



# No one left behind? The role of social policy in viral hepatitis

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**11th Australasian Viral Hepatitis Conference**

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# What is social policy, and why should you care?

- Social policies are society's responses to 'big picture' questions of how best to distribute resource through taxation, income support, programs, and services
- Social policies tell us:
  - what a society regards as important and fixable problems
  - what those problems are thought to be
  - what isn't a priority
- Social policy research tells us about
  - how different groups of people are affected by these choices and priorities
  - how policies and policy domains interact

# What can social policy research tell us about hepatitis?

# Inequality in Australia

ACOSS AND UNSW SYDNEY

## INEQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA 2018

- The top 20% of households have five times the disposable **income** of the lowest 20%
- The lowest 40% income group rely mainly on social security or (low) wages
- Australia has higher inequality than most other wealthy nations
- The average **wealth** of a household in the wealthiest 20% (\$2.9 million) is
  - five times that of the middle 20% (\$570,000)
  - almost a hundred times that of the lowest 20% (\$30,000)

# Australia's mental and physical health

## Australia's Mental Health and Physical Health Tracker

- There is strong evidence of a socioeconomic gradient in the incidence of multimorbidity. The National Mental Health Survey reported that mental health conditions are more likely in people:
  - who live outside major cities
  - in the lowest socioeconomic quintile
  - who are not employed
  - who live alone and/or
  - who have a disability causing a profound or severe limitation

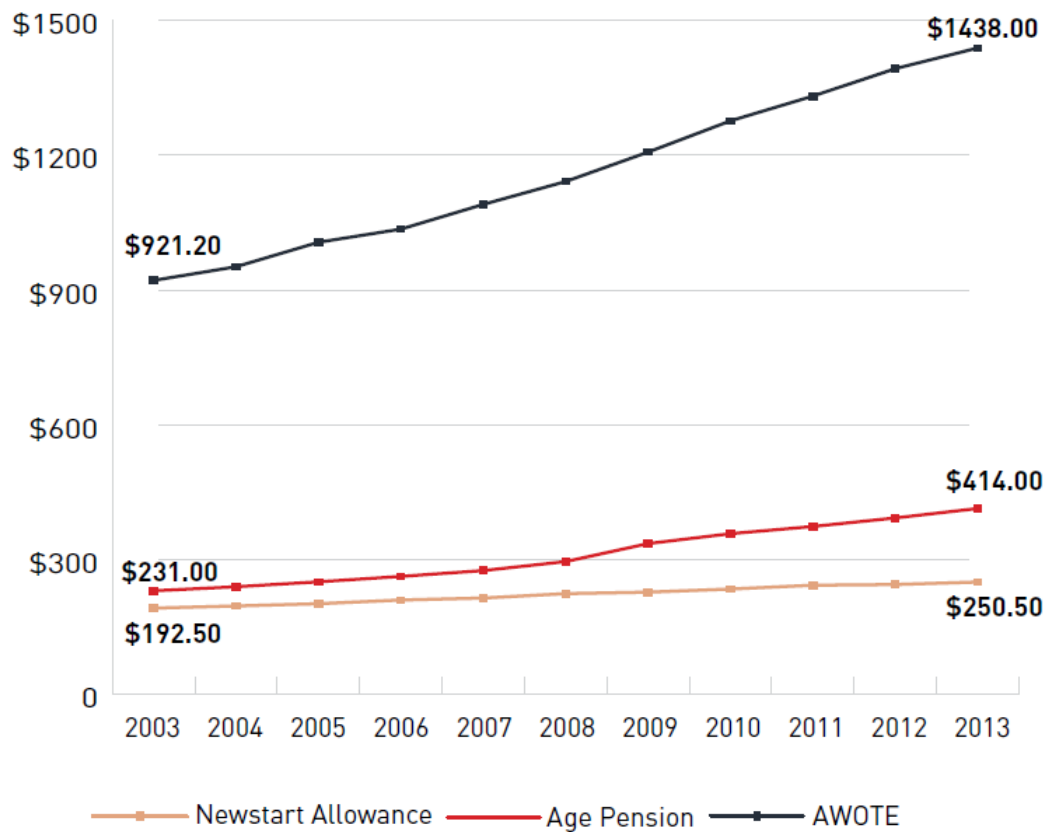
Technical paper No. 2018-06  
August 2018

Harris, B, Duggan, M, Batterham, P, Bartlem, K, Clinton-McHarg, T, Dunbar, J, Fehily, C, Lawrence, D, Morgan, M & Rosenbaum S  
Australian Health Policy Collaboration

