



# **Evaluation of the 2000-2006 Co-financing of the ESF Programme in the South West Region**

**Final Report**

**by**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Context**

The European Social Fund (ESF) Co-financing Framework was introduced in June 1999 to provide greater coherence, reduce bureaucracy, and apply more systematic monitoring through Government Offices (GOs) to project funding which stemmed from the EU Structural Funds.

HOST Policy Research (HOST) was commissioned to assess the achievements and impact of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) Co-financing Programme in the South West region over the six years 2000-2006.

The evaluation examined:

- The achievement and impact of the programme on supporting and addressing the priorities of the LSC.
- How ESF was managed across the region.
- A range of individually funded projects to identify examples of effective project practice.

### **Main findings**

#### **Strategy and management**

- The programme required a clear strategic alignment between contracted activity, the priorities of the LSC and Government Office (GO) Regional Development Plan and ESF measures.
- The strategic and operational focus of the ESF Programme began cautiously, but evolved and strengthened as managers and staff understood better the scope of ESF finance, what it could achieve, and how it could support mainstream provision.
- Working relationships between local LSCs, Government Office South West (GOSW), and other co-financing organisations developed well during the life of the programme, and joint planning exercises were beneficial.
- Local LSCs adopted various delivery strategies and resourced the programme in different ways. In two offices, not all available funding was used due to insufficient human resource and/or a cautious management policy.
- Following regionalisation of the South West LSC in 2006, a regional team took overall responsibility for the ESF programme with strategic and operational input from the local offices.

#### **ESF achievements**

- The South West LSC was able to fund nearly 120,000 enrolments on funded activity, and support to 11,000 businesses.

- This in turn led to 72,000 achievements of learning aims, 2,800 Basic Skills qualifications, 9,300 Level 2 qualifications, 3,900 Level 3 qualifications, over 42,000 enrolments on programmes to widen participation in learning, plus 15,000 positive outcomes for young people classed as NEET on starting their ESF programme.
- The overall unit cost per enrolment was £630 and the overall achievement rate, including achievement of non-accredited support activity, was 61 per cent.
- Not all ESF achievements could be expressed in terms of qualifications gained, but the overall quality of data on learner destinations was not sufficient to assess performance on other outcomes such as gaining employment or progression to other learning.

### **Effective practice within projects**

- Case study evidence suggested that sound planning and well organised delivery were the keys to achievement. The importance of information, advice and guidance for beneficiaries was underlined by many projects, as was the importance of individual support, particularly for disadvantaged individuals.
- Partnership working was a major feature of the case studies, often between organisations that had not worked together before, and who continued to collaborate after the ESF project had finished.
- Case studies identified the positive impact on individual beneficiary progression and organisational capacity building. In the voluntary and community sector, this increased capacity/capability and enabled some organisations to become involved in delivery of mainstream learning.
- Innovative approaches to engage hard-to-reach beneficiaries were highlighted by a number of project managers, and used to inform delivery of subsequent project activity.
- Micro businesses and sole traders benefited from involvement in the ESF programme, and this has been a conduit for many to progress to other learning/ accredited qualifications

### **Main conclusions**

- Much of the evidence from the 2000-2006 programme suggests that ESF made a very positive contribution to the learning infrastructure and to individual beneficiaries.
- The South West ESF programme was an enabler for individuals and organisations, allowing small-scale projects to pilot new ideas, introduce innovative approaches, and support sector-specific learning provision which could not have otherwise been financed.
- Strategic alignment was good, but an evaluation strategy and measures to determine impact, embedded from the start, would have been useful; dissemination of ideas/project practice between offices across the region could also have been better co-ordinated.

- As the programme evolved, increased LSC resourcing and stronger co-ordinated management of the programme resulted in a better understanding of ESF requirements, and what could be delivered and successfully achieved.
- Support from GOSW for those offices that had resourcing difficulties and/or did not assign a high proportion of their funding allocation, could have been managed more effectively.
- Through the use of ESF funds, some 120,000 individuals and 11,000 companies benefited from ESF funding. For individuals, this meant being able to take a further step (and for some a first step) in engagement with learning, be it via direct enrolments on courses or by accessing information, advice and guidance (IAG).
- Issues concerned with data input and ESF administration, either real or perceived, had implications for many projects in terms of additional resources needed, which in some cases was to the detriment of projects and probably what they achieved.

### **Summary of recommendations**

- A clear need for an evaluation strategy, and impact measurement at programme and individual project level, could greatly assist the delivery and management of the current programme.
- Providers need to be supported to identify how their delivery can be sustained in the longer term, how to record 'soft' outcomes, and how to assess the impact of their projects.
- Data input issues must be resolved promptly, and LSC managers and staff must understand the implications of delays in contracting for projects and find strategies to mitigate this.
- Innovation and capacity building need to be encouraged and rewarded through specialist development funding or contracts for mainstream delivery.
- The dissemination of information in the new programme needs a clear framework and ICT-based means to support it. Local offices, GOSW, and individual projects all need to be kept informed about effective practice and projects that could be replicated at other locations.
- Project specifications need to be based on current labour market information to ensure that the delivery proposed is achievable in terms of such things as numbers of beneficiaries in a target area, and skills shortages that cannot be addressed through mainstream activities.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction to the evaluation

The LSC, established in 2001, is responsible for the funding of all post-16 education and training, except Higher Education (HE). Originally constructed with a national office and 47 local councils (Local LSCs), each became established as co-financers of the European Social Fund (ESF). In England, each LSC local office deployed ESF in different ways, using it to address various priorities, including supporting greater numbers of individuals into formal learning or encouraging more cohesion in the learning delivery infrastructure.

Nationally, the LSC was reorganised in 2006 and a regional management structure was set up, though some local management of ESF programme delivery was still retained. In 2010, the LSC itself will be disbanded and two new organisations<sup>1</sup> will step into the gap. It is expected that one of these organisations will be responsible for managing the current ESF programme, but to assist this new phase the LSC in the South West was keen to review its approach to co-financing and build upon work carried out in the region in the first programme years, and carry this forward to the new ESF Convergence programme.

Against this background, in March 2008, HOST Policy Research (HOST) was commissioned to independently assess the achievements and impact of the LSC's co-financing programme in the South West region over the six years 2000-2006.

Specifically, the evaluation looked at:

- The achievement and impact of the programme on supporting and addressing the priorities of the LSC.
- How ESF was managed across the region.
- A range of individually funded projects to identify examples of effective project practice, particularly those which have been successful at forming or aiding progression and collaborative working.

### 1.2 Context

The European Social Fund (ESF) is one of the European Union's (EU) structural funds developed to help reduce the differences in living standards between regions of the EU. Under EU regulations, ESF is used to support the UK's national action plan for employment.

The ESF is administered in the UK by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and money is distributed through Government Offices (GOs) in each region. This money pays for approximately 45 per cent of projects supported, and matched funding was encouraged in the 2000-2006 programme - either public or private - but at least ten per cent had to be provided by a publicly-funded authority. Much of this finance stemmed from the Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), Development Agencies (DAs) and Local Authorities (LAs). These organisations are known as co-financing organisations. The aim of ESF is to meet three key EU objectives:

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<sup>1</sup> These are to be a Young People's Learning Agency, charged with helping Local Authorities provide for the 14-19 age bracket, and Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to administer the public money to colleges and training organisations.

- **Objective 1:** To promote the development of regions where economic expansion and growth is required.
- **Objective 2:** To support the economic and social needs of areas with specific difficulties.
- **Objective 3:** To provide funding in regions not identified under Objective 1 to help improve education, training and employment policies, and systems.

ESF can provide support to achieve a range of policy fields within each objective. Policy fields are designed to help member states of the EU develop their job markets and the skills of people who are either in, or looking for, work.

The first European Social Fund programme began in 2000 and officially ran until 2006, although some projects were supported until 2008.<sup>2</sup> The South West region contracted around £97 million of European money for the 2000-2006 programme, which was divided between geographically-based programmes. A map indicating the South West ESF-Funded Programme areas under three EU Objectives is reproduced at Annex A.

### 1.3 The evaluation approach and timetable

The evaluation methodology, which began in March 2008 and ended in August 2008, was agreed after pre-contract negotiation with the LSC, comprised five separate but interrelated stages, and involved an inception meeting with the LSC and project Steering Group about expectations, project parameters and focus, interviews with key individuals (chiefly ESF managers around the regions, GO personnel, Jobcentre Plus), review of project specifications, examples of project evaluations and final reports, examination and analysis of historic and current statistical management information, identifying and conducting a number of case studies in the region that had demonstrated effective practice, and collation and summative reporting.

Initially, it was expected that an interrogation of the Individual Learner Record (ILR) ESF Short Records for each of the relevant academic years would meet the quantitative objectives of the study. However, the LSC proposed an alternative method. This entailed using selected records from the ILR, collated, extracted and stored at dossier and LSC area level. As this collation exercise was being run in any case for producing project closure reports by the LSC, the Steering Group felt that this approach would ensure that all relevant dossier information would be captured. This did ensure that both LSC and HOST were working with data on the same group of dossiers and projects, but it also meant that some duplicated data had to be identified and excluded. The collation and interrogation process was therefore not as straightforward as expected, and the evaluation timetable was consequently extended for a further six weeks to accommodate this.

### 1.4 The report

This report consists of **six** chapters in addition to the Executive Summary and this introduction. **Chapter 2** looks at the strategic emphasis and management of the programme; **Chapters 3 and 4** examine and comments on the numerical achievements of the programme in terms of range of activities supported and results achieved; **Chapter 5** describes the experience of the case studies HOST conducted; **Chapter 6** offers some conclusions from the findings and the implications of these; and **Chapter 7**

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<sup>2</sup> A new ESF programme is running from 2007-2013.

makes recommendations to assist the co-financing partners and/or organisations that may in future manage the current programme. There are also three Annexes which include all 12 case study matrices, and more detailed suggestions on the impact measures discussed in Chapter 7. In addition, the full details of the case studies are contained in a separate document.

## Chapter 2: Strategy and Management

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we examine how the South West's LSC Co-financing Programme evolved, the strategic priorities which informed what the programme delivered, how co-financing plans were devised, describe how the programme was managed at regional and local level, and the possible effects, this on programme delivery and achievements.<sup>3</sup> We also consider the working partnerships that were central to the management and delivery of the programme.

### 2.2 Influence of strategic priorities

The EU supports poorer regions of Member States by helping them regenerate their economies and create new jobs, and the four most important funds which are used for this are known as Structural Funds. The Structural Funds have a number of key objectives,<sup>4</sup> and the South West LSC ESF programme was determined by a series of measures stemming from this fund, and also by LSC priorities and the Government Office Regional Development Plan (RDP).

The LSC priorities and targets<sup>5</sup> in 2001, which had to be aligned with the ESF plan, were primarily concerned with raising participation in learning and achievement by young people, increasing the demand for learning among adults, and raising skills levels for national competitiveness. In 2004, the emphasis changed and the priorities centred on making learning demand-led, ensuring 14-19 year olds had access to quality learning, transforming Further Education (FE) and strengthening the role of the LSC in economic development. LSC targets at this time included increasing the numbers of young people and adults with a Level 2 qualification. Currently, priorities are again focused on skills acquisition and development, and targets reflect this, with their emphasis on increasing numbers of Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications and Skills for Life achievements. Government Office South West's (GOSW)'s RDP of 2001 was their strategic plan for the delivery of ESF in the South West. This reflected government priorities and had a number of specific objectives which overlapped with those of the LSC, including raising participation in learning, and the proportion of individuals with qualifications. To deliver this regional plan, GOSW relied on activities of the main co-financing organisations - LSC and Jobcentre Plus.

The ESF plan in 2001 therefore needed to show a clear strategic alignment between contracted activity, the priorities of the LSC and RDP, and ESF measures in order to assist all three. This alignment was the subject of discussions between LSC senior managers and GOSW when ESF programme contracts were negotiated, and subsequently specified by the LSC in their advertisements which called for the submission of bids. The LSC therefore had control over the contracted activity which supported the objectives of the RDP, ESF and the LSC. Due to the way that ESF funds have to be accounted for, actual activities under each project were attributable to the measures through which the funds flow. As a result, links between project activity, ESF,

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<sup>3</sup> Although many ESF managers in the region that were in post in the first three years were no longer available for interview because they had left the LSC, HOST was able, with the help of GOSW and the former regional ESF manager, to establish how individual local offices organised the management of their ESF in the first four years of the programme.

<sup>4</sup> This evaluation is concerned with 3 objectives (1, 2 and 3). Objective 3 has national priorities and measures; 1 and 2 have a regional focus.

<sup>5</sup> LSC priorities and targets are shown in full in Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3.

and the aims and objectives of the LSC priorities could be made. The evolution of LSC targets is shown graphically at **Figure 3.1**.

## 2.3 Programme development

Co-financing stems from the White Paper *Learning to Succeed*, published by the government in June 1999, and the notion of combining ESF Structural Fund money with domestic match funding was then put into a consultative document in October the following year.<sup>6</sup> This set out the main reasons for the introduction of co-financing: greater coherence, reduced bureaucracy, and more systematic monitoring through GOs. Previously, providers had to bid and account to separate bodies for ESF funding, but agreeing projects on an individual basis made it impossible to plan strategically or address issues on a regional or local basis, and accountability was very complex and costly.

The total costs of any projects supported in the 2000-2006 programmes were made up of finance from two sources: the European element, usually around 45 per cent, and the rest ('match' funding), which had to come from a public body or organisation that receives 50 per cent of its core funds from a public source or a private organisation.

There were two main separate co-financing organisations in the South West during the lifetime of this programme. These were the local Learning and Skills Councils and Jobcentre Plus. There were also two LAs delivering small projects. Though technically the programme ran from 2000-2006, much of delivery did not start in earnest until 2002, and through the granting of contract extensions, and/or projects which began at the end of the programme, some delivery did not finish until June 2008.

In many ways the development of the ESF programme mirrors that of the LSC itself. The first two to three years were very much a learning period as local offices familiarised themselves with the requirement of ESF co-financing, setting up systems and developing infrastructures, and deciding the amount of internal human resource that was suitable. At the same time, LSC organisations were also learning how to plan and manage their mainstream budgets. In that initial phase, each LSC developed its own ESF co-financing plans and its own approach to the funding of projects addressing local priorities, but reflecting LSC priorities, ESF measures and the GOSW RDP.

During the next two/three years, the programme development was centred on consolidating what had been learnt in the first phase in terms of the types of projects that had proved most successful, with regards to widening participation in learning, targeting specific sectors to address needs, and consulting more regularly with partners and stakeholders.

GOSW reports that at the end of 2004 and before regional restructuring of the LSC in the South West, a decision was taken to introduce a regional ESF plan involving all six local offices, and a more streamlined and integrated process. This change also helped GOSW to monitor the programme more effectively and assess its achievement against their RDP.

The regionalisation of the local LSCs brought further changes with joint planning between Jobcentre Plus and the LSC, together with monitoring and administration processes which became common across the South West. Local LSC offices were expected to discuss plans, with local Jobcentre Plus representatives consulted widely, and the regional team based in Plymouth took responsibility for a number of regional projects, commissioning them and monitoring them after the contracting stage. There

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<sup>6</sup> *The European Social Fund: Co-financing in England* (October 2000).  
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was some initial resistance to regionalisation, but there is evidence to suggest that not only did this process enable more beneficiary starts, it also ensured that lessons learnt on a region-wide basis informed and enhanced plans for the ESF programme which began in 2007.

## 2.4 Co-financing plans

Co-financing plans are primarily statements of intent, outlining ESF measures and LSC priorities, setting out delivery objectives and citing target groups. It is now acknowledged that many of the early South West ESF co-financing plans caused problems for the local LSCs, not in identifying that there were local needs to be addressed, but establishing exactly how ESF finance could address them. Managers were not confident about using ESF funding, or were concerned that what they were proposing did not fall within the scope of the programme. Many LSC staff did not understand that ESF has a distinct set of objectives and that the fund must be used to address these, and it was not a 'discretionary' fund.

There were some tensions, too, between the LSCs and GOSW about co-financing plans initially. Some of the LSCs thought that GOSW was being unduly harsh because of their insistence on certain activities, which was something that many other GOs did not do. For instance, during negotiations in the early years, GOSW felt there should be more engagement with the voluntary and community sector, which LSCs were unsure about. When, however, in later years there were national criticisms about the way that some LSCs had been allowed to 'cherry pick' activities by their GO, GOSW were able to provide clear evidence that the South West had demonstrated that their approach was inclusive, and used increased engagement with the voluntary sector as evidence.

The first plans covering all three Objectives show that the LSCs hoped to offer learning opportunities to those sections of the population that had traditionally faced barriers, to increase the take-up of learning in rural areas, and address the learning needs of those facing deprivation and disadvantage - Basic Skills and family learning featured prominently in these plans, for example. Plans were developed largely 'in-house' with input from mainstream programme delivery managers, underpinned by any research that the LSC had recently commissioned. One ESF manager interviewed reported that:

*'...it was meant to be about supporting mainstream, but in our area it was largely a case of writing plans which supported organisations not activities, and few aligned with a strategic theme which is what ESF was all about'.*

Another ESF manager commented:

*'...we had some difficulty with the first plan, it was not well thought through and not well commissioned...some of the courses that we commissioned to provide IT training for the over 50s, for example, to encourage learners into employment, we found were supporting what amounted to leisure courses for high numbers of people nearly 70 because we'd not been tight enough about delivery restrictions'.*

One LSC area recognised the importance of research to assist the development of ESF planning and invited research project proposals against specific themes. The purpose of this was to identify provision gaps in order to ensure commissioned ESF projects were underpinned with evidence of local need, or to enhance labour market information that would give projects a better focus, or to identify how ESF funding could assist development in certain geographical areas. Another LSC area used skills 'brokers' and other front-line staff to consult with employers in particular to understand their needs and develop project specifications that would meet those requirements.

The second set of co-financing plans, written in 2003, were considered to be better informed and more clearly focused. LSCs developed open consultation through their websites, talked with the LAs and local providers - public and private - as well as GOSW to ensure that there was minimum duplication, and that plans were cohesive with regional and local development. They had also taken account of the success or otherwise of projects delivered in the first two years, and meetings were set up in most areas to inform potential deliverers about tender specifications and what was required in proposals.

These plans had a greater emphasis on cross-cutting themes, detailed how the projects would be managed and what would be expected of successful providers; information was provided on the research that had underpinned the decisions to commission and output targets; and target groups were clearly identified.

In some of these plans, there is mention for the first time of building capacity in specific sectors, a provision for IAG, which was neglected or not fully exploited in the early years, and a greater emphasis on equal opportunities and support for workforce development in smaller companies.

In the areas with co-financing organisations other than Jobcentre Plus and the LSC, it was especially important to have close liaison when developing co-financing plans so as not to create confusion or set up unhelpful competition. Consequently, while all the organisations developed plans, each had a particular emphasis, and these were moderated between them to ensure that duplication was kept to the necessary minimum.

There were some issues with these plans, however. For example, in one LSC area, the second set of co-financing plans set aside a budget to deliver brokerage projects to encourage individuals into work. The demand for such a service had been identified, and the LSC had negotiated appropriate output targets with GOSW, but it coincided with the launch of the pilots for *Train to Gain*, which operated a brokerage style system, and plans for ESF brokerage had to be withdrawn.

The third set of co-financing plans concentrated much more on what the LSCs knew could be delivered, what they knew would contribute towards targets, and which they knew would address local needs. Three LSCs mentioned that they had wanted to encourage smaller projects in these plans because they had learnt through earlier ESF delivery that smaller projects, where new ideas could be trialled, were much more effective than large projects which, although they invariably achieved the output targets, contributed little by way of added value.

Until 2004, when Objective 3 regional plans were developed with GOSW, each local LSC developed its own co-financing plans, commissioned its own projects, and monitored and audited those projects independently of other local LSCs. The introduction of regional plans and regionalisation did not totally eradicate this because there were overlaps during the programme when locally commissioned projects, set up before restructuring, and which were contracted to continue beyond 2004, were still managed under the previous contract arrangements by the local teams.

Regional plans were followed in 2005 by joint co-financing plans with Jobcentre Plus. Following a number of meetings, GOSW, Jobcentre Plus and the six South West local LSCs agreed a document that had previously gone out to wider consultation, which outlined themes for the final phase of the ESF programme for Objective 3 across the South West region.

These themes specified what the co-financing partners wanted to achieve, the funding they had agreed was appropriate, and the outcomes expected. This plan was informed both by internal consultations to identify gaps in current provision across the South West and by an independent impact analysis of Objectives 2 and 3 funding in 2006<sup>7</sup> and the revised RDP. The plan was reviewed in November 2006, and while the range of activities detailed within did not change the funding, some outcomes were revised. This document also outlined the joint working arrangements between the co-financing partners regarding tenders, evaluation of tenders, and how the plan would be monitored by the partners.

Objectives 1 and 2, whose delivery was centred in Cornwall and some areas of Devon, had separate plans from this.<sup>8</sup> The managers of the Objective 1 funding produced a joint co-financing plan with Jobcentre Plus in 2005, and subsequent activities from this plan were delivered in Cornwall by the LSC and Jobcentre Plus, most notably those funded under *Cornwall Works*. The Objective 2 plan featured a number of activities which were aimed at supporting small business.

## 2.5 Local and regional programme management

**Before the programme began**, external organisations applied for ESF finance by making individual applications for funding of specific projects which were based largely on their ability to spend the funding. Co-financing operated very differently. There was more open tendering, project organisers answered advertisements calling for proposals to target special groups, or to address measures with clear objectives linked to ESF measures, but above all the contracts were output-related. Many of those who had been funded before the programme disliked the new arrangements, but they attracted a lot of organisations new to ESF and who had not worked with the LSCs before, especially in the voluntary and community sector.

LSC managers and GOSW reported that differences in senior management approach, at local office level, particularly at the start of the programme, affected the way that ESF was both managed and delivered. The greatest influences on the organisation and management of the ESF programme were identified as:

- **The support and interest taken by senior managers** which determined resourcing, how the ESF budget was organised and spent, and strategic coherence with other provision. Senior managers were either wary of involvement with ESF in the early days of LSC development, or recognised it as an opportunity to add value.
- **The human resource that was allocated to the management of the programme in terms of numbers of staff and their experience and skill especially at the start of the programme**, which affected the LSC relationship with individual projects, if and how often the programme was monitored, auditing of projects, and general contract compliance activities.

Individual LSCs operated very differently in terms of approach and resourcing, which in turn translated into the amount of support and guidance they could reasonably be expected to offer individual projects. In this, the LSCs were constrained by overall volumes of staff in each office, their experience, and the possible effects on other areas of work that additional resource allocation to ESF might mean.

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<sup>7</sup> *South West ESF Impact Analysis Review, EKOS Consulting 2006.*

<sup>8</sup> Details of the Objectives and what they aim to achieve are offered in the introduction in Chapter 1 of this report.

**Devon and Cornwall (D & C)** who could draw down ESF finance under all three ESF Objectives, set up a team whose sole remit was European funding. This team was led by a manager who understood the financial constraints of ESF, who set up clear accountable systems with associated audit trails, and who reported direct to an LSC Director (later the Area Director, who very early in the programme saw its potential). To some extent, the requirement for a large team and clear accounting systems was born of necessity, as this local office had funds under all three ESF Objectives. Their team was large enough to monitor all projects regularly, but the emphasis initially was very much on ensuring projects had the right systems in place and could deliver outputs, and not what was being achieved, or how what was delivered might be sustained in the longer term.

Devon and Cornwall were considered the exemplar office by GOSW. The former Regional ESF manager remarked that Devon and Cornwall became:

*'...the blueprint for systems and strong management and against which all later ESF organisation was judged'.*

**Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole (BDP)**, who had allocation of Objective 3 funding, only had an initial allocation of one ESF manager and an administrative assistant. Individual project monitoring was therefore severely restricted and resulted in a number of contractual problems in the early part of the programme. It was not until 2005, when resourcing was increased and a more robust system of contract compliance monitoring began, that BDP then developed into an efficient team operation.

**Gloucestershire (G)**, also an Objective 3 area, saw ESF as a real opportunity to address local needs, especially in rural areas, and build capacity in organisations outside the larger mainstream providers. Senior management allocated a six-person team to plan, commission projects and assist project managers through joint training, workshops, and individual support with financial accounting to disseminate good practice. The team built on this good start to develop a very effective unit, meeting with all providers every quarter.

**Somerset (S)** hired a consultant to write the initial plan for their Objective 3 allocation, and then responsibility passed to two managers who commissioned the first set of projects, some of which were considered to be very innovative. When these managers resigned, only one person was appointed to take their place. This person was relatively inexperienced as a manager and had little knowledge of the ESF process, so in spite of generating a number of good ideas for projects, delivery was difficult and she also resigned. Following this, and until regionalisation in 2006, Somerset relied heavily on staff contracted for short periods to manage and monitor the programme, and the statistical evidence shows that this affected the amount of commissioning undertaken. From 2006, the ESF manager at Dorset took responsibility for the programme.

**Wiltshire and Swindon (W & S)** initially had one person within the partnership team for their Objective 3 finance, but he worked closely in-house with relevant teams to develop the required project specifications, and consulted widely on these internally and with external partners. Post-contracts, an ESF team of four worked with individual deliverers, though largely to audit and support data systems. GOSW reports that the senior management team there was very enthusiastic about the programme.

**West of England (W of E)**, who could have supported projects under both Objective 3 and (in Bristol) under Objective 2, resourced ESF with a team of one, and senior managers reportedly viewed the programme in the early years as high risk in terms of value for money and what could be achieved that would add value - an opinion said to be shared by many of the local FE colleges. The projects that were initiated in the early programme years had a number of delivery problems which only served to reinforce this opinion.

It would have been possible for West of England to have drawn down many more millions of pounds of funding to support, for example, projects aimed at disadvantaged individuals in deprived areas in Bristol. This position did not change until after the regionalisation of the LSC in 2006.

GOSW reports that:

*'There were many issues with West of England and they missed out on a great opportunity in their area, in our opinion. The programme was not ever resourced sufficiently or with managers with enough experience or expertise to cope.'*

**Following regionalisation** in 2006, an ESF team was formed based in Plymouth. Devon and Cornwall were the natural choice to lead on this because of their strong management and audit systems, and this team became responsible for the regional planning and delivering a region-wide operational plan. The regional ESF manager, with assistance from ESF staff in all the local offices, introduced a process which rationalised the different arrangements that individual offices used, and ensured that there were common approaches to monitoring and administrative systems, and ensured that every office understood what their responsibilities were in order to deliver the regional operational plan.

The two co-financing partners took responsibility for all match-funding requirements after regionalisation, and these used agreed audited systems and processes to ensure quality of data. The partners reviewed processes and systems and shared best practice, and from this review they tried to create a joint approach to project tendering using single documentation which they had designed and agreed. This did not materialise because of the restructuring of both organisations and because procurement processes on both sides were impossible to integrate. However, they did attend each others' project appraisal panels.

