



Leading learning and skills

Evaluation of European Social Fund Objective 3 2004-08 Programme, LSC London West

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Evaluation of ESF Objective 3 London West

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report sets out the main findings from an evaluation of the European Social Fund (ESF) Objective 3 2004-08 programme in the LSC London West area, undertaken by *Inclusion* for London West Learning and Skills Council (LWLSC).
- 1.2 The evaluation aimed to assist LWLSC to:
 - provide a summative statement on achievement against all its targets
 - satisfy the evaluation requirements of the Government Office for London (GOL)
 - assess the impact projects have had in making a difference to the lives of those at disadvantage, by enabling them to approach, access and succeed on mainstream learning, skills and employment programmes.
- 1.3 The evaluation process also had an objective to assess the impact of a reduced co-financing programme for London in 2007-13.
- 1.4 To this end, *Inclusion* carried out scoping interviews with key actors in LWLSC, conducted analysis of available performance data, conducted case-study interviews with project managers, and reviewed relevant strategic documents and project evaluations (see Chapter 3, 'Methodology').
- 1.5 This evaluation report is structured around the guidance in the GOL *Strategic review of Objective 3 co-financing plans 2005-08* in order to complement LWLSC's own reporting requirements. Section 4 offers background context on ESF and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and sets out the aims and objectives of the ESF Objective 3 LSC co-financed programme for London region and London West district. Section 5 sets out the findings from the performance data analysis overall and by measure. The remaining sections contain analysis of the qualitative evidence (project evaluation review, scoping interviews and case-study interviews) on key topics.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background Context

2.1 The ESF Objective 3 2004-08 programme is a national programme which seeks to tackle long-term unemployment by improving people's skills and employability. LSC ESF Objective 3 co-finance funding seeks to make contributions to the following strategic objectives:

- extending participation in education and training
- engaging employers in workforce development
- raising the achievement of young people
- raising the achievement of adults
- raising the quality and effectiveness of education and training.

2.2 LWLSC sought to address these targets, taking account of local needs, by funding projects under nine linked policy fields, measures (areas of work) and activities (see Table 1, Chapter 4). Overall funding was approximately £15 million for the period 2004-06.

Performance

2.3 Overall, the plan achieved 146 per cent of its target number of starters across all measures and projects (see Chapter 5, 'Performance'). Only the projects in measure 4.1 did not achieve the target number of starters. A fairly high proportion of starters completed the project (68 per cent) and 16 per cent left early. Overall, 28 per cent of leavers gained employment after the project, 34 per cent gained a qualification and 43 per cent achieved 'other positive outcomes'.

2.4 The plan as a whole achieved two of its group targets, with 63 per cent of starters being women (against a target of 50 per cent) and 79 per cent of starters were from an ethnic minority group (against a target of 25 per cent). The target on disabled people starters was narrowly missed (9 per cent compared with a target of 10 per cent).

2.5 There were fairly wide divergences in performance between measures on achievement of targets on starters (the lowest being 27 per cent and the highest 104 per cent). Performance was more consistent on proportions of women and people from black and minority ethnic (BME) group starters. Performance between measures on disabled people assisted was more divergent. There was also considerable divergence between measures on performance against outcomes (qualifications gained, employment gained, other positive outcomes gained).

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- 2.6 As previously discussed, projects within measures 1.2 and 2.2 were specifically targeting the unemployed and therefore had the lowest employment rates. This results in these measures having the highest unit cost per job.
- 2.7 Excluding measures 1.2 and 2.2, the unit costs per job ranged from just under £2,000 per job gained to just over £5,000 per job gained (see Table 5, Chapter 5).
- 2.8 The lowest unit cost per qualification was for the projects in measure 2.1 (£1,620 per qualification gained). This is to be expected given that projects within this measure were aimed at widening basic-skills provision. Similarly, projects within measures 4.1 and 4.2 are skills focused and therefore it is not surprising that they also had fairly low unit costs per qualification compared with projects in other measures.
- 2.9 The unit cost per other positive outcome ranged from just under £1,000 for measure 1.1 to nearly £6,000 per outcome for measure 1.2 (see Table 5, Chapter 5).

Provider quality and support

- 2.10 There were indications from qualitative research that projects complied with measuring, monitoring and managing requirements in the tender. There were also indications that running the project had led to some providers improving their measuring, monitoring and managing practices.
- 2.11 There were numerous examples of good practice identified, involving: aiding recruitment through early targeted marketing to raise awareness and build up referral sources; aiding retention through creating step-by-step plans with beneficiaries, followed by regular assessment and monitoring; flexible delivery to fit around other demands on beneficiaries and employers' time; clear progression routes/vocational development pathways clearly communicated to beneficiaries; short courses to upskill employees – delivering qualifications quickly without sacrificing quality. Specific examples of added value were also identified, with several case-study respondents reporting that the support that the project provided was not otherwise available.
- 2.12 The level of employer engagement seemed to vary between measures and projects, but various examples of strong and successful employer engagement were identified. Employer consultation and buy-in appears to have been particularly important to projects delivering training to beneficiaries already in work.

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2.13 Providers identified a number of positive impacts of their support on beneficiaries' lives, aside from gaining qualifications and/or employment. These included moving on to further learning, accreditation of overseas qualifications, increased confidence and motivation, improved communication skills and ability to carry out their job.

Publicity

2.14 A variety of publicity activities undertaken by projects were identified. The marketing strategies of two specific projects presented include the use of telephone canvassing, recruitment consultants, cold calling, targeted use of fliers and posters, use of text messaging and web advertising and approaches to building word of mouth.

Partnership working

2.15 Project providers engaged a mix of partners, including employers, community organisations, colleges/universities and other training providers. While not all projects engaged in partnership working, it was an important part of successful delivery for many that did. Numerous benefits of partnership working were cited in project evaluations and case studies, including improving relationships with existing partners, expanding partner networks, knowledge sharing and improving organisational/project profile.

Cross cutting themes

2.16 In relation to the ICT theme, ICT was prioritised in LWLSC's funding of projects, and some projects were dedicated to ICT training. There was also default ICT capacity-building as a consequence of meeting ESF requirements. Benefits of ICT provision were identified both in building individual beneficiary's employability and employers' capacity.

2.17 LWLSC was most active on the equal opportunities theme. Possession of an equal opportunities policy and statement of how it would apply to the project was made a requirement in the tender. However, scoping-interview respondents had some reservations about monitoring and incentivising performance on equal opportunities. Some projects took active measures to ensure their service reached and reflected different sections of the community.

2.18 Achievement in relation to social and economic sustainable development is difficult to gauge. However, project evaluations and case studies did identify ways in which their work had assisted development or sustainability of beneficiary organisations and/or contributed to social cohesion and inclusion. LWLSC held

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workshops on environmental sustainability, which were well received and resulted in projects forming environmental action plans.

Lessons for the future

2.19 The research throws up potential lessons for the future around retention, employment outcome targets and measurement, and recruitment/setting starter targets. Flexibility in provision, early employer engagement and relationship building with beneficiaries are important for retention. There may also be lessons in relation to the difficulty of tracking beneficiaries, gaining evidence of employment outcomes and developing realistic expectations and targets around providers' ability to support beneficiaries into employment. Given the success of the environmental workshops, a further lesson might be that co-financing organisations should conduct more of these types of workshop in other areas

Strategic impact

2.20 The research indicates that LWLSC projects did contribute to each of the strategic objectives.

2.21 There were indications that LSC/ESF Objective 3 funding had contributed to increased capacity and sustainability of both providers/services and beneficiary employers. There was very limited evidence on mainstreaming.

2.22 The general view from scoping interviews, project evaluations and case studies on the likely impact of the reduced co-financing plan was that it would lead to fewer small community providers in the area and that, as a consequence, ability to target resources at particular groups would be reduced and it would be more difficult to reach the most disadvantaged. Train to Gain funding was identified as the key replacement source of funding.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The methodology for this evaluation was a combination of primary and secondary evidence comprised of the following elements:

Scoping interviews

- 3.2 Interviews were carried with two key staff at LWLSC to gain an overview of the projects that have been funded under ESF Objective 3 in London West.