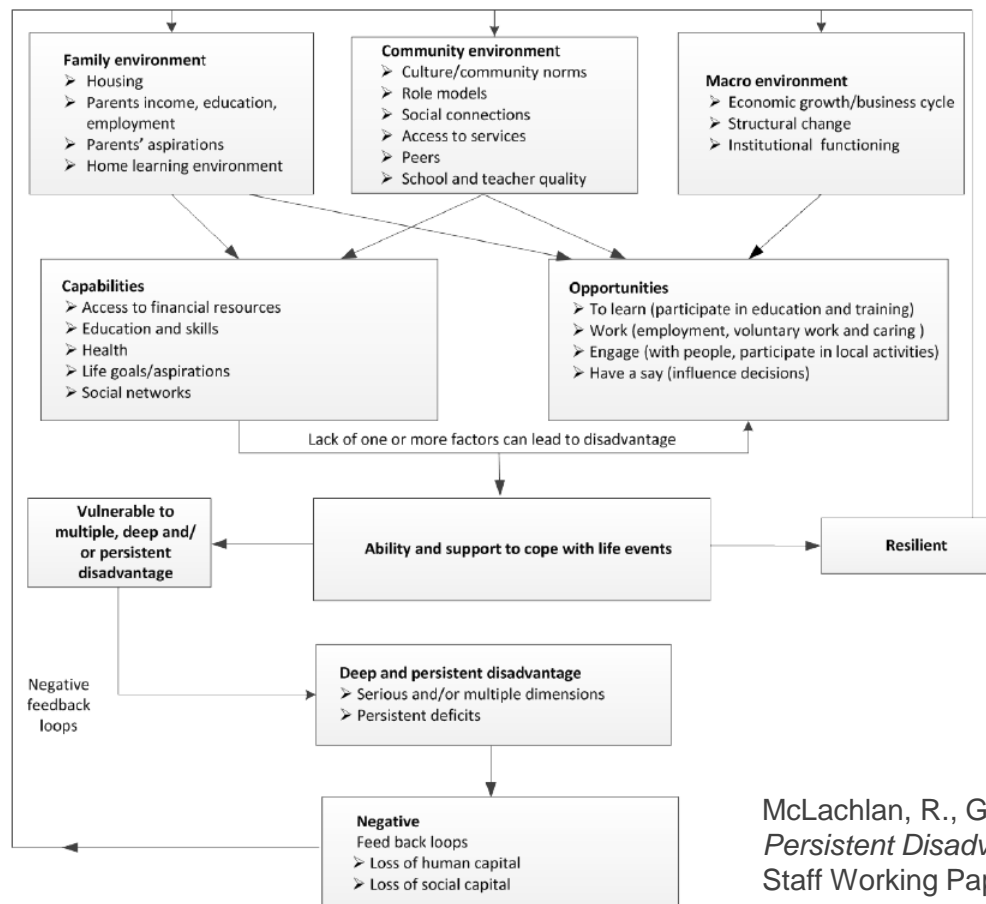
## Poverty in Australia 2016

The fifth edition of 'Poverty in Australia', part of the 'Poverty and Inequality in Australia' series from the Australian Council of Social Service and the Social Policy Research Centre.

Figure 18: Trends in payment rates compared with average wages



# Factors influencing life chances of experiencing disadvantage



- Risk is cumulative: the more adverse experiences, the higher the risk
- Socioeconomic disadvantage increases vulnerability to other risk factors
- The accumulation of risks, not a 'killer risk', is most important

McLachlan, R., Gilfillan, G. and Gordon, J. 2013, *Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia*, rev., Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper, Canberra (p13)



# What does this have to do with hepatitis?

- Inequalities between people living with hepatitis and broader population:
  - risk factors for transmission also risk factors for social disadvantage
  - over-represented in disadvantaged groups (people with severe mental health problems, prisoners, refugees)
  - co-occurrence of disadvantages and adverse experiences
  
