

In-House Research

Work Choice Evaluation: Commissioning and Transition of Clients to the Programme

by Adam Thompson, Paul Trenell, Mike Hope, and Andrew
McPhillips

Department for Work and Pensions

In-House Research No 6

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Glossary of Terms

Commissioning Strategy	Document setting out the Department's approach to sourcing, procuring and managing contracted employment provision.
Contract Package Area	The geographical territory within which a provider delivers contracted employment provision.
Contracted Employment Provision	Employment support delivered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions by external organisations from the private, public or community/voluntary sector.
Financial incentive	The movement of money from a WORKSTEP (Work Choice) provider to any organisation that employs or provides a place of work (host employer) for a WORKSTEP (Work Choice) participant. A financial incentive should only be used to address appropriate employment support needs of a participant while undertaking supported employment during WORKSTEP (Work Choice). Including situations where the WORKSTEP (Work Choice) provider employs the participant, and the place where they work pays the WORKSTEP (Work Choice) provider a proportion of the salary. The difference represents a financial incentive
Flexible New Deal	Employment programme for Jobseeker's Allowance customers launched in October 2009. The first provision commissioned under the principles of the Commissioning Strategy.
Invitation to Tender	Second stage in the Department's procurement process for contracted employment provision. Providers successful at Pre-Qualification Questionnaire stage are invited to submit a full tender.
Legacy providers	Providers who delivered WORKSTEP and/or Work Preparation, but did not deliver Work Choice at the time of fieldwork.
Ofsted	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. Delivers regulation and inspection in fields including employment provision.
Pre-Qualification Questionnaire	First stage of the Department's procurement process for contracted employment provision. Successful bidders are invited to submit a full tender.
Provider Engagement Meetings	A meeting between Jobcentre Plus, DWP Performance Managers and contracted employment provider(s) to enable discussion of performance and delivery issues.
TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment)	Regulations protecting employees' terms and conditions of employment when a business is transferred from one owner to another. Employees

of the previous owner automatically become employees of the new employer on the same terms and conditions.

WORKSTEP Specialist disability employment programme which focussed on helping disabled people find or keep employment. Replaced by Work Choice.

Work Preparation Specialist disability employment programme which helped disabled people to address employment-related issues associated with their disability and prepare to enter work. Replaced by Work Choice.

Abbreviations

CPA	-	Contract Package Area
DEA	-	Disability Employment Adviser
DWP	-	Department for Work and Pensions
JCP	-	Jobcentre Plus
PEMs	-	Provider Engagement Meetings
PRaP	-	Provider Referrals and Payments system
SRO	-	Statutory Referral Organisation
TPPM	-	Third Party Provision Manager
TUPE	-	Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)
VCS	-	Voluntary and Community Sector

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SUMMARY

Background and Research Aims

Work Choice is a specialist disability employment programme which provides employment support to clients who, by reason of disability, cannot be supported through mainstream employment programmes. It was introduced in October 2010, replacing three previous programmes: WORKSTEP, Work Preparation and the Job Introduction Scheme.

The research study reported here is the first wave of the evaluation of Work Choice, which aims to evaluate the programme against the principles and critical success factors set out at section 1.1. This particular wave focuses on the transition from the legacy programmes to Work Choice, specifically exploring:

- The process of transition;
- The impact of transition on clients;
- The early operation of Work Choice.

This strand of research also examines the early impact of the commissioning model underpinning Work Choice, which was the first specialist disability employment programme to be commissioned under the terms of the Department for Work and Pensions' Commissioning Strategy (DWP, 2008). The central elements of the Commissioning Strategy are:

- **The prime-provider model** through which the Department contracts with a provider, who in turn manages a supply chain of providers in order to deliver the contract.
- **Outcome-based funding** the strategy sets out a commitment that providers would be paid increasingly on the basis of the sustained job-outcomes that they achieve for clients.
- **Minimal service prescription** allowing providers to make decisions about what will help clients into sustainable employment, with the aim of encouraging personalisation of support and innovation in service delivery.
- **Larger, longer contracts** than for previous specialist disability employment provision. The standard contract length is five years, with the option of a two year extension dependent on performance. The aim is to produce market stability and encourage providers to invest in delivery.
- The Department is keen to understand the impact of this commissioning approach on providers of welfare to work services, and in particular: how the model is shaping the provider market (the number and type of providers delivering for DWP); the financial viability of organisations within supply chains; and how the model influences providers' decisions about service design and delivery.

Methodology

This report presents evidence drawn from several sources: qualitative interviews with Work Choice providers and DWP staff; mixed methods research with Work Choice clients; and analysis of DWP administrative data relating to specialist disability employment provision.

Qualitative research with Providers and DWP Staff

70 qualitative interviews with Work Choice stakeholders conducted between late November 2010 and early February 2011. Eight out of 28 contract package areas were purposively sampled to take account of factors such as geography, labour market conditions, and the providers operating in the area. Within these contract package areas interviews were conducted with provider staff, Jobcentre Plus staff and DWP staff involved in the Work Choice programme, in order to triangulate findings and gather a complete picture of the commissioning and transition process.

Analysis of DWP Administrative Data

The findings reported at section 3.2 relating to the provider market structure draw on several sources: DWP held Management Information about WORKSTEP and Work Preparation providers; supply chain information provided in bids, and at contract award, to deliver Work Choice; and an e-mail survey of Work Choice prime providers conducted in February 2011 to gather up-to date supply chain information.

Mixed methods research with Work Choice Clients

The findings in section 2.1 and 2.7 relating to client experience of transition and stakeholders' early views of the programme respectively draw on face to face and telephone interviews with 88 clients and 29 of their support workers during March and April 2011. This fieldwork was conducted to understand the perceptions of Work Choice clients and their support workers regarding the impact of the transition from legacy programmes to Work Choice and their early views of the programmes effectiveness.

Context of transition

The movement of clients from legacy programmes to Work Choice was a substantial change in welfare to work provision with an estimated 14,000 clients (excluding Remploy staff) moving from one programme to another. At the same time there was a significant re-shaping of the provider market, with the entry of new organisations both at prime provider and sub-contractor level, and the exit of around 170 providers. The impact of this change was increased by the condensed period of time that providers had to carry out transition activities from six months to three months, following a delay in awarding contracts to preferred bidders after the 2010 general election.

Consequently, the transition was a complex task involving significant risks. Considering the substantial risks identified, the transition of clients from legacy programmes to Work Choice has been relatively successful. The following themes are reported upon within this report as they were highlighted as areas of particular importance to respondents, either because they represent areas of good practice or because they illustrate challenges which arose during the transition period. Areas of concern tend to predominate amongst reported findings, and areas which went well or as expected would receive less mention.

Key Findings – Transition

Impact of the transition on clients

Some providers felt that the transition had had little or no impact upon clients, and where clients remained with the same provider throughout the process the change

in support arrangements was a relatively minor consideration. Examples of good practice in trying to reduce anxiety amongst clients by Work Choice providers include allowing the client's old provider to maintain contact with the client while they adjusted to the new programme. However, some respondents reported different ways in which the transition had negatively impacted on clients. This includes a potential gap in provision (covered at section 2.3 below), where clients may have been waiting for a number of months before they started receiving Work Choice support. Other respondents reported anxiety among clients about what the transition would mean for them. This stemmed in part from the lack of clarity providers had about the future of the programme as a result of the Ministerial decision making process and resulting delay in signing contracts.

Many clients thought the transition had little or no impact upon them or were completely unaware of the change. There were no reports of the transition process having a positive impact upon clients. Nevertheless a small number of clients did report a negative experience with transition, with some anxiety about the future, poor communication about the change, issues with referral systems, and a small number of cases where a gap in provision was perceived to have contributed to clients losing their job. Client experience of Work Choice support was generally positive although a number of respondents were unaware of receiving support with their job.

Movement of information

The transfer of client information between WORKSTEP/Work Preparation providers and incoming Work Choice providers was a key part of the transition process and early live running of Work Choice. Generally providers reported problems with client information that was inconsistent, incomplete or out of date. Although most Work Choice providers reported this issue, it typically applied to a minority of the clients they dealt with. The reasons for this were perceived to be related to some providers having exited WORKSTEP/Work Preparation clients late from those programmes, thus rendering client lists for new Work Choice providers out of date; or insufficient information about clients being transferred from legacy providers to new providers which could not be verified by DWP.

Referrals

Referrals to Work Choice were significantly higher than expected during the early days of the programme. Some respondents identified the practice of 'stockpiling' – whereby DEAs did not refer clients to WORKSTEP or Work Preparation during the later stages of those programmes, but rather held them back to refer direct to Work Choice – as an explanation for this. There was also a perception amongst some respondents of inconsistency among DEAs in their interpretation of the referral criteria to Work Choice, with a suggestion in some areas that DEAs were not always considering alternative provision before referring clients to Work Choice. There were reports of Work Choice providers receiving minimal information about clients' disability from the DEA when they received a new referral because of Data Protection restrictions¹, which impacted upon providers' ability to conduct effective early meetings with new clients.

Impact of delay in signing contracts

¹ Data protection restrictions prevent the transfer of personal information, such as details of an individuals' disability, between the DWP and providers. However, DEAs are able to tell providers any adjustments which need to be made for an individual because of their disability.

Work Choice preferred bidders were announced in April 2010 ahead of the start of the programme in October 2010. However, following the May 2010 general election there was a delay in signing contracts with bidders. It was confirmed in July 2010 that the programme would go ahead as planned in October 2010, leaving a reduced transition period of 3 months. Providers reported that the delay had an impact on their preparations to deliver the programme, for example by creating challenges in communicating across supply chains, delays in meeting clients and employers, and in some cases delays in implementing necessary changes to organisational systems and structures such as buying premises and recruiting staff. This compounded the challenges of the transition.

Key Findings – Commissioning

Provider Market Structure

A significant restructuring of the provider market has occurred through the commissioning of the Work Choice programme. The numbers of providers delivering fell from 214 under WORKSTEP/Work Preparation to 67 delivering Work Choice at contract award stage (including both prime and subcontractors). Over 80% of providers left the market at the time of Work Choice contract award, and 25 contracts went to providers who had not previously delivered WORKSTEP or Work Preparation. There was a net increase of 33 providers within supply chains during live running of the programme, giving a total of 100 organisations delivering Work Choice at February 2011. The majority of market leavers were from the public sector, with many Local Authorities exiting the market. Accordingly, the proportion of providers from the third and private sectors has increased, as set out in the table below:

Change in composition of providers delivering specialist disability employment services

Contract Type	Third Sector	Private Sector	Public Sector	Total
WORKSTEP/Work Preparation	62	26	126	214
Work Choice (contract award)	29	17	21	67
Work Choice (live running)	54	19	27	100

*Source: WORKSTEP/Work Preparation Management Information
Post Tender Discussion Documentation
Survey of Prime Providers conducted in Feb-11*

Delivery Models

A majority of delivery models included some element of delivery by the prime provider, ranging from 15 to 55% of contract value. Only two of the CPAs covered saw no delivery by the prime provider. The number of subcontractors in supply chains ranged from 2 to 7, with an average of 5 subcontractors per supply chain. Subcontractors typically provided an end-to-end service, and would therefore be responsible for the entirety of the client's journey through Work Choice. This was

because of a desire to provide continuity for the client, and ensure they could build a relationship with their provider during the programme. Where specialist services were needed that the end-to-end provider could not deliver, external specialist providers such as charities, training providers and local colleges were utilised.

Outcome-Based Funding

The Work Choice funding model pays providers a 70% service fee, with a further 15% being paid when a client progresses in to supported employment, and a final 15% when a client progresses into unsupported employment. Providers were generally comfortable with the principle and level of outcome-based funding, feeling that this had helped to generate a focus on progressing clients through the programme towards unsupported employment. There was also support for the removal of the WORKSTEP funding model which was felt to incentivise high occupancy rates in supported employment at the expense of progression into open employment. Providers felt that incentives were set at an appropriate level for the client group, but most did not expect to make a significant profit from the programme. Third sector providers reported being motivated more by the opportunity to fulfil their organisational aims than by profit.

Provider Capability

The introduction of a prime provider model under the Commissioning Strategy seeks to improve the quality of the provider base through the use of competition for contracts at prime and subcontract level. The Work Choice contracting process saw market entry at both levels, with 25 of the 67 Work Choice providers at contract award stage previously not having delivered WORKSTEP or Work Preparation. There is evidence that past performance and capability played a part in the sifting process used by prime providers to identify appropriate subcontractors. However, there was overlap in the subcontractors who featured in primes' bids, with many subcontractors appearing in more than one bid within the same CPA. This may have dampened the role of competitive pressures in driving up the quality of the provider base.

Prime providers have invested in infrastructure to deliver Work Choice, such as IT systems, premises and staff recruitment and development. Both prime and subcontractors commonly reported a strong ethos of partnership and cooperation within the programme. The expansion of supply chains in live running was based on prime providers bringing specialist sub contractors into their supply chains, indicating a broadening of the services available to clients to reflect more closely individual needs.

Some areas for improvement were observed during the transition with relation to clarity of roles and responsibilities between providers and DWP. Some providers saw the transfer of employees as a DWP responsibility, which it was not. Similarly, some providers felt that the accuracy and timeliness of customer information being sent from legacy providers, through DWP, to Work Choice providers was the responsibility of DWP, although DWP could not verify all provider information. Applying TUPE regulations and working through the transfer process was the responsibility of the Prime providers rather than DWP. The comments made by some respondents suggest that they had been expecting more thorough advice or guidance on this issue from the department, even though the department went further in this respect than in other contracting rounds.

DWP Capability

As part of the Commissioning Strategy DWP pledged to improve its own capability in order to work more effectively in partnership with providers. There were reports that elements of the DWP performance management structures work well individually, but less so when viewed together. Providers gave positive feedback about individuals within the new DWP and Jobcentre Plus structures. However, there was a feeling – especially among DWP and JCP staff – that more could be done to clarify roles and responsibilities, especially between Account Managers, Performance Managers and Third Party Provision Managers. There are instances, for example where DEAs speak directly to providers and keep case loads, where actions go beyond responsibilities, potentially at the expense of the operation of other parts of the system. Reports that Jobcentre Plus held people back from legacy provision preferring instead to refer them onto the new provision, but there seemed to be a lack of awareness within DWP of the implications for providers of referring large numbers of people at a time when other complex change was happening.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the last decade several external reports recommended improvements to DWP's specialist disability employment provision (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2005; National Audit Office, 2005). These reports led the DWP to conduct a three month public consultation beginning in December 2007 (DWP, 2007) which put forward proposals to reform the existing suite of specialist disability employment provision. Following the public consultation, the Green Paper 'No one written off: Reforming welfare to reward responsibility' (DWP, 2008b) and the White Paper 'Raising expectations and increasing support: Reforming welfare for the future' (DWP, 2008c) announced the Government's intention to go ahead with these reforms. This, along with findings from research on the WORKSTEP programme² resulted in the replacement of WORKSTEP, Work Preparation, and the Job Introduction Scheme with the development of a new programme: Work Choice. More details about the policy background can be found at Appendix 1.

WORKSTEP and Work Preparation had been delivered by a highly dispersed market of over 200 welfare to work providers, with many providers holding a single contract. They were part of a £1 billion welfare-to-work market which had expanded in an incremental and fragmented way, as highlighted in the Freud Report on the future of welfare to work (Freud, 2007). As a result DWP overhauled its approach to the market through a set of commissioning principles (DWP, 2008) and Work Choice was commissioned by this means.

The arrangements in place prior to Work Choice were markedly different, not least because they had developed in a fragmented way:

- There were multiple hand-offs between providers and no coherent client journey
- There were limited incentives to progress individuals from supported to open employment
- There were a range of ways to deliver financial support to individuals in supported employment (for example, the payment of subsidies to employers)
- There were concerns about the quality of the provision available to individuals

The transition to the new arrangements included:

- A re-structuring of the provider market intended to drive up the quality of providers, and provide stronger client journeys towards open employment, and which brought with it the transfer of employees between organisations.
- The movement of an estimated 14,000 clients (excluding Remploy figures) between providers, including the transfer of information on the individuals and common payment terms.

² Department for Work and Pensions (2006) *WORKSTEP evaluation case studies: Exploring the design, delivery and performance of the WOPKSTEP Programme*. (Leeds, The Stationary Office)

- The introduction of new referral procedures for Jobcentre Plus, and training for staff.

The election in May 2010 delayed the award of contracts, but not the start of the programme, which reduced the timescale in which these changes could be managed, and added to their complexity.

1.1 Work Choice

The Work Choice specialist disability employment programme was introduced by the Department for Work and Pensions in October 2010. It replaced three previous programmes:

WORKSTEP: Provided support for disabled people who faced complex issues in finding and/or keeping a paid job, but who, with support for them and their employer (such as mentoring or job coaching) could develop a successful career. The programme also helped participants and their employers to progress to a stage where WORKSTEP support could be reduced or withdrawn over time.

Work Preparation: Helped disabled people to address employment-related issues associated with their disability and prepare to enter work. Types of support included confidence-building, identification of suitable types of work and work experience.

The Job Introduction Scheme: Paid a wage subsidy of £75 per week to an employer for up to thirteen weeks when they employed a disabled person.

The aim of Work Choice is to bring together the best elements of WORKSTEP and Work Preparation into a unified programme which improves existing specialist employment services so they better equip disabled people to move into, retain and progress in employment. The programme is aimed specifically at those clients who, by reason of significant disability related barriers to work, cannot be helped into employment through Jobcentre Plus mainstream programmes. It aims to create a more flexible, easy to use service that is better at enabling Jobcentre Plus frontline staff and external providers to meet the needs of individual disabled people and their employers.

The key principles underpinning Work Choice are set out below (DWP, 2009: 14):

- a greater focus on those who need specialist support;
- less prescription and greater flexibility;
- better links between elements of provision;
- better consistency and quality of provision;
- provision for all types of disability;
- more opportunity for the customer to exercise choice and control;
- a greater focus on job entries;
- improved support for people in either employment or self employment;
- improved progression to unsupported employment;
- a greater emphasis on achieving potential within longer-term supported employment.

Work Choice - Critical Success Factors (DWP, 2009: 35-36)

- providers will ensure that effective transition arrangements have been implemented and customer service maintained for all customers;
- providers will ensure every customer receives a level and type of support appropriate to their individual needs, by means of scrupulous assessment and allocation to the most appropriate Work Choice module;
- providers will deliver a service that represents excellent value for money and a step-change improvement in performance compared with previous programme. There will be an increase in the cost effectiveness of the programme and benefit to the Exchequer (measured by cost benefit analysis);
- providers will deliver high quality provision to all customers in line with the DWP Quality Framework and achieve high standards at external inspection by developing their continuous improvement strategy in line with the relevant Common Inspection Framework;
- providers will deliver an increase in the overall number of people helped through the new programme ensuring a greater focus on disabled people with the highest support needs who cannot best be served by Jobcentre Plus provision;
- providers will deliver an increase in the percentage of individuals who progress into sustained unsupported employment for the same funding envelope;
- providers will ensure the new programme contributes to an increased level of employment for disabled people, particularly people with learning disabilities and mental health conditions (the Public Service Agreement 16 target group);
- providers will liaise effectively with JCP, including the DEA, enabling them to understand and use Work Choice provision effectively for the benefit of their disabled customers.

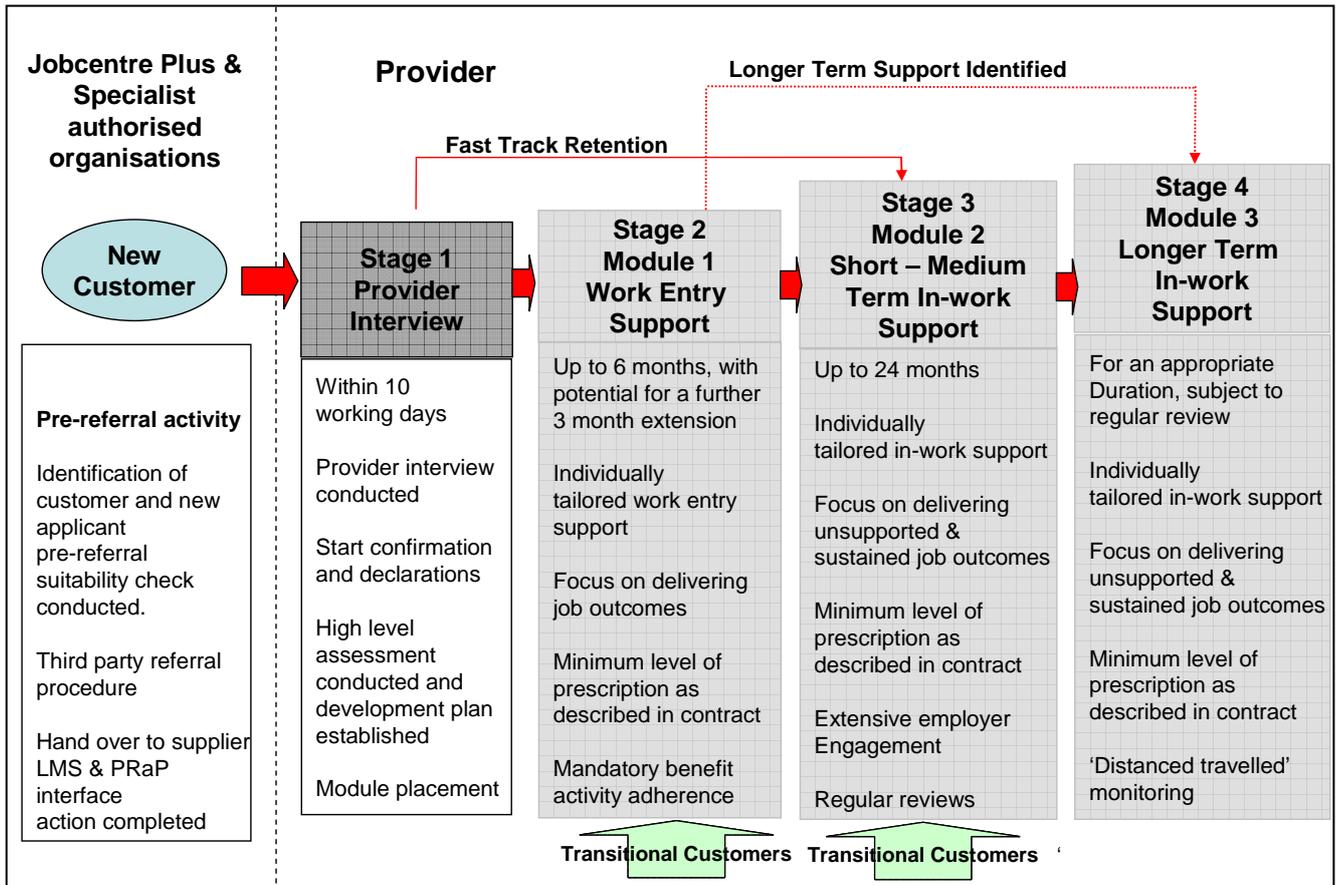
1.2 The Work Choice Journey

The principal route through which clients are referred to Work Choice is via Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs). A limited number of other organisations, which become statutory referral organisations through agreement with prime providers, (e.g. Social Services and Secondary Mental Health Services) are able to directly refer suitable disabled people to Work Choice³. This is intended to offer a route on to the programme for people with learning disabilities and/or mental health conditions, who might not contact a Jobcentre Plus office and therefore would not normally come into contact with DEA services. Providers are not able to recruit directly onto Work Choice.

On receiving a referral providers must conduct an interview with the client to discuss the provider's services and the client's needs. The modular approach aims to ensure that there is progression through the Work Choice programme towards the ultimate goal of unsupported employment, where this is appropriate. The client journey is set out in figure1 below.

³ WORKSTEP and WORK Preparation providers were able to directly refer clients onto the programme.

Figure 1 – Work Choice Client Journey



1.3 The Commissioning Strategy

The Work Choice programme was implemented under the Department's Commissioning Strategy⁴. Published in February 2008, the strategy sets out a series of principles for the commissioning and management of contracted employment provision with the aim of achieving a more strategic relationship between the Department and providers and a step change in provider performance. The strategy seeks to use competition to drive value for money, and strives for a balance between the risks suppliers will carry in terms of working capital and the potential rewards available through outcome-based funding. The intention is that DWP contracts will be appealing to existing suppliers in the market, whilst encouraging new market entrants to deliver welfare to work programmes.

The key features of the commissioning strategy are:

- **The prime-provider model**
Whereby the Department contracts with a provider, who in turn manages a supply chain of providers in order to deliver the contract.
- **Outcome-based funding**
The strategy set out a commitment that providers would be paid increasingly on the basis of the sustained job outcomes that they achieve for clients.

⁴ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/cs-rep-08.pdf>

- **Minimum service prescription**

Allowing providers to make decisions about what will help clients into sustainable employment, with the aim of encouraging personalisation of support and innovation in service delivery.

- **Longer contracts**

Contracts for Work Choice are longer than for previous specialist disability employment provision. The standard contract length is five years, with the option of a two year extension dependent on performance. The aim is to produce market stability and encourage providers to invest in delivery.

As part of this commissioning approach DWP is also committed to improving its capability and building a more strategic and partnership-based approach to managing contracted employment provision. It has committed to clarifying roles and responsibilities of staff within the Department that work with providers, investing in its staff's skills and working with providers to create a transparent and cooperative culture.

1.4 Research Aims

This study is the first wave of the evaluation of Work Choice, which aims to evaluate Work Choice against the principles and critical success factors set out at section 1.1. It will be followed by an early implementation stage which looks at the programme 9 months after starting and a steady-state stage which looks at the programme 18 months – 2 years after starting. This approach to evaluation will allow for exploration of issues around the programme as they evolve over the duration of the contract.

This particular wave focuses on the transition from the legacy programmes (WORKSTEP, Work Preparation and the Job Introduction Scheme) to Work Choice, specifically exploring:

- The process of transition;
- The impact of transition on clients;
- The early operation of Work Choice.

This strand of research also examines the early impact of the commissioning model underpinning Work Choice. The Department is keen to understand the impact of this commissioning approach on providers of welfare to work services, and in particular:

- how the model is shaping the provider market (the number and type of providers delivering for DWP);
- the financial viability of organisations within supply chains;
- how the model influences providers' decisions about service design and delivery.

As well as informing future policy on commissioning this evaluation will help to fulfil a recommendation from the National Audit Office that the department should:

'ensure that it has a consistent and thorough understanding of its supplier base for all contracted employment programmes which move beyond prime contractor level'; and

*'evaluate its prime provider model to consider the impact of the model on the third sector and on service delivery, as well as to explore the extent to which cost savings promised by this model have been delivered in practice.'*⁵

1.5 Methodology

This report presents evidence drawn from several sources: qualitative interviews with Work Choice providers and DWP staff; mixed methods research with Work Choice clients; and analysis of DWP administrative data relating to specialist disability employment provision. The methodology for each element of the research is set out below.

Qualitative research with Providers and DWP Staff

Work Choice contracts were awarded to prime providers in 28 contract package areas (CPAs) across England, Scotland and Wales⁶. The ambition to triangulate findings across individuals working for providers and DWP, and the number of organisations delivering provision through supply chains meant that the most appropriate approach for the evaluation would be to conduct a series of case studies in selected CPAs. This represents a practical approach which allows for the necessary generation of insight into the operation of Work Choice. The strategy allowed for a detailed exploration of the views and experiences of individuals involved in the process of commissioning and the transition from legacy programmes to Work Choice within a specific context. A purposive sampling approach was used to select 8 CPAs, based on the following criteria:

- Covering the majority of prime providers;
- Covering a mix of private, public and voluntary and community sector organisations;
- Covering a number of organisations who provided WORKSTEP/Work Preparation but do not provide Work Choice;
- Covering a number of organisations new to specialist disability employment provision;
- Covering a spread of geographical areas.

A total of eight different organisations have prime provider contracts in Work Choice. The eight CPAs selected as case study areas covered seven different prime providers. One prime provider operates in two of the CPAs selected in order to explore whether and how providers' delivery models vary across CPAs, depending on local context. Fourteen subcontractor organisations were included in the sample, as well as three providers which were providing WORKSTEP but who are not involved in Work Choice. Within provider organisations the intention was to interview two members of staff: one at a management level to respond to questions on the commissioning and management of the programme, and another member of staff at front line level who could respond on direct service delivery.