The regional team also devised a method post-regionalisation whereby local offices had an equitable allocation of funding. This took account of local unemployed numbers and volumes of people with Level 2 qualifications. Local offices were then sent a copy of the regional operational plan which listed the objectives and the outputs expected, and each office was asked to plan and deliver *pro rata* to the money they had received. Managers were expected to work with local partners to consider what could be achieved, and the regional team constructed the tenders accordingly. Management of regional projects was the responsibility of the regional team, while local contracts set up before regionalisation or extended beyond 2006 were monitored by local offices.

Resourcing for ESF at local office level during the final phase of the programme is shown in Figure 2.1, and compares this with the resource allocation and team responsibilities at the start of the programme. It can be seen that in some local offices, the resourcing has not significantly changed and reflects the additional regional responsibilities taken by the team in Plymouth. Staff in three offices had mainstream provision monitoring responsibilities as well as those of ESF. It should be remembered that Devon and Cornwall also had an extensive Objective 1 and Objective 2 programme to plan, deliver and monitor.

**Figure 2.1: ESF resourcing in local LSC offices in 2001-2002 and 2005-2006**

Local office	2001-2002	2005-2006
Devon and Cornwall	Team of 5 Planning, contracting and monitoring	Team of 8 Management, regional and local, implementation, contracting, monitoring local and regional projects
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole	Team of 2 Contracting and financial monitoring of contracts	Team of 4. Discretionary Fund Manager and 2 Funding Advisers. Contracting provider advice and monitoring (also mainstream funding responsibilities)
Gloucestershire	Team of 6 Contracting, monitoring and project advice	Team of 4 (plus 1 vacancy) Contracting, monitoring project advice
Somerset	2 staff Contracting, monitoring	2 staff plus contract staff Contracting, monitoring (also mainstream funding responsibilities)
Wiltshire and Swindon	1 staff member for initial contracting, ESF team of 4 thereafter Contracting, monitoring and project advice	2 staff and team of contract co-ordinators Contracting, monitoring (also mainstream funding responsibilities)
West of England	1 staff member Contracting, monitoring	2 staff All ESF procedures, contract management, monitoring

**Source: HOST/South West regional ESF plan, 2005**

To what extent achievement within each area can be linked to resourcing and local management is hard to evaluate. ESF managers interviewed were divided on this issue, with some feeling it made a significant difference, especially to resourcing, and others who felt that delivery of achievements depended on much more than the numbers and experience of staff within the LSC.

To help illuminate this issue, HOST considered the achievements and success rates in each area and regionally. Figure 2.2 shows starts, achievements and success rates at local office and regional levels over the life of the programme. These figures must be treated with caution because they do not take account of the volume of projects in each area: Devon and Cornwall, for example, contracted a complex programme under three separate ESF Objectives. Similarly, the achievements in the West of England are those for the most part in the latter stages of the programme, when contract management was being undertaken by the regional team. It should also be noted that in the analysis of

the management information, 54 per cent of all starts in the region were in the last two years of the programme when regional planning was well established.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 2.2: Achievement by local office, 2001-2008 SW ESF programme**

LSC area	Starts <sup>10</sup>	Achievements	Achievement rate
Devon and Cornwall	63,600	37,300	58.7
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole	10,300	7,200	70.1
Gloucestershire	17,900	11,200	62.5
Regional	4,500	1,200	27.3
Somerset	7,800	6,500	83.9
Wiltshire and Swindon	5,700	3,700	64.8
West of England	7,600	4,600	60.2
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>117,300</b>	<b>71,800</b>	<b>(average) 61.2</b>

**Source: HOST/South West ESF programme data 2008**

It should be noted that throughout this report actual figures used are calculated from raw learner data and may be subject to change as the verification process continues. Early indications are that enrolments/starters may be over-estimated, but achievements are likely to be close to the final figure.

### Effective practice and evaluation

One issue that was raised by a number of ESF managers concerned how effective practice was disseminated throughout the region. Interviewees felt that before regionalisation there was little opportunity for ESF staff to meet and talk about what their local areas were achieving, the innovative projects they were supporting, or new approaches that were being used in their local areas to address beneficiary engagement, or progression on exit from the programme, or sustainability strategies that were effective. Staff reported that the meetings that did take place had agendas dominated by budgetary issues or GOSW requirements. After regionalisation, this improved to an extent, but it was still felt there were ways this could be managed better by the regional team.

Apart from the analytical review previously mentioned, commissioned in 2005, and which informed the final stage of the Objective 2 and 3 programme, there was no integrated strategy for evaluation or impact measures built into the programme from the start. GOSW acknowledge that this was something they should have insisted on. ESF managers have, however, learnt from the past eight years, and in the new programme,

<sup>9</sup> Data compilation has not yet been completed so all figures shown are provisional.

<sup>10</sup> All enrolment/learner data is shown to the nearest 100, so totals may not add up - see section 3.2.3 for the confidentiality policy.

a number of impact measures will be introduced. An evaluation strategy will be designed, and evaluation activities will stem from this that will ensure reviews are carried out at stages of the programme, and to assess different aspects of project and partnership working as they evolve.

### **Partnership working**

The LSCs worked extensively with FE Colleges during the programme because so many of these establishments delivered the projects, or were partners in projects that were funded through ESF. Though this collaboration worked well on the whole, according to some interviewees working relationships were uneasy at times. One ESF manager recalled difficulties with match funding, for example, in one geographical area which was only resolved after several meetings and intervention from the Area Director.

The LSCs worked very efficiently in partnership with organisations such as Learning South West and Learning Partnership Cornwall, through which considerable amounts of ESF finance were routed through their management of large projects to small delivery groups in the community and voluntary sector. The risk involved in this strategy was offset by the consequent improvement in capacity of these third sector companies, and their subsequent partnership with larger mainstream providers.

GOSW was responsible for monitoring projects delivered through the ESF programme by the LSCs, by Jobcentre Plus and by the two LAs. They worked with all the LSCs from the start, negotiating the first contracts, assisting with initial implementation, and then monitoring the contracts. They report strong working relationships between all the co-financing partners which helped them to understand the links between projects being delivered by different partners. Their staff report that the trust that was built between the co-financing organisations was only achieved through a lot of hard work, regular communications, and faith that the programme should and could be successful. One manager said:

*'National policy changes or shifts in emphasis regionally can destroy working relationships because we are in the front line, but not so here.'*

Two LSC managers interviewed reported to HOST that they had significant assistance from GOSW during the early years. GOSW staff visited regularly, steered local offices towards or away from funding activities that did not, in their opinion, 'sit' strategically with mainstream, and helped with any tendering problems. One manager said:

*'...we had a lot of support from GOSW, they advised us, came to our team meetings, helped with project commissioning and were more like additional team members than contract monitoring officers'.*

The relationship between Jobcentre Plus and the local LSC teams varied enormously at first but strengthened as the programme progressed, although in Cornwall, and through the Objective 1 funding stream programme, it always worked effectively, and Cornwall was one of the first joint co-financing programmes to be set up in England. Working relationships between the regional team and Jobcentre Plus were robust, and communication between them operated satisfactorily. The work that was involved in preparing the joint co-financing plan in 2005 testifies to the strength of that relationship.

## **2.6 Overview**

While it has been difficult to obtain some information about strategic and operational focus in the early years of the ESF programme because of staff changes, it has still been possible to establish how the programme evolved in terms of planning, delivery and management. This chapter has revealed that these processes strengthened as individuals and teams understood better what ESF could achieve, and how it could be used to support the mainstream activities of the LSC.

Strategic alignment was good, and LSC working relationships with GOSW and the other main co-financing partner were beneficial and well organised, although a more effective way to disseminate good practice across the regions probably needed better co-ordination. An integrated evaluation strategy and assessment measures to assist in determining the impact of all three Objectives would have been useful.

## Chapter 3: Measuring Achievements

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter first looks at how the parameters of the data were defined and the methods used to allocate individual projects to LSC targets which are key determinants of the output analysis. We then go on to describe the key findings from this analysis, at the whole programme level and by LSC office.

### 3.2 Analytical approach

#### 3.2.1 Data collation and transfer

The LSC compiled spreadsheets of (anonymised) learner data covering blocks of dossiers by LSC area. These were sent to HOST during April and May 2008.

Where a project had Individual Learning Record (ILR) data and could be assigned to a target (see section 3.3 below), the data was analysed to give an overview of achievements and the characteristics of beneficiaries. Only records where the entry was clearly indicated as ESF co-financing were included in this analysis.<sup>11</sup>

#### 3.2.2 Key analysis

For the main analyses of beneficiary characteristics, it was agreed with the Steering Group that the key variables would be LSC area, ESF Objective, target area, gender, ethnicity, age band and (ideally) disability status. After a first review of the data, it was agreed to add level of qualification and achievement of the qualification, employment status and year of enrolment as further analysis variables.

For age bands, the standard calculated field definition from the (ILR) was used (age band of the learner at 31 August of the academic year in question) to help facilitate any further comparisons the LSC might wish to undertake with learners funded through mainstream sources. The categories are therefore under 16, 16-18, 19-20, 21-24, 25-59, 60 and over, and a category for '*age missing from the record*'. There were very few records in this last category.

It would also have been beneficial to look at destinations, captured in field L39 and a compulsory field on the ILR ESF Short Record form. However, again, the quality of information provided was poor, with a high proportion of learners in the catch-all categories of 'other' and 'unknown', while a further proportion were clearly miscoded, with a destination of continuing in the current programme of learning while the qualification had been completed and achieved.

#### 3.2.3 Disclosure rules and personal data

Given sensitivities about disclosure of personal information, it was further agreed that where numbers of learners were less than 100, no details would be identified, although they would be included in the overall analysis. On the same basis, ethnicity is split only into the categories White British and Other, as there is generally a low proportion of people from other ethnic backgrounds in the South West region.

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<sup>11</sup> Where A10=70.

### 3.3 ESF contribution to LSC targets

#### 3.3.1 Choice of targets

The LSC(s) came into being in April 2001 after the start of the 2000-2006 ESF programmes. An initial set of priorities for the LSC was agreed with government and defined with a set of key targets. These evolved over time as priorities for the LSC changed, and as funding and measurement issues were debated between the LSC and (the then) DfES. Three sets of priorities and associated targets, those from the original business plan and corporate plan of the LSC, those from the 2004 statement of priorities, and those from the current statement of priorities, are shown in Figure 3.1, together with the targets shared with other agencies. There are also some targets whose objectives are shared with other agencies such as Jobcentre Plus, Connexions and the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA), which are also shown in the same figure.

**Figure 3.1: Meeting LSC priorities and targets**

LSC key tasks 2000/2001	LSC priorities 2004	LSC - current
To raise participation and achievement by young people	Making learning truly demand-led	Creating demand for skills
To increase demand for learning by adults	Ensure 14-19 year olds have access to high quality, relevant learning opportunities	Transforming FE
To raise skills for national competitiveness	Transform FE	Better skills, better jobs, better lives
To raise the quality of education and training delivery	Strengthen the role of the LSC in economic development	
To equalise opportunities through better access to learning	Improve the skills of workers delivering public services	
To improve effectiveness and efficiency		
Targets in 2001	Targets (LSC) 2004	Targets current
80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning	Increase the number of 19 year olds achieving a Level 2 by this age	Increase the proportion of young people achieving a first Level 2 at age 19
Target for adults participating in learning to be developed	Increase the numbers of young people completing apprenticeships	Increase the proportion of young people achieving Level 3 at age 19
By age 19, 85% to have a Level 2 and 55% to have a Level 3	Improve the Basic Skills of adults	Reduce the percentage of 16 to 18 year olds classified as NEET
Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults	Increase the numbers of adults in the workforce with at least a Level 2 qualification	Some 95% of adults should have basic functional literacy and numeracy skills

**Figure 3.1: Meeting LSC priorities and targets (continued)**

Targets in 2001	Targets (LSC) 2004	Targets current
% adults to have a Level 2 qualification, target to be set during 2002		More than 90% of adults should be qualified to at least Level 2
52% of adults to have a Level 3		Some 68% of the adult population should be qualified to Level 3
		130,000 learners to complete the full apprenticeship framework in 2010/2011
	<b>Shared targets with other agencies</b>	
	Increase the proportion of young people/adults with Level 3 qualifications	
	Reduce the proportion of NEETs	
	Increase participation in HE by 18-30 year olds	

**Sources: Learning and Skills Council Business Plan 2001/2002 National; Learning and Skills Council Strategic Plan 2002-2005 Coventry & Warwickshire; LSC Priorities and Key Actions, 2004; Our Statement of Priorities, November 2007**

The numeric analysis of the achievements of the ESF programme shows the contribution made to meeting the LSC's targets. The 2004 targets were considered to be most relevant to the analysis of the 2000-2006 programme rather than those published in 2001 or 2007. These offered **seven core target areas**, all of which have been used. The 2004 targets were agreed as the most relevant by the project Steering Group, as they were the ones that had most influence on the ESF contracting process from early 2005 onwards.

In addition, and so that the full range of ESF-funded activity could be considered, three further non-core target areas were identified under which some projects were classified. These were:

- Widening participation.
- Information, advice and guidance (IAG).
- Other '*not identified*'.

The rationale for the '*other*' category was that a number of business support and, especially initially, research activities were funded through ESF, and that an '*other*' category would provide a suitable catch-all for additional data. The widening participation target is appropriate as this was a core objective of the LSC at its inception,

and was a target between 2001 and 2003,<sup>12</sup> and there has been a significant level of generic activity aimed at engaging people in learning through this target. Finally, the IAG category is seen as important, as a number of projects had included some level of information, advice and guidance as a precursor to moving beneficiaries into activities that would directly contribute to core targets.

### 3.3.2 Allocation to targets

The full set of ten targets for the ESF programme was therefore as shown below in Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2: Targets used in the evaluation**

Target number	Description
1	Increased achievement of Level 2 by age 19
2	Increased participation in and completion of apprenticeships
3	Improvement in levels of adult Basic Skills
4	Increased attainment of Level 2 among adults
5	Increased attainment of Level 3 among all age groups
6	Reduce numbers of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training
7	Increased participation in HE by age 30
8	'Other'
9	Widening participation in learning
10	Access to information, advice and guidance

**Source: ESF archive 2000-2006 and LSC Statement of Priorities, 2007**

Once the targets had been agreed, the next stage was to look at how, or indeed whether, objectives and measures could be allocated to each of the LSC targets, and ESF outcomes linked to those targets.

It should be noted that Objective 3 is a national programme, and the priorities and measures have been set for England as a whole. Objective 1 and Objective 2 are more targeted funding streams with strict geographical boundaries, and the priorities and measures are developed at regional level to meet local needs. The objectives and measures are shown in Figure 3.3.

HOST was unable to discern an effective method of linking measures and targets, and a review of the documentation also failed to unpick this relationship satisfactorily. As it was further established that a dossier of ESF provision could serve more than one measure, the allocation of ESF outcomes to targets had to be made on a project-by-project basis, referring to the documentation, including project specifications and project summaries.

<sup>12</sup> Local measures were calculated through national survey evidence.  
 Evaluation of the 2000-2006  
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 in the South West Region  
 Final report

**Figure 3.3: ESF objectives and measures**

<b>Objective 1 priorities</b>	<b>Objective 2 priorities</b>	<b>Objective 3 priorities</b>
1 - SME and micro business support	1 - Neighbourhood renewal	1 - Active labour market policies
2 - Strategic investments and development	2 - Business support	2 - Equal opportunities for all and promoting social inclusion
3 - Developing people	3 - Traditional economies	3 - Lifelong learning
4 - Community economic development and rural sectoral adjustment		4 - Adaptability and entrepreneurship
5 - Regional distinctiveness		5 - Reduce level of disadvantage for women in the labour market and improve opportunities for men and women in the labour market
<b>Measures (relevant to LSC)</b>	<b>Measures (relevant to ESF and LSC)</b>	<b>Measures</b>
1.7 - New employment opportunities	1.3 - Pathways to employment	1.1 - Advice and guidance for active and continuous job search
3.1 - Active labour market policies - funding to 3.8 for 2004-2006	2.5 - Management and skills development for SME development	1.2 - Improve the employability of unemployed people, returners and young people of working age
3.2 - Learning for competitive business and for enterprise - adaptability and entrepreneurship	3.6 - HRD and training support for traditional economies	2.1 - Access to Basic Skills provision
3.3 - Lifelong learning		2.2 - Improve employability and remove barriers to labour market entry
3.4 - Promoting social inclusion (to 2003 only)		2.3 - Combating discrimination in the labour market
3.5 - Increasing the participation of women		3.1 - Promoting wider access and participation in lifelong learning
3.7 - New employment opportunities		3.2 - Lifelong learning provision responsive to the changing needs of employers

**Figure 3.3: ESF objectives and measures (continued)**

Measures (relevant to LSC)	Measures (relevant to ESF and LSC)	Measures
3.8 - Using active labour market policies to promote social inclusion		4.1 - Update and upgrade employees' vocational skills, including Basic and Key Skills
		4.2 - Identify and meet emerging skills shortages
3.9 - Research and knowledge		4.3 - Entrepreneurship and competitive SMEs
4.2 - Area-based pathways to employment		5.1 - Improve access to learning, remove barriers to employment, research gender discrimination and support and activities arising from the research
5.4 - Research/knowledge		

**Source: ESF archive 2000-2006 and LSC Statement of Priorities, 2007**

The process adopted to allocate projects to targets was achieved by individual inspection. The LSC supplied a core listing of 460 projects, most of which had a 50-word project description. A further 24 projects from the West of England LSC were not on the list from the LSC, but could be found on the LSC contracting system, and were therefore added to the main list.

This listing was used in the first instance to allocate the project to a target. If the project description was missing, or was not sufficiently detailed to allocate the project, the project specification for that objective, measure and year was examined to attempt to allocate the project. In some instances, it was possible to look at the contracting system to see what had been purchased to allocate the project.

While every effort has been made to allocate projects to the most appropriate target, it is inevitable that some projects will contribute to more than one target, or may not have titles or descriptions that are completely reflective of the activity actually undertaken. It should also be noted that not all projects had learners associated with them when the data extracts were run.

### 3.4 Overall programme analysis

#### 3.4.1 Project numbers by area and objective

Overall, there were 446 projects with learner data held against them on the ILR system (Figure 3.4). In addition, there are a number of projects that were supported under ESF which did not produce learner outcomes; in particular, those dealing with research outcomes. The majority of all projects (312 out of the 446) were funded through Objective 3, as would be expected, given that this Objective has the broadest

geographical coverage. Numbers of projects varied widely by LSC area, depending on the variety of funding routes and the policies in each area. Thus, it is not surprising that Devon and Cornwall has the largest number of projects, while West of England has the lowest.

**Figure 3.4: Projects per ESF Objective and LSC area**

LSC area	ESF Objective				Total
	1	2	3	1+3	
Devon and Cornwall	90	43	90	1	224
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole	0	0	51	0	51
Gloucestershire	0	0	75	0	75
Regional	0	0	6	0	6
Somerset	0	0	33	0	33
Wiltshire and Swindon	0	0	37	0	37
West of England	0	0	20	0	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>446</b>

**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Only Cornwall was eligible for Objective 1 funding, and therefore Devon and Cornwall was the only LSC area to have projects funded through this route. Parts of Devon and parts of the West of England area were eligible for Objective 2 funding, but only Devon and Cornwall LSC chose to take up this funding option.

### 3.4.2 Enrolments by area and objective

Across all 446 projects, there were over 120,000 enrolments<sup>13</sup> on episodes of learning. The majority of these were funded through Objective 3, but over 25,000 were funded through Objective 1. The lowest number of enrolments was funded through Objective 2 (ignoring the combined Objective 1 and 3 projects). Enrolments in each LSC area are shown in Figure 3.5.

<sup>13</sup> Enrolments are the main unit of learner data used, and an enrolment is an individual enrolling on one learning aim. It should be noted that the number of enrolments will be the same or greater than the number of learners, as one learner may enrol on more than one learning aim.

**Figure 3.5: Enrolments per ESF Objective and LSC area<sup>14</sup>**

LSC area	ESF Objective				Total
	1	2	3	1+3	
Devon and Cornwall	26,200	10,800	27,900	100	64,900
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole	0	0	11,400	0	11,400
Gloucestershire	0	0	18,200	0	18,200
Regional	0	0	4,500	0	4,500
Somerset	0	0	7,900	0	7,900
Wiltshire and Swindon	0	0	5,800	0	5,800
West of England	0	0	7,700	0	7,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,200</b>	<b>10,800</b>	<b>83,400</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120,500</b>

**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

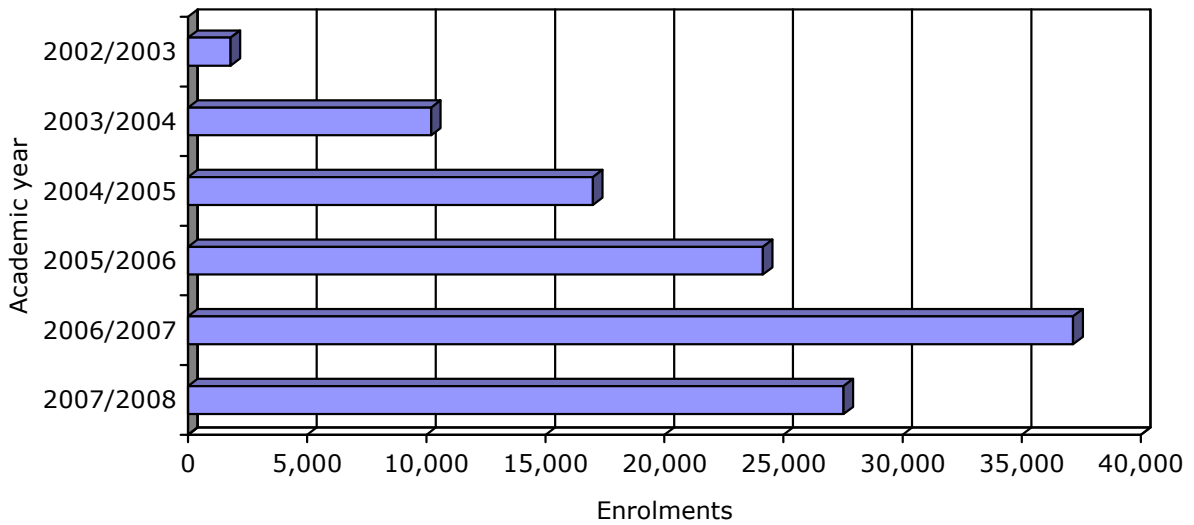
Figure 3.6 shows the enrolments over time on all ESF projects. It can be seen that there was a very slow start in overall numbers, with less than 2,000 enrolments in 2002/2003. This is due to the new nature of the funding route and methodology, which was still very much in its developmental phases at this time, as indeed was the LSC. However, by the final 18 months of the ESF programme, the LSC, its systems and suppliers had developed improved ways of working, and were able to deliver nearly a third of all enrolments on ESF projects in the 2006/2007 academic year.

Over half of all enrolments were on qualifications that are classified as generic. The main code used by ESF providers was XESF001, which is 'co-financed ESF provision not leading to a recognised qualification or other learning aim on the learning aim database'<sup>15</sup> and is the code recommended for use by ESF providers apart from where there is a formal qualification attached. Thus the code could describe learning activity that is specific to a subject or more general support activity. There was no obvious use of codes for non-accredited non-FE learning related to particular subjects (a suite of 50 codes) which are also available for use. However, there were also over 17,000 starts on Level 1 qualifications, nearly 16,000 starts on Level 2 qualifications, over 8,000 on Level 3 qualifications, and nearly 1,500 on Level 4 qualifications.

<sup>14</sup> NB - as per the disclosure principles outlined in section 3.2 above, all numbers are rounded up to the nearest 100 and thus totals will not necessarily add up.

<sup>15</sup> Source: Learning Aim Database - Aim Key Details, extracted September 2008.

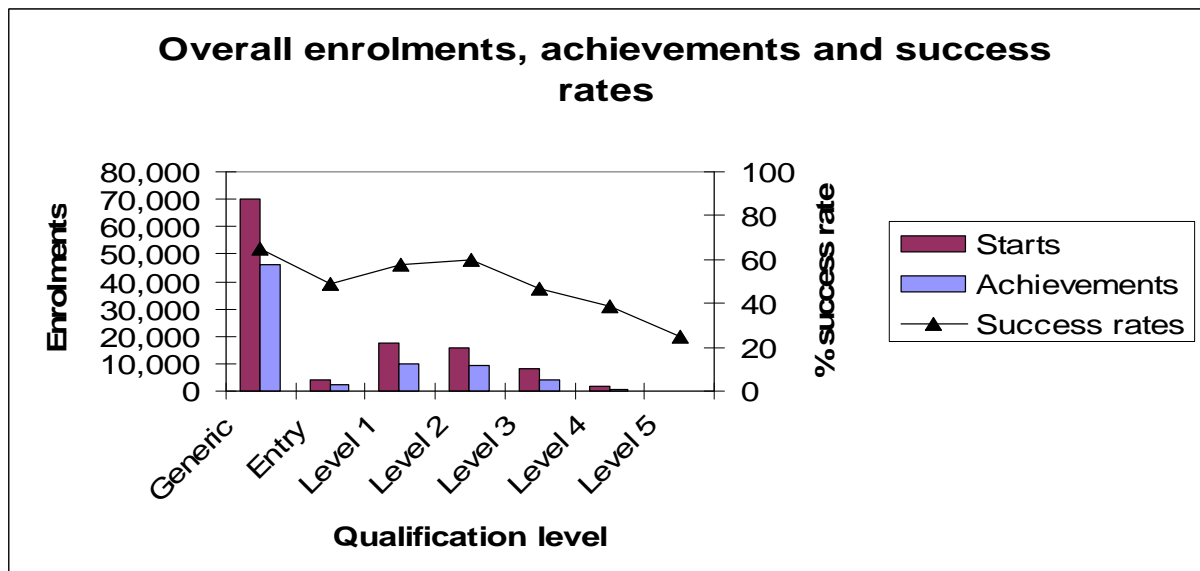
**Figure 3.6: Enrolments over time**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Success rates were lower than those funded through mainstream FE activity; using success rates published by the LSC for 2005/2006, the all-qualification, all-age success rate was 76 per cent, while the individual national FE success rates for Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 for all ages were respectively 66 per cent, 67 per cent and 74 per cent, as illustrated in Figure 3.7. The respective achievement rates (numbers achieving the qualification divided by number of starts on that qualification) for the South West ESF programme were 61 per cent overall, 58 per cent for Level 1, 60 per cent for Level 2 and 47 per cent for Level 3.

