



Evaluation report: ESF-funded projects in East London



Prepared for: LSC London East

**Prepared by: Philip Roe and Leighton Mitchell,
BMG Research**

September 2008



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January 2009



Produced by BMG Research

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www.bmgresearch.co.uk

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British Quality Foundation Member

Market Research Quality Standards Association (British Standards Institute) BS7911 for Market Research - Certificate No. FS76713

Investors in People Standard - Certificate No. WMQC 0614

Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS) Member Company

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1 Introduction

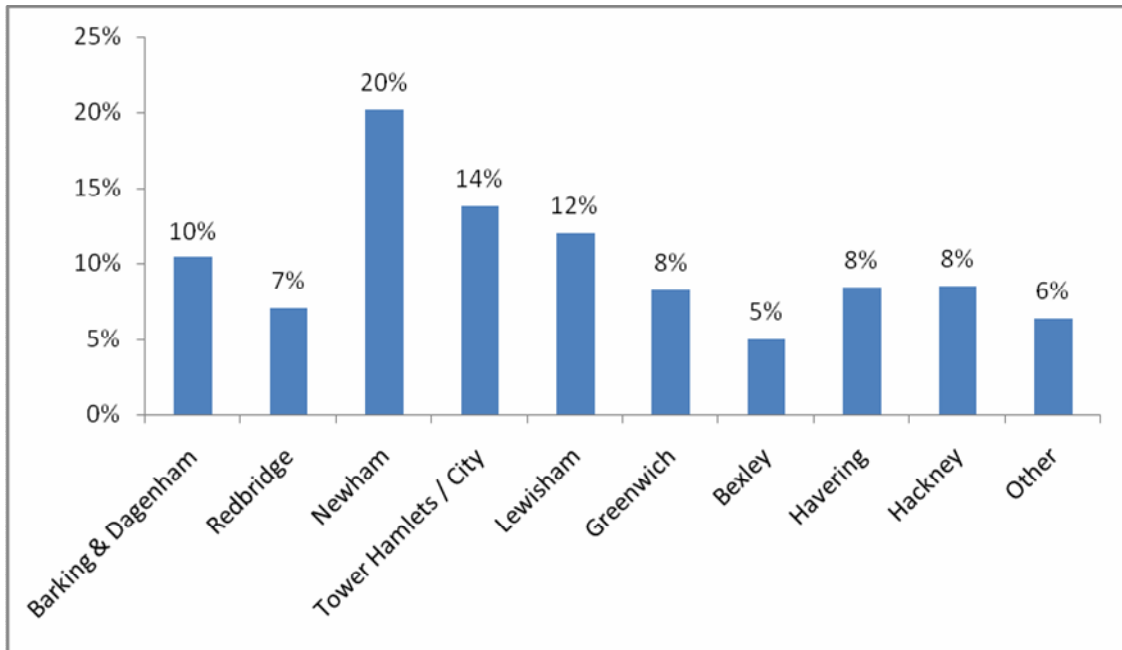
1. BMG Research was commissioned at the end of July 2008 to undertake an evaluation of a substantial set of East London LSC projects which were co-financed by the European Social Fund.
2. These projects are of eight broad types corresponding to the main focus of their work:
 - People not in education, employment or training (*NEET*).
 - Related to *14-19 Vocational Pathways* for young people.
 - Involved in delivering information, advice or guidance (*IAG*).
 - Targeted at *unemployed adults*.
 - Targeted at *disadvantaged groups*.
 - Aimed at stimulating the development of *higher level skills*.
 - Aimed at *upskilling* those already in employment.
 - Aimed at improving the capacity of the *Voluntary and Community Sector* to develop skills and engage people in productive activity.
3. The evaluation is based on an analysis of information contained in the Final Evaluation Reports from each of the funded projects.
4. These reports contain information of two kinds:
 - Firstly, there is *statistical* information which counts the number of programme beneficiaries and programme outcomes.
 - Secondly, there is *narrative* information which describes how projects operated, what 'soft' outcomes were achieved, what challenges and barriers they faced, and what their strengths were.
5. This report sets out the findings from an analysis of both types of information. The *statistical analysis* is based on contributions from the 98 ESF co-financed projects that provided outputs and achievement data, which are relevant to the evaluation. The *narrative analysis* is based on 108 projects, specifically prioritising those that were deemed to have shown a clearly 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' outcome in relation to LSC funding, although figures also take note of those that were of 'fair performance'. 'Successful' projects drew down at least 90% of their original funding allocations and would, therefore, have delivered approximately 90% of planned outputs. 'Fair performing' projects drew down between 70% and 89% of funding. 'Unsuccessful' projects drew down less than 70% of funding and, by inference, delivered less than 70% of planned outputs.

2 Statistical analysis

Geographical distribution of beneficiaries

- 6. Overall, the 98 projects had 16,054 beneficiaries, an average of 164 beneficiaries per project.
- 7. The highest proportion of beneficiaries was in Newham (with a fifth of all beneficiaries) and the lowest in Bexley (with 1 in 20 of all beneficiaries):

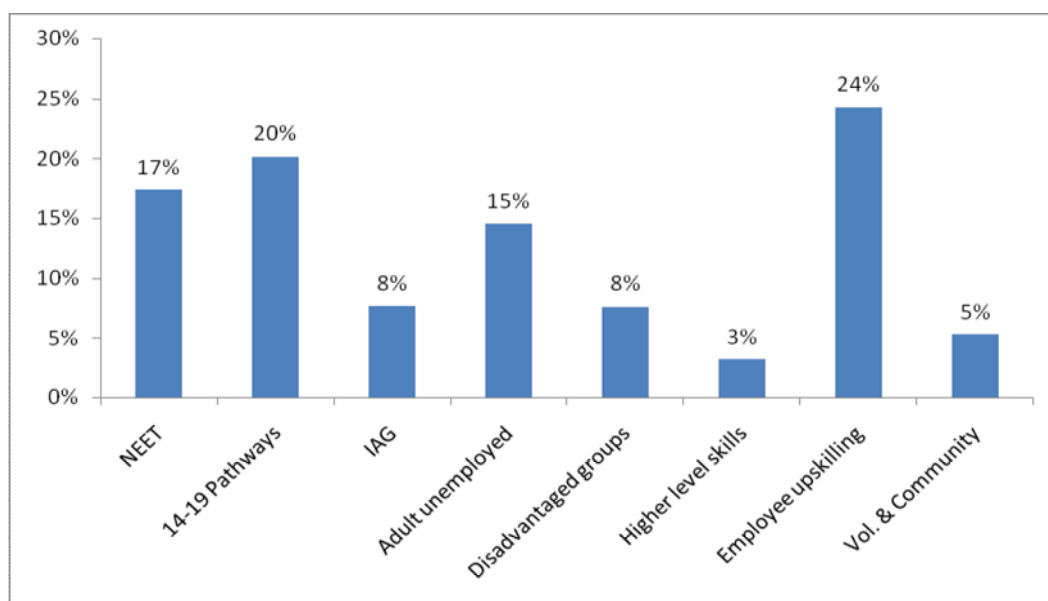
Borough base of beneficiaries



N = 16,054

- 8. Most beneficiaries were generated by the employee upskilling, 14-19 Pathways, NEET and adult unemployed strands of the programme (see next chart):

Beneficiaries by project type



N = 16,054

9. The different types of project were not evenly spread across the Boroughs. Thus, as the next table shows, there was variation in the numbers of beneficiaries in different strands in the different Boroughs:

Programme strands by borough; percentages of beneficiaries

	NEET	14-19 Pathway	IAG	Adult unemployed	Disadvantaged groups	Higher Level Skills	Employee upskilling	Vol. & Comm.	Total
Barking and Dagenham	7	18	10	16	14	10	4	3	10
Redbridge	7	3	2	9	16	16	6	11	7
Newham	16	23	6	33	24	10	18	23	20
Tower Hamlets/City	30	7	3	15	8	10	15	7	14
Lewisham	9	15	9	8	15	8	15	13	12
Greenwich	12	4	25	2	2	3	10	4	8
Bexley	3	5	18	0	1	6	7	1	5
Havering	7	20	1	1	1	13	6	20	8
Hackney	4	3	17	12	11	12	9	15	8
Other	6	2	8	5	7	12	10	4	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

N = 16,054

10. It can be seen (from the table above) that in relation to their overall share of all beneficiaries, there was some focus (reflecting which projects were delivered in particular locations) such that, for example....

