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Evaluation of the ESF Local Service Board Development and Priority Delivery Project

Formative Report - Annex 2: Case Studies

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Evaluation team

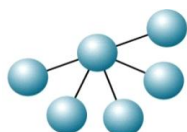


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1 Caerphilly Passport Programme

Introduction

1.1 The Passport Programme aims to reduce the number of young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) by providing work experience, mentoring and support, to prepare them for work, before being 'passported' into employment opportunities. The model is not for people who have significant barriers to work but for those who, with support, can start positions immediately.

1.2 According to the proposal, the programme will:

'assist LSB partners address workforce planning issues, ensure that local skills gaps are addressed, provide employment opportunities for young unemployed people and ensure that the potential workforce are equipped with the tools they need for employment'.

1.3 The programme relies upon significant collaboration between a number of partners which includes Caerphilly County Borough Council, Job Centre Plus, Communities First, Aneurin Bevan Health Board Health Board, Careers Wales, Educ8 (work based learning provider) and the Caerphilly Business Forum. The programme also relies upon the Welsh Government's Jobs Growth Wales fund. While the council is the largest employer in the area, the problem it faces of getting young 'work ready' people into work is common across public sector partners and the business community.

1.4 The programme started in November 2012 and is due to finish in December 2014. The large majority of the £372,220 funding from ESF covers the salaries of staff to facilitate the model.

Context

1.5 Caerphilly CBC has the fourth highest rate of unemployment in Wales and there are particularly high rates of economically inactive 16-24 year olds - the NEET population is high at around 2,200 people. The demography of the Council workforce also reveals a 'succession time-bomb' as 30% of the population are aged over 50, so it is important to have an educated workforce who can be ready for work.

- 1.6 A mapping exercise conducted in advance of the application for ESF-LSB revealed more than 50 different support interventions in place to support young people. These were mainly focused upon skills and training with no end product in terms of sustainable employment. A representative from the Caerphilly Business Forum remarked that it was difficult to understand all these programmes. Some companies were having trouble filling vacancies and existing programmes were not delivering for them.
- 1.7 Passport is a holistic and integrated employment support programme for young people aged 16 to 24 which bring together both the employer perspective and employment support together. Rather than duplicate any other project, it focuses upon the outcome of getting young people into work. One interviewee explained that
- 1.8 'What is the point of focussing on skills and training if there are no jobs out there? So you need the job creation element with the incentive to employers to create jobs and then on the back of that you need the other side of the coin which is the employment support... we are like a recruitment company'.
- 1.9 The Passport programme is complementary to other projects within Caerphilly. There are projects which look at the barriers to work, another focused upon 'Bridges Into Work' while Passport is aimed at the back-end of the process supporting young people into work. It aims to solve the conundrum facing some young people whereby they can't get a job without work experience but are unable to gain that work experience.
- 1.10 It is also different to other projects in that it aimed to dovetail with the council's £200m investment programme into their housing stock. Rather than just deliver physical improvements to housing, the council also intended to use the investment to transform lives and communities through changing its procurement structure. The council aimed to realise wider benefits through incorporating clauses into contracts which provided increased opportunities for local people to access WHQS (Wales Housing Quality Standard) related employment, training and apprenticeships. So the council was using capital investment to deliver social outcomes.
- 1.11 The designers of the programme had examined other ESF-funded projects in this area but found that these weren't holistic or integrated enough. They either had difficulties involving the private sector or there

was no facility to engage with the 'hard to reach' because the Communities First element wasn't there. The Job Centre's Voluntary Work Placement Programme which provided between two and eight weeks of work experience influenced the design of Passport. Research was also conducted in England to see if there were similar projects in place.

- 1.12 'We've got rising youth unemployment... rising number of NEETS. We've got the business sector saying that they can't recruit people. We've got all these projects that are not quite delivering. What we can do to change our practices to make it easier for people to get a foot on the ladder. That's how the project came about'.

Methods

- 1.13 A total of nine face-to-face interviews were conducted in July 2014 with representatives from all the key stakeholders in the programme which included Caerphilly CBC, Aneurin Bevan Health Board, Job Centre Plus, Caerphilly Business Forum, and Careers Wales. We were also provided with all background documentation (e.g. project proposal, reports to the LSB, cabinet, scrutiny and evaluation reports).
- 1.14 The Passport programme was selected to be a case study because it is a large-sized grant which is primarily local authority-based, in the south of Wales with high policy salience.
- 1.15 The findings below are presented using the framework provided by the theory of change.

Inputs

- 1.16 The Passport programme was funded by a variety of sources. Caerphilly Council's cabinet provided a commitment in 2011 of £485,000. This was targeted towards funding apprenticeships/trainees and graduate entry jobs, but in order to deliver work experience placements up to eight weeks, the £372,220 ESF funding was needed to pay the staff to deliver this – around three-quarters of the funding. In addition, the Jobs Growth Wales funding (which came on-stream in December 2012) provided placements for an additional six months. Finally, £121,000 was received from the Job Centre Flexible Support Fund (December 2012) which supports the model as a whole (including support for the Management Information System, marketing, training etc.)

1.17 Job Centre Plus has provided a secondee for one day a week. They provide the link between the three Job Centre offices and the programme and help by referring young people and checking rules and regulations on benefits etc. This secondment was seen by both sides as working well.

Activities

1.18 The programme provides a progression route for unemployed young people into employment.

- Tier 1 – Short-term work experience placements up to eight weeks;
- Tier 2 – Placements up to six months (JGW);
- Tier 3 – Apprenticeships / Trainee Opportunities; and
- Tier 4 – Graduate entry.

1.19 Young people are referred to the programme in a number of different ways. Referrals come from Job Centre Plus, Communities First, job clubs, Careers Wales, or from young people themselves. The large majority of referrals come from Community First areas.

1.20 The team conduct a diagnostic with individuals to ascertain basic factors like their expectations of work, their ability to do team work, how they would get into work on a daily basis. A skills assessment is also carried out as part of the induction process to see whether they are suitable for the scheme. If accepted onto the programme, the young person undertakes some training. This used to be conducted over a four week period but led to some young people dropping out. The training now takes place over two weeks to make it more attractive to the participants.

1.21 The programme takes an employers' perspective in attempting to ensure that participants are 'work ready', but determining this level was difficult as expectations varied. Early experience showed that the young people going through the programme were not as close to the job market as believed and there were barriers to work which needed to be overcome. These have included basic skills training, confidence levels and access to work challenges.

1.22 The team realised a few months in that the process wasn't working as well as they wanted. They changed their processes so that the Communities and Regeneration team (funded by Communities First) took

responsibility for the early diagnostic. These support workers had significant experience of working with young people in their most deprived areas.

1.23 An unpaid placement is carried out for up to eight weeks and the young person is able to claim benefits during this time and travel expenses to get to and from their placement. A member of the Passport team meets regularly with each individual during this period to assess whether they can progress into the Jobs Growth Wales placement which is paid at the national minimum wage. Agreement was given by Welsh Government early in the project, to allow the Jobs Growth Wales opportunities not be advertised on the Careers Wales website. Each Passport participant therefore, does not have to go through a competitive recruitment process and are automatically guaranteed the opportunity if they successfully complete their unpaid work placement. They are then supported through this recruitment process by their mentor to ensure they are able to provide all the relevant documentation, which is often seen as another barrier for young people.

What has facilitated the programme?

1.24 There are a wide range of factors which have acted as facilitators for the programme. These include:

- Partnership working;
- The programme's location within the organisation;
- The role of Welsh Government;
- Flexibility of funding;
- Officers working at the front-line; and
- Leadership.

Partnership working

1.25 All partners are signed-up to the common aim of reducing the number of NEETS. Organisations are not focusing upon single organisational interests. For example, Job Centre Plus is keen to work with any organisation that can help to fill employer's vacancies and supporting vulnerable disadvantaged people into work. Their grant-funding of £121,000 has helped them to have a direct relationship with the programme and some influence on decision-making during Working Group

and Project Board meetings. One stakeholder suggested that, 'It was a genuine partnership with the local authority'.

1.26 Working closely with Educ8 - the local Work-Based Learning Provider that holds the Jobs Growth Wales placements on behalf of the Passport Team - has also worked well and both teams meet regularly to ensure that participants are supported and outcomes are delivered.

1.27 The council has a good relationship with the Business Forum and they have acted as a conduit to getting businesses involved and having confidence in the programme. Local businesses do not want additional bureaucracy of taking part in an initiative, so the council's Human Relations (HR) department provides support directly to Caerphilly businesses by doing their payroll and undertaking risk assessments etc. For small-medium size businesses, this support has been quite critical.

The programme's location within the organisation

1.28 The programme sits within the HR department within the council and this is seen to be a particular strength. This department has the benefits of being attached to all parts of the organisation. This 'organisational reach' is important compared to other projects which are often constrained within one department.

1.29 Staff have skills in recruitment, coaching, mentoring and technical knowledge of a number of HR processes including payroll, pensions and health and safety. This means that levers can be pulled to make it easier for young people to get a foot on the job ladder. As HR deals with managers on a daily basis, they are able to ask the question – 'Why not consider one of our trainees'?

1.30 For the Business Forum, the ability of HR to manage the payroll and utilise disciplinary grievance procedures quickly helped to give them confidence in the programme.

1.31 The programme was a LSB priority and therefore a decision was made that it should sit at the top of the organisation. Officers were able to operate across the council and hold good conversations with partners as HR professionals could talk directly to other HR professionals. Of course, 'the commitment of the team who really own it' was also a significant factor.

The role of Welsh Government

- 1.32 Jobs Growth Wales, which provides six months paid work experience at the national minimum wage, has been critical to the programme. It provides confidence to the business community that they can take a young people on. For young people, it provides a reasonable long period of 'real' work.
- 1.33 The Welsh Government's flexibility in two main ways has helped the programme to deliver. Firstly, after difficult negotiations with Welsh government, additional JGW places were allocated to the council rather than to a work-based learning provider. This was the first time that the Welsh Government had done this. Secondly, the requirement of the Fund was that a JGW placement would lead to a sustainable employment opportunity within that field. The Passport team wanted a different approach whereby young people could receive their placement and then they would match the young person to *any* suitable employer. This could mean that after six months working in one area, the young person could work somewhere else in the organisation or go to another employer. This flexibility has been crucial to make the programme work.

Flexibility of funding

- 1.34 The council has bought together different funding streams for the Passport programme. As mention previously, the majority of the ESF resource is spent on salaries. When the Passport model needs revising in the light of changing circumstances, the remaining funding is flexible so they don't have to submit change requests. So, where things aren't working, they can quickly change them.
- 1.35 Parts of the programme could have been implemented without the ESF as council resources were allocated to tier 3 and 4. The ESF money has allowed the council to develop a more cohesive project.

Officers working at the front-line

- 1.36 Having dedicated Community First funded staff has been critical to the programme. These support workers engage young people at the front-end of the process. These people are often the hardest to reach in the community and the staff provide 1:1 support and engagement with the young people. The coaching and mentoring they received was said to be

invaluable. Equally important is the fact that they filter young people into the programme. If they are not suitable for Passport, they are referred to other support mechanisms. If 'work ready' people are not fed in at the front-end, the programme would not work. The staff have also been able to iron out small issues that the placement providers may have.

Leadership

- 1.37 There is political (and senior managerial) support for the programme. The importance of this should not be underplayed as 'you can achieve anything if you've got people who are brought into something and have a commitment to drive it through'. The team was described as being really committed and made good use of people's experiences across the organisation e.g. a colleague in finance who had previous experience of ESF helped with the financial aspect of the bid. Part of the success is built upon relationships - using persuasion, negotiation, compromise and knowing who the right people are.

Barriers to the programme

- 1.38 While partnership working has been a strength, there has been less involvement from some partners than was expected at the beginning. Gwent Police have been affected by downsizing as a result of the budget cuts and are not in a position to take on young people. In health, while they 'come to the table on a regular basis', but they already have a progression route in place. It is important to remember that both the police and health cover all five Gwent authorities, so Caerphilly is only part of their patch. Careers Wales also cover larger area than just Caerphilly and this has caused some difficulties.
- 1.39 The programme has suffered from changes in personnel and capacity issues. The person initially involved from the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) was made redundant and the voluntary sector has struggled because of cuts to its funding.
- 1.40 Citizens Advice Bureau were involved at the early stages as a training provider on financial literacy, but that element actually hasn't gone as well as they would have liked and the Money Advice Service is now used instead. This part of the programme is crucial as providing young people

with a route to employment needs to be matched with information on financial literacy so that money can be managed.

- 1.41 Other barriers have largely been overcome over time. The pilot phase helped the team to determine the sort of people who are 'work ready' and they worked with employers to set reasonable expectations of the young people they were recruiting. There has been some suspected abuse of the JGW element, but businesses are interviewed to make sure that they are using the scheme properly. The negotiations over JGW allocations took time at the start of the programme.

Collaborative capacity

Governance structure

- 1.42 There are clear and extensive governance arrangements in place and they are said to work well. In addition to six weekly team meetings and the HR strategy group, there is a project working group comprising representatives from all partner agencies and a Project Board upon which the LSB partners sit which meets quarterly.
- 1.43 The Project Board was described as being 'operationally focused' and this was meant in a positive way as it was not a strategic 'talking shop'. All partners were said to have a handle on both strategic and operational matters and were able to raise issues e.g. 'whether the programme is adding value and are the engine rooms working?' The council was inevitably the strong partner in this relationship - 'They led and others followed'. One partner suggested that the Board made decisions and it is a shame that this doesn't happen on other projects.
- 1.44 The team have provided progress reports to the council's scrutiny committee and to cabinet. The LSB operates only by exception. So if there's a particular issue or blockage which officers are finding it difficult to overcome, then the LSB will be involved. While the LSB is clearly signed-up to the programme, one stakeholder thought that their involvement has not been as strong as it could have been. It was involved at the inception but has not taken much of a steering role.

Collaboration agreements

1.45 The council has delivered more than they promised in their application on key indicators. Four collaboration agreements between public service bodies and seven secondments are in place. A large array of organisational learning and development activities has been conducted and there have been 51 dissemination initiatives. Terms of reference have been used at the project board. No service level agreements have been put in place.

The project manager

1.46 The HR Service Manager and the Passport Programme Manager have led the project. The HR Manager has experience of running a recruitment agency which has helped in terms of matching people with opportunities and liaising with the private sector. The Programme Manager has a HR background with expertise in training and development.

1.47 Both officers play a significant role in a number of collaborative management activities, with strategy making being led by one and implementation activities being managed by the other. While there have been delays in recruiting staff to join the team, there has been a low turnover of staff.

Monitoring

1.48 There are various risks to the programme which have been monitored and reviewed over time. As a result of learning from the early stages of the project, the team put in place measures to assess young people so that they were suitable and to ensure all partners had the same expectations. Staff have monitored the volumes of referrals into the programme and determine the appropriate level of JGW placements which are likely to be required.

1.49 The WEFO indicators were described as being 'pointless – it's ticking the box'. Respondents were unsure about what they were intending to achieve. They are already focused upon equality and sustainability issues, so there is no added value. They were not used to monitor the progress of the programme.

1.50 The Passport Programme Manager produces quarterly reports to the ESF-LSB team and performance is also reported to CMT and to scrutiny.

Learning

1.51 Learning has occurred at different levels. At an individual level, staff have attended training events organised by the ESF-LSB team. Learning has also occurred at a team level where various improvements have been made to the process over time e.g. re-introducing case meetings between Job Centre Plus, Community First and Educ 8 to try and match people to opportunities, refining health and safety checks etc.

1.52 The programme has received some press coverage and has used examples of young people who have moved into employment as case studies. A sign of national recognition can be seen by the relatively large number of ministerial visits which have been made.

1.53 Officers have in the last six months looked to disseminate the lessons from the programme to neighbouring local authorities. They have visited Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Cardiff who are interested in piloting Passport. This potential regional dimension is likely to be important for future funding opportunities from ESF.

1.54 There is potential for the Welsh Government to do more to share the learning from this project with others across Wales, but it is unclear at this stage whether there is a strategy to collect the learning from this, and other projects.

Support by the ESF-LSB national team

1.55 The programme has received lots of advice and support from the ESF-LSB team including undertaking a mini-audit of their work. Staff have also attended some training events (e.g. on change management, coaching and mentoring).

1.56 The SET officer has been helpful in giving advice on processes and requirements for audit and on administrative matters relating to project closure.

1.57 The programme has its own evaluation which is due to report in the autumn of 2014.

Public service improvement (outcomes)

1.58 The programme set out clear outcomes which were expected to be achieved from the ESF resource. Previous performance in their existing work experience programme was examined and targets were designed that were 'realistic and deliverable' given the context and the partnership that they had to build on. There was a complaint that 'some of the targets that feature within mainstream ESF projects are completely unachievable'.

1.59 Passport aimed to:

- Create a minimum of 150 work experience opportunities per annum;
- Create a minimum of 25 apprenticeship opportunities per annum;
- Create a minimum of 40 employment opportunities per annum;
- Reduce the number of people aged 16-24 claiming Job Seekers Allowance by 3% over the lifetime of the project;
- Reduce the number of people aged 16-24 unemployed for more than 26 weeks by 3% over the lifetime of the project; and
- Incorporate Targeted Recruitment and Training as a core requirement into at least 10 new public sector contracts (per annum).

1.60 Between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014, 533 young people were referred into the programme. More than six in 10 of these people have been referred from Job Centre Plus. During that period, 176 placements have been facilitated, 150 JGW placements have been filled and 77% of those young people undertaking a Jobs Growth Wales placement have found sustainable employment or returned to full-time education. 52% of these young people have come from Community First areas.

1.61 It will be important to assess whether the young people have been sustained in their jobs and to compare the figures between those in JGW who have been through the Passport programme and those who haven't to see whether there is a significant difference in outcomes.

1.62 The evaluation of the programme included interviews with 157 individuals who were referred to Passport. 46% of these have received further support following referral and the results are very supportive. They conclude from this relatively small sample (n=72) that:

- 89% have found the initial assessment work useful or very useful;
- 85% found the Employability training useful or very useful;

- 80% of those who have worked with the programme say they have been changed by their Passport experiences;
- 85% say they gained job specific skills; 68% improved social skills for work (self-confidence, turning up on time etc.); 60% improved their sense of what they want to do; 53% report improved job search skills;
- 85% say they feel more enthusiastic about work;
- 90% are more confident about their own abilities;
- 91% say they were helped by the coaching/mentoring they received; and
- 71% say that without Passport they would still be unemployed.

1.63 Achieving cost savings was not an aim of the programme but interviewees suggested that it has been excellent value for money and lean for an employment support programme. In theory, it should also be saving the council on recruitment agency fees as they are matching jobs with clients. Research has shown that the average individual life-time public finance cost of a person NEET is £56,300 (Coles et al. 2010). In addition, there are costs associated with young people who are NEET such as youth offending. The costs to sustain Passport for an additional year is less than the equivalent of the cost of four young people being NEET ($£56,300 \times 4 = £225,200$).

1.64 Reducing the number of NEETS would save money for Whitehall plus the indirect savings achieved by reducing crime levels and health costs. One partner asked 'why the decision-makers have not done more?' This is one that Ministers need to take a look at and examine the return on investment'.

1.65 Passport has allowed young people to secure a Jobs Growth Wales placement which would have been unlikely in a competitive process. Young people have gained valuable work experience which has helped them to move into work. It is difficult to measure some of the softer aspects. According to one interviewee, the programme had taught young people expectations about the workplace. A proportion had not worked since school and Passport had helped to change behaviours.

- 1.66 The council intended to include clauses in their procurement contracts to target young people from this programme. These clauses have been included in WHQS, but not for social care.
- 1.67 The programme has helped to improve relationships with the local business community. An employer who has used Passport was proud of the fact that he had taken five young people on from seven candidates and all of them are now in full-time employment. It didn't matter to him that none of them were working for his organisation but that he had helped in getting young people into employment.
- 1.68 One significant unintended consequence has been that due to the UK Government automatic enrolment on pensions, the work placements from Jobs Growth Wales are entitled to go on to the Local Government Pension Scheme if they meet certain criteria. This has resulted in a liability of £120,000 for Caerphilly CBC.

The future

- 1.69 The plan was for 'the LSB Partnership to ensure that the model evolves to become self-financing and hence sustainable' (Application 2011), but this has not proved possible to date. The ESF funding ends in December 2014 and although the programme has an under-spend, it has not been granted an extension until March 2015 like other projects. This will cause some difficulties because the Jobs Growth Wales placements go beyond December 2014. The Passport team has secured further grant funding from the Job Centre Flexible Support Fund that will sustain the programme until March 2015.
- 1.70 If future European funding streams do not come on-line until January 2016, so there will be a gap in funding even if a bid is successful. There is the problem, common with many European projects, that knowledge and skills developed over 18 months will be lost when the project finishes as staff will go back to their original jobs. A number of systems and processes have been established which will also be lost if no funding can be found. The momentum and enthusiasm for the programme is likely to ebb away. It is important, therefore, that the good relationships built with LSB partners, the Caerphilly Business Forum and others can continue to be fostered.

1.71 The council believe that there are three potential options for Passport in the future:

1. To continue to run Passport as a part of a bigger Caerphilly model which seeks to support young people who have more significant barriers to work and Passport becomes the back end of that model. (Based on the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework model);
2. To run Passport as a sub-regional project with two or three other Councils to support young people across a wider region; and
3. For Passport to be delivered across a wider region across South East Wales either as a stand-alone or as the back of a model that supports young people through barriers and onto work experience and employment.

1.72 There is potential for Passport to be delivered on other councils' behalf if further funding is available or for councils to learn lessons from the experience of Caerphilly and introduce their own Passport model. As councils are not structured in the same way - e.g. where Community First sits in relation to the council – they will not be able to simply 'copy and paste'. Councils may also have different levels of engagement with the business community but Caerphilly could ask their business forum to talk to other business forums to build up relationships.

1.73 The experience of the Passport programme illustrates that while training schemes are helpful, young people need to be provided with a route to sustainable employment. There is a concern that future funding bids in the region will be 'funding led and not strategy led'. Each organisations is likely to have its' own agenda and will want to see their projects continue regardless of whether or not they have delivered outcomes. A large number of projects and Community First funded initiatives have aimed at making improvements for NEETS, but it is not clear what impact they have had. This potential parochialism goes against the push from WEFO for councils to work together regionally.

Conclusions

1.74 Passport is different to other schemes which aim at getting young people into work. It is an integrated system which supports young people through their journey into work. It's the quasi- recruitment agency work at

the end of the process and good partnership working with all key partners which seems to have made the difference.

1.75 The programme has managed to join-up the various funding streams available from Welsh Government (Community First, JGW, and WHQS) and ESF to deliver more than the sum of its parts. It would not have gone ahead in the same way without the ESF funding. Equally, it could not have delivered without the Welsh Government's Jobs Growth Wales element. JGW provides a 'win-win' for all parties. Employers get a free worker to help their business make money and the public sector reduce the number of young people who are NEET.

1.76 There are concerns about the future. The programme has shown evidence that a large number of young people are not ready for work after leaving school. In the past, any year 11 pupil could see Careers Wales for an interview, but now the focus is on those most at risk of becoming NEET. There is therefore support for the introduction of a pre-Passport programme for young people 14-16, but this is dependent upon finding funding.

Recommendations

1.77 Caerphilly CBC council should:

- Write up the key lessons from the programme so that the learning points are clear and can be shared with others who are interested in introducing this model
- Consider making further changes to improve the programme such as bringing together businesses which have had placements to learn from their experiences and reviewing what can be done to reduce the number of young people dropping out.

1.78 The Passport programme has been used as a case study in the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework document (2013). The report states that 'We are keen to extend this type of strategic approach more widely across the public sector in Wales'. If this is the case, then the rhetoric needs to be matched with action. As one interviewee suggested:

'I would like to see Welsh government recognising when something is good and delivering outcomes which benefit the people that we and they

are trying to serve. I'd like to see Welsh government come in and say we really like this project. It's been proven to deliver. This is what it's going to be across the region. You all then need to work together to make it happen'.

1.79 The Welsh Government should:

- Provide a strategic overview of the projects receiving different types of grant funding to ensure that there are no overlaps and that all projects are outcomes-focused
- Gather and interpret evidence from evaluations to determine if projects should receive additional funding and perhaps be rolled-out further across Wales, or be stopped because they are not producing outcomes
- Consider whether they could better align programmes so that there is a coordinated approach across directorates.

2 Transforming Transport – aka Mavis

Introduction

2.1 The aim of the Transforming Transport project is to improve the provision of non-emergency patient transport by bringing together all transport providers within Cwm Taf through the creation of a centralised and fully integrated IT booking system. The project started in December 2011 and is due to finish in December 2014. The original £275,000 grant from ESF supports a part-time project manager.

2.2 The transforming transport idea owes its origins to a mapping exercise which revealed how vehicles from Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf Councils (RCT), Cwm Taf Local Health Board and a variety of third sector providers were following each other up and down the valleys providing transport services to the same group of clients. Not only is this duplication costly, but the current system is also complex and confusing for users. This situation is encapsulated by the experience of a patient called 'Mavis': an 85 year-old woman dependent on transport services provided by a

number of different agencies to attend health and social appointments. Mavis has to remember which provider is responsible for each service and then contact the right agency on the right number to arrange her transport.

2.3 The key partners for the project span sectors and include the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board (a collaboration of the two council's Local Service Board), Cwm Taf Local Health board, the two local councils, the Community Transport Association (CTA), the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST) and other third sector providers. The project is a priority goal of the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board. The ultimate aim was a Section 33 agreement which allows the pooling of budgets across providers.

Context

2.4 The Transforming Transport project fits within the remit of the Griffiths Review into non-emergency transport in Wales which concluded that services are more fragmented and less efficient than they could be and that there are, as a result, opportunities across the public and third sector for service improvement.

2.5 These issues were highlighted in Cwm Taf by the use of the Kafka' method which focuses on the individual experience of a single service user - dubbed Mavis in this case - to identify systemic dysfunctions. The Transforming Transport project served to underline the 'horrendous' dysfunctions which devil the IT systems which 'do not talk to each other' which means a booking faxed to the Welsh Ambulance Service is manually inputted into the system. The Mavis case pointed to potential improvements in terms of service integration, rationalisation and efficiency which appealed to all of the partner agencies we interviewed. Beyond the headline case for change however, different agencies tended to focus on different potential gains from reducing cost, to improving client experiences and improving contract terms and conditions.

2.6 The original plan was to use the ESF resource to procure a new IT system, but the applicants found out at the last minute that they weren't allowed to bid for capital funding, so the bid was reduced from around £1m to £275,000. The whole project hinged on the selection of an IT system and the fact that a new system could not be purchased led to a whole series of difficulties further down the line.

Methods

2.7 The Transforming Transport project was selected to be a case study because it is a medium-sized grant, covering a joint LSB in the south of Wales, which has potential to have wider benefits across Wales. We interviewed the project manager on three occasions (January 2013, November 2013, and September 2014). Interviews were also conducted with representatives from Merthyr Tydfil, RCT and St Johns Wales.