Document Review

- 3.3 The document review had two elements: a review of strategic documents and a review of project evaluations. The strategic document review covered relevant LSC, ESF and GOL documents. Key documents included the ESF co-financing plan, *The regional development plan – ESF Objective 3 programme for London 2000-2006*.
- 3.4 All available project evaluation reports were reviewed, totalling 36. A framework against which to review the evaluation documents was created in order to add rigour to the review and ensure that relevant information was extracted.

Data analysis

- 3.5 Relevant performance data analysis was conducted on individualised learner records (ILR). Financial information was extracted from the LWLSC project closure report.

Case-studies

- 3.6 Ten case studies were produced from face-to-face interviews with project managers. Case studies were carried out in order to highlight good practice and explore project performance, sustainability and the impact of reduced co-financing. Case-study projects were chosen from each measure in consultation with LWLSC. There was also the practical consideration of choosing projects which were still running or had ended recently and, therefore, whose project managers would be more likely to be available.

Reporting

- 3.7 This evaluation report is structured around the GOL *Strategic review of Objective 3 co-financing plans 2005-08* in order to complement LWLSC's own reporting requirements.

4. BACKGROUND CONTEXT

ESF Objective 3

4.1 The ESF Objective 3 2004-08 programme is a national programme which seeks to tackle long-term unemployment by improving people's skills and employability. Other aims of the programme are to promote equal opportunity and the role of women in the workplace; to help young people and those at risk of not finding work; to promote entrepreneurship and adaptability and to improve training for lifelong learning.

Co-financing

4.2 Co-financing is the system through which the funding for this programme is distributed. Co-financing means bringing together ESF funds and match funding into a single pot for providers to access as a single funding stream, without the need for providers to secure their own match funding. The purpose of co-financing is to add value to government programmes through additional activity that would not otherwise have been funded, as well as to simplify processes and reduce bureaucracy for providers. LWLSC, along with the other London Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), are 'co-financing organisations' (CFOs), responsible for the distribution and administration of funds to individual projects (through a tendering process).

ESF and the LSC

- 4.3 The ESF plays a significant role in assisting the LSC's policy remit:
- It helps individuals to improve their skills and employment prospects by tackling long-term unemployment, providing training, education, information, advice and guidance (IAG), promoting lifelong learning and encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit in the workplace.
 - It is also designed to improve the role of women in the labour market and to break down barriers, where they exist, to education, training and employment for those at a disadvantage.
 - ESF funding enables the LSC to assist the hardest to reach. This supports progress towards the LSC's public service agreement targets and aligns with both EU and LSC policy.

LWLSC

4.4 LWLSC serves the six London Boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow, and is one of five London LSCs. There are currently 56 schools with sixth forms funded by LWLSC, and 25 independent schools. In addition, there are three city academies. London West has six colleges of further education, one-sixth form college and 30 work-based learning (WBL) providers. Adult education is delivered by a service in each of the boroughs. Higher education in London West is represented by Brunel and Thames Valley Universities, as well as an outlying campus of the University of Westminster. London West also has a Learning Partnership, an IAG network and one learndirect hub that serve the sub-region, as well as a number of community and voluntary sector organisations working to develop and deliver learning opportunities.

Aims and objectives

4.5 The LSC ESF Objective 3 co-financing plan outlined proposals on how to plan and fund a series of activities which contributed to addressing the following strategic objectives:

- extending participation in education and training
- engaging employers in workforce development
- raising the achievement of young people
- raising the achievement of adults
- raising the quality and effectiveness of education and training.

4.6 The plan sets up strategies to address these targets by linking together relevant policy fields, measures (areas of work) and activities. These are set out in Table 1. Measures 2.3 and 5.2 are research based and not funded under the LWLSC ESF Objective 3 co-financing plan.

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Table 1 Field, measure, activities and target groups

Policy field	Measures	Activities	Target groups
1. Active labour-market policies	<p>1.1 Providing advice, guidance and support to enable people to develop active and continuous job-search strategies, and prevent them from moving into long-term unemployment.</p> <p>1.2 Improving the employability of the unemployed, returnees and young people of working age through targeted intervention to enhance vocational and other key skills and removing external barriers to labour-market entry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects providing a range of specialist IAG services; job-search support; employment support; work experience targeted at priority groups and for those people who have below Level 2 qualifications • Vocational and work-based training for young people that leads to Level 2/3 qualifications and careers • Support to increase participation, retention and achievement in WBL provision for 16-19 year olds • Provision that enables unemployed adults to achieve a first Level 2/3 qualification • Work-related training that increases employability, including key skills, ICT, confidence building etc 	Those who are economically inactive, including 16-19 year olds, those from BME groups and adults without Level 2/3 qualifications
2. Equal opportunities and social inclusion for all	<p>2.1 Widening access to basic-skills provision.</p> <p>2.2 Help for those at risk of exclusion from the labour market.</p> <p>2.3 Mainly research activities concerning labour-market discrimination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that build the capacity and improve the quality of basic skills and ESOL provision and that help disadvantaged learners progress into further, accredited learning • Projects that promote provider collaboration particularly encouraged. All organisations supported will be SMEs and non-public sector. 	13-15 year olds who are NEET or at risk of being NEET; people with disabilities; lone parents; ex-offenders (youth and adult); people with mental health needs; people over 50; refugees with permission to work; and people belonging to BME groups. 90% of beneficiaries will be economically inactive, 10% will be drawn from the 13-15 age group.
3. Lifelong learning	<p>3.1 Promoting wider access and participation in lifelong learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects which deliver advice, guidance and support delivered in the workplace; capacity building, ICT training; community learning and flexible learning provision 	Employees working in sectors, or for SMEs, who are least likely to participate in lifelong learning or that are in priority sectors with identified skills shortages

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	<p>3.2 Improving employability through lifelong learning provision which meets employers' needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-learning, including learndirect, • Projects that develop • Projects that promote Modern Apprenticeships and result in employer engagement and that enable lower-skilled employees and those who are unemployed to gain a first Level 2 qualification, and Level 3 qualifications in LWLSC priority sectors. 	<p>Employees who require higher level skills to sustain and progress in their careers, and those who are in insecure employment on the margins of the labour market.</p>
<p>4. Adaptability and entrepreneurship</p>	<p>4.1 Updating employees' vocational skills</p> <p>4.2 Identifying and meeting skills shortages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that develop bespoke/tailored training delivered in the workplace, particularly in the construction, care or food and drink sectors • Specific initiatives to address other identified sectoral skill needs • Training of trainers in the workplace to deliver Skills for Life • Upskilling employees to achieve food hygiene qualifications in SMEs. • Research to identify skills shortages, recruitment difficulties and future skills needs, linked to LWLSC research and the StAR process • Training to address recruitment difficulties in the London West priority sectors • Higher level skills and technical training for employees at risk of redundancy • Training to meet the emerging needs and qualifications required by employers owing to changes to legislation within the food sector 	<p>Employees in SMEs who need to improve their skills because they are at risk owing to low skills levels, or because of technological or structural changes in the London economy</p> <p>Employees from BME groups and people with disabilities</p>

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<p>5. Promoting the Participation of Women in the Labour Market</p>	<p>5.1 Improve access to learning and employment for women</p> <p>5.2 Mainly research activities related to gender occupational discrimination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that help women move from lower level occupations into supervisory and management roles (non-public sector), and that help to address the gender pay gap • Projects that train unemployed/flexibly employed women for management occupations in sectors where women are under-represented (non-public sector) • Gender sensitive training AND Activities that address gender stereotyping in WBL • Projects that help SMEs develop family-friendly employment policies and practices • Projects that offer equality audits to help organisations identify gender issues, including the gender pay gap • Projects that offer research and follow-on training of women returning to the workplace but not going beyond the standard female-dominated jobs that often have no progression and tend to be low paid 	<p>Women from ethnic minorities and refugees</p> <p>Women with no or low-level qualifications</p> <p>Women in 'flexible' employment</p> <p>Women in sectors and occupations in which they are under-represented;</p> <p>Women with children, female lone parents</p> <p>Women who have disabilities</p> <p>Women who are in third age.</p>
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4.7 The eligible projects were selected through an open competitive tendering round against objective criteria including the following:

- project fit with specification (target group, learning/skills offer etc.)
- ability to understand and address client needs/employer needs
- evidence of clear, supported progression routes for clients
- evidence of adequate management, monitoring and quality controls
- evidence of effective responses to cross-cutting themes and how providers will ensure that they are effectively embedded across projects (equal opportunities, sustainable development, ICT)
- evidence of clearly thought through soft outcomes where appropriate
- evidence of collaborative/partnership approach
- demonstrated value for money
- evidence of project sustainability or exit strategy as appropriate.