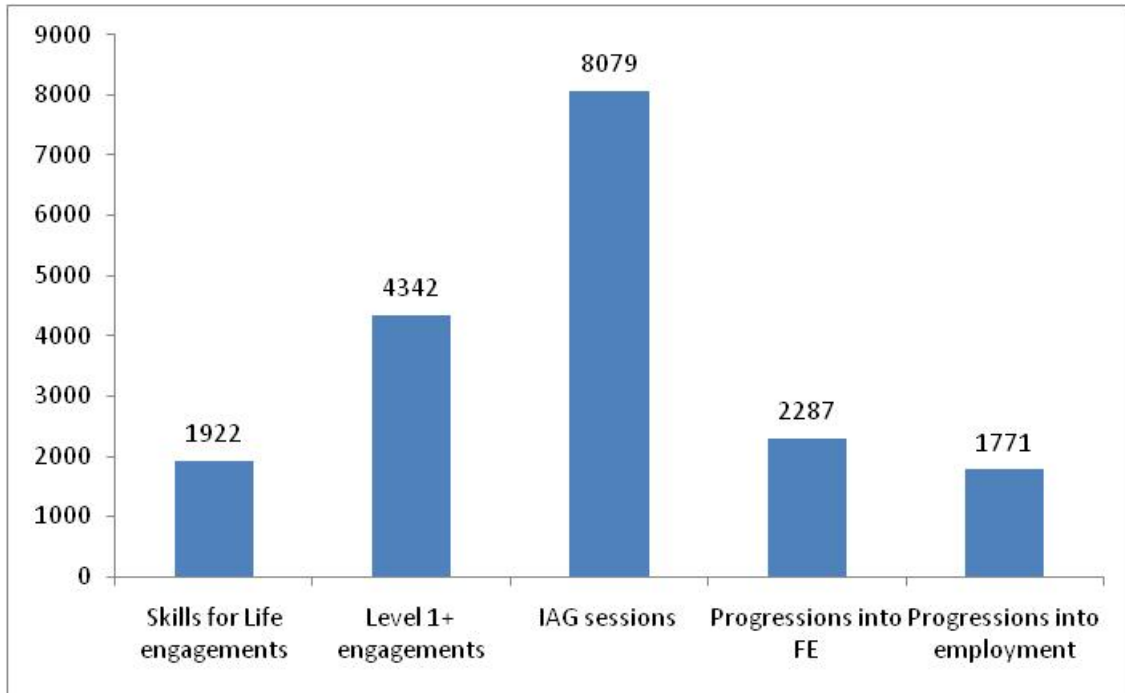
- Newham had a relatively large share of adult employed beneficiaries.
- Tower Hamlets/City had a relatively large share of NEET beneficiaries.
- Greenwich, Bexley and Hackney had a relatively large share of IAG beneficiaries.

- Havering had a relatively large share of 14-19 Pathways and Voluntary and Community Sector beneficiaries.

Engagement and Outcomes by programme

- Total *outcomes* from all projects totalled 18,041 or an average of 1.15 outcomes per beneficiary.
- The distribution of outcomes was:

Types of programme outcomes; numbers



N = 18,041

- The proportions of outcomes of different types generated by each strand of the programme were:

The share of different outcomes delivered by different strands; percentages

	NEET	14-19 Pathway	IAG	Adult unemployed	Disadvantaged groups	Higher Level Skills	Employee upskilling	Vol. & Comm.	Total
Skills for Life engagements	8	4	1	33	16	0	39	0	100
Level 1+ engagements	7	5	0	18	7	4	51	8	100
IAG sessions	22	10	15	13	14	0	19	7	100
Progressions into FE	27	16	9	18	13	0	10	7	100
Progressions into employment	9	4	*	22	8	13	34	8	100
Total outcomes	17	9	8	18	12	2	29	7	100
Total participants	17	20	8	15	8	3	23	5	100

* Less than 0.5%

14. This table shows:

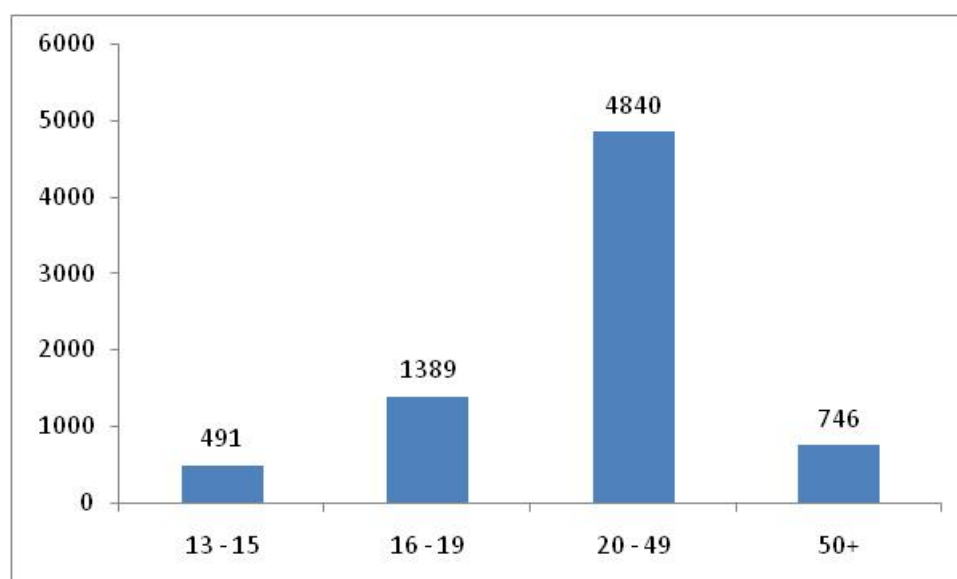
- Skills for Life outcomes mainly derived from adult unemployed, disadvantaged groups, and employee upskilling projects.
- Qualifications at Level 1 and above largely derived from adult unemployed employee upskilling projects.
- Perhaps surprisingly, the IAG strand was not particularly significant to the overall delivery of IAG sessions. IAG sessions were, however, a key feature of all the other strands
- Encouragingly, the NEET strand made the strongest contribution to progression into employment.
- Progression into employment was most frequently generated by the adult employed and employee 'upskilling' strands; and it was here too that the higher level skills strand made a significant contribution.

Attainment of qualifications

Overall attainment

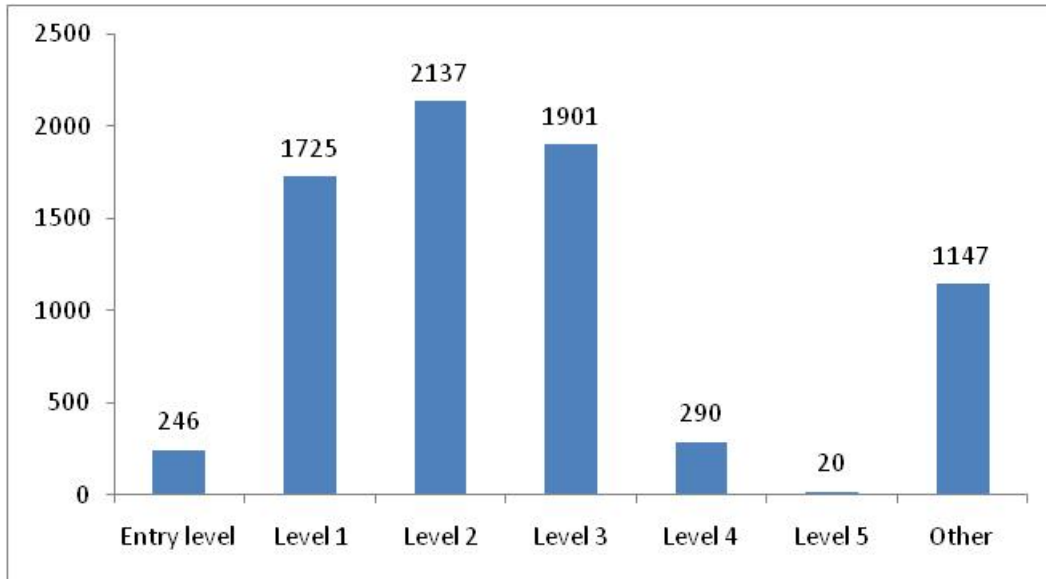
15. More particularly, a total of 7,466 qualifications were achieved, at an average of 0.5 qualifications per beneficiary. These qualifications can be broken down by the following age bands and levels:

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification; age breakdown



16. It can be seen that the largest share of qualifications (65%), corresponding to the broad age profile of beneficiaries, were achieved by those in the middle of the age spectrum.

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification; qualification level breakdown



17. Most qualifications achieved (77%) were between Levels 1 and 3. Encouragingly, nearly 6 out of 10 achieved qualifications (58%) at or above Level 2, the level at which qualifications make a real difference to employability.
18. A large number of qualifications, although accounting for only 15% of all qualifications, were not attributed to a particular level. These were most notably ‘Employability’, ‘ICT’, ‘ESOL’, Literacy’, ‘Numeracy’ or were simply recorded as ‘not applicable’.
19. Demographic information extracted from Annex A of the evaluation reports, describing the characteristics of all beneficiaries who achieved a qualification, is briefly summarised below. The summary is organised thematically, according to each strand of the programme as a whole.