2.8 The project experienced a number of delays and the case study was postponed to allow for developments to take place, which have not yet materialised. Some individuals declined to be interviewed for various reasons (moved jobs, organisational pressures not allowing involvement). In the absence of involvement from some partners, this note is reliant upon the perspectives of those we were able to interview accompanied by analysis of background documentation (e.g. project proposal, 'end project' document, annual reports). Our findings are presented using the framework provided by the theory of change.

Inputs

2.9 The project is solely funded by ESF so it could not have been undertaken without this resource. Most of the funding covers the costs of the project manager but Cwm Taf local health board has only claimed £60,000 on staff costs to date.

2.10 The other major input is the time of staff attending meetings. One partner (RCT) was often represented by three officers covering transport, IT and Social Care. This represents a significant investment and reflects the need of being 'at the table' in case these discussions might lead to further integration. One interviewee explained, 'he wanted to ensure nothing untoward is going on'.

Activities

2.11 Transforming Transport learnt from a similar project undertaken in England (Norfolk County Council) which has delivered an Integrated Transport Project. They suggested that the project should be clear on outcomes for all partners at the outset. Time was therefore spent at the beginning of this project setting out each partner's expectations. The 'end project' document - which maps the relative priority of the different organisational agendas - was signed-off by all partners. This generated a

clear picture of potential risks and raised some questions about organisational gains/losses and future organisational positioning. What are we going to gain from this project? What are we giving up? What will closer integration mean for us? At what level are we integrating? What are we surrendering?

2.12 The selection of the IT booking system was seen to be key to the project for data modelling and route planning purposes (for example), as once in place they will be able to model the data to improve service delivery. Cwm Taf local health board had a preference for using their own Cleric IT system and this was made explicit in the ESF proposal. This system is widely used in health and handles the majority of journeys. There were concerns raised by RCT about whether there was enough rigour in selecting this system (as RCT already have an integrated transport system in place). Merthyr Tydfil does not have an automated IT system in place.

2.13 The partners agreed to test the market on a range of different systems which slowed the project down by a number of months. The Cleric system was the winner of this exercise and it was suggested by one interviewee that some partners were difficult to engage after this.

The project planned to conduct a small pilot exercise between RCT, CTA and WAST to integrate their Day Unit Transport Resources. The idea was to select a busy area where lots of transport journeys were being made. This pilot was not carried out because RCT have higher quality standards than those for WAST and as a result couldn't commit to the project. This problem of different standards has not been bottomed-out and may have planted a seed of doubt for some as to whether Transforming Transport could work.

What have been the main barriers?

2.14 The project relies upon a number of organisations across sectors (local government, health, third sector) working together to collaborate on an integrated approach. Partners were signed-up to the proposal and the outcomes they wanted to achieve but relations between partners have stopped the project from delivering.

2.15 There have been four main barriers to the project delivering outcomes:

- Partnership working;
- Leadership;

- Policy context; and
- The role of Welsh Government.

Partnership working

2.16 The most significant barrier was poor partnership working. The problems of partnership working are well-rehearsed. This project was trying to bring multiple organisations from multiple sectors together and this has proved to be difficult and time consuming. Cwm Taf local health board thought they had cooperative partners on-board and while attendance at meetings has been good, the relationship with RCT has been problematic.

2.17 It has been agreed that a different approach is needed. A new plan for the project has been produced which contains six distinct components - it was described as being a stepped approach. Once all six of these steps have been completed, all the key organisations will be in a position to have single point of access for integrated non-emergency transport across Cwm Taf. According to one interviewee, it does not have the gold bar at the outset of the process - but is something they will work towards.

2.18 This new plan has changed the way in which the funding is distributed across partners and is now heavily weighted away from Cwm Taf local health board and towards the two local councils. For example, £85,000 is now going to be spent on enabling Merthyr Tydfil CBC to collaborate with RCT on using their MIS booking and planning system as a step towards the two councils working together towards integration. It is understood that all parties are happy with the new approach as each organisation can 'get their own house in order' before moving onto the next step.

2.19 From a Cwm Taf perspective, 'if this is what it takes to make it work then that's what we'll do', but there are some concerns about the governance arrangements. The plan has now been passed to the chief executive level. It will then need to be signed-off by the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board.

Leadership

2.20 The proposal acknowledged that: 'Strategic leadership will be of particular importance to this project', but it wasn't clear to one stakeholder who was providing this leadership. There was said to be 'lots of reporting back to the LSB - every twist and turn we reported back to them. So they

were well sighted on the problems that we were having'. It may have expected that the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board would have played a leadership role when things were going wrong on the project. It was not clear, however, what if any role was being played by the Board in attempting to resolve difficulties and to get it 'back on track'.

Policy context

2.21 A third barrier was said to have resulted from the Public Services Commission which raised the possibility of local government reorganisation. According to one, 'Barriers have gone up around Merthyr...barriers gone up around RCT'. It was also suggested that austerity measures introduced during the course of the project resulted in a change in focus from one that was patient-centred around Mavis, to one around finance, positioning and wider integration.

The role of Welsh Government

2.22 The project manager produced annual reports which outlined a series of delays to the project. For instance, it took more than a year to sign-off the terms of reference. The interviews revealed that there has been some contact with the Welsh Government and advice had been taken into account. It wasn't clear whether there was any responsibility on the Welsh Government to intervene or whether once the governance arrangements are in place, their hands were effectively tied and responsibility lay with the recipient of the funding and the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board?

Collaborative capacity

Governance structure

2.23 The Project Board consisted of seventeen people representing all the key organisations. Its role was to 'shape the vision of the project as well as managing expectations of both partner organisations and the general public'. It was chaired by a Director of Cwm Taf local health board. The project manager had to chair a couple of meetings which was difficult as there was uncertainty around scope, ownership and the way forward.

2.24 There was a deliberate policy to take a broad and inclusive approach to determining which stakeholders would be involved. The view was that organisations would withdrawal from the process if they didn't think it was

valuable to them. Despite the difficulties, there has been good attendance and no organisation has dropped out of the process.

2.25 The Board was described by one interviewee as being not united. While everyone had the chance to contribute, relationships were not built across partners and the meetings (1-1½ hours) every month or so (according to some interviewees, sporadic according to another), largely consisted of the health board providing updates on the mapping. There was little/no debate on what is best for the people. 'It felt like we were there to listen. There was no clear vision'. It was also difficult to ascertain progress between meetings. This criticism was accepted by the health board. As there were no action points for partners, this meant that they were almost watching. There was little/no contact between meetings. Discussions only took place if there was a blockage.

2.26 A representative from Merthyr Tydfil on the Board was employed as a consultant. He was primarily working for the best interests of the council and not necessarily the Cwm Taf area. He didn't think there was a great deal of benefit for Merthyr Tydfil from the project as their spend is pretty small, although there were clear opportunities for community service transport in the area to get more work and good benefits for patients.

2.27 While RCT was a grant-recipient body, Cwm Taf local health board were the Project Sponsor and Management body, including overseeing all project administration. They wanted to be seen as the forerunners of leading a big project and had delegated authority to undertake activities between meetings. According to the terms of reference, the Chair of the Project Board is accountable to and will report progress to the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board on a quarterly basis.

2.28 Given that the new project plan targets the resources towards the two councils, discussions are due to take place on whether the health board are going to continue to manage the governance of the project.

Collaboration agreements

2.29 The project aimed to generate two main collaborative agreements - the first is a Project Initiation Document. This outlined project management arrangements with all the key partners and was signed-off by the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board.

2.30 The second is more substantial and is a Section 33 agreement. This will allow the health board and local councils to pool their transport budgets and share management arrangements. This Agreement will require a unified service and a clear vision - but neither is currently in place.

The project manager

2.31 The project was relatively unusual in that there was no dedicated project manager as he works for half his time on this project. It is unlikely that a full-time project manager would have made any difference to the project. He is well-versed on the policy context and in particular the Griffiths Review. A lot of time has been spent on conflict resolution tactics - but with only limited success. One potential learning point from this is whether the architect of a project should manage its' delivery as they are so closely committed to it.

Monitoring

2.32 A series of measures were outlined to assess the success of the project which included:

- Reduction in missed appointments;
- More effective vehicle journey planning;
- Reduction in the time spent on vehicles;
- Improved fairness of service provision;
- Improved information sharing;
- Easier access through a single point of contact; and
- Cost efficiencies achieved.

2.33 But as the project has not reached the implementation stage, there are no monitoring processes in place.

2.34 The WEFO indicators were described as being really useful as they provided a reminder of where the money is coming from and what the project is focussed upon.

Learning

2.35 The project has learnt in two main ways. First, it gained insights from good practice in Norfolk in particular but also in other related projects in this area and put actions in place to remedy potential problems. Second,

while it took some time to realise, a new approach has now been designed which has learnt from the difficulties in earlier phases of the project.

Support by the ESF-LSB national team

2.36 The project manager has attended some training events and network meetings. These were described as being reasonably helpful to find out what other projects were doing, but then 'everybody goes back to their own projects and the events weren't repeated'.

2.37 There was no mention in any interview of the SET officer.

2.38 There was no budget in the proposal for local evaluation. The project manager received some support on evaluation in the early stages from the Welsh Government but would have welcomed further guidance.

Public service improvement (outcomes)

2.39 As shown above, there were clear outcomes intended from the project but no progress has been made to date on achieving them.

2.40 One piece of advice from Norfolk CC was that they should be prepared for the long haul as their project was derailed by a year because of failure to agree the end product document. This project managed to get through these 'choppy waters'. For Transforming Transport, partners still seem supportive of the rationale for the project but the revised plan still needs to be signed-off by the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board (as at Qtr 2 2014/15).

The future

2.41 At the time of the interviews, the project was being re-designed and a new Project Brief was being produced for the Cwm Taf Regional Collaboration Board to consider.

2.42 A number of interviewees talked about the potential for further improvement in transport provision e.g. integrating school transport across councils, co-ordinating how hospitals organise their transport system, joining-up community transport providers to work across areas, sharing vehicles between sectors. Innovative ideas seem to be there but Transforming Transport shows that it is much harder to deliver these in practice.

2.43 There is potential for Transforming Transport to have spin-offs into other areas of joint work. The project aims to consider these opportunities before the end of the funding, but time has run out.

Conclusions

2.44 At the outset of the project, it was suggested that this could be a test case for integration. 'If it could work here, it could work elsewhere'. The problem, to date, is that the project has not worked due to difficulties between key partners.

2.45 There are a number of lessons from this experience. First, a project needs a clear vision which partners are signed-up to. There was an assumption that the project would be able to bring people on board. Organisations were asked to take a leap of faith in providing data for the modelling to take place. Whoever holds the information holds the power, and as organisational outcomes were not clear, this seemed to be a risk too far for some partners. Organisational agendas should perhaps have been explicitly discussed at the outset of the project. Service integration at one level demands disintegration and changes in service standards at another. A more integrated service for Mavis must translate at some level into loss of resource, staff and control for one or other of the partner organisations. It is not clear to us that some of the partner organisations - particularly those currently delivering transport services - had reconciled themselves to that loss.

2.46 Second, it is clear that while the choice of IT system was critical to the development of this project, the negotiation of a commitment to it across key partners was mishandled from the outset. It is unclear whether it would have been better to resolve these matters before submitting the bid to ESF or else to have left the choice of the IT system open so that all partners were involved in choosing the best system. Either way confusion on this matter alienated some partners.

2.47 Linked to the above, a third lesson is that the project may have been too ambitious. Organisations were trying to deliver according to the funding schedule of three years. Service integration can take time and is context dependent. Lots of promises are made in bidding documents. For example, this project was going to 'actively encourage the increased employment of the local workforce and citizens will become more

economically active for longer', but no evidence was provided on how this would be done and it remains a long-term aspiration.

2.48 Fourth, the project reveals that more needs to be done to integrate health and social care and then the transport arrangements should fall out of that. This project tried to do it the other way around.

2.49 Fifth, designing a document which outlined the expected outcomes for all partners is a useful exercise, but more could have been done to develop shared outcomes to stop organisations focusing upon their own targets.

2.50 Sixth, the uncertain policy context re the merging of local councils and the impact of austerity did not help matters. It was said to leave a trail of uncertainty and anxiety about future arrangements. Building relationships across partners and keeping the focus on the outcomes for Mavis and other residents within Cwm Taf could have provided motivation to keep the project 'on track'.

2.51 Seventh, the person who develops the bid shouldn't necessarily manage it because they can lose objectivity.

2.52 Finally, when a project becomes stalled, there needs to be someone providing leadership and addressing the barriers to progress. More support or enabling action at the chief executive level (or at director level) was needed across all organisations. It is difficult, if not impossible, for an operational project manager to overcome some organisational barriers. Transforming Transport remains a priority project for the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board and they have a responsibility to deliver outcomes for Mavis (and many others like her).

3 Financial Inclusion Together (FIT)

Introduction

3.1 The Financial Inclusion Together (FIT) project aims to develop existing resources and services on financial inclusion across Conwy and Denbighshire. It intends to influence LSB partner organisations and funding bodies through an awareness-raising programme to support and prioritise resources, services and projects linked to financial inclusion. The project targeted front-line workers in particular with financial inclusion knowledge and resources to support people they have contact with to be financially included.

3.2 The main partners of the project are members of the Local Service Board (LSB) and include Conwy and Denbighshire Councils, Coleg Llandrillo, Voluntary Services Councils (VSCs), local housing associations represented by Cartrefi Conwy, North Wales Police, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, and third sector organisations which provide financial inclusion services.

3.3 The project was awarded funding in mid-2012 but did not begin until April 2013 due to delays in recruiting staff. The large majority (70%) of the £241,000 funding covers the salaries of the project manager and a development officer.

Context

3.4 The general economic context for the project focuses on the relatively poor position of Conwy and Denbighshire on measures of access to economic opportunity, and concerns to raise levels of financial inclusion among the population as a whole, including improved advice and signposting to different types of financial services both on and off line.

3.5 The origins of the project derive from a series of initiatives on the management of welfare rights and benefits across local government in the UK. It responds in particular to the Welsh Government's strategy on Financial Inclusion through its policy champion, the Welsh Cooperative Centre (WCC), a non-for-profit organisation. The FIT project brings together different ideas and initiatives and adapts these to the socio-economic needs of Conwy and Denbighshire as a whole, but also to

particularly deprived areas within the two counties. These are areas with high rates of unemployment, poverty and low levels of economic activity which can spill-over into financial inclusion problems for disadvantaged groups.

Methods

3.6 Data were collected between May-June 2014 and included a total of twelve interviews with representatives from a range of different organisations in the public and third sectors. Internal documentation on the management of the project was consulted and a beneficiary survey targeting trained front-line workers was distributed to assess the impact of the project (IFF, 2014).

3.7 The analysis presented below follows the structure suggested by the theory of change designed for the overall ESF-LSB national evaluation.

Inputs

3.8 Beyond the ESF money, the main input used to implement the project has been staff time from the various partner organisations. In the majority of cases, the time involved in attending meetings and preparing materials, documents and plans are responsibilities on top of the individuals' 'day jobs'. Denbighshire CC has also provided a member of staff for one day per week to support the development of the e-learning module (further details are provided below).

3.9 The interviewees were convinced on the additionality of the project. They were clear that this type of project would not have been undertaken without the support from the ESF, especially the amount of resources dedicated to training front-line workers.

What has facilitated the project?

3.10 A number of factors have helped the project to work. These include:

- Partnership working
- The role of the third sector and Communities First
- Welsh Government policy direction
- Support by the Welsh Government team

Partnership working

3.11 There has been a long tradition of partnership working and good relationships between members of the joint LSB. Over the last decade, a series of networks and forums have been organised where key stakeholders come together to discuss issues relating to anti-poverty and financial literacy. As a result, several organisations have been involved in partnership projects, many of which have been absorbed by the Children and Young People's Partnerships, now incorporated into Single Integrated Plans. The FIT project has provided an opportunity for both statutory and non-statutory organisations to carry on working together.

The role of the third sector and Communities First

3.12 The participation of the third sector has been important to this project. The third sector's presence has been evident through the Welsh Cooperative Centre (WCC) who have championed financial inclusion in North Wales, and other umbrella and advocacy groups such as the two VSC's, the Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB), North Wales Credit Union (NWCU), and regional housing associations. The role of the WCC has been a very important source of encouragement and support for the project, especially in broadening the focus beyond council services.

3.13 Local communities have also been indirectly involved through the activities on financial advice provided by the Communities First cluster in Conwy. Communities First in Denbighshire, experienced some delays in re-launching their activities after changes to the national programme so was late in contributing to the project.

Welsh Government policy direction

3.14 Two Welsh Government policy strategies - the Financial Inclusion Strategy (2010) and the Tackling Poverty Action Plan (2012) – have helped the FIT project. The project's design has been aligned to these strategies so that the content of the materials distributed in the training sessions includes a clear and holistic understanding on information that helps to: tackle fuel poverty and digital exclusion; increase credit union membership; increase the take-up of eligible benefits claimed successfully; and improve information on the opportunities for water household grants.

- 3.15 The timing of the project coincided with introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which made changes to the benefit system and introduced the so-called 'Bedroom Tax'. The introduction of other grants provided by Welsh Government has complicated the picture for front-line workers, and so the FIT project has helped to increase the knowledge and confidence of these workers.
- 3.16 Promoting financial inclusion through advice is not a new idea within the UK (Money Advice Service, 2014), but it is a topic that has become more prominent as a result of the recent economic crisis and the subsequent budget cuts. The vast range of initiatives, some of which are UK-wide, which provide advice to citizens makes it difficult to isolate the impact of the FIT project upon the population of Conwy and Denbighshire.
- 3.17 The budget cuts have impacted upon the capacity of LSB partners to be fully involved in the project. For example, front-line staff in health have struggled to attend the three-hour training sessions. Officers in the council's Education departments have been similarly constrained. What is needed here are champions to push the objectives of the project.

Support by the Welsh Government team

- 3.18 Support by the ESF-LSB national team in North Wales was considered to be very useful as well as the support provided by the Welsh Government on how to evaluate the project. Oldbell 3 have been commissioned to evaluate the project and are due to report in November 2014.
- 3.19 It would have been helpful to have information on all the different lessons learnt from past projects to shape the development of their project.

Barriers

- 3.20 The FIT project was launched at a time when the joint LSB was carrying out its own internal evaluation to define its priorities. Some interviewees believed that the timing of this added to the organisational circumstances of some of the LSB partner organisations, has prevented the LSB from providing full support and guidance to the delivery project.
- 3.21 One of our interviewees suggested that:

The role of the LSB in supporting the project to fulfil its objectives and aims has been weaker than I would have liked it to be...[LSB members]

expressed an initial commitment to the project, but in delivering that commitment, there has not been enough leadership.

- 3.22 The LSB could have helped to find new ways of overcoming time constraints for training staff encountered by some of the statutory bodies. One LSB member commented:

This kind of project is the right thing to do...I am a little concerned where we have not been able to get involved with things the Welsh Government or people assessing us just come back and say 'you just need to make the time' without thinking about what has stopped [us] being involved before...when are [we] going to make people find time and how are we going to support that. I am not going to overcome this with individual staff and teams and telling them 'you have to do it'. More creative thinking needs to be put into this.

- 3.23 Finally, one interviewee from the third sector complained about being marginalised at the bid-writing stage:

When we first came [involved], it was apparent that the third sector hadn't been quite as included in the writing of the bid as they might have been given that they are essential to financial inclusion.

Collaborative capacity

Governance structure

- 3.24 As show in Figure 1, the joint LSB sits at the apex of the project's reporting structures with the Project Board sitting beneath. This Board is composed of one corporate director, four heads of service from both councils (Planning, Community Development, Welfare Rights, Revenue and Benefits, and Housing), and two officers from the third sector: Cartrefi Conwy and WCC. It meets on a monthly basis and has taken ownership of the project. Denbighshire CC hosts the project manager, project development officer and project administration officer.

- 3.25 The relationship between the Project Board and the LSB is direct given that one of the project board members – Cartrefi Conwy – is also the chair of the joint LSB. The communication line also exists through the officer structures but as mentioned above, this could have been improved.

Figure 1: Governance structure of the FIT project



3.26 The implementation of the project has been delivered through the use of four task-and-finish groups. These were created at different times during the development of the project and included a:

- Baseline group: through a results based accountability exercise, a set of performance indicators to monitor the development of the project and a mapping of service providers on financial inclusion was achieved.
- Awareness-raising group: a training course and information pack was developed for front-line workers to raise awareness of financial inclusion and the forms of advice, support and services available. A series of presentations and toolkits for mid and top managers were also produced.
- E-learning group: an online training course was being prepared at time of fieldwork aiming to introduce face-to-face training after the ESF grant ends.
- Referral system: preparation to launch a single referral system across eight partner organisations, this included reaching agreement on data protection issues.

3.27 The project manager led the configuration of each task and finish group, which at times would involve her managing a multi-agency team consisting of 27 individuals. Table 1 provides more detail on these task and finish groups.

Table 1: Task and finish groups of FIT

	Baseline	Awareness raising	E-learning	Referral
Participating partners	CAB x 2 LAs . Coleg Llandrillo . VSC Conwy . Revenue & Benefits – CCBC . Welfare Rights – DCC . PennySmart	. Communities First – CCBC . CAB Denb. . Housing – DCC . Welfare Rights – DCC. . Coleg Llandrillo . PennySmart	. HR – CCBC . Welfare Rights – DCC . Coleg Llandrillo/Grwp Llandrillo Menai . VSC Denb. . Police . Fire . Housing – DCC . Welsh Government	. CAB x 2 LAs- . NWCUC . Benefit Advice Shop . Shelter Cymru . Revenue & Benefits – CBC . Welfare Rights – DCC . Police (informally)
Responsible in delivering	Project management team: project manager and project officer with support from WCC officer			
Inputs other than ESF	Staff time	Staff time	Staff time Financial resources by two councils	Staff time
Outputs/ outcomes (as of May 2013)				
Collaborative outputs	Agreement of project's performance indicators Mapping of 71 providers of FI services	Trained 395 workers over 34 sessions Organised 3 project events Delivered 19 presentations	Course design and implementation – to be achieved by December 2014	Local service agreement to run a single referral system across 8 partner organisations – to be launched June 2014
Intermediate outcomes (processes leading to improved services)	Smaller organisations more informed about a wider range of FI providers	Front-line workers more knowledgeable and confident about FI services	A long-term running system of awareness raising	A more integrated referral system. (costs of managing this system are unknown)
Final outcomes	Not applicable	Early evidence suggests that front-line services are more responsive to	Unclear; potentially more cost efficient than face to face training	Front-line services more responsive to people's needs (no

		people's needs Workers are better informed on financial services and providers, which may help to manage their own finances		evidence yet)
Dissemination of best practice/lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Front-line workers and managers learnt from training, toolkits and presentations. Different partner organisations learnt new ways of working in collaboration during the implementation of project. Lessons learnt log existed but no dissemination reports. 			

3.28 In order to ensure that all partners at the operational level were informed about developments in the project, a communication strategy was distributed to all team members. This contained protocols and outlined channels of communication among team members and with external actors such as the local media, ministers and the public. Bi-monthly highlight reports were also distributed to all team members.

Collaboration agreements

3.29 Two collaboration agreements have been achieved. The first is a memorandum of understanding amongst all the LSB members to collaborate in developing FIT across partners and within their own organisational processes. The level of commitment is monitored by a performance indicator for the project (see Table 2 below). The second is a local service agreement between eight service providers to build a shared referral system where front-line workers will be able to log an individual's case. The system will support front-line workers to make referrals quickly and easily to the most appropriate service.

Trust

3.30 Levels of trust pre-existed the FIT project through the financial inclusion networks established in the mid-2000s. The project strengthened the collaboration experience by providing a new opportunity to further improve relationships. In particular, after lobbying from the two VSCs and the WCC officers that third sector organisations need to be part of the decision-making process, FIT has increased the presence of CAB in the strategic negotiations with other statutory partners.

3.31 Through the implementation of FIT, more strategic opportunities have also been generated to 'get to know partners well' by discussing in detail, for example, how to avoid duplication between the services provided by Communities First and CAB in Denbighshire. Collaboration has not, however, been reflected in public and third sector partners applying for joint funding or seeking match-funding.

3.32 A potential threat which could impact negatively upon the level of trust between partners is the role played by the local health board. They have shown little engagement in any of the projects main activities and some members of the Project Board were disappointed by this. The health board's involvement has the potential to have a positive impact as their 5,000 front-line workers could signpost and refer to financial inclusion services. An officer from the health board was aware of this concern and 'embarrassed' about their slow involvement, and suggested that budget constraints to replace workers who attend the training sessions were acting as the main barrier. An alternative view was that senior and middle management of the health board were not providing any capacity to the project.

The project manager

3.33 The project manager was appointed following an external recruitment process as a candidate could not be seconded to the position. The manager's previous experience of working on projects involving multiple partners was helpful. The lack of knowledge on the topic of financial inclusion posed some challenges at the start of manager's job, but her management and organisation skills (based on PRINCE 2¹) in addition to the support provided by the development project officer, project lead and the WCC officer allowed her to fulfil her responsibilities. All interviewees acknowledged the professionalism and drive of the manager and some also highlighted the conflict resolution and listening skills as important attributes.

¹ PRINCE 2 is a project management methodology developed by UK government and extensively used in the UK government sector.

3.34 The project manager has direct access to the LSB and the senior management teams in Conwy and Denbighshire Councils. This allows her to inform officers about the project's progress, raise awareness about the relevance of the project in relation to the Single Integrated Plans and provide some ideas on actions needed to embed FIT objectives into daily working practices. Despite this access, the project manager recognised that the biggest challenge has been to transform support at the senior level into actual changes on the ground.

3.35 The short term contracts of the project manager and development officer created a temporary threat to the project in spring 2014. The project lead raised concerns when the development officer applied for another job before the end of FIT. If this officer would have been successful in getting the job, the project would have encountered a lack of capacity in delivering the training sessions for another 600 workers.

Monitoring

3.36 The baseline task and finish group designed a plan to implement the project objectives and developed the tools to monitor and provide a baseline for the project's evaluation. This work-stream included a Results Based Accountability (RBA) exercise that defined the six indicators of FIT and their corresponding targets.

3.37 Table 2 shows how well the project has performed in relation to these targets. In four cases, the target has been achieved. For indicators 5 and 6, 70% out of the 17 LSB organisations have self-reported back on these issues. On indicator number 5, the best performers are Coleg Llandrillo and the housing associations with the health board and the Fire and Rescue Service reporting the lowest scores. Patterns of performance across LSB organisations are similar for indicator number 6 with the Police joining the group of higher performers and Denbighshire CC joining the group providing the lowest scores.

Table 2: FIT performance indicators

	Indicator	Target population	Target	Achieved
1	% workers who report increased knowledge, confidence and ability to recognise financial inclusion	Front-line workers from all participating organisations	65%	74%*
2	% workers who feel increased confidence in making referrals	Front-line workers	60%	64%*
3	# referrals made by workers	Front-line workers	No target set	--
4	% workers who report that the project has made themselves and/or their family more financially included	Front-line workers	10%	74%*
5	% LSB partner organisations who have demonstrably embedded financial inclusion in their provision	LSB partners	80%	70%**
6	% LSB partners who report increased collaboration/ value to collaboration on financial inclusion	LSB partners	30%	70%**
(*) As of March 2014. The results were obtained from questionnaires at training sessions.				
(**) As of September 2013. Calculations made by the evaluation team.				