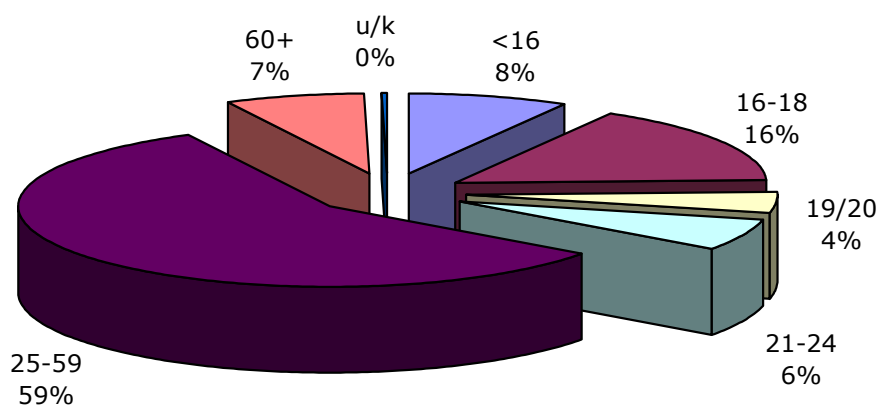
**Figure 3.7: Enrolments, achievements and success rates by qualification**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Nearly a quarter of enrolments were among those in the 16 to 24 age group (a full breakdown is supplied in Figure 3.8), in some cases complementing mainstream provision, in other instances supporting activity that could not be funded through conventional funding. It is indeed these gaps that ESF is intended to address. About 15 per cent of enrolments were among those outside the core working age group, with some provision targeted at those aged under 16, particularly addressing those in danger of entering the NEET category. Funding that could be used for this was extremely limited, however.

**Figure 3.8: Enrolments by age group**

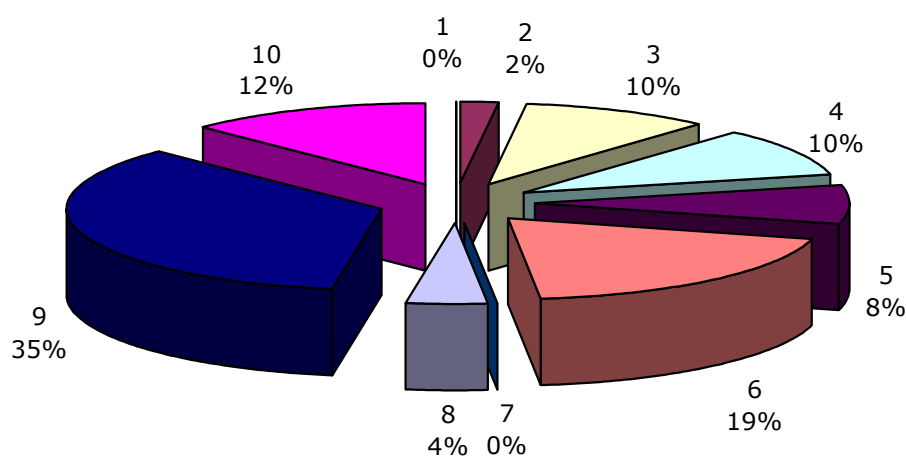


**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Figure 3.9 shows the enrolments by LSC targets as defined in Figure 3.2. Target 1 (increasing the percentage of young people with Level 2 at age 19) and Target 7 (participation in HE by age 30) were supported by particularly low numbers of projects and learners. This will be discussed in more detail later in this section. It can be seen that Target 9 (widening participation) has the largest number of enrolments, with over a third of all enrolments. A further fifth of enrolments are from projects to reduce the number of young people in the NEET category. It is therefore possible to say that ESF has been successful at supporting two of the most participation-oriented targets

For each of the projects funded through ESF, whether with or without learners associated, the LSC supplied figures for contracted spend and actual spend. Following some discussion, as the project closure process is not yet complete, it was decided to only analyse by contracted spend, as the actual spend figures were not considered to be robust enough for this analysis.

**Figure 3.9: Enrolments by LSC Target**

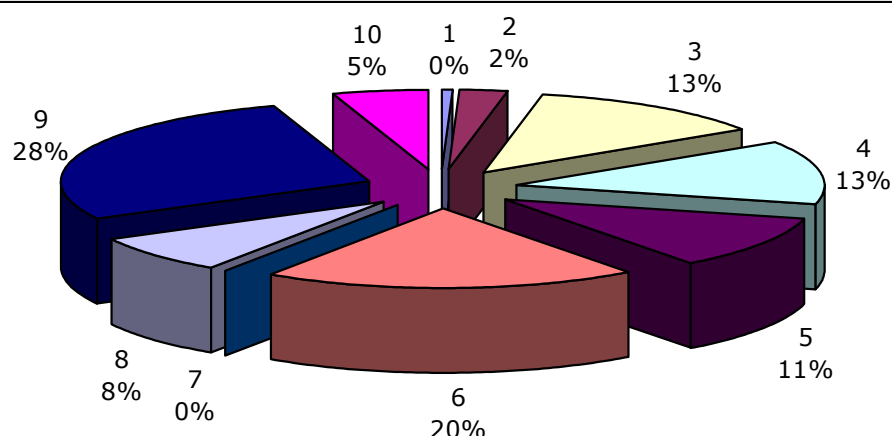


Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008

### 3.4.3 Contracted spend by area and objectives

The total contracted spend was nearly £98 million (a breakdown is provided in Figure 3.10), of which some £62 million was allocated via Objective 3, £22 million via Objective 1 and £13 million via Objective 2. The target that attracted most contracted spend was Target 9 Widening Participation, followed by Target 6 Reducing NEETs. It should be noted that the proportion of contracted spend attracted to widening participation is lower than the proportion of enrolments attributed to Target 9 Widening Participation, implying a relatively lower spend per enrolment than for some other target areas.

**Figure 3.10: Contracted spend by target**



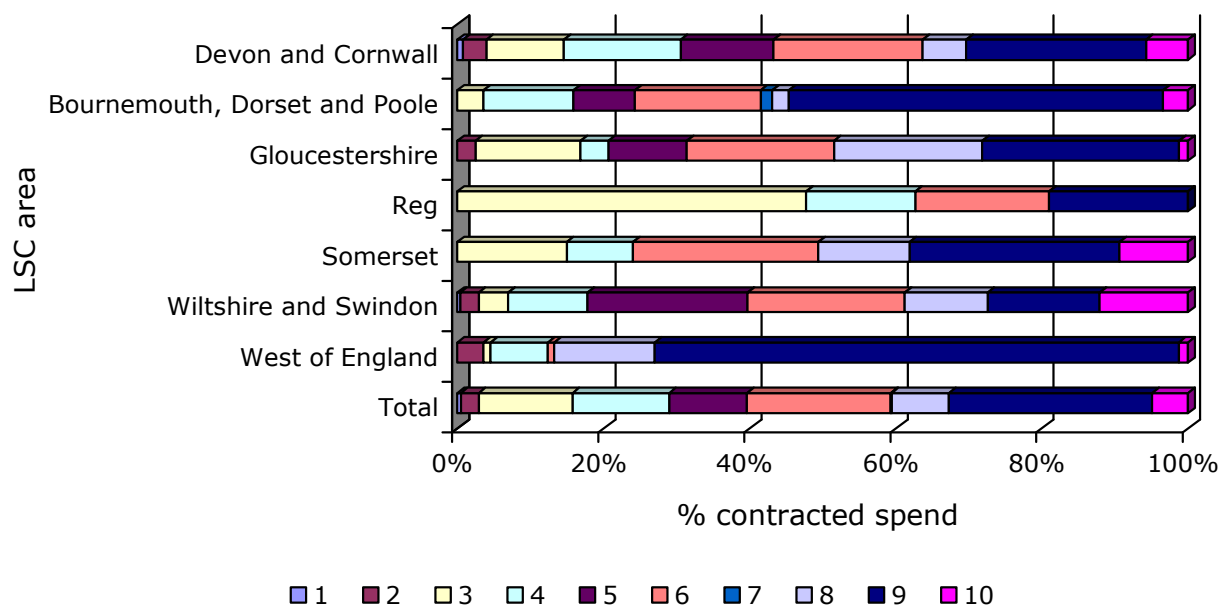
Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008

Figure 3.11 shows the relative proportion of contracted spend in each LSC area, and demonstrates the differing priorities of each area. It can be seen that West of England

and Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole placed importance on widening participation in learning, while Somerset and Wiltshire and Swindon placed emphasis on access to information, advice and guidance.

It can be seen that Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole were the only LSC area to contract a project under Target 7 Increasing Participation in HE. The table at Figure 3.12 shows the contracted spend by target and by LSC office over the life of the programme - it should be noted that the actual figures are still being developed and are likely to be lower in most cases.

**Figure 3.11: Comparison of spend by target and LSC Area**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Figure 3.13 shows the contracted spend by Objective and measure. From an ESF perspective, the single measure with the greatest level of funding contracted was Objective 3 measure 3.1 - promoting wider access to and participation in lifelong learning, followed by Objective 3 measure 2.2 - improving employability and removing barriers to the labour market, and Objective 3 measure 1.2 - improving the employability of the unemployed, returners and young people of working age. This reflects the distribution of funding to individual ESF measures at the national and regional levels.

**Figure 3.12: Contracted spend by target and by office (£000's)**

Target	Devon and Cornwall	Bournemouth Dorset and Poole	Gloucestershire	Regional	Somerset	Wiltshire and Swindon	West of England	Total
1 - Age 19 Level 2	447	0	0	0	0	19	0	466
2 - Apprenticeships	1,864	0	310	0	0	122	105	2,401
3 - Basic Skills	6,130	277	1,798	3,418	756	196	28	12,604
4 - Adult Level 2	9,258	946	472	1,065	456	525	230	12,952
5 - All age Level 3	7,389	649	1,335	0	0	1,054	0	10,427
6 - Reduce NEETs	11,795	1,319	2,513	1,309	1,279	1,039	25	19,279
7 - Increased participation in HE	0	125	0	0	0	0	0	125
8 - 'Other'	3,425	172	2,524	0	630	547	400	7,697
9 - Widening participation	14,272	3,934	3,363	1,360	1,447	741	2,091	27,209
10 - IAG	3,316	265	150	0	474	583	37	4,824
<b>Total</b>	<b>57,895</b>	<b>7,686</b>	<b>12,465</b>	<b>7,153</b>	<b>5,042</b>	<b>4,827</b>	<b>2,917</b>	<b>97,985</b>

**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

**Figure 3.13: Contracted spend by ESF Objective and measure**

ESF measure	ESF Objective				Total
	1	2	3	1+3	
1.1			£1,194,711		£1,194,711
1.2			£8,177,047		£8,177,047
1.3		£133,361			£133,361
1.7	£2,989,973				£2,989,973
2.1			£4,134,746		£4,134,746
2.2			£8,855,681	£213,808	£9,069,489
2.3			£22,913		£22,913
2.5		£7,918,648			£7,918,648
3.1	£2,406,478		£16,597,193	£7,148	£19,010,819
3.2	£4,592,268		£6,929,445	£7,148	£11,528,861
3.3	£3,535,831			£7,148	£3,542,979
3.4	£1,747,815			£213,808	£1,961,623
3.5	£1,149,999				£1,149,999
3.6		£5,330,668			£5,330,668
3.7	£2,320,932				£2,320,932
3.8	£3,076,309				£3,076,309
3.9					£0
4.1			£5,446,560		£5,446,560
4.2	£299,850		£4,780,469	£7,148	£5,087,467
4.3			£657,062		£657,062
5.1			£5,106,368		£5,106,368
5.4					£0
unknown		£22,450	£84,590	£16,967	£124,007
<b>Total</b>	<b>£22,119,453</b>	<b>£13,405,127</b>	<b>£61,986,784</b>	<b>£473,175</b>	<b>£97,984,539</b>

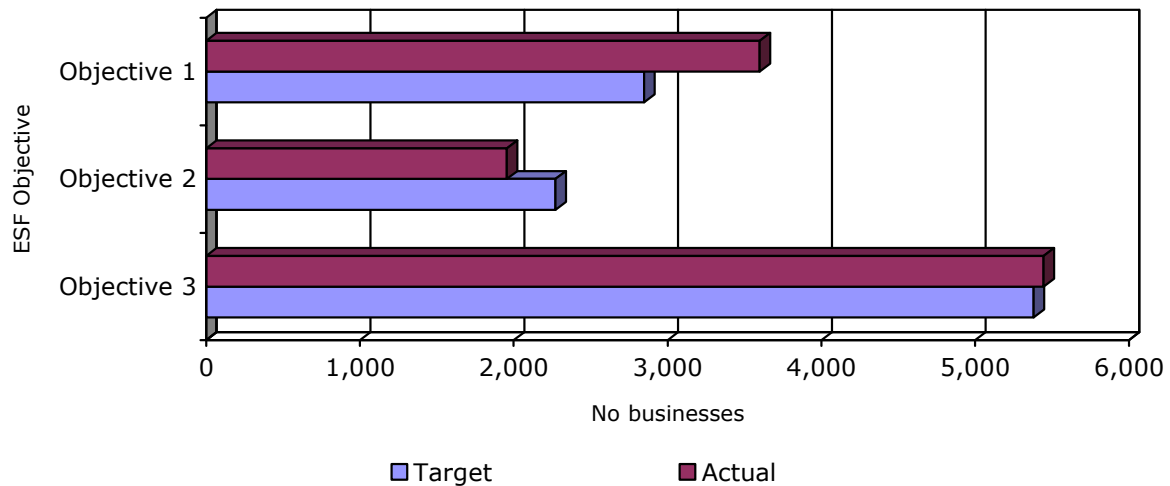
Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008

#### 3.4.4 Businesses assisted by area and objective

While support to individuals through ESF can be monitored and measured through the ILR system, there is no similar system at the LSC for monitoring support to businesses. From individual Project Closure Reports (PCRs), the LSC has been able to develop some information on target and actual numbers of businesses supported through each of the ESF objectives. The detail of this is likely to change as not all PCRs were received and verified when the information was drawn together. However, from Figure 3.14, it can be seen that performance is close to, or in excess of, target on two Objectives, and overall the number of businesses supported exceeds the target number. While the ILR cannot

be used to collect this information, the requirement to comply with state aid rules to companies required that providers collected this information, and further that companies had to declare the total of state aid received over a three-year period. These declarations are the source for this set of data.

**Figure 3.14: Businesses assisted through ESF**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

### 3.5 Overview

Overall, the South West LSCs were able to fund nearly 120,000 enrolments on learning activity and provide support to 11,000 businesses, using nearly £98 million. This investment has led to 72,000 achievements of learning aims, including 9,300 Level 2 qualifications and 3,900 Level 3 qualifications. The overall unit cost per enrolment was £630 and the overall achievement rate, including achievement of non-accredited support activity, was 61 per cent.

## Chapter 4: Contribution to Individual Targets

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the contribution made to each of the targets identified in Chapter 3 by ESF-funded activity. Each of the ten targets is considered in turn in as much detail as is warranted by the spend and the numbers of enrolments on projects contributing to that target.

### 4.2 Core targets

#### 4.2.1 Achievement of Level 2 by age 19

While nearly half a million pounds was contracted in three projects aimed at improving achievement at age 19 at Level 2, it appears that only 55 per cent of the funds were spent and only 43 enrolments registered. There were projects in Devon and Cornwall and in Wiltshire and Swindon. Some of the enrolments were at Level 1 rather than Level 2. Success rates were small, as were numbers of projects and learners; it is therefore not possible to make valid comparisons on costs with FE or work-based learning (WBL).

#### 4.2.2 Completing apprenticeships

There were few projects developed to support and encourage the completion of apprenticeships, and the distribution of ESF funding and LSC area can be seen in Figure 4.1. Nearly £2.5 million was contracted across the region, and current spend figures indicate that just over 75 per cent of that has been claimed. The actual unit cost appears to be of the order of £770,<sup>16</sup> but with significant variation by LSC area.

**Figure 4.1: Projects to support completing apprenticeships**

LSC area	ESF Objective			Total
	1	2	3	
Devon and Cornwall	2	1	3	6
Gloucestershire			2	2
West of England			1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>

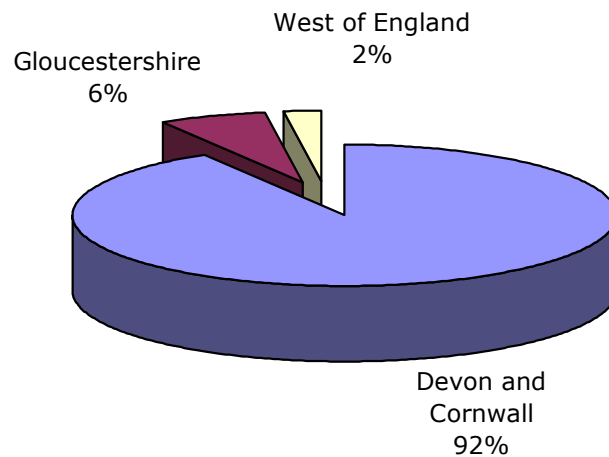
**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

There were nearly 2,400 enrolments on these projects, with the majority in Devon and Cornwall, and over half supported by Objective 1 funding, amounting to just under two per cent of all enrolments.

<sup>16</sup> Unit costs are calculated using estimated actual spend and actual enrolments, and may be subject to change as actual spend and enrolment figures are validated during the Project Closure process being undertaken by the LSC.

Just over half of enrolments were by males, and over 90 per cent were by people of a White British ethnic background. A breakdown of the percentage of enrolments in each LSC area is shown in Figure 4.2 below.

**Figure 4.2: Enrolments by LSC area**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

As can be seen from Figure 4.3, the majority of enrolments were in generic qualifications, probably enrichment projects or supplementary, but not projects to achieve accredited qualifications that would form a part of the apprentice's skills portfolio. Success rates for these generic qualifications are low, however, at only 33 per cent. Performance is better where Level 2 and Level 1 qualifications are supported (62% and 53% success rates respectively).

**Figure 4.3: Enrolments, achievements and success rates by level of qualification**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Given that the nature of this target is to support the completion of apprenticeship schemes, it is unfortunate that it is not possible to determine whether the individuals supported by this portion of ESF spend did actually complete. However, this would require intensive tracking information at the individual level, linked to analysis of related work-based learning records.

### 4.2.3 Adult Skills for Life

During the process of allocating projects to targets, the widest definition of Skills for Life was used. Thus, if a project was targeted at Basic Skills, Literacy, Numeracy or English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL), it was included in this category. Improving the literacy and numeracy skills of the adult population has been a core target for the LSC since its inception.

Given the importance of Skills for Life to the work and targets of the LSC, there were 51 projects developed to support this target, which is slightly less than the number supporting each of the adult Level 2 and all-age Level 3 targets. It is true, however, that projects for some other targets may have contributed to SfL targets as well, particularly those in widening participation.

Some £12.5 million was contracted to support this area of activity - around 13 per cent of all ESF funds allocated. A breakdown of SfL projects by LSC area is given in Figure 4.4 below.

**Figure 4.4: Projects to support Skills for Life**

LSC area	ESF Objective			Total
	1	2	3	
Devon and Cornwall	7		20	27
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole			5	5
Gloucestershire			9	9
Regional			2	2
Somerset			4	4
Wiltshire and Swindon			3	3
West of England			1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>44</b>	<b>51</b>

**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

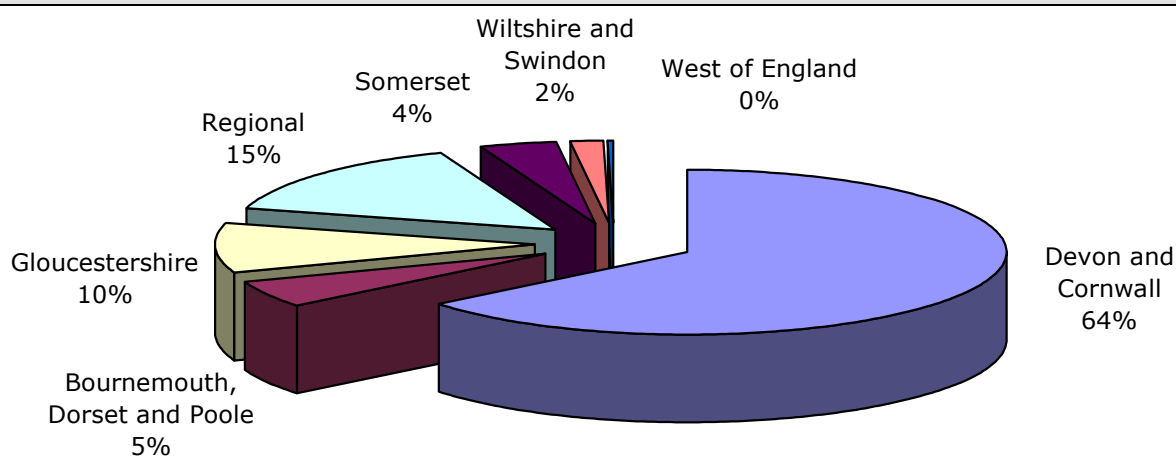
There were 11,500 enrolments funded by projects supporting SfL, accounting for ten per cent of all ESF-funded enrolments. Devon and Cornwall had nearly a third of enrolments, and a further 15 per cent were from projects with no local focus, but regional delivery. Under a third of enrolments were from males - a reasonably common finding, as males with low skills are least likely to engage in learning. Finding a way of engaging males with low educational achievement is a major challenge, particularly in the Basic Skills area, where individuals have developed coping strategies and are most likely to be reluctant to lose face. The gender participation figures should be compared

with mainstream figures to show whether ESF-funded projects have been able to start to break down barriers to learning. However, this analysis also needs to be counterbalanced by the stated objectives of individual projects which may have targeted specific groups. This is an area where local labour market information and research can help to focus and target the use of ESF funds better.

Only 80 per cent of enrolments were from individuals from a White British ethnic background, indicating that there were a relatively high proportion of individuals from other ethnic backgrounds, and therefore potentially a high take-up of ESOL provision.

The proportion of White British learners was particularly low in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole (54%), Somerset (71%) and Gloucestershire (72%). Enrolments by LSC area are shown in Figure 4.5.

**Figure 4.5: Enrolments by LSC area**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

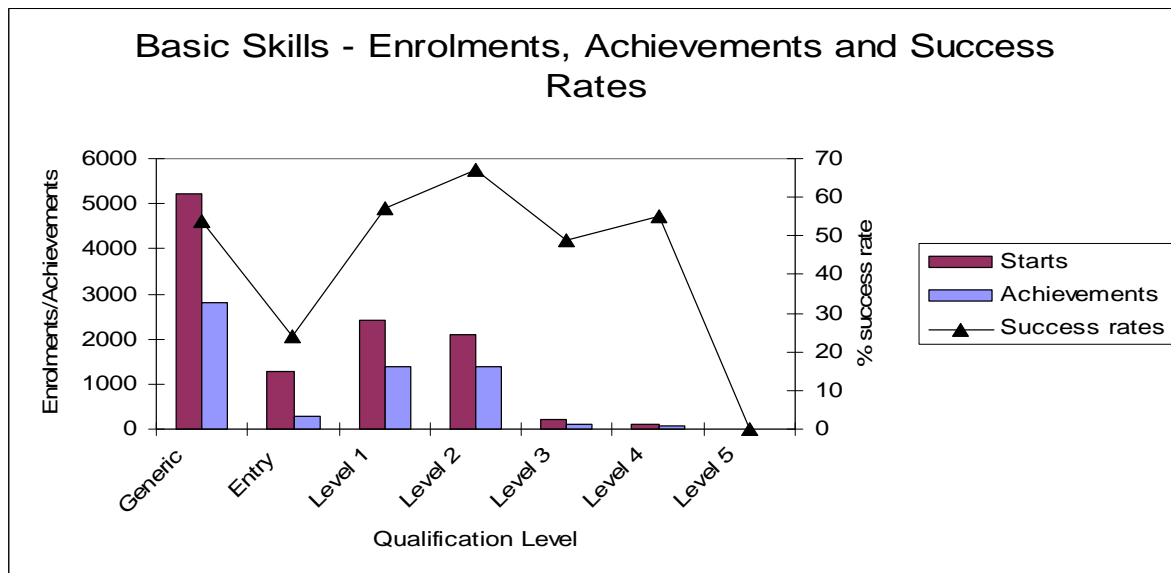
Figure 4.6 shows the level of qualifications being undertaken by learners in these projects. There are a substantial number of enrolments on generic courses, and while these could be taster sessions and introductory learning, they could also include proficiency tests to determine the most appropriate level of course to undertake. There are relatively substantial numbers of learners at Level 1 and Level 2, while the learners at Level 3 and Level 4 are likely to be part of capacity building initiatives and train the trainer activities, which were encouraged in some projects. Achievement rates at Level 2 were particularly good for ESF at 67 per cent, but disappointing for entry level at 24 per cent; these compare to FE mainstream all-age success figures of 65.6 per cent and 66.7 per cent respectively.

Over half of those enrolled on qualifications under this target (Figure 4.7) were employed when they started their learning. A further third were unemployed, indicating that providers were finding learners in all walks of life. Some 12 per cent of enrolments were from individuals with an unknown employment status.

While this could indicate that the provider did not actively collect employment information, inspection of the ILR handbook shows that providers have to use this code if the individual enrolling is in full-time education or still at school. By age, five per cent of enrolments are from individuals aged 18 or under, a proportion of which could well be in

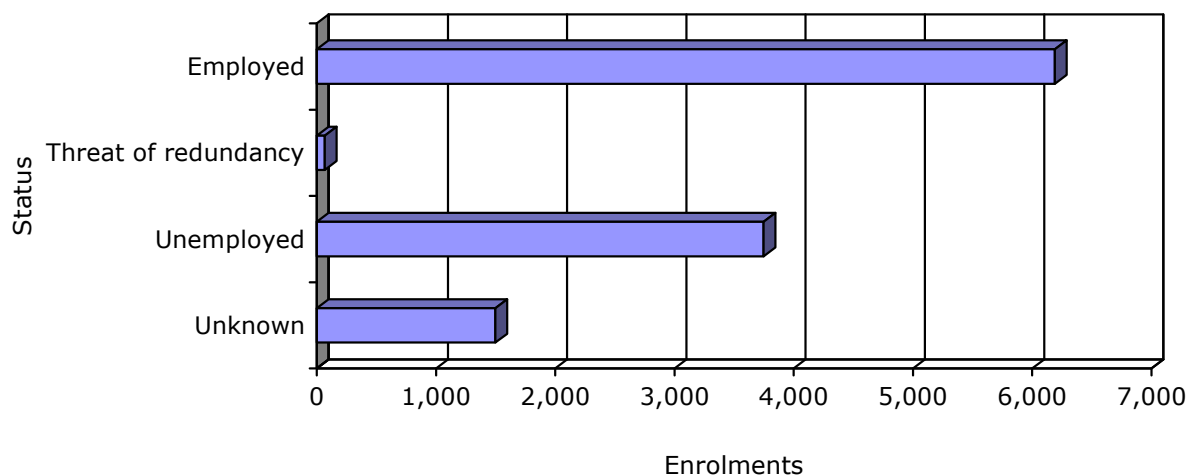
full-time education. While this could indicate double funding for activity and would therefore be an issue, there would need to be checks undertaken at the individual project level to understand how this situation has arisen. Work with people whose first language is not English or with Traveller groups may be situations where the potential double funding is justified. However, over three quarters of enrolments were from adults aged 25 to 59 years.

