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research evaluation surveys



## Engage Project – Final Evaluation

A report by Wavehill Ltd for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

In March 2011 Wavehill was commissioned by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (the Regional Lead for the Engage Project) to undertake an evaluation of the Engage Project. It is a three year project supported by European Social Fund (ESF) Convergence funding and works across two thematic areas within Priority 1 of the Convergence Programme: Supplying Young People with Skills for Learning and Future Employment. This report represents the final, summative evaluation of the project.

The Engage Project was approved in June 2009 with the aim to engage, re-engage, motivate and inspire 13,401<sup>1</sup> young people through a series of activities, both innovative and established through three linked strands:

- a) Targeting young people aged 14-16 who are currently within the education system but who are at risk of exclusion, have attendance levels below 70%, or are significantly under-achieving.
- b) Targeting young people aged 16-19 who are at risk of dropping out of their course and becoming NEET.
- c) Working across the 14-19 age range to support those young people who are NEET and to re-engage them

Throughout the rest of the report, each of the strands described above is referred to as **Strand A, B or C**.

The project operated across the South West of Wales and, in addition to the Regional Lead, the project (originally) included 10 partners:

- Neath Port Talbot CBC (Lead)
- Neath Port Talbot CBC (Operational Project)
- Carmarthenshire County Council
- Ceredigion County Council
- City and County of Swansea
- Gower College Swansea
- Coleg Ceredigion<sup>2</sup>
- Coleg Sir Gâr
- Neath Port Talbot College
- Pembrokeshire College
- Pembrokeshire County Council

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<sup>1</sup> Engage Business Plan (Original)

<sup>2</sup> Coleg Ceredigion have subsequently withdrawn from the project.

## Methodology

The evaluation has been undertaken over an 18 month period and has included a baseline, interim and this, the final summative evaluation. The research has involved:

- A review of documentation and data
- The compilation of an evaluation framework to guide the assessment of outcomes and impacts derived from the intervention
- Consultation with key stakeholders directly and indirectly involved with the project
- Consultation with the team of delivery staff from each partner
- Consultation with Engage participants
- Analysis of participant data and outcome/impact related evidence

## Project Delivery

The project commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009, however the commencement in delivery of each partner was rather sporadic, with some service providers commencing prior to the staff of the Lead Partner being in place. Furthermore, amongst a number of the local partners, frontline delivery staff were in place prior to the employment of the Co-ordinator. The sequence of appointments across the project did not always support the initial delivery of the Engage project.

Systems were established amongst some of the local partners which were specifically tailored to the nature of the provision within each partner area. Many of these were subsequently usurped by the Lead Partner who distributed a further set of requirements. Ultimately this led to a process of retrospective data capture; it also meant that a suite of different data capture tools (including participant enrolment forms for example) were being applied by the various partners.

Frustrations with delivery have emerged in relation to changing requirements and definitions of outputs and results. These have been compounded by a slow response to any queries or points of clarification that have been raised. The implications of delays in clarification on eligibility of activity (for example) have a variable impact on the delivery of services within the project but are perhaps most influential where the cancellation of provision has emerged or where potential project participants have been lost where they are unwilling or unable to wait to hear whether they can participate in a particular activity

The project, whilst regional in scale, has retained local distinctiveness as evidenced by the diversity in delivery models outlined in section 3 of the report. A level of autonomy has remained throughout the project enabling partners to deliver service provision that reflects the existing support infrastructure, the geography and the socio-economic situation within each authority area.

Local distinctiveness in both the situation of each authority area and in terms of the model of provision offered within each area is regularly cited as a contributory factor in the project being unable to measure progression or distance travelled in a consistent way. Concerns included:

- The **awkwardness** of conducting assessments in some contexts
- The challenge of achieving **objectivity** in the measurement of distance travelled
- The **timing** of implementation.

However the ability to build on local distinctive approaches rather than pursuing a harmonisation of support has enabled partners to establish, enhance and improve their model of service provision with significant success across all partners.

## Project Progress

Despite the initial frustrations, the project established itself with each partner and became well-embedded within existing service provision. The initial delays coupled with structural changes amongst some partners and the loss of one partner has meant that the profile target remained challenging, however there has been a massive upswing in the outcome/result indicators over the last quarter which has resulted in all core indicator targets being surpassed, some significantly so. The massive upswing is largely a reflection on the collation and review of paperwork associated with participant eligibility criteria and whilst it highlights the excellent performance of Engage it also provides an insight into the challenges of assessing project progress by outcome/result indicators alone.

## Project Impact

Participants, delivery staff, managerial representatives and other direct and indirect stakeholders have been overwhelmingly positive about the support offered through Engage. Participants have cited a wide range of benefits associated with their social skills, their aspirations and motivation and in supporting them to gain skills and qualifications with many, unprompted stating that they would not be in education without the support of Engage.

Indirect stakeholders – primarily service delivery staff who indirectly benefit from Engage's existence but are not funded through it were again extremely positive about the project with the majority describing it as being a great deal of help to their role.

Outcome and impact indicators that could be influenced by the existence of Engage have been analysed to help quantify the impact of the support on offer. The data highlights that Engage eligible areas continue to significantly outperform non-Engage areas in relation to the number of Year 11 leavers known not to be in education training or employment (NEET) with a 39% reduction (equivalent to an annual reduction of 188) in NEETs between 2009-2011 in Engage areas compared to a 22% reduction in non-engage areas. If Engage had performed at the same level as the non-Engage areas this would have equated to 83 additional year 11's that are NEET.

Analysis of the Engage database identifies that 130 Engage participants aged 16 or 17 years old were described as NEET of which 71 went on into further education, employment or volunteering. A further 17 participants aged 14-15 who were initially described as NEET also gained similar positive outcomes. This equates to 88 participants that were once NEET, leaving Engage into mainstream education, employment or volunteering. 47% of the annual reduction of NEETs in the Engage Project between 2009-2011 suggests that the project has played a major role in influencing this reduction.

The Engage area has also consistently outperformed the rest of Wales in relation to trends in the number of permanent exclusions from secondary schools, unauthorised absenteeism and in the reduction in the pupils leaving education with no qualifications. Collectively this data provides a compelling case for attributing the over-performance to interventions specific to this geography and client group which ultimately is driven by the Engage project.

Further evidence of both the perceived impact and effectiveness of the Engage model is evidenced by the fact that all delivery partners have sought to mainstream/continue to resource some elements of the Engage service with some even increasing the scale of service on offer.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Engage project suffered a stuttering start after its rapid approval but gained momentum and became embedded within service provision for the 14-19 age group across South West Wales. The project made good progress once a full (or near to) complement of delivery staff were on board and appears to have had significant impact on its target group as evidenced by a number of indicators collectively providing a compelling case for the impact.

Furthermore, in the months immediately following the cessation of delivery a review of data captured for participants has led to a massive upswing in delivery with all key targets being surpassed, some significantly so. The massive upswing conflicts with the performance trends exhibited by Engage project prior to the final quarter. Whilst it is acknowledged that this reflects the need to ensure that all information is in place for a participant for their result/outcomes to be deemed eligible, it does create a challenge for the ongoing external assessment of progress against outcomes/results throughout the duration of a project.

### **Recommendation**

Reporting total participant numbers (regardless of eligibility checks) and verified (confirmed as eligible) participant numbers (alongside outcomes/results) as part of quarterly monitoring returns may provide a clearer insight to Project Development Officers and other external monitoring representatives of the true performance and progress of an initiative.

Whilst many view the project as operating over too short a timescale the success of the project has influenced service provision with all partners looking to mainstream elements of their Engage model. In an era of tightening public sector resources, the desire for mainstreaming Engage services is clearly a reflection on the widely perceived success and importance of the Engage model.

## **Project Governance**

The appointment of a Lead Partner team following the commencement of project delivery in some partner areas generated a number of challenges, including, for example the need to retrospectively amend data capture forms on several occasions.

The challenges in delivering Engage services were compounded by the fact that the lead and the delivery partners have had to adjust to a strategic model of delivery and whilst the partnership approach builds on existing structures, the project still represents a step change in the extent to which partners are required to actively work together. Difficulties associated with confusion regarding eligibility and delays in terms of the release of guidance from WEFO also served to constrain the effective delivery of the project. The Lead Partner was placed in a difficult position with regards to service provider discussions, particularly where historically, partner areas had liaised directly with WEFO however all service providers were ultimately supportive of their role.

Fundamental structural changes in a number of partners (that were unforeseen), the loss of a further partner, combined with a lack of guidance constrained the ability of partners to deliver to target and ultimately resulted in the re-profiling of targets.

Whilst partner relationships have strengthened considerably; sharing of practice, successes and lessons learned has been limited at managerial level and there is very little evidence of this taking place at the delivery level.

### **Recommendations**

- The Lead Partner has to be in place prior to delivery commencing to enable consistent processes and systems to be put in place that will offer efficiencies in delivery as the project progresses.
- A greater sharing of resources, from a cross-project database through to data capture methods and mechanisms would have further aided the delivery of the project and strengthened integrated partnership working.
- Key measures need to be included in approaches to encourage networking of delivery teams to share practice and experience - one celebratory event was held for the Engage project less than 12 months from project completion providing little scope to influence any change of approach.
- A lead partner team on a regional project of this scale should also include experience of direct service delivery within the team to provide an “on the ground” perspective of deliverability when in discussion with WEFO.

### **Project Delivery**

The regional procurement framework provided some level of frustration amongst service providers, however, where service providers procured at the local level, additional challenges emerged that were not aided by the delays in the provision of guidance on approach.

Administrative requirements remained challenging throughout the project with a lack of clarity on data capture requirements (although this improved as the project progressed) leading to a number of partners having to retrospectively locate former participants to capture the necessary data to confirm them as eligible.

Data capture, management and sharing processes have been a crucial ingredient in the success of Engage across the majority of partners. Mechanisms for data capture have been developed alongside the project however Engage has helped to facilitate stronger relationships in many areas, enhancing the comprehensiveness and increasing the frequency of the sharing of information. By facilitating this change in data sharing the project has aided an increase in the effective targeting of resources that respond to specific participant needs.

Approaches to Engage service delivery vary from partner to partner but a level of consistency exists in terms of recognition of the crucial and most effective elements of support, namely:

- Outreach, Keeping in Touch provision for those on the verge of dropping out of school/college or who are already NEET;
- One to one, mentoring support for young people in school or college;
- Work experience opportunities and extracurricular activities to build confidence and social skills for those that struggle within the mainstream educational environment;
- Transition provision to assist in the move from school to college;
- Provision that remains independent (and therefore objective and confidential) from mainstream education within school or college;

- Greater flexibility (in terms of multiple start dates) and the delivery of bridging courses for those on the cusp of college.

### **Recommendations**

- Continue to establish effective data sharing protocols and focus on engaging and signing up suitable partner organisations to strengthen the evidence base available.
- Build data sharing agreements amongst partner areas where the propensity for participant transition is greatest.

### **Impact**

Quantitative indicators that are closely tied to Engage project intervention continue to suggest noticeable and significant impact arising from the support on offer. Indications of NEETs and secondary school exclusion numbers continue to exhibit a steep trend of improvements. Whilst these trends are not solely attributed to the Engage project (indeed policy focus on reducing exclusions (for example) and Reach the Heights provision (for example) are also likely to be influential), the Engage area has continued to outperform the wider geographical comparators. Furthermore, analysis of the participant database highlights a large number of 14-19 year olds supported through the project with a significant proportion gaining positive outcomes.

Relatively crude analysis of participant data suggests that Engage support may be attributed with up to half of the improving trends exhibited by impact indicators. Whilst this analysis is flawed in many senses it does nevertheless give a useful insight into the scale of influence and potential impact that the project has generated over a relatively small timescale.

Unfortunately little impact data in relation to Strand B activities is available and the evidence available is insufficient to provide any comprehensive perceptions of the success of these elements. However, participants, delivery staff and indirect stakeholders have been universal in the praise for this provision (as they have for the other strands of Engage support) and where data has been provided by Further Education Colleges (college retention rates are one such example) it illustrates significant success and impact.

Wider, longer term project impacts are more difficult to identify and whilst youth claimant count levels continue to outperform the Welsh average it is extremely difficult to attribute this performance to Engage interventions. The evaluation framework suggested an approach to estimating the proportion of these who are now in sustainable employment through the commissioning of DWP and HMRC undertaking analysis of benefit data by participant National Insurance number. Unfortunately this wasn't possible for the evaluation, however the approach is feasible and the data exists. Given the importance of addressing youth unemployment and unemployment more generally, mechanisms should be put in place to better identify the role of support in enabling a participant to gain sustainable employment as an outcome.



As identified within the interim report, whilst support within Engage appears to be having a significant impact upon participants, it is unclear as to the extent to which this provision has sufficiently equipped individuals when they are no longer eligible for the project (or the project ceases to exist). Indeed, a recurrent concern amongst delivery staff was the “cliff-edge” in terms of support drop-off experienced by participants after they move out of the eligible age group.

### Recommendations

- For WEFO to continue to explore with DWP and HMRC a potential approach for capturing PAYE evidence as a means for testing the sustainability (and therefore effectiveness) of employment outcomes.
- To track destinations of participants and the sustainability of these destinations post intervention to ensure continuity in support is achieved and that the impact of the support offered through Engage is not lost.
- To consider the expansion of the eligible age group (or status) of participants to ensure that all young people can access appropriate support as necessary.
- To build effective relationships with employment support initiatives (established – for example Job Centre Plus provision and emerging – for example Jobs Growth Wales) to help increase the proportion of individuals reaching what should be the ultimate goal for a project of this nature – sustainable employment/mainstream tertiary education for their participants.

The lack of a consistent approach to the measurement of soft outcomes does limit the extent to which participant progress and impact can be explored and analysed. Whilst partners were initially keen to identify a consistent approach, the active pursuit of this waned as the project progressed. It is recognised that the method does not work for all participants, particularly where provision is flexible and participant led in its entirety however evidence through the participant consultation highlights that it remains a crucial element of the impact of service provision.

### Recommendation

- Partners to continue to explore a consistent approach for capturing soft outcomes and distance travelled, considering the triangulation methodology mooted by the study team within the interim evaluation (where, ideally a participant, support provider and parent guardian complete a perception/self-perception tool – or (in reality) two of the three complete it to give a rounded assessment) at agreed milestones within support.

Despite the frustrations encountered in the delivery of Engage and the associated tightening of timescales for active delivery the project appears to have had a huge impact on participants, delivery staff and partner institutions. A number of partners have restructured to better accommodate Engage-type provision and all partners have sought to resource at least some elements of the model following the cessation of the project. The Engage project therefore provides a prime example of European funding enabling partners to trial innovative approaches to interventions. The desire to mainstream and identify resource to retain provision in an era of public sector austerity is perhaps the strongest indicator of the widespread value and perceived return associated with the services offered through the Engage Project.

# 1. Introduction

In March 2011 Wavehill was commissioned by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (the Regional Lead for the Engage Project) to undertake an evaluation of the Engage Project. The Engage Project is a three year project supported by European Social Fund (ESF) Convergence funding and works across two thematic areas within Priority 1 of the Convergence Programme: Supplying Young People with Skills for Learning and Future Employment. This report represents the final, summative evaluation of the project.

## 1.1. The Engage Project

The Engage Project was approved in June 2009 with the aim to engage, re-engage, motivate and inspire 13,401<sup>3</sup> young people through a series of activities, both innovative and established through three linked strands:

- d) Targeting and supporting young people aged 14-16 who are currently within the education system but who are either/or at risk of exclusion, have attendance levels below 70%, are significantly under-achieving or would benefit from an alternative curriculum with opportunities for a focus on STEM subjects.
- e) Targeting young people aged 16-19 who are about to attend, or are already attending a Further Education College and who are at risk of failing to achieve positive outcomes from their chosen course/programme, are at risk of dropping out of their course and becoming NEET, whose attendance is insufficient for them to achieve successful outcomes or who require additional support to achieve their aims.
- f) Working across the 14-19 age range to support those young people who are NEET or whose out of school behaviours put them at risk, in order to engage them in more appropriate and meaningful activities and/or to re-engage them and support them back in to the supported education and training offered in a) and b)

Throughout the rest of the report, each of the strands described above is referred to as **Strand A, B or C**.

The project operated across the South West of Wales and, in addition to the Regional Lead, the project (originally) included 10 partners:

- Neath Port Talbot CBC (Lead)
- Neath Port Talbot CBC (Operational Project)
- Carmarthenshire County Council
- Ceredigion County Council
- City and County of Swansea
- Gower College Swansea
- Coleg Ceredigion<sup>4</sup>
- Coleg Sir Gâr
- Neath Port Talbot College
- Pembrokeshire College
- Pembrokeshire County Council

<sup>3</sup> Engage Business Plan (Original)

<sup>4</sup> Coleg Ceredigion have subsequently withdrawn from the project.

## 1.2. The evaluation methodology

The evaluation has been undertaken over an 18 month period and has included a baseline, interim and this, the final summative evaluation. The evaluation methodology is designed to gather evidence in relation to several key questions which were outlined in the initial brief. These are:

### Project Outcomes

- Did the project achieve the stated objectives? If not, why?
- What has worked well and not so well?
- How has the project impacted upon its target participant group?
- How has the project impacted upon partner's organisational structures processes and practices?
- How changes in the external context have affected the project outcomes and whether this was addressed within the life of the project
- What would have happened without the intervention?

### Project Processes

- Were the projected outputs achieved? If not, why?
- How efficiently the outputs were achieved
- Whether the output could have been achieved in another way i.e. more effectively or more efficiently
- How efficient and effective were the processes of the project in terms of planning, implementation and review?

### Impact Indicators

- How many participants have received part qualifications as a result of the project?<sup>5</sup>

This set of evaluation questions, along with initial scoping interviews formed the basis of the evaluation framework (see Annex 1) which has subsequently guided the methodological approach to the collation and analysis of evidence that provides answers to each of the key questions outlined above, but also that did not place excessively onerous demands on project partners.

### 1.2.1. Scoping/baseline phase of the evaluation

The scoping/baseline phase of the evaluation involved a series of one to one consultations with each delivery partner's project team to inform the development of the evaluation framework and to identify what evidence could and should be used to inform the evaluation.

<sup>5</sup> Engage Evaluation Tender Brief

The scoping phase confirmed the diversity of delivery mechanisms utilised in the delivery of the Engage project in each of the partner authority areas for both historical and contextual reasons. Each partner's delivery mechanism evolved from the forms of support, monitoring and learning provision that were being delivered (and not being delivered) beforehand in each location. The approaches were also devised in response to the very specific set of needs that its 14-19 at risk cohort(s) had been presented with.

The Engage programme's working Business Plan further sets out the rationale behind this approach:

The preferred option for ENGAGE is one of a 'mixed-economy', cross-sector development, involving a combination of direct service delivery by the partners and a range of activity delivered by external agents, which will be procured via the Buy4Wales/Sell2Wales process. The service model is based upon sound; positive experiences by the partners of having delivered multi-agency ESF funded activity within LA areas over the duration of the preceding Objective 1 Programme.<sup>6</sup>

In the scoping phase, the view was put forward by a number of representatives that each partner had their profiled outputs to achieve and that how they achieved these was less of a pressing concern, given the relatively short time span of the ESF funding cycle.

It was also noted that this approach enabled the delivery of a more locally strategic model of delivery which takes account of the existing structure of services, but also the specific patterns of need that might exist in each area. At the time, it was felt that this approach would enable greater innovation and responsiveness of approach and would facilitate the sharing of best practice amongst partners.

In reality, however the focus on delivering project related outputs in the short time available meant that there was minimal sharing of best practice. Indeed where practice was shared amongst partners it tended to be at too late a stage within the project to influence approaches to delivery.

The scoping phase also identified a desire amongst delivery partners to 'look beyond' the hard-edged deliverable outputs of the project (as important as these were seen to be) and also to take account of **softer measures of beneficiary progress**, such as confidence, motivation, attitudinal changes, changes in participants' relationships with others and wider levels of social and extra-curricular participation. However, during the scoping phase it became clear that partners were not acting with consistency in the collection of such data to gauge and aggregate soft outcomes project-wide, although most expressed a wish to see a consistent system (or set of cohort-specific systems) implemented across the project.

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<sup>6</sup> Engage Working Business Plan

## 1.2.2. Interim and final phase of the evaluation

The interim and final phases have adopted a similar suite of approaches to the evaluation.

### **Documentation and Data Review**

Relevant documentation, at a policy and strategic level as well as specific, project related documentation has been reviewed at both evaluation phases in order to place the evaluation in context and to gain an insight into progress in the delivery of the Engage project.

