The feasibility of developing a methodology for measuring the distance travelled and soft outcomes for long-term unemployed people participating in Active Labour Market Programmes

Final report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A study on the feasibility of developing a methodology to better target support for long-term unemployed (LTU) people participating in Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) was carried out by the Warwick Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick, UK. The research was drafted as an output of the ESF Employment Thematic Network, a network of the European Social Fund (ESF) Transnational Platform (on behalf of AEIDL) by order of the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, as part of a project on long-term unemployment.

The research focused on a review of evidence on different models and measures used to design, assess, record and evaluate soft outcomes and 'distance travelled' for the long-term unemployed in terms of employability. While the focus of the review was on measures used with the LTU, it also drew upon evidence on measures used in ALMPs targeted at other groups.

Little academic evidence was found where soft outcomes and/or distance travelled models were the main focus of the review or evaluation. These types of outcomes were often reported as an incidental outcome(s) of ALMPs using a variety of terms such as non-labour market outcomes, indirect effects or other benefits. However, it was still possible to discern from this literature 'what works' in terms of getting those furthest from the labour market into training or employment.

Long-term unemployment in the EU and policy

Long-term unemployment has been identified as a major impediment to growth and a major challenge facing the European Union (EU). In recognition of the fact that barriers to labour market integration are diverse and often cumulate, the 2016 *Council Recommendation on integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market* (hereafter, the Recommendation) identified the requirement for a tailor-made, individualised approach and coordinated service provision for the LTU. This was reiterated in Principle 4 of the European Pillar of Social Rights (2017)[1], which set out citizens' right to active support to employment by receiving job search support, training and re-qualification.

A key part of this support to re-enter the labour market are ALMPs. These programmes aim to improve the prospects and ability of participants and clients to find employment or to increase their earnings capacity through engagement with a range of activities and interventions. However, ALMPs targeted towards people who are deemed furthest from the labour market, such as the LTU, people with complex health issues or disabilities, ex-offenders and disillusioned youth are seen as costly. The European Social Fund (ESF) is the EU's main financial instrument for tackling long-term unemployment.

Measuring effectiveness of ALMPs using hard and soft measures

The effectiveness of ALMPs have traditionally been evaluated in terms of the number of 'hard outcomes', such as the number of recipients who have been activated, how many recipients moved into paid employment, and the number of recipients who gained educational or vocational training qualifications as a result of their participation in the ALMP. This is also the case for ALMPs supported by the European Social Fund, where aggregating data of clients' soft outcomes and distance travelled is not commonly done in a systematic, structured way. When 'hard outcomes' are used as the basis for measuring effectiveness, the results are mixed.

[1] For more information, see: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

Using either hard or soft outcomes alone to measure or assess progress to the labour market is not likely to provide a full picture of the impact or benefit of participation in an ALMP. While neither the 'soft measures' nor the 'soft outcomes' used in ALMPs have been systematically examined in the literature, there is a body of evidence about what works in ALMPs that target the LTU. This includes activities focused on employment and training outcomes, skills in demand, job search, individual coaching and activities involving employers. What is also clear from the evidence is that different indicators are required to determine the effectiveness of ALMPs for those furthest from the labour market, such as the LTU.The positive impact of ALMPs in terms of unintentional soft outcomes reported in the evidence includes improved well-being and self-confidence; increased social capital; increased job search activity; and clarification of the person's future.

Soft skills

There is much interest in measuring soft skills developed through participation in ALMPs, as these outcomes are argued to represent intermediary stages on the way to achieving a hard outcome and are important in determining the employability of an individual. They are particularly important for measuring progress towards a 'hard outcome' of those furthest away from the labour market, such as the LTU. Evidence of soft skills developed and acquired through participation in ALMPs, includes:

- practical work-focused skills;
- career management skills;
- interpersonal skills;
- organisational skills;
- thinking and analytical skills; and
- personal skills and attributes.

Distance travelled

The concept of 'distance travelled' has developed as a way to measure the progress clients are making in achieving 'soft outcomes' that may lead to sustained employment or other associated 'hard outcomes' in the future. While recognising that measuring distance travelled can be beneficial to funders, service commissioners, providers and clients, there is a limited evidence base on the effectiveness of distance travelled measures in terms of programme impact. This suggests there is still work to be done to better understand and evaluate distance travelled models and measures.

Why measure soft outcomes and distance travelled?

The main reason for measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled is **to capture the benefits resulting from programme activities that would otherwise be missed** if only hard outcomes were recorded. The information collected on distance travelled can be used to show clients the progress they are making as a result of participating in a project. It can also be useful in showing project staff how the project is progressing, which can be important for motivating staff even if hard outcomes have not yet been achieved. The information gathered on soft outcomes can also be used to identify which activities are having a positive impact, and where improvements can be made. The information can also be useful in demonstrating to employers, colleges or other organisations that the participants have developed the soft skills that they need, and have the necessary motivation/commitment to make necessary changes. Measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled can also be used to demonstrate to funders that a project (or intervention) is making a real difference, even if hard outcomes have not yet been achieved.

Measuring distance travelled and soft outcomes in ALMPs

While only a few examples of reports and evaluations of distance travelled models were found, these highlight what is effective in terms of supporting LTU progress to the labour market. This includes:

- therapeutic approaches;
- cognitive and social skills development;
- individual needs and barriers assessments;
- personalised (and intensified) career guidance;
- job search support; and
- regular meeting at times defined by the caseworker and the individual.

Distance travelled was measured in terms of:

- increased wellbeing;
- self-esteem;
- career self-efficacy;
- resilience;
- hopefulness;
- perceived progress towards the labour market;
- re-employment or labour market participation;
- re-employment quality; and
- access to education/vocational training.

Examples of distance travelled models being used in other sectors, such as education, health and youth work, were also found.

Key considerations in designing a distance travelled tool

The review identified a number of factors that are important to keep in mind when designing a distance travelled tool. First, it is important to **set clear objectives** that are consistent with the overall aim of the intervention or programme. Secondly, it is important to ensure that **adequate resources** are allocated to the design, implementation and maintenance of tools. Evidence highlighted the importance of **reviewing existing tools** before embarking on a process of designing a new tool. In this respect, **differentiated tools** may be required as a generic tool may not fit the programme activities and target groups. The ability to make programmes **personalised** was identified as one of the key considerations when designing a tool, as individualised support has been evidenced to be effective with the LTU.

Importantly, tools should be developed in consultation with caseworkers and clients as this will help determine whether the approach is likely to be useful. Consultation during development will also garner buy-in. The **role of caseworker judgement** is considered important, so tools should allow caseworkers to obtain a better understanding of the client group that they are working with so that they can develop a **more tailored approach**. **Client-focused tools** have been found to be more successful, which means they should be designed so that the information gathered from the assessment process can be used to provide feedback to clients. Related to this, the collection of baseline data from the client needs to be carefully thought out in terms of its length and format.

Tools that enable **personalisation of programmes and interventions** have been found to be particularly valuable for the LTU and unemployed people with complex and multiple barriers. The **time period for measuring impact** of an ALMP is a key consideration in the use of a tool, as there is much evidence to suggest that the LTU need more time in which to progress in their journey to the labour market.

The process of developing a distance travelled monitoring system

Drawing together the evidence on the design, development and implementation of a distance travelled model, a number of steps in the process were identified.

In terms of **what will be measured**, assessment tools designed to measure soft skills and distance travelled must be **valid and reliable**. The process for deciding which soft outcomes to monitor and which indicators to use will depend on such factors as the objectives of the programme, the challenges facing clients and the changes the project seeks to address. To date, there is a limited evidence base about the effectiveness of particular measures predicting longer-term hard outcomes.

In terms of **how to measure soft outcomes and distance travelled**, most measurement approaches use some form of **scoring system or scale** to assess the nature and extent of client needs, and the distance that they travel in developing their soft skills. Overall it was found that systems designed to measure and/or monitor soft outcomes and distance travelled all tend to consist of a similar set of component parts, including target indicators, scales or scoring systems, baseline assessments, follow-up reviews, and analysis and reporting.

In terms of **when to measure distance travelled**, regardless of the type or number of soft outcomes and indicators, all approaches to distance travelled require an **initial baseline assessment** against which subsequent progress can be measured. It can be suggested that, as a minimum, indicators need to be **measured at least twice** (at the beginning and again at the end of the intervention), but post-invention assessments can be useful because they provide evidence of distance travelled over a longer period. Importantly, in order to reliably measure distance travelled, there must be **sufficient time between assessments** for the client to have benefitted from the learning and behaviours and attitudes changed.

In terms of **data collection methods**, it is important to collect data that can be used to **demonstrate the added value of the programme**. Two main approaches to monitor progress were identified: those based on **opinions/perceptions** and those that are more strongly **evidence-based**. Various data collection methods were identified, including paper-based written questionnaires (most commonly used); hand-held sliding scales with markers; software-driven and computer-based questionnaires; web-based assessments; games; and 3D media.

The type of programme itself will often dictate **who should measure distance travelled** but **self-assessment** can be undertaken by the client; it can be undertaken **jointly by the client and caseworker**; by a **caseworker alone**; or by a **third party** who is not directly associated with the programme, such as a teacher, trainer or workplace manager.

It is evident from the literature that it is considered good practice to **review and refine a model over time** to ensure it meets the needs of all involved.

Final comments

Measuring distance travelled has emerged as valid and appropriate way to measure or monitor 'soft outcomes' for those furthest from the labour market. As such, monitoring soft outcomes and measuring distance travelled **should be a mainstream and integral part of employability projects**.

There is sufficient evidence to support the design of a new or adaptation of an existing distance travelled model to support LTU integration. It is likely to be **challenging to create one tool that works for all programmes, stakeholders and clients**. This suggests that while a tailored approach and differentiated tools are needed, it would be feasible for programme managers to draw upon the range of readily available examples as the basis to create a bespoke model for their respective programmes and clients.

Going forward, there is a **pressing need to undertake systematic evaluations of existing distance travelled models** to establish whether they are effective in better targeting support for the LTU participating in ALMPs, and if so, how.

1. INTRODUCTION

AEIDL, on behalf of the European Commission, commissioned Warwick Institute for Employment Research (IER) to research the feasibility of developing a methodology to better target support for long-term unemployed (LTU) people participating in Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs). The research was carried out as part of a project on long-term unemployment under the Employment Thematic Network of the European Social Fund's Transnational Platform. The aim of the research was to identify design criteria for systems to:

(i) orientate clients to ALMPs identified as more likely to meet their integration needs considering individual participants' characteristics; and

(ii) assess the impact on their employability from participation in particular ALMPs.

This was achieved through a review of published academic and grey literature on different models and measures used to assess and record distance travelled in terms of employability. The main review questions were:

- What evidence is there of measures which are soft and subjective, such as increase in confidence, resilience, career adaptability, employability, skills gained, as well as re-engagement in learning and/or education, and, if employed, perceptions of job satisfaction and job quality?
- Are particular measures more suited to particular groups, of individuals with particular characteristics?
- What hard measures, such as qualifications gained, entry into employment, sustained employment, work experience, etc. are used?
- What elements comprise a 'distance travelled model' and are particular elements essential for a model targeted at the LTU?

While the focus of the review was on measures of distance travelled for the LTU, evidence on measures used in ALMPs targeted at other groups was also drawn upon due to limited academic evidence of models and measures. The target audience for the review is EU Member State experts seeking to improve services for the integration of the LTU into the labour market through implementation of the February 2016 European Council Recommendation on integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market (2016/C 67/01).

1.1. Approach to the review

A review of extant literature was undertaken using an established approach to the search and screening of evidence. The overall objective of the review was to establish the scope for the application of 'distance travelled models', which could be subsequently adapted for use by actors and key stakeholders involved in supporting LTU integration. The review mainly, but not exclusively, focused on ALMPs for the LTU across the EU, as well as the measures used to evidence and/or demonstrate distance travelled and/or positive impact on ALMP participants. It is important to note that the term 'distance travelled', when referring to measures of progress and soft outcomes, is rarely used in academic literature and more likely found in policy documents and the grey literature. Academic literature was found to reference terms, such as client's journey or progression to the labour market. Whereas, 'soft outcomes' is a more commonly used term in the surviving literature. Details of the methodology that was used to undertake the review of evidence, including the overarching aim of the research and associated research questions, parameters and key search terms, and sources used are presented in Annex 1.

The review found little academic evidence where soft outcomes and/or distance travelled models were the main focus of the review or evaluation. These types of outcomes were often reported as an incidental outcome(s) of ALMPs using a variety of terms such as non-

labour market outcomes, indirect effects or other benefits. This literature typically focused on ALMPs in Public Employment Services (PES), where ALMP reporting tends to be on hard outcomes and measures. However, it was possible to discern from this literature 'what works' in terms of getting those furthest from the labour market into training or employment.

Much of the evidence found on soft outcomes and distance travelled models and tools focused on supporting peoples' return to the labour market was reported in the grey literature. The literature on the models often related to specific projects, interventions and programmes, of which the detail was patchy. This included inconsistencies in terms of whether evidence on the models had been reviewed or assessed and whether this information was publicly available to help the future development of models. If insufficient detail was available on a specific tool or model, it was not included in the review. Furthermore, a number of these tools and models were funded through specific projects, so many are no longer in operation or publicly available.

While some useful reviews and guides on models and tools were found, these and much of the evidence reviewed is dated. This suggests it is timely to revisit the development of a model within the current political and economic context.

While this review did not identify one 'ideal' assessment tool or model to measure soft skills and distance travelled, it has identified elements of best practice on aspects of development, delivery and evaluation. The examples selected are only illustrative, and no particular tools or products are being endorsed. Furthermore, it was not always possible (beyond the brief) to confirm whether the tools remain in use, or whether evaluations have proved them to be effective or not.

1.2. Structure of the report

Following the introduction, this report has a further six sections:

- The second section of the report sets out the background to, and context of, the research, including details on the Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market.
- The third section sets out how distance travelled as a term has evolved and been conceptualised. An overview of evidence on the effectiveness of ALMPs is provided in this section using hard measures and outcomes, before definitions of soft measures and outcomes are explored.
- The fourth section provides a synthesis of evidence on why soft outcomes and distance travelled should be measured, and how they are measured in ALMPs and other interventions.
- The fifth section considers what works in measuring distance travelled, outlining the key considerations in designing a model or tool. It draws upon examples from models and tools identified in the review.
- The sixth section provides an overview of the process, which is further detailed in Annex 2.
- The report concludes by detailing the key points from the review, answering the main review questions as well as setting out recommendations and an assessment of the feasibility of developing a distance travelled model for the LTU.

For those new to distance travelled models and the measurement of soft outcomes, it is recommended that you review the background and conceptualisation of distance travelled models. While for those that have some knowledge and experience of developing distance travelled models, it may be useful to review the evidence on key considerations and the proposed process in designing a model.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This section sets out the background and context of the research, including an overview of the persistence of long-term unemployment in the European Union (EU), current evolution of EU policy development aimed at addressing this problem, and an overview of how the concept of distance travelled can be used as one way to measure progress in terms of employability.

2.1. Long-term unemployment in the European Union

Long-term unemployment has been identified as a major impediment to growth (Council of European Union, 2016) and a major challenge facing the EU (Duell, 2012, 2016; Godec and Benčina, 2018). During the 2008-2009 financial and economic crisis, most EU Member States experienced a major economic downturn that led to a sharp deterioration in their labour market. The unemployment rate at the EU level increased to a historically high level.

Unemployment in the EU-28 remained at 6.6% in December 2018 (Eurostat online, 2019), although this was was the lowest level since the start of the EU monthly unemployment series in January 2000. Among EU Member States, there is considerable variation in unemployment rates, with the highest levels recorded in Greece (18.6% in October 2018), Spain (14.3%, December 2018) and Italy (10.3%, December 2018) (Eurostat online, 2019).

Unemployment remains high, particularly among young people and the LTU (Council of European Union, 2016). Long-term unemployment also unevenly affects EU Member States depending on factors including the severity of the crisis, the macroeconomic situation, the economic structure, and the functioning of national labour markets. For example, while the annual average rate of long-term unemployment in 2018 was 2.9% for the EU-28 and 3.8% in the eurozone (19 countries), the highest rates were observed in Greece (13.6%), Spain (6.4%), Italy (6.2%), and Slovakia (4.0%) (Eurostat online, 2019). Moreover, while the LTU comprise half of the total number of unemployed persons in the EU, they account for less than 20% of participants in active labour market measures and a low proportion of the LTU (on average, 24%) are in receipt of unemployment benefits (Council of European Union, 2016).

Long-term unemployment affects a variety of people generally characterised by low employability, many of whom face multiple disadvantages. Workers with low skills or qualifications and third country nationals are twice as likely to experience unemployment and long-term unemployment, and persons with disabilities and disadvantaged minorities are also disproportionately affected (Council of European Union, 2016; Duell, 2016). Relevantly, the longer people are out of work, the more difficult it is for them to find employment as their skills, confidence and self-efficacy[2] may gradually erode, which can become a barrier to engagement with further education and entry to the labour market (Cedefop, 2016).

In addition to the potentially harmful effects on individuals, there is evidence to suggest that long-term unemployment slows the potential growth of the EU economies and increases the risk of social inclusion, poverty and inequality. It also contributes to passing on poverty to the children in jobless households, as it has been shown that educational achievement is lower among children in unemployed households (Macmillan, Gregg, Jerrim, and Shure, 2018). Moreover, every year, close to 20% of the LTU in the EU become discouraged and fall into inactivity as a result of unsuccessful job-search efforts. Not surprisingly, high rates of long-term unemployment also add to the costs of social services and public finances (Council of European Union, 2016).

[2] An individual's belief in their innate ability to achieve goals.

Evidence suggests, however, that ALMPs can have a significant impact, particularly in times of slow growth or high unemployment (Card, Kluve, and Weber, 2017; de Graaf-Ziji, van der Horst, van Vuuren, Erken and Luginbuhl, 2015; Kluve, et al., 2019).

2.2. Policy framework in the European Union

With a view to developing a coordinated strategy for employment, the Council of the European Union's (hereafter, the Council) *Guidelines for the employment policies of Member States for 2015* articulated the need for the EU to combat social exclusion and discrimination and promote social justice and protection, as well as equality between men and women. Additionally, the need to take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education and training in defining and implementing its policies and activities (Council of European Union, 2015a, 2016). More specifically, the Council's Guidelines state that Member States and the EU should aim to build a cohesive society in which people are empowered to anticipate and manage change, and can actively participate in society and the economy. Further, access and opportunities for all should be ensured and poverty and social exclusion reduced, in particular by ensuring an effective functioning of labour markets and social protection systems and removing barriers to labour market participation (Council of European Union, 2015a).

