**Final report:**

**Welfare Reform: Client Perspectives**

**December 2014**

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# Abbreviations

The table below provides a list of abbreviations used in the report.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Abbreviation | Meaning |
| WINZ | An outdated term used by many clients to refer to Work and Income |
| WFCM | Work Focused Case Management |
| WSS | Work Search Support |
| IB, SB, UB | Outdated terms for benefits (invalid’s benefit, sickness benefit, unemployment benefit) now replaced by the new benefit names introduced in Welfare Reform. |

Executive Summary

In 2011, the Government agreed to a programme of work to reform the New Zealand welfare system. The changes focus on achieving a benefit system that encourages independence and personal responsibility, primarily through paid employment, and contributes to better social and economic outcomes.

The programme of work included an evaluation component to assess:

* whether the Welfare Reform changes were implemented and operating as intended,
* the impact the changes have had, and
* what worked and did not work.

The client perspectives evaluation focuses on the effect of the changes from the point of view of Work and Income clients. The evaluation collected data from clients in three ways: in-depth telephone interviews with 40 clients, brief interviews with 100 clients at three Work and Income sites after they finished their appointments, and feedback forms from 215 clients who attended seminars and workshops.

**Many clients reported they were aware of the Welfare Reform changes that affected them, prior to their introduction**

The evaluation found that many clients had heard about and could identify the changes that were most well-reported in the media: pre-employment drug testing and changes to overseas travel. There was less awareness of other changes that were more targeted (such as social obligations) but generally clients were able to identify the changes that affected them. Clients said they had heard about the changes from a variety of sources, including case managers, letters and phone calls from Work and Income, the media and their friends.

**Some clients had misconceptions about how the changes would affect them**

Some clients had held or still held misconceptions about the content and effect of some of the Welfare Reform changes. For example, some believed that they were not allowed to travel overseas at all. Others initially thought that they would be drug tested to determine whether they were eligible to receive a benefit, but later realised that was not the case. The concerns clients held when they first heard about the changes, such as concerns about privacy and their rights, had not eventuated.

**Clients reported they understood what Work and Income expected of them**

Welfare Reform introduced significant changes in Work and Income’s approach to allocating clients to different services. Information on clients’ situations and service capacity is used to determine what intensity of services is most appropriate for each client. Clients can therefore experience different levels of service over the course of their involvement with Work and Income. As a result some clients included in the study were, correctly, receiving the same service as before the Welfare Reform changes depending on which service they had been allocated to.

In discussing the service they received from Work and Income, almost all clients reported that they understood what Work and Income expected of them. Most longer term clients still identified themselves using old benefit names, for example, UB (unemployment benefit), SB (sickness benefit), IB (invalid’s benefit) or even “the dole”. Clients most commonly recalled their case managers discussing job searching and work readiness but also mentioned budgeting and financial awareness. The frequency of contact varied across clients and service levels. Some clients that appeared to have similar circumstances reported very different levels of contact, as expected with different service levels.

**Comments were mixed on whether the changes were positive or not, although many clients expressed their appreciation for the support they received from Work and Income**

Clients did not often link changes in their interactions with Work and Income to Welfare Reform changes. Comments from clients who were able to compare Work and Income service before and after the changes focused on increased contact with case managers and more requirements for evidence to support their entitlement. Comments were mixed on whether the changes were positive or not, though many clients expressed their appreciation for the Work and Income support they received. Some clients held the view that the changes would prevent others from taking advantage of the benefit system because more evidence was required about clients’ situations. Some clients felt that the work expectations were too high given their situations, the opportunities in their locality or what they thought about their capacity to work.

**Clients were able to give examples of assistance from Work and Income that might be considered to be steps towards employment, but many did not feel they had made progress unless they had actually found employment**

Clients often judged their progress by whether they had entered employment or not and did not see themselves as having made progress if they had not achieved employment. Although few clients stated that the Welfare Reform changes had assisted them to progress towards employment, they did give examples of things they had done with Work and Income that appeared to be steps towards work. For example clients described Work and Income’s assistance with preparing CVs and applying for specific jobs.

**Clients who had been sanctioned said the experience had encouraged them to swiftly visit their case manager, and had not impacted on their wellbeing**

The few clients interviewed who said that they had been sanctioned reported that they had quickly fulfilled Work and Income requirements to restore their benefits. While they did not feel that the sanctions had impacted their work search or their wellbeing, receiving notice of the sanction had encouraged a swift visit to their case manager.

**Clients were generally positive about workshops and seminars they attended**

Most clients were positive about workshops and seminars and were able to identify the components they found most useful as well as areas for improvement. Some held negative views and made suggestions for improvement.

**The relationship clients have with their case manager appears to be an important factor when clients report on their experience with Work and Income**

The evaluation findings emphasised the importance of the relationship between the client and their case manager and the potential effects of having clients speak with different case managers. Clients who had built a relationship with a single case manager appeared to be more positive about Work and Income. Overall, many clients made positive comments about the support they received from their case managers including those who did not identify significant changes in the service.

# Malatest_Red Pattern BarIntroduction

* 1. Background

In 2011, the Government agreed to a programme of work to reform the New Zealand welfare system. The changes focus on achieving a benefit system that encourages independence and personal responsibility, primarily through paid employment, and contributes to better social and economic outcomes. The changes enabled the Ministry and in particular Work and Income to make greater use of the information from across Government to accurately target interventions toward higher risk clients. Decisions about the support and services people received were increasingly guided by the principles of the Investment Approach.

The Welfare Reform programme of work included evaluating the impact of Welfare Reform against the package’s primary objective of getting people into work. The overall objectives of the evaluation are to assess:

* whether the Welfare Reform changes were implemented and operating as intended,
* what impacts selected Welfare Reform changes have had, and
* what worked and what did not work as a guide for future changes.

This report presents the findings of part of the overall evaluation: the effect of the changes from the point of view of Work and Income clients.

* 1. The client perspectives evaluation
     1. Purpose and objectives

The objectives of the client perspectives evaluation were to assess:

* Whether clients understood the Welfare Reform changes that affect them
* Whether Welfare Reform changes were operating as intended from the client perspective
* Whether clients believed Welfare Reform changes assisted them to progress towards independence.

The Welfare Reform changes have relevance to most Work and Income business and most of the clients engaged in the benefit system. Whether visible to the client or not, almost all will have been affected by one or another of the changes. Given the breadth of the changes, an evaluation scope, framework and work plan were developed in consultation with stakeholders.

The evaluation logic, shown on the following page, shows the top level evaluation questions, the data sources and methods for collecting data. The full evaluation scope and framework and provided in Appendix A.



* + 1. Data collection

The evaluation focused on four Work and Income sites for data collection: Avondale, Dargaville, Dunedin Central and Rotorua. The sites were selected in consultation with Ministry of Social Development stakeholders and Work and Income. Sites were considered for selection if the Welfare Reform changes had been fully implemented. The final sites selected offered a range of characteristics including both North and South Island offices, rural and urban locations, and populations with different ethnic compositions (Māori, Pacific and other ethnicities).

