**This page contains relevant guidance and materials to help you run a similar project in your service.**

**Project:** PHP Improvement

**Local Authorities:** Durham County Council

**Details:**

*Why the work was done*

A need was identified for a guide/ toolkit to help with the assessment and development of personalised plans. The aim was not to take away the creative role of officers but provide a solid, consistent foundation to tailor things to individual clients accordingly. Over time, the toolkit could help to identify gaps in the current provision or prevention and relief ‘offer’ available to officers.

*Problem to be solved*

How might we design a toolkit to support the development of better personalised plans and improve consistency amongst housing officers?

*Who the users are and what they need to do*

Users are any officers in the service involved in assessing customers and developing personalised plans as required by s.189A of the Homelessness Reduction Act

**Resources available:**

* **Discovery planning spreadsheet –** including goals of the discovery phase and discussion guides for the user research
* **Workshop facilitator guide –** how to run a workshop with officers as part of the user research, including group discussion and journey mapping
* **User needs –** developedfrom research with officers. Summarises what they need from the assessment/ PHP process
* **Discovery report template –** to present findings from discovery phase. Includes summary of what other local authorities are doing in this area

**Relevant insights for others:**

* Need to regularly reiterate why the PHPs were introduced, acknowledging extra time and effort involved, as this often gets lost in the day to day
* Officers may not be making use of current templates and tools available to them – always good to check this
* Newer staff would value a “toolkit” more to build confidence and support professional development (e.g “what should I do if. . .”)
* PHPs not viewed favourably by some officers who either don't see the point/ value in them or describe them as onerous and time consuming. They are seen more positively if the “client is willing to engage”
* This leads to the "it’s the client not me" attitude in some officers, usually accompanied by frustration at the lack of client engagement/ interest in the PHP and what it’s for. This creates questions about how things are being explained and put across to clients
* Clients often don't bring documentation to assessment interviews so guidelines and procedures need to prepare for this (without “bring documentation” being added as a reasonable step)
* Officers tend to use "what they know" in terms of how they approach assessments and the tools they use e.g. some still use old templates, varied approaches towards financial assessments and when to do them etc.
* More experienced staff tend to be more comfortable asking 'probing' questions
* Majority of officers do not input things directly into case management systems. Seem to prefer F2F and typing up after. Supporting tools need to reflect this