

South West Workways

Final Project Evaluation

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Executive Summary

South West Workways

The South West Workways project aimed to provide targeted support to economically inactive and unemployed people across four Local Authorities in South West Wales. The project intended to support participants to make the transition into employment by supporting them to overcome their barriers to work, by working with employers, and where appropriate by providing access to Temporary Job Opportunities (TJOs).

Led by Neath Port Talbot Council in collaboration with Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and Bridgend Councils, the project was funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) through the Welsh Government from 2009-2014. The project was extended to include Bridgend County Borough Council from July 2013.

Across South West Wales a standardised employment gateway encompassing community engagement and referral, an individual mentoring service, and an innovative provision of volunteering and temporary job opportunities features. Local delivery teams ensured that the objectives of the project were achieved with due regard to the characteristics and circumstances of each county area.

The Mentor and Employer Liaison Officer (ELO) roles were key to the South West Workways delivery model. Mentors started working with participants as soon as they were referred to the project. The mentor role was to undertake initial assessments, plan support and assist participants in removing barriers to work. ELOs were responsible for working with employers to source TJOs and job vacancies, placing and supporting participants in work, and providing jobsearch support to work ready participants.

Evaluation

The Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (*Inclusion*) was commissioned by the project team to evaluate the delivery of the South West Workways project. *Inclusion* conducted two waves of research for this evaluation.

Wave one research covered the period up to autumn 2012. The report from wave one can be found on the *Inclusion* website.¹ Wave two of the research took place summer 2014 to look at the project overall as well as any changes since wave one.

¹ <http://www.cesi.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Workways-evaluation.pdf>

This report provides an overview of the South West Workways project over the period April 2009 – September 2014. The report summarises findings from wave one and builds on these with findings from wave two to produce a picture of South West Workways delivery and impact.

Accessing South West Workways

Profile of participants

By the start of September 2014, there had been a total of 12,319 project participants. This represented 97% of the target to the end of December, meaning that just 335 starts would be required during the fourth quarter of 2014 to reach the project target of 12,654 by the end of December 2014.

Inclusion's distance from the labour market measure suggests that later project participants were on average closer to the labour market than earlier participants. The most likely driver of this was a significant rise in the number of short-term unemployed participants in recent years. Economic conditions have resulted in participants being more likely to be unemployed than economically inactive, with a sharp increase in the number of short-term unemployed people joining the project. Changes in the eligibility criteria for the project, due to changes in the UK system of employment support, is also likely to have increased the volume of short-term unemployed participants.

Higher than expected participation of short-term unemployed also resulted in a gender split of 66:34 between male and female participants, as women are more likely than men to be economically inactive. Participation of young people was just above target profile.

Outreach and engagement

Overall the engagement process appeared to have worked well throughout the project. In the later stages of the project South West Workways mentors had undertaken outreach activities such as job fairs and attendance at partner events to attract referrals from economically inactive groups as well as the unemployed. In local authorities with large rural areas such as Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire outreach was also undertaken in rural communities.

Across local authorities the later stages of the programmes saw an increased emphasis on partnership working, demonstrated by the setup of cross-organisational Employer Support Groups in every area and the establishment of a dedicated Link Coordinator post in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. Two-thirds of project referrals

came from outreach partners and through self referrals, a further third came from Jobcentre Plus.

Delivering South West Workways

Delivery model

In both waves of research mentors were supporting participants to overcome work and non-work related barriers and to improve soft skills – for example communication and confidence. Both waves of research found that mentors would go through a process of action planning with the participant at the start of the project. This would include exploring support options available to them (for example training, referral to specialist support, and work experience).

Mentors would then go through what one described as the 'job kit.' This involved building CVs, telephone techniques, help with applications, interview preparation and weekly job search sessions run by mentors and ELOs. Beyond this practical help, mentors helped to boost participants' confidence and motivation. This could be through taking a genuine interest in participants and reaffirming what was possible.

Engaging employers was a key role of ELOs. Both waves of research found that the process of engaging employers relied on face-to-face contact, as it was felt that employers could more easily dismiss or ignore phone calls or emails. The tendency to favour face-to-face contact with employers was cited as one reason why it was more difficult to engage with larger, national employers, whose recruitment processes were online and coordinated from a central office rather than controlled by local staff who could be met face-to-face. However progress had been made with larger employers over time.

ELOs were able to offer employers a range of support. Both waves of research found that the most important of these was offering help in recruiting. South West Workways would offer to provide suitable candidates to fill vacancies, meaning that employers did not need to expend so much effort to recruit. Employers had negative experience of high numbers of unsuitable jobseekers being put forward for roles by other providers. South West Workways therefore compared much more favourably because ELOs helped to shortlist candidates and ensured that any participant put forward for a role was suitable, thus saving the employers much of the "leg-work".

Temporary job opportunities

Overall, both waves of research found that TJOs offered vital work experience and unique opportunities to participants who could benefit from them. TJOs have been arranged for participants at various distances from the labour market, and have

proved very beneficial in terms of securing paid employment, with 63% of those who went on a TJO subsequently finding work, compared to 38% who did not.

The increasing flexibility and selectivity with which TJOs were provided over time allowed them to be more targeted, efficient and effective in engaging with a wider pool of potential employers and participants. In the second wave of research, providing shorter TJOs was considered to allow for a greater focus on sustainable employment. At the time of research, the impending deadline of South West Workways funding had caused TJOs in some areas to be shortened while other areas were no longer able to provide TJOs at all.

Wider employer offer

A key change in the second wave of research was that a broader range of more holistic support was now being offered to employers through contacts in each area's employer support group. There had also been a move towards sharing vacancies sourced by ELOs with other members of the ESGs, although this had been embraced more readily in some areas than others.

Roles and responsibilities

The Employer Liaison Officer (ELO) and mentor roles had become increasingly defined as separate roles in the second wave of research, which had been facilitated by growing staff numbers in some areas. The link between ELOs and mentors continued to work better in areas where there was a more equal number of staff in each role. Strategies such as weekly caseload review meetings between the two teams had been developed in some areas to improve communication and make it a more effective working relationship.

Experiences of South West Workways

Both waves of research found that both employers and participants' experiences of the support received from South West Workways were positive, especially in comparison to support received from other employment support programmes.

Employers

From the employers' perspective, help with short-listing candidates was particularly valued, as was the ELOs' personal knowledge of participants and their understanding of the needs of the business, which altogether meant that the quality of candidates from South West Workways was deemed to be high. Employers also felt that TJOs were an excellent opportunity for both them and the participant to try out the arrangement before making a more long-term commitment. None of the employers interviewed in the second wave of research had received any wider business support

provided through South West Workways' contacts on the employment support groups, but those who had been made aware of this support had not felt they had needed it at the time.

Participants

In both waves of research, participants highlighted the high quality of the holistic and personalised support received from both mentors and ELOs which was sensitive to individual needs and barriers. Experiences of TJOs were also typically positive, as they had either helped participants secure a permanent role or had provided valuable work experience to include on their CV, and raised their confidence levels. In contrast to the first wave of research, in the second wave participants did not raise any issues with inflexibility of TJOs or a lack of support for those seeking higher skilled roles, however participants in the second wave of research were generally not looking for higher skilled jobs. The key frustration with TJOs highlighted in the second wave of research was that due to funding issues they had not been provided at all in some areas, or in others had recently been stopped.

Participants particularly valued the soft outcomes and skills gained as a result of mentor support, such as confidence building and help with mental and emotional problems, which they saw as key to their success in overcoming barriers to employment. They also valued skills gained from short training courses such as IT skills.

Impact of South West Workways

Project outcomes

Analysis of the outcomes from South West Workways indicates that up to the start of September 2014, 5,134 participants have entered employment which represents 42% of all participants. The original target for South West Workways was 35% but due to its success the target was increased over time. Younger participants and those with higher levels of qualifications were more likely to have moved into work. Participants with a disability and lone parents were less likely to move into work.

Net impact analysis

An impact assessment has been undertaken to establish the net impacts of South West Workways i.e. taking account of what would have happened anyway. This impact assessment found a statistically significant impact of South West Workways support on participants' employment changes. The impact assessment estimates that participation in the project increased participants' chances of entering work by between 2.3% to 3.0%, depending on their individual characteristics. Our analysis

also shows that increasing length of time out of work prior to participation, having a disability which is both DDA and work limiting, and having low or no qualifications reduced an individual's chances of moving into work.

Conclusions and recommendations

The South West Workways project has successfully supported over twelve thousand unemployed and inactive people in South West Wales over a five and a half year period. The project has proved flexible enough to deal with challenging economic conditions, with changes to government employment policy and ongoing uncertainty about project funding.

The evaluation has found that participation in South West Workways is strongly beneficial for participants. Analysis has identified a statistically significant positive effect on employment resulting from participation in South West Workways. In addition, South West Workways participants also reported a range of positive impacts on their soft skills. Participants reported that the person-centred, holistic approach to support delivered through South West Workways boosted their confidence and helped them with mental and emotional issues and that this was very important.

In addition to the positive effects of the project, South West Workways offers some useful learning points for any successor employment projects. The two waves of evaluation have identified a number of areas in which South West Workways has been particularly innovative or effective in supporting participants:

- The level of resourcing to enable mentors to spend significant amounts of time **supporting participants on a one-to-one basis** is fairly unique amongst current employment projects.
- From the employers' perspective, help with short-listing candidates was particularly valued, as was the **ELOs' personal knowledge of participants and their understanding of the needs of the business**. Altogether this meant that the quality of candidates from South West Workways was deemed to be high.
- **Joint working between ELOs and mentors** has developed to be very effective. The two roles had become increasingly defined as separate roles in later stages of the project, which had been facilitated by growing staff numbers in some areas.
- **Temporary Job Opportunities** can be beneficial for participants at various distances from the labour market in terms of their confidence, motivation and in

terms of going on to sustain paid work. In later stages of the project participants were required to continue to job search whilst in a TJO which, whilst some participants found this an unwelcome interruption, removed the risk of 'lock-in effects' sometimes observed in other work placement schemes.²

- The appointment of a dedicated Link Coordinator post was felt to have had a number of benefits including **greater diversity in the range of referrals** and increased awareness of other support available to participants through partner organisations.
- The **broader business support offer** is an interesting and innovative approach to relationship building. The Employer Support Group structure in each local authority area is well established and perceived positively by partners and employers. The benefits of this approach were beginning to be realised at the time of research and future programmes would benefit from consideration of this approach.
- The South West Workways project has been particularly strong in terms of learning lessons and **implementing a process of continuous improvement** across the duration of the project. The recommendations made in the first evaluation report were implemented by the time the second wave research was conducted. In addition data collection processes were refined throughout the project which enabled the project team to evaluate their own performance on an ongoing basis and adapt delivery accordingly.

² See for example, DWP (2012) Costs and Benefits of the Future Jobs Fund

Introduction

Aims and objectives

The South West Workways project aims to provide targeted support to economically inactive and unemployed people across four Local Authorities in South West Wales. The project is intended to support participants to make the transition into employment by supporting them to overcome their barriers to work, by working with employers, and where appropriate by providing access to Temporary Job Opportunities (TJOs).

The project had four primary objectives, as defined in its Business Plan:

- To reduce the number of individuals in South West Wales who are economically inactive or long-term unemployed by working in a joined up, client-centred way.
- To develop a regional client engagement and assessment Gateway, utilising links that already existed as well as proposed new provision, alongside innovative outreach work that reflects the requirements of each Local Authority area.
- To provide TJOs for those participants who require the extra support needed to move from receiving benefits to sustainable employment.
- To continue to develop collaborative working practices across South West Wales for the benefit of participants, employers and the region as a whole.

Project delivery

Led by Neath Port Talbot Council in collaboration with Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and Bridgend Councils, the project was funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) through the Welsh Government. The project was extended to include Bridgend County Borough Council from July 2013.

The South West Workways project has gone through a number of phases. The initial delivery period was April 2009 to 31st March 2012. The project was then extended to 31st March 2013 with revised eligibility criteria relating to changes to UK employment support through Department of Work & Pensions' (DWP) Work Programme. This took long-term JSA claimants out of the remit of South West Workways.

The project was further extended from April 2013 to March 2014 as part of the Welsh Government's "Pilot Phase" which aimed to test and explore the opportunity to bring together key employment and skills delivery across Wales to ensure synergy, value for money, targeted support and avoid duplication of effort. As part of the Pilot

Phase, the Genesis projects in Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire were assimilated into South West Workways in July 2013.³ The Genesis project aimed to increase labour market participation amongst lone parents in receipt of Income Support, parents not in receipt of benefit or not in work and focused on moving them closer to the labour market or into work.⁴ The Genesis team in Bridgend was restructured in order to carry out the delivery model described below as South West Workways wasn't operating at that time in the borough. There were then two further funding extensions to September 2014 and then December 2014.

Delivery model

Across South West Wales a standardised employment gateway encompassing community engagement and referral, an individual mentoring service, and an innovative provision of volunteering and temporary job opportunities features. Local delivery teams ensure that the objectives of the project are achieved with due regard to the characteristics and circumstances of each county area.

The overall model which all the localities deliver is to:

- provide a co-ordinated client engagement and assessment Gateway for economically inactive and long-term unemployed people across South West Wales
- develop individual Work Focus Plans, with tailored support at a rate to suit the participant
- provide transitional employment via Temporary Job Opportunities
- agree appropriate interventions through individual mentor support
- engage and support employers through Employer Liaison Officers ensuring effective links between participants and the demands of local organisations
- provide the financial resource to pay for provision of training, protective equipment, participant clothing and travel and childcare costs.

³ South West Workways - Supplementary Business Plan & Extension Request: March 2013

⁴ Bridgend Borough Council (2012) Bridgend County Borough Council: Report To Cabinet Committee - Equalities

Evaluation

The Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (*Inclusion*) was commissioned by the project team to evaluate the delivery of the South West Workways project. *Inclusion* conducted two waves of research for this evaluation.

Wave one research covered the period up to autumn 2012; to the end of the first South West Workways contract and part the way into the first contract extension. The report from wave one can be found on the *Inclusion* website.⁵ Wave one research comprised:

- an assessment of the project's performance against objectives based on project management information;
- interviews with regional staff overseeing the project;
- a focus group with one mentor and one ELO from each local authority;
- a telephone survey of 721 participants (see annex 3 for details); and
- in-depth case visits to each of the four local authorities delivering the project at that point – which involved focus groups with participants, and interviews with project teams, employers and other stakeholders.

Wave two of the research took place summer 2014 to look at the project overall as well as any changes since wave one. Wave two research involved:

- an assessment of the project's performance against objectives based on project management information;
- interviews with regional staff overseeing the project;
- a focus group with mentors and ELOs from each local authority;
- a focus group with project coordinators from each local authority;
- in-depth case visits to each of the five local authorities – which involved focus groups with participants, and interviews with project teams and employers;
- telephone interviews with employers and referral organisations across all local authorities; and

⁵ <http://www.cesi.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Workways-evaluation.pdf>

- analysis of the impact of the project on employment outcomes using propensity score matching.

Scope of the report

This report provides an overview of the South West Workways project over the period April 2009 – September 2014. The report summarises findings from wave one and builds on these with findings from wave two to produce a picture of South West Workways delivery and impact.

The 'Accessing South West Workways' chapter looks at the profile of participants on the project, reasons for not starting on the project, routes onto the project and how project staff go about engaging partner organisations and participants.

The 'Delivering South West Workways' chapter explores the support provided to participants and employers by Mentors and Employer Liaison Officers and how the two roles work together.

The chapter on 'Experiences of South West Workways' details views of the project from the perspective of participants and employers and include perceived strengths of the project and perceived areas for improvement.

The 'Impact of South West Workways' chapter sets out the outcomes achieved by project participants and then goes on to compare those outcomes against outcomes achieved by individuals who did not access the project, to identify the net employment impact.

The final 'Conclusions and Recommendations' chapter aims to bring the findings together to identify key lessons learned and also to make recommendations for the future design and delivery of this and other similar projects.

Accessing South West Workways

Profile of participants

The performance of South West Workways against its targets is summarised below. South West Workways targets have been re-profiled several times over the duration of the project, in line with contract extensions. The most recent target profiles (covering the project extension to December 2014) have been used in this analysis.

By the start of September 2014, there had been 12,319 project participants. This is 97% of profiled starts to the end of December 2014 (12,654), up from 90% of profiled starts at the time of wave one of the evaluation. This represents an average of 560 new participants starting the project every quarter, in excess of the average of 550 required in order to reach the project target of 12,654 by December 2014, and just 335 starts would be required during the final quarter of 2014 to hit the target.⁶

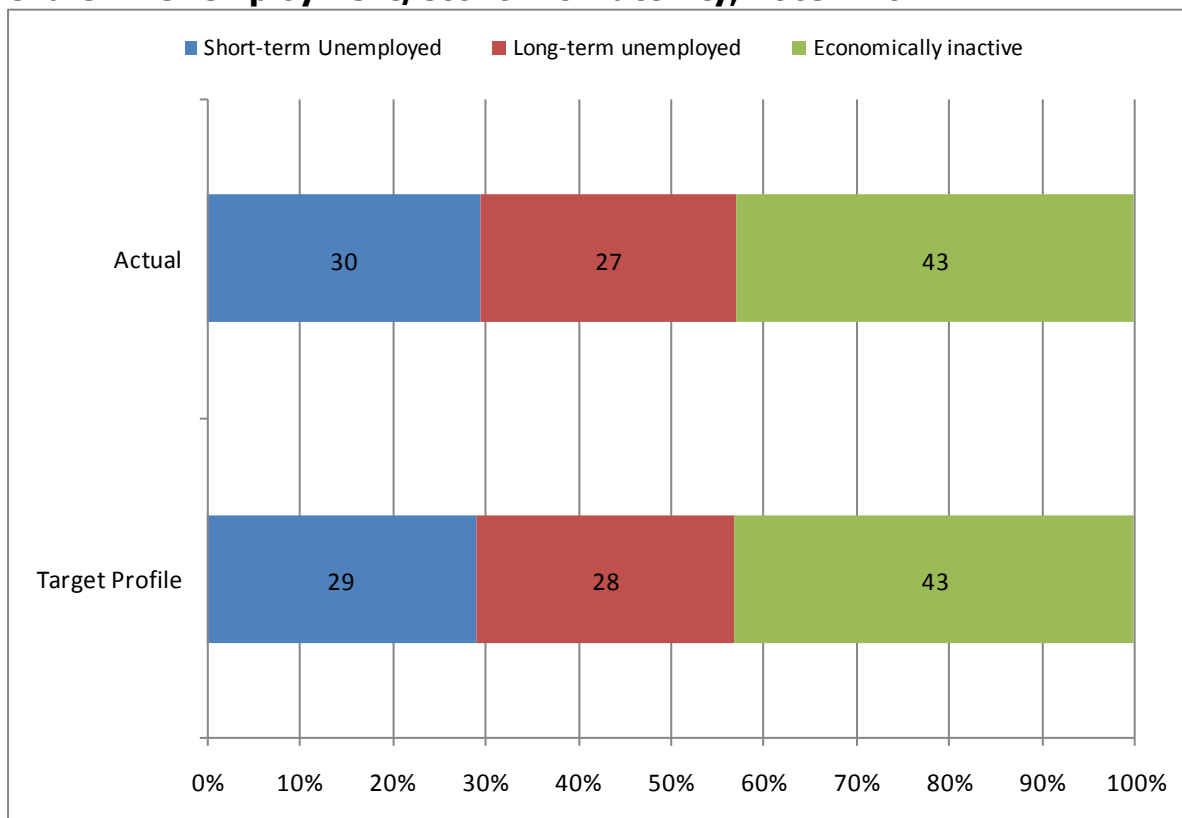
At a Local Authority level, two of the five authorities were very close to reaching their engagement target (Neath Port Talbot at 99% and Carmarthenshire at 98%), while Swansea was at 96% and both Bridgend and Pembrokeshire at 95%.

Economic status

Participants were more likely to be unemployed and less likely to be economically inactive than was anticipated when targets were initially set. In total, 43% of participants (5,289) were inactive, against a previous target profile of 46%, although in the latest re-profiling this has been set at 43%. Most of the difference with the previous target is explained by higher than anticipated participation by the short-term unemployed (less than 12 months) – with 30% of starters short-term unemployed against a target profile of 27%. The project met its targets for the long-term unemployed with 27% of starters, compared to 28% against profile.

⁶ This analysis is based on an extract of performance data taken on 2 September 2014, based on the reporting format submitted to WEFO, and an extract of MI for participants on the Genesis project taken on 13 May 2014, which is now part of South West Workways.