### **Stakeholder Consultation**

The Engage project co-ordinators for each of the partners were consulted on a one to one basis for both the interim and final phases of the evaluation. The majority of consultations were undertaken on a face to face basis using a semi-structured discussion guide (contained within annex 2).

The research team also attended several Engage delivery team meetings (a partnership meeting of co-ordinators and other senior staff from each of the local partners) and sub-group meetings (most notably the soft outcomes sub-group meeting).

As part of the final phase of the evaluation (arising out of a recommendation within the interim evaluation) an additional online survey has been distributed by delivery partners to organisations and staff with an “indirect” involvement, targeting organisations and staff that are not directly funded by Engage but do indirectly benefit from Engage activities. A total of 54 staff responded to the online survey. The analysis of their feedback is contained within Section 4.

### **Consultation with Delivery Teams**

Consultations were also undertaken with staff delivering Engage services within each of the local partners. These were undertaken either as a focus group (where a group of staff were undertaking a similar role) or on a one to one basis. The consultations with delivery staff were undertaken as part of site visits at both the interim and final phases of the evaluation. Consultations were also undertaken with representatives of organisations procured to deliver services by each partner. Again, all of the above were undertaken using a semi-structured discussion guide (see Annex 2).

### **Participant Consultation**

The site visits to all local partners also provided the opportunity to consult with participants. During the interim phase the study team undertook consultation with 81 Engage participants across all partner areas during the Autumn 2011 term. Initially it was hoped that the consultations could provide additional qualitative information to supplement that captured through the soft outcomes approach adopted across partners. However, following recognition that a diversity of approaches to capturing soft outcomes existed, the study sought instead to capture information that could be used to provide case studies and verbatim quotes of the perceived impact of the service amongst participants.

A flexible approach to consultation with participants was adopted by the study team. Each partner was asked how best they felt the consultation should be delivered (based on the knowledge of the particular participants available for consultation that day). Whilst a significant number of participants were consulted it was felt that typically, consultations on a one-to-one basis (with or without supervisors, as appropriate), elicited a more complete response. In addition, owing to the structure of the academic year, the window of opportunity for organising site visits and consultations exercises was short, and proved particularly problematic in relation to engaging with schools.

In light of these findings, for the final phase of the evaluation it was agreed that a lengthier timescale for planning and undertaking site visits would assist in increasing the success and specifically the response rate of consultations. Participant consultations as part of the final evaluation were undertaken between April and June 2012 with the majority undertaken on a one to one basis (in a handful of instances an Engage delivery staff member sitting in on the consultations to offer reassurance). Despite offering a broader window and longer lead in time to the consultations the team were only able to consult with 55 participants.

The lower success rate is likely to have been a result of targeting one to one consultations only (and therefore whilst a lower number of participants were consulted, a higher quality of consultation was undertaken) and the fact that during the consultation period, confirmation was received of the planned closure of the project (further detail of this is contained in Section 3). A consistent approach was undertaken in consulting with participants to compare returns. In addition, a portion of the participants that took part in the final phase of the evaluation were repeat consultees, thereby enabling an element of longitudinal change to be assessed. The responses gained from participants are analysed within section 4.

## Data Analysis

In addition to analysis of the primary research the study team have reviewed the project outputs and results (outcomes) contained within quarterly monitoring and analysis of a series of additional indicators to begin to assess the wider outcomes and impacts arising from the intervention. Data includes:

### Strand A provision (14-16):

- Local authority wide school exclusion figures for the 2010/11 academic year (Years 9-11)
- Local authority wide school attendance figures for the last three academic years (Years 9-11)
- The number of young people leaving full time education without a recognised qualification

### Strand B provision (16-19):

- Retention/withdrawal data (either college-wide or targeted at specific subject areas where Engage provision is more prominent amongst certain classes)

### Strand C provision (14-19):

- NEET indicators (Careers Wales and KIT data if latter available)

## General Data

- Unemployment rates of 16-19 year olds (annual population survey)
- JSA Claimants 19 and under cohort

## 1.3. Structure of the report

The remaining sections of the report discuss the key findings from the research undertaken throughout the evaluation, within an emphasis on the latest, final phase of the evaluation report.

The report is structured on the basis of the following:

- Section 2 discusses the origin, background and early development of the Engage project
- Section 3 discusses the different models of delivery operated by each partner against the three strands of provision and how the project has impacted upon partner's organisational structures, processes and practices, considering what approaches have worked well and what not so well
- Section 4 considers the progress, outputs, outcomes/results and impacts generated by the project on its participants
- Section 5 Outlines the elements of the Engage delivery model that each partner plans to take forward or to mainstream
- Section 6 draws together the findings and provides a number of recommendations

Carrying out this evaluation has required significant contribution of time and information from a large number of Engage Project staff and their participants. Their assistance in the development of this evaluation is much appreciated.

## 2. Project Background Governance and Management

### 2.1. Project development

Engage is clearly a complex and multi-faceted programme covering a large and geographically diverse area. Most of the partners involved in the programme had overseen and run programmes under the Objective One programme catering for 14-19 cohorts between 2000 and 2006, most covering just one local authority area.

In several cases partners' involvement in Engage had come about as direct result of their work on prior schemes. The South West and Mid Wales Area Consortium (SWAMWAC) and the South West Wales Regional Learning Partnership (RLP) effectively acted as co-ordinating bodies for the initial development of the Engage programme which began its life as three separate bids for ESF funding. In the wider context, at the time of the project's development, WEFO and the Welsh Government had clearly signalled their intention to promote larger, more strategic projects under the Convergence programme.

*“There is a greater strategic approach to the delivery of the funds for this programming round, with fewer, more strategic projects delivering on the priorities of the Operational Programmes. This approach will help ensure less duplication of activities and maximisation of the available resources to benefit the people, businesses, communities and environment of Wales”<sup>7</sup>*

#### 2.1.1. Strategic alignment

It is in this context of regional partnership and the drive for larger, strategic, collaborative projects that the initial development of Engage took place, indeed Engage emerged at a similar time to the plans for the regionalisation of 14-19 learning networks. It is understood that the Engage programme was approved reasonably quickly in June 2009 after its initial expression of interest.

The project at business planning stage was well-placed strategically and remains so now. It aligned at the time with Skills That Work for Wales (2008), as the skills and employment strategy that will underpin progress in Wales, alongside a series of reviews and pilot studies which identified both the value of using mentors and peer mentors in raising aspirations<sup>8</sup>, alongside research and evaluation that recognised the importance of multi-agency interventions alongside the use of learning coaches for engaging and supporting young people<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> WEFO Website

<sup>8</sup> See for instance: The Webb Review: Promise and Performance: The Report of the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales in the context of the Learning Country: Vision into Action (2007)

<sup>9</sup> See for instance: Learning Coaches of Wales – Summary document (2008)



As the project has evolved Learning Pathways 14-19 has emerged in Wales which has seen a move to needs-led learner provision, wider choice and access to personal support or a learning coach. Then in April 2009, the Welsh Assembly Government (as it was then) published its strategy “Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales. Delivering skills that work for Wales.” The strategy focused on the 16 to 17 year-old age group and identified the need for the following:

- Efficient processes for identifying and re-engaging those young people who become not in education, employment or training;
- A full range of learning options to meet demand;
- More targeted and intensive learning and personal support.

In 2011, following the sharp downturn in the economy amidst the increasing profile of youth unemployment, the Welsh Government’s Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan was launched. Its stated overall aim is the reduction of the number of young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, not in education, employment or training in Wales with 18 separate actions for the period 2011-2015 to underpin this aim. .

### 2.1.2. Engage business plan

In its original Working Business Plan, Engage committed to the following key outcome/results:

**Objective 1:** Support and engage young people in activities that will contribute to tackling underachievement and raising skills and aspirations delivered to 13401 participants.

**Objective 2:** Supporting young people to remain or re-engage in education and achieve the skills and confidence to succeed in education, employment and training assisting 11361 young people to have the potential to engage in economic activity.

**Objective 3:** Targeting action to identify and keep in touch with young people who are or are at risk of becoming NEET and delivering preventative and curative interventions ensuring that 11361 are not “lost in the system” and receive the targeted interventions they need.

**Objective 4:** Increase the number of learning coaches to allow more young people to overcome barriers to learning and raise their skill levels. Employ/up-skill 727 learning coaches to work with young people in educational settings, both formal and informal to provide them with support and motivation to achieve to their abilities.

**Objective 5:** Provide assistance for those not attending school/ college, and additional support for young people from Pupil Referral Units, care leavers, young offenders and those with basic skills below level 1. Provide 3445 young people who are most disengaged and disadvantaged in education and training with intensive support to enable them to gain access to mainstream education and training.

**Objective 6:** Train volunteer Peer Mentor and Peer Education Trainers and peer mentors and peer educators to support the target group. The project will train 227 peer mentors and peer educators who will work with young people in both formal and informal settings, providing informal advice and support. The project will also train 25 Peer Mentor Trainers to ensure that Peer Support programmes across South West Wales are sustainable beyond the end of the project.

**Objective 7:** Employ/up-skill outreach youth workers, and other specialist staff to provide community based activities such as volunteering, Duke of Edinburgh, sport, personal development and emotional intelligence activities to re-engage the participants. 116 specialist staff, including youth workers, sports leaders, outdoor activity leaders, work placement officers, sign language/deaf awareness trainers will be employed/procured/up-skilled to address the particular additional needs of young people in the project.

**Objective 8:** Increase the number of supported and extended work placements for young people through engagement with employers in order to provide 621 young people with opportunities for a range of vocational work tasters and placements. The project aims to engage with 371 employers to provide the work placements.

**Objective 9:** Expand vocational provision at KS4 using specific learning themes such as enterprise and sustainable development to improve environmental awareness and management with 3595 young people and engender an enterprise culture through learning and training opportunities.

**Objective 10:** Implement or expand school/college transition programmes to ensure that young people have the best opportunities for a smooth transition and make the best possible choices post 16 delivered to 767 young people in order to pilot innovative models of provision, at key transitions at ages 14 and 16.

**Objective 11:** Information, advice, guidance and support interventions for young people in a range of accessible settings, and highlight opportunities, support informed decision making and use innovative approaches, including information technology. Provide services to meet the needs of young people delivered to 13401 young people aged 14-19 to help them to develop their learning skills and motivation to facilitate entry to more testing learning routes and higher level qualifications, and make more effective decisions in their learning careers.

It is important to say that some of these outcome/results were the subject of a re-profile, most notably the training and up-skilling outcome/results referred to in Objectives 6 and 7 (see Section 3.4 below).

## 2.2. Project governance

The Engage project has been governed by a Steering Group operating at a regional level, made up of project co-ordinators from within each partner area and representatives (typically Heads of Service and External Funding Managers) from project sponsors. The steering group meets on a quarterly basis and, as identified in the terms of reference, holds the following responsibilities:

- Delivery of the Engage Project
- Compliance with WEFO requirements
- Making project decisions
- Managing project risks
- Managing project change
- Resolving project issues
- Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the project, including finance and outcomes.
- Project communication<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Terms of Reference – Engage Steering Group

Further regional governance for the project was provided in the form of a Regional Delivery Team which typically met on a quarterly basis. The Regional Delivery Team's role has been more operational in focus than the Steering Group and was primarily made up of management staff from each of the partners (including project co-ordinators). There existed therefore, some level of overlap across the two groups, particularly, it is said, amongst Further Education Colleges.

The responsibilities of the Regional Project Delivery Team were described as:

- Developing joint processes and procedures
- Highlighting project changes, decisions required and risks
- Co-ordinating project delivery
- Project communication
- Sharing good practise

Some of the representatives of each of the groups were familiar to each other having sat on preceding regional networks. There is also a desire amongst the partners to retain this forum following the closure of the Engage project. This would appear to reflect the recognition of the added value of an established regional partnership, particularly in relation to exploring potential future funding opportunities for enhancing existing mainstream service provision.

At intermittent periods sub-working groups (of a "task and finish" nature) have been established, most notably the soft outcomes sub-group which sought (unsuccessfully) to identify a suitable cross-partner method for recording and tracking the change of soft outcomes.

At the partner level within each unitary authority area, there are nine delivery teams, each with a project co-ordinator. The size and structure of each delivery team varies from one partner to the next, the nature of the team is discussed in greater detail in the following section.

## 2.3. Project management

Day-to-day, the Engage project has been managed at the regional level by a team based within Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) as the Lead Partner. This team reported to the County Borough's Head of Schools, Inclusion and Lifelong Learning, but operated as an entirely separate entity to the NPTCBC Engage delivery team, which was based in the County Borough's Youth Service, and was responsible for delivering NPTCBC's own component of Engage. The Regional Project Management Team was led by a Project Manager with the support of a Senior Accountant, Finance and Monitoring Officer and a Business Support Technician, all of whom had been seconded to their posts.

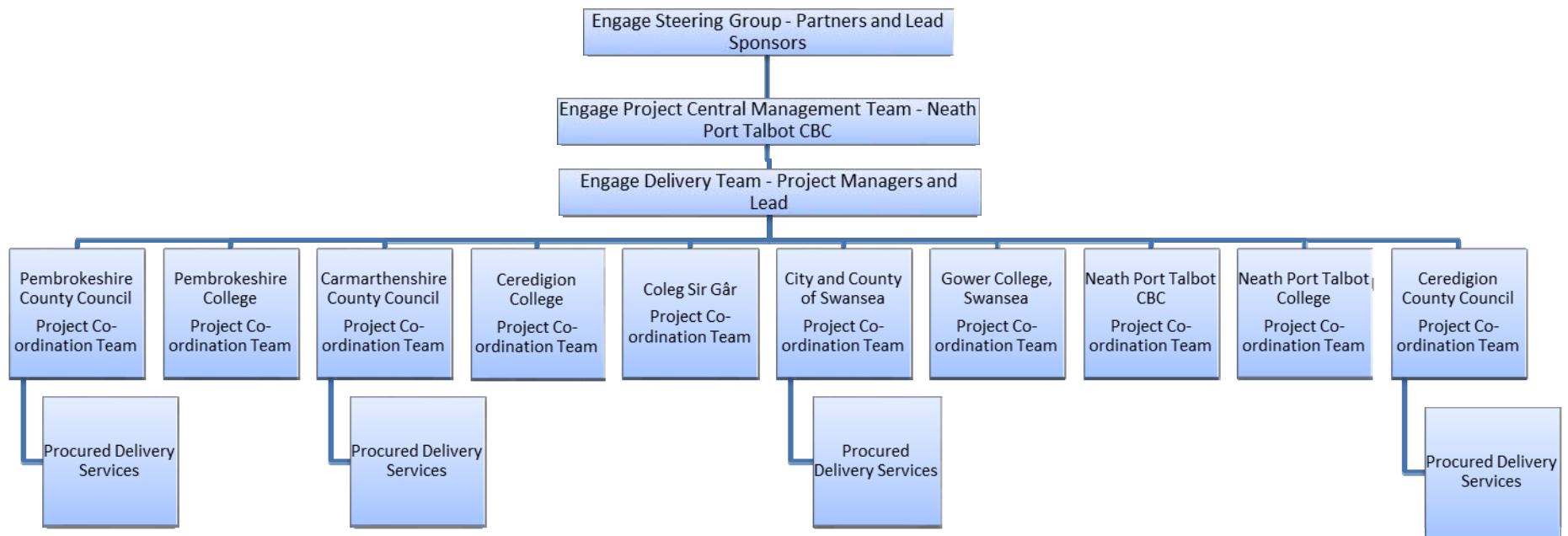
The Project Management Team's role included drawing together the variety of delivery information from each of the partners and collating it into the quarterly returns. The team also acted as the primary contact with WEFO, disseminating information to the partners and collating and referring any queries to WEFO. The Management Team have led on the establishment of all structures (including governance structures) to support the successful delivery of the project. The Management Team seek to ensure that all partner project delivery is eligible and have undertaken a series of audits with each partner to fulfil this aim. The Management Team have also been subjected to series of rigorous audits from WEFO and from the Welsh Government.

The Management Team also maintain a risk log, monitoring any risks that emerge and overseeing any remedial action required to reduce the level and/or impact that the risk may incur on the project.

They have an issue log which picks up any claims and monitoring issues which is reported to the Steering Group and an error log for logging any financial errors associated with quarterly claims. Finally, the team log all procurement activities undertaken through the project in an effort to ensure that procurement thresholds are not breached.

The operational structure of the Engage project is illustrated in figure 1 overleaf.

Figure 1: Management and Delivery Structure for the Engage Project



## 3. Project Delivery

### 3.1. Overview

- The Engage project benefitted from rapid approval for European monies but subsequently suffered from not having staff or systems in place to enable the effective commencement of delivery.
- Delays associated with the appointment of each partner's delivery teams and delays in the provision of guidance associated with the procurement of delivery services were additional constraints on the early phases of the project.
- A series of challenges were encountered in delivering the project yet most were overcome and the project had gained real presence and momentum prior to the confirmation of its cessation as planned.
- The tight timescales for delivery and target driven approach led to a focus on the delivery of Engage services with great efficacy. However this has perhaps limited the capacity (and therefore extent) for cross-(administrative) boundary partnership working and the sharing of practice amongst delivery staff.

### 3.2. The commencement of delivery

The project commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009, however the commencement in delivery of each partner was rather sporadic, with some service providers commencing prior to the staff of the Lead Partner being in place. Table 1 below provides an estimate of when delivery commenced in each partner area (although it should be noted that these are the research team's own interpretation of commencement of service delivery and there may be some small inaccuracies).

**Table 1: Approximate Dates for Project Commencement for Each Partner**

Partner Team	Approximate Date Team were in Place and Operational
Lead Project Team (NPTCBC)	March 2010
Ceredigion Local Authority	December 2009
Pembrokeshire Local Authority	December 2009
Neath Port Talbot (Delivery Team)	May 2010
Carmarthenshire Local Authority Team	Delivery commenced December 2009 and full team in place by December 2010
Swansea Local Authority	May 2010, delivery commenced September 2010 and full team in place December 2010
Neath Port Talbot College	Initially end of 2009, postponed, restarted July 2010
Swansea College	April 2010
Gorseinon College (subsequently merged with Swansea College)	(Pre March 2010)
Pembrokeshire College	January 2010
Ceredigion College	May 2010
Coleg Sir Gâr	September 2009 – match team & commencement of Project, Jan 2010 direct team were in place

Furthermore, amongst a number of the local partners, frontline delivery staff were in place prior to the employment of the co-ordinator. The sequence of appointments across the project and within each partner did not always support the initial delivery of the Engage project. Systems were established amongst some of the local partners which were specifically tailored to the nature of the provision within each partner area. Many of these were subsequently usurped by the Lead Partner who distributed a further set of requirements. Ultimately this led to a process of retrospective data capture, it also meant that a suite of different data capture tools (including participant enrolment forms for example) were being applied by the various partners.

The Lead also sought to establish a shared participant database at the outset of the project which partners would remotely upload participant information into. However the diversity and complexity of existing systems amongst partners meant that this wasn't possible. Whilst it would have been more resource efficient for the Lead Partner it is unlikely that local partners would have avoided duplicating effort through double data entry, increasing the level of administrative burden.

### **3.3. Procurement**

WEFO and the Welsh Government's desire to see fewer, more strategic Convergence programmes based on larger, multi-partner co-operation and joint delivery had implications for Engage's procurement arrangements. The project has had to take account of the legal and practical implications of procuring services across a region, as opposed to within a local authority area. It was decided that, in accordance with WEFO guidance, that the Lead (NPTCBC's) sponsor's contract procedure rules for the procurement of services such as non-vocational and pre-vocational training provision for young people, could be used for Engage.

The details of procurement at the outset of the project have been explored in some depth as part of the interim report however it should be noted that frustrations did exist in relation to the length of time it took for the publication of procurement guidance by WEFO (October 2010) when elements of the project had commenced over a year prior to the publication.

Concerns were also raised about the requirement to use the NPT contract procedure rules, namely that the providers on one local authority's framework would not always necessarily provide the 'best fit' in terms of other partners' requirements. Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire local authorities had undertaken procurement exercises individually, with the relevant permissions having been gained. Yet, whilst by procuring on an individual basis the local authorities have avoided some of the frustrations experienced as part of the regional framework, they had varying success in relation to the pace at which the procurement exercises were completed.

### **3.4. An overview of Engage project delivery models**

This section includes an overview of the delivery model developed and operated by each of the Engage Partners. It is based on a review of the Business Plan and briefing documents provided by each partner and was further informed by both scoping interviews and more in-depth fieldwork conducted with each partner at interim stage. The delivery models have been further refined following subsequent consultations as part of the final phase of the evaluation.