- Inequalities between different groups of people living with hepatitis

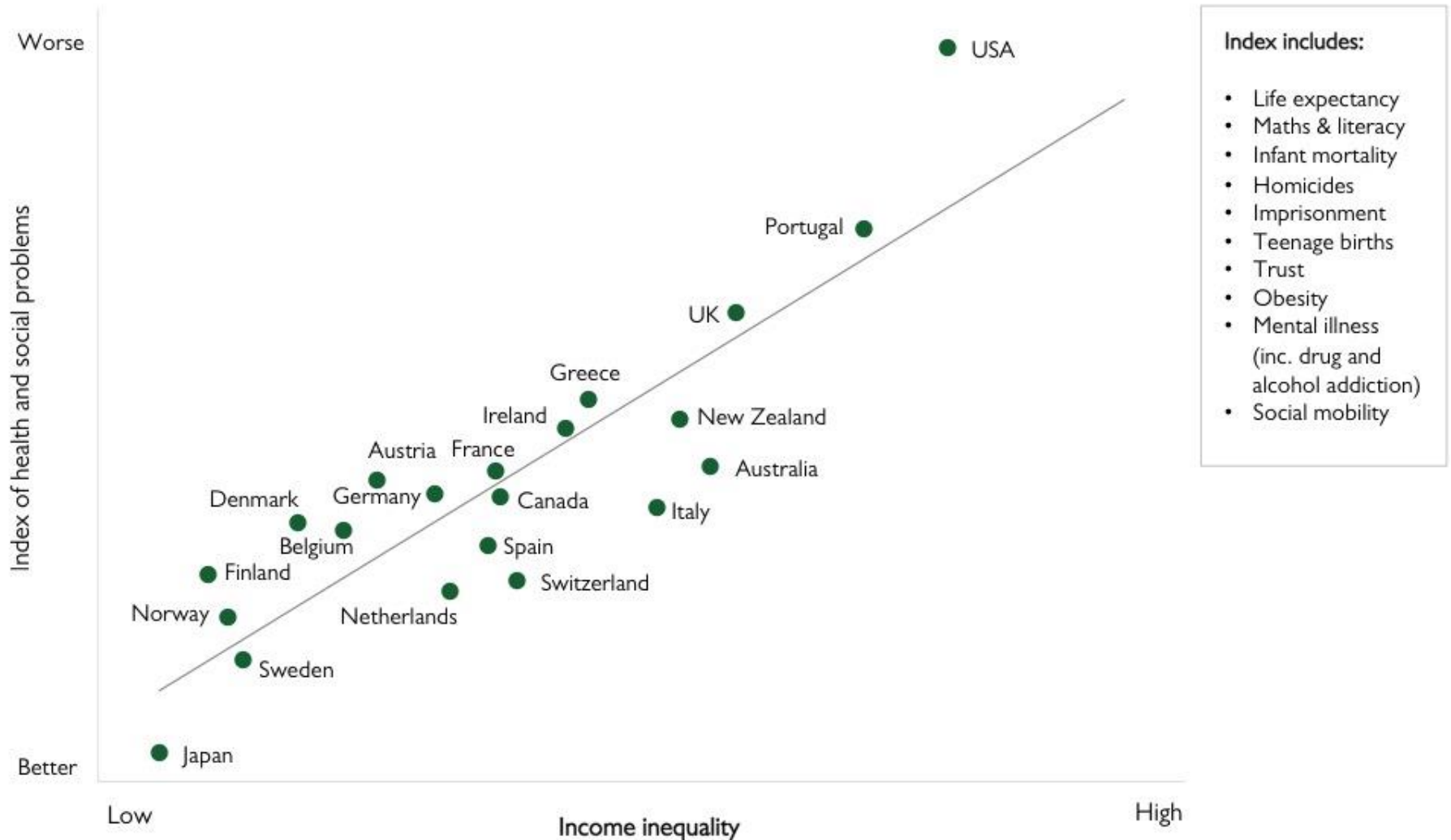
# What can social policy research tell us about living with hepatitis?

