

The New Deal for Lone Parents: A Review of Evaluation Evidence

A summary of evidence from the monitoring and evaluation of NDLP

Chris Hasluck, Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick

Summary

The New Deal Reviews

New Deal is a major labour market intervention intended to contribute to an increase in the sustainable level of employment and a reduction in social exclusion. The New Deal is delivered by means of a number of programmes each aimed at a different target group. New Deal for Young People (NDYP) and the New Deal for the Long-term Unemployed (NDLTU) are aimed at unemployed jobseekers. The New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) is targeted at a different client group: lone parents on Income Support whose youngest child is above school age.

The NDLP was the first New Deal programme to be implemented. A prototype programme (Phase 1) began in July 1997 in eight areas and became a full national programme (Phase 3) in October 1998. The NDLP Prototype was subject to a thorough evaluation of its operation and impact. A similar programme of evaluation has been set out for NDLP Phase 3. There is now a body of information available about the way in which NDLP has been delivered and the effect of interventions on lone parents. Much of this evidence is derived from the evaluation of the NDLP Prototype but monitoring information from the New Deal Evaluation Database and qualitative evidence relating to the early period of national operations is also available.

In view of the growing body of evidence, it is timely to review current knowledge of NDLP and to draw out early lessons. To achieve this, a Review of the NDLP evaluation evidence has been undertaken. This Review of NDLP is the third of four New Deal Reviews. Two previous Reviews examined the evaluation evidence relating to NDYP and NDLTU.

A fourth Review provides an overall assessment of the common experience of the New Deal programmes, identifies issues raised by evaluation and highlights early lessons to be drawn from the monitoring and evaluation of the New Deal programmes. In common with the two earlier programme specific reports, this Review provides a summary and assessment of the relevant monitoring and evaluation evidence. It also describes the timetable for future evaluation. Finally it highlights some of the issues that have emerged from evaluation and describes the ways in which NDLP is being developed in the light of the emerging findings from evaluation.

The structure of the Review

Early findings from monitoring and evaluation are examined under the following headings:

- an outline of NDLP and the aims of the Review;
- a description of the main elements of NDLP evaluation programmes for the prototype and the national programme;
- an examination of the evidence relating to the population of lone parents and NDLP clients;
- a summary of the evaluation evidence up to the end of 1999 relating to participation in NDLP, activities on the programme and the evidence relating to outcomes and impacts;
- the identification of a number of key issues that have emerged from the evaluation of NDLP;
- an account of recent and future developments of NDLP in response to the experience of national implementation and issues from evaluation.