London region specific aims and objectives

4.8 The London ESF Objective 3 programme was developed within the framework of the national programme and led by GOL. Eight regional aims, developed by regional partners, were added and aligned to the five ESF Objective 3 policy fields. The London aims and related policy fields are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: London regional aims aligned to ESF Objective 3 policy fields

London aims	Relevant policy field
1. Secure the reintegration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market.	1. Active labour-market policies
2. Prevent long-term unemployment among adults and young people.	
3. Tackle the problem of labour-market exclusion experienced by specific groups in society.	2. Equal opportunities and social inclusion for all
4. Ensure that young people are adequately equipped for the world of work.	
5. Promote a commitment to workforce development and lifelong learning among employers and employees.	3. Lifelong learning
6. Sustain and enhance employability among employed people and improve the competitiveness of small and medium-sized	4. Adaptability and entrepreneurship

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enterprises (SMEs).	
7. Promote gender equality within the workplace and in the labour market.	5. Promoting the participation of women in the labour market
8. Create the infrastructure for the effective delivery of the Objective 3 programme.	Applies across all policy fields

4.9 Typically, co-financed LSC ESF projects in the London region were aimed at engaging specific beneficiary target groups (young people, women, economically inactive and registered unemployed, disabled people, SMEs) and common outputs included progression to employment and/or self employment, qualifications achieved, and engagement in lifelong learning.

4.10 An integral part of the programme was linking learning and training of target beneficiaries to the employment opportunities within key sectors of the London regional economy. The sectors identified were:

- manufacturing
- health and social care
- voluntary and community organisations
- creative and cultural industries
- leisure and tourism
- SMEs.

LWLSC specific aims and objectives

4.11 The LWLSC programme was informed by the national and regional aims and objectives, including the Objective 3 cross-cutting themes of promoting ICT, equal opportunities and sustainable development. It further sought to address local needs such as low participation in WBL, skills gaps and skills shortages in certain areas, and lack of reach of IAG services to all target groups. These local needs were reflected within the objectives set out within the broader national aims.

1. Extending participation in education and training

- Raise awareness throughout London West of the inherent benefits of learning so that more individuals are encouraged to engage in lifelong learning.
- Break down barriers so that everyone who wishes to engage in learning in the London West area is empowered to do so.

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2. Engaging employers in workforce development

- Ensure that employers in the London West area are supported by a workforce equipped with the skills necessary to improve productivity and achieve success through active participation in workforce development.
- Promote a sectoral approach to encourage excellence in the provision of workforce development, facilitating greater and more effective co-operation between employers, and organisations supporting employers, in order to strengthen the London West economy.

3. Raising the achievement of young people

- Ensure that young people engaging in learning programmes are empowered and supported so they may achieve their learning goals and fulfil their potential.

4. Raising the achievement of adults

- Ensure that adults engaging in learning programmes are empowered and supported so they may achieve their learning goals and fulfil their potential.
- Ensure that adults possess the basic skills and English language abilities necessary to allow them to fully participate in learning and society.

5. Raising the quality and effectiveness of education and training

- Ensure that the local learning infrastructure meets the needs of individuals, communities and employers and improves collaboration between providers and partners so that standards are raised.
- Ensure that providers and partners maximise the standard of provision in the London West area, placing quality, equality and diversity at the heart of all provision.

4.12 LWLSC was allocated ESF funding of approximately £15 million for the period 2004 to 2006. Table 2 show the funding allocations for each measure.

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Table 3 ESF Objective 3 co-financed funding allocations by measure for London West

ESF policy field / measure	Measure description	Approximate funds available (£)
1.1.	Advice and guidance	642,360
1.2.	Improve the prospects of the unemployed through training and other support	2,549,214
2.1.	Basic-skills provision for the unemployed, particularly people disadvantaged in the labour market	1,199,156
2.2.	Help for unemployed people disadvantaged in the labour market	2,992,887
3.1.	Promoting wider access to lifelong learning for unemployed and employed people	4,614,782
3.2.	Supporting lifelong learning to meet the needs of employers	1,305,929
4.1.	Update and upgrade employees' vocational skills, including basic and key skills	386,077
4.2.	Identify and meet emerging skills shortages, including higher levels	310,987
5.1.	Improve women's access to learning and employment	1,000,000
Total		15,001,392

Future funding

4.13 There is a reduced co-financing programme for London in 2007-13. The London funding amount for 2007-13 is £323 million, compared with £520 million for 2004-8.

5. PERFORMANCE

Financial performance

5.1 The final total amount spent on the Objective 3 co-financing plan as a whole was £19,932,835. This was less than the original planned amount of £21,566,987 and the last agreed profile of £22,800,636.

Plan performance

5.2 Overall, the plan achieved 146 per cent of its target number of starters across all measures and projects (Table 4). Only the projects in measure 4.1 did not achieve the target number of starters.

5.3 A fairly high proportion of starters¹ completed the project (68 per cent) and 16 per cent left early. Overall, 28 per cent of leavers² gained employment after the project, 34 per cent gained a qualification³ and 43 per cent achieved 'other positive outcomes'.

5.4 LWLSC had the following priority group targets:

- 50 per cent of starters to be women
- 25 per cent starters to be from BME groups
- 10 per cent of starters to have a disability.

5.5 The plan as a whole achieved two of its group targets with 63 per cent of starters being women (against a target of 50 per cent) and 79 per cent of starters were from an ethnic minority group (against a target of 25 per cent). The plan as a whole missed, by 1 per cent, the target of recruiting ten per cent of starters with a disability.

5.6 It should be noted that there are number of factors related to the recording of disability which are likely to have caused the reported amounts on starters with a disability to be lower than the true figure. Firstly, providers initially had some difficulty with understanding the definition of disability for ESF monitoring purposes and consequently may have undercounted the number of disabled people. This was recognised as an issue by LWLSC, who held sessions with

¹ 'Starters' refers to the number of people who started each project. If someone started more than one project between 2004 and 2008 they will be counted more than once.

² Outcomes are calculated as a proportion of 'leavers' not 'starters'. Leavers are defined as people who completed the project or left early.

³ The proportion of leavers who gained full vocational qualifications is the proportion of leavers who achieved their learning aim and were attending a learning aim at Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4, Level 5 or higher according to ILR data.

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providers to counteract it. Self-declaration (i.e. it is left to the beneficiary to declare if they have a disability) represents a further issue, as some people are understandably known to be hesitant about declaring that they have a disability and sometimes choose not to lest it affect their prospects, the way they are treated and similar (this may be particularly true of people already in employment).

- 5.7 Table 4 details the target number of starters, achieved number of starters and a range of outcomes for the plan as a whole and for each measure.