Attainment in NEET projects

20. There were 827 beneficiaries who achieved a qualification within the ‘NEET’ strand:

NEET, or those at risk of being NEET, beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – age; percentages

	13 - 15	16 - 19	20 - 49	50+	Total
Entry level	0	100	0	0	100
level 1	0	100	0	0	100
level 2	0	100	0	0	100
level 3	0	96	4	0	100
Other	9	91	0	0	100
Total	2	97	1	0	100

NEET (or those at risk) beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – gender, ethnicity and disability; percentages

	BME	Disability	Male	Female	Total
Entry level	63	11	59	41	100
level 1	60	4	61	39	100
level 2	53	4	38	67	100
level 3	66	0	34	71	100
Other	66	0	82	9	100
Total	62	3	54	46	100

21. These tables show:

- The vast majority of NEET beneficiaries who achieved a qualification at each level were, not surprisingly, aged 16 – 19 years, although this strand of activity was also open to 14-16 year olds at risk of becoming NEET
- Approximately two-thirds of all NEET beneficiaries achieving qualifications were of a Black or Minority Ethnic background. This was less so for those with Level 2 qualifications
- Low proportions of NEET beneficiaries achieving a qualification reported that they had a disability. Those that did mostly achieved an entry level qualification
- Overall, slightly more NEET beneficiaries who received a qualification were male than female. However, the data shows that female NEET beneficiaries were more likely than male beneficiaries to receive higher level qualifications (meaning at Levels 2 and 3 in this case)

Attainment in 14-19 Pathways projects

22. There were 561 beneficiaries who achieved a qualification within the '14-19 Pathways' strand:

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – age; percentages

	13 - 15	16 - 19	Total
Entry level	71	29	100
level 1	82	18	100
level 2	99	1	100
level 3	100	0	100
Other	31	69	100
Total	79	21	100

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – gender, ethnicity and disability; percentages

	BME	Disability	Male	Female	Total
Entry level	39	6	92	8	100
level 1	33	4	75	31	100
level 2	7	4	56	51	100
level 3	0	0	80	20	100
Other	81	0	58	42	100
Total	34	4	75	25	100

23. Analysis of beneficiaries who achieved qualifications within the 14 – 19 Pathways strand shows:

- The majority, over two-thirds, were aged 13 – 15 years old. Almost none of the 14-19 Pathways beneficiaries who achieved a Level 2 or 3 qualification were aged 16 – 19 years.
- A third were from a Black or Minority Ethnic background, half the proportion of beneficiaries receiving a qualification in the NEET category, but none of these achievers achieved above a Level 2 qualification and most achieved at entry level and Level 1.
- Qualifications achievers with a disability mostly achieved at lower levels.
- 14-19 Pathways qualifications achievers were strongly weighted to males.

Distribution of IAG projects

24. There were 8,338 Information and Guidance sessions provided. In this case, as would be anticipated, there were no qualification outcomes. These sessions were delivered under the following project themes:

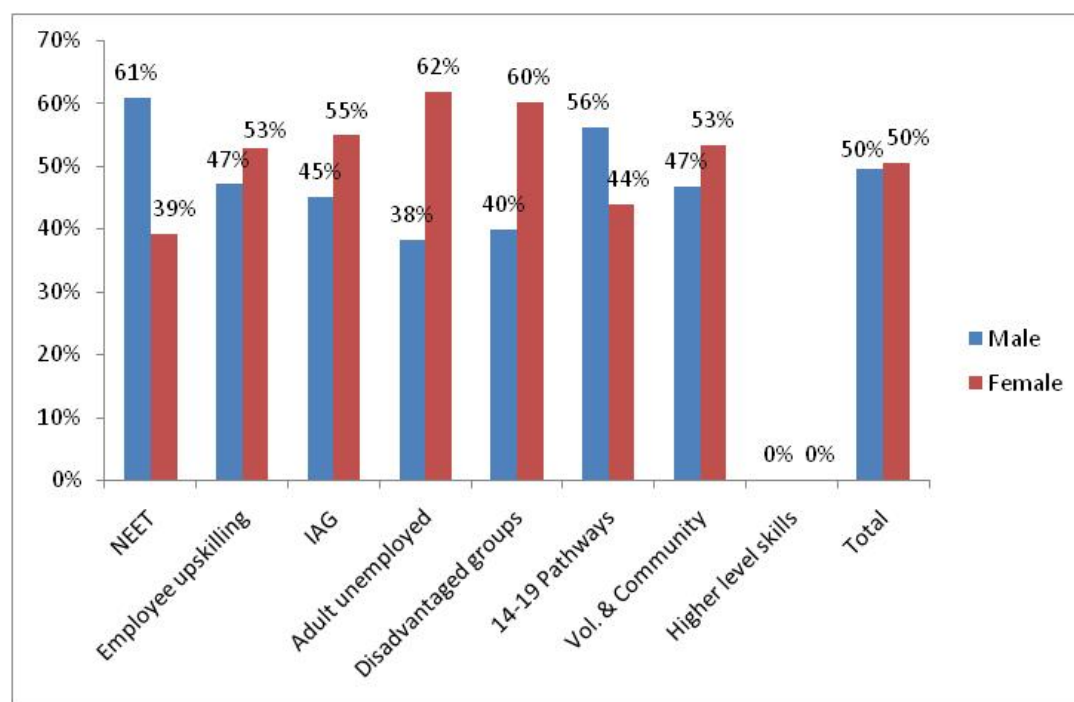
Distribution of IAG sessions per project theme; numbers

Theme	No.
NEET	2225
Employee upskilling	1308
IAG	1228
Adult unemployed	1036
Disadvantaged groups	1013
14-19 Pathways	965
Vol. & Community	563
Higher level skills	0
Total	8338

25. Projects within the NEET theme carried out the most IAG sessions, almost double the number of sessions carried out in any of the other project themes. There were relatively few IAG sessions delivered by the 14 – 19 Pathways and Voluntary and Community strands and none at all by Higher Level Skills themed projects. This is unsurprising as good practice dictates that IAG is embedded in delivery for the NEET group.

26. The chart below shows the distribution of IAG sessions between project themes by gender:

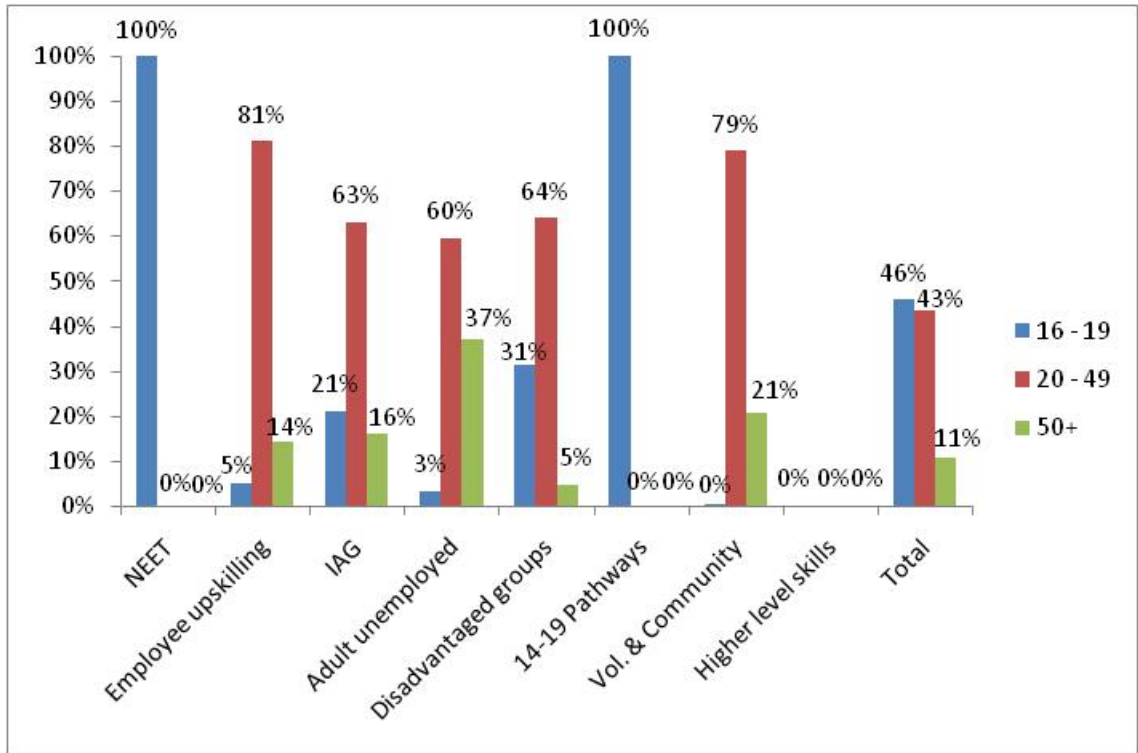
Distribution of IAG sessions per project theme and gender; percentages



27. It can be seen that receipt of information, advice and guidance was equally balanced between male and female beneficiaries. However, this overall result conceals significant differences between different strands. For example, receipt of IAG in the NEET strand was weighted towards males (reflecting the gender balance of NEET beneficiaries) whilst the reverse was true for the adult unemployed strand.

28. The following chart analyses IAG session figures by age of recipient:

Distribution of IAG sessions per project theme and age; percentages



29. As would be expected, IAG sessions delivered as part of the 14-19 Pathways and NEET strands were directed to 16-19 year olds. Other than this, the majority of IAG sessions were delivered to 20-49 year olds. Those aged over 50 years who received information, advice and guidance, mainly did so within the adult unemployed and voluntary and community sector strands.

