Welsh European Funding Office

Swyddfa Cyllid Ewropeaidd Cymru

A Practical Guide to Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled

Guidance Document

June 2003

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund
YR UNDEB EWROPEAIDD
Cronfa Gymdeithasol Ewrop

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

ISBN 0 7504 3179 2
Designed by CartoGraphics G/019/03-04

July
INA-15-20-024

Typesetting by Text Processing Services

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1 INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF THE GUIDE

The measurement of soft outcomes and distance travelled poses a series of challenges for ESF funded projects, not least in terms of developing suitable monitoring approaches that can be implemented with their target groups and with limited resources. However, the benefits of doing so may be substantial, and soft outcomes may be the most relevant measure of progress for many ESF project clients. This is particularly the case where the disadvantages clients face mean they are less likely to achieve traditional "hard" outcomes of qualifications or progressing to employment.

The guide has been written for ESF projects that are interested in monitoring soft outcomes and distance travelled, primarily in terms of employability, although the lessons and key principles apply more widely. A number of different approaches are currently available, including systems developed both commercially and by projects themselves. The inclusion of specific approaches in this guide does not imply their endorsement by WEFO or the Department for Work and Pensions. This guide focuses on systems developed and used by projects, and is written for project workers either developing and introducing a system from scratch, or looking for ideas on how to improve their existing approach. It explains the main components of measurement systems, and provides practical, step-by-step guidance to developing an approach that best fits the needs of individual projects.

The guide is based on extensive research of current practice on approaches to measuring soft outcomes followed by ESF projects and other organisations, as well as a survey of ESF Objective 3 projects.

The survey received almost 600 responses, which identified considerable interest in measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled. Just over half (52%) described having measurement approaches in place across a range of project types and beneficiary groups – although many indicated they were actively considering amending and improving their current approach.

The projects not currently measuring soft outcomes described a series of barriers to measurement, although all but 2% felt the process would be useful for them. The main barriers, in order, were the lack of an appropriate methodology, resource constraints, and, to a lesser extent, concerns over intrusiveness/sensitivities or the lack of relevance for project beneficiaries. However, one-third of those not currently measuring described plans to introduce approaches in the future, and over three quarters of the non-measurers said they would if a suitable approach was available.

The research identified that there is no single, "off-the-shelf" approach that will suit all projects, mainly due to the wide variety of ESF supported activities, the resources/skill-sets available to them, and the different client groups they work with. Importantly also, the research identified a series of benefits for projects in developing their own approaches – such as systems which are most fit for purpose, understood and bought into by staff and beneficiaries, and which form part of the project's central delivery approach.

The guide is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides an introduction to the concepts of soft outcomes and distance travelled, and the benefits and limitations in their measurement.

- Section 3 sets out the main components of monitoring systems, and provides a glossary of terms which are used in the final section.

- Section 4 provides a step by step guide to establishing a system for monitoring soft outcomes and measuring distance travelled.

The guide also includes an annex providing summaries of a number of approaches to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled currently in operation. Each approach is summarised and key features identified, and includes copies of forms, indicators and other components used. The approaches are intentionally varied to provide a broad range of examples – and do not represent an endorsement on behalf of the authors or the ESF Division.

2 INTRODUCTION TO SOFT OUTCOMES AND DISTANCE TRAVELLED

This section introduces the concepts of soft outcomes and distance travelled, the benefits to be gained by (and opportunities lost by not) measuring them, and some provisos and limitations to be considered.

Definitions: What is Meant by Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled?

In this context, an outcome can be defined simply as an observable change in client behaviour brought about at least in part through their participation in an ESF project. "Outcomes" are sometimes confused with "outputs" but there is an important difference between them. An output is usually the tangible service that a project delivers, such as a training course in basic IT skills. An outcome, in contrast, is the wider behavioural change that results from the output, such as an ability to write a letter using a word processing package.

The simplest way of explaining what is meant by soft outcomes is to compare them to hard outcomes:

- "Hard outcomes" are the clearly-definable and quantifiable results that show the progress a beneficiary has made towards achieving desirable outcomes by participating in a project. Typically they include obtaining a qualification, finding work, or securing a place on a course. Hard outcomes are usually straightforward both to identify and to measure.

- In contrast, "soft outcomes" refer to those outcomes that represent intermediary stages on the way to achieving a hard outcome. They could include for example, thinking skills such as improved problem-solving abilities, personal attributes such as improved self-confidence, or practical work-focused skills, such as a better appreciation of the importance of time-keeping in the workplace. As such, it can be more difficult to define them clearly or to measure them – although they may represent the main outcomes achieved by the most disadvantaged ESF client groups.

- In this context, "distance travelled" refers to the progress beneficiaries make in terms of achieving soft outcomes that lead towards sustained employment or associated hard outcomes, as a result of participating in a project and against an initial baseline set on joining it. By definition, measuring distance travelled will require assessing clients on at least two separate occasions (and preferably more) to understand what has changed.

Examples of hard and soft outcomes are provided below.

Examples of Hard and Soft Outcomes	
Hard Outcomes • Starting a training course • Gaining a qualification • Getting a job • Moving into permanent accommodation	Soft Outcomes • Improving self confidence or self-esteem • Improved individual appearance/presentation • Improved ability to manage and plan finances • Improved language, numeracy or Literacy skills • Better time-keeping/time management • Improved ability to get on with people/teamwork • Abiliy to write job application letter or prepare CV

Why Measure Soft Outcomes?

The main reasons for measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled are to capture the benefits resulting from project activities that may be missed if only hard outcomes are recorded, and in so doing motivate individual clients. Specific benefits can include:

- **Showing clients the progress they are making** as a result of participating in a project, even if not immediately apparent to them, and so providing an opportunity for personal motivation. Projects' experience suggests that clients frequently view this process in a positive light – and for many their work on the project represents the first "success" they have experienced.
- **Showing project staff how the project is progressing.** This can be an important motivator for staff, by illustrating that clients are making progress which may have been undetected previously.
- **Providing information to support project development** – by identifying whether the activities being undertaken are the right ones and where improvements might be made. This can also be useful when disseminating results and best practice – and can often lead to improvements in the way the projects themselves operate.
- **Demonstrating to employers, colleges or other organisations** that the participants in a project have developed the soft skills that they need, and have the necessary motivation and commitment to change and make change happen for themselves.
- **Demonstrating to funders** that a project is making a real difference, even if hard outcomes have not yet been achieved. Information on soft outcomes can also be useful in illustrating the wider skills clients require for employment and therefore improving the understanding of funders of the work of a project.

Examples of how soft outcomes measurement has helped beneficiaries on ESF projects.

- A WISE Group project in Bolton has tailored the soft outcomes their clients work towards to fit the needs of local employers. The beneficiaries are then able to provide clear evidence that they can do the job they are applying for, even if they have few formal qualifications.

- A client using the Bridges to Progress system used simple graphs produced in Excel showing his progress towards self-reliance in support of a successful application to the city council's Housing Department. This was a key step towards finding and keeping a job.

- A number of ESF projects measuring soft outcomes referred to a noticeable increase in their clients' self-confidence because the progress they had made could be demonstrated to them in a tangible way.

In addition to the benefits of measuring soft outcomes, there may also be disadvantages from not doing so. For instance, for many ESF beneficiaries, especially those furthest from employability and those facing multiple barriers to labour market entry, the achievement of hard outcomes may be unlikely from a single intervention. Here, measuring soft outcomes is important in capturing the benefits resulting from a project, where hard outcomes alone may miss more subtle impacts and so undervalue the benefit of the project to its target group.

Even when clients are able to achieve hard outcomes, they may also benefit from developing softer employability skills, like improving presentation and team working skills, gained from the project. Assessing and monitoring soft outcomes also allows these additional benefits to be captured, which would otherwise be missed.

Some Provisos / Limitations

It is clear that measuring soft outcomes presents a more complex challenge than recording the number of hard outcomes achieved. While there are significant benefits from measurement, some qualifying points must be made:

- While the approaches in this guide can be very useful in assessing the soft outcomes that clients achieve, the tools themselves should always be used as **an accompaniment to, rather than a replacement for, the professional judgement of project staff.**

- **No approach to measuring soft outcomes will be an exact science,** as they will rely to a significant extent on subjective judgement. This can be moderated by seeking evidence, i.e. the judgement is based on an observable difference, before and after, rather than opinion, belief or rhetoric.

- Scoring systems or scales to assess progress, key components of measurement systems, should always be treated as **indications of movement towards achieving soft outcomes, rather than exact measurements.** It makes no sense, for example, to talk about clients achieving a "50% improvement" in self-confidence, as this may be mis-leading to both the client and others and create an inaccurate impression of the scale of progress achieved. For this reason soft outcome measures are not usually not appropriate for comparing the performance of different projects, even if these are working with similar client groups.

There may be also times when it is **not appropriate to measure soft outcomes.** There are two main reasons for this:

- Where there are **specific reasons for not monitoring** certain client groups or individuals. For example, there may be cases where the process of measurement gets in the way of Service delivery. Further more where the target group or individual is sufficiently disaffected or distanced from society that assessment would be perceived as unacceptably intrusive, and risk withdrawal from the service or damage to a carefully nurtured relationship. This may be of particular relevance to the timing of initial baselining, as this process will always require trust between a project worker and client.

- Secondly, **where attendance at projects is erratic, insufficiently frequent, or of too short a duration** for measurable change to result or for measurement to be practicable. For example, some projects use filtering processes where clients are signposted to support services delivered by other agencies. In such cases clients referred elsewhere will not be included in the measurement approach.

3 COMPONENTS OF MONITORING SYSTEMS

Before describing a series of key steps to be followed in developing approaches to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled, it is useful to set out the key components of soft outcome monitoring systems.

While there is considerable variation in terms of different overall approaches, as the examples in the Annex show, they all consist of a similar set of component parts. These components are introduced below, to provide a broad picture of what monitoring systems are likely to consist of and to set the context for the rest of this guide.

- **A set of target indicators** relating to the soft outcomes that the project wants to help its clients achieve. These can be more or less detailed, but usually break down a broad target area into a list of component parts. For example, if one of the project aims is to focus on reliability in the workplace, the indicators could focus on punctuality, the ability to complete tasks with limited supervision, and maintaining a professional standard of dress at work. Indicators may in turn be made up of a number of criteria, for example for being able to complete tasks with limited supervision a statement such as "I am able to complete my work without help" might be appropriate.

- **A scale, or profiling system** for assessing the client's aptitude or ability on each particular indicator. These can include, for instance, a scale from one to ten, or a rating such as "Needs improvement" to "No work needed". Continuing the example above, the criterion "I am able to complete my work without help" might have three scale points "Rarely", "Sometimes" and "Often". Progress is measured by movement through the scale after involvement with the project.

- **Baseline assessments and subsequent reviews to assess progress.** These will typically include an initial assessment of whether a client needs to develop their aptitudes in a particular area. Tools to help with this assessment process will typically include questionaires or forms using the scale or profile adopted. How these work, whether they should be by self-assessment, an assessment by a project worker or assessed jointly, and alternative and supplementary methods of assessment are discussed in more detail below.

- **A system for analysing and reporting results.** These vary between approaches but can include, for example, graphs showing how scales or profiles have changed over the course of the project.

4 STEPS IN DEVELOPING MONITORING SYSTEMS

This section describes a series of sequential steps to be followed in developing approaches to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled. These are:

- Step 1 - Understanding the key success factors for implementing an effective system
- Step 2 - Deciding what to monitor and which indicators to use
- Step 3 - Deciding how to measure – the scaling/profiling approach to follow
- Step 4 - Establishing baselines
- Step 5 - Reviewing progress to assess distance travelled

Each step is now described in detail, following a summary glossary of the key terms used throughout.

Glossary of terms used in this Guide

Output:	A tangible product or service provided by a product, e.g. a training course.
Outcome:	A change in a client that results from their participation in a project.
Hard outcome:	A clearly definable and measurable outcome, e.g. getting a job or getting a place on a training course.
Soft outcome:	Less tangible or more difficult-to-measure outcomes, such as increased self-esteem, or improved problem-solving abilities.
Indicators:	A measure used by a project to assess the extent to which soft outcomes have been achieved.
Assessment:	The process of deciding which soft outcomes clients need to work towards, what their initial starting point is, and the extent to which they progress while participating in a project.

Step One: Key Success Factors for Implementing an Effective System

1. Understanding what the process of developing a soft outcomes monitoring system consists of, how much effort it will require and planning accordingly

Developing a system will take time and resources, which will vary from a few weeks to several months depending on the nature of the project and the approach to be followed. Key variables will include:

- The degree of complexity of the approach to be adopted.
- The size and complexity of the organisation or project that is going to use it.
- The number of staff that will be involved in the development process.
- The number of staff that will use the final product.