3.38 There is no target for indicator number 3. One of the project's objectives is to train 1,000 front-line workers. As of March 2014, 395 officers have attended over 34 sessions. Partners thought it was reasonable to set a target of 3,000 referrals (3 per worker trained), but the task and finish group decided not to use this target because the project encourages prevention and signposting which aims to reduce the burden of referrals on agencies. These indicators tell us nothing about the numbers of people involved in the programme and the actual numbers the percentages are being applied to.

3.39 The project has used 'highlight reports' to monitor the progress of the project and assess the barriers and risks encountered during implementation. These documents are important for all stakeholders at strategic and operational levels in order to understand the status of the project and its future steps. A lesson learnt register was being developed at time of fieldwork to be ready before the termination of the project.

3.40 A particular difficulty for the project is determining the direct impact on the citizen. In an attempt to overcome this problem, the project management team designed a template and asked trained front-line workers to describe the impact of attendance at the training sessions on the citizen. The intention was develop around half a dozen case studies, but as of May 2014, only one case study has been produced.

3.41 Three main learning points have resulted from designing and implementing the monitoring tools of the project:

- It is better to design monitoring and evaluation frameworks at the outset of the project and not during the execution of the process.
- The monitoring of performance indicators demanded the project management team to carry out a systematic approach in gathering and reporting the project's performance. In the first stages of the project, the tools used to collect data were not adequately designed to provide accurate information to the partner organisations.
- The design of the measures to collect data for indicators 5 and 6 have proved to be challenging, so the project manager has created indexes that show the variation is the organisational culture of the LSB partners.

Learning

3.42 Learning within the project has taken place throughout three dimensions. Firstly, front-line workers have learnt through the training sessions promoted by FIT. Workers have increased their knowledge and confidence on financial inclusion which has helped to change their own attitudes and behaviour (see further evidence in the survey report).

3.43 Second, learning within partner organisations has raised awareness and changed attitudes among middle and senior managers about financial inclusion and some organisations have incorporated financial inclusion processes into daily working practices.

3.44 Finally, collaborative learning has also been experienced through the myriad of partner organisations that have contributed to the development of the design, implementation and monitoring of FIT. Our interviews and survey have highlighted the value of bringing the third sector into the project by broadening, in scope and in depth, the understanding of financial inclusion provision. Coordination between public agencies, such as Communities First and third sector organisations has been improved which has reduced duplication.

Sharing the learning

3.45 The project has been relatively weak at disseminating its learning, but this may reflect the emphasis at this stage on implementation. There is a great potential for workers' to disseminate their knowledge to service users and their own networks, but partner organisations have not been proactive

in sharing the mechanisms that they have used to embed financial inclusion into their working practices.

3.46 Disseminating the results from the survey will help the project to gain credibility. Officers from education and health pointed out that publication and dissemination of the project's outcomes would not only motivate them to become more active partners, but could also provide evidence for those wishing to replicate the project in other regions.

3.47 Finally, all stakeholders need to consider what points are most important to share in the 'lessons learnt report'.

Organisational and service change

3.48 Those partners working at the operational level have appreciated the role of the project manager in bringing them together to discuss the detailed planning and implementation of the project. The short timeframe of the project meant that decisions needed to be taken quickly. The Project Board have played a key role in enabling effective and targeted project delivery

3.49 One of the challenges of the project is to turn all partners' commitments into actions that promote financial inclusion into their daily working processes. Where this has been achieved, more needs to be done to learn from this 'good practice'. For example, Conwy Council was considered as an exemplar in embedding FIT into its departments' service plans and incorporating principles into its staffing policies. These changes partly reflect the successful championing of financial inclusion in Conwy by a member of the Project Board. The project manager has designed a toolkit (Ideas Lab 2013-2014) to embed financial inclusion in service plans. Partners need to be encouraged to use this toolkit and discuss ways in which their front-line workers could be trained given constraints of time.

3.50 The e-learning task and finish group will develop an online tool using resources (both financial and staff) provided by the two local councils with the guidance from Coleg Llandrillo. The capacity to produce this output is considered by partners a way of ensuring the project's sustainability. The project has been upskilling some staff across LSB organisations (through 'Train the Trainer sessions') to deliver training sessions face to face in their own organisation once the project comes to a close.

Public service improvement (outcomes)

3.51 The FIT project was designed to bring together a plethora of information on financial advice that could simplify the front-line workers' jobs in signposting and making referrals to financial inclusion providers. It aimed to embed financial inclusion concepts into organisations' working practices.

3.52 As mentioned previously, it is difficult to isolate the effect of FIT from other initiatives in Wales and the UK that focus upon raising levels of advice and awareness on financial inclusion. Table 3 outlines some variables which could help to assess the impact of the project. It would be unrealistic to expect the project to have any influence on the general background statistics, but it could contribute towards the proportion of people who are able to keep up with bills and credit commitments. The use of organisations providing debt advice looks to be the most useful variable, but there is no data available at the local authority level.

Table 3: Contextual indicators for Conwy and Denbighshire

	Conwy	Denbighshire	Wales
General background indicators			
GDP (GB=100) 2011	62.8	62.8	75.2
Household income (UK=100) 2011	91.5	91.5	88.1
Employment rate - aged 16-64 Apr12-Mar13	70.7	69.4	67.6
Unemployment rate - aged 16-64 Apr12-Mar13	6.9	7.0	8.5
Specific indicators			
Overall credit union membership (2013)	3420	3854	na
Junior credit union membership (2013)	339	783	na
Ability to keep up with bills and credit commitments (May 2013) %			
<i>Keeping up with all bills and commitments without any difficulties</i>	55.6	56.3	47.6
<i>Keeping up with all bills and commitments but it is a struggle from time to time</i>	27.4	29.3	33.0
<i>Keeping up with all bills and commitments but it is a constant struggle</i>	9.4	9.3	11.9
<i>Falling behind with some bills or credit commitments</i>	1.8	1.2	3.0
<i>Having real financial problems and fallen behind with many bills etc</i>	1.1	0.7	1.3
<i>Have no bills</i>	4.7	3.0	3.1
Use of organisations providing debt advice in last year (May 2013) %	na	na	4.0
Number of LSOAs in most deprived 30% in Wales WIMD, 2011	25	21	na

3.53 Despite these constraints, the emphasis the RBA exercise put on the workers' own benefit, and that of their families (indicator 4 in Table 2), provides a proxy on the impact of FIT upon citizens. Our survey provides an opportunity to assess the impact of FIT on front-line workers. The survey was sent to 395 front-line workers who attended FIT training sessions before April 2014. A response rate of 46% was obtained (see

IFF Research, 2014). The characteristics of these respondents show that the great majority worked in the public sector (71%) as opposed to the third or private sectors and the most common type of service/advice they provided to citizens regarded financial inclusion, health and social care, community issues and housing.

Improving collaboration

3.54 The survey asked workers if the training sessions led to more collaborative working with other organisations. Less than half of the respondents (44%) replied that some degree of collaboration has happened with other organisations. This collaboration occurred predominantly with public agencies (81%), followed by third sector organisations (73%) and consisted of sharing knowledge, delivering better services and bringing together skills and resources.

3.55 69% of workers agreed that knowledge gained during training has been shared among other staff at their organisations. Where learning was not shared, this was because it was not relevant to other staff (41%) or because their colleagues had also attended the training (34%). Only 7% perceived that the lack of sharing was because of a lack of support from senior management. This finding seems to conflict with views from interviewees and may reflect the fact that collaboration on financial inclusion may be happening from the bottom up.

Improving workers' own financial literacy and the impact on the citizen

3.56 The survey showed that the training sessions can transcend a working culture as more than half of respondents (55%) said that they used what they learnt to provide informal advice to their families or friends. Not surprisingly, seven in ten agreed that they know where to go for advice on financial inclusion matters (72%). Overall, 40% of workers had made some changes to their financial practices as a result of attending the session.

3.57 The other way in which the project assesses impact on citizens is through the use of case study narratives that are submitted by front-line workers who have attended training. The project has struggled in getting workers to submit case studies because of the time it takes to write them. In the single case study submitted to date, it took the worker eight months to complete as time was needed to include an assessment of his/her

impact on the citizen. In this case study, the worker explicitly acknowledges the value of the training session to assist Mr and Mrs F in handling their household's finances to pay rent, fuel and food:

'I would not have known how to assist them with this without having attended the financial inclusion training which increased my knowledge in this area'

3.58 This worker describes a range of grants and benefit schemes s/he assisted Mr and Mrs F to apply for. It is unclear whether knowledge of all these schemes resulted from the training or from previous experience. To ensure that there is more clarity on this issue, the template could have asked the worker to specify which schemes were solely provided by the training.

3.59 More examples on how front-line workers have provided information on financial inclusion to people are provided in the survey report.

Conclusions

3.60 One of the aims of the project was to 'ensure a sustainable legacy of quality joint working processes and services on financial inclusion of all relevant organisations'. The e-learning resource and 'train the trainer' events may help to do this but this will be harder without the push of the dedicated staff funded by ESF. Another objective was the production of a strategic cross county plan for financial inclusion and anti-poverty, but it was decided, given the delayed start to the project, that efforts should be focused upon raising awareness of financial inclusion rather than designing a strategy.

3.61 Our findings suggest that FIT has enhanced collaborative working. It has instituted a new mechanism where implementation can be delivered in a collaborative way through task and finish groups. Collaboration has mainly developed in the preparation and implementation of the awareness raising programme, but it is less clear how collaboration is happening among partners that are committed to embed financial inclusion principles into their daily practices. There is some indication that sharing of information and other type of resources exists among front-line workers, however, this has not been promoted systematically at a strategic or corporate level nor monitored in a consistent way. We are still to see how the integrated referral system will facilitate the front-line workers'

performance and if third sector organisations will be able to cope with a potential increase in demand.

3.62 While the LSB has helped to bring the key partners around the table, the role played by the LSB is an area for improvement. A more engaged LSB could have allowed the project to think of creative ways in which to encourage partner organisations to transform their 'buy in' of the project into implementation on the ground. Senior public service leaders could also have considered whether there were opportunities to pool resources to improve the sustainability of the project.

3.63 It has to be recognised that the project's measures of impact on citizens are not robust. They are indirect and rely upon the self-reporting of the front-line workers. It is unlikely that FIT (or potentially any project) will be able to have a discernible impact on the majority of measures outlined in Table 3. The approach of collecting case studies of impact on citizens seems a sensible alternative and more examples are needed.

3.64 All of our interviewees recognised that the nature of the project's design (adopting ideas from other initiatives in the UK) and scope can be considered innovative within the debates of financial capability and inclusion. It is important, therefore, that the outputs from the project (such as the training materials and e-learning course) as well as information on outcomes should be shared with other regions within Wales and beyond.

Annex - Situating FIT in a broader policy debate.

- 3.65 The academic and policy debates on financial inclusion are closely related to the concept of financial capability or literacy. In 2006, the Financial Services Authority defined financial capability as a policy that aims to improve the knowledge, skills and confidence of people to make financial decisions. The retrenchment of the welfare state in the UK has encouraged the development of this policy, which aims to encourage people to change behaviour to meet their own individual welfare needs.
- 3.66 This socio-political phenomenon has made the UK, alongside the US, pioneers in advancing this policy (Seymour and Vlaev, 2012; Prabhakar, 2014). The 2008 crisis accentuated the importance of this topic as it has been perceived that financial illiteracy pushed consumers to high levels of debt, which accentuated the problems that financial deregulation generated at a global level.
- 3.67 A key policy document produced by HM Treasury identified many of the institutional barriers that low income families face in accessing financial advice and sets the ground for finding mechanisms to change consumer behaviour (HM Treasury, 2007). The coalition government, through the Behavioural Insight Team based in the Cabinet Office, has been interested in promoting the policy of behavioural change around topics such as health care, climate change and financial management (savings and pensions). The team has followed the MINDSPACE framework (Dolan et al., 2012) which identifies the contextual factors that influence behavioural change in a population.
- 3.68 Although the FIT project has been designed in a regional context, it includes some ideas that chime with policy mechanisms at the national level which aim to change behaviour in the money management of residents (see Money Advice Service, 2014). FIT aims to situate front-line workers as part of the context that contributes to changing behaviour. Through their improved knowledge and confidence, these workers act as 'messengers' (Dolan et al., 2012) who are prepared and trusted to give credible information to sectors of the population who have struggled (a) to access mainstream services and (b) to understand changes in recent welfare rights and benefits.

- 3.69 FIT is a project which is closely linked to the 'citizenship approach' of financial capability (Prabhakar, 2014). This approach responds to strategies against poverty and exclusion through seeking a means to avoid people falling into poverty. For example, modest financial shocks to a household (e.g. breakdown of a washing machine) can put financial stress on a family. Through education programmes on financial management, this type of scenario can be avoided for future generations.
- 3.70 The Welsh Government's Financial Inclusion Strategy for Wales (2010) and Action Plan (2012) support the value of education programmes and recommends financial planning in school curricula. Similar to the arguments posed by stakeholders in the FIT project, the research by Prabhakar (2014) argues that any efforts to boost financial capability can only succeed if they are embedded within the organisational culture of institutions providing financial services.
- 3.71 FIT incorporates ideas from education programmes on money management directed to workers and employers (Tagtmeier, 2014). These programmes tend to focus on financial planning sessions to increase the workers' productivity. In FIT, workers act as a means to assist the public to understand the changes in the welfare state, in doing so, they may encounter opportunities that could benefit their own personal financial situation. Alhenawi and Elkhal (2013) argue that increased knowledge does not ensure that people will produce a financial plan. They recommend that alongside the inclusion of financial education in school curricula, money management courses that address the major financial life cycles (buying property, divorce, retirement) are included in the development and training of workers.
- 3.72 Lusardi (2013) shows that high percentages of financial illiteracy are prevalent in western developed countries regardless of their levels in GDP. The report highlights how females are more likely than men to say that they are not financially knowledgeable. This finding emphasises the special care that financial literacy programmes have to put upon specific sections of the population not only upon women but also on young people, elderly, the unemployed and those with low levels of education. FIT has not specifically addressed this aspect in its implementation but could consider it if the project continued in any form.

3.73 A recent report by the Money Advice Service (2014) recommends that setting a saving target and substituting the consumption of goods for cheaper ones are incentives that show how people can overcome debt and minimise threats that may take them into poverty. In addition to the procedural challenges that FIT has encountered (e.g. lack of incentives to ensure financial inclusion is embedded in all partner organisations, lack of capacity to deal with increased number of referrals), a future project should consider addressing how its intermediate outcomes can be more closely linked to final outcomes that respond to citizen needs in managing their bills and financial planning.

3A Financial Inclusion Together (FIT)

Beneficiary Survey full findings

Introduction

- 3.74 The Financial Inclusion Together project aims to develop and increase collaboration between existing services and resources across Conwy and Denbighshire. It aims, in part, to do this through training frontline workers on financial inclusion matters so that they have the resources to advise the people they come in contact with to help them become financially included.
- 3.75 The long term sustainability of the project will be achieved through the organisations involved in the partnership embedding financial inclusion into their culture, and also through the development of an e-learning course to substitute the face-to-face training when the project funding comes to an end.
- 3.76 As part of the evaluation of the ESF-LSB National Priority Delivery Project, a case study has been conducted of the FIT Project. This involved interviews with the Project Board and other organisations involved in the partnership, and of a survey of frontline workers who have benefited from the training offered by FIT.
- 3.77 This report outlines the findings from the survey, and is intended to be supplementary to the full case study write up (REFERENCE).

Survey methodology

- 3.78 The survey was conducted by IFF Research, and designed in collaboration with Cardiff Business School.
- 3.79 A mixed online and telephone methodology was adopted for the study, with fieldwork taking place between 21st May and 6th June 2014.
- 3.80 All individuals for whom an email address was held were sent an email invitation to the survey; those who had not responded and those for whom no email address was available were then telephoned the following week to invite them to complete the survey that way.
- 3.81 In total, 180 of the 395 who attended the training took part in the survey, a response rate of 46%.

Profile of individuals attending training

3.82 All individuals who had attended a Financial Inclusion Awareness Raising session run by Financial Inclusion Together were invited to take part in the survey. This chapter outlines the profile of those who took part.

Demographic profile

3.83 There was a significant gender imbalance amongst the advisors surveyed; three-quarters of advisors were female (74%). This reflected the gender spread of the list of attendees at the sessions, suggesting the interviews achieved are representative of the population as a whole.

3.84 Basic demographic information was gathered to facilitate analysis of whether the training affected different demographic groups in different ways. Over half of those interviewed were aged between 35 and 54 with a further quarter under the age of 35. In the vast majority of cases, advisors classified themselves as White British.

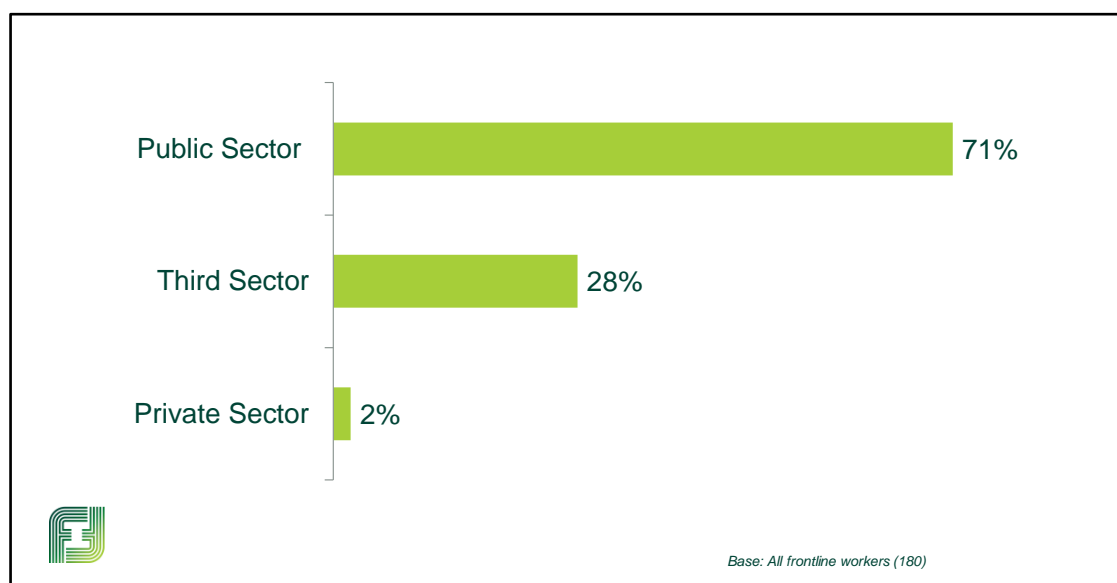
3.85 Table 1.1 shows the demographic profile of the 180 advisors interviewed for the research.

Table 1.1: Demographic profile of front line workers

Characteristic	Proportion
Base	(180)
	%
Gender	
Male	24
Female	74
(Refused)	(1)
Age	
Under 25	4
25 - 34	20
35 - 44	26
45 – 54	36
55 – 64	13
65+	1
(Refused)	(1)
Ethnic background	
White British	92
White other background	11
Asian or Asian British/Indian	1
Other ethnic background	6
(Refused)	(2)

3.86 The majority of frontline workers were employed by public sector organisations, although a sizeable minority were employed in the third sector (Figure 1.1). Very few were employed by the private sector – for this reason this report only presents analysis from the public and third sectors where relevant.

Figure 1.1: Sector of employment



3.87 The majority of public sector workers were from the councils (65%) but there was also representation from public sector bodies involved in Housing, Fire, Police, Health and Education.

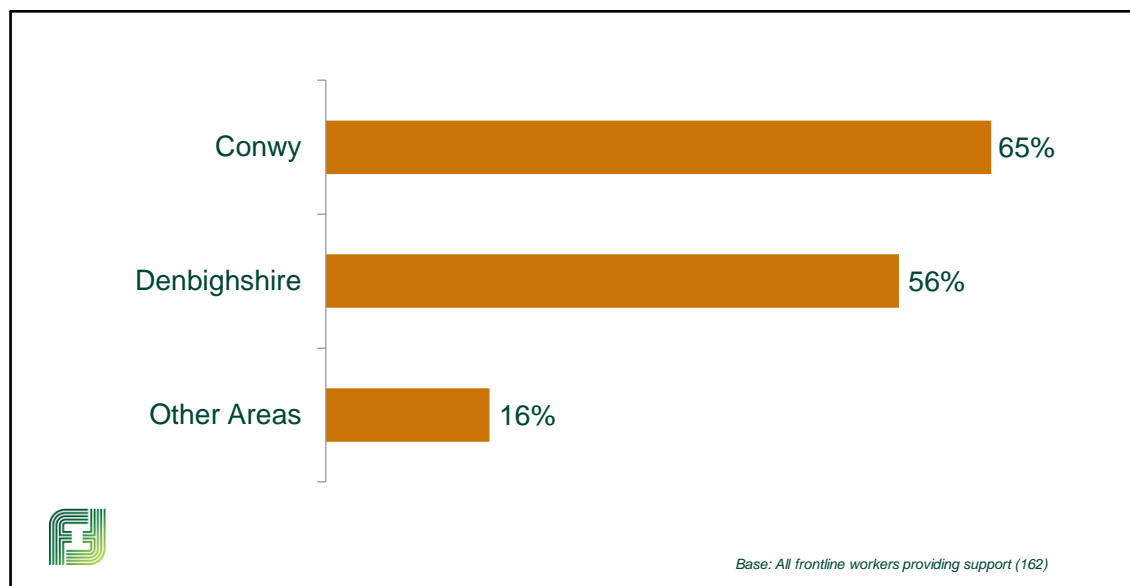
Table 1.2: Public sector participation

Public services	Proportion
Base – All public sector	(217)
	%
Councils	65
Housing	10
Fire	9
Education	6
Police	5
Health	4
Other	2

3.88 The project covers frontline workers in Conwy and Denbighshire. Figure 1.2 shows that slightly more frontline workers involved in providing

support in Conwy completed the survey than in Denbighshire, however the proportion was relatively even. Around a quarter (23%) were involved in supporting individuals or households in both counties. A small number (16%) were also involved in providing support outside the Conwy and Denbighshire region.

Figure 1.2: Region in which frontline workers provide support



Profile of support provided

3.89 The majority of attendees (91%) said their job involved supporting individuals or households in some form; of the remainder, most were public-facing even if support wasn't explicitly part of their remit (for example a council receptionist, debt recovery and people who advise/train staff within local authorities). From this point on, this report will refer to the survey respondents as "frontline workers".

3.90 Half of frontline workers providing support said that supporting or advising individuals accounted for most of or their entire job role (51%). Frontline workers working with organisations in the third sector were significantly more likely to say that advice provision was the sole remit of their job role (44%) whereas only 14% of those working with public sector organisations said this.

3.91 Two-thirds of frontline workers (67%) said that their main method of conducting their advice sessions was out of a clinic or establishment which

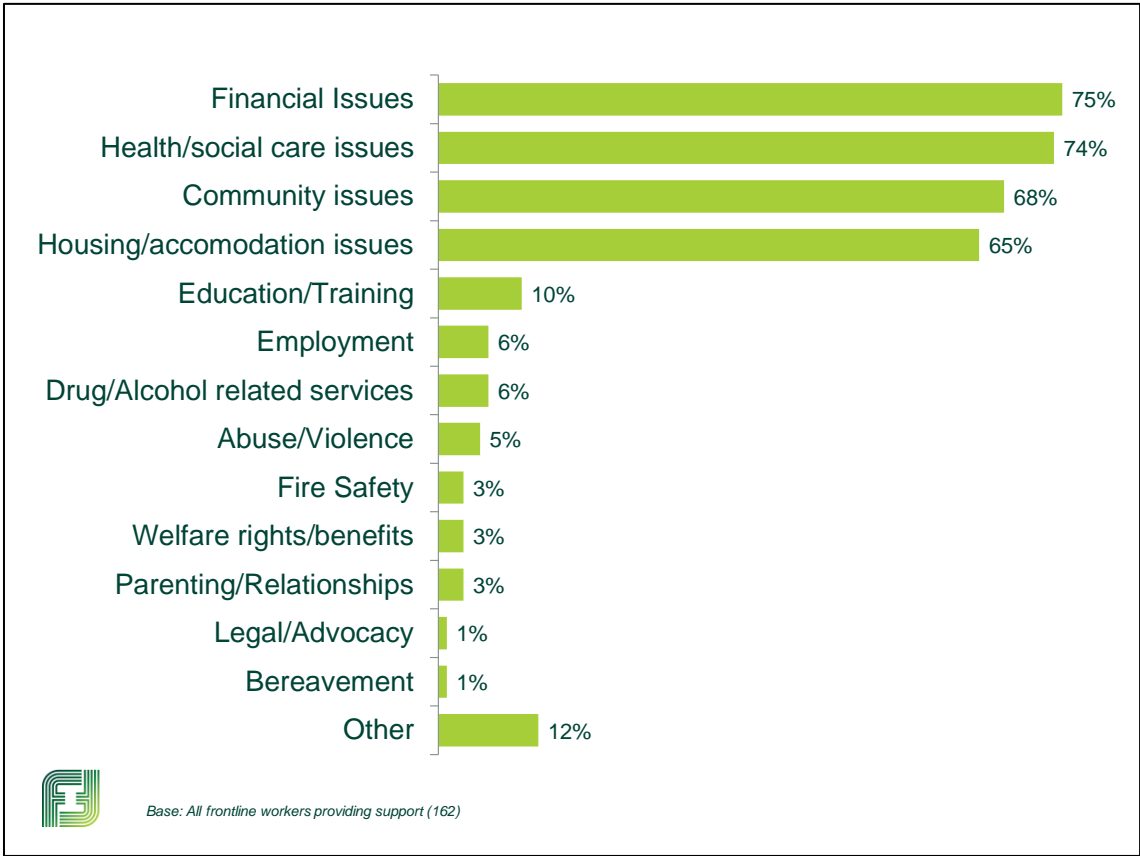
clients visit. However in most cases they were not limited to one method of working and over half also visited clients in their homes (56%) and two-fifths arranged to meet elsewhere.

3.92 A fifth of frontline workers (21%) said that the scope of their job involved non-face-to-face contact with the people they support and they conducted all of their advice sessions through either telephone or email communications.

3.93 Frontline workers involved in supporting fewer than 10 households were significantly more likely to visit their clients at their homes (75%) when compared to advisors dealing with more than 25 households (50%).