The sample also included JCP and DWP staff involved in the commissioning of and transition to Work Choice in order to triangulate the views and experiences reported by providers. These participants were selected on the basis of their involvement in Work Choice within the case study area. For DEAs (Disability Employment Advisers) and TPPMs (Third Party Provision Managers) this was

⁵ NAO Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on 'Support to incapacity benefits through Pathways to Work', 28th May 2010, p.13

⁶ Further details of prime providers and contract package areas can be found in appendix 2.

Supported Employment (BASE)¹². All but one of the interviews was digitally recorded and fully transcribed¹³. In the interview which was not digitally recorded notes were taken in a tabular format based on questions in the topic guide.

All transcripts and notes were systematically analysed using a variation of qualitative content analysis in order to identify themes and patterns which emerged from the interviews (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1278). This involved the development of a coding framework based on the anticipated areas of interest which informed the topic guides. Transcripts were then coded accordingly¹⁴ and placed into tabular format to allow the identification of key themes within case study areas, within roles, and across all groups. The coding framework was then further developed through incorporating new themes which emerged from the data.

Mixed Methods Research with Work Choice Clients

In addition to the research conducted with providers and DWP and JCP staff a separate study was conducted which involved Work Choice clients.

This study took a mixed-methods approach, utilising a semi-structured telephone interview with open and closed questions, and a semi-structured qualitative face to face interview¹⁵. 48 clients were interviewed using the telephone survey and 40 clients interviewed face to face¹⁶. This design was used as it was thought that a semi-structured telephone interview would not be appropriate for some Work Choice clients, such as those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment and those with a hearing or speech impairment. By taking this approach the research was able to explore the experiences of wider range of Work Choice clients. 29 of the clients' support workers were also interviewed, with clients' consent, face to face in order to help clarify the support clients receive where the client had a learning disability.

Telephone interviews were conducted by DWP research staff, whilst face-to-face interviews were conducted by research staff at the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion. This report documents findings from both modes of data collection.

Telephone survey sampling

Clients involved in the telephone survey were drawn from DWP client records and were selected using the following criteria, which allowed the research to recruit a representative sample:

- Participation in the Work Choice programme
- Details of disability
- Geographical location

¹² Topic guides used in the research can be found at appendix 3.

¹³ One interview could not be recorded due to a Dictaphone malfunction.

¹⁴ Coding of data was conducted by researchers separately and then compared in order to test inter observer reliability.

¹⁵ Copies of topic guides used can be found in Appendix 4.

¹⁶ The telephone survey sample included 32 Transition clients, 15 new Work Choice clients, and one retention client. The face to face interview sample included 35 Transition clients, four new Work Choice clients, and one retention client.

This created a sample frame of 149 Work Choice clients who were approached to take part in the research. Letters inviting clients to take part in the research, and giving them the option to opt-out, were posted to all clients on the list. A period of two weeks was left until clients who had not opted-out were contacted by telephone to arrange interviews. During these phone calls the research was again fully explained to clients allowing them a second chance to opt-out of the research.

A total of 48 Work Choice clients took part in the telephone survey element of the research representing a response rate of 32%. A total of 48 individuals (32%) declined to take part in the research. A total of 53 individuals (36%) did not respond to the request to take part, which may include some who did not receive the information.

Telephone interviews were conducted over a period of four weeks, from mid March to Mid April 2011¹⁷.

Face to face interview sampling

In order to recruit a number of clients with learning disabilities, cognitive impairments, and hearing and speech impairment it was thought that the most appropriate approach would be to contact providers and seek their assistance in relaying the requirements of the research to the clients. This allowed for the recruitment of clients and their support worker together where appropriate.

Providers selected clients for the research based on criteria that were provided by DWP, such as the impairment of the client. This presents the possibility of some bias in the sample through possible 'cherry picking' respondents. This was mitigated through clear communication to providers of the purpose of the research and the criteria to use in selecting clients.

A total of 40 clients were interviewed face to face which were drawn from seven providers covering contract package areas 4 (Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders; Ayrshire, Dumfries, Galloway & Inverclyde), 7 (South Tyne & Wear Valley; Northumbria), 12 (West Yorkshire), 22 (South London; Lambeth, Southwark & Wandsworth), and 25 (Surrey & Sussex; Kent). In addition to this, face to face interviews were conducted with 29 clients' support workers where the client had a learning disability. Full consent was obtained from all participants prior to the interviews and where a support worker was interviewed consent was sought from the client regarding this too.

Face to face interviews were carried out during March and April 2011.

Analysis

All interviews involved taking notes of responses to open ended questions¹⁸, including some verbatim quotations where this was felt appropriate. Open ended responses were then compiled and placed into a tabular format based on pre-determined themes which were drawn from the content of the questionnaire. Following this the data was searched for new and emerging themes and any which

¹⁷ One participant was unable to complete a telephone interview because of their health condition but still expressed a desire to be involved in the research. This client was sent a postal survey which asked exactly the same questions as the telephone survey.

¹⁸ Face to face surveys were also recorded using a digital recorder with the respondents consent

arose were added to the tabular format, allowing themes to be grounded in the data. Where it was appropriate, themes from the qualitative interviews were quantified. Closed responses were recorded during interviews and were later analysed for frequencies using SPSS statistical software

Analysis of DWP Administrative Data

Information on the provider market was gathered through DWP administrative data in order to track and understand developments in the structure of the provider market through the Work Choice procurement process and into live running. DWP analysis has established a data infrastructure to bring together data on providers from a range of administrative sources. As at April 2011 the provider market analysis used:

- A database of WORKSTEP and Work Preparation providers at October 2010 maintained by Delivery Directorate Provision Management Division to act as a baseline of the specialist disability employment provider market;
- Information included in providers' Work Choice bids, and at contract award, sourced from DWP Commercial Directorate Finance (including prime providers' stated first tier supply chains);
- An e-mail proforma survey of prime providers of nationally contracted employment provision conducted in February 2011 by Delivery Directorate Provision Management Division. This captures information on first tier supply chains and is the source of data on Flexible New Deal suppliers and Work Choice suppliers during live running. Some providers also listed second and third tier sub-contractors

The analysis linked together records from these data sources at the level of the individual provider, as defined by company registration number, in order to track market exit and entry. Providers may include supported businesses as Work Choice prime providers were contracted to deliver a number of supported business places.

A further stage of analysis used Ofsted inspection results¹⁹. Results were gathered using the providers' most recent WORKSTEP inspection and cross-tabulated against a provider's position in the specialist disability employment provision market (i.e. Work Choice provider, Work Choice unsuccessful bidder, WORKSTEP/Work Preparation provider not providing Work Choice). This information was used to help assess whether or not the bidding process for Work Choice had identified stronger performing providers. Ofsted only inspected WORKSTEP providers operating in England.

¹⁹ Accessed from <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Inspection-reports/Learning-and-skills> at 10 June 2011

2. TRANSITION

This chapter of the report explores issues surrounding the transition of clients from legacy programmes onto Work Choice and the early live running of the programme. It is structured as follows

- The impact of transition on clients
- Transition activities
- Movement of information
- Referrals to Work Choice
- TUPE
- The impact of the delay in prime provider signing contracts
- Stakeholders early views of the programme

The movement of clients from legacy programmes on to the new Work Choice programme was an unprecedented change in welfare to work provision with an estimated 14,000 clients (excluding Remploy figures) moving from one programme to another. Consequently, the transition was a complex task involving significant risks.

2.1 The impact of transition on clients

This section considers the effect that the transition to Work Choice had on clients. The excerpt below from DWP Provider Guidance sets out the criteria for successful transition of clients to Work Choice:

Work Choice Success Criteria for transition of clients from legacy programmes to Work Choice (DWP 2010c: 2-3):

- All WORKSTEP participants choosing to move to Work Choice provision remain in their respective stage (pre-employment / employment) and where employed, remain at their current location, with current terms and conditions.
- All WORKSTEP participants choosing to move to Work Choice provision have discussed and agreed with their Work Choice Prime Provider, module allocation, the nature and level of support to satisfy their work goals and access to that support from the first day of the Work Choice programme.
- WORKSTEP participants choosing to not move to Work Choice have access to the support of a JCP Disability Employment Adviser (DEA), if desired and access to other provisions (where appropriate).
- Employees of current providers affected by TUPE have been dealt with, in line with the requirements of the TUPE Regulations 2006 and associated Codes of Practice.
- Employers of WORKSTEP participants understand the nature and level of support that they will receive from Work Choice Prime Providers.
- There are no delays in payments of protected financial incentives to employers of WORKSTEP participants.

- There are no delays in payments to Supported Businesses in respect of payments for protected places.

2.1.1 Qualitative research with Providers and DWP staff

A number of respondents suggested that the clients they have worked with were unaffected by the transition from legacy programmes to Work Choice. This was because clients were not concerned as long as it did not affect their employment, and because provider staff had reassured clients that they did not need to be concerned by the change. It is notable that some clients would have remained with both the same employer and the same provider, so should have experienced only minimal disruption. Often when there was felt to be an impact it was only considered to be small and usually alleviated by the reassurances of provider staff.

'The transition has been very smooth, because I've explained to them [Clients] what the difference is between WORKSTEP and Work Choice and there's no need to worry. If you mention change everyone goes off in a panic mode. But it's been smooth'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'We made sure that there was no impact on our customers. I had written to every employer way back in the spring advising them that WORKSTEP and Work Preparation were finishing...it might have been the year before, we had written to all employers and all clients advising them that both programmes were ending – a new programme was coming in'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

Some good practices by providers were reported during the transition and early days of the programme that were aimed at minimising disruption to clients. One respondent discussed how their organisation was attempting to alleviate client concerns about a change of provider through working alongside exiting providers for a few months while the client established a relationship with the new provider. This was felt to be effective at ensuring a smooth client transition and it may be beneficial to encourage this type of handover during similar client transitions in the future.

'To help that process along [the transition of clients], what we've agreed with the clients and other providers is, a between a three and six month exit strategy so we can work alongside them to help build a relationship with the new providers, before we then physically let go completely. It just kind of alleviates their fears and helps build that new relationship. And that seems to be working, it's getting better'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

However, there were some respondents who felt that the transition was not as smooth as it could have been. Sometimes this was because clients did not want to be supported by a new organisation, which led to reports of a number of clients at one provider not wanting to transfer into Work Choice and consequently being progressed off WORKSTEP.

'We did have a large number of people progress off the scheme before 'go-live' date. There was a group of them who were customers didn't want to move to a

different provider who they thought may not give the same financial incentives or support that they needed. There weren't any customers who just flat out declined without a good reason"

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

If a client did decline to transfer they were contacted by their new prime provider as well as their WORKSTEP provider in an attempt to alleviate any concerns. If these attempts failed then they would have been referred to a DEA by the WORKSTEP provider to further discuss their concerns.

Other respondents mentioned a general lack of clarity and information for providers, which in turn reduced providers' ability to communicate the details of the programme effectively to their clients. This was felt by some to have exacerbated clients' anxiety about the change. This was despite DWP holding national events for providers and sending out a series of briefing notes and nationally designed letters.

'Customers are unclear what is happening and what they are supposed to do'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'I think they were very much in the dark because we were in the dark so that first conversation with them was awkward. We were trying to give them as much information as possible and obviously we didn't know much about Work Choice at all....and I think it did nothing to help the clients anxiety levels – especially with clients that may have had high anxiety levels anyway – I mean it didn't help'

(Former WORKSTEP provider)

Other respondents suggested that clients had experienced unease because of the speed with which the transition was undertaken after contract award, or because of uncertainty about whether the financial incentives given to their employer whilst they were on WORKSTEP would continue to be available on Work Choice which could potentially impact upon clients continued employment.

'The transition has not been a particularly good experience for customers. In the main they were quite settled in the relationship they had with advisers from [provider] and the speed with which that was removed and replaced with another organisation, and the fact that there wasn't much information caused a lot of unrest and uncertainty'

(Former WORKSTEP provider)

'I think the one concern of the clients, generally, some of them are quite open and need minimal support by now. Others are very concerned about their job, if they've had financial help before through the employer, they're worried that that's going to stop and their job is therefore adrift'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

It appears that some providers were also unclear about the use of financial incentives. Specifically, providers were unsure about which clients would have their financial incentives protected under Work Choice, and appear to have told some clients and employers that funding would continue to be protected when it was in fact at risk of being stopped. The impact of reducing or stopping financial subsidies was again felt to be a risk to clients' employment.

'We were told we had a contract in place with our clients that the funded elements, for example, would remain in place until the end of that contract period and we were giving that information to clients and employers. We are having reports back that new providers are going in and saying that that's no longer valid'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'There's also a lot of anxiety around funding - some employers who have previously received wage subsidies are saying if they don't continue to receive this money they will have to sack people and this message feeds through to the customer, some of whom know about the wage subsidy their employer receives'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

The Work Choice provider guidance set out details of how financial incentives should feature in the new programme, stating:

“Work Choice providers are required to continue payment of any **protected** financial incentive in payment, at the time of transfer from WORKSTEP to Work Choice for agreements made by WORKSTEP providers prior to 18th May 2009. **Protected** means a financial incentive that is not part of the exclusions detailed below in Para 11.7.

Work Choice providers will not be required to continue payment of any new WORKSTEP financial incentive agreements agreed, on or after the 18th May 2009 as WORKSTEP providers were instructed to ensure employers understood that the support is time-bound and only guaranteed for the period of their contract”

(DWP, 2010b: 32)

In spite of this it appears that some providers were not clear about the status of financial subsidies, and this apparent confusion appears to have had negative implications for some clients and employers.

2.1.2 Mixed methods research with Work Choice Clients

Many of the clients in this research reported not being aware of transferring from legacy programmes to work Choice, and therefore reported no negative impacts with this change. Whether this lack of awareness is because of providers not sufficiently informing respondents of the change, or respondents not recalling being informed when they actually were, is however unclear. However all clients who were due to transfer into Work Choice were meant to be fully informed of this change and to consent to it, so it may be that communications from providers were not sufficient. DWP do have records to show that all clients who transferred into Work Choice signed their consent. Indeed one respondent mentioned being informed of the change some time ago but since then forgetting about this until prompted by the interview.

A small number of respondents reported being aware of the transition from legacy programmes to Work Choice, with most of these only being aware of a change in provider organisation or support worker. Indeed, some support workers interviewed discussed how they were reluctant to mention the change from legacy programmes to Work Choice to clients while exact details of who the new providers would be remained undecided, in order to prevent causing unnecessary anxiety to the client. Support workers may have been unsure of

who would be supporting clients in Work Choice as a result of delays in prime providers signing contracts. Nevertheless, this could go some way towards explaining why many clients interviewed appeared to have little or no knowledge of what Work Choice is, or about transferring into the programme.

Of those respondents who discussed their experiences of transition a mixed picture emerged. Most clients who mentioned the change did not suggest this had created any kind of challenge for them, which was often related to whether they remained with the same provider or not. Several respondents mentioned that the transition had had a small effect upon them which was either due to a lack of information about the change or to temporarily having a different support worker.

"(The transition from WORKSTEP to Work Choice had) only a little impact because I didn't know who the new (provider) was"
(Work Choice client)

"It wasn't too bad. It was fine actually. Mum got through on the phone to talk to [adviser at current provider] and we decided to meet from there."
[Work Choice client]

"Don't think it's had a lot of impact (transition from WORKSTEP to Work Choice), but without the induction it would have been very stressful for him. But he's really receptive to anything we talk about."
[Work Choice support worker]

"He's taken it in his stride, he's quite confident. He was nervous at first, but so was I."
[Work Choice support worker]

However, some respondents' experiences of transition were reported much less positively, although these instances are for a range of reasons they did not appear on many occasions.

One respondent mentioned a new support worker did not know anything about their condition which resulted in a difficult experience for one client. This problem was also reported by some staff at service providers in qualitative interviews with provider staff.

An administrative error appears to have occurred during the transition period as well. One respondent mentioned that their provider had withdrawn in work support shortly after they got a job at the start of Work Choice. This is because the provider did not receive a referral for that client during the transition period. The client had been supported to get a job by the same provider for some time and was due to continue being supported in work by the provider during Work Choice. This resulted in the respondent having a negative experience of transition.

"I was quite angry at the time"
(Work Choice client)

However, this client did go on to mention another, third sector, organisation supporting her now, although it did not appear to be through the Work Choice programme.

Another respondent stated that the transition process was very negative because of the prospect of having financial assistance for travel to work taken away resulting in support being discontinued. However, this respondent did mention receiving equipment through Access to Work previously, and it may be that travel to work support is also provided through this source, so the introduction of Work Choice should not affect Access to Work travel arrangements. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the anxiety which was felt by the respondent due to a lack of clarity.

"I was in tears at the time, it was a horrible experience"
(Work Choice client)

One respondent reported that she was informed of the change by her WORKSTEP provider and her Work Choice provider. However, the way in which the Work Choice prime provider contacted her through their call centre to discuss the change was thought to be inappropriate, and the respondent felt her needs were not properly considered exacerbated her anxiety condition. This method of contacting the client may have been caused by the provider having a lack of information on the client and so not being aware of the potential for causing distress by using the phone.

"[Communication from the Prime provider was] very rude...informal....could have been handled much better".
[Work Choice client]

Another respondent appeared not to have had their records passed from the old provider to the new provider via DWP, creating challenges at the initial meeting with the new provider which ended up causing frustration for the client and their family. This type of challenge at initial meetings with clients is something that was also reported in the qualitative interviews with provider and DWP staff.

Some respondents appear to have had gaps in their provision between the end of WORKSTEP and the time where they first met their Work Choice support worker, which may have been over three months duration. In one case a client ended up leaving their job voluntarily and in another case a client lost their job during the transition period which was perceived to be as a result of gaps in provision.

"During the transition, communication to his employer stopped. It was not a fluid transition and the customer left his job.... There was a period of time when he wasn't being supported, as his new adviser hadn't been CRB checked and his work placement deteriorated. He had been late too many times and it got out of hand. [The client] handed his notice in.... had he had an adviser supporting him it wouldn't have happened"
[Work Choice support worker]

The Work Choice supplementary transition guidance (DWP, 2010: 2-3) sets out the success criteria for the transition of clients to the new programme, with two of these stating:

- “All WORKSTEP participants choosing to move to Work Choice provision remain in their respective stage (pre-employment / employment) and where employed, remain at their current location, with current terms and conditions”.
- “All WORKSTEP participants choosing to move to Work Choice provision have discussed and agreed with their Work Choice Prime Provider, module allocation, the nature and level of support to satisfy their work goals and access to that support from the first day of the Work Choice programme”.

These success criteria appear not to have been fully met because not all clients were in receipt of support from the first day, although it is worth considering this in the overall scale of 14,000 individuals moving into Work Choice. This is something that may be explained by the findings of the qualitative interviews with provider and DWP staff. Some providers interviewed in that study mentioned not being able to see all transitioning clients until some time after Work Choice started because of pressure in seeing all clients in such a short time, and because of information about client’s sometimes taking time to come from legacy providers through to Work Choice providers.

Summary

Overall the client experience of the transition appears to have been largely smooth, with many clients transferring from one programme to another without being affected or indeed being aware of doing so. Nevertheless, there were some instances of negative client experience suggesting that the transition was not seamless. Whilst this is perhaps unsurprising given the complexity of the change from legacy programmes to Work Choice, it does imply that the transition did not fully meet all of the critical success factors set out in the Work Choice transition guidance.

Many respondents suggested that the transition had had little or no impact upon clients, and that significant efforts were made to try and facilitate a seamless transition for clients to Work Choice. However, other respondents suggested several ways in which the transition had negatively impacted on clients.

An important negative impact on clients was the potential gap in provision covered at section 2.2 above, where clients may have been waiting for a number of months before they started receiving Work Choice support. This would suggest that one of the transition success criteria set out in the Work Choice provider guidance was not met as a number of clients may have been without support for some time.

There were also some instances reported where clients did not want to change the organisation that supported them, which led to a number of clients at one provider progressing off WORKSTEP.

While some clients were reported to have been anxious about what the transition meant, in some cases due to the lack of clarity providers had about the future of the programme as a result of the delay in signing contracts, there were examples of good practice in trying to reduce anxiety amongst clients by Work Choice

providers, for example by allowing the client's old provider to maintain contact with the client while they adjusted to the new programme.

Further exploration of clients' experience of the transition to Work Choice was conducted through mixed methods research with Work Choice clients. The messages which came out of this study suggested that the majority of respondents were unaware of and/or unaffected by the transition - suggesting a minimal impact. That being said, a small number of clients did report a difficult experience during the transition, with some clients having a gap in provision during which jobs were left voluntarily or lost, as well as cases of poorly handled communication, client anxiety about the future of their support and problems in the referral system. This corroborates the messages which came from providers.

2.2 Transition activities

The transition of clients from legacy programmes to Work Choice involved a range of different stakeholders. These include;

- WORKSTEP/Work Preparation providers not due to be involved in Work Choice
- WORKSTEP/Work Preparation providers due to become Work Choice prime and sub providers
- Work Choice providers not involved in WORKSTEP/Work Preparation
- Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers
- Jobcentre Plus Third Party Provision Managers
- DWP Account Managers
- DWP Performance Managers

This section gives a brief overview of the typical activities these stakeholders engaged in during the transition to Work Choice in order to set the context within which respondents to the research were operating.

WORKSTEP and Work Preparation providers who were not due to become Work Choice providers generally reported that they spent time talking to existing clients and other providers about the change of programme, sending out letters to clients and seeking consent to move their clients into Work Choice, as well as completing all the necessary documentation.

WORKSTEP and Work Preparation providers who were due to be involved in Work Choice talked about conducting many of the same types of activities as WORKSTEP providers who not due to be involved in Work Choice, often communicating with clients about the change and completing documentation and administrative tasks. This involved completing documentation for exiting clients in their WORKSTEP provision as well as seeking consent from clients to join Work Choice. These organisations also talked about work conducted to accommodate the new programme, such as investing in new premises and staffing, as well as managing issues around supply chain development.

Work Choice providers who were not involved in legacy programmes discussed how they worked with DWP and legacy providers closely, moving towards

developing supply chains. Providers also reported making changes to their own infrastructure to accommodate their role in Work Choice.

Third Party Provision Managers generally reported having involvement throughout the transition period, liaising with providers and other Jobcentre Plus staff, often acting as the link for communications between these stakeholders.

Disability Employment Advisers reported limited involvement with the transition of clients on to Work Choice, often leaving providers to complete the movement of clients themselves and only becoming involved if there were issues with clients not wanting to move into Work Choice.

However, the involvement of Jobcentre Plus staff varied depending upon their location as some areas centralised transition, taking virtually all involvement away from the individual Jobcentre Plus staff.

Staff at DWP were involved at different stages of the transition and implementation of Work Choice. Account Managers appeared to become involved mainly after Work Choice started and appeared to oversee much of the work that was conducted and to act as an escalation point if any large issues arose with providers.

DWP Performance Managers were introduced in Work Choice as a replacement for WORKSTEP Contract Managers. Performance Managers reported becoming involved in the transition when the central project team required local issues resolving, such as ensuring information about clients was submitted by legacy providers to DWP.

The remainder of this chapter will continue to explore the experiences of different stakeholders during the transition to Work Choice and shortly after live running, focusing upon five specific themes; the movement of information; referrals to Work Choice; the implications of TUPE; the impact of the delay in prime providers signing contracts; and stakeholders' early views of the programme. More detailed exploration of the roles of DWP and JCP staff involved in the Work Choice programme will be discussed in later chapters of this report.

2.3 Movement of information

This section covers stakeholders' experiences during transition to Work Choice in relation to the movement of information between providers and the Department.

During the transition period legacy providers discussed the transition to Work Choice with existing clients and sought consent to transfer them on to the new programme and for their details to be passed on to the Work Choice prime provider. This information was put into 'Work Choice Transition 1' (T1) forms if the client consented to be transitioned to Work Choice. These electronic documents allowed for client information to be transferred, such as personal details, contact information, details of the client's disability and the impact this has upon work, the adjustments made for this client, and financial incentives paid to employers for individuals in protected supported employment. These forms were sent from legacy providers to DWP through encrypted email in batches, with the intention that these were all sent to DWP between 31/05/10 and 11/06/10.

Once these forms reached DWP a proportion of each legacy providers' batches were randomly checked²⁰ and any forms which contained missing information were followed up by DWP with legacy providers. DWP verified this information where possible, but was reliant on exiting providers to provide accurate details about transition clients. All completed forms were then sent from DWP to the new Work Choice prime provider. Once the Work Choice prime provider received this information they could allocate the clients they were not supporting directly to a sub contractor and pass on client information accordingly through their own systems.

As discussed at section 2.1 above, many clients appeared to feel that the transition from their legacy provider to their Work Choice provider had gone smoothly and did not impact on them. However, one of the most frequent complaints from providers involved in this research was the lack of information received about some of their new clients. Many Work Choice providers felt that the information they received about some of their new clients via T1 forms was insufficient. This lack of information led to some providers meeting clients without information about their disability, experiencing challenges in prioritising which clients should have been seen first, and at times seeing clients with the greatest needs later than they would have done if they had been fully informed.

'We were going in blind [at the initial meetings with transition clients]; all we knew was their name and an employer. If we'd had a bit more information about them then maybe we wouldn't have looked so naïve when we first met them'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

'What was evident was they [providers] either hadn't had the training or hadn't paid attention because the information [within T1 forms] was either very sketchy or didn't exist at all...'
(Disability Employment Adviser)

'When we got the Transition 1 forms we identified different groups of people and prioritised that work completely wrong in terms of when we got to meet that person'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

Another common observation regarding the movement of information between stakeholders was that information about clients was sometimes late in being transferred – indeed some clients' T1 forms had not reached the new Work Choice provider at all at the time of the research. Clients who were supported by the same provider under WORKSTEP and Work Choice were insulated from this problem, as their existing provider would have held all necessary information. However, some clients who did change provider could have been without support for some time.

'And what has been happening as well is that, still, even on Friday [10th December 2010] we had another I think 56 new transitional customers come through. I think what had happened is that they'd been out of area and then come into us. So one of the concerns I have is, have any of these customers had contact because we've only just received them. Because of the large numbers

²⁰ For each legacy provider 3% of their T1 forms were randomly selected and checked by DWP for missing information. Once these checks were made any errors found would be sent to the relevant DWP Performance Manager to undertake the necessary checks with the provider. DWP did not release transition payment to providers until it was satisfied with the providers T1 forms.

there have been some people who have been missed through the system as well'

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Further issues were reported relating to the movement of information from legacy providers to Work Choice providers. Some respondents mentioned receiving T1 forms for clients who had already progressed off WORKSTEP. This would have created additional workload for providers, and resulted in some Work Choice clients experiencing a delay before they were seen by providers.

'We have met with people who have finished the programme...the information coming through from DWP is just a mess. We have had people with Transition 1 forms who had left the programme who hadn't been updated'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

The submission of transition forms for clients who were no longer on WORKSTEP may have been caused by the fact that legacy providers were required to compile client information early on in transition – from as early as May 2010 for an October 2010 transition. The information submitted was therefore likely to be out of date when the time came for clients to actually transfer to their new Work Choice provider. Whilst DWP did require legacy providers to supply updates on changes to the client's transition 1 details, the experience of providers involved in this research suggests that complete and accurate updates were not received for all clients.²¹

One reason for this may have been the fact that a large majority of legacy providers were due to exit the market, so staff at exiting providers may not have been motivated to continue the transition exercise thoroughly. The Department did provide additional funding to exiting providers to complete transition activities. However, it was suggested by respondents that the payment structure for exiting providers contributed to the inconsistent or missing T1 forms, because there was not an effective check in place before payment was made to exiting providers to ensure that forms had been accurately completed. As discussed previously the DWP did do a random check of T1 forms received and did not release payments for this until it was satisfied with these. Again it seems possible that legacy providers may not have been sufficiently motivated to complete the transfer of information fully because staff at these providers may have been due to leave the organisation during the run up to Work Choice go-live.