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Table 4: Performance of whole Objective 3 co-financing plan, and by measure

	Priority group targets	Plan overall	Measure								
			1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.2	4.1	4.2	5.1
Target number of starters (Match and ESF) ¹	n/a	25,878	2,200	3,000	2,500	4,000	7,500	2,000	1,278	1,500	1,900
Target number of starters (ESF only)	n/a	11,645	990	1,350	1,125	1,800	3,375	900	575	675	855
Number of starters (ESF only)	n/a	17,015	1,856	2,094	2,324	1,932	4,162	1,443	342	886	1,976
Starters as proportion of target (%) (ESF only) ²	n/a	146	187	155	207	107	123	160	59	131	231
Completers ³ as proportion of starters (%)	n/a	68	70	74	59	55	64	76	79	71	78
Early leavers ⁴ as proportion of starters (%)	n/a	16	15	16	25	20	19	8	12	7	12
Gained full vocational qualification or equivalent ⁷ as proportion of leavers (%)	n/a	34	n/a	25	52	19	38	41	69	77	30
Gained employment post project as proportion of leavers	n/a	28	22	10	28	8	31	38	58	86	27
Achieved 'other positive outcomes' ⁸ as proportion of leavers (%)	n/a	43	46	33	34	87	32	54	40	41	39
Women assisted as proportion of starters (%)	50	63	52	59	53	47	63	72	63	64	100
BME assisted as proportion of starters (%)	25	79	77	68	95	78	78	68	87	76	80
Disabled people assisted as proportion of starters (%)	10	9	22	28	4	6	4	4	4	5	7

Source: LWLSC and ILR

Notes:

1. The target number of starters is based on the 'last agreed profile', not the original profile. This includes both match and direct funded participants.
2. The number of starters as a proportion of the target number of starters is based on direct ESF projects only which equate to 45% of all participants.
3. Completers are defined as learners who completed the learning activities leading to the learning aim in the ILR.
4. Early leavers are defined as learners who withdrew from the learning aim and transferred to a new learning aim, temporarily withdrew from the learning aim or withdrew from the learning aim and did not start a new one.
5. Employment, qualification and 'other positive outcomes' are reported as a proportion of all 'leavers' which includes completers and early leavers.
6. People who are neither completers nor early leavers are those who are continuing in learning activities leading to the learning aim and where there have been changes in learning within the same programme type and sector area/ funding category and remaining with the existing provider.
7. The proportion of leavers who gained full vocational qualifications or equivalent is based on the number of people who achieved their learning aim and were attending learning aims at Level 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or higher.
8. 'Other positive outcomes' is defined as including those who go into FE, HE, WBL or other learning, education or training, but excluding those going into employment or gaining qualifications.

Performance by measure

- 5.8 In summary, Table 4 shows that only one of the measures (measure 4.1) under achieved on the target number of starters. All measures far exceed the target of attracting 25 per cent of starters from BME groups, with the BME proportion ranging from 68 per cent to 95 per cent of starters. Nearly all measures met the 50 per cent women target, with the exception of measure 2.2, for which 47 per cent of starters were women. Only two of the nine measures achieved the disability target (measure 1.1 and 1.2).
- 5.9 The proportion of leavers who gained full vocational qualifications or equivalents is not reported for measure 1.1, as this measure provides mainly advice and guidance.
- 5.10 Measure 5.1 intends to improve access to learning and employment for women and therefore 100 per cent of the people attending projects within this measure were women.
- 5.11 Projects within measures 1.2 and 2.2 were specifically targeting the unemployed and therefore it was to be expected that the proportion of leavers who gained employment after the project was lower for these measure than for other measures.
- 5.12 The performance of each measure is discussed further below.

Measure 1.1

- 5.13 Measure 1.1 is under the 'active labour-market policies' policy field. Measure 1.1 projects are concerned with providing advice, guidance and support to enable people to develop job-search strategies and prevent them from becoming long-term unemployed. Measure 1.1 projects target economically inactive people.
- 5.14 Overall, the projects in measure 1.1 overachieved on their target number of starters (187 per cent). Seventy per cent of starters completed the project and 15 per cent left the project early.
- 5.15 These projects did meet the group targets, with 52 per cent of its learners being women, 77 per cent from BME groups and 22 per cent people with a disability.
- 5.16 Twenty two per cent of leavers gained employment after the project and 46 per cent achieved 'other positive outcomes'. Projects in this measure provided advice and guidance rather than training, therefore the proportion who gained qualifications was not applicable.

Measure 1.2

- 5.17 Measure 1.2 is under the 'active labour-market policies' policy field. Measure 1.2 projects are concerned with improving the employability of the unemployed, returnees and young people of working age through targeted intervention to enhance vocational and other key skills and removing external barriers to labour-market entry.
- 5.18 Overall, the projects in measure 1.2 overachieved on their target number of starters (155 per cent). Seventy four per cent of starters completed the project and 16 per cent left early.
- 5.19 The measure did meet all its specific group targets with 59 per cent of women assisted; 68 per cent of people from BME groups and 28 per cent of people with a disability.
- 5.20 Ten per cent of leavers gained employment after the project, which is lower than most other measures but this is to be expected given the fact that the projects in this measure were aimed at unemployed people. Twenty five per cent of leavers gained a qualification and 33 per cent achieved 'other positive outcomes'.

Measure 2.1

- 5.21 Measure 2.1 is under the 'equal opportunities and social inclusion for all' policy field. Measure 2.1 projects are concerned with widening access to basic-skills provision. Ninety per cent of beneficiaries for measure 2.1 projects should be economically active and 10 per cent drawn from 13-15 year olds who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) or at risk of being NEET.
- 5.22 Overall, the projects in measure 2.1 overachieved on their target number of starters (207 per cent). Fifty nine per cent of starters completed their project and 25 per cent left early.
- 5.23 The measure did meet two of its specific group targets: 53 per cent of starters were women and 95 per cent were from BME groups. It did not meet the target of ten per cent of starters having a disability, only managing four per cent.
- 5.24 Twenty eight per cent of leavers gained employment after the project, 52 per cent gained a qualification and 34 per cent achieved 'other positive outcomes'.

Measure 2.2

- 5.25 Measure 2.2 comes under the 'equal opportunities and social inclusion for all' policy field. Measure 2.2 projects are concerned with helping those at risk of

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exclusion from the labour market, including young people NEET, ex-offenders, people with mental health needs, refugees and people from BME groups.

- 5.26 Overall, the projects in measure 2.2 overachieved on their target number of starters (107 per cent). Fifty five per cent of starters completed their project and 20 per cent left early.
- 5.27 It met one of the group targets, with 78 per cent of its starters being people from BME groups. It failed to attract its target proportion of women (47 per cent of starters were women) and only six per cent of its starters had a disability.
- 5.28 Eight per cent of leavers gained employment after the project which is lower than other measures but this is to be expected given the groups of people projects within this measure are targeting. Nineteen per cent of leavers gained a qualification and 87 per cent achieved 'other positive outcomes'.

Measure 3.1

- 5.29 Measure 3.1 comes under the 'lifelong learning' policy field. Measure 3.1 projects are concerned with promoting wider access and participation in lifelong learning. Measure 3.1 projects target employees who require higher level skills to progress or are in insecure employment and SMEs in priority sectors with identified skills shortages.
- 5.30 Overall, the projects in measure 3.1 overachieved on their target number of starters (123 per cent). Sixty four per cent of starters completed their project and 19 per cent left early.
- 5.31 The measure managed to achieve two of its group targets with 63 per cent of the learners being women and 78 per cent of people from BME groups. It did not attract the agreed target of people with a disability, with only six per cent of learners belonging to this group.
- 5.32 Thirty one per cent of leavers gained employment after the project, 38 per cent gained a qualification and 32 per cent achieved 'other positive outcomes'.

Measure 3.2

- 5.33 Measure 3.2 comes under the 'lifelong learning' policy field. Measure 3.2 projects are concerned with improving employability through lifelong learning provision which meets employers' needs. Measure 3.2 projects target employees who require higher level skills to progress or are in insecure employment and SMEs in priority sectors with identified skills shortages.

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- 5.34 Overall, the projects in measure 3.2 overachieved on their target number of starters (160 per cent). Seventy six per cent of starters completed their project and eight per cent left early.
- 5.35 The measure met two of its agreed targets for specific groups, with 72 per cent of learners being women and 68 per cent being people from BME groups. It did not attract the agreed target of people with a disability, with only four per cent of learners belonging to this group.
- 5.36 Thirty eight per cent of leavers gained employment after the project, 41 per cent gained a qualification and 54 per cent achieved 'other positive outcomes'.