**Figure 4.6: Enrolments, achievements and success rates by qualification level**



Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008

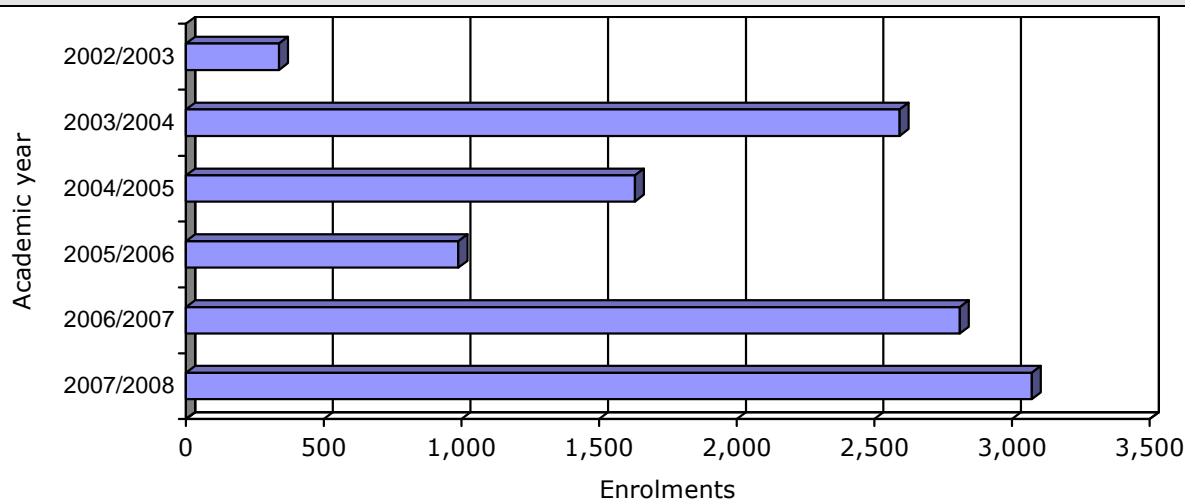
**Figure 4.7: Employment status of enrolled beneficiaries**



Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008

The profile of enrolments over time differs slightly for this target compared to the overall profile (Figure 4.8), in that there was a reasonable level of activity early in the ESF programme. Given the high importance accorded to this target, this is to be expected. The dip in enrolments in 2005/2006 is also different to the overall profile and could indicate a change in management policy toward this target.

**Figure 4.8: Time profile of enrolments**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

#### 4.2.4 Adults achieving (first) Level 2

The target to increase the proportion of adults to at least a Level 2 qualification has been important to the LSC since its inception, despite a delay in determining the scale of the problem and the desired scale of the solution. There have also been debates as to the definition of the target. For the purposes of allocating projects to this target, if a project mentioned supporting an individual to obtain a Level 2 qualification, it was included (see Figure 4.9).

**Figure 4.9: Projects to support adult Level 2**

LSC area	ESF Objective			Total
	1	2	3	
Devon and Cornwall	6	17	14	37
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole			4	4
Gloucestershire			7	7
Regional			1	1
Somerset			2	2
Wiltshire and Swindon			4	4
West of England			1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>56</b>

**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

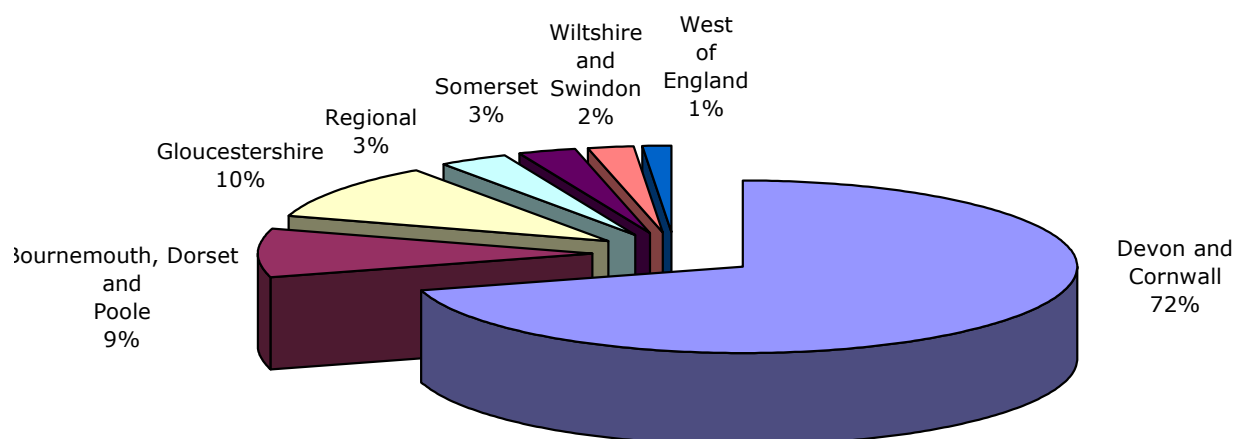
There has been no attempt to determine or limit the definition to a first Level 2. It is also the case that some projects offered to support individuals to a Level 2 or a Level 3,

and in that instance, projects with more starting Level 2 qualifications were allocated to this target, while those with more starts on Level 3 programmes were allocated to a different target.

With 56 projects, this is one of the better supported targets. One reason for this will be the influence of the Employer Training Pilots (now mainstreamed as Train to Gain), which ran in some parts of the region but not others. Areas without the pilots may well have decided to support this activity through ESF funding. Objective 2 funds are more targeted at economic support, and there are 17 projects under this objective in this target area to support this hypothesis. Nearly £13 million was contracted to support this target - around 13 per cent of the total funds contracted. This target was supported by 56 projects. One reason for the number of projects in this target area is that not all parts of the region were running the Employer Training Pilots, and consequently wanted to make such provision available using ESF funding. There were a substantial number of projects running in Devon and Cornwall, and using Objective 2 funds. This was one way of supporting employed status learners, particularly in targeted occupations and industrial sectors. Nearly £13 million was contracted to support this target - around 13 per cent of the total funds contracted.

This target accounts for nearly 12,000 enrolments, or ten per cent of all enrolments through ESF. As can be seen from Figure 4.10, nearly three quarters of enrolments were in Devon and Cornwall, and over 4,000 of these were supported under Objective 2. Gloucestershire and Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole both had in excess of 1,000 enrolments under this target.

**Figure 4.10: Enrolments by LSC area**



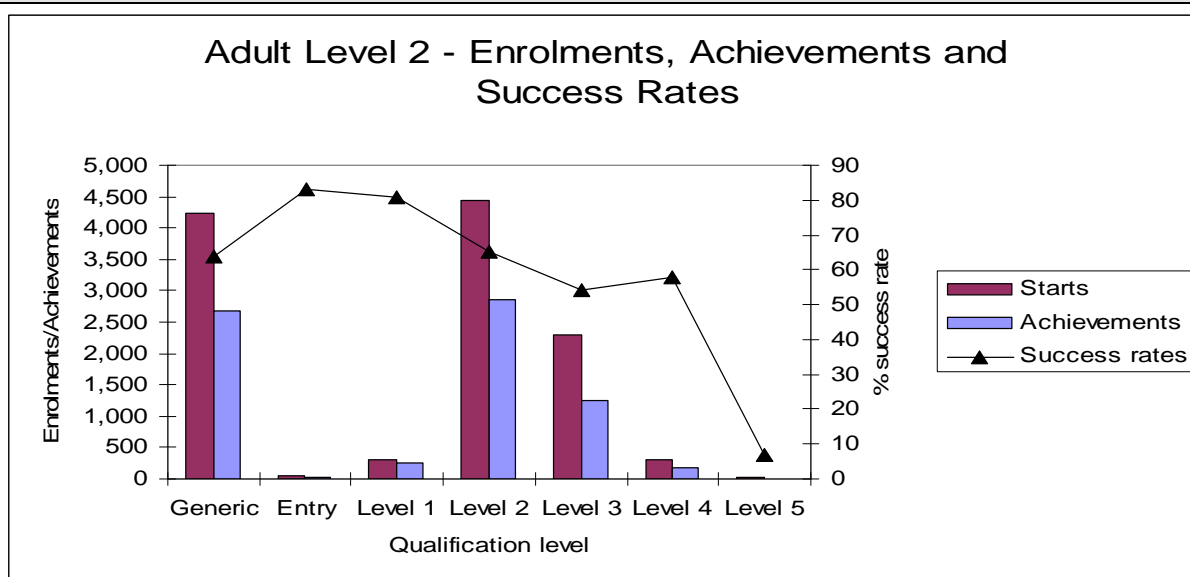
**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Just over 40 per cent of enrolments were males, but there was some variation by LSC area, with 70 per cent of enrolments in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole from males, and only 23 per cent in Gloucestershire. By ethnicity, 91 per cent of enrolments were from White British, but this fell to 79 per cent in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole. The take-up of this provision was mainly by those in employment (94%) with some activity with the unemployed in Somerset, and Wiltshire and Swindon.

Out of the 12,000 starts, just over a third are for generic qualifications and 37 per cent are for Level 2 qualifications, with 19 per cent for Level 3 qualifications. Figure 4.11 illustrates that success rates are generally high for ESF, with a 65 per cent success rate for Level 2 qualifications, and 54 per cent for Level 3 qualifications. The Level 2 success

rate compares well with that for FE mainstream-funded Level 2s by all ages, being nearly the same. Assuming the Level 2 qualifications are a first Level 2 for the individual concerned, some 2,900 individuals have gained a qualification contributing to the achievement of the LSC target. However, contribution would really need to be reviewed at the individual project level to determine whether the project was targeted at those without a first Level 2, or whether a second Level 2 was allowed. Individual project eligibility criteria are therefore important in understanding the contribution to targets. What is clear is that 2,900 individuals have achieved qualifications that enable them to prove they have the skills to suit their employment. The unit cost per enrolment for this target is £800.

**Figure 4.11: Enrolments, achievements and success rates by qualification level**



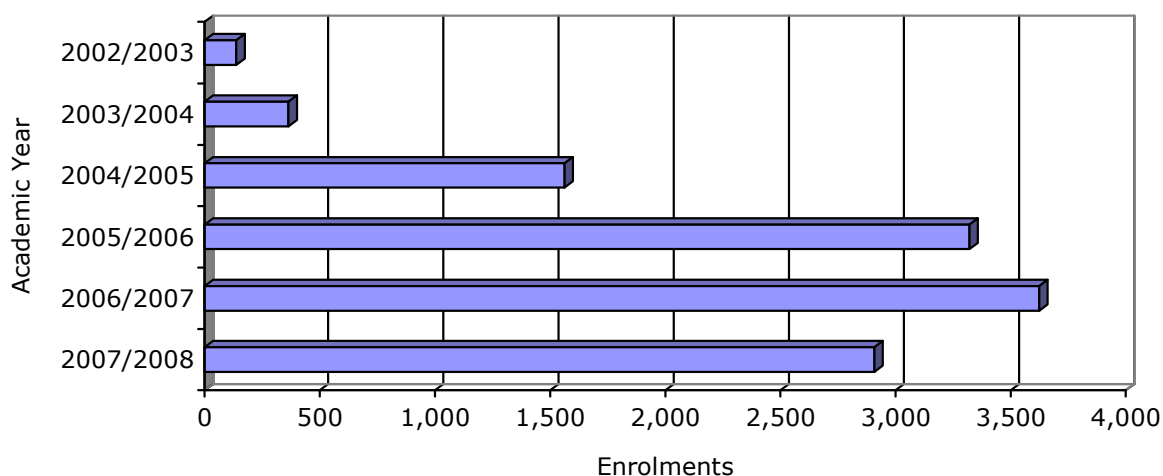
**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

The profile of enrolments over time shown in Figure 4.12 is very back-loaded, with 54 per cent of starts in the final two years of the programme, and 82 per cent in the final three years. While it is likely that projects have benefited from the publicity about Level 2 qualifications with Train to Gain, and the Employer Training Pilots before that, the danger of back-loading this sort of project is that beneficiaries do not have time to complete the learning, gain the qualification, and for that to be recorded as an outcome for the project.

#### 4.2.5 All-age achievement of (first) Level 3

The adult Level 3 target was introduced when the LSC was created, and has become more challenging in the targets that were announced in 2007. The adult Level 3 target was introduced when the LSC was created, but its importance has changed through the ESF programme period. Its relative importance with other regional stakeholders has also fluctuated. However, the importance of Level 2 qualifications and Train to Gain has perhaps detracted from this target. For the purposes of allocating projects to this target, if a project mentioned supporting an individual to obtain a Level 3 qualification, it was included. There has been no attempt to determine or limit the definition to a first Level 3. It is also the case that some projects offered to support individuals to a Level 2 or a Level 3, and in that instance, projects with more starting Level 2 qualifications were allocated to the previous target, while those with more starts on Level 3 programmes were allocated to this target.

**Figure 4.12: Enrolments over time**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

There were just as many projects to address attainment of Level 3. However, fewer LSC areas had projects in this area, and the majority are in Devon and Cornwall. Indeed, more projects were funded through Objectives 1 and 2 for this target than under Objective 3, in part due to the greater emphasis on improving the competitiveness of businesses through management and staff development in Objective 2, and the greater flexibility of funding in Objective 1. Overall, £10.5 million was contracted to the projects covering this target. A breakdown of projects by LSC area is shown in Figure 4.13.

**Figure 4.13: Projects by LSC area and LSC Objective Level 3**

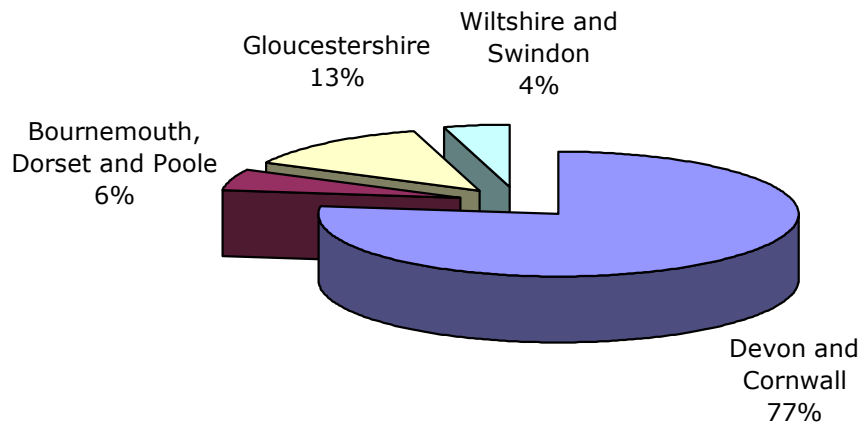
LSC area	ESF Objective				Total
	1	2	3	1+3	
Devon and Cornwall	19	11	7	1	38
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole			5		5
Gloucestershire			12		12
Wiltshire and Swindon			3		3
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>58</b>

**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Despite the similar number of projects addressing this target, and the adult Level 2 target, there were many fewer enrolments, with just over 9,000; nearly half of these were under Objective 1 and a further quarter were under Objective 2, so it is not surprising that Figure 4.14 shows that over three quarters of enrolments were in Devon and Cornwall. Just under 40 per cent of enrolments were from males, and 92 per cent of enrolments were from people with a White British ethnic background. Just over 90 per cent of enrolments were from employed people and only five per cent from the

unemployed - this is not unexpected, as enrolment on a Level 3 qualification would affect an adult's benefits entitlements.

**Figure 4.14: Enrolments by LSC area**

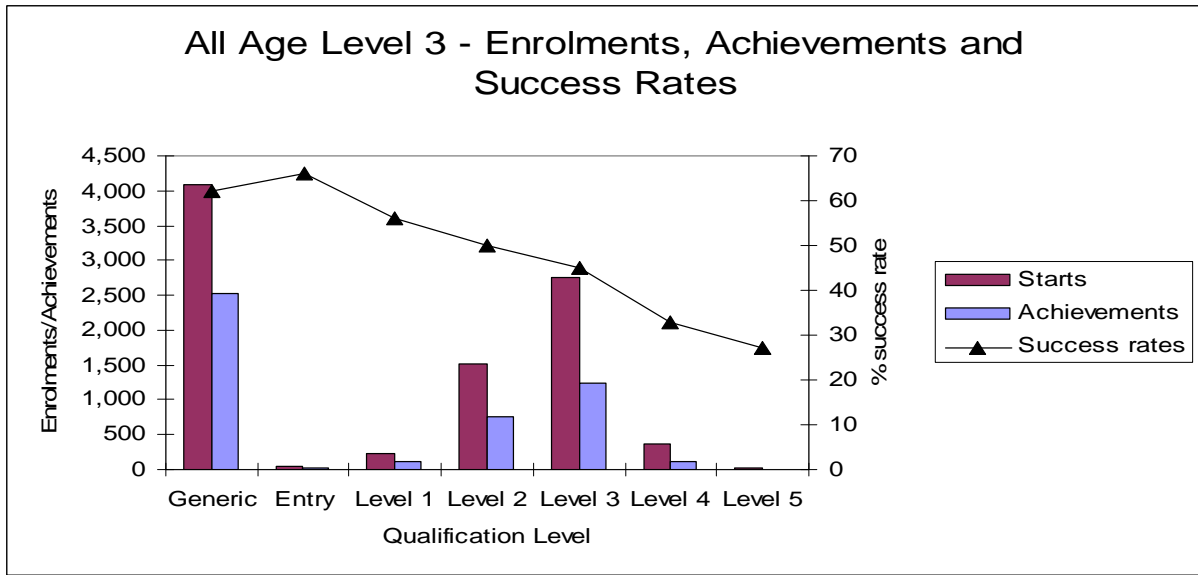


**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Around 45 per cent of enrolments were for generic qualifications (Figure 4.15). Around 45 per cent of enrolments come under the category of a generic code for an ESF co-financed learning aim under this target, while nearly a third were for Level 3 qualifications. This generic activity could be some form of locally developed learning with an unaccredited certificate, or it could be some form of support activity. While projects under this target contributed 1,230 achieved Level 3 qualifications support the LSC targets, the success rate was low at 45 per cent, compared to the FE mainstream all-age figure of 73.9 per cent. However, it may be that the projects were aiming to fund units towards a Level 3 rather than a full Level 3. Future projects with Level 3 qualifications as an outcome might need to be assessed more rigorously and managed more closely to ensure improved success rates, or demonstrate value through their evaluation reports. The unit cost for enrolments in this target area was £860.

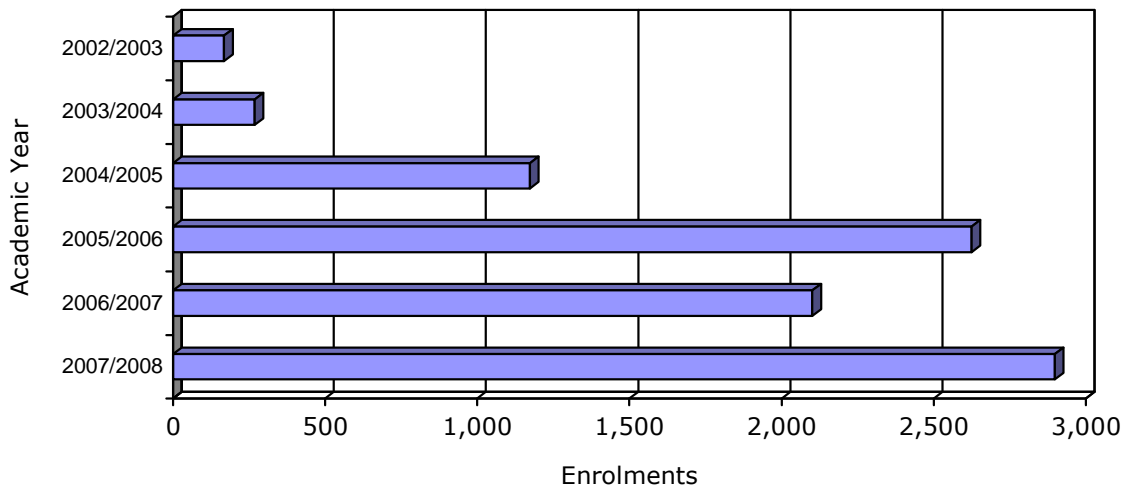
Despite being a target since the LSC inception, enrolments on projects under this target were slow until the 2005/2006 academic year, with a peak of enrolments in the final year of the programme (nearly a third of all enrolments). This final year peak may have affected the success rates, as there may not have been sufficient time for an individual to undertake the required learning, have it assessed, and prove the outcome before the data for this evaluation was provided. The activity was most back-loaded in Gloucestershire, and Devon and Cornwall. Figure 4.16 illustrates enrolments over the period of the whole programme

**Figure 4.15: Enrolments, achievements and success rates by qualification level**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

**Figure 4.16: Enrolments 2000-2006 Programme**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

**4.2.6 Reduce numbers of young people who are or are at risk of being, NEET (not in education, employment or training)**

Responsibility for ensuring young people aged 16 to 18 are in education, employment or training has been broadly shared between the LSC and the Connexions service, and is a key participation target for both. With all areas affected by the issue, and the need for creativity in addressing the issue, it is not surprising that there are a significant number of projects under this target and across the whole of the region. The funding for this has to come from Objective 1 (for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly) and Objective 3, as this issue does not fit with the requirements of Objective 2. In total, something over £19

million was contracted against this target - 20 per cent of the total contracted spend. A breakdown of projects by area is shown in Figure 4.17.

Overall, there were nearly 22,000 enrolments on projects under this target, with over half in Devon and Cornwall. However, while numbers are dominated once again by Devon and Cornwall due to the size of the LSC area, all areas have enrolments.

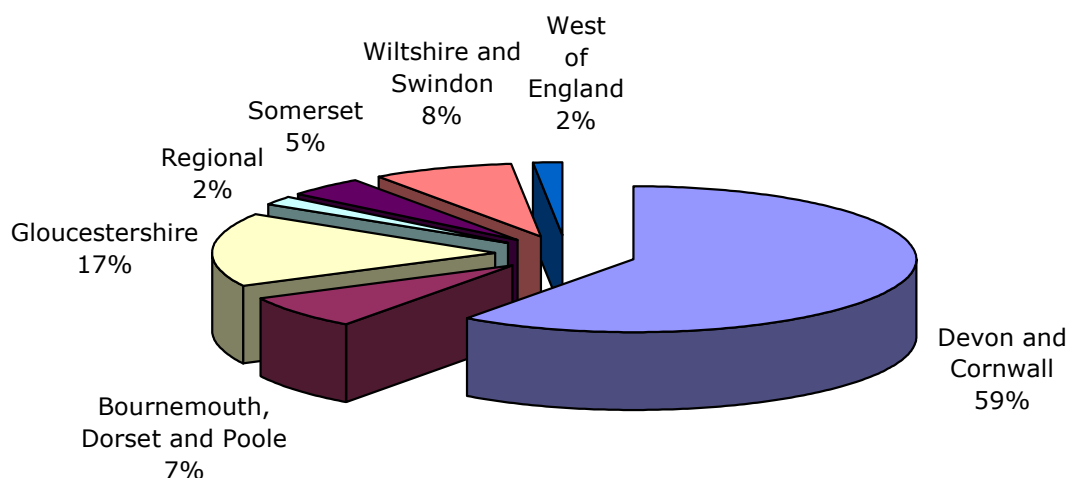
Another characteristic of this target and the beneficiaries is that it is the one area where enrolments by males outnumber those by females, as males are traditionally more likely to become NEET. This is most pronounced among enrolments from the Gloucestershire area. Over 90 per cent of enrolments were from those from a White British background, a figure which is reflective of the predominantly White ethnic mix in the South West region of England. Figure 4.18 shows a breakdown by LSC area for this target.

**Figure 4.17: Projects by LSC area**

LSC area	ESF Objective			Total
	1	2	3	
Devon and Cornwall	8		19	27
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole			8	8
Gloucestershire			13	13
Regional			2	2
Somerset			6	6
Wiltshire and Swindon			11	11
West of England			2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>61</b>	<b>69</b>

**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

**Figure 4.18: Enrolments by LSC area**

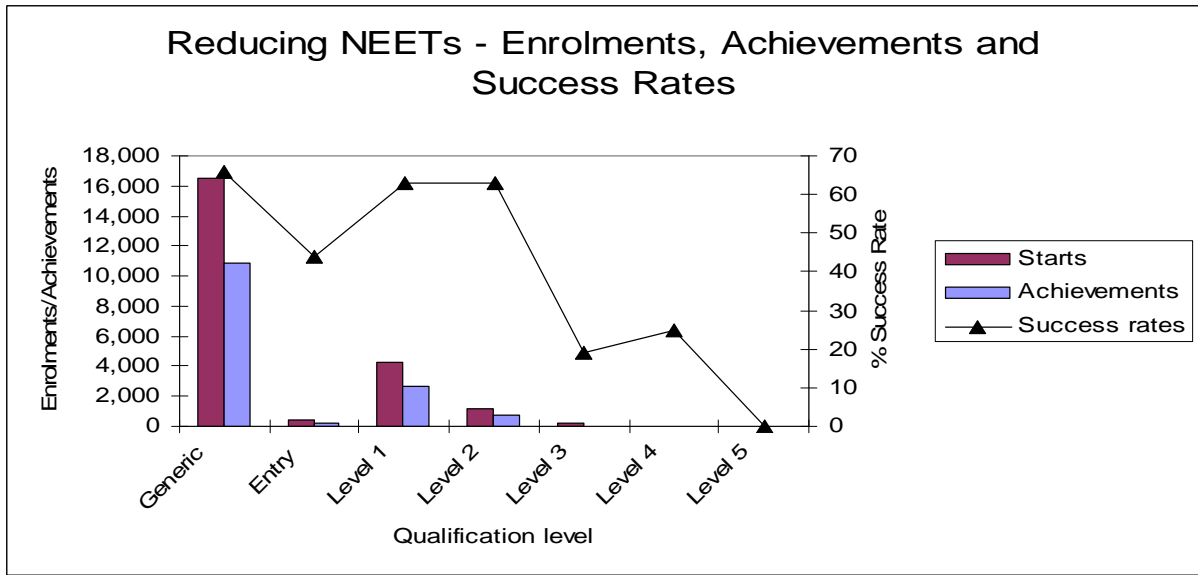


**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

In terms of drawing young people back into education, employment or training, providers seem convinced that generic qualifications are most effective, with over 70 per cent of enrolments at this level. In terms of drawing young people back into education, employment or training, providers seem convinced that generic activity, be it non-accredited learning activity or other aspects of support, are most effective, with over 70 per cent of enrolments being of this type. There are a further 18 per cent of enrolments at Level 1 and five per cent of enrolments at Level 2. However, it is probable that the offer that is most likely to re-engage this group of young people will be something different to the standard offer of learning available. This is reflected in reasonably high rates of completion and achievement of 66 per cent for generic activity, and 63 per cent for each of Level 1 and Level 2. A full achievement breakdown is illustrated in Figure 4.19.

However, given that the point of the target and the activity is to re-engage a hard-to-reach group of young people, while these success rates are impressive, it is more important to understand the destination or progression of the young person. The indicator for learner destination (L39) is generally poorly completed, and this is true even when there may be outcome payments linked to progression. In part, this is due to the difficulty of tracking leavers.