Table 2: Strand A and C Provision Amongst Service Providers		
Service Provider	Budget	Staff Quota and Service Provision
Carmarthenshire County Council	£5.744m	The Engage Project operated by Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC) is managed by a team comprising a Project Manager, Finance Officer and Administrative Assistants. The project management team are tasked with meeting the management, finance and administrative needs of the project.
		Strand A: 14-16 Provision to those at risk of NEET
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mentoring and Work Experience Co-ordinator</b> – tasked with identifying young people who would benefit from the provision of mentoring and/or work placement opportunities – primarily working with School Based Youth Workers and also with Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).</li> <li>• <b>Work Related Learning Officer</b> – tasked with securing work related learning placements within CCC for young people. The nature of work-related placements are again needs-led (in consultation with young people and, where possible, their parents).</li> <li>• <b>SMART Provision (through 3 x Assistant Co-ordinators and Engage Vulnerable Pupils Support Worker)</b> – targeted at young people at risk of exclusion from school, providing them with support to engage in informal learning from a wider curriculum (whilst retaining specific targets in relation to STEM subjects).</li> <li>• <b>Engage Restorative Approaches Co-ordinator</b> – provides the restorative approach within schools with school staff trained in using restorative approaches to diffuse situations. Support is also provided to young people focusing on the impact and consequences of any wrong doing.</li> </ul>
		Strand C: 14-19 Provision to re-engage those that are NEET
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engage NEET Youth Workers (x3)</b> – deliver outreach and Keeping in Touch activities with NEET young people across the county. NEETs are referred to workers primarily from Careers Wales West (CWW). Their role includes organising needs-led activities and facilitating the accreditation of these activities.</li> <li>• <b>YOPS Engage Youth Worker</b> – Supporting young people aged 14-19 who are in the justice system, to work alongside statutory provision and help re-engage young people into employment, education and training.</li> </ul>
		Cross cutting provision
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Information and Accreditation Officer</b> – offers support and advice to staff across the Engage project in relation to accreditation of provision. The role also supports the procured elements of CCC's Engage project. (see below)</li> <li>• <b>Communication Officer</b> – tasked with the aim of raising the profile of the project.</li> <li>• <b>Procured strands</b> - CCC also sought to procure some elements of Engage provision from primarily third sector providers within the county. The procured providers deliver outreach youth services with a strong emphasis on the provision of accredited learning, support to increase volunteering opportunities for learners throughout the county and to support provision of services at Llanelli hub –a drop in centre in the middle of Llanelli.</li> </ul>



Table 2: Strand A and C Provision Amongst Service Providers		
Service Provider	Budget	Staff Quota and Service Provision
Ceredigion County Council	Partner Budget £2.563m	The Project Manager at Ceredigion provides an overview of the project and provides support to the study team. Study team members are not line managed by Ceredigion’s project manager for Engage but each team member has a referral within their job description to the strategic management role of the Project Manager.
		<b>Strand A: 14-16 Provision for those at risk of becoming NEET</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Youth Workers (x5)</b> – 5 Youth Workers are assigned to specific schools throughout the county with 1 youth worker focussed on individuals in alternative curriculum. The Youth Workers work with individuals identified as at risk and provide them with intensive mentoring and support into alternative education in order to maximise success and sustain their placement within school. They also typically refer to Duke of Edinburgh provision and other activities. (with the success of the former leading to its roll out to another area within the county).</li> <li>• <b>Restorative Justice Worker</b> – who works for the Youth Offending Service (YOS) primarily within two schools on a brief pilot basis within each school - focussed on building staff awareness of additional needs of this cohort.</li> <li>• <b>Education Inclusion Officer</b> – receives referrals on a weekly basis from the Education Department – primarily those that are based in Hafan/Encil<sup>11</sup> but also acts as the link between school, families and the pupils themselves.</li> </ul>
		<b>Strand C: 14-19 Provision to re-engage those that are NEET</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outreach Workers (x2)</b> – primarily working with post 16 participants but also go into school to help with transition. The Outreach Workers provide assistance to those not attending school/college, specifically in NEET hot spot areas identified via KIT systems, and additional support for young people from PRUs, care leavers, young offenders and those with basic skills below level 1.</li> <li>• <b>NEETs Learning Coach (Part time – hosted with Careers Wales)</b> – receives referrals through NEET multi-agency meetings, delivers one-to-one support for individuals that are not comfortable with a more formal learning environment and work with individuals to develop a learning pathways plan. The Learning Coach also delivers NEET identification courses - engaging individuals at an early stage who are at risk and focussing on prevention.</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> Hafan ac Encil (literally ‘Haven’ and ‘Retreat’) is the county’s system for the support of at-risk young people. The service is embedded in schools and consists of a safe, welcoming space for pupils to go when they need support: Hafan is for young people who need immediate support and attention, Encil is for young people in danger of being excluded; support is provided over a temporary basis.

<b>Table 2: Strand A and C Provision Amongst Service Providers</b>		
<b>Service Provider</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Staff Quota and Service Provision</b>
<b>Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council</b>	<b>Partner Budget £6.050m</b>	Neath Port Talbot have employed a series of Youth Community Workers (or Youth Officers) and Keeping in Touch Officers in addition to the provision of a Senior Youth Workers, who acts as the Project Coordinator for Engage provision within the county. In addition a Finance Officer has been employed to manage the financial and administrative elements of the project.
		The provision offered within NPTCBC is delivered through three elements; High Intervention, Moderate Intervention and 14-19 years olds who are NEET or at risk of becoming so.
		<b>Strand A: 14-16 Provision for those at risk of becoming NEET</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Youth Community Workers</b> deliver the <b>High Intervention</b> strand of activity. High Intervention – provides full time alternative learning (delivered by the Youth Community Workers) for young people in Key Stage 4 (year 10 and 11) and at risk of social and educational marginalisation (it should be noted that NPT County Borough no longer has a Pupil Referral Unit).</li> <li>• <b>Moderate Interventions</b> – Staff members work with groups of Year 10 pupils in schools who are at risk of underachieving or disengagement. Provision is needs-led, providing added value to the curriculum and includes commissioning vocational activities with external providers alongside additional personal support delivered at home via the Youth Service or the Education Development and Inclusion Service EDIS staff.</li> </ul>
		<b>Strand C: 14-19 Provision to re-engage those that are NEET</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Keeping in Touch Officers (x3)</b> – along with <b>Detached Youth Workers (x3)</b> primarily deliver support to those who are 14-19 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET through a variety of methods including street based work and project work.</li> </ul>		

<b>Table 2: Strand A and C Provision Amongst Service Providers</b>		
<b>Service Provider</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Staff Quota and Service Provision</b>
<b>Pembrokeshire County Council</b>	<b>Partner Budget £3.655m</b>	In addition to Overarching co-ordination and support offered by the <b>Project Co-ordinator, Beneficiary Tracking Officer and Financial Officer</b> . In the final year of the Engage project the team have specifically targeted year 11 participants with an aim to reducing the number leaving school without a qualification.
		The Pembrokeshire team includes the following staff:
		<b>Strand A: 14-16 Provision for those at risk of becoming NEET</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A team dedicated to supporting curriculum provision (primarily operating within schools) with alternative curriculum provision secured through local providers (obtained through a local procurement exercise) which is predominantly needs led.</li> </ul>
		<b>Strand C: 14-19 Provision to re-engage those that are NEET</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An additional area of support is offered through the Outreach Youth Work Team which comprises four Outreach Youth Workers targeted at young people.</li> </ul>

<b>Table 2: Strand A and C Provision Amongst Service Providers</b>		
<b>Service Provider</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Staff Quota and Service Provision</b>
<b>City and County of Swansea</b>	<b>Partner Budget £4.978m</b>	The City and County of Swansea Engage Project targets services at two strands – 14-16 and 16-19. In addition to the Project Co-ordinator, Finance and Monitoring Officer and MIS and Administrative support the team’s model of support includes:
		<b>Strand A: 14-16 Provision for those at risk of becoming NEET</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14-16: Staff provision in each of the schools has been allocated in response to schools submitting briefs/action plans of what additional resource they wanted and why. Link Workers based in each of the schools support the delivery of Engage provision in addition to Support Workers to assist in delivery against the school action plans. The scale of resource offered to each school is dependent on a number of factors which include the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals alongside a consideration of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation statistics.</li> <li>14-16 pupils who have low motivation, attendance problems and personal issues are referred to Engaging Learners in Swansea (ELiS). ELiS staff provide an alternative curriculum alongside the provision of essential skills in addition to the provision of vocational education and the co-ordination of work experience placements.</li> <li>Youth service provision is also available for both 14-16 and 16-19. For 14-16 year olds, youth service provision is primarily focussed on working with the schools on prevention activities. Youth Workers also provide transition programmes with year 11 pupils.</li> </ul>
		<b>Strand C: 14-19 Provision to re-engage those that are NEET</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Youth Workers dedicated to the 16-19 year olds primarily deliver outreach services to those individuals who are already NEET, securing referrals primarily through CWW and through the Keeping in Touch Workers in addition to referrals from other agencies. Provision is needs led for both at risk and NEET young people with a portfolio of support developed alongside the running of a range of accredited programmes.</li> <li>ELiS provision is also available for both 16-19 and 14-16, Outreach workers follow up referrals from CWW Keeping in Touch workers to work with individuals who are known to be NEET to help them re-engage with the employment or education or training environment</li> </ul>

<b>Table 3: Strand B Provision Amongst Service Providers</b>		
<b>Service Provider</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Staff Quota and Service Provision</b>
<b>Coleg Sir Gâr (Carms)</b>	<b>Partner Budget £888,000</b>	<p>Coleg Sir Gâr operates across five campuses throughout Carmarthenshire. The team at Coleg Sir Gâr have been delivering the Engage project since September 2009, the team comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Project Manager</b> – whose role includes: typical project management, participant eligibility checks, supervision of Engage team staff and risk assessment of participant students and also recently (due to workloads) mentoring of Engage participants.</li> <li>• <b>Student Support Advisors (x4)</b> – work closely with lecturers and faculty leads, engaging students from the start of term and typically are triggered to engage with a student as a result of poor or falling attendance to flag up any early issues. They offer low intensity support (matched funded by the college), if issues increase in their severity the students are <b>referred</b> to Mentors.</li> <li>• <b>Mentors/Personal Development Mentor (x8 – 4 are 100% funded through Engage, 4 are matched)</b> – offer more intensive one-to-one support to students with students receiving a dedicated Mentor to offer them the support. The Mentors receive referrals from a variety of routes including; tutors, schools, family, student support advisers etc. The emphasis on their approach with students is flexible, needs-led support provision (varying from one session of support to several months or years of support). For those individuals identified as having socially-related issues they are offered a personal development programme targeted at improving their self-confidence and their ability to interact with other people. Mentors also provide team building events and deliver transitional activities during the summer holidays in addition to promotional activities in schools and building awareness in PRUs and alternative curriculum providers. The transitional activities initially typically targeted 12 young people who are considered to be at risk of becoming NEET. They are offered training sessions and acclimatisation activities so they feel better informed about the decisions they make within college and to help them gain a stronger commitment for staying on in college. In the subsequent summer a much greater volume of transitional support was offered, further detail can be found later within this section.</li> </ul>
<b>Ceredigion College</b>	<b>Partner Budget £178,000</b>	<p><b>The team at Ceredigion College comprise of:</b>  <b>One Mentor and 2x Advice and Guidance Officers</b> delivering support across the College.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews undertaken with the Advice and Guidance Officers, Mentors and students to identify at risk students – those at risk invited to introduction to college days over the summer.</li> <li>• Typical mentoring support offered to help students access additional support and progress towards achieving qualifications.</li> </ul> <p><b>N.B. The Ceredigion project ceased delivery in July 2011</b></p>

Table 3: Strand B Provision Amongst Service Providers		
Service Provider	Budget	Staff Quota and Service Provision
<b>Neath Port Talbot College</b>	<b>Partner Budget £342,000</b>	<p>Neath Port Talbot College operates across eight campuses throughout the county. Their model for delivering Engage provision has been significantly restructured this year with the introduction of dedicated staff to deliver the provision.</p> <p>The team includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <b>Project Co-ordinator</b> and support from an <b>External Funding Officer</b> alongside three <b>Personal Mentors</b> who work across the campuses.</li> <li>• The team of Personal Mentors describe themselves as support workers targeting those young people who are struggling to stay in college for any reason and focus on supporting them to stay-on in college (or alternatively, if this is not suitable, find provision that is more suited to them). Referrals to the support are a combination of tutor and self-referrals and the team are based in the wider learning support services area within the main campus in Neath.</li> </ul> <p>Mentor training of college staff has also been resourced through the Engage project and delivered by members of the Engage team.</p> <p>Finally, the Engage Team at the college has been active in facilitating the development of special interest groups within the college, including a young parents group and a lesbian gay bisexual and transgender group. Whilst the Engage Team facilitate the sessions they are led by students and have been commended by senior management, other diversity groups and the Children’s Commissioner for Wales.</p> <p><b>N.B.:</b> Prior to the operation of this model of Engage support at Neath Port Talbot College, the model for Engage was set up to enable existing staff within the college to dedicate time to the provision of support to college students through a combination of Advice and Guidance Officers, Tutorial Development Officers and Learning Coaches. The staff appointed to deliver these services struggled to dedicate sufficient time to the successful delivery of this provision and on reflection it was considered more appropriate for fully dedicated resource to be made available for the participants in the college.</p>

Table 3: Strand B Provision Amongst Service Providers		
Service Provider	Budget	Staff Quota and Service Provision
<b>Pembrokeshire College</b>	<b>Partner Budget £957,000</b>	<p>The team at Pembrokeshire College includes a Project Co-ordinator and a dedicated delivery team that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engage Work Placement Support Officer</b> – organises work placements for participants who typically have learning, behavioural or social needs in addition to the participants attending the Work Skills course (see below).</li> <li>• <b>Outreach and Remote Learning Support Tutor</b> – supporting students in danger of dropping off courses, largely flagged up through non-attendance (resulting from a range of reasons, including ill health), with support focussed on overcoming the barriers that have emerged which are inhibiting them from attending college.</li> <li>• <b>Additional Support Tutors</b>– who provide additional support in classes for students on foundation or L1 programmes, or those at or below L1 in any of the essential skills areas and are therefore at risk of disengaging.</li> </ul> <p>The Project has also funded the <b>Work Skills course</b> - a 17 week bridging course that includes work placements for those that are below Level 1 to help them gain the qualification to “bridge” them into mainstream education.</p>

Table 3: Strand B Provision Amongst Service Providers		
Service Provider	Budget	Staff Quota and Service Provision
<b>Gower College, Swansea</b>	<b>£2.516m</b>	<p>The Engage project at Gower College Swansea has delivered three main elements of support over the period of the project. The model of support includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A team of <b>Student Support Officers (x4)</b>. The Student Support Officers primarily work with young participants in the college who are recognised as being at risk of dropping out and becoming NEET. The Support Officers work and support the college tutors and faculty leads who identify and refer the students following a series of trigger actions, or a recognised decline in the students' performance or based on a feeling that the student may be at risk of dropping out. The team have links with Youth Workers and CW for referrals and tend to provide one-to-one needs led support to the individuals for however long they require it.</li> </ul> <p>The team offer a range of support including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work experience opportunities</li> <li>• Vocational related activities</li> <li>• External activities that are wide ranging to build up their ability to socially interact with other people.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior to the merger the college also offered support to those students who encountered difficulties in progressing on to further or higher level of qualifications. The support typically sought to assist in bridging any gap in learning that may exist for the students to help them acquire the necessary skills to aid progression, and thereby assisting in reducing the risk of a student dropping off the course.</li> <li>• The final element of support was the inclusion of basic skill support; many of the participants at the college had a desire to enter further learning or progress on to vocational qualifications but lacked the basic and essential skills that would allow them to continue their educational pathway, increasing the risk of a student dropping off the course. Through the project's activities it allowed these learners to receive the necessary support, and continue to obtain and in most cases complete their chosen vocational learning.</li> </ul>



## 3.5. Processes and challenges associated with delivery

### 3.5.1. Introduction

The emphasis of the interim evaluation was process-based and as such explored the progress and challenges associated with delivering Engage services in great depth. The final evaluation has sought to review which challenges remain, which have evolved as the project has progressed and which further challenges have emerged during the remainder of the Engage project.

### 3.5.2. Changing requirements and definitions

As outlined within the interim evaluation, the process of business plan amalgamation, submission and approval were rapid, particularly in European funding terms. However, the rapidity of approval did lead to a number of finer points in relation to eligibility and clarity being overlooked (the definition of NEET was cited as one such example). Eligibility requirements were then further confused by a series of changes and amendments emerging from WEFO in relation to what elements are, and what elements are not eligible for Engage resources. A lack of clarity of requirements associated with data capture was hindered further by the inconsistent approach to participant related paperwork across partners.

Frustrations associated with changing requirements and definitions of outcome/results and results have been compounded by a slow response to any queries or points of clarification that have been raised. The governance arrangements for the project (which meant that concerns raised by delivery partners were channelled through the Lead Partner to WEFO) have created some inefficiencies in the process however it is understood that the delays in responding to points of clarification (as well as in the provision of guidance) from WEFO have been the primary driver behind these delays.

The implications of delays in clarification on eligibility of activity (for example) have a variable impact on the delivery of services within the project but are perhaps most influential where the cancellation of provision has emerged or where potential project participants have been lost where they are unwilling or unable to wait to hear whether they can participate in a particular activity.

As discussed within the interim report, we acknowledge that the Lead Sponsor has a very challenging role; however project partners have been keen for greater accountability and remained keen throughout the project for the Lead to hold greater autonomy, particularly in relation to providing a view of the eligibility or ineligibility of potential Engage activities. However, whilst a lack of clarity over eligibility has led to issues for the delivery of outcome/results and for match funding, these appear to have been identified and ironed out as the project has progressed.

### 3.5.3. Offering suitable provision

#### OCNs and Mainstream Provision

As outlined within the interim report, there is a wide range of entrenched challenges and barriers associated with this client group and sourcing and funding provision to meet their needs is extremely difficult. The menu of courses offered through the OCN framework is diverse and substantial and is an excellent starting point for engagement. Challenges do emerge however when strand C participants that are very capable students are keen to, and indeed have the capability to gain mainstream qualifications typically offered within school/college. Some partners have been able to resource provision for Maths, Science and English for example but also recognise that a greater diversity of offer would be helpful, but again, this is likely to be resource intensive and should, perhaps act as a point of negotiation for engaging participants back into mainstream provision even if just for the specific qualification that they wish to pursue.

It is also recognised (and this is certainly not specific to the Engage project) that the structure of reporting outcomes and results doesn't necessarily lend itself to recognising the continual (and often significant) progression of a participant.

*“The OCN package enables you to be more imaginative but the downside being you can only count one OCN per person, the process wipes out the previous qualification gained if it is progression from the previous one. Therefore accreditations alone don't offer a true position of progression and almost impossible to capture true achievement of targets”*

Other partners have sought to offer courses that operate within the colleges to tie the process of learning with a process of familiarisation of what college is like.

### 3.5.4. Administrative demands

The administrative demands associated with the Engage project were initially flagged up as a challenge within the interim report and they have, of course, remained so. The administrative burden appeared to be particularly acute amongst delivery partners who were relatively new to the demands of European funding. As the project has progressed delivery staff have increased their efficiency of approach however the difficulties associated with capturing information such as the National Insurance number remain.

### 3.5.5. Publicity

A further area that has constrained delivery has been the ineligibility of spend in relation to publicity. As outlined within the interim report, marketing provision is deemed ineligible for partners as they are working with a client who forms part of a “contained group”. Given that Strand C of the Engage project (by way of example) is working with participants who are not engaged in any provision, it is understandably difficult for partners to understand how this group could be considered “contained”. Frustrations associated with this issue have again been compounded by an increased awareness of active promotion and publicity of other projects operating within the same Priority Theme. These frustrations also provide an insight of underlying competition in engaging and supporting these target groups which fluctuates from one partner area to the next.

### 3.5.6. Capacity building

As outlined earlier within this section (table 2), the speed at which partners were able to successfully recruit a full complement of staff to deliver the Engage project in their area varied significantly (for a variety of reasons) from one partner to the next. However EU funds are not available for resourcing of skills “refresher” courses or to up-skill existing staff due to the expectation that staff appointed to the project should already have the necessary skills to deliver services through the project.

The approach adopted with this project is, the study team understand, consistent across European funded projects. However, the necessity of refreshing skills (continuous professional development) pervades all employment and is particularly pertinent when delivering mentoring or counselling support due to the importance of staying abreast of latest policy and professional guidance.