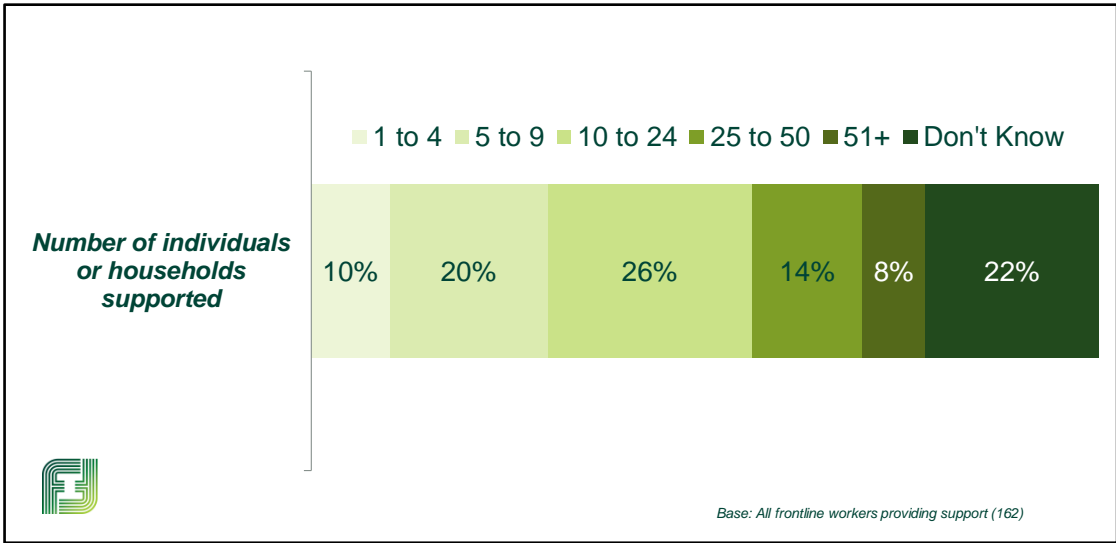
3.94 Figure 1.3 shows the type of support provided by frontline workers. The most common type of support or advice offered by advisors was on financial issues (75%). Just under three-quarters of frontline workers provided support on health and social care issues (74%) and two-thirds on community related issues (68%) and housing and accommodation issues (65%). These four represented the main subjects of advice provided by frontline workers interviewed.

Figure 1.3: Scope of advice offered by frontline workers



3.95 Figure 1.4 shows the number of individuals or households that frontline workers support. Over half of workers have a 'client base' of fewer than 25 individuals/households (56%) with one in ten saying they only worked with fewer than 5 (10%). One in five, however, could not give a figure (22%).

Figure 1.4: Number of individuals or households frontline workers support



Impacts of the training

3.96 Whilst it is the frontline workers who attend the training, the intention is that the impact is felt in the wider community as workers use the information they have to advise citizens on financial inclusion.

3.97 Through improving the ability of the workers to provide support for individuals, the training has the potential to impact positively on the community. In addition, the knowledge the workers bring back to their own organisation can be shared among others, and knowledge of other services can drive collaboration both within the organisations the staff work for and with other initiatives.

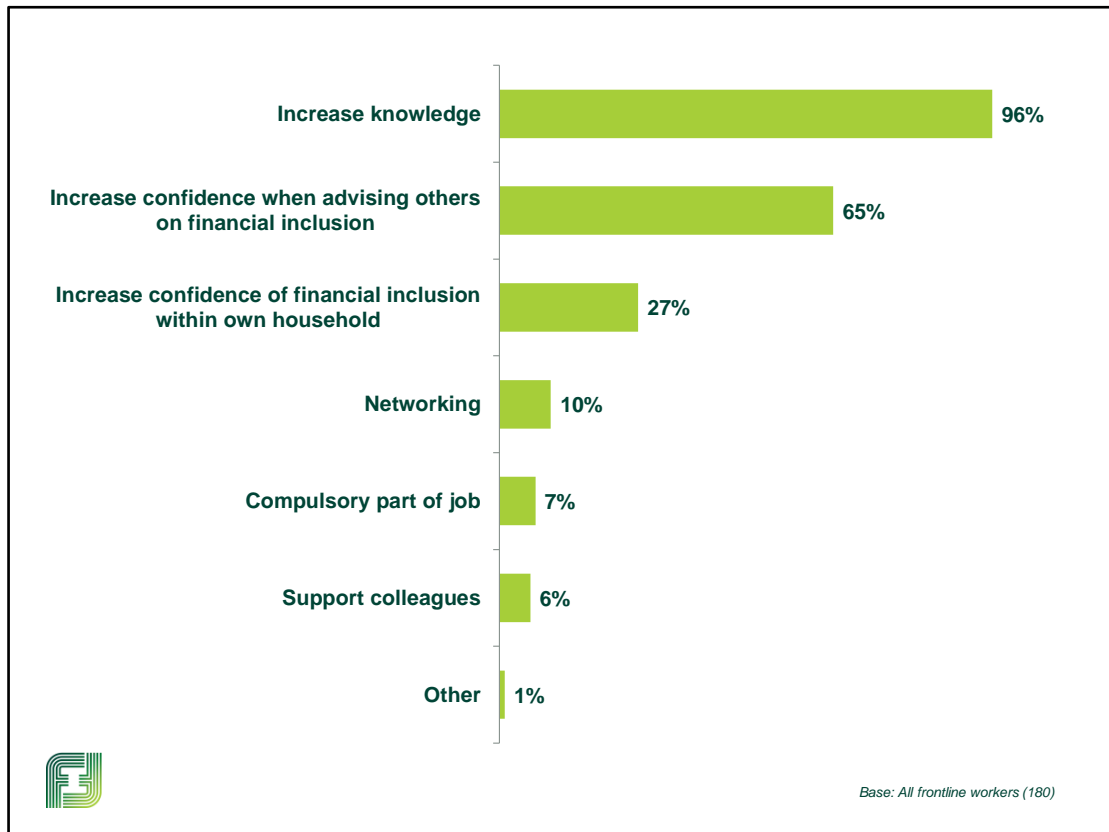
3.98 It is also important to look at the workers as individuals themselves, who could benefit from increased knowledge about financial inclusion. Asking workers whether their new knowledge has allowed them to make changes in their own households is an important measure of the potential the advice they are giving has to empower others to make similar changes.

Motivations for attending training

3.99 For context, the survey looked at what the individuals themselves hoped to achieve by attending training by asking them what their reasons were for attending the FIT awareness raising session. The vast majority (96%) of those attending said the reason for doing so was to increase their knowledge of financial inclusion issues, and two-thirds (65%) said they also wanted to increase their confidence in this area.

3.100 Improving financial inclusion in their own household was a motivator for just over a quarter (27%). Figure 1.5 shows the motivators for attending the sessions in full.

Figure 1.5: Motivators for attending FIT awareness raising session



Impact on the support given

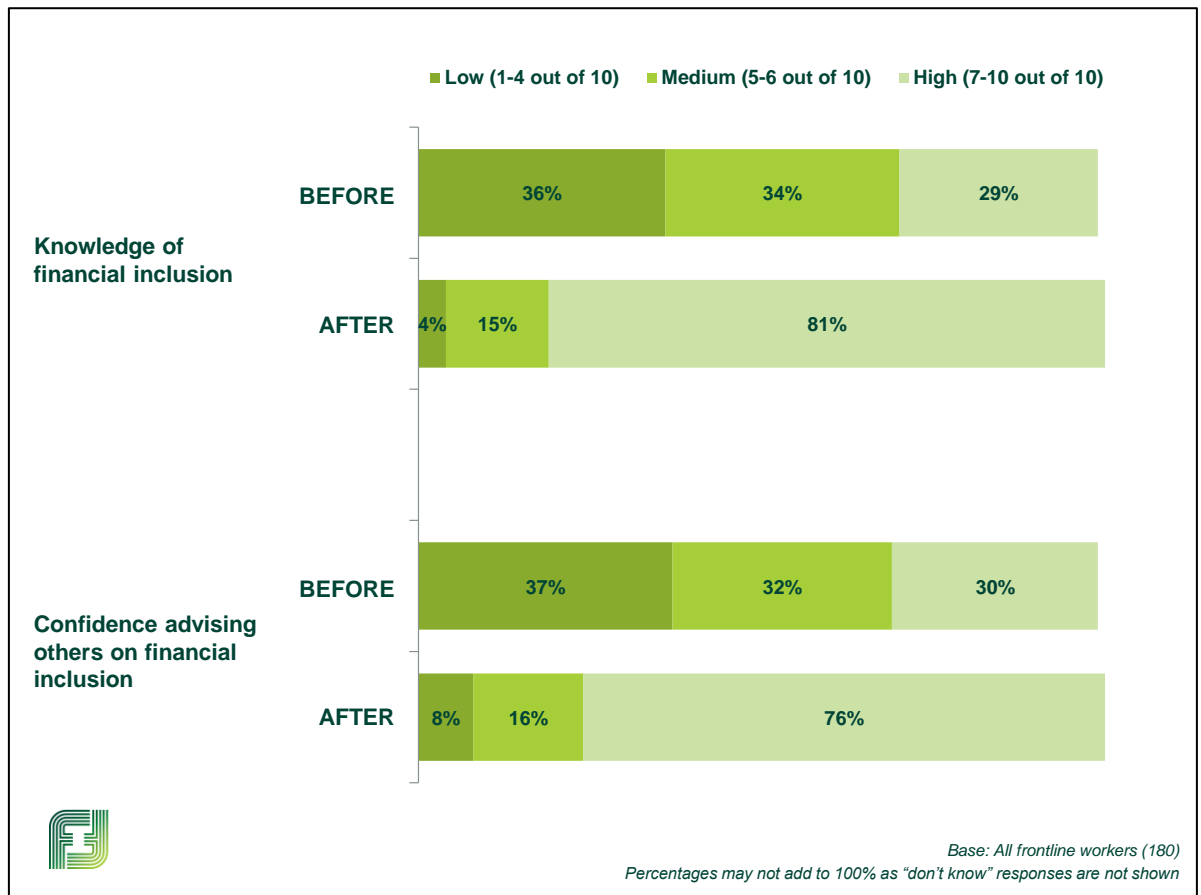
3.101 Frontline workers were asked to give a rating of their own knowledge of financial inclusion and their confidence in advising others about it on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very low and 10 being very high.

3.102 As Figure 1.6 demonstrates, levels of knowledge and confidence rose considerably after the training.

3.103 Frontline workers rated their pre-course level of knowledge relatively low on average; around a third said they did not have much knowledge, a third gave middling scores and the final third said they felt they had a reasonable amount of knowledge before the training. Compared to their rating after the training, workers' rating of their own knowledge of financial inclusion increased in 89% of cases; overall the proportion rating their knowledge as 7 or higher increased from 29% to 81%. Importantly, it also reduced the proportion saying their knowledge was "low" to just 4%.

3.104 Related to this increased knowledge, confidence in advising the people they support on financial inclusion increased for 87% of workers with the proportion rating their confidence as "high" increasing from 30% to 76%.

Figure 1.6: Rating of knowledge and confidence before and after Financial Inclusion training



3.105 This is a positive finding that supports the findings from FIT's own questionnaires, distributed at the end of sessions and three months afterwards.

3.106 Frontline workers were also asked to identify the barriers they faced to providing financial inclusion advice before the training, and the barriers they have faced since the training.

3.107 Before the training, the most common barriers faced by frontline workers were issues relating to their own knowledge and confidence in providing advice, with 53% saying they didn't have the knowledge and 42% that they didn't have the confidence. As Figure 1.7 shows, this was significantly improved by attending the FIT training session, with knowledge as a barrier dropping to just 4% and confidence to 7%.

3.108 More practical barriers were also reduced by increasing knowledge of what is available, such as having a database to make referrals (47% before training, 24% after). It should be noted that the referral system has not yet been launched; however the very fact the training provided a list of

organisations frontline workers could signpost people towards seems to have helped and reduced the issue of there not being a referral database. The FIT project has also reduced the barrier of having links between different organisations (46% before to 19% after).

3.109 It has also expanded the remit of some workers' roles – where as previously 29% said the provision of such advice was not within their remit, it seems the availability of training has allowed it to be included as part of the job role with only 15% still citing this as a barrier after the training.

3.110 In this respect, the training has been very successful in removing the barriers frontline workers had to provide advice to the people that support on financial inclusion. Indeed, every specific barrier cited in the question was reduced post-training and the proportion saying there were no barriers to them giving advice increased from 11% to 47%.

Figure 1.7: Barriers to providing financial inclusion advice before and after Financial Inclusion training



3.111 It is worth noting however that whilst the training was successful in removing the majority of barriers, other more specific issues have since

come to the fore that have hampered frontline workers in providing advice to those they support. A fifth of workers (20%) said other barriers not listed were now an issue for them. Many of these were simply a lack of opportunity to give the advice since the training (i.e. not come across anyone in need of it yet), however some more specific ones are listed here.

3.112 Some cited bureaucratic reasons as why they struggled to give advice:

"The reporting system duplicates the amount of paperwork we submit. At present we submit CID16 which is shared with partner agencies why cannot our existing forms be screened and shared with the necessary departments."

"The length of time to get an appointment with Citizens Advice Bureau or Benefits Advice"

3.113 A few mentioned that sources of support or benefit rules are constantly changing and it is a struggle to keep up to date:

"Requirements for schemes under the umbrella of Financial Inclusion are continuously changing"

"Making sure the links change as things are always changing - so a live database"

3.114 Other things mentioned included workloads, lack of funding for services and the sort of relationship they have with the people they support making it inappropriate to provide advice on financial inclusion matters.

3.115 Around half of the frontline workers were able to give an example of an occasion when they had been able to provide financial inclusion advice as a result of the training. Around one in seven of these were able to specify a direct outcome of the advice given, for example somebody being rehoused or applying for a benefit or loan. A couple of examples are below; a full list is shown in Appendix A to this report.

"Working with a young person to look at how they were budgeting to help them increase the money available that they had as well as apply for a hardship grant."

"Somebody who was homeless, not in receipt of right benefits, being able to refer or signpost to CAB."

"Last week I helped someone apply for a warm home discount."

"Customer couldn't afford oil for boiler, couldn't afford to fill his tank, gave information on how to pay it monthly in instalments inclusive of rent and now can have heat in the winter."

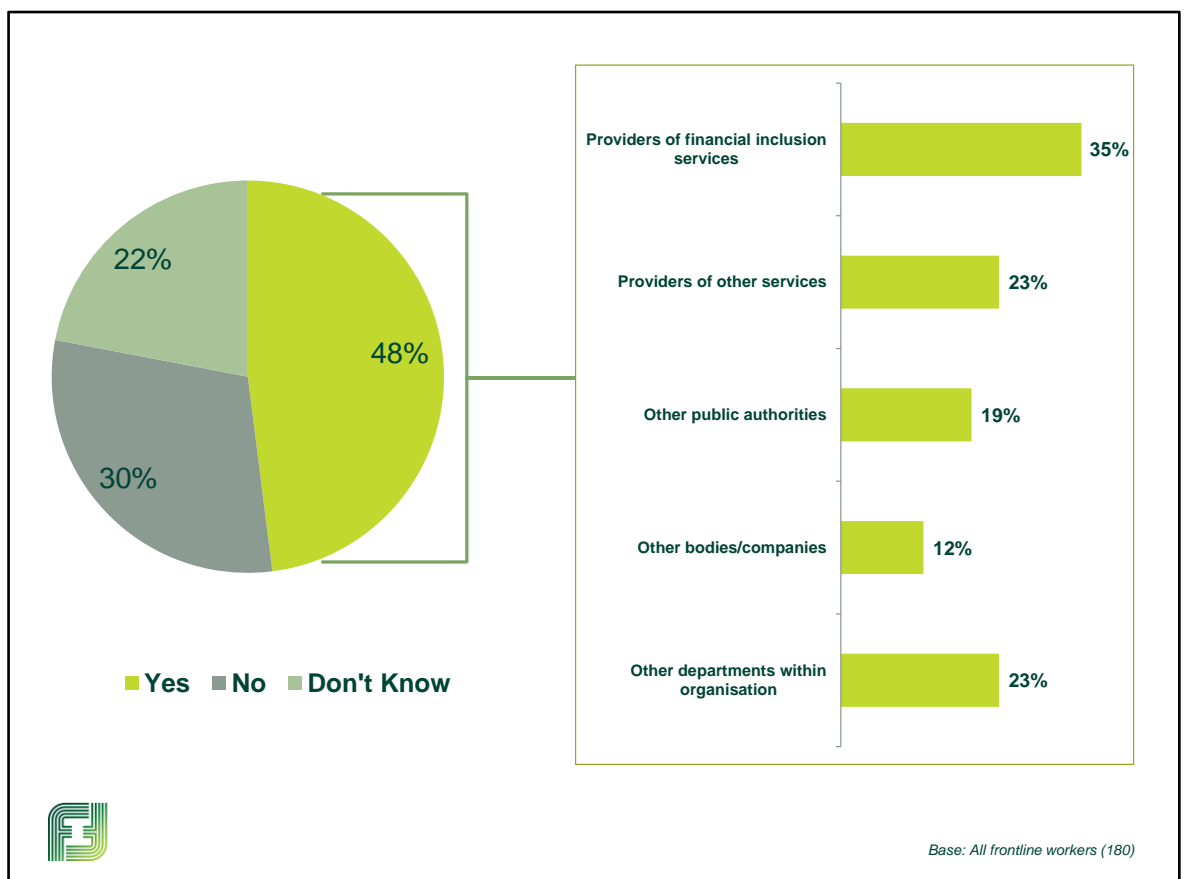
Impact on collaboration

3.116 One of the aims of the ESF-LSB National project as a whole is to increase collaboration within and between public services and the third sector. In the FIT project this involves the organisations and departments involved in the project partnership collaborating with each other, and with providers of financial inclusion advice and resources such as credit unions and debt advice charities. It also involves increased collaboration within their own organisations.

3.117 Overall just under half of frontline workers said that the training had led to more collaboration (48%). For some, however, this additional collaboration was only within their own organisation; in all 44% said the training had led to more collaboration with other organisations.

3.118 Figure 1.8 shows the types of organisation the training has led to increased collaboration with. Providers of financial inclusion services come top with 35% saying they have increased the amount they work with these organisations, followed by providers of other services (23%). A fifth (19%) said collaboration had increased with public sector bodies.

Figure 1.8: Proportion increasing collaboration as a result of the FIT training

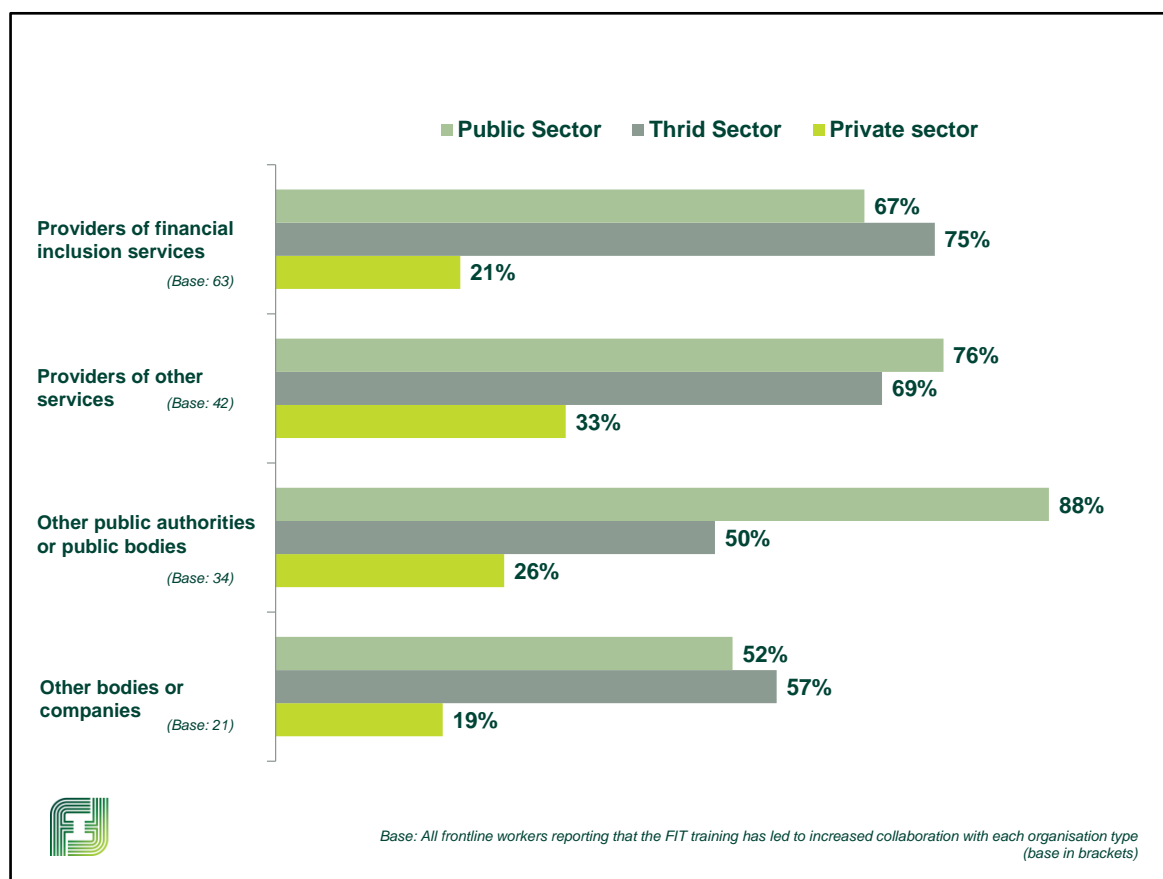


3.119 The majority of collaboration has come from increased working with public sector bodies, with 81% of frontline workers reporting increased collaboration saying this had been the case. Almost three-quarters (73%) report collaboration with the third sector, and around a third (32%) with the private sector.

3.120 Almost all (95%) of third sector organisations had increased collaboration with other third sector organisations.

3.121 Figure 1.9 shows how this splits depending on the type of provider the collaboration has been with. Providers of financial inclusion services have been predominantly in the third sector, whereas other service providers were more likely to be public sector.

Figure 1.9: Status of different types of organisations involved in increased collaboration



3.122 The focus of the collaboration, where it exists, is believed to be predominantly to share knowledge between organisations (90%) and to help deliver better services (83%). Over three-quarters (79%) also believed the focus was on finding new solutions and bringing together skills and resources, and 71% delivering joined up services suggesting

deeper levels of collaboration in these arrangements than simply sharing knowledge; it implies that frontline workers believe their services are proactively working together to improve awareness. Just 38% said the collaboration was focused on reducing the cost of service provision.

Impact on sustainability

3.123 Sustainability of the outcomes from the project will be seen through the organisations whose staff received the training being able to embed the principles of financial inclusion into their working culture. This will ensure frontline workers in years to come are able to advise the people they support on such matters.

3.124 The first stage in doing this is sharing the knowledge gained through the training among other staff at the organisation. Over two-thirds (69%) of frontline workers reported the information learned had been disseminated further, 52% by themselves and 17% by colleagues who attended the session.

3.125 This was more likely to occur among third sector organisations (82%) than public sector (64%).

3.126 Of those who had not shared the knowledge among their organisations, an encouraging 24% had plans to do so.

3.127 The others were divided by perceived need for sharing the information, and practical barriers to doing so. Four in ten (41%) said the information was not relevant to other staff, and 34% said their colleagues who had already been on the session thus eliminating the need for further dissemination.

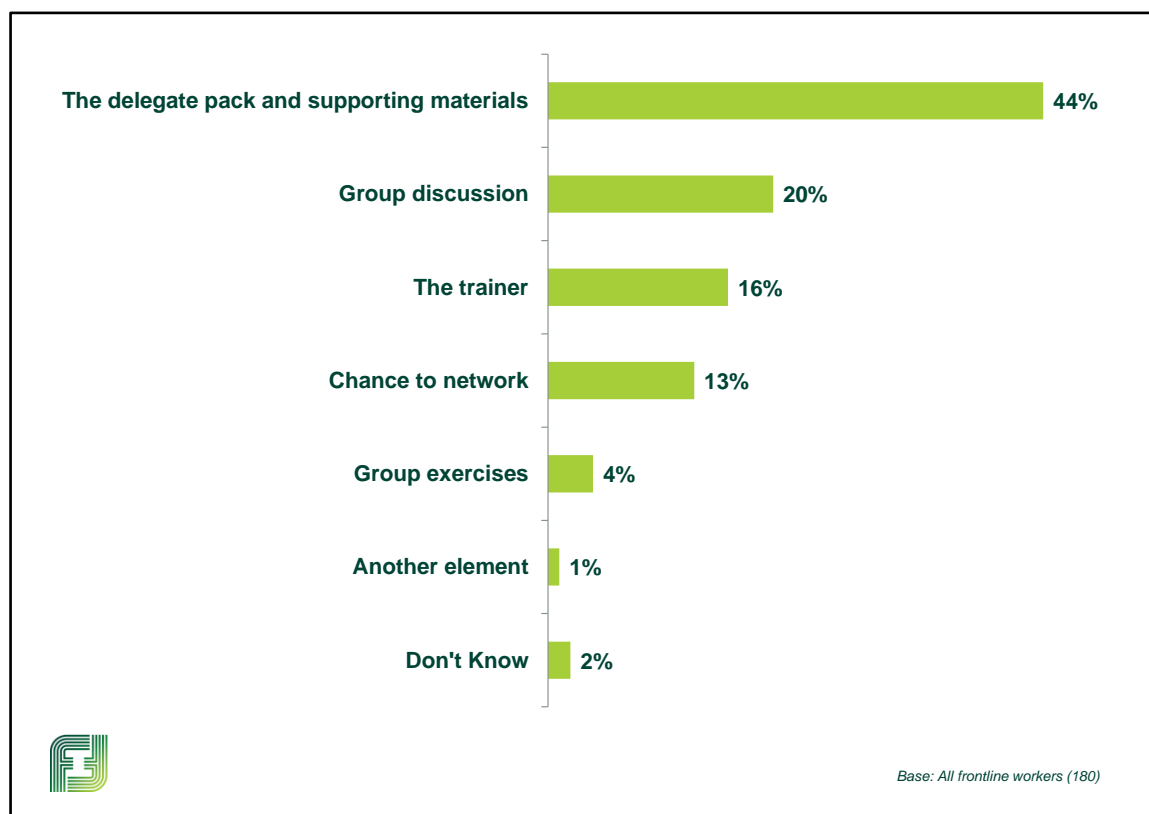
3.128 However 28% said they do not have time to share the information with other staff, which is a concern for the project.

3.129 Only 7% said they had not shared the information because of a lack of support from senior management.

3.130 One way the FIT project is considering enhancing the sustainability of the training once funding has come to an end is through compiling an e-learning module to continue to deliver the training in a low-cost fashion. Encouragingly for this plan, the element of the training that frontline workers say they found most useful was the delegate pack and supporting materials (44%, see Figure 1.10). Group discussion came second at 20%;

it may be useful to consider some materials to facilitate group discussions between employees who may be completing the e-learning module within the same organisation, or an online forum for such discussion.