Additionally, some legacy providers who were also due to provide Work Choice may have had insufficient capacity to complete all transition activities within a condensed timeframe²², especially where they were involved in several CPAs. Indeed, one new Work Choice prime provider reported that a legacy provider who was also involved in Work Choice did not supply all the required information in T1 transition forms.

²¹ A related issue that has been raised with the fieldwork team, but did not come up directly in the research, is that some Local Authorities who did not become involved in Work Choice submitted T1 forms for clients, but during the lead up to the programme decided to support the client themselves outside of Work Choice. Thus, the client would have been exited off WORKSTEP and supported outside of Work Choice, but the new Work Choice provider would potentially have still received the individual's T1 form and attempted to start supporting the client.

²² See section 2.5

Another contributing factor to inaccurate client information being sent to Work Choice providers is that some legacy providers may have held on to some of their clients until the end of WORKSTEP in order to achieve maximum occupancy payments for the clients. The legacy provider may then have exited clients into unsupported employment at the very end of WORKSTEP in order to also receive a progression payment for as many clients as possible. In one sense this may have meant that clients who did not require a significant level of support – but had remained on WORKSTEP due to a lack of progression incentives for providers - were not transferred into Work Choice. Nevertheless, this strategy would have reduced the time available to accurately update transition information between the end of WORKSTEP and the start of Work Choice, with the impact of indicating that there were to be more transitional clients coming to Work Choice providers than actually materialised.

‘For an outgoing provider who hasn’t got a contract, well blimey if we progress these people today we’ll get a progression payment in 6 months time, so let’s progress the lot of them. So the numbers that actually did come across were a lot less than those indicative numbers we were given before for that reason and because of the nature of funding of WORKSTEP in terms of occupancy...’

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Work Choice T1 transition forms contained a series of tick boxes and free text boxes which allowed for details of clients to be input. It does not appear that there was any systematic flaw in the design of the T1 form that prevented the transfer of sufficient client information from legacy providers to new Work Choice prime providers.

Where there was found to be missing information in T1 forms DWP encouraged Work Choice providers to chase this up with legacy providers once the programme went live. Again, the success of this may have been affected by the motivation of legacy providers, some of whom may not have had staff to complete this once WORKSTEP ended in October 2010. If for example staff at the legacy provider were due to move organisation, or had already moved, then collecting information in this way may have proved difficult.

‘So there was a lot of to’ing and fro’ing, probably weekly if not daily conversations with existing and exiting providers to work out who was on their caseload, where they were, to get that information to the subcontractors working for us to ensure that person was transitioned at the right time’

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

‘So we have information that’s not been passed on but then we’re told we can’t or shouldn’t pass on our clients’ files to a provider. We were told that by DWP’

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

The challenges experienced by new providers with the lack of information were however mitigated in some instances through support workers moving into jobs with the new Work Choice provider under TUPE. This meant that support workers were often dealing with the same clients as they were under legacy programmes and were able to fill in the gaps of the incomplete or missing transition forms.

‘It’s only because they [new support workers] know them that they can actually do that [fill in gaps of information] and it enables me to go back to DWP and say ‘I’m missing T1s for x, y and z’

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

The lack of information in some T1 transition forms was also mitigated to an extent by Work Choice providers requesting this information directly from legacy providers, as suggested by the WORKSTEP/Work Choice supplementary transition guidance (DWP, 2010: 7). However, some providers were reluctant to discuss their clients or to disclose any details to incoming providers due to concerns about data protection.

Another implication of the delay in providers receiving information on clients was that their ability to claim for any short job outcomes electronically was affected as the PRaP system, used for claiming job outcomes, requires a Purchase Order number which is only supplied when the electronic referral is received. This would therefore mean that any provider who progressed a client into a job without the electronic information about this client would not be able to claim for that job outcome.

Summary

Many Work Choice providers reported experiencing challenges relating to the movement of client information from legacy providers. Specifically, information about clients was often inconsistent, incomplete or out of date. As a result of this, providers reported making errors when meeting some of their new clients, meeting clients late, or contacting clients who were no longer a part of the programme. Also there were a small number of instances of clients experiencing a gap in support between legacy provision and Work Choice, and reports that this resulted in clients leaving or losing their job (see section 2.1.2). However, the impact of this was mitigated somewhat by several factors: new and old providers cooperating during transition; staff from exiting providers transferring to Work Choice providers with knowledge of transition clients; and some clients remaining with the same employer, and even the same providers, throughout transition. Accordingly, the majority of clients reported that transition appeared to go smoothly, with minimal impact on the service they received.

2.4 Referrals to Work Choice

There are three types of referrals to the Work Choice programme; transitional clients (those clients transferring from legacy provision to Work Choice in the initial stages of the programme); new referrals on to the programme; and retention cases (urgent referrals where a client is at risk of losing their job because of their disability). This section explores the experiences of respondents during and shortly after the transition to Work Choice which relate to the referral of new clients onto the programme. Referrals of new clients on to the Work Choice programme are made by a Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Adviser or by a Statutory Referral Organisation to the Work Choice prime provider or to Remploy if they offer support in the area. Details of the client are entered into the LMS (Labour Market System) computer system which feeds information to the Work Choice prime provider through PRaP.

The level of new referrals onto Work Choice was a major concern among many respondents, with some providers reporting very high levels of referrals within the first few months of the programme. It should be noted though that a process for managing referrals has been implemented since fieldwork was conducted.

'The challenge that we have at the moment is that we are getting more referrals than we have profiled and that is a big concern for us and for JCP, the DEAs are very unsettled by the level of referrals that we can take on our contract and the level of demand out there'

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

The DEA acts as the gatekeeper to the Work Choice programme, making decisions on individual suitability and referring clients from the Job centre to a Work Choice prime provider or Remploy, so the number of new clients on the programme is to a significant degree determined by the DEA.

There were differing messages from respondents on the issue of suitability of clients, which could potentially help explain why the reported levels of referrals onto Work Choice were so high. DEAs commonly felt that suitability requirements for Work Choice were a major change from legacy programmes. A common feeling amongst DEAs was the need to consider a client's likelihood of being ready for work within six months of being on the programme.

'Yeah we probably have [been assessing customers differently for Work Choice than referrals to legacy programmes] because of this 6 month rule now that we've got to think that they'll perhaps be ready for work in 6 months whereas in the past that didn't come into it with WORKSTEP or Work Preparation so we do think differently when we refer them'

(Disability Employment Adviser)

'We were told [by DWP] they [clients] have to be almost ready for work by time they get to Work Choice'

(Disability Employment Adviser)

If DEAs are not taking into account the more intense support offered through Work Choice (8 hours a week during module 1) they may not be referring harder to help clients, instead referring those who are much closer to the labour market than the policy intended. This would have the knock on effect of reducing the number of Work Choice places available to clients in most need of the support that the programme offers. It is worth noting that Work Choice DEA guidance has been amended since this fieldwork was conducted to emphasise that DEAs should not take into account how far they perceive the client is from the labour market.

DEAs also seemed to present mixed messages about what provision there is available for disabled people outside of Work Choice, which could be expected to lead to inconsistency between DEAs in their referral practices, and could also explain some of the high levels of referrals reported. Generally DEAs appeared to take a wide view of the provision which may be available for a disabled person, or supported some clients themselves for some time to prepare them for Work Choice.

'Well now that we have Work Choice we're sort of looking around at whatever else is out there, so we're using ESF-funded projects, our own Job Centre-funded projects and any other partners that we can find out there...'

(Disability Employment Adviser)

However, some DEAs reported seeing Work Choice as the only suitable option for the majority of the people they come into contact with, despite understanding that

they should technically only be referring a small proportion of the individuals they see onto the Work Choice programme.

'Work Choice seems to be the only game in town until the Work Programme comes in, so assessing customers for Work Choice they wouldn't be referred to me [from other Jobcentre Plus advisers] generally if they're not going to be... Work Choice eligible'

(Disability Employment Adviser)

The intention is for DEAs to search for the most suitable option for supporting clients before they make a referral onto Work Choice, and in some instances Work Choice may be the only suitable provisions. Nevertheless, the DEA guidance does seem to imply that DEAs should only consider other DWP provision, and not necessarily search wider. Indeed, the guidance states that suitable clients for Work Choice are those who 'cannot be helped through other DWP programmes'. If DEAs think they should only search for DWP support then they may be dismissing support provided elsewhere, leading to higher levels of referrals than the policy intended. There may be benefit in further encouraging DEAs to consider a wider variety of options for support, such as supported internships or apprenticeships, and not just restricting their searches to DWP provision. This could potentially be a means of better management of the level of referrals onto Work Choice.

The level of training and information which was provided to DEAs in order to help them prepare for the new programme may go some way towards explaining the much higher than expected numbers of referrals to the programme. The views of DEAs regarding information and training were generally quite mixed, possibly indicating that the policy intent of the programme had not been clearly communicated to or understood by all DEAs. Some respondents suggested that a large proportion of DEAs may not have attended Work Choice training, and some were critical of the training that was available to them in order to prepare them for the introduction of Work Choice, especially in the case of less experienced staff.

'We have got a lot of new DEAs at the moment; we need to get them out and up skilled. Eighty per cent of new DEAs have not been on training'

(Disability Employment Adviser)

However, many DEAs seemed to think that the training and information available to help them prepare for Work Choice was suitable, even for less experienced DEAs.

'If you've got a lot of experience, maybe 10 years now, so I've seen a lot of changes come and go and as I say once I found out what the basis of Work Choice was, I don't think it was a programme that you needed a lot of training for. Even a new DEA would understand the processes of what you go through with a referral and what the person going to get once they're there'

(Disability Employment Adviser)

Generally DEAs described having one day of training to prepare them for Work Choice, which was also attended by some TPPMs in an advisory role. During the training DEAs were provided with an overview of the structure of Work Choice, given examples of who would be a suitable person for the programme, and talked through the referral procedure. This was also supplemented with DEA guidance available on the internet shortly before the date of Work Choice go-live. However, given the role that the DEA has in Work Choice, the inability of some members of

staff to attend the training may support the argument that variance in the understanding of DEAs could be one of the causes of inconsistent and higher than expected referrals.

Respondents also mentioned other explanations for the higher than profiled referrals to the programme during the early stages. Some providers thought that the high levels of referrals could be explained by Jobcentre Plus holding back some clients who should have been referred onto WORKSTEP or Work Preparation, preferring instead to wait for the Work Choice programme to go live.

This would mean that clients who should have gone into a legacy programme and potentially moved into Work Choice as a transition client, actually moved into Work Choice as new referrals. This practice would create added pressure on new providers during the early stages of the programme because the higher level of new clients have to be seen within 10 days of the provider receiving the referral, rather than 3 months for transitional clients. It is also concerning because it means individuals were waiting for support because of not being entered into a legacy programme straight away due to stockpiling.

'We're getting more [referrals than expected], but that's because with WORKSTEP and Work Preparation coming to an end there's possibly a bit of stockpiling in Jobcentre Plus, that may be a bit harsh, but that's the indication that we get. Our anticipation is that in the first 6 months we will overachieve'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'DEAs have had quite a lot of clients that they've held back, I think, waiting for Work Choice to happen, and now we're being bombarded'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

Additionally, there was a view from some respondents that the ratio of new referrals against transitional clients was higher than expected because legacy providers progressed some clients off WORKSTEP to trigger an outcome payment. Subsequently these people passed to Work Choice as new referrals. One DEA discussed how a provider had mistakenly tried to exit their clients off the programme rather than transition them, but the DEA was able to intervene and ensure that these clients were moved into Work Choice as transitional clients rather than new referrals. However, other respondents suggested that clients who should have been transitional clients have been referred to them by the DEA.

'It's been a total miscalculation by you or by somebody. What we have found is that some providers, especially by the outgoing providers they exited everybody off WORKSTEP in the last month. But what's happened is they have just bounced back to the DEA and bounced back as a Work Choice referral so the levels have been artificially high in the first few weeks because of that'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

Along with the aforementioned challenges experienced as a result of the high levels of referrals, providers commonly reported that the level of detail on clients which was included in the electronic referral to them through the PRaP system was not sufficient. On occasions data missing from the referrals related to administrative information, such as telephone numbers or addresses. However, a number of providers also reported that information about a client's disability was often missing. This negatively impacted on providers' ability to conduct effective meetings with clients.

'We've had clients turn up that are deaf, but we hadn't an interpreter because we didn't know they were deaf...we need more information from DWP...we just need to know disability because at the moment the disability box is empty. Everyone on the programme has got some form of disability'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'We've had some horrendous situations where we've been calling deaf people. And we've had some details come through with no phone number...what we're trying to do at the moment is work with JCP to get a system in place so they put all the information on that gets picked up through PRaP. Again, whether there's been a lack of training from DWP or JCP I don't know'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

'That's something that we need to educate the DEAs on a bit more when the purchase order comes through on PRaP that we can identify that it's a learning needs customer because that's not always easy to do'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

The electronic referral sent from DEAs to prime providers is limited in some ways by data security protocols as these restrict the transfer of personal data including the specific nature of a disability. Indeed, the PRaP system only allows the referral to state if the client has a disability or not. However, a work-around to this is available through using the free text boxes within the action plan element of the PRaP referral to enter a description of the impact the client's disability has on their ability to work, as well as the reasonable adjustments required to manage this. Furthermore, the DEA is able to communicate directly with the Work Choice prime provider to inform them of any specific issues which need considering when meeting the client.

Therefore, reports of providers receiving limited details of a client's disability are not considered to be the result of a technical issue with the PRaP system, but rather an issue with the information input into the system by Disability Employment Advisers. This could be tackled by ensuring that DEAs are aware of the need to include sufficient information about a client's disability when making a referral to Work Choice. Current DEA guidance states that the action plan should include details of the agreed steps to overcome any barriers to work. This guidance could be amended to explicitly state DEAs should supply sufficient information in the action plan, or through directly contacting providers, to allow providers to conduct effective meetings with clients.

Summary

Respondents consistently reported receiving more referrals to Work Choice than anticipated, with some reporting close to their years profile in the first few months of the programme. Explanations for this included inappropriate referrals from DEAs; stockpiling of clients prior to the introduction of the programme; and some inappropriate progression of clients into open employment by legacy providers who should instead have transitioned clients directly to Work Choice. Some measures have been taken since this fieldwork was conducted to address this issue and careful monitoring of the type and level of referrals will continue as the programme continues.

In addition to challenges reported with the higher than expected level of referrals, providers commonly reported issues arising from referrals containing limited client details. This was viewed as having detrimental effects upon providers' ability to conduct effective early meetings with some clients, as they often did not know full address details or even details of a client's disability and consequently their requirements. This was caused by insufficient information being provided by some DEAs, which could be addressed through ensuring DEAs appreciate the importance of including information on a client's disability when referring to a provider.

2.5 TUPE

This section will explore the experiences of stakeholders during the transition to Work Choice in relation to TUPE regulations.

During the commissioning of Work Choice a number of changes were made in organisations providing support in each contract package area. In situations such as this the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations 2006 (TUPE) protect employees whose business is being transferred to another organisation. Thus, staff and clients who were employed by an organisation providing WORKSTEP or Work Preparation, but whose organisation was not due to provide Work Choice support in that area, may move to the new Work Choice provider with the same terms and conditions. Applying TUPE regulations and working through the transfer process was the responsibility of the prime providers rather than DWP, although some respondents suggested that they had been expecting advice or guidance on this issue from the department.

Not all organisations involved in Work Choice transferred staff in or out via TUPE. Some had clients move but not staff, other organisations had a small number of staff involved in the movement. However some organisations had a large number of staff involved in TUPE.

'We haven't had to TUPE anyone in or out'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'One of the other issues we had was around TUPE...We had nearly 50 people TUPE in and we had some very difficult providers who didn't want to share any information regarding staff so we couldn't move on with the TUPE. So (provider) had to step in and deal with that issue'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

A large proportion of respondents did not report concerns or challenges with the TUPE process during the transition period, which was likely to be related to the number of individuals potentially moving organisation. However, other respondents did report challenges. There was the feeling amongst some respondents that there was not enough guidance from DWP to help providers understand the implications of TUPE. Some limited information relating to TUPE was provided in the Work Choice supplementary transitional guidance in addition to the legal advice which was given to DWP being made available to providers, and a HR event for incoming and outgoing providers. This was provided despite the fact, as noted earlier, that DWP had no responsibility for TUPE between providers. Some providers reported that they were unclear about how this would affect their Human Resources (HR), payroll and pensions. This uncertainty was seen to affect smaller providers more

than larger ones, perhaps because a small organisation may not have had the existing capacity to deal with complex HR issues such as TUPE.

'There wasn't adequate support and guidance, for example on HR, payroll and pension issues relating to TUPE. Prime providers had slightly more and better advice and guidance but DWP need to be aware that if they want the supply chain to flourish, they have to consider that some of the smaller, especially voluntary organisations may not have extensive HR capacity or the resources to deal with for example complex pensions issues which arose in relation to TUPE'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'I think DWP have washed their hands of the TUPE process by saying it may apply and there wasn't any real clarity in the spec in terms of understanding TUPE'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

Other respondents reported having a lack of clarity about the implications of TUPE on staff delivering the Work Preparation programme. Some providers seemed to be unclear about when staff providing Work Preparation should TUPE into their organisation and ended up making up their own mind as to when this should happen, whereas other providers seemed to be unclear if staff providing Work Preparation should actually transfer into their organisation under TUPE regulations at all. This uncertainty was viewed by many as stressful and respondents generally suggested that they would have liked more guidance from DWP about how TUPE would affect Work Preparation staff (although DWP had no obligation to provide this).

'So providers had to make up their own mind whether they were going to allow Work Preparation staff to TUPE on the 17th [February] or whether they were going to TUPE on the 15th October. What's actually happened is a middle ground – a lot of people are TUPEd in on 4th January. There was no guidance from DWP on that, that's caused a lot of stress to staff and to organisations, those for WORKSTEP were straightforward, they TUPEd on 25th October'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

The lack of clarity and perceived lack of guidance about TUPE led to some respondents suggesting that some legacy providers were attempting to exploit the ambiguity in order to offload staff who were not entitled to move under TUPE. However, it did appear that those who reported this disagreement about who should be transferred came to a consensus with the old provider and all staff who did move were felt to be suitable for providing Work Choice. Nevertheless, such disagreements would probably have been time consuming and stressful for staff during an already demanding time, thus further complicating transition.

'It looked like some people were trying to off load staff and they weren't TUPE people at all...their proportion of time was doing something else, not working on WORKSTEP. So we reduced that and then eventually we got the list down through looking at them, talking to their employer and really working as far as possible to ensure that the individual that was entitled to come across under TUPE did come across and employers weren't using the entire situation just to loose some people'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

For organisations that did have individuals moving in or out through TUPE, the HR implications would have been significant. There was a feeling amongst some respondents that the delay in signing contracts which followed the 2010 General Election had a detrimental effect upon the way providers were able to handle the implications of TUPE. It was often felt that everything had to be done in a short time scale and was consequently rushed, with impacts felt in staff receiving pay late and staff having to re-apply for Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks when they moved organisation. This meant that they could not go out and meet their new clients face to face until they received the new CRB clearance. Again, these factors further complicated transition and impacted upon clients.

'Main issue [with TUPE] was the delay in signing contracts, so all the TUPE work had to be done in about 2 weeks (for 30/40 people)...Also, this had a knock-on effect on pay as people finished working for one organisation on 22 Oct and started with another on 25 Oct (WC go-live date) but had to wait until the end of November to be paid, because this date was too late for October payroll'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'Because it's all [employment contracts] transferred from company to company we have had to re apply for CRBs'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Summary

There was a general feeling from providers that there was a lack of guidance from DWP to help them understand how TUPE regulations would impact on the transition to Work Choice. This may not have been an issue for the organisations who had few or no individuals move in or out of their organisation, but for those organisations who did have large movement, or limited HR capacity to understand the complexities of TUPE, the effects of the perceived ambiguity were that staff morale was affected, which could have impacted upon clients. However, despite the fact that DWP has no responsibility for TUPE between provider organisations, the department did in fact do more than was required to support provider organisations in relation to TUPE.

This lack of clarity about TUPE perceived by providers was not helped by the delay in Work Choice contracts being signed following the 2010 general election. TUPE processes were often reported to have happened during the last few weeks of WORKSTEP, and things such as mandatory re-application for a CRB check just before support workers were due to meet clients caused delays in providers meeting clients face to face.

2.6 The impact of the delay in signing contracts

This section explores in more detail the experiences of stakeholders related to the delay in prime providers signing contracts following the 2010 general election. Earlier sections in this chapter have touched upon the impact of the delay in prime providers signing contracts because the delay was generally thought to have far reaching implications. This section will focus specifically on this issue.

The Work Choice programme was introduced on 25th October 2010, with preferred bidders originally intended to sign contracts during April 2010, a full six months prior to Work Choice go-live. However, the hiatus following the 2010 general election and change of Government the decision to go ahead with Work Choice contracts was not announced until the end of July 2010.

The vast majority of respondents thought that the delay in signing contracts, and subsequent time available to complete transition arrangements, created a strain on their ability to make the necessary preparation for implementation of the programme. Indeed, some thought that they were unlikely to complete all the required transition activities until early in 2011. Areas of particular strain included challenges in communicating across supply chains, meeting clients and employers, and implementing all the necessary changes to organisational systems and structures such as buying premises and recruiting staff.

'[The impact of the delay in signing contracts was] massive, absolutely massive, and you'll get the same response from every provider out there'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

'I think it had a very negative effect, 'cause what we're doing is subcontracting Work Choice throughout the country, so dealing with 4 different prime providers and basically they all struggled to basically get back the 2 months or whatever, and the first month was chaos as people didn't have the procedures and processes in place and the systems weren't there. But it's coming together slowly, do you know what I mean, it's still not quite there, but I feel that by January everything will be up and running pretty smooth or whatever'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'I don't think the transition will be over until into February next year. We haven't actually seen everyone, because the paperwork didn't actually come to us until slightly after the 25th October, and by the time we physically see every employer and engage with every client I can't see that happening until the end of January. We have spoken to lots of people, but to actually sit back and I think it will be early February'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'We still haven't met all of our customers, to meet them is one thing but to complete a full assessment is another. Other providers are just going out and doing initial assessments and not doing that initial meeting first because of the time pressures, and to me that's really poor practice'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

However, a number of subcontractors were of the view that the reduced transition period was actually enough time to complete the necessary activities or thought that the delay had only a minimal effect. This may reflect the fact that their role in preparing the programme for go-live was likely to have been significantly less demanding than that of the prime provider.

'My personal opinion is that it could have all have been done within the 3 months, and potentially more effectively as well. I think it was plenty of time to do it'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'There were a few delays but nothing major; we were able to catch straight back up'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

The effects of the delay in prime providers signing contracts was perhaps felt the most in Contract Package Area 1 as the prime provider did not sign the contract for some time after the prime providers in other CPAs. This was because the preferred bidder in this area pulled out by mutual agreement during the summer of 2010, and the new prime provider did not find out their new status until 12th July 2010. This delay had knock-on effects upon the development of supply chains, which were slow to get established, as well as on providers who were unable to start development plans with clients.

'The sub contract we have in Scotland still hasn't got off the ground, so we haven't actually started delivering in Scotland, so we are trying to push forward with the prime because we know that customers we were supporting in WORKSTEP are in limbo at the moment because there is nobody supporting'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'Development plans for Work Choice?' No, not possible within the time scales we were dealing with'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

There was the feeling amongst respondents in CPA1 however that DWP did work effectively with the prime provider to try to come to appropriate arrangements for implementing the contract in CPA1, which was well received.

'Coming in at the last minute has been an issue but in all fairness to DWP they have been a lot of help to us and [other Provider staff], as regard to getting off the ground they have been a lot of help, but because we were in at the last minute it has been tricky'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Summary

Respondents generally felt that the delay in prime providers signing contracts, and the resulting shortened transition period had a detrimental effect upon the implementation of the programme. The effects of the delay were far reaching, with respondents often suggesting transition activities, such as meeting all their clients, would not be completed until early 2011. This raises questions about the decision to proceed with the implementation of Work Choice on the planned date with such a reduced length of preparation time.

2.7 Stakeholders' early views on Work Choice

This section discusses the early views of stakeholders about the Work Choice programme.

2.7.1 Qualitative research with Providers and DWP staff

Some respondents were positive about the new programme and seemed to be supportive of the changes introduced, reporting that they thought clients were also positive about the change.

'From my point of view it seems to be going well. I think it's a good programme, it's well received by the clients'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'The transition has been nice, invigorated, it has excited people, the biggest change in 20 years up to standards with the DDA. It's a whole new breath. It's not in a job club setting anymore...customers are coming back and are happy, no issues or difficulties'
(Disability Employment Adviser)

However, the intended culture change brought about with the introduction of Work Choice was not observed by all stakeholders. Indeed, some respondents suggested that the new programme is very similar to WORKSTEP because many of the same individuals and organisations are still involved in the process, or because some providers have been involved in legacy programmes for some time and are used to operating under this model.

'To me [Work Choice is very similar to WORKSTEP because], the employers, the DEAs are all the same, the customers, we're used to working with that kind of customer. The only difference is the systems and the paperwork, but it's a lot less paperwork which is quite welcoming! WORKSTEP was horrendous for paperwork but this is good'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'Because Work Choice is not a variation of WORKSTEP that has been a big culture change, particularly to those that were existing WORKSTEP and Work Preparation providers, and we've had to work through with subcontractors to explain the change...It's been hard message to get across to those who have been used to being all things to one person'
(Work Choice Prime Provider).

A common view expressed by respondents was that there is a reduced level of involvement associated with the new role of DEAs in Work Choice. As discussed previously the DEA acts as the gatekeeper to the programme, meeting potential new clients and referring suitable people to a prime provider who supports the client. The level of involvement in the client's support was generally felt to be less with Work Choice than under legacy programmes, which is in line with the policy intent. Nevertheless, concerns with how DEAs would adapt to this were raised by some respondents and some DEAs discussed their anxieties about their reduced involvement in the new programme.

'They've [Jobcentre Plus] been used to their DEAs having a social worker type of relationship with their customers, and the DEAs haven't got time to do that, they've got a lot of people to see, so they need to free up their time and leave us to do the specialist side of it'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

'It felt before Work Choice started that a large part of our job was being taken away from us, the decision making, so that was a big concern to myself and rest of the DEA team'
(Disability Employment Adviser)

'It has got less [our involvement with clients], because we just refer to Work Choice, whereas before I would look for placements and involve people, and the

Work Preparation providers would monitor those placements, but where as now I've had all that taken from me. I've got none of that now'
(Disability Employment Adviser)

Perhaps symptomatic of this challenge in DEAs adapting to their reduced involvement with the client in Work Choice, there were some examples of working practices not in line with the policy intention. These included DEAs case-loading clients after they have been referred to the prime provider and following up with providers about how some clients are doing.

'I have followed up with a few of the customers I've referred, perhaps we're case loading customers in a way which maybe we shouldn't be doing, but we are following up with them'
(Disability Employment Adviser)

There was also evidence of DEAs retaining direct working relationships with subcontractors in order to monitor clients' progress through the programme. This is contrary to the intent of the prime provider model and is discussed further at section 3.6.

It is perhaps to be expected that the adaptation to a new role and working practices would take some time to bed in, and it will be of interest to monitor the attitudes of DEAs and their working practices in the future to ensure that the new culture and systems have been fully incorporated at the front line. This is something which will be explored during forthcoming research as part of the overall Work Choice evaluation

One of the most significant changes from WORKSTEP to Work Choice is the requirement for providers to support clients for a minimum of eight hours per week during Module one, eight hours a month during Module two, and four hours a month during Module three. The intention of these requirements is to maintain a focus on progression through the programme into unsupported employment. Some respondents suggested that they had received positive feedback from many clients about the increased time supporting a client.

However, some respondents seemed more uncertain about the increased time supporting clients, suggesting that this may have negative implications for how some clients view their disability, and that they may not actually need this level of support.