The extent to which this was, or indeed has remained a challenge varies from one partner to the next. Some employers have utilised their own budgets to refresh or up-skill their staff but, in an era of public austerity others have not had this luxury.

### 3.5.7. Locally distinctive challenges

The project, whilst regional in scale, has retained local distinctiveness as evidenced by the diversity in delivery models outlined in tables 2 and 3 above. A level of autonomy has remained throughout the project enabling partners to deliver service provision that reflects the existing support infrastructure, the geography and the socio-economic situation within each authority area.

The rurality of one authority to the next fluctuates widely, with predominantly more urban or accessible rural authority areas such as Swansea at one end of the spectrum and predominantly remote rural areas such as Ceredigion at the other. Remote rural areas typically demand an increased intensity of resource when compared to their urban counterparts and highlights dangers of any crude assessment of value for money (based on cost per outcome/result for example).

#### Partner Case Study

**Ceredigion County Council** - The issue of rurality and a lack of access to suitable public transport has led to Ceredigion County Council introducing a Travel to Train scheme to provide resources to enable participants who are NEET and residing in rural areas (identified through research, mapping NEET location), to get to their courses. Resources have been invested in various methods including getting a taxi to the provision or to the nearest public transport link or in refunding as eligible mileage for staff workers who are picking up participants.

## Tracking Progression

Local distinctiveness in both the situation of each authority area and in terms of the model of provision offered within each area is regularly cited as a contributory factor in the project being unable to measure progression or distance travelled in a consistent way. Concerns, as identified within the interim report included:

- The **awkwardness** of conducting assessments in some contexts
- The challenge of achieving **objectivity** in the measurement of distance travelled
- The **timing** of implementation.

In addition, some interventions, particularly those targeted at strand C participants (those individuals that are already described as NEET) are predominantly participant led and there is therefore no guarantee of participants engaging in support for any length of time to warrant the adoption of distance travelled measures. However with other elements of the Engage support, a drive towards consistency of approach in tracking progression was recommended in the interim report, specifically

*For the project team and delivery partners to continue to explore the potential for a consistent soft outcomes measurement tool and utilise the study team's experience as appropriate. There is perhaps the potential to consider the adoption of a triangulation approach to data capture (where, ideally a participant, support provider and parent guardian complete a perception/self-perception tool – or (in reality) two of the three complete it to give a rounded assessment) at agreed milestones. However it should be acknowledged that the approach cannot be universally adopted due to the participant-led nature of elements of the Engage service.*

In response to this recommendation a subsequent meeting of the soft outcomes subgroup was held in May 2012. However, it was recognised that it was possibly too late to bring in a new collation system for the Engage project but that perhaps consideration should be given to a consistent approach for any subsequent project collaborations of a similar nature. Other partners also referred to the fact that some youth service providers within the local authorities already had systems in place to measure soft outcomes and distance travelled and that perhaps any consistent approach should draw upon these as a useful template.

The focus from a project managerial perspective at this meeting had shifted somewhat towards the (ultimately unsuccessful) pursuit of the extension to the Engage project and it is understood that no further work has been undertaken around a consistent measurement of soft outcomes and distance travelled. It is likely however that this will be revisited as part of any subsequent project collaboration.

## Inter-Authority Partnership Working

The interim report highlighted the importance of effective partnership working on an initiative operating across 10 partners and five authority areas. However at the time effective referrals and the sharing of best practice across administrative areas appeared limited, “*We always said that we'd visit another college but never did, we may have learnt some good practice*”. A lack of sharing of practice had placed some partners, particularly those with less experience of delivering ESF initiatives at a disadvantage.

Unfortunately as the project's cessation was confirmed any enthusiasm gained from the celebration event held in 8<sup>th</sup> December 2011 for further sharing of practice appeared to be surpassed by the need to finalise delivery of the Engage project within each area. The pool of knowledge and expertise at steering group and operational delivery group level remains largely unexploited and whilst there is an element of understanding of other delivery approaches at the strategic level there appears little or no effective dissemination of practice to those staff delivering Engage services.

A lack of cross-authority working also creates challenges when a participant accesses services within two different authority areas. Background data on these individuals remains difficult to obtain and as a result undermines the efficacy of Engage provision due to a lack of understanding or awareness of an individual's background.

### **Intra-Authority Partnership Working**

Effective partnership working within authority areas is universally recognised across Engage service providers as fundamental to the successful delivery of the suite of Engage service strands. However the extent to which service providers have worked together within authority areas fluctuates from one partner to the next.

The regulations associated with the capture of participant results/outcomes can act as a constraint on the extent of partnership working. By way of example, those service providers targeting provision at the 14-16 year old cohort (the local authority operated service providers) are able to capture participant numbers effectively as their service provision will typically be the first element of Engage support that participants will be the recipients of. However, it is often the case that attainment of qualifications by participants are cancelled out when the participants subsequently gain qualifications or accreditations through Engage support at a higher level. Ordinarily this appears a sensible approach, however the Engage model typically sees a participant "graduating" from local authority led support (typically strand A provision offered through a school) to college led support (typically strand B provision offered through the college). The local authority led service provider would lose any qualifications or accreditations gained in this scenario (which it is understood regularly occurs).

The colleges offering strand B provision are however themselves disadvantaged in terms of participant numbers. If a participant is enrolled in Engage provision through strand A services (that are typically local authority led) they cannot then be re-enrolled (and counted once again) as a new participant when they access Engage services within their college.

Whilst it is recognised that this is a regional project and that all support benefits participants within the region, targets underpinning regional achievement are partner specific.

There is acknowledgement of these issues across all service providers however the challenges of these idiosyncrasies can undermine effective college-authority partnership working. A lack of a shared participant database meant that some provision was delivered to Engage participants for up to six months before service providers were made aware that the participant had already been counted by another service provider. Whilst they felt that this would not influence the nature of provision they offered, it did undermine their ability to accurately manage their target and delivery numbers.

Further comments were raised:

*“We work alongside CWW sustaining the participant’s training when they go to college – but it is hard to get specific links with those Engage members within the college and can be frustrating when we subsequently hear of them dropping out of college provision after all of our hard work”.*

*“We met the college to set out the transitional event but needed to be more structured in our collaboration to ensure that the transitional element is bedded in better”.*

However the majority of partners (if not all) have described significant progress in data sharing as the project has evolved, with an increasing regularity and uniformity of data sharing approaches between colleges, schools and local authorities in addition to strengthened data sharing protocols with CWW.

*“In terms of understanding the scale of need and issues that exist, we now for example have bi-weekly drop-out data from the college to help with the post 16 element in addition to the data we are capturing through schools in relation to the 14-16 age group”.*

There are also additional surveys taking places in some partner areas (Swansea for instance) that are specifically targeting 18 year olds as well as now capturing evidence of NEETs and multiple points within an academic year.

## **Work Placements**

For many participants in this strand, work placements are typically desired by individuals who are often more vocationally than academically driven. Sourcing work placements has however, been a challenge for some partners:

*“You end up having your pool of employers – targets become increasingly difficult to achieve – there are only so many placements and once someone fails to achieve or lets an employer down that relationship can be damaged and at worse you could lose that potential referral route”.*

*“Wish we’d concentrated on work experience and work based learning post 16 to actually give them the work experience that they need but the opportunities just don’t exist”.*

One partner suggested that the local authorities should take the lead on offering work placements – in many areas they are the biggest employer locally and it would be an excellent way of championing both the project and the importance of offering placements.

Many however, cited the work placement element of the Engage project as a crucial element of the support model, particularly so in relation to the Work Skills course offered through Pembrokeshire College, *“The students on this course are students that wouldn’t ordinarily be at college without the additional support that the course offers. It has been incredibly successful; we’ve had over 70 placements as part of the Work Skills course”.*

Section 4 provides further analysis on Work Placements; reviewing the range of industry sectors by gender that were successfully undertaken by Engage participants.

**Participant case study**

*xxx has lots of disabilities-Postural Scoliosis, Tourettes Syndrome, Autism, Cerebral Palsy and was stuck at home and “nobody would have me. They have helped me massively, My confidence has grown considerably - I can be with and I can talk to another person - I would have NEVER been able to take to you for example. I can also talk more openly. For the first time I am starting to believe in myself. The best bits of the support? The fact that they are really kind people but also the work experience at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and the Riding School. If you need any help you can approach them*

## **3.6. Delivering Engage services – Strand A: (14-16) key findings**

### **3.6.1. Introduction**

The interim report provides a great deal of depth on the models and approaches adopted (including case study examples) for services delivered through Engage. A number of these examples have been reiterated in this report as the approaches to service delivery have remained largely consistent (unsurprisingly given the scale of success gained) over the period between the interim and the final phase of the evaluation.

### **3.6.2. Engagement of schools**

Success in the delivery of Strand A support has largely been predicated on the willingness of schools to actively participate in the project. This willingness has been variable within authority areas and across the Engage project as a whole. As identified within the interim report, greater success in school engagement and participation has been gained where schools were engaged and given the opportunity to specify the nature of support they felt would most effectively add value to their provision. This approach is reported to have generated quick successes in terms of school engagement albeit alongside some challenges in relation to negotiations with schools to ensure that the request is for support that is additional and beyond the core curriculum.

## Partner case studies

### *City and County of Swansea*

The 15 comprehensive schools in Swansea were asked to identify the type of support they required in the school with one Engage worker (at least) offered to schools. Then dependent upon the action plan developed by the school, resourcing to meet the requirements of the action plan were provided through Engage as long as it could be seen to be additional, beyond the core curriculum and focussed on the following target groups:

- At risk of social and educational marginalisation
- Are currently under achieving against expected performance
- Are either on the verge of exclusion or have previously been on fixed term or permanent exclusion or 70% or less school attendance
- Have basic skills levels of 18 months or more behind the average for their age
- Would gain long term benefit from alternative curriculum activities including an emphasis on STEM areas

The overarching scale of resource provided through the Engage project is substantial (sufficient to recruit 35 direct staff and to match fund a further 30 staff in the schools). The scale of resource available to each school was calculated through a formula-based approach derived from an estimate of the number of pupils considered to be at risk of becoming NEET (based on indicators include Free school meals eligibility, the proportion with SEN, and rates of attendance) along with the extent of deprivation (based on the IMD) that existed around the location of the school and its catchment area.

### *Pembrokeshire County Council*

In Pembrokeshire, a similar approach to Swansea has been adopted with schools tasked with initially identifying the key issues that they wished the Engage project to respond to. The issues and opportunities for support services were outlined in a referral/application form returned to the project team. The forms provided the opportunity for each school to outline the specific issues it faced and the plan of support it felt could address those issues.

Support elements were then explored with each school via the Link Officer based within each school with activities that best meet the needs of the school identified through the Engage project's procured providers.

### 3.6.3. Identification of "At Risk"

Whilst the majority of partners had mechanisms and measures for identifying pupils considered to be at risk the elements taken into consideration varied from one partner to the next. The comprehensiveness of risk assessments relied heavily upon the extent to which data is shared amongst key service providers but particularly between schools and the Engage delivery staff. However in those areas where the model was largely school-led, the onus was on the schools to identify those in need of support.



Where data is comprehensive, and accurate, it is a highly effective tool *Last year we were able to predict all apart from 12 who ultimately became NEET, and for 8 of these it was down to the fact that just prior to starting their training course, the trainer cancelled the training at the last minute*".

Across all partners however it was recognised that the at risk register to proactively support individuals who it is deemed are at higher risk of becoming NEET should be considered in tandem with the provision of reactionary support for those individuals impacted upon by an unforeseen circumstance with a focus on early detection and effective reaction.

### Partner case study

#### Ceredigion County Council

Ceredigion operate a traffic light system to identify pupils "at risk" of becoming NEET, against four key indicators:

- Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Looked after pupils
- Eligibility for free school meals
- Attendance below 90%

A pupil who meets one of the above criteria is given a green status code (and therefore is not currently at risk). A pupil who meets two of the above criteria is given an amber status code and could therefore become "at risk". A pupil who meets three of the above criteria is given a red status code and is therefore considered to be "at risk".

The analysis of pupil data is undertaken for all year 9-11 pupils in Ceredigion on an annual basis with subsequent discussions with key staff members at each school to capture further contextual information on identified pupils so as to avoid placing them in a particular box.

#### Other Partners

Other partners utilise a host of other indicators (Swansea have 30 separate indicators), with some offering a variance on the attendance threshold above (at 80% or 70%).

### 3.6.4. Understanding of offer

Within the early stages of the Engage project some partners suffered from a misinterpretation of what Engage support is for, which led to, for example, referrals that were largely behavioural based. As the project has progressed and the level of understanding increased, partners felt that the instances of mis-referral had diminished significantly. There is concern however that the cessation of the Engage project is occurring once brand and service awareness had finally pervaded schools and other educational establishments.

### 3.6.5. Age parameters

The interim report highlighted a desire amongst Strand A service providers for a widening of the age parameters for Engage service provision. This emanated from a widely held view that issues amongst young people that would typically place them as “at risk” are easily identifiable in most at 11 years old. By 14, when they become eligible for Engage support, these issues are perceived to be so engrained that to address them is a far greater challenge than it perhaps would have been were resource provided to intervene at an earlier stage. Unsurprisingly, the desire for widening of the age parameters remained a prominent recommendation amongst the majority of providers of strand A services when consulted as part of the final phase of the evaluation.

### 3.6.6. Embedding services

Whilst there have been challenges and suggestions for improvements for the Engage service there is widespread recognition of the huge positive impact of Strand A Service provision (further evidence of impact can be found within Section 4) across the delivery area. Tangible evidence of the perceived success of this approach is not only evident through quantitative analysis but also in reviewing the scale to which elements of the strand A services have been mainstreamed by schools and local authorities (Section 5 provides explores this in considerable depth). In an era of ever tightening budgetary constraints the realignment of limited available resources towards the retention of Engage service provision must reflect a recognition of tangible impact associated with the service models adopted across partner areas.

#### Strand A Participant Case Studies

*“I was really paranoid and unconfident and stopped going to history and music and xxx came to see me to help, she always gives advice all the time. I definitely listen to her - she has been really supportive. If I hadn’t had her support I wouldn’t be learning at all and would have had more days off school”.*

*“I suffer with anxiety, when it came to assemblies and exams I felt really uncomfortable but I can always go to their office where they give me advice and always listen, their door is always open and when the exams came they got me a separate room. I am now more confident and able to sit in assembly and in the exam hall. Without the support I would have stopped turning up to school”.*

## 3.7. Delivering Engage services – Strand B: (16-19) key findings

### 3.7.1. Introduction

Considerable detail on Strand B service provision is contained within the interim report. This subsection provides a summary of the findings from the interim report alongside any additional updates emerging from subsequent consultation with delivery staff and service provider leads.

### 3.7.2. Engagement

Two clear streams of engagement approaches exist within the Further Education Colleges (which deliver the vast majority of Strand B services). One route is reliant upon referrals from tutors, the other is reliant upon the individual, through participant self-referral.

#### Tutor referral

All partners have been reliant, to a varying extent, upon tutor referral; however some partners solely rely on this approach to engagement with participants whereas for other partners it plays a very minor role. A similar risk associated with tutor referral to that identified within Strand A provision is the potential misunderstanding about what Engage service provision is there for. Again, however as the project has progressed, it is widely reported that the level of understanding of what the Engage service offers, has increased. As the level of understanding has increased this has also served to strengthen and embed the Engage service provision within all of the partner colleges.

#### **Strand B Participant Case Studies – Tutor Referrals**

*“I got involved with Engage through my tutor; it was really easy to get involved. Since then they’ve helped me with my accommodation and they’ve helped me with my college work. I struggled with college and would’ve given up by now if it wasn’t for the support they’ve given me.”*

*“My tutor referred me to Engage, I had family problems and so I left home, I was missing college and I was confused. When I started with Engage I had no confidence, couldn’t talk to anyone and I was paranoid that everyone was talking about me. I have now made friends and my attendance is 99%, last year it was 40%. It has helped me with my confidence, when I did not have any friends I kind of went into myself but now I have come out of myself and talk to people. It is nice to have someone to have a chat with and they help me read my coursework. I have made new friends and I have got a qualification now, I finish the course in June and then I want to come back and do an apprenticeship course and then maybe even go to University so I can become a teacher. Without the support I would not be at college, I would be sat on the dole, probably in the situation where I was living with people who made me sad.”*

*“When I started College the tutors told us what was going on and a friend was already going to Engage. It was also part of our induction process. My Mum spoke to the tutor and they suggested I go and see the Engage Team it was really easy to get involved with a mentor. Without the support I would still be really shy and wouldn’t be able to talk to anyone. I would be lazy and stay at home all the time. It has helped speaking to the mentors about my shyness.”*

## Self-referral

Self-referrals resulting from active promotion of the Engage project amongst classes and campuses within colleges are likely to help to capture some students who perhaps are “suffering in silence”, overcoming the inevitable danger of behavioural issues becoming a trigger for a proportion of participant referrals.

A risk identified within the interim report was of self-referrals being the victim of their own success, leading to volumes of participants beyond the resource capacity of Engage staff. This has remained an issue for a number of service providers who adopted this approach with the model also suffering from an influx of students at key pinch points within the day (typically lunch and other break times).

Self-referrals do provide the opportunity to pick up on issues that a tutor may not necessarily know about (bereavements for example) and can therefore, if the mechanisms exist, offer the reactionary support necessary where “shocks” occur that secondary data associated with identifying “at risk” would not immediately unearth.

Regardless of approach there was a widely held view amongst Strand B service deliverers that the Engage provision had become increasingly embedded within the colleges within which they operate over the last six months. This is perhaps evident in the proportion of colleges planning to mainstream significant elements of Engage support following the closure of the project, which again provides evidence of a perception of impact and importance associated with the various service models adopted. Further details on these plans can be found within Section 5.

### **Strand B Participant Case Studies – Self Referrals**

*“During the induction process at college I found out about Engage, after that I went directly to the team and they helped me from the beginning, they set me up with a mentor - it was really easy. I was having a lot of arguments with my dad and my mum was ill, she has mental illness. They helped me with stress issues, they were there for me when I needed them, they are really helpful and helped me with my stress, they are always there for me and are helpful and supportive. I don't know what I would have done if they weren't there.. Without the support I wouldn't be in college - I would be at home doing nothing.”*

*“Engage came in the class to introduce themselves, after that I went along and met xxx and started talking, slowly I began to use them a lot more. I have received many types of help, I have received tutoring, help finding jobs, mental support and general 'life support'. I had lots of stress from a few things going on and Engage helped me to work through these. Engage has done me the world of good, I would not be who I am today if it wasn't for them. I have totally changed for the better, I have confidence. I know I have someone to talk to. I would not be on this course if it wasn't for Engage and I enjoy the courses I do with Engage, I like to meet new people and have a laugh with people you do not know. Without the support my future would not be as bright as it is now, there has been such a big change between when I started and now. I have developed - I am more mature and better at handling things. I am happier now and glad to know there is someone I can talk to (even if I have to wait)”.*

### 3.7.3. Transition

The interim report identified that a number of the Engage partners have delivered transition support in partnership with local secondary schools with all of them citing it as a very effective approach to adopt. The scale of transition activities in summer 2012 are reported to have been boosted significantly by a number of partners in recognition of the previous success gained. Coleg Sir Gâr for example, had 100 applications for transition support and with resource limited to the provision of between two and three activities every week it has meant an element of rotation of activities to enable all to benefit.

Transition support typically involves a series of activities over the summer and/or towards the end of the academic term providing individuals with the opportunity to come and visit the college and gain a taster of the different type of college activities on offer. The services offered through the transition programme of activity are typically promoted through schools with Engage staff actively touring schools during the summer term to promote the services and the college to year 10 students.

Where colleges and local authorities (via the schools) are effectively sharing data, transition provision can be effectively targeted at those individuals deemed at greatest risk of either not making the transition to college or of dropping out of college in the early stages of an academic year. Further targeted support is offered to those in some partner areas where they have been referred to the transition provision by their KIT officer.

### 3.7.4. Age parameters

In a reflection of the response from Strand A service providers, providers of Strand B services also felt that there should be a widening of service provision for older age groups, with some suggesting a widening of the eligibility criteria to 21, others to 25 years old. The desire for an expansion of the age parameters is a reflection, in part of the fact that Further Education colleges have a significant proportion of mature students enrolled who have been ineligible for support. Of further concern and as identified within the interim report is the fact that some of the hardest to reach Engage participants are formerly NEET, having been re-engaged through Youth Service provision and have ultimately built up their skills and confidence to embark on a college course. For some individuals this will have taken until they are aged 20 or over to enrol in the college by which time the wider support to retain them within the college will no longer be available to them.