30. The next table shows:

- People with a black or minority ethnic background formed the largest majorities of those receiving information, advice and guidance in the adult unemployed and 14-19 Pathways strands.
- People with a disability formed a relatively very high proportion of those receiving information, advice and guidance in the voluntary and community strand.

Distribution of IAG sessions by ethnic status and disability; percentages

	NEET	Employee upskilling	IAG	Adult unemployed	Disadvantaged groups	14-19 Pathways	Vol. & Community	Higher level skills	Total
BME	58	52	49	78	59	70	53	0	59
Disability	6	1	7	5	3	1	39	0	6

Attainment in adult unemployed projects

31. There were 1,484 beneficiaries who achieved a qualification within the ‘adult unemployment’ strand:

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – age; percentages

	16 - 19	20 - 49	50+	Total
Entry level	0	0	100	100
level 1	1	85	15	100
level 2	1	87	12	100
level 3	1	88	11	100
level 4	0	100	0	100
Other	0	0	100	100
Total	1	84	15	100

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – gender, ethnicity and disability; percentages

	BME	Disability	Male	Female	Total
Entry level	67	3	70	30	100
level 1	81	15	19	78	100
level 2	73	3	32	60	100
level 3	83	16	38	62	100
level 4	60	100	100	0	100
Other	69	0	50	50	100
Total	77	9	30	63	100

32. This data shows:

- The great majority of beneficiaries achieving qualifications within the adult unemployed strand were aged 20-49 years old, although all beneficiaries who achieved entry level qualifications were aged 50 years or more
- A high proportion, over two-thirds of all achievers in this strand, were from a Black or Minority Ethnic background.
- Approximately one in ten qualifications achievers in this strand had a disability. All qualifications achieved at Level 4 under this strand reported a disability (but the number of actual cases, five, is low).
- Those who achieved entry level qualifications were more likely to be male, whilst those who achieved at levels 1 to 3 were mainly female. All starters who achieved a Level 4 qualification (the same five people as in the previous point) were male.

Attainment in disadvantaged group projects

33. There were 1,180 beneficiaries who achieved qualification within the ‘disadvantaged groups’ strand:

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – age; percentages

	16 - 19	20 - 49	50+	Total
Entry level	12	71	17	100
level 1	27	70	3	100
level 2	51	49	1	100
level 3	40	60	0	100
Other	9	80	11	100
Total	30	65	5	100

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – gender, ethnicity and disability; percentages

	BME	Disability	Male	Female	Total
Entry level	23	94	77	23	100
level 1	58	16	59	36	100
level 2	9	0	52	48	100
level 3	9	1	53	45	100
Other	97	9	31	71	100
Total	46	10	48	51	100

34. These tables show that:

- No achievers in this strand achieved above a Level 3 qualification
- 16-19 achievers formed higher proportions of those achieving at Levels 2 and 3 whilst achievers aged 50 or over formed higher proportions of those getting lower level qualifications. Two-thirds of beneficiaries of this strand who received a qualification were aged 20-49 years.
- Almost half of those getting qualifications in this strand were from a Black or Minority Ethnic background. However, these people formed higher proportions of those achieving Level 1 and ‘Other’ qualifications.
- Overall, people with a disability comprised 1 in 10 of all those getting a qualification within this strand, with nearly all of those getting an entry level qualification.
- Those getting a qualification within this strand were fairly equally balanced between men and women. However, men comprised a higher-than-average share of those achieving lower level qualifications (entry level and Level 1) whilst women had a very high share of ‘Other’ qualifications.

Attainment in higher level skills projects

35. There were 354 beneficiaries who achieved a qualification within the 'higher level' skills strand:

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – age; percentages

	20 - 49	50+	Total
level 3	81	19	100
level 4	77	23	100
Total	80	20	100

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – gender, ethnicity and disability; percentages

	BME	Disability	Male	Female	Total
level 3	55	1	6	94	100
level 4	56	3	16	86	100
Total	56	1	9	92	100

36. This data shows that:

- Over three-quarters of qualification achievers from 'higher level skills' projects, at both Levels 3 and 4, were aged 20- 49 years
- Just over half were from a BME background
- A very small number had a disability of some kind
- The majority, approximately nine in ten, were female. It is apparent that higher level skills projects were heavily supported under ESF measure 5.1 which is dedicated to upskilling women.

Attainment in employee upskilling projects

37. There were 2,588 beneficiaries who achieved a qualification within the 'employee upskilling' strand:

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – age; percentages

	16 - 19	20 - 49	50+	Total
Entry level	0	100	0	100
level 1	8	85	7	100
level 2	4	84	11	100
level 3	0	87	13	100
level 4	0	80	20	100
Other	6	83	11	100
Total	4	85	12	100

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – gender, ethnicity and disability; percentages

	BME	Disability	Male	Female	Total
Entry level	100	0	100	0	100
level 1	52	2	22	78	100
level 2	32	0	64	33	100
level 3	52	2	23	77	100
Level 4	31	0	17	83	100
Other	82	1	37	63	100
Total	52	1	36	63	100

38. These tables show:

- The majority of those who achieved a qualification from ‘employee upskilling’ projects, over three-quarters at all levels, were aged 20-49 years. Younger participants formed a higher proportion of those achieving at lower levels whilst those aged 50 or over were a higher proportion of those achieving at Levels 3 and 4 than at levels below Level 3.
- All those who upskilled to an entry level qualification were from a BME background. Overall, approximately half of all people who gained a qualification in this strand were from a BME background.
- Only a small number of achievers in this strand had a disability
- Nearly two-thirds of all achievers in this strand were women, but men accounted for all of those who achieved at entry level.

Attainment at voluntary and community sector projects

39. There were 472 beneficiaries who achieved a qualification within the ‘voluntary and community sector’ strand:

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – age; percentages

	13 - 15	16 - 19	20 - 49	50+	Total
level 1	23	1	60	15	100
level 2	0	0	68	33	100
level 3	0	0	84	16	100
level 4	0	0	82	18	100
level 5	0	0	80	20	100
Other	0	2	96	2	100
Total	7	1	74	19	100

Beneficiaries who achieved a qualification – gender, ethnicity and disability; percentages

	BME	Disability	Male	Female	Total
level 1	71	28	43	57	100
level 2	28	12	33	68	100
level 3	61	3	34	69	100
level 4	36	5	9	91	100
level 5	35	0	15	85	100
Other	61	0	22	61	100
Total	53	13	33	66	100

40. From these tables we can see that:

- Three-quarters of those achieving qualifications in this strand were aged 20-49 years. The proportion in this age group increased at Level 2 and above. A relatively large proportion of 13 – 15 year olds, as would be expected, achieved at Level 1.
- There were no achievements at entry level but there were, unique to this theme, a number of Level 5 achievements
- Half of all achievers in voluntary and community sector projects were from a BME background. These BME achievers formed a higher proportion of Level 1 achievers than of achievers at other levels.
- Approximately one in eight achievers had a disability of some sort, although this proportion rose to almost a third of achievers at Level 1.
- Two-thirds of achievers under this theme were female. Women constituted even higher proportions of achievers at Levels 4 and 5.

Attainment of qualifications: summary

41. Analysis of those achieving qualifications within the different strands of the ESF programme showed a number key characteristics:

- In terms of *age*, the majority of those achieving qualifications, reflecting the general age profile of participants, were in the 20-49 age groups. The exceptions to this were, of course, the NEET and 14-19 Pathways projects, where virtually all achievers were aged 16-19 and 13-19 respectively. Those aged 50 or over were most strongly represented (at about 1 in 5) of achievers in the higher level skills and voluntary and community sector projects.
- In terms of *gender*, the different strands showed significant differences in the balance of achievement between men and women:

Achievers approximately balanced

NEET
Disadvantaged groups

Achievers significantly weighted to males

14-19 Pathways

Achievers significantly weighted to females

Adult employed
Higher level skills
Employee upskilling
Voluntary and community sector

- Further, too, in terms of gender, women consistently form higher proportions of those achieving at higher levels within each programme whilst men form higher proportions of those achieving at lower levels.
- Those from *BME groups* formed varying proportions of achievers:

Adult unemployed	77%
NEET	62%
Higher level skills	56%
Voluntary and community	53%
Employee upskilling	52%
Disadvantaged groups	46%
14-19 Pathways	34%
- The projects which delivered the highest proportions of qualifications to people with a *disability* were voluntary and community sector projects (13% with disability), disadvantaged group projects (10%), and adult unemployed projects (9%). Perhaps not unexpectedly, those projects primarily involving people in employment delivered qualifications only to very small proportions of people with a disability (Higher Level Skills and employee upskilling, 1% in each case). Similarly, those projects aimed at younger people also delivered lower proportions of qualifications to people with a disability (NEET and 14-19 Pathways, 3% and 4% respectively). This may in part reflect lower levels of self-reported disability among this group.