'A lot of them had been on WORKSTEP for years and years and had very little support and here comes [Prime provider] who come along and say we are going to do this and do that and wow we haven't had this you know'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'There were some people with support that actually they don't want to make too much of a big issue with it, their disability, they want to keep it a low profile and they like to see us when they need us or every 6 months'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'If for the last 5 years you have seen me 3 times a year and if you had a problem at work I'd be there quite quickly you had plenty of time to interact with the employer and you feel part of the team. Now all of a sudden I'm coming in to see

you every week, for two hours a week. That's either going to make you feel special, or make you feel quite awkward'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

If clients do not feel that they need the intensity of support associated with the Work Choice programme, and would prefer a more remote, infrequent relationship with their advisers, then it raises questions about their suitability for the programme. This is important when considered in the context of such high levels of referrals onto the programme, as discussed in section 2.4, as there may be clients whose needs are more suited to Work Choice support, but who are not currently receiving it.

Other respondents raised questions about the increased contact time, and appeared to be unclear about what exactly constitutes contact time with a client. The implications of this lack of clarity are that delivery of the programme is likely to vary depending upon an individuals' interpretation of client contact time. However, the level of advice given in the DWP provider guidance is in line with the policy intention that Work Choice offers support which is tailored to a client's needs, and so is deliberately non prescriptive. Again this is something that will be monitored as the programme progresses through the wider Work Choice evaluation, but would also benefit from being more explicitly stated to providers in order for this ambiguity not to influence client support and to ensure support is driven by a client's needs.

'I think a lot of primes would like more direction around what DWP thinks are activities that count towards that 8 hours because actually it's quite ambiguous, you know 'for and on behalf of the client' – that could be anything'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Some respondents relayed concerns about the potential for the Work Choice programme to be burdensome for employers. One reason for this was that the increased contact time may have a detrimental effect upon clients continued employment if the employer has to release the client too often for meetings with support workers or Work Choice related activity.

Some respondents also mentioned cases where employers were accommodating several providers visiting their premises.

'We do have some clients based in one organisation and we have more than one provider going there...which isn't ideal'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

Clients who have a job and are referred onto Work Choice as transitional clients were allocated to a prime provider based on the postcode of their work. Clients who are new referrals are allocated to prime providers based upon where their Jobcentre is. However, it may be the case that prime providers allocate sub providers to clients based on where the client lives.

2.7.2 Mixed methods research with Work Choice Clients

Client profile

Respondents interviewed through this research described being employed in a number of different types of jobs, as well as various working patterns, time in employment and health conditions²³. More details of client profiles can be found in Appendix 5 and 6.

Knowledge of Work Choice

Knowledge of the Work Choice programme varied among respondents. Some were aware of the name Work Choice and some knew it offered support to find employment or help in work. Some respondents had little awareness of what the term meant, but went on to describe support they received through Work Choice to help find work or within their job. However, a number reported that they had heard of Work Choice but when asked for further details were unable to clarify what it was. A large number of respondents were unaware of the name Work Choice and were also unaware of receiving support like that available through the programme. In some instances this may have been because the client had a learning disability, although some clients without learning disabilities also expressed a lack of awareness about Work Choice, indicating that they may not have been fully informed about the programme, or may have forgotten being told.

Support received to obtain employment

A number of respondents described the support they received to help them obtain employment, which included one or several of the following:

- General support, encouragement and confidence building;
- Job search activities, with varying levels of support from a small amount of assistance to actually finding jobs on the clients' behalf;
- C.V. writing;
- Interview techniques;
- Assistance with application forms, and accompanying clients to interviews;
- Assistance in working with employers, such as communicating with them and sorting out appropriate documentation;
- Computer courses;
- Development of appropriate personal appearance and communication skills;
- Travel training;
- Work with employers to facilitate their understanding of client needs and to make appropriate adjustments to job roles;
- Organisation of work trials.

A total of 18 respondents went on to answer questions in the telephone survey which related to how the support they receive to obtain employment affects them. Respondents who did not answer these questions were identified as not seeking employment through Work Choice. Three respondents were asked these questions but were unable to provide answers. One of these clients had obtained employment since Work Choice commenced, and the rest were still

²³ A number of respondents did not consider themselves as having a health condition which may indicate they have limited awareness of their barriers to work or that they are not suitable for the programme because they do not have a health condition.

seeking employment. A total of 12 Work Choice clients answered questions in the face to face interview which relate to how the support they receive to obtain employment affects them; one of these had found employment since being on Work Choice. These were supplemented by support worker interviews as well.

Generally, respondents in the telephone survey thought that the support they receive to help them obtain employment is about right for their needs and that receiving less or no support would make it harder to get a job. In the face to face interviews all respondents were positive about the support they receive to find employment. However, because the majority of respondents were still seeking employment at the time of interview, any views expressed about the appropriateness and level of support are made within the context of not having actually found employment.

Some clients praised their Work Choice provider, or thought the support was broad and invaluable. Other clients felt that the support received to obtain a job from their service provider was more appropriate to their needs than that offered through Jobcentre Plus.

"[The provider is] like a family, work as a group but give good one on one help" (Work Choice client)

"The support I've had from [the provider] has been invaluable. They've given me support, encouragement, CVs, computer work, friends, associates, financial support, someone on your side when the world is on your case."
(Work Choice client)

"It makes a big difference [support from provider]. At least I have somewhere I can go, rather than the Jobcentre where it's a couple of minutes and they don't really help you. I need to be somewhere for a bit more help. It's a big relief."
(Work Choice client)

A small number of respondents receiving pre-work support commented that they felt the support received through previous programmes was inadequate, and that they were much more positive about the support offered through Work Choice.

Support received in employment

This section discusses respondents' views of support they receive in employment. A number of clients described this support, which included one or a number of the following:

- General support, encouragement and confidence building. Examples of more general support included assistance with money management, benefits such as tax credits and dealing with correspondence from government agencies. A number of clients greatly valued day to day flexible support available from their support worker (by telephone);
- Development of appropriate personal appearance, communication skills, and appropriate attitudes/behaviour in the workplace;
- Training with travel;
- Development of appropriate timekeeping;

- Development opportunities / training provision e.g. literacy, numeracy and specific work related skills;
- Job coaching – including some development of job coaching skills with employers;
- Maintaining good communications between employers and employee, and advocacy for the client. This was particularly valued in relation to change (e.g. changes in staff especially line managers, changes to hours of work or tasks carried out, dealing with potential redundancies or during TUPE when an employer was taken over by another organisation);
- Dealing with bullying in the workplace;
- Work with employers (and other employees) to facilitate their understanding of client needs and to make appropriate adjustments to job roles. Examples included explaining to the employer the need to demonstrate new tasks, rather than giving verbal instructions and to carry out observations rather than asking clients how well they are performing tasks. One support worker also described facilitating the redeployment of a client to another (more appropriate) role with their employer in order to maintain their employment;
- Two clients mentioned the provision of a financial subsidy which was paid to their employer (in one case this was to provide cover when the client was absent from work due to their health condition);²⁴
- Clients employed in supported businesses appeared to value the supportive environment of their workplace, and opportunities for peer support (e.g. working with other deaf people);
- Career development (with a potential move to another employer);
- Assistance in sorting out action plans;
- Assistance in working with employers;
- Funding of a supply worker to fill in when the client needs some sick leave;
- Supportive working environment as provided in a supported business;
- Equipment such as a more appropriate chair or a personal loop to assist in hearing.

A total of 16 Clients answered questions in the telephone survey which related to their views of the support they receive in their job through Work Choice. Respondents who did not answer these questions were identified as seeking employment, or did not appear to be in receipt of support similar to that offered through Work Choice. One respondent also needed to end the interview early so did not complete these questions. Two respondents did not answer these questions as they did not understand them. All respondents were in employment at the time of the research. A total of 28 clients answered questions in the face to face interviews which related to their views of the support they receive in their job through Work Choice. These were supplemented by the views of support workers as well, with one support worker answering exclusively on the client's behalf.

Generally, respondents were positive about the support they receive in employment, reporting that it is appropriate for their needs and for helping them to maintain employment.

²⁴ Work Choice providers can elect to pay a financial subsidy if they wish

One respondent was positive about the support she has just started receiving through Work Choice. Another respondent was happy with the kind and amount of support she was getting through Work Choice and appreciated having someone to contact if she needed to. Another client was very positive about [her] support worker. One respondent discussed how [she] had seen improvements in the level of support under Work Choice compared to WORKSTEP.

"We're just building up, we've just started. But she seems very supportive. I like to know there's someone there I can call for advice and support."
(Work Choice client)

"Yes, the most helpful thing is that I can bombard her with texts."
(Work Choice client)

"She's the best; she makes me laugh and makes me happy"
(Work Choice client)

"I've had more contact with [Work Choice adviser] in the last couple of months than I had from WORKSTEP in the last couple of years."
(Work Choice client)

However, not all clients were entirely satisfied with Work Choice in-work support. One client did mention that the use of a British Sign Language interpreter at work was not adequate because they were only available once a month. This resulted in changes at work taking time to be communicated to the client. Another client mentioned how Work Choice doesn't seem to provide any support at work.

"It would be nice to know that when something changes we would get told straight away through an interpreter."
(Work Choice client)

"They [Work Choice provider] don't really provide anything".
(Work Choice client)

Some respondents interviewed through the telephone survey reported having a minimal amount of support through regular but infrequent contact with a support worker, often every 3 – 6 months. Many of these clients reported being able to contact their support worker should they need any support, but that at the present time they were not actually receiving any other support as offered through Work Choice. In some instances this was because the respondent suggested they had progressed into unsupported employment. Where respondents did not appear to be in receipt of support through Work Choice they were not asked about the appropriateness of such support at work.

A number of respondents interviewed through the telephone survey also reported not receiving any support in their job and were not aware of receiving any support in work during the past. Many of these clients reported receiving support to find employment, either through the Job Centre or from other sources. However, a number of individuals were not aware of receiving any form of pre-work or in-work support at all. It should be noted that none of the respondents who described receiving minimal or no support appeared to want any increase in support. . These respondents did not answer questions about the appropriateness of the support they receive through the programme.

There are a number of possible explanations for this seeming lack of support for respondents who should be receiving relatively intensive support. One is that some respondents may not have been aware of what was meant when they were asked about the support they receive in their job. Indeed, when asked about support received in work a number of respondents initially described things like social support at work or family assistance. Some of these respondents did go on to describe support similar to that offered by employment programmes as well when probed further, however some did not. It may also be possible that some respondents are unaware of receiving support with their job as this can sometimes be subtle and perhaps not considered by the individual to be support.

While discussing their in-work support, one respondent mentioned that they were still waiting to have their initial meeting with a support worker following the transition from one WORKSTEP provider to a different Work Choice provider. These meetings were meant to happen within the first three months of the programme, after post tender easements were implemented, so it is concerning that respondents should have to wait longer before their new provider meets them to discuss their support needs. This is also of interest as it may mean that a number of the respondents who reported receiving minimal or no support through Work Choice could have been waiting for their new provider to see them and consequently the limited support reported related to WORKSTEP provision, rather than Work Choice provision which was yet to commence.

Nevertheless, reports of clients who do not appear to be in receipt of support, or to want any additional support, does raise questions about the suitability of such people for the Work Choice programme. A few respondents reported that they were receiving support at work but felt they didn't need this support anymore, so may be at the stage where they can progress to unsupported employment. It was however unclear how long the respondents had felt like this and indeed if this related to Work Choice provision – again, it may have related to WORKSTEP provision prior to Work Choice being introduced.

Future support

This section describes the views of respondents about their future support needs and aspirations.

A total of 16 respondents answered questions in the telephone survey which related to the support they receive in their job through Work Choice and their future aspirations²⁵. Respondents who did not answer these questions were identified as seeking employment or appeared not to be in receipt of support through Work Choice. One respondent could not complete the whole interview so was not asked these questions. One respondent did not understand these questions. All respondents were in employment at the time of the research. A total of 35 respondents in the face to face interviews answered questions which related to the support they receive in their job through Work Choice and their future aspirations. Five respondents in the face to face interviews were not able to answer questions about their support and future aspirations.

²⁵ Two of the four questions which relate to support received through Work Choice and future aspirations were only answered by 15 participants due to not understanding the questions.

About as many respondents in the telephone survey could see themselves needing the same support in the future as they receive now as could see themselves needing different amounts. For those respondents who could see themselves needing different amounts of support in the future, the majority saw themselves needing less or no support. However, several of these respondents did also mention that any reduced level of support in the future would be dependent upon their health and that if their health deteriorated they may need to increase support.

Respondents who were interviewed through the face to face interview generally did not anticipate that they would need greater levels of support in the future, although some did mention that this may be different if their circumstances, such as the job role or line manager were to change.

"Depends what happens with the job. If things change, definitely [would need more support]."

(Work Choice client)

However, for some employed clients it was felt that an increased level of support may increase the likelihood of that client securing a job with better conditions or job satisfaction. Moreover, for some clients within supported businesses it was felt that more support may increase the likelihood of the individual progressing into open employment.

For a number of employed clients it was felt that the effect of less or no support in the future would negatively impact upon their ability to maintain employment.

"[without support I would be] back on the dole"

(Work Choice client)

Nevertheless, some clients, and their support workers, felt that they would be able to maintain work in the future without support because they were at the stage where they were close to progression into open employment.

"I don't think I need all of it [Work Choice support]... it wouldn't bother me."

(Work Choice client)

Summary

Some respondents were enthused about the culture change and thought the programme was going well in its early days. However, others appeared disengaged from the culture change Work Choice seeks to achieve, with implications for the way in which key stakeholders operated in the programme.

That said, it is not necessarily unexpected that the intended culture change introduced with Work Choice should take some time to bed in, and it would be wise to ensure the change is still being encouraged even after transition. This suggests that it would be useful to continue to monitor DEAs' case loads and their general adaptation to the programme.

An issue which arose in relation to the structure of the programme was the minimum support requirement in each module. Some respondents seemed to think this could be overly burdensome for employers and could also potentially change

the way in which clients viewed their health condition, as well as being too much support for some clients. This raises questions about the suitability of some clients for the programme if providers do not think they need the increased level of support provided through Work Choice. There was also a lack of clarity about what could be considered as counting towards the minimum support required on the programme. These differences in interpretation could lead to differences in the support offered to clients. This suggests that some further clarification on minimum contact hours would increase the likelihood of consistency of support.

Generally clients were positive about the support they receive to obtain or retain employment. However, a number of Clients reported receiving little or no support with their job, which may suggest they experienced a gap in support during the transition from legacy programmes to Work Choice, although this may also be explained by limited understanding of their support.

3. COMMISSIONING

3.1. Background

The Work Choice programme was implemented under the Department's Commissioning Strategy²⁶. Published in February 2008, the strategy sets out a series of principles for the commissioning and management of contracted employment provision with the aim of achieving a more strategic relationship between the Department and providers and a step change in provider performance. The strategy seeks to use competition to drive value for money, and strives for a balance between the risks suppliers will carry in terms of working capital and the potential rewards available through outcome-based funding. The intention is that DWP contracts will be appealing to existing suppliers in the market, whilst encouraging new market entrants.

The key features of the Commissioning Strategy are:

- **The prime-provider model** through which the Department contracts with a provider, who in turn manages a supply chain of providers in order to deliver the contract. The Department wants a stronger, more consistent base of top-tier providers.
- **Outcome-based funding** the strategy set out a commitment that providers would be paid increasingly on the basis of the sustained job-outcomes that they achieve for clients.
- **Minimal service prescription** allowing providers to make decisions about what will help clients into sustainable employment, with the aim of encouraging personalisation of support and innovation in service delivery.
- **Larger, longer contracts** than for previous specialist disability employment provision. The standard contract length is five years, with the option of a two year extension dependent on performance. The aim is to produce market stability and encourage providers to invest in delivery.

As part of this commissioning approach DWP is also committed to improving its capability and building a more strategic and partnership-based approach to managing contracted employment provision. It has committed to clarifying the roles and responsibilities of staff within the Department that work with providers, investing in its staff's skills and working with providers to create a transparent and cooperative culture.

This section of the report examines issues relating to the commissioning strategy. It is structured as follows:

- Provider Market Structure
- Market and Supply Chain Development
- Delivery Models (including black box and Larger longer contracts)
- Outcome-Based Funding
- DWP Capability
- Summary

²⁶ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/cs-rep-08.pdf>

3.2 Provider Market Structure

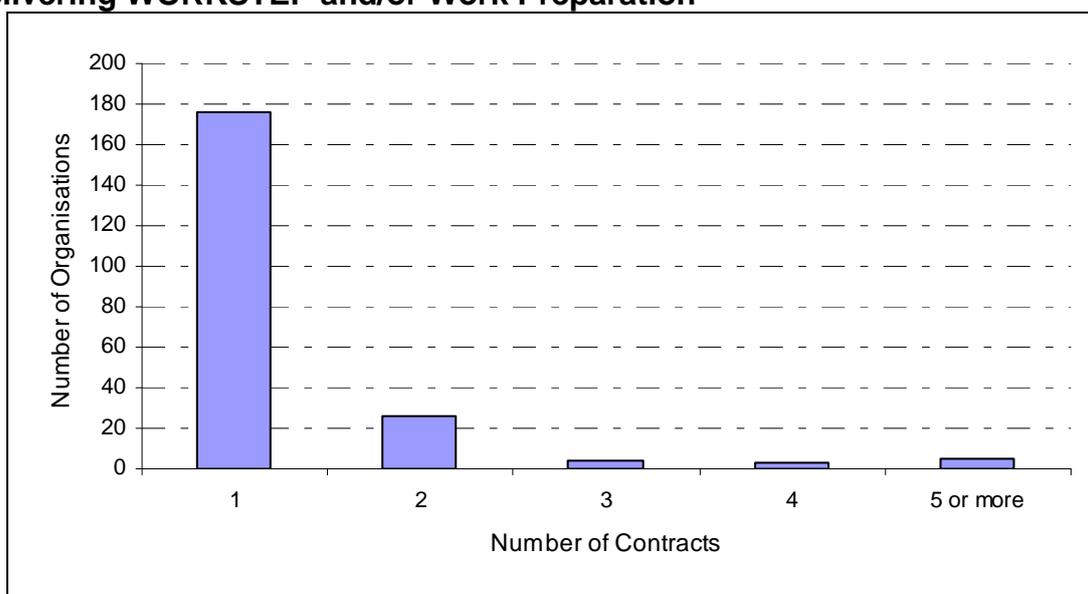
In line with the aims of the Commissioning Strategy, the transition from WORKSTEP and Work Preparation to Work Choice was likely to bring a restructuring of the provider market. This chapter tracks the development of the market for specialist disability employment services at a national and local level, from WORKSTEP and Work Preparation, through the bidding and contract award for Work Choice, and finally to Work Choice live running.

3.2.1 Provider Market before Work Choice

National level

The specialist disability employment provider market before Work Choice was highly dispersed - DWP held 305 contracts with 214 organisations for the delivery of WORKSTEP and Work Preparation. Chart 1 illustrates that 83% of organisations held only one contract with a further 12% holding only two contracts. Just five organisations held five or more contracts. Of the 214 organisations, 126 (59%) were from the public sector, 62 (29%) from the third sector and 26 (12%) from the private sector.

Chart 1: Number of contract package areas covered by each organisation delivering WORKSTEP and/or Work Preparation

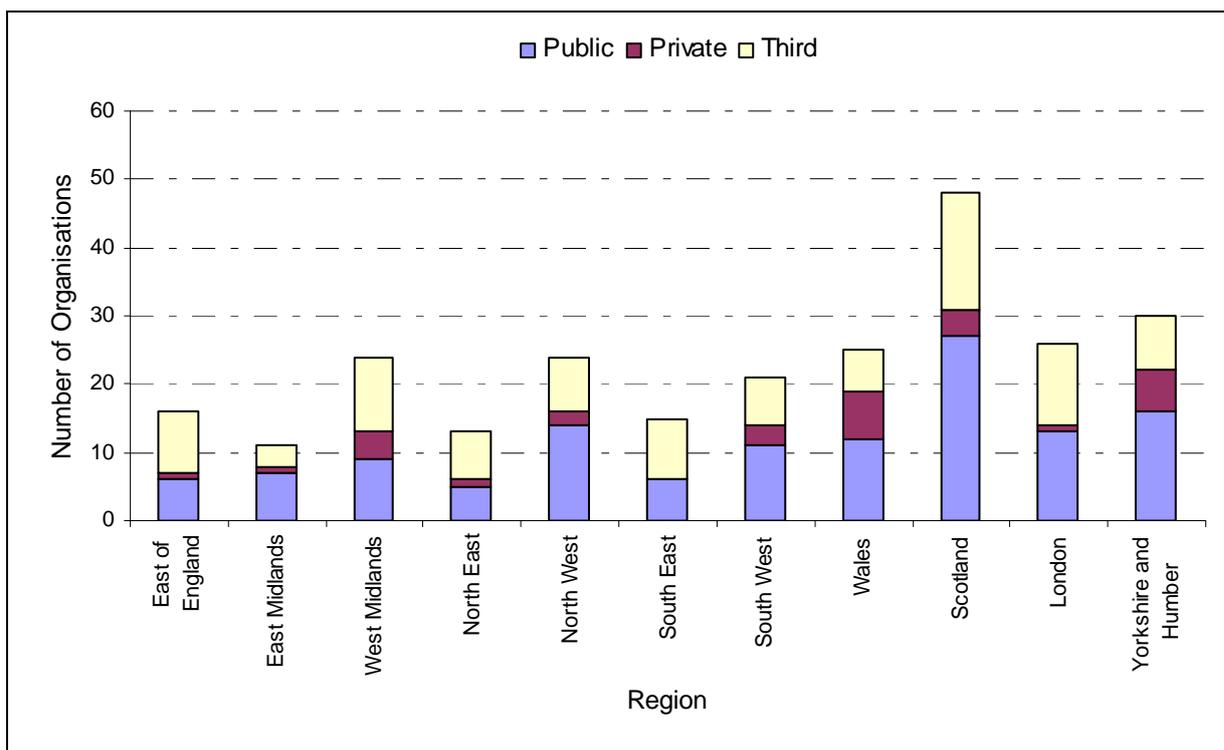


Source: WORKSTEP/Work Preparation Management Information Oct-10

Regional Level

Chart 2 looks at the variations in the numbers of providers delivering WORKSTEP and Work Preparation across the different regions of the country. There were at least 10 providers operating in every area, rising to over 20 in six areas. There was public and third sector delivery across all contract package areas, although the private sector presence was typically small.

Chart 2: Number of providers delivering WORKSTEP and/or Work Preparation by region



Source: WORKSTEP/Work Preparation Management Information Oct-10

3.2.1. Bidding for Work Choice

There was a two stage bidding process for Work Choice contracts. Potential primes responded to a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) for assessment by the Department. Those that were successful proceeded to the Invitation to Tender (ITT) stage. At ITT stage potential primes were required to submit a list of the first tier sub-contractors with whom they proposed to deliver Work Choice.

National level

Prime providers

Table 1 provides information on the characteristics of the organisations that bid to become prime providers. Including whether bidders were involved in Flexible new Deal (FND), the only previous programme to be commissioned under the terms of the Commissioning Strategy.

Table 1: Bidding behaviour to be a prime provider by organisation

Characteristics of Organisation	PQQ Bids	ITT Bids	Bid Success
FND prime & WORKSTEP/Work Prep	2	2	0
FND sub & WORKSTEP/Work Prep	9	2	1
FND prime only	6	3	3
FND sub only	6	2	0
WORKSTEP/Work Prep only	24	8	2
Other organisations	18	6	2
Total	65	23	8

Source: WORKSTEP/Work Preparation Management Information Oct-10
PQQ and ITT Bid Documentation
Survey of Prime Providers conducted in Feb-11

35 out of 214 WORKSTEP/Work Preparation providers submitted a PQQ bid to become a Work Choice prime provider. 30 of the organisations bidding at PQQ stage (46%) were from outside the WORKSTEP/Work Preparation market, indicating a healthy degree of interest in entering the specialist disability employment market. Of the 23 organisations proceeding to ITT Stage, 12 held WORKSTEP or Work Preparation contracts and 11 did not. Of the 23 organisations invited to tender for Work Choice, 11 were from the private sector, ten from the third sector and two from the public sector.

Eight organisations were successful in becoming prime providers. Of these three had WORKSTEP or Work Preparation contracts, three were Flexible New Deal (FND) prime providers, and two did not deliver either provision. The highest success rate was among FND prime providers from outside the WORKSTEP/Work Preparation market, with 50% of bidders at PQQ stage receiving a contract.

Table 2 provides comparable information to table 1 looking at bid behaviour by contract rather than by organisation. Table 2 reveals a slightly different picture to table 1, in that 19 of 28 contracts went to former WORKSTEP or Work Preparation providers. Whilst this indicates an incumbency advantage it should be noted that the figure is heavily influenced by the award of 16 prime contracts to a single provider, Shaw Trust.

Table 2: Bidding behaviour to be a prime provider by contract

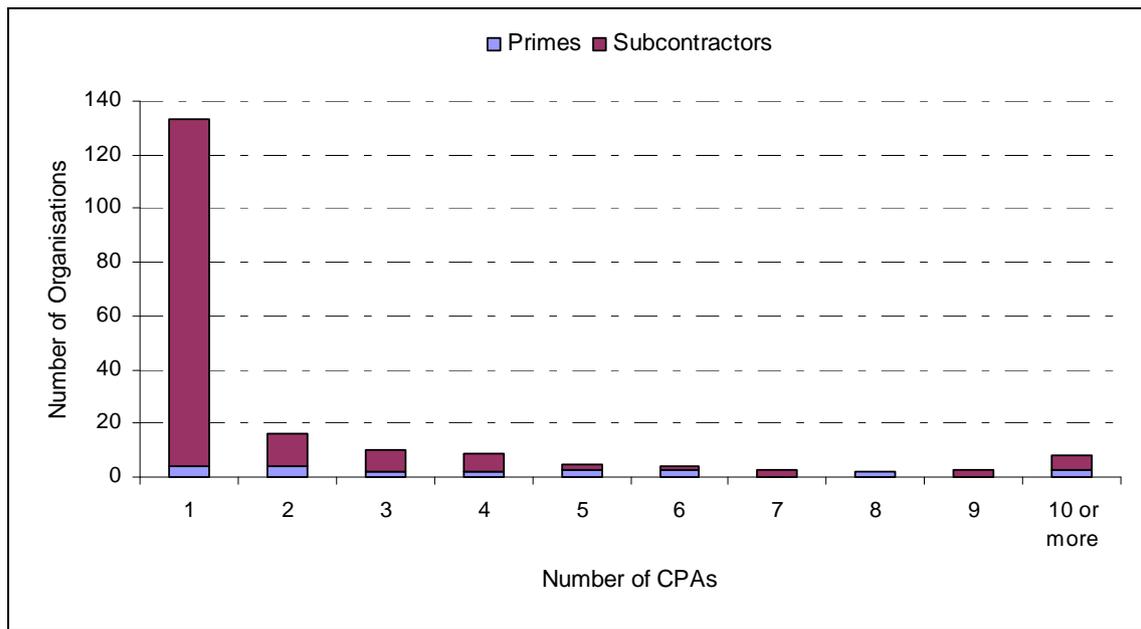
Characteristics of Organisation	PQQ bids	ITT bids	bid success
FND prime & WORKSTEP/Work Prep	18	4	0
FND sub & WORKSTEP/Work Prep	56	17	16
FND prime only	70	25	7
FND sub only	59	12	0
WORKSTEP/Work Prep only	60	19	3
other organisations	68	20	2
Total	331	97	28

*Source: WORKSTEP/Work Preparation Management Information Oct-10
PQQ and ITT Bid Documentation
Survey of Prime Providers conducted in Feb-11*

Prime and subcontractors

Bids at ITT stage contained a total of 193 organisations seeking to deliver Work Choice (either as a prime provider or a first tier subcontractor). The majority of providers (69%) were involved in bids for only one contract package area, continuing the trend of dispersed, local delivery observed under WORKSTEP and Work Preparation. However, there were also some signs of ambition from providers to deliver across a greater geographic area, with 6 organisations submitting bids in more than half of the contract package areas. Chart 3 below provides a breakdown of the number of contract package areas in which each organisation was involved in a bid. 85 organisations included in bids at ITT stage were from the third sector (44%), 73 from the public sector (38%) and 35 from the private sector (18%).