### 3.7.5. Bridging/holding courses

Bridging/holding courses were being delivered by a number of partners at the time of the interim research and are said to have been of great success. The courses are typically targeted at those who are not quite ready for college either after dropping out from a course or simply not identifying a course early on within the academic year.

In a number of colleges where bridging courses have taken place (Pembrokeshire for example) there is a desire to increase their frequency to four intakes in an academic year rather than two. The flexibility of this course, combined with the work based element is regarded by the Engage team within Pembrokeshire College as one of the strongest elements of their Engage model. This also highlights the efforts of FE providers to increase flexibility of approach in recognition of the value it can bring to students.

## Partner Case Study

### Pembrokeshire College

Pembrokeshire College offer a Work Skills course as a bridging course into college but is increasingly being used for those that appear unlikely to complete their Level 1 course within the college. The course has a start date in January as well as September and typically lasts around 17 weeks with three days a week in college with additional elements for the remaining days (usually a work placement and social skills or similar support from Prince's Trust or a similar provider). The course, which started September (2010) secured a 100% achievement rate in its first year. Over the two years of the course's operation, 70 work placements were gained.

### 3.7.6. Challenge of multiple campuses

The operational structure of partner colleges has influenced the model of Engage service delivery from one college to the next. A number of the colleges have a high number of fairly disparately located sites. Delivering support across multiple campuses has presented a logistical challenge for Engage staff with a varied degree of "embeddedness" of Engage provision within each campus. This would appear to depend on the scale of resource and regular presence of Engage staff but also, to a greater extent, on the existing culture of a campus, the nature of courses on offer and the associated nature of students participating in those courses. Some campuses have typically been described as more "self-sufficient" with tutors getting to know their students in greater depth whereas in others a lack of on-site presence has limited the extent to which effective working relationships have been built.

## 3.8. Delivering Engage services –Strand C: 14-19 NEET key findings

### 3.8.1. Engagement

As identified within the interim report, outreach provision (through Keeping in Touch services or similar) is widely used across partner areas to engage with those individuals aged 14-19 that are considered to be NEET.

The importance of identifying those considered to be NEET was consistently reiterated during the final phase of the evaluation. Identification is heavily reliant upon the comprehensiveness and accuracy/timeliness of available data on those that are NEET and also on the extent to which the mechanisms are in place to share such intelligence.

In terms of data sharing it is reported that those partners and team representatives that have historical links with CWW (who typically hold data on NEETs as a result of the destinations survey) have better data sharing mechanisms in place with them, partly due to historical relationships but also due to the better understanding of the nature of data being captured by CWW.

Eligibility issues in terms of what is eligible for resourcing through the Engage project are perhaps most pertinent when considering the engagement of these target groups. For a Keeping In Touch worker, the purchase of refreshments, a discussion over coffee for example, is a useful ice breaker and can take place on neutral but familiar (to the participant) ground. The simple purchase of these drinks was originally deemed to be an ineligible cost, however following discussion it was agreed that the expenditure on a participant is eligible; this is a very welcome development given the importance associated with this initial engagement.

### **Strand C Participant Case Studies**

*xxx got involved with Engage after being kicked out of school for stealing money for drugs “I live on my own in a bedsit, I didn’t like school, maths in particular. However since receiving support I’ve got some NVQ’s, OCN’s. The staff are excellent and they are easy to talk to, I’ve now got a GCSE in maths and in English. Without the support I would probably be in prison yet now I am starting to go to college.”*

### **3.8.2. Partnership working**

Partnership working is perhaps most important for this strand of participants with interviewees citing a wide range of partners with whom they engage including:

- Youth Offending Team
- Careers Wales West
- CAMHS
- Local schools and colleges
- Reach the Heights
- Social Services
- Other providers specific to partner areas

### **Neath Port Talbot Case Study**

In recent months, the Keeping in Touch team in Neath Port Talbot have developed a useful relationship with their local Jobcentre. They were invited by Jobcentre Plus to attend the Job Centre on the morning of each week to specifically engage the young people who were coming in to claim their benefits as interaction with the 16-19 age group was proving a struggle for advisors. The Keeping in Touch Team has subsequently attended with local Communities First advisors who have targeted the post 18 cohort.

This partnership approach has enabled the Keeping in Touch team to engage with around 500 individuals who they’d struggled to engage in the past. The success of this approach has led to conversations commencing with the regional manager of JCP to explore the potential for rolling out the model across the region. If it were to be rolled out there is recognition of the need to bring in a variety of roles including offering provision in relation to housing, courses and job clubs (which have also been offered as part of the existing localised model) which ultimately, it is hoped could become a one stop shop for those young people who have been the most difficult to engage with over recent years.



## 3.9. Cross-Cutting Themes

This sub-section explores how the Engage project delivers against the cross-cutting themes.

### 3.9.1. Equal opportunities

The core provision of Engage includes the focus of tackling under achievement amongst participants, through improving the education outcomes of young people at risk of underachieving and meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups. Disadvantaged groups include; NEETs, young people with learning difficulties, young offenders and young people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. The project team have identified how Engage delivers against four specific objectives in relation to equal opportunities namely:

1. Increase the number of individuals who have multiple disadvantages accessing employment and self-employment.
2. Increase the number of women, BME people and disabled people, securing training and employment in higher paid and higher skilled sectors and self-employment.
3. Challenging occupational segregation by increasing the number of women and men training or re-training in non-traditional areas, focusing on those areas where there are skill shortages.
4. Increase the number of employers and training organisations to develop equality and diversity strategies, including monitoring systems and methods for feeding in improvements.

Objective 1 and 2 are closely aligned to the core aims of Engage, providing support to disadvantaged young people to enable them to take an active role in the labour market. Whilst, with Objective 3 the evaluation team encountered, as part of the consultation process, a number of individuals being supported to actively pursue training and employment opportunities in non-traditional areas.

In relation to Objective 4, an equality risk assessment was required of providers delivering training through Engage to ensure that a flexible approach is offered to work and training including child care and elder care support.

Whilst there are a number of objectives in relation to equal opportunities, provision offered through the Engage project is largely in response to participant need with services available to all 14-19 year olds regardless of background. All promotion materials and Engage related materials are offered bilingually and it is understood that Welsh speaking capacity exists amongst the Engage delivery teams within Ceredigion Council, Ceredigion College, Carmarthenshire County Council, City and County of Swansea with mechanisms in place amongst other partners to provide services in Welsh should participants wish them to be.

The nature of the Engage project means that the responsive provision is predominantly participant led, for example:

- Supporting an individual in pursuing a course (at college) of their choice
- Supporting an individual in pursuing work experience of their choice
- Supporting an individual in undertaking activities or re-engagement courses



Where provision is offered proactively, for example with transition support, service providers ensure that participants are exposed to the breadth of courses on offer within a college with taster courses offered across the available curriculum.

In addition, equal opportunity is promoted through courses offered through Engage. Examples include Citizenship Courses which explores student's feelings about what equal opportunities means and how equal opportunities issues are reflected in legislation and which groups of people might benefit from better equal opportunities.

A further scheme promoted amongst participants of Engage in Carmarthenshire was the Show Racism the Red Card scheme of work which involved a workshop amongst participants to raise awareness of diversity and the impact of racism through the use of examples from football.

The following section (Section 4) analyses the characteristics of Engage participants to explore the extent to which the opportunities/open for all approach to participants has led to a broad cross-section of the local demography accessing the services. The research in Section 4 also includes analysis of STEM subjects by gender and qualification level.

### **Female participants**

An interesting outcome of the Engage project to interim stage has been the success to date in engaging female participants. All delivery partners were asked for their views as to why this is the case. The majority felt that within this cohort, females appeared to be more willing to discuss or share their concerns than their male counterparts and this was perhaps particularly the case where Engage services were reliant upon self-referrals and/or word of mouth.

Where provision was reactive to a participants needs or to a teacher/tutor referral, then this was dependent of an issue being picked by said teacher/tutor. Similarly for those that are NEET there is no choice in who to engage with, the target group is all individuals that are NEET so there is no gender influence in this respect.

In isolated cases some delivery partners have delivered small scale schemes targeted at young single parents and a girls group has set itself up amongst one delivery partner which is said to have helped with retention.

### **Special interest groups**

In addition to a young parents group a number of other special interest groups have been established amongst delivery partners with perhaps the most active group being the LGBT group in Neath Port Talbot College.

The LGBT group has around 10 regular attendees, one described the role of the support group as follows; "When I came there was no support, people enjoy having a chat and feel more comfortable amongst peers who are facing similar challenges. I discussed this with one of the mentors in the college and we decided to set up this group in August of last year (2011). We are now having lots of success, we recently held a conference for example, inviting schools and the college to talk about education and homophobia".

The group feel that they are having an impact now more widely across the college than specifically with those attending the group *“Even those not involved in the group are now coming up and being really supportive...even in the canteen we see attitudes changing, staff have badges saying LGBT friendly, leading by example”*. Whilst the representatives of the group who participated in the consultation felt that membership of the group alone would unlikely be the sole reason for staying on in college there was universal agreement that it influenced their enjoyment of college and that the wider role of the group in terms of awareness raising and cultural change was critical to boosting a sense of acceptance within the college amongst these groups. The group has gained national recognition and they now wish to promote this form of forum in schools.

### **Ex-offenders and care leavers**

Two additional target groups that Engage seeks to support are ex-offenders and care leavers. Whilst across many partners the nature of support offered to these groups does not differ greatly (it was seen as important that they were integrated into “mainstream” Engage support rather than being noticeable by their isolation or specialist attention). However methods to initially engage these groups were tailored, specifically relying on the existing local networks of support provision. One partner for example, sits on the local Youth Offending Team (YOT) panel regularly reviewing all those that are on the YOT in conjunction with other members to consider whether Engage may be suitable for them and if that is the case, to encourage the outreach team to work with them.

For care leavers again there was a real desire to integrate these participants within mainstream Engage support, however care leavers are particularly encouraged to participate in life skills type courses amongst a number of partners including, for example, food hygiene courses and courses on how to cook on a budget in recognition of their contextual circumstances. There is a brief analysis of the number of participants from these backgrounds in the following section.

### **Environmental sustainability**

In terms of environmental sustainability the project has sought to reduce environmental impact through, for example the provision of local accessible services whilst partners have been encouraged to adopt an Eco-Code (which all have adopted) through the implementation of a number of elements, including:

- Energy conservation and efficiency strategies;
  - Electronic recording systems wherever possible, to minimise the use of paper-based systems. Where essential, project partners have endeavoured to use recycled paper products. All printer cartridges and other similar materials will be recycled as part of the Eco-Code adopted by partners.
- The integration of climate change education and sustainable development into education and training programmes.

The adherence to the Eco-Code is monitored by the Lead Partner as part of the monitoring visits to each partner. Furthermore, those college partners that did not already hold the Green Dragon award have now gained the award.

In addition a number of specific activities and courses have been undertaken with Engage participants which have promoted environmental sustainability.

Participants from several of the partners have taken part in courses at the Centre of Alternative Technology in Machynlleth with the aim of raising awareness of environmental sustainability and in providing insight into how to operate in a more sustainable lifestyle, whilst also providing an insight into the potential career opportunities within the renewable energy sector. One partner spoke of an education residential undertaken at the centre which centred on raising awareness of how much energy is used and how energy consumption can be reduced on a day-to-day basis through, for example recycling, growing your own produce, utilising renewables etc.

In addition all partners, where possible, mainstream Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship within their existing provision specifically reflecting on:

- The links between society, economy and environment and between our own lives and those of people throughout the world
- The needs and rights of both present and future generations
- The relationship between power, resources and human rights
- The local and global implications of everything we do and the actions that individuals and organisations can take in response to local and global issues.<sup>12</sup>

In the provision of an ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness, NPTCBC (although it is likely that other local partners do the same) includes a module on the Environment and Personal Social Development which itself incorporates a unit in Environmental Awareness.<sup>13</sup>

Other partners referred to the use of a number of elements in their course provision, some elements outlined by Carmarthenshire County Council were:

- Frozen Planet DVD resource; this was watched and discussed by participants
- Global Warming project
- Fairtrade week
- Young passport for global citizenship
- A Duke of Edinburgh expedition which incorporated a theme on marine life.

Pembrokeshire County Council has also overseen, as part of the Engage project, the delivery of a variety of schemes that promote environmental sustainability, including:

- Taster courses in Bushcraft, Conservation, Woodcarving and the Environment
- The John Muir Discovery Award – a scheme that incorporates four challenges:
  - Discover a wild place
  - Explore its wildness
  - Conserve – take some personal responsibility
  - Share your experiences
- Agored Cymru Entry 3 – Preparing to Learn Outdoors
- Duke of Edinburgh courses associated with woodlands and campcraft.

<sup>12</sup> The Mid Wales Work Based Learning Consortium ESDGC Strategy July 2012

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.asdan.org.uk/Qualifications/CoPE\\_1\\_and\\_2](http://www.asdan.org.uk/Qualifications/CoPE_1_and_2)

Schools in City and County of Swansea have also been active in promoting environmental sustainability through the project, including:

- At Pontarddulais Comprehensive the Engage Key Worker worked with a group of Engage pupils building benches and developing a garden area
- At Cefn Hengoed Community School the Engage Key Worker accompanied a group of Engage pupils to the Community Farm
- At Penybryn Secondary School the Engage Key Worker worked with Down to Earth providers and a group of Engage pupils to develop a sensory garden.

### **3.10. No cost extension – project cessation**

In the midst of the drafting of the interim evaluation report the Engage project team, through the Lead Partner were seeking to agree a re-profiling of project targets as well as a no cost extension to the project.

The rationale for a no cost extension to the project was submitted to WEFO on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012, (in addition to there being a no cost element incurred on behalf of WEFO beyond the value initially agreed) was on the basis that;

- The project was beginning to embed the approach within existing structures but that it needed further time for this to be achieved
- That it would provide a further regional evidence base to inform the development of future applications on a regional basis for the next funding programme
- It would provide additional time to plan for the elements that should be sustained

These points were offered alongside the evidence of impact derived from the interim evaluation with the rationale signed by all Directors of Education within each of the five partner local authority areas eligible for Engage provision.

A response was received on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2012 confirming that the project hadn't secured an extension and that the project would indeed end, as planned on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012. As part of the response an agreement to the re-profiling submitted earlier in the year was made, the revisions to the profile for delivery are contained within the following section.

Following confirmation of the project's cessation, some delivery partners began winding down activities towards the end of the summer term, primarily as the project was in effect ceasing operation at the end of the academic year (July 2012) as there was little opportunity for any substantive interventions in the brief window of opportunity between September and November 2012 (when the students returned to school or college).

Consequently service providers have been actively exploring potential exit strategies and mainstreaming opportunities, further details on these can be found within Section 5.

## 4. Progress and Impact of Engage

### 4.1. Introduction

This section offers an overview of the current position in respect of project outcome/results and expenditure. It is based on WEFO returns and claims as of August 2012. The section then considers the wider outcomes and impacts emerging within the Engage area and the extent to which these can be attributed to the project.

#### Overview

- The delays in delivery at the outset of the Engage project meant the project was behind profile from an early stage.
- Organisational changes amongst several partners restricted the ability of the Engage project to overcome the shortfall of delivery associated with the slow start. In addition an element of confusion surrounding several outcome/result indicators enhanced the level of disparity with profile.
- There has been a massive upswing in the outcome/result indicators over the last quarter which has resulted in all core indicator targets being surpassed, some significantly so.
- The massive upswing is likely a reflection on a collation of paperwork associated with eligibility criteria and whilst it highlights the excellent performance of Engage it also provides an insight into the challenges of assessing project progress by outcome/result indicators alone.
- The project has delivered very effectively with extremely high levels of praise from participants and stakeholders.
- Impact indicators exhibit extremely positive trends and analysis of the participant database suggests a significant proportion of these trends could (and indeed should) be attributed to the Engage project.
- Further evidence of both the success of the delivery model and of the quality of Engage services on offer is reflected in the extent to which partners are seeking to continue to mainstream Engage services following project closure (further evidence can be found within the subsequent section (Section 5)).

### 4.2. Project progress

Table 4 and figure 2 overleaf provide numerical and illustrative evidence of the progress of the project against profile. It should be noted that the final three claims (claim 10-12) are based on re-profiled targets that were agreed by WEFO in June 2012. The need for a re-profile was influenced by a number of factors and partners, including:

- Coleg Ceredigion's withdrawal from the project as of September 2011 and the corresponding reduction in potential Engage participants that their withdrawal incurred
- The merger of Gorseinon College and Swansea College into Gower College Swansea meant that Gower College Swansea revised their project, submitting a project variation which has reduced their budget and their total number of participants.
- Tenders not being received by Carmarthen County Council for two of the lots advertised with targets associated with the project included in those tender documents.

- The definition of further learning was not properly understood by partners when the business plan was drafted or when the participants were profiled in May 2010. After receiving clarification from Richard Chivers all partners have reduced this target to be more achievable in accordance with the definition.
- The definition of positive outcomes was not properly understood by some partners and a reduction was required when it became apparent that insufficient evidence had been collated for a proportion of participants whom it was initially felt could be counted towards this figure.<sup>14</sup>

The analysis of performance following re-profile highlights that the project exceeded profile against all target areas and particularly so for entering further learning and other positive outcomes.

Figure 2 illustrates that the project continued on a similar trajectory (or rate) of performance in terms of participant numbers from December 2010 onwards. The delivery of qualifications profile fluctuates more markedly than the profile of participant numbers and perhaps reflects the timing and duration of courses undertaken and the resulting qualifications gained (towards the end of an academic year for instance).

Figure 2 also highlights the substantial increase in rate of performance in the final quarter of the project with the number of participants reported as entering further learning more than doubling (increasing by 135% in the last quarter) as has the number of participants gaining other positive outcomes (increasing by 158% in the last quarter). These final outcome numbers provides evidence of the true scale of delivery through Engage as a result of significant effort over the last few months in capturing the necessary supporting evidence and paperwork in order for Engage participants to count towards outcome/result targets.

In light of the evidence drawn from these cumulative figures, it is clear that the Engage project has been a success. However the massive upswing in outcome/results arising from the collation and validation of evidence captured poses some challenges for the project lead and for the Project Development Officer in WEFO. Prior to the final quarter, outcome/results were behind profile, in some instances significantly so, therefore external perspectives of success based upon outcome/results alone would have significantly undervalued what subsequently become apparent as the true performance of the project. Mechanisms to capture actual and verified performance may offer a truer picture for monitoring projects of this nature in the future.