In recognition of the fact that barriers to labour market integration are diverse and often cumulate, the Council's *Recommendation on integration of the long-term unemployed into the EU's labour market* (hereafter, the Recommendation) identified the requirement for a tailor-made, individualised approach and coordinated service provision (Council of European Union, 2016). This was also reiterated in Principle 4 of the European Pillar of Social Rights (2017)[3], which set out citizens' right to active support to employment by receiving job search support, training and requalification. For those that are unemployed, it recommends that citizens have the 'right to personalised, continuous and consistent support' and for the LTU, 'the right to an in-depth individual assessment at the latest at 18 months of unemployment'. Personalised and tailored approaches to support the LTU are a foundation of several PES programmes (see for instance the UK Work Programme, Taylor, Rees, and Damm, 2016).

Along with improved registration with employment services (and other relevant agencies), the provision of intensified labour market integration efforts for those most severely affected by long-term unemployment is central to the Council's Recommendation.

The Recommendation emphasises the need to strengthen prevention and activation measures. It mainly focuses on the start of the unemployment period, where specific action for the registered LTU should be taken at the very latest when they reach 18 months of unemployment, as this is when support mechanisms and services for this particular group change in a large number of Member States. The Recommendation calls **for individualised approaches** to support the LTU in order to address the barriers leading to persistent unemployment. In addition to the initial assessment made upon registration, the Recommendation states that LTU persons should be **guided towards support services sufficiently tailored to their individual needs** (with debt-counselling, rehabilitation, social support services, care services, migration integration, housing and transport support listed as examples of types of support). The support provided should be aimed at addressing barriers to work and empowering those persons to reach clear goals leading to employment (Council of European Union, 2016). The Recommendation envisages **an essential role for employers** in the integration of LTU persons, where employer engagement should be facilitated and supported through the provision of

[3] For more information, see: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

dedicated services by employment services, accompanied by well-targeted financial incentives and involvement of social partners (Council of European Union, 2016).

The Council's Recommendation is comprised of a series of inter-related components:

- First, that Member States 'support the registration of job seekers and a closer labour market orientation of integration measures, *inter alia*, through a closer link with employers'.
- Secondly, that Member States provide individual assessments to registered LTU persons.
- Thirdly, Member States should make an offer of a job integration agreement at the very latest when the LTU person (not covered by the Youth Guarantee) has reached 18 months of unemployment, where the 'job integration agreement' is understood to be a written agreement between a registered LTU person and a single point of contact, having the objective of facilitating that person's transition into employment in the labour market (Council of European Union, 2016).

The Recommendation identifies a role for the European Network of Public Employment Services (hereafter, the PES Network) in monitoring progress, where the sharing and the exchange of good practices under the bench learning process of the PES Network is encouraged. Support for social innovation projects to integrate LTU persons into the labour market (particularly via the EU programme for employment and social innovation, EaSI) is also signalled in the Recommendation (Council of European Union, 2016).

The European Social Fund (ESF) is the EU's main financial instrument for tackling LTU. The ESF accounted for around 20% of total ALMP expenditure in the EU over the 2007 to 2013 period (Campbell and Mercer, 2017, p. 6). During the period 2014-2020, €86 billion will be invested to support Member States with the integration of the LTU into the labour market (Council of European Union, 2016; Campbell and Mercer, 2017, p. 6). Specifically, over the period 2014-2020, **€11 billion** on ALMP has been programmed (especially in Finland, Ireland and Slovakia), **€980 million** has been programmed on increasing the capacity of labour market actors (especially in Italy and Romania), and **€13 billion** on social inclusion (particularly in Belgium, France, Ireland and Netherlands) (Campbell and Mercer, 2007, p. 6). Supporting job creation, the modernisation of public employment services (PES) and vocational education, training for skills and lifelong learning are identified as key priorities for ESF activities (Council of European Union, 2016).

Transnational cooperation plays a key role in delivering support via the ESF, through thematic networks, mutual learning and expert input, where the ESF Transnational Platform operates on nine themes through a series of thematic networks (Campbell and Mercer, 2017, p. 6).

3. CONCEPTUALISING DISTANCE TRAVELLED

This section sets out a number of concepts and key terms used in the debates and discussions around defining and understanding individual progression to the labour market. Evidence from the surviving literature uses these terms when describing the design, development, implementation and evaluation of models measuring and recording distance travelled for unemployed people engaged in labour market programmes.

This section begins with an overview of labour market programmes and common approaches to assessing their effectiveness before a review of evidence on alternative measures that could be used in a distance travelled model.

3.1. Labour market programmes, active and passive

The aim of labour market programmes is to improve the prospect and ability of participants and clients to find employment or to increase their earnings capacity. These programmes include:

- labour market training and education to improve skills, qualifications and employability;
- private sector employment programmes such as wage subsidy and self-employment funding to encourage employers to employ LTU workers;
- direct employment programmes to support the disadvantaged through the creation of jobs; and
- job search assistance (Bredgaard, 2015).

It is important to consider the elements of these programmes because they highlight the types of activities and measures that are used to assess their effectiveness, as well what might support the measurement or assessment of distance travelled.

A distinction has been drawn between 'active' and 'passive' labour market programmes (LMPs). LMPs which focus on income replacement and general well-being of the unemployed without also aiming to improve employability are commonly described as 'passive'. Passive LMPs can include, for example, unemployment compensation programmes and programmes for early retirement for labour market reasons (OECD, 2018). In contrast, active LMPs (ALMPs) include interventions or activities aimed at improving the employability of the unemployed or those at risk of becoming unemployed (Whelan, McGilloway, Murphy and McGuiness, 2018). Duell (2012) states 'the objectives of ALMPs are to prevent and reduce unemployment, to improve the matching of labour supply and labour demand, to increase employability of the job seeker, as well as to intensify their job-search activities' (p. 7). Importantly, she adds 'the design and budgets dedicated to ALMPs are enshrined in the different welfare state models' (p. 7). Some ALMPs develop specific interventions targeted towards people who are deemed furthest from the labour market, such as the LTU, people with complex health issues or disabilities, ex-offenders and disillusioned youth.

3.2. Measuring the effectiveness of ALMPs

Effectiveness of ALMPs has traditionally been evaluated in terms of the number of 'hard outcomes', such as the number of recipients who have been activated, how many recipients moved into paid employment, and the number of recipients who gained educational or vocational training qualifications as a result of their participation in the ALMP. These types of measures of 'employability', as defined by Yorke (2004, p. 410), is 'a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes' that make individuals more likely to secure and be successful in their chosen occupation(s) to the benefit of themselves and the economy.

However, this measurement is not always relevant, at least in the short-term, for LTU people, many of whom face multiple barriers to employment (The Learning and Work Institute, 2016). Yet, most evaluations of ALMPs have looked at whether the programmes have increased the likelihood of employment or re-employment, ignoring factors such as the possible effects on individual and/or societal health and well-being (Audhoe, Hoving, Sluiter and Frings-Dresen, 2010; Björklund, Häggström and Nyström, 2017).

Recent econometric and quantitative assessments of ALMPs from across the EU have focused on hard outcomes and evidenced the effectiveness of ALMPs in supporting the LTU. There are mixed results in terms of hard measures, but they have suggested what works in ALMPs targeted at LTU. For instance, some studies have found that unemployment rates reduced for those LTU participating in ALMPs focused on employment and training outcomes (Benda, Koster, and van der Veen, 2018a; Brenninkmeijer and Blonk, 2011; Kluve, et al., 2019; Vikström, Rosholm, and Svarer, 2013). Moreover, training measures have been found to be more effective when they prepare clients for skills and competences which are demanded by (local) companies (Duell, 2012).

Job search activity has often been found to have positive short-term outcomes, while training programmes have positive outcomes over the longer term (Angel-Urdinola and Leon-Solano, 2018; Blázquez, Herrarte, and Sáez, 2019; Card, Kluve, and Weber, 2010; Duell, 2016). Research from the UK and Germany found that the period of unemployment

was shorter for those who had engaged in an ALMP and had been required to make one job application (Arni and Schiprowski, 2019). Others have found that the anticipation or expectation to participate in ALMP can positively impact on the unemployed who are likely to increase efforts to search for employment or engage in some form of training (Berg, Bergemann, and Caliendo, 2009; Berg, Bozio, and Dias, 2014).

While a review of the evidence on the effectiveness of ALMPs for youth in Europe found job search assistance (with and without monitoring) to be effective, mixed effects for training and wage subsidies, and negative effects of public work programmes were found (Caliendo and Schmidl, 2016). An OECD working paper on matching skills and jobs in Estonia, where the unemployment rate of people with basic education and secondary education is around double the EU average and there is a high share of LTU among the unemployed, advocated for strengthening activation policies including better design and targeting of training programmes, particularly for youth. Among the other recommendations, the OECD argued for a strengthening of workplace training subsidies, an intensive approach to training, certification, and improving incentives for lifelong learning (Demmou, 2012).

Some studies, however, show mixed results on the effectiveness of training measures, wage subsidies and job creation measures. For example, Duell (2012) found that if small-scale and well targeted to disadvantaged groups, wage subsidies and job creation measures can be effective in increasing the probability of employment, particularly for youth. Moreover, evidence from Sweden and Germany indicates that the success of these types of measures is strongly connected to how well they are combined with individual coaching and employer involvement (Duel, 2012). Relevantly, Duell (2012) found that as a general rule, for the LTU with multiple employment barriers, that is those who are furthest from the labour market, the more the ALMP will benefit from accompanying measures such as monitoring, guidance for employers, and individualised approaches and institutional cooperation. Whereas large-scale wage subsidy and job creation programmes have generally been found to have high dead-weight, substitution and displacement effects. Analysis of the European Social Survey from 19 OECD countries found that ALMPs with a training focus were effective for those LTU with low educational attainment (Benda, Koster, and van der Veen, 2019).

The **German** ALMP *Perspektive 50plus* ran from 2005 to 2015, was voluntary and aimed at getting hard-to-place, older unemployed people into unsubsidised work via coaching, skills assessment and short-term training. The ALMP represented a move away from passive benefits only or publicly-sponsored employment schemes. An evaluation found positive effects for intensive counselling and job search assistance, where effectiveness was higher for men. It was inconclusive whether these types of interventions were effective for those who have been out of the labour market for a long time (Boockmann and Brändle, 2018). However, in a separate article about the effectiveness of German ALMPs, Bofinger (2017) cautions against other EU countries following the German model (Hartz IV reforms) on the basis that the country's reduction in unemployment was mainly due to cyclical factors and time lapse since reunification.

Consistent with findings from similar studies in a number of other EU countries, participation in two **Spanish** direct employment ALMPs reduced the likelihood of young unemployed people finding a job afterwards (Casino, Sánchez-Braza and Espinoza, 2018). It is, therefore, evident that a mix of types of support and assistance are often required due to LTU people being relatively far from the labour market, where different types of support may be more effective for particular groups of clients. Nevertheless, PES and other service providers need to put in place performance measurement systems in their ALMPs to be able to justify resource allocations as well as to monitor the effectiveness of their activities.

In recognition of the fact that hard outcomes are not always appropriate for measuring progress for those furthest away from the labour market, the concept of 'distance travelled' has developed as a way to measure the progress clients are making in terms of achieving 'soft outcomes' that may lead to sustained employment or other associated 'hard outcomes' in the future. This approach corresponds with the Council's *Recommendation*,

as noted earlier, which identified the requirement for a tailor-made, individualised approach and coordinated service provision for the integration of the LTU into the labour market (Council of European Union, 2016). Individualised approaches to interventions do mean that there is a need to use alternative and a variety of measures, which are reviewed later in this section and in section 4.

3.3. Hard measures and outcomes

ALMPs are focused on improving an individual's employment prospects to enable access to the labour market by supporting individual job search, access to training and skills development, and providing work experience or direct employment. Hard measures (such as:

- measuring changes in employment status, income levels or educational level;
- starting a training course; and
- moving into permanent accommodation)

are commonly used to assess and evaluate the outcomes of ALMPs and interventions (Collins, 2013; Dewson, Eccles, Tackey and Jackson, 2000a; The Learning and Work Institute, 2016; Wapler, Werner, and Wolf, 2018). It could be argued that these measures are used as proxy measures of employability, labour market integration or distance travelled. The UK Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) *Practical Guide to Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled* (hereafter referred to as the DWP Guidance document) (2003, p. 5) provides the following definition of hard outcomes:

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

There is much evidence on ALMPs and interventions that measure outcomes in terms of transition into a job, engagement with formal education and vocational training, and/or participation in job search strategies (Adamecz-Volgyi, Levay, Bordos, and Scharle, 2018; Ahmad, Svarer, and Naveed, 2019; Andersen, and Svarer, 2012; Audhoe, Hoving, Sluiter, and Frings-Dresen, 2010; Bartelheimer, Verd, Lehweß-Litzmann, López-Andreu, and Schmidt, 2012; Beck, 2018; Bengtsson, 2012; Brouwer, Bakker, and Schellekens, 2015; Kluve, 2010; Kvist, Pedersen, and Köhler, 2008; Wapler, Werner, and Wolf, 2018). Even recent work to classify activation measures uses a typology based on hard outcomes, including employment status, job search activity, upskilling, engagement with counselling, job placement and training undertaken (Dinan, 2019). It could be suggested that these are standard or accepted measures of ALMPs, whilst others argue that the use of hard measures to evaluate programmes are a consequence of the payment by results model being adopted (Beck, 2018; MacArtain and Thorne, 2016).

Payment by results in ALMPs are seen to restrict the choices of unemployed and limiting their ability to engage in anything, but recognised training and job search activities (Beck, 2018). Similarly, the work-first approach (see section 5.2 for a discussion on this approach) to supporting unemployed people drives the use of hard measures (Bengtsson, 2012; The Learning and Work Institute, 2016). This is, therefore, disabling individuals from engaging in a range of activities that may support development and bring them closer to the labour market.

There are, therefore, a range of hard outcomes that are commonly used to assess and evaluate the outcomes of labour market programmes using econometric measures (Bredgaard, 2015). Most evidence reports that labour market programmes have varying success at getting the LTU into employment when using hard outcomes as a measure (Bredgaard, 2015; Card, Kluve, and Weber, 2017; Collins, 2013; Kluve, 2010; Kluve et al., 2007; Martin and Grubb, 2001). For instance, a review of five interventions to support unemployed people with mental health issues used hard measures to evaluate the success

of the intervention (Audhoe, et al., 2010). Employment status (i.e. a hard outcome) was used to measure progress at the end of the intervention. These interventions were not viewed as successful as participation in the labour market had not improved as a result of participation in intervention activities. While mental distress was assessed as part of the intervention, no soft measures or outcomes were considered when assessing the effectiveness of the intervention, so there was limited evidence on the 'effectiveness' of these 'soft' interventions for their target groups.

For those unemployed who are most distant from the labour market, Collins (2013) cautions against solely using output measures of ALMPs which measure throughput, placements, employment and/or activation and calculate economic efficiency measures based on short-term expenditure and outcomes. He argues that such policies and schemes are likely to favour the easiest to activate and disadvantage those most distant from the active labour market, as the latter may need longer and more personal interventions to facilitate their return to the labour market. Collins (2013) proposes the restructuring of ALMP interventions and activation for the distant unemployed by way of segmenting them into groups based on probability of re-entering employment in the short-term.

Along this vein, the **Irish** ALMP *Momentum Programme,* targeting the LTU, was developed to specifically target people impacted by the recent economic crisis who had previously been employed, many of whom had never previously experienced unemployment. *Momentum's* 'delivery-outcomes-based funding model' represented a new approach because providers were obligated to deliver in-demand skills training at the local level in conjunction with a beneficial duration of placement to achieve employment, or failing that, progression to a higher level relevant qualification.

A number of revisions were made to the ALMP (*Momentum 2*). Following a payment-for-results model, premiums were paid to providers who helped those furthest from the labour market with skills development, and work placement experience followed by at least two consecutive months' employment of at least 16 hours per week (MacArtain and Thorne, 2016). *Momentum 2* also included an additional induction model, as well as a contractual requirement of an increased focus on work placements. Further to this, changes to the payment model resulted in almost one third of the participants achieving an employment outcome. With improving labour market conditions, the profile of clients in *Momentum 2* reverted to the more typical LTU characteristics (i.e. lower skilled and those in relatively longer spells of unemployment). MacArtain and Thorne (2016) contend that innovative approaches adopted by training providers as well as a deliberate policy of mixing the age profile of training groups have both contributed to the favourable outcomes for young people, including young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The OECD (2018) notes that ALMP evaluations often neglect to assess individual participant circumstances so it is difficult to evidence and report on what works for particular groups. This is a limitation of using only hard measures to evaluate ALMPs. There is growing recognition, however, that hard measures alone are often inadequate in demonstrating the success of a project as a whole and that such measures do not provide a holistic view of a client's increased employability. In some cases, it may be unlikely or inappropriate for projects to expect 'hard' outcomes from target groups that face multiple barriers to employment and who are a long distance from employability (Dewson, et al., 2000a).

Overall, this suggests that alternative measures are needed and are important to evaluating labour market programme successes and the 'outcomes' at an individual level.

3.4. Soft measures and outcomes

Dewson and her colleagues (2000b) found that while most of the 300 ESF-funded projects they consulted were aware of the importance of measuring soft outcomes, very few had developed any systematic means of doing so. Similarly, when the informal learning process was examined in six voluntary organisations by the team who developed the ***SOUL Record* tool** for measuring soft outcomes, they found that more than 80 soft outcomes were being developed across the six organisations (Andersen, Foster, and McKibben, 2005). The

number of potential soft outcomes that can be measured is further complicated by the various terms which have been used to talk about soft outcomes, such as 'non-economic outcomes' (Sage, 2015), 'non-labour market outcomes' (Ibarraran, Ripani, Taboada, Villa, and Garcia, 2014), 'indirect effects' (Andersen, 2008) or 'other benefits' (Kvist, Pedersen, and Köhler, 2008).

Various definitions of 'soft outcomes' were found during the review, but it is evident that they can be consistently difficult to measure, quantify and compare across programmes and interventions. For example, an evaluation of Scottish employability programmes found that different monitoring systems were in place and different data had been collected variously on hard and soft outcomes (Sutherland, Macdougall, and McGregor, 2015). A number of barriers to measurement were also identified in the DWP Guidance document (2003), including the lack of appropriate methodology, resource constraints, and to a lesser extent, concerns over intrusiveness and/or sensitivities or the lack of relevance for project clients (DWP, 2003, p. 3).