Adopting a basic model from this guide and fine-tuning to meet specific needs will substantially reduce this time cost. However, the best approaches often result from a process of continuous improvement, where initial approaches are reviewed and refined over time. In some cases measurement approaches have been refined over a period of years, and one project manager described how, in her view, the processes of review and refinement would never be completed. The most important element, however, is the commitment to start and continue the measurement process.

Typically, the main tasks in developing and implementing an approach will include:

Development Process	Time will be needed to: • Use this guide to decide what kind of approach you wish to take in light of the aims of your project and what you are seeking to achieve with your clients • Outline a timetable and plan for designing and implementing the approach. • Design and draft indicators, create questionnaires / forms • Adjust existing procedures, such as setting up administrative systems so all information is collected in the same place. • Explain the approach to staff and train them in its use. • Test the system out with a pilot group of project workers and clients. • Review, refine and re-design the system according to lessons learned during the pilot phase. • Consult with project staff, beneficiaries and other stakeholders, and communicate lessons learnt during the process

Operation	Time will be needed to: • Carry out baseline assessments. • Carry out subsequent reviews with clients. • Assess the information in order to understand distance travelled. • Feed information back into clients' personal development plans. • Review use of the system and ensure that it is used consistently and in the same way by different staff.
Continuous improvement	• a review of the system should be carried out at least once a year, possibly more often in early stages, to ensure the system is working well and still reflects the needs of the project.

2. Consulting to ensure an effective approach is developed

Consultation is a key element in developing an effective and workable system – with inputs from project staff and beneficiaries being particularly useful. Gaining acceptance with the staff who will be using the system is an essential element of implementation, a point emphasised throughout the research underpinning this guide. Beneficiaries can also have an important role in providing useful feedback and bringing a specific perspective to the development process and identifying any weaknesses.

The development and implementation process itself can have a considerable influence on the effectiveness (in the widest sense) of the resulting approach. Where measurement approaches are "dropped in" to projects, with limited input and involvement of operational staff and other stakeholders, the adoption of, and commitment to, an approach may be limited. Important issues to consider consequently include:

- **Involving staff in designing and setting up the system.** The involvement of project staff is crucial, although a balance must be reached between the breadth of consultation and allowing real progress to be made. Given the potential for divergent views to emerge, it may be that a "core development group" approach is most effective. Introducing the system on a pilot basis first will allow for wider feedback, based on a small number of staff using the system until initial problems can be addressed.

- **Having a planned process for introducing the system within the organisation or project** e.g. having a structured roll-out plan, with a clear timetable for design and implementation.

- **Having a project champion to oversee the process** e.g. one senior member of staff who has the backing of any management and/or steering committees.

- **Keeping the additional work-load on staff as small as possible** – for example by integrating elements of monitoring into existing work processes, and where possible making it an intrinsic part of the services the project delivers. This could include integrating baseline assessments of soft skills with existing needs assessments taking place when clients join a project.

- Getting feedback on the proposed approach from a sample of the beneficiaries who will be assessed with it is important, to understand whether the approach will be acceptable and workable and whether it is addressing all the issues of concern to them.

Introducing a system for monitoring soft outcomes to project staff

It may take some time to get a system for monitoring soft outcomes accepted and used by project staff. A common initial objection is that the additional administrative work involved will reduce the time staff can spend with clients, and some staff may dislike approaches that could be seen as devaluing clients by assigning a score to them. Addressing such concerns will require a structured approach to introducing a soft outcomes monitoring system. The Bridges to Progress approach was introduced to one project in the following way:

-A general introduction was held at a meeting for all 25 project workers

-A pilot was conducted with four individual clients and two staff members before the system was used by the other workers.

- For the first six weeks, fortnightly meetings were held to discuss issues arising, and for the project "champion" to answer questions.

Bridges to Progress is a relatively complex approach, and simpler systems may require less time or effort. Nonetheless, a planned roll-out of any new monitoring system will be needed.

3. Appreciating that approaches should be reviewed over time

A further lesson arising from the research underpinning this guide is that new systems must be reviewed and refined in the light of experience and over time. There are considerable benefits from frequent early review, including identifying any changes to be made before establishing the process and tools used are working effectively.

Once established, reviews can be undertaken less frequently, but remain key in ensuring the approach continues to work well and in identifying any fine-tuning to meet specific needs. For example, the approach developed by Off the Streets and

Into Work featured in the Annex has been revised on several occasions, and the organisation plans to involve specialists in alcohol, drugs and mental health areas to ensure their approach is addressing the issues in the right way.

Some of the issues worth discussing with project staff when conducting a review include:

- How they use the system, what works well, what they (and clients) feel more or less comfortable with.

- Whether the choice and phrasing of any indicators used is right, and whether they feel these reflect the project's aims.

- How much time they take to carry out different aspects of the assessment progress and whether this needs fine-tuning.

- Their perceptions on how clients respond to the assessment process.

4. Design issues

Design and lay-out in any materials used by the system need to be clear and presentable, and not off-putting for beneficiaries. Some basic points include:

- Keep the time required to complete any forms short wherever possible.

- Avoid over crowding of text on the page.

- Avoid using small font-sizes for text (Times New Roman 14 point font-size Ariel 12 point or larger is preferable).

- Consider using colour – the use of coloured paper or text may make forms more appealing, and help engage clients in the monitoring process. However, care should be taken that colour combinations do not pose difficulties for individuals with colour visual impairments, so any design should be tested with various audiences to ensure there are no negative effects.

One of the disadvantages of paper-based assessment systems is that they can be off-putting to clients with literacy problems. This may be less of an issue if baseline assessments are carried out with a project worker present, as they may be able to help by reading questions out, talking through the form, or completing it with the beneficiary.

An alternative solution is provided by some of the commercial approaches to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled, which have either used computer-based packages with audio features (i.e. that ask the questions aloud) or avoided the need to complete forms by using a moveable counter on a scale. These may be a significant advantage for projects where literacy is an issue for their clients, with the corresponding disadvantages of cost and potential need for relevant technology.

Step Two: Deciding What to Monitor and Which Indicators to Use

Deciding which soft outcomes you want to monitor will depend on the objectives of the project, the challenges facing beneficiaries and the changes the project is seeking to help them make and will be tied directly in to any action plan set for a client. In the case of the Bolton WISE Group, the indicators developed focus closely on general workplace-related skills. In contrast, Off the Streets and Into Work, whose main clients are homeless people, uses a wider range of indicators that address self-reliance issues in general.

Projects might decide they want to increase the chances of beneficiaries finding employment, and decide that their particular client group need help with improving communication skills. The outcomes selected for measurement should reflect the aims of counselling sessions, workshops or other activities on this issue organised by the project. Considering the following questions may be helpful:

- Which aspects of improved employability does the project seek to work on with clients?
- What changes in clients are expected by the end of the project?
- What changes would help judge that the project has been successful? (for examples, changes in behaviour, attitude or skill set)

Once the general outcomes to monitor are decided, the project must **develop indicators that reflect these outcomes**, against which beneficiary progress will be measured. A practical way of doing this may be through discussion sessions with a representative group of project workers. There are different ways of developing indicators, but a two- stage approach is suggested:

- The first stage is to try and group similar skills or behavioural attributes that the project is hoping to work on into sub-headings, as indicated in the middle column of the table below. These should reflect the broad aims of the project.
- The second stage is to create one or more indicators to reflect each of these. These can then be used as the basis on which soft outcomes are monitored.

A series of examples are illustrated below, with the scales they are measured against, taken from the projects featuring in the Annex. This is, therefore, not a comprehensive range of indicators and there are other projects equally qualified to provide suitable examples.

Source	Sub-headings	Examples of indicators and scales used
1. Off the Streets and Into Work	Communication issues	• I find completing forms easy • I sometimes need help with reading instructions • I often worry about handwriting/ spelling • When I need to check change I do it in my head • I can use a computer • I often have difficulty understanding when people speak English
	Presentation issues	• I have somewhere to wash • I am always punctual e.g. work/the course/appointments • I always telephone with a reason if I know I'm going to be late • I often have to leave early due to my situation (A four point scale used, strongly agree to strongly disagree)
2. New Bridges: Soft Indicators Individual Profiling Form	Achievements	• I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses • I can control my finances • I am able to work on my own • I can concentrate for 30 minutes • I can complete tasks on time • I find it hard to ask for help (A four point scale used, from always to rarely)
3. Bridges to Progress Employability Skills Form	Reliability: the young person is able to:	• Be punctual • Attend regularly in accordance with agreement • Manage time effectively • Demonstrate honesty • Work without supervision when appropriate • Arrange external appointments in agreed time
	Motivation / Attitude	• Demonstrate a positive attitude towards a challenge • Work co-operatively as part of a team • Work co-operatively with those in authority • Demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment • Sustain agreed activity / activities (Clients graded on six point, evidence-based scale from clear area of deficit to fully competent and self-reliant)

4. Bolton WISE Group Weekly Work Appraisal	Work output Work quality Attendance Timekeeping Communication Attitude Appearance Conduct Team working Job search	• Completed set tasks within timescales • Tasks did not need redoing • Was either 100% or a satisfactory, properly documented reason communicated to Personnel • Was consistently punctual. Returned from breaks without prompting • Clear, effective and appropriate communication with all • Worked willingly, receptive to instruction • Was neat and presentable. Wore clothing suitable to the job. Observed corporate / safety clothing requirements. • Maintained a positive, professional, mature and helpful attitude with all • Worked as a team member, wasn't selective over work tasks. Shared workload and responsibility • Made consistent, conscientious and measurable attempts to find work (A four point scale is used, from above standard to unacceptable standard)

A number of points about the sub-headings and indicators shown can be made:

- **Completion** - the indicators from the first two systems are in the form of first person statements ("I am aware" etc), reflecting the fact that their assessment approaches are based on the beneficiary completing forms themselves. In contrast, the second two systems are in the form of third person statements ("the young person is able to" etc), as assessment is carried out by a project worker (though sometimes with a beneficiary present). Issues around whether assessment is carried out by the beneficiary on a self-reporting basis, or by the project worker and other third parties are discussed in more detail below. It is also notable that each of these indicators address actions, abilities, skills, attitudes or behaviour - in other words things that the client is capable of developing or improving.

- **Numbers of indicators used** – the indicators described represent a sample, and the total number used varies considerably by project. There are no firm rules on the number of indicators to use, although this has implications for the time taken to carry out assessments. However, assessing progress on an indicator in several different ways at the same time will provide a fuller picture. Projects must find the right balance between the number of indicators to provide sufficient coverage in terms of outcomes, and ensuring accurate measurement. At the same time, the focus of the approach should remain on the needs of the individual to avoid getting lost in unnecessary detail. Some projects featuring in the research described reducing the number of indicators used with experience, to ensure that a balance between coverage and practicability was reached. Another approach may be to vary the indicators used with particular beneficiaries, according to their particular needs.

- **Evidencing change** - in this context, consideration should be given to how change will be evidenced by indicator, as some will be easier to measure than others. For instance, it is easier to show that a client can complete a job application form or CV than to establish that they have the self-confidence to describe their abilities in a job interview. The indicators used should reflect the full range of project outcomes, not just those which are most easily measured.

- **Cultural bias** - it is important to consider the potential for cultural bias in the choice of indicators, and to be sensitive to equal opportunities issues in wording them. An example is the statement: "I have difficulty understanding when people speak to me in English". Without the specification that English is the language, the statement may produce ambiguous answers or fail to pick up that language issues are a barrier for someone with English as a second language. The interpretation of indicators by people from different cultures may also raise issues - for example what is considered as assertive in one culture may be considered brash or arrogant in another. The review of potential indicators by representatives of projects' cultural target groups can be a useful part of systems development more widely.

Guidelines on drafting indicators

There is no one scientific way of deciding the exact wording for standards or indicators, or what should be measured, as there may be several equally good ways of expressing the same objectives in different ways. However, the questions or statements used in assessment need to be clear and easily understandable. Some guidelines on drafting these include the following:

- Be as clear and as exact as possible in framing questions or statements for use in indicators.
- Avoid words like generally, typically or fairly. It can also be helpful to tie statements to a particular period or place. For example, in assessing whether self-confidence is an issue it is better to tie the question to a specific situation (e.g. "how self-confident do you think you would be going to enrol at your first day at college?") rather than asking the question in general terms ("how self-confident are you?").
- Avoid using slang or jargon which may not be understood by all clients, as well as technical or over-formal language which may be off-putting or alienating.
- Avoid ambiguous statements or questions that have more than one meaning. Ambiguity can be detected by testing the questions out to ensure they are understood in the same way by different people.
- Ensure that each question asks only one question, and avoid the use of "and".
- Avoid de-motivating language.