3 Narrative information

42. Narrative information extracted from the Final Evaluation Reports of 108 ESF co-financed projects is briefly summarised below, specifically prioritising those that were deemed to have been successful and unsuccessful (73 projects) but also noting those that were of 'fair performance'. The summary is again organised thematically.

NEET projects

Projects

43. Twelve NEET themed projects were reviewed, of which five were deemed successful by the London East LSC, three were judged to have been unsuccessful, and four were reported to be of fair performance.

44. These projects were aimed at helping;

- E2E students enrolled on a learner programme*
- College students thought least likely to be successful in the labour market
- Young learners interested in theatre
- Those that were already in the NEET category*

** Includes unsuccessful projects*

45. Young people participating in these projects were inducted via local colleges and Connexions. The main methods of the successful projects varied slightly, but focussed on providing individual, one-to-one IAG, and mentoring support. By contrast, the *unsuccessful* projects utilised wider employment-specific methods of providing work experience and training.

Engagement of beneficiaries and employers

- Three projects engaged with beneficiaries through Connexions, and two colleges, both successful, targeted their own students.
- None of the projects reported how they engaged with employers.

Soft outcomes

- Almost all projects reported the development of a range of generic and personal skills (communications, interpersonal, self-awareness, anger management, teamwork, etc.), which in turn had led to increases in employability.
- There were also improvements in attitude reported, in addition to increased engagement in the local community.

Equal opportunities

- Equal opportunities informed recruitment whereby three projects specifically targeted disadvantaged people and a general cultural and ethnic mix.
- Two projects, both of which were successful, stated that equal opportunity monitoring was not a priority.

Social and economic sustainability

- The nature of these particular projects meant that barriers to employment were addressed and opportunities for progression were presented.
- Some projects reported a longer term reduction in anti-social behaviour.
- Retention rates in education were increased in some cases.
- The unsuccessful projects were more likely to have highlighted any social and economic sustainability.

Environmental contribution

- The majority of projects reported the recycling of materials and paperless systems (through encouragement of emails and electronic storage of documents).

Strengths

- The most obvious strengths mentioned by each of the project evaluations were that they specifically engaged disadvantaged youth and providing opportunities that would not have otherwise existed. Other strengths, however, differed between each project, but included:
 - Peer mentoring;
 - Strong partnership development;
 - Excellent work place provision; and
 - Engagement of hard-to-reach parents and building communications with their children's schools.
- The unsuccessful projects mentioned just as many project strengths as those that were successful, and were of a similar nature.

Weaknesses/challenges

- The unsuccessful projects stated that their main weaknesses/barriers were based around poor partnerships established from the outset, whereby there was confusion over roles and some subsequent withdrawals of organisations from original partnership arrangements.
- The successful projects reported no such problems, but nevertheless faced difficulties in:
 - Matching mentees to mentors correctly.
 - Poor communications between staff
 - Paperwork to meet monitoring and audit requirements.

Innovation

- Four projects reported having employed innovative practice, however three of those cited practice that was generally embedded across all projects. A fair performing project recruited young community ambassadors to promote a theatre based programme in their local area which meant they were able to relate to and engage with young people who they might not have otherwise been able to reach.

Retention

- Two projects cited beneficiaries' family issues/home lives as a main reason for leaving projects.
- There were no other common factors affecting retention across NEET projects, although reasons included learners becoming uncontactable, behavioural issues, uncomfortable mentoring relationships and incorrect expectations.

Sustaining after ESF

- There were eight projects still on-going (they did not state their funding source), of which one was an unsuccessful project, and two were seeking further funding.

14-19 Pathways

Projects

46. Eight 14 – 19 Pathways projects were reviewed, of which three were judged as successful, one as unsuccessful and four as fair performance.
47. These projects sought to help school children at risk of joining the NEET group (an unsuccessful project) and/or socially excluded young people. They were identified by indicators such as poor attendance, poor punctuality, poor behaviour, or poor attainment at KS3.
48. The successful projects provided school-based training programmes which created vocational learning pathways, in one case increasing the involvement of local businesses. The unsuccessful project aimed to deliver E2E type provision which involved work placements.
49. Of those projects that were fair performers, two sought to provide careers based information and guidance, one delivered E2E style provision and another developed a five stage journey for young people aimed to prepare them for Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) sectors.

Engagement of beneficiaries and employers

- Four projects engaged with beneficiaries via local schools and colleges and using indicators such as attendance, punctuality, behaviour and attainment at KS3 in three of the cases.
- One successful project worked with local businesses to produce nine curriculum packs of employer case studies, whilst another worked with a local employer on an ad hoc consultation basis. In addition to this, a fair performing project involved employers in a series of workshops or as guest speakers at seminars.

Soft outcomes

- All projects reported a range of soft outcomes which mainly included improved confidence, motivation and goal-setting.
- The unsuccessful project reported a greater number of soft outcomes than those that were successful. Those include improvements in anger management, positive thinking and in organisational, team-working, and goal-setting skills and reductions in discrimination and substance abuse.

Equal opportunities

- All projects promoted equal opportunities via internal policies, with three stating that beneficiary characteristics were regularly monitored.

Economic sustainability

- Only the unsuccessful project provided details on economic sustainability, describing how the project upskilled the NEET group and addressed local skills shortages.

Environmental contribution

- Two projects aimed to employ paperless systems, recycle materials and promote energy use awareness and minimisation.

Strengths

- The unsuccessful project did not report any project strengths
- All three of the successful projects highlighted good partnership working with local schools, FE providers, service providers and the local authority.

Weaknesses/challenges

- Two of the successful projects reported a lack of clarity from the outset as to outcome measurement.
- A further two projects cited retention rates as being a main weakness
- Two projects reported that there was a lack of clarity with regards to project deadlines
- A lack of partnership between training providers and local schools (which did not make adjustments for lessons missed whilst on the course or withdrew students from the course altogether for behavioural reasons) was reported in one case.

Innovation

- A fair performing project tasked their young beneficiaries, in order to develop their ICT skills, to research on an organisation's competitors and, based on this research, develop a user friendly website which would appeal to young people.

Retention

- Two of the projects were based at schools therefore reported no problems with retention.
- Other factors affecting retention were learners moving into full time education or training, and courses being inappropriate for the beneficiaries needs.

Sustaining after ESF

- Three projects reported that they will be continuing in some form, either as a result of links established between a college and local schools or in the form of a series of learning toolkits.
- The unsuccessful project did not provide any information.

IAG projects

Projects

50. Six Information, Advice and Guidance projects were reviewed, of which one was judged as successful, three as unsuccessful and two as fair performance.

51. These projects were aimed at helping;

- Economically inactive adults*
- Hard to reach adults who are socially excluded or with learning difficulties or disabilities*
- General employees and apprentices*
- Learners at college

** includes unsuccessful projects*

52. They engaged participants through local employers, colleges and referral agencies.

53. The successful project aimed to provide IAG to address low progression rates of learners, whereas the unsuccessful projects offered action plans, help with CVs and mentoring services in addition to the standard service. One of the projects that were deemed as fair performers both delivered IAG through events and workshops.

Engagement of beneficiaries and employers

- The methods for engaging with beneficiaries in IAG projects varied, but involved using links with referral agencies, job centres, and community and voluntary sector organisations. The successful project, a university, engaged with beneficiaries via local colleges.
- None of the projects reported how they engaged with employers.

Soft outcomes

- The successful project reported a greater number of soft outcomes than those that were unsuccessful.
- All helped raise awareness of the benefits of Lifelong Learning and of progression opportunities. However, the successful project also reported that their beneficiaries received support to confidence-building and motivation.
- Two projects reported improved personal skills as preparation for progression.

Equal opportunities

- Four projects aimed to promote equal opportunities by targeting groups who experience barriers to economic engagement, particularly looking to recruit beneficiaries from a BME background, those with disabilities, lone parents or other 'non traditional' learners.

Social and economic sustainability

- Three of the projects engaged with inactive parts of the community and helped them to overcome barriers.
- Two projects thought that they could have done more to understand the needs of the local labour markets and to identify skill shortages

Environmental contribution

- Three projects aimed to recycle paper and reduce consumption.

Strengths

- There were few commonalities between the projects. Overall, however, the following project strengths were reported:
 - Promoted equality of opportunity.
 - Strengthened partnerships.
 - Responsive to individual needs.

Weaknesses/challenges

- Three projects reported poor starts to their projects, due to poor planning, lack of strategic focus, and managerial changes.
- Individual projects reported;
 - Competition with mainstream providers.
 - Inappropriate tutor expertise, whereby staff had expertise in finding employment for young people rather than adults
 - Poor staff communications.
 - Lack of managerial direction.
 - Time spent on red tape due to learner eligibility issues.

Innovation

- One successful project, a University, enabled beneficiaries at local colleges to earn 'passport points', which were equivalent to UCAS points, for completing a passport workbook which contained activities, exercises and guidance notes designed for raising attainment. This was of a particular benefit to learners applying to the University of Greenwich as they would receive 40 Passport points which could then count towards entry onto undergraduate courses at the University.