Data were collected through the methods shown in the table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Data collection method** | **Approach to sampling** | **Client responses** |
| **Post-interaction brief interviews:** Brief interviews with clients from a range of circumstances as they finished their appointments with Work and Income. | Clients were informed about the evaluation as they checked in with Work and Income staff on reception. Researchers then approached clients as they exited the office following their appointments. It should be noted that some clients exited while both researchers were engaged in interviews and so while every attempt was made to reach as many clients as possible, some may have attended appointments on the day of the site visit but not been offered the chance to participate in an interview.  Interviews were most often completed in a private room or quiet area close to the service centre lobbies. Some clients refused to participate, most commonly because they were hurrying to another appointment. | 100 completed:   * Mixture of clients across different service levels including clients attending Work and Income for the first time to apply for benefits. |
| **In-depth phone interviews with clients:** A sample was randomly selected from amongst clients of each service centre. Clients were contacted by phone and asked to participate in an in-depth, semi-structured interview. The interviews took between 20 minutes and one hour. | The Ministry of Social Development produced the sample of clients for in-depth interview recruitment. Two samples were randomly selected from Work and Income administrative data:   * Exited clients (30): Clients who experienced WSS and/or WFCM for at least three months and then exited benefit, half for employment and half for other reasons. * Current clients (90): 36 clients who experienced WSS and 54 clients who experienced WFCM for at least six months and are still on main benefit. The sample included clients with short, medium and long term benefit receipt. The sample included sole parents and clients who had been sanctioned.   Clients who had been contacted for any other research and evaluation projects in the last 12 months and those without phone numbers were excluded.  Researchers randomly sorted both samples and contacted clients in that order until the interview targets were reached. | 40 completed:   * 10 exited clients (5 to employment and 5 for other reasons) * 30 current clients, including 16 sole parents, two clients with health conditions and part-time work conditions |
| **Seminar and workshop feedback forms:** Work and Income seminar and workshop facilitators distributed feedback forms to participants following each session over a six-week period. Clients were asked to complete the forms, but participation was voluntary. All completed forms were placed in a sealed box and mailed to researchers at the conclusion of the data collection period. | | 215 completed:   * 141 seminar forms and 74 workshop forms from the four sites |

# Malatest_Red Pattern BarFindings about the Welfare Reform changes

|  |
| --- |
| Many clients had heard about and could identify the changes that were most well-reported in the media: pre-employment drug testing and changes to overseas travel. There was less awareness of other changes that were more targeted (such as social obligations) but generally clients were able to identify the changes that affected them. Clients heard about the changes from a variety of sources, including case managers, letters and phone calls from Work and Income, the media and their friends. |

* 1. Welfare Reform changes overview

The table below provides an overview of the Welfare Reform changes that clients were asked about for this project. Note that this is not a comprehensive list of all Welfare Reform changes.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Welfare Reform change | Brief description |
| Service model changes | Introduction of three services: Work Focused Case Management, Work Search Support and General Case Management. |
| New benefit categories | New categories (Jobseeker Support, Sole Parent Support and Supported Living Payment) were introduced to replace most of the old benefit types. |
| Pre-employment drug test | People receiving a main benefit with part-time or full-time work obligations are required to take and pass a drug test if they are referred to a job or training course where drug testing is part of the application process. |
| Social obligations for parents | Requirements introduced for people with dependent children to take reasonable steps to ensure that their children are receiving certain services (such as attending early childhood education from the age of three or school from the age of five or six, and enrolling with a general practitioner or medical practice that is part of a Primary Health Organisation). |
| Overseas travel changes | All people receiving a benefit are required to inform Work and Income before they leave New Zealand. Benefit payments automatically stop unless Work and Income have been advised and it has been agreed there are approved reasons that mean the payments can continue. |
| Work expectations for sole parents | Work expectations for sole parents changed |

* 1. The Welfare Reform changes

Few clients were familiar with or recognised the term ‘Welfare Reform’ so instead researchers asked clients about the changes they had seen or heard about to Work and Income in recent years. This approach generated a stronger response.

Clients most commonly recalled changes to overseas travel and pre-employment drug testing. These changes generated the most coverage in the media and were the most well-known amongst the clients interviewed.

“I think I saw a letter about it, but generally most of the knowledge is gained through the news.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)

“Friends often mention the travel overseas though.” (Post-interaction brief interview)

Interviewers prompted clients on some of the other changes introduced by Welfare Reform:

* **Benefit name changes:** Most clients had heard of the changes to benefit names. However, clients who had been with Work and Income longer tended to identify abbreviations for older names for benefits, such as “UB” for the unemployment benefit, “SB” for the sickness benefit and “IB” for the invalids benefit. Some simply said they received “the dole”. For example, one client said:

*“I’ve been on the unemployment for a couple of years now, on the sickness and invalids a few years before that.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

Some clients who had entered benefit more recently identified their benefit by its new name. For example:

*“Right now I’m back on the Jobseeker with WINZ at the moment waiting for a job to come up.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

One client expressed concern about the contrast between the new name of their benefit and how they saw themselves and their capacity to work. He said:

“It’s not much of a change really. Although it’s a bit awkward to be considered a job seeker when I’m only eligible to work a few hours.” (WFCM client with a health condition)

**Social obligations:** Few of the parents interviewed had heard of the social obligations or felt they were affected by the obligations when they were described. Those who had discussed their obligations with Work and Income felt that the requirements were simply part of their duties as parents, that they were meeting the obligations and would continue to do so regardless of Work and Income’s influence.

“Some of them - social obligations since I have a kid. Drug testing.” (Post-interaction brief interview)

One sole parent interviewed had difficulty meeting the obligations. He had a 14 year old child and was having difficulty preventing him from truanting. He reported that he had been warned by Work and Income to ensure that his son was attending school, so had begun taking his son to school and staying with him during the day. This approach had been discussed with his case manager.

“I had concerns about the social obligations. Wasn’t sure what they were expecting of me. I don’t know. My son, he’s high maintenance eh. I didn’t know how it would affect me. But as it is, they compromise and accommodate me as well. I had to get written letters and confirmations from the school and teachers to do with what’s going on with him. That made it easier for me to meet my son’s needs by giving my case manager confirmation of exactly what my situation is.” (WSS SPS with part-time work obligations)

* **Change in service types:** The services clients receive also changed with the introduction of the new service model. Most clients were able to describe the services they received, for example how often they saw their case manager or attended seminars. While some clients were able to give examples of how the service they received had changed over time, few said they had heard about changes to the intensity and types of services Work and Income provides to clients.
* **Work obligations for sole parents:** Most of the clients interviewed who were directly affected by work obligations for sole parents had heard of the changes. Nine of the eleven sole parents interviewed had part-time work obligations and all but one said that they had heard of part-time work obligations and understood their own work obligations.
  1. How clients heard about the changes

Clients said they had heard about the changes from a range of sources. Generally they identified sources of information across all the changes they had heard of, rather than identifying individual sources for information on individual changes. Clients often cited more than one source.

Work and Income was a major source of information for clients. Clients primarily spoke of discussing the changes that affected them with their case manager, but not discussing other changes that did not affect them. Current clients that had only heard of the changes that affected them, most often cited their case manager as their main source of information. For example, one client said:

*“Some of the changes. I talked to my case manager and she told me everything I needed to know, so no worries” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

Some other clients heard about the changes from Work and Income in other ways, including letters, automated phone messages and seminars. For example, one client said:

*“When I rang through, I heard it on the phone message.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

A high proportion of the clients interviewed who were no longer on a benefit said that they had only heard about the changes in a letter from Work and Income rather than through interaction with Work and Income. For example, clients said:

*“I got it in the mail when I was on the benefit.” (Exited client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“I think the main things were a couple of mail outs.” (Exited client, in-depth phone interview)*

Information sources outside of Work and Income fell into two other groups: the media, and word of mouth. Clients focused on word of mouth and the media as sources of information on pre-employment drug testing and the overseas travel changes, reflecting the higher publicity these changes received. For example, clients said:

*“Heard about them on the news.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“Just on the internet mainly.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“Just from what I’m hearing from my friends who are in the same situation as me.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

Interviewers asked clients how they would prefer to find out about future changes to Work and Income services. Clients most commonly said they would like to be notified by letter, but also mentioned phone calls, emails, discussion with their case manager, television advertising and online information. For example, clients said:

“Not sure, just tell me when we have meeting.” (JS full-time work obligations)

“Send out some information like they did last time I guess.” (WFCM no work obligations)

* 1. Understanding of the Welfare Reform changes

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| --- |
| Some clients had or still misunderstood the content and effect of some of the Welfare Reform changes. For example, some believed that they were not allowed to travel overseas at all. Others initially thought that they would be drug tested to determine whether they were eligible to receive a benefit, but later realised that was not the case. The concerns clients held when they first heard about the changes, such as concerns about privacy and their rights, had not eventuated. |