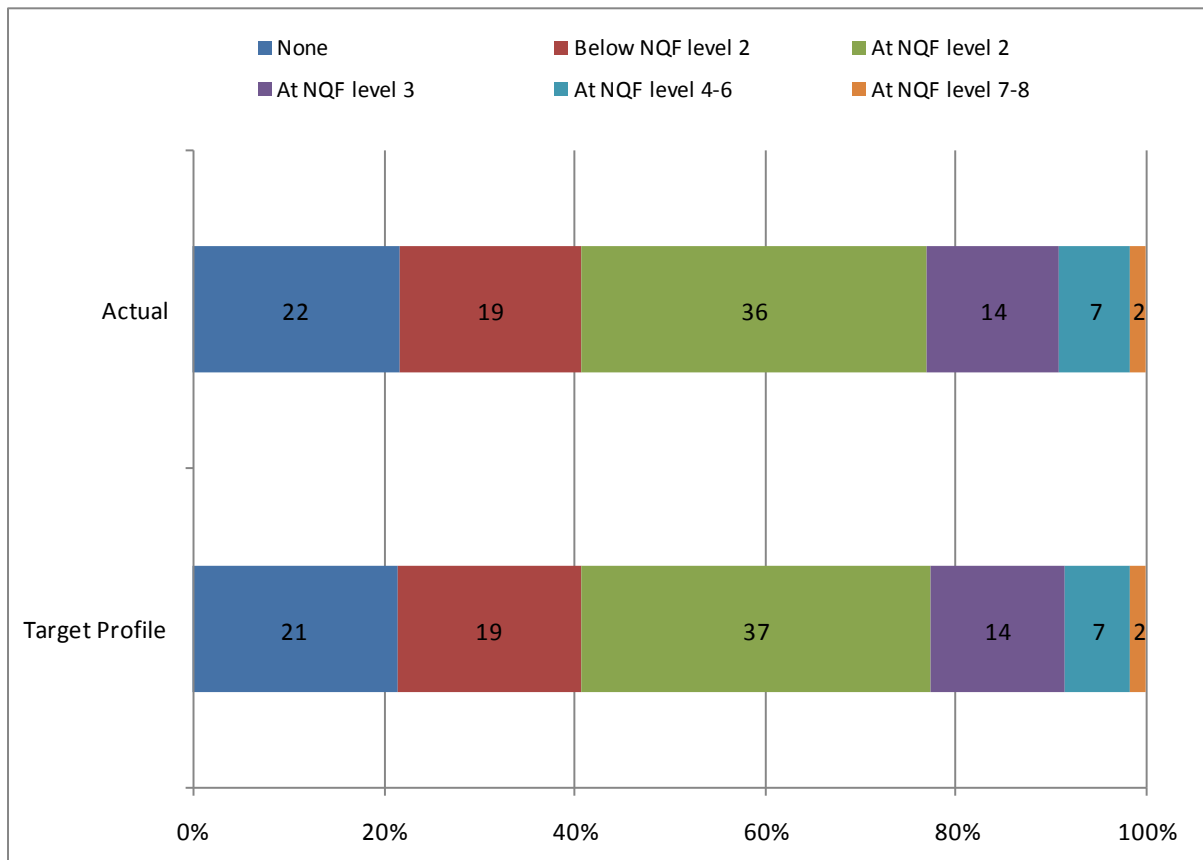
Chart 1 - Unemployment/economic inactivity, 2009 - 2014



Source: South West Workways MI for Impact Assessment 2nd Sept 2014. Base: 12,319 South West Workways participants

The qualifications of participants were very closely in line with the target profiles for the project, as illustrated in the chart below. Overall, 77% of participants had qualifications at or below Level 2 (equivalent to five good GCSEs) and 22% had no qualifications. In wave one of the evaluation, a higher proportion of participants (44%) had qualifications below Level 2, against a target profile of 46%, suggesting that participants joining the project since wave one are more likely to have qualifications to at least Level 2.

Chart 2 – Qualifications of project participants against target profile, 2009 - 2014



Source: South West Workways MI for Impact Assessment 2nd Sept 2014. Base: 12,319 South West Workways participants

Diversity

The higher proportion of participants that were unemployed rather than inactive has also led to the proportion of male participants being higher than anticipated, even though re-profiling had accounted for this change – with a gender split of 66:34 between men and women against the latest target profile of 65:35. By comparison, in wave one of the evaluation, the split was 67:33 between men and women, against a target profile of 49:51.

Participation of ethnic minorities was above project profile, with 3.4% of participants (up from 1.6% in wave one) from ethnic minority groups compared with a target profile of 1.5% (target profile has been lowered slightly from 2.1% since wave one). People with disabilities were just above target profile, with 5.5% of participants having a disability compared with a target profile of 5.4% (the latest re-profiling exercise lowered this target from 5.8%).

By age, participation of young people aged under 24 has been just above target profile, with this age group accounting for just 28% of starters compared to a target profile of 27%. The number of participants aged under 24 was 99.7% of its target level to December 2014 (the latest re-profiling having lowered the projected number of starts in this age group in the final quarter of 2014). Participation of those aged 55 and over were slightly below target (85% as of the start of September 2014), although the number of participants involved is small (just three more starts required to hit the target of 20 overall).

In addition, 17% of participants (2,096 people) were recorded as having sole caring responsibility e.g. lone parents (there was no specific target in this regard).

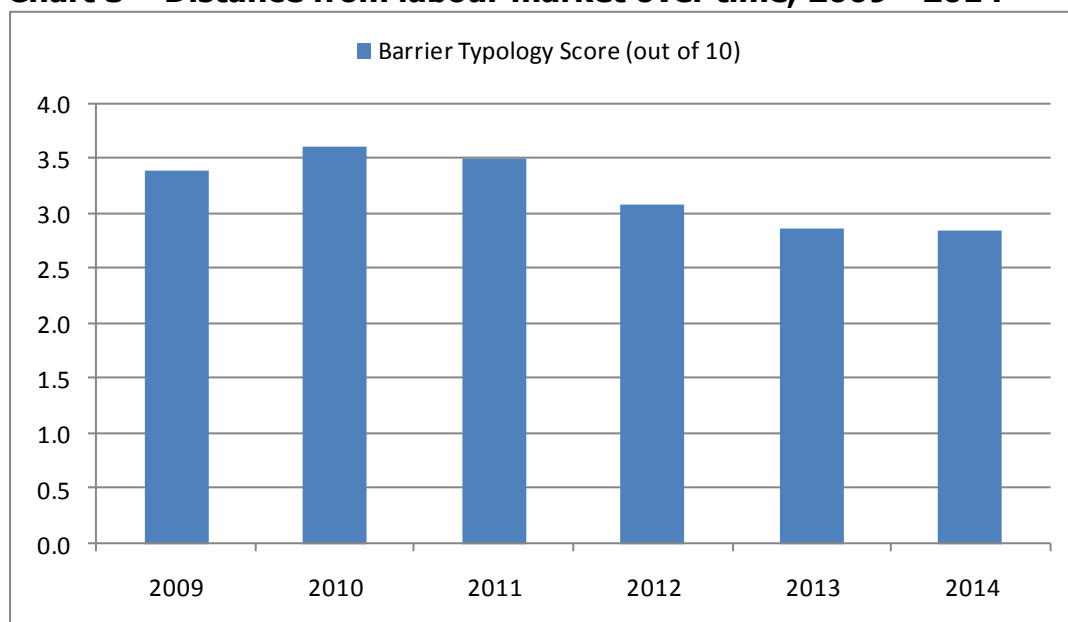
Distance from the labour market

The following section draws on analysis of project management information, to examine the distance from the labour market of different types of participant. It uses a typology of barriers, giving each participant a score out of 10 based on indicators of their distance from the labour market, with a higher score meaning participants were further from the labour market forth (see Annex 2 for details). Scores are based on:

- Participants' duration of unemployment
- Whether they had a disability or work-limiting health condition
- Whether had sole caring responsibilities; and
- Qualification levels.

The average score for all participants was 3.2, which is lower than the 3.4 average recorded at the time of the first evaluation of South West Workways, suggesting that participants joining later in the project may be on average closer to the labour market. This is confirmed in Chart 3, which shows that the average score dropped from a peak of 3.6 in 2010 to 2.9 in 2013 and 2014. As the original fall will be the result of the rollout of the Work Programme in the autumn of 2011 which took the longer-term unemployment out of the eligible population for South West Workways. The further fall may be partly due to high levels of labour market churn, whereby people are securing paid employment for short spells and then becoming unemployed again. As has already been noted, the proportion of participants who were short-term unemployed (and therefore will generally have a lower barrier typology score) was higher than expected, and the number of starters who had been unemployed for less than six months increased from 639 in 2010, to 1,170 in 2012 and again to 1,315 in 2013.

Chart 3 – Distance from labour market over time, 2009 - 2014



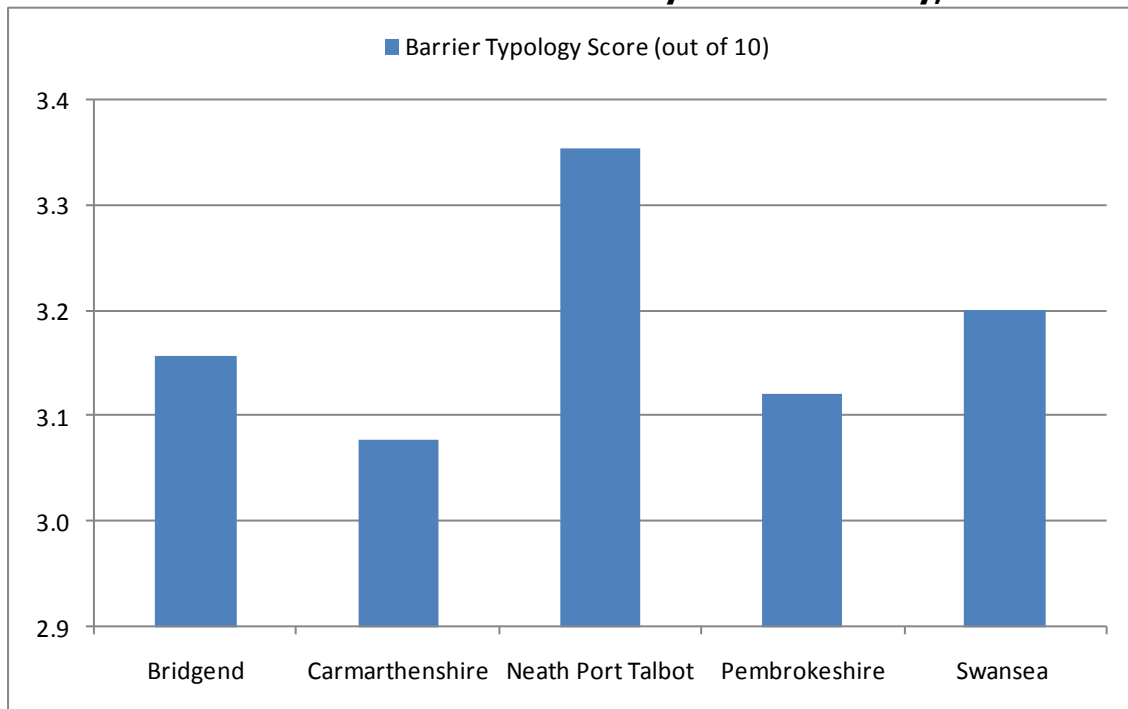
Source: South West Workways MI for Impact Assessment 2nd Sept 2014 and Inclusion calculations.

There was limited difference in distance from the labour market of participants in different Local Authorities, as shown in Chart 4. However, participants in Neath Port Talbot were on average slightly further from the labour market. In relation to participants with multiple barriers (i.e. higher scores), Neath Port Talbot had a much higher than average proportion of participants with scores greater than 5 (19%), compared to the following proportions for the other authorities:

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Bridgend | 12% |
| Carmarthenshire | 12% |
| Pembrokeshire | 14% |
| Swansea | 16 % |

In terms of the participants who were furthest from the labour market, lone parents were more likely to face multiple barriers to employment. For the group as a whole, the average barrier typology score was 5.7, compared to 2.7 for those who were not lone parents. Some 17% of lone parent participants had typology scores of at least 7.5 out of 10 (being a lone parent scores 2.5 points on its own), compared to just 1% of those who were not sole carers of children.

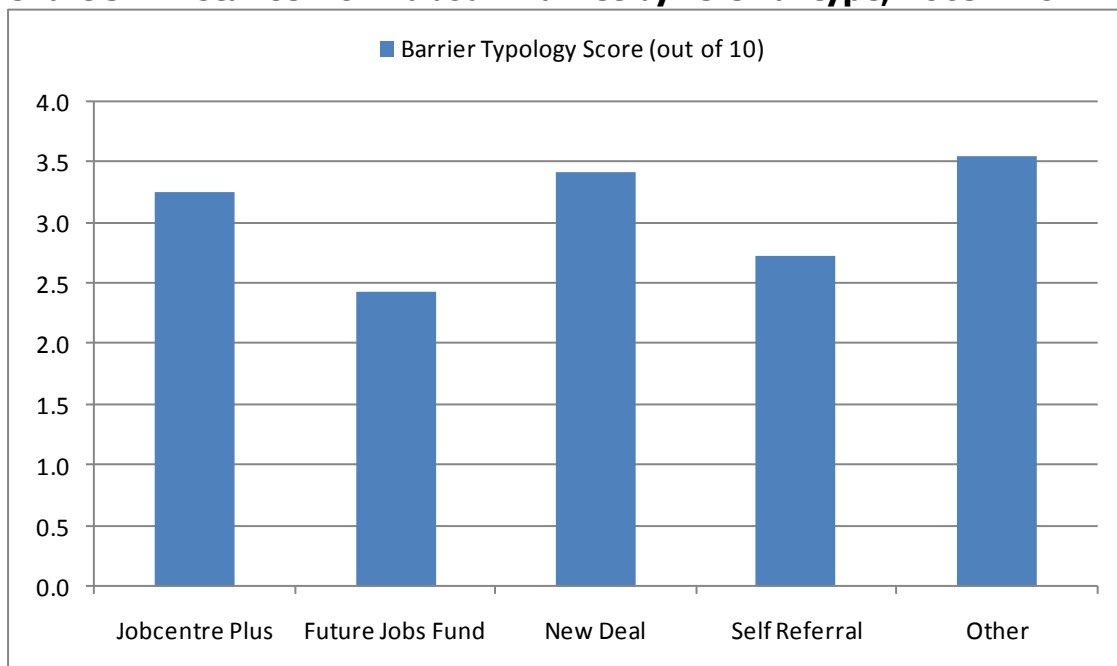
Chart 4 – Distance from labour market by Local Authority, 2009 - 2014



Source: South West Workways MI for Impact Assessment 2nd Sept 2014 and Inclusion calculations.

There are some variations in distance from the labour market depending on where participants were referred from, as Chart 5 shows. Those closest to the labour market were those referred from the Future Jobs Fund and self-referrals, while those referred from the New Deal and other sources were the furthest away.

Chart 5 – Distance from labour market by referral type, 2009 - 2014

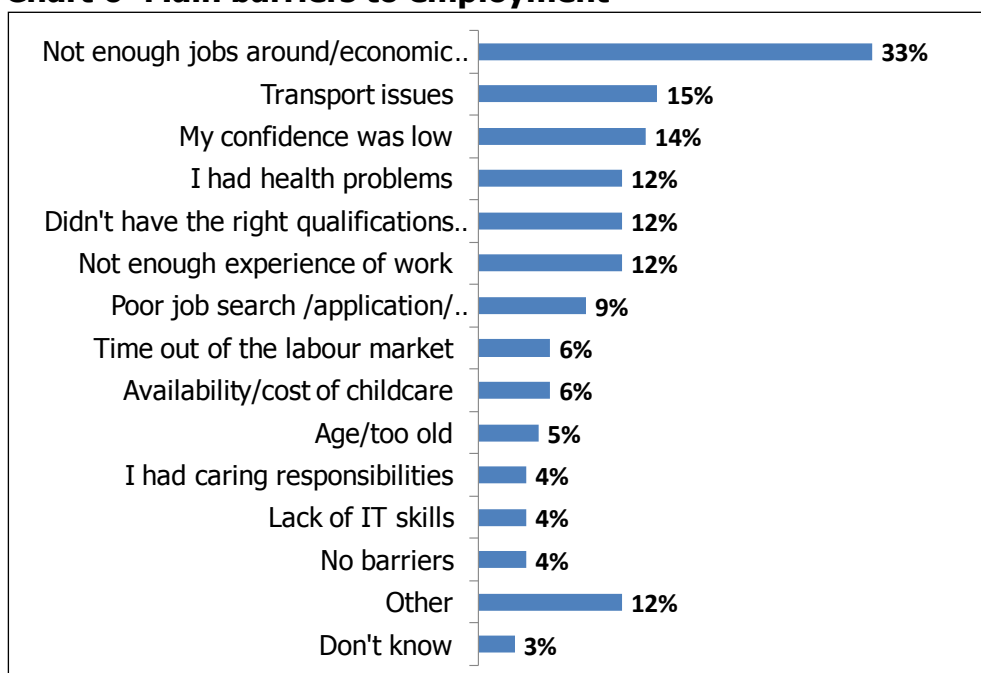


Source: South West Workways MI for Impact Assessment 2nd Sept 2014 and Inclusion calculations.

Perceived barriers to work

In the wave one survey respondents were asked about the barriers that they faced to entering employment, Chart 6. The most commonly mentioned reason was that there were not enough jobs in the local area (33%), but a range of other barriers were mentioned, including transport (15%), confidence (14%) and health problems (12%).

Chart 6—Main barriers to employment



Source: survey of participants. Base: all (721)

There were some variations in barriers to employment noted by different groups, including:

- Short term unemployed participants were more likely to note the poor labour market (42%) than others; and
- Those aged 18-24 were more likely to say that they did not have enough work experience (26%) than others.

The second wave of qualitative research found that a lack of experience, confidence and skills were seen as key barriers in all areas, particularly for those who had been out of work for a long time. Reflecting the survey findings, transport was mentioned as a key barrier for those living in more rural areas who relied on buses to travel to work. They explained that in some areas, buses did not run early enough in the morning to enable someone to arrive at work on time, particularly if they had to change and catch more than one bus or train, which further added to the cost of

travel. Older participants also felt that their age was a barrier to employment. A lack of jobs in the local area was only cited as a barrier in Carmarthenshire and Bridgend, perhaps suggesting that the local labour market had become less of a significant barrier across the region since the first wave of research when the survey was carried out.

Non-participation

Over the duration of the South West Workways project, approximately 40% of referrals to the project did not result in a start on the project⁷. The proportion of non-starters has risen, from around 35% during the period from 2009 to 2012, up to around 47% for 2013 and 2014. Non-starting rates by local authority are as follows:

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Bridgend | 23% |
| Carmarthenshire | 45% |
| Neath Port Talbot | 41% |
| Pembrokeshire | 40% |
| Swansea | 34% |

The South West Workways MI system also records the reasons for referrals that do not start on the project. Table 1 shows that 38% were 'unknown', although it should be noted that the proportion of unknowns is much smaller for the 2013/14 data. This suggests improvements in the quality of data collection over the course of the project.

The next largest group are those who South West Workways have been unable to contact, accounting for 21% of all non-starters. 15% failed to attend and 11% declined the support available while 7% were ineligible. One % of non-starters were referred to another organisation. Please note that the process of including a 'reason for non-starter' was introduced in January 2013. Therefore non start's prior to this date would have been classified as unknown and account for the high proportion recorded under this status. Again, this highlights improvements in the quality of data collection over the course of the project.

Table 1: Reasons for non-starts, 2009 - 2014

| Reasons | % of non-starters |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Declined Support | 11% |

⁷ This data is sourced from different MI, supplied by South West Workways for the period 2009-2012, and for 2013-2014, up to mid-May 2014.

| | |
|---|-------|
| Failed to attend | 15% |
| Found work | 5% |
| Moved address | 0% |
| Referred to other organisation | 1% |
| Not eligible | 7% |
| Already receiving South West Workways support | 0% |
| Unable to contact | 21% |
| Unknown | 38% |
| Total | 8,027 |

Source: 'South West Workways 2009-2012 Stats' , 'South West Workways 2013 - 2014 Stats' updated 15/05/2014 and Genesis Stats updated 13/05/2014.

Engaging participants

Outreach and partner engagement

Mentors were responsible for ensuring links with local organisations in their areas and for planning outreach activities to recruit to the project. Staff across the local authorities highlighted how important it was for them to get out into communities to attend as many events and engage as many people as possible. They were being innovative and flexible with this work to ensure that they could quickly respond to approaches that worked well and those that did not. In Neath Port Talbot, staff reported using outreach work to ensure delivery within isolated communities and to target harder to reach groups. In the second wave of research Neath Port Talbot mentors were doing weekly outreach in homeless projects every week which had been successful at generating referrals.

In all areas, close relationships with partner organisations facilitated and encouraged a steady flow of referrals. The majority of referrals to South West Workways (65%) came through other organisations or through self referral. In Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, it was noted that most staff had been working in the area for long periods of time, and had pre-existing good relationships with partner organisations. However in Swansea and in Bridgend there have needed to be greater efforts to build relationships with local organisations to encourage referrals. In all case study areas the project teams had invested in maintaining a high profile within their local communities and undertaking outreach to engage participants. This included

attending a range of local events to promote South West Workways amongst people who were not receiving support from JCP or other organisations. Within Swansea, this included attending children's centres in order to reach economically inactive parents, as well as handing out leaflets in town centres. In Carmarthenshire, staff had a monthly presence in the town centre which they found very effective.

The project acknowledged a high percentage of referrals were from JCP. Each Joint Sponsor, in conjunction with the Regional Marketing Officer adopted a marketing strategy to specifically target economically inactive individuals, suitable for their geographical area. As a result, there was a great deal more outreach being undertaken, including leaflet drops, and attending events. Much of these activities were already established in the Neath Port Talbot area. Outreach activities were regularly fed back to WEFO to demonstrate the efforts that were being made to recruit this client group.

Relationship with Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus (JCP) was the single largest source of referrals to South West Workways over the course of the project. For the period 2009 to 2012, there were 4,257 referrals from JCP (33% of all referrals, rising to over 52% of referrals for the period 2013 to 2014 (3,669 referrals in total)⁸.

Staff in one area reported that they had seen referrals from JCP increase since the Work Programme was introduced. They understood that JCP was increasingly accessing South West Workways as they considered there was a high chance that participants would find work more quickly through the project before they were mandated to the Work Programme.

Relationships with Jobcentre Plus appeared to vary considerably across areas and were often based on personal knowledge and experience of working with specific individuals in local offices. However one mentor commented that these kinds of relationships could be hard to maintain due to the turnover of workforce in the Jobcentre and information about South West Workways was not always passed on. Mentors often spent time rebuilding relationships with new staff to ensure the flow of referrals was maintained.

A common finding across areas, and in both waves of the evaluation, was that some participants referred by JCP believed they had been mandated onto South West Workways (although South West Workways and JCP interviewed staff were clear that this was not the case). For example, in one area, JCP staff were understood to have told their customers that 'everything' they sent them to must be attended otherwise they would lose their benefits – which participants inferred included South

⁸ This includes all referrals, not just those that resulted in starts on the project.

West Workways. Attendance at the *initial* Workways interview was frequently part of a claimant's mandatory activity and not to do so was at risk of sanction. Even when it was clear that participation was voluntary, in wave one, one mentor said that those referred from JCP were less likely to attend their initial meetings. Project MI shows that around half of all JCP referrals (49%) started on the project.