# Universal programs ≠ universal benefit

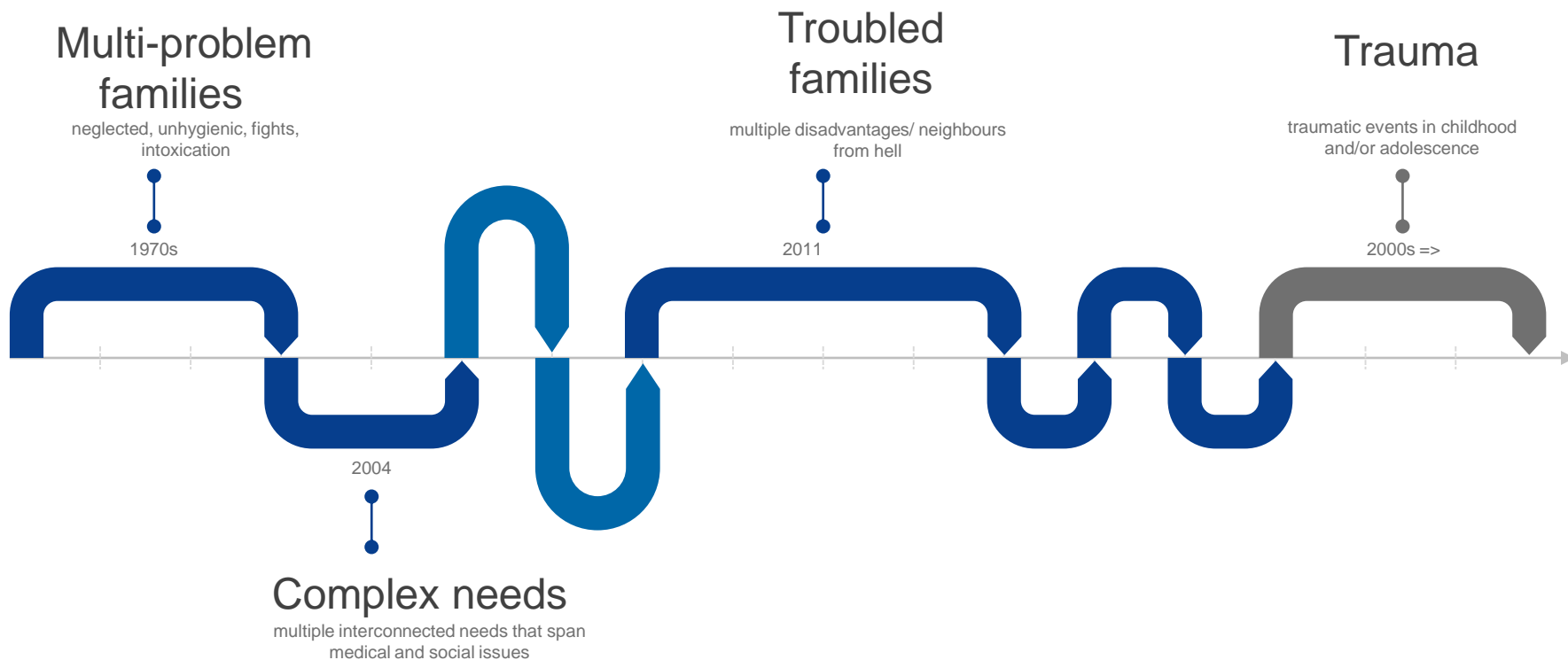
- Vaccines
  - financial constraints are a barrier to achieving higher immunisation coverage, despite being free\*
  - the proportion of children in the lowest SES decile who were partially vaccinated and for whom there was no recorded objection, was 20–50% higher than for those living in the most advantaged decile\*
  - 16% of Australians in 2013 did not fill a prescription; skipped a recommended medical test, treatment, or follow-up; or had a medical problem but did not visit a doctor or clinic in the previous year because of cost\*
  - Refugees are at high risk of being under-immunised\*\*
- Education
  - an average of 73 per cent of selective school students came from the highest quarter of socio-educational advantage in 2016\*\*\*
  - socio-educational conditions are having a stronger net impact on school performances than they were before the First Gonski Review\*\*\*\*

\* Fielding, J. E., Bolam, B., & Danchin, M. H. (2017) \*\* Mahimbo, A., Seale, H., Smith, M., & Heywood, A. (2017) \*\*\* Ho, C. and Bonnor, C. (2018) \*\*\*\* Bonnor, C. and Shepherd, B. (2018)

# Health and social problems are worse in more unequal countries



# Social determinants are lived in the everyday



# What do social policy priorities tell us about government priorities?

# Stigmatising and punitive interventions

Too many people are led into lives of dependence and passivity, with insufficient incentive to make the most of their innate potential.

While welfare, for a short period, can be a blessing for a capable person temporarily out of work, long-term welfare dependence can become a poison. Over time, welfare dependence sucks the life out of people and can diminish their capability.

The Hon Alan Tudge MP, Minister for Human Services, Speech to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia, 26 May 2017

## Indigenous work-for-the-dole scheme slaps participants with more than 400,000 fines

By political reporter Dan Conifer

Posted 10 Mar 2018, 6:02am

**Participants in a troubled Indigenous work-for-the-dole scheme are being fined more than every other jobseeker in Australia.**

Financial penalties applied under the Community Development Program (CDP) have spiked, passing 400,000 in just over two years.

There are about 33,000 CDP participants, most of whom are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Participants work up to three-times longer than city-based jobseekers to receive welfare.