Step Three: Deciding How to Measure

There are different ways of measuring soft outcomes, for example through observation, witness statements, feedback from clients (through interviews or by filling in forms), and/or by reviewing evidence of completed tasks. While anecdotal evidence can be useful in providing a fuller understanding of clients' progress, relying on it make assessments is less rigorous than taking a more structured and evidence-based approach.

Most measurement approaches use some form of scoring system or scale to assess the nature and extent of client needs, and the distance that they travel in developing the soft skills while participating in the project. As the previous list of indicators suggested, a variety of scales can be used. A number of options exist, including assigning a value to each indicator, say between 1 and 10, 1 and 6 or 1 and 4. There is some debate over whether an odd- or even- numbered scale is more appropriate – based on the view that odd numbers exacerbate the tendency to go for the mid-point and avoid extremes. This issue is best resolved by finding a preferred option based on experience of implementation and the views of the project workers who will use the system. It is better to avoid using zero, or minus scores, as these have negative connotations that may be off-putting.

Points on scales may be labelled, although it is equally valid to use a simple numerical score. Caution should be exercised to avoid the impression of providing an exact measure of distance travelled. Examples of different scoring systems are provided in the box below, with fuller details in the descriptions of different approaches in the Annex.

Different labels used in scoring systems

Five point scales asking beneficiaries:

- if they agree with a statement: (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree).
- the frequency with which they experience a problem (very often, often, sometimes, seldom, never).
- the degree of satisfaction with their ability in a particular area relating to work they have been seeking (very satisfied, quite satisfied, neutral, quite dissatisfied, very dissatisfied).

Six point scales, where a project worker assesses client abilities ranging from 1, where there is a severe lack of skill to deal with a clear area of deficit, and 6, where the beneficiary is deemed to be fully competent.

Use of a simple "traffic light" approach by project workers to assess whether beneficiaries have achieved the task well or adequately or whether more work needs to be done in a particular area (i.e. a 3 point scale). This could also allow colour coding, with red, amber and green signifying the level of achievement and effort still required.

Respondents may also be offered the option of responding "not applicable in my situation", where the question posed is not relevant to them or outside their experience.

Care should be taken when using numerical scores in assessing distance travelled. The point of these scales is to provide an indication of progress on a particular indicator, rather than a precise measurement of distance travelled. It is incorrect to think of improvements in strictly quantitative terms such as percentages. While it is possible to say that a client's self-confidence or ability to work as part of a team has increased marginally or substantially, it makes little sense to say that they have made a 50% improvement on those indicators.

Similarly, it is a mistake to try and aggregate scores to give an indication of overall progress on a project. Doing so essentially means comparing very different characteristics in an inappropriate way, crudely comparing apples with pears, and may obscure areas where progress has been made. An aggregate score is also more likely to be taken as an indication of "success" or "failure" on the project, which as well as being inaccurate has the potential for de-motivation.

Step Four: Establishing Baselines

Monitoring soft outcomes requires an initial assessment against which subsequent progress can be measured. The baselining approach will vary according to the nature of services provided, different client groups and other features of the monitoring system. A number of issues arise here, including the type of information recorded, the merits of self-assessment compared to joint assessment or assessment by a third party, and the timing of the baselining process.

1. Fixed choice vs. open ended approaches

Baseline assessments can be made using fixed choice or open-ended approaches. There are examples of measurement systems based on recording answers to open-ended statements or indicators - although this may make assessing progress over time difficult. It is possible to devise a coding system for open–ended, more qualitative responses, but in practice this becomes highly time-consuming. The approach recommended here is to use fixed choice questions and a scoring system or scale as described earlier. This also makes information storage and manipulation easier, with graphic representations being used to illustrate distance travelled, as described in more detail below.

2. Self-assessment approaches

A key issue is whether the assessment approach is based on self-assessment by the client or third party assessment by a project worker.

With self-assessment the client scores themselves against a set of indicators. A common approach is for them to complete paper forms, scoring themselves on different indicators as described above. In some cases it may save time for clients to do this at home, though this risks completion by others, and means project staff will be unable to provide help. While paper forms can be cheaply reproduced, they may be off-putting to clients with literacy problems, learning disabilities or an aversion to completing forms. As noted previously, commercially-developed alternatives also exist, such as computer-based questionnaires, or sliding scales with markers that are used to record scores in particular areas.

Truthfulness and subjectivity are always an issue with self-assessment and projects need to be wary of accepting that self-assessment without a qualifying opinion or evidence will provide an accurate picture of the client's need or actual progress. Getting honest answers from clients relies on the degree of trust between them and staff, although this was not found to be a significant problem for the projects researched for this guide. Subjectivity may also be a problem. An example identified in the research was a client initially unable (or unwilling) to recognise their standard of dress for interviews was inappropriate and a barrier to securing employment. In this case the issue was resolved after discussions with their project worker.

A further issue associated with self-assessment approaches is the influence of the beneficiary's state of mind on a particular day. This may be mitigated by anchoring the question to a particular situation, for example asking "how confident would you feel if you were at college for the first time", rather than "how confident do you feel today". Alternatively, it may be better to carry out an initial assessment during more than one session in order to avoid unrepresentative responses. Another approach is to include the first two or three client review sessions as part of the initial baselining process, where the client is likely to have a relatively long-term engagement with the project. This approach also allows the necessary levels of trust to be established for accurate information to be divulged.

Advantages and disadvantages of self-assessment approaches	
Advantages	**Potential disadvantages**
• Assessment is completed by person with best knowledge of the issues • Considerable time-saving for project staff compared to 3rd party assessment approaches	• People may not always be willing to answer truthfully, or may give the answer they perceive assessors to be looking for • In some instances people may not be self-aware enough to provide accurate answers • The type of answers given may be influenced by mood • Filling-in forms may be difficult for some clients or a disincentive to taking part in a project for others

Advantages and disadvantages of joint completion approaches	
Advantages	**Potential disadvantages**
• Project staff and others able to provide assistance with completion (explanation, language and literacy issues) • Potential to explore answers and propose activities as responses • More opportunities based on inter-action, for example identifying "off-days" and introducing objectivity	• May introduce influence, by client telling person what they want to hear or being led towards an inaccurate response • Reluctance to be open with others, especially if not known to client or not project staff • Relies on the sensitivity and degree of empathy of person assisting, and understanding of client issues • Person assisting needs to be trained in, and fully conversant with, the monitoring approach

3. Assessment by third parties

Third party assessments may be based on the opinion of one or more project workers, or other people indirectly associated with the project, such as college teachers, trainers or workplace managers. It is important that such assessments focus on the positive and make a point of valuing the participation of the people on the project. In these situations it is critical that evidence, rather than opinion, is sought wherever possible.

One of the issues with third party assessment is the potential for problems with subjective judgements and fairness. Examples could include situations where assessment is complicated by "difficult" clients, or where a project worker takes an unduly positive view out of a desire to help the client. As a result there are clear advantages to getting a range of opinions on the client's progress to try and counteract potential bias. A related issue is the need for a robust system that produces similar results when used by different members of staff. The usual method for this is to appoint one person on the project to verify that there is consistency in use of the system.

An alternative to basing assessments of progress on the opinions of project workers alone is to combine this with "harder" evidence to support any judgements, where this is possible. Projects using this kind of approach have stressed the need to be creative in looking for different types of evidence. Examples could include:

- a re-worked CV or application letter.
- a video of a client giving a short presentation to a group.
- a daily project record/diary detailing activities illustrating development of particular skills or achievements.

Using an evidence-based approach may also have the further benefit of illustrating that work needs to be done to improve skills if a client has a different perspective to project workers.

Advantages and disadvantages of third party assessment approaches	
Advantages	**Potential disadvantages**
• May provide a more objective view than self-assessment, especially if several views sought	• Potential for bias or mis-judgement • May reveal what the client is capable of doing, but not necessarily the underlying reasons why • Time-intensive for project staff

4. Timing of baselining

In most cases trust needs to be established for an accurate assessment to take place, and this may be a factor in delaying any initial assessment for some days or weeks after the client has started attending the project. With projects that are trying to help with clients with complex and deep-seated problems baselining may need to take place over a lengthy period of time. For example, the Bridges Project, which worked in partnership to develop the Bridges to Progress system described in the Annex, carries out baselining over a period of several weeks in order to get an accurate picture of client needs.

However, not all projects will have the time or need to do such an intensive baseline assessment. In addition, for projects where clients attend for relatively short periods, delaying or prolonging baselining in this way may make it more difficult to assess the true progress that they made as a result of attending the project. For instance, if a baseline is only established after three or four weeks of participating in a project, the value of the work the project has done in this time may not be identified (unless evidence of what the client has achieved is recorded from the beginning). In these cases it may make sense to integrate the baseline assessment process into other needs assessments that project workers carry out when clients first attend the project.

Key points on baselining

- Taking time over baseline assessments will produce fuller and more accurate results. There is a particular imperative not to constrain the process within a set time period (e.g. 1 hour interview) if it is likely that sensitive issues will be raised by clients
- Carrying out assessment in an environment which is comfortable for both assessor and beneficiary will help with the process
- Combining baselining with activities the project carries out anyway (e.g. initial needs assessments) will help to reduce the extra work that introducing a soft outcomes measuring system may otherwise impose on staff

Step Five: Reviewing Progress to Assess Distance Travelled

The frequency with which assessments subsequent to baselining are carried out may vary considerably for different projects. It may depend for instance on the resources and time available to the project, the nature of the services provided to clients by the project, and the length of time they are likely to be attending the project. It is of course feasible to carry out one additional assessment (e.g. at the end of a project), though this will provide a narrower range of information than carrying out assessments more frequently. This also means there is no opportunity to use early findings to influence provision for the client. There are instances of projects working intensively with people with particularly complex or severe problems who make assessments on a fortnightly, weekly or even daily basis to assess progress.

The common method for assessing progress is then to compare the results between different assessments. Assessing distance travelled simply on the basis of comparing scores is a very limited approach, and it always makes sense to put results in context by discussing them and what they mean in real terms with the client, and perhaps with other relevant parties such as employers, trainers, carers or other project workers. This will help to explain any improvements and what underlies them, and may help both with the personal programme for the particular client and with the projects assessment of its own strengths and weaknesses. The issue of "grading" may be an extremely sensitive one for some clients, so it is important to discuss progress (or lack of it) in a sensitive way. Trainers need to give honest, but constructive feedback on aspects of a clients attitude, skill or knowledge which need further work or development.

It is possible that at some point during the project, the client’s results will show a deterioration in some areas. There are various reasons why this may happen, for example:

- In self-assessment processes, clients may initially rate themselves highly and then find that their ratings drop as they become more self-aware, or because positive initial feelings about the project drop off. This drop may not necessarily represent real regression; it may be an indication of increased trust in the person carrying out the assessment, which is a positive development in itself. In this situation, the way in which the results are reported back to the beneficiary will be key to their continued motivation and engagement.

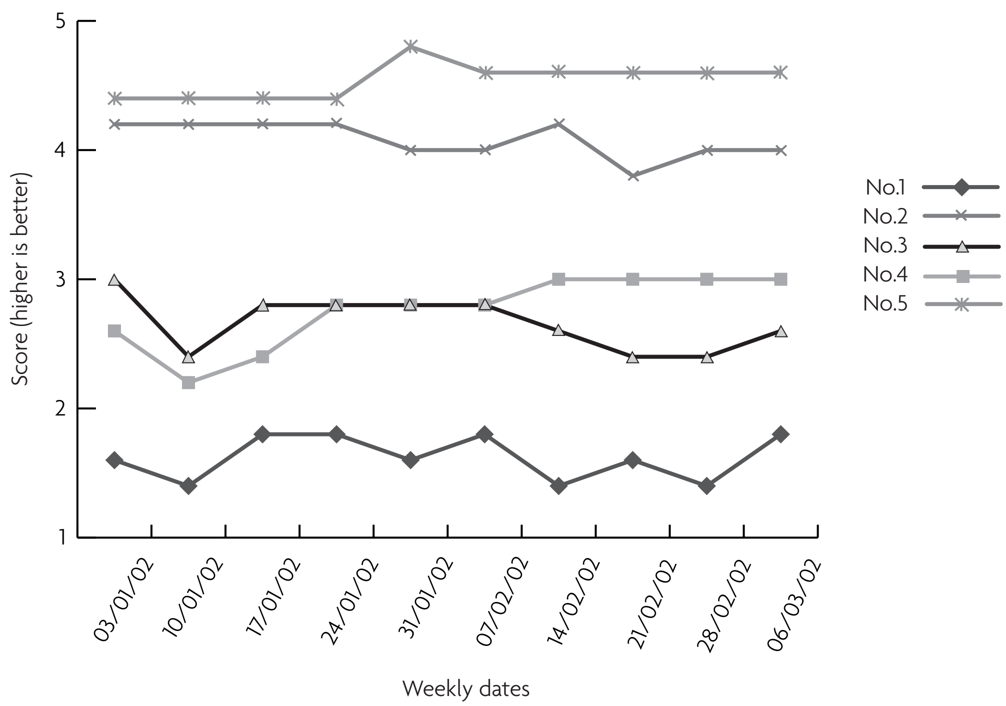
- Changes in clients’ circumstances may also have an important positive or negative impact on their results, providing another reason for discussing these with them. This is also important in assessing the difference the project’s activities are actually making to the client, with a key question being the extent to which they feel any change is attributable to their participation in the project.