Figure 1.10: Elements of the course frontline workers found most useful



Impact on Individual

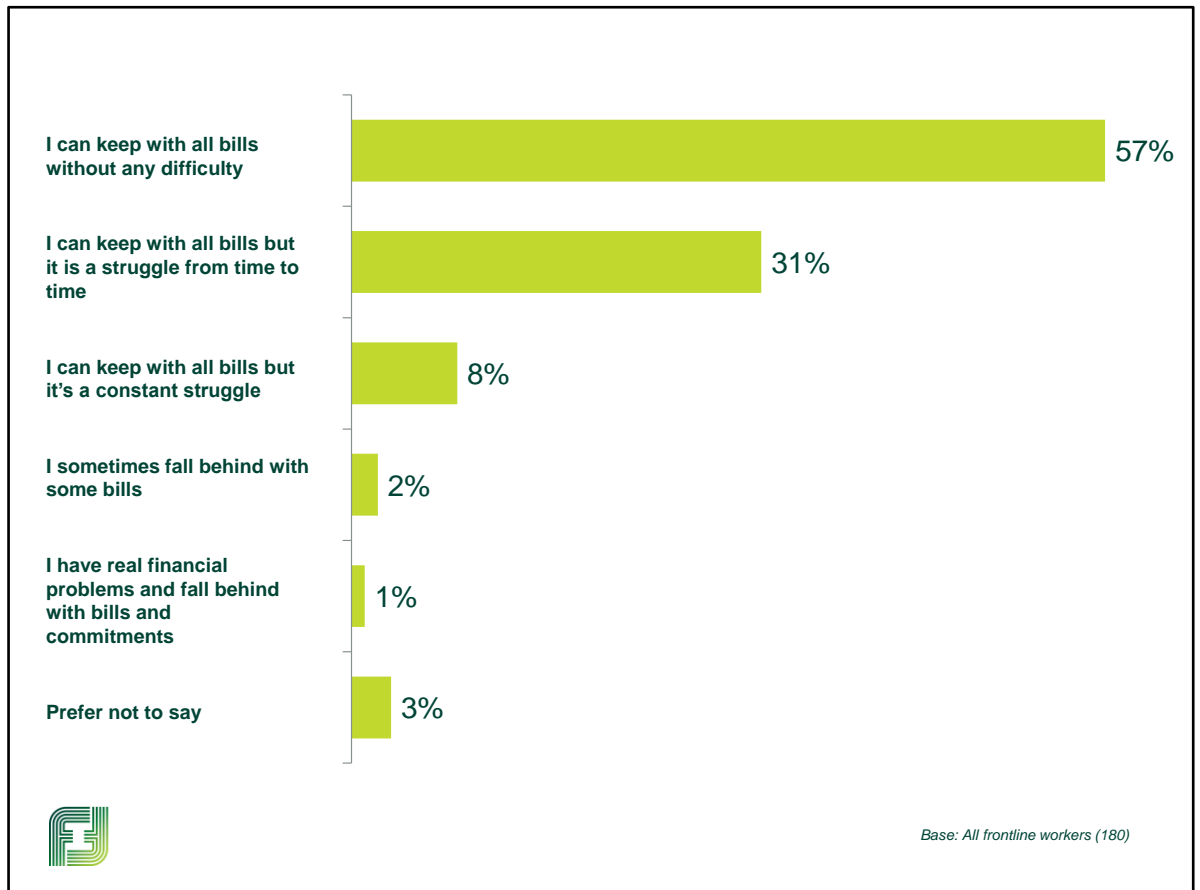
3.131 As it is not possible to measure the impact of the FIT project on the citizens that could benefit from the frontline workers' increased knowledge, as a proxy the survey measured whether the knowledge gained in the training had made an impact on the frontline workers' own level of financial inclusion.

Financial Situation

3.132 For context when examining the effect of attending the Awareness Raising Session on their personal financial management, frontline workers were asked to summarise their current situation. Figure 1.11 displays their responses.

3.133 On the whole workers were of a comfortable disposition when it came to their own personal finances. 57% were very comfortable, being able to keep up with bills without any difficulty, whilst 41% admitted to struggling at least some of the time.

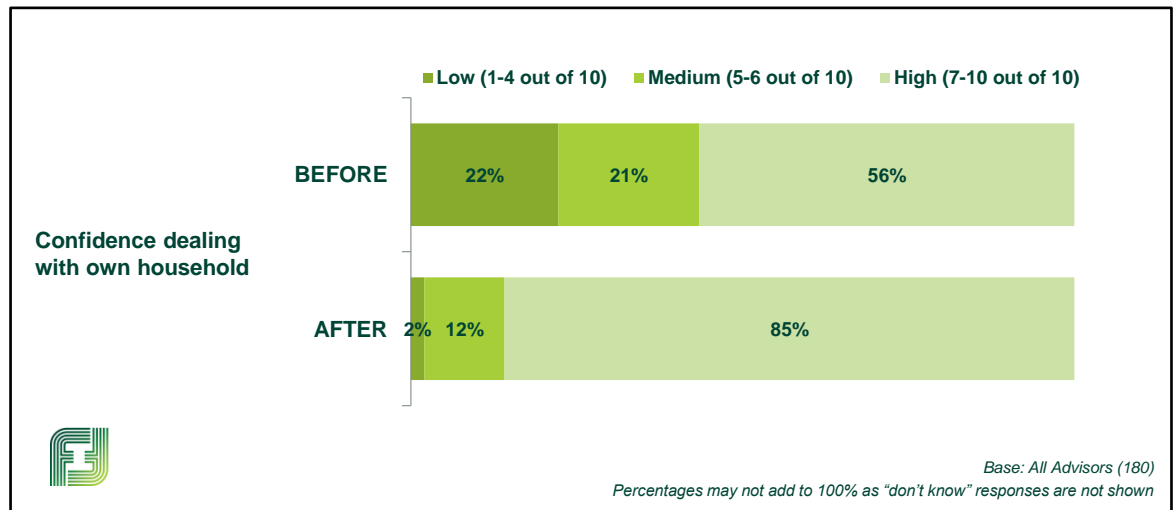
Figure 1.11: Current financial situation of frontline workers



Confidence

3.134 There was a significant increase in the confidence workers had dealing with financial inclusion matters in their own household, when their ratings of their confidence on a scale of one to ten was compared before and after the training. Initially confidence was rated fairly highly with 56% scoring themselves as seven or higher; after the training this increased further to 85% (see Figure 1.12). In total, 63% reported their confidence dealing with their own financial inclusion had increased, and the initial high levels should be borne in mind when interpreting this finding (a quarter already rated themselves as 9 or 10 out of 10, leaving little or no room for improvement).

Figure 1.12: Confidence dealing with financial inclusion matters in own household before and after training



Financial inclusion in frontline workers' own lives

3.135 Frontline workers were asked whether what they had learnt from the Awareness Raising Session had been used to provide advice in an informal advice to family and friends. Around half of advisors said they had done so (55%), suggesting the knowledge they had gained had relevance beyond their working life.

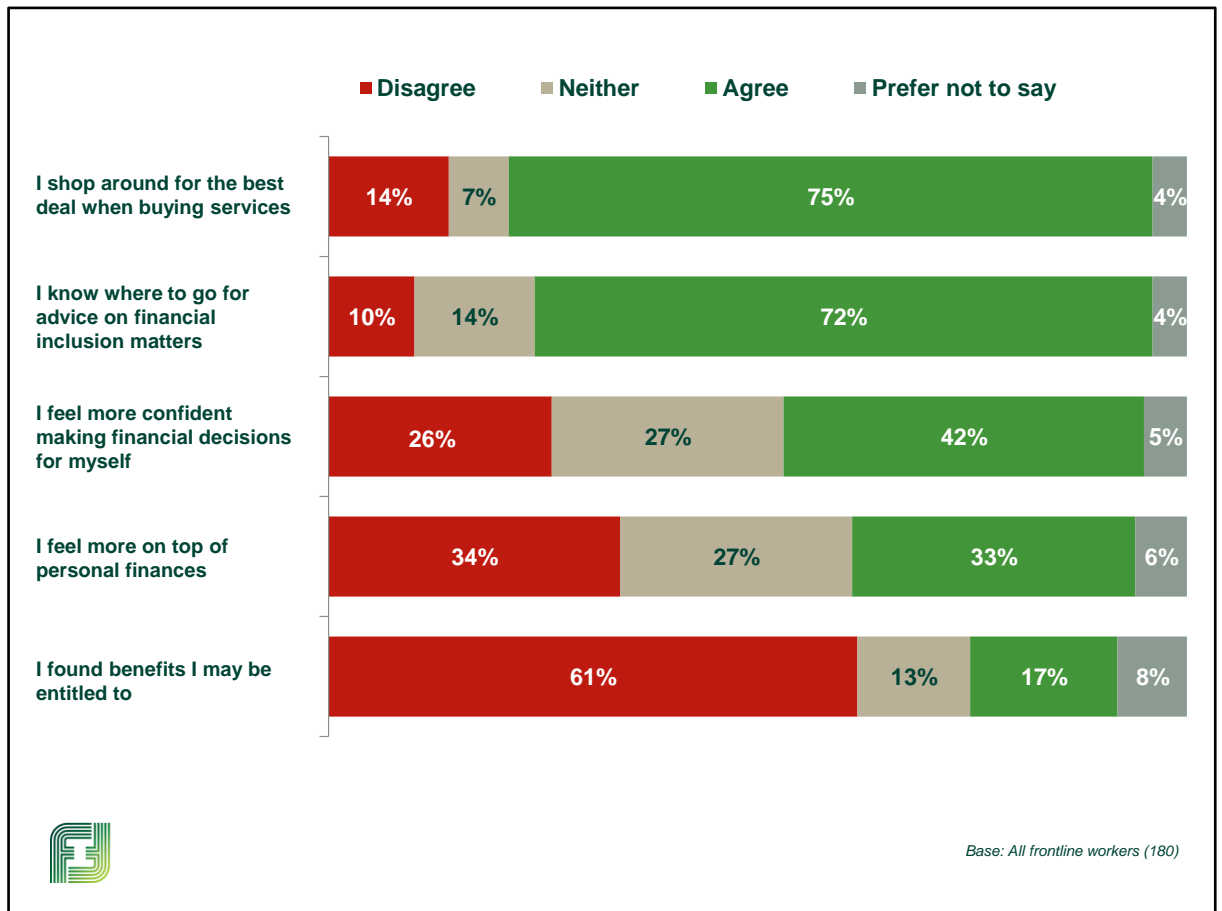
3.136 Figure 1.13 shows the impact attending the Awareness Raising Session has had on frontline workers financial management decisions for their own households.

3.137 The biggest impact of attending the Awareness Raising Session on the individuals were now more likely to shop around to find the best deal on products and services such as their energy bills and other regular payments, with three-quarters (75%) agreeing this was the case. A similar proportion (72%) said they now know where to go for more advice on financial inclusion.

3.138 Two-fifths (42%) felt more confident in their overall financial decision making and a third feel more on top of their personal finances.

3.139 Relatively few frontline workers found benefits they were entitled to as a result of the session (17%); it must be remembered that for many there may not have been any additional benefits so the fact that almost a sixth have done so is encouraging.

Figure 1.13: Impact of attending Awareness Raising Session on personal financial management

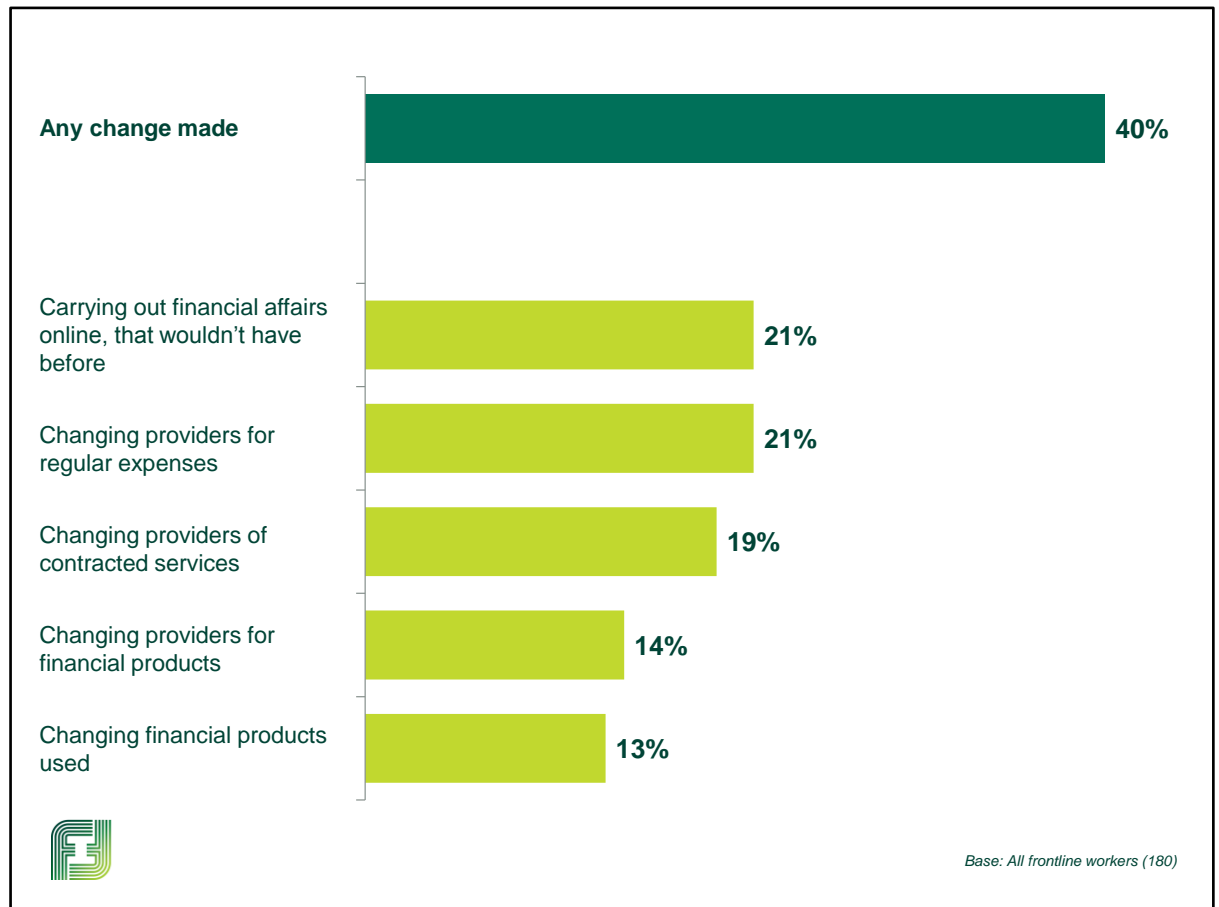


3.140 How this translates into action is less clear cut, however, 40% of frontline workers reported having made a change to their household's financial affairs and management since the training. We cannot determine the extent to which the session influenced this, but given the results seen above it is fair to assume it was a factor in many cases.

3.141 The most common changes workers had made to the way they do things since the training were carrying out more financial affairs online and changing providers for regular expenses (both 21%). Similarly 19% reported having changed providers of contracted services (such as broadband, television packages and so on).

3.142 As Figure 1.14 shows, fewer had actually changed their providers for financial products (14%) or the financial products they used (13%).

Figure 1.14: Changes to financial products and services as a result of the Awareness Raising Session



3.143 These findings show how the knowledge and information imparted by the training have impacted on the frontline workers themselves, and give some indication of how passing on this knowledge is likely to benefit the people that they support.

Conclusions

- 3.144 The data collected by the survey supplements the findings from the case study interviews and provides data to evaluate the impact the Financial Inclusion Together project is having on its beneficiaries.
- 3.145 It is clear from the survey results that the training is having an impact on the individuals attending. Most see their knowledge of financial inclusion increase along with their confidence in advising others. The proportion who said that they had a good level of knowledge and a high level of confidence after the training is far higher than the proportion who said this had been the case before the training.
- 3.146 This increased knowledge and confidence has translated into changes in how many of them manage their own financial inclusion matters, which shows the potential of the effectiveness of the advice that they have received and can now impart on other people living in Conwy and Denbighshire.
- 3.147 Before the training, many faced barriers to providing this sort of advice to the people they support beyond simply having the knowledge and confidence to do so. By raising awareness within public and third sector services of financial inclusion matters the giving of this advice has become part of the remit of many more workers' job roles than it was previously.
- 3.148 The survey was able to gather evidence of occasions when workers had been able to use the knowledge gained from FIT in "real life" situations when advising the people they support. This information will be useful in evaluating the project (despite the low level of detail) as an open call for case study examples from those who had attended the training had, at the time of the interviewing for the survey, only garnered one example. It provides evidence that the training is having an impact on the citizens of Conwy and Denbighshire.
- 3.149 There are also some indications that the culture of financial inclusion is starting to embed itself into these organisations, at least among the front-line workers. Over two-thirds had been able to share the information with their colleagues, and some had in fact used the information to advise colleagues on their own financial inclusion matters. Collaboration had also increased between the organisations whose staff had been on the training and providers of financial inclusion services.

- 3.150 This is encouraging for the sustainability of the project, with the ESF funding due to end in late 2014. Whilst it is clear that frontline workers are now giving more financial inclusion advice than they were able to previously, the real challenge for the project will be in ensuring financial inclusion remains high on the agenda for organisations advising citizens beyond this period.
- 3.151 To this end, a plan is being developed to have an e-learning module that can continue to deliver training in a low-cost fashion; encouragingly for this plan the workers who had attended the training rated the delegate pack as the most useful element of the session – as the delegate pack would still be provided by the e-learning module this suggests the most useful information will still be shared. The challenge would be maintaining the capacity to update the materials given the continuous changes facing welfare rights and benefits. Group discussion was also rated highly; it is therefore suggested that the e-learning module could include the tools for some group discussion exercises that could be used within organisations that have several staff sitting the training at the same time to maintain this element.
- 3.152 Some workers had concerns however about keeping up to date with the changes in service providers. It will be important going forward that the database of service providers to be kept up-to-date, and there is scope for a regular e-bulletin to those who have attended the training to keep them aware of any changes that might affect the advice they give.

4 Hedfan

Introduction

4.1 The Hedfan project is a collaborative attempt by Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil local authorities to improve learning outcomes for children aged 8 to 14 who are most at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the future.

4.2 Its overall goal is to prevent young people becoming NEET by improving the range, quality and level of engagement with Out of School Hour Learning (OSHL) activities. The project was given two and half years and £0.5M in funding.

4.3 The rationale underlying the project is that innovative and varied extra-curricular activities will help bring children who are disengaged from school back into mainstream education, which will improve their learning outcomes. It looks to involve children and their families in OSHL activities, which are to be designed and delivered through collaboration between the public and the third sectors.

4.4 Hedfan's specific aims are to:

- Develop and improve the early identification of young children at risk of becoming NEET;
- Develop a community-based approach to NEET prevention by improving children's participation in OSHL activity and involving them in OSHL design;
- Promote effective collaboration between providers to optimise the OSHL offer; and
- Assess the impact of the project on OSHL participation and its further impact on school attendance, behaviour and attainment

4.5 The evidence was collected in late spring and summer 2014 through: face-to-face interviews with representatives from the project team, schools, Communities First, the two LSBs, and both authorities' youth services; a focus group with the project Steering Group; and a desk analysis of project documentation including Steering Group quarterly minutes and progress reports.

Context and design of the project

Original design and alignment with both Single Integrated Plans

4.6 Hovep and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, with the support of Merthyr Tydfil and Communities First, bid for ESF-LSB funding in 2011 and was awarded a grant of £0.5m in June 2012.

4.7 Hedfan is embedded in the regional collaborative “Change Programme” aimed at developing a shared culture and approach to promoting the benefit of work to health and wellbeing. It has been integrated into the NEET reduction strategies in the Single Integrated Plans of Blaenau Gwent 2013-2017 and the Single Integrated Plan of Merthyr Tydfil 2013-2017. Hedfan also sits in the Raising Aspiration Group (RAG) task force for NEET reduction in Blaenau Gwent.

4.8 There is widespread recognition that a significant change in educational standards and skills is required in Wales, particularly in the Heads of the Valleys region where, over the last 15 years, between 10% and 12% of young people have been at risk of dropping out of education and training. The boxes below provide some more detailed contextual information on education and skills in the region.

1.1 **Blaenau Gwent** has a higher rate of unemployment than the average in Wales. An estimated one in three children also lives in poverty. In 2012 there were 1,400 young people in the NEET category between the ages of 16 and 24 of whom 1,200 received benefits. The area suffers a much lower level of school attainment at all key stages, as well as high levels of school absenteeism. Half of the population is digitally excluded.

1.2 The authority recognises it has poor measurement indicators in terms of school attainment and adult basic skills. The council had already identified the need for a coordinated approach to NEET prevention at younger ages, including increased transitional arrangements to smooth the move from primary to secondary school. The authority had worked on the issue for the previous two years, which established the basis for a strong collaborative environment around extra-curricular activity. Furthermore, the mapping and profiling of OSHL services by the delivery project highlighted a disconnection between the formal education offer and OSHL activities. In its Single Integrated Plan for learning communities, Blaenau Gwent highlighted its commitment to raise pupils' attendance and attainment and to support vulnerable pupils and those with additional learning needs.

Merthyr Tydfil is the most deprived local authority in Wales. The authority acknowledged in its Single Integrated Plan 2013-17 that it needed to do more around prevention and early intervention in order to break the cycle of dependency and to promote social mobility. Like Blaenau Gwent, it has a higher than average level of child poverty (28.2% in 2010 vs 22.2% for all Wales) and has the lowest performance in literacy, numeracy and in relation to Core Subject Indicator at Foundation Phase, Stage 2 and Stage 4.

In 2012, the gap in school attainment between children eligible for free school meals and those who were not actually grew. This reversed the trend of the previous two years. However, its NEET register for year 11 and 13 experienced a significant decrease between 2008 and 2012.

As in Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil acknowledged that there was a lack of coordination on the offer supporting its Learning for Life priority. Its monitoring of what works could also be improved. It therefore pledged to adopt a “multi agency prevention and early intervention approach linking with families and communities [...] to help reduce the achievement gap for multi disadvantaged groups”

4.9 In this context, the Hedfan project is focused on the 8-14 year olds most at risk of becoming NEET, amongst the population of around 9,000 children in that age bracket across both authorities. Following the withdrawal of Hovep, the joint approach across both authorities and education professionals was reduced and the project focused on collaborative action between each local authority and Communities First.

Project progress and engagement

Key milestones

4.10 The project was approved in June 2012 but did not start delivering until October 2012, when the team was recruited after the preferred secondment options had not worked out. Reflecting this early delay, the end date for the project has been extended from December 2014 to March 2015. This will also give additional time to assess the impact of the project.

- 4.11 The project was originally developed as a joint initiative between the Heads of the Valley Education programme (Hovep)², both local authorities and Communities First.
- 4.12 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council was the recipient of the grant and hosted the project team.
- 4.13 In June 2013, the Welsh Government withdrew funding for Hovep. The impact of this, plus the restructuring of Communities First and the delay described above led to some initial disruption of the project.
- 4.14 Eventually, Communities First – Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil took over as a strategic partner and realigned the delivery of the project with its seven clusters. The clusters in Blaenau Gwent are: Tredegar; Ebbw Fawr; South Ebbw Fach; and North Ebbw Fach. The clusters in Merthyr Tydfil are: Merthyr Tydfil Mid; Merthyr Tydfil North; and Merthyr Tydfil South.
- 4.15 By mid-2014, the project was included in both authorities' Single Integrated Plans (SIPs), with a focus on community-based approaches to prevention. Each authority had its own arrangements for delivering activities, aligned with the seven Communities First school clusters. Hedfan was also engaged with the learning strand of Communities First planning 2014-15 in OSHL and with each one of cluster areas.
- 4.16 The budget and project modification request reflecting these new cluster-focused arrangements was made in early October 2013 but was not approved until early 2014, creating some further delays to delivery.

Delivery and governance

- 4.17 The project team is made up of: a project manager; two local area facilitators; and an administrative support. These were recruited in October 2012. An additional IT support worker was recruited in April 2014 to aid the collection and management of data for the identification of children at risk. Liaison officers from both LSBs were appointed to support the local area facilitators.

² **HOVEP:** Head of the Valleys Education Programme was a partnership between the Welsh Government, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Councils, Coleg Gwent, College Merthyr Tydfil and the Universities of South Wales committed to improve skills and employability across the region.

- 4.18 The role of the project manager and the two local area facilitators in making links in each authority appears to have been crucial to progress, alongside the strong relationships between Steering Group members.
- 4.19 The Head of Education, Transformation and Performance for Blaenau Gwent took on leadership of the project after Hovep withdrew. The same officer also chairs the learning group which links to the Blaenau Gwent Single Integrated Plan.
- 4.20 The Steering Group for the project was established in June 2012 following the grant attribution to Blaenau Gwent CBC. It meets approximately every two months.

Schools, families and Third Sector engagement

- 4.21 Collaboration has been an integral aspect of Hedfan's design because of the importance of addressing the risks to children and young people becoming NEET through a multi-agency and community-based approach. Members of the Steering Group and project stakeholders such as teachers have been largely positive about Hedfan's ability to develop a collaborative dynamic between the partners involved, although this varies between partners as discussed below. The link between Hedfan, schools and other partners has been informal and based more on trust and taking mutually beneficial opportunities than on formal collaborative agreements.
- 4.22 Schools engagement. During its first stage, the team promoted the project to local schools including through showcase events.
- 4.23 The link between the local area facilitators and the schools was described by a number of research partners reported to have been productive, where it had developed. However, the schools' capacity to bring children and families on board and act as a catalyst for extra-curricular activities was mixed. In some schools it was limited by constraints on their time and resources in relation to other priorities.
- 4.24 In response, Hedfan has tried to link more specifically to schools' priorities. A number of schools in Blaenau Gwent were under special measures and their priorities were driven by the need for improvement across the board – and particularly in educational attainment - rather than NEET prevention and reduction more specifically.

4.25 The rationale and implicit theory of change behind Hedfan would suggest that the OSHL activities could improve children's engagement with their school, leading to improvements in attendance and educational attainment as well as preventing and/or reducing the numbers of children and young becoming NEET. To establish and make explicit these connections, the project team analysed the schools' improvement plans to understand how extra-curricular activities could contribute to their post-inspection plans.

4.26 Although schools' engagement in Hedfan is clearly essential, a number of interviewees pointed that schools are, by definition, not the most effective organisations to engage children who have been excluded. This reinforces the rationale for a collaborative approach using a range of methods for engaging children and young people in OSHL activities.

Children and families

4.27 Recognising that schools could not be a conduit to reach all children, the project team carried out a number of activities to directly engage children and families including:

- Workshops for children to try out and feedback on the proposed activities. The children and families who attended these gave positive feedback, but the project team was disappointed by the level of attendance.
- The mapping of OSHL provision was validated in consultation with children and families.
- Blaenau Gwent worked with children to understand what OSHL meant to them and what they expected from it. Together they produced a film which is available on YouTube
- Merthyr Tydfil worked on a child friendly version of the directories.

Third Sector

4.28 **Third Sector** involvement at the start of the project was patchy. This was recognised by the project manager who subsequently engaged the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations and Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil in the project.

4.29 The engagement of these infrastructure organisations helped Hedfan address a further challenge in the form of the fragmented nature of the

local Third Sector, which can make it difficult to communicate with the numerous voluntary and community organisations in the area.