Retention

- Two projects stated that it was not possible for beneficiaries to 'leave' as such as one was a drop in set up which meant that beneficiaries could attend whenever they wanted to, and the other project had no clearly defined 'completion' point.

Sustaining after ESF

- Two projects reported that they were continuing, albeit in adjusted formats.
- A further two (unsuccessful and fair performance) projects had an idea of how to take their projects forward but at the time of reporting had not put these plans into action.

Adult unemployed projects

Projects

54. Twenty adult unemployment projects were reviewed, of which thirteen were judged as being successful, two as unsuccessful and five as fair performance.
55. These projects aimed to engage a range of beneficiaries, including;
- Economically inactive members of BME groups (particularly women)
 - Disadvantaged women
 - Economically inactive adults
 - Women wishing to upskill
 - Refugees and asylum seekers
 - Parents (or carers) disengaged from their own and their children's education*
 - Students of manufacturing*
- * Includes unsuccessful projects*
56. Beneficiaries were engaged through local faith communities, colleges, neighbourhood open days, Jobcentre Plus and community centres.
57. Of the twenty projects, ten aimed to provide beneficiaries with an accredited qualification at the end of the project, mostly aimed at level 1-3 ESOL and Basic Skills but also with a focus on ICT, and one further project aimed to deliver an industry-specified non-accredited qualification.
58. The unsuccessful projects aimed to develop an apprenticeship framework and provided workshops with embedded basic skills training

Engagement of beneficiaries and employers

- Adult unemployment projects engaged with beneficiaries using a variety of different sources, most notable through educational colleges (7 projects, of which 5 were successful), Widows and Orphans International (2 projects), open days in the local neighbourhood and the job centre.
- Two successful projects provided information regarding employer engagement. One used a job broker as the main interface between the project and employers whilst another used an employer for work placements. An unsuccessful project which sought to focus on manufacturing utilising existing links with jewellers in the local area.

Soft outcomes

- The majority of projects reported improved generic and interpersonal skills (self-esteem, communications, confidence, IT, etc.).
- Most of the successful projects highlighted;
 - Improved job search and preparation skills, and general employability.
 - Raised future aspirations and general motivation
 - Improved British cultural awareness and general cohesiveness between people of different ethnic backgrounds

- Improved social skills.
- The unsuccessful projects strengthened family relationships and raised awareness of sector requirements, as well as generally increasing confidence.

Equal opportunities

- Eight projects, seven of which were successful projects, stated that they mainly addressed equal opportunities by specifically targeted groups that face multiple barriers.
- Six projects established marketing methods and produced programme materials that encouraged inclusion and diversity of the programmes.

Social and economic sustainability

- Two projects helped establish friendships and social cohesion to help to create an integrated society.
- Four projects, of which all were successful, reported that their work had helped to address the barriers which beneficiaries face and helped to provide opportunities for progression into learning and employment.
- Thus, these projects were tailored to local economic conditions, helped to develop relevant employability skills, and contributed to the reduction in worklessness.
- An unsuccessful project reported that it had helped to strengthen family relationships.

Environmental contribution

- Almost all projects reported recycling of materials and general re-usability wherever possible.
- Paperless systems were also encouraged to cut down on paper usage.

Strengths

- The majority of projects tackled long-term unemployment by upskilling their beneficiaries and tackling gaps in provision.
- Three projects reported flexibility in delivery and personal attention relative to their beneficiaries' needs as strengths.
- One of the two unsuccessful projects reported the creation of sector-specific pathways to employment. The other did not identify any project strengths.

Weaknesses/challenges

- Three projects, including one which was unsuccessful, reported challenges in recruitment of beneficiaries early on in the project which led to delays.
- Four projects reported that some assignments and levels were too challenging for some beneficiaries due to (unexpected) low initial attainment levels on entry.
- Four projects, one unsuccessful, reported delays in project start up due to difficulties in engagement of beneficiaries, budget reduction, partnership issues, and administration difficulties.
- There were a number of *external* challenges, varying across projects, which created barriers to provision, including;
 - Loss of venues
 - Lack of child support

- Over 50s prejudice
- Retention issues
- Delays caused by CRB applications
- Changes in Sector Skills Council

Innovation

- There were no particularly innovative adult unemployment projects.

Retention

- Four projects stated that beneficiaries left their courses due to childcare issues where children were unable to settle in nursery, a lack of facilities provided or even an unwillingness to leave children in care when facilities are made available.
- Two projects said that illness played a part in retention rates

Sustaining after ESF

- Of the twenty projects, seven reported that they were continuing (including one of the unsuccessful projects, albeit in a different form), five were seeking further funding as their projects were still viable, and one was not continuing.
- Seven projects did not provide any information.

Disadvantaged groups

Projects

59. Ten disadvantaged/hard to help projects were reviewed, of which four were judged as successful, one as unsuccessful and five as fair performance.

60. These projects engaged with:

- NEET young parents*
- Ex-offenders, substance abusers, homeless
- Long term unemployed people with learning difficulties
- People with care responsibilities
- Asylum seekers and refugees

* *unsuccessful project*

61. The methods of these projects were varied. One successful project provided skills for life tuition, a Health and Safety qualification and general IAG, whereas another sought to provide tailored support for people with learning difficulties and a further project aimed to improve the employability of asylum seekers. In addition, the unsuccessful project delivered a parenting skills and general soft skills courses. Of those that were classed as fair performers, half or all disadvantaged group projects, three provided work experience placements.

Engagement of beneficiaries and employers

- The unsuccessful project sought to engage with it's NEET beneficiaries via a general marketing strategy, whilst two of the successful projects used established links with referral agencies.
- One successful project engaged employers through the local job centre.

Soft outcomes

- Two projects reported improved personal, social, and generic skills (organisation, time management, self-confidence, motivation, self-esteem).
- The other project highlighted improvement in capacity to deal with daily life (completing forms, interactions with public agencies, etc.).

Equal opportunities

- Four projects promoted equal opportunities through their recruitment of beneficiaries, albeit in opposing ways whereby two projects employed an open-for-all strategy and two targeted disadvantaged groups.
- Two projects stated that they complied with internal equal opportunity policies.

Social and economic sustainability

- Improved community safety (from an ex-offenders project).
- Only the unsuccessful project reported on economic sustainability of their work, citing the increased longer term employability of participants.

Environmental contribution

- All projects reported the promotion of public transport, paperless systems, energy conservation and general recycling of waste.

Strengths

- The successful projects reported that their initiatives built participant trust (with difficult groups), were responsive to participant needs and views and highlighted the good quality of their staff.
- The unsuccessful project did not report any strengths

Weaknesses/challenges

- The unsuccessful project aimed to engage young parents but reported conflicts between participants and poor attendance from young fathers due to stigmatisation. They also suggested that young parents found it difficult to juggle their home life responsibilities in addition to this courses' responsibilities and tasks, such as gathering documents.
- The other two projects identified difficulties in evidencing progression and a lack of funding for expenses which fell outside of course time e.g. for IAG and interview attendances.
- Poor and sporadic attendance, the benefits trap, and cultural challenges where women are not supposed to have an education, were some of the other issues that were mentioned by the successful projects.

Innovation

- There were no particularly innovative disadvantaged projects.

Retention

- Two projects reported beneficiaries leaving as a result of them moving out of the local area without any notice or explanation

Sustaining after ESF

- Two projects had secured funding, whilst five other projects, including the unsuccessful project, were seeking funding at the time of reporting, either through the local authorities or 'various government contracts'.

Higher level skills projects

Projects

62. Eight projects were reviewed of which four are judged as being successful, three as unsuccessful and one as fair performance.

63. These projects sought to engage with:

- Personal advisors
- Women and members of BMEs employed in Small and Medium Enterprises
- SMEs in general*
- People with disabilities
- Employees working within residential and domiciliary care
- Non-employed individuals identified as having Level 3+ potential
- Dentists*
- Students*

* *unsuccessful projects*

64. Beneficiaries were recruited from local SMEs and colleges.

65. Three successful projects provided training up to Level 3, supported by IAG and directed to management and leadership skills. In addition, they all offered IAG or other one-to-one support.

66. By contrast, none of the unsuccessful projects offered IAG sessions, instead aiming to raise awareness of foundation degrees, health promotion or, in one case, provide leadership and management qualifications for SMEs.

Engagement of beneficiaries and employers

- Four projects, three successful and one unsuccessful, attempted to engage with beneficiaries via local Small and Medium Enterprises, whilst a further two utilised links with local colleges and universities.
- Two successful projects promoted their courses with promotional material via local SME's. One unsuccessful project engaged the local dentistry sector through existing links to seek employees whilst another mostly dealt with referral agencies.

Soft outcomes

- The projects developed confidence, commitment, team leadership, or networking:
 - Three projects stated that increased confidence was a key soft outcome, and this was linked to self esteem and ability to write up effective CVs. All were successful.
 - Two of the seven higher level skills projects provided IAG, and both of these increased beneficiary confidence
- Successful projects tended to mention personal development-orientated soft outcomes such as confidence, commitment, enthusiasm, and team leadership, whereas the

unsuccessful projects mentioned more generic workplace-orientated outcomes such as 'enhanced employability' and 'time management'.

