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## **Evaluation of the Childcare Partnership Manager Role**

Childcare Partnership Managers were introduced in April 2003 to: identify and help Jobcentre Plus customers to overcome childcare issues; to improve access to, and co-ordination of, childcare information for providers, parents and employers; and keep Jobcentre Plus advisers up to date on childcare issues and initiatives. CPMs also offer career and recruitment advice in aspects of childcare work and contribute to developing the childcare workforce and childcare capacity. In order to achieve this, CPMs work alongside Jobcentre Plus colleagues, local authorities, Childcare Partnerships (Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in England, Childcare Partnerships in Scotland, Children and Young People's Partnerships in Wales), Children's Information Services (CIS) and other local childcare organisations and providers.

This evaluation of the CPM role ran from September 2003 to July 2004, and was carried out in two stages. The first stage involved an in depth telephone interview with 91 CPMs to explore contacts made both within Jobcentre Plus and external organisations, key achievements, intended outcomes and issues or problems encountered so far. The second stage used a case study approach within 10 districts across England, Scotland and Wales. This involved in depth interviews with CPMs, internal Jobcentre Plus colleagues and key external organisations and individuals with whom CPMs work.

### **Main results**

- The role looks to be progressing well towards achieving its aims. CPMs are working with a variety of internal colleagues, from front line staff such as New Deal for lone parents personal advisers, to those with more strategic roles such as Field Account Managers (FAMs) and marketing staff. Many also have direct links with, or at least report to, their senior management team.
- CPMs have also built successful working relationships with a wide number of external

childcare related organisations, including childcare partnerships, Sure Start local programmes, Children's Centres and other childcare and related organisations. CPMs have set up and developed a wide variety of methods of partnership working, including: information sharing; joint planning; running joint events; joint staffing; and formal working protocols or agreements for capturing results.

- CPMs have begun to work with internal colleagues and external partners to develop joint initiatives on specific projects such as developing the childcare workforce or influencing childcare capacity- many of which could directly contribute to wider Jobcentre Plus targets over the next 2 years.
- There are a number of key issues affecting delivery of the CPM role. These include resources, particularly difficulties with time constraints, additional roles or duties, large geographical districts and the difficulties of working with several childcare partnerships. Some CPMs would also like greater steer for the role. Whilst CPMs have worked hard to increase visibility and support for the role both internally and externally, some found it difficult to convince Jobcentre Plus colleagues of the importance of the role and of childcare issues. Small numbers of external potential partners also expressed disinterest or resistance to working with CPMs, often due to negative preconceptions of Jobcentre Plus, or a failure to recognise the potential contribution of Jobcentre Plus to their own objectives and targets. Also significant was the background of CPMs and the personal qualities they bring to the post.

## Executive summary

The aims of the evaluation were to:

1. explore the role of CPMs and the ways in which they interact with a variety of relevant childcare and labour market agencies and organisations on both a day to day and strategic level
2. investigate perceptions about CPMs' actual/intended/ potential impact on the childcare and Jobcentre Plus sectors on a variety of levels, including: CPMs' role in facilitating the availability and accessibility of childcare to those Jobcentre Plus customers with dependent children wishing to return to work; CPMs' involvement in promoting childcare recruitment; and CPMs' contribution to increasing the childcare capacity in the local area
3. identify the barriers to childcare for Jobcentre Plus customers, how they may vary according to social group and location, strategies to overcome these barriers, and the role CPMs play in this.

To achieve this, a two stage evaluation was conducted. The first stage consisted of in depth telephone interviews with 91 CPMs to explore progress and to discuss any problems encountered so far. The second stage involved case studies in 10 districts in England, Scotland and Wales, conducting in depth interviews with CPMs and internal colleagues and external partners with whom they had worked.

### Key Conclusions

The role looks to be progressing well towards achieving its aims. CPMs are working with a variety of internal colleagues, from front line staff such as New Deal for lone parents personal advisers, to those with more strategic roles such as FAMs and marketing staff. Many also have direct links with, or at least report to, their senior management team. CPMs have also built successful working relationships with a wide number of external childcare related agencies and organisations, including childcare partnerships, Sure Start local programmes, Children's Centres and other childcare and related organisations.

By the end of year 1, CPMs had begun to work with internal colleagues and external partners to develop joint initiatives on specific projects such as developing the childcare workforce or influencing childcare capacity which could directly influence wider Jobcentre Plus targets over the next 2 years.