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<sup>14</sup> Drawn from the explanatory notes relating to the re-profile of May 2012

Table 4: Progress of Engage Project – cumulative outcome/result indicators

Outcome/Result Area	Claim												
<b>Participants</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>Profiled</b>	836	1393	2177	3995	5013	6076	7218	9298	10783	10317	10938	11392
	<b>Claimed</b>	429	1465	1680	1844	3256	3891	6192	7482	9298	10264	11381	12311
	<b>Variance</b>	-407	72	-497	-2151	-1757	-2185	-1026	-1816	-1485	-53	443	919
	<b>%</b>	-49%	5%	-23%	-54%	-35%	-36%	-14%	-20%	-14%	-1%	4%	8%
<b>Qualifications</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	
	<b>Profiled</b>			733	1172	1475	1832	3114	4129	4566	3782	5242	5809
	<b>Claimed</b>			10	55	518	469	2221	2892	3425	3558	4434	5905
	<b>Variance</b>			-723	-1117	-957	-1363	-893	-1237	-1141	-224	-808	96
	<b>%</b>			-99%	-95%	-65%	-74%	-29%	-30%	-25%	-6%	-15%	2%
<b>Entered further learning</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>Profiled</b>			83	900	1165	1387	1739	2713	3037	1410	1797	2819
	<b>Claimed</b>			197	26	33	30	407	505	834	1265	1663	3917
	<b>Variance</b>			114	-874	-1132	-1357	-1332	-2208	-2203	-145	-134	1098
	<b>%</b>			137%	-97%	-97%	-98%	-77%	-81%	-73%	-10%	-7%	39%
<b>Other positive outcomes</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>Profiled</b>			110	928	1008	1068	1283	1980	2313	1281	1796	2379
	<b>Claimed</b>			25	9	27	28	312	508	739	899	1127	2916
	<b>Variance</b>			-85	-919	-981	-1040	-971	-1472	-1574	-382	-669	537
	<b>%</b>			-77%	-99%	-97%	-97%	-76%	-74%	-68%	-30%	-37%	23%

Source: Engage Project Management Team 2012

Figure 2: Month by month progress – incorporating the re-profile

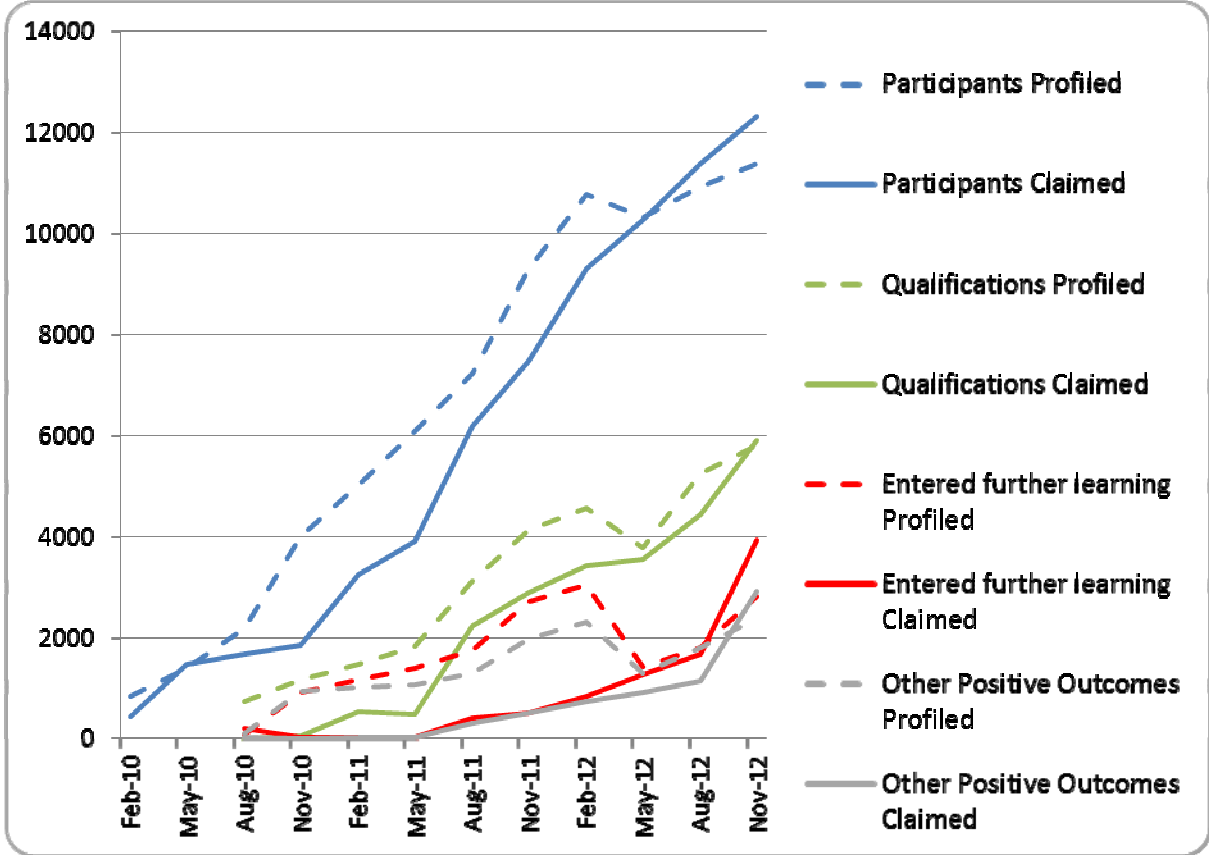
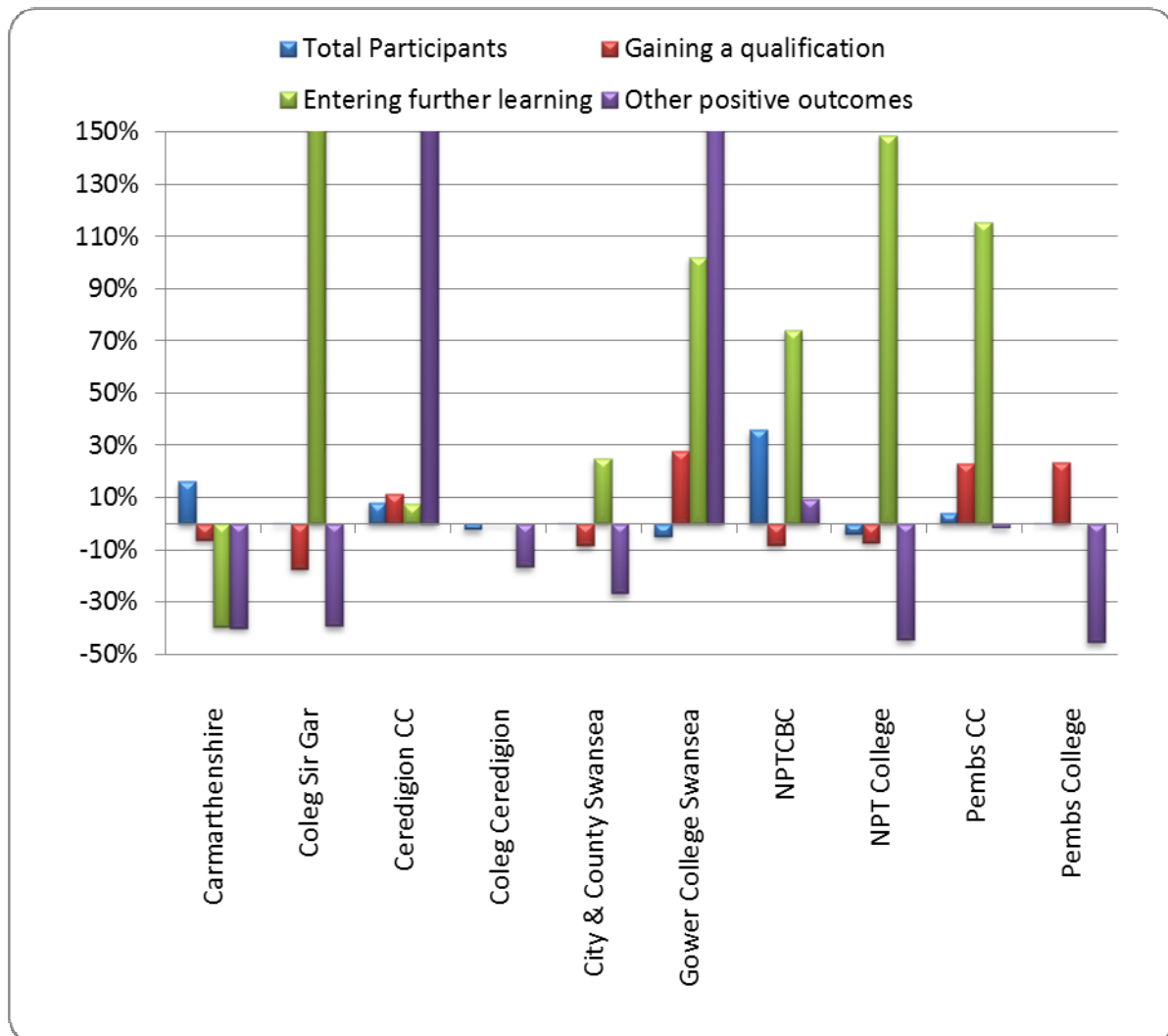


Figure 3 below summarises performance by partner based on outcome delivery against profile. It illustrates a wide variance in performance with some partners significantly over-performing such that to include the performance within the chart would have resulted in vastly increased axis range.



Figure 3: Performance by Provider



Instances of over-performance against profile that were beyond the charts scale are set out in the table below and highlight that in one instance, Ceredigion Council delivered more than six times its profiled delivery for “other positive outcomes” equating to over 30% of the entire Engage project achievement of “other positive outcomes”.

Table 5: Partner Over-Performance

Provider	Outcome/Result Area	Percentage over-profile
Coleg Sir Gâr	Entering Further Learning	378%
Ceredigion County Council	Other Positive Outcomes	614%
Gower College Swansea	Other Positive Outcomes	173%
Neath Port Talbot College	Entering Further Learning	149%

### Value for Money - Cost Effectiveness Assessment

A relatively crude assessment of cost effectiveness by analysing partner spend per outcome is set out within figure 4 and figure 5 below. To provide some level of comparability, those providers delivering Strand A and C activities (local authorities) have been grouped together, and the colleges delivering Strand B provision have been grouped together in the subsequent figures.

When comparing the cost per provider of Strand A and C provision it is evident that cost per participant engaged ranges from £1,157 in Carmarthenshire through to £2,640 in Swansea. In terms of cost per qualification gained these range from £3,415 in Pembrokeshire through to £6,661 in Ceredigion. Finally, cost per participant entering further learning ranges from £2,927 in Pembrokeshire through to £18,002 in Ceredigion. Based on this very basic assessment of outcome/result return against contract value, it would appear that Pembrokeshire County Council offered the best return.

It should be noted however when considering these figures that a variety of elements may influence cost per outcome/result; the geography of each authority area (greater rurality in areas such as Ceredigion is likely to have a significant inflationary impact on cost), nature of participants engaged (fluctuations in the proportion of participants that were NEET when engaged on the project by partner may influence cost per outcome/result), and its dependent on what has and hasn't been included as match (as many of the partners referred to the importance of the additional network of support that doesn't form part of Engage provision in facilitating the delivery of some of these outcome/results). It should also be noted that we have excluded "other positive outcomes" from the cost per outcome analysis, mainly due to the variety of what can be considered a positive outcome. As highlighted earlier within this section, Ceredigion County Council delivered more than six times their target, equating to over 30% of the entire Engage delivery for this outcome area. It is therefore highly likely that their cost per positive outcomes is far lower than other Strand A and C service providers.

**Figure 4: Cost Per Outcome/Result – Strand A and C provision**

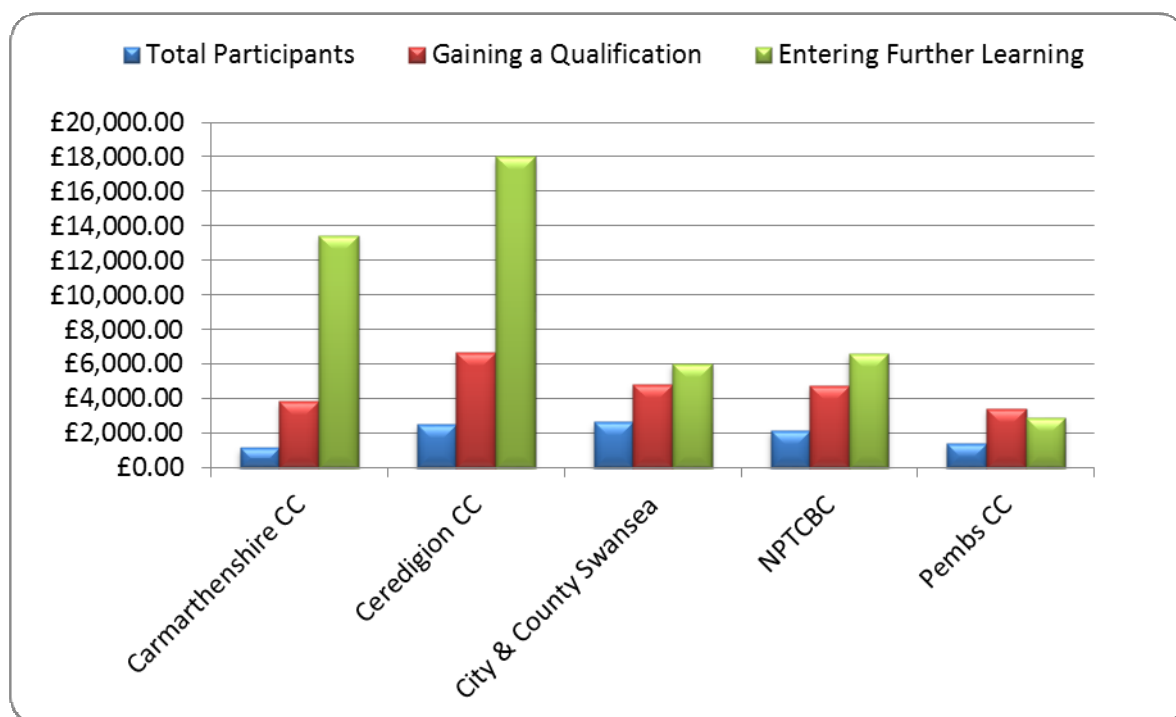
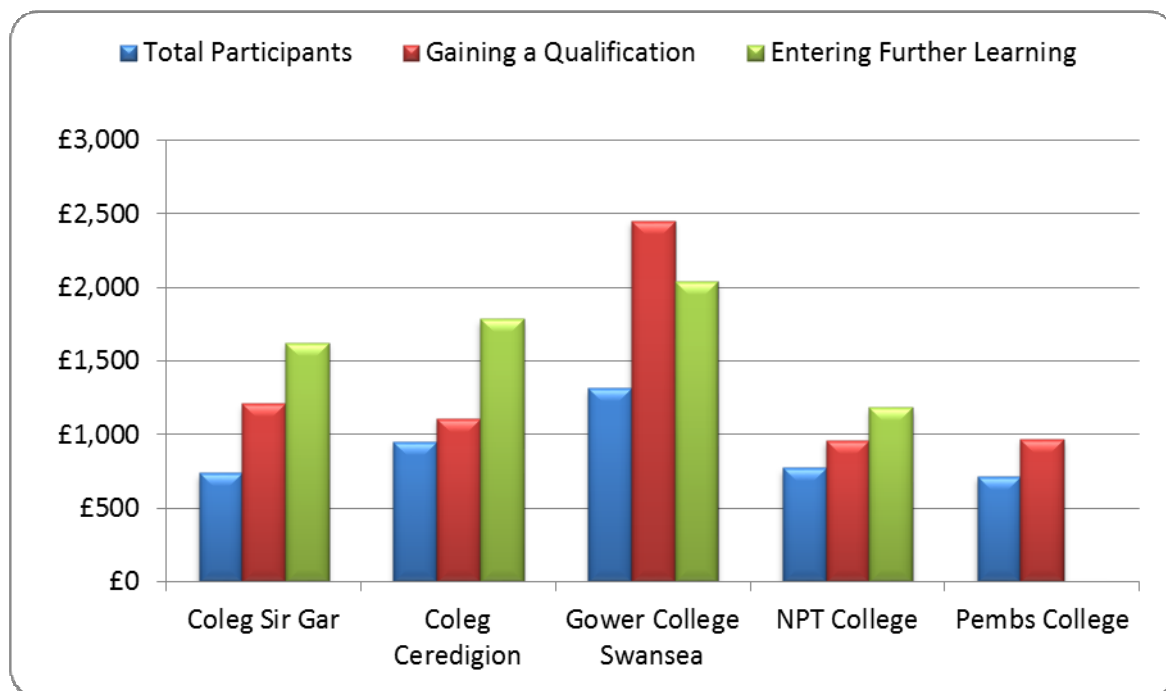


Figure 5 below compares cost per outcome/result for the colleges that delivered Engage provision. It is instantly obvious that the range of costs are far smaller than those for the Strand A and C service providers, the cost per participant by way of example ranges from £715 for Pembrokeshire College to £1,314 for Gower College Swansea. In terms of gaining a qualification four of the partners are tightly grouped, ranging from £967 to £1,210 per qualification gained with Gower College Swansea significantly more expensive at £2,453 per qualification gained. Finally, for entering further learning (excluding Pembrokeshire College who recorded no entering further learning outcome/results) the cost per outcome/result ranged from £1,182 at Neath Port Talbot College through to £2,038 at Gower College Swansea.

Again this is a very crude analysis and there are a host of factors that will have influenced costs; including the structure of the colleges (the number and geographical spread of campuses) and specifically in relation to Gower College Swansea, the whole-scale changes that took place as a result of the Gorseinon College and Swansea College merger.

**Figure 5: Cost Per Outcome/Result – Strand B Provision**



#### 4.2.1. Equal opportunities

##### Female participants

The Engage business plan originally established a target of 40% of total project participants to be female and was a target that matched the proportion of female participants specified for the entire Priority 1 programme. The project has consistently surpassed this target throughout its delivery and currently, 44% of participants are female. Partners were asked to provide feedback as to why they felt they had over delivered against this specific target, however all partners were consistent in highlighting that their services were available to all who required them and were not targeted in any way.

## Participants of BME origin

Analysis of the latest population estimates by broad ethnic group suggest that 3.3% of the population within the Engage project area are non-white.<sup>15</sup> The latest quarterly return suggests that 2.8% of participants are of a Black and Minority Ethnic Group which suggests that the project is slightly underperforming against profile. It should be noted however that a more accurate assessment of whether the participant profile reflects ethnic diversity, particularly in relation to strand b service providers would be through a review of the ethnic diversity of those enrolled at each college.

Again the nature of support, being demand and referral led and equally, being restricted on promotion and marketing means that the delivery teams have little if any influence on who they engage with. The data could suggest that young people of BME origin are less likely to need to access this nature of support, however recent research found that a slightly higher proportion of Minority Ethnic Groups are known NEETs (4.9%) compared to those of White Ethnic origin (4.4%) across Wales<sup>16</sup>, which would contradict this suggestion.

## Ex-offenders and care leavers

The Engage project sought to work with 3,423 young offenders, care leavers, participants from pupil referral units and those with basic skills below level one. By Claim 11 (August 2012) the project had worked with 3,875 thereby overachieving against this target.

## Participants engaging in STEM/non-traditional subjects

The business plan for the Engage project identified an opportunity for participants supported through the project to focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects, with associated targets for females accessing STEM subjects (as these are typically considered to be “non-traditional” subject areas for females).

All service providers have been tasked with capturing data on the number of Engage participants undertaking learning (and ultimately employment) that is linked to STEM subject areas and by tracking course participation and ultimate destinations of Engage participants.

Consultation with Engage delivery teams found that provision is student led so to an extent, there is little way of influencing the nature of provision accessed by individuals. However the onus from all partners has been on the promotion of a full breadth of curriculum that is accessible by all.

In Carmarthenshire for example, work placements are offered in architecture and engineering as well as for backstage technicians and they have found that the STEM has been a particularly successful route for females, however again, this has been demand-led through the identification and availability of a breadth of opportunities, (with taster days in STEM subjects offered each year for example) rather than through any specific tailored provision.

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<sup>15</sup> Census 2011 data – in this calculation White British (including White English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish) , White Irish, White Gypsy and White Other have all been excluded from being of BME origin.

<sup>16</sup> Year 11 Destination Survey 2011, Careers Wales

Elsewhere, in Neath Port Talbot for example science is run as part of the high intervention programme but they have found it difficult to gain engagement from participants due to the quality of the equipment that they have available.

In other areas partners referred to a lack of clarification from WEFO as to what precisely is a STEM subject. For a period of time the absence of clarity led to partners utilising their own definition. The Lead Partner subsequently contacted the Regional Learning Partnership and worked with CWW to agree a definition that was then subsequently agreed by WEFO. Across all partners, as part of the project closure activities, providers have reviewed the specific activities undertaken through Engage to identify whether, retrospectively provision can be allocated to a specific outcome/result or result indicator that may have slipped through.

Table 6 outlines the levels at which STEM subjects have been undertaken. The proportion of females and males within the table should not be compared as some partners provided data for females only. Details on the STEM courses undertaken by participants can be found within Annex 3.

**Table 6: STEM Qualifications by gender and qualification level <sup>17</sup>**

Course	Male	Female
At NQF Level 3	28	42
At NQF level 2	122	225
Below NQF Level 2	376	185
Unknown	3	11
Where qualifications below level 2 recorded:		
At NQF level 1	33	77
Basic Skills/Entry Level	16	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>336</b>

#### 4.2.2. Work placements

A significant number of Engage participants gained work placements as part of their support. Table 7 below provides an overview of the industrial sectors within which male and female participants gained their work placements. It should be noted that the data is drawn from a sample of the Engage partners. <sup>18</sup> The table highlights work placements across a broad spectrum of sectors but also suggests limited placements in non-traditional sectors for a particular gender.