Collecting, analysing and presenting data

If you plan to use a scale or scoring system to assess soft outcomes and distance travelled, using an IT package such as Excel or Access to collect and store data will normally save time and effort, for example through the creation of standardised reports that can be run when necessary. Using such packages also makes it relatively easy to create simple graphs and charts to present results. There are several benefits from doing this:

- Graphs can be particularly helpful in showing progress over time, and for instance illustrating occasional deterioration in some areas within the context of overall improvement (as in the example below).

Presenting results: Morav Youth Action Scheme



Key

No.1 Deals with conflict appropriately
No.2 Is aware when support is needed. Seeks appropriate support prior to crisis
No.3 Develops appropriate behaviour for social context.
No.4 Willingness to help others. Concern for others is evident
No.5 Turns up for arranged sessions and appointments

Adapted from Bridges to progress Toolkit (with permission)

- They provide a more vivid way of explaining the results to clients than simply reporting a range of scores, which is likely to be off-putting and for some people difficult to understand.

- There are also examples of clients using these charts to explain their progress to other agencies or institutions.

Some agencies have established databases for the purpose of holding information. For instance, Off the Streets and Into Work has a database which can be accessed by several different agencies working with the same client group of homeless people. This enables different projects to use information others have already collected, particularly useful with a client group who often move to different areas and between projects.

Clearly there are data protection issues that need to be taken into account, as no personal information revealed to project workers can be provided to others without the express consent of the client. Keeping data secure is a related issue, but this can usually be addressed by ensuring that information on individuals is carefully protected with passwords.

IT is not the only means of presenting assessments of distance travelled however. For instance, the IDEA Project approach featuring in the Annex uses paper-based "spider web" charts to provide graphical representation which is used in both initial needs assessment and for recording progress and tasks completed on the project.

Reporting soft outcomes to funders

Currently, the ESF Division does not require reporting of soft outcomes by projects. Other funding bodies may, however, require or encourage projects to do so. The required format for reporting may well vary between different bodies, so no particular approach is recommended here. It may be useful though to report progress with both quantitative indicators and case studies. Basic points to consider include the following:

- Quantitative information could be provided from changes recorded according to the scale or scoring system for the project. Funders will be interested in the overall impact of the project, so average figures for the project, rather than for individuals, should be reported.

- is essential to report changes against baselines – simply reporting totals will be meaningless.

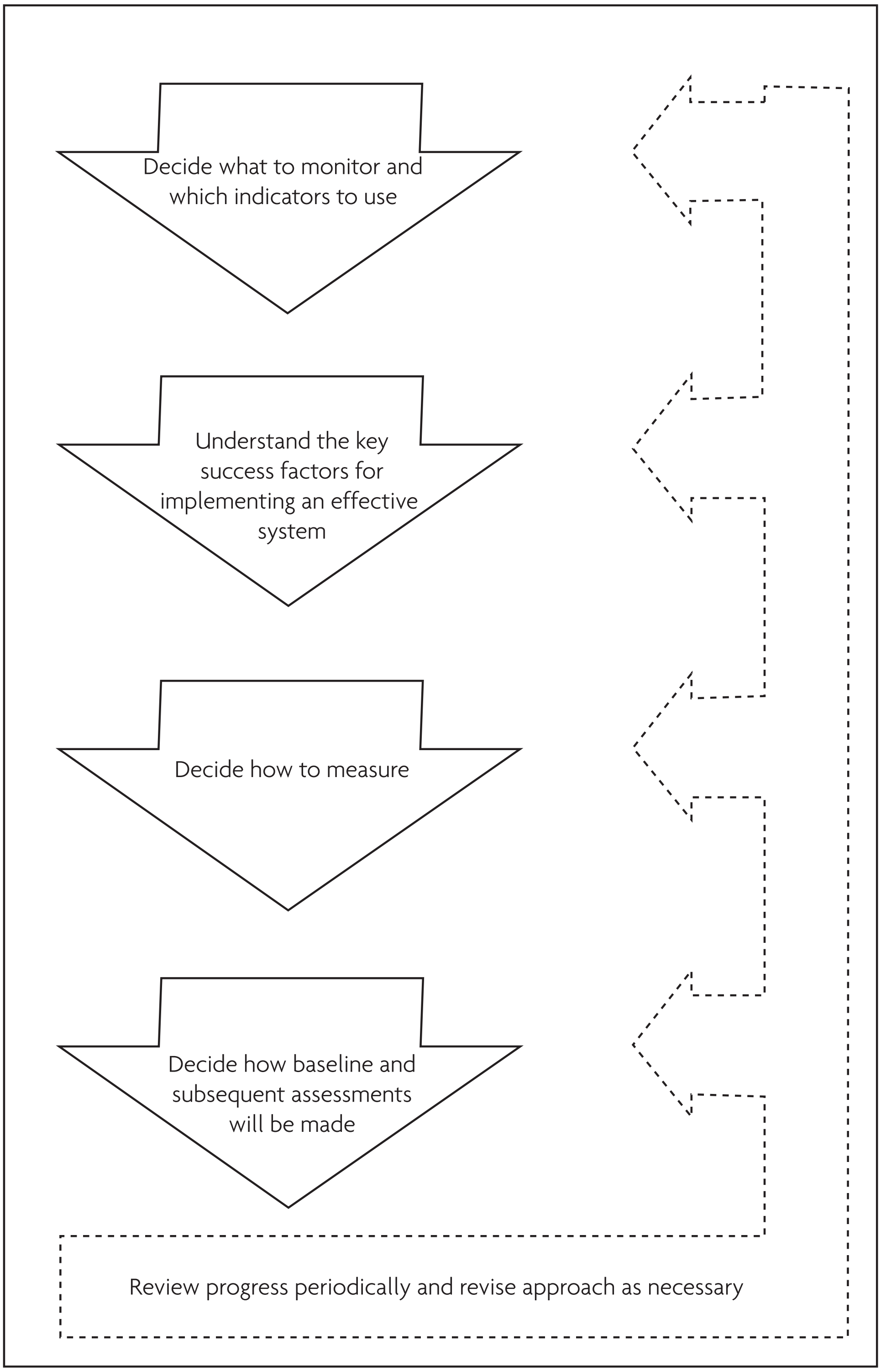
- Any quantitative data should also include a brief note explaining very briefly how it was produced and commenting on its overall validity.

- The process of change may not necessarily be clear to readers, so it may be advisable to include two or three short case studies in addition to any quantitative information. These could explain what the data show about the progression of a particular beneficiary. These should be concise, as should the overall report on the main outcomes achieved.

- Attention to presentation and layout is important, and the same design issues discussed above in relation to forms used by beneficiaries apply equally to funders.

A final word of warning is necessary. Given the essential element of subjectivity in soft outcomes measurement, and the substantial variation between different kinds of ESF-fund project, funding bodies should be wary of using soft outcomes indicators to compare performance between projects. Of course, this does not preclude their use in assessing the performance of an individual project over time.

Summary of steps to take in designing a system



EXISTING MODELS FOR MEASURING SOFT OUTCOMES AND DISTANCE TRAVELLED

This section provides information and sample documentation from the approaches listed below. These have been included in this guide to provide models that projects will need to adapt to their own use, as no single approach will be suitable for all ESF projects.

Nearly all of these approaches could be modified for use by projects of shorter or longer duration. The main exception is Bridges to Progress, which has been designed for projects working with beneficiaries for a period of at least several months and emphasises the collection of evidence, which may be harder for some smaller organisations. Those approaches developed initially for shorter duration projects include the Idea Project, Breaking the Cycle, the SIIP approach, Bolton Wise, Steps to Success and the Formula One Process.

CONTENTS

1 IDEA PROJECT

The project

IDEA, an ESF project run by Sussex Employment Services in 2001 – 2002 worked with people with all levels of learning disabilities, and also those with mental health issues to help them get and keep jobs, and to become independent in doing so. The project's programmes were individually tailored and ranged from 3-4 weeks to 10 months.

Approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled

The project manager developed a system for assessing and monitoring progress towards employability based on a questionnaire developed by project staff and a "task wheel" (modified from a version designed by Connexions) that shows beneficiary needs and progress they make, in graphical format.

Beneficiaries were assessed with an initial 9-page questionnaire Work Skills Assessment Form covering literacy, numeracy, social skills, personal approach to the workplace and so on.

The form was usually filled in by the beneficiary with the help of an a Employment Officer, with the process taking around two hours (but longer for those with learning disabilities). Some clients were able to complete the form alone, with around an hour of further help and discussion back at the project to clarify issues arising.

The results from this questionnaire and the general assessment made by the Employment Officer were then used to complete an Assessment Profile – a wheel shaped graph (see overleaf) that shows areas of need in four areas (social skills, work skills, approach to work, personal issues). This was graded according to the scale:

P Positive strengths identified which could contribute to successful transitions (to employment)

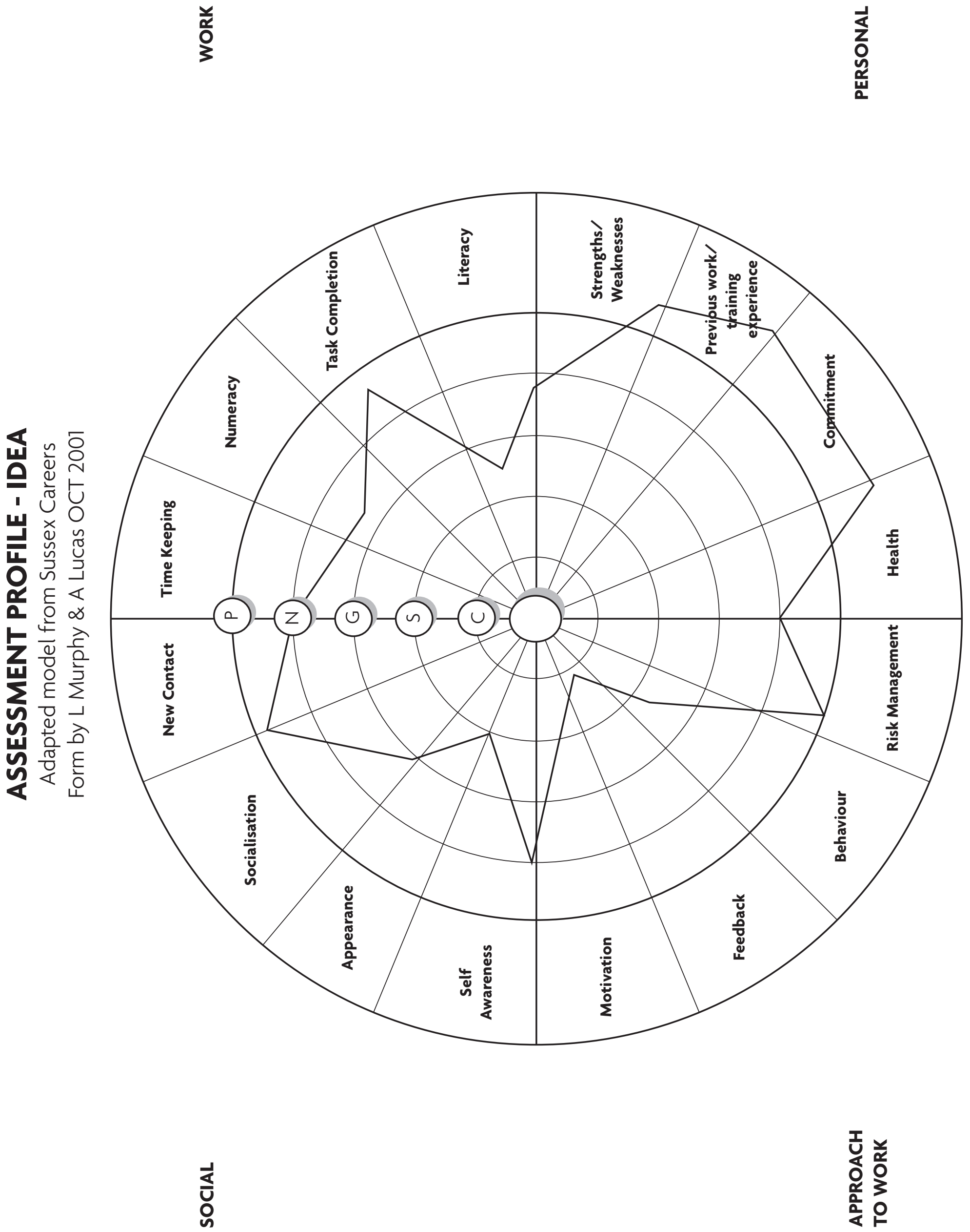
N No issues identified which could hinder successful transitions

G General issues identified

S Significant and/or specific issues identified

C Critical and/or complex issues identified

The results from this assessment could be easily converted into an action plan, which could include both hard and soft skills development issues. At a subsequent appointment the Employment Officer discussed possible work placements with the beneficiary that was most relevant in terms of their interests and strengths.