PHOTO: CDP participants

### #NotMyDebt

confused & concerned about your Centrelink debt?

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### The issue

The government is using a computer algorithm to identify overpayments, or 'debt', by matching fortnightly Centrelink reporting periods to annual income from the Australian Taxation Office and looking for discrepancies. They're going back at least 7 years, and anyone who has earned any income in the same financial year that they also received any payment from Centrelink is at risk of getting a 'debt'.

~ But how can they match fortnightly reported earning to an annual amount?  
The answer is simple, but stupid: they take your total financial year earnings and divide that by 26.

~ But what if I was only working part of the year, or not working regular hours, or...  
Well, exactly. It's leaving people with often massive debts, and no reliable advice from Centrelink about how get an appeal.

Additionally, the system isn't comparing employer ABN's, but business names  
Can you see that "Fred's Breads", "Fred's Breads", "FRED'S BREADS" and "Bready Fred trading as Fred's Breads" are probably all the same employer? The algorithm can't, so it will conclude that you've been hiding employers and income from Centrelink, and have been overpaid, and will initiate recovery proceedings accordingly.

That's a lot of false debts.

Please share your [#NotMyDebt story](#)

it's 100% anonymous

#notmydebt stories:

751

false debt total so far:

\$5 121 974

# Technocratic attempts at political problems



## Australian Priority Investment Approach to Welfare – Students

The Priority Investment Approach is a new way of looking at the welfare system. It uses data analysis to provide insights into how the system is working and uses those insights to find innovative ways of helping more Australians live independently of welfare.

- More than a third will be receiving

### What we know

In 2014-2015, there were 392,000 people receiving studying payments.

It is estimated that in 10 years, around 25 per cent of those students will be receiving income support payments, with 56 per cent having left the welfare system.

### Young students

While most people who receive student payments exit income support payments within five years, there are some who are at greater risk of long-term welfare dependency.

Additional Departmental analysis shows that since 2003 there were 13,400 vocational and university students who started receiving a student payment aged 17 to 19, and then experienced a period of long-term dependence on unemployment payments.

Of these former students, 6,600 received an unemployment payment in 2014-15.

Around three-quarters did not complete their study or training before moving to an unemployment payment.

If nothing changes:

- Around 45 per cent of former young students who moved directly to unemployment payments will be receiving income support payments in 10 years' time, with a further 15 per cent

- More than a third will be receiving income support payments in 20 years, with a further 15 per cent receiving non-income support payments.

### Why?

There are many reasons why some former young students struggle to find and keep long term jobs. Further analysis and work with stakeholders through the Try, Test and Learn Fund will help us to pinpoint new and innovative ways that will help more young students to find a job.

In the future, the Government will spend an estimated \$97 billion on welfare payments for all people currently receiving studying payments.

People currently receiving studying payments have an average future lifetime cost of \$247,000 per person.

Young students who move directly to an unemployment payment for a period of long-term dependence are expected to have higher future lifetime costs at an average of \$304,000 per person.

Those who fail to complete their study or training before moving to an unemployment payment for a period of long-term dependence have a higher expected future lifetime cost of \$318,000 per person.

students who started receiving a student payment aged 17 to 19; then experienced more than 12 months on unemployment payments; and were receiving unemployment payments in 2015-16. On average, all of these former young students who transitioned directly to unemployment payments are expected to receive income support in 33 years of their future lifetimes.

- If nothing changes for these former young students, 39 per cent will be receiving income support payments in 10 years, and 30 per cent will be receiving income support payments in 20 years.

### What is Y4Y Youth Force?

A digital platform will connect unemployed former students with short-term employment opportunities in the task-based (gig) economy. Jobs could include gardening, driving and delivery, catering and hospitality and child minding. These jobs will help participants build work experience and give them the confidence to take the next step into long-term employment.

At the onset, participants will receive two weeks of general skills training (for example, time management, IT skills and customer service) and additional sector-specific training by request (for example, administration work and gardening).

### Fast facts

**Priority group:** Unemployed former students

**Recipient numbers:** 80

**Locations:** Melbourne and Hobart

**Trial period:** 24 months

**Total funding:** \$1.38 million

**Co-designer:** Whitelion Youth Agency

**Service provider:** Whitelion Youth Agency (subcontracting Nous Group)

**Potential future saving:** The purpose of these initiatives is to test whether an intervention works to reduce long-term reliance on welfare. It is not possible to predict success rates in advance—this is the purpose of testing new approaches. If 20 per cent of participants (17) move off welfare, the savings to the welfare system are likely to outweigh the costs.



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