Chart 3: Number of contract package areas bids at ITT stage as prime or subcontractor



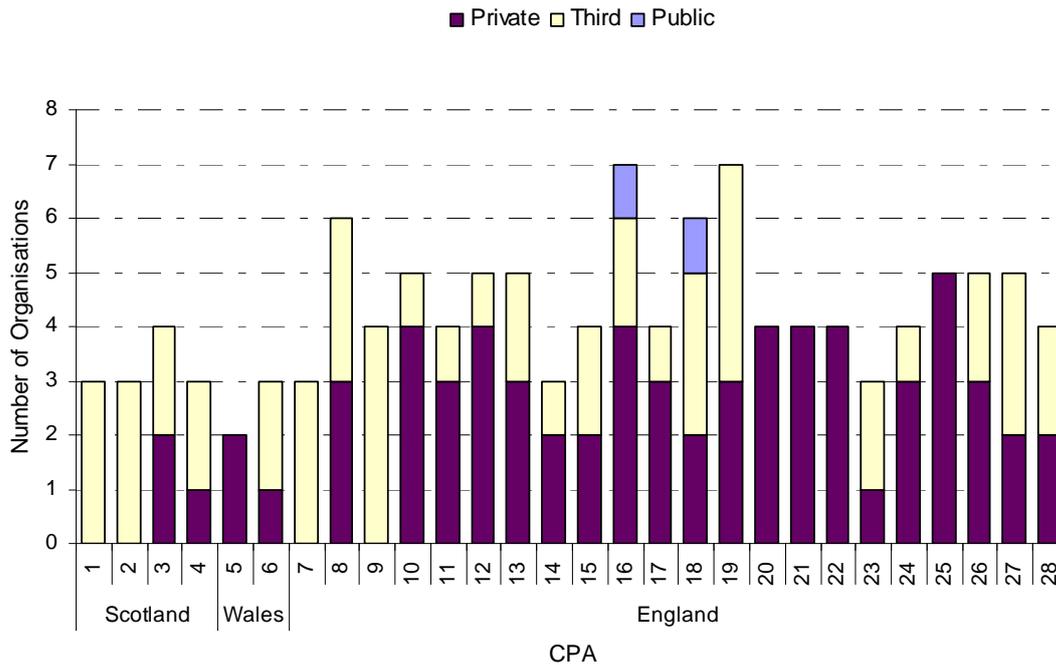
Note: organisations which bid both as primes and sub-contractors are reported as primes
Source: ITT Bid Documentation

Contract Package Area Level

Prime providers

The number of organisations invited to tender to be the prime provider in each area ranged from two to seven, and in most areas the largest number of bids came from private sector organisations. There were bids from third sector organisations for all contract package areas, and from the private sector in all but two areas. Public sector organisations bid to become a prime provider in just two contract package areas. Chart 4 provides the detail for each contract package area; please see Appendix 2 for a list of CPAs by number.

Chart 4: Sector breakdown of prime provider bids received in each contract package area – ITT Stage



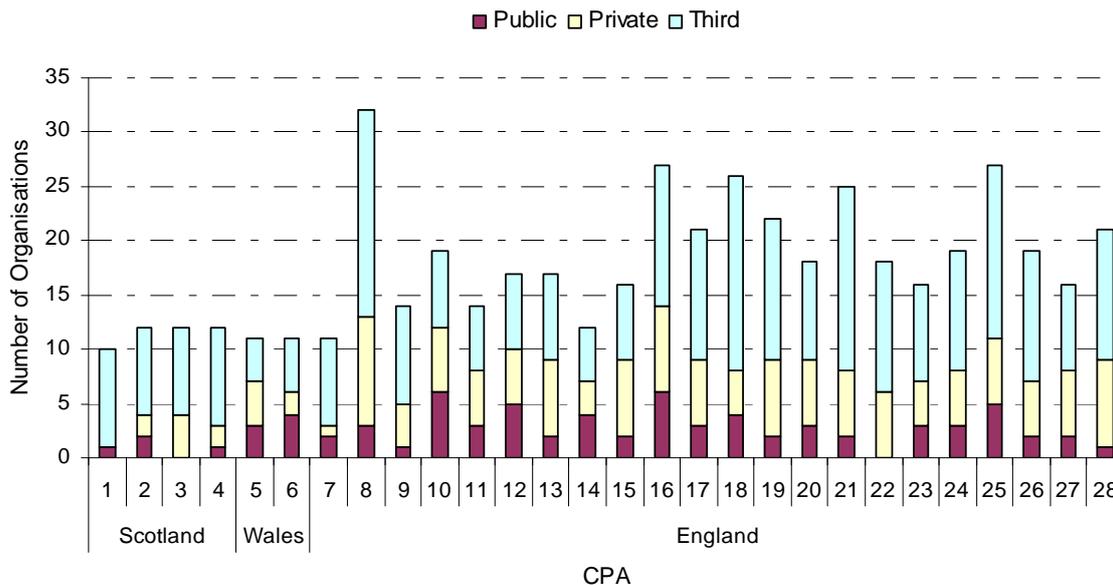
Source: ITT Bid Documentation

Prime and subcontractors

There are significant differences between the number of providers involved in bids for contracts in each contract package area with a low of 10 organisations in CPA 1 (Highlands, Islands, Clyde Coast and Grampian) compared to a high of 32 in CPA 8 (North and East Yorkshire and the Humber, Tees Valley).

The third sector makes up the largest proportion of providers involved in bids in each contract package area. There are however large differences between the composition of supply chains in bids across contract package areas. For example, in CPA 5 (North and mid Wales, South East Wales) 11 organisations were involved in bids, with three from the public sector and four each from the private and third sector. In comparison, 25 organisations were involved in bids CPA 21 (West London, Central London, Barnet Enfield and Haringey) with just two from the public sector, six from the private sector, and 17 from the third sector. In contrast to the bidding for prime contracts, public sector organisations form part of bids in every contract package area. Chart 5 provides the detail.

Chart 5: Sector breakdown of provider in Work Choice bids by contract package area



Source: ITT Bid Documentation

It was common for an organisation to appear in multiple bids. Some providers bid both as primes and as sub-contractors in a contract package area. Table 4 highlights the differences in competition to enter Work Choice supply chains between different contract package areas. Some contract package areas, such as CPA 27 (Dorset and Somerset), saw a high number of bids and very little overlap between proposed supply chains. However, other CPAs saw a much greater degree of overlap in proposed supply chains – for example in CPA1 30% of all potential providers were in all potential supply chains, meaning that they would be delivering Work Choice regardless of who won the contract. Table 4.1 illustrates that in every contract package area there was at least one organisation named on half or more bids as either a prime provider or a sub-contractor, and in 17 contract package areas at least one bidder was named in all bids.

Table 4: Breakdown of multiple bidding behaviour by contract package area

Contract Package Area	Number of 'prime led' bids	Number of organisations in bidding	Proportion in 50%+ of bids	Proportion in 75%+ of bids	Proportion in 100% of bids
1	3	10	50%	30%	30%
2	3	12	50%	8%	8%
3	4	12	50%	42%	17%
4	3	12	50%	25%	25%
5	2	11	100%	0%	0%
6	3	11	36%	9%	9%
7	3	11	36%	18%	18%
8	6	32	13%	0%	0%
9	4	14	36%	7%	7%
10	5	19	21%	11%	11%
11	4	14	36%	21%	21%
12	5	17	41%	12%	6%
13	5	17	29%	24%	12%
14	3	12	50%	8%	8%
15	4	16	25%	6%	6%
16	7	27	22%	4%	0%
17	4	21	43%	19%	14%
18	6	26	31%	8%	0%
19	7	22	14%	5%	0%
20	4	18	33%	22%	0%
21	4	25	36%	16%	0%
22	4	18	33%	11%	6%
23	3	16	6%	6%	6%
24	4	18	28%	22%	6%
25	5	27	30%	4%	0%
26	5	19	11%	5%	0%
27	5	16	6%	0%	0%
28	4	21	38%	5%	0%

Table 4.1: Multiple bidding behaviour

	Number of CPAs	
	Frequency	Percentage
At least one organisation on 50% + of Bids	28	100%
At least one organisation on 75% + of Bids	25	89%
At least one organisation on 100% of Bids	17	61%

Source: ITT Bid Documentation

3.2.3 Work Choice Contract Award

National level

Prime providers

Table 5 presents the distribution of contract awards. Eight organisations were successful in their bids to become prime providers for Work Choice; four of these were from the private sector and four from the third sector. One third sector organisation, Shaw Trust, was awarded 16 contracts. Shaw Trust is the only provider that held 5 or more WORKSTEP or Work Preparation contracts which has become a Work Choice prime provider. Five organisations were awarded only one prime contract. Eight areas had a private sector prime provider with the remaining 20 led by third sector organisations.

Table 5: Distribution of Work Choice contract awards

Organisation Name	Contracts		Sector
Shaw Trust	16	(57%)	Third
Working Links	5	(18%)	Private
PLUSS	2	(7%)	Third
Advance Housing and Support	1	(3.6%)	Third
Careers Development Group – Wise Ability	1	(3.6%)	Private ²⁷
Ingeus	1	(3.6%)	Private
Momentum	1	(3.6%)	Third
Seetec	1	(3.6%)	Private

Source: Post Tender Discussion Documentation

The intention of contracting with a reduced number of top tier providers has been achieved. Many providers interviewed acknowledged the logic behind the move towards this structure:

“I agree absolutely that we had to change what we were doing. For DWP to be managing the volume of contracts that they were managing across WORKSTEP provision was not good business.” [Work Choice Prime]

However, providers also expressed concerns about the impact that the commissioning model would have on the structure of the provider market and the type of organisations who would deliver Work Choice.

“You’re looking for people who can sub £50 million over a number of years – they’re going to be people who are in it for the money, and they’re not necessarily going to have the same values as the people they subcontract to.” [Work Choice Prime]

This concern arose from the view that the majority of existing specialist disability employment providers would not have the financial capability to act as prime contractors, so would need to find a place in the market as a subcontractor. There was a contention that organisations who could afford the level of investment that is required of prime providers would not be specialists in disability employment provision, and that this would affect their approach to delivery. It is noteworthy that 19 of the 28 prime contracts for Work Choice were awarded to providers who

²⁷ Both Wise Ability and the Careers Development Group are third sector organisations, but the special purpose vehicle created to deliver the Work Choice contracts is a for profit organisation.

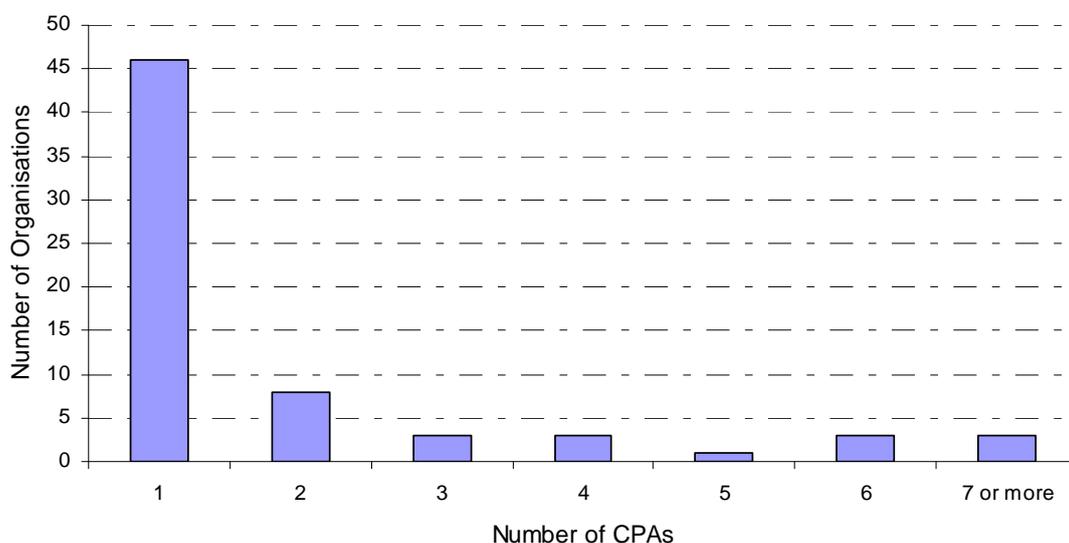
played a role in delivering either WORKSTEP or Work Preparation, indicating that providers who specialise in disability employment services can also have the financial capability to operate as prime contractors. However, this is affected by the fact that Shaw Trust won 16 contracts. Considering the numbers and a provider rather than a contract level reveals that 5 of the 8 successful prime providers were new to the specialist disability employment sector.

Prime and subcontractors

Overall 67 organisations were involved in successful Work Choice bids, either as prime or subcontractors, or both. This contrasts with 214 organisations delivering WORKSTEP or Work Preparation. Of the successful providers 29 (43%) were from the third sector, 21 (31%) from the public sector and 17 (25%) from the private sector. Private sector organisations had a higher success rate than their public sector counterparts during the Work Choice bidding process.

46 organisations (69%) were awarded contracts to deliver in just one contract package area. This is unsurprising given that the majority (also 69%) only bid for a contract in a single contract package area at the ITT stage, but does indicate the continuing localised nature of specialist disability employment provision. Of the six organisations who bid for contracts in more than half of the contract package areas only two were successful in obtaining this spread of contracts. Chart 6 provides a breakdown of the number of contracts awarded.

Chart 6: Number of Work Choice contract package areas in which providers were awarded a prime or subcontract



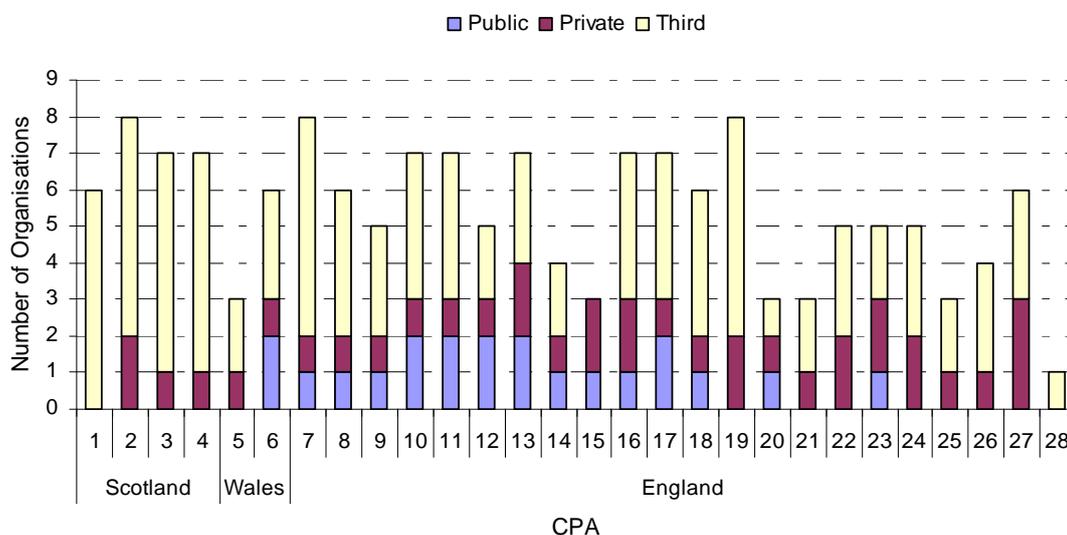
Source: Post Tender Discussion Documentation

Contract Package Area Level

Prime and subcontractors

The number of providers contracted in to deliver in a contract package area ranged from one²⁸ to eight. Third sector organisations account for the largest proportion of providers in most contract package areas, and have a presence in all but one CPA. In 13 out of the 28 contract package areas there is no public sector presence, while there is a private sector presence in all but two areas. Chart 7 provides the detail for each contract package area.

Chart 7: Sector breakdown of organisations awarded contracts in each contract package area



Source: Post Tender Discussion Documentation

3.2.4 Work Choice Live Running

This section tracks how the provider market developed in the period after contract award in October 2010. It uses data from a survey of prime providers conducted by DWP in February 2011, through which they were asked to provide details of the first tier subcontractors in their supply chain.

National level

Prime providers

There has been no change in prime providers since contracts were awarded.

Prime and subcontractors

Between contract award and contract start up seven organisations did not join supply chains despite being named in bids, while another seven organisations not named in bids joined supply chains.

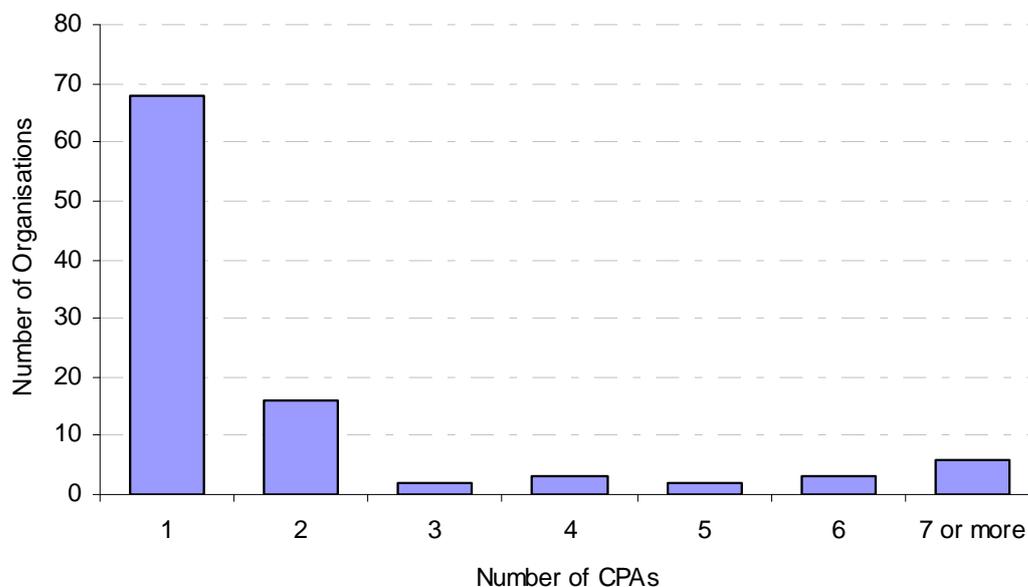
²⁸ Two prime providers were consortia. PLUSS won two contracts, and previously delivered WORKSTEP as a consortium. Wise CDG is a special purpose vehicle created to deliver Work Choice. Neither of the two partners delivered WORKSTEP or Work Preparation.

The prime provider survey returns indicate that there were 100 providers delivering Work Choice at February 2011. This is an increase of 49% from the 67 organisations listed at contract award²⁹. This increase reflected 43 organisations joining supply chains, of whom 18 had previously delivered WORKSTEP or Work Preparation, and 10 leaving supply chains, giving a net increase of 33 providers.

This market was made up of 54 organisations from the third sector 27 from the public sector and 19 from the private sector, an increase of 25 third sector organisations and 6 public sector organisations from contract award stage. The majority of sub-contractors entering the market during live running are thought to be subcontractors who deliver specialist services. Two providers substantially increased their presence, with one holding 13 contracts compared to one at contract award, and another establishing a presence for the first time with nine contracts.

The number of contract package areas covered by each organisation has not changed significantly since the award of contracts with the majority (68%) only delivering in one contract package area. Chart 8 below illustrates the spread of geographic coverage based on the survey returns.

Chart 8: Number of Work Choice contracts by organisation



Source: Survey of Prime Providers conducted in Feb-11

Contract Package Area level

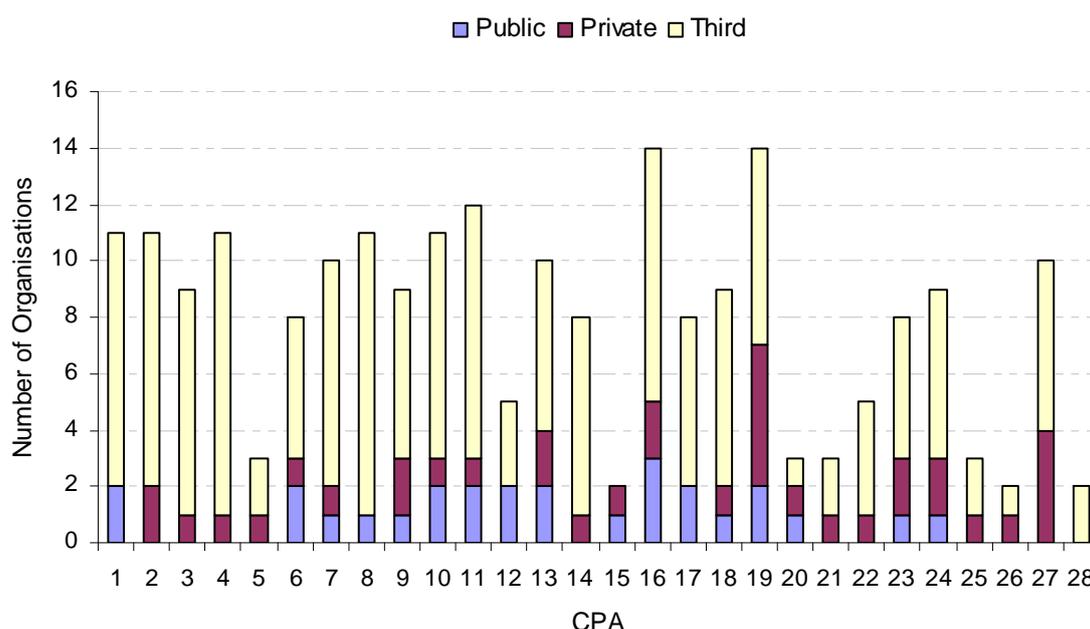
Prime and subcontractors

Three contract package areas have seen a reduction in the number of providers since contract award stage. One contract package area had a reduction of two organisations, and the others both contracted by one organisation each. 20 areas saw an increase in the number of providers, ranging from increases of one organisation to seven. In most areas this was a direct result of including more third

²⁹ Part of this increase may reflect different ways of reporting to the two surveys. Some respondents to the prime provider survey provided all organisations in the supply chain, and not just first tier sub-contractors as provided in bid documentation. In interviews prime providers did report expansions of supply chains in live running.

sector organisations in supply chains. Chart 9 breaks this down into the number of organisations by sector.

Chart 9: Sector breakdown of organisations holding Work Choice contracts in each contract package area



Source: Survey of Prime Providers conducted in Feb-11

3.3 Market and Supply Chain Development

Overall the number of providers delivering contracted specialist disability employment services has fallen from 214 under WORKSTEP/Work Preparation to 100 under Work Choice. The number of providers across all sectors has decreased in absolute terms, with public sector organisations exiting in the most significant numbers. Both third and private sector providers have increased their presence in terms of their proportion of the market. Table 7 provides the detail, whilst chart 10 illustrates the proportion of specialist disability employment providers by sector at different stages in the evolution of the market.

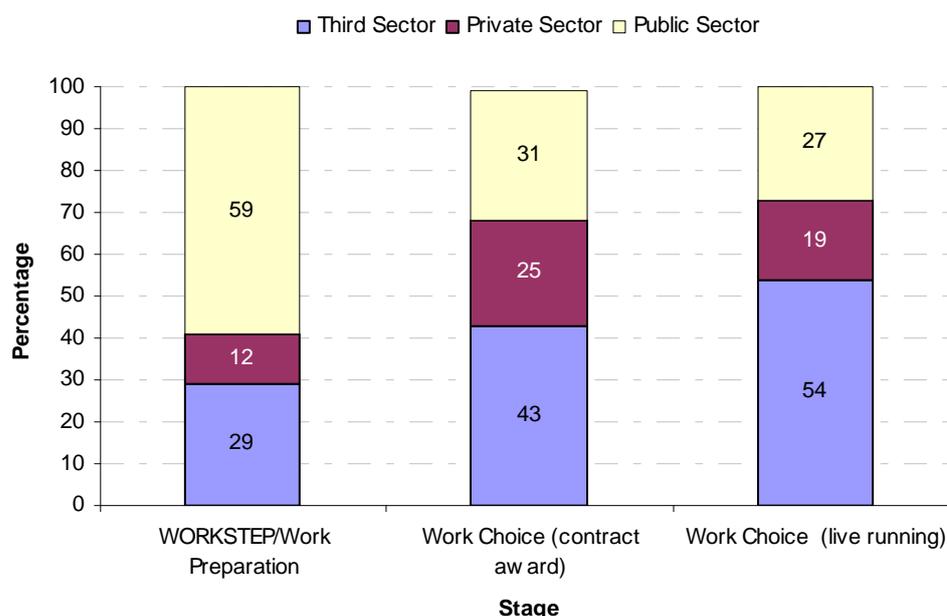
Table 7: Change in composition of providers delivering specialist disability employment services

Contract Type	Third Sector	Private Sector	Public Sector	Total
WORKSTEP/Work Preparation	62	26	126	214
Work Choice (contract award)	29	17	21	67

Work Choice (live running)	54	19	27	100
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Source: WORKSTEP/Work Preparation Management Information
 Post Tender Discussion Documentation
 Survey of Prime Providers conducted in Feb-11

Chart 10: Specialist Disability Employment Provider Market



Within these shifts in the composition of the market there has been market entry and exit, reported at table 8. At contract award stage there were 25 new entrants to the market, and another 75 organisations which tried to enter at the bidding stage for Work Choice. 15 of the 25 new entrants were not delivering Flexible New Deal. 121 organisations exited the market without bidding for Work Choice, amongst which public sector providers predominate. Another 55 exited the market because they were unsuccessful in bidding for Work Choice. Of the 214 WORKSTEP and Work Preparation delivery organisations only 42 stayed in the market to deliver Work Choice after contract award.

Table 8: Participation in Market for Specialist Disability Employment Services at Contract Award Stage

Market Status	Delivering Flexible New Deal?	
	Yes	No
WORKSTEP/Work Preparation provider - exited without bidding for Work Choice	6	115
WORKSTEP/Work Preparation provider - unsuccessful Work Choice bidder	9	42
WORKSTEP/Work Preparation provider - successful Work Choice bidder	16	26

New entrant - unsuccessful Work Choice bidder	10	65
New entrant - successful Work Choice bidder	10	15

Source: WORKSTEP/Work Preparation Management Information
Post Tender Discussion Documentation

The remainder of this section considers the factors that influenced provider decisions on market and supply chain development, and assesses how prevalent they were.

Under the prime provider model, many organisations that had contracted directly with the Department to deliver WORKSTEP or Work Preparation will now operate as subcontractors to prime providers. At this level there was concern about whether the money available through Work Choice would be sufficient to sustain organisations financially.

“I think there are a lot of good small providers out there who will not stay in business very long because of the prime model and the challenges for people who subcontract, particularly very small providers” [Work Choice Prime]

However, the subcontractors consulted were broadly comfortable with the terms agreed with their prime providers. Moreover, subcontractors were positive about the fact that the prime provider model enabled them to eschew administrative and management functions in favour of focussing on specialist delivery of employment provision:

“It’s for the better, it seems to be a better way of working... it’s just a bit less extra work really...we deal with the delivery rather than the contract management...we can concentrate now on the actual delivery rather than the other side of it all” [Subcontractor Manager]

To further understand these changes providers were asked about the process of building supply chains to deliver Work Choice. The standard method of conducting a supply chain to deliver Work Choice was through an expression of interest exercise, whereby subcontractors were asked to submit information to the prime provider if they wished to deliver Work Choice on the prime’s behalf. Prime providers consistently reported using similar core criteria in selecting subcontractors:

- Experience in the specialist disability employment sector;
- A track record of producing outcomes (assessed through job outcomes and independent assessment such as Ofsted reports);
- Ability to offer geographical coverage in the relevant contract package area.