In wave two mentors mentioned that individuals referred from JCP were not always aware of why they were referred and what South West Workways could offer. It was an important initial role of mentors therefore to explain the nature of the services on offer, and that ongoing participation was voluntary. A number of areas, including Pembrokeshire, mentioned that they had begun to run group sessions in Jobcentre Plus to explain the voluntary nature and also to explain what the project would involve and to filter out those who were not eligible, suitable or interested. In Pembrokeshire this was mentioned as being a good way to manage resources when they are busy because it means that one-to-one sessions are used for those who really want/need them

Reaching "hard to reach" groups

South West Workways has recruited fewer than planned economically inactive participants. Clearly, the onset of the recession, large increases in unemployment, and subsequent changes to priorities had influenced this.

It was also noted that the pool of inactive people who could be identified by their benefit status was getting smaller, as a result of Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants being reassessed (with many being found fit for work and instead claiming Jobseeker's Allowance) and reforms to lone parent entitlement to Income Support. Staff acknowledged the need to do more to increase recruitment of inactive groups.

In wave one, the project teams in all areas felt that they could be doing more to engage with hard-to-reach groups. In particular, given male JSA claimants had been over-recruited early in the project, there was now a need to recruit economically inactive females. At that time Swansea was considering recruiting a marketing manager to take responsibility for outreach at a more strategic level, this had been achieved by wave two (see Link Coordinator section below). The first wave of evaluation recommended that the project areas continued to review their processes for increasing referrals of inactive groups, in particular women.

By wave two project teams generally took the view that they had tried hard to reach more economically inactive participants and had achieved a great deal. However they could only do so much. For example, in Carmarthenshire it was noted that many economically inactive women, especially lone parents, did not want to work for 16 hours or more, preferring 'mini-jobs' of fewer than 16 hours.

Workways would want to get [economically inactive] people into work, but when you're looking for referrals for those economically inactive people, the organisations that they're engaging with have got different priorities, i.e. saving children going into care, making sure children are well looked after and well educated, and engaging with the health system and the education system. And, those health professionals turn around and say that parent, that economically inactive parent, should be concentrating on their family and their parenting and shouldn't be looking for work. I've actually been told that." (ELO, Pembrokeshire)

Both Neath Port Talbot and Swansea had developed good links with organisations to refer young people to the project. In Neath Port Talbot this included a project called Engage as well as working with the Youth Offending Team. In Swansea they ran group sessions in the JCP Youth Zone to raise awareness of South West Workways amongst young people. In Pembrokeshire, South West Workways worked with youth clubs and the council Youth Service to engage NEETs, but did not do a great deal more outreach towards NEETs, as they felt the Youth Service was doing this and referring appropriate participants, and they did not want to duplicate the work. In Bridgend they had received a few referrals of young people from the military training college.

In all areas, the project teams had developed successful partnerships to engage women, including by working with Women's Aid and attending local parent and toddler groups. In addition, there was increasing outreach in Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, as mentors visited schools, soft-play areas, and leisure centres in order to engage inactive lone parents. In Bridgend mentors had attended language and play sessions which they felt had been quite successful in generating referrals.

People with health conditions were perceived as particularly hard to engage. In some areas, it was suggested that JCP and South West Workways should run joint events with people with health conditions to try to engage them. It was noted in some areas, including Pembrokeshire, that engaging with health services had been particularly difficult.

The Swansea team had also worked with several organisations (the Ethnic Youth Support Team, the Swansea Bay Racial Equality Council) to encourage referrals from ethnic minority groups, although this was seen as less of a priority in some areas.

Link Coordinator role

The practice of introducing a 'link co-ordinator' role to build relationships with referral sources was working well within the Neath Port Talbot Team and was then also adopted within the Swansea Team.

The main objective of this role was to build relationships with potential referral organisations, to begin by engaging with existing partners and then finding new partners through those existing links.

In the Swansea team, a timetable of regular contacts was devised to follow up what partner organisations are doing and if any new provision is available, and then update mentors with details. The Link Coordinator also provides partners with updates on South West Workways' activity. These updates include progress reports on any individuals that partners have referred to the project which helps to increase partner understanding of the support that South West Workways can provide.

The Link Coordinator also organises and attends events, monitoring and reviewing levels of referrals achieved from each. The role also raised awareness of South West Workways through marketing activities such as good news stories about participants finding work.

The impact of this dedicated role has been to increase referral rates and to make the sources of referrals more varied. It was also reported to take some of the pressure off mentors to enable them to work closely with participants and it also ensures that partnership working activity is done more systematically.

Selling the project

When engaging with participants for the first time mentors reported that they emphasised three main elements of South West Workways that they felt made the project distinctive. The first of these was the voluntary nature of the project and this was particularly emphasised in wave two research participants as a result of the increased conditionality and sanctioning placed on unemployed benefit claimants.

"I think a lot of them, when they are referred from the Jobcentre, they think that they have to come but it's realising that it's not a mandatory project; they choose to be there. I think that's a big help."(Mentor, Carmarthenshire)

A second key feature of South West Workways which mentors use to engage participants is the personalised nature of the support and the one-to-one, face-to-face relationship with the mentor. In other support services an individual may not see the same person on every visit whereas the South West Workways mentors are able to get to know that person and to build trust and help them to regain their confidence.

"We've got that little bit of patience and time to be able to work with them through [job search]. I think that's something they obviously don't get from anywhere else really."(Mentor, Bridgend)

Contact with employers and the associated potential for Temporary Job Opportunities were also key selling points mentioned by project staff. The relationships that Employer Liaison Officers have with their employers mean that South West Workways participants have access to jobs that are not advertised.

"A lot of the vacancies I source are exclusive to Workways. I think the employer won't advertise it anywhere else; I can obviously negotiate that with them. So I tell people that... they quite like the idea that there's less competition and that it's kind of exclusive. They feel like they've got more of a chance in actually getting the job." (ELO, Bridgend)

Other positive features mentioned by ELOs and mentors were that the support offered by South West Workways is free, that it takes place in locations that are local and convenient for participants to access. They also mentioned that the interaction with the mentor and with other participants provides a support network that they might not have otherwise.

Referral to alternative support

As well as partnership working to obtain referrals into South West Workways mentors can also refer participants on to partners if they feel that the partner support is (more) appropriate. When asked which kinds of people they would not feel that Workways could help, project team members typically identified people with learning disabilities, drug and alcohol issues, and potentially those with criminal records, as requiring more intensive support than the project could offer.

In the first wave of research, the Gateway was a key part of the South West Workways offer. One of the Business Plan objectives is that the project will "provide a co-ordinated client engagement and assessment Gateway for economically inactive and long-term unemployed people across South West Wales". The Gateway was intended to be a particularly innovative aspect of the project and is a mechanism to co-ordinate referrals to ensure that participants receive the most appropriate support. At the Gateway stage, it was intended that potential participants would be accepted onto the project or referred to other more suitable provision dependent on their circumstances. The Business Plan specifies that the project would adopt a "standardised process which will be adhered to by all engagement and mentoring staff across the region".

However the first wave of research found that, whilst staff in all areas were referring participants to other services, and knew well the different services in their local area, it did not appear that there was a "standardised process" across the region. In some areas, staff were not aware of the term Gateway, and the process varied between the areas. Nevertheless, even where there was not a clear understanding of the

term Gateway, staff reported that they would always consider referring participants to other sources of support if appropriate. The first evaluation report recommended that there was a clearer articulation of the Gateway process to the project staff.

By wave two, although the concept of the Gateway remained and the project continued to refer participants to other projects if they felt they were better suited, the term 'Gateway' was no longer used. However mentors were confident that they were fully aware of alternative specialist provision to which they referred participants with specific needs, such as housing, drug and alcohol and childcare services. Often referral to organisations supporting more specific needs that were not centred around employment did not mean the participant could not also engage with South West Workways at the same time. For participants who wanted to pursue long-term, vocational training instead of moving in to employment, South West Workways referred them to local colleges or partners that specialised in apprenticeships such as Careers Wales.

However project staff did identify gaps in specialist support that South West Workways was not able to meet and which was not being provided elsewhere, as discussed often due to services closures. This included drug and alcohol programmes, counselling services for mental health issues, and support for ex-offenders. There were regional differences and those project staff based in larger towns appeared to have access to a greater range and volume of other support.

In wave one of the evaluation, there were specific concerns about the effect of recent changes to WEFO guidance which undermined the incentives for any projects to refer participants to one another. The WEFO guidance stated that only one outcome could be claimed per participant across ESF projects. Despite efforts to mitigate this, operational staff felt that local organisations were now more reluctant to work together, as they have a vested interest in claiming outcomes for themselves. One mentor went as far as to say that they were "fighting for the same participants" as the Coastal and Want to Work projects.

However by wave two of the evaluation, this issue was largely felt to have been overcome through partnership working to ensure the participants were best supported and progressed with the most suitable project. Indeed the purpose of the Pilot Phase (described in the introduction) was to encourage a joined up customer journey with partnership working and handover between services to reduce duplication and provide the best possible support to the individual. In addition, one area it was suggested that as many services had closed down (including projects for people with disabilities) there was less duplication and less competition for participants.

The setup of Employer Support Groups (discussed further in the following chapter) in each area had increased partnership working with other employment support

organisations such as Work Programme providers. However, in general the wave two research found that instances of referrals out of South West Workways because the participant was considered more suitable for support from an alternative *employment provider*, were limited. Instead, South West Workways felt that they had become known as the project that focused most exclusively on getting someone in to work, so that they were unlikely to refer someone elsewhere for employment support. Rather they were more likely to receive referrals into South West Workways from other employment projects. For example, whilst just one incidence of referring from South West Workways to Want to Work was mentioned in relation to self employment support, Want to Work staff mentioned referring job seekers into South West Workways.

"I can't deal with Job Seeker's Allowance, so I refer a majority of my job seekers to Workways... because of my ESF funding." (Want to Work, Swansea)

However the support that Want to Work provides is very similar to that provided by South West Workways and had funding conditions allowed, Want to Work may not have made onwards referrals for job seekers. This supports the Pilot Phase intentions to better aligning eligibility criteria and support across programmes to encourage partnership working.

Conclusion

By the start of September 2014, there had been a total of 12,319 project participants. This represented 97% of the target to the end of December, meaning that just 335 starts would be required during the fourth quarter of 2014 to reach the project target of 12,654 by the end of December 2014.

Our distance from the labour market measure suggests that later project participants were on average closer to the labour market. The most likely driver of this has been a significant rise in the number of short-term unemployed participants in recent years. Economic conditions have resulted in participants being more likely to be unemployed than economically inactive, with a sharp increase in the number of short-term unemployed people joining the project. Changes in the eligibility criteria for the project, due to changes in the UK system of employment support, is also likely to have increase the volume of short-term unemployed participants

Higher than expected participation of short-term unemployed has also resulted in a gender split of 66:34 between male and female participants, as women are more likely than men to be economically inactive. Participation of young people has been just above target profile.

Overall the engagement process appeared to have worked well throughout the project. In the later stages of the project South West Workways mentors had

undertaken outreach activities such as job fairs and attendance at partner events to attract referrals from economically inactive groups as well as the unemployed. In local authorities with large rural areas such as Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire outreach was also undertaken in rural communities. Across local authorities the later stages of the programmes saw an increased emphasis on partnership working, demonstrated by the setup of cross-organisational Employer Support Groups in every area and the establishment of a dedicated Link Coordinator post in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot.

Delivering South West Workways

Mentor support

In both waves of research mentors were supporting participants to overcome work and non-work related barriers and to improve soft skills – for example communication and confidence. All staff recognised the benefits of delivering services that were flexible and responsive to some of the more structural barriers that participants face.

"If you have to pay £4.75 return, people wouldn't come. I wouldn't. You've got to be out there, and to build that trust, particularly in small communities." (Mentor, Carmarthenshire)

In the second wave of research, mentors began to hold group information sessions to introduce people to the project and allow them an opportunity to decide whether or not they wanted to participate. The sessions were held at outreach centres where mentors would explain what South West Workways did and how they could help, emphasising that it was a voluntary project and asking attendees to approach them if they decided they did want to participate in the project. For those who showed an interest, the first appointment with the mentor would be arranged. This technique allowed mentors to brief more people at one time, rather than having to hold one-to-one sessions with each individual who may or may not decide to continue, thereby improving efficiency and reducing the number of inappropriate referrals.

Both waves of research found that mentors would go through a process of action planning with the participant at the start of the project. This would include exploring support options available to them (for example training, referral to specialist support, and work experience). Depending on the participant, and whether the mentor thought a formal plan would motivate or intimidate them, the plan would either be shared with them or kept informal. Planning the support offered to participants depended on their individual priorities and circumstances, and participants noted that mentors took the time to get to know them properly, including asking about hobbies that might help them find work.

Mentors were also completing "Rickter Assessments" with participants, which measured soft outcomes and were used to contribute to the way that provision was planned. Most mentors considered that these assessments were helpful in identifying additional needs and in providing a good basis for the mentor to discuss personal information and to develop relationships. One mentor said that by looking at the relative differences in scores for measures of where participants said they were now

and where they wanted to be, they could determine the key areas to work on. However it was noted that the questions could be very personal, and that this could sometimes hamper gaining participants' trust. As a result of this, in Carmarthenshire it was noted that Rickter Assessments were always completed in a private room.

Mentors would then go through what one described as the 'job kit.' This involved:

- Building CVs. It was noted by participants that CVs were not generic like those provided through JCP and that showing participants how to market their relevant experience on their CV was also helpful in improving their confidence;

"My CV was pretty poor, to be honest with you, and although a lot of the things are obviously still the same it's just reworded and rewritten, it looks a lot better. I'd give myself a job now, definitely." (Participant, Swansea)

- Telephone techniques. For example, participants would go into another room and call their mentor to enquire about a job advert, and the mentor would give feedback. In addition, one mentor said he impressed the importance of first contact with employers, as this would form employers' opinions of the participant;
- Help with applications. Including help filling forms and writing letters; and
- Interview preparation. Mock interviews were important in preparing participants, by boosting their confidence. It was noted that sometimes a mentor and ELO would conduct these together.
- Weekly job search sessions were run by mentors and ELOs for any participants who wanted to attend. These gave participants the opportunity to look for jobs advertised online, and to talk to ELOs about any vacancies they had sourced that were not advertised elsewhere.

"It's like they're an extra pair of eyes for you." (Participant, Swansea)

- During job search sessions participants could also work on their CV and interview techniques with mentors or ELOs.

Beyond this practical help, mentors helped to boost participants' confidence and motivation. This could be through taking a genuine interest in participants and reaffirming what was possible. One mentor noted that empathy was important, as she was able to talk about her own experience of unemployment to show what was possible. It was also evident that mentors would 'pick up' participants when they suffered setbacks.

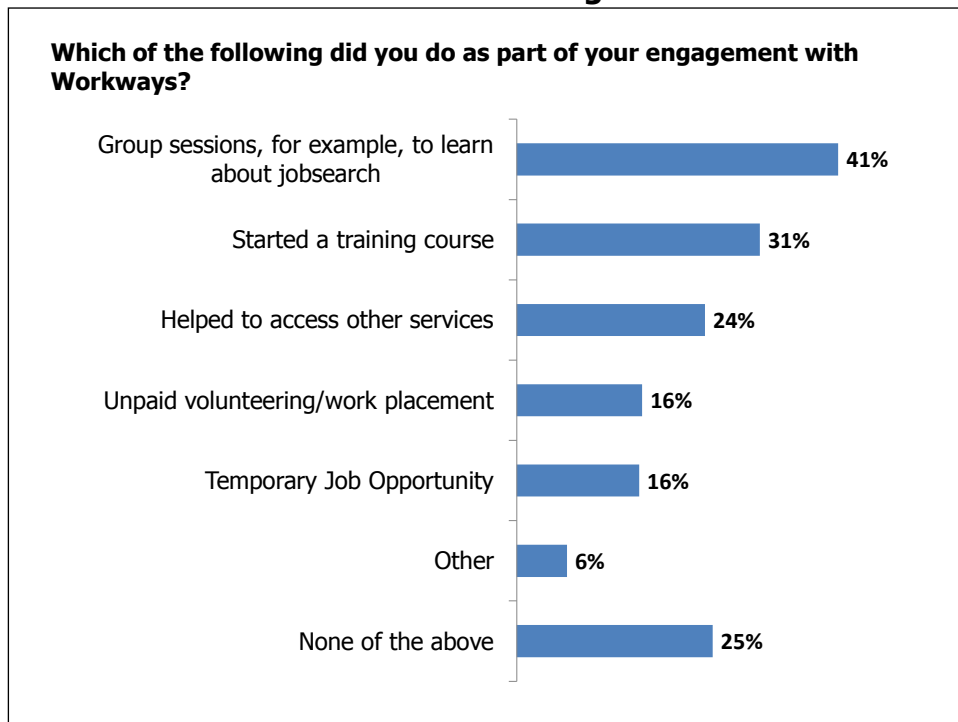
"If you're not successful they give you encouragement to carry on, to keep applying for the next job. You know, something will come." (Participant, Swansea)

Additional support

In the first wave of research survey respondents were asked what support they had received from South West Workways, in addition to one to one support from their mentor or ELO. The most common type of additional support was group sessions, which 41% of participants had done, followed by going on a training course (31%) and helping gain access to other services (24%). A quarter of respondents had just had one-to-one contact with their mentor and ELO.

Participants in the second wave of qualitative research reported other ways in which South West Workways had helped them overcome barriers. They included paying for public transport taken to and from a TJO which made the TJO financially worthwhile, helping participants understand how their skills can be transferred and marketed on their CV, and providing TJOs, which helped to fill gaps in their CV and demonstrate relevant experience. Training courses were also felt to have provided participants with skills and qualifications they were previously lacking, such as IT skills or the CSCS card. Participants' confidence was improved in various ways, including through mock interviews and emotional support from mentors, which included positive feedback and encouragement after unsuccessful interviews.

Chart 7–Activities undertaken through South West Workways



Source: survey of participants. Base: all (721)

Access to training

Provision of training was seen as an important element by participants and employers. In both waves of research, there was little 'further learning' (such as NVQs) undertaken partly due to funding (these longer courses were too expensive), inflexibility of training provision (courses started at particular points in the year which might not suit participants), or because mentors and participants were focused on more immediate support to move into work. Often the barriers that participants needed to overcome to secure a job in the local labour market required shorter training as opposed to 'further learning'.⁹

"We are not a training project – we are an employment project" (Project manager, Neath Port Talbot)

In the second wave of research, participants did not raise a lack of longer-term training as an issue, as they were focussed on moving in to work as soon as possible.

⁹ Participants who showed a desire to pursue a career in a different field to their current experience and needed further learning to achieve this, were in the main referred to colleges or Careers Wales for advice. Further learning was also an exit outcome for South West Workways and therefore participants would no longer receive project support.

In both wave of research shorter courses, however, were very important to participants who valued the training they had received through South West Workways. These included SIA security licenses, IT training, site safety certification such as CSCS, and licenses to drive HGVs/PCVs, as well as courses in softer skills such as confidence building. Only in isolated cases was it suggested that the range of short courses should be extended, for example to include advanced IT skills rather than just basic IT skills training.

The second wave of research found that provision of training depended largely on local availability and therefore varied between areas. At one end of the spectrum, Bridgend found that there was a wide range of free short training courses provided in their local area that they were able to send participants to. In the Llanelli site in Carmarthenshire, South West Workways had become a learndirect centre, which allowed them to deliver online training in their base, and Pembrokeshire South West Workways could utilise the Local Authority's Essential Skills tutor that could provide training to participants in house. However by the second wave of research, some areas were not able to provide certain training any longer, for example Swansea Local Authority no longer provided confidence and assertiveness training in house, which South West Workways participants had previously found useful.

Specific training was considered on a discretionary, case-by-case basis for individuals who had a job offer on the condition that required completion of a training course.

"We signed off for an assessor's NVQ course for a participant who had a job offer from a group which said if he had this qualification, they would give him a job, so we paid for that training" (Project manager, Swansea)

In Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot, a training framework allowed mentors to draw down courses quickly and easily. The first evaluation report recommended that training frameworks were created or renewed to reduce the burden of procuring training. In Carmarthenshire and other areas, or when the required training was not on the framework, three quotes were required, which was time-consuming for mentors. Frameworks were positive, but it was noted that some training providers had closed down in the recession, or did not want to bid to go on the framework, so they did not cover all training needs. At the time of wave two research the project team was considering the feasibility of operating a regional training framework which could be used by all project areas.

Management information shows that 16% of participants had been on a TJO. Of those who had been on a TJO, 70% had received training as part of the TJO.

There was some evidence that more intensive support was targeted at those who were further from the labour market. For example, those who had been out of work for longer periods of time were more likely to have: gone on a TJO; started a

training course; gone on unpaid work experience or work placement; or been to group sessions.

Overall, in both waves of research mentors provided a very high level of support, tailored around participant needs. The approach was informal and distinctly different to employment-related support that participants may have received in the past. South West Workways staff insisted that this approach was key to achieving a high level of cooperation and commitment from participants.

Employer Liaison Officers

Both waves of research found that Employer Liaison Officers (ELOs) were responsible for three main areas within South West Workways (although not all ELOs were doing all roles):

- Work with employers to source opportunities, both TJOs and other vacancies;
- Place South West Workways participants and support them in work; and
- Provide jobsearch support to participants who were considered “work ready.”

Engaging employers

Engaging employers was a key role of ELOs. The first wave of research found that there were some differences in the types of employer who had been engaged in different Local Authorities. In Neath Port Talbot there had been more success in engaging larger employers than other areas. This was because ELOs had been able to spend more time with large employers navigating their more bureaucratic processes, and overcoming concerns about involvement. In addition, the Council’s Economic Development department had been effectively mobilised to encourage large employers to engage. In other areas, particularly Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, smaller community employers were more commonly engaged.

ELOs had to work flexibly with large employers to get them to engage with the project. This was successful in Neath Port Talbot in the case of Tesco. When first approached, Tesco had been concerned about engaging, because of bad publicity about unpaid work experience, and also because of limits on the number of people they can have on their payroll at any time. In order to overcome this, the ELOs in Neath Port Talbot negotiated a number of TJOs by arranging amended Service Level Agreements whereby the council accepted participants on to the payroll for the period of the TJO. Other than pay, all other rights and responsibilities were the same as other Tesco employees. Staff in other areas agreed that using Service Level Agreements flexibly was a good way of engaging with larger employers.