Measure 4.1

- 5.37 Measure 4.1 comes under the 'adaptability and entrepreneurship' field. Measure 4.1 projects are concerned with updating employee's vocational skills. They target employees in SMEs who need to improve their skills because they are at risk owing to low skills levels, or because of technological or structural changes in the economy and those employees from BME groups or people with disabilities.
- 5.38 Measure 4.1 only attracted 59 per cent of the agreed number of learners, falling short of meeting its targets. Seventy nine per cent completed their project and 12 per cent left early.
- 5.39 The measure met two of its agreed targets for specific groups, with 63 per cent of learners being women and 87 per cent being people from BME groups. It did not attract the agreed proportion of people with a disability, with only four per cent of learners belonging to this group.
- 5.40 Fifty eight per cent of leavers gained employment after the project, 69 per cent gained a qualification and 40 per cent achieved 'other positive outcomes'.

Measure 4.2

- 5.41 Measure 4.2 comes under the 'adaptability and entrepreneurship' field. Measure 4.2 projects are concerned with identifying and meeting skills shortages. They target employees in SMEs who need to improve their skills because they are at risk owing to low skills levels, or because of technological or structural changes in the economy, and those employees from BME groups or people with disabilities.
- 5.42 Overall, the projects in measure 4.2 overachieved on their target number of starters (131 per cent). Seventy one per cent of starters completed their project and seven per cent left early.

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- 5.43 The measure met two of its agreed targets for specific groups, with 64 per cent of learners being women and 76 per cent were from BME groups. Only five per cent of its learners had a disability, meaning that it did not meet this target.
- 5.44 Eighty six per cent of leavers gained employment after the project, 77 per cent gained a qualification and 41 per cent achieved 'other positive outcomes'.

Measure 5.1

- 5.45 Measure 5.1 comes under the 'promoting the participation of women in the labour-market' policy field. Target groups include women from BME groups, refugee women, women in sectors and occupations in which they are under-represented, women in 'flexible' employment and female lone parents
- 5.46 Overall, the projects in measure 5.1 overachieved on their target number of starters (231 per cent). This was the only measure to exceed the target number of starters. Seventy eight per cent of starters completed their project and 12 per cent left early.
- 5.47 Owing to the nature of the projects in this measure 100 per cent of starters were women and 80 per cent were people from BME groups. Only seven per cent of the measure's learners had a disability.
- 5.48 Twenty-seven per cent of leavers gained employment after the project, 30 per cent gained a qualification and 39 per cent achieved 'other positive outcomes'.

Performance by group

- 5.49 Overall, 68 per cent of all starters completed the project. Women were more likely than men to complete the project (71 per cent of women completed the project compared with 61 per cent of men). There was no difference by ethnicity or disability in the proportion of starters who completed the projects.
- 5.50 Overall, 28 per cent of all leavers gained employment after the project. Only 16 per cent of people with a disability gained employment after the project. The proportions of women and ethnic minority leavers who gained employment were in line with all leavers.
- 5.51 Overall, 34 per cent of leavers achieved a full vocational qualification. However, leavers with a disability were less likely to have achieved a full vocational qualification from the project/course, only 20 per cent of leavers with a disability achieved a full vocational qualification. The proportion of women and BME leavers was in line with all leavers.

Unit costs by measure

5.52 Based on the final amount spent on projects in each measure it is possible to determine unit costs per job, qualification and other positive outcomes.

Unit cost per job

5.53 The unit cost per job is the final amount spent on projects within each measure divided by the number of people who gained jobs after the project ended.

5.54 As previously discussed, projects within measures 1.2 and 2.2 specifically targeted the unemployed and therefore had the lowest employment rates. This results in these measures having the highest unit cost per job.

5.55 Excluding measures 1.2 and 2.2, unit costs per job ranged from just under £2,000 per person to just over £5,000 per person (see Table 5).

Unit cost per qualification

5.56 The unit cost per qualification is the final amount spent on projects within each measure divided by the number of people who gained qualifications during the project.

5.57 As previously discussed, projects within measure 1.1 were advice and guidance only and therefore it was not applicable to report the numbers who gained qualifications or the unit cost per qualification for this measure. Similarly, projects within measure 2.2 provided help for unemployed people disadvantaged in the labour market and had a low proportion of leavers who achieved full vocational qualifications and therefore had a high unit cost per qualification.

5.58 The lowest unit cost per qualification was for the projects in measure 2.1. This is to be expected given that projects within this measure are aimed at widening basic-skills provision. Similarly, projects within measures 4.1 and 4.2 are skills focused and therefore it is not surprising that they also had fairly low unit costs per qualification compared with projects in other measures (see Table 5).

Unit cost per 'other positive outcomes'

5.59 The unit cost per qualification is the final amount spent on projects within each measure divided by the number of people who gained 'other positive outcomes' (excluding jobs and qualifications) during the project.

5.60 The unit cost per other positive outcome ranged from just under £1,000 for measure 1.1 to nearly £6,000 per outcome for measure 1.2 (see Table 5).

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Table 5: Unit costs by measures

Measure	Unit cost per job (£)	Unit cost per qualification (£)	Unit cost per other positive outcome (£)
1.1	1,931	n/a	916
1.2	18,882	7,830	5,963
2.1	3,061	1,620	2,496
2.2	25,620	10,248	2,281
3.1	5,019	4,104	4,884
3.2	4,801	4,491	3,430
4.1	3,099	2,621	4,560
4.2	1,894	2,114	4,003
5.1	3,802	3,388	2,635

Source: LWLSC and ILR

Number of projects funded by provider type/sector

5.61 Table 6 summarises the type and number of providers supported by the plan as a whole. Voluntary organisations were used the most (41 per cent of all providers) followed by private SMEs at 23 per cent.

Table 6 Number of projects funded by provider type

Provider type/sector	No. of projects funded	Projects funded as proportion of total (%)
Voluntary Organisation	40	41%
Private Company (SME)	23	23%
Other	16	16%
Further Education	11	11%
Local Authority	5	5%
Higher Education	2	2%
Private Company (non-SME)	1	1%
Business Link	0	–
Chamber of Commerce	0	–
Industrial common ownership movement	0	–
NHS Trust	0	–
London Development Agency	0	–
Sector Skills Organisation	0	–
Totals	98	100

Source: LWLSC

6. PROVIDER QUALITY AND SUPPORT

Measuring, monitoring and managing performance

- 6.1 All case-study projects reported that the project was managed in line with the tender. Several reported that participation in the LWLSC ESF programme had led to providers improving their monitoring and management systems and procedures:

“Complying with the ESF requirements has forced us to look closely at what we are doing and how we are doing it. It has helped to bring in tighter management systems.” (case-study respondent)

“There was a step forward in terms of delivery, management and reporting. The ESF requirements helped to keep improving accuracy.” (case-study respondent)

“The introduction of self-assessment reporting enabled us to critically look at the support systems we had in place – it was a good learning curve.” (case-study respondent)

- 6.2 The exact form of measuring, monitoring, and management procedures and practices used by case-study providers varied but included management information systems, having a monitoring officer, monthly reports, steering group and/or project manager meetings, partner visits and monthly reports. In project evaluations the most commonly cited tool for measuring or monitoring and managing performance was feedback/satisfaction forms (or other mechanisms). All case-study organisations also carried out some form of beneficiary satisfaction assessment: some only at end of projects or courses and others at different stages throughout.
- 6.3 All case-study projects also had some form of quality control/quality assurance system. These commonly involved using an auditor, observer, control manager or similar alongside quality control monitoring systems.
- 6.4 An example of good practice in measuring, monitoring and managing performance was provided by one case-study project which worked with school children with dyslexia. Each learner was monitored each week. An account manager was brought in every month to make sure that practices fitted with the tender specifications. A review between the provider and each learner occurred after two terms of teaching, to look at things that they liked, disliked, wanted more or less of. Quality control was undertaken through observations once a year by an experienced dyslexia specialist and a quality control agreement between schools and the provider.

Good practice

6.5 Numerous examples of good practice in other areas were identified by the project evaluation review and case studies, notably:

- targeted marketing to raise awareness and build up referral sources to support recruitment (see case-study box)
- step-by-step plans with beneficiaries, followed by regular assessment and monitoring (see case-study box)
- flexible delivery to fit around other demands on beneficiaries' and employers' time
- clear progression routes/vocational development pathways coherently communicated to beneficiaries
- short courses to upskill employees – delivering qualifications quickly without sacrificing quality.