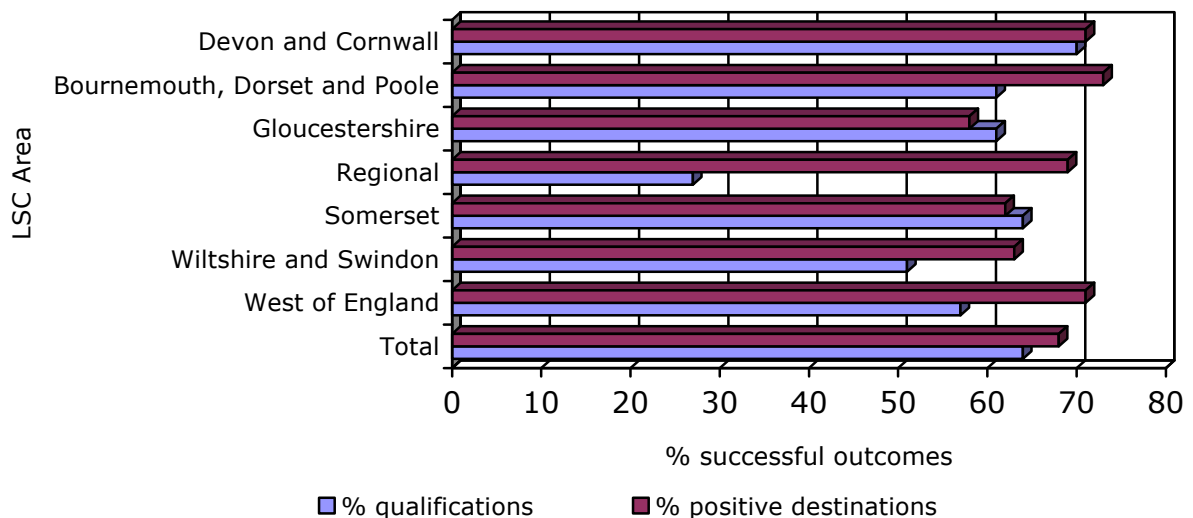
**Figure 4.19: Enrolments, achievements and success rates by qualification level**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

In order to determine a positive outcome for beneficiaries, the L39 options were divided into employment outcomes, training outcomes and other outcomes - employment and training being positive destinations. Nearly a quarter of beneficiaries had a destination of 'other' or 'unknown', while a further quarter had an outcome of continuing in the current programme of training. While this last outcome was not technically possible, it was categorised as a positive destination into learning of some sort. The positive qualifications and destinations outcomes estimated from the ILR data are therefore shown in Figure 4.20.

**Figure 4.20: Positive outcomes and destinations by LSC area**

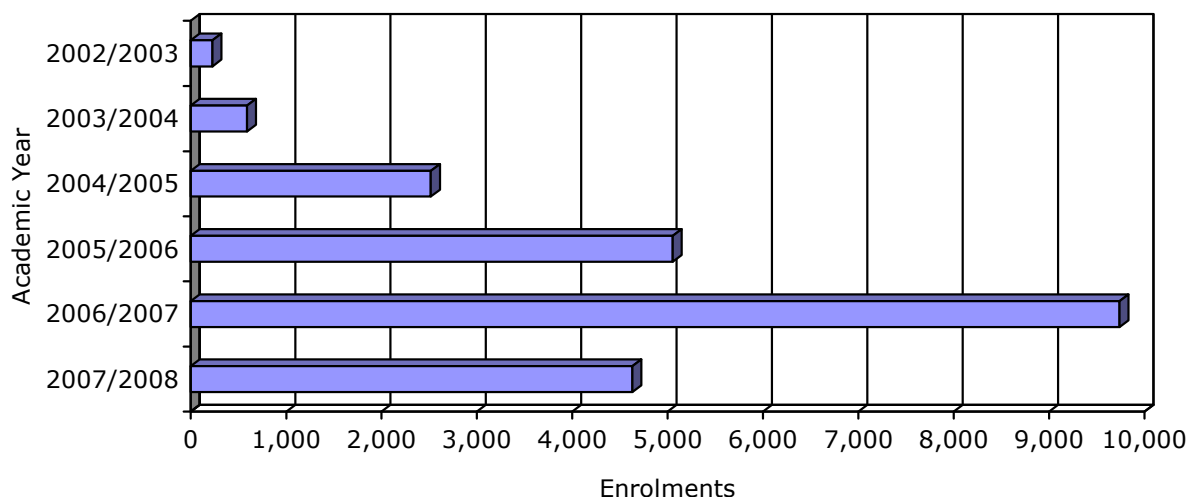


**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Overall, it would appear that positive destinations accounted for 68 per cent of starts, compared with 64 per cent of qualifications achieved. Further, it implies that over 15,000 young people re-engaged with employment or training - a positive impact for the ESF funds.

Over 40 per cent of enrolments occurred in the 2006/2007 academic year, and 62 per cent of all enrolments were in the last two years of the programme, one of the most back-loaded of all the targets. This is illustrated in Figure 4.21.

**Figure 4.21: Profile of enrolments over time**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

#### 4.2.7 Increase participation in HE by those aged 18 to 30 years

There was only one project identified that would support this target, and this was in the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole LSC area. However, there were no learners identified on the ILR system. The project was aimed at capacity building, so the lack of learners is not particularly surprising. In terms of spend, £125,000 was allocated to this project, and the information presented to HOST implies a 90 per cent spend on this contract.

### 4.3 Non-core target analysis

#### 4.3.1 'Other' projects

Projects were classified to the 'other' category when they could not positively be allocated to any other target. The variety of projects in this group varies from research into skills gaps and skills forecasting, company-based skills needs assessment, capacity building activities for voluntary groups, or to train up assessors and internal verifiers, business start-up support for women, business development and support activities, management development and training programmes at Levels 4 and 5, or without any specified level. These projects appear to be driven by the needs of the local area and targeted in very specific areas, sectors and activities. It is not within the scope of this report to address individual project successes outside the case study material presented in Chapter 5. However, the individual project evaluations should have highlighted the successes of these activities.

There were only 31 projects in this category, with contracted spend of about £7.5 million. The greatest levels of contracted spend were in Devon and Cornwall, and in Gloucestershire, as can be seen in Figure 4.22.

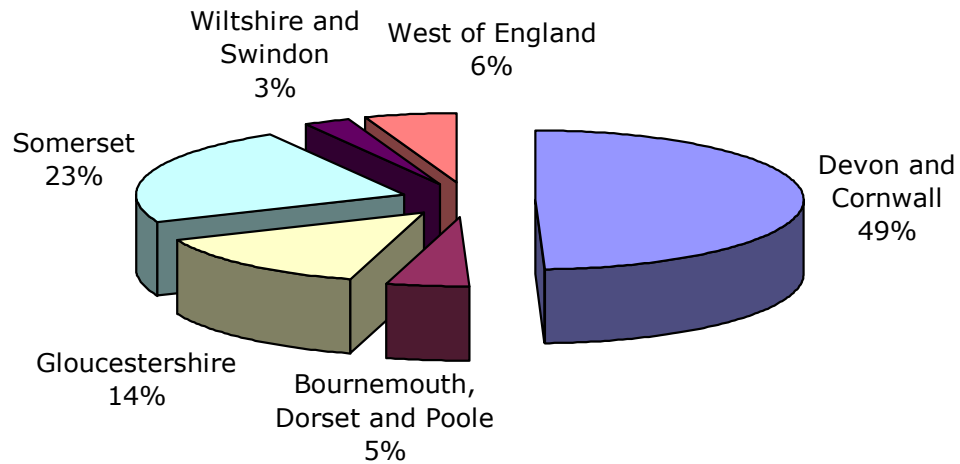
**Figure 4.22: Projects by LSC area**

LSC area	ESF Objective			Total
	1	2	3	
Devon and Cornwall	4	3	3	10
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole			1	1
Gloucestershire			7	7
Somerset			9	9
Wiltshire and Swindon			3	3
West of England			1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>31</b>

**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Given the breadth of activity that is supported through this collection of projects, and the non-training emphasis of some of the projects, there were still over 5,000 enrolments on learning activities - about four per cent of all enrolments. Just under half of the enrolments were in Devon and Cornwall, while nearly a quarter were in Somerset (Figure 4.23). With the emphasis on business support, higher-level qualifications, and assessor and verifier training, over 50 per cent of the enrolments were for males, with two thirds of enrolments in Somerset by males, and 55 per cent of those in Devon and Cornwall. Not quite 90 per cent of enrolments were from a White British ethnic background. Two thirds of enrolments were for people who were employed, and 22 per cent were for those who were unemployed.

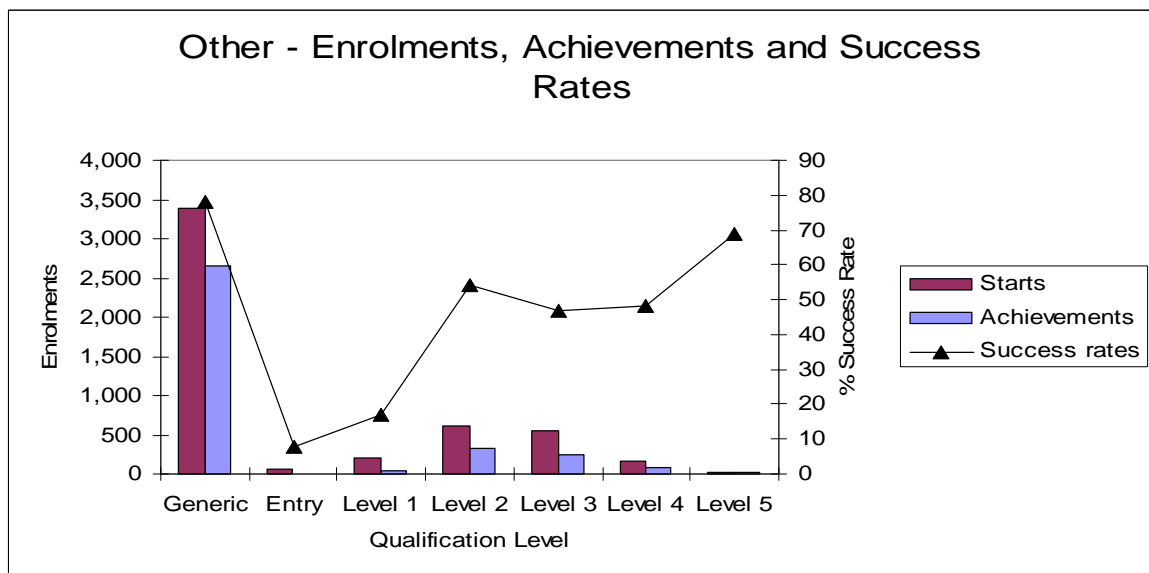
**Figure 4.23: Enrolments by LSC area**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Over two thirds of enrolments were on generic qualifications activity, either support, development or non-accredited learning activity, but despite some projects focusing on higher-level qualifications (Levels 4 and 5), only four per cent of enrolments were at that level. The achievement rates were good for generic activity, as can be seen in Figure 4.24. Unit costs were relatively high in this target at £1,120 per enrolment, but this would be inflated by projects with no learners attached.

**Figure 4.24: Enrolments, achievements and success rates by qualification level**

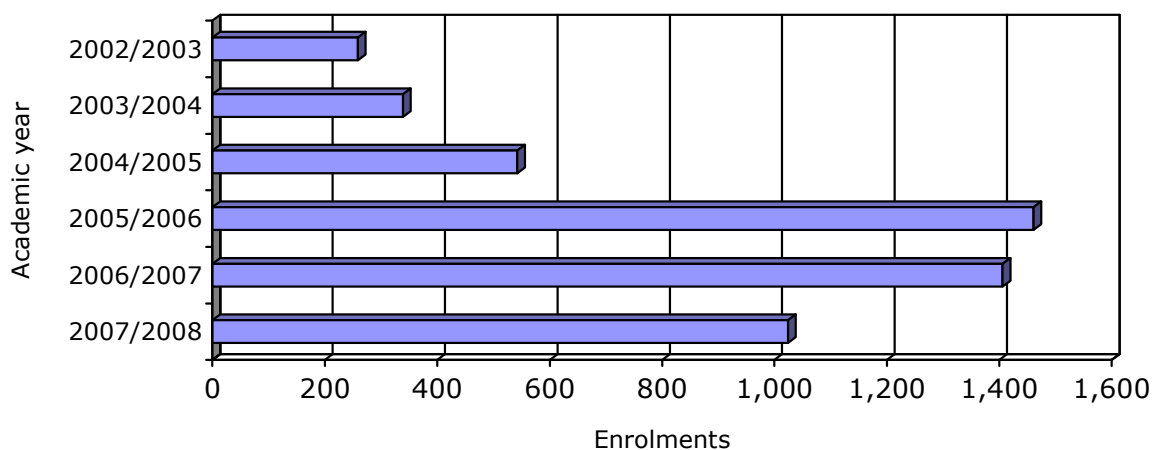


**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

There were proportionately more enrolments in the early years of the ESF programme in this target area than in others, and a significant tailing off of activity in the final year of the programme (Figure 4.25). This could be due to the clearer understanding by the

LSC of what it wished to purchase with the ESF funds, and tighter project specifications, mainly as a result of regional management of the programme, leading to generic priorities as a focus, and harder targets.

**Figure 4.25: Time profile of enrolments**



**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

### 4.3.2 Widening participation

This is the target area with the most projects (Figure 4.26) and the most contracted spend (over £27 million). In part, this was an early LSC target, until the full funding implications of the targets were considered, and in part, in order to encourage people to take-up learning for qualifications, it is also important to attract more people into learning. Regional Household Surveys run by the LSC and predecessor bodies have shown that those with higher levels of qualifications and employed in higher skilled occupations are more likely to participate in learning. In order to attract non-traditional learners, who are in general in lower skilled occupations or unemployed/workless and have lower levels of educational attainment, innovative methods had to be found to attract them into learning. Once they have engaged, it is then possible to help them to improve their Basic Skills, or achieve a first Level 2 or Level 3 qualification. Thus, while widening participation is not necessarily a core LSC target any more, it is fundamental to the desire to increase skills levels in the country.

**Figure 4.26: Projects by area**

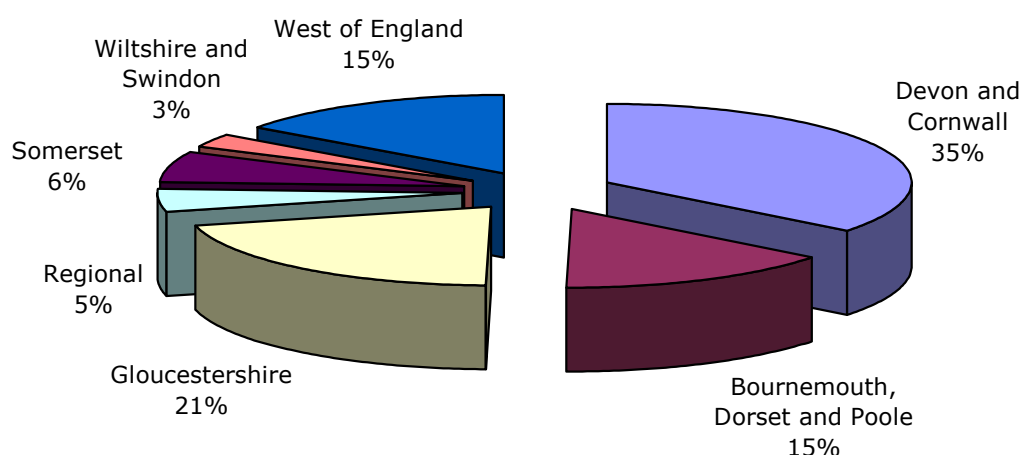
LSC area	ESF Objective			Total
	1	2	3	
Devon and Cornwall	35	6	19	60
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole			27	27
Gloucestershire			23	23
Regional			1	1
Somerset			8	8
Wiltshire and Swindon			5	5
West of England			12	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>136</b>

**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

There were in excess of 42,000 enrolments under this target, 35 per cent of all ESF-funded enrolments, and Figure 4.27 demonstrates that all LSC areas had at least some activity in this area. Indeed, the usual dominance in the proportion of enrolments in Devon and Cornwall is distinctly reduced here, with only 35 per cent of the total. Around 40 per cent of enrolments were by males, and 88 per cent were by those from a White British ethnic background. By employment status, just over 40 per cent were employed and just over 40 per cent were unemployed, demonstrating a major achievement in engaging those without work in learning activity. While 70 per cent of learners were aged 25 to 59 years, a further 15 per cent were aged 60 years and over, showing that this funding had broadened the appeal of learning to an age group that is traditionally not particularly involved in learning. The converse of this is that, with a focus on those of working age, it may be less of an appropriate use of funds.

The large number of projects looking at widening participation in learning may also be due to the largely rural nature of the region. The need to provide outreach services to remote locations and to work with smaller numbers of learners than would generally be viable would make co-financed activity attractive for providers. Many of the projects would be funded under Objective 3 measure 3.1, which had a significant proportion of funding allocated to it by government, which would again encourage projects contributing to this target. Finally, it should be noted that while measure 3.1 funding in the South West was available to beneficiaries who were employed or unemployed, in the rest of the country, this measure was only available to projects working with the unemployed.

**Figure 4.27: Enrolments by area**

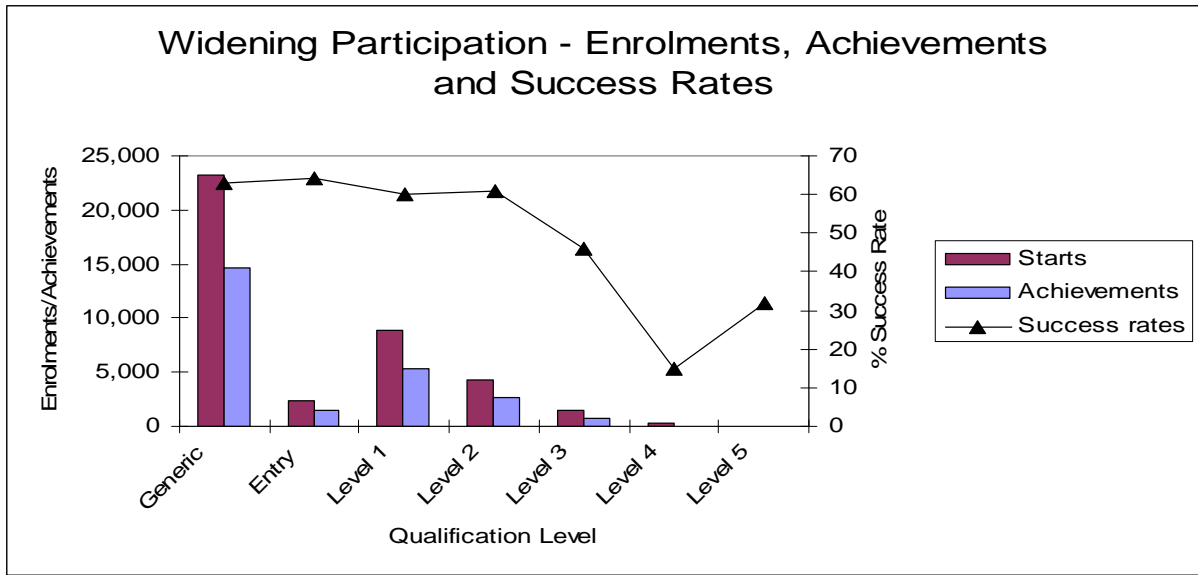


**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Given the general nature of this target and the projects within it, it is surprising that only 55 per cent of enrolments are classified as generic, while over a fifth are Level 1 and ten per cent are Level 2. Thus, while the target is very broad, outcomes have included over 2,500 individuals gaining Level 2 qualifications, and nearly 700 attaining Level 3 qualifications to contribute to other targets. Success rates are over 60 per cent for qualifications other than Levels 3, 4 and 5 (Figure 4.28).

However, in terms of the objective of widening participation, while achievements of qualifications at particular levels are impressive, it is perhaps more important to consider how many of the learners had not been engaged with learning since school, and whether they went on to further learning. Unfortunately, the data covering prior learning is non-existent, and destinations data is not adequate to the task, and must be an area of development in future ESF programmes. However, it is fair to say that over 40,000 individuals accessed learning through ESF funding, which has widened participation, and it is hoped that the experience has encouraged learners to continue. The unit cost for enrolments is the second lowest of all targets, at £500.

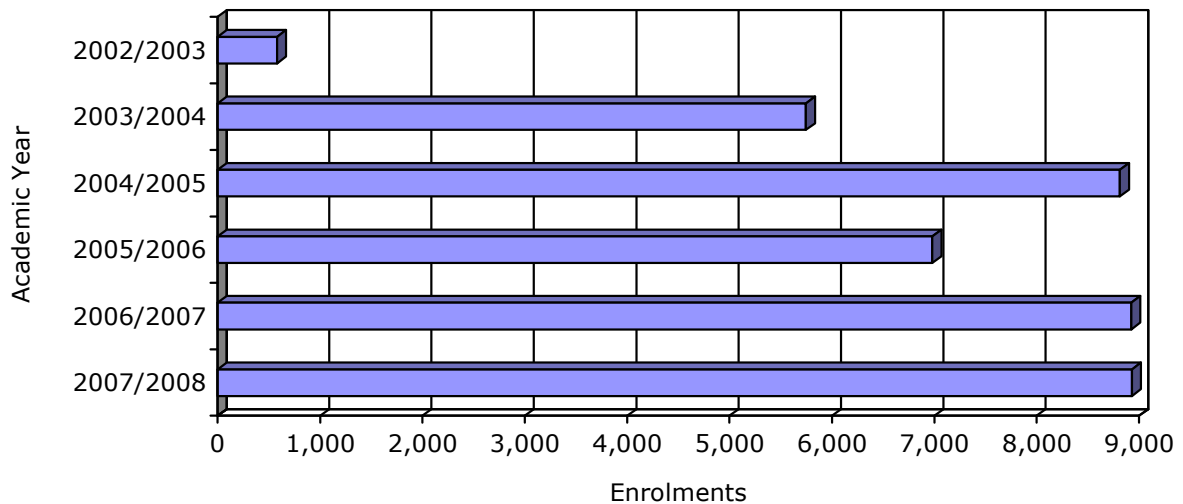
**Figure 4.28: Enrolments, achievements and success rates by qualification level**



Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008

After a slow start in 2002/2003, enrolments increased and were relatively stable between 2004 and 2008, with 7,000 or more enrolments per year (Figure 4.29).

**Figure 4.29: Enrolments over time**



Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008

### 4.3.3 Information, advice and guidance

While not a specific target, there were sufficient numbers of projects with an IAG focus to make a separate category. Indeed, it can be argued that the IAG projects are critical in order to give information and signpost potential learners to both ESF programmes and mainstream funded learning. All LSC areas had at least one IAG project funded (Figure 4.30) through ESF, although a half of all projects were in the Devon and Cornwall LSC

area. Nearly £5 million was contracted to support the 33 projects on IAG, with three quarters of that contracted spend in Devon and Cornwall.

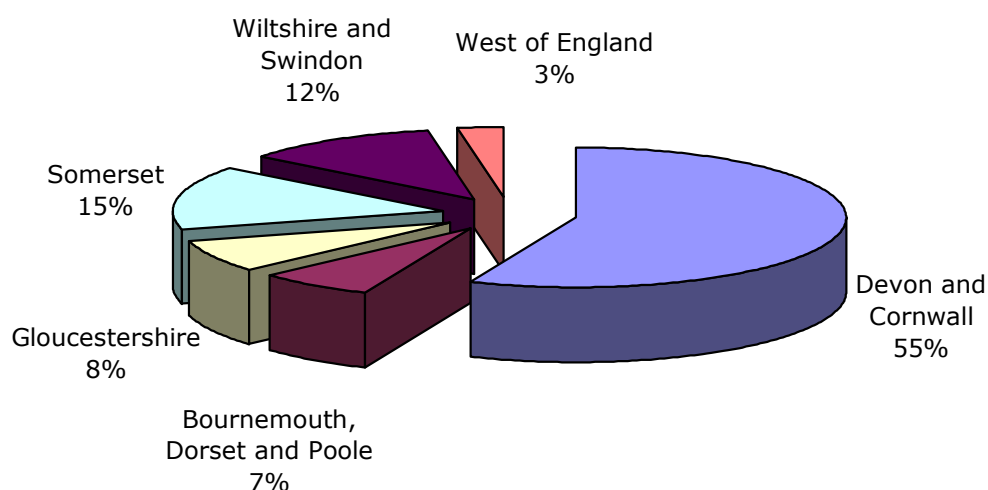
**Figure 4.30: Projects by LSC area**

LSC area	ESF Objective			Total
	1	2	3	
Devon and Cornwall	8	4	5	17
Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole			1	1
Gloucestershire			2	2
Somerset			4	4
Wiltshire and Swindon			7	7
West of England			2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>33</b>

**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Given that the bulk of spend in this area was contracted through Devon and Cornwall, it is surprising that only 55 per cent of the 15,000 enrolments were from that LSC area. Overall, the enrolments in this target area accounted for 12 per cent of all ESF-funded enrolments (Figure 4.31), yet only five per cent of ESF contracted spend. It is likely that the individual interventions were shorter and therefore had a lower unit cost. Nearly half of enrolments were by males and 89 per cent were by those from a White British ethnic background. By employment status, some 43 per cent were employed, 26 per cent unemployed, and two per cent were threatened with redundancy; the remainder were marked as unknown, but this could include young people in full-time education of some sort, as 30 per cent of beneficiaries were aged 18 years or under, and 18 per cent were aged under 16 years.

**Figure 4.31: Enrolments by LSC area**



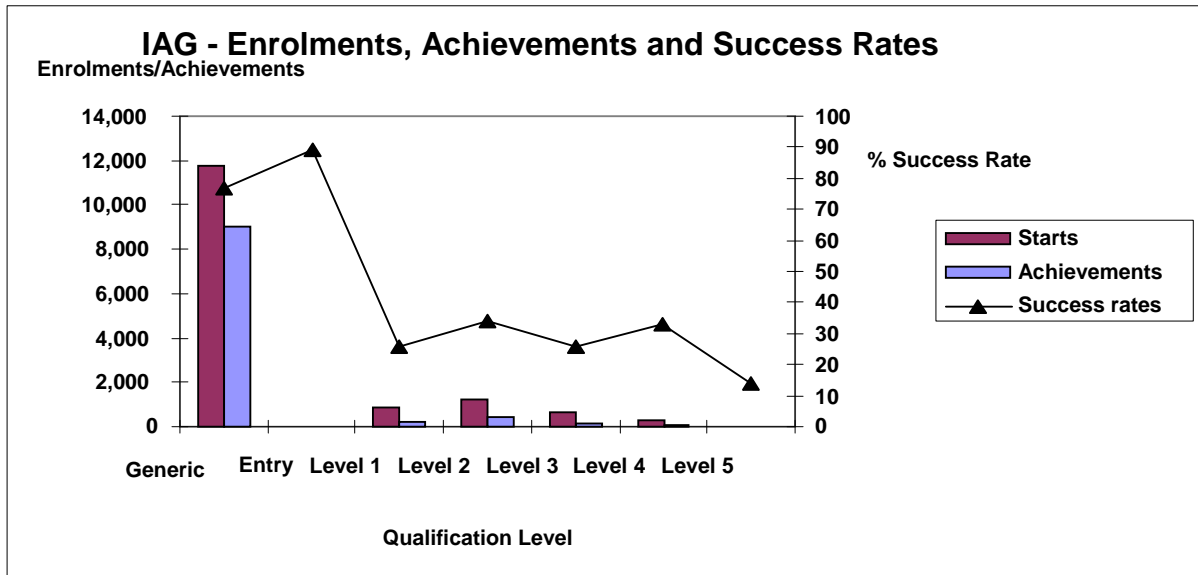
**Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008**

Over three quarters of the enrolments under this target area were on generic qualifications activity, although there were over 1,200 enrolments on Level 2 qualifications. While over 75 per cent achieved their generic qualification, other qualifications generally had low success rates. This should probably be reviewed during the next round of projects to ensure either that success rates are improved, or that individuals are not being enrolled for qualifications that are not appropriate.