* + 1. Common misconceptions

Almost all clients felt that they understood the changes they had heard of and that applied to them. Most felt that they had been adequately informed of the changes and their consequences. For example, one client said:

“I do understand the changes, all geared up for getting people back into the workforce.” (WFCM health condition, part-time work obligations)

However, there were a number of common misconceptions around the content of the changes. These were most commonly around the effect of the overseas travel policy (with clients thinking that Work and Income clients would no longer be allowed to travel overseas) and the pre-employment drug testing policy (with clients thinking that all clients would be drug tested before being allowed the benefit). None of the clients interviewed had personally experienced the application of either of these policies and none of their concerns had eventuated. Their concern had diminished over time. For example, one client said:

“Yeah, I was concerned about them drug testing people. No – it didn’t really [happen], it was just my initial reaction.” (WSS full-time work obligations)

None of the clients’ concerns had eventuated. For example, one client said:

*“When I heard about the drug testing I was a bit worried, but it’s understandable why they changed it. But it didn’t impact me in the end.” (WFCM health condition, part-time work obligations)*

* 1. Understanding of their obligations

In discussing the service they received from Work and Income, almost all clients reported that they understood what Work and Income expected of them.

None of the clients interviewed in the post-interaction interviews or the in-depth interviews said that they did not understand what Work and Income expected of them. Descriptions focused on the requirement to be work ready and looking for work. Descriptions did not include detail on numbers of jobs or specific actions clients were required to take in searching for work but focused on the principle of always being available for work and always looking for work. For example, clients said:

“I just have to look for work - limited to part-time.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

“Turn up to appointments, be honest.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

Clients with a health condition or disability often felt that Work and Income understood their situation and their limited ability to work, although some clients noted that Work and Income needed to provide them with more support. Some wanted to ensure that Work and Income understood they had limits in their capacity to work and could not do too much. For example, clients said:

“I’ve been on the sickness benefit, so it’s just getting ready for when I do get healthy.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)

“Stay positive and stay on top of things really, they don’t push me because they know that there is only so much I can do.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)

“I don't think they understand that people like myself who can work on a limited basis need more support. It’s good they are looking at a work programme ... Abatement for SLP would encourage more work. That’s something that concerns me.” (Post-interaction brief interview client with a permanent health condition limiting his capacity to work)

# Individual’s journey with Work and Income: job seeker

**Obligations with WI**

* He goes into the WI offices once a month, but only when he has an appointment that WI set up.
* His appointments are with whichever Case Manager is available and changes most visits.
* He understands that he is expected to be actively looking for an applying for jobs, but is frustrated because there are limited job opportunities and those are only seasonal.
* He feels that he’s doing the best he can but that WI staff sometimes expect more from him than he can do in a small town.

**WR changes**

* He heard about the WR changes on the news and from WI, although notes that his case manager only told him about the changes that may have impacted him.
* He understands all of the changes and doesn’t think that any of the changes have affected him.
* His initial concerns about the drug testing never proved to be a problem and overall thinks the changes are positive.

***“I was concerned about the drug testing and the rest of it, but I suppose it’s compulsory for any job. It was a big concern, but I’ve gotten used to the idea now.”***

**Where he started**

* Started receiving support from WI in 2009 when he was made redundant from his painting job
* Dropped out of high school in the 3rd form and completed some on-the-job training as a spray painter and sand blaster
* Has two teenage children who live with their mother full-time.

***“Just to look around, but they recognise there’s seasonal work only. Encourage me to look for full-time, but it’s pretty hard when you’re just in a small place like this.***

***They expect too much sometimes, you’re trying your best you know.”***

**Where he is now**

* He is 49 years old and is currently on Jobseeker Support and is in the Work Search Support service He doesn’t have any future goals, he’s just hoping to get back into work in the next few weeks as soon as he gets a phone call from his boss
* He knows that he has limited options but he is constantly looking to see what work might be available to him.

# Malatest_Red Pattern BarChanges in client experience of Work and Income services

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| --- |
| The frequency of contact clients had with Work and Income varied across clients and service levels. Some clients that appeared to have similar circumstances reported very different levels of contact, as expected with different service levels. Clients appeared to be more positive about Work and Income where they had built a relationship with a single case manager.  Clients did not often link changes in interactions with Work and Income to Welfare Reform changes. Comments from clients who were able to compare the Work and Income service before and after the changes focused on increased contact with case managers and more requirements for evidence to support their entitlement.  Comments were mixed on whether the changes were positive or not, though many clients expressed their appreciation for the Work and Income support they received. Some clients held the view that the changes would prevent others from taking advantage of the benefit system. |

* 1. Changes to Work and Income services

Work and Income introduced three services in the Welfare Reform changes:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Service | Description | Target group |
| Work Focused Case Management  (WFCM) | Provides intensive one-to-one case management to support clients with full- and part-time work obligations, into sustainable employment | People likely to stay on a benefit for a long period of time |
| Work Search Support (WSS) | Provides less intensive one-to-many case management to assist those clients with full- and part-time work obligations who are closer to the labour market into sustainable employment | People who are more likely to move into employment quickly and are able to conduct their initial job search with a minimum of assistance |
| General Case Management (GCM) | Provides benefit administration and other assistance | People not in WFCM or WSS, or people who need more tailored interventions to suit their needs |

The matching of clients to services depends on a range of factors including their circumstances, the support they may need to find work (for example, training or other services as appropriate), and the capacity of the WSS and WFCM services at the site. More intensive support is offered to those people who are at risk of being on a benefit for a long period of time in line with the Investment Approach[[1]](#footnote-1). The service experienced by clients (for example, frequency of contact with their case manager or whether they consistently see the same case manager or a different case manager) can change as clients circumstances change and they move between services.

* 1. Contact with Work and Income

Clients varied in the frequency of their contact with Work and Income, even where clients appeared to be in similar personal circumstances. This variation is an expected result of the different levels of service (WFCM, WSS and GCM) Work and Income provides. Clients can move between different levels of service intensity according to their circumstances, support needs and capacity of the Work and Income site to provide the service.

Interviewed clients were divided in the frequency of their contact with Work and Income. Twelve of the current clients said they saw Work and Income monthly or more often, twelve once every two or three months, and six saying they saw Work and Income less often.

In interviews, some clients identified that they have to go in to a Work and Income office every month, even though they are unable to work due to having children under five, while they knew other clients in similar situations only visited Work and Income on an annual basis. For example, one client said:

“I have to go in every month [to talk about] just getting my CV ready and getting ready to find work when I’m ready once my daughter goes to school.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)

In the brief post-interaction interviews, clients were asked to identify the reason for their visit to Work and Income and what they mainly talked about with their case manager. Just under half of the clients spoken with (48%) had been asked to attend the appointment by Work and Income. The rest had requested their appointments. The most common reason clients said for asking to see Work and Income was to apply for other financial assistance. Reasons given for needing other financial assistance included medical costs, being unable to pay a power bill, rent or other bill, or not being able to afford food or other essentials. For example, one client said:

“Needed extra help with my power bill.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

Clients who said they had regular appointments at Work and Income’s request generally had them scheduled monthly. The appointments were generally used to discuss work readiness or specific job opportunities. For example, one client said:

“Go through current status and estimated work readiness: courses to take over voluntary.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

Other reasons for the clients’ visits to Work and Income included:

* Six clients had to make changes to their entitlement, for example due to receiving some income from overseas or just checking that they were receiving the correct amount.
* Two clients were cancelling their benefit because they had gained employment.
* Two clients had their benefit sanctioned. One said he had attended to discuss “non-compliance with obligations.” The other said he talked to the case manager about “getting a job and getting the benefit back on track.”
* Six clients wanting help with an employment opportunity wanted some funding to attend an interview or move to a job. For example, one client said:

“Got a job through MSD and had to fundraise things.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

