



University of  
**Salford**  
MANCHESTER



**SHUSU**  
SUSTAINABLE HOUSING  
& URBAN STUDIES UNIT

# Evaluation of DWP & Oxfam Livelihoods Training Project

## Interim Report

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**OXFAM**



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

Adran Gwaith  
a Phensiynau

# Executive summary



## 1 Introduction

In August 2016, Oxfam Cymru in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commissioned the Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at the University of Salford to carry out an evaluation of the Livelihoods Training Project. The overall aim of the Project is to embed understandings of poverty within the DWP service across Wales, to enable DWP staff to better understand the needs of customers, and consequently be better placed to provide appropriate support and solutions to meet their needs. It is hoped that this more personalised approach will reduce the need for sanctions and improve outcomes in terms of sustainable employment. The Project aims to provide training to around 600 DWP staff across Wales by September 2017.

The evaluation is using a mixed-methods approach to document and evaluate the operation of the Project and its impact on DWP staff and customers, and participating community partners. The evaluation has three linked objectives:

1. To understand how the Project was delivered, assessing to what extent the Theory of Change for the Project was fulfilled, and the factors affecting success;
2. To set out the difference the Project made in terms of quantitative (statistically measurable) impact for key Project outcomes; and
3. To present an assessment of how the benefits of the Project relate to the costs.

This Interim Report provides an overview of some of the initial findings of the on-going evaluation. It is not our intention to present definitive findings; rather the purpose is to provide insights from the data collected to date to support the on-going delivery of the Project.

## 2 Methods

This Interim Report is informed by four key sources of data:

1. Facilitator notes: Analysis of flip-chart notes made by the training facilitator during each training session, which log key issues raised by participants in relation to use of the tools.
2. Surveys of DWP staff: This includes an Oxfam Post-Training Feedback questionnaire, distributed at the end of training sessions between 28th June 2016 and 31st January 2017 (200 anonymous responses fed into this report; a response rate of 97.09%); and a follow-up questionnaire administered by the DWP, up to six months after the training (27 anonymous responses).
3. Qualitative case study: The evaluation includes a case study in each Welsh district, to provide a more in depth understanding of the process and outcomes of the training. Within each case study, data is derived from semi-structured interviews with DWP customers and a focus group with DWP staff who have received the training. The findings in this interim report are based on

one case study comprising of seven DWP staff and five customers.

4. Consultation with a community partner: To date, a small number of community partners (approximately eight) are playing an important role in the Project and three organisations collaborate actively by volunteering on the Project and assisting in co-training, where possible. This Interim Report includes consultation with one community partner.

### 3 Findings

- Responses to the Oxfam administered survey were very positive and highlighted the immediate impact of the training.
- Overall, responses for the likelihood of being able to use the tools were positive (based upon a mean score of 6.74 out of 10).
- Responses relating to the effects of the training on awareness of poverty, supporting customers, and using livelihoods approaches at work were positive across the board and scores were clearly higher at the end of the training than at the start (there was a net gain of at least 2.5 points out of 10 for each question).
- A large majority of participants reported that, as a result of the training, they had new ideas on ways to support customers (87%), and that the tools were directly relevant for their job role (77%).
- After returning to work, participants reported the continued impact of the training on awareness of poverty in particular. Respondents also felt that the training had a positive impact on their work in terms of feeling more effective (7.25/10), interested in work (6.75/10), a sense of accomplishment (7.08/10), and they have subsequently recommended the training to colleagues (8.00/10).
- However, there was a big decrease in participants stating that they have been able to come up with new ideas and apply these ideas in their work. Several participants explained this was due to lack of time. The figures after returning to work

were 30% and 33%, respectively.

- Qualitative consultation with DWP staff highlighted a number of positive responses in relation to the training, particularly around the skills of the training facilitator and the post-training support, as well as the impact it had had on how they approached particular customers.
- However, some staff had yet to fully utilise the tools (despite the training taking place a few months ago).
- Time constraints and organisational barriers were highlighted as key issues impacting on the ability to use the tools. However, personal barriers were also relevant, whether that related to the confidence of staff or the perception that they would find it difficult to use on certain customers.
- Feedback suggested that 'buy in' from senior DWP staff would be vital for embedding the tools within current working practices.

### 4 Next steps

This Interim Report presents emerging findings from the data collected up to February 2017. The evaluation will be on-going until September 2017, at which point a full final evaluation report will be produced. The final evaluation report will incorporate the following data:

- The full DWP staff survey;
- A survey of DWP customers who are supported by staff who have received the training, to be compared with existing customer insights surveys undertaken by the DWP;
- Post-training questionnaires and facilitator notes;
- A minimum of three qualitative case studies, including consultation with both DWP staff and customers;
- Consultation with all community partners; and,
- Consultation with Oxfam and DWP staff responsible for the delivery of the Project.

The final evaluation report will provide a process, impact

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