

Linking Clients to Services: Challenges and Approaches, with an illustration of Case Management in the UK

Dan Finn

University of Portsmouth and
Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion
(www.cesi.org.uk)

Context: Activation reforms

- Changes to *benefit requirements* to reinforce job search obligations and activity (redesigning sanctions, activity requirements and sometimes changing the name given to the cash payment)
- *Extending job search and employment related requirements* to previously inactive (people with health/disabilities; lone parents; spouses/partners)
- *Active measures* – job search support, ALMPs
- Policies to *make work pay* and *make work possible*
- Employment-focused reforms to the *delivery system*, including better coordination/integration of PES, benefit/insurance agencies, and municipalities and benefit payment
- Increased *competition* for PES *and* traditional providers of labor market programs:
 - liberalization of private employment agencies
 - contracting out delivery of PES advice/placement activities

‘Reaching the client’: Case Managers

- *‘Reaching the client’* involves both the
 - organisation, location and delivery of services (e.g., balance between remote and face-to-face delivery; outreach), and
 - getting service users to engage in job search and employment, even though they may not see this as their priority.
- A critical factor in delivery and ‘reaching clients’ has involved reshaping the character, intensity and sequencing of front line interactions, including in particular the introduction of:
 - Employment-focused *‘Individual Action Plans’*;
 - *Regular Interviews* (though frequency varies);
 - *Case Managers*
- These front line workers have been given the complex task of providing assistance, referrals to jobs, programs and other services whilst also enforcing obligations (significant role of *‘street level bureaucrats’* in implementation and their use of administrative discretion)

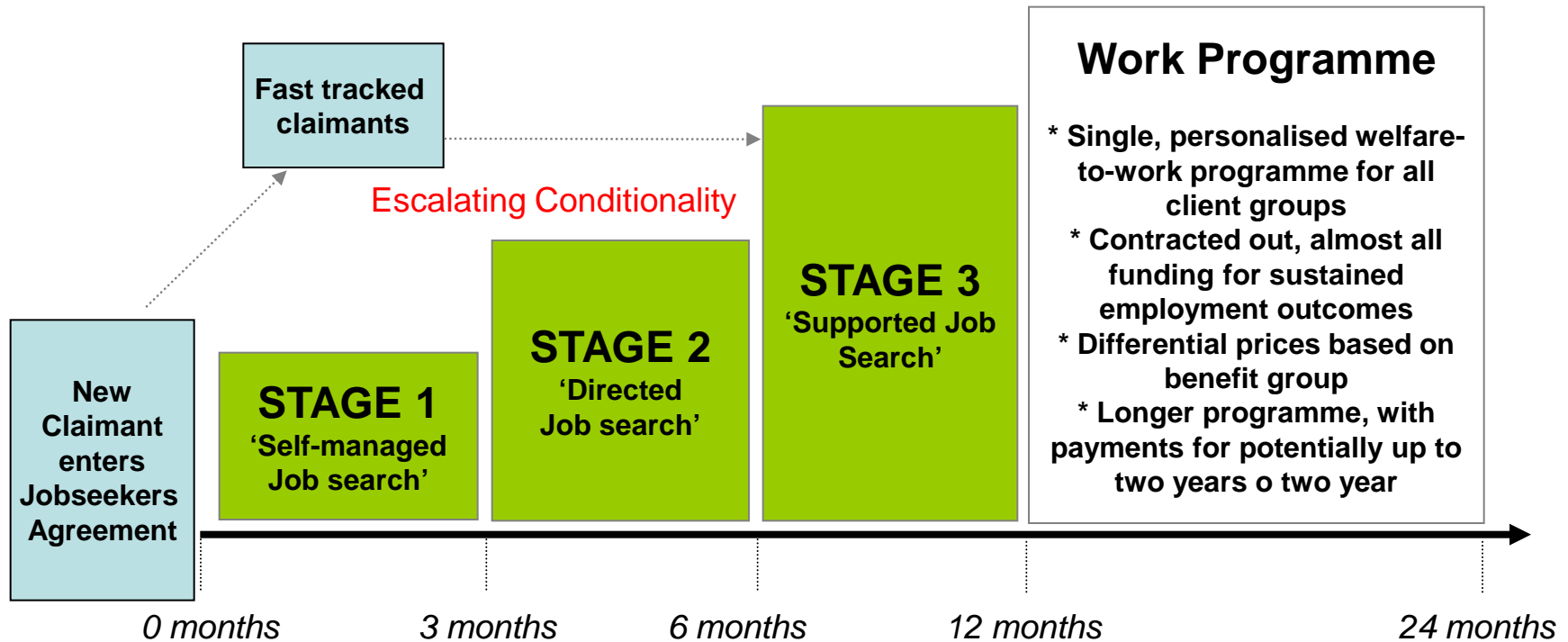
Delivering Activation in Britain

- Britain has a mixed public-private delivery system, with public system delivering high-volume, low cost services, alongside more intensive advisory services with contracted providers delivering job search support and working with harder-to-place groups (increasingly paid on basis of job outcomes).
- *Jobcentre Plus* (JCP) integrated PES, benefit assessment and delivery in 2001. Service delivery comprises:
 - *Telephone contact centres* for benefit information, claims, and employer vacancies
 - *'E-channels'* for vacancy search and placement, CV bank, employer direct services, benefit information, inquiries and claims
 - *Face-to-face advisory service* delivering *work focused interviews*, with the intensity of job search/activity regime varying according to benefit status and duration on benefit (minimal profiling – 'RAG' system)