<sup>17</sup> Figures based on data regarding females only from Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Carmarthenshire County Council and Pembrokeshire County Council only. Data on both females and males is from Ceredigion County Council, Gower College Swansea, Coleg Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot College and Pembrokeshire College

<sup>18</sup> Figures based on feedback from Pembrokeshire County Council, City and County of Swansea, Carmarthenshire County Council and Coleg Sir Gâr only

**Table 7: Work Placements of Engage Participants**

<b>Work Placement Sector</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total</b>
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	9	0	9
Manufacturing	0	0	0
Construction	31	0	31
Motor trades (incl. vehicle repair)	25	0	25
Wholesale	13	0	13
Retail	2	9	11
Transport and storage	0	0	0
Accommodation & food services	13	5	18
Information and communication	1	1	2
Finance & insurance	0	1	1
Property	12	3	15
Professional, scientific & technical	5	14	19
Business administration & support services	10	9	19
Education	7	23	30
Health	10	35	45
Public administration & Other	22	19	41
<b>Total Placements</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>279</b>

### 4.3. Participant related results/outcomes/impacts

As part of the interim evaluation the project team managed to consult with 81 engage participants across all partner areas during the autumn term of 2011. The consultations were undertaken as a combination of one to one and focus groups consultations.

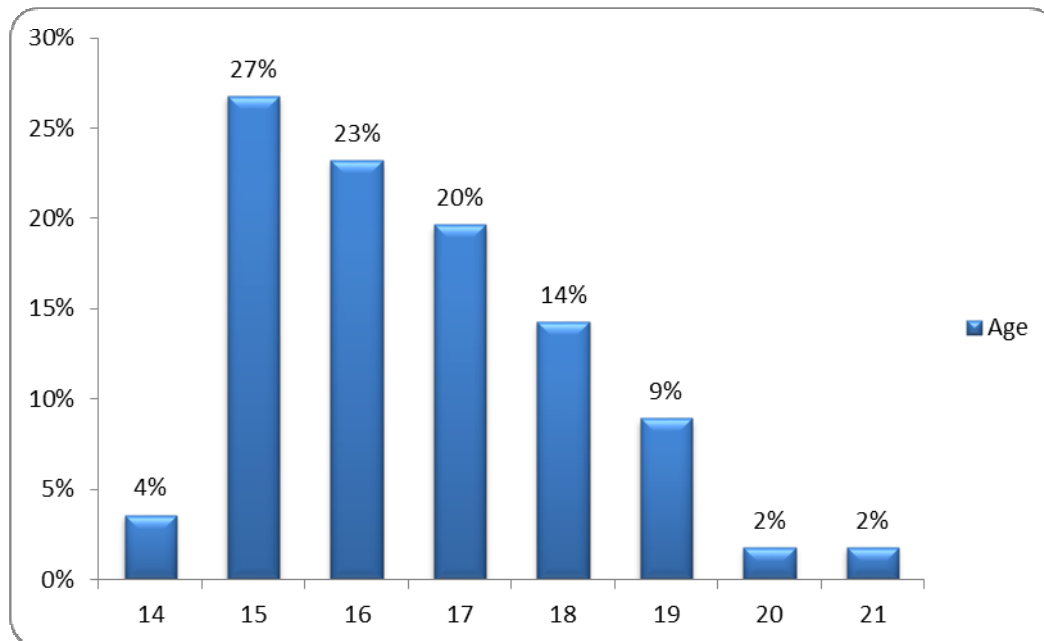
During the consultation process the study team found that the one to one approach to consultation tended to bring forth more comprehensive evidence of a higher quality, and more comprehensive, as in focus group sessions there was a tendency for some to be reluctant to divulge information, particularly that which was of a sensitive nature. The focus group approach had been chosen as a more efficient route to consultation, both for the study team but also, primarily for the service provider (with the hope that this approach would minimise impact on service delivery). However, it was felt that the quality of research outweighed the impact upon delivery and during the further phase of consultation, undertaken six months later during the summer 2012 term, participant consultation was undertaken on a one to one basis in its entirety.

The consultation approach as part of the final evaluation was undertaken with 55 participants. To boost rates of response and in response to feedback regarding the consultation approach last year we sought to provide a combination of a longer lead-in time (informing service providers of our plans a month prior to consultations commencing) and a larger window of consultation (a three-month period between April-June 2012).

Providers asked whether repeat participants could be included as part of the research which we confirmed as being appropriate, particularly in terms of tracking the change amongst those individuals and ten of the participants consulted were participants who had been consulted previously.

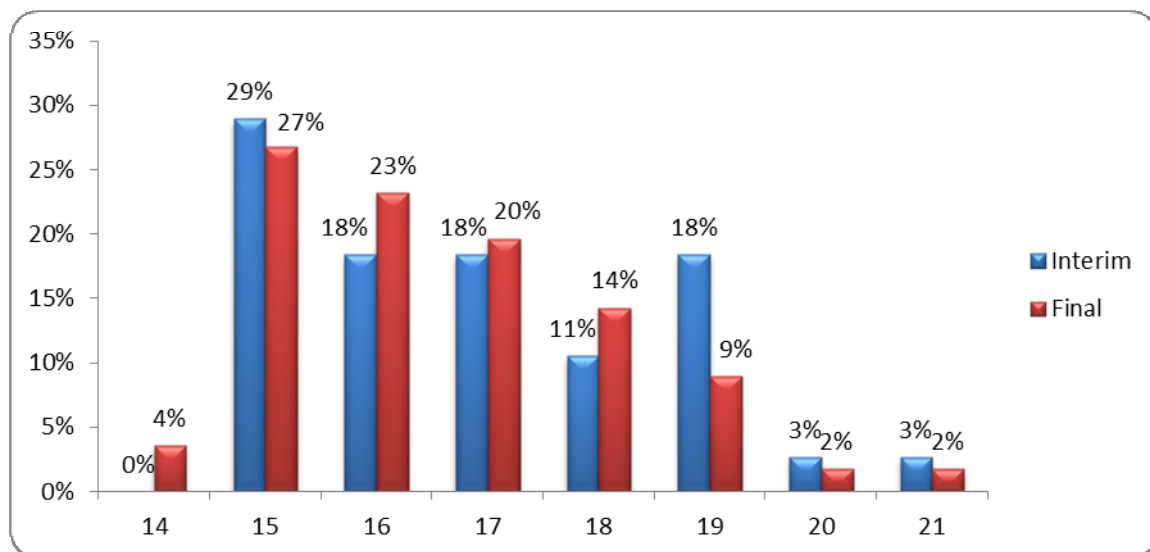
Thirty-six per cent of the participants consulted were female with the majority of all participants (70%) between the ages of 15 and 17, as illustrated within figure 6 below.

**Figure 6: Age profile of participants consulted**



The following figure compares the age profile of participants engaged as part of the interim evaluation, against the participants engaged as part of the final evaluation and highlights a broadly simple spread of ages aside from 19 year olds who made up almost double the proportion (18% of the participants consulted for the interim evaluation compared to 9% of the participants consulted for the final evaluation) of Engage participants within the interim report compared to those consulted as part of the final evaluation.

**Figure 7: Comparison of age profiles – interim and final evaluation**



Of the 49 participants who could recall how they became involved with engage support, 36 (73%) were referred to the support by a tutor, teacher or equivalent. Twelve participant's (24%) referred themselves to the support on offer and a further two participants (4%) were referred to the support by another external organisation (the Prince's Trust).

The reasons behind their referrals did vary widely (by way of example, some were seen to be socially excluded, others appeared withdrawn, others were referred following the receipt of information from a parent/carer), it is noticeable however that only a handful of tutor referrals were associated with ill-discipline (un prompted)

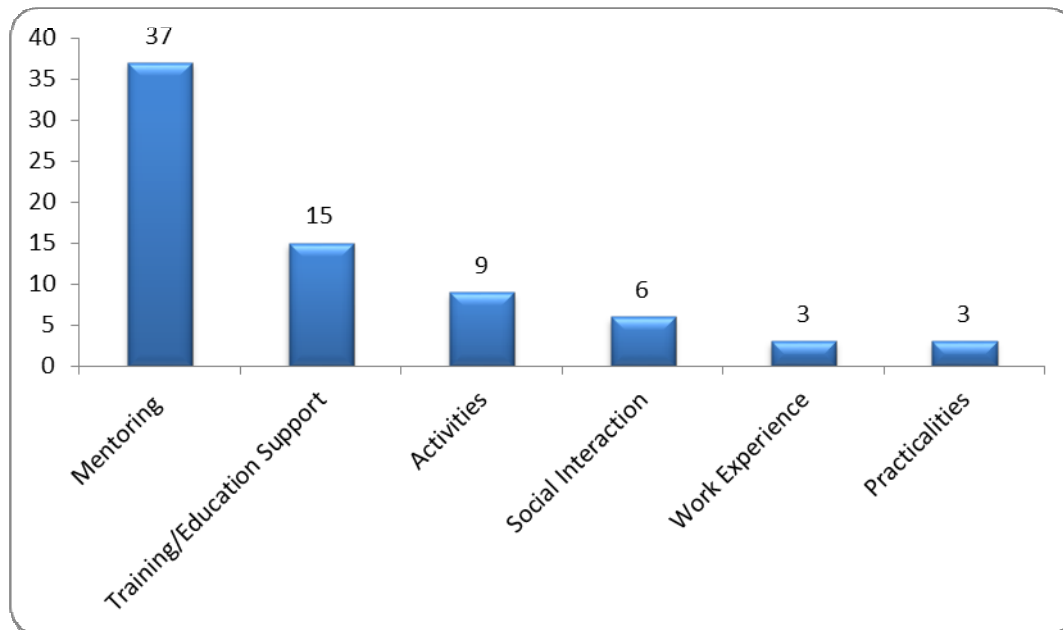
- *"I knew of Engage as we are all told when we start, but was asked to join by my course tutor for behavioural and discipline reasons".*
- *"I had a few issues, one of the tutors picked up on it, I had a bit of an attitude in class using my phone etc. The tutor took the phone off me, I had a go at her and she referred me to Engage".*

Participants were asked to describe the nature of the support they'd received through Engage. Again, given the flexibility of the support and the emphasis on it being participant-led, the feedback was wide-ranging.

- *"I love the outdoors, I am unable to work inside a building. I now work with the National Park, I enjoy climbing, surfing and I have a Saturday job at the National Park - all as a result of coming here".*
- *"When I started College I had recently had a miscarriage and was having counselling - The people at Engage listened to me and were really helpful. There have been a lot of times when I thought about leaving - I don't think I would be here if it wasn't for them".*
- *"I was having a lot of arguments with my dad and my mum was ill, she has mental illness. They helped me with stress issues, they were there for me when I needed them! I have regular meetings with my mentors".*
- *"I have received many types of help, I have received tutoring, help finding jobs, mental support and general 'life support'. I had lots of stress from a few things going on and Engage helped me to work through these".*
- *"I had some family problems and had to move out, so Engage has helped me with accommodation and just general support if I have any sort of problem".*
- *"I was on a mechanics course, wasn't for me, started missing class as there didn't seem any other options with my level of qualifications....gave me an idea of what else there was and I managed to get on to a hair and beauty course, even whilst on the course she still provides support."*

The participants were asked "What have been the best aspects of the support you have received?" and 70% (39/53) of those able to answer the question specifically referred to the mentoring role offered through Engage. A further 15 (28%) referred to the training and education support they gained whilst nine respondents referred to the activities they were able to go on.



**Figure 8: What have been the best aspects of the support you have received?**

N = 53 – Participant responses were assigned, where appropriate to more than one of the above categories

Comments in response to this question included the following:

- *“Engage has done me the world of good, I would not be who I am today if it wasn't for them. I have totally changed for the better, I have confidence. I know I have someone to talk to. I would not be on this course if it wasn't for Engage and I enjoy the courses I do with Engage, I like to meet new people and have a laugh with people you do not know”.*
- *“I learnt loads, I settled down more than I would have done in school. I knew if I had a problem there was someone to support me and they have supported me loads. The staff are all lovely, if you are in trouble or got a problem or need help they are here to support you”.*
- *“Knowing that there is someone there who you can ask for help - she'll make time for me and I can speak to her or someone else in the office”.*
- *“I can understand her better than my teachers and I can tell her anything - she is more like a friend than a teacher, she explains things better - she takes more time explaining - one to one support is great, if you really want support you can have it but you have to show willing – it's good as it's confidential and everyone knows Kelly - her character and her willingness to help people”.*
- *“Helped with the step from being a foster child to living with independence. Helped with food shopping and working out a budget. It is not like counselling. The team are not judgemental, but not like a friend either, they have a good balance - I trust them and feel they are on my side. They are really nice and go beyond their role”.*
- *“Someone is always there if you need to talk, the team actually listen. They are helpful and direct you to other places when they cannot support”.*
- *“She motivates me and provides support to help me with my course - if there is anything wrong you can always go to her - she persuades you, she doesn't order you, she brings out the positive things you do, treats you more as an equal”.*

## Improvements

Participants were asked if there were any improvements that could be made to the Engage support, ten of the 56 participants consulted, cited improvements for the support, all but one of which related to increasing the capacity and resources of the Engage team, the remaining improvement related to the increased promotion of the project. Some of the responses included the following:

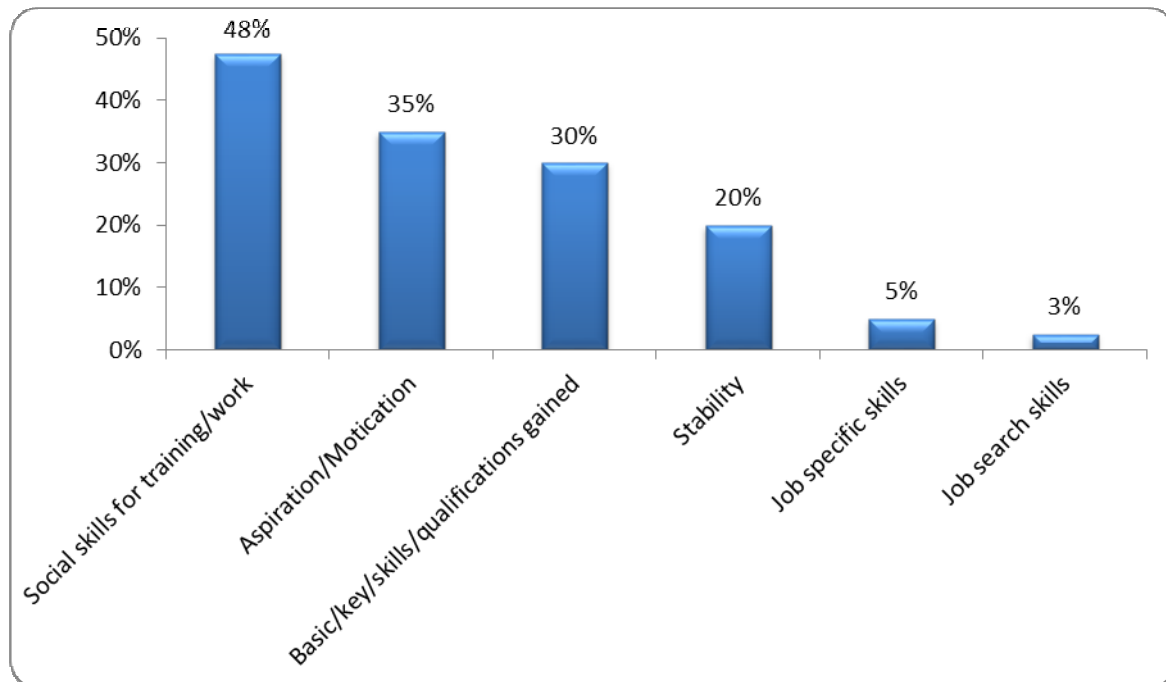
- *“They need more funding - I have a saying, ‘the more you have got the more you can give and the more you give the more you get back’”.*
- *“I only get a time slot of 1 hour/week and this could be increased. The staff seem really busy so may be another member of staff”.*
- *“Need more staff - sometimes there are six people waiting to be seen, many people just walk in but maybe they need more staff or a bigger space”.*
- *“More personal mentors - there are only 3 of them and they are quite busy running clubs and all the paperwork”.*
- *“More mentors per campus - they are really stretched”.*

## Benefits and participant impacts – unprompted

Engage participants were asked: “How have you benefitted from the support that you’ve received? Has anything about you or your life changed?” The question was initially asked as an open question, with no element of prompting with responses coded against a series of different categories which align to a number of pre-defined categories within the interim report, namely:

- Aspiration and motivation
- Basic/key skills/qualifications gained
- Social skills for training/work
- Stability
- Job specific skills
- Job search skills

Figure 9 below illustrates the 40 respondents who were able to cite changes without being prompted. The most common responses referred to softer skills – specifically social skills – linked to confidence and the ability to talk to other people and support that has boosted (and in some cases managed) their aspirations, and through increased enjoyment of education, boosted their levels of motivation. However, given the sample size, caution should be taken in interpreting too much from these findings given the wide margin of error.

**Figure 9: How have you benefitted from the support that you've received? (unprompted)**

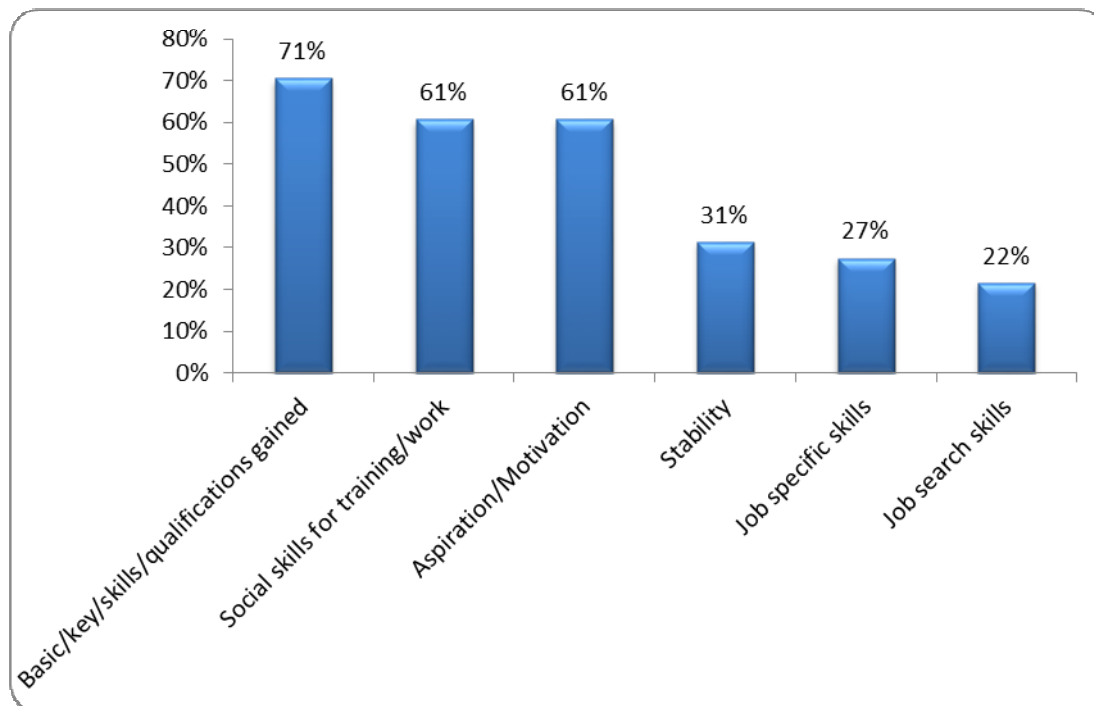
N = 40

Comments included:

- *“They have helped me a lot. I was really shy before and now I am more confident, I wouldn't have been able to speak to you before”.*
- *“Definitely more confident with other people, I actually enjoy working in a team. More sociable and better able to communicate and express myself”.*
- *“Getting me more relaxed and stuff, giving me confidence, in school and out of school, helped with some subjects like doing presentations”.*
- *“I have changed quite a bit, I have a better attitude and I am managing my temper more. I am more confident and my reading and writing is better”.*
- *“I have made new friends and I have got a qualification now. I finish the course in June and then I want to come back and do an apprenticeship course and then maybe even go to University so I can become a teacher”.*
- *“I have received advice on how to deal with my home relationships; I have calmed down a lot in class and now know where I want to go in life - social care, despite currently studying engineering”.*
- *“Massively, my confidence has grown considerably - I can be with and I can talk to another person I would have NEVER been able to talk to you for example. I can also talk more openly. For the first time I am starting to believe in myself”.*

Following the initial question and response exercise, participants were then prompted on the other impact areas (using the same categories as described above). This approach (unsurprisingly) led to an increase in the proportion of participants citing impacts against each of the given areas. The greatest proportionate increase was associated with support in relation to skills and qualifications and highlights that whilst support has clearly impacted upon skills and qualifications participants do not tend to immediately refer to this element of impact from the support received.