In the context of ESF employment projects aimed at helping disadvantaged groups into the labour market, Dewson and colleagues (2000a) characterised soft outcomes as 'those which, unlike hard outcomes cannot be measured directly or tangibly' (p. 2). They characterised soft outcomes as intangible, subjective, a matter of degree rather than absolute, dependent on individual client needs, and immediate (in that they typically measure progress towards hard outcomes such as qualifications or employment).

In their guide, Dewson and colleagues (2000b, p. 2) defined the following terms as part of their distance travelled conceptualisation:

- Soft outcomes are defined as 'outcomes from training, support or guidance interventions, which unlike hard outcomes, such as qualifications or jobs, cannot be measured directly or tangibly'.
- Soft indicators are 'the means by which we can measure whether the (soft) outcomes have been achieved' and may 'indicate acquisition or progress towards an outcome'. While a subjective judgement, 'indicators or measures such as improved levels of attendance, improved time-keeping and improved communication skills can suggest strongly that motivation has increased'.
- Interplay exists between outcomes and indicators whereby 'indicators are the means by which it is possible to measure whether outcomes have been achieved'.

In addition to the distance travelled models and tools defining and using soft outcomes, some evidence from ALMP evaluations identified or qualitatively discussed soft outcomes alongside hard outcomes. It should be noted that for the majority of the ALMP evaluations, soft outcomes were not their primary focus or the main part of their investigation. Sutherland and colleagues' (2015) evaluation of employability programmes across 28 local enterprise partnership (LEPs) in the **United Kingdom** (UK) reported that all used hard outcomes as measurement of success whilst only 15 variously measured soft outcomes, including increased confidence (measured by 10 LEPs) and increased motivation (measured by 6 LEPs). Dewson and colleagues (2000a) found that very few of the 300 ESF-funded projects they consulted were aggregating data of clients' soft outcomes and distance travelled to produce a measure of distance travelled. This suggests there is still work to be done to systematically understand distance travelled models and measures.

The following studies evidence the positive impact of ALMPs in terms of unintentional soft outcomes including improved well-being and self-confidence, increased social capital, increased job search activity, and clarification of future. It is evident that using soft outcomes to assess an AMLP participant's progress to the labour market does not provide a full picture of the impact or benefit of participation.

The concept of 'well-being' has been used to evaluate the outcomes of ALMPs (Andersen, 2008; Hogarty and McGuckin, 2018; Sage, 2015). Secondary analysis of the **British**

Household Panel Survey found that ALMP participants reported increased well-being compared with a non-participant control group (Andersen, 2008; Sage, 2015). Well-being was defined by Andersen (2008) as the need for mastery and autonomy over economy and life course. It is important to note that subjective well-being post-ALMP was found to reduce over time, suggesting that support over a longer period of time is needed to develop and maintain positive feelings of well-being.

A small study in **Ireland** recently explored the social capital and social well-being outcomes of a labour market activation programme in a higher education setting (Hogarty and McGuckin, 2018). The majority of participants were unemployed at the time they participated in the programme. The study found that well-being measures were higher for those in employment compared to those who were not. Social capital in terms of social relationships and the ability to ask for help were higher for those who had found employment. This was also noted in recent research which analysed Programme for the Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIACC) data from 19 EU countries (Benda, Koster, and van der Veen, 2018b). It found that ALMPs with a training focus act as a 'socialising agent' encouraging positive learning behaviour and attitudes, which was particularly the case among the low skilled or less educated, and in countries were training programmes were important. Hogarty and McGuckin's study (2018) reported no significant differences between feelings of trust betwen employed and unemployed. While only small studies, the evidence suggests that those engaged in ALMPs experience an increase in their social capital and subjective well-being. This highlights the importance of understanding and measuring soft outcomes of ALMP participation.

An evaluation of **Danish** labour market policy and programmes examined three types of activation outcomes: search activity; skills investment; and welfare (Kvist, Pedersen, and Köhler, 2008). All three soft outcomes were examined quantitatively. First, job search activity was analysed with survey evidence from programme participants self-reporting activity. Evidence suggested that the LTU were less likely to be motivated or to have looked for a job in the last 30 days. Second, skills investment was examined in terms of timing of engagement with education or training and when a job offer was received. Investment in skills was shown to have a positive outcome in terms of returning to employment. Early interventions around supporting job search and upskilling were suggested to reduce the period of unemployment.

A review of **German** ALMP data has shown that self-efficacy is one factor (or soft outcome) that needs to be examined, particularly in terms of job search, to ensure better outcomes of long-term training programmes (Mahlstedt, 2018). This supports earlier evidence from a study of active labour market policy aimed at young people in Belfast, which showed that lack of confidence (along with other factors) negatively impacted on perceived opportunities limiting job search (Green, Shuttleworth, and Lavery, 2005).

A review of ALMPs in the **Middle East and North Africa** examined evidence on four programmes that variously offered wage subsidy, entrepreneurship, financial support, life skills training and coaching (Angel-Urdinola and Leon-Solano, 2018). No impact on employment in the longer-term was found, and only a change from employee to self-employment status in the programmes offering entrepreneurship training was noted. All programmes reported a positive change in behavioural skills, knowledge and attitudes, indicating that the participants had developed over the duration of their engagement with the programme.

The final type of effect of activation on welfare corresponds to soft outcomes and were measured by analysing results from a self-reported scale (high, fair, little and none) of individual benefits from the programme (Kvist, Pedersen, and Köhler, 2008). Evidence found that engagement in activation programmes:

- improved qualifications for work and education;
- made everyday life better;
- improved self-confidence; and

- clarified future prospects.

These outcomes were rated more highly by programme participants than the labour market outcomes, particularly by those still on the programme. This suggests that softer outcomes are valid measures of progress and a participants' journey.

3.5. Soft skills

In contrast to hard outcomes, soft skills development referred to those outcomes that represent intermediary stages on the way to achieving a hard outcome. There is growing consensus internationally that soft skills (sometimes called 'life skills', 'essential skills', 'generic skills' or 'employability skills') are important in determining both the employability of an individual and the productivity and health of a business. For example, Balgobin and her colleagues (2004) cite examples of government departments around the world that are addressing the concept of soft skills, and highlighting these in their work or employment strategies. In addition, they found international evidence indicating that soft skills are important not just at the entry level, but for workers at all skill levels; in all sectors of the economy; in both current and future workforces (Balgobin, Hutton, Rees, and Weinstock, 2004). Along similar lines, results from a survey of European Social Fund (ESF) Objective 3 projects revealed similar interest in measuring soft skills (DWP, 2003).

To this end, a number of key documents set out soft skills that are developed and acquired through participation in ALMPs (Balgobin, et al., 2004; Dewson, Eccles, Tackey, and Jackson, 2000b; DWP, 2003).

The following graphic illustrates the range of soft skills and attributes that have been assessed as part of the distance travelled models and soft outcomes measures reviewed.

Figure 1: Soft skills and attributes

The development of personal skills and attributes such as greater motivation, increased self-esteem and self-efficacy have all been found to be important outcomes in both education and employment interventions. For instance, low self-esteem and lack of confidence are seen as important factors in contributing to lack of success in education, training and employment. This explains why these factors have also been found to be key components in the list of 'soft' skills. Moreover, developing such skills has been found to

be particularly important when working with disadvantaged groups such as the LTU (Balgobin, et al., 2004).

When commissioned to develop a soft skills measurement tool for unemployed people between the ages of 16 and 50, Balgobin and her colleagues (2004) found a wide range of activities being offered to participants of different ages, abilities, interests and employment backgrounds. It became apparent that although the skills requirements do remain constant for all types of employment, the route to acquiring them is likely to be different and will be linked to the specific needs of the individual or group. As part of their work, Balgobin and colleagues (2004) identified a set of skills considered important to employers, grouping them as follows:

- attendance, punctuality and time management;
- teamwork, communication, self-esteem and confidence; and
- motivation, relationships, and how you look and behave.

Efforts to measure self-esteem, particularly in the discipline of psychological health, have proved complex. In terms of relevance for distance travelled for the LTU, many of the diagnostic tools that have been developed specifically to measure self-esteem are lengthy (Ploug, 2014). Because self-esteem is only one component of 'soft skills' identified as important for employability, the evidence suggests that it may not be feasible to rely on such specific 'off-the-shelf' diagnostic tools, however it may prove useful to draw inspiration from the types of questions/indicators included in the tools (Balgobin, et al., 2004).

Drawing on the synthesis of evidence on various distance travelled models and tools, soft skills can be grouped as follows:

- practical work-focused skills (e.g. time management);
- career management skills (e.g. job search abilities, ability to write a job application letter or prepare a CV);
- interpersonal skills (e.g. communication, social skills and coping with authority, ability to get on and work with people, team-working, individual appearance/presentation);
- organisational skills (e.g. personal organisation, the ability to order and prioritise, ability to manage and plan finances);
- thinking and analytical skills (e.g. the ability to exercise judgement, managing time or problem solving); and
- personal skills and attributes (e.g. self-management, insight, motivation, self-esteem, confidence, reliability and health awareness).

The difficulties of developing monitoring approaches for these soft skills is acknowledged in the DWP Guidance document, particularly in the context of specific target groups and with limited resources (DWP, 2003). Despite such difficulties, soft skills and outcomes are often considered more relevant in cases where disadvantaged clients (such as the LTU) mean they are less likely to achieve traditional hard outcomes of qualifications or progressing to employment.

3.6. Distance travelled

The term 'distance travelled' refers to the progress clients or participants make in terms of achieving soft outcomes that lead towards sustained employment or associated hard outcomes, as a result of participating in a project and against an initial baseline set on joining it (Dewson, et al., 2000b). Dewson and colleagues (2000b, p.2) noted that consideration of distance travelled is 'very important in contextualising the achievement of clients'. For those that have not participated in an

education course or entered employment, distance travelled is particularly important in showing a participant's journey and progress (Sutherland, Macdougall, and McGregor, 2015). Measuring distance travelled requires assessing clients on at least two separate occasions (and preferably more) to understand what has changed.[4]

While recognising that measuring distance travelled can be beneficial to funders, service commissioners, providers and clients, a recent review of the literature on effectiveness of employment programmes undertaken by the Learning and Work Institute (2016) for the Scottish Government found there to be a very limited evidence base on the effectiveness of distance travelled measures in terms of programme impact, as well as a lack of evidence on which particular measures better predict longer-term hard outcomes.

The DWP Guidance document (2003) was designed to be a practical guide to measurement of soft outcomes and distance travelled – primarily in terms of employability. It was developed in 2003 by the UK Department of Work and Pensions and the Welsh European Funding Office. It included a glossary of key terms (DWP, 2003, p. 11), including the following five terms required within a distance travelled model:

- an **outcome** is 'a change in a client that results from their participation in a project';
- a **hard outcome** is 'a clearly definable and measurable outcome, e.g. getting a job or getting a place on a training course';
- a **soft outcome** is a 'less tangible or more difficult-to-measure outcome, such as increased self-esteem, or improved problem-solving abilities';
- **indicators** are 'measures used by a project to assess the extent to which soft outcomes have been achieved'; and
- **assessment** is defined as 'the process of deciding which soft outcomes clients need to work towards, what their initial starting point is, and the extent to which they progress while participating in a project'.

[4] The term 'distance travelled', when referring to measures of progress and soft outcomes, is more likely to be used in policy documents. 'Soft outcomes' is a more commonly used term in the extant literature.

4. Role of soft outcomes and distance travelled models in Active Labour Market programmes

This section positions the concept of distance travelled and soft outcomes as appropriate ways to measure progress in ALMPs for those furthest from the labour market, in particular, LTU people. Evidence on the value of these measures for different stakeholders is identified, and shows why distance travelled models and measures in ALMPs are of value. Evidence on the use of distance travelled models in other types of interventions is also discussed.

4.1. Why measure soft outcomes and distance travelled models in ALMPs market?

Several reasons as to why soft outcomes and distance travelled should be measured can be distilled from the review of the literature. Distance travelled tools can perform different roles within ALMPs, but by and large, the main reason for measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled is to capture the benefits resulting from programme activities that would otherwise be missed if only hard outcomes are recorded (DWP, 2003; The Learning and Work Institute, 2016). More specifically, the DWP Guidance document identifies five specific benefits in measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled, as follows:

- showing **clients**, the progress they are making as a result of participating in a project, even if not immediately apparent to them, and so providing an opportunity for personal motivation;
- showing **project staff**, how the project is progressing, which can be important for motivating staff by illustrating that their clients are making progress which may have been undetected/unreported if only hard outcomes are reported;
- providing **information to support project development** as gathered information can be used to identify which activities are having a positive impact, and also, where improvements can be made;
- demonstrating to **employers, colleges or other organisations** that the participants have developed the soft skills that they need, and have the necessary motivation/commitment to make necessary changes;
- demonstrating to **funders** that a project (or intervention) is making a real difference, even if hard outcomes have not yet been achieved (DWP, 2003; The Learning and Work Institute, 2016).

Others who have developed measures of soft outcome and distance travelled have similarly identified the value of these approaches to a range of stakeholders. First, Balgobin and her colleagues (2004) envisaged that the development of soft skills and distance travelled tools would be most beneficial to those people who could not or did not demonstrate their learning or progress through established routes or who do not have previous work experience. They also identified other potential clients would likely include employers, teachers and training providers, careers and guidance counsellors.

Second, the team who developed the soft skills tool for the *Unqualified Success Life Skills Work Skills* employment project started from the premise that employers' value and appreciate soft skills, albeit informally (Balgobin, et al., 2004). The soft skills measurement tool for the project identified and grouped soft skills for employers, including:

- communication (verbal and non-verbal);
- motivation;
- confidence;
- working with others;
- time management; and
- self-management.

This being so, they contend that the main reason for developing a tool to assess an individual's soft skills was 'to make the individual more employable with the current and future job market' (Balgobin, et al., 2004, p. 8). There is a growing body of international evidence that employers assess potential employees on the basis of their 'soft skills', so developing an understanding of what employers want and need provides an optimum 'end point' of the distance travelled by an individual in relation to their soft skills (Balgobin, et al., 2004; Sutherland, Macdougall, and McGregor, 2015).

Third, the *WORKSTEP* pilot found evidence that their distance travelled system was beneficial to the programme. In particular, the approach was found to have contributed to the quality of programme delivery in terms of realising improvements in such areas as standardisation and development of work practices, facilitation of client engagement and motivation; and the ability of clients to demonstrate their progress to employers (Purvis, Lowrey and Law, 2009). Stakeholders in the pilot identified a range of benefits associated with monitoring soft outcomes. It enabled clients to see the progress they were making as a result of participation in the programme and staff could also see how much progress their clients were making and more easily identify areas where improvements could be made. Moreover, they also thought that a distance travelled system could demonstrate to their funders that the programme was making a difference even if sustained open employment was not reached (Purvis, Lowrey, and Law, 2009).

Along similar lines, Dewson and colleagues (2000b) contend that in addition to the benefits that accrue to the project and client, it is generally considered good practice to measure soft outcomes and distance travelled because it improves the process of working with clients, raises the standard of service delivery, and provides a valuable context for clients' needs and progress. In their guide, the types of benefits of measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled are grouped under general benefits, benefits to the project, and benefits to the client.

4.2. Measuring distance travelled in ALMPs

A variety of ALMPs have been developed and implemented across the EU; some countries focus on a 'work first' approach in their ALMPs (such as in **Germany**, **Ireland** and the **UK**) and others focus on developing human and social capital (such as in **Denmark**, **Norway** and **Sweden**). It is important to consider the focus of the ALMPs as this provides an indication of whether and what approaches to measuring distance travelled and soft outcomes are appropriate and/or credible.

4.2.1. The work first model in ALMPs

Core to the 'work first theory', developed in Michigan during the 1990s, is that achieving a work outcome as early as possible is the most likely means of ensuring longer-term employment for an individual, where intensive intervention at the start of a claim, focused on assisted job search, is the best way to help people into sustainable employment (Bruttel and Sol, 2006; Damm, 2012; Freud, 2007).

While the work first approach may be effective for 'mainstream unemployed', there is much debate over whether disadvantaged individuals, such as the LTU, are best served by this approach (Damm, 2012; Whelan, et al., 2018). For example, there is evidence to suggest that when service providers are incentivised only by the number of job outcomes they facilitate, they have a tendency to steer clients towards sectors that attract low pay and require low skill levels. This may do little to improve the long term prospects of the individual as they may become trapped in low paid, poor quality jobs (Grover, 2007).

Furthermore, evidence suggests that the adoption of a 'work first' approach combined with payment by results in ALMPs has impacted on the way that services are delivered. For example, following this approach may lead to a faster pace of progress for clients (i.e. time-limited contracts); a higher caseload for caseworkers; and attempts by providers to focus on those most likely to achieve job outcomes (i.e. 'skimming' or 'creaming') (Damm,

2012, p. 5). Relevantly, evidence from the **UK** has found that a sanctions model focused on 'work first' does not result in sustained labour market outcomes (Taulbut, Mackay, and McCartney, 2018).

Interestingly, it is suggested that more personalised ALMPs focused on addressing individual barriers to the labour market, such as help with finding job opportunities, may be more effective than just a focus on achieving employment outcomes (Daguerre and Etherington, 2009).

4.2.2. The social inclusion first model in ALMPs

In contrast to the 'work first' model, the 'social inclusion first' model focuses on the broader social exclusion needs of their client group. This involves taking a more integrated and individual approach including considering a client's wider social needs (such as addictions, violence), pre-employment skills (such as appearance, regularity, relating to others), wellbeing (such as self-confidence, health, motivation), and chaotic environment (homelessness) before tackling workplace skills and employment (Aitken, 2007, pp. 8-10).

These types of ALMPs that focus on human and social capital have been found to enable access to sustainable and better-quality work (McQuaid and Fuertes, 2015; Whelan, et al., 2018). For example, international evidence on the employment rates of ALMPs have noted better outcomes when soft skills or life skills training is provided alongside skills training (Angel-Urdinola and Leon-Solano, 2018; The World Bank, 2012). This focus is particularly important in ALMPs targeted at those with low skills and/or qualifications, those who have been away from the labour market, and those with complex and multiple barriers to employment.