4.30 Nevertheless, there was agreement amongst partners that the Third Sector should be the main provider and grassroots organisations were most capable of reaching local children and their families grassroots and identifying their needs. The project team therefore organised a number of workshops to which all potential OSHL providers that they had identified were invited. Almost half of those invited actually attended which was considered a very good proportion by the organisers.

4.31 The participants fed back that they appreciated the opportunity to network and talk about potential connections and shared opportunities for becoming involved in OSHL provision through Hedfan. Nonetheless, there remained the challenge that many providers, especially the smaller ones, felt that they had to devote a great deal of their time just to bringing in enough income for their core activities and were concerned about committing time and resources to new activities.

Outputs and outcomes

Creating a common starting point

4.32 The first steps of the project were devoted to mapping the current provision of OSHL services, identifying the gaps in provision, and developing the seven Communities First cluster profiles to give an overview of school performance, OSHL provision and levels of participation. This information provided a common starting point across both authorities.

4.33 The exercise created a shared viewpoint in terms of gaps in OSHL provision and areas for action. The analysis highlighted a lack of coordination and planning across OSHL activity; a low level of communication between providers; and gaps in physical activities. A need to improve the measurement of NEET risk and NEET trends was also highlighted.

Outcomes for children

4.34 Hedfan raised awareness of OSHL activities with families, schools and children and gathered the views of children about their needs. Across all

the clusters, the events allowed children to express specific needs which, most of the time, could be met. The case study found that it was clear that empowering children and giving them what they want were key success factors for engaging them in extra-curricular activity.

4.35 In terms of overall improvement, it is difficult to prove a direct link between the improvement in OSHL provision and participation, and an improvement in children's attainment and behaviour at school. However, through interviewing people working 'on the ground' it appears that this link does exist, based on their experience and knowledge of the beneficiary group.

4.36 Senior local authority officers in Blaenau Gwent felt that Hedfan has made an important contribution to bringing down the number of young people aged 16 to 24 who were registered as NEET from around 14% to 4% since 2012. They also felt that continuing with the project could further improve these figures.

4.37 Schools in Tredegar have reported a positive impact of OSHL participation on school attendance and attainment. The performance assessment exercise to be held between September 2014 and March 2015 will give a better appreciation of what has been achieved.

4.38 Where Communities First staff are working on the ground with family liaison officers, attendance officers, literacy and numeracy officers – the impact of OSHL participation may be greater. These members of staff are able to work on a long term basis with children and their parents through - "knocking on the doors" and getting children out of bed" to engage them in OSHL activities. This type of approach seems to be an important success factor in engaging children and their families in OSHL. -. Certainly, where schools have access to these resources, they are more amenable to supporting OSHL activities.

4.39 For example, Tredegar cluster, starting from the lowest level of performance in terms of school attainment within Blaenau Gwent in 2010-11, described itself as having outperformed the other clusters in area thanks to having a strong 'on the ground' presence. Tredegar Communities First worked closely with the schools in designing the OSHL provision and in engaging them to promote the extra-curricular activity.

Creating new tools

4.40 The project improved in Blaenau Gwent and developed in Merthyr Tydfil a **framework for the early identification of children at risk of becoming NEET** that uses information generated from the schools. The identification tool was already in place in Blaenau Gwent, but it was improved through the project.

4.41 Linked to this, the project team developed an OSHL provision directory in each cluster, identifying gaps and duplication. This task was time consuming but, together with the cluster profiles described below, is considered to be the main value added generated by the project, and has been praised by all the interviewees.

4.42 To inform and guide the use of the directories, the Hedfan project developed **cluster profiles** that gave an overview of:

- deprivation in the cluster;
- school achievement at each stage of National Curriculum;
- OSHL provision with its funding sources, the ranges of activities offered, the targeted age ranges, the availability of provision throughout the week, the existing users, the mechanism implemented to monitor the quality of provision, the final cost for users, and the accessibility.

4.43 This mapping was praised by interviewees as a very useful tool to benchmark the performance of their cluster against others. It also provides a basis to monitor the school performance over time and the impact of children's participation in OSHL activities on their general behaviour at school.

“[The project] brings the data to life and in one place” (Project stakeholder)

4.44 The cluster profiles have fed into the **design of targeted OSHL provision plans for children and young people from 8-14 years old**, coupled with a performance grid that will monitor the impact of the cluster activity on children's behaviour, attendance and performance at school. Hedfan organised OSHL-focused workshops facilitated by 'Communities and Schools Together' – CaST Cymru' in each cluster with partners, providers, schools and families to develop these plans.

4.45 The plans were finalised in mid-2014. The deliverers of the activities will be the schools themselves, Communities First and independent

voluntary organisations. The plans include targets and key performance indicators.

Influencing and partnering

4.46 As well as developing these practical tools, the team raised the profile, and explained the value, of extra-curricular activity with mainstream education services and other partners working on the NEET agenda. A number of stakeholders suggested that local NEET provision had reached a 'plateau' prior to Hedfan.

4.47 One way in which the project has added value has been by linking up providers and finding pathways between under-16s and over-16s provision. Blaenau Gwent youth service had known for some time there was a need to bring partners together to address the age range of 8 to 14, filling the gap in transitional arrangements to smooth the move from primary to secondary school. They had already set up the Raising Aspiration Group (RAG) with partners including training providers, colleges, schools, youth services, Career Wales, Job Centre Plus, third sector, Communities First. They had also made links with the business forum. The case study found that this had been a major contribution to better co-ordination of existing providers, an outcome which would have been unlikely to have happened without Hedfan.

4.48 Building on the quality of already existing relationships, Hedfan strengthened its partnership with the RAG in Blaenau Gwent and has supported the set-up of a multi multi-agency platform in Merthyr Tydfil, where the strategy was informed by Blaenau Gwent best practice.

4.49 Hedfan has also influenced partners in other ways. The Blaenau Gwent NEET team lowered its age range for children to year 2 in order to integrate Hedfan's remit because it felt that Hedfan had demonstrated the importance of working with a younger age group on preventing and/or reducing the numbers of young people NEET. Hedfan has also helped embed education in the family activities delivered by of Communities First. One Communities First family learning officer explained how she had involved literacy providers in her family-focussed activities as a result of support from Hedfan.

Enabling factors

4.50 A number of key enabling factors facilitated the delivery of the outputs and outcomes described above:

- Steering Group leadership – from a senior local authority officer helped the project team to make contacts with key partners and helped raise the profile of the project within the two local authorities and with other services
- Project team experience – several research participants felt that the experience and skills of the project team, some of whom knew each other and had worked together prior to this project had been a strong asset. In particular the project co-ordinator showed the co-ordination and project management skills that were necessary to develop the project in the face of changing circumstances and engage a wide range of partners and stakeholders
- Adaptability – the strength of the board and core team, and the open communication within and between both, has enabled the project to adapt and change in response to problems and opportunities

Challenges

4.51 The project also encountered a number of difficulties and obstacles along the way, many of which related to engagement. These included:

- The restructuring of Communities First at the beginning of the project to the initial delay. In response, the Steering Group acknowledged that the initial schedule was too ambitious and did not sufficiently take into consideration the constraints on other partners.
- Hovep's withdrawal due the cessation of its funding by the Welsh Government required a redesign of the collaborative model and governance arrangements of the project – though it did not change the final aim of the project nor its delivery.

4.52 Similarly, the project encountered some challenges engaging schools, which had other competing priorities. The attempt to link OSHL with individual schools' improvement plans helped to tackle this.

4.53 Some partners were concerned that the data collection and monitoring requirements placed on schools was potentially burdensome and would reduce the level of ownership schools felt over the agenda. The project responded, linked to the previous point, by stressing the contribution that OSHL activities can make to the schools' objectives.

4.54 It was difficult at first to engage small Third Sector organisations as potential deliverers because they were scattered across the two authorities. The development of the profiles helped at first to identify and map them and then to engage them where relevant. The networking events also forged connections between the organisations.

4.55 In terms of sustainability, some partners were concerned that Hedfan's achievements might not be sustained without an umbrella role to coordinate effort. However, such a role has now been confirmed as there is commitment from the two local authorities to use Blaenau Gwent's Data Unit to keep the Hedfan data and directories up to date.

Learning

4.56 The learning between partners and between different staff on the ground has taken place informally. The project team has been more focused on making connections to carry out the profiling and raising awareness of Hedfan than on learning specifically. However, it appears that this collaborative way of working has led to informal learning.

4.57 From a practical point of view, the key learning point has been the importance of the directories and cluster profiles as well as the practices in identifying children at risk of falling into the NEET category. The information is available to the public, has been posted in libraries and in schools, and has been cascaded to families by Communities First staff. Council officers and other stakeholders clearly value this information and have described how it has helped their planning processes.

4.58 The project has helped to develop and share lessons about key ways to engage young people e.g. empower young people by enabling them to design the services; establish a strong staff presence on the ground to establish trustful long- term relationships with children and their parents; offer services that are accessible and can be locally responsive to needs e.g. at a walking distance from where potential users live.

4.59 The results of the performance assessment of the activities carried out by Communities First over the last year will provide a more detailed overview of performance and should be used as a valuable source of learning about what works, for whom and how, in terms of increasing participation.

4.60 Conclusions The initial design of the Hedfan project was ambitious in the scope of its collaborative approach between two local authorities and the Third Sector as well as in the impact it sought to have in the timeframe. External changes led to a refocusing to a more localised and holistic approach. Some extra time will be needed to better appreciate its ultimate impact on OSHL participation and its contribution to reversing the NEET trend but some very positive outputs and intermediate outcomes have been already achieved, which in line with the ESF-LSB Project's Theory of Change (ToC) should lead to an improvement in learning outcomes for children and young people and then to a reduction in young people NEET. These outputs and intermediate outcomes include:

- A dedicated and experienced project team and Steering Group members who were able to adapt quickly to the evolving circumstances to redesign the mechanisms of the project while keeping its main aims intact.
- Hedfan has successfully raised the profile of "the complementary nature" of the extra-curricular activities to mainstream education which has been embedded into the wider NEET agenda by the two authorities.
- There was a shared perception among partners and other stakeholders that, even if it is difficult to isolate one factor, Hedfan has contributed to an improvement in the provision of extracurricular activity, and increased the awareness of OSHL among families, children and schools.

4.61 It is worth reflecting that these undoubted achievements are nevertheless lower than the original aims of the project, which included an evidence-based assessment of the impact of the project on OSHL participation and its further impact on school attendance, behaviour and attainment. This is partly explained by the initial delays to the projects and the need to redesign the approach but also reflects the time lag associated with bringing about transformational change through a new, collaborative and holistic approach to a cross-cutting issue.

4.62 Despite less progress on achieving final outcomes than originally hoped, there is some evidence that children's participation in OSHL activity has increased which in turns should lead to an improved school attendance and attainment. This evidence can be tested through the

performance assessment exercise to be held over the last quarter 2014 and the first quarter 2015.

4.63 In addition, the collaborative culture and infrastructure around tackling the problem of young people NEET has been improved in that the Third Sector was officially brought on board as a key partner in Hedfan and the collaboration with Communities First has strengthened throughout the project.

4.64 There has been a positive return on the investment of project time that was devoted to the profiling of each cluster. Gaps in provision were identified as well as potential duplicates. An OSHL provision directory was established for each cluster and made available to schools and parents. Both profiles and directories have fed into the design of Communities First delivery plans for 2014-2015. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has agreed to continue to update and publish the directory through its Data Unit.

4.65 The sustainability of the achievements of the project lies in keeping the tools generated by the project, including the profiles and directories, accessible and up to date. The arrangements for this are in place and will need to be monitored by the two LSBs and constituent authorities.

5 Delivering Collaboration Improvement Frameworks (DCIF) Project

Introduction

5.1 This chapter provides a case study of an element of the DCIF project in Anglesey.

5.2 The case study focuses in on the Specialist Children's Services element of the project, where the most valuable learning was to be found.

5.3 DCIF is a jointly funded ESF project between Anglesey County Council and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to "drive forward service transformation and improve public sector delivery through joint working, integration and pooling of resources". The application to the ESF LSB national project was developed by the Strategic Commissioning and Service development Manager at the time in the County Council with support from Community Partnership Development in the Health Board , and submitted in December 2010. Subsequently the project was granted funding of £169,801 in April 2011 to support activity up to December 2014.

5.4 Originally it sought to develop up to six collaborative agreements underpinned by new flexibilities; known as Section 33 agreements under the NHS Wales Act 2006 for services such as:

- Specialist Children's Services
- Single Point of Access Services

Context

5.5 The integration of health and social care is one of the great challenges facing public services in Wales. The population is ageing, more people are living with long-term conditions and health inequalities are widening. All of these challenges required sophisticated and joined-up responses.

5.6 To do this, the pressure is on services to work proactively and preventatively to deliver better outcomes and reduce need in future. In the current climate, this must be also achieved in the context of pressure on spending.

5.7 A number of legal requirements and agendas are pushing health and social care closer and closer together. The NHS (Wales) Act of 2006

mandates that every local authority and health board must provide and publish a Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy for their area. 'Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action' makes clear that central government "expect[s] more efficient and effective delivery through greater collaboration and integration of services".

5.8 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act of 2014 reinforced this:

"A local authority must exercise its social services functions with a view to ensuring the integration of care and support provision with health provision and health-related provision where it considers that this would [lead to better outcomes for people]"

5.9 One way to do this is through a Section 33 agreement under the provisions of the NHS (Wales) Act of 2006. Through a Section 33 agreement the NHS and local authorities can pool resources, develop integrated services or lead commissioning which could include transferring functions to a lead partner. The range of functions that can be transferred is fairly wide-ranging and includes social service, health and care-related services.

5.10 Integrating health and social care in Anglesey has been identified as priority in the development of more accessible Health and Social Care services to serve the local population. Improving the experience of citizens accessing services and improved outcomes for the citizens. Taking into consideration the local challenges and demographic factors:

5.11 In 2012, 14% of children and young people in were living in severe poverty (i.e. in a household that earned 50% or less of median household income)

5.12 21.9% of the population of Anglesey was aged 65+ in Anglesey in 2010 - the third highest proportion amongst local authorities in Wales

5.13 In line with the national policy agenda described above, Anglesey's Health, Care and Wellbeing Strategy 2011 - 2014 is clear that the "The National Health Service alone cannot provide or maintain good health". It highlights three principal themes, all of which are reliant on effective collaboration between health and social care:

- Promoting healthy lifestyles
- Managing long term conditions
- Promoting independence for vulnerable people

5.14 While there has been a long history of partnership working in Anglesey, there was limited integration of services. Front-line staff could see the advantages of working together more closely, but the processes and procedures which they had to follow were not aligned.

"Time is wasted arguing about small pots of money...it is what we provide to the population that matters".

Milestones

5.15 The DCIF project was awarded grant funding in April 2011 but, as with other ESF LSB projects, encountered delays at the early stages. The project officially started in September 2011 but the Project Manager, also known as the Collaboration Improvement Officer, did not start until January 2012 following a long recruitment process.

5.16 The DCIF project also found it difficult to establish a project board of sufficient seniority and breadth in terms of key partners. This was due to the relatively low level of awareness of the project at the time and the many competing pressures on senior officers in partner organisations. A board was eventually established in October 2012 to provide high-level oversight of the project.

5.17 Over the summer of 2012, a workshop was held on the development of Section 33 agreements so the project team could support services to come together and explore the benefits of developing formal partnership arrangements for the integration of services by using section 33 agreements. However, towards the end of 2012, the DCIF project board agreed to place more emphasis on the importance of collaboration and less emphasis on developing Section 33 agreements specifically. This decision was taken on the basis that it was important to encourage whatever forms of collaboration and integration were most effective/fit for purpose, rather than narrow down on Section 33 agreements in particular.

5.18 It was also around this time that board started discussing the potential for the project to nurture the development of a delivery board which would bring together senior officers from the Council and Health Board to drive the integration of health and social care at a strategic level. The new board could prompt integration during the life of the project and continue to promote the agenda after the project finished. This materialised, as set

below, as the Integrated Delivery Board (IDB) for Health and Social Care Services for Anglesey in 2014.

5.19 This idea was one of the key recommendations from a workshop convened by the DCIF project for strategic leads and managers from the Council and Health Board senior management teams in March 2013.

5.20 In July 2013, the original Collaboration Improvement Officer went on maternity leave and was replaced following the recruitment of a new Collaboration Improvement Officer to cover maternity leave. However, it became necessary to extend this contract to the end of the Project in December 2014. In September 2013 the Council and Health Board signed a Section 33 Agreement for Specialist Children's Services.

5.21 In March 2014, the first meeting of the IDB for Health and Social Care Services for Anglesey was held. The role of the IDB is to drive the integration of services between the two partners, including 'taking opportunities arising from NHS and local authority service reconfiguration' and 'joint workforce initiatives in support of strategic change'.

5.22 The success of establishing the IDB is one of the successful outcomes of the DCIF Programme and the strategic partnership approach across North Wales to create 'county Fora' to provide more robust governance arrangements for the development and delivery of more integrated health and social care services.

5.23 The membership of the IDB is set out in the table below.

Isle of Anglesey County Council:
Corporate Director of Community
Head of Children's Services
Head of Adult's Services
Councillor
Councillor
Deputy Chief Executive and member of Gwynedd and Môn Local Service Board
Gwynedd County Council:
Senior Partnerships Manager, Gwynedd and Ynys Môn
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board:
Executive Director of Public Health, BCUHB
Assistant Director, Community Partnership Development
Associate Chief of Staff, Children and Young People CPG
Associate Chief of Staff, Primary, Community and Specialist Medicine CPG
Programme Manager, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities CPG
Director of Therapies and Clinical Support

Senior Site Manager, Ysbyty Gwynedd
GP Locality Lead (Chair of the Model Mon Locality Leadership Team)
Public Health Wales:
Principal in Public Health

5.24 To inform its work programme, the IDB is intending to establish a reference group of stakeholders and will run 3 workshops - one for staff, one for stakeholders and one for the IDB members - in order to "better understand what people want from [the Integrated Delivery Board]."

5.25 The IDB should act as an ongoing forum for workstreams supported by the DCIF project. Discussions will take place towards the end of the project on how the IDB could best apply the lessons learned by the project.

Project management and accountability

5.26 The DCIF project is managed by a Collaboration Improvement Officer, supported from Sept 2013 by a project support officer.

5.27 The DCIF Project Board is responsible for ensuring that the project:

- Meets its objectives
- Has a robust programme of work
- Operates within project management parameters (timeliness, finance, quality, evaluation, assessment)

5.28 The project also reports to Gwynedd and Ynys Mon Local Service Board, which is responsible for ensuring the project is aligned with the County Council's and University Health Board's strategic objectives.

Specialist Children's Services

5.29 From the start, the project focused in on promoting further collaboration in Specialist Children's services. This culminated in the signing of a Section 33 Agreement by the Council and Health Board.

5.30 In practical terms, this meant:

- The appointment of an integrated service manager to lead and manage a multi-disciplinary team
- Relocation of the team into a new building
- Action to join up policies and procedures and pool resources
- Work on communication and engagement activities

5.31 The team evolved over time but, in addition to the integrated service manager, brought together social workers, a nurse team leader, a child and adolescent mental health services officers and a carers officer.

5.32 There were a number of reasons why Specialist Children's services moved more quickly toward formal collaboration:

- There was already some history of joint work on which the project built. Colleagues from health and social care had been co-located since 2005. However, as the structures were still different "it was co-working, not integrating".
- That history had created a high level of trust - a vital enabler when partners are looking to share or transfer powers and budgets
- The front-line staff also convinced of the benefits of greater integration. As one team member put it, 'staff need to see it as a good idea' for collaboration to happen. In this case, the benefits of working together were clear.

5.33 This encouraged a much greater sense of shared responsibility between health and social care. One stakeholder described the situation prior to the development of the Section 33 agreement:

"Previously, health said it was a social services issue - and social services said vice versa."

Progress and achievements

5.34 One of the main outputs from the DCIF project is the successful delivery of a Section 33 agreement for Specialist Children's services

5.35 Within the Specialist Children's services team, the DCIF project supported a number of organisational outcomes which enabled service improvements:

- Greater creativity in terms of solutions and responses to problems as staff are no longer working within separate structures
- A stronger understanding of how the team fits with the Council's and the Health Board's overall strategic objectives.

"Section 33 gives you permission to do more."

5.36 Service improvements identified by the team include:

- Faster responses to needs as colleagues can act together, working within the same structure

- Developing a short breaks statement (The first version of the Short Breaks Statement was published in September 2012 in response to WG Guidance and expectations).
- Delivering enhanced summer activities programmes
- Learning from the 'Next Steps' Transition Project to identify ways of strengthening Transition support for children and young people and implementing integration into mainstream services. The Transition Co-ordinator could enable this to happen.

"Better networking has given us a clearer idea of each other's' roles and how they fit into the overall service."

Enablers

5.37 Given the complexity of integrating services across different organisations, each of which has its own structure, culture, ways of working etc., senior sponsorship is critical to success. As the quote below indicates, visible senior leadership galvanises staff into tackling these difficulties in order to deliver collaboration. For some strands of the project this took time to obtain, but the creation of IDB helped generate senior sponsorship by bringing in a wider range of senior managers to support the objectives of the project.

"Change must be led from the top and Senior Leaders must show visible commitment to make effective progress and to ensure that their staff deliver."

Overview of Annual Report 2013

5.38 The IDB has also acted as an enabler, by bringing together senior officers to drive the collaboration agenda with the backing of the Council and Health Board. One project stakeholder talked about the board's ability to 'unlock' barriers.

5.39 There were a number of enablers for the integration of the Specialist Children's services:

- The history of co-working and co-location - team members appreciated being able to share information, and ask each other questions
- Linked to the above, the strong relationships between team members, which had developed over time
- The style of team working, which was described by team members as "focused on the needs of the child - no one is precious"

5.40 The cumulative impact of this history of joint working, co-location and open way of working created an atmosphere in which "cross-fertilisation" of ideas and knowledge occurred informally.

5.41 A practical enabler was the use of 'developmental days' which allowed the specialist children's service team to learn about one another and, in the process, pot opportunities to share information and work together.

Barriers

5.42 High turnover of staff at senior and operational levels. During the period of the project, many partners were going through significant re-organisations, leading to posts being left open, being abolished and changing hands. In practical terms this made it difficult to build up the individual knowledge and trust that leads to collaboration. A need for continuity of integrated services management is recognised, one direction of travel and senior management buy-in.

5.43 A general barrier for various strands of the project was the difficulty of getting ICT systems to 'talk to one another' in order to share data and jointly plan. This often led staff to come up with 'work around' solutions that slowed down the delivery of collaborative pieces of work.

"Our [IT] systems just don't work together."

5.44 Initial links with the Health Board Clinical Programme Group for Children operating on a regional footprint.

Conclusions

5.45 Trust is vital to collaboration. For individuals and teams to share or transfer powers or budgets with and between one another, they need to have a level of confidence in one another. This was the case with the Specialist Children's services and one of the reasons progress was made so quickly in that area. At the start of a process of collaboration it may be worthwhile investing in some trust-building measures to facilitate further progress.

5.46 Sustainability is a major question for many ESF projects which takes various forms: how to maintain the outcomes delivered by a time-limited project; how to keep an issue on the agenda of key partners after project-

funded activities have stopped; how to bend mainstream services to deliver outcomes without 'special' funding?

5.47 The project sought to address this by creating the IDB, with the aim of facilitating integration and providing the basis of a legacy of ongoing collaboration after the DCIF project has ended. Looking ahead, there may be scope for other time-limited projects to establish similar legacy-type bodies.

5.48 In that context, a practical lesson with regard to integrating services is to bring together all senior managers who are responsible for the services. This way, it is possible to map out a service end-to-end and identify all the parts before working out where and how integration will be delivered.

5.49 Following on from that, it is important to then identify all the practical factors, such as IT systems, that will enable - or otherwise stymie - the successful delivery of collaboration. Being proactive about aligning or amending the organisational 'nuts and bolts' will prevent the project constantly running into unexpected barriers.

5.50 It is important to see a service from the citizens' perspective, asking 'where does it start and end for them'. People working in public services may default to thinking about 'their service' in terms of structures, hierarchies and professional labels. Integration requires a different way of looking at things; one that starts and ends with the citizen. From that perspective, it is clearer where services need to be integrated in order to deliver a seamless service for the user.

5.51 The role of the SCS Commissioning and Management Board has an integral role in driving forward the Section 33 Agreement.

6 Powering Up Communities First

Introduction

6.1 Powering Up Communities First is a pilot project which engages with households, particularly those living on low incomes in Communities First areas or in fuel poverty in Torfaen. The overall aim of the project is to reduce energy usage and energy costs for households, through the installation of energy-saving measures and related community engagement and education activities.

6.2 The pilot started in March 2012 and will run until December 2014. The project is run in partnership with Melin Homes, Torfaen County Borough Council, Communities First and Bron Afon Housing Association. Melin Homes is the main delivery partner.

6.3 The project's original three work streams were to:

- Fit photovoltaic units onto at least 100 properties
- Support two community organisations to generate green energy through photovoltaic or hydro generation, and
- Produce a Wales-wide best practice toolkit.

6.4 However, the different elements of the project have evolved over time in response to the changing context and new opportunities. In particular, the community involvement and awareness-raising aspect of the project has grown more prominent.

6.5 The increased emphasis on community engagement has led to a stronger focus, amongst the key partners, on how the different elements of the project are leading to positive behaviour change.

6.6 Local partners are conscious that merely installing new equipment does not help if households don't understand how they can use it to reduce their energy usage and, thereby, their bills. Partners share anecdotal evidence of energy saving schemes which have led to households either not benefitting or actually wasting energy and money because they did not understand how to use the equipment.

6.7 Given the delays to the planned installation of the photovoltaic panels, which is explained below, the project team has been able to carry out much more community engagement and education than was originally

planned, so that residents are fully informed and empowered to save energy and money.

“It has become much more about community engagement and education, far more ground level engagement.”

Context of Powering Up Communities First

Original design and alignment with Welsh Government policy

6.8 According to the 2011 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey, 8.6% of households in Torfaen live in fuel poverty. The Torfaen Affordable Warmth Strategy sets out a number of actions and commitments that should contribute to the Welsh Government’s target that by 2018 no household should live in fuel poverty.

6.9 In support of the Affordable Warmth Strategy and the national 2018 target, Torfaen County Borough Council led on the preparation of the ESF-LSB bid in 2010 and 2011, with input from Melin Homes. It was seen as an opportunity to support low-income families in particular, as well as improve the sustainability of new and existing neighbourhoods in the area.

6.10 The goals of the emerging project were also in line with the objectives of the Torfaen Energy Partnership, which aims to reduce fuel poverty and the carbon footprint in the area, in ways that encourage the creation of jobs and local economic development. The Partnership was formed in 2010, to “share information, identify and maximise funding opportunities and increase skills and training in the renewable energy and insulation sector”.