Some staff from other areas felt that they had not had as much success with larger employers because they did not have the ELO capacity to forge productive relationships with such organisations. Swansea particularly felt that they were limited in this way with one ELO explaining that the majority of employers they engaged with were those who were proactively seeking to be involved with the South West Workways project. Nevertheless, other members of the Swansea team were seeking to actively target expanding companies – in particular through attending events, referrals from mentors, and word of mouth. Conversely, by the second wave of research, Neath PT had found that the increase in number of ELOs from 5 to 10 had allowed them to increase the number of employers they engaged with.

In the first wave of research, in one area, a mentor was concerned that ELOs engaged employers without thinking about the types of work that participants wanted. However, in the same area ELOs reported that it was their aim to be “participant centred.” Clearly there is a need to balance the twin imperatives of engaging employers in sectors where there is participant demand, and engaging employers who need to recruit new staff. On the whole, it appeared that a good balance was struck.

The second wave of research found that there was variation by area in terms of whether the focus was on finding vacancies that suited the needs of participants or finding participants to suit the needs of employers. Pembrokeshire, for example, focused on employers who might have jobs in the areas that participants were looking to work in.

“We tend to look at finding jobs that are relevant to the people we’re working with currently rather than targeting any specific area.” (ELO, Pembrokeshire)

In contrast, Carmarthenshire reported a recent drive to attract any vacancies offered by any type of employer, which, if not suitable for current South West Workways participants, could be fed out to the wider network of the Employer Support Group, whose other members might be able to fill the vacancy. The rationale of this strategy was to focus on supporting employers.

Both waves of research found that the process of engaging employers relied on face-to-face contact, as it was felt that employers could more easily dismiss or ignore phone calls or emails. One ELO reported that he would pop in, explain what South West Workways could offer and discuss whether they had any plans to recruit. An ‘employer pack’ would be left, with leaflets, information and case-studies. The ELO would then revisit the employer to keep up to date and ensure any vacancies were identified. The tendency to favour face-to-face contact with employers was cited as one reason why it was more difficult to engage with larger, national employers, whose recruitment process was online and coordinated from a central office rather than controlled by local staff who could be met face-to-face.

Some employers were sceptical of employing inactive and long-term unemployed participants. ELOs were able to persuade them that participants were keen, as engagement was voluntary, and that only suitable participants (often with suitable training) would be recommended.

"I think the biggest part, the first part, is to let the employer know it is a voluntary project, so people who are looking for... actually are looking for work, it's not something that they're forced to do, so they're not going to be let down... by the candidates that are coming through" (ELO, Neath Port Talbot)

Support for employers

ELOs were able to offer employers a range of support. Both waves of research found that the most important of these was offering help in recruiting. South West Workways would offer to provide suitable candidates to fill vacancies, meaning that employers did not need to expend so much effort to recruit. The second wave of research highlighted that a clear incentive for many employers was the filtering service that ELOs provided when shortlisting candidates for a role. Employers had negative experience of high numbers of unsuitable jobseekers being put forward for roles through Universal Job Match by JCP. South West Workways therefore compared much more favourably because ELOs helped to shortlist candidates and ensured that any participant put forward for a role was suitable, thus saving the employers much of the "leg-work".

Both waves of research found that ensuring that candidates had the necessary training, such as safety certificates, was important to employers, as was highlighting the role of mentors on the South West Workways project, as it demonstrated to employers how participants had overcome any barriers to work and were now work-ready. If the employer was not in the position to recruit, the possibility of a TJO was mentioned.

However, the first wave of research found that in some areas, it appeared that the focus of employer engagement work was finding TJOs as a means for participants to build relationships with employers.

"It's a very useful tool to get your foot in the door with a company. You go in and talk about TJOs and then move on to discuss how you might work with an employer to offer vacancies that are not funded." (ELO, Bridgend)

In contrast, the second wave of research found that TJOs were offered less readily, and generally only to smaller companies as larger companies were not considered to need a TJO. In Bridgend, TJOs had not been offered at all, as discussed further below. Nevertheless, a TJO was still seen as a useful way to engage some employers as it enabled them to 'try before you buy'. If a participant did a TJO, the ELO would

conduct a risk assessment and provide advice about health and safety. It was reported that this support was particularly valued by smaller employers.

The first wave of research found that other support provided to employers included advice about recruitment and training of non-South West Workways participants (if South West Workways was unable to help with recruitment directly), and referrals to other sources of support including the Health and Safety Executive or HMRC. One ELO mentioned providing advice about Sage accounting software, and business insurance.

By the second wave of research, wider business support had become a more significant part of the overall offer to employers. Each South West Workways area chaired an Employer Support Group whose members included local organisations that could offer business and recruitment support, such as Careers Wales, Jobcentre Plus, GO Wales and local groups such as Neath Port Talbot Business Services. These groups met regularly to discuss available support and share information, which allowed ELOs to share information with employers on the types of support available to meet their needs. For example, if an employer needed a grant for new premises, or a potential candidate was eligible for ReAct funding¹⁰, or they had training needs that Skills for Industry¹¹ could help with, the ELO would signpost them to the relevant agency. In Neath Port Talbot, ELOs had also been involved in helping employers to complete paperwork to apply for funding. Employers were reportedly very welcoming of this holistic support, particularly small businesses that generally were not aware of the help that was available to them.

"It's quite openly received...they're not really aware of what's available a lot of the time so by offering that to them and making them aware, I think it's a benefit to them." (ELO, Neath Port Talbot)

"If you say, well, we could get your staff there some training via Skills for Industry, or we can access this many for him because he's just been made redundant you start building up a relationship with them." (ELO, Neath Port Talbot)

Both waves of research found that a key feature of the support offered to employers was that the ELO would make efforts to be proactive in determining employers' needs and providing support where needed quickly and efficiently. This would

¹⁰ ReAct funding is for training for people living in Wales who are facing redundancy, or have already been made redundant in the last 6 months. The funding is provided by the Welsh Government and WEFO.

¹¹ Skills for Industry is a project aimed at the business and voluntary sector organisation of Swansea and South West Wales. It provides funding for the training and upskilling of the region's workforce.

include seeing the employer wherever and whenever was convenient for them, and this accessibility encouraged close working relationships.

Finding vacancies

In both waves of research, the first thing most ELOs did having engaged an employer was to discuss their recruitment plans and offer support in filling vacancies. Despite the recent recession, ELOs found that employers often struggled to fill vacancies and retain staff, and so welcomed this support. Engaging employers often allowed South West Workways to put people forward for jobs before they were publicly advertised. Access to these 'hidden' vacancies was valued by participants. One participant who was looking for jobs in JCP and with South West Workways noted that South West Workways would have jobs that JCP did not.

In both waves of research, an important element of finding vacancies was reported to be knowing where gaps in the labour market were likely to emerge and targeting opportunities. As noted above, ELOs would aim to target companies that wanted to expand their business and would need to recruit. For example in the first wave of research Pembrokeshire South West Workways had been proactive at targeting particular refinery shutdowns, during which additional employment would be created to undertake maintenance and repair work. To ensure that this opportunity could be maximised South West Workways targeted companies who would need to recruit to fill the shutdown vacancies, and liaised with them to determine the skills and safety certification that would be required so that there would be enough time to prepare participants.

The first wave of research found that in Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Neath Port Talbot close working with the Local Authority Economic Development team has led to social clauses being built into Local Authority contracts, and into other economic development work (for example in the building of a new power station in Neath Port Talbot). This ensured that South West Workways participants could benefit from important developments in the Authority and continued in to the second wave of research.

It was noted that when a good relationship had been built up between the ELO and employer, sometimes the employer would trust the ELO to pick participants to start on the job without interviewing them. Ensuring that appropriate participants were selected to fill vacancies was extremely important in maintaining good relationships with employers.

The second wave of research found that there had been a move towards sharing any vacancies sourced by ELOs with other members of the local Employer Support Groups, so that they might be able to find suitable candidates to fill the role if South

West Workways could not. Vacancies tended to only be shared once South West Workways had checked that they did not have a suitable participant for the role. There were views that this was a work in progress however, for example in Pembrokeshire there was a perception that other areas were sharing vacancies more quickly with other members of the ESG than they were in Pembrokeshire. In Neath Port Talbot all vacancies were shared across the ESG as a matter of course. It was felt that by sharing vacancies more readily it would encourage trust and partnership working between agencies which would bring strategic value.

Temporary Job Opportunities

Particularly in the first wave of research, ELOs considered a large part of their role was to source and manage Temporary Job Opportunities (TJOs) – which are subsidised, temporary jobs paying the National Minimum Wage. TJOs are required to be additional jobs (i.e. that would not have been created without the additional funding) and to be targeted at disadvantaged people.

TJO participants and outcomes

In total, 1,566 South West Workways participants (12.7% of project participants) had taken part in a TJO by the start of September 2014, across 658 different workplaces. At the time of the first phase of the South West Workways evaluation (June 2012), this figure was 15.6% of participants. This is confirmed when looking at the number of TJOs started by year, shown in Table 2, which has fallen each year from a peak of 446 in 2011.

Table 2: Starts in Temporary Job Opportunities, 2009-2014

| Year | Number of TJOs started |
|------|------------------------|
| 2009 | 63 |
| 2010 | 343 |
| 2011 | 446 |
| 2012 | 369 |
| 2013 | 274 |
| 2014 | 71 |

Analysis of project management information suggests that in practice, participants who have taken TJOs have not faced any greater or fewer barriers to work i.e. long-term worklessness; low or no qualifications; caring responsibility; and disability or

health condition than those who have not taken these opportunities. However, the wave one survey found that those who had been on a TJO were slightly more likely to cite low confidence as a barrier to employment than those who had not been on a TJO.

In one area it was noted that earlier in the project filling TJOs was more target-driven, so that ELOs were keen to hit their targets of number of people on TJOs and were less careful about targeting those furthest from the labour market, or ensuring that there was likely to be unsupported employment at the end of the TJO. However, when fieldwork was conducted, in all areas there was a notable focus on working with the employer and the participant to ensure that temporary opportunities would lead to permanent employment.

The first evaluation report recommended that project teams kept under review how TJOs were used to ensure that they were targeted at those furthest from work but that they are also deployed flexibly for employers and participants.

By the second wave of research this recommendation had been implemented, A marked shift in focus was identified, as TJOs were not offered to employers as readily as in the earlier stages of the project. Only when it was perceived that a specific participant could significantly benefit from a TJO was one provided, so that it was based on participant needs rather than being an automatic offer to employers, or a reaction to a request from an employer. This meant that when TJOs were used they were more efficient and targeted.

"If you don't have a participant who needs a TJO, then you don't have to offer it, just because the employer wants a TJO filled." (ELO, Swansea)

This shift was due to an increased focus on the aim of South West Workways being to find sustainable vacancies for participants, which did not necessarily require a TJO. Mentors kept a list of participants who they deemed to be suitable for TJOs, and provided this to ELOs, who could offer only those participants on the list to employers who wanted a TJO. Mentors explained that the type of participant who would benefit from a TJO were generally those who had shown effort in job searching, had worked with mentors to overcome the barriers they faced to work, and were otherwise work-ready in a supported environment except for perhaps a lack of confidence or relevant experience in the area of work. A TJO was considered suitable for such participants as it could provide them with the necessary experience and confidence to secure a permanent role.

To ensure that TJOs were not subsidising employment that would have happened anyway, in the first wave of research ELOs reported always checking that the vacancy had not been advertised anywhere else. Nevertheless, it was felt by some

staff that that large employers should be recruiting staff into unsubsidised jobs rather than using TJOs. By the second wave of research some areas some ELOs reported that they no longer offered larger, national companies a TJO as it was felt that they could afford to offer permanent roles without needing a TJO first. An exception to this was Neath PT where Tesco had been a successful TJO employer, as many participants on TJOs with Tesco had moved in to permanent roles when a new store opened. In addition, in Pembrokeshire an ELO had managed to get agreement from the manager in a new Debenhams store to take Workways CVs for the first time, in spite of a centralised, online recruitment process.

These attempts seem to have been successful; across the duration of the South West Workways project, 63% of people who experienced a TJO went into employment, compared to 38% of those participants who did not. Given that TJOs have been offered to people at various distances from the labour market, management information also strongly suggests that TJOs are a helpful means of participants progressing into paid employment.

TJOs in different Local Authority areas

The first wave of research found that TJOs developed in different ways in different areas – in particular, reflecting different “Intermediate Labour Market” projects that previously existed in Swansea and in Neath Port Talbot. The main differences were related to the length of TJO and payment arrangements.

In Swansea, TJOs were originally designed to last 50 weeks, compared to 26 weeks in other areas. In all areas, there was originally a 16-week period before participants could be put forward for a TJO, with the rationale being that they needed to receive support to become ‘job-ready.’

In Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, TJOs were used increasingly flexibly. First, the length of TJOs could be shorter or, in some cases, longer than six months, with some lasting for as little as eight weeks. In addition, while the expectation was that participants would not be referred to TJOs until they had been on South West Workways for 16 weeks, mentors in practice had the flexibility to discuss and refer participants for TJOs from the start of their time on the project, where this was considered appropriate.¹² Staff felt that being able to offer

¹² The 16 week guideline was revised to take into consideration that, although in the majority of cases there was a necessity to work with participants for 16 weeks to ensure all options had been considered and all barriers addressed, as staff experience grew and participant engagement varied, some participants would be suited to a TJO at an earlier stage. The 16 week guideline was included early on in delivery based on previous project experience where participants were supported for an

TJOs flexibly had worked well. (In Swansea, at the time of the case study visit, there was less evidence that participants could access TJOs before being on the project for 13 weeks.)

One area reported that the turning point for them was when the Work Programme was introduced – suddenly the profile of individuals they were working with changed, and they were on average much closer to the labour market than they previously had been. They then began offering shorter TJOs because participants were closer to the labour market.

The second wave of research found that as the project had progressed ELOs had become more selective about which employers they approached regarding TJO's It was explained that ELOs had been reactive to employers' requests for a TJO in the earlier stages of the project, whereas over time, they had learnt that they only needed to offer a TJO if the employer and participant particularly needed one, as the focus of the project was on sustainable employment. Where TJOs were offered, they were generally shorter than they had been in the earlier stages of the project. Experience had shown that shorter, 13 week TJOs gave better outcomes than longer, 26 week placements, so the extra time was seen as unnecessary for the participant to demonstrate their suitability to the employer. By the later stages of the project therefore, TJOs in all areas ran for a maximum of 18 weeks, with the ideal minimum term perceived to be around 8 weeks. However there were cases of TJOs as short as 3 weeks, which was all that the employer and participant felt they needed in order to have the confidence to move into a permanent role. It was felt that shorter TJOs prompted the employer to invest more in the participant at an earlier stage.

"Employers know then that they don't just have an endless supply of funding, they think more carefully about who they choose and invest their time at the front end, rather than waiting for 13 weeks to pass, and only then starting to invest their time and energy in that person" (Project Manager, Carmarthenshire)

Bridgend was an anomaly in that they did not offer TJOs. This was because delays in the signing of the service level agreement with the Local Authority meant the team did not have a finance officer to process the paperwork and ELOs were not trained in health and safety assessments of employer sites. Neath PT had provided them with resource temporarily, but on the whole TJOs were not yet a feature of the Bridgend South West Workways offer.

average of 16 weeks prior to being offered a TJO. The 16 weeks also fell in line with Flexible New Deal where at this point they would be referred to a New Deal option.

At the time of the second wave of case study visits, all areas were finding it increasingly difficult to offer TJOs because they were nearing the end of the project funding period and there was insufficient time for a TJO to run. In Swansea, South West Workways were offering work trials, whereby the participant worked for free for an employer for a few days to a week, with the hope that this would lead to an offer of permanent work, and this was reported to have been effective.

By the second wave of research there was no fixed time period that the participant had to be on the South West Workways project before they could be offered a TJO. Instead, to be eligible for a TJO participants had to fulfil certain criteria, which included fulfilling the Workways definition of 'work-ready', showing motivation by attending job search sessions regularly, and completing the first Rickter Assessment. If those criteria were fulfilled in a shorter space of time, a participant could be put on a TJO in as little as 6 weeks.

Earlier in the project, participants in most areas (Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire) were paid directly through the employer and the South West Workways team would refund the wages. However in Swansea, South West Workways participants were paid through the council. Swansea staff felt that this arrangement meant that the expectations on employers offering TJOs were not always clear and that participants did not always feel part of the workplace. The first evaluation report recommended that employers should pay participants on TJOs directly. By the later stages of the project Swansea had joined other areas in moving payroll over to the employer, with South West Workways refunding the wages.

The second wave of research found that as the project progressed, it became uniform across all areas that the employer paid the wages of a TJO placement which were refunded by the South West Workways team. The point of this was to ensure that South West Workways participants were paid and treated the same as other members of staff. South West Workways staff reported that this arrangement helped participants to feel more attached to their workplace because they enjoyed the same rights and benefits as other employees, as well as meaning the employer has showed some commitment to the participant. Being formally enrolled on the employer's payroll also assisted employers in setting expectations.

In Pembrokeshire, match funding arrangements were more complicated than elsewhere. As in Neath Port Talbot and Carmarthenshire, the employer initially paid the participant and then invoiced South West Workways to recover the money. In Pembrokeshire, South West Workways then invoiced the employer for £30 for match funding element of the project. This was needed because two sets of accounts were required, but some employers had not paid and it was felt that the process was unnecessarily complicated and time-consuming.

Engagement with participants on TJOs

Both waves of research found that once a participant started a TJO, the ELO would always keep in touch with the employer and the participant at least once a month, and more frequently on shorter TJOs. The objective of this engagement was primarily to try to secure permanent employment for the participant, as well as to support them with addressing outstanding barriers. Moreover, this allowed the ELO to ensure that the employer was providing valuable work experience as laid out in the SLA, rather than just making the participant perform menial tasks. The first wave of research found that Neath Port Talbot in particular had a formalised process for monitoring sustainment beyond the agreed length of the TJO using a traffic light system. Although it wasn't as structured in the other areas, all would refer to job-search activity if there was a chance that the TJO would not be sustained.

The first evaluation report recommended that the project team should review the support given to participants on TJOs, to ensure they have enough support to move into unsupported employment afterwards. By the second wave of research, participants in all areas who were on TJOs would attend job search sessions in case the TJO did not lead to a permanent role. This was agreed with the employer as part of the service level agreement for the TJO.

Responsibilities of mentors and ELOs

In all areas it was found in both waves of research that mentors started working with participants as soon as they were referred to the project. The mentor role was to undertake initial assessments, plan support and assist participants in removing barriers to work. ELOs began supporting participants when they were ready to start looking for work, by providing jobsearch support and liaising with employers. In most areas a crossover in the roles was highlighted, with mentors also doing some of the jobsearch work with participants and ELOs becoming involved with participants before they were put forward for a TJO or permanent role.

The first wave of research found that the point at which the ELO began to work with participants differed between the areas and was dependent on staff capacity and the way that the office(s) were set up to deliver support. Areas where there was a more equal split of ELO and mentor numbers with both teams located in the same office allowed the project to be delivered in a very integrated way with good communication between the teams. This also enabled ELOs to start working with participants at an earlier stage as they worked more closely with mentors and got to know participants in a more informal way. In areas where the mentors outnumbered the ELOs quite considerably, the ELOs were only able to support participants in a more limited way and at a later stage in the participant journey, i.e. when referred

by a mentor for a TJO, and were not able to be involved in job-search sessions with participants.

Nevertheless, in both waves of research staff considered that the split in roles was a key strength of the project, as it allowed mentors to focus on the participant, and the ELO on finding jobs.

The second wave of the research found that over time, the ELO and mentor roles had become increasingly defined as separate roles as staffing levels improved. Moreover, as the project progressed ELOs were monitored against the number of vacancies sourced, the number of sites visited per week and the number of vacancies filled, which further defined their role as distinct from that of mentors. Nevertheless there remained specific points in the participant journey at which ELOs and mentors would work together with a participant.

ELOs continued to meet participants during weekly job search sessions that they co-ran with mentors. Here, ELOs would get to know participants, sometimes carrying out mock interviews and helping with CV-writing. ELOs found this to be a useful way to get to know participants so that when they approached employers they had a good understanding of which participants might be suitable for a role. This in turn aided ELO's relationship with employers as it allowed them to demonstrate a sound understanding of potential candidates. Additionally, there was a view that introducing the ELO early in the process would provide the participant with added motivation as it showed them the support they had from the ELO as well as the mentor. ELOs and mentors also worked together to arrange 3-way meetings between themselves and a work-ready participant so that the ELO could get to know the participant and put them forward for a job with an employer.

The first evaluation report recommended that there should not be considerably more mentors than ELOs in project teams. In the main this recommendation was met. In wave two the link between ELOs and mentors continued to work better in areas where there were more equal staff numbers in each role, or where there was a small team. For example, in Bridgend, communication between ELOs and mentors was felt to work well because there were only had 2 mentors and 2 ELOs so it was easier for them to be aware of each other's caseloads through more informal communication. In Swansea however, where there were 2 ELOs and 8 mentors, it was more difficult for ELOs to have thorough knowledge of the mentors' caseloads. The process of finding a suitable participant for a vacancy was therefore less systematic. In instances where a suitable participant needed to be found at short notice and mentors were out of the office, ELOs could resort to working through lists of participants pulled from a search on the database, phoning each participant themselves rather than working with mentors to find someone suitable for a role. Alternatively, the Link Coordinator would help to find suitable participants by running

searches on the database. Many areas developed a system of highlighting the participant that each mentor considered to be the most work-ready, for example by writing their names on a whiteboard in the office, to highlight to ELOs.

In the second wave of research it was identified that there could be differences of opinion between ELOs' and mentors' in terms of which participants were work-ready. ELOs felt that as mentors work with participants from the beginning of their journey and see their progress, they were likely to perceive them as work-ready sooner than ELOs would, who viewed the participant from an employer's perspective. This led mentors in some areas to express frustration that ELOs were not putting participants who the mentors deemed to be work ready forward for jobs or TJOs. This issue was addressed by weekly caseload review meetings held between ELOs and mentors which helped to improve ELO's knowledge of each participant. The meetings provided a space for mentors and ELOs to discuss each participant and for mentors to respond to any ELOs' concerns that a participant was not work-ready. This was thought to be effective in preventing ELOs from deciding against placing a participant with an employer because they assumed they were not work ready, and enabled mentors to do further work with a participant if it was deemed to be necessary to address any remaining barriers.