CPMs have set up and developed a wide variety of methods of partnership working, including: information sharing; joint planning; joint events; joint staffing; and formal working protocols or agreements for capturing results.

Local knowledge and good practice is being fed nationally to other CPMs via the CPM intranet site, regional networking and national conferences.

### Key achievements within Jobcentre Plus

Internally, CPMs are acting as change agents, raising the profile of childcare within Jobcentre Plus and the importance of childcare as a key enabler to work. CPMs offer specialist expertise to take forward unresolved childcare issues.

CPMs are beginning to contribute to the wider Jobcentre Plus business of reaching employment targets and supporting front line staff to meet the needs of customers by: increasing childcare information for Jobcentre Plus customers; influencing childcare capacity; developing the childcare workforce; increasing the number of childcare vacancies advertised through Jobcentre Plus; monitoring existing vacancies; and encouraging employers to recognise childcare needs.

The role also helps to establish new contacts/potential partners for Jobcentre Plus and improves Jobcentre Plus knowledge of related services and programmes e.g. Children's Information Services, Sure Start local programmes. The CPM also assists the development of Jobcentre Plus outreach work (for example, in Children's Centres and Sure Start local programmes), thereby improving the reach and accessibility of Jobcentre Plus services.

## Key achievements with external partners

CPMs offer added value to the work of external partners by contributing key Jobcentre Plus competencies in: careers marketing; business support; knowledge of local employers and employment trends; understanding of the employment, training and childcare support needs of unemployed customers; and experience of contracting for training and developing training routeways.

External partners value the single, named point of contact within Jobcentre Plus. The CPM role can convince external organisations and their customers of the value of Jobcentre Plus's programmes and services. Thus, the role of CPM has a wider impact beyond the specific childcare brief it was set up for, impacting on other services directed at supporting traditionally hard to reach people back into work and thereby helping other government departments' achieve their targets to reduce child poverty and workless households.

## Key issues

Key issues affecting delivery of the CPM role include:

- *Resources.* Time constraints, additional roles or duties, large geographical districts and the difficulties of working with several childcare partnerships limit the possible remit of the role. Administrative assistance and easier access to marketing resources would be helpful.
- *Steer for the role.* Different local contexts and demand, combined with the broad scope of the role, sometimes make prioritising difficult. The wide, and in some ways self-defined, remit of the CPM role, is difficult for some CPMs to grasp and some feel that they needed a more direct steer. Line managing can also be difficult for those who may not have great knowledge of the role – and therefore difficult for CPMs with problems or who need direct support.
- *Visibility of CPM role and childcare issues.* CPMs have worked hard to inform internal colleagues and external partners of their role, although it is sometimes difficult for CPMs to

ensure that other staff realise the importance of the role. National Tier could play a stronger role in reinforcing messages regarding the CPM role.

- *Support and commitment from Jobcentre Plus colleagues.* Line managers sometimes lack time or knowledge to support the CPM role. CPMs also sometimes have difficulty convincing other staff of the contribution of the role to Jobcentre Plus business. Target-less roles can be difficult for Jobcentre Plus colleagues to comprehend, particularly within the organisation's points culture. CPMs sometimes feel peripheral because of the priority afforded to more measurable and short-term targets within their organisation. This is particularly the case since key aspects of their work, such as building successful partnerships with organisations, are a longer term process with less easily identifiable/measurable outcomes.
- *Roll-out.* Problems encountered in achieving visibility for the role, gaining colleague support and the issue of resources are exacerbated in some districts by the time and resource pressures associated with Jobcentre Plus roll out and pressures on head count.
- *Support and commitment from external partners.* Some potential partners express disinterest or resistance to working with CPMs, often due to negative preconceptions of Jobcentre Plus, or a failure to recognise the potential Jobcentre Plus contribution to their own objectives and targets.
- *Background of CPM.* Backgrounds within the Employment Service, as New Deal for lone parents advisers and/or experience of partnership working prove advantageous to the role.
- *Personal qualities.* CPMs use a wide variety of personal and inter-personal skills, including flexibility, perseverance, diplomacy and leadership to achieve success in the role. More training in influencing/persuading and partnership working skills may benefit CPMs, especially those facing particular challenges with external partners and internal colleagues.