Once a placement was found, the Task Wheel (see example overleaf) would be completed with specific tasks. These would be specific to the job or work placement, and could be varied to be as complex or specific depending on the beneficiary. Examples used with one client with learning disabilities included: "unpack goods when they come into the shop"; "make drinks for other staff"; "travel independently in a taxi" etc. For another client though more sophisticated tasks were included, e.g. "learn the Sierra computer package".

The following scoring system was used:

5. Beneficiary has assisted with the task

4. Beneficiary has performed the task with assistance

3. Beneficiary has done the task with supervision

2. Beneficiary has done the task unaided

1. Beneficiary has done the task with excellence

Tasks could subsequently be modified or added to if necessary. When the beneficiary reached level 2 in a specified number (or all) tasks they received a Certificate of Personal Achievement, and a Certificate of Excellence when they reached level 1. These would be signed by the employer and a representative of the Employment Service, and were kept in a portfolio along with the completed task wheels. This could then be presented to potential employers.

Key issues

- The approach, and use of the wheel in particular, required some explanation and training for project staff, though in general they were enthusiastic about using it. Discussions were held at weekly progress meetings to discuss issues arising, but after the system had been used a few times there were no problems.

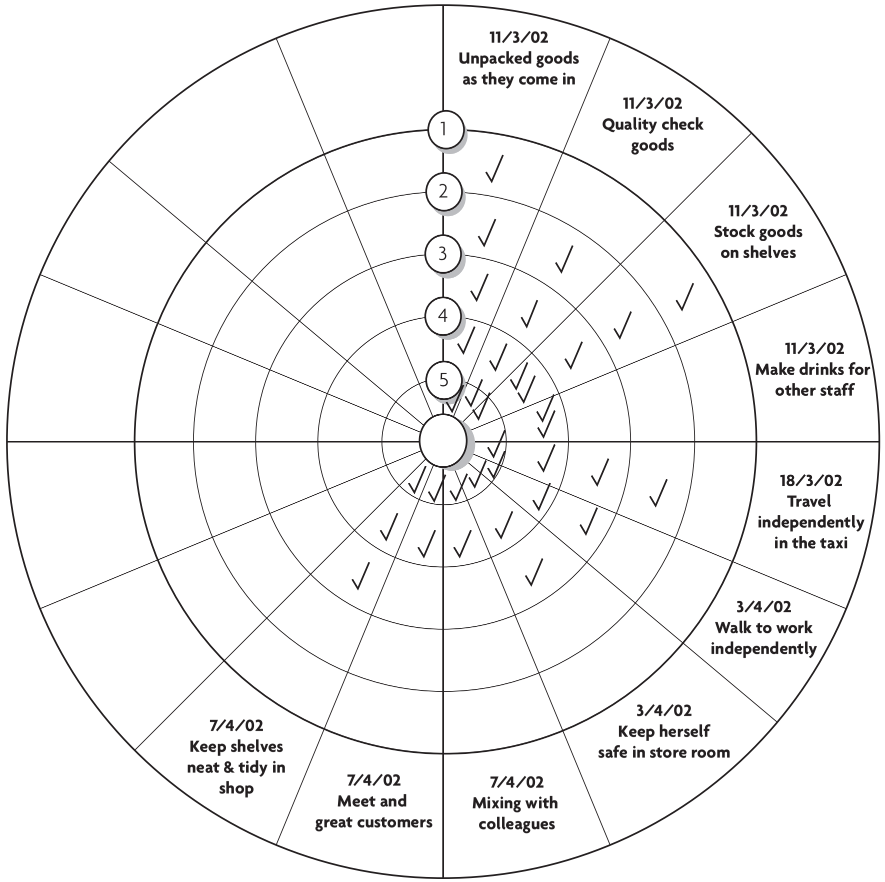
- Consistency in the use of the system was not a problem as distance travelled was always measured against a starting point set individually for each client so that no verification was needed.

- One of the strong points of this approach is that assessment is task oriented, with completion of specific tasks used to provide evidence of the acquisition of soft skills. The approach has significant benefits in having clear, presentable evidence on what the client is capable of doing, which can be helpful in overcoming scepticism on the part of potential employers.

TASK ACHIEVEMENT WHEEL - IDEA

Adapted model from Sussex Careers
Form by L Murphy & A Lucas OCT 2001

Name:
Date started:



2 BREAKING THE CYCLE

The project

Breaking the Cycle is a series of nine projects, located predominantly in the South East of England and working with disaffected young people. On average, clients are on the programme for four to six months, although in practice it is often more complicated than this as some clients dip in and out of the programme and may be involved for more than one year.

Approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled

Breaking the Cycle has developed an approach known as IRAS, the Information, Recording and Analysis System, to measure both hard and soft outcomes, which is currently in its third version.

IRAS was designed specifically to engage with all stakeholders and to bring a range of perspectives to bear in assessing distance travelled. It integrates monitoring and evaluation tools within the day-to-day work of the projects (so that it does not appear as an additional weight on project workers). The administration and data entry is completed by tutors themselves so that they can get immediate access to up-to-date project-level findings on soft outcomes.

The approach aims to measure changes in employability, health, accommodation and housing, offending behaviour, and other general cross-cutting issues, such as communication or relationship skills, self esteem or basic skills.

The primary means for assessing soft outcomes is through a system of quarterly reviews which form part of a wider objective-setting and assessment process. An enrolment form is completed during an initial interview. This interview takes place after clients have attended the project for a couple of weeks, in order to put them at greater ease in providing personal information. It also provides prompts on whether the client requires any support measures (for example, childcare) or is involved with any other agencies. All this helps develop a client profile which is translated into a personal action plan.

At each quarterly review, feedback on soft indicators is gained from a number of sources depending on how the client came to join the programme and the extent to which they have engaged with the process. These include the trainee, a project worker (though this view may represent the views of several workers and the trainee's mentor), and a "third view" from someone external to the project (this could be the trainee's referrer or another professional who works with them). Each source rates the trainee's progress in the issues they are working on at the project according to the following five-point scale:

1. This is now much worse
2. This is now worse
3. This is about the same
4. This has improved / increased
5. This has greatly improved / increased

X. Not relevant

The person completing the form is then asked to provide "reasons for rating" & supporting evidence/examples. These may relate to knowledge, skills, attitude, outcomes or actions taken. As well as ensuring that greater thought is given to the rating, this has a further advantage of providing evidence for some of the pre-vocational qualifications trainees work towards. External professionals contributing to the form are told that the information they provide will be shared with the client during the quarterly review. In practice, clients tend to complete a version of the form verbally at their review (literacy is a major issue) with the help of the tutor, who provides the feedback from others to compare with the client's own views. This will sometimes result in the trainee making changes on the basis of the views of others. This is a key component of the approach, because clients often lack self-awareness about the degree of progress they have made. These ratings and comments also feed into any revisions of the action plan.

The ratings from each individual quarterly review are fed into an Excel spreadsheet – which can be analysed and monitored at the level of individual trainees, individual project sites or for several project sites. The data has several uses. For individual trainees it can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses, to celebrate success and to inform further action planning. Across one or more project sites it can also be used as a developmental tool to drive project development by identifying strengths or weaknesses that need to be addressed. Average ratings can be shown for each individual, and across each project.

Key issues

All project workers receive a User's Guide for the system, a day of training on IRAS during their induction and subsequent top-ups on request. There is also a "helpline" offering support to project workers who have queries. A new development for the system is that each project will receive an on-site visit to address support, training and quality assurance issues every three to four months.

The system has recently been revised, as some projects found previous versions of IRAS difficult to administer, particularly because clients tend to dip in and out of the programme. These difficulties have been substantially reduced with the new version, in part by reducing the number of views that had to be canvassed in completing the form.

Breaking The Cycle

Trainee		**ID No**		**Worker**	
"3rd View" - name (& ideally signature)		Agency / Contact details			

Please use the following ratings to show how the trainee / their life has changed **on balance**, since joining BTC:

1 - much worse. 2 - worse. 3 - about the same. 4 - improved. 5 - greatly improved. X - Not relevant / can't comment.

	Area	Ratings Given			Reasons, evidence or examples given to support rating/s
		Trainee	**Worker**	**3rd View**	
Employment - training - education	Generally "willing & able" to achieve / sustain ETE				
	Being motivated				
	Being Able to manage ETE lifestyle needed				
	Being punctual & reliable				
	Having the right qualities fo the ETE option wanted				
	Looking or found work/training in a suitable vocational area				
	Looking for the right level of ETE at this stage				
	Knowledge/skills/attitude for job(or study) search				
	Ability to make applications - e.g. forms/cv's/interviews				
	Qualities to get on with others (colleagues, customers, bosses)				
	Seeking support with problems (when in/finding ETE)				
	Revelant level of job/training search activity				
	Other factors				

Area			Ratings Given			Reasons, evidence or examples given to support rating/s
			Trainee	Worker	3rd View	
Health		Health generally				
		Has regular exercise				
		Has balanced die & healthy eating behaviours				
		Manages use of substances (drugs, alcohol, tabacco etc)				
		Uses services appropiately (doctor,dentist,check ups etc)				
		Manages any mental health issues appropiately				
		Manages Stress well				
		Sexual Health				
		Managing impact of any health issues on other areas of life				
		Managing impact of other areas of life on health				
	Other factors					
Housing (independent or with family)		Housing generally				
		Ability to get on with those sharing e.g. family, flatmates				
		Ability to manage money & Budget (rent, food, utilities)				
		Ability to keep landlord/lady parents &/or neighbours happy				
		Ability to manage for self (cook wash,shop,clean,etc)				
		Ability to seek support with problems				
	Other factors					

Area			Ratings Given			Reasons, evidence or examples given to support rating/s
			Trainee	Worker	3rd View	
Crime/Offending	General ability to be law abiding					
	Frequency of any offending					
	Seriousness of any offending					
	Ability to manage anger					
	Manage self, triggers or circumstances likely to be a factor in offending					
	Consideration of others rights/ consequences for victim					
	Consideration of consequences for self					
	Other factors					
General, other or "cross - cutting" issues	Self esteem (more fundamental /long term than confidence)					
	communication skills	Literacy &/or Numeracy (please note which)				
		IT				
		Verbal				
	Problem solving					
	Ability to work well in teams					
	Ability to take on challenges/ try new things					
	Assertiveness					
	Ability to get on with views/ people different from self					
	Other factors					

Signed as a true and accurate record of conversations / review:

Trainee		Worker		Date	

Reason if trainee did not sign

3 BRIDGES TO PROGRESS

The project

Bridges to Progress is the system for measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled developed by the Bridges Project in East and Micthothian in partnership with several other organisations. The project works with young people who attend on a voluntary basis, and provides a range of different services with the ultimate aim of helping young people become self-reliant.

Approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled

The system identifies 49 standards in seven core skill and knowledge areas. Taken together these standards cover the core skills that anyone needs in order to be self-reliant and employable. Individuals usually work only on those standards relevant to their situation and the work undertaken by that particular agency. The system has been geared for use with the most disadvantaged young people, but has also been used with a wide range of other client groups.

This section summarises the different elements of the system and explains how it works. However, a full guide to the system is downloadable from the following website:**www.scottishthroughcare.org.uk/Bridges.html**

In addition, a modified set of standards and an assessment form which focuses specifically on employability rather than the full range of issues relating to self-reliance is attached below.

Bridges Project staff stress the importance of having a thorough initial assessment of needs, which is usually conducted over a period of up to several weeks. During this process, project workers select a sub-set of the full range of standards according to the specific needs of individual clients. The staff also stress the need for professional judgement in this process, and note that the system was generally unsuitable for use by staff without a social work background. An achievable and realistic set of goals, reflecting the standards chosen are agreed with the client. Progress is then reviewed on a regular basis, usually once a week or once a fortnight, depending on the resources and aims of whichever project is using the system.