With this area of activity however, a qualification outcome is not necessarily the main or core outcome. With IAG, the outcome should be progression into employment, employment with training, or some form of learning activity. It is therefore important that with this type of project, **the outcomes are relevant to the activity**, and that providers are encouraged and supported to provide full and valid destination information (Figure 4.32).

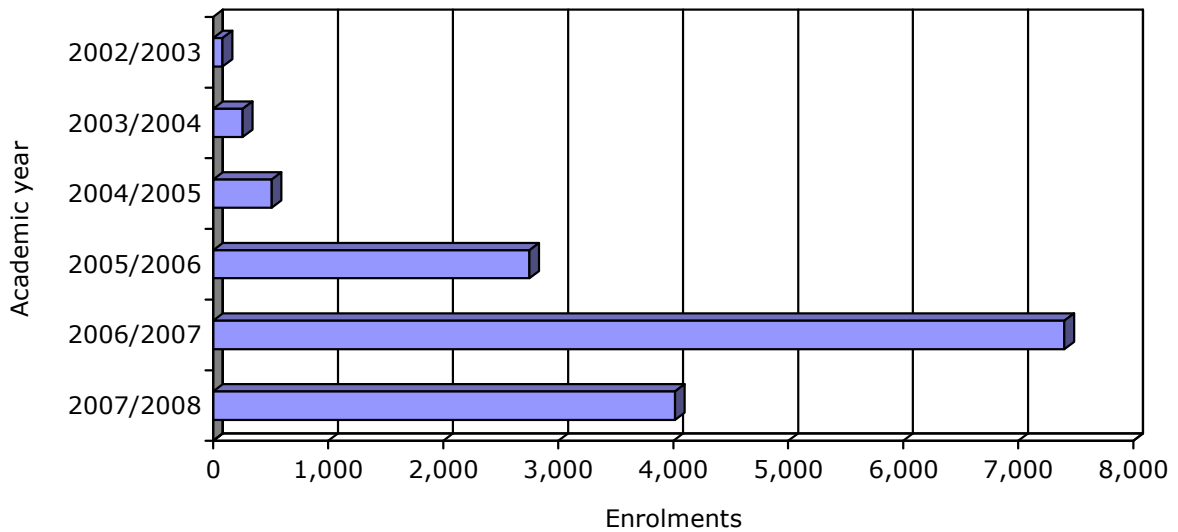
This is the target that exhibits the most extreme back-loading of enrolments, with half of all enrolments in the 2006/2007 academic year, and over three quarters of all enrolments in the last two years of the programme. It is not clear whether there was a change in the focus of the ESF spend, or whether projects were actively encouraged in this area over the last two years, or even whether this was felt to be a good way to fund useful activity that could be delivered in a short space of time. Enrolment profiles are illustrated in Figure 4.33. There was a change in funding policy for IAG, with fees introduced for those, even the unemployed, who had a Level 2 qualification or higher, which may also have influenced activity. This target had the lowest unit cost per enrolment of just £265.

**Figure 4.32: Enrolments, achievements and success rates by qualification level**



Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008

**Figure 4.33: Profile of enrolments by year**



Source: South West LSC/HOST Policy Research, 2008

#### 4.4 Overview of ESF achievement

In numeric terms, the ESF-funded activity engaged a significant number of individuals and supported a total of:

- 2,900 Basic Skills qualifications at Level 1 and Level 2.
- 9,300 individuals to achieve a full Level 2 qualification.

- 3,900 individuals to achieve a full Level 3 qualification.

It is not clear if these individuals would have undertaken and achieved these qualifications if the activity was not funded by ESF, so additionality cannot be assumed or proved at programme level.

ESF funding offers individuals the chance to undertake units of a Level 2 or Level 3 qualification, which LSC feedback implies is more appealing to employers than full qualifications. This may be why achievement of full qualification rates are particularly low for Level 3. This will also help to explain why success rates are not as high as FE-funded provision, *particularly for Level 3 provision*.

Projects are also more likely show higher achievement when working with difficult client groups (such as NEET groups), or where there are alternative outcomes (a job or a move to full-time training) than full qualifications (apprenticeships, NEETs, Widening Participation, and IAG). The non-accredited learning aims would appear to be more appropriate to the targeted client groups. However, given this success, the fact that some 70,000 enrolments were for a generic code that could range from in-house non-accredited training activity to some form of mentoring support means that the richness of information on what works is lost.

Not all ESF achievements could be expressed in terms of qualifications gained, but the overall quality of data on learner destinations was not sufficient to assess performance on other outcomes such as gaining employment or progression to other learning.

## Chapter 5: Case Study Experience

### 5.1 Introduction

HOST undertook 12 case studies which were chosen by the Steering Group as examples of effective practice from a longer list of suggestions from ESF managers throughout the region. These case studies included projects in a range of different contexts and South West areas, and addressed different target groups in both rural and urban settings. This chapter examines the evidence from those cases, and in particular considers:

- The reasons why the projects were set up and how they were organised.
- How projects recruited beneficiaries and used partnerships to develop projects.
- The main issues and challenges that emerged during the life of the projects.
- Project achievements, impact and sustainability.

A series of comparative matrices summarising all the information from the case studies is given as Annex C in this report, and each case study is presented in full<sup>17</sup> at the end of this report.

### 5.2 Funding and focus

Ten of the case study projects were supported solely under the ESF Objective 3 funding stream which is concerned with helping to improve education, training and employment policies, and systems. One project was financed under both Objective 3 and Objective 2 - the latter sets out primarily to support economic and social needs of areas with specific difficulties. One project in Cornwall was funded under Objective 1, which is the Objective that promotes the development of regions where economic expansion and growth is required. One project recruited beneficiaries in all areas of the South West except Cornwall.<sup>18</sup>

All the case study projects had been funded in the last three years of the ESF programme. None reported any real problems with the bidding process; although the advice and help with proposals offered by local LSC offices reportedly varied, it was overall seen as constructive and fair.

Two of the criteria for the final choice case studies aimed to reflect activities across the whole region and a variety of project budgets. There is one project, for example, whose budget allocation was £61K, one whose budget was over £3 million, and one a little short of £3 million. However, only five case study projects spent their allocation in full; the remainder recorded a spending shortfall of between 12 and 50 per cent. Reasons offered for this shortfall by projects included the inability to recruit sufficient numbers of beneficiaries, short lead-in time to project start which hindered development, and lack of evidence to generate paid outcomes.

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<sup>17</sup> Each case study involved a series of interviews with the project manager and appropriate staff/partners/LSC, and each was 'cleared' with the project managers to ensure factual accuracy.

<sup>18</sup> This project - Crystal Chandelier - was unable to recruit in Cornwall as it involved Skills for Life, which is separately financed through Objective 1 funding in Cornwall.

Project focus and scope varied. The cases included five which were targeted at support specific to rural areas, five which were concerned with engaging and supporting young adults/adults to reduce the effects of disadvantage, one which was centred on support for an ethnic minority group, one which was concerned with the delivery of training in small communities, and two which were focused on learning programmes for those who themselves were in a teaching or advising role.<sup>19</sup>

There were no reported major changes of focus to any of the case study projects, although one - *Learning Notes* in Somerset - agreed halfway through to widen eligibility to include a bigger geographical area in order not to exclude those from neighbouring communities, but who were still resident in the sub-region. Both *Crystal Chandelier* and *Rural Connections* were granted extensions to their project, the former because of consequences of a shift in government policy related to training teachers in the Lifelong Learning sector, and the latter because they had exceeded their targets and the demand was still high. None of the projects could have been financed through mainstream learning provision, although one - *Education Unlimited Limited* - reported that the project had been supported previously by that route.

Four of the projects were managed by those with previous experience of running or being involved with ESF projects. This was seen by them as a distinct advantage when it came to writing bids, managing such things as the need to replace delivery partners during the project, negotiations with the LSC about profiles numbers, and coping with the administration of their project. Two projects - *Crystal Chandelier* and *Community ICT in Cornwall* - were managed by organisations well versed in the facilitation of ESF projects or initiatives which had a strong partnership working focus, and this, too, was seen by them as an advantage, especially at the start of the project during planning stages. These managers, through that previous experience, recognised the importance of strong project organisation, good communications, and committed partners who fully understood their roles and responsibilities either as deliverers of learning or as consulting partners. One project manager reported that:

*'It was important that the project staff had previous experience...in terms of collecting and inputting administrative and financial data and it was very important to our success in terms of knowing what the pitfalls would be.'*

Another reflected that:

*'Without my experience of being involved in ESF, I would not have understood the importance of writing a good bid that got serious consideration.'*

Those that had had no previous experience of ESF relied on their more general management experience and skills, and although some had difficulties with the language/jargon used in the bid process and the subsequent paperwork, there was general agreement that sound planning, robust administrative and financial systems, and ensuring that the project was regularly monitored, were the keys to efficiency and effectiveness.

### **5.3 Rationale and flexibility**

While the origins of the projects varied, they can be classified in one of three ways although it must be recorded that in some cases, as with project focus, projects were the product of more than one idea:

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<sup>19</sup> Some of these were a mixture of two or even three of these.  
Evaluation of the 2000-2006  
Co-financing of the ESF Programme  
in the South West Region  
Final report

- **Directly from the identification of a real need**, either resulting from a piece of specifically commissioned research (*Rural Connections, Cotswolds Rural Heritage Skills*) or through monitoring of a policy or strategy (*Matchmaker*) or through consultation with small businesses (*Dynamite*). In these cases, evidence of need strengthened the proposal, and in most cases translated into a relatively straightforward recruitment of beneficiaries.
- **Proposed either by or through consultation with the LSC** ESF teams (*Education Unlimited Limited*), or as a direct result of an LSC event (*Crystal Chandelier*) or because the LSC had indicated that finance for collaborative projects would be viewed positively because of the potential for capacity building within organisations delivering learning (*Community ICT in Cornwall*). In these cases, it was LSC encouragement that was the catalyst for action, but for at least two projects this had only confirmed their thinking rather than prompted them to consider a new idea.
- **Gaps in provision recognised** by individuals or establishments because of their ongoing involvement with a specific group (*IAG in the Workplace*), **or** a wish to **strengthen provision with a specific target group** (*Wiltshire QEST*).

Many of the provider project managers had developed very flexible approaches when responding to beneficiary needs. They built this into the design of their delivery methods, and where the delivery was tailored to directly meet the specific needs of the clients, or was designed in response to a strong understanding of the target group, projects were largely successful in achieving outputs. Provider project managers did, however, highlight the challenges in delivering such flexible provision and emphasised that it often tends to be hard to transfer this type of delivery into mainstream provision.

One manager remarked that:

*'We were flexible and we gave each participant personal attention. This was very staff intensive, and we would not be able to do that cost effectively on a mainstream programme.'*

For those projects targeted at individuals not currently in employment, education or training (NEETs), this flexibility often translated into an initial assessment over many sessions, or was deferred until the beneficiaries were considered to be 'learning ready'. In one NEET project, a good deal of time was spent engaging young people's interest in sport or music to raise their confidence and self-esteem before advisers helped them to consider formal learning.

For projects which were targeting delivery at small companies or sole traders, project managers felt that it was especially important that expectations were not raised that could not be met, that information was accurate, and that learners had access to support mechanisms in addition to learning, if needed. For one rural-based project aimed at small local businesses, flexibility here meant that these businesses themselves decided on the menu of options that would be offered and the mode of delivery which would be used, and that this took account of the constraints on their time as owner/managers. An important part of this project delivery was providing one-to-one counselling about such things as taxation, offering workshops on changes in legislation, and gearing project delivery around short courses and not NVQ courses, which generally the micro businesses appeared not to understand or want.

In four projects, the use of information technology played a major role in delivery. In one project, assessors used laptops for recording information when visiting beneficiaries, and candidates e-mailed completed projects back to the partner providers for comment/assessment.

In another, specialist ICT packages were used and group delivery took place on farms using a travelling Internet bus - a bus which doubled as a classroom and had Internet capability. In the only Objective 1-funded project, ICT was the main project with delivery focused on IT training in smaller community areas. Flexibility was an essential component of success here, too, and delivery providers offered nursery facilities, paid travel costs, and arranged courses at locations and at times which suited beneficiaries and their domestic commitments.

The use of music and the arts were key features of two of the projects. One - *Learning Notes* - was based solely on project partners wanting to use innovative methods in attracting people to learning, in this case through the vehicle of music and musical technology. In the other, music, theatre and art were used to generate interest and a sense of achievement among young beneficiaries before they embarked on more formal learning paths.

## 5.4 Collaborative working

Project partnerships, properly managed, are often essential to the success of projects aimed at improving individual learning and skills. For organisations involved in the ESF programme, the model for project partnership was a group of agencies and organisations contributing their particular experiences and expertise, and actively involved in the training of beneficiaries or in activities which supported beneficiaries. It was often on this collaboration that the success of a project depended. The key was to work with partners who could deliver.

There were strong examples of partnership working from the case study projects. Several of the projects had two or more main partners and delivery and/or consultancy partners with numbers ranging from three to forty-five. Most partnerships worked well, but for a few there was a mixed experience, with collaboration working well at the operational level but somewhat disappointingly at strategic level. While this meant that outputs were achieved and the project ran smoothly, it had implications for sustainability at a later stage of the project.

Not all of these projects had formal contracts with each partner, but many had partnership protocol agreements which set out the roles and responsibilities of each agency or organisation and, in the case of partners delivering courses which contributed to outputs, clear targets. Many of the delivery contracts mirrored those which the leading and financial accounting partner had with the LSC. Many of the partner organisations had worked together on projects previously, and built on that existing working relationship.

In some projects, collaboration was the main feature of the project; for example, the funding proposal for *Community ICT in Cornwall* was predicated on the perceived need to develop partnerships between mainstream and community learning partners, and simultaneously increase the capacity and quality of delivery in community partners. The regional project *Crystal Chandelier* organised their project so that every partner, whether delivery or consultative, could make a tangible contribution, and the image of a co-ordinated unit, stemming from a central thread, providing ongoing support for partners, was expressed in the title of the project, which became a metaphor for the delivery model.

The importance of the lead partner monitoring the project on a regular basis and monitoring partners for contract compliance was also emphasised by a number of the case study projects. One manager said:

*'You need to keep on top of things constantly so that you can re-allocate numbers within the project to those that are achieving the most. At the end of the day, this is about outputs and it makes commercial sense to be sure that you support those who are going to deliver the most.'*

Partnership Steering Groups were cited as one of the most successful components of good collaboration. The most productive Steering Groups were multi-dimensional, and consisted of a mixture of strategic thinkers and practitioners, or employers and providers, or community and voluntary sector and publicly-funded FE Colleges.

Additionally, in some projects, working groups or best practice groups were set up that helped to facilitate delivery or address specific issues related to the needs of the client group, or disseminate good practice. For example, in the *Matchmaker* project, which was set up to support Gypsy and Travelling People Communities, a Sustainability Group was set up which played a major role in the project through their regular monthly meetings, and in the regional project, a number of working groups addressed delivery issues and current challenges.

Several of the projects were able to make use of their existing networks and build on already effectively working partnerships. This was especially so with the rural partnerships such as *Dynamite* and *Rural Heritage*, the former using the NFU, cattle breeders' groups and small farm associations to publicise the programme, but was also demonstrated by others such as *Education Unlimited Limited*, who worked with local community groups with whom they had links through other programmes.

The collaboration between a small general FE College and a tourism networking agency in the *Rural Connections* project is a good example of new inter-agency collaboration. The tourism agency provided support at the start in bid writing and had useful contacts among training providers and consultants that helped the project manager to tailor training to learner requirements. The partnership continues to work together to deliver a range of government-funded and commercial courses and initiatives.

Successful networking groups had been set up in four areas as a direct result of the project, and often involved two or more of the project partners. In one of these, small business cluster groups met regularly, and the project paid for speakers to attend and talk about current small business issues. In another, a business advice centre was set up by the Regional Development Agency specifically to assist the newly self-employed who had undertaken training within an ESF project set up to address a skill shortage need. A third project set up a regional networking group which became a forum for good practice for practitioners and organisations, was highly valued, and continued after the project.

It must be recorded that some small issues in partnership working did arise, but mainly where the role of each partner had not been fully defined, or the information or resources to allow partners to fulfil specific tasks have not been clear in the initial stages of project development. Partnerships were most effective where all agencies communicated well on the content and delivery method of the learning/skills development programme at all stages of delivery, and developed means to resolve any issues, but all case study managers stated that they would work collaboratively in future, with a number reporting that they were already doing so.

Overall, providers had a positive experience through working with the LSC on co-financed projects. In terms of contact with the LSC, all except one project manager have found contract managers helpful and approachable, and appreciated their flexibility. Some projects developed particularly strong working relationships with contract managers, and found that they were supportive and responsive to issues experienced in delivery.

Continuity of LSC contract management was an issue for some projects, especially where good working relationships had been forged, and then a change of contract manager meant a change of approach. The LSC links were said to be especially valuable at project closure and before final audits were undertaken.

## 5.5 Beneficiaries

Making initial contact with and recruiting beneficiaries is a crucial preliminary stage to project delivery. This can prove particularly challenging where target beneficiaries are from harder-to-reach groups. In response to this challenge, a range of successful methods were used by the case study projects, including:

- **Targeted marketing** communications. Providers dropped leaflets and placed posters in the locations where beneficiaries would most likely live or visit, and used local advertising and local radio.
- **Setting up meetings** at local venues to attract small businesses using expert speakers to talk about issues relevant or current, and subsequently introducing the project and inviting a response.
- **Using existing links** with potential beneficiaries as a 'conduit' to recruitment. A good use was made of this method by two projects, most notably in one where veterinary surgeons were trained to deliver workshops to their existing customers as an introduction to small farmers committing to NVQ courses. Another project designated access points at local community centres where potential beneficiaries could be encouraged to consider learning by advisers they already knew and trusted.
- **By visiting job fairs**, craft fairs, working with local adult guidance organisations and pro-actively with employers with large-scale redundancy situations imminent.

The project set up to support Gypsy and Traveller Communities in Dorset felt that one of the key success factors was ensuring that recruitment of individuals was made at an 'appropriate' stage of disengagement, and when this was recognised, to allocate staff and resources immediately, which was something echoed by another project in the West of England who were targeting NEET beneficiaries.

There was strong evidence from the case studies that beneficiaries had received good Information Advice and Guidance (IAG). In some cases, IAG had underpinned the whole project (*Matchmaker, IAG in the Workplace*); in others, it was a central element of delivery (*Crystal Chandelier, Rural Connections*). Within some projects, the course delivery itself was organised so that beneficiaries could use a new skill to access better information themselves (*Community ICT in Cornwall*), while in others it was offered at various stages of the project and again at exit interview (*Learning Notes, Education Unlimited Limited*).

Some project managers felt the importance and achievement of the IAG targets within their contracts had been undervalued, and viewed it as a critical ingredient in both maintaining interest of beneficiaries and achievement rates.

The support offered to beneficiaries was felt by most projects to be more critical to output success than initial assessment. In some projects, this meant individual support and advice throughout the project; for others it was through project provision of additional activities. In the regional project *Crystal Chandelier*, it was clear at an early stage that beneficiaries would need mentoring support.

The project trained mentors who remained committed to the role in another initiative when the co-financing project was completed.

Beneficiary referral is an important method of ensuring that learners access the appropriate provision, and especially on exit from ESF. Referrals tended to be most effective where providers were well established, and had developed networks and knowledge of other provision in the area. Nine of the case study projects had clear exit strategies for beneficiaries, which included referral to other courses or network working groups. Here, again, there was innovation. Deliverers in the ICT project in Cornwall, for example, helped participants to take advantage of online learning opportunities and advice on learning progression, in order to make services more accessible to them and reduce travel needs, as part of the county's ongoing initiative to protect the environment and manage resources more carefully.

## 5.6 Issues and challenges

There were inevitably a number of questions and concerns that arose for individual projects during the ESF programme. The chief issue, and mentioned by all the projects, was the difficulties experienced with the administration of ESF in two main ways:

- ESF systems concerning evidence of outputs and outcomes<sup>20</sup> for payment were considered to be overly bureaucratic at worst and challenging at best.
- Making electronic learner data entries onto the LSC system which, in some cases, meant that the projects had to keep two sets of data in order to manage the contract properly. Managers reported that they either were not able to enter the data at all, or the data they wished to enter was not accepted by the system.

Some of the problems with data input were resolved and some were not. One project manager reported that on two occasions he did not enter data because the only figures that system would accept would have been fictitious. It caused him to mistrust all regional output figures issued by the LSC thereafter.

Another project had huge problems with postcodes because they were located near the Welsh border, and some beneficiaries had postcodes related to Welsh districts. Even project managers with considerable experience of contracting with the LSC reported that they found the systems for ESF the worst they had ever encountered.

What did this mean for the projects? For most, it meant additional resources had to be used for administrative tasks which was costly, and chasing beneficiary outputs and using additional staff time to input data meant that in some cases other, and arguably more important, project areas were neglected. It tested the relationship between projects and local LSC staff, and it delayed payments to projects sometimes, which for large organisations was not significant, but for smaller delivery partners it was critical. Two of the smaller projects found the amount of funding very restrictive, and reported that half as much again as they received would have enabled them to have achieved much more, so spending additional resource on administration through no fault of theirs was doubly frustrating.

Delays to the start of the projects through protracted contract negotiations with the LSC were reported by seven of the case studies. Again, for some this had little impact, while for others - most notably *Richmond Fellowship and REAL* - it became necessary to re-profile the outputs of the project with the LSC.

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<sup>20</sup> Outputs here are defined as direct products of activities, including the types, levels and targets delivered, and outcomes as specific changes arising from the activity, for example, in behaviour or knowledge.

This involved reducing the numbers of beneficiaries, and consequently the numbers entering training and achieving qualifications.

There were a whole range of challenges surrounding eligibility of beneficiaries, some of which were addressed very imaginatively. For example, a project aimed at very small businesses and owner/managers was heavily over-subscribed from the start, and had numerous enquiries from businesses which were not eligible for finance. Where there was capacity on some courses and workshops, individuals were able to attend at no cost unless the course was accredited, when a charge was made. This extended the benefits of the project more widely, and by implication assisted the local economy and engaged a wider interest in learning. Many of those who had taken up 'free' places went on to access other learning which they financed themselves, and became members of the networking cluster groups set up as part of the project.

The larger mainstream providers involved in *Community ICT in Cornwall* also had enquiries from those who were found to be ineligible, in this case because they worked over 16 hours a week. The deliverer took a pragmatic line, offering the course to all, although only eligible beneficiaries counted towards the project targets. *Crystal Chandelier* also had eligibility issues. The project was unable to support some SfL teachers due to central regulations; for example, those teaching Literacy who became teachers after 2002. This caused difficulties, because on some courses there were participants who were supported through the project and some who were not.

Other issues which concerned the case study managers included:

- Beneficiaries who had specific difficulties due to inaccessibility of public transport affected individuals in five of the 12 case studies. Outreach provision was provided in some cases, or other support was put in place to ensure regular attendance, and a system for quick reimbursement for travel costs organised, but this required time and additional staff resources.
- For some projects, there was some reluctance from partners to work collaboratively to gain the ESF contract, most notably small training companies and those in the voluntary and community sector. There were a number of reasons for this, largely centred on the influence of perceived competition between them for the same clients. This reluctance was in most cases overcome by the skill of the leading organisation in facilitating partnership working.
- There were some issues around the identification of NVQs and how they could be delivered which were not anticipated by the projects at the proposal stage. In some cases, this required negotiations with the Awarding Body about suitable elements and assessment procedures, and in other cases with the LSC regarding what could be counted as an output/outcome for contract compliance.
- There were problems related to quality assurance. Where providers had their own quality improvement arrangements, there were some issues about the systematic monitoring of these, and in some smaller providers some did not have their own procedures at all. This was an issue that figured latterly on the agendas of the best practice and working groups where they existed, but partners report they have learnt from this, and this is expected to be a main development strand of their future collaborative working.

## 5.7 Impact and sustainability

The regional output data shows that 120,500 beneficiaries received some level of training support or IAG through the co-financed activity, and 72,000 achieved a qualification. Despite the outputs identified, it is more difficult to identify subsequent progression into employment and further training. The individual case studies were able to give output figures for their projects, and all were able to provide *some* evidence of *some* beneficiary progression to employment or further learning, although follow-up methods were generally weak and response rates low.

Three projects had collected the information through a postal survey system, while others had gauged progression through the numbers of subsequent courses beneficiaries had attended at their establishment, or more informally through networking groups, set up during the project and continued after it ended.

Recording 'soft' outcomes relating to motivation and confidence to participate in learning, and to enter employment, was not a requirement of LSC contracts, and except in the case of two projects, was not collected systematically. One case which did (*REAL* project) captured soft outcomes through the production of case studies for each beneficiary. It is not clear, however, from the information obtained from project case studies whether beneficiaries were indeed more employable after taking part in the project courses. Some providers felt that having recognised qualifications, or taking a Skills for Life test, increased beneficiary employability, but a more structured approach to tracking would have given a better indication of progression - something that a number of the project managers acknowledged.

Evidence from the case study project partners across the region records the impact of the ESF programme in a number of different ways, and noted in particular that:

1. **Collaboration has led on to cross-partner benefits.** There is now an effective dialogue between ESF partners that either was not evident before or has been enhanced. Projects that have noted this particularly include *Dynamite*, *Rural Heritage Skills*, and *Matchmaker*. Some learning organisations are now delivering courses for partners who they worked with on the ESF programme; others are using the models of a successful project or partnership to replicate delivery in another area, or to another target group.
2. **Partnership working has built capacity**, particularly within small training companies and in the voluntary and community sector. This has been demonstrated by the project case studies through joint planning and development work, through their regular review of current practice and formal sharing of good practice, through the development of fair and equitable partnerships that has ensured that individuals' organisations have developed through collaborative activities, and in the way in which organisations have enhanced their capability. Projects in particular who have demonstrated this are *Community ICT in Cornwall*, *IAG in the Workplace* and *Education Unlimited Limited*.
3. ESF funding made training accessible to businesses (*Rural Connections*, *Dynamite*) and individuals (*Rural Heritage Skills*, *Matchmaker*, *Nova*) that would not have been able to meet the cost of training through other routes. This training **promoted a learning culture which project partners have continued to promote and encourage.**
4. Organisations now have a better understanding of specific target groups and their learning needs, the levels of support they need to achieve, and the activities that can facilitate that achievement. **This has had an impact on their strategic**

**and operation plans and informed their planning.** Projects here include *REAL, Matchmaker, Rural Connections and Dynamite*.