Good practice case study Blythe Neighbourhood Council – <i>Prescriptions for Learning</i>
<p>The Prescriptions for Learning project was funded under measure 1.1 (advice and guidance). The project took a holistic approach to health, housing and learning. It targeted 200 economically inactive adults of working age on low incomes with health and educational issues, providing a number of interventions through IAG services to improve their access to education and employment. The project demonstrated particularly good practice in relation to beneficiary engagement and retention.</p> <p>The IAG process involved in-depth interviews with beneficiaries, drawing up individual action plans with achievable goals and referral to learning and support services. Ongoing support was provided via monitoring and continuous intervention where necessary to ensure that beneficiaries stayed on track.</p> <p>Engagement was based on building up strong links with different organisations that referred beneficiaries to the project. In the initial stage promotional information was sent out to numerous support agencies within the community outlining the programme and inviting participation and client referral. This proved successful, with a number of community-based health organisations registering a keen interest and making referrals. Retention was improved through introducing step-by-step plans at initial IAG stage, followed by classroom-based diagnostic assessments and one-to-one tutor support, and continuous monitoring.</p>

6.6 Case-study respondents were asked what they considered to have been the added value of project (over the other available provision). Several case-study

respondents reported that the support that the project provided was not otherwise available. Specific examples of added value included:

- open learning in Skills for Life provision – allowing flexibility and allowing learners to go at their own pace
- multi-sensory and one-to-one spelling and reading tuition to school children with dyslexia
- training for health and social care workers designed to meet the needs of, and be affordable for, employers.

Employer engagement

- 6.7 Evidence of employer engagement was also identified in project evaluations. Much of this came from projects in policy field 4 – ‘adaptability and entrepreneurship’ where employer engagement was the sole focus. For example, one field 4 project engaged with 65 SMEs and trained 69 beneficiaries who, between them, achieved 121 accredited qualifications. The extent of employer engagement appeared to have varied according to the nature of the project. For projects concerned with providing support to employers and employees, employer engagement was crucial, while to those with a focus on building employability with workless people often quite far from the labour market, employer engagement may have been less of a priority.
- 6.8 All case-study projects had sought to engage employers. Some were unable to report examples of successful outcomes or good practice in relation to employer engagement. Examples of successful outcomes and good practice for those who did included:
- a project which aimed to support organisations to embed quality benchmarked business and soft skills training had, as one of their successes, enabled an organisation running two community-based radio stations to develop a training team, become liP accredited and go for Matrix accreditation
 - a project aiming to support employees in the passenger transport sector engaged with a number of employers and reported that a coach company gave feedback that the result of the project’s support had been a noticeable rise in the standard of service provided by drivers and a boost to advertising as they could now report that all their drivers had professional qualifications.
- 6.9 The research indicated that employer buy-in is key to the success of projects working with low-skilled employees. Some projects used organisational training needs analysis and organisational development/training plans to identify and deliver training services that met employers’ needs. One project reported that

employer buy-in was further aided by offering an initial assessment conducted in the workplace at a time most convenient to the individual. A generally high level of employer satisfaction with training delivered was reported.

- 6.10 Employer engagement was also used (albeit to an apparently lesser extent) to establish supported work placements with employers. This generally took place in projects dealing with younger people.

Impact on learners

- 6.11 Projects worked with a variety of people many of whom had considerable and/or multiple barriers to employment, including: mental health problems/disabilities, physical health problems/disabilities, learning disabilities, drug and alcohol misuse problems and stress-related problems. Projects also worked with: lone parents and people with childcare needs, young people NEET, or at risk of being NEET, older people, refugees, and secondary school children with dyslexia.
- 6.12 The impact of qualifications on jobs and employability was evident in the qualitative research.

“As a result of doing the qualifications, beneficiaries had the ability to work in the industry and to move in and around the industry taking the qualification with them and making them more employable.” (case-study respondent)

- 6.13 As well as the qualification and job outcomes achieved (covered in the performance chapter), there were also some other ‘hard’ outcomes reported, such as job progression, as a result of training, moving on to further learning or accreditation of overseas qualifications.
- 6.14 Additionally, numerous ‘soft’ outcomes were identified in project evaluations and case-study interviews. The most commonly cited of these were:
- increased confidence/self esteem
 - increased motivation
 - improved communication skills
 - improved efficiency at work or ability to carry out job.
- 6.15 Other reported soft outcomes included: challenging people’s views about young people, challenging young people’s attitudes towards their community, improved job prospects, expanding social networks, knowledge sharing, helping refugees integrate into society and understanding of the workplace environment.

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- 6.16 Soft outcomes for supported employers were also cited, e.g. gaining quality standards accreditation and increasing management capability, and these are discussed in the employer engagement section (paragraphs 6.7-6.10).
- 6.17 Some case-study respondents gave more specific examples of projects' impact on beneficiaries' lives:

"One of our beneficiaries was a cleaner in our organisation who we found out had serious literacy issues. Following her journey she has now passed Entry Level 1 and 2 literacy exams. She is now looking to do a childminding course and we have planned for her to do Entry Level 3 to enable her to go on to do an NVQ." (case-study respondent)

"Many beneficiaries came into the programme with their shoulders stooped at the thought that they were coming to do things that they didn't feel they were capable of. They were surprised that they could do the training and they didn't expect the support they received. The beneficiaries gained enormous pride knowing that they were doing a good and professional job and that they could do the programme." (case-study respondent)

7. PUBLICITY

Publicity activities

- 7.1 The project evaluation review and case studies identified a variety of publicity activities undertaken by projects. Beginning publicity/marketing activities at an early stage was highlighted as important to raising awareness of services and building strong partnerships and referral arrangements, thereby aiding recruitment.
- 7.2 The case-study boxes illustrate two of the fullest publicity/marketing strategies identified, and show the different approaches taken to engaging with different target groups (in this case retail SMEs and young people).

Publicity case study <i>Business Management Resources (UK) Ltd – Retail Solutions for SMEs</i>
<p>Retail Solutions for SMEs was funded under measure 3.2 (supporting lifelong learning to meet the needs of employers). It provided SMEs in the retail sector with a holistic retail learning programme. This involved delivery of retail NVQs to employees and upskilling of line managers to become qualified assessors and internal verifiers. The project was to deliver retail qualifications at Levels 1, 2 and 3, also Assessor Level 1 / Verifier Level 1 units and English as a second or other language qualification to 99 beneficiaries and 10 SMEs. This was directed at employed beneficiaries only.</p> <p>Business Management Resources (UK) Ltd put in place a marketing strategy which involved placing adverts in newspapers in the London West area to promote the ESF funding/National Vocational Qualifications directed at SMEs. Potential SME beneficiaries were canvassed by telephone, and this was followed up with written information sent in the post. Someone would then go out, meet the beneficiary and sign them up. If this was successful, an assessor would then go out and carry out an induction to the service and provider organisation. Recruitment consultants were recruited who marketed door to door to the retail sectors. This included cold calling, giving out information leaflets, carrying out presentations of the National Vocational Qualification and informing the SMEs of what was involved within the programme. Training needs analysis was completed with interested employers to determine the programmes which were suitable for their staff.</p>

Publicity case study
Vital Regeneration – *Creative Edge (Studio +)*

Creative Edge (Studio +) was funded under measure 2.2 (help for unemployed people disadvantaged in the labour market). The project sought to help young people aged 13-19 who were NEET or in danger of becoming NEET, to enter into employment. It took a creative industry approach to skills learning with embedded literacy learning: all beneficiaries had access to a basic-skills tutor who carried out an initial assessment at the beginning of the 12 week course and entered learners into Edexcel adult literacy exams at a level appropriate to them at the end of their course. The project provided music industry courses that gave young people the right experiences and qualifications to get into employment and the music industry, including how to produce music and manage events.