* Ten clients were attending Work and Income for job searching activities, such as catching up on the available opportunities or talking to a work broker. For example, one said:

“[I came to see the] work broker, discussing what work opportunities are out there.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

Just over one-third of post-interaction clients said that they discussed work with a case manager, for example:

“Yes. We talked about a few roles opening up.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

“Yes, with my case manager; also went through job sheets and looked at jobs on the board.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

While many clients said work was not the main reason they came to Work and Income on the day, some discussed work with their case managers anyway. For example, one client said:

“Talked about - on shortlist for a job at the moment. His advice helped get here. Talked about getting spectacles grant for getting back to work.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

In interviews, a higher proportion of the clients reported that they usually attended Work and Income only when they were asked to come for an appointment. For example, clients said:

*“Twice a month usually when they ask me to come in.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“Generally they ask me [to come in], it’s about an hour’s drive for me.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“[Work and Income] call me in about once every three months to come in for a seminar or a catch up.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

In interviews, messages about job searching and work readiness were most commonly recalled with a secondary focus on budgets and financial awareness. For example, clients said:

*“Just keep trying to find part-time work and they really ask me to demonstrate how I’ve been looking for work every time I go in to see them.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“Just checking on my well-being and helping me develop my CV and slowly getting into work.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“Always talking about the budget and making sure I have one in place.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

* 1. Changes in expectations and contact

The interviewed clients had mixed views on whether Work and Income’s expectations of them had changed in recent years. It is important to note that after the Welfare Reform changes clients may be expected to still receive the same service, or to receive more intensive service, depending on whether they moved between services (see the table in section 3.1). For example, clients in WSS may receive the same level of support before and after the changes.

Some clients felt that there had not been any changes in the Work and Income service and that it was more or less the same as they had been receiving for some time. For example, one client said:

“Stayed pretty much the same. Compared to last time I was on benefit, if anything it’s a little friendlier, they actually seem to listen. It didn’t seem like they used to do that. They used to just go with the flow. Now they actually listen and take an interest. I think it’s good.” (WSS with full-time work obligations)

Some clients, even those on the more intensive WFCM, thought the service had not changed much though noted that there was more contact.

“It’s alright, it hasn’t really changed much, just a bit annoying coming in every month especially when I can’t do anything since [my daughter’s] under five.” (WFCM sole parent, no work obligations)

For other clients the interviews offered an opportunity to reflect on the service they received and how it had changed over the years. Their initial reaction was that Work and Income service was the same as it had always been, however on reflection they were able to identify changes. For example, one client said:

“I don’t think so, they do update me with any changes. I see them probably about the same amount. I guess they do expect more.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)

“Yep [it has changed], they expect me to get off my \*\*\* and get more work, but that’s about it really.” (WFCM with part-time work obligations)

Other clients were clear that there had been definite changes. Their descriptions of the changes fell into three broad areas:

* **Expectations of attending Work and Income appointments and seminars:** Some clients said that they were required to attend Work and Income service centres for appointments, seminars or other activities on a more regular basis. For example, one client said:

“It’s helpful - I like being in regular contact, working together on what's suitable. My case manager understands my strengths and my background. It’s not about working for McDonalds. They are more helpful than they were previously. It’s not just coming in, signing something, carrying on. We have to go through a lot and it’s changed a lot.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

*“I have to go to all these seminars, some I’ve been to twice now. I don’t blame them, they need to stay on top of people and make sure they’re looking for work, but there are those that are already looking for work and doing everything they can.” (WSS client)*

Some clients did feel that the level of contact with Work and Income was not reasonable given their situations. One client reported that she was being transferred from the “sickness benefit” to Jobseeker Support and felt that, as she had provided medical certificates, she should not be expected to look for work or attend regular appointments. The level of service clients receive is based on their work capacity as determined by a doctor and recorded on the client’s medical certificates. The client said:

“The decision has been made from the top and there is nothing she can do to change that. WINZ seems not to understand her situation fully and insist on monthly appointments.” (Post-interaction brief interview, WSS client with a health condition)

* **Expectations of job searching activity:** Some clients felt that Work and Income clients expected them to be doing more to look for work than they had in the past. For example, one client said:

“I think they do expect a bit more but also that they’re offering more to you.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)

“Keep focusing on how jobs are going, applying for jobs, getting more experience.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)

“Basically they talk about part-time. Yeah they just say keep trying because in my situation there’s not much out there for me.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)

* **Expectations of providing evidence:** Others felt they saw Work and Income about the same amount but that Work and Income expected more evidence of their job-searching activity:

“It was fine, just had to explain myself clearly and bring in a lot of paperwork to prove my situation then it was easy.” (WSS with full-time work obligations)

“They always make me show how I’m spending my money and I know how to budget now.”(Post-interaction brief interview client)”

“Work obligations contradict medical certificates and WINZ demanding medical reports based on care workers’ opinions increases costs.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

The increases in evidence required by Work and Income were viewed positively by many clients as they would prevent other people from taking advantage of the system. The clients interviewed felt that while they were justified in receiving support from Work and Income there were other clients who were taking advantage of the support available from Work and Income. Providing evidence and continuing to receive support showed that their benefit receipt was legitimate.

“It’s good – there are lots of people who abuse the system. Even if it makes it harder for you. Getting proof costs - but it's a good thing, so people can't abuse the system.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)

“The level of accountability is fair and there seems to be a human concern, as opposed to bureaucratic.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

Changes in expectations and requirements were often not attributed to clients’ case managers, but instead to higher levels of management, or Work and Income as a whole.

*“Yeah, Work and Income expect more from me now.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“Most definitely [been a change in what Work and Income expect], they are getting people out there and more motivated.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

Clients were mixed between those who saw the same case manager, or a different one each time, which is expected under the different levels of service available.

*“[I just see] whoever is available and who’s working.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“I see the same person every time.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“Normally speak with same one, but have spoken with others too.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

* 1. Work and Income’s understanding of clients’ situations

For clients, it was important that Work and Income understood their situations and they did not have to explain their situations repeatedly whenever they spoke to a case manager. Having one case manager as a single point of contact reduced the re-explaining the client had to do. This may have been one of the reasons why clients were generally more positive about Work and Income when they had a single case manager.

*“More sticking with the same case manager, because when you got to a new case manager, it can really be a challenge getting them to understand your situation and what’s happening to you. They’re more willing to help you out if they understand your situation.” (Exited WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

Overall, the majority of the current clients interviewed felt that Work and Income understood their situations. For example, one client with social obligations commented that they felt Work and Income understood their situation and had been flexible to accommodate their circumstances.

“Yes, they have been talking about getting her into kindy. But my daughter has a bit of a speech problem that we’re working on with the Ministry of Education, so I don’t feel comfortable putting her into kindy yet. They understand that and so I don’t have to do it." (WFCM – Sole Parent Support with no work obligations)

Some differences in the way staff treated clients were attributed to recent changes to Work and Income.

*“When I go into WINZ now, I feel like a person, not just feeling degraded when you got to them and them to help with food and uniforms for your child. They used to make you feel so low, but I just look at them and think, if it wasn’t for us, you wouldn’t have a job anyway.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

“They improved in: the way they talk, interact. Before they were belittling, now feels like they are here to help. They would make me feel like I was trying to rob them. Now they say you do this and we'll do that for you - it's fair.” (Post-interaction brief client interview)

Not all comments were positive though and a small proportion of the clients interviewed felt that Work and Income did not show enough compassion for their situations.