An important aspect of ESF is the extent to which supported activity has led to sustainable results, and there are examples both of sustainable activities and those that have proved to be unsustainable. Some projects have been successful in attracting further funding to continue activity, and have been able to put into practice approaches developed through their ESF contracts. Innovative approaches to engaging hard-to-reach learners have been highlighted by a number of project managers, and these have been used to inform delivery of other project activity.

One of the main barriers to sustainability is embedding provision into mainstream activity. Difficulties in mainstreaming co-financed activity are even evident in those case study projects that were clearly very successful. Some, such as the regional project *Crystal Chandelier*, have transferred their delivery model and networking arrangements into another initiative, where they have been streamlined and remodelled to ensure some continuation. Others have worked with partners to access other funding, or have been able to continue some part of the delivery in the new ESF programme, though not in exactly the same way. The remaining five projects consulted have been unable to embed activity into mainstream provision. The inability to sustain activity is a particular concern where providers have been able to link the experience of project delivery directly to the development of new competencies in both project management and the development of specialist knowledge of the sector, target group or provision.

All the projects submitted a final report to the LSC summarising the activities and achievements of the project. Four projects had commissioned an independent evaluation of their project in terms of process, achievement and impact. None of the projects had implemented any impact measures at the start, or during project activity, which could have measured changes to the project and offered more evidence of achievement.

## **5.8 Overview**

The case studies evidence provided a number of good examples of effective practice and underlined the importance of good planning and well-focused delivery addressing clearly identified need as the key to achievement. The extent to which partners, some of whom had not worked together previously, built and sustained good working relationships, and the numbers of agencies acting as consulting partners who became actively involved in delivery, was also significant. There is evidence that what has been achieved by these projects has had both an impact on beneficiary progression and built capacity in individual organisations. Impact measures built into the design of the projects could have offered more conclusive evidence of project achievements and assisted sustainability, and this needs to be built into project guidelines in the current programme.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions and Implications**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This review of the ESF co-financing programme, of its management and its impact, is timely, coming as it does near the start of a new ESF programme and at the beginning of further change for the LSC.

This chapter draws together the statistical analysis, the case study evidence, and considers the information obtained from the interviews with ESF managers and key agency staff involved in the planning and delivery of the ESF programme 2000-2006. In particular, it considers if the programme added value in terms of:

- The range of projects supported and how successful they were in delivering LSC targets.
- What individual projects achieved as evidenced by case studies, and the approaches they used which could influence how the next programme is supported and delivered.
- How the programme was planned and managed.
- The evidence of impact of the programme on beneficiaries.

### **6.2 What worked effectively?**

#### **i) ESF as an enabler**

Evidence from the case studies, and from information and examples obtained from ESF managers and GOSW, presents a raft of evidence to suggest that the ESF programme steadily improved as it evolved, reached new client groups, worked with new types of organisations, and enhanced the capacity of organisations and small businesses. This is demonstrated in particular by:

- The numbers of small-scale projects that were piloted within the programme, and whose good practice was later transferred to larger projects and/or later to areas of mainstream delivery.
- The sector-specific delivery, especially that which involved small and micro businesses (under all three Objectives) whose target groups benefited from a very wide range of workforce development, including skills and knowledge development, directed towards both managers and lower-skilled workers.
- The capacity building in the voluntary and community sector and smaller training organisations, so many now have a better understanding of the wider learning environment and their place within it, have more efficient systems and structures in place, and can plan and network more effectively.

#### **ii) ESF programme partnerships**

Partnership was a feature of the 2000-2006 programme. The LSC worked collaboratively with organisations and government agencies, and their joint co-financing arrangements

with Jobcentre Plus were groundbreaking in some cases - as in Cornwall under Objective 1 - and reportedly provided greater coherence at both strategic and operational levels.

The LSCs made serious attempts to use new organisations in the programme, or those who could lead and manage a project with a range of smaller partners. This produced multi-dimensional partnership working when it operated on a regional basis, and offered small companies the chance to demonstrate their ability to deliver outputs, and in some cases subsequently resulted in franchising arrangements with bigger mainstream providers.

The case studies provided a number of examples of very productive collaboration developed through existing networks, through LSC engagement with new providers, and through working with IAG organisations and with employers. Steering Groups and best practice groups, not infrequently consisting of strategic thinkers *and* practitioners, were other examples of effective partnership practice within individual projects.

Case studies also evidenced where the LSCs have worked with individuals and organisations which have provided a 'conduit' to employers or to target specific beneficiary groups, and which have resulted in both non-accredited and accredited learning outcomes and an increased interest in learning *per se*. They were also working together to address quality issues that had arisen in order that future collaboration would build this aspect into any development planning. The implications of this partnership experience, especially for the new programme, are significant.

### **iii) ESF flexibility**

ESF was often described to the evaluators as 'flexible' particularly in relation to projects which addressed a need or needs in a geographical area and directly assisted those who were disadvantaged. This flexibility was demonstrated in a number of ways, but was especially beneficial for those new to or returning to learning, or who needed considerable personal support to achieve. Not infrequently, this flexibility resulted in wider community benefits, including the improvement of local learning facilities.

HOST identified a number of examples of flexibility in all South West areas of this approach, and specifically:

- ESF managers who were flexible about mode of delivery and outcomes and outputs when contracting with providers where learning support had to be tailored to the complex needs of hard-to-reach beneficiaries.
- Project deliverers who, via the use of imaginative and relevant activities, introduced learning to small employers through workshops and individual support, because these employers saw the traditionally delivered NVQ learning route as neither necessary nor desirable.
- ESF managers who were prepared to take risks by contracting with organisations outside the FE sector who had not previously contracted with the LSC, but who knew their markets and client group.
- Projects which successfully engaged with NEET young people with approaches that were very different from formal learning settings, and who used interesting approaches such as music, art and sport to maintain commitment and develop skills.

### **6.3 How was ESF planned and managed?**

The ESF contracts with the LSC were managed by GOSW. They negotiated with the co-financing organisations and their partners, and subsequently monitored the contracts; in many cases, they also advised and supported individual office teams. They insisted, especially at the start of the programme, on the inclusion of specific measures such as capacity building, which strengthened partnership working and sustainability. However, they did not insist that the offices or the region had an evaluation strategy, or an impact assessment plan as part of that strategy or independent from it. Additionally, when two of the LSC local offices clearly did not, for varying reasons, use the ESF finance to which they were entitled - in one area a sum of almost £14 million - there did not seem to be a clear strategy on how to approach or support the local offices concerned.

Planning by the local LSC offices was weak in the early years, but rapidly improved, and was chiefly assisted by three things:

- Better intelligence on local needs, and some good practice dissemination from other LSC regions.
- Information obtained from monitoring and closure reports of completed projects.
- Partnership at local and regional level with Jobcentre Plus, and collaboration between individual LSC offices.
- More understanding by staff involved with ESF contracts about what it could and could not address.

Senior management interest and support, together with adequate human resourcing in discrete ESF teams, was considered by GOSW and many ESF managers to be the key to effective and successful delivery, but as we have said in Chapter 2, from what we know of individual area achievements and the numbers of staff assigned to ESF programme management in each area, numerical results do not necessarily support that view.

Issues involving delays in contractual procedures were raised by provider project managers and discussed with ESF managers. This could be said to have impacted on the achievement of outputs as the time available for delivery was lessened, though in some cases the recruitment of project staff also took time to complete. This may equally have impacted on the time allowed for partnership development in the known instances of 'first time' partnerships of organisations. Some LSC staff interviewed did feel that some of the organisations involved in leading some partnership projects were perhaps not experienced enough for the role.

Issues concerned with data input and ESF administration, either real or perceived, had implications for many projects in terms of additional resources needed, which in some cases was to the detriment of the projects and what they achieved. LSC staff helped to overcome some of these difficulties, but problems of data input remained throughout most of the programme.

### **6.4 Did the programme support LSC priorities?**

While there were changes in the detail of LSC priorities and targets through the life of the ESF programme, the broad principles of engagement and attainment of Basic Skills, Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications were constant.

The ESF Objectives and measures also had a strong commitment to engagement in learning and improvement of skills, particularly linked to economic and community development. Similarly, GOSW and SWRDA had similar aims to improve skills levels, so LSC priorities were congruent with those of the strategic partners.

Through the use of ESF funds, some 120,000 individuals and 11,000 companies benefited from ESF funding. For individuals, this meant being able to take a further step (and for some a first step) in engagement with learning, be it via direct enrolments on courses or by accessing IAG. In terms of Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications purchased, 9,300 and 3,900 respectively were purchased/achieved; while a further 10,000 Level 1 qualifications were attained, giving individuals the foundation for progression to Level 2 learning and beyond.

In terms of re-engagement of young people, 22,000 individuals, aged 16 to 18 years, have engaged in programmes designed to support them out of the NEET category. Young people in this situation often have very chaotic lifestyles and face multiple barriers, so 64 per cent completed their learning programme, and 68 per cent progressing to a positive destination is a concrete contribution to LSC priorities.

With seven per cent of enrolments from individuals in the 60 years and over age category, it could be argued that some funding was not being directed at the economic population, and therefore not being used to achieve LSC or partner priorities. Individual projects need to be aware of the dangers of outcomes that, while valuable *per se*, do not always fit with LSC and other priorities. There may be good reason and benefits to wider provision, but this needs to be clearly identified at the start of a project.

## **6.5 How was the programme useful to beneficiaries?**

Chapter 3 analyses beneficiary outputs in detail. What is harder to glean from the output data is the *full* impact the projects may have had at the individual level, or in the case of the some projects, at SME level.

Beneficiaries were not directly consulted for this project, but anecdotal information and exit interview details reported by the case study project managers suggest that benefits from the projects for individuals have been in such areas as improved numeracy and literacy, increased motivation, knowledge of training requirements and provision in specialist sectors, and the development of job-related skills.

The importance of IAG for beneficiaries was emphasised by a number of case study managers. The value of this intervention and the support offered to beneficiaries at specific transition points (on entry and exit and at times when their motivation decreased) was felt to be more important to achievement than initial assessment.

The need to evidence the success of programmes in respect of beneficiaries' attitudinal and behavioural change ('soft outcomes') as well as supposedly 'hard outcomes' (such as securing work or entering learning) has been long recognised, particularly in the context of ESF projects. Such measures were not totally neglected in this co-financing programme, but case study evidence showed varying project-level activity and attention, and that there is still much to be learnt in this area.

Many employers, particularly those who were owner managers, reported on exit from projects that they felt more equipped to run their business effectively, especially as a result of learning ICT and marketing skills. A number of highly successful strategies to engage and retain beneficiaries are described in the case study evidence, but conversely there was a lack of systematic tracking of individuals in place to fully assess progression.

## **6.6 Was successful activity sustained/mainstreamed?**

Difficulties in mainstreaming co-financed activity are evident in the lack of projects demonstrating this at the end of the funding round, although many more projects, as the programme evolved, began to consider sustainability at an earlier stage of their project. The inability to sustain activity is a particular concern where providers have been able to link the experience of project delivery directly to the development of new competencies in both project management and the development of specialist knowledge of the sector, target group or provision. A number of providers have been able to continue activity, but not necessarily in direct relation to co-financing activity.

## **6.7 Overview**

Much of the evidence from the 2000-2006 programme suggests that ESF made a very positive contribution to the learning infrastructure and to individual beneficiaries. The recommendations that follow are primarily focused on the retention of these positive elements, and on suggestions and improvements that might be considered in order to increase both efficiency and effectiveness.

## **Chapter 7: Recommendations**

### **7.1 Introduction**

An evaluation of a programme of this size and length can be expected to lead to a number of recommendations, but we have kept these to a minimum in what we consider to be critical areas. These are in draft form for consideration by the Steering Group, and can be developed if necessary.

### **7.2 Recommendations**

The recommendations arising from the HOST evaluation fall into eight specific areas:

#### **Evaluation strategy**

There is a clear need for an evaluation strategy which needs to be designed, plans compiled and activities implemented in the next programme. The strategy should articulate the evaluation rationale and the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the implementation of the evaluation plan which results from the strategy. In particular, the evaluation of the programme needs to be managed by an individual who must ensure that the purpose and benefits of evaluation are understood throughout the region. Providers should be given clear guidance on the evaluation of their individual projects and supported to undertake this where needed.

#### **Impact measurement**

Embedded in the programme evaluation strategy should be some form of impact measurement, ie a method for the recording and interpretation of *outcomes* from selected and measurable activities. This must include setting outcome indicators and assisting individual projects to do similarly, and a method of capturing indirect impacts that cannot be anticipated, as well as direct impacts which are easier to predict. (*Some do's and don'ts of impact measurement can be found at Annex B of this report.*)

#### **Contracting and data collection**

LSC managers and staff must understand the implications of delays in contracting for projects and find strategies to mitigate this. They also need to work with the Information Authority to ensure data collections are relevant and as complete as necessary for provider project management. Additionally, they need to find a way to ensure that a single project with a single provider has a single funding code to reduce the need for supplementary management information systems by providers.

#### **Capacity building**

Capacity building for new and developing partnerships has been a valuable element of the past programme, and should continue to be funded, building on the innovative approaches used and developed. Improved capacity within the smaller training providers should be rewarded by their inclusion in the delivery of mainstream provision where this is practical, and ESF staff may need to assist organisations in their search for additional funding at an early stage of the project.

## **Mainstreaming and provider best practice**

Providers may need to be supported at an early stage of a project to identify potential for mainstreaming, to consider sustainability strategies, and offered best practice on tracking or follow-up surveys or activities to gauge progression. Facilitating provider quality groups might also help to share best practice in sustainability, monitoring destinations, and the collection/recording of 'soft' outcomes.

## **Linking project specifications to accurate labour market information**

Project specifications need to be based on current labour market information to ensure that the delivery proposed is achievable in terms of such things as numbers of beneficiaries in a target area, and skills shortages that cannot be addressed through mainstream activities. The regional team may wish to consider commissioning research projects similar to those conducted in an early stage of the 2000-2006 programme in Devon and Cornwall and Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole and disseminate this information to potential ESF contractors. This will both help them to underpin their project proposals and reinforce the collaborative strategy that has become so central to successful delivery in the region.

## **A dissemination framework**

The dissemination of information in the new programme needs a clear framework. Local offices, GOSW, and individual projects all need to be kept informed about effective practice and projects that could be replicated in other areas. The use of ICT for this could be a useful, and an information 'huddle' a possible, tool for this.

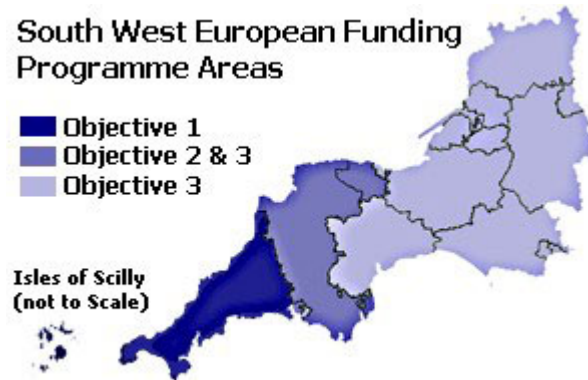
## **Encouraging innovation**

Partnership/consortia projects, especially those which are innovative, need to be encouraged if the ESF programme is to grow and thrive. The use of smaller and voluntary and community providers in larger-scale co-financed contracts is one way forward, or offering contracts to smaller organisations that are able to engage with hard-to-reach groups, micro businesses or specific age ranges. ESF teams could help here by monitoring consortia composition and membership, and seek opportunities to enlarge them.

## **Annex A**

### **A map showing the South West's European Funding Programme areas**

## Annex A: A map showing the South West's European Funding Programme areas



## **Annex B**

### **Impact measures - some essential do's and don'ts**

## Annex B: Impact measures - some essential do's and don'ts

Past research, and HOST working, in particular with ESF and QIA-funded programme evaluations, suggests some useful tips about developing appropriate impact measures and indicators, and also a few warnings about pitfalls.

**When setting impact indicators**, some useful tips are:

- **DO** ensure that all indicators pass each part of the five-step *S-M-A-R-T* test to ensure they will be practical and relevant to the outcome which needs to be measured.
- **DO** build wider ownership - it is important to develop both understanding and commitment to impact measures (and their measurement) that you develop.
- **DO** make use of what you already have to hand - impact indicators can often (but not always) be set to take advantage of evidence or data that is already being collected.
- **DO** make sure the measurement of indicators is credible by using established information sources which are recognised to be sound, or are audited in some way. This will not be possible for all the indicators you choose, but it will help with some.
- **DO** ensure your indicators are fit for the purpose for which they are designed.
- **DO** remember that even the best set indicators are the *means* to impact assessment and not the *ends*. Setting out how you propose to use and assess the indicators will be essential to building credibility in their use and utility.

**But also remember:**

- **DON'T** overburden the programme with more impact measures and indicators than are necessary. More indicators does not mean better impact assessment. The key to success is setting the minimum number of indicators which are appropriate to the outcome goals of the programme and any wider expectations of it.
- **DON'T** rely only on those indicators (or sources of measurement) which are easily quantified or measured. This risks presenting a misleading and/or unbalanced picture of the difference the programme may be making.
- **DON'T** forget the quality dimension, especially for outcome indicators. Focusing exclusively on numerically measured evidence may neglect the quality issues which are equally important to what ESF is aiming to achieve.
- **DON'T** interpret the results you get from your indicators inflexibly when assessing impact. The numerical results should be used as guidance to outcome trends and achievements, not as answers in themselves.

## **Annex C**

### **Comparative matrices**

## Annex C: Comparative matrices

### Matrix 1

Lead deliverer	Overview of managing organisation	Project start/finish	Number of project partners and roles	How project organised between partners	Prior experience of ESF	Rationale for project
Learning Notes (Somerset) Objective 3	Managed by the Education and Training Manager, Somerset County Council's Adult Learning and Leisure Department	Contract signed in April 2004. Ran until end of December 2006	Up to 20 partners involved in supporting learning, providing venues, supporting recruitment and management of project through Steering Group	Project led by senior manager within Adult Learning and Leisure who chaired project's Steering Group made up of representatives from NCH, Sure Start, Bridgwater College and Somerset Music	First ESF project the project manager had been involved with, although some involvement in tendering for an earlier ESF-funded project	Use of innovation to widen participation, using music as the vehicle to attract people into learning
Matchmaker (Dorset) Objective 3	Managed by the Equality and Diversity Manager at Kingston Maurward College	October 2005 - December 2007	Alliance of many partners rather than a formal partnership. In total 15 lead deliverer partners offering training	Steering Group: Bournemouth & Poole College; Kingston Maurward College (Chair); Travellers Education Support Service (TESS); TOPS Day Nursery. Group met monthly	Project manager's first experience of an ESF bid, and he experienced difficulties with the language used and trying to match this with the client group	KM College's own equality and diversity monitoring had identified Gypsies and Travellers as being a substantial minority group whose needs should be addressed
The NOVA Project (Dorset) Objective 3	Directed by the chief executive of Links4Learning, the Education Business Links consortium for the Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole LSC area from 2002 until end July 2008	October 2005 - December 2007	Links4Learning worked with its LA strategic partners to identify young people from within the mainstream secondary schools across the county that met the ESF participant criteria	Links4Learning managed administration of project while each school identified a named Project Co-ordinator to oversee the delivery of the project within their organisation	Links4Learning had already delivered an ESF LSC co-financed work-related project for disengaged young people, and this involved working with basically the same schools as NOVA	Strengthening provision of a work-related curriculum for disengaged 14 - 16 year olds in danger of not meeting their full potential

## Matrix 1 (continued)

Lead deliverer	Overview of managing organisation	Project start/finish	Number of project partners and roles	How project organised between partners	Prior experience of ESF	Rationale for project
REAL (Somerset) Objective 3	Directed by Chief Executive of the Somerset Rural Youth Project (SRYP), which provides IAG as well as specific assistance for young people through its own training programme	Originally January 2004 - March 2006, but a contract variation agreed to extend the project with additional ESF co-financing until 31 March 2007	Not a formal partnership for the project, but working with partner agencies, including Jobcentre Plus and Somerset Connexions	A project advisory group met quarterly	SRYP had previously had an ESF-funded project in 2003 for the Exmoor Rural Studies Workshop under Objective 2	The REAL project derived from an incident related to SRYP's mopeds loans scheme, which identified a need to provide support to young people in rural surroundings
VT Southern Careers Limited Objective 3	Held the Nextsteps contract for Wiltshire and Swindon between 2005 and 2008, and is part of the national company, VT plc	January - December 2007	5 delivery partners with coverage across the whole of the area; VT provided the management support	Contracted through VT to partners, who were allocated a maximum number of starts - none exceeded their maximum	Had run projects before, but staff had moved on since then, so they were new to paperwork and systems	Gap in the provision for this client group recognised by provider/LSC
The Richmond Fellowship Objective 3	Wiltshire and Swindon branch of a national charity, a leading national specialist in holistic mental health care	July 2006 - December 2007	The Richmond Fellowship used 2 training providers for accredited learning delivery	Contracted through the Richmond Fellowship with sub-contracting arrangements agreed with learning providers	Had run a 3-year programme for assisting people into work, gained through Wiltshire County Council co-financing	There was a known potential client group for Level 1 training, although the size of the client group was not necessarily linked to the scale of the contract

## Matrix 1 (continued)

Lead deliverer	Overview of managing organisation	Project start/finish	Number of project partners and roles	How project organised between partners	Prior experience of ESF	Rationale for project
The Dynamite Project (Devon and Cornwall) Objectives 2 & 3	Project managed by Duchy College (part of Cornwall College). Specialist horticulture and agriculture college with some general FE provision	Began in January 2004 and finished in December 2005	Two partners. Bicton College (specialist land-based in Devon) and Drake Training (work-based learning provider in Devon)	Project led by Duchy. Delivery divided between partners as 58% Duchy and 21% respectively the other two. Some activities were collaborative	Duchy had experience of ESF previously. Bicton as a partner organisation, and Drake, no experience	Large numbers of small farming businesses in sub-region, weak response to mainstream training, were not eligible or did not want NVQ-based provision
Rural Connections (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	Small rural-based general FE College with Business Training Department	Began in 2004 and completed 2006 with one extension	One other main partner, Tourism and Skills network. College accountable partner. Tourism Network marketing responsibilities	College delivered learning and Network wrote proposal, provided contacts - individual and companies - to assist delivery	No prior experience as accountable body but awarded 3 other ESF projects at the same time	Research from College's CoVE had indicated small accommodation, providers wanted a more flexible approach based on needs
Education Unlimited Limited (West of England) Objective 3	Managed by City of Bristol College	2005-2007	10 delivery partners - 4 private training providers and 6 community group partners	Managing body employed 5 advisers to work with partner providers	Both manager and college had previous ESF experience	Stemmed from LSC perceiving need to address NEET target group more imaginatively
Community ICT in Cornwall Objective 1	Led by The Learning Partnership for Cornwall (LPC), a company set up in 1990s to facilitate partnership working	2004-2006	LPC with 14 partners mix of large providers and very small community groups	LPC managed, monitored and offered advice and guidance. Delivery partners also involved in steering group and best practice groups	Some larger-sized partners had experience and also LPC, but few of the others were experienced in ESF	Perceived need to develop more partnerships between mainstream and community learning partners, and build delivery capacity

### Matrix 1 (continued)

Lead deliverer	Overview of managing organisation	Project start/finish	Number of project partners and roles	How project organised between partners	Prior experience of ESF	Rationale for project
Cotswolds Rural and Heritage Skills (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	Royal Agricultural college which now has a rural skills and business development centre	2005 - early 2008	Main partners were British Waterways and Cotswold Canal Trust. 4 main delivery partners (local colleges)	RAC undertook delivery of courses with help from other deliverers	No prior experience of ESF	Skill needs analysis undertaken by Canal Trust in 2004 identified need for rural skills, and a shortfall in the Cotswold area
Crystal Chandelier Objective 3 (All South West areas except Cornwall)	Learning South West, an independent education charity	2005-2007 (originally only 2 years but granted extension of 1 year though no additional funding)	30 delivery partners and numerous other collaborations	LSW accountable partner. Delivery partners had service- level agreements specifying targets	Some experience by LSW and some delivery partners	Funding available to address need, identified by LSC, for more and better qualified SfL workforce in the SW

## Matrix 2

Lead deliverer	Focus/scope of project	Changes to original focus	Model for delivery	Targets set/achieved	Soft outcomes recorded?	Support from LSC/other agencies
Learning Notes (Somerset) Objective 3	Recruiting adults not in any learning or training, and those with disabilities or Basic Skills needs in the areas of Somerset	Contract variation agreed with LSC to widen geographical areas to not exclude people from neighbouring communities	Delivery local to beneficiaries using mixed approach and a range of musical activities to meet their diverse needs	Targets were set for recruitment, progression to further provision and IAG, all of which were met or exceeded	Participants said they felt more confident about communication, and most workshops led to a performance	Long process of contract re-negotiation, working closely with LSC. The LSC was a member of the Steering Group
Matchmaker (Dorset) Objective 3	Aimed to reach and engage with local Gypsy and Travelling People Community	Little apart from additional support needed in helping beneficiaries to complete forms	Beneficiaries receive mix of IAG, enhanced support, education/training places in a variety of skills areas. Training delivered in FE provider establishments and via outreach work	Contract was for 50 beneficiaries and was exceeded (78); all had initial IAG, and 73 ILPs. 30 units and 35 qualifications were delivered meeting those targets	Increased confidence within the Gypsy and Travelling People Communities in working with a range of local employers and educationalists	Training provided for a member of staff to do the ESF returns went very smoothly. LSC staff were very supportive, came to meetings regularly, and dealt effectively with any queries
The NOVA Project (Dorset) Objective 3	To reduce the effect that disadvantage has on excluded learners in the 14-16 age group	No changes to focus	Management board. Each school responsible for engaging Formal Project Agreement with each participating school	Participation target of 200 was surpassed, with 333 participating, of which 283 gained NVQ Level 1 (or equivalent), exceeding target of 150 by 133	Beneficiaries welcomed opportunity to 'reinvent' themselves in a work-related context, which raised their aspirations and improved confidence and self-esteem	LSC offered training in short event record forms and inputting into the system. Nova project had regular meetings with the LSC officers