Relevantly, research in **Bulgaria** found that integrated systems were particularly effective at supporting the unemployed (Terziev, 2019). Consistent with earlier research, a **Swedish** field experiment found that a combination of job-search monitoring and job-search assistance generated more permanent jobs than job-search monitoring alone, where monitoring alone was more likely to result in temporary employment (Hägglund, 2014). Moreover, Orton and Green (2019) suggest ALMPs at a local level could be effective in drawing together expertise and key stakeholders to enable access to sustainable work. The importance of adapting ALMPs to local labour market conditions is also identified by Ploug (2014) as one factor that has contributed to the relative success of **Danish** ALMPs in recent times.

These approaches highlight how ALMPs focused on hard or soft measures to assess hard outcomes could fail to evidence effectiveness. A distance travelled model could include both types of measures evidencing how social and human capital has developed on a pathway to the labour market with the outcome of engaging in further education and training or gaining employment. While there was little evidence on measuring distance travelled or a participant's journey in an ALMP, some that have examined both hard and soft outcomes and are reviewed next.

4.2.3. ALMPs using both hard and soft outcomes to measure progress

The following studies evidence how some distance travelled models or soft outcome measurements have been used in ALMPs.

Dewson and colleagues (2000a) found that most of the 300 ESF projects they consulted collected information on soft outcomes. In their reviewing of the ESF projects they found that the range and type of indicators that have been used to measure soft outcomes varied considerably. Moreover, while some projects had systems in place to measure distance travelled, these systems remained primarily focused on quantifying hard outcomes; measurement of soft outcomes was often informal and unsystematic.

When Saunders and his colleagues (2012) were designing a screening tool for the *ENABLER* project, they asked a small sample of clients about what types of services they considered useful in helping them to find work. The clients reported receiving useful support in a number of ways, including accessing IT courses, job brokerage, training via an employer, voluntary work, PES support and further education courses. Those who considered themselves 'ready to work' mentioned such factors as help from people with specialist knowledge of job opportunities; people who could advocate on their behalf; help with gaining access to websites that were inaccessible to them; career counselling; as well as support such as a work buddy or mentor. While some clients found it difficult to identify specific services that would be useful, they saw any activities that would build their confidence as helpful.

While it involved a small sample of 15 purposively-selected participants, a **Finnish** qualitative study aimed to try to understand young unemployed men's experiences post participation in an ALMP. The programme was run from a job and youth centre and aimed to help young people find work, education programmes, or other solutions that would have a long-term positive effect on their wellbeing and development. The participants worked with caseworkers to develop targeted support measures, including opportunities to develop new interests. The participants reported positive experiences from this active form of targeted support, including a sense of optimism about the future, a sense of purpose and structure in the daily lives, social support, and increased self-confidence (Björklund, Häggström and Nyström, 2017). While this small-scale programme was costly to fund and time-intensive, it serves as an innovative example of an ALMP aimed at helping young men to increase their self-confidence, wellbeing and health, and progression to the labour market.

It is clear in the evidence that the LTU often experience multiple barriers and challenges to re-entering the labour market which is coupled with poor mental health and well-being. There is some evidence that including therapeutic approaches within an ALMP is beneficial for the LTU. For instance, a randomised controlled trial was undertaken in **Ireland** by Whelan and colleagues (2018) to examine the impact of an intervention (known as *EPPIC*, Enhancing Employability through Positive Interventions for improving Career potential) aimed at the LTU (12 months on benefits) from a disadvantaged urban area. The participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups – half of them engaged in a high support intervention (including therapeutic interventions) and half participated in the usual service. The aim of the study was to determine whether well-being and perceived employability (defined by self-esteem, hopefulness, resilience and career self-efficacy) could be improved (Whelan, et al., 2018). The high-support intervention included an individual needs and barriers assessment, personalised career guidance, career planning and regular meeting at times defined by the caseworker and the individual. A range of self-assessments in the form of questionnaires were used to measure outcomes. The outcomes included:

- increased wellbeing;
- self-esteem;
- career self-efficacy;
- resilience;
- hopefulness;
- perceived progress towards the labour market;
- re-employment or labour market participation;
- re-employment quality (job satisfaction, job sustainability, level of earnings); and
- access to education/vocational training.

Early results in measuring distance travelled using this approach are positive, but longer term results are not yet available.

Similarly, combining therapeutic, cognitive and social skills development in ALMPs for the LTU with a physical or learning disability has been found to result in positive soft outcomes as well as positive employment and vocational outcomes. For instance, in **Norway** and **Denmark**, ALMPs combining job search support with intensified counselling were found to

be cost effective (Filges, Smedslund, and Jørgensen, 2016). A study in **Ireland** evidenced the positive benefits of a therapeutic approach to job-seeking and employment support for the LTU (Whelan, et al., 2018). Similarly, a study in the **United States of America** of two employment programmes to support employment, and enhance cognitive and social skills for those with autism used base line and post-intervention data to measure cognitive, social and employment outcomes (Baker-Ericzen et al., 2018). The programme used a 'soft skills curriculum' to support participants. While small, the study evidenced that combining soft skills development within an employment programme can have a positive impact on vocational outcomes for this particular group. Baker-Ericzen and colleagues (2018) reported qualitative improvements in confidence, and cognitive and social skills with many using social networking toward career building.

Furthermore, a **Spanish** randomised control experiment explored whether the provision of a structured intervention in emotional competencies (i.e. identifying and expressing emotions, understanding emotions, and regulating one's own and others' emotions) can improve perception of employability, job search, entrepreneurialism and reemployment among unemployed adults (Hodzic, Ripoll, Lira and Zenashi, 2015). The researchers found that the experimental group that participated in the intervention reported a significant increase in their level of perceived employability and entrepreneurialism, more reemployment success and shorter duration of unemployment than the control group.

A youth employment programme in a developing country evidenced the importance of, what they label as, 'non-labor market outcomes' which they argue increase participant employability and quality of employment (Ibarraran, et al., 2014). The aim of the employment programme was to support young people who did not complete their high school education into the labour market by providing life skills training and vocational or technical training. While evaluation of the programme examined employment rates, it also examined whether it increased non-cognitive and socio-emotional skills of participants. Ibarraran and colleagues (2014) found a positive impact on non-cognitive skills which can support transitions into the labour market. The longer-term impact of the programme was not measured, but Ibarraran and colleagues suggest the short-term nature of the programme limited its success in terms of employment outcomes.

The objective of research commissioned in **Canada** by a group of voluntary organisations working with young people in the inner-city projects was to identify an existing tool that they could use to measure young people's progress to hard and quantifiable outcomes. The aim was to use valid soft outcomes measures. After reviewing existing tools, the researchers found no suitable existing tool. It was argued that the other tools were: too specific and dealt with too narrow a field (such as employability only); only measuring soft skills; and were too expensive, particularly the commercially available psychometric instruments (Balgobin, et al., 2004). It was decided to modify an existing tool that aimed at providing an assessment of 'social health' or 'quality of life'. This was based on evidence that when quality of life is improved then individuals are better able to achieve success in education, training and employment (Balgobin, et al., 2004). Interestingly, the tool was never used as it moved too far from the original objective of the programme which was for the young person to define their own outcomes.

These studies evidence how outcomes measured over time can demonstrate the positive impact and outcomes of ALMPs, particularly when programmes are designed to support the LTU achieve both employability and developmental outcomes.

4.3. Measuring distance travelled beyond ALMPs

Lessons can also be learned from efforts to measure distance travelled in interventions and programmes beyond the confines of ALMPs. For example, **formal education and training programmes** have typically measured their success in terms of 'hard outcomes' including numbers succeeding in gaining a formal or recognised qualification; numbers of participants obtaining employment; and/or course completion rates. However, there is growing recognition such 'hard outcomes' may not be valid, particularly if learners/participants do not have the skills that are important for employment. While there

has been some reluctance to shift away from 'hard' to 'soft' measures, this has often stemmed from the fact that 'soft' outcomes are difficult to measure and involve subjective and qualitative assessments.

In their review of the literature on measuring distance travelled, Balgobin and her colleagues (2004) reviewed a broad range of evidence from **education and training interventions and beyond**. They did not limit the search as tools for measuring soft skills were found to have been developed by other sectors (such as **housing, health, social care**) and contained elements that are suitable for use with employment outcomes (Balgobin, et al., 2004). They discovered that a considerable body of work had been undertaken to try and define what they describe as the intangible benefits of a wide variety of interventions, whether such interventions were geared towards a person's education, health or wellbeing.

Their research found that there has long been recognised a need to try and quantify 'distance travelled' in terms of soft outcomes of **formal training and education**. They also found interest and debate in this field about the desirability and viability of developing measurement tools. Similar debates were also found in the field of health and social care research and development. A range of tools were identified that measured some aspect of a patient's subjective experience of health and the consequences of illness. During the development of their soft skills measurement tool (called *Life Skills Work Skills*) for the *Unqualified Success* employment project, the main driver for the development was that it captured distance travelled on softer skills for employment. It was also designed to ensure that the delivery would be cost-effective, and that funders would be able to recognise soft outputs in a meaningful way (Balgobin, et al., 2004).

In one of the very few articles published in the academic literature that explicitly makes reference to 'soft outcomes', Zepke and Leach (2010) critique policy discourses that equate student success in **higher education** with 'hard' outcomes. In doing so, they suggest that using 'soft' outcomes and student engagement as more appropriate ways to obtain a more holistic understanding of student success. They argue that 'soft' outcomes, rather than measuring success objectively, measure it according to learners' own perceptions toward their own and programme goals. Three characteristics of 'soft' skills are identified that set them apart from 'hard' outcomes:

- first, success is not measured directly or tangibly, but by distance travelled;
- secondly, they conceive 'soft' outcomes as context-sensitive; and
- thirdly, measuring soft outcomes has a subjective dimension that includes the experience of learners (Zepke and Leach, 2010).

An evaluation of an education programme in **Australia** found that practitioners used a range of evidence to assess progress of their students beyond hard measures (Thomas, McGinty, Riele, and Wilson, 2017). It was concluded that the term 'distance travelled' was valued by both the educators and students. It is argued that successful outcomes should, therefore, be recognised as points on a journey, rather than solely a destination.

A review of frameworks, tools and data sources used by providers to measure distance travelled in a **UK youth programme**, *Talent Match*[5] identified a lack of an agreed approach to measuring outcomes, and therefore, no agreement around what constitutes 'success' or how outcomes should be measured (NPC and the Young Foundation, 2012). The failure to link up the steps on the journey to employment or enterprise means that providers have no way to measure their work unless it results in 'hard' outcomes, nor a way to understand the links between different outcomes. The review found gaps in measuring some outcome areas, such as skills for finding and sustaining work and that few distance travelled tools are specifically developed to target 18 to 24 year-olds. Furthermore, they found a lack of

[5] Talent Match is a UK project funding young people aged 18 to 24 who are furthest away from the labour market towards work.

tools that put young people's voices at the centre or that were developed in collaboration with young people; many organisations are trying to measure their impact in isolation without sharing their experiences with other providers. Moreover, despite the potential of technology to improve engagement with young people as well as to improve management systems, new technologies (such as smart phones, tablets, social media platforms) have yet to make much of an impact on measurement tools.

While a process to identify scales that measure soft outcomes by another **youth programme,** this time in the **USA**, *Forum for Youth Investment* focuses on four, cross-cutting specific skill areas: communication, relationships and collaboration, critical thinking and decision making, and initiative and self-direction (Wilson-Ahlstrom, Yohalem, DuBois, Ji, Hillaker, and Weikart, 2014). In addition to identifying common constructs across these frameworks, they decided to focus on specific skill- and ability-oriented outcomes. Eight existing measurement tools for youth were identified. A mapping exercise revealed that all eight of the instruments include at least one indicator that addresses collaboration and relationships and initiative and self-direction. While fewer than half of the instruments measured communication skills. While the focus is on employability and life skills for youth, the guide contains some useful details on how to assess validity and reliability.

5. KEY CONSIDERATIONS IN DESIGNING A DISTANCE TRAVELLED MODEL

This section synthesises evidence into eight things useful to consider when designing distance travelled models and tools. Examples of programmes using soft outcome measures or distance travelled models are used to further illustrate some of the key considerations.

5.1. Set clear objectives

When designing a distance travelled measurement tool or model, there is a need to be clear on what is wanted from the approach from the outset. The objectives should be appropriate to the overall aim of the intervention or programme and align with its activities, regardless of whether the achievement of soft outcomes is explicit in the project objectives.

Regardless of whether a system or tool is purchased, customised or designed in-house, the project objectives should guide the design of a relevant framework around which monitoring and evaluation can occur (Dewson, et al., 2000b, p. 7). By and large, the system that is put in place should align with the activities and objectives of the project, its target groups, length of intervention, and the availability of financial and other resources, including staffing.

5.2. Allocate dedicated resources

Resourcing for the design, implementation and maintenance of tools is a key consideration as evidence shows sufficient resources and continuity in policy support ensures good labour market outcomes. On this, the DWP (2003) identified allocaton of dedicated resources as one of the three key success factors to implementing distance travelled models. For instance, time-series analysis of labour market outcomes from ALMPs in 31 countries reported a positive impact concluding that they were successful as they had sufficient allocation of resources to the programme and its administration, as well as continuous policy support for the programmes (Escudero, 2018).

So, understanding the key success factors for implementing an effective system is important in terms of determining how much effort would be required in terms of time and resources, where this will necessarily vary from a few weeks to several months depending on the nature of the project and the approach that is followed. Factors such as the degree of complexity of the approach to be adopted, the size and complexity of the organisation or project that is going to use it; the number of staff that will be involved in the development process; and the number of staff that will use the final product (DWP, 2003).

While it is important to consider financial costs when designing and using soft outcomes and distance travelled tools, the evidence review revealed little by way of specific information about the sorts of likely direct and indirect costs. One exception, as part of their review of existing soft skills assessment tools, Balgobin and her colleagues (2004, pp. 63-66) listed some of the types of initial and recurring costs associated with introducing a soft tools assessment tool, including:

- In terms of initial or start-up costs, purchase price of resources such as hardware, software and printed material; staff training costs; additional staff to administer, evaluate and to embed in the organisation; and costs associated with follow up work with clients were flagged.
- For recurring costs, they include such costs as those associated with renewing resources for new groups of clients; costs to train new staff; staff time to administer and evaluate results; and ongoing development and revision of the tool over time.

While they undertook their research some time ago, they examined the costs associated with a number of existing 'off-the-shelf' assessment packages in order to obtain a broad indication of costs. The reported figures were presented in Pounds Sterling (GBP) and are

outdated, however they found that higher costs were associated with computer only packages that require annual site licenses. They stressed the importance of making sure recurrent costs are taken into consideration when preparing budgets; also that financial costs need to be weighed up against other potential savings and benefits, such as improved professional development of staff, better outcomes for clients, and improved ability to demonstrate progress to funders (Balgobin, et al., 2004).

5.3. Review existing tools

The review has highlighted the need for greater awareness of good practice in the field of measuring soft outcomes as it is largely uncoordinated, and evaluations of such tools are limited. For instance, Balgobin and her colleagues (2004) concluded that while tools are constantly being devised, many of these customised tools will remain within the organisations concerned, a small number will be commercialised, while many will be used for a while then disappear.

Reviewing the evidence highlighted that it is typically not feasible to develop a 'universally applicable' assessment tool (see Anderson, Foster, and McKibben, 2005; Balgobin, et al., 2004; Dewson, et al., 2000a; The Work and Learning Institute, 2016). The review conducted by the Work and Learning Institute noted that projects often found it necessary to develop their own bespoke tools rather than using 'off-the-shelf tools because of the variety of activities and intended outcomes, client groups and resources. They also found that distance travelled tools have primarily been developed for use within specialist employment programmes that serve client groups with more complex needs or multiple barriers, who need to stabilise their circumstances and who may take longer to achieve hard work outcomes (The Learning and Work Institute, 2016).

The review of systems to measure soft outcomes undertaken by Dewson and colleagues (2000a) concluded that more guidance on how to develop soft outcomes and distance travelled models is required. Furthermore, a systematic approach to measurement is needed to capture important achievements, different programmes have different objectives so different tools are needed. Balgobin and her colleagues (2004, p. 23) noted that the proliferation of customised assessment tools along with a burgeoning commercial market brings into question 'whether it is possible to design a tool that assesses progress towards employability which can cope with different needs and abilities.' They were concerned that their tools would not be reliable or valid as based on subjective judgements of clients' progress. Adopting a slightly different stance, the team who developed the ***SOUL Record* tool** to measure soft outcomes in informal training concluded that although a generic distance travelled model may not be effective, a learner-centred generic framework that is simple to use and supported by user training can be successfully used to evidence soft outcome achievements (Andersen, Foster, and McKibben, 2005).

5.4. Consult on design of tools and measures

The evidence also highlights the importance of being consultative when designing and developing a distance travelled model or tool (see for example, Balgobin, et al., 2004; DWP, 2003). Feedback should be sought from those implementing the tool and the clients. Consulting with caseworkers and clients in the design will garner buy-in as well as help in understanding whether the approach is likely to be useful. It is also argued that adopting a consultative approach will aid with clarity of process so that clients understand the point of, and see value in, the process.

Some have suggested that introducing a system of measuring soft outcomes may require a cultural shift and learning curve for project staff, clients and other stakeholders (Dewson, et al., 2000b). Others have suggested staff training with opportunities for consultation is useful (DWP, 2003). In addition, there is evidence to suggest that a reasonable caseload is required for caseworkers working with clients who are furthest from the labour market (Daguerre and Etherington, 2009; Duell, 2012). Communication with, and commitment

from, staff involved in the assessment process is important. Among other things, it can improve trust between the client and the person involved in the assessment.

Those delivering the ***WORKSTEP*** distance travelled system work with clients who have fluctuating or deteriorating conditions, so they raised concerns about the approach and measures (Purvis, Lowrey, and Law, 2009). While some of the users initially expressed difficulties with using the system, there were perceptions that the assessment was time-consuming given already high caseloads, and some reported having to assign scores off-putting (Purvis, Lowrey and Law, 2009). However, many of the concerns appeared to ease as staff became more familiar with the approach. This highlights the importance of consultation and staff training in order to integrate the approach with existing activities.

Relevantly, the DWP Guidance document (2003) cautions strongly against 'dropping in' measurement approaches to projects with limited input and involvement of operational staff and other stakeholders. It is recommended that staff and clients are involved in designing and setting up the system and that a planned approach should be used to introduce the system, including a clear timetable. Using a project champion to oversee the process is also suggested, where the champion should have the backing of management. Resonating with other literature, the guidance document recommended that adding to the workload of staff should be avoided by way of integrating elements of monitoring into their existing work. For example, integrating baseline assessments of soft skills with existing needs assessments during the initial contact with the client.