These factors are captured in the following quote from a Work Choice prime provider:

“They needed to be specialists in disability...have experience in preferably WORKSTEP...to be able to produce a record of producing outcomes...the other thing was geographical spread for us...you need to have a presence” [Work Choice Prime Provider]

Whilst existing contacts were important, prime providers did not simply elect to work with the subcontractors with whom they already had a working relationship:

“One provider we knew well we didn’t consider because we knew their past delivery record was very, very poor and we knew that the step change is enormous” [Work Choice Prime]

Ofsted inspection results provide another perspective on the process of sifting providers to form supply chains. Results for WORKSTEP providers were cross-tabulated with their bidding behaviour for Work Choice. Table 9 provides the detail. A score of 1 would indicate that the overall effectiveness of provision was outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 represents inadequate. Ofsted only inspected WORKSTEP providers in England, and results relate to the last inspection of provision for that provider. Table 9 indicates that providers who exited the market without bidding were more likely to have an ‘inadequate’ rating and less likely to have a ‘satisfactory’ rating than providers who bid for or won Work Choice contracts. Correspondingly providers who remained in the market were more likely to be those with a ‘satisfactory’ rating. This indicates that the department and prime providers had some success in identifying and keeping stronger providers in the market place.

Table 9: Ofsted inspection results for WORKSTEP providers and market status

Market Status	Ofsted Scores		
	2	3	4
WORKSTEP provider – Exited without bidding for Work Choice	36%	58%	71%
WORKSTEP provider – Unsuccessful Work Choice bidder	27%	19%	14%
WORKSTEP provider – Successful Work Choice bidder	36%	22%	14%

Note: columns total to 100 per cent

Source: Latest Ofsted Inspection results ranging from 2005-2010

Base: 76 (Scotland and Wales not covered)

Another notable point is the impact of TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) legislation on the selection of subcontractors. One subcontractor reported that TUPE was the principal consideration for its prime provider, leading it to look only at former WORKSTEP providers as potential Work Choice subcontractors. This was due to the risk that if a subcontractor from outside WORKSTEP was employed, the prime would also be liable for transferring staff from previous WORKSTEP providers across, and end up with more staff than required. To avoid this previous WORKSTEP providers were preferred. Whilst many of these providers would have been well qualified to deliver Work Choice, there is a risk that TUPE legislation acted as a barrier to well qualified providers entering the market from outside the existing specialist disability employment sphere. This stands in contrast to the stated aim of the Commissioning Strategy to encourage entry from other sectors (DWP, 2008: 13), and what actually happened across the market place.

A point emphasised by the majority of subcontractors was that the process of getting on to Work Choice supply chains was highly labour intensive, with the

demand to submit similar information in a range of different formats to many different potential prime providers. This was perceived as especially demanding for small organisations that did not employ professional bid writing staff, and again could act as an unwanted barrier to market entry. One subcontractor reported submitting 45 separate Expressions of Interest and 15 separate sets of due diligence documents to different potential prime contractors. A typical experience is described below:

“When we’re putting the tenders in we have to approach all the prospective providers...they all have a completely different form, which gathers the same information, and it always comes in from a slightly different angle so we can’t use the same information, so we have to spend an awful long time rewriting forms and when you’re talking about 20 different regions and you’re dealing with 6 different primes it adds up to an awful lot of time” [Work Choice Subcontractor]

There was strong support among both subcontractors and prime contractors for the introduction of standardised bidding documents for future welfare to work contracting rounds.

“I believe that it would have made subcontractors’ lives easier, prime contractors’ lives easier, and ultimately DWP’s life easier, in terms of identifying more quickly and easily the supply chain, if there had been a standard document that every subcontractor completed.” [Work Choice Prime]

Subcontractors also expressed frustration that having submitted Expressions of Interest to potential prime contractors they were not contacted with a response or any meaningful feedback, with one subcontractor describing the process of trying to subcontract to some prime providers as “a big black hole”. Whilst this was frustrating, an issue of greater concern was where subcontractors had been offered a place in a supply chain by a prime contractor only to find that offer rescinded before the contract went live. One subcontractor reported being included within a prime provider’s bid as a provider of self-employment provision but then not re-contacted after the prime provider had received the contract.

“We went from being told that we would be delivering...to being told that we wouldn’t without any negotiation” [Former WORKSTEP/Work Preparation Provider]

Whilst the subcontractor in question was insulated by other contracts the principle is of concern. Prime providers are contractually obliged to agree changes to their supply chains with DWP Performance Managers.

However, the process of refining supply chains worked in both directions, and several Work Choice prime providers reported subcontractors themselves deciding to drop out of the supply chain. One specialist subcontractor who was named in a substantial number of bids went bankrupt before go-live, so inevitably exited all supply chains. There were several other instances reported of subcontractors deciding that they did not wish to provide Work Choice and choosing to leave supply chains. No consistent reasons for this decision were given³⁰.

³⁰ The Work Choice Commissioning Evaluation being conducted by the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion includes research with supply chain leavers which will seek to identify their reasons for leaving supply chains along with their destinations and future intentions.

The reduction of the transition period from seven months to just three also had an impact on the establishment of supply chains. Prime providers expected to, and as we now know did, make further changes to their supply chains during live running of the programme to ensure that they had the necessary support available to meet all of their clients' needs. Typically prime providers felt that they had their 'core' subcontractors in place for go live, but expected to supplement this by recruiting additional specialist subcontractors during the programme. Prime providers set out an intention to keep their supply chains under regular review throughout the Work Choice contract and bring in additional subcontractors as required:

"I would hope that the supply chain changes over the next five years because I would expect that the needs of the customers would change"
[Work Choice Prime]

3.4 Delivery models

A relatively consistent picture of prime providers' delivery models emerged from fieldwork. A large majority of delivery models included some element of delivery by the prime provider, ranging from 15 to 55% of contract value. Only two of the CPAs covered saw no delivery by the prime provider. The number of subcontractors in supply chains ranged from 2 to 7, with an average of 5 subcontractors per supply chain. Subcontractors typically provided an end-to-end service, and would therefore be responsible for the entirety of the client's journey through Work Choice. The tendency to use end-to-end subcontractors as opposed to specialist subcontractors (i.e. those responsible for just one part of the client's journey through the programme) was explained by one prime provider:

'Our experience...suggests that if you don't have a consistent caseworker with a customer throughout their journey then it can be quite detrimental, especially if they've built that level of trust, to then move them on...if they need specialist provision that we can't deliver we would look to bring somebody in to work with them for that particular thing, so whether it be a job coach coming in, whether they go on a training course, those types of things, if they need that sort of support it's brought in but it's arranged by their adviser and their adviser is always their main point of contact and they always go to that one person'
(Work Choice Prime)

This model was common across providers, with clients being referred to a single provider who would be responsible for their journey through the programme. This approach contrasts with reports from Flexible New Deal, under which some providers operate a staged delivery model which sees clients referred to a series of different subcontractors throughout their time on provision. The lack of adviser continuity within this model was identified as source of frustration by FND clients (DWP, 2011b: 71).

The Work Choice provider who was responsible for the client's journey (either a prime provider or a subcontractor) would access specialist services as required from delivery partners outside of their formal supply chains through the use of Service Level Agreements or call-off contracts.

'If a customer has a particular need and we have to purchase a particular piece of training we do that via an SLA type agreement rather than having an organisation in our supply chain and not providing extra business to them'

(Work Choice Prime)

'There are also Tier 3³¹ providers in the supply chain where can buy in interventions e.g. relating to sight and hearing impairment, where you need specialist interventions to support people in work'

(Work Choice Prime)

'We do have a network of other provision or support services that we can refer to or signpost a customer to, other things like skills and condition management'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

Examples of delivery partners cited by Work Choice prime or subcontractors included:

- Local Authorities;
- Training providers;
- Primary Care Trusts;
- Local colleges;
- Charities;
- Local prisons;
- Mental health organisations.

Examples of the type of support accessed through delivery partners included: alcohol dependency support; basic skills support; confidence building and condition management. Providers felt that it was necessary to try to access support through local delivery partners in order to fill gaps in their own provision, and also to replace provision that they may previously have bought in under WORKSTEP or Work Preparation:

'We're having to make sure that we work with lots of partner organisations to make sure that the client gets all the support that they need and all the specialisms that they need because to be absolutely frank the funding is so low compared to WORKSTEP that we can't afford to buy in everything that we need, so we need to be able to access other provision that's funded in other ways'

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Whilst providers were generally comfortable with this arrangement, there were some concerns expressed that funding to their partner organisations may be squeezed over coming years, and where they were unable to access this support a gap in their provision would emerge.

The role of tier three providers is clearly important in providing specialist support to Work Choice clients. However, they do not have a fixed presence in supply chains, tending to operate on the basis of call-off contracts or Service Level Agreements. It will be important to monitor the presence of all providers through Work Choice

³¹ Tier 3 is defined here as organisations with commercial relationships with sub-contractors to prime providers. These organisations are also second tier sub-contractors.

supply chains to ensure that their position remains viable, and that prime contractors and subcontractors are able to access the required specialist services as the programme continues.

Referrals to subcontractors

In the majority of delivery models covered under this research the determining factor in referrals to subcontractors was specialist need, with an appropriate subcontractor being selected on the basis of a clients' circumstances – for example specialist provision for clients with a learning disability, or provision for blind people³². This sets Work Choice apart from mainstream employment provision such as FND where geography is the prime determinant of referrals from a prime contractor to subcontractors (DWP, 2010: 120).

'With Work Choice because of the nature of the customers, we felt it important to structure on a customer basis rather than a geographical basis'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Where there was no specific specialist need clients would be referred on the basis of geography, with subcontractors holding the contract for a certain geographical area within a Contract Package Area. However, primes typically showed a good degree of flexibility in their referral structures, and would factor in clients' preferences to their decision. In broad terms the referral process across CPAs appeared to be flexible and focussed on what best meets clients' individual needs and circumstances.

'It varies. We might do it on a geographical basis, if they require a specialism we might do it on a specialism rather than geography, the other thing is we do it with JCP, so if JCP feels that, or the customers feels that they would benefit from a particular subcontractor they'll put it on their referral notes and we will follow that recommendation where we can...so the customer is having a choice at the outset when talking with JCP...It's whatever works best for the customer'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Primes also gave consideration to the recommendations of Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers on the most appropriate provider for a particular client. This was welcomed by DEAs, who felt that they had a good knowledge of local providers and the client's needs and were pleased to be consulted by prime providers about referrals.

'We feel like we've got a bit more choice than we thought we would have originally... [the prime] has sub-contracted with a lot of the organisations that we would use anyway, and [they] have said they would welcome our opinions as to what's best for the customer so if we put down on the action plan that we think this is the best path and they should be referred to then they'll go along with that'
(Disability Employment Adviser)

³² The sample included 7 of the 8 prime providers, covering 8 contract package areas. The typical referral model described by providers during the research does not reflect the number of CPAs held by respondents.

At the time of fieldwork subcontractors reported receiving a good level of referrals, typically more than they had expected to receive from prime providers. This links with the fact that referrals to the Work Choice programme were significantly above profiled expectations during the early months. It will be important to monitor the level and quality of referrals to subcontractors during the lifetime of the Work Choice programme to ensure that they are receiving a sustainable level of clients.

There was very little evidence of prime providers using competition within supply chains as a mechanism to improve performance, with providers favouring an ethos of cooperation within supply chains.

'It's a partnership...it's about learning from each other, because we are all Work Choice and I can't afford for one area to have a better reputation than other areas, we all need to be at the same level'

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

'There's a lot more partnership working which I think is a plus...I think it's taken most of the providers out of their silos, because I feel most providers protected their own little bit of the pie or whatever and now everyone's working together for the first time in years'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'We see it very much as a partnership, we want to work with subcontractors and help them develop'

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

'Part of the implementation of the contract is about staff training not just for our own staff but supply chain staff as well. We bring everyone together to ensure that regardless of the delivery organisation the kind of ethos, the level of customer service the approach of working with customers is the same, we use the same system across all suppliers'

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Examples of partnership working included regular partnership meetings between supply chain partners, weekly conference calls, sharing of premises and jointly developed training sessions/materials. Another factor behind the decision not to use competition within supply chains is the volumes associated within the Work Choice contract. Prime providers did not feel that the Work Choice contract offered sufficient volumes to allow them to have two specialist providers within their supply chain competing for business. This helps to explain the difference between Work Choice and Flexible New Deal, under which some prime providers did use competition between subcontractors (DWP, 2010: 86) – the size of the FND contract was seen as sufficient to make competition workable, whereas the size of the Work Choice contract is not.

The 'Black Box' Model

An important element of the Department's commissioning model is the commitment to reduce the level of prescription relating to how providers deliver employment services. Providers are paid on the basis of outcomes; how best to achieve these outcomes is a decision for providers. The intention is to drive innovation in the delivery of employment provision and achieve a focus on delivering sustained job rather than delivering a process. Providers were supportive of the 'black box' principle:

'If you transfer the risk, you've got to transfer the ability to manage that risk; you can't impose a method on people who are taking all the risk'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

'We are very pleased, because we can with our partners come up with a journey which we feel from our experience is the most effective'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

However, providers consistently reported that they did not feel that Work Choice was truly a 'black box' programme.

'With the 'black box' well it's sometimes a bit fictional because it's fairly prescriptive about what we have to do. It's not the same in reality as it's laid out in the commissioning document'
(Work Choice Subcontractor Manager)

'Work Choice is not a black box, absolutely no way'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

The most commonly stated example of prescription highlighted by providers was the requirement to offer clients 8 hours of support per week in Module one, 8 hours per month in Module two, and 4 hours per month in Module three. As reported at section 2.7 above, providers felt that the requirements presented challenges to both Work Choice clients and employers. Providers reported resistance from employers in allowing access to clients on the in-work support stages of the programme due to a feeling that this was interfering with the client's ability to do their job, and also wanted more flexibility to tailor the level of support depending on individuals' needs and circumstances.

'The 8 hours a week, 8 hours a month and 4 hours a month are too prescriptive. And I think that's going to be a massive challenge for a lot of clients but also for employers as well'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Another observation in relation to the 'black box' model is that whilst DWP may not prescribe directly to prime providers how they should deliver the Work Choice programme, prime providers do tend to prescribe to subcontractors how they want them to deliver.

'Our prime has a fairly rigid structure and they want us, as a sub contractor, to follow the delivery model very closely'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'[Primes] are not going to pass on the black box, because they're not going to be passing on all the risk, so they are going to impose their method on the subcontractors'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

This suggests that prescription may not have been removed from the market, but rather displaced down the supply chain. Providers reported limited examples of genuine innovation in terms of their methods for getting clients into sustained employment.

'I don't see that they've got any new ideas at the moment'
(Work Choice Third Party Provision Manager)

Delivery models were relatively conventional and it will be necessary to monitor approaches to delivery during the lifetime of the program to see if examples of innovation emerge.

Geography

The larger Contract Package Areas introduced for Work Choice under the terms of the Commissioning Strategy were perceived to have had a negligible impact. As set out above at section 3.3, coverage was an important consideration for prime providers when establishing a supply chain. Once supply chains were in place however, larger CPAs were not felt to have had a big impact on delivery. Providers did not feel that the challenges of setting up infrastructure to cover the CPA was any more challenging than setting up in a new area for any other contract. Providers reported using technology to enable their staff to deliver across a large CPA, and also sharing premises with other providers and delivery partners in order to achieve the necessary geographical coverage.

'[Our] staff are very much mobile with a laptop and a mobile phone and can deliver anywhere. They don't have many hubs but they have a lot of community venues that they can use on an ad hoc basis'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Providers also expressed a view that the larger CPA was necessary in order to ensure the Work Choice contract was commercially attractive:

'The bigger geographical area doesn't pose a particular issue because quite frankly if it had just been a district then the numbers would have been incredibly small'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Overall the introduction of larger Contract Package Areas appears to have had relatively little impact on Work Choice providers or delivery models, but was acknowledged as a necessary step to make contracts viable.

3.5 Outcome-based funding

The Commissioning Strategy embedded the principle of outcome-based funding for contracted employment provision, whereby providers are paid a proportion of their fee on the basis of the sustained job outcomes they achieve. The Work Choice funding model pays providers a 70% service fee, with a further 15% being paid when a client progresses in to supported employment, and a final 15% when a client progresses into unsupported employment. Providers were generally comfortable with this funding model, and felt that it was appropriate for the Work Choice client group.

'The payment structure of Work Choice is absolutely right for the client group. There is no doubt about that'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

'I completely understand the motivation for moving towards that model, the transfer of financial risk from government to private organisations – I completely understand that'

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Providers also felt that the outcome-based element of funding had helped to encourage them to progress clients through the programme towards unsupported employment.

'It makes staff more job outcome focussed which is particularly important with this particular customer group. The industry (has) undergone significant changes in the last three years and that is partly due to the Department's shift to outcome funding. Three years ago when we went into a delivery centre and asked delivery organisation staff and asked what their job was it was about helping people. Now the focus is very much, yes it is about helping people but about getting people into work, that's what we are here for'

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

'I suppose it sharpened our act up in terms of trying to get people into a job quicker'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'The fact that we're outcome based, and that we're trying to convert people from supported to unsupported work, it really has focused the mind'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

One subcontractor noted that the move to outcome-based funding had helped them to negotiate with employers and make the point that clients in supported employment would not remain there indefinitely, but needed to continue to make progress towards unsupported employment. Providers also welcomed the fact that the new funding model had removed an inbuilt incentive within the WORKSTEP funding model which encouraged providers to keep clients on the programme indefinitely in order to receive an occupancy payment.

'The old contract had a built in conflict where...if you were not fully occupied you had someone on your back saying you're not fully occupied...and you're in danger of having those places taken away. If you progressed someone you were making that situation worse. I think one of the main differences between WORKSTEP and Work Choice is that it's removed that internal barrier to people progressing'

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

'The emphasis when I started [on WORKSTEP] was very much to keep the contract numbers up...so the more referrals we could get the better, because you were obviously getting paid for your contract numbers. And to get people off and refill those numbers back up it was like a running train. Whereas now its not so much topping those numbers back up... now we're focussed on where people are going'

(Work Choice Subcontractor)

However, some providers reported that the funding model would not lead to significant changes in their delivery model or approach to the Work Choice

programme, because they felt that their existing delivery model was their best opportunity to achieve sustained job outcomes:

'Work Choice doesn't change our business model because we have produced employment outcomes for people with a disability for 20 years, that's what we do, and so it doesn't change that model. So whether its grant funding or whether it's commissioned outcome funding, we have the same approach with all our programmes, so that doesn't have an impact'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Another provider noted that the Work Choice programme was delivered by front line staff who were not involved in or aware of the finance behind the programme. They had not chosen to incentivise their staff in line with the funding model and expected delivery to remain relatively unchanged, and driven by the need of each individual:

'The team don't know anything about the finance, so they're not being influenced by anything like that. They'll treat every client as an individual and assess their needs accordingly, and just focus on that. They're not thinking about targets and outcome payments and stuff like that'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

The impact of the outcome-based funding model appears to be principally in altering the focus of providers and establishing the mentality that Work Choice is ultimately about achieving progression to open employment, rather than in bringing about tangible changes to delivery models.

Whilst providers were generally comfortable with the funding model, they did not see Work Choice as a particularly profitable programme. Many providers expected to do little better than break even over the life of the contract, and one public sector provider reported subsidising the Work Choice contract. The message from providers was that Work Choice was not viewed as a purely commercial venture, but rather as an opportunity to carry out activities which were critical to the purpose of their organisation. Whilst finance is clearly important, it was not the driving factor behind involvement in the Work Choice market.

'It's pretty much break-even to be honest - it's something as an organisation we want to be involved in because our charitable objective is to support disabled people so that's why we're involved in Work Choice'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'We need to achieve the contract virtually to break even. There's very very little margin in there at all'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

'How commercially attractive is the Work Choice contract? I don't think it is. Is it for anybody? The money is not attractive at all...it wasn't what attracted us to it. I'm not sure it attracted other people either. We can go back on core funding if we have to'
(Work Choice Subcontractor Manager)

In this stage of research prime providers consistently reported passing on the terms and conditions that they held with DWP to their subcontractors, but with a management fee of between 25 and 40% built in to reflect the prime's provision of

IT systems, training, administrative support and contact management. Subcontractors consistently reported that opportunities to negotiate over terms and conditions were limited or non-existent:

'The prime really just has said, this is how it's going to be - I don't think there was too much negotiating'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

'There were no negotiations with our terms and conditions, it was take it or leave it'
(Work Choice Subcontractor Manager)

In spite of the lack of negotiation on terms and conditions, subcontractors interviewed were generally accepting of the financial terms on offer - as describes above, Work Choice was seen more as an opportunity to fulfil organisational aims that to turn a profit. There was variance between prime providers over the terms and conditions offered to subcontractors:

'We're paid different rates between different prime providers. Some of them are very mean...I mean we nearly walked away from one prime provider because basically the amount they expected us to deliver we couldn't even cover our costs or whatever...I think the amount they were actually talking about was between 25 and 30 percent of the money they were getting'
(Work Choice Subcontractor)

One notable contrast to the common view that Work Choice did not offer great financial rewards came from a prime provider who was not delivering any aspect of the programme but acting solely as a managing agent. This provider viewed the contract as more commercially attractive than those primes who were delivering:

'I think it's really attractive for us [the contract]. From a commercial point of view it's something that we wanted to do'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Those providers who felt that financial rewards within the programme were low reported investigating ways to keep costs down in order to deliver the contract within the funding model. These included seeking to source free support for clients through local delivery partners as described above, and by sharing premises with fellow providers, but also by using more group work within the programme. It was acknowledged that the use group work was not ideal for a client group with such a wide range of individual needs, but felt providers felt they had little alternative.

'There will have to be a lot more group work done within this than there ever was in WORKSTEP...It's a very mixed client-base and it's a client-base that doesn't necessarily have the confidence and self-esteem to operate within a group'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Investment

The Commissioning Strategy set out an expectation that, in return for larger, longer contracts and reduced prescription from the Department, providers would invest in service delivery. Providers did report investment in association with Work Choice:

'We welcome the long contract because it enables us to make more significant investment in infrastructure' [Work Choice Prime]

Typically investment had been focussed on the infrastructure to allow providers to operate the programme effectively. The most common targets for investment are set out below:

- Information Technology
 - IT systems to manage client caseloads
 - Diagnostic tools to determine clients journey
 - Security software (to meet DWP security standards)
 - Laptops (to enable remote working)
 - Mobile phones
 - Mobile broadband
- Premises
 - Purchase of lease of new premises to ensure coverage
 - Decoration and furnishing of new premise
- Staff
 - Recruiting new staff
 - Training for existing staff

Financial strength and access to capital was a key requirement for top-tier providers as set out in the Commissioning Strategy and there is evidence that prime providers within Work Choice have drawn on the reserves to invest in the necessary infrastructure to provide deliver the programme:

'A lot of the investment has been around people, IT...I think only larger primes would have that kind of initial investment to put in. You've got to have a lot of money to do that'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

3.6 DWP capability

The Commissioning Strategy set out a commitment from DWP to build its own capacity in order to work in partnership with external providers to deliver sustained job outcomes:

'We will clarify roles and responsibilities of relevant DWP staff so that providers are clear who they should be working with on any given issue';

'We will invest in our skills base to ensure we can support providers in delivering sustained outcomes for our customers.' (DWP, 2008: 28)

Providers acknowledged that some positive steps had been taken towards achieving these commitments. Provider Engagement Meetings were welcomed as a helpful forum for discussing Work Choice issues which had helped move providers' relationships with DWP on to a partnership footing.

'I think they work brilliantly. There are quite a lot of things that they air'
(Work Choice Prime Provider)

This corroborates positive feedback about Provider Engagement Meetings received from FND providers (DWP, 2010: 112) and indicates that this model is proving effective in improving engagement between providers and the Department. There was also positive feedback about relationships with individual members of staff within the Department's provider performance management structures.

'The TPPM...he's been absolutely fantastic, he's been very supportive and very good at understanding the challenges of his team as well as us. He's been almost a mediator between the two, not 'well they're my DEAs so they must be right', not like that at all he's been absolutely fantastic.'

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

'[Our Account Manager] is great...you don't feel like you're in a schoolteacher relationship, it feels like a partnership, I'm here to help, I'm here to monitor your performance, but at the same time I'm here to help you improve and develop. It's very balanced.'

(Work Choice Prime Provider)

Whilst individuals within the provision management structures received positive feedback, providers were less positive about the structures as a whole. There was confusion about the different roles within the structure, and both providers and DWP staff were not clear about who did what.

'I think there were too many fingers in the pie on DWP's side'

(DWP Performance Manager)

'From the DWP point of view their new structure is confusing.'

(Work Choice Third Party Provision Manager)

'I have yet to receive a clear explanation of what the Performance Manager does and what the Account Manager does that I can understand...I really do think, and I know others think, we do need a clearer definition of what the three of us do'

(Work Choice Third Party Provision Manager)

Several Third Party Provision Managers reported an overlap in responsibilities between themselves and Performance Managers. One Third Party Provision Manager felt that issues which were perhaps for the Performance Manager to deal with were referred to him because his presence in the Contract Package Area made him a more visible and obvious contact for providers. Once an issue was referred to him he felt it was easier to deal with the issue, rather than re-refer onto the Performance Manager, meaning the process for provision management was not operating as intended. Performance managers also reported feeling left out of the strategic decisions behind the Work Choice programme, but then being required to manage the programme at go live.

Fieldwork was conducted during the early months of Work Choice and it will be important to monitor how the provision management structures put in place for DWP operate once the programme has bedded down. However, this research indicated that there is further work to do in order to meet the commitment to clarify roles and responsibilities of DWP staff.

Subcontractors consistently reported that they did not have contact with the Department, and as intended they were referring all issues or requests for information to their prime provider. Broadly, subcontractors were happy with this arrangement, but did request a channel to contact DWP in the case of a disagreement with their prime provider. This function will be fulfilled by the Merlin Standard Mediation service which was not in operation at the time of fieldwork³³.

However, it should be noted that subcontractors were maintaining regular contact with Jobcentre Plus DEAs. This contact took the form of regular phone or email contact to discuss a client's progress, and even meeting between DEAs and subcontractors to discuss the subcontractor's delivery model and role in the Work Choice programme.

'My role is to actually caseload these people as well as having an interactive role with Work Choice'
(Work Choice Disability Employment Adviser)

This is contrary to the policy intent of the prime provider model, under which all communications between JCP/DWP and providers should be channelled through the prime provider, and once a client is referred to a provider they should exit a DEAs caseload. However, it should be noted that both subcontractors and DEAs appreciated this relationship, feeling that it gave DEAs a better understanding of subcontractors' delivery models, which in turn allowed them to explain to clients what they were likely to experience during the Work Choice programme.

A key change in DWP capability for the Work Choice programme was the introduction of the Provider Referrals and Payment system (PRaP)³⁴. PRaP enables automated exchanges of information about clients from DWP to providers, and payments from DWP to Prime Providers. This replaced the previous paper-based system. From the perspective of DEAs PRaP was perceived to work well, and to be significantly less labour-intensive than the old system.

'It's working really well! We just make the referral on LMS and I know that it's working because we've had a phone call about every single person that we've referred'
(Work Choice Disability Employment Adviser)

However, from a provider perspective the referral process still required further improvement. One major issue that was consistently raised by providers was the level of information that they received about clients who were referred to the programme. This was considered to be inconsistent, and often insufficient with detrimental impacts for providers' initial meetings with clients, as reported at section 2.3 above.

3.7 Summary on Commissioning

There has been progress against several key aims of the Commissioning Strategy under the Work Choice programme. The desire to move to a top tier of prime contractors has been achieved, with 8 prime providers managing supply chains, although one provider won over half of the prime contracts. Despite attempts by some organisations to extend their reach across contract areas it

³³ <http://www.merlinstandard.co.uk/mediation.php>

³⁴ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/supplying-dwp/what-we-buy/welfare-to-work-services/prap/>

remains the case that most delivery organisations only hold one contract. The number of providers delivering provision fell from 214 to 67 at the time of contract award, but has since risen to 100.

There has been both market entry and exit. Over 80% of legacy providers left the market at the time of Work Choice contract award, notable being the exit by public sector providers. Half of Work Choice contracts went to providers who had not previously provided WORKSTEP or Work Preparation. Past performance and capability have played a part in the sifting process by prime providers to re-shape the provider market. The sifting process would have been assisted if there had been a single model Expression of Interest form for all providers.

Prime providers reported investment in infrastructure to deliver the Work Choice programme such as IT systems, premises and staff recruitment and development, and both prime and sub contractors reported a strong ethos of partnership and cooperation within the programme. Sub-contractors tended to be responsible for end-to-end delivery over the client journey. The significant extension of supply chains in live running may indicate a broadening of the services available to participants to reflect more closely individual needs.