Jobcentre Plus, Jobseekers Allowance Regime and Work Programme

Jobcentre Plus

Prime Providers



British research on PAs

- Two types. Qualitative and quantitative studies that seek to identify:
 - the effects that PAs have in improving service quality and/or outcomes; and
 - those front line practices which may be more effective.
- Findings from such studies show:
 - Activity of PAs is associated with greater numbers leaving benefits and entering employment.
 - PAs have a positive impact by raising service users confidence, equipping them with improved job-seeking skills and assisting with job applications.
 - Individual capabilities and attitudes of PAs and techniques they use have an important impact on effectiveness of interventions.
- Much of the qualitative evidence supporting this is retrospective (interviews/focus groups), with little direct research involving observation/analysis of how PAs interact with clients at front line and exercise informal discretion.
- There are also small scale independent studies of PAs as ‘street level bureaucrats’, variously analyzing ‘implementation gaps’ and how policy reforms are mediated through the local strategies and work cultures of front line staff.

Personal Advisers in the UK

- In 2006 JCP estimated to employ 9,300 PAs who:
 - undertook 10.8 million WFIs, about 200,000 a week;
 - each PA conducted about 28 interviews per week with an average active caseload of 30-40 (interviews lasted 20-60 minutes);
 - Just over half PA time (52%) was spent in interviewing – rest in training, performance monitoring, completing paperwork, missed appointments, etc.
- Subsequent research in 2008 estimated that there were some 20,000 PAs in Britain delivering employment related services for DWP (an underestimate).
- Much variation in the resources and status of PAs, the ways in which they are employed, job titles, autonomy, and in their caseloads and the frequency and nature of contact they have with service users.
- Varied backgrounds but PAs trained in and use psychologically derived models of motivation and intervention frameworks, but also rely on intuition, informal workplace socialization, training and professional expertise when dealing with clients.

What do PAs do?

- The core generic functions of PAs involve:
 - assessment of a client's circumstances and needs;
 - planning the range of support or assistance needed;
 - meeting regularly and monitoring a client's job search activity, engagement and progress;
 - linking the client with necessary external services; and
 - achievement of an employment outcome (though variation about 'distance travelled' and first or better job).
- Main difference between public/private was role PAs played in 'policing' the benefit system/sanctions, with variable tension between 'enabling' and 'policing' roles.
- A number of strategies commonly used by PAs, including:
 - 'rapport building and contracting';
 - 'challenging'; and
 - 'selective case loading' (positive/negative 'parking').

What works and might be transferable

- No simple ‘blueprint’ of best practice but a ‘toolkit’ of good PA/case management practices that may be adapted to local circumstances:
 - Emphasis of face-to-face interactions should be on employment with referral to job vacancies, rather than immediate referral to more intensive programs.
 - Use of Individual ‘back to work’ plans and persistent follow-up with use of sanctions to secure engagement and enforce mandatory nature of requirements.
 - Some flexibility over requirements but clear incentive to ensure that ‘employable’ clients seek work and meet obligations.
 - PAs should be supported by flexible provision to tackle specific barriers (e.g., discretionary funds to deal with immediate issues, such as travel, licenses, child care, etc.).
 - PA efforts should be targeted on those most distant from the labor market, with lower caseloads for those working with ‘hardest to help’.
 - PA continuity with service user, access to ‘senior advisers’, and strong caseload management practices.
 - Additional value of specialised advisers (‘job developers’) who seek out/build bank of job opportunities relevant to clients.

References/Resources

- POWER – a provider -led group seeking to professionalize the welfare to work industry in the UK, at <http://www.cesi.org.uk/power>
- McNeil, C. (2009) *Now It's Personal: Personal advisers and the new public service workforce*, Institute of Public Policy Research, London, at http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/05/now_its_personal_1700.pdf
- Hasluck C. and Green A. (2007) *What works for whom? A review of evidence and meta-analysis for the Department for Work and Pensions*, Research Report No 407, at <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2007-2008/rrep407.pdf>
- National Audit Office (2006) *Jobcentre Plus: delivering effective services through Personal Advisers*, National Audit Office, London, at http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0607/jobcentre_plus.aspx
- Joyce, L. and Pettigrew, N. (2002) *Personal Advisers in New Deal 25+ and Employment Zones*, Department for Work and Pensions, London, at http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/working_age/wa2002/wae139rep.pdf