5.5. Allow caseworker judgement

Related to the previous point, the **role of caseworker** judgement is increasingly seen as important in assessing clients and allocating resources to support their clients return to the labour market, so it is important to consider where a tool would support this process. It is also suggested that tools should be responsive, allowing the caseworker to obtain a better understanding of the client group that they are working with so they can develop more tailored support.

Evidence on the profiling and targeting approaches of PES suggests that some form of assessment (whether objective or subjective) is often undertaken at the point individuals register as unemployed (Barnes, Wright, Irving and Deganis, 2015). Profiling, screening and targeting tools are commonly being used by public and private employment services to target the delivery of their support services (Desiere, Langenbucher, and Struyven, 2019). These tools help identify individuals needing targeted support with the aim of supporting a faster return to the labour market. Profiling or screening approaches support the delivery of services by providing an indication of what activation measures individuals can be allocated to (such as active labour market programmes, further learning, skills development and career guidance), or those that would be most beneficial, given an individual's profile. It is used as part of an integrated or coordinated approach to supporting individuals (Berthet and Bourgeois, 2014). The implementation of some form of profiling or screening is commonplace in employment services as supporting those who are less able is becoming increasingly important where self-service is a key mechanism to managing resources (Barnes, Wright, Irving and Deganis, 2015).

Recent research has identified a number of procedures that are considered useful for assessing individual needs ranging from statistical tools that require labour market information to softer approaches that rely on the judgement and assessment undertaken by a caseworker.

The caseworker is increasingly being seen to have a vital role in using, implementing, interpreting and understanding profiling and targeting approaches as well allocating resources in ALMPs (see Barnes, Wright, Irving, and Deganis, 2015; Bimrose, Barnes, Brown, and Hasluck, 2007; Behncke, Frölich, and Lechner, 2010; Mahlstedt, 2018; Saunders, Lynch and Douglas, 2012). Even if the client completes the assessment tool themselves, they will still need to meet with the caseworker to discuss the results, and

ideally, use the assessment as the basis for developing an individual action plan. Research has found that caseworkers often resisted the idea of categorisation or segmenting of clients because they viewed their work as individualised. Perhaps not surprisingly, many of those surveyed either did not use assessment tools or were resistant to their use, instead preferring to rely on their own professional judgement (Saunders, Lynch and Douglas, 2012). These findings highlight the importance of 'buy in' in terms of ensuring that any system designed to measure distance travelled should not only allow for input from clients, but also scope for caseworkers to exercise their own judgement.

5.6. Ensure tools are client-focused

Client-focused tools have been found to be more successful. This means tools should be designed so that information gathered during the assessment process can be used to provide feedback to clients. It is suggested that this may serve to increase the client's confidence and satisfaction with their own achievements. Related to this, the collection of baseline data needs to be carefully thought out in terms of its length and format, as it is an essential element of collecting data for a tool.

After reviewing a range of existing generic tools that measure outcomes, Saunders and his colleagues (2012) identified a set of factors that employment counsellors considered important when trying to assess a client's distance from the labour market. Obtaining a full understanding of the client's fundamental needs (such as housing needs, benefits, mental health) in order to address individual circumstances *before* trying to assist the client into employment was seen as vital. In addition to obtaining information about the client's previous employment experience and other transferable skills, counsellors identified a range of 'soft skills': establishing whether the client was aware of relevant service providers as well as obtaining information about the client's previous employment experience and/or other transferable skills; qualifications, including literacy and numeracy skills; language skills; mobility and independent skills; ICT skills; self-confidence in terms of knowing when they are 'job ready'; and whether clients are realistic about their expectations in terms of opportunities.

With the ***ENABLER tool***, which essentially captures information for both profiling/segmentation and baseline distance travelled, the developers wanted to create a tool that was not too onerous, easy to use and could give the employment counsellors an initial view of the distance a client was from the labour market (Saunders, Lynch and Douglas, 2012). As a first step, they identified a list of relevant categories based on a number of key areas related to the activity of work. The structure and content of the tool changed considerably during its development. For example, the first version contained over 40 questions about the client's readiness for work covering such areas as employment-related skills, aspirations, required skills for work, what search activities had been carried out, and so forth. This first version was structured into areas and sub-areas, each of which had an associated question (or questions). After it was established that many of the questions being asked had already been collected via another source, some questions were omitted (Saunders, Lynch and Douglas, 2012). The first two versions of the assessment tool included additional categories on levels of literacy and numeracy, spoken language skills and vocational training. A final section included 10 indicators on self-esteem that was drawn from the ***Rickter Scale***. The final version of the tool saw screening questions scored using a four-level categorisation developed earlier to give counsellors a rapid assessment of a client's distance from the labour market by placing them within the segmentation model.

As highlighted earlier, distance travelled models require data to be collected at, minimally, two periods during engagement with the programme; normally data are collected at the beginning of the process and at the end of the programme (or later as a follow-up). The initial assessment of the client is an essential part of the process of measuring distance travelled during engagement with an ALMP. There is some evidence which discusses this stage of the distance travelled models highlighting some considerations, such as timing and length of assessment, and the form of the assessment.

5.7. Personalise programmes and interventions

The ability of programmes to be personalised is another key consideration when designing a tool. Tools that enable **personalisation of programmes and interventions** have been found to be particularly effective with unemployed people with complex and multiple barriers. There is also evidence to suggest that tools should be backed up with good support, feedback and planning, particularly for those who face multiple barriers to employment.

Labour market programmes with an individualised or personalised approach may be more effective in shortening the length of unemployment and supporting the LTU into employment (Aitken, 2007; Card, Kluve, and Weber, 2017; Duell, 2012; Orton and Green, 2019; Taulbut, Mackay, and McCartney, 2018) and particularly LTU with mental ill health (Baker-Ericzen, et al., 2018; Brenninkmeijer and Blonk, 2011; Dean, Pepper, Schmidt, and Stern, 2019). Aitken (2007) contends that for people furthest from the labour market, more imaginative approaches that are individualised and flexible may be more effective than traditional 'work first' activities. Three interventions highlight how personalisation of programmes can be delivered.

The aim of the ***EPPIC intervention***, discussed in detail earlier, was to determine whether well-being and perceived employability (defined by self-esteem, hopefulness, resilience and career self-efficacy) could be improved with the LTU (Whelan, et al., 2018). As part of the intervention one group of clients received the high-support intervention which was tailored to their needs. This not only included the timing of meetings defined by the caseworker and the client, but clients also received intensive and personalised career guidance and career planning support. This was found to be effective for clients.

In an analogous way, a ***Dutch JOBS intervention*** targeting the LTU draws from theories and principles from behavioural and social sciences, whereby the focus is on soft skills such as strengthening of self-confidence, self-efficacy, coping and problem-solving skills. When results from the JOBS group were compared with a control group (who were given an intervention of a personal budget to spend on training and other services), the JOBS approach appeared to be effective for employment status and satisfaction, while the personal training budget approach did not appear to have any significant effects. The researchers concluded that this type of self-efficacy intervention may help the LTU avoid scarring effects that can hinder re-employment (Brenninkmeijer and Blonk, 2011).

Similarly, the ***RNIB's Work Focus Programme*** (2008-2010), delivered in partnership with Action, provided important evidence about what helps people into work. Four employment pilots were conducted in London, Sheffield, Scotland and Norfolk, where work counsellors were freed from the usual outcomes-led, time limited restrictions usually associated with government-funded ALMPs to work with harder-to-reach people out of employment, i.e. those furthest from the labour market. Based on gathered evidence, it was found that segmenting clients (i.e. profiling) according to their needs enabled staff to tailor services or make appropriate referrals to others (Saunders, Lynch, and Douglas, 2012).

Evidence supports the fact that a combination of bespoke training and referrals to other services enabled and empowered clients to access the services they needed to enhance their ability to look for work. Furthermore, participation in group activities helped participants learn from one another, thus reinforcing the importance of peer-to-peer learning and the need for an organisation-wide peer support effort (Saunders, Lynch, and Douglas, 2002, p. 8). The pilots also identified gaps in provision and service in such areas as literacy and numeracy training and vocational skills training, including computer literacy. While focused on assisting the blind or visually-impaired, arguably, the notion of taking an inclusive approach to services is equally as relevant for the LTU. That is, 'inclusive services' should encourage participation of clients in discussions about the services they receive and

ask them to identify services that are important to them (Saunders, Lynch, and Douglas, 2012).

5.8. Measure impact over time

The time period for measuring the impact of an ALMP is a further key consideration in the use of a tool, as there is much evidence to suggest that the LTU need a longer time period in which to progress in their journey to the labour market.

In addition to what will be measured, there is much discussion on when outcomes should be measured, as the extent of impact of the ALMP will be different over time. It should be noted that most evidence is quantitative in nature using employment rates as a measure of outcome and impact (see for example: Card, Kluve, and Weber, 2017; Escudero, 2018; Godec and Benčina, 2018; Kluve, 2010). For instance, analysis has shown that measuring the short-term outcomes of a programme will show little impact (Boone, and van Ours, 2004; Bredgaard, 2015, 2018), particularly in terms of employability defined by employment rates (Godec and Benčina, 2018).

Research suggests that outcomes are better measured over the longer-term (Boone and van Ours, 2004). For the ***EPPIC intervention***, measurements were taken at the beginning and end of the programme, and six months after the programme as part of the follow up. Whelan and colleagues (2018) argued that this approach to measuring multiple outcomes is valid and would evidence that this combination of intensive support and employability is more effective than the 'usual' service provided for the long-term unemployed.

6. THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A DISTANCE TRAVELLED MODEL

This section draws upon the evidence about the process of designing a distance travelled model or monitoring system. Some 22 tools, approaches or models to measure soft outcomes and distance travelled were identified. Based on the evidence, the first part of this section outlines details on the key components of a distance travelled system. This is followed by a summary of findings on the practical process of designing a distance travelled monitoring system.

6.1. Key components of a distance travelled system

While there is considerable variation in terms of specific approaches, systems designed to measure and/or monitor soft outcomes and distance travelled all tend to consist of a similar set of four key components:

- the first component is a **set of target indicators** relating to the soft outcomes that the programme wants to help clients achieve;
- the second element is a **scale or scoring system** for assessing the client's aptitude or ability on each particular indicator, where progress is measured by movement through the scale after participation in the intervention;
- the third component involves **baseline assessments and subsequent reviews to assess progress**, where tools such as questionnaires or forms can be completed either by the client (self-assessment), a caseworker or jointly; and
- the fourth component is a **method or system for analysing and reporting results**, where approaches may include, for example, graphs showing how scales or profiles have changed over time (DWP, 2003, p. 9).

6.2. The process for designing a distance travelled model

In terms of the process of developing a distance travelled monitoring system, the DWP Guidance document (2003, p. 11) was the only literature found that clearly evidenced the sequencing of steps required to develop a system. it identified **five steps** to follow:

- the first step involves **gaining and understanding of the key success factors** for implementing an effective system;
- the second **involves deciding what to monitor and which particular indicators to use**;
- the third involves deciding **how to measure**;
- the fourth concerns **establishing baselines**; and
- the final step involves **reviewing progress to assess distance travelled**.

Information gained from the evidence review on each of these steps is set out below.

6.2.1. What will be measured?

One important issue to consider when designing an approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled is the question of what to measure. A summary of key issues is set out below:

- Assessment tools to measure soft skills and distance travelled must be **valid** and **reliable** so that the tools measure what they are intended to measure (validity) as well as ensuring that consistent results can be obtained over time with different client groups and with different staff members applying the tools (reliability) (Dewson, et al., 2000b).
- While there is a limited evidence base about the effectiveness of particular measures predicting longer-term hard outcomes (The Learning and Work Institute, 2016), the process of deciding which soft outcomes to monitor and which indicators

to use will depend on such factors as the **objectives of the programme/project**, the **challenges facing clients** and the **changes the project seeks to address**.

- **Not all outcomes (and indicators) will be relevant for all clients or client groups**. Some soft outcomes and indicators will be more relevant to some target groups (such as people with learning difficulties, those with mental health issues, LTU, youth, etc.) than others, and some indicators may be more (or less) relevant for certain individuals. It is suggested that **if an intervention or programme is tailored to an individual client's needs then the indicators will also need to be tailored**.
- Where possible, decisions about outcomes and indicators should be **tied directly into the individual action plans of clients** and should reflect the aims of counselling sessions, workshops or other activities (DWP, 2003).
- Once the general outcomes to monitor have been established, a two-stage approach is suggested where the first stage involves trying to group into sub-headings similar skills or behaviour attributes that the project/intervention is hoping to work on and the second stage involves creating one or more indicators to reflect each of these skills or attributes (DWP, 2003, p. 16).
- Indicators, by definition, are only indicators of progress rather than precise measures of progress, so scales, symbols or pictures, and/or accumulation of evidence can be used to 'quantify' progress (Dewson, et al., 2000b).
- It is important to ensure that indicators are measuring something that can be changed as a result of the project and that they reflect an accurate and balanced picture of actual progress (Dewson, et al., 2000b).

In summary, developing a set of outcomes and their associated measures or indicators does not need to be a complicated task. As long as there is a clear link between the outcomes and indicators, a simple design can effectively contribute to a useful system of indicators.

6.2.2. How to measure soft outcomes and distance travelled

Determining how soft outcomes and distance travelled will be measured is another key component of designing a distance travelled model or tool. A summary of key issues is set out below:

- Most measurement approaches use some form of **scoring system or scale** (quantification) to assess the nature and extent of client needs, and the distance that they travel in developing their soft skills (Balgobin, et al., 2004; Dewson, et al., 2000b).
- **Quantification is necessary** to avoid the subjectivity of words, to provide an element of precision to descriptions and to allow comparisons between users and across time. Open-ended statements are not considered useful as they can make assessing progress over time difficult (DWP, 2003).
- There needs to be recognition and awareness that **not all indicators and measures will be appropriate for all clients**, so some suggest it is **difficult to design one particular system or model that would fit all projects** (Terziev, 2019).

Systems designed to measure and/or monitor soft outcomes and distance travelled all tend to consist of a similar set of component parts, including target indicators, scales or scoring systems, baseline assessments, follow-up reviews and analysis and reporting.

6.2.3. When to measure distance travelled

Another important issue to consider when designing an approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled is the question of when to measure distance travelled. A summary of key issues is set out below:

- Regardless of the type or number of soft outcomes and indicators, all approaches to distance travelled require an initial assessment or baseline against which subsequent progress can be measured (Balgobin, et al., 2004; DWP, 2003).
- There is a suggestion that, as a minimum, indicators need to be measured at least twice: at the beginning and again at the end of the intervention. Evidence indicates that it is beneficial to carry out assessments at other times as well as at the beginning and end of the intervention to make the process more responsive to changes and to aid in reliability (Balgobin, et al., 2004). The frequency of assessments subsequent to the baseline measurement will depend on such factors as length of project, availability of caseworker time and project resources (DWP, 2003; Balgobin, et al., 2004). In order to reliably measure distance travelled, there must be sufficient time between testing for the client to have benefitted from the learning and behaviours and attitudes changed (Balgobin, et al., 2004).
- Results always need to be contextualised by discussing what they mean in real terms with the client, and perhaps with other relevant parties such as employers, trainers, carers, or other project workers (DWP, 2003). Moreover, it is important to note that the client's journey to the labour market is not always a linear process, and in some cases, their progress may stall or even deteriorate.

In summary, all approaches to measuring distance travelled require an initial assessment or baseline against which subsequent progress can be measured. While at least two assessments must be undertaken, the number of subsequent assessments will be influenced by the duration of the project and availability of resources.

6.2.4. Data collection methods and design

Another important issue to consider when designing an approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled concerns the sort of data that will be collected and collated to track progress. A summary of key issues is set out below:

- The aim of collecting data is to not only track distance travelled, but to collect information that feeds into the overall programme evaluation and can be used to demonstrate added value of the programmes at an aggregate level (Dewson, et al., 2000b).
- Two approaches to monitor progress have been identified by Purvis and colleagues (2009): those based on opinions/perceptions and those that are more strongly evidence-based. The review of the literature suggests that when an opinion-based approach is used, where possible it should be combined with the collection of evidence to support opinions.
- There are various data collection methods including paper-based written questionnaires; hand-held sliding scales with markers; software-driven and computer-based questionnaires; web-based assessments; games; and 3D media (Balgobin, et al., 2004; Dewson, et al., 2000; DWP, 2003; Thomas, et al., 2017). It appears that paper-based questionnaires or forms remain the most commonly used data collection method, however an assessment tool that can be administered both on paper and computer would seem to offer the greatest flexibility (Balgobin, et al., 2004; Dewson, et al., 2000a; DWP, 2003).

- Other than occasional mention of graphs being produced using Excel, hardly any evidence was uncovered discussing whether digital technologies are being used to complete online assessments or track distance travelled.

In summary, it is possible to design an approach based on outcomes and indicators that are opinion-based; evidence-based or an approach where opinions are supplemented with evidence. There can be many sources of evidence that can be used to monitor progress. A range of generic and specialised tools have been developed to monitor distance travelled. It is important to consider how the data that is collected will be used in terms of both discussing progress with individual clients as well as demonstrating overall impact of a programme at the organisational-level.

6.2.5. Who measures distance travelled?

Another important issue to consider when designing an approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled is who should undertake the assessment. A summary of key issues is set out below:

- Dewson and colleagues (2000b) point out that who carries out an assessment of soft outcomes and/or distance travelled will **depend on the particular programme itself**. The following possibilities were identified: a self-assessment undertaken by the client; an assessment undertaken jointly by the client and caseworker; or an assessment undertaken by a third party who is not directly associated with the programme, such as a teacher, trainer or workplace manager.
- With **self-assessment**, the client scores themselves against the set of indicators, however truthfulness and subjectivity have already been noted to be a potential problem with self-assessment. It is suggested that obtaining an accurate picture of the client's needs and progress needs to be weighed up against client empowerment and self-direction. On this, the DWP Guidance document (2003) sets out some of the potential advantages and disadvantages of self-assessment, joint completion and approaches involved third parties.
- Evidence (Balgobin, et al., 2004; Dewon, et al., 2000b; DWP, 2003) suggests that the identified advantages of adopting a **joint approach** to assessment include the caseworker being able to provide assistance with completion (which may be particularly relevant where clients have language, low literacy, a disability or aversion to filling out forms); and explore and probe answers and propose suitable activities.
- There is much evidence on the role of the **caseworker** in ALMPs, particularly on how they can target, personalise and/or provide intensive support (Adamecz-Volgyi, et al., 2018; Barnes, et al., 2015; Behncke, Frölich, and Lechner, 2010; Blázquez, Herrarte, and Sáez, 2019; Mahlstedt, 2018; Whelan, et al., 2018).
- Finally, there was some debate in the literature on the range of **third parties** involved in assessing and measuring distance travelled of clients, suggesting teachers and trainers, employers, mentors, and independent assessors. While having a third party complete an assessment might be more objective, it can be more time-consuming, could introduce bias or mis-judgement and may not get to the underlying reasons behind issues (DWP, 2003).