Bridges to Progress is an evidence-based, rather than opinion based system in that progress is measured against evidence of ability in a particular standard, not on whether the client feels they have made progress. Projects using the system will need to be flexible and creative in looking at evidence. Examples could include videos of presentations to illustrate communication skills/self confidence measures, or corrected/re-worked CVs to illustrate job search skills. Because it relies on collecting evidence in this way, it is not suitable for paperless organisations.

Clients are then graded 1 – 6 on each standard according to the following criteria:

1. There is demonstrably no recognition of a problem, or there is a severe lack of skill to deal with a clear area of deficit

2. The individual has recognised and accepted the need to address an area of deficit but has not yet developed the skills to do so.

3. The individual has been involved in drawing up a plan of action to address his/her areas of need and is beginning to work towards accumulating evidence to demonstrate the acquisition of the necessary skills

4. The individual is fully involved in evidencing his/her growing competence

5. The individual has demonstrated competence in relation to an area of deficit and has sustained this competence over a period of time

6. The individual is deemed to be fully competent and operating consistently in a way that demonstrates self-reliance.

Data can be plotted in Excel spreadsheets and then used to produce graphs showing performance over time. These assessment sheets are included in individual portfolios created for each client, which can be used for example, to provide proof to third party organisations of the progress that clients have made towards self-reliance and employability.

Key issues

Bridges to Progress cannot be an evaluation system for comparing progress of different individuals because it is purposely designed to account for the fact that different clients have different starting points. However, it will be possible to use it:

- to talk about how successful a project is with particular standards or categories of need if a wide base of evidence is collected to demonstrate this;

- to show funders or other parties that a project has helped clients make progress towards self-reliance and employability, even in the context of some regression.

Due to its relative time and resource intensity, Bridges to Progress is not suitable for all projects, in particular short-term interventions, and is most appropriate in projects where clients attend for between 6 months and 2 years. Bridges to Progress has been used by a range of different organisations who have modified it for their own use. Further points that have arisen from their experience include:

- It needs time to introduce the approach to staff and get them used to using it. How long will depend on the individuals concerned, the disciplines they come from and how quickly they learn.

- It needs to operate in the context of a robust management system. In particular, it needs an internal verification system with a senior staff member acting as a Quality Manager who should check use by different staff by sitting in on a sample of assessments, in order to ensure consistency (this is particularly important in multi-site projects).

- It is not suitable for projects working with people with severe or enduring mental illness, in particular because assessment using it has the potential to hasten the oncoming of florid states.

The form below is based on the original Bridges to Progress system, but the standards it uses focus solely on skills relevant to the workplace. This version of the system is still under development, should not be considered as definitive, and would need to be adapted according to the specific circumstances of a particular project. A key difference with this version is that it focuses specifically on the needs of employers or trainers. The scoring system is different because of the workplace context. There is also a space in the column headed "C" for indicating which specific skills are regarded as critical and / or worth paying specific attention to.

C	SKILL AREA	SCORE	COMMENTS
	RELIABILITY THE YOUNG PERSON IS ABLE TO:		
	Be punctual		
	Attend regularly in accordance with agreement		
	Notify absence appropriately		
	Manage time effectively		
	arrange external appointments outwith agreed time		
	Comply with rules, regulations and safe working practices		
	Recognise the need to act responsibly (self and others)		
	Exercise judgement/common sense in taking decisions		
	Work without supervision when appropriate		
	Sustain and complete work (short term)		
	Sustain and complete work (longer term)		
	Work towards realistic objectives		
	Demonstrate honesty		
	MOTIVATION / ATTITUDE THE YOUNG PERSON IS ABLE TO:		
	Demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment		
	Work co-operatively as part of a team		
	Work co-operatively with those in authority		
	Demonstrate a commitment to learn and try new things		
	Demonstrate a positive attitude towards a challenge		
	Sustain agreed activity/activities		
	Demonstrate a commitment to continuing self-improvement		
	Manage conflict in workplace appropriately		
	Leave personal issues outwith workplace		

Scoring

1 = not attainable

2 = poor

3 = is undergoing training

4 = needs further training

5 = needs further practice to master the skill

6 = competent to employed worker's standard

C	SKILL AREA	SCORE	COMMENTS
	BASIC SKILLS THE YOUNG PERSON IS ABLE TO:		
	Read to the functional level required		
	Write to the functional level required		
	Understand and use what is written at appropriate level		
	Demonstrate ability to use appropriate technology/ equipment		
	Manipulate numbers		
	Communicate appropriately verbally		
	Communicate appropriately non-verbally		
	Listen actively to others		
	Demonstrate concentration		
	Manage systems, rules and procedures appropriately		
	Manage change effectively		
	INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS THE YOUNG PERSON IS ABLE TO:		
	Demonstrate clear self-expression		
	Demonstrate appropriate degree of tolerance towards others		
	Help others when appropriate		
	Demonstrate a realistic understanding of trainer/ employer's needs		
	Demonstrate sensitivity to others		
	Demonstrate awareness of impact on others		
	Recognise the needs of others		
	Recognise the contribution of others		
	Share and recognise the value of others' ideas		
	Demonstrate ability to exercise self control		
	HEALTH / FITNESS THE YOUNG PERSON IS ABLE TO:		
	Demonstrate ability to take responsibility for own health		
	Demonstrate ability to maintain personal hygiene		
	Demonstrate ability to maintain personal appearance		
	PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS THE YOUNG PERSON IS ABLE TO:		
	Evaluate the nature of a problem		
	Use own initiative appropriately		
	Think through, plan and prioritise		
	Demonstrate a solution-based approach		
	Demonstrate ability to recognise the need for support and to access it appropriately		
	Understand and remember processes		
	Demonstrate determination/tenacity		
	Overcome barriers of personal frustration		

4 SIIP, BRIDGES PROJECT WEYMOUTH

The project

Bridges (Weymouth) is an umbrella body for various local community organisations which deliver a wide range of services including training and skills development, mental health services, crisis services to a diverse group of clients (all ages, varying levels of functionality, recovering addicts, schools etc.)

Approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled

The project has developed a tool for measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled which is used by most of its local partners: the Soft Indicators Individual Profiling (SIIP) form. The SIIP forms are used both for initial assessment of client needs and to assess distance travelled by re-assessment at a later date. The form provides evidence of progress and goes into individual client files, eventually forming part of a portfolio for which clients receive a certificate. In addition, data provided from the forms have proved useful in providing evidence to support funding bids. Project staff feel that the approach they have developed is particularly useful in identifying areas of need that clients are sometimes unable to articulate clearly or are initially unwilling to discuss with project staff.

The form was initially developed because the project needed to assess progress in clients but had little evidence of hard outcomes. The form has been through several stages of development, as the original version was very long and found to be too cumbersome. Subsequent revisions were made by a group of staff from different programmes who had experience of working with the full range of client groups.

Initial assessment is carried out when clients come to the project for the first time. Use of the form also varies within a programme, depending on the needs and personal circumstances of the clients participating in the project. Clients fill in the SIIP form either alone or with a project worker to provide help. The forms are always completed on a voluntary basis; some organisations use it only with some clients, and may also omit some questions. As answers may be affected by variations in the client's mood when completing the form, the project suggests that clients complete the form on at least 3 or 4 occasions where possible in order to get a balanced view of distance travelled.

Data from the from is collected by project staff and analysed using Excel spreadsheets. The results are then discussed with the clients. The data is also used for the quarterly ESF report, to show evidence of achievement.

Key issues

- Because of the diversity of clients, it was decided to have two SIIP forms instead of one: one for young people under 25 years and one for other adults (both are reproduced here). The main variations between these two versions are that slightly different language is used in each, and some questions which were not appropriate for adults were dropped from the second form.

- The approach is valued by project staff in particular for being quick to complete and relatively simple to administer.

Soft Indicators
Individual Profiling

Beneficiary Name: ______________________ **Beneficiary Start Date:** ___ /___ /_____

Partner Name: ______________________ **Today's Date**: ___ /___ /_____

Keyworker Name: ______________________

	Yes	No	N/A
My CV is up to date	☐	☐	☐
My action plan is up to date	☐	☐	☐

This is the

1st ☐ 2nd ☐ 3rd ☐ 4th ☐ More (please specify) ☐

time I have completed this questionaire

		Please tick						
Factor		**5 Always**	**4 Often**	**3 Sometimes**	**2 Rarely**	**1 Never**	**Not Applicable**	**See over**
1. Achievements								
1	I am aware of my strengths & weaknesses							
2	I have difficulty managing my own money							
3	I don't give up easily							
4	I am able to work on my own							
5	I can concentrate							
6	I have trouble observing rules / boundaries							
7	I can complete tasks on time							
8	I can come up with new ideas							
9	I find it hard to ask for help							
10	I know how to make a good impression							
11	I can keep appointments							
12	I can complete forms							
13	I know how to act at interviews							
14	I know how to use the telephone for different purposes							
15	I know how to write letters for different situations							
16	I can cook for myself							

Factor		5 Always	4 Often	3 Sometimes	2 Rarely	1 Never	Not Applicable	
		Please tick						
2. Social								
17	I can control my temper							
18	I have feelings of violence or aggression							
19	I find conflict hard to handle							
20	I take chances with my health							
21	I can see problems coming							
22	People take advantage of me							
23	I don't take advantage of others							
24	I can get on well with anyone							
25	I can take responsibility when things go wrong							
26	I am good at listening							
27	I can maintain eye contact							
28	I like myself							
29	I am aware of the effect of drugs / alcohol on me							
3. Personal Growth								
30	I can wait / be patient							
31	I know what I feel							
32	I am unable to talk about my feelings							
33	I find it hard to relax							
34	I worry about what people think of me							
35	I know how to keep healthy							
36	I live a healthy lifestyle							
37	I am aware of how I appear to others							
38	I am willing to learn new things							
39	I can face problems in my life							
40	I want to succeed							

Soft Indicators
Individual Profiling

Beneficiary Name: ____________________ **Beneficiary Start Date:** __/__/____
Partner Name: ____________________ **Today's Date:** __/__/____
Keyworker Name: ____________________

	Yes	No	N/A
My CV is up to date	☐	☐	☐
My action plan is up to date	☐	☐	☐

4.1.1.1 This is the
1st ☐ 2nd ☐ 3rd ☐ 4th ☐ More (please specify) ☐ ______
time I have completed this questionaire

		Please tick					
Factor		**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**Not**
		Always	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**Applicable**
1. Achievements							
1	I am aware of my strengths & weaknesses						
2	I can control my finances						
3	I don't give up easily on things						
4	I am able to work on my own						
5	I can concentrate for 30 minutes						
6	I can complete tasks on time						
7	I find it hard to ask for help						
8	I can keep appointments						
9	I can complete complicated forms						
10	I usually come over well at interview						
11	I am confident about writing letters for different situations						
2. Social							
12	I find conflict hard to handle						
13	I take chances with my health						
14	I can plan ahead						
15	I am able to be assertive						
16	I am tolerant of other people						
17	I can take responsibility when things go wrong						
18	I am good at listening						
19	I am a confident person						
3. Personal Growth							
20	I am patient						
21	I am unable to talk about my feelings						
22	I find it hard to relax						
23	I worry about what people think of me						
24	I know how to keep healthy						
25	I live a healthy lifestyle						
26	I am aware of how I appear to others						
27	I am willing to learn new things						
28	I can face problems in my life						
29	I want to succeed						

5 BOLTON WISE

The project

Bolton WISE runs intermediate labour market projects to help people who have been out of work for some time back into employment. Participants include New Deal clients, ex-offenders, lone parents, labour market returners and other long-term unemployed people. Participants go through an unwaged induction programme lasting between 8 and 26 weeks. Candidates who successfully complete this programme move on into unsubsidised employment or into transitional employment with Bolton WISE, usually for a 13 – 26 week period. They receive on-the-job training from a supervisor (e.g. in landscaping) during this period, going to various sites as part of a team. The aim of the project is to develop soft skills required for employment as well as technical or vocational skills taught in individual work placements.

Approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled

Individual progress is assessed on a weekly basis by supervisors (i.e. project staff) using the "Weekly Work Appraisal" sheet, which is attached with guidance below. Participants are graded from "A" to "D" on ten criteria by the person supervising their work placement team. There are reviews generally every four weeks, where the previous week's appraisal sheets are looked at. Once they perform to a readily achievable standard, they can move into transitional employment with WISE, and may also receive bonuses based on performance. In addition, waged trainees have the opportunity to receive a wage enhancement where additional responsibilities are assumed, subject to continuous satisfactory appraisal. The appraisals are evidence-based in the sense that they are based on a supervisor seeing certain behaviour in a work placement, but subjective in that they are based on supervisor opinion. Periodic workshops are arranged to ensure consistency in applying the standards. The standards, their meaning and relevance to employers are reinforced with trainees during induction training and job-search sessions.