Those providers who remained in the market expressed support for some of the central commissioning principles. The prime provider model, and the move to outcome based funding, which was perceived to have sharpened providers' focus on moving individuals through the programme towards unsupported employment DWP's steps to improve its own capability received positive comment, although there would be some benefit in clarifying the respective roles of account managers, performance managers, and third party provision managers. Providers did not see Work Choice as an opportunity to make substantial financial returns.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Transition

The research highlighted a number of transition issues which contributed to the effectiveness of the change of programme. This should be considered within the overall context of the transition of clients to Work Choice, which represented a substantial organisational change with up to 14,000 individuals (excluding Remploy) potentially changing programme. Therefore the transition of clients to Work Choice faced significant risks.

The overall impact of the transition upon clients was often felt to be minimal and some examples of good practice amongst legacy and new providers was reported which ensured a smooth handover. Nevertheless other clients were reported to be negatively effected by the transition and reports of added anxiety arose, leading to a small number of cases of clients not transferring into Work Choice. This was corroborated through research with Work Choice clients which also found that most clients were unaffected by the change in provision, although there were some cases of negative experience

One of the key challenges reported was the poor transfer of information about clients from legacy providers to Work Choice providers. Many providers felt the lack of accurate and timely information created challenges with conducting initial meetings with some of their new clients. Moreover, a number of clients may have been without support during the handover from legacy programmes to Work Choice because of delays in Work Choice providers receiving information about these clients. Providers reported an ongoing problem around the transfer of insufficient information on the characteristics of referred clients in live running.

Another challenge highlighted in this research was the level of new referrals in the early days of the programme, which was generally reported to be much higher than respondents were expecting. The high levels of referrals at the time of fieldwork were felt to have a big impact upon providers' ability to perform necessary early activities, such as meeting all their clients. Furthermore, there were some suggestions that DEAs were referring clients who were closer to the labour market than the policy intended, which may mean that those who are hardest to help are not being referred onto the programme. The DEA guidance regarding suitability for the programme has been amended since the fieldwork was conducted and should improve this situation. Nevertheless, this will require careful monitoring as the programme progresses.

The delay in prime providers signing contracts due to the 2010 general election was felt by many respondents to have had a large impact upon the ability of providers to prepare adequately for the implementation of Work Choice. The reduction in time from six months to three months made it difficult for providers to make structural changes to their organisation and carry out TUPE activities, as well as meet all their new clients and employers. This highlights the need to give providers sufficient time to prepare for and implement new programmes.

The early views of stakeholders reveal a mixed set of attitudes towards the new programme, with support for the ethos behind the programme clearly expressed by a number of respondents. Others however did not appear to fully appreciate the culture change that Work Choice aims to achieve. This helps to explain some of the operational practices observed which were not in line with the policy intent of

the programme, such as DEAs case loading clients, or not referring the hardest to help clients. Furthermore, some respondents expressed concern about the impact that increased support would have upon clients and employers, and confusion as to what counted towards support. It is perhaps unsurprising that the operation of a new programme, with a very different culture, should take some time to fully bed in. Nevertheless, careful monitoring of how the programme operates will be necessary to assess whether clients benefit from the intended increased level of support compared to legacy programmes. Despite the mixed set of attitudes which were reported in the qualitative interviews with provider and DWP staff the mixed methods research with Work Choice clients sought clients' perceptions of the support they receive through Work Choice. Generally clients were positive about this and most valued the support they receive to obtain or retain employment.

Nevertheless, some clients appeared not to be in receipt of much support. This may be because they didn't classify the assistance that they receive, which may be subtle or provided by the employer, as formal 'support', or that they simply were unsure what was meant by the research questions. Or, that, having been on Workstep for a number of years, their support needs were no longer such that they need the support of Work Choice. Alternatively, respondents may have been waiting for their Work Choice support to commence because of challenges which arose from delays in transition activities. So the limited support they reported related to WORKSTEP support, or a gap in provision, rather than Work Choice support.

It will be necessary to monitor the client experience of Work Choice as the programme matures, especially as those respondents who reported limited or no support appeared to be happy with this amount. This means that the increased support which should be available through Work Choice is potentially a big change for some respondents. This is something which will be explored further in the wider Work Choice programme evaluation.

4.2 Commissioning

The transition to Work Choice also involved a transformation of the provider market. This was done in line with the principles of the Commissioning Strategy, whose purpose was to bring about more capable and high performing provider base, but it added to the complexity of moving 14,000 individuals onto new provision. This research presents progress against several key aims of the Commissioning Strategy under the Work Choice programme. The desire to move to a top tier of prime contractors has been achieved, with 8 prime providers managing supply chains, although one provider won over half of the prime contracts. The structure of the market has changed. The overall number of providers has reduced significantly, with public sector providers exiting in significant numbers, whilst third sector and private sector providers have increased their share of the market. Market entry was achieved, with half of Work Choice contracts going to providers who had not previously provided WORKSTEP or Work Preparation. There was limited evidence of legacy providers seeking to increase the scale of their delivery, and it remains the case that most providers only hold one contract. There is also some evidence that past performance and capability have played a part in the re-shaping of the provider market, highlighted by the fact that former WORKSTEP/Work Preparation providers who elected to leave the market were disproportionately likely to have received an unsatisfactory rating in their last Ofsted inspection than those providers who achieved a Work Choice contract.

Prime providers have invested in infrastructure to deliver the Work Choice programme such as IT systems, premises and staff recruitment and development, and both prime and sub contractors reported a strong ethos of partnership and cooperation within the programme. The extension of supply chains in live running may indicate a broadening of the services available to participants to reflect more closely individual needs and this should be monitored as supply chains evolve through the life of the programme. Those providers who remained in the market expressed support for some of the central commissioning principles such as the prime provider model, DWP's steps to improve its own capability, and the move to outcome based funding, which was perceived to have sharpened providers' focus on moving individuals through the programme towards unsupported employment. However, providers did not see Work Choice as an opportunity to make substantial financial returns.

There are also some clear areas for improvement identified through the research. The supply chain development process was labour intensive for subcontractors. The development of a single model Expression of Interest form for future contracting rounds would simplify this process for all concerned, as well as removing a potential barrier to small providers entering the delivery market. Roles and responsibilities within DWP are in need of further clarification – notably around the respective roles of Account Managers, Performance Managers and Third Party Provision Managers. This clarification would be welcomed by both providers and DWP staff.

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APPENDIX 1 – Work Choice Policy Background

Several public reports, such as the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (2005) and National Audit Office (2005) recommended that improvements were needed to the existing suite of specialist disability employment provision.

Recommendations from the Prime Minister's Strategy unit (2005) focused on five areas of intervention, as follows:

- Providing effective early support and guidance to those who need it to overcome barriers to work;
- Improving the skills and access to in-work support needed to enhance disabled people's employability;
- Connecting disabled people with work by making transition to employment less risky and complicated;
- Engaging employers to improve their attitudes towards disabled people and their understanding of what it means to employ a disabled person; and
- Building information networks to bring together and disseminate important information to disabled people, their employers, family, friends and carers.

The NAO (2005) made the following recommendations to the Department;

- Rationalise our specialist disability employment programmes to provide a more flexible modular approach so as to offer a better customer experience and increase efficiencies;
- Drive up quality standards and achieve better consistency, including gaining improved efficiency through better contracting;
- Improve the referral process to ensure customers are referred to the most appropriate provision;
- Ensure individuals continue to progress and receive a quality service whilst on our programmes;
- Place more emphasis within WORKSTEP provision on progression to unsupported employment;
- Ensure we offer a clear point of contact back to the Department for our customers on the specialist disability programme;
- Ensure that Disability Employment Advisers are given the right level of support and training to enable them to carry out their important role of helping disabled people find and retain employment; and
- Engage more effectively with employers to help more disabled people enter and retain employment.

In addition to the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (2005) and National Audit Office (2005) reports the WORKSTEP evaluation case studies: Exploring the design, delivery and performance of the WORKSTEP Programme (2006) made the following recommendations to aspects of the WORKSTEP programme:

- Programme design;
- Programme Management;
- Programme delivery; and
- Cross cutting themes

As a result of the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, NAO and WORKSTEP research recommendations a 3-month public consultation '*Helping people achieve their full*

potential: Improving Specialist Disability Employment Services' was launched in December 2007. This contained a number of proposed reforms to the suite of specialist employment provision, including;

- A greater focus on those who need specialist support;
- Less prescription and greater flexibility;
- Better links between elements of provision;
- Better consistency and quality of provision;
- Provision for all types of disability;
- A greater focus on job entries;
- Improved support for people in work;
- Improved progression to unsupported employment; and
- Improved progression within longer-term supported employment.

During the consultation the following reforms were recommended;

- Ensure that support is reserved for those disabled people who are unlikely to receive sufficient support from our wider employment services, e.g. Flexible New Deal programme or Pathways to work;
- Combine the current Work Preparation, WORKSTEP and the Job Introduction Scheme into a new single modular programme so that customers receive the right support;
- Ensure the service provided is capable of delivering support that is tailored to the needs of each individual customer and, throughout a customer's time on the programme, the support is;
 - Continuously focused on enabling the individual to progress out of the programme;
 - Changed as the individual's circumstances change;
 - Reviewed at regular intervals by customers, the service providers and the employer; and
 - From the outset, agreed on the basis that the support will be regularly reviewed and is likely to be withdrawn over time – the timescale for this will depend, largely, on the progress that the customer is making in their workplace;
- Recognise that the programme will continue to be available to individuals who have longer-term support needs. However, these needs will also be reviewed at regular intervals and support will be changed – decreased or increased – when appropriate;
- Ensure that all support provided to individuals has a clear focus on enabling that individual to progress towards unsupported employment;
- Improve the relationship between this employment-focused provision and other organisations that support customers who have complex barriers to employment, e.g. social care, NHS trusts and education establishments;
- Work with employers to enable more disabled people with complex barriers to enter and progress in work;
- We need to be clear about the role within a single programme, of supported business; and
- The changes may have an impact on existing WORKSTEP customers who either work in supported businesses or with other employers. We will be putting in place and communicating appropriate transitional arrangements to ensure that these individuals can continue to receive the support they require to maintain their employment and, where appropriate, progress into unsupported employment.

Following this consultation, the announcement was made in the Green Paper '*No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility*' (July 2008) that the Government would go ahead with the proposed reforms to the existing suite of specialist disability employment provision. This was reaffirmed in the White Paper '*Raising expectations and increasing support: reforming welfare for the future*' (December 2008).

These recommendations to specialist employment support have led to the integration of Work Preparation scheme, WORKSTEP and Job Introduction scheme into a single programme, Work Choice.

Work Choice Customer Journey

The customer journey which makes up the Work Choice model is set out as follows:

Joining the Work Choice programme:

The Disability Employment Advisor in Jobcentre Plus is the gateway onto the programme. Customers can also be referred by specialist organisations such as social services and secondary mental health services. The DEA will check eligibility – to join Work Choice, people must have severe and complex disability related barriers to work that require specialist support to resolve. They must be out of work or at risk of losing their job – they don't have to be on benefits, although many are.

Referral to a provider:

The customer meets with the provider in the area within ten working days. The provider will assess the customer's needs and will produce a development plan.

Pre-employment support (module 1):

If the customer does not have a job, they will get help to find one. We expect this period in most instances to last for no more than six months, although it can be extended in exceptional circumstances to a maximum of nine months. If the customer is also on JSA or ESA, they must meet the conditions of these benefits – for example, participating in Work Choice will count as evidence that they are actively seeking work.

In-work support (module 2):

When they find a job, the customer will receive ongoing flexible specialist support relevant to their own personal circumstances. This provides a holistic, managed service based on coaching, training, establishing relationships in the workplace, and regular engagement with the employer. Providers have the freedom to tailor the package to suit the customer. We expect this initial period of supported employment to last no more than two years, with regular reviews built in.

Long term in-work support (module 3):

Some very disabled customers will need longer term support. A review after two years will identify these customers and set further, appropriate review points. Where unsupported employment is a more distant prospect, the emphasis is on 'distance travelled' and progression within the supported workplace.

Unsupported employment:

The emphasis of the programme is on moving people into working environments where the support they need is, over time, provided by the employer and colleagues. Even though they are no longer on the programme, customers can call on providers for ad-hoc help, although if their circumstances change and they need more intensive support again, they can re-join the programme again.

In cases where a WORKSTEP participant has spent more than six months in the pre employment stage of WORKSTEP, it may not be appropriate for the participant to transfer directly to Work Choice and a referral to a DEA should be considered.

Participants who enter pre employment or employment between contract award (April 2010) and programme start (October 2010) will also be deemed as a transitional participant.

APPENDIX 2 – Work Choice Prime Providers

Contract Package Area (CPA)	Contract awarded to
1. Highlands, Islands, Clyde Coast & Grampian	Momentum Scotland Ltd
2. Forth Valley, Fife & Tayside	Shaw Trust
3. Glasgow; Lanarkshire & East Dunbartonshire	Shaw Trust
4. Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders; Ayrshire, Dumfries, Galloway & Inverclyde	Shaw Trust
5. North & Mid Wales; South East Wales	Working Links
6. South West Wales; South Wales Valleys	Shaw Trust
7. South Tyne & Wear Valley; Northumbria	Shaw Trust
8. North & East Yorkshire & The Humber; Tees Valley	Shaw Trust
9. Cumbria & Lancashire	Shaw Trust
10. Greater Manchester Central; Greater Manchester East & West	Shaw Trust
11. Merseyside; Cheshire, Halton & Warrington	Shaw Trust
12. West Yorkshire	The Pluss Organisation
13. Derbyshire; South Yorkshire	Shaw Trust
14. Nottinghamshire; Lincolnshire & Rutland	Shaw Trust
15. Leicestershire & Northamptonshire	Working Links
16. The Marches; Staffordshire; Coventry & Warwickshire	Shaw Trust
17. Birmingham & Solihull; Black Country	Advance Housing & Support
18. Cambridgeshire & Suffolk; Norfolk	Shaw Trust
19. Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire; Essex	Shaw Trust
20. Waltham Forest, Redbridge, Havering, Barking & Dagenham; City & East London	Working Links
21. West London; Central London; Barnet, Enfield & Haringey	SEETEC
22. South London; Lambeth, Southwark & Wandsworth	Ingeus UK Ltd
23. Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire	Shaw Trust
24. Hampshire & Isle of Wight	CDG-WISE Ability Ltd
25. Surrey & Sussex; Kent	Working Links
26. West of England; Gloucestershire, Wiltshire & Swindon	Working Links
27. Dorset & Somerset	Shaw Trust
28. Devon & Cornwall	The Pluss Organisation

APPENDIX 3 – Topic Guides

Work Choice Provider Interviews – Topic Guide A – Prime Provider Managers

GET CONSENT FORM SIGNED BEFORE STARTING THE INTERVIEW

READ OUT: Date, Time, Interview Reference Number

Introduction

As you know this interview relates to the Work Choice programme and focuses on three main elements: the transition stage from WORKSTEP and Work Preparation to Work Choice, your delivery arrangements for the provision of Work Choice, and the commissioning approach used to procure Work Choice. In responding to the questions please focus on CPA x [Insert CPA name] unless prompted otherwise.

General

Firstly, I would just like to confirm your role in delivering the programmes that Work Choice has replaced.

- 1) Can you please tell me whether you delivered WORKSTEP or Work Preparation?

If Yes: Please confirm where you provided and the approximate total number of customers you supported.

Programme	Number of customers	Region/CPA
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WORKSTEP		
----------	--	--

Work Preparation		
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Transition

I would now like to focus on the transition from WORKSTEP and Work Preparation programmes to Work Choice.

- 2) What steps did you take to facilitate the transition of customers onto Work Choice?
*Probe: When did transition activities happen? Probe for end date?
What role did their organisation play?*
- 3) How did you work with other providers to facilitate transition of customers?
Probe: How helpful or unhelpful were other providers? Did any issues arise?
- 4) In terms of communications throughout the transition period, how did you communicate with a) DWP and b) Jobcentre Plus?
Probe: Was guidance from DWP and JCP sufficient? Was it clear?
- 5) How did you manage the transfer of customers within Supported Businesses?
*Probe: What issues arose?
Was the process different where supported businesses are internal or external to the supply chain?*
- 6) To what extent did the delay in signing contracts impact upon transitional activities?
*Probe: What, if any, easements were used to alleviate this pressure?
Is there anything more that could have been done?*

- 7) How did the TUPE process work?
*Probe: Firstly for customers, secondly for staff?
 Was there enough support and guidance to assist with this?*
- 8) What modules have customers been transferred into? [Reminder: thinking of CPA x]

Module	%age of customers
Module 1: Work Entry Support	
Module 2: Short – Medium Term In-Work Support	
Module 3: Longer Term In-work Support	

- 9) How did you communicate with customers throughout the transition period?
*Probe: How frequent was contact?
 What methods were used?*
- 10) Did all customers have development plans in place for ‘Go live’?
*Probe: How were development plans produced?
 How will development plans link with provider plans for assessing distance travelled?*
- 11) Have customers raised any concerns about the transition process?
*Probe: Were some groups of customers more concerned than others?
 What was done to alleviate these concerns?
 Have any customers declined to move into Work Choice?*
- 12) What do you think the impact of transition was upon customers generally?
*Probe: Did this vary for customers with different needs?
 Probe: Are you aware of any customers receiving Access to Work Support during transition, and if so did this help?*

Work Choice

I'd now like to confirm your organisation's role in the delivery of Work Choice.

- 13) I understand that your supply chain for Work Choice looks like this [*show breakdown of subcontractors used and percentage value subcontracted*]. Is this correct?
Probe: Record correct supply chain and percentage breakdown.
- 14) Could you also confirm which supported businesses you use?
Probe: Are they part of your supply chain, or external to the supply chain?
- 15) Could you please talk me through your delivery model, including what type of services you subcontract, and what type of services do you provide in-house?
*Probe: What is the rationale behind their delivery model?
 Do they use competition among subcontractors? If yes, how is competition structured? If no, why not?*
- 16) In total, approximately how many customers do you support through the Work Choice programme?

Commissioning

I would now like to ask some questions about the commissioning model used for Work Choice and how your organisation responded. As you will be aware, Work Choice is the first specialist disability employment programme to be procured under the Department's Commissioning Strategy, which introduced:

- Larger, longer contracts for providers
- Prime provider model
- Outcome-based funding

- Limited prescription from DWP ('Black Box' model)

17) In general, what impact do you feel that the Commissioning Strategy will have on your organisation?

Probe: Has it created barriers or opportunities for that provider, and how they have responded?

18) Thinking of supply chain development, can I ask how you went about selecting subcontractors to form your supply chain?

*Probe: Adverts? Expression of interest forms? Formal tender exercise?
How did you evaluate potential subcontractors?*

19) What were the key things you looked for when selecting subcontractors?

If necessary probe: Experience of delivering to customers with disabilities specialist expertise, previous working relationship with the sub contractor, financial strength, ability to cover a wide geographical area?

20) Were there significant changes to your supply chain between submitting your bid to DWP and the time you started delivery of the programme?

Probe for why this happened and how this was handled – were contingencies effective?

21) Do you envisage future changes to your supply chain?

Probe around whether they feel expansion or contraction of the supply chain is expected.

22) Do your terms and conditions with subcontractors mirror directly your terms with DWP? If no, how do they vary? Do terms differ between end-to-end and specialist providers?

23) How did the process of agreeing contractual arrangements with subcontractors go?

Probe: Did any difficulties emerge and how were they resolved?

24) How do you manage referrals to subcontractors?

*Probe: Based on customer needs? Do you Keep customer with WORKSTEP provider where possible? Automatic basis? Geographical allocation?
Do they use any customer segmentation tools? If so, how do they work?
How quickly are providers passing referrals onto subcontractors?*

25) What specific steps have you taken to ensure that your delivery model can meet the full range of disabilities and needs of Work Choice customers?

Probe: What is the role of smaller and specialist organisations?

26) Do you feel that DWP has met the commitment to limit prescription in terms of how Work Choice is delivered ('black box' model)?

*Probe: If yes: How will this impact upon you delivery model? Has it allowed them to innovate?
If no: identify areas of excessive prescription*

27) How have you responded to the larger geographical contract package areas established under the new commissioning model?

Probe: Does it cause any delivery challenges?

Probe: Are your offices located in the geographical area for which you are contracted to provide support? If not, what effect does this have on delivery?

28) Which local delivery partners do you work with – other than subcontractors – to assist in delivery of Work Choice

Probe: What are the benefits of these partnerships?

- 29) Has your organisation engaged with any other organisations regarding becoming a Statutory Referral Organisation?
*Probe: If yes, how successful has this been?
 If not why not and do they intend to do this in the future?*
- 30) What information and training has your organisation given to staff to prepare for transition?
*Probe: When was this given? Who gave it? Was this sufficient?
 Have they also given training to subcontractor staff?*
- 31) Have you sought to integrate services you provide under Work Choice with any other services you provide?
Probe: What are the services and who commissions them?

Financial and Commercial Issues

- 32) How have you developed your business model to take account of the move to outcome-based funding?
*Probe: What is impact of the need to achieve sustained job-outcomes?
 Do they have any specific strategies for ensuring jobs are sustained?
 How are they managing the additional financial risk?*
- 33) How commercially attractive is the Work Choice contract?
*Probe: Expected break even point?
 Does it allow primes to offers sufficiently attractive terms to subcontractors?
 Does it allow prime providers to invest in delivery?*
- 34) What investment have you made to assist you in the delivery of Work Choice?
Probe: IT Systems, Staff Development, Premises?

DWP Capability

Within the Commissioning Strategy there is a commitment that DWP will improve its own capability and seek to work in partnership with providers.

- 35) In terms of contact with DWP, can you tell me which areas of the Department you have contact with?
*Probe: Frequency of contact with different areas of the Department
 Perceived value of different areas
 Are roles and responsibilities of DWP staff clear?*
- 36) How do you work with Jobcentre Plus in the delivery of Work Choice?
*Probe: Specific role of Disability Employment Advisers
 Specific Role of Third Party Provision Managers*
- 37) How have you found the Provider Referrals and Payment System during the early stages of delivery?
Probe: Is it easy to use, reliable, does it provide the necessary information?

Closing the interview

Ask if providers have anything else they wish to add, or any questions they wish to ask.

Let them know that their information will inform a report into the transition and commissioning of Work Choice and that CESI will be conducting further research about the live-running of the programme over the next two years.

Thank them for their time.

Work Choice Provider Interviews – Topic Guide B – Subcontractor Managers

GET CONSENT FORM SIGNED BEFORE STARTING THE INTERVIEW

READ OUT: Date, Time, Interview Reference Number

Introduction

As you know this interview relates to the Work Choice programme and focuses on three main elements: the transition stage from WORKSTEP and Work Preparation to Work Choice, your delivery arrangements for the provision of Work Choice, and the commissioning approach used to procure Work Choice. In responding to the questions please focus on CPA x [Insert CPA name] unless prompted otherwise.

General

Firstly, I would like to confirm your role in delivering the programmes that Work Choice has replaced.

38) Can you please tell me whether you delivered WORKSTEP or Work Preparation?

If Yes: Please confirm where you provided and the approximate total number of customers you supported.

Programme	Number of customers	Region/CPA
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WORKSTEP		
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Work Preparation		
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Transition

39) How much of a role did you play in the transition of customers to Work Choice?

Probe: Were they actively involved, or was transition principally handled by their prime?

If they were involved what role did they play? How did they work with other providers to facilitate transition?

40) To what extent did the delay to contracts being signed with your prime provider impact upon transitional activities?

Probe: What, if any, easements were used to alleviate this pressure?

Is there anything more that could have been done?

41) Was your organisation involved with the application of the TUPE process, either for customers or for staff?

Probe: If yes, talk through what their involvement in TUPE was

How did the process go? Was there enough support and guidance?

42) Have customers raised any concerns about the transition process?

Probe: Were some groups of customers more concerned than others?

What was done to alleviate these concerns?

Have any customers declined to move into Work Choice?

43) What do you think the impact of transition was upon customers generally?

Probe: Did this vary for customers with different needs?

Probe: Are you aware of any customers receiving Access to Work Support during transition, and if so did this help?

Work Choice

I'd now like to confirm your organisation's role in the delivery of Work Choice.

44) I understand that your role in the supply chain for Work Choice in CPA X looks like this *[show breakdown of subcontractors used and percentage value subcontracted]*. Is this correct?

Probe: Record correct supply chain and percentage breakdown.

45) In total, approximately how many customers do you currently support through the Work Choice programme?

46) What is your delivery model for supporting Work Choice customers to move towards work?

*Probe: What type of services do you provide on behalf of your prime provider?
End-to-end or specialist subcontractor?
Role of primes and subs – what is the split of admin and delivery?*

47) What information and training has your prime provider offered to help you prepare for delivery of Work Choice?

Probe: When was this given? Who gave it? Was this sufficient?

Commissioning

I would now like to ask some questions about the commissioning of Work Choice. As you will be aware, Work Choice is the first specialist disability employment programme to be procured under the Department's Commissioning Strategy, which introduced:

- Prime provider model
- Outcome-based funding
- Larger, longer contracts for providers
- Limited prescription from DWP ('Black Box' model)

48) In general, what impact do you feel that the Commissioning Strategy will have on your organisation?

Probe: Has it created barriers or opportunities for that provider? How have they responded?

Supply Chains

49) How did you come to enter the supply chain for Work Choice?

*Probe: Responded to adverts? Expression of interest forms? Formal tender exercise?
Informal approach?*

50) How were you evaluated by your prime provider? How did you find this process?

Probe: Was it transparent and fair?

51) Did you seek to become involved in other supply chains unsuccessfully?

*Probe: If so what do they see as the reason for their lack of success?
Are there any barriers preventing subs joining supply chains?*

52) Do you use any subcontractors of your own to deliver Work Choice?

*Probe: If so please tell us the following information:
If not, probe for why not.*

CPA	Sub name	% value of your Work Choice contract with the prime this	Sub sector (private, public, voluntary)	Type of services (end to end/specific part of FND/specialist)	Type of contract (formal/informal/call off/SLA)	Terms (same as DWP/service fee/Payment in advance etc)
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**sub
delivers**

- 53) If yes at Q16: How did they select the subcontractors they work with?
- 54) How do you envisage your supply chain evolving?
Probe: Do they expect to recruit subcontractors, reduce their number of subcontractors or keep their supply chain about the same?
- 55) Do your terms and conditions with your prime provider mirror their terms with DWP?
*Probe: If not, how do they vary?
Do terms differ between end-to-end and specialist providers?*
- 56) Please talk me through the process of negotiating your terms and conditions with your prime provider.
*Probe: What difficulties emerged and how were they resolved?
Did they feel able to challenge their primes or request different terms?
Check subs are happy with their terms and conditions.*
- 57) What impact has the introduction of an outcome-based funding model had on your organisation?
*Probe: How have they responded to the introduction of outcome based funding?
What is the impact of the need to achieve sustained job-outcomes? Do they have any specific strategies for ensuring jobs are sustained?*
- 58) How commercially attractive is the Work Choice contract?
Probe: Expected break even point? Does it allow primes to offer sufficiently attractive terms to subcontractors?
- 59) What investments have you made to assist you in the delivery of Work Choice?
Probe: IT Systems, Staff Development, Premises?
- 60) How are the referrals you receive determined by your prime provider?
Probe: Automatic basis? Geographical allocation? Based on customer needs?
- 61) Have you been receiving the expected number of referrals from your prime in the first weeks of live running?
Probe: Do they have guaranteed volumes written into their contracts with primes?
- 62) Are you subject to competition with other subcontractors? If so, how does this work and how does it affect your delivery?
*Probe: If yes ask for details: on what basis do subcontractors compete?
If no, why not?*
- 63) Which local delivery partners do you work with – apart from fellow providers – to assist in delivery of Work Choice?
- 64) How do you work with Jobcentre Plus in the delivery of Work Choice?
*Probe: Specific role of Disability Employment Advisers
Specific Role of Third Party Provision Managers*
- 65) Have you sought to integrate services you provide under Work Choice with any other services you provide?
Probe: What are the services and who commissions them?