6.2.6. How to review and evaluate distance travelled models and tools

The need to review and evaluate distance travelled models and tools is also considered best practice. A summary of key issues is set out below:

- As with any new system, there is a need to **review and refine it over time** (Angel-Urdinola and Leon-Solano, 2018; DWP, 2003).
- Frequent revisions are likely when an approach is **first piloted** and then implemented, but that approach should be **regularly reviewed and amended to ensure it continues to meet the needs of all involved**. This is to ensure that the tool remains effective by being reliable, valid and responsive, as well as ensuring that it continues to be accepted by those using it, whether that is the client or other stakeholders involved in monitoring and assessing the progress of the programme and the clients (Angel-Urdinola and Leon-Solano, 2018). To this end, the DWP Guidance document (2003, p. 15) provides a list of the types of issues to discuss with staff when conducting a review.
- The proliferation of bespoke tools has raised some concern because these tools are often not designed, tested or administered in such a way as to ensure they are valid and reliable (The Learning and Work Institute, 2016). Therefore, it is **necessary to undertake evaluations to build up the evidence base** on the links between distance travelled measures and longer-term, hard outcomes such as sustained employment.

In summary, it is best practice to review and evaluate the effectiveness of a tool or an approach that has been developed to monitor distance travelled. In addition to piloting the tool, regular reviews should be carried out to ensure that it is meeting its stated objectives as well as to identify any aspects that require fine-tuning.

Further guidance on the process for developing a distance travelled model or tool is set out in Annex 2 of this report.

While it is not possible to discuss all of the 22 assessment and monitoring tools that have been developed, are in use and/or available for purchase to measure soft outcomes and distance travelled, Annex 3 provides a synthesis of the design features found across the various tools. Additionally, **Annex 4 presents eight selected examples from the review of the literature**. These are useful in terms of providing concrete examples of different approaches, components, indicators and scoring/rating systems that have been used in existing tools or approaches. However, reference to a tool in this report does not constitute an endorsement of the tool, as it was beyond the scope of this review to independently verify the effectiveness or appropriateness of tools. The examples are meant to be illustrative only. In addition to the examples set out in Annex 4 of this report, **the Annex in the DWP Guidance document provides information on nine further approaches to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled** (DWP, 2003, pp. 31- 80).

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Key findings on distance travelled models and tools

The aim of this review has been to establish the scope for the application of 'distance travelled models' for the long-term unemployed; models and tools that can either be developed, refined and adapted for use by key stakeholders involved in supporting LTU integration, including ESF authorities in the design of ESF-financed measures. Over 140 pieces of evidence on Active Labour Market Programmes aimed at the LTU have been reviewed. These ALMPs use a variety of measures. The focus of the review has been on models and tools that measure distance travelled and/or soft outcomes. The timeframe for the review has not been limited as little recent evidence was found on models and tools. However, in terms of what works in ALMPs there has been more focus on recent evidence to ensure its relevancy to the current context. The main review questions were:

- What evidence is there of measures which are soft and subjective, such as increase in confidence, resilience, career adaptability, employability, skills gained, as well as re-engagement in learning and/or education, and, if employed, perceptions of job satisfaction and job quality?
- Are particular measures more suited to particular groups, of individuals with particular characteristics?
- What hard measures, such as qualifications gained, entry into employment, sustained employment, work experience, etc. are used?
- What elements comprise a 'distance travelled model' and are particular elements essential for a model targeted at the LTU?

These are addressed next.

ALMPs are complex programmes that are designed, developed and delivered within different country and policy contexts, targeted at specific groups and with different objectives. Hard outcomes and measures (such as employment rates, training courses started, qualifications achieved, etc.) have traditionally been used to assess the effectiveness of ALMPs. These measures have provided policymakers and other stakeholders with evidence on what works. However, for the LTU or those furthest from the labour market these hard measures do not capture a person's progress or journey to the labour market and therefore do not capture the positive impact of a programme or intervention. There is mixed evidence on the effectiveness of ALMPs using hard measures and outcomes. However, evidence has shown that the various elements of ALMPs have different impacts on different groups of people – the impact can often be personal and contextual. This suggests that new approaches to measuring the impact or effectiveness of ALMPs are needed. This is particularly the case as more programmes become tailored to the individual unemployed person.

The evidence on measures suggests that not all outcomes (and indicators) will be relevant for all client groups. Some soft outcomes and indicators will be more relevant to some target groups than others and some indicators may be more or less relevant for particular individuals. It is suggested that if an intervention or programme is tailored to an individual client's needs then indicators will also need to be tailored. There is no definitive evidence on what measures are most suited, useful or effective with particular groups of individuals with particular characteristics.

There is also much evidence that suggests hard measures are not (always) appropriate for people facing multiple barriers to the labour market, such as the long-term unemployed, and people with disabilities, or health problems whose journey to the labour market may take longer. Furthermore, the concept of employability defined by these hard measures is too narrow and does not take into account how those that are furthest from the labour market have developed and progressed, ultimately moving them closer to the labour market. From this understanding, the concept of distance travelled has emerged as an approach to measure or monitor 'soft outcomes' for those furthest from the labour market.

It is a valid and appropriate alternative to assessing the effectiveness of ALMPs for the client, programme funders, and the economy.

There is some evidence on the positive impact of ALMPs in terms of unintentional soft outcomes including:

- improved well-being, self-efficacy and self-confidence;
- a sense of optimism, empowerment and hopefulness;
- more resilience;
- increased social capital;
- increased job search activity;
- perceived progress towards the labour market; and
- clarification of future.

Evidence on the measurement of soft skills developed through participation in ALMPs has also been found. These skills are argued to represent intermediary stages on the way to achieving a hard outcome and include the development of:

- practical work-focused skills;
- career management skills;
- interpersonal skills;
- organisational skills;
- thinking and analytical skills; and
- personal skills and attributes.

7.1.1. Distance travelled models targeting the LTU

In terms of what comprises a 'distance travelled model' targeted at the LTU, the following elements are suggested:

- it should support the **personalisation** of programmes;
- **measures and indicators** should align with the programme activities;
- **sufficient resourcing** should be made available to ensure the model can be implemented, refined and maintained in the longer term to ensure continuity of service as well as enable the monitoring of longer-term outcomes;
- the **tools need to be flexible** and differentiated for both programmes and clients;
- the model and process should be **clear for all stakeholders** to ensure it is understandable, that progress is evident, and it is seen as valuable; and
- the **caseworker is integral** to not only the design and implementation of a model, but they also play a crucial role in supporting the client in the process.

Through a review of evidence on distance travelled models, key considerations and steps to design a tool have been identified. This has also included a review of the types of measures and indicators that could form a model or tool drawn from the selected examples that were reviewed. Overall, there is sufficient evidence to support the design of a new, or adaptation of an existing, distance travelled model to support LTU integration.

7.2. Recommendations

With shifts to more coordinated service delivery for those out of the labour market and requirements for individualised support, there may be greater opportunity and understanding on the soft outcomes and measures to assess distance travelled. The following list of recommendations focus on the feasibility of creating a model for measuring distance travelled in the ALMP measures, including ESF-financed programmes.

- **Monitoring soft outcomes and measuring distance travelled should be** a **mainstream and integral part of employability projects**. There is much evidence on the importance of measuring soft outcomes, including showing progress, soft skill development and evidence of impact, as hard outcomes may take

longer to be reached and not always appropriate. This suggests a **shift to profiling the LTU in terms of their employability** rather than employment rates would be more appropriate.

- When designing a model for distance travelled, it is evident that there is a **need to be clear on what is wanted from the approach from the outset**, how it fits within a programme and its activities and whether it will measure hard and/or soft outcomes. A combination of outcomes is recommended to be implemented at different points of the programme and after completion. This ensures that a range of measures are available to demonstrate progress and distance travelled.
- It is important to ensure that the **measures adopted to record and assess distance travelled are both valid and reliable**. This is to ensure that consistent results can be obtained over time with different client groups and with different staff members applying the tools (reliability) and that the tools measure what is intended (validity).
- **Models and tools should be developed and refined in consultation with those that are likely to implement and experience them**. Client buy-in is essential to their success. It is also important to ensure clients understand the process and results, and that they are supported throughout the process.
- **Establishing a baseline is essential** in measuring distance travelled at an individual level. As a minimum, indicators need to be measured at least three times (at the beginning, mid-point and at the end of the intervention). For longer programmes, it is recommended that more assessment points are needed as well as follow ups and assessment after the intervention or programme has ended. There is mixed evidence on what works in terms of timing of the post-programme follow-ups, with some suggesting six months and others suggesting longer.
- There is evidence to suggest that **technology can play a role in supporting a distance travelled model** by enabling access to different assessments and developmental activities, as well as supporting reporting mechanisms.
- Overall, there is sufficient evidence on the feasibility and value of developing a distance travelled model for the LTU. However, it is likely to be challenging to create one tool that works for all programmes, stakeholders and clients. This suggests that while a tailored approach and differentiated tools are needed and complex, it would be feasible to **provide a selection of readily-available tools and purposefully-designed tools that could be used by programme managers as the basis for creating a bespoke model** for their respective programmes and clients. Where programmes implement the same tools, comparisons would be possible, and a macro-picture of distance travelled evident.
- Going forward, there is a pressing need to **undertake systematic evaluations of existing distance travelled models** to establish whether, and if so, how they are effective in better targeting support for the long-term unemployed participating in Active Labour Market Programmes.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Review methodology

A review of extant literature was undertaken examining evidence on distance travelled models across the EU. It focused on ALMPs for the LTU (but not exclusively) and the measures used to evidence and/or demonstrate distance travelled and/or a positive impact on ALMP participants. The review focused on different models and measures used to design, assess, record and evaluate 'distance travelled' for the LTU in terms of employability. While the focus of the review was on measures used with the long-term unemployed, it also drew upon evidence on measures used in ALMPs targeted at other groups. The main review questions were:

- What evidence is there of measures which are soft and subjective, such as increase in confidence, resilience, career adaptability, employability, skills gained, as well as reengagement in learning and/or education, and, if employed, perceptions of job satisfaction and job quality?
- Are particular measures more suited to particular groups, of individuals with particular characteristics?
- What hard measures, such as qualifications gained, entry into employment, sustained employment, work experience, etc. are used?
- What elements comprise a 'distance travelled model' and are particular elements essential for a model targeted at the LTU?

An initial search for evidence drew upon what was already known by the team. This enabled the review to take into account existing knowledge as well as build on any other relevant reviews and research. Using evidence from this search, a keyword strategy was developed, which was used to expand the review using a systematic search approach of a number of bibliographic databases. This methodology provided a robust framework within which to conduct a transparent review. It sought to create a baseline of evidence and identify: the range of measures used to indicate progression of unemployed people of the 'distance travelled' to the labour market; and the elements that could be used to create a distance travelled model. The review methodology comprised five phases:

- setting review parameters;
- searching;
- screening;
- data-extraction;
- synthesis and
- reporting.

This first phase of the review involved establishing parameters for the review and developing a keyword search strategy using existing knowledge and a quick review of key documents in the field. By developing a keyword search strategy each database was systematically searched and exhausted of potentially relevant literature. Advanced search techniques were used within each database to maximise search results (such as wild cards, synonyms). The following keywords were used:

Keyword 1	**Keyword 2**	**Keyword 3**	**Keyword 4**
Long term	ALMP	Distanced travelled	Employability
LTU	Labour market	Metrics	Sustainable
Unemployed	Labour market	Measures	Social inclusion
Disadvantaged	Employment	Outcomes	Social exclusion
	Activation policies	Model	
		Framework	
		Impact	

The second phase of the review comprised applying the keyword strategy to identified databases. Academic literature was sought from selected databases, including EBSCO, Science Direct, Oxford Journals Online, Sage Online and Cambridge University Press. The

term 'distance travelled' had limited success in terms of searching as it was not found to be commonly used in academic literature. Keywords such as metrics, measures, impact and outcomes were found to be commonly used to describe, assess and/or evaluate ALMPs. Where literature was found on ALMPs for the LTU, this was reviewed in-depth to identify any evidence on soft measures or outcomes that may not have been a main objective of the ALMP but could be relevant to a distance travelled model.

Less systematic ways of finding sources that responded to the review questions (such as 'snow-balling' reference search and personal recommendations from experts) became the main tool to search for evidence. A search was undertaken for grey literature on relevant websites, including those of supra-national organisations (e.g. the European Commission; OECD, Cedefop and ILO) and research centres engaging in relevant research. All the evidence was managed using the bibliographic software programme, Endnote. In total 111 pieces of academic and 36 pieces of grey literature were identified. From these, only two academic articles on distance travelled and soft outcomes were found; one on an intervention currently being piloted; and the second, pertained to graduates of higher education as opposed to ALMPs, although content was, to a certain degree, relevant.

The third phase of the review involved screening relevant literature to ensure that evidence included in the review answered the main questions. While the search for evidence was not restricted in terms of timeframe, screening focused on more recent material, favouring evidence from the last 10 years to ensure evidence was context relevant. However, a number of reviews and models were found to have been developed in the last 20 years so have been included. Evidence was included that focused on:

- Evidence from the EU[6];
- ALMPs and ALMPs targeted at the LTU and groups with particular characteristics;
- Measuring outcomes, impact and progression of those participating in labour market programmes;
- Softer outcomes; and
- What works in measuring 'distance travelled', models and frameworks.

Screening also enabled international evidence and outcomes measures of labour market programmes targeted at others to be identified and included where appropriate. This ensured that evidence of what works in terms of measuring, evidencing or evaluating distance travelled could be identified. While strictly beyond the scope of the review, evidence on distance travelled measures used in other disciplines such as education, training and health, if encountered, was incorporated into the review, but only if it included relevant, transferable insights on best practice.

The fourth phase of the review, data extraction, entailed an in-depth examination of the literature included in the review. A thematic matrix was developed in order to manage the evidence extracted from the included literature. This ensured that key information and evidence from each study was recorded in a systematic manner. Evidence was critically assessed, which enabled an assessment of the evidence on whether particular measures were more suited to particular groups of individuals with particular characteristics.

The final phase of the review involved the synthesis and reporting of evidence through the development of a framework for data analyses. Evidence was synthesised and presented by theme. It should be noted that the review is limited to evidence provided in English. While it is more common for academic publications to be available in English, it is likely that grey literature reviewing distance travelled models or soft outcome measures developed and implemented across the EU may be available in other languages.

[6] Selected international evidence has been included where relevant and to provide evidence not found in the EU.

Annex 2: Additional guidance of designing a distance travelled model

Based on the review of evidence, this Annex provides additional guidance about the process of designing a distance travelled system to the information presented in section 6.2 of this report.

What will be measured?

The evidence reviewed suggests that assessment tools to measure soft skills and distance travelled must be reliable and valid so that consistent results can be obtained over time with different client groups and with different staff members applying the tools (reliability). The tools also need to measure what they are intended to measure (validity) (Dewson, et al., 2000b). In this respect, Dewson and colleagues (2000b) identify four tasks that need to be undertaken when designing indicators. In the first instance, there is a need to consider the outcomes, or dimensions of performance that will be measured. Once the outcomes have been identified, it is necessary to translate the outcomes into meaningful and precise measures (questions or statements). It is then necessary to consider the overall mix of indicators to ensure they work together and that there are no gaps. Finally, it is necessary to consider the order in which the questions will be answered because the order of questions can influence a person's response.

In practical terms, the DWP Guidance document also provides useful information about the process for deciding which soft outcomes to monitor and which indicators to use, where it is suggested that this will depend on such factors as the objectives of the programme/project, the challenges facing clients and the changes the project seeks to address. Further to this, it is suggested that decisions about outcomes and indicators should be tied directly into the individual action plans of clients and should reflect the aims of counselling sessions, workshops or other activities (DWP, 2003).

Once the general outcomes to monitor have been established, indicators must be identified or developed to reflect these outcomes. While it is recognised that there are various ways to develop indicators, the DWP Guidance document suggests a two-stage approach where the first stage involves trying to group into sub-headings similar skills or behaviour attributes that the project/intervention is hoping to work on and the second stage involves creating one or more indicators to reflect each of these skills or attributes (p. 16).

When drafting indicators, it is advised to be clear and exact in the framing of questions or statements, avoiding ambiguous terms. It is also viewed as helpful to connect statements to a particular period of time or place, to avoid jargon which may not be understood by all clients, as well as overly formal or technical language. It is also important to avoid language that might 'alienate' or 'demotivate' clients (DWP, 2003, p. 20). The phrasing of soft indicators will depend on who is conducting the assessment (covered in section 6.6). The DWP Guidance document (2003) includes a useful table providing actual examples of skills, attributes and indicators used by four different employability projects. For the first two examples, indicators are phrased in the form of personal statements (e.g. 'I am aware …') whereas in the second two examples, the indicators are phrased in the third person (e.g. 'The client is able to …').

It was apparent from the review of the literature that the way that questions and/or indicators are framed can influence the way that a client responds, and ultimately, the assessment outcomes. Guidance from tools that have been reviewed suggest that questions should be clearly asked, as where the more factual and descriptive the question, the less subjective the response is likely to be. For instance, an evaluation of the soft tools assessment tool developed for the *Unqualified Success* project revealed that questions around personal hygiene were generally not well received, while questions on punctuality and non-verbal communication caused some difficulties because none of the available response options were appropriate for certain clients (Balgobin, et al., 2004). Others have noted that it is important to ensure that the indicators are something that can change as a result of the project, because if it is not possible to link project activities and the possible impact on clients, the soft indicators will not be valid (Dewson, et al., 2000b). Indicators

also need to capture all elements of the project, so that they reflect an accurate and balanced picture of the overall effort and actual achievements (Dewson, et al., 2000b).

To summarise, developing a set of outcomes and their associated measures or indicators does not need to be a complicated task. As long as there is a clear link between the outcomes and indicators, a simple design can effectively contribute to a useful system of indicators.