Vital Regeneration used varied but targeted marketing techniques to engage beneficiaries. These included fliers and information posted in places young people would spend time, such as hairdressers, chip shops and takeaways, record shops etc. radio adverts, events and taster sessions. The project also used mobile phones and the internet e.g. text messaging, social networking sites and putting the recording sessions young people had done up on the website for others to see. Once the project had got going the provider also produced a CD to give to other young people to show them what they could do on the project. The project also did a lot of consultation with the young people initially on the project to ask them about their ideas for recruiting young people. While all marketing techniques had contributed, the project manager reported that key sources of recruitment and engagement were word of mouth and the interaction with young people by key workers and detached youth teams. The marketing strategy was designed to appeal to males and females and people from different BME groups.

8. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Extent and effectiveness of project partnership working

8.1 Qualitative research gave indications on the extent and effectiveness of partnership working within the LWLSC programme. A mix of partners were engaged, such as:

- employers in sectors including retail, construction, media, transport
- community organisations including youth centres
- colleges/universities and training providers.

8.2 The case studies indicate that not all projects engaged in partnership working. Two case-study projects – one providing workplace training for people working in the passenger transport sector and the other training workless people in Skills for Life – said the project was stand-alone and so did not need partners. Another case-study project providing training and employability support to BME women had begun in partnership with two other community organisations, but had ended the partnership when it became apparent that they did not understand ESF requirements.

8.3 However, for the majority of projects which did engage in it, partnership working seems to have been positive and beneficial. All case-study projects who engaged in partnership working reported that relations with partners had been good. Several asserted that partnership working had been key to the successful delivery of the project. Case studies suggest that the main approach to sustaining effective partnership working was to hold regular steering group (or equivalent other) meetings alongside regular informal contact.

8.4 Some projects made expanding and improving partnership working an explicit project objective. One project evaluation for a project working with a number of disadvantaged groups reported that it had made it an objective to build on existing relationships with employers, colleges/universities and other training providers in the region, in order to:

“identify existing and future skills gaps, secure paid employment and apprenticeships for clients on the project, and obtain first-hand information and advice for those clients wishing to progress onto further education and training”.
(project evaluation)

8.5 Some providers reported that delivery of LWLSC ESF co-finance funded projects had led to their establishing new and/or stronger relationships with partners. Some training providers cited expanded networks of employers as a clear benefit of the programme. One provider reported in its evaluation that:

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“Our links with the main training provider have turned into a strong and mutually-beneficial working relationship that can offer an enhanced set of training and support services to people from disadvantaged communities. Our relationship with employers was also enhanced because we could offer a more comprehensive service by working with project partners”. (from project evaluation)

“For us as an organisation this project has developed partnerships that we have used within other projects.” (case-study project)

8.6 Other reported benefits of partnership working included: sharing and building on good practice, increased awareness of the business benefits of providing volunteering opportunities to employees, an increase in referrals, and more awareness/profile of the service amongst other agencies.

8.7 A minority of providers reported more mixed experiences of partnership working:

“It very much depended on the organisation we worked with, e.g. we worked with one ECDL provider, who was very co-operative and efficient, and with whom we had a good working relationship, whereas we worked with another, earlier in the project who was hard to get information and required documentation from and with whom we had much lower outputs.” (project evaluation)

Partnership working case study Ealing Hammersmith and West London College – *Food Skills for Southall*

Food Skills for Southall was funded under measure 4.1 (update and upgrade employees' vocational skills). The aim of the project was to upskill the food hygiene and food safety qualifications of employed beneficiaries those working within the hotel and catering industry in West London as a result of changes to food health and safety legislation. The project used existing links with restaurants and catering companies to target 66 beneficiaries employed within the hospitality sector, living in the Southall area of London West.

Hammersmith and West London College worked in partnership with Southall Regeneration Group and Heathrow City Partnership to deliver the project. Effective partnership working with these partners was key to the successful delivery of the project. The project benefited from the fact that one of the partner organisations was closely based in the community and strong on local employer engagement. The partnership also fostered good relationships with local community providers, showing that colleges are supporting local community initiatives.

CROSS CUTTING THEMES

ICT

8.8 LWLSC efforts to promote ICT in the Objective 3 programme had two elements:

- default ICT capacity-building i.e. Objective 3 funding led those delivery organisations that required it to develop their ICT capacity in order to deliver the project and meet the requirements of the ESF monitoring requirements
- prioritising ICT in the funding of projects, with some projects dedicated to ICT training.

8.9 Numerous projects offered training in ICT. This was seen to benefit individuals' employability and employers' capacity. For example, one ICT project provided vocational ICT training to people from disadvantaged groups. Part of the explanation for the project not meeting its employment-outcome targets was that some learners were already employed. The provider reported that many of the employed learners were drawn from local small companies, both private and not for profit, which benefited from the training. An example was cited in the evaluation of a beneficiary working at a local charity who came to lead on upgrading its IT systems and client database.

Equal opportunities

8.10 According to scoping-interview respondents, LWLSC was most active in relation to the equal opportunities cross-cutting theme. Consideration of, and action on, equal opportunities was a requirement in the tender: making award of funding dependent on demonstrating that applicant organisations had an equal opportunities policy and how this would apply to the particular project. Specification that certain proportions of women, people from BME groups and disabled people would be recruited on the project was then included in the contract. However, one scoping-interview respondent considered it to be a weakness of the LSC approach that there was no monitoring or incentivisation on equal opportunities. LWLSC did, in round 2, set a target for projects to make a certain amount of starts women, people from BME groups and disabled people. This was considered by scoping-interview respondents to have been effective in incentivising providers to deliver on equal opportunities recruitment targets. However, LWLSC was advised that this was not the right approach as it equated to positive discrimination. It was also asserted that self-declaration could be problematic in relation to people with disabilities, who might have been unwilling to declare their disabled status.

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- 8.11 As the data analysis shows, the programme was relatively successful in meeting overall targets on recruitment of target groups: surpassing targets on women and people from BME groups and falling narrowly short of reaching its target on disabled people.
- 8.12 Project evaluations and case studies provided evidence that projects had considered and taken action on equal opportunities. While, for some projects this was largely restricted to equal opportunities monitoring, others took further actions to ensure that their service reached and reflected different sections of the client/beneficiary population. An example of this included a project offering training in health and social care, and child care which sought to ensure that it recruited unemployed beneficiaries from diverse ethnic minority backgrounds reflecting the local community. The project did this by marketing the service through Jobcentre Plus offices on housing estates where unemployment was high.
- 8.13 Other actions on equal opportunities included using needs assessments of, and meetings with beneficiaries to ensure all beneficiaries' needs were met and taking account of the topic in the staff induction.

Sustainable development

- 8.14 Achievement in promoting social and economic sustainable development was considered by scoping-interview beneficiaries to be difficult to measure, given that it formed an inherent part of work to increase low-skilled and/or unemployed people's employability. It was easier to define achievement in relation to the environmental aspect of sustainable development. LWLSC was funded by a GOL technical assistance contract through the London Environment Centre to deliver a series of environmental workshops for projects. Workshops assisted projects to form an environmental action plan. Scoping-interview beneficiaries reported that workshops were well received and had almost universally positive feedback. This was reflected in project evaluations and case studies, which contained numerous positive responses to the workshop.
- 8.15 The points made in the scoping interviews on sustainable development were largely borne out by the project evaluation review, in that actions and impacts on environmental sustainability were more clearly defined than social or economic sustainability. Nevertheless, some indications of contribution towards social and economic sustainability were provided in project evaluations and case studies. Several projects reported that their support to employers showed evidence of having assisted development and/or sustainability of the business. While others stated that their work had aided social inclusion and cohesion e.g. through promoting integration of refugees and people from BME groups into wider society

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or reducing social exclusion of young people who were NEET or at risk of becoming so. Others still equated joint contribution to the economic and social sustainability goals with breaking down barriers to employment for people from disadvantaged groups and providing targeted training to meet skills needs.

- 8.16 There were several examples of environmental sustainability. One project reported attending the environmental workshop and looking into going for Green Mark certification as a consequence, as well as formulating plans to build an 'eco-studio' for young people to use to learn music production. Another reported having introduced recycling and energy saving measures as a result of the workshop. An environmental sustainability action of a project working with young people was to carry out environmental risk assessments for each of its activities. Another project working with young people NEET arranged for learners to visit an outdoor activity centre to learn about environmental issues and got some learners involved in a River Thames clean-up project.