In the second wave of research, both ELOs and mentors had acquired team leaders, in all teams, which was felt to have been a beneficial change for both roles. Team leaders attended regional meetings and fed back any learning and best practice that had been shared to the area teams. This allowed information to be cascaded to teams more efficiently and effectively than in the earlier stages of the project.

Conclusion

Both waves of research found that South West Workways mentors were delivering support in the form building CVs and helping with applications and interviews, job search sessions and building participant's confidence. They were also instrumental in arranging short term employment focused training. There were variations between areas and waves of research in terms of whether the focus was on finding the type of vacancies that participants were looking for or on finding participants that suited the needs of employers.

The ELO and mentor roles had become increasingly defined as separate roles in the second wave of research, which had been facilitated by growing staff numbers in some areas. The link between ELOs and mentors continued to work better in areas where there was a more equal number of staff in each role. Where numbers were particularly uneven, such as Swansea, it made the working relationship between the two teams less effective and efficient. Strategies such as weekly caseload review

meetings between the two teams had been developed in some areas to improve communication and make it a more effective working relationship.

Overall, both waves of research found that TJOs offered vital work experience and unique opportunities to participants who could benefit from them. TJOs have been arranged for participants at various distances from the labour market, and have proved very beneficial in terms of securing paid employment, with 63% of those who went on a TJO subsequently finding work, compared to 38% who did not.

The increasing flexibility and selectivity with which TJOs were provided over time allowed them to be more targeted, efficient and effective in engaging with a wider pool of potential employers and participants. In the second wave of research, providing shorter TJOs was considered to allow for a greater focus on sustainable employment. At the time of research, the impending deadline of South West Workways funding had caused TJOs in some areas to be drastically shortened while other areas were no longer able to provide TJOs at all.

A key change in the second wave of research was that a broader range of more holistic support was now being offered to employers through contacts in each area's employer support group. There had also been a move towards sharing vacancies sourced by ELOs with other members of the ESGs, although this had been embraced more readily in some areas than others.

Experiences of South West Workways

From employers

Feedback from employers was strong in both waves of research. All reported that they had had positive experiences of engaging with South West Workways. They considered that the support from ELOs had been high quality and effective – supporting them in the recruitment of participants to posts, supporting them in work, and accessing and delivering in-work training and support. One employer reported that it was refreshing that the ELO approached them to say “this is what we can offer you,” rather than asking for help. Another employer described their ELO as “terrifically supportive” because they were able to give time to the employer, were flexible, and were quick to answer questions.

“Very supportive, very professional, and they’re always at the end of the phone, and supportive of both the employer and the employees.” (Employer, Carmarthenshire)

Comparisons with other public sector organisations were positive. In the first wave of research, one employer had once tried to access a grant through the Welsh Government to help recruit and up-skill staff, but found it a “nightmare of paperwork.” Engaging with South West Workways was easier because the ELO guided them through the paperwork and made the employer feel that “they’re on your side,” which made them more engaged. Another said that previously they had tried to fill vacancies with JCP, but South West Workways staff were more attuned to their needs and more proactive in providing support. This experience was echoed in the second wave of research, by which time many employers had had experience of advertising a role through JCP which had elicited a high numbers of applicants, many of whom were unsuitable or did not appear to genuinely want to work. In contrast, South West Workways ELOs helped employers to shortlist candidates and could be relied upon to only put forward candidates who were suitable for the role and wanted to work.

“We can talk to [the ELO] about the type of person we want, and explain to them why we want this or that type of person, and then they can weed out the ones that aren’t suitable for even coming to us for interview.” (Employer, Swansea)

The second wave of research found that another perceived advantage of South West Workways over other recruitment support was that ELOs had met and got to know participants and their personal circumstances, so that their understanding of each candidate could be passed on to the employer. This in turn meant that the overall

suitability of candidates put forward by South West Workways was higher than those from other schemes.

"The people that we did pick, the ELO had actually, she knew them, like personally. Which was a big help to us." (Employer, Pembrokeshire)

"It's a lot easier if they say to you right you know I've matched this one up, I think she would be ideal to work with you" (Employer, Bridgend)

Similarly, the ELO's knowledge and understanding of the employer's business was more in depth than that of other schemes because the ELOs visited the site to find out how the business worked and what their needs were. A further benefit of South West Workways was the support provided to participants while on a TJO, which other schemes did not provide. For example, one employer had taken people on placements through Jobs Growth Wales, which, even though the funded placement was longer at 6 months, did not support the person in the temporary role, which was seen as a disadvantage to the employer.

In both waves of research, most of the employers interviewed had offered TJOs. All considered that this had enabled them to expand their workforces and create additional jobs, and where appropriate to "trial" participants who may become suitable for existing opportunities.

"It's a wonderful way to try someone out." (Employer, Pembrokeshire)

Employers also saw TJOs as being greatly beneficial for the participant, as it improved their confidence and gave them valuable experience of the work place, even if it did not lead to a permanent role with the same employer.

"It's absolutely right for them because it shows that they're prepared to work by actually taking up something and the experience they gain. It goes on their CVs and they've got extra chances of references through whoever they've been with" (Employer, Carmarthenshire)

The ability of South West Workways to provide suitably trained/accredited staff was very important to employers. One employer interviewed in wave 1 of the research went as far as to describe South West Workways as "a training programme." In the second wave of research employers still valued the training that South West Workways had provided participants, either before applying for a job or while on a TJO. Employers also valued support with recruiting staff. One employer needed to recruit around 20 people at short notice, and the employer was able to fill most vacancies through South West Workways because South West Workways had such a good understanding of the type of candidate that was needed.

"I'm trying to create a job where we can grow and earn money and all be comfortable but there's only me...so any way that I feel if I've got a problem it can be sorted, they know my business, they know from past experience the people that I want and that I don't want, so the people coming through the door now are pretty much 9 times out of 10 going to be successful" (Employer, Neath Port Talbot)

The second wave of research found that the ELO's understanding of the type of personality and attitude the employer was looking for in a candidate was particularly valued by smaller businesses, as this was something they could not specify in a job specification and yet was a crucial factor in finding someone who would fit with the company culture.

"The law says this is the criteria, and if the person matches that criteria, then that's the person I should employ. But from my experience, just because that person fits that criteria doesn't mean A, they can do the job, or B, they are suitable for the job...When [the South West Workways participant] walked in, yes, she had computer skills, she had customer service skills, which was what we were looking for, but her as a person, she was bright sunny nature, easy to get on with, and quick to learn. And eager to work, as well." (Employer, Swansea)

In the second wave of research, employers typically expected the same standards from a TJO candidate as they would expect from someone they were interviewing for a permanent role. Nevertheless, a minority of employers said they would not have offered a job to certain individuals who were taken on TJOs had they been interviewing them for a normal, permanent role, because they did not perceive the candidate to be job-ready; for example they did not have the confidence or training required for the role. However, the TJO had allowed the employer to give the participant a chance that they would not otherwise have been able to provide, and consequently the participant proved their ability (and perhaps gained the necessary training through South West Workways while on a TJO placement) and went on to be offered a permanent role. This suggests that in some cases TJOs were effective in helping those further from the labour market, who might not otherwise have been offered a position, to gain employment.

One area of frustration for employers was the short-term nature of South West Workways funding which had meant that they could not take participants on TJOs in the later stages of the project.

Areas for improvement

Employers in the second wave of research discussed some areas for potential improvement. None of the employers interviewed had received wider business support other than help with recruitment. However, some had been made aware of

wider support available but had not felt that they needed it, and this was not identified as an issue for employers.

Other areas for improvement centred around what were perceived as teething problems with Bridgend South West Workways as the youngest South West Workways scheme. There were reports from employers in Bridgend that they had been sent CVs of unsuitable candidates, or even that unsuitable candidates had been sent for interviews for a role. For example, someone who could not drive was put forward for a role that required a driving licence. One employer in Bridgend reported that the personal description section of CVs received from South West Workways were identical on each CV, which suggested they had been written according to a template rather than being adapted to fit the individual applicant. However, these aspects of South West Workways support were reported to have improved over time as the project gained experience.

From partner organisations

The partner organisations interviewed had engaged with South West Workways either as a result of partnership engagement activity conducted by mentors or through the Engagement Providers Group. They engaged with South West Workways in order to access employment support for their clients which they themselves were not able to offer. Most had experience of referring to South West Workways but not of having had South West Workways clients referred to them.

All partners could see the benefits of working with South West Workways and other organisations to provide the best possible service and outcomes for clients. Where partners did not offer employment support they felt that the relationship was complimentary and their clients often undertook Workways' specialist support alongside wider support from the partner.

Where the partner also undertook employment support, they tended to access South West Workways only when the customer had a need that the partner could not meet themselves, again the benefit was in delivering the best outcome for the customer.

"We also run [family days and information days] and invite Workways to come along and have a stall there...It's great, it's working together.. well it benefits the clients, the people who attend can have a chat with us, chat with Workways, chat with Remploy, Community first, Shaw Trust, Want to work, everyone." (Partner, Swansea)

The main selling point of South West Workways support for partners was the level of one-to-one personalised support that the project is able to offer to its participants. It was mentioned a number of times that South West Workways offers its customers

one-to-one support where other programmes can only do group support. The Temporary Job Opportunities were mentioned by a few partners as a positive element of the project

Areas for improvement

A small number of partners mentioned that the uncertainty surrounding funding for the continuation of South West Workways had made it difficult to know whether they could continue to refer to them. This was perceived to have affected South West Workways ability to offer TJOs and to meet with clients face to face. One partner would like to have seen greater ethnic diversity amongst South West Workways staff members to reflect the communities that they are working with.

From participants

Feedback from participants was very positive in both waves of research.

Participant experiences of mentors and ELOs

Participants in both waves of research highlighted high quality personal support from Mentors and ELOs, which for many was in contrast to their experience in other employability projects. In particular it was felt that mentors took a more holistic approach to identifying barriers and then supporting participants to overcome them.

In both waves of research pastoral support was noted as being very helpful. One participant was very frustrated and upset at a setback she had suffered, and her mentor helped her calm down and refocus. She noted that they were “on your side” and that it was important that she felt they were genuinely interested in her; “there’s light behind their eyes.” The flexible and participant-centred approach taken by mentors was seen as a key strength of South West Workways support. It was noted that mentors did not push participants too hard, as this could be counterproductive. One participant in the second wave of research appreciated that his mentor recognised the limitations on what type of work he could do due to an injury he had sustained that had left him with a disability. He was grateful that the mentor listened to his needs and did not push him in to roles that were unsuitable and therefore unsustainable.

“South West Workways they actually sat down with me and they asked me, what were my limitations, what did I find difficult when I was working, and that was the first time somebody had actually asked me...they would actually listen to me and say ok, you need to avoid this kind of work...they’re not trying to shoehorn you or corner you in to something that isn’t right, they take each case individually and tailor it to suit yourself” (Participant, Pembrokeshire)

However more pressure was applied towards the end of TJOs as participants neared the end of their involvement with the project, or when mentors felt it would be beneficial for participants. Overall, participants reported a *"supportive, relaxed atmosphere,"* which overcame thoughts that South West Workways was *"just another programme."* (Participant, Neath Port Talbot)

"You can have a cup of tea with them, it's more welcoming, like a drop in centre"
(Participant, Carmarthenshire)

"They're always there if we need them, they're at the end of the phone...they help as much as they can...and they listen to you" (Participant, Bridgend)

Mentors were perceived to be able and willing to spend as much time with participants as they needed, as often and whenever they needed. For example, one participant in the second wave of research spoke to her mentor several times a week over the phone. In both waves of research, this flexibility and availability of support was contrasted with that received from other organisations such as JCP, where advisors were not able to be as generous and flexible with their time.

In general, feedback in both waves of research on the additional support available was good – which included support with writing CVs and cover letters, interview techniques, filling in application forms, ensuring they were receiving all the benefits they were entitled to and applying for tax credits, finding childcare, accessing training and addressing specific needs. In addition, in Carmarthenshire participants noted that mentors had arranged for external speakers, including a CAB adviser.

In the second wave of research, participants reported that mentors had widened the scope of jobs they felt confident to apply for, as they helped participants to recognise their transferrable skills and look outside of their typical area of work. This had helped some participants gain work experience after a long gap out of work, and others to realise what skills they already had. For example, one participant who had left her job in the sewing industry to care for her husband was encouraged to apply for a job in the care sector after her mentor highlighted the care skills she had demonstrated in her personal life.

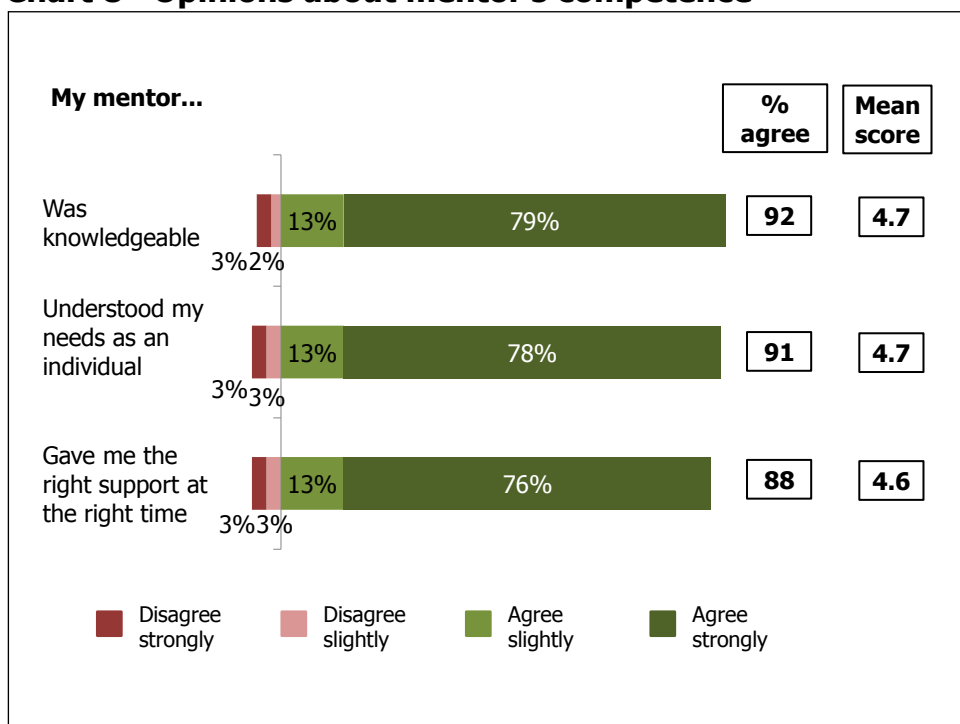
"Since changing my CV around, I'm getting loads of interviews and stuff like that."
(Participant, Bridgend)

Participants in the second wave of research also reported positive experiences of receiving support from ELOs before applying for a TJO or a vacancy. Hearing about links that the ELOs were making with employers gave participants hope about potential job opportunities, and 3-way meetings with their mentor and ELO played a similar role of focussing participants on the type of job they could aim for at an earlier stage.

"If you can't get your foot through the door to talk to somebody, you can't get anywhere, and South West Workways have that ability to talk to people the way we can't." (Participant, Pembrokeshire)

Mirroring the qualitative findings, feedback in the participant survey was also very positive about mentors. Participants were asked to say how far they agreed to a number of statements relating to their mentor's competence, with a score of 1 being disagree strongly, and 5 being agree strongly. Around 90% of participants reported that their mentor was knowledgeable, understood their needs as an individual, and gave them the right support at the right time. It was striking that nearly 80% of respondents agreed strongly to all of these statements.

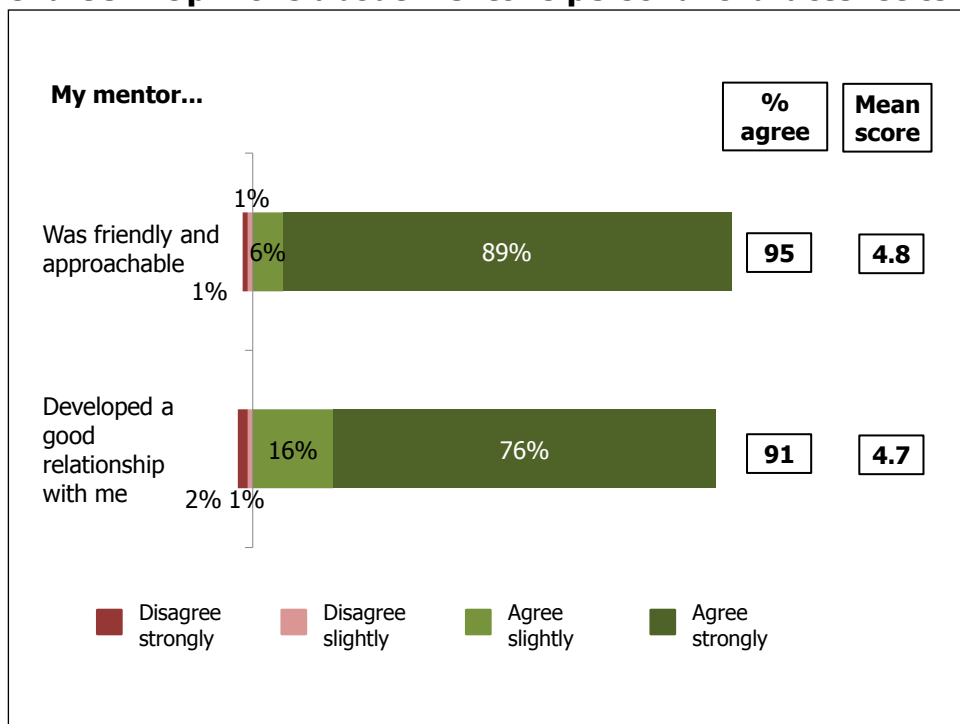
Chart 8 –Opinions about mentor's competence



Source: Survey of participants. Base: all (721) NB. Excludes 'don't know' responses

In addition, there were very high levels of agreement about the mentor's personal characteristics, with nine-in-ten strongly agreeing that their mentor was friendly and approachable, and only 2% disagreeing.

Chart 9 – Opinions about mentor’s personal characteristics



Source: Survey of participants. Base: all (721)

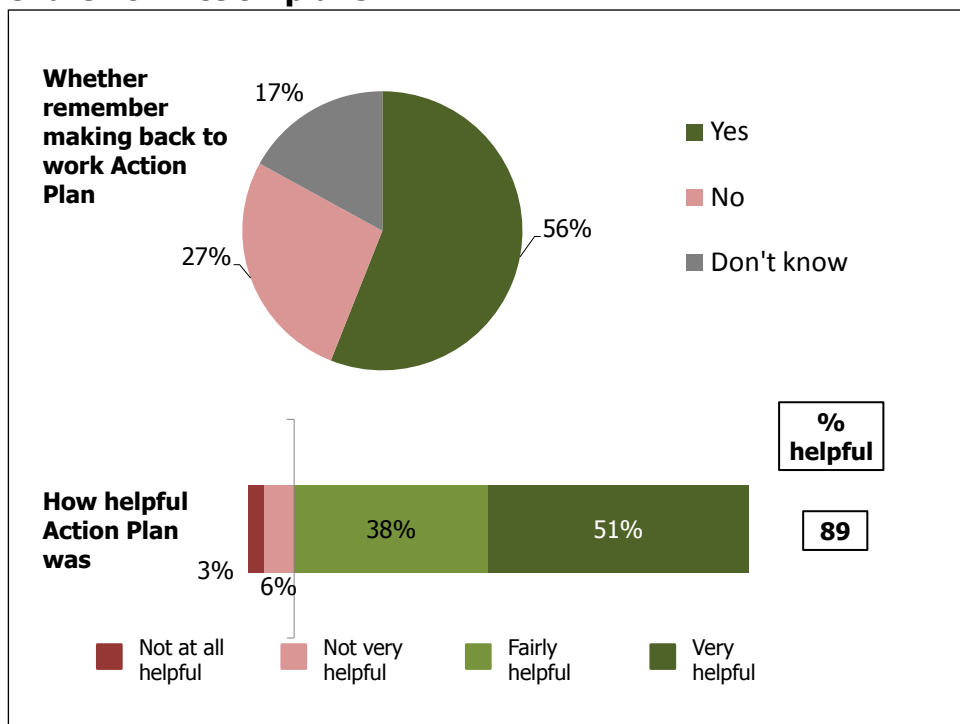
Agreement with these five statements tended to be higher among a number of groups, particularly:

- those with lower qualification levels;
- younger respondents;
- those who had been longer out of work; and
- those who entered work or had done a TJO.

Action plans and Rickter Assessments

Respondents were asked about how support was planned. Just over half remembered making some sort of plan. This is lower than may be expected, but appears to confirm mentors’ feedback that these plans were only be made formally if they thought it would be beneficial for the participant. The targeting of action plans seemed to be working, as nearly nine-in-ten of those who remembered making one found it useful.