“There is so much stigma attached to WINZ and actually going there and asking for help. Sometimes the people you face – your case manager or work broker – just don’t give you enough compassion for people that are already feeling really shit.” (WFCM, health condition, part-time work obligations)

* 1. Self-service

Only a small number of clients were observed to be using the self-service kiosks during the onsite visits and this was consistent with the small number of clients that mentioned the kiosks and online services during the interviews. Although some clients mentioned a desire to increase the volume of electronic communication (e.g. email alerts), only one client noted that they made use of the kiosks:

“I think the self-service kiosks have been great – easy to use and means I can stop in and look for what jobs might be available.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)

Although some clients would prefer to move to an electronic mode of communication, there are barriers that some clients may not be able to overcome, as noted by another client:

“I think the whole online situation doesn’t work very well, needing to have a cell phone to get online, it’s just not an option for a lot of beneficiaries who can’t even afford a phone.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)

# Individual’s journey with Work and Income: Sole parent

**Where she started**

* Completed school certificate
* Signed up for the benefit for the first time when she was 31 as she was pregnant and had separated from her partner who was supporting her
* She was renting a house at the time and was not struggling
* Her goals at that point were to have a healthy baby and then to try and get back into the workforce
* High risk of long term benefit receipt at entry

***“I was pregnant and I separated from my partner who was supporting us, so I needed some help.”***

**WR changes**

* She was advised of some of the changes in person when she attended the seminar
* She thinks that the changes don’t affect her and so she doesn’t even think about them really
* She would prefer to find out about any future changes by letter

**Where she is now**

* She has two children and has been on the benefit for the last 12 years. Her youngest child is between 5 and 14 years old
* She in the WSS service with part-time work obligations
* She’s working 10 hours a week now and feels that being back in the workforce has really changed her life as she doesn’t have to depend on WI anymore
* She is just focused on working away and taking it one day at a time

**Case Managers**

* She feels that the case managers do not listen to her. She thinks that they understand her situation, but only because she explained it to them over and over until they did understand

***“… They sort of pushed me to look for another job even though I had just got one, so I just had to tell them straight that the other ones were just too many hours. I’m a solo parent and I just can’t work that many hours.”***

**Interactions with WI**

* She has not been in to a WI office for over a year now and hasn’t talked to a case manager “in ages”. The last time she was there she had to participate in a seminar
* She found a part-time job about a year and a half ago and feels that WI did not help her find the job, she feels that she found it herself. As soon as she found the job WI were suddenly contacting her all of the time and rushing around trying to get her to find another job; to get a job with at least 30 hours a week
* She told WI that she’s a solo parent and she just can’t work that many hours so eventually WI just stopped trying to make her and she hasn’t really heard from WI since
* She feels that she sees WI less now, but despite that, that WI do still expect more from her
  1. Obligation failures and benefit sanctions

Only five of the 140 clients spoken to in the evaluation remembered having their benefit suspended or reduced.

All of these clients said that they had quickly contacted Work and Income to correct the error or fulfill the requirements to restore their benefits. For example, clients said:

*“We ended up working it out and I explained that I never got the letter and so it was reduced but then they put it back up.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“It was quite frustrating, but once they talked me through it I knew that I was in the wrong.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

The reasons for clients reporting that their benefits were suspended or reduced were mixed and included not reporting income and not attending appointments or seminars. All clients that had their payments suspended felt that although they were initially frustrated, and in some cases angry, once they understood why their benefit had been affected they felt that it was fair for Work and Income to do so. For example, clients said:

*“I called to change an appointment because I was sick, which they said was fine and changed, but then they tried to call me – which I didn’t know because it was a private number – and I didn’t answer, so they said they would cut the benefit in half because they couldn’t reach me. But then in the end I called them and explained and they didn’t end up taking any money off, they just threatened to.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

Only one client reported that a sanction motivated them to find work, all other cases were situations where the client felt they were already doing everything they could to find work or were not in a situation where they could work (e.g. looking after young children).

While most clients did not feel that the sanctions had helped them or encouraged them in their work search, it was clear that application of the sanctions resulted in the client making contact with Work and Income as soon as they were noticed.

*“I missed out on a week or so of income, but I think it was back-dated.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“No impact on me looking for a job at all really – I felt a bit demoralised afterwards.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

One client did feel that the sanctions had pushed him towards work.

“It really did, it pushed me to look for a job and then I found a job straight away.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)

# Individual’s journey with Work and Income: Sanctioned sole parent

**WI expectations**

* She feels that WI expects more from her (e.g. attending seminars) but feels she is already doing everything she can to find work
* She has now attended all of the seminars at least once, so believes there is little to be gained from attending a third time.

**Case Managers**

* She feels that although the case managers listen to what she has to say, because she has a different case manager every time, they don’t understand her situation.
* She doesn’t like having to explain her situation to a new person every time.

**Where she started**

* Completed a Bachelor’s degree in social practice
* Was initially on a benefit after she finished studying, but did manage to find full-time work
* Moved back to the benefit in 1997 when her daughter was born as she had no support from a partner or her family
* Moved into a Housing New Zealand home

**WR changes**

* She was advised of the changes by letter and they were further explained to her during a seminar.
* She does not feel that any of the changes have affected her and just thinks that WI make laws and changes when they feel like it.

**Benefit sanctioned**

* Her benefit was sanctioned once for a short period of time as a result of her not attending a seminar.
* She received a letter asking her to come in for a seminar, but as it was a time that she couldn’t make, she called and asked for it to be rescheduled. WI advised her that she would receive a new letter with a new seminar time, however, the next letter she remembered receiving was a notice of the benefit being sanctioned. She did not recall receiving an initial letter warning of the sanction.
* She was able to work it out with a case manager when she explained that she never received the adjusted seminar appointment letter
* She was scared by the sanction because she wasn’t sure how she was going to put food on the table.
* She did believe that WI sent her a letter and as such felt that the sanction was fair. She did not feel it encouraged her to find work as she was already doing everything she could to find a job.

***“Take whatever job is out there … but I went and studied because I want to do something that I’m passionate about, not just taking any job to please them. I’ve been told to get a part-time job, and yeah, it’s extra money, but I need a full-time job, so that’s what I’m looking for.”***

***“I’m always looking for work anyway, I look for work every day. It scared me, because I was wondering how I was going to put food in my cupboard.”***

**Where she is now**

* Currently on Jobseeker Support (WSS) with part-time work obligations although identifies herself as just on a benefit
* 40 year old single mother who has been receiving a benefit for 18 years in a row without work. Her youngest child is now older than 14.
* Although WI are encouraging her to take part-time work, she is focused on finding full-time employment that is close to home
* She keeps missing out on jobs to more experienced candidates
* She feels that WI are not helping her make progress
  1. Workshop and seminar feedback

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| Most clients were positive about workshops and seminars and identified the components they found most useful, including assistance with tools such as cover letters and CVs, although some held negative views. Clients with both positive and negative views made suggestions for improvement. |

Clients completed 74 workshop and 141 seminar feedback forms across all four sites. Work and Income workshop and seminar facilitators selected the appropriate form to use for the session they were running.

Seminars are held at Work and Income service centres frequently. They are made up of two parts: an information session outlining details of each of the workshop topics with time for participants to complete a self-evaluation questionnaire relating to each of these topics and a one hour job search session.

Workshops run for a minimum length of 90 minutes and a maximum length of three hours and are made up of an inter-active workshop topic followed by a one hour job search session. Clients receiving the Work Search Support service are expected to attend a workshop every two to four weeks, however, they may attend these more frequently if they have a large number of workshops highlighted as being beneficial for them to attend.

Clients’ answers on the feedback forms are presented in the following sections.

* + 1. Seminars

Clients who completed the seminar feedback forms were asked to record the number of other seminars they had attended. More than one-third of the clients who completed forms were attending their first seminar.

Clients who had attended seminars before had most commonly attended three or four others (35%) and just under one-quarter (23%) were attending their second or third seminar. Just over one-fifth (21%) had attended seven or more other seminars (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Number of seminars clients had attended in the year before the one today.**

Overall most clients (80%) felt that they knew what to do to find a job, with the proportions similar across both clients attending their first seminar and those who had attended one or more other seminars (82% and 87% respectively) (Figure 2). A smaller proportion of people at their first seminars said they learned something new than people who were attending subsequent seminars (58% compared to 72%).