6.11 The project also fits the Welsh Government’s Arbed programme, which aims to “reduce climate change, help eradicate fuel poverty and boost economic development and regeneration in Wales”. Arbed was established in 2009, and through Phase 1 of the programme, invested £68m in measures that improved 7,500 homes. Phase 2 of the programme, which was launched in May 2012, will spend up to £45m on:

- Improving the energy efficiency of a number of at least 4,800 homes by the end of 2015, and
- Reducing at least 2.54 kilo tons of carbon of greenhouse gas emissions by 2015.

6.12 Melin Homes are responsible for delivering the schemes in South Wales.

Changes to the feed-in tariff – changes to the project

6.13 When the project was originally being designed in 2010, feed-in tariffs (the amount of money that households get from their energy supplier when they create renewable energy) were set at a rate that made renewable energy generation highly competitive. However, they have since been reduced and the rules on eligibility have been tightened by the UK's Department for Energy and Climate Change. These changes reduce the incentive for developers to install photovoltaic panels and for households to use them.

6.14 The project highlighted this challenge to the Welsh Government during 2011 and 2012, as the changes to feed-in tariffs were developed, consulted and finalised. The project explained that the change in tariffs would impact on their ability to hit their targets in the original timescale. This was recognised by the Welsh Government.

6.15 Delivery partners are positive about the support they received from the ESF-LSB national team and, in particular, the flexibility shown when the project has had to amend its plans, as set in the previous and following paragraphs.

Collaborative capacity / capability and activities

Governance structure

6.16 The Powering Up Communities First team is led by a Director, with a project manager and a project assistant, who are responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the project. The team is co-located in Melin Homes' corporate office. It is overseen by the Powering Up Communities First Partnership.

6.17 The Powering Up Communities First Partnership meets regularly to review progress and plan the next stage of action. The meetings include representatives from both Housing Associations and the County Borough Council. The project director and manager meet regularly with the LSB project sponsor who keeps the LSB informed of high-level progress.

6.18 The partners involved in the project are developing their ideas for how the project could be sustained after funding ends in 2014.

Residents' and partners' engagement

6.19 The project was officially launched in March 2012, although the project manager didn't come into post until May 2012. She planned to use the additional time needed to complete the physical installation work to undertake more community outreach and engagement work. To help achieve this, she also spotted an opportunity to tweak the budget in order to free up some money. This would enable her to turn a volunteer post into a part-time paid post. Welsh Government agreed this change.

6.20 This meant there was greater capacity to carry out the community engagement and education work. This has taken the form of:

- Recruiting and training a pool of volunteer Community Green Energy Champions. This includes staff from partner organisations and local residents. By the end of 2012, 97 volunteers had been recruited. As an incentive, volunteers qualify for an Open College Network qualification. The Champions are encouraged to speak to the family, neighbours and colleagues about energy usage.
- Working with 11 local schools to raise awareness of the campaign and recruit 171 young Green Energy Champions. Visits to the school are structured around interactive games-playing and activities. Children who complete a workbook qualify as volunteers. By the end of 2013, activities focused on primary and junior schools, with more work with secondary school-age children planned for 2014. An event was held in December 2013 at one of the local schools, but attendance was lower than expected.

6.21 As well as the specific events targeted at children and young people, the project organised a series of community events, to raise awareness and create interest in the scheme, as well as to get out more general messages about ways to save energy and money. Again, these events have been focused on games and activities that are designed to get messages across in interesting ways that also make clear the practical benefits.

6.22 During 2012, the project team also undertook further partnership engagement work. The Torfaen Energy Partnership developed initial links with the project, but has been largely inactive since then. As a result, the

project's links into the LSB have been limited, as the Torfaen Energy Partnership was seen as the conduit.

6.23 This has not been a significant barrier, as the project's focus has been on making connections with residents. Looking ahead, partners see the Powering Up Communities First as an opportunity to "revive" the Torfaen Energy Partnership. As the project progresses, better connections with the Energy Partnership and LSB should create opportunities to apply lessons and emerging practice across and beyond Torfaen.

Third sector and Communities First

6.24 As the baseline evaluation report points out, the list of key partners are all in the public sector. However, the project started working with local organisations and venues, including the Community Farm and the Big Pit (the National Coal Museum) to install photovoltaic panels and message boards to promote energy saving messages. The project has also worked with organisations like Sure Start and Age Concern on community outreach.

6.25 Due, in part, to the re-organisation of Communities First, there has been limited contact between the project and the Communities First Cluster Board.

Trust

6.26 There is a high level of reported trust between partners. The project has both benefited from existing levels of trust, which stemmed from a history of partnership working locally, and further contributed to it.

6.27 Partners identified the reasons for the high level of trust as:

- the "open approach" of partners (e.g. openly identifying potential and actual issues, and being able to discuss them)
- the high quality of the team, giving partners confidence that the project will be delivered,
- and the collective desire to learn from a project that addressed several important and shared agenda including environmental sustainability, financial poverty and fuel poverty.

6.28 Members of the Powering Up Communities First Partnership were also positive about what they saw as a shared "can do" and problem solving attitude.

“We’re not interested in bureaucracy – it’s just ‘can you do it? Yes?

Let’s get on with it then”.

Characteristics of project management

6.29 Project management is largely left to Melin Homes, with the project manager reporting regularly to the local authority. The LSB has not had a great deal of involvement; the project is generally perceived to be successful and, as set out above, the inactivity of the Torfaen Energy Partnership meant there was little connection between the project and the LSB. As the local evaluation baseline report stated, “there were not worries or concerns by partners and stakeholders that Melin Homes was managing the project and that they will not deliver a successful and much needed initiative in the community.”

Outputs and outcomes

Progress and achievements

6.30 By December 2013, the project had:

- Recruited 97 Green Energy Champions, aged between 6 and 97
- Organised and run a series of community events which, from early 2013, included the use of an energy saving board game and jigsaw
- Retro-fitted 15 photovoltaic panels, with plans being developed to install the rest on new homes on the ‘Cae Nant’ site
- Fitted photovoltaic panels on seven retail units
- Expanded its range of partners, in the public and third sector, and “created good partnership working with its partners and stakeholders”, according to the local baseline evaluation report, and
- Built links with parts of Melin Homes e.g. the teams are helping households manage the impact of the bedroom tax and other benefit changes

6.31 Progress toward the toolkit has been slower. However, by the end of the 2013, the project team had developed their ideas around an online, highly visual story-board that highlighted good practice in helping households make best use of energy-saving technology.

“It’s not just a change to a dwelling – it’s a change in lifestyle”

Organisational and service change

6.32 It is possible to identify some organisational and service changes:

- Teams from Melin Homes and Bron Afon promote and refer households to Powering Up Communities, and vice versa
- Highly engaged volunteers report a higher level of satisfaction with their home, but there is no evidence yet from other beneficiaries, and
- The project has levered in support in-kind from partners e.g. help with promotion, support at events but there is no evidence yet of more significant sharing of resources.

Enabling factors

6.33 Interviews and the evidence presented in the local evaluation baseline report highlight a number of key enabling factors:

- Commitment from Melin Homes. The original thinking, when preparing the bid, was for the council to match-fund the scheme through prudential borrowing. However, Melin Homes were keen to play a lead role in the project, and made clear that they were prepared to commit resources to the project.
- Support from Torfaen County Borough Council – the council was seen as flexible and supportive, helping the project team to link into other activities in the area and others parts of the council and its partners.
- The background and skills of the project manager in community engagement and development are seen as a key factor in re-focusing the project on community involvement and education and successfully engaging residents and partners.
- The wider skills of the team have also been a key enabler – the first, part-time work project worker had a background in renewable energy. The second project worker has skills in community engagement, particularly youth involvement.
- Local partners welcomed the flexibility demonstrated by Welsh Government when the project changed to focus more on community engagement and awareness-raising.
- Proactive community engagement, using a variety of different methods and high-quality publicity materials. The project has used different events to engage different groups, using a variety of key messages.

- Incentivising participation by: emphasising that the project can help people save money; creating incentives through the volunteer time banking schemes; and designing and offering an Open Colleges Network qualification in “Understanding Home Energy Efficiency” for volunteers.
- “Zeitgeist” – several stakeholders felt that the project was resonating with people and partner organisations because it addressed a number of highly relevant topics, including poverty and household income, energy poverty and climate change.

“You need vibrancy, positivity, being light-hearted, to get across your messages”.

“It’s all about zeitgeist – innovation, energy, money in a recession”.

Challenges

6.34 Stakeholders identified a number of barriers that had been encountered to achieve the original objectives set by the project:

- The changes to feed-in tariffs caused a delay to the project, as the changes were consulted on and finalised, and forced the project to look harder at which potential developments would still be feasible within the new tariff regime.
- Engaging all parts of the community. While the project can point to successful examples of community engagement, from very young children to older households, it has had to think hard and be very energetic about how to engage different groups.
- The lack of clarity about project sustainability/legacy has led to some confusion about the future of the project.
- The project covers a range of different agenda, in which various stakeholders have an interest. This is a positive thing, and created opportunities to promote the project and build on its achievements. However, with a small team, and even with support from the housing associations and other partners, the project team have had to work hard to maintain contact with a wide and growing range of stakeholders. This challenge is also experienced by other delivery projects (IPC, 2013).

“I’m not clear – does Welsh Government expect projects

to be self-sustainable?”

Learning

6.35 Given that the project is still in a delivery phase and the local evaluation has only produced a baseline report, it is difficult to identify high-level lessons from the project and, subsequently, how and where learning has taken place.

Learning taken place

6.36 Members of the project partnership felt that they could identify examples of informal learning. For example, this occurs between members of the project team and Melin Homes more widely on opportunities and effective ways to engage residents, utilising individuals' career skills and knowledge, and when reviewing the key lessons from engagement activity.

6.37 One stakeholder felt that the experience of hosting the project, for Melin Homes, had “changed us hugely” in terms of the organisation's knowledge of energy issues and its skills at community engagement.

6.38 Melin Homes' experience of delivering Powering Up Communities First generated learning which it can apply to the delivery of the Arbed programme in South Wales.

6.39 The project has commissioned a local evaluation, which is being delivered by Empower, an independent consultancy. The evaluation is focused on assessing the effectiveness of the project's objectives:

- The management and delivery of the solar panel installation
- The management and delivery of the two community energy schemes
- The production of the best practice toolkit, and
- The effectiveness of partnership working and collaboration between partners and stakeholder, and the impact of benefit of their involvement for the project, the partnership and the local community.

6.40 The Baseline Project Evaluation Report was produced in July 2013.

Learning dissemination

6.41 The project team is keen that the lessons from the project should be disseminated and applied where possible, particularly around behaviour change, in which there is general interest in policy-making circles. There is not enough evidence from the project to start generating firm lessons, but the project manager did speak about emerging lessons at an event on

behaviour change organised by the Energy Savings Trust and Chartered Institute of Housing.

Behaviour change

6.42 Many public bodies are interested in ways to encourage positive behaviour change e.g. by encouraging people to improve their diets and take exercise, so they lead healthier and longer lives and the pressure on public services is reduced.

6.43 There are some emerging potential lessons in relation to behaviour change from the project. Caution is needed as the evidence for behaviour change is observational, from stakeholders involved, and has not been tested independently. There is also no evidence for sustained behaviour change. With these caveats, the potential lessons are:

- Incentivise change by stressing tangible, meaningful benefits e.g. 'Save money by reducing your energy bills'

"Selling sustainability doesn't work – saving money does".

- Stress positive messages that make people feel good about their potential to do something positive, rather than messages that can make people feel guilty or be seen as 'telling people off'
- Shape early behaviour. The emphasis on schoolchildren in the community outreach work is designed to embed energy-saving knowledge and behaviour at an early stage, so there is no need, as with adults, to 'un-learn' certain behaviours before adopting new ones.

"The kids go home and say to the parents

"You shouldn't be filling that kettle up!"

- Use face to face contact. People are more likely to change their behaviour when they have contact with a trusted face. For example, people are more likely to use energy-saving devices if they are shown how to do so by a recognised engineer or adviser, compared to a helpline or reading a manual.
- Identify simple prompts to initiate and maintain benefit changes. One project volunteer described how a flashing light, which indicated she was using too much energy, prompted her to check what appliances were on in the house.

- Provide intensive support and then withdraw and monitor. A number of stakeholder described the process of encouraging households to change as providing a lot of support, reminders and encouragement up front, then withdrawing that support but monitoring to see if change is being sustained.

“You can see the energy you are using, so I’ve reduced how much I use.

I’ve been educated. And I’ve talked to my neighbours and family”.

Potential for learning

6.44 Housing providers are key to the future delivery of the Arbed programme. There may be lessons in the strong and trusting relationship between the council and Melin Homes which could inform thinking in future about the role of housing providers in delivering sustainable energy schemes.

6.45 There may be scope for using the learning in relation to behaviour change to inform Switch Cyd Cymru, although the emphasis of the project is on practical measures to reduce usage, rather than energy switching.

Conclusions

6.46 The perceived success of the programme has increased the level of trust between the council and Melin Homes, as the lead delivery partner.

“It’s strengthened the partnership between the

local authority and Melin Homes.”

6.47 More generally, the project has also strengthened the relationships between Torfaen County Borough Council, Melin Homes and Bron Afon Homes. Partners described the high level of trust and openness between the organisations, which was attributed to: their shared interests in meeting the needs of often hard-pressed communities; the open, problem-solving style of leadership and working that is displayed by the project team and partnership; and the shared enthusiasm for a project that hits many current and important issues in the environmental and poverty agendas.

6.48 There is some evidence of increased collaborative capacity and capability, particularly between the two housing associations and the County Borough Council. For example, the project works across the

housing associations, both of which make contributions in kind e.g. staff time, helping the project make connections, and sharing information. Partners were also confident that this collaboration would continue after ESF funding ceased.

- 6.49 There is some evidence of organisational and service change, such as partners starting to refer households to each other and to other services, but this is limited as the project was still being run as an additional, separate activity stream to the main business of the key partners. However, with partners already discussing sustainability, there is an opportunity to mainstream the elements of the project.
- 6.50 Some interviewees felt that the County Borough Council would be more confident about trusting other partners to deliver projects, given the positive experience, thus far, of Powering Up.
- 6.51 An important learning point from the early stage of the project is the importance of resilience in responding to external factors affecting the project. The Welsh Government demonstrated flexibility in recognising the need for time to review the project in light of changes to the feed-in tariff regime. In turn, the project team saw the need to pause and reflect as an opportunity, to strengthen significantly the community engagement and education elements of the project.
- 6.52 In particular, the change in UK government policy with regard to feed-in tariffs, underlines the importance of policy context as an input in the theory of change used in this case study.
- 6.53 Another key input highlighted in the theory of change is project management. The importance to Powering Up Communities First of the project manager demonstrates how effective it can be when a person with the necessary skills is placed in the right position.
- 6.54 This links to a further key lesson, one emphasised by local delivery partners. Working with a community to deliver outcomes, particularly those who require individual and household behaviour change, is not just about providing new infrastructure or equipment. To make best use, and therefore benefit most, from new equipment, people need support and guidance.
- 6.55 The project has successfully engaged different parts of the local community, though this has required persistent effort. This has been

achieved by: focusing on simple, practical messages, most obviously around saving money; using play and interaction as a hook; and ensuring messages about behaviour change are encouraging and incentivising, not 'finger wagging'.

6.56 The project experienced a couple of issues similar to those raised by the survey results presented in the previous chapter. First, the project did not show a close relationship with the LSB. This was not yet perceived by leading partners as a limitation to develop the project. However, it is recommended that project board assesses this point with care. Second, the ambiguity about the project's sustainability generated some level of confusion amongst its stakeholders. This potentially can become a threat for the future of the project.

6.57 There was not enough evidence on wider public service improvement. The project was at too early a stage to have impacted on wider public services. There is, though, the scope for lessons from the project to inform important, wider policy agenda around housing debt and money management, fuel poverty and sustainable energy. A more active support from the LSB, the Torfaen Energy Partnership, may help develop wider dissemination.

6.58 The findings from this case study suggest a number of things about how we use the theory of change. In terms of inputs and throughputs, it will be important to pay attention to how factors like informal behaviours, individual attitudes and organisational cultures shape activities and lead to different kinds of outputs and outcomes.

6.59 The fieldwork for this case study found some evidence of learning amongst partner organisations and amongst citizens, though this tended to be informal. In using the theory of change to shape further fieldwork, it will be important to probe for learning in its widest sense.

7 North Wales ICT collaboration

Introduction

7.1 This chapter examines the North Wales ICT collaboration delivery project.

Data were collected over the period October-December 2013 and included 12 face-to-face interviews with representatives from a range of different organisations including managers of the delivery projects and officers from the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, local councils, and the WLGA. Internal documentation prepared during the management of the delivery project was also consulted.

7.2 This ESF-LSB delivery project was designed to deliver cost efficiencies through the modernisation and sharing of ICT services in North Wales. The large majority (70%) of the £151,000 funding was spent on employing a project manager who provided the capacity to undertake the detailed implementation work. It was envisaged as being the foundation or enabler to improve other council services as 'savings achieved through the project could be redistributed to other front-line services' (ESF-LSB Project Proposal, 2011).

7.3 The project encompasses collaboration among 11 partners: the six local councils in North Wales, both convergence and non-convergence areas (Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, and Wrexham), North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Local Health Board (Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board), North Wales Police, and Bangor and Glyndwr Universities; all of who refer to it as a 'programme'.³

7.4 The programme ran officially from autumn 2011 to winter 2013 and included six different work-streams or projects:

- Standard Desktop Hardware (SDH) – aimed at developing a combined procurement exercise through common specification for PCs and laptops.

³ However, the programme board and the manager of the programme were referred to as 'project board' and 'project manager'.

- Standard Desktop Software (SDS) – aimed to develop a feasibility project to assess the options available to standardise the desktop software such as Microsoft Office.
- Disaster Recovery (DR) – aimed to build disaster recovery roadmap through the adoption of best practice documents and process across partners to ensure a more integrated approach.
- Shared Service Desk Software (SSDS) – aimed to standardise an IT service desk system through a procurement process of an IT service management solution.
- Web Content Management System (WebCMS) – aimed at procuring shared web content management software that has the potential to store the content information of all partners in the programme through a common platform and design.
- North Wales Directory Service (NWDS) – aimed at building the ICT mechanisms to exchange the directory information between employees in all partner organisations. It included a proof of concept tested through the pilot of the social services Emergency Duty Team (EDT).

7.5 Our case study focused on three of the six projects: SSDS, WebCMS and NWDS. They were selected because they were still running by the time fieldwork commenced in October 2013, had the potential to generate spill-over effects (impact on other council services) and achieve cost savings. Each project involved a different combination of partners from the 11 partner organisations (Table 7.1).

Context of the ICT Collaboration Programme

7.6 Partnership working in the region became more palpable in 2007 and 2008 in response to the Making the Connections policy. Additionally, the North Wales Voice, composed of chief executives who lobby the Welsh Government on behalf of the region, started to work as a platform where the collaboration agenda was discussed.

7.7 Until 2011, councils pursued opportunities for collaboration in service provision across a number of services including social services, waste disposal and school improvement (see Martin et al., 2011; 2013).

7.8 One interviewee, with a strategic role in the region, believed that there was some scepticism from chief executives towards collaboration. Levels of

enthusiasm had varied over time, peaking in in 2007-08 and 2010-11. More recently, the uncertainty created by the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery (2014) has had a detrimental effect on the collaboration agenda. Councils in North Wales have focused on working together on procurement, rather than more far reaching integration, and the ICT programme fitted into this agenda.

7.9 The origins of the programme derived from the monthly meetings across all heads of ICT (HoICT) in the six councils in the region which have taken place since mid-2000's and provided an opportunity to share knowledge and discuss technological challenges of dealing with the increased complexity of information and communication systems.

7.10 It was realised that sharing software and other type of technical tools might offer potential for cost savings (or most specifically cost avoidance). External consultants were asked to assess the opportunities for cost savings in 2010-11 and this led to the SDH being the first collaborative project to focus on. The positive experience from this project encouraged partners to think about other projects where they could continue developing collaboration in ICT services. The ESF-LSB Project, alongside the WLGA's Improvement Fund, came at a convenient time to cover the costs of a project manager who could coordinate all ICT departments of the six local authorities and gradually of those in other non-council partners.

7.11 Our literature review (visit: <http://business.cf.ac.uk/LSB-ESF-evaluation>) reveals that the implementation of the ICT Collaborative has closely followed other innovative IT initiatives in public sector management. This Programme, like others, has fallen short in tracking its benefits and translating these into benefit for citizens. Too much of its focus has been on 'reintegration' and less about developing 'digitisation of processes' and a 'needs-based' approach (Dunleavy et al., 2005).

Table 7.1 Summary of projects studied by the case study

	SSDS	WCMS	NWDS
Participating partners	Flintshire Gwynedd Wrexham	Flintshire Gwynedd Denbighshire Conwy	All 6 local councils, Fire & Rescue, LHB and to an lesser extent Police
Responsible in delivering the project	Wrexham Gwynedd	Denbighshire	Anglesey Flintshire
Inputs	-Staff time -Cost of standardising desk software £240K across the partners	-Staff time -Each council £50K	-Staff time
Collaborative outputs	-Contract awarded. Others aspects such as data migration to be achieved individually by each partner.	-Selection and procurement of WCMS. -A framework agreement. Many activities in phase 1 shifted to future phases to be developed individually by each partner.	-Technical designs (two way forest trust and resource domain) -Start of EDT pilot in Flintshire, Denbighshire and Wrexham. Pilot in other areas were shifted to a future phase.
Cost reduction/savings	£122K overall in economies of scale	Each council £29K through procurement	Cost savings expected (c.a. £100 per token per 11 employees) throughout 3 councils participating in pilot.
Improved services	Each council to raise awareness with users individually, but unclear to what extent this will be a focus in future.	Will be part of phase 2 where Chanel Shift (online services) will be piloted and tested. This will be carried out at individual level by each partner.	Early to say, but anecdotal evidence points toward: quicker, more reliable and extended access for staff to check electronic records.
Dissemination of best practice/lessons learnt	Lesson learnt reports exist, targeting: -All partners in programme as well as project teams -SOCITM and all ICT departments in Wales -ESF-LSB team -WLGA team -Potentially: Knowledge Hub for Local Government		Lesson learnt report did not exist at time of fieldwork. To be ready in March 2014.

Collaborative capacity/capability and activities

7.12 The programme involved 11 partners, the most active have been the local councils and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service. This reflects the main focus of the programme, which initially envisaged collaboration among ICT teams across all local councils. From 2011, when the project manager was appointed, there was capacity to expand its membership to other public service providers.

Governance structure

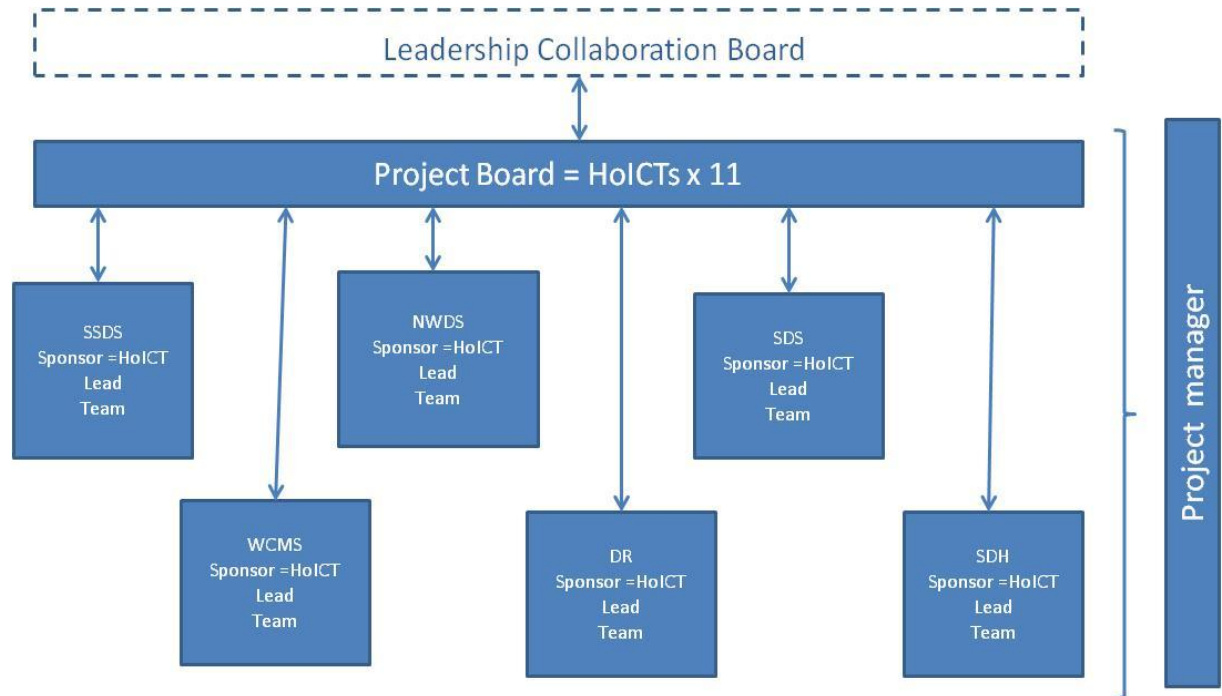
7.13 In order to ensure that all partners were committed to collaboration a model that distributed responsibilities across partners had to be designed in a way that was flexible and inclusive. The senior responsible owner of the programme⁴, with support from other HoICT, thought that each local authority had to sponsor a project and a different partner had to lead that project. The sponsor would be a HoICT responsible to ensure 'buy-in' from all partners; whereas the lead would be an ICT officer with technical knowledge of that project. Furthermore, the sponsor and lead would count on an operative team to implement the project and on the project manager's support to ensure that project meetings were organised, responsibilities distributed and agreements followed up. See Figure 7.1.

7.14 As the governance of the programme started to be implemented, the project manager led the configuration of each project team. The manager also prepared the project initiation documents, minutes and monthly 'highlight reports', which monitored how the projects were performing and assessed the barriers and risks encountered by their implementation. After a project reached its objectives, the project manager would produce a 'lessons learnt' and closure reports for each project. Although all this documentation was produced by the project manager, all project team members had the opportunity to provide feedback to ensure accuracy. Because the project sponsor and lead officers had to carry out these roles

⁴ The senior responsible owner was a HoICT who had the highest level of seniority across all six councils. The portfolio of this HoICT involved corporate responsibilities which allowed him excellent access to chief executives and council leaders in the region.

in addition to their ‘day jobs’, the capacity provided by the project manager was regarded as being invaluable to inject vitality to the overall programme.

Figure 7.1. Governance structure of the ICT Collaboration Programme



7.15 In order to ensure that all partners were included and informed about the development of each project, a series of mechanisms were implemented. First, all partners had an open invitation to attend project board meetings. However, non-participating partners tended to receive updates from each project in the monthly HoICT meetings and programme documentation prepared by the project manager. Second, there were occasions that non-participating partners offered their premises for project partners to meet. That was the case of Conwy’s premises in the implementation of some of the programme’s projects. Third, the terms in which the agreements were signed between the participating partners and the supplier of an ICT service procured jointly were designed in such a way to allow potential partners (and in WebCMS any public sector body) to join later within a period of four years - the length of the legal validity of the collaborative contract with the supplier - if, for example, the legal contract that initially prevented a partner from joining earlier expired.