The appraisal sheets were used from the beginning of the project in 1997 and were based on a piece of research conducted by the Glasgow WISE Group investigating soft skills that employers generally look for when recruiting. Bolton WISE then used the research in the development of its programme, both in the design of the programme and its aims to develop certain soft skills, and also in evaluating participants' progress.

The time each appraisal sheet takes to complete varies depending on client performance but it can take as little as two minutes if there are no complicating issues. If there are disagreements about performance these area discussed with the client and the form could then take longer to complete. There is a box for clients' comments on each sheet, and as supervisors meet with project managers on a weekly basis this also provides a way for communicating clients' views. The appraisal sheets also act as an early warning system if something is going wrong.

Appraisals can be used as a reference for employers when participants move on to work, with average scores given for each criterion. This has proved to be very useful in giving employers a reference with real evidence of employability.

The appraisal system is currently being further developed to provide broader information about organisational performance or client group performance, which will then be fed back into participant training. At the moment all areas assessed using the form receive equal coverage, but if it is discovered that participants overall tend to have more trouble reaching acceptable standards in certain areas, these will be emphasised more heavily during future programmes. The project is also planning to enter results onto a database in order to provide management information on the project performance as a whole, and to integrate the weekly appraisal data with other information such as entry and exit questionnaires completed by beneficiaries.

Key issues

- Project managers feel that grounding their assessment approach has been valuable as they are able to show beneficiaries that the criteria are based on real-world information and are therefore relevant.
- However, subjectivity is a potential weakness in using the appraisal sheets, as only one opinion is sought in making the assessment. Projects modifying this approach for their own use might consider seeking alternative views, and/or having periodic reviews to ensure assessment is carried out in the same way by different project workers.
- Staff appraisals use very similar sheets, with a few irrelevant criteria such as "job search" left out. Using the same appraisals also helps in the administration of the system as project staff then have direct experience of the system that they themselves are using to assess beneficiaries.
- Some types of work placements require stronger performance in certain criteria than others e.g. appearance is less important for landscaping work. Assessors need to be careful in taking this into account when assessing how participants are scored in some areas.

Weekly Work Appraisal Bolton WISE Ltd.

RATINGS AND THEIR MEANING	
A = ABOVE STANDARD	**Participant shows initiative at all times, is forward thinking and is able to take on additional responsibilities.**
B = SATISFACTORY STANDARD	**Works hard and is focussed. Requires minimum supervision.**
C = BELOW STANDARD	**Needs strong and constant supervision Requires repeated instruction and/or correction.**
D = UNACCEPTABLE STANDARD	**Needs one-to-one supervision. Persistently fails to perform to required or achievable standard.**

CRITERIA	DEFINITION OF SATISFACTORY STANDARD	RATING (see above rating)
WORK OUTPUT	Completed set tasks within appropriate timescales.	
WORK QUALITY	Tasks Undertaken did not need redoing	
ATTENDANCE	Was either 100% or there is satisfactory reason for absence which is properly documented and communicated to Personnel.	
TIMEKEEPING	Was consistantly punctual. Returned from breaks without being prompted.	
COMMUNICATION	Maintained clear effective, polite and appropiate communication with everyone.	
ATTITUDE	Worked willingly. Was receptive to instruction.	
APPEARANCE	Was neat and presentable. Wore clothing suited to the job. Observed corporate/Safety clothing requirements	
CONDUCT	Maintained a positive, professional, mature and helpful attitude with everyone.	
TEAM WORKING	Worked as a team member, Wasn't selective over work tasks. Shared workload and responsibility.	
JOB SEARCH	Made consistent, conscientious and measurable attempts to find work. Activity reflected the individuals personal job search stratergy. **Supervisor must record a "B" rating here unless otherwise advised by the Jobsearch Tutor**.	

See notes overleaf for further addvice on how this form should be completed.

Bolton WISE Personnel Advice:

to be completed by the supervisor

Participants Name:

Three 'C' or one 'D' rating in any one week should result i loss of bonus for waged participants.

wk. commencing:

Fri.

Bonus pay recommeneded: YES NO N/A

Supervisors must provide an explanation of all "A", "C" and "D" ratings. Action taken as a result of all "D" ratings must be noted.

Signature of supervisor

Date:

Supervisors must fully discuss the contents of this appraisal with the participant. The participant may record his/her views here for discussion at future review meetings.

I confirm that my supervisor has discussed the contents of this appraisal with me.
Signature of participant

Date:

Bolton WISE Ltd
Guidance Notes for Weekly Work Appraisals

What is the purpose of this assessment ?

- It reinforces important employment values
- It recognises and rewards satisfactory achievement.
- It helps us to measure the progress of participants and forms the basis of 6 weekly reviews.
- It provides a basis for assessing suitability for transfer from "unwaged" to "waged" employment.
- It provides a track record of achievement that can be used in support of future job references..

Which participants should it be completed for ?

- All participants engaged on WISE programmes – whether or not they are in receipt of a wage.
- Terms and conditions for participants vary. In most cases, transfer to waged status will not happen before the participant has completed 8 weeks on "benefits plus an allowance". Personnel make assessment for transfer to "wages". Their decision will be informed by, but not entirely based upon weekly appraisals. Four consecutive weeks of "A" or "B" ratings is a usual prerequisite. Transfer may also be based on other factors such as the availability of waged vacancies.

Who should complete the assessment ?

- It should be completed by the supervisor who has had responsibility for the participant for most, if not all of the week.
- Wherever possible you should seek the views of any others who have a significant input into supervision during the week
- Only authorised signatories of timesheets should complete assessments.
- Prior approval of Personnel must sought before anyone else completes an assessment.
- The whole form must be completed. Participants do not have to record comments but they must sign in the relevant box.

When should it be completed ?

- At the end of each timesheet week.
- It must then be sent to the Quest Centre with the timesheet. Bonuses cannot be paid without a completed appraisal.

What sort of comments are you looking for ?

- Specific examples should be provided in support of "A" ratings.
- "C" ratings may be the result of inexperience or a learning difficulty.

  Summarise the issues as you see them.
- All "D" ratings must prompt immediate action. The supervisor should ideally provide counselling. If you wish, you can refer such matters to Personnel. All serious or persistent problems must be referred to Personnel without delay.

6 STEPS TO SUCCESS, TOMORROW'S PEOPLE

The project

Tomorrow's People are a charitable trust operating nationally, and the managing partners for the ESF-funded Getting London Working project. This is a labour market intermediary project operating in four London boroughs, working with the long term unemployed and labour market returners. Tomorrow's People use their approach, Steps to Success, in their other UK operations.

The organisation recognised that hard outcomes failed to represent the extent of benefits accruing from their work, and wanted to be able to present a more rounded picture of achievement to their clients, staff and actual/potential funders. They initially investigated the use of a commercial system but found the cost prohibitive, and so sought to develop their own approach.

Approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled

The approach was developed in-house, with support from an external consultant. A working group was established, comprising advisors and management staff. The resulting approach was piloted in Scotland before introduction nationally.

The system is particularly simple, and consists of a scratch card with six prompts, with clients recording the extent to which they agree with a series of statements on a 1 to 5 (disagree to agree) scale. The statements/indicators are:

- I am open to change
- I feel positive about myself
- It is important for me to improve my situation
- I find it easy to solve my problems
- I find it easy to talk and listen to other people
- It is easy for me to make positive things happen

The scratch card is self-completed, on a voluntary basis, by the individual client as part of their initial meeting with the project. Clients have the system explained to them, with confidentiality being guaranteed, and support with completion is offered for those with literacy/language issues. New cards are then completed on a four weekly basis ideally, but at the start and end of involvement (namely the point of first outcome) at least. However, the project acknowledged that use by advisor was variable, both in terms of coverage and implementation.

Experience has shown that efforts are best concentrated on clients when multiple contacts are expected – rather than "drop-in" contacts. This approach has been refined with two client groups being identified – those who can job hunt effectively on their own (and so use the project's information and sign-posting functions), and those who need support/are identified as harder to help. The scratch cards are now used with the second group only, and the project estimate that they undertake baseline and follow-up assessments with approximately 60% of this group.

Key issues

The measurement approach is felt to offers a series of benefits:

- For clients, it illustrates change and achievement, so helping to motivate them to remain engaged with the project and continue to progress. The measurement approach also allows change (both positive and negative) to be discussed and future action planned.

- For the organisation, it allows advisors to identify achievement beyond solely hard outcomes, as well as helping refine the targeting of their work with individuals.

Further details on the Tomorrow's People approach, which is in the process of being refined, are available from Steve Swan at sswan@tomorrows-people.co.uk.

7 INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT SHEETS, YOUTH GATEWAY

The project

Youth Gateway provides advice on careers-related advice to all young people aged 14 to 18 in Wales. A significant amount of their work is carried out with disaffected young people with whom they work to encourage to them to address their problems and to develop skills that will enable them to benefit from education, training and employment.

There are seven different Careers Service companies delivering the Youth Gateway across Wales. A substantial part of their work includes assessing young people's needs and then directing them towards appropriate specialist services, for instance, agencies providing extra tuition for numeracy and literacy problems, or counselling for drugs-related issues. However, they always see their beneficiaries more than once, and in some cases see them on a one-to-one basis over an extended period. Beneficiaries receive a certificate of completion at the end of the programme, and also have a progress file which in some cases will include graphs showing their progress.

Approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled

The different companies use a range of different tools for assessing soft outcomes and distance travelled. These are generally commercially developed tools and so are not discussed here. The assessment work and tools of each of the companies was also recently reviewed by consultants, and it is possible that a single tool for measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled will eventually be adopted.

They have also developed the self-assessment sheets that are filled in with personal advisers at the beginning, middle and end of the academic year in order to assess clients' opinions on their own abilities. These are not tools for assessing basic skills, but are used to inform discussions with clients about what kind of job they are interested in doing and whether these are realistic aspirations in the light of beneficiaries' own assessments of their skills. These sheets are filled in by the beneficiary at the beginning of an interview, and their answers are then discussed with the staff member in order to help agree what needs to be done and to inform the completion of a personal development plan.

Key issues

These sheets are produced in colour even though this is more expensive than using black and white. There are two main reasons behind this. Attention to design quality in materials that their beneficiaries will use is felt to be important in re-inforcing the Service's attitude of "unconditional regard" towards the disaffected young people it works with. In addition, the use of colour is conducive to learning, with some studies suggesting that use of colour rather than black and white materials can significantly improve both long- and short-term memory.

Alternative versions of the self-assessment sheets include tick boxes at the bottom of the sheet which asks if the information submitted can be passed to other agencies, as a considerable number of beneficiaries will be directed to other services. This issue is always discussed at the start of any interview, and the service will never pass on information that is asked to be kept confidential.

Personal Development Plan

My Self-Assessments

This is how I see myself now:

Literacy												
I rate my literacy as:	Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High

Numeracy												
I rate my numeracy as:	Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High

Communication Skills												
I rate my communication skills as:	Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High

Teamwork												
I rate my teamwork as:	Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High

Confidence												
I rate my confidence as:	Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High

Motivation												
I rate my motivation as:	Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High

Behaviour												
I rate my behaviour as:	Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High

Self Esteem												
I rate my self esteem as:	Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High

Client Signature:	Date: / /
Adviser Signature:	Date: / /

youthgateway

Personal Development Plan

Observations by Personal Adviser

Communication Skills

Teamwork

Confidence

Motivation

Behaviour

Self Esteem

Client Signature:	Date: / /
Adviser Signature:	Date: / /

8 THE FORMULA ONE PROCESS - STEPS TO WORK, PENNYWELL

The project

Steps to Work is one of the projects run by Pennywell Community Business, which is based on the Pennywell Estate in Sunderland. It works to create jobs and to help residents find sustained employment through a range of measures including job linkage programmes, enterprise start-up and education and training courses.

Approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled

The approach by Pennywell Community Business differs from those listed previously in that it does not make use of a scoring system to assess distance travelled in the same way that the others do. Instead, the project has developed an approach which deliberately avoids "grading" clients. Although clients are taking part in a metaphorical "race" as described below, the length of this process can be as lengthy or short as required, and the whole process is based on individual points of departure for each different client. At the same time, the approach can be used to demonstrate both progress to both the person in question and to potential funders. This following description of this approach, including the graphic, has been adapted from an article written by John Tulip and Michelle Burlinson of Pennywell Community Business. The full version is available at www.skills.org.uk/docu-pcb.htm.

