their data, the *method* across all but Communities First who report via Aspireview may be compatible.
- 4.5 When it comes to the process of data collection and submission, the main concerns expressed across all four Tackling Poverty programmes, were around the time and resource the process takes and the amount of information required. Alignment of outcomes could potentially see a reduction in this, as one indicator could then be used for more than one Tackling Poverty programme.

- 4.6 The data systems used to collect and record data pertaining to the Tackling Poverty programmes varied. The majority used some sort of data collection system, either bespoke or off-the-shelf. However, there was no evidence of preference by either a local authority for a particular system or indeed within the Tackling Poverty programmes themselves. As already stated, this project was small in scale and the findings cannot be considered to represent the whole of Wales, but it would indicate that there are no preferred systems either within a local authority or within a Tackling Poverty programme. Such a variation in systems may pose difficulties for alignment of data collection systems, especially where systems currently link into other local authority activities.
- 4.7 Of those interviewed as part of this research, there were indications of links and some joint working between Communities First, Families First and Flying Start teams. There was little evidence of joint working between these programmes and Supporting People, although it was reported that discussions were underway to develop closer links.
- 4.8 Supporting People teams did report links with Housing Options teams and vice versa, also reporting good working relationships, including the co-location of some teams.
- 4.9 It should also be noted that this study was undertaken prior to the Welsh Government initiating an alignment project between the Communities First and Tackling Poverty programmes and some of the findings will therefore have been superseded by actions undertaken since that time. This report has therefore been updated where appropriate.

Recommendations

- 4.10 The recommendations made below were made prior to the alignment project being started, or the Common Outcomes Framework roll-out being halted.
- 4.11 Alignment may be possible, but any joint outcomes either need to be directly applicable to all Tackling Poverty programmes and all programmes should be equally able to evidence them, or it should be clear that only the relevant outcomes for an individual needing support should be selected. Given the number of data systems currently used, the development of a standardised database will need to involve considerable consultation across all local authorities and all Tackling Poverty programmes to ensure that both the technical capabilities and administrative uses and links are fully understood.
- 4.12 The Welsh Government could consider a standardised reporting Excel template to be used as the main reporting tool in the interim, while the work on scoping the most appropriate data collection system is underway. This could be submitted once to Welsh Government but used by multiple Tackling Poverty programme teams. Although the eventual data collection system would take over this role, the use of a standardised spreadsheet would enable alignment to occur quicker. It could also act as a 'pilot' of the new process. The pilot and the feasibility of alignment could then be evaluated before significant investment is made.
- 4.13 A standardised database across all Tackling Poverty programmes would be beneficial, irrespective of whether alignment goes ahead or not. This would assist with greater streamlining of the programmes, whilst enabling greater cross-working and cutting down on bureaucracy in the local authorities and service providers.