Sustainable development case study

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham Education Business Section – *West London NEET Project*

The West London NEET project was funded under measure 2.2 (help for unemployed people disadvantaged in the labour market). The project aimed to support young people who were NEET, were disadvantaged in a range of ways, and required holistic and specialised intervention. It was a cross-borough, multi-agency project that aimed to engage and support 205 disadvantaged NEET and pre-NEET young people aged 13–19, giving them the skills and motivation to remain in education or training. The project focused on providing young people with individualised and tailored support including IAG, therapeutic counselling, tutoring, volunteer mentoring/support from local employers and supported work-placements.

West London NEET project can be seen to have contributed to environmental, economic and social sustainable development. All the partners involved in the project used their own sustainable resources policies, which involved use of paper, paper communications and local procurement. The project also worked to instil the importance of environment issues amongst beneficiaries, including arranging visits to outdoor activity centres to learn about environmental issues, and getting involved in the River Thames clean-up project.

Two large employers (Coca Cola and the BBC) and a number of community mentors were involved in the project, and this led to job creation, in particular helping to embed the BBC in the local community and thus create more local employment opportunities.

9. LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

- 9.1 There may be lessons for the future in projects' experience of, and response to retention problems. Projects working with employed people sometimes found that drop outs were a consequence of barriers related to the nature of the sector/occupation targeted e.g. operational demands in social care; the temporary nature of many jobs in certain sectors (e.g. hotels) which meant that beneficiaries dropped out when they changed job. These issues emphasise the importance of flexibility in provision and early employer engagement. Relationship-building with beneficiaries was also cited as key to promoting retention.
- 9.2 There may also be lessons in relation to the difficulty of tracking beneficiaries, gaining evidence of employment outcomes and developing realistic expectations and targets around providers' ability to support beneficiaries into employment.
- 9.3 Given the success of the environmental workshops, a further lesson might be that co-financing organisations should conduct more of these types of workshop in other areas, such as equal opportunities, partnership working etc.

10. STRATEGIC IMPACT

Achievement of strategic objectives

- 10.1 Scoping-interview beneficiaries stated that the LWLSC had formed its strategic aims and objectives to take the relatively high employment in the area into account, with greater emphasis placed on upskilling and employer engagement. There is also evidence, albeit anecdotal, primarily from case studies that projects did add value through additional activity that would not otherwise have been funded.
- 10.2 Scoping-interview beneficiaries felt that the LWLSC Objective 3 programme was structured to focus on increasing employability and employment outcomes. However, the exact impact of it in this respect was considered to be hard to measure since impact can be cumulative and may result in, or contribute to an employment outcome which does not occur until the medium or the long term, when the nature of the funding does not allow for these to be registered. It was also stated that projects can experience difficulty in tracking beneficiaries and gaining the required evidence of employment, meaning that there are likely to have been more employment outcomes than were registered in the statistics.
- 10.3 Despite this, the research and analysis reported above does indicate that the programme has contributed to each of the strategic objectives: to extend participation in education and training, engage employers in workforce development, raise the achievement of young people, raise the achievement of adults and raise the quality and effectiveness of education and training.

Mainstreaming and sustainability

- 10.4 The review of project evaluations and the case studies gave indications about the extent to which projects had been successful in both ensuring the continuation of the service and mainstreaming services/practices in the wider landscape of employment and skills provision.
- 10.5 Some case-study respondents reported that ESF funding had allowed them to increase their capacity to continue to provide the enhanced service that it had supported. There was also some evidence of projects' campaigning for mainstreaming of the type of support they had provided.
- 10.6 There were also indications from the project evaluation review and case studies that ESF support had led to increased long-term capacity both for providers and for employers. Several projects reported that their work with employers (particularly SMEs) had led to greater recognition of the business benefits of staff

training and development, which, it was anticipated, would lead to increased demand for this in future. Case-study projects reported that ESF funding had allowed them to increase and improve their services. For example:

- an ICT project reported having been able to double ICT training course capacity
- a holistic health, housing and learning support project reported that ESF funding allowed it to provide comprehensive IAG.

10.7 Several projects reported having strategies for securing further funding to maintain and expand or diversify their service. Funding was reported to have been gained or sought from a variety of sources (mainstream and non-mainstream) including: Train to Gain, ESF (LSC co-financed and other), NRF, local authorities, GOL, LDA, local trusts and local companies.

Impact of reduced co-financing plan

10.8 Scoping-interview beneficiaries considered that the impact of the reduced co-financing plan was likely to be that there would come to be fewer smaller, community providers in the area and that, as a consequence, ability to target resources at particular groups would be reduced and it would be more difficult to reach the most disadvantaged.

10.9 This prognosis was largely reflected in the qualitative research. Larger providers, appeared to have fairly diverse revenue streams and not be overly reliant on LSC/ESF co-financed funding, while some voluntary and community-based providers appeared to be more vulnerable. However, Train to Gain funding will plug the gap to some extent.

10.10 The project manager of one ICT project reported in its project evaluation that:

“It now appears that the original exit strategy is virtually non-existent for our ESF programmes. Because of the radical changes in ESF, we are now faced with a large time gap until any ESF funding is reintroduced (and then it will be much less). Also there seem to be moves towards larger contracts with the LSC (e.g. pan-London contracts), cuts in ESOL funding and also much greater training for employed staff, under Train to Gain. Therefore it will be very difficult to continue the project in its current form. I am particularly concerned about the move to larger contracts as this will penalise excluded groups who are most likely to access training through small, local community venues.” (project evaluation)

10.11 Many of these concerns were reflected in the case studies. Case-study respondents were asked what the impact of reduced co-financing would be for their organisation and what they thought the wider impact would be. Train to Gain

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was the main alternate funding source for those case-study organisations whose respondents reported that there would be no or little impact on their own organisation. Some also pointed to other funding sources including ESF and other LSC funding pots.

10.12 While those reporting no impact on their own organisations were a mix of voluntary and private sector organisations and colleges, those organisations who reported that reduced co-financing would have an impact were, with one exception, voluntary organisations, associations or trusts. These organisations reported that reduced co-financing would mean making adjustments. One reported that it would have a negative impact on organisational effectiveness. Another organisation reported that reduced co-financing would harm its bargaining power and diminish it to a subcontractor to colleges. Another reported that reduced co-financing has caused the organisation to take a more strategic approach in order to address the needs of the most disadvantaged, including diversifying the funding base, mainstreaming projects into wider local service provision and leveraging funding from Section 106 agreements with local authorities.

10.13 In terms of its wider impact, several case-study respondents considered that reduced co-financing could (at least potentially) lead to funding being more concentrated around larger providers with the consequence of reducing smaller voluntary and community organisations' capacity to innovate and reach the most disadvantaged, meaning poorer accessibility and quality of service provision to customers in those groups. One case-study respondent explicitly stated that reduced co-financing would lead to the closure of some small community organisations.

"[Reducing co-financing will lead to] a screening out of the most disadvantaged customers as providers are forced to take on more job/training ready users to ensure outputs and financial targets are met." (case-study respondent)

"Funding goes to the larger colleges but they do not deal with all of the target groups – they do not deal with all sections of society. There has to be an equal distribution of funds to ensure that all the needs of all targeted groups are assessed and met." (case-study respondent)

"If everything moves on to Train to Gain many people will not be picked up – many cannot afford to pay for a Level 2 qualification and many will not go to a college environment." (case-study respondent)

10.14 The last comment was mirrored in that of another case-study respondent from a college, who asserted that current college delivery works well for mainstream delivery but not for adult and employer-related delivery. The respondent also

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stated that the change from ESF to Train to Gain will have certain implications for colleges e.g. restructuring of some courses to make delivery time shorter.

- 10.15 The nature and extent of the impact may depend on how well remaining ESF funds are positioned to complement Train to Gain and how far small, voluntary and community organisations are able to adapt to the new environment, for instance by ensuring they have adequate quality assurance processes in place to have a chance of gaining some of the remaining ESF funding.

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