The two groups, clients attending their first seminar and clients who had been to seminars before, were similar in whether they felt that the seminar they attended helped them get closer to finding employment (40% and 36% respectively).

“Coming to these seminar's has made more be more confident in looking for work and also staff are willing help us look for work and even go the extra mile :) Happy as client.” (Seminar feedback form)

That such a high proportion of clients felt they knew what to do to find a job may in part explain why a much smaller proportion thought that attending seminars had helped them get closer to finding a job.

**Figure 2. Clients’ views on the seminars they attended.**

Overall the majority of clients were positive about the seminars. Clients’ comments on the best part of the seminar varied. Some commented on the types of information that they found most useful, including:

* Information on Work and Income products and services they may be eligible for and the documents and information they needed to bring to their appointments to apply for a benefit

“[The best part was] a checklist of what I need to bring in and what/how much I may be entitled to.” (Seminar feedback form)

* Learning about the tools available to help with their job search, such as websites advertising job opportunities and agencies.

“[The best part was] telling us the websites which are useful for looking for jobs.” (Seminar feedback form)

* Assistance with their CVs and cover letters

“[The best part was] deciding to do a cover page.” (Seminar feedback form)

* Just learning about the overall process of applying for jobs.

“[The best part was] knowing how to apply and search for jobs.” (Seminar feedback form)

Other clients made positive comments on the ways information was delivered in the seminars. Most often clients commented that they liked the DVD presentation and the quality of the speakers. Some clients commented on the value of the group aspect of the seminars, commenting that the best part of the seminar was being able to tell other people about their situations, hearing what others were doing and participating in the group activities. A small number of clients commented that the success stories of other Work and Income clients who had found jobs were encouraging.

“[The best part was] seeing how many people are helped by WI to find a job.” (Seminar feedback form)

A smaller proportion of clients made negative comments about the seminars and about the Work and Income service as a whole. Common issues amongst the few negative clients were clients who were not happy with the seminars and felt that they did not learn any new information. They thought they had been to too many other seminars with similar content.

All clients, positive and negative, were also asked to record any suggestions for how the seminars could be improved. Most clients did not comment, or said that nothing needed to be improved. Suggestions from those who did comment made diverse comments about both delivery and content.

As noted above, some clients enjoyed the group aspect of the seminars. However, others commented that they would prefer to have the information tailored to their individual situations or delivered in a one-on-one session with a case manager.

“Talk individually to people about the type of work they are looking for. Not in front of everyone.” (Seminar feedback form)

“It would be nice to speak one on one cos people are shy.” (Seminar feedback form)

One client requested more detail on the topic covered in the seminar:

“Need to include more knowledge about the topic. We learned only few obvious thing which most many already know.” (Seminar feedback form)

Another client found the DVD frustrating.

“The entirety - video stupid. It basically told us how great it would be to have a job.” (Seminar feedback form)

Other comments included the travel cost associated with attending seminars, that there should be more visuals and that they should be shorter or timed better.

* + 1. Workshops

Only a small proportion of the 74 clients who completed workshop feedback forms were attending their first workshops (13%). Most had been to between one and six other workshops (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Number of workshops attended in the last year before the one today.**

Overall, almost all clients were positive or neutral about the workshops. As with seminars, the majority of clients (60%) agreed that they learned something new in the workshop, that it was useful for them, and that attending the workshop was worthwhile. Only small numbers of clients disagreed with any of the statements, though smaller proportions agreed that Work and Income helped them search for a job (47%) or that the seminar helped them get closer to finding a job (51%) (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Clients’ views on the workshop they attended.**

Clients who completed the workshop feedback forms recorded the type of workshop they attended. The workshops with feedback were:

* Working well with others (19)
* Searching for work (16) and other job search workshops (4)
* Cover letter, job interview, CV and moving into employment (19)
* Work Search Assessment (10)
* Not recorded (6).

Some differences were identified across the responses for the different workshop types. Clients were most positive about the cover letter and job interview workshops, with most (15 of 19 clients) saying that they would recommend it to their friends, that they learned new things (15 of 19 clients) and that attending was worthwhile (14 of 19) and useful (14 of 19). Two clients said the best things about the workshop were:

“Having clear understanding about cover letter to support me with my job.” (Workshop feedback form)

“Learning how to go about various ways of attaining work and acquiring new skills.” (Workshop feedback form)

The ‘working well with others’ workshops were also highly rated with 10 of 19 clients reporting that it helped them get closer to finding a job, 13 of 19 clients saying they would recommend it to their friends, 13 of 19 found it useful and 12 of 19 found the workshop helpful and learned new things.

Only two of ten clients who completed ‘work search’ assessment feedback forms felt the workshop got them closer to finding a job and only four of ten would recommend it to their friends. Despite these views, the majority still said they found the workshop useful, worthwhile and that they learned new things (six of ten clients).

Clients were least positive about the searching for work and other job search workshops. Only eight of the 20 clients found the workshop useful, learned new things or felt it got them closer to finding a job, and only nine of 20 felt that attending was worthwhile. There were few suggestions for improving the searching for work workshops. Two clients commented that they felt the workshop could be split into different sessions for people with different levels of knowledge.

“It could be split into beg/med/advanced so it is more specific to the needs of the attendants.” (Workshop feedback form)

Being given a list of available jobs suitable to their experience was also suggested by two clients.

“Given a list of jobs with contacts would be nice.” (Workshop feedback form)

“Maybe some suggestions for my particular industry.” (Workshop feedback form)

Overall, as with seminars, the majority of comments were positive.

“Excellent instructor and excellent and very useful information.” (Workshop feedback form)

“This is a worthwhile meeting to find out relevant employer to employee rights and responsibilities.” (Workshop feedback form)

One-third of the clients who completed forms had done job-search activities in the workshop (31%), evenly spread across the different workshop types. Those who did job search activities applied for an average of four jobs each and two-thirds (61%) felt that Work and Income had been helpful in helping them search.

# Malatest_Red Pattern BarThe effect of the Welfare Reform changes in helping clients into work

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| Few clients stated that the Welfare Reform changes they could identify had assisted them to progress towards employment. However, they often gave examples of things they had done with Work and Income that appeared to be steps towards work such as preparing a CV and applying for a specific job. |

Few clients were able to make a comparison between old and new service levels. They were not able to connect changes in their experience of Work and Income, which had happened at different times, with Welfare Reform. Almost all understood Work and Income’s expectations and the focus on work but often focused on the effect the changes had in preventing people from abusing the system.

* 1. Making progress

The concept of making progress was different across the clients interviewed. Some were able to compare their current situations to where they were when they started with Work and Income and felt they had taken steps forward, even if they had not yet entered employment.

*“Definitely [helped me make progress]. Applied for a job last week. Hopefully I’ll get an interview. Did a seminar on interviews and CV preparation. They definitely helped. Sending me on interviews and things helps. Can’t think of anything else they could do, can’t expect them to do everything.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

Some clients felt like they were stuck in the same position. For example, clients said:

*“I actually think that I’m just stuck in a rut right now, it’s just depressing right now.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“Progress would be getting a job. I mean landing interviews is getting halfway there, but I’m just losing out to more experienced people.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)*

Other clients did not recognise any progress and would not see anything less than gaining employment as progress. Some said they had not made any progress, despite giving examples that might be described as steps towards employment such as preparing a CV or unsuccessfully applying for a job.

* 1. Views of clients who exited to employment

Interviewed clients who had exited benefit tended to have a higher level of education and were on the benefit for a shorter period of time. Most exited clients were aware of at least some of the changes, but many had only heard of the headline changes (i.e. drug-testing, overseas travel). While most exited clients did not feel that the changes had impacted them, some did identify them as motivators. No specific changes were mentioned as the reason for exited clients moving into employment and the main positive support they had received was through their case manager.