Chart 10 –Action plans



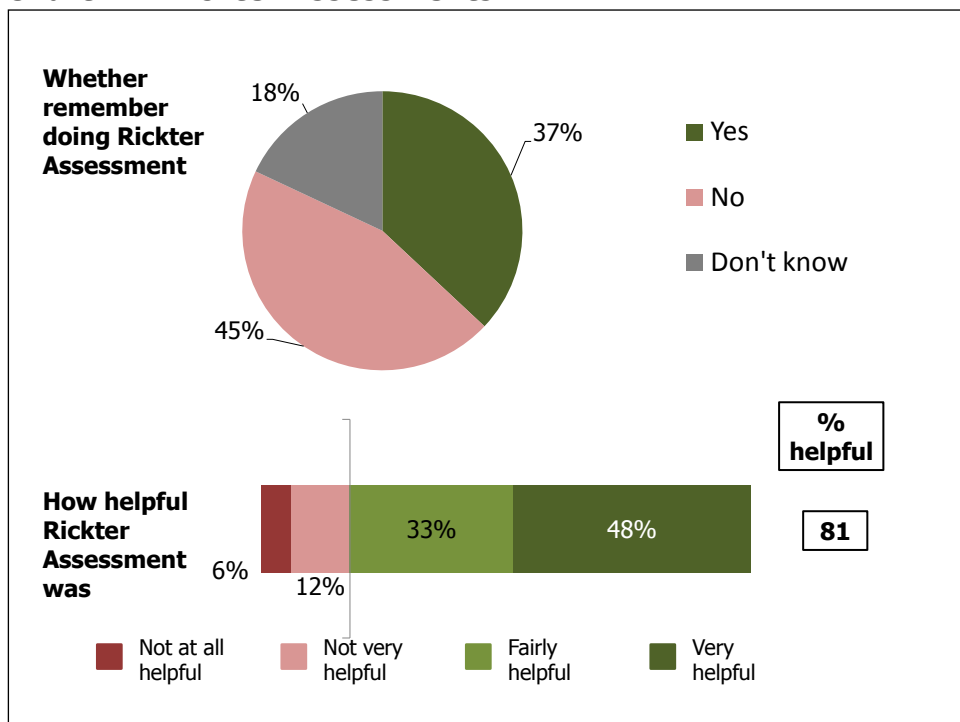
Source: Survey of participants. Base: all (721); those who did plan (404)

Fewer respondents (37%) remembered conducting a Rickter Assessment. Older participants, those who had been out of work for longer periods of time and those with higher level qualifications were more likely to recall having conducted one, whilst only 20% of those in Pembrokeshire recalled having done so.

Moreover, Rickter Assessments were considered less useful than Action Plans with 18% finding them not very or not at all helpful. Nevertheless, 81% of those who recalled conducting one found it useful, suggesting that most participants did get something helpful from the process.

The first evaluation report recommended that the project review how Rickter Assessments were used to baseline and measure progress. An internal review was undertaken by the project team which led to some re-training on the purpose and use of such assessments.

Chart 11–Rickter Assessments



Source: Survey of participants. Base: all (721); those who did assessment (276)

Respondents also felt that meetings with South West Workways staff were held at a location at which they felt comfortable; 95% agreed that this was the case, with only 2% disagreeing.

Participant experiences of TJOs

In both waves of research, most of those who had taken part in TJOs gave positive feedback on the experience – TJOs had increased their confidence, got them back into a routine and given them valuable work experience. Mirroring the survey findings discussed below, in the second wave of research TJOs had generally been in areas of work that participants wanted to be in permanently or wanted to try out, which for some was a new area of work that they had not considered before. For example, one participant in Swansea previously had a career in nursing but did a TJO in an administration role which she enjoyed and which led to a permanent role. She felt the TJO had given her the confidence to enter a new area of work that she would otherwise not have considered.

In the second wave of research participants generally felt they had been adequately supported by the ELO before and during the TJO, and that their employer had given them sufficient support and training during the TJO to continue in the role when the TJO finished, which also echoes the survey findings discussed below. Support from the ELO comprised regular meetings, usually on a monthly basis, where the ELO would discuss with the participant and the employer how the TJO was going and any

issues that needed to be resolved. Participants also felt they were able to speak to the ELO privately if they wanted to, and could contact them at any point to do so, outside of the regular meetings with the employer. The exception to these positive experiences was that of one participant who felt that his ELO had not been realistic about the chances of his TJO continuing in to a permanent role. While the employer had said throughout the TJO that he would only be able to offer a permanent role at the end if the company won a new contract, the ELO did not seem to acknowledge the risk that they would not win the contract and prepare for the eventuality that there was no permanent role available at the end of the TJO. Consequently, when the employer did not have enough work to offer a permanent role at the end of the TJO the participant was disappointed and disengaged from the South West Workways project for a period of time. This participant had also not been offered a chance to speak to the ELO privately, as all communication was in the presence of the employer. However he acknowledged that he could have initiated one to one contact with the ELO himself.

TJOs were seen as an ideal opportunity for both the employer and the participant to find out if they were happy with the arrangement before making a permanent commitment.

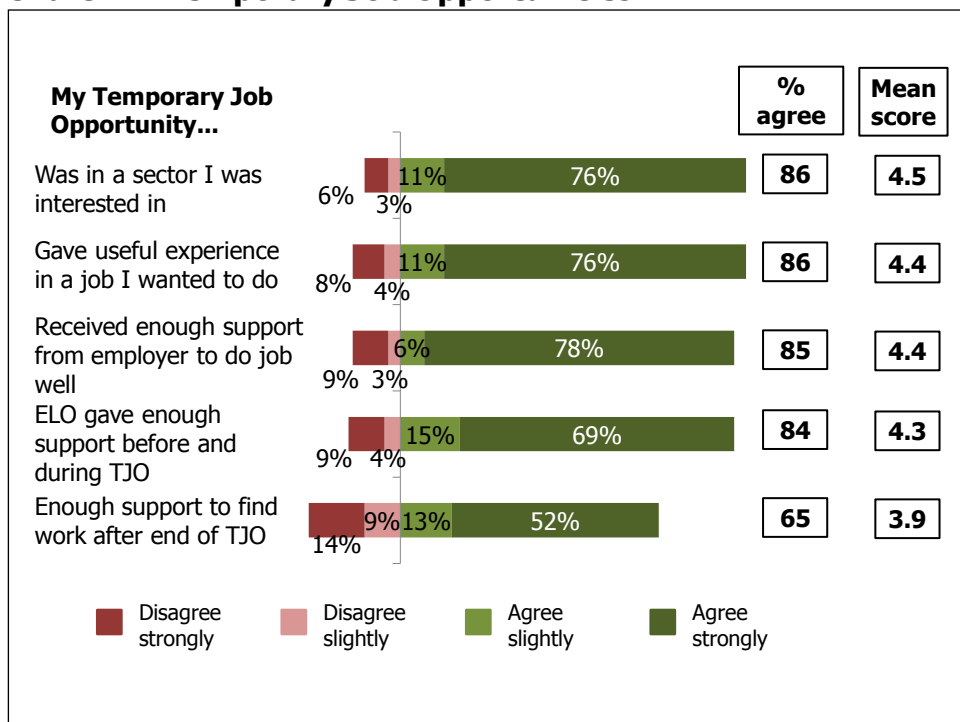
"[A TJO] is really good, I think, because you get to know if you like the job, if they like you, and I think it's marvellous." (Participant, Swansea)

While most of those who had done a TJO had continued in to a permanent role with the employer once it ended, those who had not nevertheless appreciated the work experience they had gained on the TJO. The experience was useful to add to their CV and had taught them what they did not want to do as much as what they did want to do, so was still beneficial in helping them to find a new, sustainable role more quickly.

"I have learnt something from the fact that I've never worked inside a building, a factory environment before, and it's probably something I will never do again. I'm an outdoor person. I mean, I don't mind working in the workshop, but being in a factory environment where you've just got four walls, a skylight [unclear] it's not an environment I can work in again...yes, it was a valuable lesson for me as well." (Participant, Pembrokeshire)

Survey responses about TJOs were also very positive. Participants were asked how far they agreed with a number of statements about their TJO, with a score of 1 being disagree strongly, and 5 being agree strongly. Around 85% of respondents agreed to most statements. TJO so would not have required further support to find work.

Chart 12–Temporary Job Opportunities



Source: Survey of participants. Base: all (721); those who did assessment (175)

Areas for improvement

There were some areas identified by participants where the project could be improved. While mentors’ holistic approach was welcomed, in the first wave of research some participants interviewed highlighted that mentors could have been more focused on supporting them to search and apply for jobs earlier. A minority also said that more advice about different careers would have been valued. It was also felt that South West Workways could be better promoted, and in Pembrokeshire it was noted that the information about Workways online did not make clear what the service actually was. This view was echoed in the second wave of research:

"When I looked at the website, I didn't think the website was that useful, it was not really an overview, it didn't seem to have much relevance to what they actually do, it seemed quite far removed." (Participant, Neath PT)

In wave 1 research, participants in more than one area noted in interviews that the support they received was not tailored to their career aspirations (although this was not reflected in the survey data). Whilst this was a minority view, it was mentioned in a number of different circumstances. Two participants, while overall having positive experiences of the project, noted that they had previously built skills in particular sectors in which there was employment in their area, but South West Workways staff encouraged them to seek unskilled labour that they did not want to do, including TJOs. One participant valued the work experience and the generic

workplace skills provided by the TJO even though the sector was not relevant to his career aspirations, whilst the other felt it was inappropriate. Other participants felt that mentors did not understand the sectors in which they wanted to work, particularly where the jobs were professional or specialised. These issues were not raised in the second wave of research, although participants involved in the research were generally not looking for particularly specialised or professional roles.

Some participants in the first wave of research in Swansea also felt that the project could be more flexible – some said that they were “desperate” to work and did not want to have to wait for long periods before being able to access TJOs. Those participants felt that the purpose of this wait was so that they could “prove” that they were reliable enough to take up the opportunity, rather than it being to allow time to address barriers or find unsubsidised work. For those who did take up TJOs, some said that they felt that they lost access to their Mentor. In Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire on the other hand, participants considered that the additional flexibility on TJOs was welcome. Many also said that they continued to stay in touch with their Mentors in work, and that there was good communication between mentors and ELOs.

The issue of inflexibility did not arise in discussions with participants in the second wave of research. One participant had waited 4 months before starting a TJO but thought that was reasonable as she felt that the mentor needed to get to know her first. Rather, the key frustration with TJOs in the later stages of the research was that they were either not available at all to some participants (particularly those in Bridgend) or only available for very short periods of time, due to the imminent end of South West Workways funding. Participants understood this problem to be out of the hands of the mentors they worked with, but wished funding could be longer-term to make the project more secure and TJOs more meaningful. One other issue with TJOs in the second wave of the research was that participants had to attend job search sessions every fortnight, which meant leaving work for those who worked full time. This was frustrating for participants who felt they could just as easily search for jobs at home, and that leaving the workplace once every fortnight impeded their ability to demonstrate their reliability to the employer. However it is useful to note that wider evidence emphasises the importance of supporting individuals on work placements to seek alternative work (where they are not likely to be kept on permanently by an employer). Therefore it is reasonable for South West Workways to want to monitor job search activity to ensure that it takes place.

In addition, in the first wave of the research Rickter Assessments were highlighted in some cases as an area for improvement. Many participants in focus groups seemed to consider that they added little value in identifying barriers, and most did not recognise that they were being used to measure progress. Nevertheless, a minority of participants did say that it motivated them when the Assessment demonstrated

the progress they had made. In addition some participants could not recall having had assessments themselves.

Overall satisfaction with South West Workways

Overall, participants were positive in their assessments of the project, with many participants, particularly those in the second wave of research, being extremely positive, and this was reflected in survey findings. Most participants described that the benefits of participation had exceeded their expectations, and that South West Workways had been a more beneficial experience than other employment support they had received.

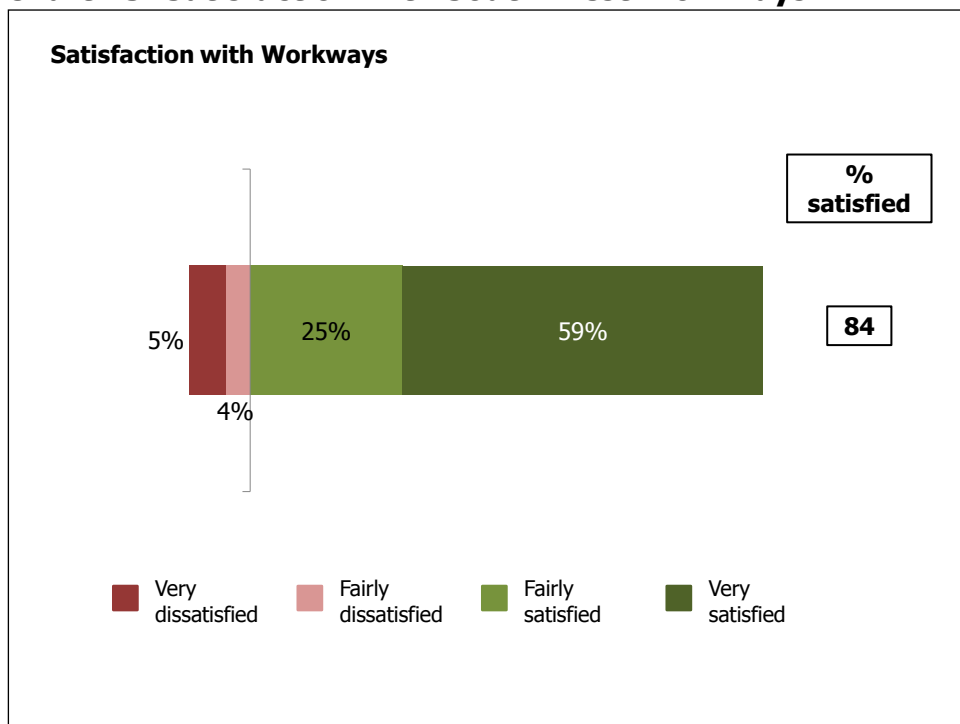
"You see with the Job Club, or the Job Centre, you're kind of left on your own to do it yourself...With South West Workways you have support, you have a mentor, you have a coach, that can try and develop you and bring the best out of you"
(Participant, Neath Port Talbot)

"The job I've got now, I'd never have got it if it hadn't been for my mentor, because I didn't think I could do it." (Participant, Swansea)

Overall satisfaction with South West Workways did not appear to depend on whether or not the participant had found work through South West Workways, as those who had not gone in to employment or been on a TJO were just as positive about the support they had received so far, and remained optimistic about their chances of finding employment in the future.

In total, 84% of survey respondents were satisfied with the service they had received from South West Workways, with 59% saying they were very satisfied. In total, 10% were dissatisfied with South West Workways. There was no variation in satisfaction by Local Authority.

Chart 13–Satisfaction with South West Workways



Source: Survey of participants. Base: all (721)

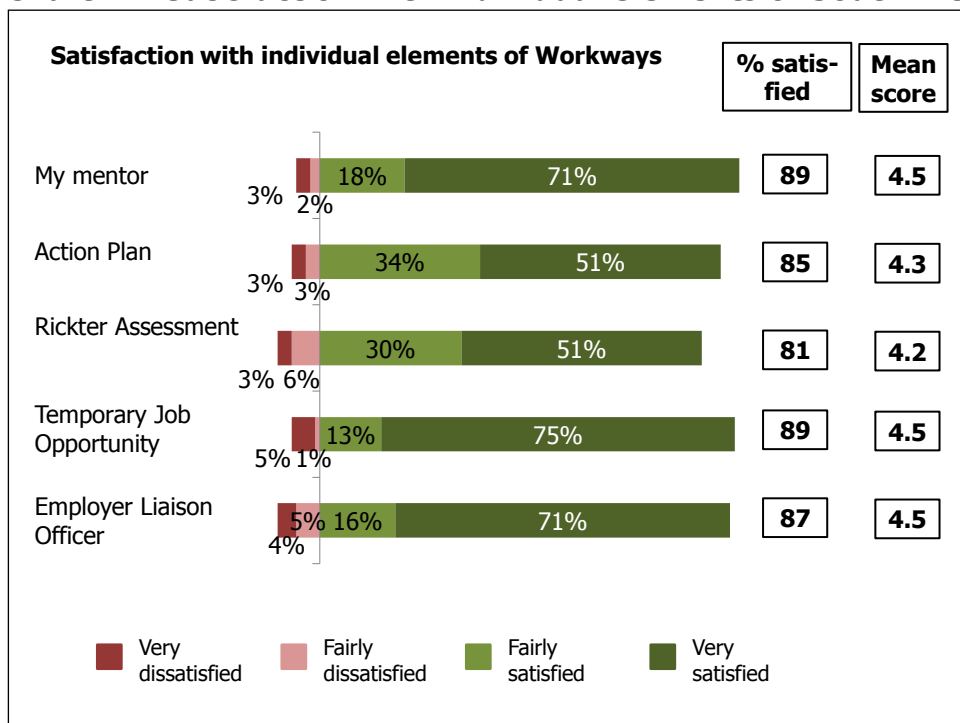
Satisfaction was higher among certain groups of participants.

- Younger participants were more satisfied than older ones. Whilst 92% of those aged 18-24 were satisfied, 84% of those aged 45-54 were. Younger participants were more likely to have qualifications and have been unemployed for shorter periods of time, and less likely to have a health condition or caring responsibilities.
- Those without a health condition were more satisfied than those with one (85% compared to 79%).
- Those with no qualifications were more satisfied than those with qualifications (90% compared to 84%).
- Those who had been out of work for 35 weeks or more were more satisfied than those who had been out of work for shorter periods. In total, 89% of those who had been out of work for 35 weeks of more were satisfied, compared to 83% of those who had been out of work for less time.
- Those who had been on a TJO were more satisfied than those who had not (91% compared to 82%), and those who had found work were more satisfied than those who had not (90% compared to 79%).

Those who were dissatisfied with their experience of South West Workways were asked why this was the case. This question was only asked of 76 respondents, so results should be treated with caution. Nevertheless, the most common reason for dissatisfaction was that South West Workways did not help dissatisfied respondents find work, reported by nearly half of those who were dissatisfied.

Participants were also asked about satisfaction with the individual elements of South West Workways, on a scale of 1-5, where 5 was very satisfied and 1 was very dissatisfied. Satisfaction was particularly high with mentors (89%), ELOs (87%) and TJOs (89%), reasons for which are explained further in the qualitative findings discussed above. There were high proportions of respondents who were very satisfied with these aspects of South West Workways.

Chart 14–Satisfaction with individual elements of South West Workways



Source: Survey of participants. Base: all (721); those with action plan (404); those with Rickter Assessment (276); those doing TJO (175)

'Soft' outcomes and skills gained

Participants in both waves of research reported that the person-centred, holistic approach to support delivered through South West Workways boosted their confidence and helped them with mental and emotional issues and that this was very important.

"I suffer with depression and they've helped me big time...they've brought me out of that...I am getting on my feet with them...I was a mess when I first came, I wouldn't speak up for anything, it's a lot better now...They supported me, they've

promised me courses, and they've showed me all different things. They helped me with various things at home. And they've just been there for support. So, poor [mentor]...I'd been crying on the phone to her, like, she's brilliant."
(Participant, Bridgend)

Support with emotional issues was perceived to be as important as employability support for some, while others felt that ELO's ability to source vacancies and put participants forward for TJOs or permanent roles was the key value of South West Workways.

Other 'soft' benefits noted in both waves of research were that there was a social element to the project, which was important for some participants. It was noted that they liked going to South West Workways as they would meet other people on the project, and help each other with jobsearch.

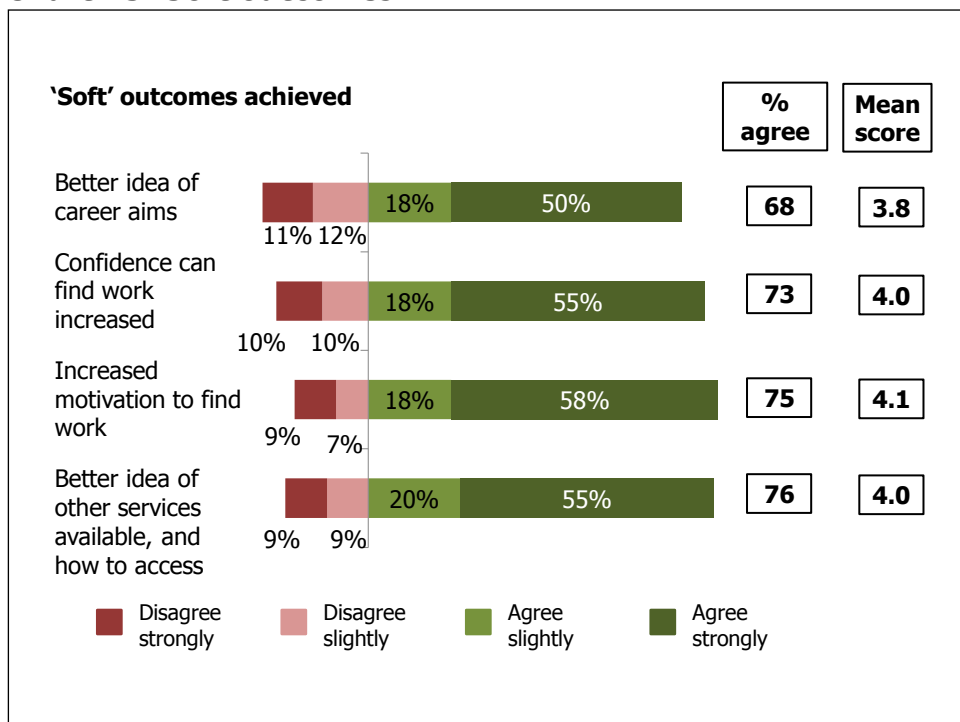
"They make you feel like you're worth something, not just oh, here's another person that doesn't want to work. It gives you that confidence as well. It's like someone to talk to as well." Participant, Carmarthenshire

"They put you in the mindset that you have self-worth." (Participant, Neath Port Talbot)

These findings from the qualitative research were supported by the telephone survey. Respondents were asked whether they agreed that they had experienced a range of soft outcomes on a scale of 1-5, where 1 was disagree strongly, and 5 was agree strongly. Between 68% and 78% of respondents agreed they had achieved each of these soft outcomes. The most commonly achieved soft outcome by participants was having a sense that they had more opportunities than before they started the project. The least commonly achieved soft outcome was having a better sense of career aims, but even so, 50% of respondents agreed strongly that they had achieved this. Large increases in motivation and self esteem were also reported, as reflected in the qualitative research.