## Matrix 2 (continued)

Lead deliverer	Focus/scope of project	Changes to original focus	Model for delivery	Targets set/achieved	Soft outcomes recorded?	Support from LSC/other agencies
REAL (Somerset) Objective 3	To identify, engage, motivate and support vulnerable, isolated and hard-to-reach rural young adults	REAL project was fundamentally a brokerage scheme. The focus did not change	Identify beneficiary, put an action plan in place, develop short-term and medium-term aims, look at who is best to help the young person meet those aims, and offer support	The project exceeded its contract requirements of 100 by identifying and engaging with 137 beneficiaries	The project captured soft outcomes through the production of case studies for each young person, all of whom were given exit interviews	LSC was part of the project advisory group. Deliverers offered training for data returns, but many problems relating to these, eg during the audit
VT Southern Careers Ltd Objective 3	IAG to employed people aged 25 plus with a Level 2 qualification or higher	Not deliberately, but did find that they were working with employed people threatened with redundancy (104 out of the total of 476)	Once engaged, it was 2 sessions, an initial information and advice session, followed up with a second more detailed and development-oriented session	Original target of 600 starts, achieved starts of 476, with all achieving a generic qualification outcome	Information not required by the LSC was stored on the VT AMIS system	Good assistance on forms, data entry and audit. No other assistance provided
The Richmond Fellowship Objective 3	One-to-one support including careers guidance, and training to Level 1	Not overall, but did stop the Level 1 problem-solving option, as learners were more inclined to drop out of this	Initial session with RF adviser, followed by accredited training with another provider and non-accredited training with the RF	Targets: 320 beneficiaries, 208 working to qualifications 192 achieved qualifications 4 trainers trained. Achieved 212 beneficiaries, 89 training starts, 19 qualifications achieved and 4 trainers trained	While not paid outcomes, RF did note that 54 beneficiaries entered employment rather than finishing qualifications	Good assistance on forms, data entry and audit. No other assistance provided

## Matrix 2 (continued)

Lead deliverer	Focus/scope of project	Changes to original focus	Model for delivery	Targets set/achieved	Soft outcomes recorded?	Support from LSC/other agencies
The Dynamite Project (Devon and Cornwall) Objectives 2 and 3	Engaging small business providers in learning included bespoke short courses and certificated structured NVQ-based provision	No major changes to provision during life of project, though Drake Training closed during project (unrelated reasons)	Short course subjects centred on immediate needs such as herd health planning. Extensive use of IT, including mobile classroom unit	Targets set by LSC and agreed by partners. 1,300 engaged and 85% achieved an award or units towards an award	No system for recording this	Very active support from LSC and NFU, also other organisations in both counties - cattle breeders, large processing companies, Defra, and vets throughout Devon and Cornwall
Rural Connections (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	Deliver a 'menu' of opportunities for accommodation owners/managers whose business skills needed upgrading or enhancing	None	Courses provided in local areas at times to suit SMEs. Courses chosen by them with additional workshops about current issues	Original targets 64 SMEs and 300 learning opportunities to be achieved. Project exceeded this, engaging 130 businesses and delivering 340 learning opportunities	Some recording of soft outcomes, but was not a main feature of the delivery model	Very supportive LSC manager. Support from tourism agencies
Education Unlimited Limited (West of England) Objective 3	Customised support and activities for NEET group through use of traditional approaches and those involving sport and arts	None	Initial assessment. Package customised to suit individual needs and requirements aiming for learning/job outcomes	600 recruited. Short-fall in outcomes of those progressing to learning/employment	Beneficiaries able to evidence soft outcomes for ASDAN units as outcome of project	Manager did not feel LSC supported project and did not understand aims, although regional LSC representative was helpful at one stage. Supported well by Connexions

## Matrix 2 (continued)

Lead deliverer	Focus/scope of project	Changes to original focus	Model for delivery	Targets set/achieved	Soft outcomes recorded?	Support from LSC/other agencies
Community ICT in Cornwall Objective 1	ICT training in community settings. Beneficiaries not eligible if work over 16 hours a week. SMEs included in target group, especially micro businesses and sole traders	None	Times suitable for beneficiaries, in easy to reach venues offering travel costs, crèche facilities, access to IAG	1,400 individuals recruited; over 900 completed an ICT course. Achievement of Level 1 and 2 qualifications fell below target by 35%	Some deliverers were able to do this, but it was not systematic	Excellent support from LSC from start to finish, also from other agencies who were able to refer individuals to delivery partners, such as Jobcentre Plus
Cotswolds Rural and Heritage Skills (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	Develop local workforce in rural and heritage skills to meet increased local demand through accredited training	Targets for numbers of NVQ Level 3s were changed during life of programme	Mixture of college-based delivery and work-based delivery and assessment	50 1-day training courses, 48 NVQ Level 2s and 5 NVQ Level 3s (renegotiated down from 10 with the LSC)	No system for recording this	LSC supportive throughout assisted with contract, data input, suggestions about course delivery and marketing to beneficiaries
Crystal Chandelier Objective 3 (All South West areas except Cornwall)	Support for individuals engaged in SfL teaching to obtain Level 3 and Level 4 NVQ qualifications with IAG	None	College and other provider-based delivery (30 delivery partners). Comprehensive support network work groups and <i>ad hoc</i> events underpinned by appropriate ICT	1,509 beneficiaries enrolled (target 1,516) Level 3 qualifications achieved=495 Level 4 qualifications achieved=468	Not recorded	Support from LSC excellent. Also support from a whole range of organisations including LLUK, Awarding Bodies, Higher Education and NIACE

### Matrix 3

Lead deliverer	Any innovation?
Learning Notes (Somerset) Objective 3	Use of music and music technology to reach targeted beneficiaries and provide them with progression opportunities
Matchmaker (Dorset) Objective 3	The project set up a Gypsy and Travelling People Sustainability Group (Kushti Bok) made up of equal numbers of Gypsies and Travellers (4 of each)
The NOVA Project (Dorset) Objective 3	The structure of the in-school programme needed to be flexible and to react quickly in cases where initial work-related programme choices proved unsuccessful
REAL (Somerset) Objective 3	Staff delivered a service until 10 pm and at weekends. Support to young people through the use of mobile phones and MSN
VT Southern Careers Ltd Objective 3	Delivery partners were able to develop client-specific materials where they were working with an employer in a large-scale redundancy situation, which were subsequently developed for other situations
The Richmond Fellowship Objective 3	For RF, there was a lot of partnership development with agencies and organisations that they had not worked with much in the past
The Dynamite Project (Devon and Cornwall) Objectives 2 & 3	Use of 'conduits', eg vets already attached to farms trained to deliver workshops to farmers on herd health. This has been sustained after project
Rural Connections (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	Beneficiaries designed their own menu of opportunities at initial marketing meetings and through a needs analysis. 1:1 counselling for individuals. Cluster network groups set up to assist exchange of practice among participants
Education Unlimited Limited (West of England) Objective 3	Variety of very successful interventions used which involved sport and arts
Community ICT in Cornwall Objective 1	No large-scale innovation, but small groups operated as flexibly as possible
Cotswolds Rural and Heritage Skills (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	Innovation was not a feature of this project
Crystal Chandelier (all South West areas except Cornwall) Objective 3	Good practice network established to reflect need for regional support for learners and sharing of good practice. Mentors trained specifically to work with beneficiaries

#### Matrix 4

Lead deliverer	Activities to engage beneficiaries	Evidence of beneficiary progression (employment training)	Evidence that beneficiaries had better access to IAG
Learning Notes (Somerset) Objective 3	Various - flyers were distributed to places like pubs, supermarkets and playgroups. Project workers also visited different community organisations	A survey of beneficiaries found that 21% had indicated that they moved into employment	IAG was provided through learning advisers on a 1:1 basis at beneficiaries' induction sessions or drop-in sessions. At the end of the project, participants saw a learning adviser again
Matchmaker (Dorset) Objective 3	Project targeted Gypsies and Travellers aged 13 and above direct, starting with short practical taster courses. A survey found that 66% of respondents heard about it through word of mouth, and 34% through project team's direct marketing or speaking to partner organisations	The project directly employed some of the student beneficiaries on self-employed and part-time bases throughout the life of the project to provide their bespoke services. An increase in self-employment and in self-employed services, including safer working practice	IAG underpinned the whole process, with potential and actual students having unlimited access to IAG as they needed it. IAG was provided by the project co-ordinator, who was trained in IAG and had contacts with the Connexions Service
The NOVA Project (Dorset) Objective 3	A clear strategy based on an IAG programme that was key to engaging and motivating them, and making sure that interventions took place at a stage where re-engagement was realistic and achievable	There were 41 early leavers accounting for 12% of participants - a low percentage for the challenging disengaged target group. The target of 76 learners to progress into employment was not achieved, falling short by 16. However, the target for progression into training or Further Education was significantly over-achieved	Little actual evidence regarding better access to IAG other than the fact that targets were exceeded
REAL (Somerset) Objective 3	Targeting geographical areas, referrals from other agencies	Originally, 30 beneficiaries employed and 70 who were unemployed. By the end of the project, these had changed to 55 employed (45 full-time and 10 part-time), with only 5 unemployed. The number in full-time education or training also increased significantly from 35 to 45	Beneficiaries were all provided with appropriate IAG by project staff, who were all qualified to offer IAG

#### Matrix 4 (continued)

Lead deliverer	Activities to engage beneficiaries	Evidence of beneficiary progression (employment training)	Evidence that beneficiaries had better access to IAG
VT Southern Careers Ltd Objective 3	Jobs fairs, pro-active work with employers with large-scale redundancy situations, some delivery partners located within colleges with open door policies on adult advice and guidance	Collected by follow-up survey; however, this postal survey had poor response rates and indicated a lack of progression	The whole project was about IAG and the target group was not covered by detailed provision, and outside the project had to be referred on to learndirect as the only other source of IAG
The Richmond Fellowship Objective 3	Engagement with a wide range of local groups, learning providers, carer groups and voluntary action services, as well as core partners such as community health teams, occupational health workers, social workers and Jobcentre Plus. Presentations to Jobcentre Plus core and specialist staff and other organisations. Mailshots	Tracked where possible, so aware of a number of beneficiaries going into employment rather than completing training. Some beneficiaries stayed with the programme at the end of funding to achieve their qualifications. High drop-out rates with this difficult client group	Each beneficiary had a personal adviser who started out by developing an action plan with them, and then followed up the beneficiary on a regular basis to ensure progress and consolidate learning/development
The Dynamite Project (Devon and Cornwall) Objectives 2 & 3	Network used as a tool for engagement. Marketing techniques and use of brokers as a conduit to learning. Partners attended events and promoted project at every opportunity	Bespoke delivery continues. Some progression into structured training or work on units towards	Better access to what was available to small business, types of support available, as well as learning provision and current issues
Rural Connections (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	2 launch events followed by meetings at local levels in community halls and small companies. Tourism Network publicised what was being offered. Telesales company used to contact SMEs through Tourism Council's database of companies	Some beneficiaries have progressed to other training either through Train to Gain or by paying for commercial courses. Only a very few have gone on to take NVQ units	Beneficiaries kept abreast of current issues and encouraged to discuss at network cluster meetings. Speakers booked to offer help on specific topics such as tax and new legislative requirements. Each participant given interview at mid-point and exit

#### Matrix 4 (continued)

Lead deliverer	Activities to engage beneficiaries	Evidence of beneficiary progression (employment training)	Evidence that beneficiaries had better access to IAG
Education Unlimited Limited (West of England) Objective 3	Recruited through youth groups, Social Services, Connexions or self-referral, having heard of project from friends. Providers were access points for recruitment and IAG	Many have progressed into formal learning, others have employment in, eg construction, having had taster session and test for CSCS card; progression into ICT training common	Advisers were each allocated a number of young people, and offered support and guidance. They linked with other agencies and signposted to activities and learning
Community ICT in Cornwall Objective 1	Variety of different approaches from using <i>Pathways</i> advisers, advertising, deliverers attending events. Larger organisations able to offer courses for all, even if some were not eligible for funding	Many beneficiaries took more than 1 course; 90 enquired about Train to Gain learning subsequently, although these were not tracked to evidence result of this interest	Many deliverers introduced beneficiaries to what the Internet could offer, both for their personal lives and regarding further learning, and especially e-learning
Cotswolds Rural and Heritage Skills (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	Advertising, flyers, managers attended craft fairs, referrals from Jobcentre Plus and voluntary sector after discussions with both	Half those who were unwaged at start of course are now in employment/self-employment and have taken additional commercial courses at RAC	Achieved through links with both The Heritage Academy and the Rural Enterprise Gateway, both of whom provided information and support to beneficiaries, and subsequently to those who moved into self-employment
Crystal Chandelier Objective 3 (All South West areas except Cornwall)	Marketing strategy and activities included advertising, promotions, specifically targeted events	Beneficiaries remain part of the Good Practice Network and some will progress to Level 4 qualifications	Through network and events, and mentoring support throughout the project

## Matrix 5

Lead deliverer	How effective is partnership working?	Has collaboration continued beyond project?	Has project improved capacity/capability of main organisation/partners?	When did project partners/organisation consider sustainability?
Learning Notes (Somerset) Objective 3	Partnership was more of an <i>ad hoc</i> nature - a facilitating and developmental partnership which concentrated on practical collaboration	Some groups which were established through the project have continued to meet, eg Mendip All Drummers practise and perform	The project has led to an increasing breadth in the Council's programme. 5 of the musicians who were involved have trained as tutors and gained City & Guilds 7302 first level teacher training	Sustainability was considered at the bidding stage and throughout the project. The project, while not continued in its ESF form, has spawned a number of projects and groups
Matchmaker (Dorset) Objective 3	Successful practice and regular conference dissemination brought additional partners on board who were willing to work to the standards of the project	Not project partners, but a number of potential partners approached Kingston Maurward College to discuss partnership outcomes of the project, and developmental and sustainable ideas that could result from it	A staff and partnership survey conducted in 2007 showed that their knowledge had been increased, and working practice had become more flexible and equal opportunities aware	The project established early on a Sustainability Group made up of Gypsies and Travelling People
The NOVA Project (Dorset) Objective 3	Schools worked closely with individual students and, where possible, with their parents/guardians, to identify the most appropriate work-related activity for each student	Project continued through South West LSC, with 25% of the Education Business Link budget used to target potential NEETs. The 14-19 Steering Group is being used to continue funding of NOVA with fewer beneficiaries	Enabled partner schools to develop capacity within their infrastructure. Also supported the development of a multi-agency approach, building capacity amongst teachers, advisers and school support staff	N/A
REAL (Somerset) Objective 3	Links with Connexions have been strengthened and developed	The current bid, which is led by Connexions, has a clear formal partnership approach	While the REAL project was running, SRYP had essentially 2 programme areas, ie community and economic. It now has 3 areas as a result of involvement, and correspondingly larger numbers of staff	Deliverers felt that there was no possibility of mainstreaming this type of work, so it could only continue for as long as ESF could fund it

## Matrix 5 (continued)

Lead deliverer	How effective is partnership working?	Has collaboration continued beyond project?	Has project improved capacity/capability of main organisation/partners?	When did project partners/organisation consider sustainability?
VT Southern Careers Ltd Objective 3	Partners worked closely together. This project was one in a portfolio, but was discussed at regular meetings; non-participating delivery partners were able to refer learners	Yes, at least until VT Southern Careers closed its Wiltshire office at the end of July 2008, when its contract to deliver Nextsteps ceased	There were no funds for capacity building in this contract, despite delivery having to include Level 4 advisers. Individual delivery partners were able to develop materials and methods that could be used with a wider clientele	VT actively sought the Nextsteps contract for the South West region, but were not in a position to bid for further ESF funding as the Nextsteps contract was not won
The Richmond Fellowship Objective 3	Strengthened existing partnerships and also helped to develop the relationship with the 2 training providers	In a more informal way, until the future of the RF in Wiltshire is more clear	4 RF trainers were able to access Train the Trainer courses, although this has not been reflected in the ILR data submitted. The delivery partners are much more aware of the needs of this client group	The client group needs longer than the 3 to 6 months allowed to achieve the Level 1 qualification. Consequently, they are looking for funding streams that will allow 3-year projects
The Dynamite Project (Devon and Cornwall) Objectives 2 & 3	Very successful, good dynamic between partners and other agencies. Regular open communications reported	Worked together to extend and enhance aspects of delivery model, including training of work-based assessors in poultry rearing companies that service large Devon-based organisation	Ensured that staff at both colleges now prepared to develop and encourage ideas for innovation and good practice in learning to address needs of small farming businesses	From the beginning, were considering how best to finance continuation through other funding streams or mainstream provision
Rural Connections (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	Good strong collaboration. Partners kept one another informed and had regular meetings with the LSC	Collaboration continues between those involved in delivery of courses (outside college) and also with TSN	Improved knowledge of what SMEs want. Results of exit interviews and evaluation informed planning and business training approach	From about 3 months in, when it was realised that the project was going to be very successful. This was the reason the cluster network groups were set up

## Matrix 5 (continued)

Lead deliverer	How effective is partnership working?	Has collaboration continued beyond project?	Has project improved capacity/capability of main organisation/partners?	When did project partners/organisation consider sustainability?
Education Unlimited Limited (West of England) Objective 3	Successful and well integrated into life of project. Advisers worked with partner staff and undertook training with them	Collaboration continues, and the deliverers are used by Project Manager's department in other initiatives with young people	Partners' staff undertook additional learning which assisted the project. Deliverer staff are now fully involved in education and learning projects, and staff are taking training in delivery of Skills for Life	From the start. Discussions began early on how and when the project could be continued. There was a real belief that the LSC could not disinvest at the end of the project term
Community ICT in Cornwall Objective 1	Partners wary at first to collaborate with competitors for a similar learning market, but quickly grasped the benefits. Very effective Best Practice groups and Steering Group	Collaboration has continued, and a number of initiatives between partners have resulted, including franchising arrangements with larger colleges	It has improved both their capacity and their understanding of the client group, which has meant that their courses are now better designed and reflect the needs of local people and small businesses	From the start, at every Steering Group, partners were working on how to access further finance and sustain many of the ideas trialled in this project
Cotswolds Rural and Heritage Skills (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	Complementary expertise through the sub-contracting of some NVQ modules, sharing of physical resources between partners, and effective practice, which has helped to inform future provision	Partnership with the Cotswold Canal Trust continues, with the Trust commissioning further training, and also with other delivery partners	RAC and partners now have a firmer understanding of ESF projects and how to deliver them. Capacity within the Canal Regeneration project has improved, particularly with volunteers	From the start, but there were many constraints, including RAC being an HE establishment and unable to draw down, eg NVQ funding. Partners are still exploring ways to overcome this
Crystal Chandelier Objective 3 (All South West areas except Cornwall)	Highly successful collaboration which was central to whole project and co-ordinated by LSW. Good practice shared, and diverse opportunities for partnership activities	Partners continue to work within the networks set up within the project. Agencies support and inform LSW in other projects	Evaluation reports higher number of qualified teachers has enhanced the image of SfL, enabled teachers and tutors to work with students more confidently, and enabled networking across the region	From the start, although recognised that there could be difficulties carrying forward such a project using the same model independently

## Matrix 6

Lead deliverer	Has project continued beyond funding?	Who finances continuation?	Other benefits for participating organisation(s)
Learning Notes (Somerset) Objective 3	No - but some of the activities which it initiated have	N/A	Project staff encouraged to address their own training needs. Some musicians who trained as tutors have found employment in mainstream Adult Learning
Matchmaker (Dorset) Objective 3	Yes, to some extent - the Principal has provided time for the project manager to continue to support the Kushti Bok group	The Principal had earmarked some funds for continuation, and the college has also applied for funding to the Allen Lane Foundation	Kingston Maurward College was recently highly commended at the AOC's Beacon Awards in the widening participation category for its work on the Matchmaker Project with Gypsies and Travellers
The NOVA Project (Dorset) Objective 3	Yes - the 14-19 Steering Group is being used to continue funding of NOVA, but on a smaller scale, with fewer beneficiaries	Project funding has been continued through South West LSC, with 25% of the Education Business Link budget to be used to target potential NEETs	The project staff had previous experience of working in this way in the schools, and it was an important aspect of the relationship that there was one-on-one contact with the schools co-ordinator
REAL (Somerset) Objective 3	The REAL project has been able to continue beyond the ESF funding	Through funding from the Children's and Young People's Partnership in Somerset (CHYPPS), and a small pot of money from Defra, whose funding finished in March 2008. The REAL Project currently has LSC funding from its discretionary fund until July 2008	REAL is now an established project in Somerset, known and respected by a number of key agencies. Links have developed with other agencies, as have employer links, although the project recognises there is more to do in this respect
VT Southern Careers Ltd Objective 3	Some activity has continued with individual delivery partners who have been able to secure other funding or hide the activity within mainstream activity	Some regional initiatives and provider funding/cross-subsidy	Opportunity to develop skills working with a different section of the population
The Richmond Fellowship Objective 3	Yes, insofar as beneficiaries already on the programme are being supported to complete their qualifications	There appears to be some cross-funding from other projects, and also the RF is providing some funding itself	Provided a better understanding of the training environment and therefore ideas on how to deliver a similar project better in the future

## Matrix 6 (continued)

Lead deliverer	Has project continued beyond funding?	Who finances continuation?	Other benefits for participating organisation(s)
The Dynamite Project (Devon and Cornwall) Objectives 2 & 3	Many aspects have, but some are now part of the mainstream agenda	-	Has raised profile of colleges in both counties and with various farming organisations
Rural Connections (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	Some aspects of it have been integrated into other programmes for SMEs, some into Train to Gain packages	-	Publicity for the project has raised the profile of the College and TSN. Information from courses has informed planning and College's interface with business
Education Unlimited Limited (West of England) Objective 3	Project has continued and was first financed under LIF funding. From 2009, will again be part of ESF funding	ESF (through LSC)	It has been a capacity builder, and an opportunity to work collaboratively with both the College and the public sector agencies
Community ICT in Cornwall Objective 1	The project did not continue as such, although elements of it have been incorporated into projects that are now funded under current ESF projects, and even into mainstream provision	-	Smaller organisations and groups have seen the benefits of collaboration and are now able to tender for funding more confidently
Cotswolds Rural and Heritage Skills (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	Not as a whole, although what has been learnt has transferred to commercial delivery and to publicly-funded courses of delivery partners	-	The collaboration and networking between those engaged in the delivery of rural skills, or providing information and guidance to those who are, is now more firmly established
Crystal Chandelier Objective 3 (All South West areas except Cornwall)	Not as such, but the model and the 'brand' have been incorporated into one of the QIA-financed CETTs in the region to enhance CPD and ensure continuation of good practice	QIA	Networks welcomed by employers in the region and by participating small and medium-sized private training providers operating in Lifelong Learning. Smaller providers have clearer understanding of ITT and new qualifications

## Matrix 7

Lead deliverer	What worked most effectively?	What worked least effectively?	Chief impact to date
Learning Notes (Somerset) Objective 3	The staff involved, who were 'charismatic' without being too 'in your face'; they were all passionate about the project. There were also excellent tutors. The drumming group was a huge success. Access to local community venues was an important factor	Project proved difficult administratively for staff, with much paperwork, which the learners also found off-putting. There was a mixed experience of working with partners, sometimes very good operationally, but disappointing at a strategic level	The project had provided a different sort of experience, enabling beneficiaries to take steps in moving forward, and a significant number of people had demonstrated progression
Matchmaker (Dorset) Objective 3	What worked outstandingly well was mutual trust and confidence amongst all concerned	What worked less well was not having enough money, and also the few providers who did not achieve targets	Learners offered the chance to change their behaviour patterns, and have done so
The NOVA Project (Dorset) Objective 3	Ensuring that recruitment to the programme was made at an appropriate stage of disengagement. It was important to identify the level of individual support needed, and to allocate staff and resources quickly	They found the ESF systems quite bureaucratic. Managing the project proved extremely time-consuming	Beneficiaries engaged who had previously been classed as disaffected. Better transferable understanding of levels of support required for this target group
REAL (Somerset) Objective 3	Being needs-based, flexible and quick to respond was essential	Funding to enable a third worker in the team, and preferably a male one to balance the team and give greater flexibility. More administrative support	Chief impact was seen among the beneficiaries on their employability and skills
VT Southern Careers Ltd Objective 3	Targeted work with companies facing large-scale redundancies, tailored materials for individuals	Follow-up after the end of the programme through the tracking system	While the provider was disappointed with tracking figures, initial destinations data on the ILR indicated positive destinations for 91% of beneficiaries
The Richmond Fellowship Objective 3	Individual and personalised support to beneficiaries, helping them back into work or training	Level 1 problem-solving course. Early leavers gave this as main reason for leaving the course; they found it too challenging	54 individuals entered employment during their time on the project; this was not a 'paid for' outcome

## Matrix 7 (continued)

Lead deliverer	What worked most effectively?	What worked least effectively?	Chief impact to date
The Dynamite Project (Devon and Cornwall) Objectives 2 & 3	Partnership and innovation, and willingness of partners to consider different models to make learning workable for small farmers	Travel costs were high, some issues with Awarding Bodies over NVQ delivery (still not resolved); funding stream eligibility did not always match local demand. Project not evaluated, and impact not systematically recorded	Economic and learning benefits. Eg, vets have increased their capacity; large poultry company in Devon with numerous sub-contractors has well-trained sub-contractors producing quality products
Rural Connections (Gloucestershire) Objective 3	Flexible approach with SMEs. Transparency with SMEs about eligibility and constraints on ESF funding, which raised trust	Data requirements of the LSC, and problems with project aims which were not cohesive with LSC targets. Opportunities that could be offered to different sized business, and under what circumstances	ESF made training accessible to micro businesses and candidates whose needs could not be met in other ways at low or no cost. In particular, this greatly assisted the over-25 age group
Education Unlimited Limited (West of England) Objective 3	Partnership communication, innovations in sport and art to motivate young people, giving young people short-term aims on which to build progression into learning. Recording of soft outcomes was also considered an achievement	Relationships with LSC, administration connected with data input for payments. No systematic measurement of impact	Continuation of the project which has enabled many more young people to take advantage of the programme resources
Community ICT in Cornwall Objective 1	Ensuring that accessibility to ICT was totally inclusive and no section of the community was disadvantaged. Good exchange of practice throughout the project between partners	Measuring impact and tracking progress of beneficiaries were seen as the weakest areas of the project	More effective collaboration; smaller organisations more involved in the mainstream of learning provision, and are more aware of opportunities open to them

## Matrix 7 (continued)

Lead deliverer	What worked most effectively?	What worked least effectively?	Chief impact to date
<p>Cotswolds Rural and Heritage Skills (Gloucestershire)</p> <p>Objective 3</p>	<p>Work with disadvantaged young people, improving skills of volunteers who underpin much of the rural skills work in the Cotswolds, partnership with LSC and delivery colleges</p>	<p>Not recording soft outcomes or having a system to measure impact built into project as a whole</p>	<p>A general recognition in the industry locally that rural skills shortages need to be addressed, and in more innovative ways than NVQ certification. Heritage Academy has more evidence of what does and does not work, and Rural Enterprise Gateway groups now provide support to new self-employed entrants to the sector</p>
<p>Crystal Chandelier</p> <p>Objective 3</p> <p>(All South West areas except Cornwall)</p>	<p>Partnerships, addressing learner feedback, working groups and Steering Group contribution to working model. Working relationships with LSC and agencies</p>	<p>Engaging small training providers in the project fell well below target, lack of alignment between MIS of LSC and LSW, difficulties in engaging the voluntary sector without additional resources</p>	<p>Has directly informed other initiatives. Working model has been incorporated into CETT and will be used to enhance the CPD elements of that pilot. LSW has better understanding of what can work most effectively in region among SfL deliverers</p>