How to measure soft outcomes and distance travelled

The DWP Guidance document (2003) sets out the key components of soft outcome monitoring systems and describes a series of key steps to be followed in developing approaches to measure soft outcomes and distance travelled. In terms of these key components, while there may exist considerable variation in terms of specific approaches, systems designed to measure and/or monitor soft outcomes and distance travelled all tend to consist of a similar set of component parts. Such measurement systems usually include:

- a set of target indicators relating to the soft outcomes that the programme wants to help clients achieve;
- a scale or scoring system for assessing the client's aptitude or ability on each particular indicator, where progress is measured by movement through the scale after participation in the intervention;
- baseline assessments and subsequent reviews to assess progress, where tools such as questionnaires or forms can be completed either by the client (self-assessment), a caseworker or jointly; and
- a method or system for analysing and reporting results, where approaches may include, for example, graphs showing how scales or profiles have changed over time (DWP, 2003, p. 9).

Most measurement approaches use some form of scoring system or scale (quantification) to assess the nature and extent of client needs, and the distance that they travel in developing their soft skills. Quantification is necessary to avoid the subjectivity of words, to provide an element of precision to descriptions and to allow comparisons between users and across time (Dewson, et al., 2000b). However, hard measurement of soft outcomes is not considered appropriate. Rather progress, it is suggested, should be measured by matters of degree. Dewson and colleagues (2000b) noted that indicators – by definition – are only indicators of progress rather than precise measures of progress, so scales, symbols or pictures, and/or accumulation of evidence can be used to 'quantify' progress.

While not all examples of soft skills assessment systems came across in the evidence review included a scoring system, Balgobin and her colleagues (2004) argue that 'for a project seeking to measure 'distance travelled', a scoring ability for the assessment tool is essential'. In addition, they pointed out that it was essential to be able to replicate or repeat the assessment. A variety of scales can be used, such as assigning a value (number) to each indicator (e.g. 1 to 5, or 1 to 10), labelling the points, or a traffic light system (i.e. where red, amber and green are used to signifying the level of achievement and effort still required) (DWP, 2003, pp. 21-22).

In terms of scoring, debate exists about whether to have an odd- or even-numbered scale. For example, having an odd-numbered scale might increase the likelihood of central tendency, where the person doing the rating places most scores in the middle of the rating scale. Regardless of how many points on the scale, it is suggested that it is best to avoid extremes such as zeros or negative scores, as these may dishearten or offend clients. Moreover, the DWP guidance document (2003) states that when using numerical scores in assessing distance travelled is it important to keep in mind that the 'score' is intended to provide an indication of progress on a particular indicator, rather than the precise measurement of distance travelled. Relevantly, it is not advised to think of improvements

in strictly quantitative terms (i.e. such as percentages) and it is not considered methodologically sound to aggregate scores to give an overall indication of progress on a project. The evidence on types of labelling systems includes use of Likert-type scales for statements (e.g. strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree), frequency (very often, often, sometimes, seldom, never) or satisfaction (very satisfied, quite satisfied, neutral, quite dissatisfied, very dissatisfied) (DWP, 2003).

In relation to selection of soft indicators, fixed choice and/or open-ended approaches to assessment can be used. However, using open-ended statements can make assessing progress over time difficult, so using a set of fixed choice questions and/or indicators and a scoring system or scale is recommended in the DWP Guidance document (2003). One of the strengths of using a fixed choice approach is that it should make it easier to store, collate and graphically-represent progress (DWP, 2003).

On measures, the evidence suggests that not all outcomes (and indicators) will be relevant for all clients or client groups. Some soft outcomes and indicators will be more relevant to some target groups (such as people with learning difficulties, those with mental health issues, LTU, youth, etc.) than others and some indicators may be more (or less) relevant for certain individuals. It is suggested that if an intervention or programme is tailored to an individual client's needs then the indicators will also need to be tailored.

Interestingly, while strongly in support of assessment tools including a scoring system or scale, when designing their distance travelled assessment tool, Balgobin and colleagues (2004) opted for clients to respond a series of statements with labelled responses, where the ordering was jumbled so that the underlying 'score' was hidden from clients. Their reason for doing so was to avoid clients feeling like there were 'good' or 'bad' answers and to reduce the likelihood of 'cheating'. Based on other evidence, the lack of transparency may work against trust-building, it could be interpreted as patronising to withhold scores from clients; and it may be inconsistent with privacy legislation, where a client may have a right to access all of the information kept on file about them.

Furthermore, Dewson and colleagues (2000a) found that the information on soft outcomes was often poorly integrated with other sources of information. It was also found that it often difficult (or not possible) to attribute positive, soft outcomes (and thus distance travelled) solely to project interventions. Systems which relied on self-administered questionnaires were found to have problems in terms of subjectivity, where clients overstated or understated their achievements. Similarly, the subjectivity or bias of caseworkers was likely to impact on assessments, in part, because caseworkers were found to work with different understandings or definitions of the same outcome. In Bulgaria, Terziev (2019) noted the importance of shared outcomes and understandings in integrated ALMPs and services. Dewson and colleagues (2000a) also found that the wording used in soft outcome tools was sometimes inappropriate for certain client groups. While not necessarily a problem in itself, they also found that because there were many different client groups, it was not possible to devise one particular system or model that would fit all projects, which rendered comparisons within and between groups impossible. In this respect, the Learning and Work Institute state that 'tools need to be easy to administer, meaningful to participants and not unduly interfere with service delivery' (2016, p. 12).

Finally, the review of nine existing approaches to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled included in the DWP Guidance document demonstrates that there are various ways of measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled where the Guidance document mentions observation, witness statements, feedback from clients, and/or a review of evidence on completed tasks (DWP, 2003). Anecdotal evidence can also be used to provide specific examples of progress, however this method is not considered to be as rigorous or objective as following a more structured and evidence-based approach (DWP, 2003).

When to measure distance travelled?

Regardless of the type or number of soft outcomes and indicators, all approaches to distance travelled require an initial assessment or baseline against which subsequent progress can be measured (Balgobin, et al., 2004; DWP, 2003). Establishing a baseline is essential if soft outcomes and distance travelled are going to be measured. There is a suggestion that, as a minimum, indicators need to be measured at least twice: at the beginning and again at the end of the intervention. Evidence indicates that it is beneficial to carry out assessments at other times as well as at the beginning and end of the intervention to make the process more responsive to changes and to aid in reliability (Balgobin, et al., 2004).

In terms of measuring progress, the common way to assess progress is to compare the results between assessments. The DWP Guidance document (2003) argues that assessments of distance travelled simply on the basis of comparing scores are very limited. Results always need to be contextualised by discussing them and what they mean in real terms with the client, and perhaps with other relevant parties such as employers, trainers, carers, or other project workers. This is suggested as it helps explain any improvements, as well as to help with individual plans. As noted earlier, the issue of 'grading' can be sensitive for some clients, so constructive feedback and support with the development of a client's attitude, skill or knowledge is needed (DWP, 2003).

If some form of assessment or profiling is undertaken at the point of registering unemployment, then evidence suggests that consideration needs to be given to whether baseline information for a distance travelled model is, or could be, collected at this point. Also, whether this is the starting point to measure 'distance travelled'. In this respect, given that case workers often have high caseloads and other compulsory record-keeping, Saunders and his colleagues (2012) emphasise the importance of ensuring that distance travelled assessment tools do not duplicate, but rather, complement profiling tools and other record-keeping obligations. Similarly, the DWP Guidance document (2003) recommends that the use of diagnostic and action planning tools is integrated with the activities of the projects so that the tools lead to benefits for both the organisation and the client.

At times, evidence suggests that a client's results may stall or show a deterioration in one or more areas. This is explained by the self-assessment processes in which clients may initially rate themselves highly, but their subsequent ratings may drop as they develop greater self-awareness, or because initial enthusiasm has waned (DWP, 2003). Drops in ratings may also be due to an increase in trust between the client and caseworker, which should be viewed as a positive development. Changes in the client's circumstances may also have a positive or negative impact on their results, which provides another justification for sensitively discussing the results with the client. In terms of measuring distance travelled, it is important to ascertain whether the client feels like their progress (or lack of it) is attributable to their participation in the ALMP (DWP, 2003). The team who developed the *soft skills tool* for the *Unqualified Success* employment project explored this and recognised that distance travelled in acquiring soft skills is not always a linear process (Balgobin, et al., 2004). They found that results from the baseline assessment could include an over-optimistic appraisal of skills. As self-awareness grows during participation in a programme then a more realistic second test can appear to register a lowering of skills, pointing to more frequent assessment than just at the beginning and end of a programme (Balgobin, et al., 2004).

Nevertheless, there are differences of opinion in the literature about whether the baseline for distance travelled should be conducted at the first session with a new client, across several sessions, or at a later date when at least some rapport or trust has been built. In many respects, this decision will depend on the duration of the programme and on whether the measurement of distance travelled is incorporated into or remains separate from initial screening or profiling. For clients with complex needs, it is suggested that the baseline assessment may need to take place over a lengthy period of time. Crucially however, not all projects will have the time or resources to undertake an intensive baseline assessment,

and in some cases, clients may attend for short periods or they may 'drop in and out' of projects (DWP, 2003, p. 25).

Another important aspect to consider when designing an approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled concerns the frequency in which assessments subsequent to baselining are carried out during the programme. This will necessarily depend on the resources and time available to the project, the nature of the services provided to the client, and the length of time they are likely to be attending the project (DWP, 2003, p. 26). It is noted that while carrying out only one additional assessment after the initial baseline at the end of the project is sometimes unavoidable, it means that there will be no or limited opportunities to make adjustments during the project. For instance, the team that developed a soft skills tool for the *Unqualified Success* employment project contend that in order to reliably measure distance travelled, there must be sufficient time between testing for the client to have benefitted from the learning and behaviours and attitudes changed (Balgobin, et al., 2004).

An evaluation report of *Momentum 2* reveals contracted providers with this ALMP carry out assessments at the beginning of the programme, after the work placement and two years after commencement in order to measure hard and soft aspects of distance travelled (MacArtain and Thorne, 2016). The same evaluation found that after participation in the programme, just over one-third of clients had obtained full-time employment, a further 1-in-10 had obtained part-time work, and 4% obtained a further education outcome. Despite the change in participant profile, the outcomes for *Momentum 2* are better than *Momentum 1*, particularly for younger participants. Relevantly, the data-evidenced delivery and outcome reporting means that the impact is completely verifiable because it is possible to draw a clear link between the participant, the training provider, and the employer.

While there is much evidence and debate on when to measure distance travel in terms of timing and frequency, it is important to note that client's journey to the labour market is not always a linear process. This needs to be taken into account when considering distance travelled models.

Data collection methods and design

In terms of data collection methods and their design, the evidence review revealed a wide range of commercially-developed assessment tools that have been developed to record scores and track distance travelled (Balgobin, et al., 2004; Dewson, et al., 2000b; DWP, 2003; Purvis, Lowrey and Law, 2009). Some of the existing tools are generic while others are customised to specific projects. The aim of these data collection methods is to not only track distance travelled, but to collect information that feeds into the overall programme evaluation and can be used to demonstrate the added value of programmes at an aggregate level (Dewson, et al., 2000b). Data collection methods include:

- Paper-based written questionnaires;
- Hand-held sliding scales with markers;
- Software-driven and computer-based questionnaires;
- Web-based assessments;
- Games; and
- 3D media.

The data collection methods found in existing tools for employability were reviewed by Balgobin and her colleagues (2004) in terms of their usefulness for distance travelled tools. For paper-based written questionnaires, they identified a need for the client to have a reasonable level of literacy, as completing this kind of questionnaire can be quite intimidating, in part because it may feel like a 'test'; and that it may require substantial staff time to score, moderate and then aggregate data across the client group. There was a suggestion that 'fun' elements could be added to the tool to remove the 'test like' nature

of the assessment. For computer software questionnaires, while the client completes a questionnaire online, software can then be used to score and aggregate data and to produce individual or group results. Administrative costs may be lower than if using a paper-only tool, however reasonable literacy levels are also required (possible to ease with audio). However, the client will also require basic IT skills, but this could be built into the client's skills acquisition. For web-based assessment, the client also completes the assessment online, from which individual profiles and reports can be generated. Games may be less intimidating than other test-like formats, but they are typically sourced from specialist providers (which has cost implications) and staff may require additional guidance in delivering the assessment.

From the evidence, it appears that paper-based questionnaires or forms remain the most commonly used data collection method, however an assessment tool that can be administered both on paper and computer would seem to offer the greatest flexibility (Balgobin, et al., 2004; Dewson, et al., 2000a; DWP, 2003). In systems where a scale or scoring system were used to assess soft outcomes and distance travelled, commonly available IT packages such as Excel or Access were found to be used to collect and store data (DWP, 2003). This enabled standardised reports, simple graphs and charts (such as spider charts or radar charts) to be produced, which were helpful in visually displaying progress (or lack of it) over time. Some projects report having created dedicated databases for holding, collating and reporting soft outcomes (DWP, 2003). This highlights the need to consider the design of tools.

In terms of design, it is suggested that how the information will be used will influence how it should be presented and where it may be presented. Some have suggested that it may be presented as a portfolio for clients, which can be used as evidence of progress and outcomes; as a written report which collates evidence at the programme level; and/or as case studies of individual clients to highlight success (Dewson, et al., 2000b). This is important for both clients and funders, with funders more interested in overall impact and outcomes. The type and layout of material, and the presentation of results have been noted as important in the design of distance travelled taking into account target client groups (Balgobin, et al., 2004; DWP, 2003). It is noted that changes should be reported against baseline data because reporting totals will be meaningless and individual starting points can vary considerably.

Other than occasional mention of graphs being produced using Excel, hardly any evidence was uncovered discussing whether digital technologies are being used to complete online assessments or track distance travelled. Neither does the literature focus, to any great extent, on the back office management information systems being used by caseworkers and senior management. This does not mean that providers are not effectively using ICT in their work. Connected to this issue, MacArtain and Thorne (2016) identified a common problem experienced by ALMPs in that they can find it difficult to maintain long-term links with participants. Making better use of digital technologies such as mobile phones and social networking sites could be exploited by providers to engage with clients, both during and after interventions.

Regardless of who is responsible for completing any assessments (covered in the next section), it is possible to design an approach based on outcomes and indicators that are opinion-based; evidence-based or an approach where opinions are supplemented with evidence. While a range of methods can be used, Purvis and colleagues (2009) identified two clear models for monitoring progress:

- those based on opinions/perceptions of clients; and
- those which are more strongly evidence or judgement based.

While the DWP guidance document (2003) does not strongly favour evidence-based approaches over those with opinion or perception-based approaches, it does set out some of the advantages and disadvantages of the two main approaches. For example, one of the identified benefits of adopting an evidence-based approach is that it can help demonstrate to the client what work needs to be done to improve skills, particularly if the client has a

different perspective to the counsellor (DWP, 2003). The review of the literature suggests that when an opinion-based approach is used, where possible it should be combined with the collection of evidence to support opinions. There can be many sources of evidence, which might include: copies of revised CVs or application letters; feedback/rating of completion of tasks; videos of the client giving a presentation to a group; attendance data; diaries; portfolios; feedback from interviews and/or work placements; feedback from tutors/trainers; and feedback from peers (Balgobin, et al., 2004; Dewson, et al., 2000; DWP, 2003; Thomas, et al., 2017).

While a number of data collection methods have been identified, it is considered important to ensure that the data collected are reliable, valid and interpretable (Balgobin, et al., 2004; DWP, 2003). The reliability of the data is considered essential to the credibility of the tool, so data should be consistent results over time, with different client groups and with different staff members. The indicators in the data must be relevant for the intended outcomes. Interpretability of the data produced by the tool has to be understood by all those involved.

Who measures distance travelled?

Another important issue identified in the evidence to consider when designing an approach to measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled is who should undertake the assessment. Dewson and colleagues (2000b) point out that who carries out an assessment of soft outcomes and/or distance travelled will depend on the particular programme itself. A review of the evidence has identified the following possibilities:

- a self-assessment undertaken by the client;
- an assessment undertaken jointly by the client and caseworker; or
- an assessment undertaken by a third party who is not directly associated with the programme, such as a teacher, trainer or workplace manager.

With **self-assessment**, the client scores themselves against the set of indicators. However, truthfulness and subjectivity have already noted to be a potential problem with self-assessment. It is suggested that obtaining an accurate picture of the client's needs and progress needs to be weighed against client empowerment and self-direction. On this, the DWP Guidance document (2003) sets out some of the potential advantages and disadvantages of self-assessment, joint completion and approaches involving third parties.

The advantages and disadvantages of a self-administered tool versus one which needed to be facilitated by a caseworker was assessed by the *Unqualified Success soft skills tool* team (Balgobin, et al., 2004). They found that while self-administrated assessment tools provide the most economical option, from their study they concluded that reliable results were gained through a facilitated tool. While self-assessment is considered a skill in itself, it requires motivation, it is more difficult to check validity, it requires reasonable literacy skills and it can be intimidating. Notably, it was recognised that the concept of 'soft' skills might be alien to many clients, and they may have little or no previous experience with self-assessment. As well as reliability, Balgobin and colleagues (2004) identified additional advantages of developing a facilitated tool; namely, using a facilitated approach generated results that could be used by caseworkers to work up individual action plans with clients and to improve management information.

Evidence (Balgobin, et al., 2004; Dewon, et al., 2000b; DWP, 2003) suggests that the identified advantages of adopting a **joint approach** to assessment include the caseworker being able to:

- provide assistance with completion (which may be particularly relevant where clients have language, low literacy a disability or aversion to filling out forms); and
- explore and probe answers and propose suitable activities.

The designers and/or users of the system may deem it necessary, on clinical, philosophical or administrative grounds, for staff to be involved in, or solely responsible for, the assessment process (Dewson, et al., 2000b). However, the client might be reluctant to be open with others and they might tell the caseworker the answers they think they want or expect to hear.

There is much evidence on the role of the **caseworker** in ALMPs, particularly on how they can target, personalise and/or provide intensive support (Adamecz-Volgyi, et al., 2018; Barnes, et al., 2015; Behncke, Frölich, and Lechner, 2010; Blázquez, Herrarte, and Sáez, 2019; Mahlstedt, 2018; Whelan, et al., 2018). For instance, the evaluation of the *EEPIC* (Enhancing Employability through Positive Interventions for improving Career potential) labour market programme in Ireland collected data to measure outcomes at the start and end of the programme (Whelan, et al., 2018). *EEPIC* provided intensive support from a caseworker (a career guidance practitioner in this instance) alongside employability and training support. Data were collected using questionnaires and scales completed by the individual with support from their caseworker. Data were also collected six months after completing the programme. It is argued that this post intervention follow-up enables an assessment of the longer-term effects and sustainability programme effects (Whelan, et al., 2018).

