



From Dependency to Work: addressing offenders' multiple needs

There is continued emphasis on statutory and voluntary sector agencies working together to tackle the social factors associated with drug misuse and crime. This study by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research, King's College London represents one of the first British evaluations of a programme designed to integrate drug and alcohol treatment with mental health services and education, training and employment support for offenders. The evaluation of the From Dependency to Work (D₂W) programme found that:

- Over the four years from January 2000, D₂W received 5,148 referrals of individuals with multiple needs and assessed 3,178 (62%) of these. 69% (2,187) of those assessed went on to engage with a D₂W service. However, half of all D₂W clients engaged with only one service, despite being identified as having several areas of need at assessment.
 - D₂W clients who were interviewed generally showed reductions in drug use and offending. Levels of satisfaction with the programme were also high.
 - Two-year reconviction rates were significantly lower for those accessing D₂W services than those not – indicating the potential for substantial cost savings.
 - Although those who engaged with the programme seemed to benefit considerably: referral rates represented a significant underachievement against original targets.
 - A number of procedural, organisational and service delivery issues hampered the overall performance and effectiveness of D₂W.
 - The funding arrangements for D₂W served to reward single-agency work but not partnership work. If similar schemes are to be developed in future, funding arrangements are needed that reward good partnership work as well as delivering targets.
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Background

The From Dependency to Work (D₂W) programme was launched in January 2000 and was gradually rolled out across the 12 inner London boroughs until March 2004. During the final year there were 26 different agencies providing services, employing 120 practitioners. Agencies involved in delivering D₂W services included: SOVA, ACAPS, Addaction, ASSET, Blenheim Project, Broadway, CAST (Creative and Support Trust), City and Hackney Alcohol Services, Community Drug Project, Community Service Volunteers, Crossroads, De Paul Trust, Docklands Outreach, Druglink, Dyspel, Equinox, Hungerford Project, LWTS (London West Training Services), MACA (Mental Health After Care Association), mbA, Milton House, New Start, Orexis, Revolving Doors, Rugby House, St. Martin of Tours and Westminster Drug Project.

The programme offered integrated support services to people with a combination of drug, alcohol, mental health, employment and literacy needs, and a history of criminal involvement. The intention was to coordinate the work of statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure speedy access to appropriate services and promote multi-agency partnership approaches.

The impetus for D₂W came from the Inner London Probation Service (ILPS – now part of the London Probation Area) in conjunction with SOVA (Supporting Others through Volunteer Action), a national charity and the London Action Trust (LAT), a local voluntary organisation. They applied successfully to the Government Office for London (GOL) for a five-year £12m Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) grant. SOVA was the managing agent and grant holder, and ILPS, the Metropolitan Police Service and the Prison Service provided the bulk of the matched funding required under SRB rules. The programme was directed by the D₂W Partnership Board, on which the key partners were represented, along with the Prison Service, the Metropolitan Police and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs).

The D₂W grant was originally envisaged by the funder and the partners as a pan-London social regeneration project aimed at reducing the cost of crime and substance misuse to London. When responsibility for SRB funding transferred from GOL to the London Development Agency (LDA) there

was a shift in emphasis to economic regeneration and a sharper focus on training and jobs.

Alongside statutory and voluntary sector agencies the programme:

- developed procedures for managing and delivering multi agency support services;
- provided training for referrers and service providers; and
- developed instruments to facilitate, monitor and evaluate the provision of services.

Challenges and achievements

Developing and delivering a programme of this scale required a great deal of co-operation between criminal justice and community-based agencies. Working with a disadvantaged group in this way also raised a number of important issues for methods of joint working between institutions and agencies with competing agendas of care and control, and different working styles, priorities and ethos. Challenges included:

- generating and sustaining appropriate referrals;
- conducting multiple needs assessments;
- developing and delivering interventions and support packages that reflected individual needs;
- ensuring effective care management and co-ordination; and
- fostering links with different treatment and support agencies and other ancillary services.

As a large-scale demonstration project, the D₂W programme sought to develop innovative strategies in order to address and overcome these problems. During the lifetime of D₂W there were a number of important achievements:

- receiving 5,148 referrals of individuals with multiple needs and assessing 3,178 (62%) of these;
- carrying out half (51%) of the multi-agency assessments within 4 days of referral;
- developing innovative approaches to the assessment of complex needs and devising appropriate care plans;
- facilitating service contact for the majority of those assessed (69%);
- enabling 1,386 individuals to complete an average of 3.7 programmes, or a total of 5,216 interventions;
- formulating new approaches to offering services through the use of one-stop shops, mentoring

and the development of peripatetic services in prison, probation and community settings; and

- providing a service that 80% of clients interviewed described as either “good” or “excellent”.

There were also disappointing aspects of programme performance:

- There was significant underachievement against original referral targets, particularly from probation.
- Half of those engaging with the programme used only one service.
- There was limited evidence of sustainable development beyond the life of the SRB funded programme.

How the programme performed

Most of those referred were male (80%) with an average age of 30 years. Less than one-third (29%) were aged under 25 years. This is similar to the profile of clients accessing mainstream drug treatment services in the London area during this period. By contrast, D₂W had particular success at attracting referrals from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (43%). Established criminal justice sources accounted for 58% of referrals, with most of those coming from prison (32%) and probation (20%) services. There were fewer referrals from YOTs (4%) and arrest referral schemes (2%).