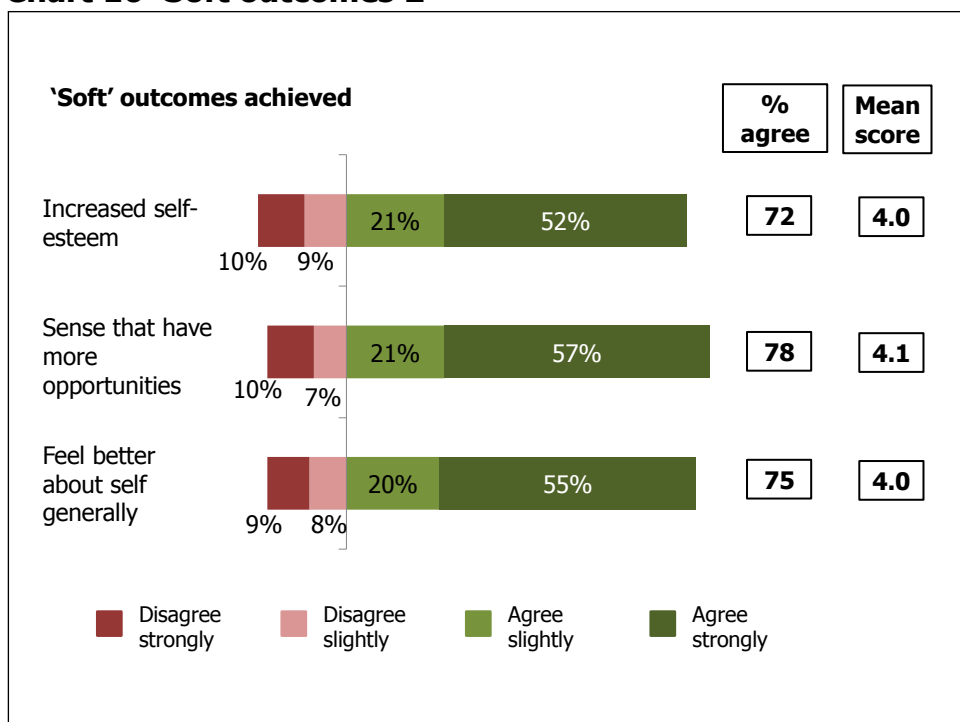
"Since I've been at South West Workways my confidence has shot up...I just find them a great bunch of people, they just make you feel so positive about yourself...they focus on you and how you're feeling and what you want to do, rather than you've got to do this for your money or you've got to do that...it's been a great help to me." (Participant, Pembrokeshire)

Chart 15–Soft outcomes 1



Source: Survey of participants. Base: all (721)

Chart 16–Soft outcomes 2



Source: Survey of participants. Base: all (721)

Again, some groups were less likely to report that they had achieved these soft outcomes. These groups included:

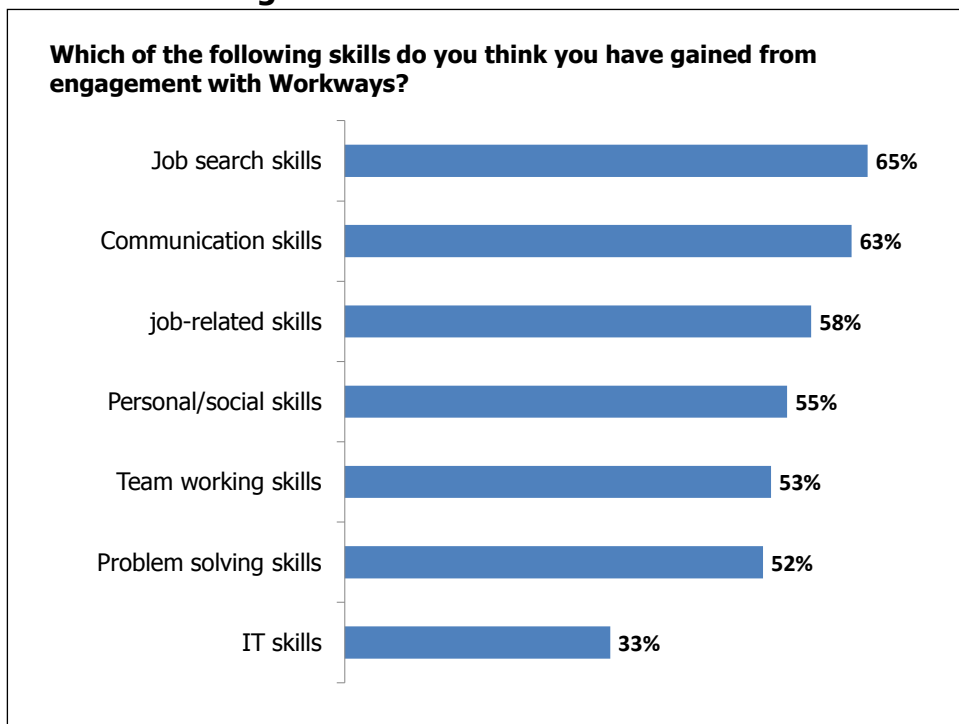
- Older people;

- Those with health conditions; and
- Those with caring responsibilities.

As expected, those who had been on a TJO or who had entered work were more likely to report achieving these soft outcomes.

Respondents were also asked whether they had gained any skills whilst on South West Workways, including skills gained during temporary jobs or training. The most common skills respondents reported gaining were jobsearch skills (65%), communication skills (63%), or skills related to specific employment (58%). The least commonly mentioned skills were IT skills, which only a third of respondents gained.

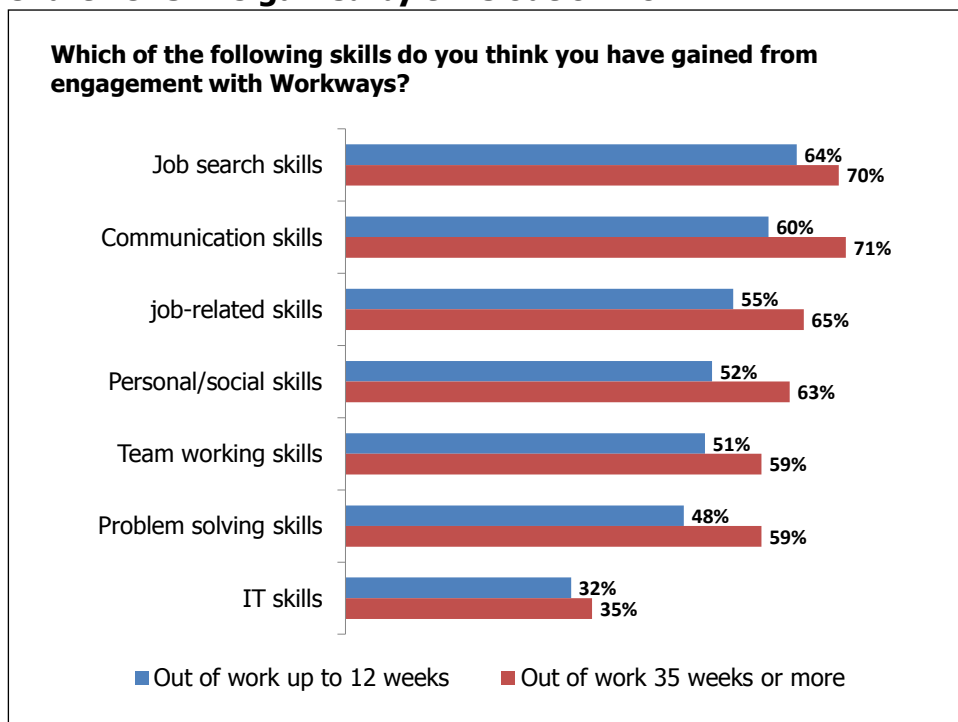
Chart 17–Skills gained



Source: Survey of participants. Base: all (721)

Those who had been out work for longer periods were more likely to have reported gaining skills, as shown in the chart below.

Chart 18–Skills gained by time out of work



Source: Survey of participants. Base: out of work up to 12 weeks (205); out of work 35 weeks or more (253)

In addition, younger respondents were more likely to have gained skills, as were those with lower qualification levels.

Conclusion

Both waves of research found the both employers and participants' experiences of the support received from South West Workways were generally positive, especially in comparison to support received from other employment support programmes.

From the employers' perspective, help with short-listing candidates was particularly valued, as was the ELOs' personal knowledge of participants and their understanding of the needs of the business, which altogether meant that the quality of candidates from South West Workways was deemed to be high. Employers also felt that TJOs were an excellent opportunity for both them and the participant to try out the arrangement before making a more long-term commitment. None of the employers interviewed in the second wave of research had received any wider business support provided through South West Workways' contacts on the employment support groups, but those who had been made aware of this support had not felt they had needed it at the time. Teething problems found to have been experienced by employers in Bridgend in the second wave of research had generally improved as the service became more established in that area.

In both waves of research, participants highlighted the high quality of the holistic and personalised support received from both mentors and ELOs which was sensitive to individual needs and barriers. Experiences of TJOs were also typically positive, as they had either helped participants secure a permanent role or had provided valuable work experience to include on their CV and raised their confidence levels. In contrast to the first wave of research, in the second wave participants did not raise any issues with inflexibility of TJOs or a lack of support for those seeking higher skilled roles, however participants in the second wave of research were generally not looking for higher skilled jobs. The key frustration with TJOs highlighted in the second wave of research was that due to funding issues they had not been provided at all in some areas, or in others had recently been stopped.

Participants particularly valued the soft outcomes and skills gained as a result of mentor support, such as confidence building and help with mental and emotional problems, which they saw as key to their success in overcoming barriers to employment. They also valued skills gained from short training courses such as IT skills.

Impact of Workways

Project Outcomes

Over the entire project, 5,134 participants entered paid employment (97% of the 5,270 profiled), and 5,678 gained other positive outcomes (98% of against 5,800 profiled). Taking into account lower than anticipated starts, looking at the proportion of project completers achieving outcomes, performance has been slightly lower than the target profiles set for the project in terms of participants gaining qualifications (6% achieving against 7% in profiled) and for numbers receiving support with their caring responsibilities (although the numbers of individuals involved are fairly small). Project outcomes are set out in Table 3 below.

Over the entire duration of the project, 42% of project completers entered paid employment, up slightly from the 40% recorded during wave one. The proportion of completers achieving qualifications was also up slightly (from 5% in wave one), while the proportion achieving other positive outcomes was up significantly (from 35% in wave one).

Table 3 – Achievement of outcomes against targets, 2009 - 2014

| Outcome | Number of participants achieving outcome | Proportion achieving outcome | Target proportion achieving outcome | Variance |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Entered paid employment | 5,134 | 42% | 42% | 0 |
| Gained qualifications | 684 | 6% | 7% | -1 |
| Entered Further Learning | 87 | 1% | 1% | 0 |
| Other Positive Outcomes | 5,678 | 46% | 46% | 0 |
| Support with Caring Responsibilities | 45 | 0% | 1% | -1 |

Source: South West Workways MI for Impact Assessment 2nd Sept 2014. Base: 12,319 South West Workways participants

Note: Gained qualifications, entered further learning and support with caring responsibilities data sourced from 'South West Workways 2009-2012 Stats' and South West Workways 2013 - 2014 Stats' updated 15/05/2014. Other positive outcomes are defined as 'entered voluntary work', 'completed short job-focussed course' or 'attended job interview'. Figures include outcomes from Genesis project as follows: 15 participants entered paid employment, 7 gained qualifications, 4 entered further learning and 24 who achieved other positive outcomes.

In total, management information (dated 2 September 2014) suggests that 57% of participants have achieved at least one positive outcome (up from 52% in wave one), including entering voluntary or paid work, completing a course, or having a job interview. Just over 30% of participants have achieved multiple positive outcomes, with an average of 2.1 positive outcomes achieved by these participants (down from an average of 2.5 in wave one).

Outcomes by Local Authority

Detailed analysis of the management information from the project shows that Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire were ahead of their targets for the proportion of participants entering employment, while Swansea was at target, and Neath Port Talbot just below target, despite having the highest level of performance, with 49% of participants going into employment. Only Bridgend was some way below its current target of 41%. However it is important to note that South West Workways started with a project target of 35% entering employment. Due to the success of the project, the target figure was increased at every re-profile hence finishing with an end target of 42%. Performance figures are set out in Table 4 below.

Compared to wave one, Table 4 also shows that most areas have improved on this measure. Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire have seen a very slight fall in the proportion entering employment (39% compared to 42% in wave one).

Table 4 – Proportion of project completers entering employment by Local Authority, 2009 - 2014

| | Proportion entering employment | Target | Variance | Proportion entering employment (wave one) |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|--------|----------|---|
| Bridgend | 37% | 41% | -4 | - |
| Carmarthenshire | 41% | 40% | 1 | 35% |
| Neath Port Talbot | 49% | 50% | -1 | 47% |
| Pembrokeshire | 39% | 38% | 1 | 42% |
| Swansea | 32% | 32% | 0 | 31% |

| | | | | |
|-------|-----|-----|---|-----|
| Total | 42% | 42% | 0 | 40% |
|-------|-----|-----|---|-----|

Source: South West Workways MI for Impact Assessment 2nd Sept 2014. Base: 12,319 South West Workways participants

Outcomes by distance from labour market

Interestingly, when the data on distance from the labour market (see Annex 2 for more details) is compared with local authority performance in terms of the proportion of project participants entering paid employment, it appears there is little correlation between the two. This means that performance by local authority area is not necessarily impacted by the profile of participants.

Despite the Neath Port Talbot area, having the highest average barrier typology scores and the highest proportion of participants with high scores, it has achieved by far the highest rates of participants finding paid employment of the five local authorities, across all four quartiles. For those furthest from the labour market (quartile 4), 34% of participants found paid employment, some eight percentage points higher than any other area (Carmarthenshire, 26%). This may relate to local labour markets or it may relate to the longevity and/or expertise of the Neath Port Talbot team.

Table 5: Percentage of participants finding employment by local authority and distance from the labour market

| Unitary Authority | Employment Outcomes by Quartile | | | | Total |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| Bridgend | 48% | 54% | 25% | 20% | 37% |
| Carmarthenshire | 56% | 45% | 32% | 28% | 41% |
| Neath Port Talbot | 62% | 56% | 47% | 35% | 49% |
| Pembrokeshire | 51% | 42% | 36% | 25% | 39% |
| Swansea | 46% | 36% | 28% | 16% | 32% |
| South West Workways Total | 55% | 46% | 37% | 28% | 42% |

Source: South West Workways MI for Impact Assessment 2nd Sept 2014 and Inclusion calculations. Participants have been divided into evenly sized groups or quartiles, with Quartile 4 being the furthest from the labour market i.e. having the highest barrier typology scores.

Outcomes for specific groups of participants

The MI also identifies the groups which were more likely to have entered work through South West Workways:

- Younger participants were most likely to have entered work. Forty-eight percent of those aged 15-24 had entered paid employment, compared to 42% across all age groups. Those aged 55-64 (36%) and those over 65 (35%) were less likely to be employed. Stronger performance for young people is consistent with other employment programmes such as the Work Programme.
- Participants without a disability were more likely than those with a disability to have found work (43% compared to 31%). The proportion of those with a disability finding work has fallen from 36% at the time of wave one.
- Those with higher qualifications (Level 2 and above) were more likely to have found work (46%) than those with no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2 (35%), although the proportion of those qualified to at least Level 2 finding employment has fallen from 52% in wave one).
- Lone parents were also less likely to have found employment (36% compared to 43% of those who were not lone parents).
- There were not significant differences in finding employment depending on gender.

Impact Analysis

The outcomes measured in the MI section above are the *gross* impacts of the South West Workways programme. Some of these outcomes would have occurred in the absence of the project i.e. an individual may have found work under their own steam. The following section assesses the extent to which South West Workways has an impact on the likelihood of its participants entering employment compared to what would have happened anyway, if these individuals had not received the assistance that South West Workways offers. Therefore this is an assessment of the *net* impact of South West Workways on the likelihood of people entering employment. Put crudely it is a calculation of the gross outcomes minus an estimate of the outcomes that would have occurred in the absence of South West Workways.

This means that the pattern of the *net* impacts of South West Workways across the different groups of participants may not be the same as for the above *gross* impacts reported above. For example, the gross impacts for people without a disability are larger than for those with a disability. However, this is not unexpected given that

people with disabilities in general fare worse in the labour market than those without disabilities. It does not mean that the net impact, or South West Workways project effect, for people with disabilities which controls for other influences on their job entry outcomes will be worse than for people without disabilities.

Methodology

We have done this by creating a control group of similar workless people from the five quarter Longitudinal Labour Force Survey (LLFS). We used a propensity score matching approach to weight the control group so that it matched the characteristics of participants in South West Workways, based on a number of characteristics: age, length of time out of work, ethnicity, gender, disability status, level of highest qualification and the year of participation in South West Workways / joined the 5 quarter LLFS panel. Given we were comparing job entry rates against those who participated in South West Workways between 2009 and 2014 the control group was made up of workless people from the 5 quarter LLFS from the 2009Q1 to 2010Q1 panel through to the latest 2013Q2 to 2014Q2 panel. For more details of the propensity score matching process see Annex 4.

We then analysed our combined sample of matched South West Workways participants with the matched control group to estimate the probability of moving into work. The technical details of the approach we followed are set out in Annex 4. South West Workways is shown to have a positive and statistically significant impact on participants' chances of entering employment when compared against the control. The size of this project impact varies slightly depending on individual characteristics. Our analysis uses a "base case" with a particular set of characteristics as follows: a man, aged 47, who has been out of work for less than six months, is disabled with both a DDA¹³ and a work limiting disability, is qualified to Level 4, and is from an ethnic minority. We can then vary this base set of characteristics to see how this affects the impact that South West Workways has on an individual's chances of entering employment. The results are shown in the table below.

Results

For an individual with the base set of characteristics participation in South West Workways (the treatment effect) increases their chances of entering employment by 2.4%. For a woman with otherwise the base set of characteristics the project impact on their chances of entering employment increases slightly to 2.5. Similarly,

¹³ The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) says a disabled person is someone with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

if we change the length of time someone has been out of work prior to participation in South West Workways to 12 to 23 months then the impact of participation increases to 2.8%. The table below shows other variations in the set of characteristics where those variables are shown to have a statistically significant impact on the chances of entering employment. (The impacts were not statistically significant for different definitions of disability, namely DDA disabled alone or work limiting disability, for having level 3 qualifications or being white as opposed to being from an ethnic minority.)

Table 6: Impact of participation in South West Workways on chances of entering work

| Set of Characteristics | Treatment effect (%) |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Base Characteristics | 2.4% |
| Female | 2.5% |
| Out of work for 6-11 months | 2.7% |
| Out of work for 12-23 months | 2.8% |
| Out of work for 24-35 months | 2.8% |
| Out of work for 36 months or more | 3.0% |
| Not Disabled | 2.3% |
| Level 2 Qualifications | 2.5% |
| Below Level 2 Qualifications | 2.6% |
| No Qualifications | 2.7% |

However, we should note some caveats. Although we have matched South West Workways participants with a control group, this cannot control for any unobserved differences between participants and the control group. South West Workways is a voluntary project so participants are motivated to find work. Hence they may be more motivated to seek work on average than individuals in the control group. Similarly, they may be more confident about their prospects of finding work. Hence part of the estimated impact of South West Workways may reflect these motivation and confidence effects. This means that the calculated project effects of 2.3% to 3.0% on job entry rates should be seen as an upper bound estimate of the impact of the project.

Our analysis also provides some interesting results as to the impact of differing individual characteristics on individuals' chances of entering employment. The results for participants in South West Workways are shown in the table below:

Table 7: Estimated impact of individual characteristics on the chances of entering work for South West Workways participants

| Characteristic | Impact on chances of entering work (%) |
|--|---|
| Female compared to Male | -2.5% |
| Out of work for 6-11 months compared to less than 6 months | -5.2% |
| Out of work for 12-23 months compared to less than 6 months | -7.3% |
| Out of work for 24-35 months compared to less than 6 months | -8.8% |
| Out of work for more than 36 months compared to less than 6 months | -13.0% |
| Not Disabled as opposed to DDA and work limiting disability | +3.5% |
| Level 2 Qualifications compared to Level 4 Qualifications | -1.8% |
| Below Level 2 compared to Level 4 Qualifications | -3.7% |
| No Qualifications compared to Level 4 Qualifications | -5.2% |

It is notable that all the impacts shown in Table 7 have the expected signs and that the ordering of the impacts is also as expected. So for example, an increase in the length of time someone has been out of work has a negative impact on their chances of moving into employment and this impact consistently increases with time out of work. This suggests that our analysis is robust.

Increasing age has a small negative impact on South West Workways participants' chances of moving into work. An increase in a participant's age from 52 (median age) by 10 years to 62 reduces their chances of moving into employment by -0.5%, while a decrease of 10 years to 42 increases their chances by 0.4%.

Sustained employment

Sustained employment rather than job entry has become an increasing focus of policy in recent years. For example, the Work Programme does not pay providers for job entries but for job outcomes after programme participants have spent three or six months (depending on the precise payment group) in work. In addition, the Work Programme pays sustainment fees where jobs are sustained for an additional four weeks for another one or two years. Hence we would have liked to have assessed the impact of South West Workways on job sustainment as well as entry into work. However, this was not possible for the reasons outlined in Annex 4.

Conclusion

Analysis of the outcomes from South West Workways indicate that up to the start of September 2014, 5,134 participants have entered employment which represents 42% of all participants, in line with the project target profiles. Younger participants and those with higher levels of qualifications are more likely to move into work. Participants who have a disability and lone parents are less likely to move into work. The above are all gross impacts which do not take account of what would have happened in the absence of the project.

An impact assessment has been undertaken to get at the net impacts of South West Workways taking account of what would have happened anyway. This impact assessment estimates that participation in the project increased participants' chances of entering work by between 2.3% to 3.0% depending on their individual characteristics. Our analysis also shows that increasing length of time out of work prior to participation, having a disability which is both DDA and work limiting, and having low or no qualifications all reduce an individual's chances of moving into work.

Conclusions

The South West Workways project has supported over twelve thousand unemployed and inactive people in South West Wales over a five and a half year period. The project has proved flexible enough to deal with challenging economic conditions, with changes to government employment policy and ongoing uncertainty about project funding.

The evaluation has identified a statistically significant positive effect on employment resulting from participation in South West Workways. The impact assessment estimated that participation in Workways increased participants' chances of entering work by between 2.3% to 3.0% depending on their individual characteristics. South West Workways participants also reported a range of positive impacts on their soft skills. Participants reported that the person-centred, holistic approach to support delivered through South West Workways boosted their confidence and helped them with mental and emotional issues and that this was very important.