This is supported with further evidence from a Hungarian ALMP for long-term unemployed people with disabilities that was provided through the country's public PES. The programme offered traditional training and employment support, and an optional personalised element of counselling and mentoring to develop softer skills (Adamecz-Volgyi, et al., 2018). The caseworkers and medical staff determined the support needed by the individual to improve their labour market outcomes. Caseworkers were responsible for coordinating support and access to the programme elements with the aim of providing a coordinated and personalised approach. The ALMPs combining personalised support and benefits for people with a disability, therefore, have a positive impact on labour market outcomes. This increases the probability of participants re-entering the labour market. Evidence from two ALMPs in Germany has shown that the long-term outcomes for the unemployed is greatly improved by early and intensive support from a caseworker (Mahlstedt, 2018). This was found to be linked to information on and support with job search once enrolled on an ALMP. These examples of ALMPs suggest that the caseworker has a key role in the process of supporting the long-term unemployed, and those with a disability.

Finally, there was some debate in the literature on the range of **third parties** involved in assessing and measuring distance travelled by clients, suggesting teachers and trainers, employers, mentors, and independent assessors. While having a third party complete an assessment might be more objective, it can be more time-consuming, could introduce bias or mis-judgement and may not get to the underlying reasons behind issues (DWP, 2003). Using third parties who are not directly involved in the project might mean that basing assessment on evidence, rather than opinions, should be sought whenever possible. While others are suggested, only evidence on employers engaged in this process was found.

Employers are seen as playing an important role in ALMPs supporting positive outcomes for participants by offering subsidised and unsubsidised employment. However, there has been no systematic review of how and why employers engage and support ALMPs (Balgobin, et al., 2004; Bredgaard, 2018; Orton and Green, 2019; Orton, Green, Atfield, and Barnes, 2018). Studies that have examined employer engagement suggest that employers can be classified on a scale based on whether they are active and passive in the process (Bredgaard, 2015; Martin 2015). Engagement has been measured using various indicators - from motives and attitudes to whether one-off or continuous support is provided. Evidence from Denmark suggest that employers are more likely to be the latter as is the case across the EU (Bredgaard, 2018). ALMPs that are implemented by employers have, however, been found to be more effective than PES programmes (Bredgaard, 2015; Card, Kluve, and Weber, 2017; Kluve, 2010). Evidence from an employability programme in the UK found that where employers were actively supported by those running the programme outcomes were more positive (Orton, et al., 2018). Participants of the programme were also found to have improved self-efficacy and gained skills relevant to

the labour market. While MacArtain and Thorne (2006) suggest that the way the *Momentum 2* ALMP created structural linkages between training providers and employers has helped foster positive relationships between the two groups. This has contributed to better outcomes for long-term unemployed people.

Overall, while there is a suggestion that employers could be involved in measuring soft outcomes, there is little evidence on whether and how this may work in practice. Evidence suggests that employers who are engaged and active are more likely to have a good impact on programme outcomes – both hard and soft. Bredgaard (2018) concludes that understanding employer preferences is an important precondition for more effective ALMPs and interventions.

How to review and evaluate distance travelled models and tools

The DWP Guidance document (2003) sets out that as with any new system, there is a need to review and refine it over time. It suggests that frequent revisions are likely when an approach is first piloted and then implemented, but that an approach should be regularly reviewed and amended to ensure it continues to meet the needs of all involved. To this end, the DWP Guidance document (2003, p. 15) provides a list of the types of issues to discuss with staff when conducting a review, such as:

- how they use the system;
- What works well and not so well;
- whether the system reflects the programme's aims;
- how much time it takes to carry out the different aspects of the assessment;
- any suggested revisions; and
- their perceptions of how well clients respond to the assessment process.

One example of how a tool was reviewed and evaluated in practice was provided by Balgobin and colleagues (2004). The team who developed and then piloted the soft skills assessment tool for the *Unqualified Success Project* trained staff before the tool was introduced and after the pilot they asked staff from each of the organisations involved in the pilot to identify 10 trainees who could do the assessment twice in the six-week period assigned to the pilot (once near the beginning and once as near to the end as possible).

Assessments were carried out in a number of different ways with varying degrees of facilitation, according to preferences and practicalities. The assessment tool they developed could be completed on paper or computer and was specifically designed for facilitated self-assessment. A mix of participants who had used both media and clients from different target groups were included in the pilot. While 78 clients completed the baseline assessment, only 39 clients completed the second. Reasons for non-completion included the following:

- one (mental health) organisation considered the tool unsuitable for its client group;

one organisation considered the language requirements were too high for its clients;

- it was too onerous for staff paid on an hourly basis; and
- because the pilot phase was too short there was not enough time for clients who were absent at the second assessment to complete the task later.

The evaluation considered the process, the tool itself, measurement issues, and cost (Balgobin, et al., 2004). In terms of the process, staff at the providers who piloted the tool were asked about:

- how the tool was introduced (individually or in groups);

- how long, on average, assessment sessions took and whether any sessions took significantly longer (and if so, why);
- what skills (if any) the facilitator needs;
- whether the idea of measuring soft skills met the needs and interests of users;
- whether the process was affected depending on whether the paper-based or electronic version of the tool was used; and
- whether the counsellor had collected any feedback from the clients about their experience of the process.

In terms of the tool itself, they were asked about:

- the appropriateness of the questions;
- whether the users were satisfied with the design and layout;
- whether there were any specific items or questions that seemed particularly useful or inappropriate or of little use;
- whether they could identify any gaps in coverage; and
- the effect of the scoring system, including whether they thought it motivated clients.

In terms of measurement, they explored:

- measures of progress;
- whether the tool added value to existing outcomes; and
- what kinds of benefits accrue from the measuring of soft skills for clients and/or organisations.

Balgobin and her colleagues (2004) also asked about financial costs to the organisation of implementing the tool and whether their organisation intended to keep using it, even if there was no requirement to do so.

In summary, the tool was evaluated as having a positive effect on raising awareness about soft skills that some clients, particularly younger clients, had not considered before. It was reported that the tool worked better with some client groups than others, where young participants appeared most likely to benefit. However, people with learning or language needs and those with limited employment prospects needed their progress measured, but in different ways. Some clients enjoyed the assessments and more clients in the pilot increased their scores than did not; the greatest gains in 'distance travelled' were for non-verbal communication, time management, communication, self-esteem, and confidence. This example of a review process illustrates the complexity as well as the value of the process.

Annex 3: Design features of 22 soft outcomes and distance travelled tools

The review of evidence identified some 22 tools, approaches and models to measure soft outcomes and distance travelled. Below is a summary of the design features of these various tools.

- The tools target a range of client groups including four that target the long-term unemployed as well as target groups of people that are likely to be a far distance from the labour market, young people; and people in informal training.
- All bar one is from a programme or project based in the United Kingdom, with the other based in Ireland. This is not to say that tools are not in used in other countries.
- The number and type of indicators depends on whether the tool is generic, focussed on activation/employability and/or designed for a specific project or target group in mind. In most instances, indicators consist of a statement to be rated by either the client or the caseworker.
- Three of the approaches measure a combination of both hard and soft outcomes while the remainder measure soft outcomes. In most instances, indicators consist of a statement to be rated by either the client or the counsellor.
- The total number of outcomes that are measured varies dramatically, with a mixture of adopting an evidence-based, an opinion-based and opinion-based plus supporting evidence.
- Indicators aim to measure such aspects as skills, attitudes; behaviours/habits and personal traits. The number of individual indicators in the various tools range from as many as 73 down to only four. Several tools have more than 40 indicators, two have 21 indicators, and others have between 6 and 13 indicators. The indicators are more often than not grouped into areas (such as 3, 4, 5 or 7 areas). Indicators common to a number of the tools included those of self-esteem; confidence; motivation; communication skills; social skills; basic skills like literacy, numeracy; job search skills; work skills; teamwork and dealing with challenges.
- The scoring/grading levels ranges from a 3-point scale up to a 12-point scale with 5-point and 6-point scales common. Some form of Likert-type scales is frequently used. One system does not have scoring while another has an underlying scoring system, but it is not meant to be obvious to the client.
- In terms of who conducts the assessment, the completion method is split between those that involve client self-assessment; facilitated assessment and counsellor/work placement assessment.
- In terms of design and presentation, in the majority of cases the data is collected from clients via a paper-based assessment sheet. One system has both a paper- and online version of the assessment tool. One system uses scratch cards, while another uses a plastic board with sliding scales (Ricker board). One approach uses a 'fun' game.
- Based on available information, around half of the tools feature a graphical presentation of results, often in colour. Graphical results can be generated and reproduced digitally in a software package such as Excel so repeat assessments can easily be plotted against the original results to show 'distance travelled'.
- Information available from the evidence review on the tools provided very little specific information about the process that were followed to aggregate results for programme management or funders.

Annex 4: Examples of distance travelled and soft outcomes tools, approaches or models

Eight selected examples from the review have been included, as they are considered useful in terms of providing concrete examples of different approaches, components, indicators and scoring/rating systems that been used to develop existing distance travelled tools or approaches. These include:

The ***SOUL Record tool*** for measuring soft outcomes. The tool was developed after a need was identified within the UK voluntary and community sector for an effective system to evidence the soft outcomes of non-accredited training. Funding bodies required projects to demonstrate project success and to provide evaluations of their services. In addition, there was growing recognition that the inability to measure soft outcomes in informal learning was adding to an undervaluation and under-funding of informal learning projects (Andersen, Foster, and McKibben, 2005). The team who developed the *SOUL Record* mapped the soft outcomes achieved through non-accredited learning and used their findings to develop a system which could measure learner progress. The final *SOUL Record tool* consists of a generic framework containing three tools which can be used flexibly: questionnaires, worksheets, and observation sheets, supported by a user guide and a spreadsheet results package. Soft outcomes were grouped into three areas: attitude; personal/interpersonal; and practical. Distance travelled is measured by adding up scores in response to 21 statements (indicators), where clients self-assess against a 6-point Likert Scale. It is recommended that the tool is used on at least three occasions to measure the baseline, mid-point and end-point scores. At the time of its development, demand for the tool was high, with nearly 50 UK community and voluntary sector organisations involved in developing and piloting the tool (Andersen, Foster, and McKibben, 2005). Organisations report that the tool was valuable for assessment because it helped to identify where more support was needed, it was used as a talking point with clients to build trust and it was adaptable and sensitive to different client groups.

WORKSTEP was a supported employment programme aimed at disabled people facing complex barriers to employment. It is delivered by a range of UK organisations in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. An evaluation of the programme identified a need to develop measures of programme quality and 'in programme' performance. In particular, the evaluation proposed a need to develop an approach to monitor the 'in work' progression of supported employees (Purvis, Lowrey and Law, 2009). The project sought to develop an approach to monitoring distance travelled that would provide useful information and feedback to *WORKSTEP*, supported employees, provider staff and employers (Purvis, Lowrey and Law, 2009). With this distance travelled approach, the skills and attributes are identified via a framework of key behaviours and associated typical indicators. The monitoring of progress is based on recorded evidence which is used as the basis for scoring against a series of monitoring categories or levels. By using the scoring system over time it is possible to monitor individual progress, or 'distance travelled' (Purvis, Lowrey and Law, 2009). Monitoring categories were changed from numerical scores to an alphabetical scale (A to E) to avoid problems with 'measuring' progress using numerical scores (Purvis, Lowrey, and Law, 2009). The system offered a standardised way to gather evidence, which was useful when extensions were sought for clients. The main finding that emerged with regard to the development process was the need to consult and involve staff who would be using the approach. In addition, the need to integrate the approach with individual development plans was emphasised (Purvis, Lowrey and Law, 2009). While the approach was piloted in the *WORKSTEP* programme, Purvis and colleagues (2009) believed that the approach could be applied to a wide range of service provision.

The ***Work Outcomes Star*** is part of a suite of over 20 commercially-developed tools designed to measure and support change when working with vulnerable people as service users (MacKeith, 2011). The *Work Star* was developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise in collaboration with four London councils. The philosophy underpinning the outcome stars is based on the three core principles of empowerment, collaboration and

integration. The tool plots the client's progress using a visual star divided into seven core areas:

- job specific skills;
- job search skills;
- stability (e.g. housing);
- basic skills (e.g. IT, language, literacy and numeracy);
- social skills for work;
- and challenges.

Each area is assigned a score on a scale from 1 to 10 (Burns and Mackeith, 2009). As this tool was developed by consultants, there are cost and licensing implications related to its use.

The ***Rickter Scale*** tool was a hand-held board with 10 headings with a slider that moves along a 10-point scale. It was intended to be a motivational tool designed to measure soft indicators and distance travelled. The *Rickter Scale* measured 10 areas:

- motivation;
- confidence about the future;
- communication;
- support;
- core skills;
- work skills;
- readiness;
- type of work;
- job applications, and
- interview preparation (Saunders, Lynch and Douglas, 2012, p. 18-19).

It was not possible to establish how many employability projects have or currently use the *Rickter tool*, however one example of a project that does is discussed next.

The ***Cedar Foundation's ESF-funded project*** was designed to support clients with complex physical disabilities, including those with brain injuries, participants who are furthest away from the labour market, including young people transitioning from school into further education or employment (Armstrong, n.d.). While the *Cedar Foundation's ESF Employability and Vocational Rehabilitation Service* had good systems to measure hard outcomes such as work outcomes, training and educational achievements and community inclusion activity, the organisation was keen to find a way to quantify progress in clients' personal lives for clients across a range of different ages, levels of ability and starting points. It used funding to train staff to pilot the ***Employability Scale of the Rickter tool***.

The *Rickter tool* was used for initial assessments and planning because it captured baseline the types of goals and support that are important for clients. Use of the tool allows Cedar project staff to capture and quantify more detailed information on personal achievements beyond traditional hard measures. The tool was considered motivating for clients and staff, and it re-focused people on key goals. The tool was considered flexible enough to use as often as the individual feels it is useful. In addition, Cedar started using the online Impact Measurement System (IMS) to report at three levels: client (individual reports on personal skills development that are visual and user-friendly), service level (monitoring and tracking of effectiveness of service delivery); and strategic level (collated information on all clients can be benchmarked against other providers for continuous improvement). While it was recognised that introducing the *Rickter Scale* and IMS had required a significant investment of time and training, it enhanced rather than replaced the existing system for assessment, planning and review. It also provided a soft outcome measure relevant to the organisation's diverse client group.

The ***ENABLER*** **Project** was a three-year research project that aimed to improve the employment opportunities of blind and partially-sighted job seekers. The project was carried out by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), Actions for Blind People

(Action) and the Visual Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR) at the University of Birmingham. The ***ENABLER tool*** developed for the *ENABLER* project was described as 'a screening tool and distance travelled measure for employment services for blind and partially sighted people (Saunders, Lynch and Douglas, 2012), the documentation about the tool indicated that it was largely a screening/profiling tool, as opposed to a distance travelled tool. The aim of the tool was to categorise clients according to their baseline assessment. The initial assessment involved the caseworker asking the client a series of 33 questions around employment activity, job search skills; education and training; computer skills; access to information; independent travel; vision; and other disabilities. The questions were customised to take into account the target group. By adding up the 'scores; clients were then segmented into one of four levels:

- work entry (level 1);
- transitional (level 2);
- long term (level 3); and
- potential (level 4).

While it was not clear in the available document, it was presumed that repeating the assessment enables the caseworker to track distance travelled.

The ***Momentum Invention Model*** was an evaluation tool for the *Momentum Programme*, an ESF-Funded Irish ALMP that specifically targeted the LTU through innovative labour market activation processes. The integrated training, work placement and confidence-building components combined real-world skills and employment outcomes. The programme measured distance travelled with a range of hard and soft measures consistent with its data-driven, delivery-outcomes payment model (MacArtain and Thorne, 2016). In addition to a long list of profiling questions and hard outcomes, the data collected at the induction from the Participant Survey for *Momentum 2* had two indicators about personal confidence and attitude to work. Distance travelled in terms of soft skills was measured via asking participants to assess their skills before training and again at the point they had reached on the *Momentum* Programme at the time of the survey. A 10-point rating scale was used for the seven distance travelled indicators:

- work habits;
- confidence;
- attitude;
- communication skills;
- self-care;
- self-management; and
- readiness for work.

After the work placement, the participant was asked to complete 11 questions with 4-point scales on:

- skills development:
- thinking skills;
- ability to manage in a workplace environment;
- overcoming difficult situations;
- teamwork;
- positive attitude to work;
- taking responsibility;
- ability to work quickly and efficiently, use of initiative;
- communication skills;
- self-confidence; and
- self-management.

Finally, there was a Longitudinal Participant Survey two years on that has four indicators measured by 3-point scales (stayed the same; improved a little; improved a lot):

- job skills;

- literacy skills;
- numeracy skills; and
- confidence (MacArtain and Thorne, 2016).

Enhancing Employability through Positive Interventions for improving Career potential **(EPPIC)** is a recent tool developed to measure soft outcomes and distance travelled (Whelan, et al., 2018). The intervention is aimed at the long-term unemployed (specifically those that have been in receipt of benefits for 12 months or more) from a disadvantaged urban area in Ireland. The aim of the intervention was to support the development and improvement of employability skills and well-being defined by self-esteem, hopefulness, resilience and career self-efficacy. Clients participated in a high-support intervention, which included:

- an individual needs and barriers assessment;
- personalised career guidance;
- career planning; and
- regular meeting at times defined by the caseworker and the individual.

The measured outcomes included:

- increased wellbeing;
- self-esteem;
- career self-efficacy;
- resilience;
- hopefulness;
- perceived progress towards the labour market;
- re-employment or labour market participation;
- re-employment quality (job satisfaction, job sustainability, level of earnings); and
- access to education/vocational training.

A range of self-assessments in the form of pre-existing questionnaires were used to measure these outcomes, including:

- General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12);
- Satisfaction with Life scale;
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Questionnaire;
- Career Self Efficacy Questionnaire;
- Brief Resilience Scale;
- State Hope Scale; and
- Cantril's Self-Anchoring Ladder.

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6. Tackling Long-Term Unemployment through RISK PROFILING AND OUTREACH – May 2018

This discussion paper from the Employment Thematic Network reviews approaches to risk profiling and outreach, summaries their benefits and challenges, and gives case examples.

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The main aims of the review were to assess the usefulness of the ECCP, learn more about the challenges encountered in its implementation, and develop recommenda-tions to embed the partnership principle into the next European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programming period.

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