

Approved.

5.5 **MSD evaluation of Active Case Management of New Work Tests [REDACTED],
MSD, #189**

The meeting was attended by [REDACTED] (lead researcher), [REDACTED] (Manager, Social Outcomes Team) and [REDACTED] (statistician). MSD does not have its own Ethics Committee and hence MSD requested that ACC consider and offer advice. The Committee clarified that they could not approve the proposal but only provide advice. Although there was no obligation to follow the advice provided by the ACC Ethics Committee it was expected that the advice would be given serious consideration.

Discussion focussed on two main issues from the proposal: the methodology and informing clients.

Methodology:

The methodology was clarified by the researchers – Those people receiving the DHB with a child over six years of age will be subject to a work test and will be required to accept a 'suitable job offer. The research is an evaluation of the case management of the law not the law itself and will look at service usage, the frequency of contact between case managers and clients to see how the law is working in practice. The active case management will be over 3 months for 4,500 clients.

A random sample of those on the DPB will be selected evenly across work and income offices and lists provided to the offices of those selected. For clients who have not been selected there is an opt in but no opt out for those randomly selected.

Measures of outcomes from the intervention: leaving benefit, employment, doing better financially; proxies for income such as subsidies for children receiving extra childcare, changes in accommodation supplement; child outcomes such as neglect, abuse, domestic violence notifications, children receiving benefits later; youth justice data, for example, youth supervision orders; educational outcomes of children, for example truancy, school retention, evidence of student loans later on.

The Committee noted:

There will be a staged implementation of the new law because there are not enough resources and therefore some people will be denied an intervention that could benefit them.

The research needs to set out the perceived harms and risks that may encountered have not been described. In not telling or informing clients about the research there is a risk of potential health impacts, for example suicide. Need to set out anticipated harms and benefits of active case management.

If research shows intervention to be having a deleterious effect what can the researchers do about it? Will the study results affect policy – is the research intended for refinement of policy or process?

The research needs to ensure that the thoroughness of the methodology to measure outcomes will impact on the validity of the results. Need to ensure that results are sound and statistically strong. There are many confounders for the evidence. Employment may be associated with an outcome such as less domestic violence

notifications but employment cannot be deemed to have caused less domestic violence.

Informing clients about the evaluation:

Informing of clients about the research and recruitment method should be open and clearly explain that not all clients have been recruited initially due to a lack of resources. There was no voluntary participation for those randomly selected. The researchers should use the opportunity in the letter to all clients and the media release to communicate that MSD are constrained by resources and it will be a phased approach. Those initial selected clients that are case managed will be evaluated.

Are clients clear about their consent for the use of their information for research purposes? Need to be upfront from the beginning and provide letter and information sheet for all clients.

There was concern expressed by the committee that if the results of the evaluation were unfavourable and the trial was found to have little or no impact that the results might not be disseminated. MSD could offer no guarantee of this and the committee expressed that openness should be apparent.

It was noted that there is a qualitative strand of research planned alongside this quantitative study looking at case manager interaction with clients, but not of clients' perceptions. The committee noted that the qualitative stream of the study will have separate important ethical issues that will need to be considered

6 Other Business

6.1 Review of the ACC Research Ethics Committee update

Next meeting: Wednesday 1 September 2010.