*“The changes definitely motivated me to get a job.” (Exited WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

Despite many clients not attributing their success in obtaining employment to the Welfare Reform changes, most of the clients who exited to employment provided examples of how their case manager’s support had helped them move into employment. For example, two clients said:

*“The main help was getting to the job interviews, they always helped me get from A to B. They helped me find jobs and find what might be available.” (Exited WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“It has been great to have WINZ as a backup, I feel much more secure.” (Exited WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

Some of the exited clients that were interviewed felt that they did not receive the right level of support and that they instead moved back into employment as a result of their own actions.

*“If you show any sign of doing things yourself, they just don’t care – they just want you to get a job cleaning and to go nowhere. There is a serious lack of help for anyone that doesn’t want to go and get a job with/for someone else. No targeted resources for people trying to start their own business and become self-employed.” (Exited WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

*“I found personally my experience quite unpleasant at times, coming in for my meetings. I found them very unsupportive and they felt the amount of jobs that I had applied for wasn’t good enough. Quite focused on the number and telling me that I needed to broaden my selection of jobs, even though I was already applying for everything that I was qualified for.” (Exited WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

# Individual’s journey with Work and Income: Client engaged with education

**Where he started**

* Fresh out of high school he was “a bit over study”, but couldn’t find any work and needed some money, so signed up for the benefit
* His parents were helping support him, but he needed more help
* He joined the benefit at the start of 2013 and had a low LLTBR this requires an explanation rating and full-time work obligations

**WR changes**

* He heard about the changes through a couple of different mail outs, but doesn’t think the changes really affected him because he was already looking for work.
* He’s not fussed about the changes and feels that they apply to other people more than himself.

***“They didn’t really affect me, I was already looking for work.”***

**Where he is now**

* He was on the benefit for under a year (WFCM) and he is now continuing his studies at Otago Polytechnic
* He is receiving the student allowance and is feeling financially secure
* He is looking forward to finishing his studies and getting into some full-time work

**Help from WI**

* He was not sure what he was going to do, but looking back he feels that WI definitely helped him get into Polytechnic.
* The Career Advisor helped him decide what he was going to do and then once he had decided to go to Polytechnic, the Career Advisor set up an interview that essentially resulted in him being admitted into the course.
* He felt that WI helped him make progress by setting up the interview and introducing him to people and new opportunities.

***“They definitely helped me get into the polytech, I can’t remember her name, but a career adviser of some kind hooked me up with an interview that essentially resulted in me getting into the polytech.”***

# Malatest_Red Pattern BarGeneral comments on Work and Income

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| Overall, clients made a variety of comments about Work and Income services. Most clients were positive about the support they received and about their case managers and others said not much had changed for them. Negative comments were generally linked to a specific concern or incident that had led to dissatisfaction with the Work and Income service. |

Interviewed clients made a variety of comments on Work and Income services, from very positive to very negative. Some clients expressed gratitude for the support that they had received from Work and Income in what had been difficult times for them.

*“WINZ are really helping me out right now, I’ve had a significant reduction in income and they’re really helping me out. I think they’ve changed a lot in the last few years, now it’s really like they want to help me, not just that they’re giving money out of their own pockets. They’ve been really awesome. My goals are just getting healthy and getting back into work.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)*

Often clients associated positive outcomes with the efforts of their case manager and negative outcomes with Work and Income as a whole. They saw their case manager as making efforts on their behalf but being constrained by the rules of the system.

“Everyone up here [at Work and Income] tries, they just can’t do everything.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)

“No, no complaints with the case managers, they’re just doing their jobs.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)

“Not really, the case manager was nice, informative, lovely, she doesn't pressure me. If I had a hard case manager it would be different. I was with a hard one before. I complained as they were trying to force me into a different path. I don't have to see them anymore. My case manager is really informative – she said I shouldn't have been pressured.” (Post-interaction brief interview)

In brief interviews with clients as they left their appointments, one-third of clients made unprompted positive comments about Work and Income with a smaller proportion making more critical comments.

“Too many people are negative about WINZ, need to change people's attitudes since WINZ is here to help.” (WFCM client, Supported Living Payment)

Clients with negative views of Work and Income services generally spoke of a specific incident that had left them feeling that they had been treated unfairly or dissatisfaction with a particular aspect of the Work and Income service. For example, one client was having difficulty with the 52 week reapplication process and being required to provide medical information.

*“WINZ have unrealistic expectations e.g. can demand medical appointments. Appointment 9:30am - waiting one hour. They need to be self-service. This is my sixth 52 week review since January 14 due to the loss of information. A case worker phoned my doctor to discuss my personal issues without my consent, then informed me that my doctor agreed with him that it was ‘all in my head.’” (WFCM client, Health condition or disability)*

*“Don't they know that it upsets the household? Last week I had an issue with MSD, they requested money from my account but should have got permission first. I talked about it yesterday. I put a complaint in. Housing NZ never did that, they always requested first. I haven't heard back yet. They need to take a look at how they're doing things.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)*

Other examples include frustration with a perception of a lack of consistency and feeling uncertain about when they would or would not be able to get extra assistance from Work and Income.

“Help when help is needed. Nothing specific, just help when I go in and see them. Sometimes they help and sometimes they don’t, it just isn’t consistent.” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)

“They should be taking cases individually, being a bit more flexible.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)

Some clients were not happy that they had not obtained employment and that Work and Income was not helping them make progress.

“I reckon, if they really want to kick us off the benefit they should help us get the jobs.” (WSS client, in-depth phone interview)

“Not really, I don’t find they give you much help at all in that area [help to make progress towards work].” (WFCM client, in-depth phone interview)

Overall, positive comments from clients appreciating the Work and Income service were more common than negative comments.

“I’m impressed by the WINZ/MSD service. It’s professional, respecting, cautious and clear.” (Post-interaction brief interview client)

# Individual’s journey with Work and Income: Transition to work and return to benefit

**WR changes**

* He heard about the changes on a letter that was sent out.
* He feels that the changes really motivated him to get a job. His whole family are all on the benefit and so he didn’t want to live like they were, he wanted to get off the benefit.
* Overall he feels that the changes are a good idea and that they really help people take action

**Where he is now**

* He is now back on Jobseeker Support (WFCM service) as a result of the strong New Zealand dollar impacting available jobs in the logging export industry (first in first out) and is still actively looking for work
* Continuing to live in the far north even though there aren’t any jobs up here because his son loves it and he does not want to force him to relocate
* He is back with his son’s mother and is trying to make it work with her and her children

***“In a way they helped me find the job at the port, because it was part-time at first out there and then they managed to help me move into full-time there.”***

**Case Managers**

* He was on benefit for two years before he was able to find full-time employment.
* He feels that his Case Managers really helped him transition from part-time to full-time work and that he was able to get off benefit with their help.
* He feels that WI and helped him a lot, helping him when he really needed it and helping ever since.

**WI expectations**

* He has contact with WI around once every three weeks right now, going in to take part in seminars and to get help searching for jobs.
* He really feels like he’s doing everything he can to get back into work but that there just aren’t any jobs up north.

***“It was a good change I suppose, helps people get off their backsides and get out there to find a job – just like I did, it helped me get into work, but I just lost the job because of the downturn.***

***No work available up here, but my son really loves it, so it’s hard to move down to Auckland where there is more work since it will impact him. WINZ have helped me out a lot really, they’ve helped me when I really needed them and have been helping me ever since.****”*

**Where he started**

* Dropped out of high school when his father died as he was the oldest of seven kids
* Has a lot of on-the-job experience and has completed some farming and painting courses through polytechnic
* He moved onto benefit when he found out at 28 that he had a son who was a year and a half old who the mother was no longer able to support
* He was working part-time when he started the benefit two years ago but had a high LLTBR

# Malatest_Red Pattern BarConclusion

The Welfare Reform changes aimed to encourage independence and personal responsibility, primarily through paid employment. Welfare Reform introduced significant changes in Work and Income’s approach to working with clients by allocating them different services depending on their circumstances, support needs, and risk of being on a benefit for a long period of time in line with the Investment Approach. Clients can therefore experience different levels of service intensity over the course of their involvement with Work and Income. As a result some clients included in the study were, correctly, receiving the same level of employment service or support as before the Welfare Reform changes depending on the service or services they had been allocated to over the period.