Equal opportunities

- Two projects stated that they had demographic monitoring arrangements in place.
- Two projects addressed equal opportunities by specifically targeted disadvantaged groups.

Social and economic sustainability

- Only three reports highlighted social sustainability, two of which were unsuccessful projects.
- Two projects helped develop transferable management skills.
- Two reports highlighted economic sustainability

Environmental contribution

- Six of the eight reports highlighted environmental sensitivities, having encouraged recycling, careful use of materials and resources, and energy conservation.

Strengths

- Two projects had increased progression into higher level jobs. Both were successful and both had provided IAG sessions.
- Amongst other strengths which were mentioned were:
 - Good female and BME engagement.
 - Good mix of theory and practice in learning experiences.
 - Flexibility and success of one-to-one tuition.
- Two out of the three unsuccessful projects did not mention any strengths at all.

Weaknesses/challenges

- Four projects reported difficulties which arose from planning and communication weaknesses. These were as a result of poor communication within partnerships, re-organisations in terms of structure, inexperienced staff and difficulties in setting up evidence mechanisms for monitoring.
- Two projects reported having problems with incompetent staff, citing a lack of experience, poor standards and inadequate resourcing. Both of these projects were unsuccessful.
- Five out of eight projects received limited employer support and some resistance. Specific problems included unwillingness to pay a contribution towards the funding of training, withdrawals, partnership changes and difficulties in engaging relevant businesses.

Innovation

- There were no particularly innovative higher level skills projects.

Retention

- Three projects reported that beneficiaries left due to a change in employment.

Sustaining after ESF

- The project deemed to have been a fair performer was continuing via Train2Gain.
- 5 projects were discontinued, citing a lack of funding. This in spite of the fact that there is a high demand reported for some of these projects and a database full of learners.
- There was one unsuccessful project which was seeking further funding opportunities at the time of writing this evaluation report.

Employee upskilling projects

Projects

67. Thirty employee upskilling projects were reviewed, of which fourteen were judged as successful, six as unsuccessful and ten as fair performance.

68. These projects sought to engage with:

- Professional people supporting ESOL skills in the workplace
- Childcare workers*
- Social workers
- Care staff working with people with learning disabilities* and/or mental health issues*
- Teachers
- SME employees in construction* and creative sectors.
- Employees with no or low skills

** unsuccessful projects*

69. There were no observable differences between the methods employed by the employee upskilling projects whereby most beneficiaries received on-the-job-training, leading Care qualifications from levels one to four in six projects.

Engagement of beneficiaries and employers

- Half of all projects who specified how they engaged with their beneficiaries did so through local businesses whilst the other half were (successful) colleges engaging their own students.
- Not surprisingly, the seven projects that provided information with regards to engaging employers did so through marketing to local SME's in their relevant sectors.

Soft outcomes

- The majority of projects reported the development of a wide range of employability skills including confidence, English language, professional approach, time management, and IT skills.

Equal opportunities

- Six projects offered flexible training to suit the beneficiaries needs and background ensuring that they faced minimal barriers into employment.
- Four projects adhered to internal equal opportunities policies and principles.

Social and economic sustainability

- Five projects, four of which were successful, reported enabling beneficiaries to become long-term participants in the labour market, particularly through development of Skills for Life.
- Four projects successfully supported beneficiaries into gaining promotions, new jobs and general career development.

Environmental contribution

- Almost all projects promoted waste minimisation, recycling of materials and paperless systems based on the use of emails and electronic storage.
- Public transport, or project delivery in convenient locations, was promoted.

Strengths

- Nine of the thirty projects under this theme mentioned project strengths.
- Three projects provided bespoke/tailored solutions, both in terms of content and delivery schedule.
- Two of the projects, both of which were judged as unsuccessful, noted the engagement of hard-to-reach groups as a strength.

Weaknesses/challenges

- Eight projects reported that they had difficulties in recruiting beneficiaries due to eligibility issues, difficulties in employee release, and general low take-up.
- Four projects highlighted staff issues such as inexperience and changes in personnel.
- Five projects mentioned that financial issues faced by both the beneficiaries, (especially as some competitors were providing free training), and by the projects themselves, which complained of the reduction of ESF funding and its implications.

Innovation

- There were no particularly innovative employee upskilling projects.

Retention

- Five projects stated that their beneficiaries mainly left due to a change in employment
- Three projects highlighted the length of their courses as the reason for beneficiaries leaving.
- Two projects reported that their beneficiaries left due to childcare reasons.

Sustaining after ESF

- Of the thirty projects, thirteen were continuing (some in scaled down format), six were seeking further funding or hoped to proceed in other formats, four were discontinued and seven did not provide any information.
- Of the six unsuccessful projects, two were continuing, two were discontinued, one was expecting Train to Gain funding and was did not provide any information.

Voluntary and Community Sector projects

Projects

70. Fourteen VCS projects were reviewed, of which ten were judged to have been successful, one as unsuccessful and three as fair performance.
71. The beneficiaries of these projects were VCS providers, and people with health conditions or disabilities*
- * unsuccessful project*
72. The majority of projects aimed to develop the VCS workforce by providing training, support and mentoring, as well as establishing and developing partnership networking between voluntary and community organisations, learning providers and agencies.
73. The unsuccessful project aimed to promote wider access to lifelong learning for unemployed people with health conditions or disabilities by providing support where needed.

Engagement of beneficiaries and employers

- Two projects stated that they engaged their beneficiaries through working closely with VCS providers, whilst two others promoted through the local community and local venues.
- None of the projects reported how they engaged with employers.

Soft outcomes

- A number of projects reported that a range of generic and personal skills were developed, including confidence, interpersonal relationship skills, motivation, and analytical skills.
- Some projects reported that community capacity-building had encouraged inter-organisational working which promoted shared ideas and forged partnerships

Equal opportunities

- Three projects adhered to internal equal opportunities policies and principles.

Social and economic sustainability

- Greater capacity to respond to the needs of disadvantaged groups and to tackle the barriers which they face in the labour market.
- The general skills of the voluntary workforce were developed
- Some projects also assisted recruitment into local economic sectors.
- The unsuccessful project did not report any social and economic sustainability

Environmental contribution

- Most projects had policies in place to tackle the recycling of materials and to minimise usage of materials.
- Accessibility by public transport was also a priority for a number of projects.
- The establishment of workshops and a 'Green Team' also raised awareness of environmental issues.

Strengths

- A number of projects promoted flexible bespoke delivery to suit the needs of the beneficiaries and thereby raise retention rates.
- Good communications and partnership working enabled individual skill-building and organisational developments

Weaknesses/challenges

- Some projects complained that the short-term funding provided limited the amount of work that could be done.
- The unsuccessful project, having targeted people with health difficulties or disabilities, reported that the health of their beneficiaries was sometimes a barrier as they had to have time off to receive treatment. They also reported that the extra time needed for people with these particular barriers and needs was not accounted for.

Innovation

- There were no particularly innovative VCS projects.

Retention

- The amount of time and commitment was the reason why beneficiaries left three of the projects early on.

Sustaining after ESF

- Five projects continued with alternative funding, five were seeking funding at the time of reporting, and four further projects did not specify their plans.
- Possible funding sources mentioned were COF, ESF, Change Up, LDA and Capacity Building.

4 Summary

74. This chapter briefly reviews the key points and messages of data and information set out in preceding chapters.

Beneficiaries

75. Firstly, in terms of *beneficiaries*:

- Overall, the programme had just over 16,000 beneficiaries.
- The highest proportions of these were in East London's more disadvantaged boroughs – Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Lewisham.
- Four out of the eight programme strands (employee upskilling, 14-19 Pathways, NEET and adult unemployed) generated over three-quarters (76%) of beneficiaries.

Outcomes

76. Secondly, in terms of *positive outcomes*:

- The programme overall delivered just over 18,000 positive outcomes, an average of 1.15 per beneficiary.
- IAG outcomes (45% of the total) were most frequent, followed by qualifications at Level 1 or above (24%), progression into FE (13%), Skills for Life (11%), and progressions into employment (10%).
- Most strands of the programme delivered proportions of total outcomes which equalled or exceeded their proportions of beneficiaries. The exceptions were the higher level skills strand (marginally) but, more noticeably, the 14-19 Pathways strand delivered below half its 'expected' proportion of outcomes (in relation to its proportion of beneficiaries).

Qualifications

77. Thirdly, in terms of *qualifications*:

- The programme as a whole delivered 7,466 qualifications.
- This represents an average of 0.47 qualifications per beneficiary.
- Qualifications were delivered across an age spectrum from people as young as 14 or 15 up to people aged 50 or over.
- People from Black and Minority Ethnic groups made up a majority of those receiving a qualification from most strands of the programme.
- Women made up a majority of recipients of qualifications, and an even larger majority of those receiving higher levels of qualification.