7.16 In the three projects studied, there was a shared vision from all the council partners; however, there was a difference in leadership. A couple of interviewees agreed that Gwynedd and Flintshire were driving the collaborative vision. Despite this differentiation, the involvement of all council partners in each of the projects studied was undoubtedly acknowledged by all. An environment of sharing knowledge and benefiting from the opportunities achieved by a specific sub-group of partners participating in each project was seen as the norm across the board; it was the predominating ethos of the ICT Collaborative Programme. Although it was clear that workloads and responsibilities were not distributed equally within a project, it was believed that in the overall programme these responsibilities were shared evenly.

Inputs

7.17 The main input of the programme was the staff cost of the project manager funded by the ESF and WLGA. The partners involved in each project also had to factor in individual costs for becoming part of a project. These included overheads, miscellaneous costs such as travelling, and staff time. Project teams had on average nine members including the sponsor and leads. An interviewee playing a lead project role said that project meetings took a full day on a monthly basis for a period of 12 months.

7.18 There were also some additional costs for testing software. For example, in the second phase of the NWDS project which will be implemented after the official end of the programme, it is envisaged that an initial investment by all partners of £5,000 will be necessary to develop a resource domain that includes video conferencing and messaging via the internet. Cost of this kind, in addition to the knowledge and resources that each ICT department had, determined, to a great extent, the reasons for either joining a project or extending its future.

Collaboration agreements

7.19 A project initiation document (PID) was provided for each project which summarised the state-of-the-art of existing resources, limitations and opportunities across all partners and included the options that could solve the problem identified. The PIDs were not legally bound agreements, they

were in effect 'gentlemen's agreements'. It was the output of the projects which were the legal agreement between ICT suppliers and project partners for the cases of SSDS and WebCMS. This collaboration on an ad-hoc basis gave flexibility to partners either to join or pull out from a project at any point in time before achieving expected outcomes.

7.20 Although the governance structure about the membership of each project was clear across the programme's partners, the reasons why and how a partner was able to join or retract were less so and tended to depend more on the specific and temporal organisational situation that each partner encountered. This was acknowledged by a few HoICT who claimed to be aware about the lack of stability that this flexible commitment involved. There was a recognition that any collaborative project could unravel due to the sovereign nature of each council.

7.21 Of the three projects in our case study, only the SSDS project presented a scenario where one of its partners withdrew from the process. Following an exhaustive procurement and tender process and after the supplier was chosen to provide the service desk software, Denbighshire pulled out. This decision was largely understood by other HoICT; nevertheless it put a lot of strain in the relationships between the members of the project team and between ICT and legal departments in Gwynedd, who were leading the project.

Trust

7.22 We found that a series of elements contributed to developing and maintaining levels of trust. First, the project manager and the project teams delivered the main outputs for each of the projects: a framework agreement. Second, channels of communication existed among team members to externalise the frustrations that the rest of the team had to encounter, especially when one of the partners pulled out in a critical point of a process. Third, despite the conflict generated by some partners in pulling out, the latter continued to show commitment in collaboration through the active involvement in other programme's projects and activities.

7.23 The building of trust was also perceived by interviewees through the management capacity of the project manager, who would meet with

project sponsors on a one to one basis to enhance trust. Her determination in making collaboration work showed that she was not working for a sub-group of partners, which could have happened given the hierarchical composition of the governance structure.

The project manager

7.24 The project manager had several years' experience of programme management as well as background on ICT and a PRINCE 2⁵ certification, all of which provided her with important skills for the job of this size and scale. It was challenging to bring all partners to reach agreements; before she came into post the project board meetings were 'talking shops'. In being a good listener, she found ways of encouraging teams to talk to each other.

7.25 The design of the programme found a way of being organisationally innovative. The governance structure thought by HoICT and refined by the project manager created a model that was superimposed on all ICT departments without affecting their daily operations. The model provided flexibility and freedom for ICT departments to carry on their individual organisational rules and activities, whilst also allowing collaboration with others through sharing knowledge and, in specific periods, staff. The model worked as long as ICT departments achieved cost savings, but it is unclear if the model would be appropriate to achieve further levels of organisational integration.

7.26 Neither her role nor the programme was about income generation and the extent she could change programme's aims/objectives were limited to making changes to the programme proposal in relation to dates and incorporating milestones. These changes were done alongside the programme's senior responsible owner and another HoICT. It was beyond her remit to invite new partners into the programme; however, her role consolidated the participation of the non-council partners. Also beyond

⁵ PRINCE 2 is a project management methodology developed by UK government and extensively used in the UK government sector.

her remit was to decide what agreements were to be prioritised, she always carried out all the points agreed in the project board meetings.

- 7.27 Other programme stakeholders were equally important to develop each of the projects. Project leads were important given their technical knowledge as well as the senior responsible owner, who championed the ICT collaboration agenda in the region and was a member of the corporate director and chief executive regional boards. The latter's role was the main channel in which other corporate directors and chief executives from the six councils were to learn about the programme's development.

Monitoring

- 7.28 In terms of monitoring the progress of the programme, the project manager relied on the systematic preparation of monthly highlight reports for each of the projects. These reports included the deliverables in each project, updates on progress and any explanation for delays using the Red-Amber-Green tool. The business analysis skills mentioned by the project manager were reflected implicitly in the highlight reports and in the composition of the project teams and their responsibilities. These documents show the linkages between the resources or capabilities of the project partners and the deliverables or process outputs established through collaborative working.

- 7.29 Although PRINCE 2 includes in its methodology 'benefit reviews' which focus on the potential outcomes achieved by the project, these were not produced by the project manager. This task was said to be an overall organisational responsibility that went beyond the manager's remit:

- 7.30 In contrast to the WEFO indicators (which work more like targets), the highlight reports were better tools for managing the progress of the projects and worked as real indicators that tracked the activities and which led to the targets agreed with WEFO. WEFO indicators played a secondary role in complying with the administration established by the ESF-LSB national team and were not used to monitor the progress of the programme. The other themes relevant to WEFO such as equality, sustainability, or citizen participation/scrutiny did not figure in any of the objectives of the programme.

7.31 The impact that the programme had on citizens or other areas of the councils was largely overlooked. Two of the stakeholders leading the design and implementation of the programme acknowledged that 'they've gone into the projects too early without setting out outcomes and how to evaluate these'. As stated above, the project manager had the knowledge to produce benefit reviews, but the programme's two-year schedule prevented her from carrying out this type of analysis.

7.32 As most of the projects were about achieving outputs - procurement agreements and procedural agreements (change of templates) - the beneficiaries of the projects were overlooked in the programme's business plan. It was further down the line, after achieving the software and IT platform to share data by the WebCMS and NWDS respectively, when stakeholders became more conscious about the impact of the projects upon the users of the councils' websites and the social services EDT. Initially, the project board and project teams did not envisage the full potential of the outputs to be achieved.

Organisational and service change

Embedded collaborative capacity

7.33 The majority of our interviewees agreed that the work of the project manager was 'invaluable' and in that sense the programme proved that having this type of post can help to develop collaboration 'quicker'. The other two legacies left by the programme were, first, the team work across partners which filtered down below the HoICT. Interviewees said that the trust to 'pick up the phone and call colleagues' working in another council would carry on regardless of the programme's continuation. The second were some of the practices introduced by the PRINCE 2 documentation that the project manager used. The templates of the different documents and the discipline of following them in a consistent way prompted project teams to focus on the further development of the projects.

7.34 A more sceptical interviewee felt that no legacies were to be retained over time, especially if the ICT Collaboration stakeholders did not agree or envisage the future continuation of a permanent project manager. The lack of future grants that could specifically sponsor a programme of this type and the small savings achieved by ICT, as opposed to mainstream

services, such as education or social services, pose little chances to build upon the programme's achievements. Furthermore, the skills that the project manager had developed were not retained within the region given that in November 2013 she left for another job outside Wales.

Additionality

7.35 Some of the projects in the programme could have been implemented without the ESF. For example, the procurement process for SDH was undertaken before European funding was allocated to the programme and the project manager appointed. Through the ESF, the project manager ensured that the other five projects were implemented. The WLGA Improvement Fund (c.a. £940,000) was used to match-fund convergence and non-convergence areas across Wales that could not be covered by ESF (WLGA, 2013). This amount could have financed the costs of the project manager in ICT Collaboration, or any other ESF regional project, if the WLGA would have decided to do so. However, this alternative would have had a limited scope by focusing on one single ESF-WLGA project as opposed to the nine projects carried out throughout Wales.

7.36 Without the ESF money, HoICT would have carried on with their own departments' project plans to procure the software and equipment required to keep up to date with technology. Perhaps some projects in the programme would have been carried out, but at a slower pace and the amount of savings would have been less or non-existent than through collaboration. The selection of projects, through the monthly HoICT meetings, would have carried on being a space for discussion among ICT leaders and then for each individually to find ways of implementing those into their own organisations.

7.37 By having the ESF resource in place, a more open culture of sharing knowledge and collaborating across the six councils trickled down beyond HoICT and greater savings were achieved. Furthermore, the latest programme's projects (WebCMS and NWDS) prompted some programme's stakeholders to reflect on how their enabling role could have real impact on other front-line services. However, this awareness might not guarantee a more robust assessment of outcomes without senior or corporate steering.

7.38 The ESF-LSB grant did not enable the programme's stakeholders to leverage additional money from other sources. The project manager approached the WLGA regional coordinator and her line manager for suggestions, but neither was able to identify a source that addressed ICT services.

ICT Collaboration influencing mainstream practice

7.39 The governance model of the programme is one aspect which has impacted practice given that other regional ESF-WLGA projects focusing on back-office and front-line functions have adopted the model (Western Bay South Wales and Legal Services North Wales). A missed opportunity was finding out how back-office services helped to monitor and evaluate the impact that ICT technology had on front-line services.

7.40 The lack of thought given to evaluation at the beginning of the programme meant this did not occur and the challenges and myths of measuring intangible outputs were not overcome. A way to have overcome the latter would have been producing a collaborative performance management framework not only across partner organisations, but also throughout the different service departments within each partner organisation. For example, through a group that brought together the EDT and the ICT teams in the three participating councils to design and measure performance indicators. Another innovative idea would have been to track the cost savings made by each ICT department and then examine the ways in which the councils' finance departments allocated or spent that amount - either in a back-office or front-line services. According to one HoICT, this could have been possible for some local councils to do.

Public service improvement (outcomes)

Cost savings

7.41 One of the main aims of the programme was to achieve cost savings. The SSDS project achieved an overall £122,000 in cost savings reflected in better economies of scale across the three partner councils. The majority of these cost savings were generated by a better deal provided by the supplier of a shared service desk platform and reductions in staff time operating the system within the partner organisations.

7.42 In the WebCMS project, each partner organisation avoided a cost of £79,000 by instead investing £50,000 each. The NWDS aimed at generating cost savings for the social services EDT who were one of the beneficiaries of the project. The savings were envisaged to be about £100 per employee by replacing the electronic token to access secured databases containing citizens' personal information. However, at time of fieldwork this type of information was not available and informants told us that a report with more details would be ready by March 2014.

7.43 The documentation containing these data is found in the projects' closure reports. Apart from WebCMS, the cost savings are not broken down by council or partner organisation. Our interviewees told us that these calculations were done in a spreadsheet by the project sponsors and that the cost avoidance was calculated through the online communication between the project teams and suppliers and in the tender documents submitted during the procurement process.

Intermediate outcomes

7.44 Our interviewees made clear that the outputs achieved by the programme's projects were 'enablers' to develop outcomes to be achieved further down the line, such as service improvement in other council services and higher citizen satisfaction in their use of the council's online services. Some of the projects had the potential to improve services; the NWDS through the EDT pilot and the WebCMS further development.

7.45 In the EDT pilot, we found that the ICT teams were not encouraged to monitor the development of the IT operation that facilitated the sharing of databases between social workers working across Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham. The shared database enabled the EDT to access files quicker and easier. As many social workers have struggled in logging cases on a database. The IT enabler reduced time in accessing information by the EDT;⁶ facilitated the access to the databases from any computer located in any of these three councils in a more reliable way;

⁶ It varied, but for some cases accessing records improved from 'taking hours' to immediate access.

and extended the access to these databases by all staff. The pilot showed how the NWDS can improve the working practices of social workers who can now provide a more efficient service to citizens.

7.46 A weakness when examining the impact of the change is that it was not clear who was responsible for monitoring performance. The ICT team mentioned it was beyond their remit and that the EDT should be responsible. Although the EDT claimed that this technological change 'without doubt made a big, big change to us', the team was not monitoring or measuring this positive change because 'it is difficult...It is very busy here, the workload is phenomenal...especially during weekends the phone does not stop ringing'. After some reflection this interviewee continued 'what benefit will it be for us monitoring this? It will take a lot of work and we will not see a benefit from it in terms of service'. Finally, the project manager claimed that the monitoring of these issues was beyond the programme's remit and hence it needed a steer from the corporate directors rather than from HoICT.

7.47 The potential intermediate outcomes in WebCMS concern content improvement of the partners' web-pages and consequently a higher user/citizen satisfaction. For example in Denbighshire, through the use of statistics reported by SOCITM, user satisfaction surveys and other measures (i.e. Google Stats), the web-page team use indicators that showed the number of online-form-posts made by citizens on issues such as applying for a school place (667 posts) or requesting a replacement bin (318 posts). These online requests were available from August 2013 and became a new way of communicating between the council and citizens after the procurement agreement achieved by WebCMS.

7.48 These indicators showed the way the ICT team was implementing 'channel shift'⁷ throughout different services in the council. However, the extent of implementing these online requests and services did not only

⁷ In 2010 the UK Government published a report entitled Directgov 2010 and Beyond: revolution not evolution. It called for the public sector to shift its contact with the public to digital channels; being cost savings one of its potential benefits. Following the latter, the Channel Shift White Paper (Power, 2012) has influenced the ICT professions in both England and Wales.

depend on the ICT department, but also on the action by front-line service departments. In the SOCTIM's 2013 report, and based on this organisation's criteria, Denbighshire scored 3 out of 5 points with regard to service access in contrast to the Welsh average of 3.5. The webpage team expects that the council's ranking will improve in the 2014 report.

7.49 From the Denbighshire example, it was observed that the transformation from outputs to intermediate outcomes was to be developed individually by each ICT team in the councils and other non-council partners. The tools or documentation to keep track of how outputs could build into outcomes within each partner organisation varied depending on the resources and priorities within each ICT team. In some cases monitoring tools were non-existent or councils, in an individual basis, were beginning to design a systematic process.

7.50 These examples show the potential for some of the projects to lead to outcomes. They show that collaboration across partners worked well in procuring products and services as a collective, as this resulted in better value for money. However, working collaboratively across the full board of partners was not always developed. In the case of NWDS, although its PID established the importance of piloting a shared network database across different service areas, the interviews highlighted that the pilot was only to be tested with the EDT working across three local councils. It seemed that the project team and project board were disheartened in pursuing further ambitions. Some reasons behind this less ambitious approach within the programme were:

- The ESF money covered a period of two years which was not long enough to see projects' outcomes come into fruition; if the project manager would have had to develop a collaborative performance management framework into her responsibilities, the funding would have required to be extended further (maybe six to twelve months).
- ICT departments did not have the remit to monitor or evaluate the spill-over effects of the project on other services. Apart from the senior responsible owner, the majority of our interviewees expected this to be the task of front-line heads of service, especially if they benefited directly from the technological change. However, there was no guarantee that other council departments would implement

this and if they did there was no systematic way of doing it within and across partner organisations.

- Many of the intermediate outputs were difficult to monitor: for example, time saved or faster communications during the implementation of working practices as a result of changes in technology.⁸
- The autonomy or sovereignty of each partner organisation, especially from local councils, was clear and there were no intentions to integrate or merge an ICT strand of the overall service throughout the region.

7.51 As long as these three factors remain, it will be very difficult to measure the impact on the citizen within each council, let alone throughout the region.

Learning

7.52 The majority of the learning revolved around activities led by ICT departments, but there were cases where learning involved other departments within some councils. In the SSDS and WebCMS projects, ICT teams have worked closely with procurement and legal departments. This experience was new given that the procurement documents and the specification of the ICT products involved a series of partners with very particular needs. The pilot run in the NWDS project also involved learning between the ICT departments and the social services EDT which has improved understanding of the challenges that social workers encounter in accessing online secured information.

7.53 Learning has occurred at three different levels. At an individual level, the project manager sharpened her skills and strengthened her career development through the programme. Learning also occurred at a team and organisational levels, across ICT teams and other departments within the same local council. But learning did not reach the top organisational

⁸ However, there were signs that this could be measured in the feasibility pilot of Microsoft Lync not covered by the case study.

level because of the limited involvement of corporate teams in the programme.

7.54 The sharing of knowledge between ICT teams across the partners covered three dimensions:

- Administrative knowledge: partners would learn from the different procedures used in other organisations.. The project manager also taught certain processes of project management to project leads involved in the programme.
- Technical knowledge: partners would learn from each other with regard to ICT matters because partner organisations had different skills and areas of specialisation. This type of knowledge sharing also happened with legal and procurement matters.
- Organisational knowledge: partners learnt and understood better the organisational cultures and visions of their partners. This happened not only amongst HoICT, but also amongst lower levels of ICT staff. A couple of interviewees mentioned how decisions were being more transparent and filtering down beyond senior staff. In this dimension, HoICT started to change perceptions of their departments within their own organisation: from being a support service to an enabler.

7.55 The communication established by the governance model changed attitudes and behaviour of staff in sharing knowledge and ideas as well as discussing problems and challenges encountered across the projects. This type of communication in the region did not exist before the programme was implemented.

Dissemination of learning

7.56 At the time of our fieldwork, learning reports had been produced by the project manager for the SSDS and WebCMS projects. These reports specify that lessons are to be disseminated in the Local Government Association's Knowledge Hub, but the reports do not state who will be responsible for ensuring that these lessons reach an audience beyond the programme's stakeholders. These reports were sent to all partners, team members of the projects, the ESF-LSB national team, all HoICT in Wales and to the professional group, SOCITM.

7.57 Although professional groups helped to disseminate information (i.e. webpage group Wales). There was a belief amongst a couple of interviewees that a national organisation, such as the Welsh Government, could provide a 'bank of lessons learnt' and build a repository.

7.58 Given that the project manager left in November 2013, it is unlikely that resources would be allocated to find that communication platform and disseminate further the lessons learnt. An exception may be the governance model, in particular the role of project sponsors and leads, which has been similar in the governance structures of other regional ESF-LSB delivery projects: Legal Services in North Wales and Western Bay in the south through the WLGA training networks.

Support by the ESF-LSB national team

7.59 At the beginning of the programme, support from the Welsh Government's ESF-LSB team was described as being sporadic and disjointed. There was no opportunity to bounce ideas off with other project managers funded by the ESF. After a Welsh Government officer for North Wales was appointed at the end of 2012, the support increased through a series of networking events among different ESF-LSB project managers in the region.

7.60 In terms of evaluation, this neither featured in the business plan produced by the project manager nor was prompted by any of the HoICT or corporate officers. There was also limited contact with the Welsh Government on evaluation.

Learning between WLGA and Welsh Government

7.61 Having an ESF-LSB national team member dedicated to support the development of the delivery projects in North Wales enhanced the relationship between the Welsh Government and the project manager. However, this support was only put in place when the project was three-quarters of the way through.

7.62 The ESF-LSB officer also helped to improve coordination between Welsh Government and the WLGA by developing the 'learning sets' – events where project managers came together to discuss their experiences. These events were an addition to the training provided by the WLGA to project managers involved in regional collaboration across

Wales. The project manager of ICT Collaboration did not benefit greatly from these training events because of her extensive prior experience. She was frustrated that these events were largely held in South Wales.

7.63 The evaluation of the programme was to be undertaken by the Local Government Data Unit (LGDU) on behalf of the WLGA. A budget of approximately £5,000 was allocated to the LGDU to carry out the evaluations of this and eight other regional projects. The Welsh Government evaluation team did not therefore have any contact with the project manager until the end of January 2013. According to a couple of national stakeholders (Chapter 4) because of an initial lack of clarity among the members of the ESF-LSB Advisory Board on how to include local evaluations within the delivery projects, the programme's evaluation had a very low profile within its lifespan. This can be evidenced by the fact that the amount allocated to evaluation (£3,000) was not spent (Annual Project Report, 2013).

7.64 Furthermore, the WLGA training for regional project managers did not include anything on evaluation. It would be significant if future training included this aspect.

7.65 A key learning point from this is to ensure that all parties understand the role of evaluation at the start of an ESF-LSB delivery project. For the partners in the ICT Collaboration Programme, this understanding was not in place. The Welsh Government and WLGA officers were discussing how to include evaluation within the national project when the programme started, which meant that it became very unpractical to incorporate this new element during the implementation phase.

Conclusions

7.66 Two main learning lessons that the programme identified, which show a degree of innovation at a process level, are important to share in the development of similar projects across Wales:

- Having a procurement expert as part of a project seeking cost savings through collaborative ICT procurement processes, and
- A well organised governance model that includes open and clear channels of communications across the programme's teams.

7.67 The evidence suggests that the programme strengthened collaboration in ICT across the region. The governance model enhanced the channels of communication between HoICT and it created new ways, which did not exist before, for ICT teams across the region to communicate and share knowledge. Collaboration was also strengthened by extending the membership of partners by inviting and consolidating the working relationships with non-council partners, in particular, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

7.68 The strengthened collaboration did not mean a shared integrated service throughout the region. It did provide particular projects with different combinations of partners that potentially could lead to a regional holistic collaboration if partners decide to integrate teams and share assets in the future. However, for this to happen, the programme requires a more systematic and a stronger commitment and willingness from strategic leaders.

7.69 The enablers of this strengthened collaboration were:

- a history of HoICT meetings to share knowledge and discuss the best model of collaborative governance;
- the ESF-LSB funding to cover the cost of the project manager for a two year period;
- the project manager's knowledge, expertise and tenacity to operationalise the governance model within a month from her arrival and her systematic approach to monitoring the programme's development; and
- the additional legal-procurement and ICT staff and equipment resources that partners had to contribute in implementing the projects.

7.70 The need for councils to make short-term savings, as a result of unprecedented budget cuts, was perceived as a threat to collaboration because the savings from procurement processes in ICT Collaboration took time to achieve and ICT is not 'a sexy topic that will come out in the news'. The prospect of redundancies also slowed down collaboration. The sharing of knowledge and the integration of some operational processes that the projects started to lead to, began to create a 'threatening' environment for some officers in ICT and since local councils

are often the largest provider of jobs in the local area, this presented significant political challenges.

7.71 The disadvantage of collaboration was the slow process in achieving the outputs within each project, the worst perhaps being the SSDS case, which took 12 months for the procurement agreement to be reached. Collaboration also meant moving at the pace of the slowest partners. This slow pace was a double-edged-sword; whilst it strengthened the capacity of the weakest partners it diminished the benefits of the leading councils. National policies such as Making the Connections, the Simpson Report and ICT Strategy in Wales were seen as opportunities to strengthen collaboration, but at the same time national policies could act as temporary barriers to the development of collaboration - i.e. the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery and its recommendations on local government reorganisation.

7.72 The evidence suggests that the programme managed to deliver cost savings. The case study cannot conclude if these cost savings delivered value for the total money invested (£151,000) by the ESF given that half of the programme's projects were not included in the case study. However, by isolating the three projects selected, it can be said that savings were not maximised because of the partial involvement of partners in the three projects studied.

7.73 The ICT Collaboration Programme was not a delivery project which directly impacted on citizens. Rather as a back-office function, it has shown to have potential to improve processes within specific service areas, some of which the public may see the benefit (i.e. improved website and a more efficient social services EDT). If channel shift were to be successful, then this could have greater benefits for citizens or users. Instead, our evidence only shows that the programme began to build the foundation to enable channel shift of service delivery via the internet.

7.74 It is unlikely that many of the outputs (i.e. collaborative agreements) and outcomes (cost savings) would have been achieved without having the project manager in place. In this sense, the programme has provided evidence which supports the idea that additional capacity leads to some outcomes more quickly (similar to survey results, Chapter 5).

7.75 However, the late adoption by the ESF-LSB Advisory Board of a stricter approach to local evaluations by all delivery projects limited the reach that the programme could have had in terms of impacting citizens. The limited involvement of corporate local leaders to incorporate evaluation within the business plan of the programme was also a weakness.

7.76 The programme did not pro-actively promote the benefits that the projects could generate throughout their life time. In theory SSDS, WebCMS and NWDS all had the potential to create a shared service across the region, but the sub-groups of partners within each project show the lack of holistic integration with this regard. The different organisational situations that the partners were encountering did not allow them to get involved in one specific project at the same time; this could have been because of political, financial or capacity reasons. These types of contextual or institutional factors deferred the ambitions or potentials of the programme. Furthermore the limited involvement of senior leadership in the development of the programme stymied any opportunities that could have developed across the region.

7.77 Given this experience, the governance model developed by the programme seemed suitable for regional collaboration involving a group of council and non-council partners that sought cost savings or economies of scale at the same time that they maintained their organisational and political autonomy. The downside of this approach was the short-termism of collaboration which was developed to achieve cost savings whilst external funding lasted. The short-termism of the model does not necessarily mean that collaboration would not happen again in the future. This might be probable if local stakeholders are able to build upon the level of collaboration achieved by the programme.

7.78 The programme proposal submitted to the ESF-LSB Advisory Board underlined that the promotion of lessons learnt and benefits would be a core objective of the programme and work of project manager. Our evidence show that although lessons learnt reports were distributed to a range of stakeholders related to the programme, the distributive mechanisms relied on the networks of a few programme's individuals.

7.79 Although a dissemination strategy did not become a part of the project manager's responsibilities, partly because of its short-termism, the absence of a larger institutional space or repository of lessons learnt sponsored by the Welsh Government or other national organisation would have minimised this problem.

7.80 It was observed that a further challenge for the ICT policy sector is the lack of performance indicators collected by the public sector agencies. Without these it is unlikely that a more robust evaluation of a programme of this kind would actually ever take place.

7.81 Finally, this case study has been useful to test the theory of change illustrated in Chapter 3. It shows two relevant points that will need to be tested further:

- The transition from 'organisational and service change' to 'public service improvement' is not immediate. It is possible that this transition may take a year (or perhaps more) to occur. This transition involved steep learning curves with new actors that ICT departments were not use to deal with (i.e. procurement). The learning process involved a series of 'tos and fros' or 'ebbs and flows' in order for decisions to materialise into cost savings.
- The lack of clarity by the ESF-LSB Advisory Board in asking the ICT Collaboration Programme to include a more formal evaluation in its business plan affected the reach of 'public service improvement'. It limited the programme's outcomes to cost savings only rather than also focusing on benefiting citizens. This limitation was not because the programme lacked capacity or capability. On the contrary, it had a well prepared project manager and ICT teams and at the end of its lifespan, stakeholders started to realise the broader effects it could have enabling other front-line services (i.e. EDT). This shows that the way the ESF-LSB Project is managed nationally (by the team and Advisory Board) can help to determine the quality of service improvement.

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