66) Throughout the transition and first weeks of live running have you had much contact with DWP, or have communications been channelled through your prime?

Probe: Are you happy with the level and quality of information you are receiving through your prime provider?

Are you happy with the role played by DWP?

Closing the interview

Ask if providers have anything else they wish to add, or any questions they wish to ask.

Let them know that their information will inform a report into the transition and commissioning of Work Choice and that CESI will be conducting further research about the live-running of the programme over the next two years.

Thank them for their time.

Work Choice Provider Interviews – Topic Guide C – WORKSTEP/Work Preparation Providers (Unsuccessful or Non-bidders for Work Choice)

GET CONSENT FORM SIGNED BEFORE STARTING THE INTERVIEW

READ OUT: Date, Time, Interview Reference Number

Introduction

As you know this interview relates to the Work Choice programme and focuses on two main elements: the transition stage from WORKSTEP and Work Preparation to Work Choice and the commissioning approach used to procure Work Choice. In responding to the questions please focus on CPA x [Insert CPA name] unless prompted otherwise.

General

Firstly, I would like to confirm your role in delivering the programmes that Work Choice has replaced.

67) Can you please confirm where you provided WORKSTEP and Work Preparation and the approximate total number of customers you supported.

Programme	Number of customers	Region/CPA
------------------	----------------------------	-------------------

WORKSTEP		
----------	--	--

Work Preparation		
------------------	--	--

Transition

1) How much of a role did you play in the transition of customers to Work Choice?

Probe: Were they actively involved, or was transition principally handled by the Work Choice provider?

If they were involved what role did they play? How did they work with other providers to facilitate transition?

2) To what extent did the delay to contracts being signed with your prime provider impact upon transitional activities?

Probe: What, if any, easements were used to alleviate this pressure?

Is there anything more that could have been done?

3) Has your organisation been involved with the application of the TUPE process, either for customers or for staff?

Probe: If yes, talk through what their involvement in TUPE was

Was there enough support and guidance to assist with this?

4) Did you use funding provided by DWP to facilitate the transaction of customers to Work Choice?

Probe: If so, how was the funding used and was it sufficient?

5) Did customers raise any concerns about the transition process?

Probe: What concerns? Were some groups of customers more concerned than others?

What was done to alleviate these concerns?

Have any customers declined to move into Work Choice?

6) What do you think the impact of transition was upon customers generally?

Probe: Did this vary for customers with different needs?

Probe: Are you aware of any customers receiving Access to Work Support during transition, and if so did this help?

- 7) In terms of communication with DWP, were you given the right information at the right time to allow you to conduct transition activities?

Commissioning

I would now like to ask some questions about the commissioning of Work Choice. As you will be aware, Work Choice is the first specialist disability employment programme to be procured under the Department's Commissioning Strategy, which introduced:

- Prime provider model
- Outcome-based funding
- Larger, longer contracts for providers
- Limited prescription from DWP ('Black Box' model)

You previously provided WORKSTEP/Work Preparation, but do not provide Work Choice, so we are interested in your insights around the commissioning process and your future intentions.

- 7) In general, what impact do you feel that the new commissioning model will have on your organisation?

Probe: Has it created barriers or opportunities for that provider? How have they responded?

- 8) Did you seek to become a prime provider for the Work Choice Programme?

Probe: If no, why not.

- 9) If yes at what stage were you unsuccessful? What do you think the reasons were for your lack of success?

- 10) Did you seek to become a subcontractor for the Work Choice programme?

Probe: If yes, what avenues did you pursue?

What do you think the reasons were for your lack of success? (Prompt if necessary: Level of investment required; geographical coverage required; level of financial risk; inability to agree terms with a prime?)

If no, why not?

- 11) Do you intend to try to enter the supply chains for Work Choice in the future? For example, to deliver on behalf of another subcontractor?

Probe: If no, why not?

- 12) In general, how commercially attractive is the Welfare to Work sector at present?

Probe for reasons

- 13) What are your future intentions with regard to Welfare to Work provision?

Probe: Do you intend to try and provide other programmes – i.e. get involved in the Work Programme as a subcontractor? If not what other sectors types of work do they intend to turn to?

- 14) What other employment related services do you currently provide, and who commissions them?

- 15) How do you think the fact that you are not involved in the provision of Work Choice will impact on the future of your organisation?

Probe: Will this effect delivery of other supported employment provision? (especially relevant for Local Authorities).

Closing the interview

Ask if providers have anything else they wish to add, or any questions they wish to ask.

Let them know that their information will inform a report into the transition and commissioning of Work Choice and that CESI will be conducting further research about the live-running of the programme over the next two years.

Thank them for their time.

Work Choice – Support Workers – Topic Guide D

GET CONSENT FORM SIGNED BEFORE STARTING THE INTERVIEW

READ OUT: Date, Time, Interview Reference Number

Introduction

As you know this interview relates to the Work Choice programme and focuses on three main elements: the transition stage from WORKSTEP and Work Preparation to Work Choice, your delivery arrangements for the provision of Work Choice, and the commissioning approach used to procure Work Choice. In responding to the questions please focus on CPA x [Insert CPA name] unless prompted otherwise.

Part A) Involvement in Work Choice

Firstly I would like to discuss your involvement in the Work Choice programme and the transition from WORKSTEP/Work Preparation schemes.

1. Tell me about your job?
2. What types of support do you provide to customers?
3. Were you previously involved in WORKSTEP and/or Work Preparation?
4. How have you facilitated the transition of customers onto Work Choice?
Probe when did transition activities happen? Probe for end date?
Probe how well did these activities go?
Probe could any of these have been improved?
5. How have you worked with other providers, DEAs and other JCP staff to facilitate transition of customers?
Probe how did transitional activities differ when working with WORKSTEP providers who a) are not providing Work Choice support, or b) are providing Work Choice support?
Probe In hindsight could anything have been done to make this easier?
6. How have you communicated the change of programme to Customers?
Probe was this sufficient?
Probe could this have been improved?
7. Have there been any concerns raised by customers, and if so what were these?
Probe were some groups of customers more concerned than others?
Probe what was done to alleviate these concerns?
Probe have any customers declined to move into Work Choice and, if so, what did you do in response?
8. How have you communicated with employers during transition?
Probe have there been any difficulties working with employers?

Probe have there been any employers that have not agreed to transfer to Work Choice? – if so, has this caused any problems with customer employment?

9. To what extent has the delay in signing contracts impacted upon transitional activities?
Probe what, if any, easements were used to alleviate this pressure?
Probe is there anything more that could have been done?
10. Can you give me an overview of your Work Choice delivery model?
11. Did all customers have development plans in place for 'Go live'?
Probe how were development plans produced?
Probe how will development plans link with provider plans for assessing distance travelled?

Part B) Training

Now I would like to discuss the information and training that has been given to you to prepare for Work Choice.

12. What information and training have you been given to prepare for the transition to Work Choice?
Probe when was this given?
Probe who gave it?
Probe was this sufficient and, if not, how could this have been improved?

Part C) Effect of transition upon customers

I would now like to discuss your views about how the transition to Work Choice has impacted upon Customers.

13. What modules have customers been transferred into?
Probe have any been moved into long term support and, if so, how was this decision made?

Module	% of customers
Module 1: Work Entry Support	
Module 2: Short to Medium Term In-Work Support	
Module 3: Longer Term In-work Support	

14. What do you think the impact of transition was upon customers generally?
Probe did this vary for customers with different needs?
Probe are you aware of any customers using Access to Work support during transition, and if so did this help transition?
15. Is there anything else that DWP could do to support you in the delivery of Work Choice?

Closing the interview

Ask if providers have anything else they wish to add, or any questions they wish to ask.

Let them know that their information will inform a report into the transition and commissioning of Work Choice and that CESI will be conducting further research about the live-running of the programme over the next two years.

Thank them for their time.

Work Choice – Topic Guide E – WORKSTEP/Work Preparation Support Workers

GET CONSENT FORM SIGNED BEFORE STARTING THE INTERVIEW

READ OUT: Date, Time, Interview Reference Number

Introduction

As you know this interview relates to the Work Choice programme, focusing on the transition stage from WORKSTEP and Work Preparation to Work Choice, the commissioning approach used to procure Work Choice, and the impact on your organisation. In responding to the questions please focus on CPA x [Insert CPA name] unless prompted otherwise

Part A) Involvement in Work Choice

Firstly I would like to discuss your involvement in the Work Choice programme and the transition from WORKSTEP/Work Preparation schemes.

16. Tell me about your job?
17. What types of support do you provide to customers?
18. Were you previously involved in WORKSTEP and/or Work Preparation?
19. How have you facilitated the transition of customers onto Work Choice?
Probe when did transition activities happen? Probe for end date?
Probe how well did these activities go?
Probe could any of these have been improved?
20. How have you worked with other providers, DEAs and other JCP staff to facilitate transition of customers?
Probe how did transitional activities differ when working with WORKSTEP providers who a) are not providing Work Choice support, or b) are providing Work Choice support?
Probe In hindsight could anything have been done to make this easier?
21. How have you communicated the change of programme to Customers?
Probe was this sufficient?
Probe could this have been improved?
22. Have there been any concerns raised by customers, and if so what were these?
Probe were some groups of customers more concerned than others?
Probe what was done to alleviate these concerns?
Probe have any customers declined to move into Work Choice and, if so, what did you do in response?
23. How have you communicated with employers during transition?
Probe have there been any difficulties working with employers?
Probe have there been any employers that have not agreed to transfer to Work Choice? – if so, has this caused any problems with customer employment?
24. To what extent has the delay in signing contracts impacted upon transitional activities?
Probe what, if any, easements were used to alleviate this pressure?
Probe is there anything more that could have been done?

Part B) Training

Now I would like to discuss the information and training that has been given to you to prepare for Work Choice.

25. What information and training have you been given to prepare for the transition to Work Choice?
Probe when was this given?
Probe who gave it?
Probe was this sufficient and, if not, how could this have been improved?

Part C) Effect of transition upon customers

I would now like to discuss your views about how the transition to Work Choice has impacted upon Customers.

26. What do you think the impact of transition was upon customers generally?
Probe did this vary for customers with different needs?
Probe are you aware of any customers using Access to Work support during transition, and if so did this help transition?
27. Is there anything else that DWP could do to support you in the delivery of Work Choice?

Closing the interview

Ask if providers have anything else they wish to add, or any questions they wish to ask.

Let them know that their information will inform a report into the transition and commissioning of Work Choice and that CESI will be conducting further research about the live-running of the programme over the next two years.

Thank them for their time.

Work Choice – Topic Guide F – Disability Employment Advisers

GET CONSENT FORM SIGNED BEFORE STARTING THE INTERVIEW

READ OUT: Date, Time, Interview Reference Number

Introduction

As you know this interview relates to the Work Choice programme and focuses on three main elements: the transition stage from WORKSTEP and Work Preparation to Work Choice, your delivery arrangements for the provision of Work Choice, and the commissioning approach used to procure Work Choice.

Part A) Background Information

1. How long have you been working as a DEA?
2. What parts of the region do you cover?
3. How is the team you are in structured?
4. What targets do you have to meet?
5. How many customers (and on what programmes) do you work with at any one time?

Part B) Involvement in Work Choice

I would now like to discuss your involvement in the Work Choice programme and the transition from WORKSTEP/Work Preparation schemes.

6. What was your role in transition to Work Choice and did you experience any difficulties?
Probe was this as they expected?
7. What is your ongoing role in Work Choice?
8. How have you worked with providers during transition and how well did this go?
Probe which providers and where?
Probe could this have been improved?
9. How have you worked with Third Party Provision Managers during transition and how well did this go?
Probe could this have been improved?
10. How have you worked with Performance Managers and/or Account Managers during transition and how well did this go?
Probe could this have been improved?
11. How have you worked with third party statutory referral agencies during transition and how well did this go?
Probe could this have been improved?
12. How have you been assessing Customers for Work Choice?
Probe have there been any difficulties or issues with this?
13. How have you been referring Customers to Providers?

*Probe how have they been deciding who to refer where?
Probe have there been any difficulties or issues with this?*

Part C) Training

Now I would like to discuss the information and training that has been given to you to prepare for Work Choice.

14. What information and training have you been given to prepare for transition and the ongoing role in Work Choice?
*Probe when was this given?
Probe who gave it?
Probe was this sufficient? - If not, how could this have been improved?*
15. What is your previous experience of WORKSTEP/Work Preparation?
Probe has this influenced the amount of training you needed to prepare for Work Choice?

Part D) Effect of transition upon customers and providers

I would now like to discuss your views about how the transition to Work Choice has impacted upon customers and providers.

16. Have you had any customers or providers express concern or raise questions about the transition to Work Choice?
If yes, how have any such issues been dealt with?
17. Are you aware of any customers who have not transferred?
Probe if yes, do you know why?
18. How do you think the transition of customers has gone generally?
*Probe what went well/didn't go well?
Probe could this have been improved, and if so, how?*
19. Is there anything else you think would be important to consider for the future?
20. Are there any ways in which the process could be improved?

Closing the interview

Ask if DEAs have anything else they wish to add, or any questions they wish to ask.

Let them know that their information will inform a report into the transition and commissioning of Work Choice and that CESI will be conducting further research about the live-running of the programme over the next two years.

Thank them for their time.

Work Choice – Topic Guide G – Performance, Account and Third Party Provision Managers

GET CONSENT FORM SIGNED BEFORE STARTING THE INTERVIEW

READ OUT: Date, Time, Interview Reference Number

Introduction:

As you know this interview relates to the Work Choice programme and focuses on three main elements: the transition stage from WORKSTEP and Work Preparation to Work Choice, your delivery arrangements for the provision of Work Choice, and the commissioning approach used to procure Work Choice.

Part A) Background Information

1. How long have you been working as a Third Party Provision Manager?
2. What CPAs or Providers do you cover?
3. How is the team you are in structured?
4. What targets do you have to meet?

Part B) Involvement in Work Choice

Firstly I would like to discuss your involvement in the Work Choice programme and the transition from WORKSTEP/Work Preparation schemes.

5. What was your role in the transition to Work Choice and did you experience any difficulties?
Probe was this as they expected it to be?
6. What is your on going role in Work Choice?
7. How does your role differ from that of a Performance Manager/Account Manager?
Probe whether they work alongside them and, if so, how?
8. How have you worked with providers during transition and how well did this go?
Probe which providers and where?
Probe could this have been improved?
9. How have you worked with DEAs and other JCP/DWP staff during transition and how well did this go?
Probe could this have been improved?

Part C) Training

Now I would like to discuss the information and training that has been given to you to prepare for Work Choice.

10. What information and training have you been given to prepare for transition and your ongoing role in Work Choice?
Probe when this was given?
Probe who gave it?
Probe was this sufficient? - If not, how could this have been improved?

Part D) Effect of transition upon customers and providers

I would now like to discuss your views about how the transition to Work Choice has impacted upon Customers.

11. Have you had any customers or providers express concern or raise questions about the transition to Work Choice? *If yes, how have any such issues been dealt with? Probe how do you ensure provision meets customer needs and feeds into local performance?*
12. Are you aware of any customers who haven't transferred to Work Choice? *Probe if yes, do you know why?*
13. How do you think the transition of customers has gone generally? *Probe what went well/didn't go well? Probe could this have been improved and if so, how?*
14. Do you take any steps to measure or monitor customer experience of people on the Work Choice programme?
15. Is there anything else you think would be important to consider for the future?
16. Are there any ways in which the process could be improved?

Closing the interview

Ask if TPPMs have anything else they wish to add, or any questions they wish to ask.

Let them know that their information will inform a report into the transition and commissioning of Work Choice and that CESI will be conducting further research about the live-running of the programme over the next two years.

Thank them for their time.

Appendix 4 - Topic Guides

Client face to face Topic Guide



Work Choice Early Customer Experience Survey

CUSTOMER TOPIC GUIDE

Interviewer notes

This document is a guide to the principal themes and issues to be covered.
Questions can be modified and followed up in more detail as appropriate.

- Introduce yourself and thank them for agreeing to talk to us.
- Explain that the Department for Work and Pensions have asked Inclusion to carry out a survey of Work Choice customers.
- We want to ask them about the support they get from Work Choice and what they think of it.
- Information about them will be kept private by researchers at Inclusion and the Department for Work and Pensions.
- The findings from the interviews will be sent to researchers at the Department for Work and Pensions so they can write a report.
- Their name will not be given to the Department for Work and Pensions or used in any reports.
- We would like to record the interview to make sure we report exactly what we are told, ask if they are comfortable with that.
- Ask if they have any questions.

A. I would first like to talk to you about you and your job

1. What is your job?
2. How long have you had this job?
3. How many hours do you work a week?

4. What disability or health conditions do you have?
5. How does this affect you day-to-day at work?
6. Do you get Disability Living Allowance? *(money to help with living costs)*
7. Do you know what Work Choice is? *(the support they get at work from [provider name])*
8. Has your support worker or the organisation that supports you recently changed?

If yes:

9. Did anyone tell you this was going to happen?
10. Did they explain to you why this was happening?
11. Has this change had an effect on you? If yes, what?

B. I now want to talk to you about the support you got finding your job

12. Did you get any help or support to get your job?
(Probe if customer says no, e.g. did anyone help you look for jobs, complete application forms, come with you to interview, etc)

If yes:

13. What support did you get?
14. How did this support help you?
15. If you'd had less support, do you think you would have still got your job?
16. If you'd not had any support, do you think you would have still got your job?

C. I now want to talk to you about the support you get at work

17. Do you get any help or support at work?
(Probe if customer says no, e.g. does someone from [provider name] come and visit you, etc)

If yes:

18. What support do you get?

19. How does this support help you?

(Prompt: making me more confident, helping me keep my job, helping me get to work, helping me do new tasks, helping me talk to my employer about problems I am having at work)

20. Do you think you get the right kind of support?

If no, what other type of support do you need?

21. Do you think you get the right amount of support?

If no, do you need more support or do you need less support?

D. I now want you to think about the future and your job

22. If you got more support, what do you think would happen?

23. If you got less support, what do you think would happen?

(Prompt for now and further down the line)

24. If you didn't get any support, what do you think would happen?

(Prompt for now and further down the line)

E. Close

- Ask if they have anything to add.
- Ask if they have any questions.
- Explain how interview information will be used (anonymised findings sent to researchers at the Department for Work and Pensions so they can write a report).
- Give them the £10 shopping voucher and thank them for their time.

Work Choice Early Customer Experience Survey

SUPPORT WORKER TOPIC GUIDE

Interviewer notes

This document is a guide to the principal themes and issues to be covered.
Questions can be modified and followed up in more detail as appropriate.

- Introduce yourself and thank them for agreeing to talk to us.
- Explain that the Department for Work and Pensions have asked Inclusion to carry out a survey of Work Choice customers which includes some supplementary interviews with support workers.
- We want to ask about the support customers get from Work Choice and what they think of it.
- Anonymised findings from the interviews will be sent to researchers at the Department for Work and Pensions so they can write a report.
- [If applicable] We would like to record the interview to make sure we report exactly what we are told, ask if they are comfortable with that.
- Ask if they have any questions.

A. I would first like to clarify some details about [customer name] and their job

25. What is [customer name]'s job?
26. How long has [customer name] had this job?
27. How many hours does [customer name] work a week?
28. What disability or health conditions does [customer name] have?
29. How do these affect [customer name]'s ability to work?

30. Does [customer name] get Disability Living Allowance?
31. Has [customer name] transferred onto Work Choice from WORKSTEP or Work Prep?

If yes:

32. Did this transfer involve a transition from one provider/support worker to another?
33. Was the transition explained to the [customer name]?
(Probe for details of who explained this, what was said and whether they feel [customer name] understood the explanation)
34. What effect do you think the transition to Work Choice has had on [customer name] so far?

B. I now want to talk to you about the support [customer name] got finding his/her job

35. Are you aware of what help and support to get his/her job [customer name] received?

If yes:

36. What support did he/she get?
37. How did this support help [customer name]?
38. If [customer name] had received less support, do you think he/she would have still got his/her job?
39. If [customer name] had received no support, do you think he/she would have still got his/her job?

C. I now want to talk to you about the support [customer name] gets at work

40. What support does [customer name] get?
(Prompt: adjustments, how often you see them, etc)
41. How does this support help [customer name]?
(Prompt: making them more confident, helping them keep their job, helping them get to work, helping them do new tasks, helping them talk to their employer about problems they are having at work)

42. Do you think [customer name] gets the right kind of support?
If no, what other type of support do you think [customer name] needs?
43. Do you think [customer name] gets the right amount of support?
If no, do you think [customer name] needs more support or less support?

D. I now want you to think about the future for [customer name]

44. If [customer name] got more support, what do you think would happen?
45. If [customer name] got less support, what do you think would happen?
(Prompt for now and further down the line)
46. If [customer name] didn't get any support, what do you think would happen?
(Prompt for now and further down the line)
47. If not answered above: Do you think [customer name] could maintain this job without support?
(Prompt for now and further down the line)

E. Close

- Ask if they have anything to add.
- Ask if they have any questions.
- Explain how interview information will be used (anonymised findings sent to researchers at the Department for Work and Pensions so they can write a report).
- Thank them for their time.

Client telephone survey

Introduce self and state purpose of the research. Inform participant that interview should last no longer than 20-30 mins and check this is okay. Ensure they understand consent form.

Please write customer name on top of Q'aire

Ensure customer knows that there are no right or wrong answers

Section 1 - Background information

I would firstly like to talk to you about your job

1. Please could you tell me what job you do?
2. How long have you had this job?
3. Approximately how many hours a week do you work?
4. Would you mind telling me about your health and any barriers you have to work?
5. Are you currently receiving Disability Living Allowance? (help with living costs)
6. Could you please tell me what kind of support you received to help you get a job?
Probe around – support worker, job clubs, development plan, organisation other than job centre, help with interviews or C.V's
7. Could you please tell me what kind of support you receive in your job?
Probe around - support worker, development plan, organisation other than job centre
8. Are you aware of the Work Choice programme? (if answers no, **researcher** please give brief description)
9. Are you aware of what help comes from Work Choice and what comes from elsewhere?
10. Have you recently had a change of support worker or organisation which supports you?
11. (If yes to Q10) Did they explain what would happen?
12. (If yes to Q10) Did this change of support worker or organisation affect you? if yes, how?

Section 2 - pre work support

For the remainder of the questionnaire I am going to ask you some questions which I would like you to rate on the following scale:

Yes, No, Not sure

I would now like to ask you about the support you received to help you get a job

13. The support I received to help me get a job **was** appropriate for my needs

Yes No *Not sure*

14. **less** support would make it harder to get a job

Yes No *Not sure*

15. **No** support would make it harder to get a job

Yes No *Not sure*

16. **More** support would make it harder to get a job

Yes No *Not sure*

Section 3 – In work support

I would now like to talk to you about the support you receive with your job

17. The support I receive in my job **is** appropriate for my needs

Yes No *Not sure*

18. I would have to stop working in my job if I got **less** support

Yes No *Not sure*

19. I would have stop working in my job if I got **no** support

Yes No *Not sure*

20. I would have to stop working in my job if I got **more** support

Yes No *Not sure*

21. I would work less hours if I got **less** support

Yes No *Not sure*

22. I would work less hours if I got **no** support

Yes No *Not sure*

23. I would work less hours if I got **more** support

Yes No Not sure

24. I would get a different job if I got **less** support

Yes No Not sure

25. I would get a different job if I got **no** support

Yes No Not sure

26. I would get a different job if I got **more** support

Yes No Not sure

Section 4 - Aspirations for the future and their job

I would now like to talk to you about your job and the future

27. In the future I can see myself needing **less** support than I get now

Yes No Not sure

28. In the future I can see myself needing **the same** support as I get now

Yes No Not sure

29. In the future I can see myself needing **more** support than I get now

Yes No Not sure

30. In the future I can see myself needing **no** support

Yes No Not sure

Thank participant for taking part in the interview. Inform them of how the data will be used and where the final report will be available and that we will inform them when it is available

Also give contact details in case they have any concerns.

Ensure you get participant address if they said they did not receive a letter, so we can send the shopping voucher to them

Appendix 5 - Telephone survey client profile

Type of Work	
Domestic / Cleaning / Laundry	3
Administrative	4
Retail	3
I.T.	1
Catering	2
Civil Service	2
Social Services / Carer / Youth Worker	5
Teaching	2
Security	2
Supported Business	2
Highways Maintenance	1
Self employed	1
Unemployed	20
Total	48
Length of time in work	
0 – 6 months	8
7 – 12 months	2
1 – 5 years	6
6 – 10 years	3
11 – 20 years	3
> 20 years	6
Total	28
Hours worked	
0 – 15	3
16 – 21	6
> 21	19
Total	28
Health condition and barriers to work	
Asthma, high blood pressure, broken arm	1
Back injury	1
Bi-polar disorder	1
Bilateral vestibular hypo function	1
Brain tumour, learning difficulties, weakness in back	1
Cant drive	1
Cannot be classed as having a disability	1
C.O.P.D, Osteoarthritis	1
Cerebral palsy	1
Cerebral palsy, partially deaf with speech problems	1
C.O.P.D	1
Depression and anxiety	1
Depression and P.T.S.D	1
Depression	2
Uses a wheelchair	1
Epilepsy	1
Had motorbike accident but fine now	1
Had depression	1
Had leg infection, swelling in legs, depression	1
Hearing impairment	1
Had heart attack in past and an angiogram	1
Left leg damage as a result of a stroke and blood clot	1
M.S.	3

Mobility difficulties	1
None but awaiting an operation	1
None	5
Osteoarthritis	1
Osteoarthritis, slipped disc, asthma	1
P.B.C, Osteoarthritis	1
Paraplegic	1
Post cancer treatment problems	1
Recovery from shoulder operation	1
Rheumatoid arthritis	
Cerebral palsy and limited mobility	1
Severe back injury	1
Spina bifida	2
Suspected stroke, left with minor seizures and memory loss, also flashbacks	1
Thyroids and back pain, arthritis	1
Visual impairment	2
Total	48
<hr/>	
Receipt of Disability living allowance	
Yes	18
No	27
Not sure	3
Total	48

Appendix 6 - Face to face interviews client profile

Of the 40 clients interviewed 22 indicated that they were in receipt of DLA, 11 stated they were not and seven were unsure (although the support worker was able to indicate that of these seven, two were in receipt of DLA and one was not.)

Providers who facilitated access to the clients were asked to select clients with a learning disability or cognitive impairment and one provider was asked to select two clients who were Deaf BSL users. The majority of clients interviewed were, therefore, within these two groups, although two were not (one had a visual impairment and one had multiple sclerosis).

As noted within previous WORKSTEP research many clients reported multiple impairments / conditions and some of the clients with a learning disability were unable to articulate the nature of their condition, or chose to only report a physical impairment.

Overall 36 clients (or their support workers) reported a range of learning disability ranging from mild to severe, or other cognitive impairment resulting from a brain injury or genetic disorder. These clients included five reporting a condition on the Autistic spectrum.

The range of 'secondary' conditions / impairments in addition to a learning disability included conditions restricting mobility, mental health conditions, epilepsy, speech and visual impairments.

The remaining four clients included two who were Deaf BSL users, (one of whom also had a condition restricting mobility), and as reported above one client who had a visual impairment and one who had multiple sclerosis

Of the 40 respondents in the face to face survey 14 were employed part time (less than 21 hours) and 14 worked full time (21 hours or more), one respondent did not know. 11 respondents were unemployed.

Work Choice is a specialist disability employment programme which provides employment support to clients who, by reason of disability, cannot be supported through mainstream employment programmes. It was introduced in October 2010, replacing three previous programmes: WORKSTEP, Work Preparation and the Job Introduction Scheme. The Work Choice programme was also the first specialist disability employment programme to be commissioned under the terms of the Department for Work and Pension's Commissioning Strategy (DWP, 2008).

This report describes the findings from a qualitative study to assess the success of transition from legacy programmes to Work Choice, as well as explore the impact of the commissioning process used to procure the provision. The study comprised interviews with key stakeholders carried out shortly after the programme began.

If you would like to know more about DWP research, please contact:
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<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rts-index.asp>

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