The remaining referrals were generated by D₂W provider agencies (24%), non-D₂W providers (11%) and self-referrers (8%). Following a multiple needs assessment, more than half were identified as requiring support around: education, training and employment (91%), drugs (70%), mental health (55%) and mentoring (53%). D₂W was not set up to provide support for accommodation needs, although many (43%) of those who were assessed were identified as needing help in this area.

The strongest predictors of engagement with D₂W services were the borough from which a client was referred and referral source. Personal characteristics such as the extent of need, age and gender had little effect on engagement. Prison referrals and crack-cocaine users were among the least likely to engage with D₂W services. For those engaging with the programme, the average length of contact lasted 4.5 months during which time a client would

have attended an average of 16 sessions. One in four clients engaged with D₂W for one month or less.

Despite being identified as having multiple needs, the additional value of D₂W's multi-agency approach to service delivery was not realised by half the client group, who engaged with only one service. Most completed programmes of intervention were drug (60%), mental health (13%) or ETE (11%) ones. A lack of referrals resulted in underachievement against original SRB targets. This prompted SOVA to renegotiate targets at various points during the life of the programme and the majority of these revised outputs were met and in many cases exceeded by March 2004.

Client perceptions and experiences of D₂W

Those who engaged with D₂W services generally showed reductions in drug use and offending behaviours. Reductions were attributed to a range of factors including a change in outlook, lifestyle and increased motivation. The possibility of ‘selection effects’ – whereby those looking to make changes would have shown positive outcomes regardless of what services they were offered – cannot be ruled out entirely. However, findings from in-depth qualitative interviews with clients indicated that most found D₂W a useful and valuable service. Sources of dissatisfaction included delays accessing services and implementing treatment plans, and for some a perceived lack of pro-activity among some staff and services.

The short-term impact of D₂W on offending behaviour

Two-year reconviction rates were significantly lower for those engaging with D₂W services than those not. Overall 47% of the 249 people contacting D₂W services during the first 15 months of operation had been reconvicted within two years. This compares to 76% of the 386 people referred to D₂W during the same period who failed to access services. Not all of the difference can be attributed to D₂W, of course. The very fact that some people were prepared to contact services suggests that they were more disposed to address their problems than those who did not.

Nevertheless, these findings offer some indication of the significant cost savings that programmes like D₂W have the potential to deliver: using recent estimates from the Social Exclusion Unit this could perhaps be as much as £15.6 million in criminal justice costs alone. Rates of reconviction were lower still among those completing programmes of intervention and engaging with multiple services. This suggests that when services managed to engage people, ensured that they completed programmes of intervention and facilitated access to the range of services offered by the programme, this further maximised the impact D₂W had on subsequent rates of reconviction.

Lessons learnt

Our evaluation of the D₂W programme has documented some considerable implementation problems, but our analysis of the reasons for these difficulties suggests that a different style of funding regime, greater 'buy-in' from statutory agencies and a stronger management structure would in combination have yielded referral and take-up rates much closer to those originally projected.

Engagement with D₂W required a great deal of motivation and commitment from clients and it was clear that some were simply either unwilling or unable to meet those demands. However, we have also identified a number of procedural, organisational and service delivery issues that may have prevented some clients from accessing multiple services. Adjustments to these could have resulted in improved rates of referral and engagement with services.

We have suggested that the SRB funding regime, as implemented in this project by the LDA through

SOVA, was corrosive of effective partnership working. The problems were twofold. On the one hand, the funding arrangements served to reward single-agency work but not partnership work. Not surprisingly, agencies invested their effort where the rewards were to be found. On the other hand, the "target driven funding regime" worked in a way that destabilised partnerships. The monitoring requirements upon which funding was dependent were experienced by some as burdensome and sometimes oppressive. As the accountable body, and thus as the 'contract enforcer' for the LDA, SOVA had a difficult role to play, being both policemen and partner.

Our evaluation contains many pointers for future policy. Over time, we expect the D₂W concept of multi-disciplinary working with offenders with multiple needs to become firmly established. Making such teams work will – as our evaluation has shown – remain a challenge. The key challenge lies in building funding systems and capacity that genuinely promote partnerships between disparate agencies with differing skills and capacities and ensuring referrals are appropriately facilitated.

About the evaluation

The ICPR team adopted a multi-method approach in order to describe the implementation, development and delivery of D₂W provision and to assess the impact the programme had on those who received its services. In doing so, the researchers utilised a number of different data sources. These included: secondary analysis of various D₂W datasets; surveys, interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders; interviews with D₂W clients; and, analysis of conviction data held on the Offenders Index.

How to get further information

The full report, **From Dependency to Work: addressing the multiple needs of offenders with drug problems** (ISBN 1-86134-660-3) by Tim McSweeney, Victoria Herrington, Mike Hough, Paul J Turnbull and Jim Parsons, forms part of the *Researching Criminal Justice Series* published by The Policy Press.

Copies of the report are available from Marston Book Services on 01235 465500 (direct.orders@marston.co.uk) priced £14.99.

Further details of the Institute for Criminal Policy Research are available at www.kcl.ac.uk/icpr.

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