Clients often judged their progress by whether they had entered employment or not and did not see themselves as having made progress if they had not achieved employment. Although few clients stated that the Welfare Reform changes had assisted them to progress towards employment, they did give examples of things they had done with Work and Income that appeared to be steps towards work. For example clients described Work and Income’s assistance with preparing CVs and applying for specific jobs.

The changes also aimed to make better use of client information in order to provide services that could best help clients move towards and ultimately into employment. Requirements for more information from clients were often seen as positive as they would prevent others from taking advantage of the system and demonstrated that they were themselves justified in receiving support. Some clients felt that the work expectations were too high given their situations, the employment opportunities in their area or their capacity to work.

The evaluation findings emphasised the importance of the relationship between the client and their case manager and the potential effects of having clients speak with different case managers. Overall many clients made positive comments about the support they received from their case managers including those who did not identify significant changes in the service.

**Where to from here?**

All of the changes that were introduced as part of Welfare Reform are now embedded into the processes, practices and culture of Work and Income. The Ministry is continuing to monitor outcomes and looking for opportunities to improve the support and services it delivers to clients in line with the principles of the Investment Approach. Evaluating Welfare Reform is an on-going programme of work.

# Appendix A: Evaluation scope and framework

The table below provides an outline of the evaluation scope.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Objective | In scope | Out of scope |
| Client understanding of welfare reform | * Client understanding of the changes that affect them * Sources of information clients have used for Welfare Reform changes | * Assessing the process used to communicate with clients |
| Operation of Welfare Reform changes | * Client experiences of the services they should have received under the Welfare Reform changes, for example:   + Have they had the interactions with Work and Income that are expected under the policy?   + Have they noticed changes in their routine interactions with Work and Income (staff attitudes, etc)? * Client views on their interactions with Work and Income staff that are expected to have changed as a result of Welfare Reform * Match between client expectations of changes and the reality of their implementation * Client barriers to meeting the new expectations introduced in Welfare Reform * Client experience of new case management approaches * Client views on the self-assessment tool | * Case manager views on whether clients have received certain services * Extent to which the changes have been implemented at a site as a whole * Adequacy of staff skills, capability and support to deliver the Welfare Reform changes * Case manager understanding of changes * Assessment of Work and Income processes and policy * Client views on Work and Income processes and policy not affected by Welfare Reform changes * Challenges in implementing the Welfare Reform changes |
| Whether clients believe Welfare Reform changes have assisted them to make progress towards independence | * Client views on which of the Welfare Reform changes have:   + Helped them make progress towards work   + Hindered them or made no difference in their progress towards work * Client views on the effectiveness of seminars * Other assistance that clients expected or wanted but are not receiving * Perception of the work-first approach and its effect on client behaviour * Client experience and understanding of obligation failures * Client views on the intensity of the service they are receiving | * Analysis of administrative data on outcomes for aggregate groupings of clients * Client views on effectiveness of Work and Income business not affected by Welfare Reform changes * Cost-benefit analysis of changes |

The top level evaluation questions shown in the evaluation logic were underpinned by a series of sub-questions. The evaluation questions and sub-questions have a focus on the changes made by Welfare Reform. Some clients who have been involved with Work and Income since before the Welfare Reform changes that affect them were implemented were able to compare their experience before and after the changes. Other clients who have become involved with Work and Income were not be able to make that comparison so questions will focus on the aspect of service that was expected to have changed under Welfare Reform.

The table below demonstrates how the evaluation questions were tailored to the different client groups.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Evaluation question | Sub-questions | Question for pre-WR implementation clients | Question for newer clients |
| How have clients’ interactions with Work and Income staff changed with the Welfare Reform changes? | Do clients perceive that their case managers’ expectations have changed? In what ways? | Do clients perceive that their case managers’ expectations have changed? In what ways? | What do clients perceive their case managers’ expectations to be?  Are client perceptions of their case managers’ expectations consistent with Welfare Reform policy? |
| Have clients changed their behaviour as a result of the changes? | How have clients changed their behaviour as a result of the Welfare Reform changes that affect them (pre-employment drug testing, social obligations, changes to overseas travel)? | How has pre-employment drug testing changed client behaviour? | How does pre-employment drug testing affect client behaviour? |

The evaluation questions and sub-questions are shown in the table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Evaluation question | Sub-questions | Data sources |
| Do clients believe that the Welfare Reform changes have helped them make progress towards paid employment? | Which changes have helped clients make progress? | Interviews with clients in paid employment and those still seeking work |
| Which changes have hindered clients in making progress? | Interviews with clients in paid employment and those still seeking work |
| How did the changes contribute to their gaining paid employment? | Interviews with clients in paid employment |
| Do clients believe that they are making progress towards paid employment? | Interviews with clients seeking work |
| Is there anything else clients believe could help them? | Interviews with clients seeking work |
| Have clients who have moved into work received the support that they needed to remain in work? | Interviews with clients who moved into paid employment |
| How have clients’ interactions with Work and Income staff changed with the Welfare Reform changes? | Do clients perceive that their case managers’ expectations have changed? In what ways? | Post-interaction chats  In-depth interviews with all clients |
| What messages are clients receiving from their case managers? | Post-interaction chats  In-depth interviews with all clients |
| Do clients believe that case managers uphold the client/case manager relationship fundamental values?  How has being sanctioned for having an open warrant to arrest changed client behaviour and how they see Work and Income?  What impact have sanctions had on sole parents and their children? | Post-interaction chats  In-depth interviews with all clients  In-depth interviews with a sanctioned client  In-depth interviews with a sanctioned client |
| Do the changes clients have experienced under Welfare Reform match what policy intended? | How frequently do clients in WSS and WFCM interact with their case managers? | In-depth interviews with WSS and WFCM clients |
| Do client experiences of the different levels of case management match the practice guides? | In-depth interviews with the clients affected by each change |
| How do clients see their new social obligations? | In-depth interviews with sole parents on WFCM |
| How do clients see their new work obligations? | In-depth interviews with clients with a health condition or disability who are in WFCM |
| Have clients changed their behaviour as a result of the changes? | How have clients changed their behaviour as a result of the Welfare Reform changes that affect them (drug testing, social obligations, changes to overseas travel)?   * For example, have clients changed their use of recreational drugs? | In-depth interviews with the clients affected by each change |
| Have the changes had any unintended effects for clients? | Have the Welfare Reform changes affected client behaviour in ways unexpected by the Welfare Reform policy? | In-depth interviews with the clients affected by each change |
| Do clients value the Work and Income seminars? | Is the client experience of seminars consistent with that expected under Welfare Reform changes? | Post-seminar forms |
| What are the most valuable and least valuable aspects of the seminars? | Post-seminar forms |
| How could the seminars be made more useful for clients? | Post-seminar forms |
| How did clients find out about the changes that affect them? | Do clients recall receiving communications about the Welfare Reform changes and did they understand them? | In-depth interviews with clients |
| What other sources of information did clients access about the changes (media, internet, friends, advisors)? | In-depth interviews with clients |
| Did clients discuss the changes with their case manager or with another Work and Income source? | In-depth interviews with clients |
| Do clients understand the changes that affect them? | Do clients understand the changed:   * Work obligations * Changes to overseas travel * Drug testing * Social obligations * Case management changes | In-depth interviews and post-interaction chats with clients affected by each change – only asked about the changes that affect them |
| What were clients concerned about when they heard about the changes? | What concerns did clients have? | In-depth interviews with clients |
| Have client concerns eventuated? In what ways? | In-depth interviews with clients |

1. The Investment Approach is about targeting the right client at the right time to reduce long-term benefit dependency. The Ministry allocates clients to more or less intensive services based on information provided by the client combined with administrative data (eg previous benefit history) to calculate the client’s risk of long-term benefit dependency. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)