The underlying idea in developing the approach was to present to the client an unobtrusive and fun way of determining a learning development plan, suited to their needs and aspirations, that would function as a "visible" monitoring and assessment mechanism. What the project did need however was some way of producing documentary evidence of progress along the development path agreed with the client that would be suitable to funders which needed to be "invisible" to the client. They therefore came up with the following approach.

The client would enter the Neighbourhood Learning Centre and be greeted by the development worker and gently encouraged to discuss their aspirations, which could have a leisure or education orientation. Client requests can be extremely varied and expectations may be unrealistic and at this point the development worker would have the opportunity to explain what they can and cannot do. In many cases the worker would then "signpost" clients to appropriate service providers. This referral is extremely important as referrals are a quantifiable output. It is also important that "hand holding" and giving support to the client if they engage with other providers is part of the process, as guidance and counselling hours are also quantifiable outputs.

It is quite often the case that clients are not sure what they want to do. It is therefore important that development workers offer the chance for experimentation – allowing the client to try different activities before deciding on a specific objective, which is one of the reasons for describing this approach as the F1 assessment and monitoring methodology.

The client would be invited to undertake a Taster Session or "Practice Lap" which can might work as follows:

1. The worker would sit with the client and discuss their fears and concerns.

2. From this initial assessment, the steps the client needs to take to address these fears or concerns would be identified.

3. The worker will then work with the client and develop a Personal Action Plan.

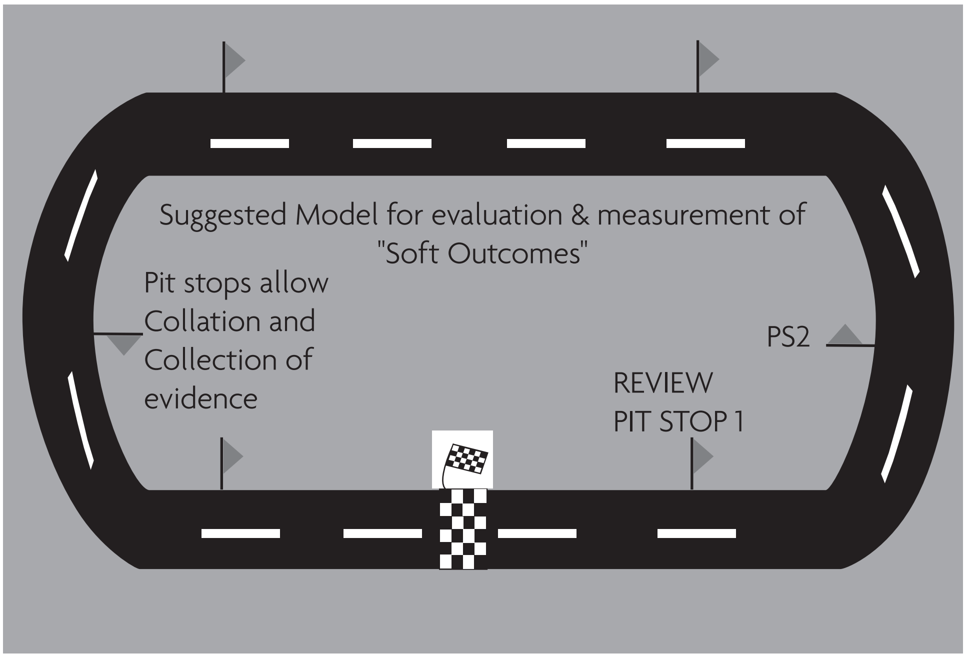
4. The worker and the client would decide their race strategy. For example, the client might have identified that they are not sure what they should wear for an interview.

5. The worker would arrange for the client to undertake a Personal Presentation Course. If the client is not ready or prepared to undergo formal training the worker would work with the client in a non-formal way. They might discuss with the client why appropriateness in presentation is so important and then ask them to go away and perhaps cut pages out of an old catalogue of what they consider may look right. It would have been agreed that they would meet again for a "pit stop" to look at the evidence the client has collected and ensure that it is a good choice.

6. It may have been identified that the client was unsure about what questions may be asked at the interview and how they should frame their answers. The worker could provide the client with a list of possible questions and ask them to write in the spaces provided what they think the answers should be and arrange the next pit stop to discuss them. If they are not suitable, further discussion could take place and the next pit stop be arranged. This way the client does not feel they have failed but that they are still very much in the race.

The process of formally identifying progress in ways that can be reported to funders is invisible to clients (for instance, in terms of registering the number of referrals or counselling sessions as quantitative outputs). However, these steps can also be presented to clients using the Race Track diagram below, or similar. In

Pennywell for instance, the projects reported positive feedback from clients who followed their progress on a race track drawn on a green baize in the Neighbourhood Learning Centre.



The client can have as many pit stops as they need before finishing the race, which would ultimately be attending the interview. Each element expressed in their fears and concerns list can be individually addressed at their own speed. If they get the job then the process has been successful, but if they don't they can go on to the next race in the season and build their portfolio of skills. What is important is that there is a post-race debriefing where what went wrong or what went right in the process can be discussed and analysed. It is also important that the client is rewarded for their efforts at the finishing flag. In this example, and with many others, it would be quite easy to match the activities in part or whole to an accredited course or module.

So the process has evolved some hard evidence of work and achievement on the client's behalf, and the worker can justify time and resources through guidance and counselling .An integrated structure to the clients learning process evidenced by initial assessment evidence, personal action planning, review processes and exit interviews. These in turn would involve evidence that demonstrate evaluation and monitoring material and would provide time sheet data. Therefore most of the elements and criteria required by funding regimes could be met through a process that is invisible to the client but produces visible evidence for the funder.

9 OFF THE STREETS AND INTO WORK

The project

Off the Streets and Into Work is Europe's largest co-ordinated guidance, training and employment programme for homeless people, and has operated in London since 1996 to co-ordinate services to support homeless individuals. It developed its Individual Progression System (IPS) having recognised that for the majority of their client group soft outcomes were the main ways in which their progress could be measured.

The initial system was developed in 1999 and based on a comprehensive review of existing approaches undertaken by Annabel Jackson Associates. The system has been reviewed by staff and revised over time, following a continuous improvement approach.

Approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled

The IPS comprises a 10 sided questionnaire which is completed by clients, and acts as a diagnostic and progression measurement tool. The questionnaire provided below, has been subject to major revision once, and a second revision will be made soon to ensure the approach is still relevant to the changing needs of the client group. The questionnaire has 11 sections covering a range of topics:

- Communication skills
- Accommodation
- Presentation
- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Confidence
- Motivation
- Overcoming setbacks
- Feelings
- Influencing others
- Knowledge of opportunities

Some sections, for example accommodation, alcohol and drugs, have initial sifting questions to test their relevance, allowing the sections to be skipped if not relevant. Responses are against a four point scale, from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

Over time, the questionnaire has shortened, with fewer questions and more skips, as the review process identified the most relevant questions for their clients. It has also changed to meet the requirements of an expanding client group and for use in different contexts, for example the Knowledge of Opportunities section was expanded for use with disaffected clients as part of a regeneration programme in London.

In summary, the IPS is used on a flexible basis, with reviews taking place on an 8 to 12 week basis. Clients complete their own forms – which is considered a key success factor, and their baseline responses are taken as reported. However, given the nature of the client groups initial assessments are not always repeated, or completed fully. Initial assessments inform the production of individual action plans, and reviews assess progression against these initial baselines.

The system is now available on-line, on a networked database used between the organisation and its partners multiple sites. Clients are registered on the database, which means their details can be exchanged between different projects and providers.

Key issues

Off the Streets and Into Work's considerable experience of both operating and continually developing their approach has provided many valuable lessons. These include:

- The importance of staff training – crucial for developing common understandings and shared approaches. The system is used by a range of organisations, with training days being held for their provider network.

- Developmental approaches – the benefits of involving users in the development and change of the approach has been invaluable. The project plan to involve experts in assessment techniques with different groups to inform further revisions. However, a clear message to other projects to expect long development times, and be clear on what they want to get from the system from the outset.

- Wide consultation is an essential part of the development and review process, but projects must be prepared to limit the process to ensure solid practice can begin.

- Confidentiality – consent forms have been developed, the confidential nature of the assessment is stressed at all times. This has been found to aid compliance.

- Integration with the activities of the projects supported – the use of the IPS as a diagnostic and action planning tool leads to benefits for both the organisation and the client, and so enhances use.

Off the Streets & Into Work

INDIVIDUAL PROGRESSION SYSTEM

Name:.............................. Reference No................

Worker name:..............................

Date:..............................

This is an individual assessment and aims to help you and the worker identify the areas you want support in. All sections in this assessment are weighted equally. Once you have completed the assessment you will discuss it with a worker and draw up an action plan.

A. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I find completing forms easy				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. I sometimes need help with reading instructions				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. I often worry about my handwriting and spelling				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. When I need to check change I do it in my head				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. I can use a computer				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6. I often have difficlty understanding when people speak English				

B. ACCOMMODATION

I have accomodation at the moment	Yes	No

If answer is No go to section C
If answer is Yes complete the following sections

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I don't know where I will be staying in a month's time				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. I do not have use of a telephone				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. I never get my telephone messages				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. I could afford my rent if I got a job				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. I would have less money If I got a job than on benefits				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6. I have space to write job applications or study				

C. PRESENTATION

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I have somewhere to wash				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. I have somewhere to wash my clothes				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. I am always punctual e.g. work/the course/the appointment				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. I always telephone with a reason if I know I am going to be late				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. I often have to leave early because of my situation e.g. working/the course/the appointment				

D. ALCOHOL

Have you drunk alcohol over the last month?	Yes	No

If Answer is No go to section E

If Answer is Yes complete the folowing questions

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Drinking makes me more confident				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. It irritates me when people refer to my drinking				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. I drink more than is healthy for me				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. I feel guilty when I am drinking				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. I often have a drink in the morning				

E. DRUGS

Have you used recreational drugs in the last month?	Yes	No

If Answer is No go to section F

If Answer is Yes complete the following questions

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. My drug-taking changes my coordination and judgement				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. My drug use is increasing				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. I spend more than half my income on drugs				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. When I use drugs I have difficulty in getting up in the morning				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. Using drugs makes me more confident				

F. CONFIDENCE

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I am as good as the next person				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. I enjoy meeting new people				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. I am nervous about asking questions in a group				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. My mind goes blank when I am asked a question				

G. MOTIVATION

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I find it difficult to motivate myself				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. I like to keep working on something until it is completed				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. I find it hard to concentrate for long				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. People trust me to get a job done				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. I need a lot of encouragement				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6. One of my strongest wishes is to be independent				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7. I like challenges				

H. OVERCOMING SETBACKS

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I am easily hurt by criticism				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. I learn from things that go wrong				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. When doing things, I decide what is More important and what is less Important				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. I get nervous about learning new things				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. I can't always cope with doing several different things at once				

I. FEELINGS

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I have felt unhappy all week				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. I feel positive about my future				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. I feel despairing or hopeless				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. Talking to people is too much for me				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. I feel my problems are too much for me				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6. Over the last week I have been| physically violent towards others				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7. Over the last week I have felt panic or terror				

J. INFLUENCING OTHERS

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I have difficulty expressing my views or feelings				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. I find it difficult to make eye contact with people				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. I have the right to say "no" to others without feeling guilty				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. If others are offensive, I am offensive back				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. I feel uncomfortable when someone compliments me				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6. I am happy to stand up for myself				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7. I am willing to understand the needs of others				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8. Working together, people get more done				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9. I understand the need for rules and regulations				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10. Nobody has the right to tell me what to do				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11. People in authority intimidate me				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12. If I don't understand the instructions, I ask questions				

K. KNOWLEDGE OF OPPORTUNITIES

I feel that I am ready to look for a job	Yes	No

If Answer is No do not answer the following questions - you have completed the assessment

If Answer is Yes complete the following questions

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I understand my strengths and weaknesses				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. I know what kind of job I am looking for				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. I need further training				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. I can think of several different ways of finding out about job vacancies				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. I think I could present myself well during an interview				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6. My CV does not make the best of my experience				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7. I have thought about the kind of questions I might be asked during an interview				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8. I have practised my interviewing skills				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9. I would ask questions during an interview				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10. I have the clothes to go to an interview				

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11. I would be prepared to change how I present myself for work				

10 CREDITS

The authors would particularly like to thank the following individuals for their help in putting together the materials contained in this Annex, as well as those not mentioned here who contributed to the research for this Guide.

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Bridges Project, Edinburgh

Pauline Sly
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A Practical Guide to Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled