TACKLING MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE: SUMMARY

This interim report is the first of three reports for the evaluation of the Tackling Multiple Disadvantage (TMD) project. TMD provides personalised coaching support and tailored employability provision to support homeless people with multiple and complex needs into training or employment. TMD is a Building Better Opportunities project funded by the Big Lottery Fund and the European Social Fund. It is being delivered across 17 London boroughs by a partnership of specialist homelessness or mental health organisations: Crisis, Thames Reach, St Mungo's and Mind in the City, Hackney & Waltham Forest[1].

The project will be in live delivery between April 2017 and December 2019. During this period, TMD aims to engage and support 600 single homeless people. Three quarters of these participants are expected to have one or more additional support needs such as an offending history, substance misuse and physical or mental ill health.

This first interim report presents findings from research conducted between September and December 2017 with each partner's strategic leads and local authority representatives from London boroughs where TMD is in operation[2]. The report outlines the policy intent of the project, an outline of the existing evidence base, an overview of TMD performance monitoring and early implementation findings.

Project background and development

The TMD project was developed in response to gaps within mainstream employment programmes, accommodation projects and specialist support organisations. TMD partner leads and local authority representatives felt that there was a clear gap in support for this group. The main factors contributing to this were reported as: payment structures which incentivise quicker outcomes; limited resource to provide holistic, longer term support and high thresholds in service level criteria for specialist support which doesn't account for multiple needs.

TMD was designed to provide a longer term employment and support package specifically for homeless people with multiple and complex needs. The support aims to address needs in sequence and develop the stability, confidence and skills needed to access employment. The key elements in programme design to facilitate this were:

- **The partnership** comprised of organisations with specialist knowledge of the client group's needs and pan-London coverage. TMD also promotes cross partner learning through Steering Group and practitioner meetings.
- **The coaching support model** which utilises a confidence building approach and supports individuals to access service offers to meet their needs in sequence.

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[1] Formerly City and Hackney Mind

[2] Interviews were conducted with six local authority representatives from employment and skills, homelessness, and public health teams from boroughs involved in TMD.

- Using a **non payment-by-results funding structures** and the **inclusion of soft outcome targets** to enable intensive delivery.

Support model

TMD delivery partners are using a highly personalised coaching methodology and access to a range of support interventions. This approach enables the integration of counselling, training, volunteering, job brokerage and other specialist support provision such as housing support, financial support and health based interventions.

The role of the coach, links to wider support to stabilise participant circumstances and effective employer engagement were viewed as the most essential elements of delivery for this client group.

Outcome measures and programme performance

The TMD project has been designed to measure progression into employment; progression into training, education and volunteering; and progression into job searching. The targets for these are set at 28%, 17% and 18% respectively. The outcome measures also include a target for 26 weeks sustained employment (58% of employment outcomes).

Job outcome rates for TMD are relatively high when compared to similar previously commissioned programmes. The 28% job outcome target is far higher than the 17% average job entry rate for the 2007 – 2014 ESF programmes supporting similar client groups, and certainly higher than the similarly framed STRIVE project which achieved a 15% job entry rate. Local authority stakeholders and partners felt that a 28% job outcome target was ambitious considering the timeframe and nature of target client group's wider needs.

TMD also captures soft outcome measurements through baseline and end point outcome star assessment. These capture improvements in motivation, self care, money management, social networks, drug and alcohol misuse, physical health, emotional and mental health, meaningful use of time, managing tenancy and offending.

Implementation findings

TMD partners registered 72 participants during the first three quarters of delivery, which is 37% of the profiled target for this period. The low participation rate is partly explained by implementation challenges reported including staff turnover, difficulties with compiling the evidence for a successful registration and additional outreach requirements:

- The paperwork and audit requirements linked to BBO funding were reported as a barrier for client's successful registration on to the project and a contributing factor in staff turnover on the project.

- Some partners reported that their existing service user base did not meet the criteria for TMD and as a result they have had to further develop their outreach activities.

Despite these challenges, partner leads indicated that the partner organisations have formed a strong and constructive working relationship. Regular steering groups and partnership practitioner meetings were especially valued for supporting practical delivery challenges and sharing best practice across the partnership.

Future stages of the evaluation will explore how the Tackling Multiple Disadvantage project impacts the lives of clients. This will include findings from qualitative research with staff, clients and local stakeholders and outcomes analysis.