Beneficiaries, outcomes, and qualifications: summary

78. In summary therefore:

	NEET	14-19 Path ways	IAG	Adult unemployed	Disadvantaged groups	Higher level skills	Employees upskilling	Vol. & Community	Total
Percent of beneficiaries	17	20	8	15	8	3	24	5	100
Percent of outcomes	17	9	8	18	12	2	29	7	100
Percent of qualifications	11	8	0	20	16	5	35	6	100

79. This summary suggests that, in proportion to the number of beneficiaries, numbers of outcomes and/or qualifications tended to be high for some adult projects – those aimed at the adult unemployed, disadvantaged groups, higher level skills, and employee upskilling. Qualifications tended to be proportionately low for projects aimed at young people (where objectives concerning changes in attitudes and values are, perhaps, as significant as achieving ‘hard’ outcomes).

LSC success ratings

80. Fourthly, projects were rated by the LSC as successful (achieved 90% or more of planned outputs), fair performance (achieved between 70 and 89% of planned outputs) or unsuccessful (achieved less than 70% of planned outputs). For the 107 projects reviewed in this evaluation:

	Successful	Fair performance	Unsuccessful	Total	Success rate % *
NEET	5	4	3	12	42
14-19 Pathways	3	4	1	8	38
IAG	1	2	3	6	17
Adult unemployed	13	5	2	20	65
Disadvantaged groups	4	5	1	10	40
Higher level skills	4	1	2	7	57
Employee upskilling	14	10	6	30	47
Voluntary and community	10	3	1	14	71
All	54	34	19	107	50

* Successful as % of total.

81. These data shows that the projects reviewed in this evaluation had an overall success rate, in LSC terms, of 50%, with a particularly low rate (though based on only 6 cases) of 17% for IAG projects.

Soft information

82. Fifthly, a variety of ‘soft’ information is available from Final Evaluation Reports. This information includes:

- Reports of *soft outcomes* mainly focus on the capacity of projects, across all strands, to develop a wide variety of personal, social, generic, and employability skills.
- Assessments of *social and economic sustainability* outputs are varied but key benefits include the contribution to reduction of social exclusion, the long term benefits of enhanced employability, increases in community capacity, and, to a lesser extent, the delivery of skills relevant to the long term development of local sectors or the local economy in general.
- Almost all projects identify their *environmental responsibility* with typical forms including recycling of paper and other materials, taking care with energy use, encouraging beneficiaries to use public transport or delivering learning close to their homes, and minimising waste.
- *Strengths* of projects tended to focus around strengthened partnerships, tailored or flexible solutions, responsiveness to beneficiaries, successful engagement of difficult or challenging groups, or successful outcomes of various kinds.
- *Weaknesses* of projects tended to focus on organisational or management weaknesses (late starts, confusion between partners, poor communications, planning weaknesses, etc.); on difficulties in getting difficult groups to attend regularly and complete work assignments; on difficulties in getting beneficiaries through to completion; on the administrative burden of ESF monitoring and audit or of assessment procedures; and on recruitment (mostly not enough, but sometimes too many, beneficiaries).

Sustainability

83. Sixthly, in terms of the *sustainability* of projects (ie. their continuation after ESF funding ended), analysis suggests:

	Continuing*	Doubtful/ seeking funding	Discontinued	Not known	Total	Sustainability %**
NEET	8	2	1	1	12	67
14-19 Pathways	3	2	1	2	8	38
IAG	2	4	0	0	6	33
Adult unemployed	7	5	1	7	20	35
Disadvantaged groups	2	5	2	1	10	20
Higher level skills	1	1	5	1	8	13
Employee upskilling	13	6	4	7	30	43
Voluntary and community	5	5	0	4	14	36
All	41	30	14	23	108	38

* Sometimes in adjusted or reduced form.

** Continuing as % of total

84. This data implies an overall sustainability rate of 38% (though this may rise if some projects/organisations currently seeking alternative funding are successful).

Evaluation: summary

85. Key strengths of the programme include:

- Overall, the programme involved a significant number of beneficiaries (over 16,000).
- The programme generated over 18,000 positive outcomes, more than one outcome per beneficiary.
- Qualifications constituted a significant proportion (41%) of positive outcomes, around 0.5 qualifications per beneficiary.
- A significant proportion of qualifications (58%) were achieved at Level 2 and above, a level which clearly contributes to the employability of individuals and, collectively, to the local skills and knowledge base.
- The programme included a significant proportion of people from BME groups in East London, who frequently comprised majorities of those achieving qualifications within the different strands of the programme.
- Virtually all projects had positive effects on the attitudes and the generic and employability skills of their participants.
- Projects led in many cases to enhanced partnership working in East London and to the engagement of difficult or challenging groups.
- Projects almost universally conformed to requirements that they should be delivered in a way which minimised their environmental impact.

86. Within this overall perception of success, a number of questions or issues should also be considered.

- The levels of beneficiaries, positive outcomes, and qualifications are numerically significant. However, they have not been assessed in relation to the overall input of public finance which was required to generate them. It may be a matter for the LSC itself to calculate average costs per beneficiary, outcome, and qualification in order to determine whether or not these were generated in sufficient numbers in relation to costs as to constitute good value for money.
- Similarly, the estimated overall success rate in LSC terms (50%) and the estimated overall sustainability rate (38%) do not in themselves carry an automatic value. It is up to the LSC itself to judge whether or not these rates represent adequate or acceptable outcomes for the programme.
- The programme did not apparently generate equal outcomes for all groups. Particularly, there was a preponderance of female participation and notably greater success for women in respect of achievement of higher levels of qualification. Again, it is a matter of judgement for the LSC as to whether this represents an acceptable outcome, perhaps as a counter-balance to historic male preponderance in the economy and labour market, or whether it might actually have been better if more men, perhaps *now* tending towards disadvantage in a largely service economy, had been attracted into the programme and had achieved a stronger share of higher level qualifications. The involvement of women in the programme is weighted by the availability of a separate ESF measure (Measure 5.1) and therefore budget which is aimed almost exclusively at women.
- Finally, 'soft' information on the programme's projects reveals that project managers saw two main broad areas of difficulty or weakness in project delivery. The first concerns participants: that there were problems in attracting engagement, maintaining attendance, and getting elements of training programmes completed or completed to an adequate standard. The second concerns a variety of planning and management

failures – for example, slow starts, unrealistic expectations, inadequate or inexperienced staffing, and partnership failures. The first case may, perhaps, be discounted. By their nature, projects aimed at challenging or hard-to-reach groups are clearly likely to face difficulties in securing engagement and commitment. However, there may be a lesson in the second area of difficulty: that longer lead-in times and deeper project scrutiny are necessary to ensure that all projects have realistic, reliable plans and secure delivery structures in place from the outset.

87. In summary, and in review of the original research questions outlined in the LSC's Research Specification, the following points are noted:

- A small proportion of all projects provided any information of how they engaged with employers therefore it was impossible to assess what factors influenced how successful providers engaged with employers compared with those that were not successful.
- On the whole, from the evidence available there appeared to be an absence of any real innovation within projects and, where reported, perceived innovative activities tended to be commonplace across all projects, eg partnerships, work experience and tailored provision.
- Overall, there were relatively few commonalities within and between the project themes with regards to reported strengths. Nevertheless, across the projects strengths identified include engaging with hard to reach groups, partnership working (with providers, local authorities, schools etc), being able to meet individual needs, filling gaps in local service provision and being able to offer flexible service delivery to beneficiaries
- The establishment of strong partnership working was highlighted as a key strength in NEET, 14 – 19 and IAG emphasising their reliance on localised support services, particularly in engaging with young people.
- Projects that aimed to engage primarily with adults, such as VCS, Employee upskilling, Higher level skills and Adult unemployment projects, stated that their main strength was being able to deliver flexible bespoke programmes to suit their beneficiaries' circumstances.
- The engagement of hard to reach groups was considered a particular strength of NEET, Higher level skills and employee upskilling projects.
- From analysis of the 108 final evaluation reports, no sector specific issues were identified so therefore it was difficult to gauge whether these issues had any bearing on project success.
- In terms of weaknesses and what can be improved to make a positive impact on the same or similar projects in the future, it could be seen that numerous projects, particularly in the NEET, 14 – 19 vocational pathways, IAG and Adult unemployment projects, encountered challenges and set backs from the outset. Noted difficulties included establishing partnership working, a lack of clarity as to outcome measurement, poor project planning, a lack of strategic focus and difficulties in recruiting beneficiaries. These poor starts have then had a negative impact at subsequent stages of the programmes leading to delays.
- The challenges of lack of project clarity, poor partnerships and communication were common amongst other themes, though not necessarily as a result of poor start up.
- Disadvantaged, high level, employee upskilling and VCS orientated projects reported that funding issues were a main weakness. These issues were centred around a lack of

funding for expenses which fell outside of course time, an unwillingness of employers to pay course contributions, beneficiaires' personal finances which could have an impact on transport, childcare, purchasing of learning materials among other things, and the constraints imposed by short term funding.

- Inexperienced staff were reported as a weakness of higher level and disadvantaged themed projects also.
- Again, most other weaknesses cited by all projects seemed to be theme specific and had minimal overall commonalities.

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