In addition to the positive effects of the project, South West Workways offers some useful learning points for any successor employment projects. The two waves of evaluation have identified a number of areas in which South West Workways has been particularly innovative or effective in supporting participants:

- The level of resourcing to enable mentors to spend significant amounts of time **supporting participants on a one-to-one basis** is fairly unique amongst current employment projects. South West Workways is known amongst partners for its innovation in this regard. Participants valued the soft outcomes and skills gained as a result of intensive, one-to-one support, such as confidence building and help with mental and emotional problems, which they saw as key to their success in overcoming barriers to employment.
- From the employers' perspective, help with short-listing candidates was particularly valued, as was the **ELOs' personal knowledge of participants and their understanding of the needs of the business**. Altogether this meant that the quality of candidates from South West Workways was deemed to be high. Participants also valued the 'employer view' that ELOs were able to provide when reviewing their CVs and job applications. They also recognised that ELOs may be able to find vacancies that would not be advertised elsewhere and that this gave them a head start on other job seekers.
- **Joint working between ELOs and mentors** has developed to be very effective. The two roles had become increasingly defined as separate roles in later stages of the project, which had been facilitated by growing staff numbers in some areas. The relationship appeared to work better in areas where there was a

more equal number of staff in each role. Strategies such as weekly caseload review meetings between the two teams had been developed in some areas to improve communication and make it a more effective working relationship.

- **Temporary Job Opportunities** can be beneficial for participants at various distances from the labour market in terms of their confidence, motivation and in terms of going on to sustain paid work. The increasing flexibility and selectivity with which TJOs were provided over time allowed them to be more targeted, efficient and effective in engaging with a wider pool of potential employers and participants. In later stages of the project participants were required to continue their job search whilst in a TJO which, whilst some participants found this an unwelcome interruption, removed the risk of 'lock-in effects' sometimes observed in other work placement schemes.¹⁴
- The **broader business support offer** is an interesting and innovative approach to relationship building. The Employer Support Group structure in each local authority area is well established and perceived positively by partners and employers. However the practical application of this approach is variable across the project. None of the employers interviewed had received wider business support other than help with recruitment (although some had been made aware of wider support available but had not felt that they needed it). Whilst there had also been a move towards sharing vacancies sourced by ELOs with other members of the ESGs, this had been embraced more readily in some areas than others. One of the key selling points of South West Workways – the ELO's close understanding of participants' skills and employers' needs – at times stood at odds with opening up vacancies to a wider pool of unknown candidates. Further efforts to win hearts and minds and/or vacancy-sharing as standard may be required to embed this as a key part of the Workways offer.
- **Partnership working** – A key difference between waves one and two of the evaluation was the emphasis placed on partnership working. In wave one of the evaluation there were clear disincentives to partnership working amongst projects created by duplication of support and competing funding criteria. However the implementation of the Pilot Phase across Wales was a welcome introduction and wave two of the evaluation observed, across all local authorities, an increased emphasis on partnership working. This is demonstrated by the set up of cross-organisational Employer Support Groups in every area. It is believed that the next wave of ESF funding in Wales will build on the learning from the Pilot Phase to reduce duplication of support and to streamline with customer journey through better partnership working.

¹⁴ See for example, DWP (2012) Costs and Benefits of the Future Jobs Fund

- A significant proportion of referrals to South West Workways across the whole of the project came from Jobcentre Plus and word of mouth from previous participants. This made the project vulnerable to changes in government policy and also created a specific profile of participants in the project. The appointment of a dedicated Link Coordinator post in Swansea was felt to have had a number of benefits including **greater diversity in the range of referrals** and increased awareness of other support available to participants through partner organisations. Better links with referral organisations also benefitted the project by ensuring that participants had a clearer understanding of the aims and nature of the project upfront.
- The **continuity of project funding** was also an issue which impacted on the later stages of the project. In the evaluation, employers expressed some frustration over the short-term nature of South West Workways funding which had meant that they could not take participants on TJOs in the later stages of the project. Similarly for participants a key frustration in the later stages of the project was that they were not able to access TJOs or that TJOs were only available for very short periods of time. In addition a small number of partners mentioned that the uncertainty surrounding funding for the continuation of South West Workways had made it difficult to know whether they could continue to refer to them. This was perceived to have affected South West Workways ability to offer TJOs and to meet with clients face to face. The internal impact of this uncertainty was that some staff had left to find other, more secure jobs and some parts of the project had experienced difficulties recruiting new staff because they could only offer short-term temporary contracts.
- The South West Workways project has been particularly strong in terms of learning lessons and **implementing a process of continuous improvement** across the duration of the project. The recommendations made in the first evaluation report were implemented by the time the second wave research was conducted. In addition data collection processes were refined throughout the project which enabled the project team to evaluate their own performance on an ongoing basis and adapt delivery accordingly.

Annex 1 – List of Abbreviations

| | |
|------|----------------------------------|
| BAME | Black and Minority Ethnic |
| CAB | Citizens Advice Bureau |
| DDA | Disability Discrimination Act |
| ELO | Employer Liaison Officer |
| ESA | Employment and Support Allowance |
| ESF | European Social Fund |
| FND | Flexible New Deal |
| IB | Incapacity Benefit |
| JCP | Jobcentre Plus |
| JSA | Jobseekers' Allowance |
| LLFS | Local Labour Force Survey |
| SLA | Service Level Agreement |
| TJO | Temporary Job Opportunity |
| WEFO | Welsh European Funding Office |

Annex 2 - Barriers typology

To help understand the distance participants were from the labour market we have again used a barriers typology system that takes into account a number of factors available in project management information. These are duration of unemployment; whether have a disability or work-limiting health condition; whether have sole caring responsibilities; and qualifications levels. The same scoring system was used as in Inclusion first evaluation of South West Workways, where each of the four categories was marked out of a score of four, as show below. Thus, each participant was given a score between 0 (those closest to the labour market) and 16 (those furthest from the labour market).

Length of time out of work

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| <6 months | 0 points |
| 6-11 months | 1 point |
| 12-23 months | 2 points |
| 24-35 months | 3 points |
| >36 Months | 4 points |

Qualifications

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| None | 4 points |
| <NQF Level 2 | 3 points |
| NQF Level 2 | 2 points |
| NQF Level 3 | 1 points |
| >Level 3 | 0 points |

Whether a sole carer

| | |
|-----|----------|
| Yes | 4 points |
| No | 0 points |

Whether disabled or work limiting health condition

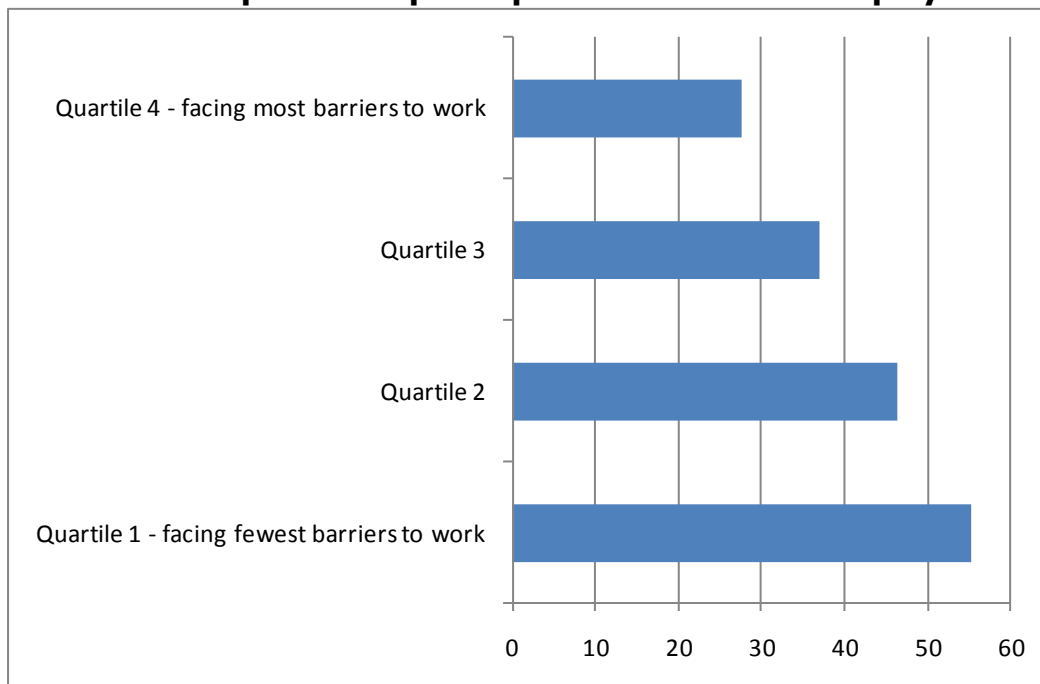
| | |
|-----|----------|
| Yes | 4 points |
| No | 0 points |

These values were then scaled down by 5/8 so that scores were then out of a maximum of ten, making them easier to interpret.

These barrier typology 'scores' are indicative of patterns emerging, allowing comparisons in distance from the labour market between different groups. However, these score only take into account 'objective' criteria, and cannot include 'subjective' criteria such as confidence and motivation.

The validity of these groups was tested in the same way as in the wave one evaluation, by examining employment outcome rates for different groups of participants. As shown in the chart below, when we split participants into quartiles based on their barrier typology score, the quartile facing most barriers to work were nearly half as likely to enter work than the quartile facing least barriers, suggesting that they were indeed further from the labour market (assuming they received the same level of support from South West Workways). These results are very similar to those in the wave one evaluation based on data to June 2012.

Chart A1- Proportion of participants who entered employment



Source: South West Workways MI for Impact Assessment 2nd Sept 2014 and Inclusion calculations.

Annex 3 – Telephone survey

This annex provide technical details of the wave one evaluation survey of participants, which was conducted by Ipsos MORI.

Sample

The target population was comprised of individuals who have been on the South West Workways project between February 2009 and April 2012.

South West Workways provided Ipsos MORI with a full list of all individuals who had started the project within this timeframe.

The original sample comprised 6,905 leads. A number of sample leads without phone number details, duplicates and those who had been on the course for less than four months (after April 2012) were removed from the sample before starting fieldwork, meaning 6,120 sample leads with phone numbers were useable.

A sample of 2,360 leads was selected at random from this sample of 6,120 leads and contacted during the fieldwork period. This sample was representative of the total population.

Fieldwork

Ipsos MORI interviewed 721 participants by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) between 9 August and 16 September 2012, using Ipsos MORI's in-house specialist telephone interviewing team. No quotas were set, although several variables were monitored during the fieldwork period to ensure the sample would be representative of the target population.

The average interview length was 11 minutes which was slightly longer than anticipated. This was partly due to the higher proportion of respondents being in work than originally assumed (the questionnaire is longer for those in work due to also answering questions about their employment outcomes).

Prior to starting fieldwork, interviewers were fully briefed by the Ipsos MORI project team. They also received full written instructions about all aspects of the survey.

Response rates

Ipsos MORI achieved 721 interviews from a total sample of 2,360 individuals. The unadjusted response rate is therefore 31 per cent, while the adjusted response rate,

based on valid sample, is 78 per cent. Valid sample refers to sample that was eligible (i.e. not screened out) and contactable.

Weighting

With this research it was necessary to compare the profile of those who took part in an interview against the population of all those who have used South West Workways. Based on this comparison we weighted the data by age, qualifications, whether did a temporary job opportunity, and whether unemployed (short or long term) or economically inactive.

Annex 4 – Impact Analysis

This annex provides technical detail about the propensity score matching approach used in this evaluation of Workways. Propensity score matching was used to examine whether Workways participants are more or less likely than other similar workless people to move into work.

Entering work

Propensity score matching was used to identify a control group of workless people with similar characteristics to participants in Workways. With this control group in place, we were able to determine whether Workways participants are more or less likely enter work than the control group.

The control group was made up of respondents from the five quarter Longitudinal Labour Force Surveys from the 2009Q1 to 2010Q1 panel to the 2013Q2 to 2014Q2. This period was selected in order to match as closely as possible the management information we had for Workways which ran from April 2009 to August 2014. This is important because movements into work are clearly impacted by the state of the economy as well as project impacts. By having data for Workways participants and the control group for as similar a time period as possible we ensure that their outcomes are influenced by the same macroeconomic conditions. Hence differences between the two groups should not reflect the impact of differing macroeconomic conditions between the two groups. Respondents to the Local Labour Force Survey (LLFS) were selected who were unemployed or economically inactive (workless) in the first quarter, and measuring movements into work in the subsequent four quarters.

We created a single database which included these respondents and the 12,307 Workways participants who started on the project between April 2009 and August 2014. We constructed variables across the Workways management information and LLFS data, for age, length of time out of work, ethnicity, gender, disability status, level of highest qualification and the year of participation in Workways / joined the 5 quarter LLFS panel.

We then loaded the database into R, a statistics package. We used two add-on software packages for R, Matchit and Survey, and conducted propensity score matching, using the characteristics noted above, to weight our control group to match the characteristics of the Workways participants in 2009. In this case, we used 'exact matching'. The advantage of exact matching is that this approach most closely matches the control group to the characteristics of the Workways participants. The downside is that this requirement for an exact match throws away

lots of data in both the participant data set and the control group where an exact match cannot be made. However given we had very large datasets for both participants (12,297 cases) and the LLFS based control group (34,759) we determined that this approach was both appropriate and workable.

The use of this method assumes that the major factors other than Workways affecting outcomes will be the state of the economy (covered by using a similar time frame as discussed above) and the personal, educational and work history characteristics of participants. In particular, as we do not attempt to match on geography then area or neighbourhood effects are implicitly assumed to have a lesser effect. There is research evidence to support this assumption and the broad current consensus is that independent neighbourhood effects on outcomes may be small. Therefore we believe that the use of a counterfactual that is not limited by geography, but is limited by time, fits with the current state of evidence.

The results of the propensity score matching are shown in Table A2 below.

These results show the initial pre-match differences in the characteristics between the control group and the Workways participant records. Before matching the LLFS based control group contains too high percentages of women, those who have been out of work for less than two years, people with a disability, people with high levels of qualifications and Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals when compared with the participants in Workways. After the exact matching process the characteristics of the Workways participants and the control group are aligned.

Table A2: Propensity Score Match Results

| | Before matching | | | After matching | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| | Characteristics of the Control Group | Workways Participants | Difference between control group and Workways Participants | Characteristics of the Control Group | Workways Participants | Difference between control group and Workways Participants |
| Male | 40% | 66% | 26% | 53% | 53% | 0% |
| Female | 60% | 34% | -26% | 47% | 47% | 0% |
| Less than six months | 6% | 35% | 28% | 27% | 27% | 0% |
| 6 - 11 months | 5% | 14% | 9% | 10% | 10% | 0% |
| 12 - 23 months | 9% | 19% | 10% | 14% | 14% | 0% |
| 24 - 35 months | 7% | 9% | 2% | 4% | 4% | 0% |
| more than 36 months | 72% | 23% | -49% | 45% | 45% | 0% |
| DDA disabled and work-limiting | 22% | 4% | -19% | 5% | 5% | 0% |
| DDA disabled | 15% | 2% | -13% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Work-limiting disabled only | 4% | 6% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 0% |
| Not disabled | 59% | 88% | 29% | 93% | 93% | 0% |
| NQF Level 4 and above | 21% | 9% | -11% | 12% | 12% | 0% |
| NQF Level 3 | 10% | 14% | 4% | 13% | 13% | 0% |
| Trade Apprenticeships | 5% | 0% | -5% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| NQF Level 2 | 15% | 36% | 21% | 38% | 38% | 0% |
| Below NQF Level 2 | 14% | 19% | 5% | 19% | 19% | 0% |
| Other qualifications | 8% | 0% | -8% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| No qualifications | 27% | 22% | -5% | 18% | 18% | 0% |
| BME | 7% | 3% | -4% | 1% | 1% | 0% |
| White | 93% | 97% | 4% | 99% | 99% | 0% |
| Total N | 34,759 | 12,297 | | 3,715 | 3,259 | |

Logistic regression

We then ran a logistic regression on our combined sample of matched Workways participants and the matched control group to estimate the probability of moving into work. Logistic regression models the log of the odds ratio as shown in the equation below.

$$\log_e \left(\frac{\pi}{1-\pi} \right) = \text{logit}(\pi) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_k X_k$$

In our case π is movement into work a binary variable which takes the value 1 if an individual moves into work and 0 otherwise. The explanatory variables (the Xs) include a "treatment" variable for participation in Workways which takes the value 1 for Workways participants and 0 for the control group. We also included the following personal characteristics as explanatory variables: gender, age, age squared; length of time out of work in four bands, under six months, 6-11 months, 12-23 months, 24-35 months and 36 or more months; disability status; highest qualifications held, ethnicity and year started on Workways / entered the Longitudinal Labour Force Survey five quarter panel. As the differing characteristics with the exception of age are all binary variables, e.g. Gender =1 for women and 0

for men, one of the categories for each characteristic had to be excluded to avoid perfect multi-collinearity. This means that the Intercept term in the estimated logistic regression picks up the overall impact for this collection of excluded characteristics which can be thought of as a “base case”. In our analysis this base case is a man, aged 47, who has been out of work for less than six months, has a disability which is both DDA¹⁵ and work limiting, has Level 4 qualifications, is from an ethnic minority and entered Workways in 2009. The results of our logistic regression analysis are shown in Table A3 below:

Table A3. Estimated model for the log of the odds ratio for entering work. (Base: Male, age 47, out of work less than six months, DDA and work limiting disability, Level 4 qualifications, BAME, and started in 2009).

| | Estimate | Std. Error | t value | Pr(> t) | Significance |
|------------------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|--------------|
| Intercept | 0.54489 | 0.06619 | 8.233 | 2.29E-16 | *** |
| Participation in Workways | 0.06692 | 0.01506 | 4.443 | 9.05E-06 | *** |
| Female | -0.07012 | 0.01636 | -4.286 | 1.85E-05 | *** |
| Age | -4.33007 | 0.74115 | -5.842 | 5.46E-09 | *** |
| Age squared | -0.67174 | 0.76015 | -0.884 | 0.3769 | |
| Out of work 6-11 months | -0.14392 | 0.03662 | -3.929 | 8.62E-05 | *** |
| Out of work 12-23 months | -0.20215 | 0.02895 | -6.982 | 3.27E-12 | *** |
| Out of work 24-35 months | -0.243 | 0.04208 | -5.775 | 8.12E-09 | *** |
| Out of work 36 months + | -0.35517 | 0.02164 | -16.415 | < 2e-16 | *** |
| DDA Disabled | 0.10616 | 0.06343 | 1.674 | 0.0942 | . |
| Work Limiting Disability | 0.0681 | 0.04554 | 1.495 | 0.1349 | |
| Not disabled | 0.10116 | 0.02199 | 4.6 | 4.32E-06 | *** |
| Level 3 Qualifications | -0.02368 | 0.02658 | -0.891 | 0.3731 | |
| Level 2 Qualifications | -0.05028 | 0.02336 | -2.153 | 0.0314 | * |
| Below Level 2 Qualifications | -0.10415 | 0.02563 | -4.063 | 4.91E-05 | *** |
| No qualifications | -0.1458 | 0.0251 | -5.809 | 6.65E-09 | *** |
| White ethnicity | 0.09367 | 0.05191 | 1.805 | 0.0712 | . |
| Started in 2010 | -0.03292 | 0.03203 | -1.028 | 0.304 | |
| Started in 2011 | -0.02896 | 0.0307 | -0.943 | 0.3456 | |
| Started in 2012 | -0.02684 | 0.03141 | -0.854 | 0.3929 | |
| Started in 2013 | -0.03815 | 0.03469 | -1.1 | 0.2716 | |

Notes:

(1) Significance codes: '***' = significant at 99.9% level, '**' = significant at the 99% level, '*' significant at the 95% level.

(2) The Age and age squared variables have been normalised so that the mean age equals zero. This also means that one should no longer interpret the coefficients on age and age squared as pertaining to age measured in years.

¹⁵ The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) says a disabled person is someone with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Participation in Workways is estimated to have a positive and statistically significant impact on participants' chances of entering work relative to the control group. Indeed the impact is statistically significant at the highest (99.9%) level of significance. It is also notable that the duration of time out of work, disability and qualification variables have both their expected signs and order, e.g. the impact of just having a DDA or work limiting disability is to increase the chances of being in work relative to the base case of having both categories of disability, and in turn has a less positive impact than no being disabled. This suggests that the modelling results are robust.

Sustained employment

The project management information includes information on the length of time a participant on Workways stays in employment up to a maximum of 12 months. In general, the Workways project data is very comprehensive and of better quality than that collected by similar programmes. However there are some measurement problems with the sustainment data. In 423 cases (7.6% of all job entries recorded) the information on sustainment is either missing or recorded as "Unable to track". In addition, we have been told that where participants were known to have entered work but the extent to which this employment was sustained was not known then sustainment was often recorded as "Under 1 Month". There are 837 cases (15.0%) of recorded job entries where sustainment has been recorded as "Under 1 Month". Hence for a substantial proportion of our job entry data we cannot distinguish between employment spells which are in reality very short lived and where the extent to which employment is sustained is actually unknown.

Even if there were no measurement error in the sustainment data we would face the problem that the sustainment data is a mix of completed and uncompleted spells in employment. Where a Workways participant moves into work and then subsequently moves back out of work then (assuming they are accurately tracked over time) the period recorded for the length of employment sustainment would be a completed spell of employment. However, where a Workways participant moves into work and remains in employment then the period recorded for the length of employment sustainment would be an uncompleted spell. In order to assess the impact of Workways on employment sustainment we would need to impute the expected completed spell in employment for those cases where the data we have is for uncompleted spells.

This would require us to initially identify completed and uncompleted spells from the employment sustainment data. This would have to be based on comparing the time that passed between the recorded start date in employment and the recorded length of employment sustainment. Where the recorded employment sustainment was less

than the length of time that has passed since the recoded job start date then we could assume that this was a completed spell of employment. However, the measurement error noted above makes this extremely problematic. Even without these measurement error problems this imputation would require complicated modelling based on the recorded spell in employment to date (the uncompleted spell) and a range of individual characteristics such as age and highest level of qualifications held. This would be complex and time consuming and is beyond the scope of this evaluation report.

For these reasons we were unable to undertake an impact assessment of the extent to which Workways helped to sustain employment.