**Figure 10: How have you benefitted from the support that you've received? (prompted)**



*N = 51 Respondents could refer to more than one impact area*

Some of the responses received included the following:

#### **Key Skills/Qualifications**

- *“Better grades in reading, writing and maths than I ever got at school”.*
- *“If I hadn't have come here I wouldn't have the grades I've got, I'd be struggling to do the work”.*
- *“Certificate in National Parks, also work skills. I've also been accepted onto a beauty course”.*

#### **Social Skills for Training/Work**

- *“Social skills have improved because I'm more confident”.*
- *“Got a lot better, I am still improving. I feel more confident in myself and what I can do and what I want to do in the future”.*
- *“More social and able to work in a team of people I do not know, more confidence generally too”.*

**Aspiration/Motivation**

- *“I’m definitely more motivated to reach my goal of becoming a chef in the navy and get qualifications. I’m more confident in cooking now”.*
- *“Knowing I can achieve something”.*
- *“Makes me feel confident, more focussed about the exams, more self-belief in terms of what could be achieve”.*

**Stability**

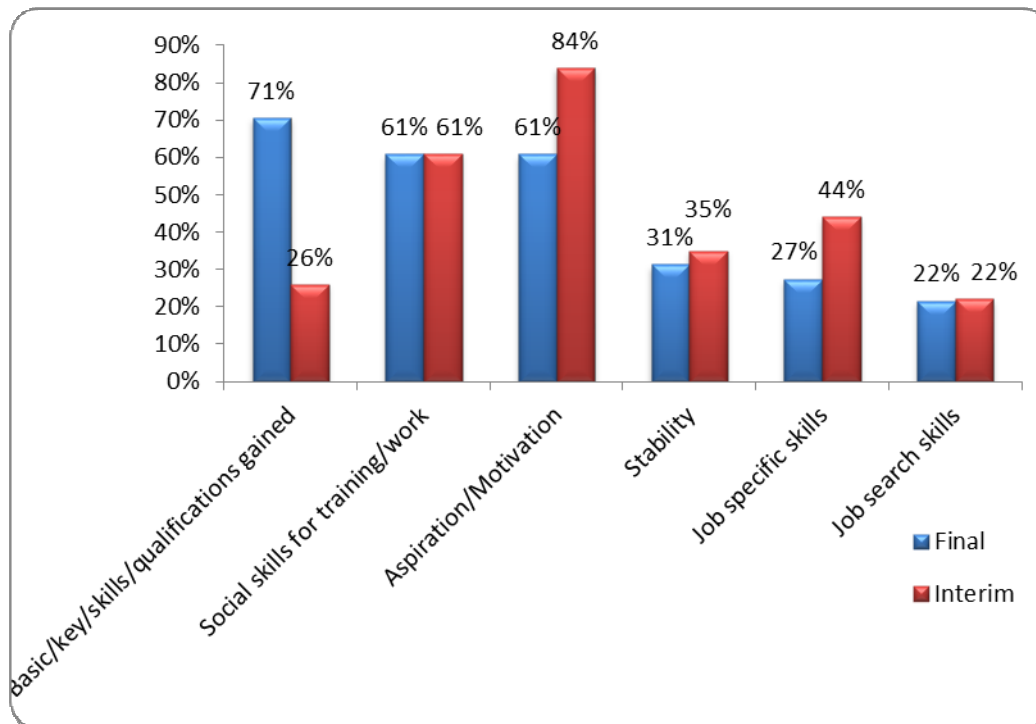
- *“I have got better in my behaviour at home as well and am getting on better with my family; they have noticed a big difference”.*
- *“My work and attendance is better. It has helped me with problems I had with my boyfriend and parents and Engage have supported me when I got in trouble with the police”.*
- *“More confidence and my life is far more stable”.*

**Job Specific/Job Search Skills**

- *“Taught me new cooking skills, I definitely want to become a chef. I had 2 days’ work experience over Easter”.*
- *“I have learnt loads, timekeeping, reading writing and outdoor skills working at the National Park”.*
- *“I have had intensive help finding the right Job and I now know what I am going to do in life - Land Management”.*

Figure 11 below compares the prompted impact areas referred to by participants as part of the interim evaluation against those referred to as part of the final evaluation. Whilst broadly similar responses were gained across the majority of impact areas the difference in terms of the proportion of respondents referring to basic/key skills and qualifications as part of the interim evaluation to that of the final evaluation is stark. Whilst a portion of this could be a matter of interpretation by the study team this would not account for the scale of difference in response. The findings perhaps reflect the fact that to gain a qualification takes a longer period of time. The findings may also reflect a slight change of approach and emphasis in delivery on the project which may indeed reflect the shortfall that has existed in relation to the qualifications gained outcome.

**Figure 11: How have you benefitted from the support that you've received? (prompted) – interim and final evaluation comparisons**



#### 4.3.1. Estimating the counterfactual

Participants were also asked whether their life would be different in any way if they hadn't received support from the Engage project. Analysis of responses as part of the interim evaluation found that at least 80% of respondents felt that their life would be different in some ways, with many stating that they would no longer be in college or school. When the question was asked as part of the final evaluation it was found that just two respondents felt that support through the project had not impacted upon their life in anyway with one of these stating that it was too early within the support to tell what impact it had led to.

Of the remainder who did refer to the project impact upon their life, 21 (40%) of the respondents felt that they would no longer be in school or college without the support that they'd received whilst a further two respondents felt that they would not be in their current jobs without the support through Engage.

Some of the comments included:

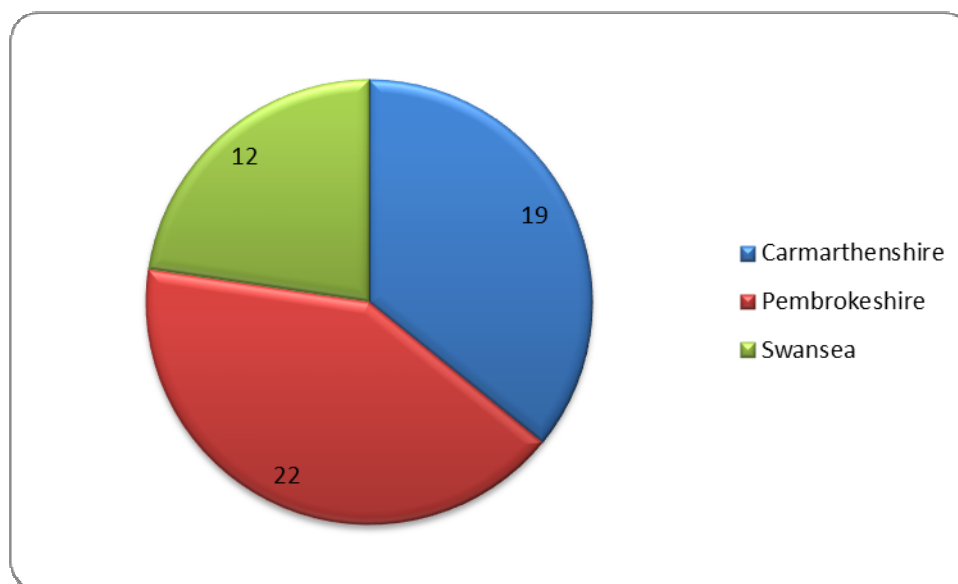
- *"I struggled with college and would have given up by now if it wasn't for the help they gave me".*
- *"I would have dropped out of college and got back into drugs and probably be in an institution or jail now! I was in a bad place before they helped me".*
- *"If it wasn't for Engage I probably wouldn't be in college - to be honest I'm not sure I would even be here. Engage have been incredible and I am able to appreciate life so much more. I know I am not on my own. I never thought I would be good enough for University but now I am going to university, have a job and I'm in college full time".*
- *"Probably my attitude would still be terrible because I was like it in school. I may have been suspended and I don't think I would be as happy. I probably would not be as committed to college. Things probably would not be as good at home either; I am getting on with my parents better".*
- *"Probably still be living on a friends sofa, maybe dropped out of college and probably would not have been in employment as I have no qualifications".*
- *"The first few months of starting the college were so hectic, so much work and problems, Engage has helped me to organise and manage my time. I would be less social and more introvert."*
- *"I would still be really shy and wouldn't be able to talk to anyone. I would be lazy and stay at home all the time. It has helped speaking to the mentors about my shyness".*
- *"I would still be really shy and wouldn't be able to talk to anyone. I would be lazy and stay at home all the time. It has helped speaking to the mentors about my shyness".*
- *"I would have been kicked out of school, I was kicked out every week! I would not have gone to college. I would probably still be on the dole and would still be angry".*
- *"My future would not be as bright as it is now, there has been such a big change between when I started and now. I have developed - I am more mature and better at handling things. I am happier now and glad to know there is someone I can talk to (even if I have to wait)".*
- *"I would have probably dropped out of college by now - I would have been "just forget it" probably just be sitting in my house. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> time I have tried college, and now have only a month left to complete".*

## 4.4. Indirect stakeholder perceptions

For the final phase of the evaluation an additional element of research involved a survey of “indirect stakeholders” – those individuals (primarily) staff, who whilst not directly resourced by the Engage project, gain benefit or at the very least interact with Engage services.

An online survey was distributed by service providers to key contacts within their area, a total of 53 responses were received. Respondents were asked in which authority they worked and for which organisation; figure 12 below illustrates the spread of these across the Engage area and highlights that unfortunately, responses were received from just three of the five authority areas.

**Figure 12: In which local authority area are you employed?**



N=53

Respondents were asked for their understanding of the role of Engage, all were able to provide a comprehensive view on this and responses consistently referred to supporting those who are or are at risk of becoming NEET. A few described the project as aiming to work with disadvantaged students whilst a handful referred to support for learners who are not well supported by the existing educational systems.

Respondents were asked the extent to which they felt the project was achieving this aim, of those who responded 38/52 (73%) replied “a great deal”, 13/52 (25%) to some extent and one respondent said “a little”.



A range of comments were provided as to why they felt this way including:

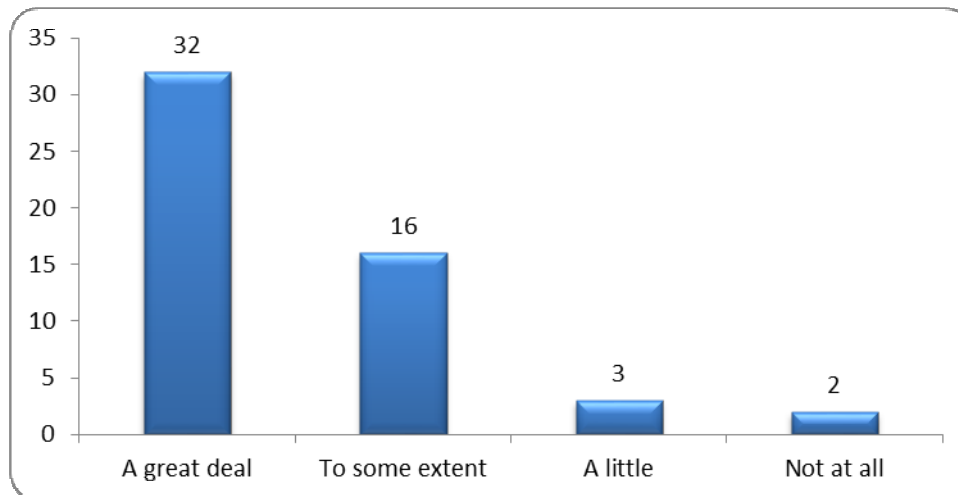
- *“Learners in my experience who have been referred to the Engage tutors have often turned their lives around e.g. getting to university against all the personal odds. Getting a job where hope had been extinguished”.*
- *“The additional support has been of real benefit to learners and has made a huge difference to their attainment”.*
- *“The Engage team has been invaluable in supporting students. Without the support of Engage we as lecturers would not be able to do our job”.*
- *“The students with us have benefitted enormously. Some have been able to remain on the course with the support of Engage - who would otherwise have dropped out. Others have received the guidance and support needed to enable them to progress at their true level and overcome/ come to terms with a wide variety of personal issues”.*

Respondents were then asked how much impact the Engage support has had on the target group, 39/53 (74%) respondents said “a great deal”, 13/53 (25%) “some” whilst one respondent wasn’t sure. Comments included the following:

- *“Students have been given extra support in class which has been so valuable and enabled them to complete their work, with greater understanding and ability -whereas without it they may have failed”.*
- *“There is somewhere for learners to go where nothing is too much trouble and it is friendly, private and learners trust the tutors”.*
- *“It is not just those who are being helped that Engage affect, because students are improving they become more confident in the classroom and this has a direct effect on the other learners. It encourages a stronger 'culture of learning' within the class as students who are less able then react and feel they also could do better. A direct measure of course would be the grades the students achieve but in most cases Engage makes the difference between a student failing and passing and that I have seen in several cases and courses on which I teach”.*
- *“From what I can see they have helped vulnerable, disadvantaged and troubled learners overcome their problems and make them feel valued and have somewhere to turn to when in need. They have also helped build their confidence and help them fit into the college environment and society as a whole”.*
- *“Positive impact on those involved but again short lived”.*
- *“Staff were appointed specifically to work with the identified pupils in a targeted way. This amount of individual learning support and attention was unaffordable without the funding”.*

Respondents were then asked to what extent has the Engage project helped you in your role? Figure 13 below highlights that again, the majority felt it had a great deal of impact.

**Figure 13: To what extent has the Engage project helped you in your role?**



Comments included the following:

- *“It has spread the load of teaching and allowed those students that are struggling to have more support and enable them to complete work at a similar pace to other more able students in the group”.*
- *“The Engage tutor has been able to assist small groups in the main lesson, allowing the tutor to support and move forward with the session”.*
- *“By having additional classroom support I have been able to better meet the needs of all learners in my classroom. Without this support, a disproportionate amount of my time would be spent with one or two learners which would have neglected others in the group”.*
- *“It has provided a network of mentors that I can link in with to provide guidance through a different path”.*
- *“Engage staff always make time to support the teaching staff as well as the students i.e. when an incident/ unexpected need occurs, they will make time to support a positive resolution /intervention so that the student is able to re-join the class/group without loss of self-esteem and make progress”.*
- *“The group that I work with is very difficult to engage with and has specific issues, barriers and negative educational aspirations and experiences generally. Engage has helped me and the young people that I work with overcome barriers with work placements and taster courses that I would otherwise have been unable to do. This has meant that Traveller young people have accessed provision that they would not normally have accessed. Traveller families have benefitted from consistent access to Engage outreach workers which has helped to build trust and improve access to provision”.*
- *“All the Engage team have gone out of their way to help staff and learners in my college. They have a wealth of skills that they bring to help learners. Their work is very impressive”.*
- *“Time is so tight now that we cannot offer the level of support that some students need. The Engage team provided that support”.*

Respondents were then asked which particular elements of the Engage service were most successful. The most common response related to the one to one support or mentoring role offered through the Engage service which 17/50 (35%) referred to. Three respondents referred to the work experience activities whilst a further two referred to the extra-curricular activities. Many others simply said “all of it” or, more specifically the support it offered them in teaching classes/courses.

#### 4.4.1. Improvements

Respondents were asked if there were any ways in which the project could be improved. 26/40 (65%) respondents referred to the need for more resources or a continuation of the programme (which in part reflects the timing of the survey, immediately following confirmation of the project’s cessation). A further three respondents referred to the need for improved communication between Engage staff and other college and school staff as well as other service providers.

### 4.5. Wider impacts...

The evaluation framework (Annex 1) developed as part of the initial phase of the study outlined a number of quantitative indicators that could be explored to assess the wider impacts of the project, namely:

- NEET indicators
- Retention rates in Further Education
- Exclusion rates

In addition, as part of consultations with the delivery partners it was felt that the proportion of pupils leaving school at 16 without a qualification should also be considered as part of the analysis.

#### 4.5.1. NEET indicators

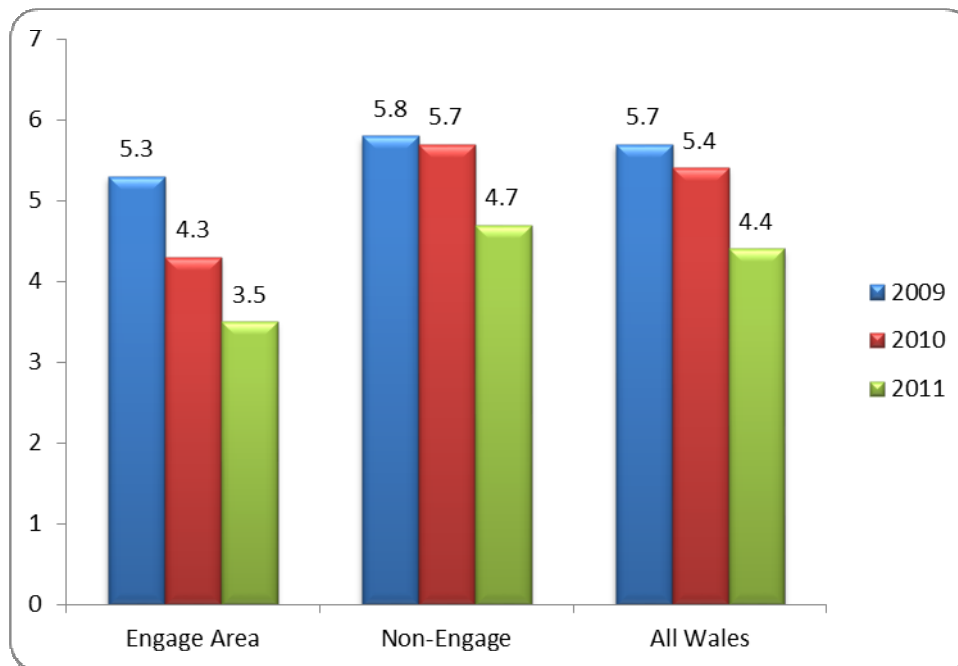
Calculations of the number of people that are NEET are typically drawn from the annual Destinations Survey (Careers Wales) in the autumn of each year and is recorded as a result of the pupils’ known activity on the 31<sup>st</sup> October of that year.<sup>19</sup> The data for 2009 could therefore conceivably be viewed as baseline data for the project as Engage commenced in the September of that year. The timing of the Destinations Survey and its annual undertaking in October is considered to significantly understate the true scale of NEETs in a given area. This is because year 11 leavers are likely to be newly engaged in some form of provision at that time of the year (typically commencing provision at the start of the academic year) however instances of participant drop out will then occur throughout the remainder of that academic year, which will be overlooked through this survey.

The data is yet to be published for 2012 and furthermore, the Welsh Government requested that for the 2011 year, the survey should be undertaken using Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data, which relates to pupil’s details as recorded in January 2011. In previous years the Destination Survey has been based on a list of pupils sent to Careers Wales by schools rather than on PLASC data, therefore any trend based analysis of the figures should be treated with caution and not undertaken without benchmarking against other comparator geographies.

<sup>19</sup> <http://destinations.careerswales.com/>

Figure 14 below provides analysis of the proportion of year 11 leavers for the academic years 2009, 2010 and 2011 who were known not to be in education training or employment (therefore “known NEETs”). The figure highlights that the area eligible for Engage support continues to outperform non-Engage areas and therefore the Welsh average.

**Figure 14: Percentage of Year 11 leavers known not to be in education, training or employment**



Were the Engage project to have reflected performance in relation to the reduction of NEETs over the 2009-2011 to that of the non-Engage areas within Wales (which fell by 25%) then NEET numbers would have fallen by 105. Table 7 below identifies that the number of Year 11 leavers has in fact fallen by 188. On the basis of this analysis, 83 (the difference between the proportionate fall in Engage areas versus non-Engage areas) could be attributed to Engage interventions. Furthermore, the fact that those areas eligible for Engage continue to outperform the non-Engage areas is all the more impressive given that the small cohort who remain NEET are most likely to be the very hardest to reach/help.

When “unknowns” are incorporated into the analysis of Year 11 destinations the performance gap between the Engage eligible areas and the non-Engage areas increases to the equivalent of 86 individuals.

As identified within the interim evaluation research undertaken by Coles et al (2010)<sup>20</sup> estimated that the average lifetime cost to public finances of a young person NEET is £56,301 (for example through benefit payments etc.). They also estimated an average resource cost for each NEET young person of £104,000 (mainly derived from losses to the economy in terms of wages and productivity).

<sup>20</sup> Coles et al (2010), Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training – Research undertaken for the Audit Commission, The University of York

However, more recent research suggests that the cost of each person who is NEET between the ages of 16 and 19 in the U.K. is almost £120,000 in 2009 prices, again on the basis of costs associated with unemployment, health services and the criminal justice system.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 8: Change in Year 11 NEET numbers by geographical area<sup>22</sup>**

Geographical Area	2009	2010	2011	Difference	% Change
Engage Area	479	378	291	-188	-39%
Non-Engage	1651	1589	1285	-366	-22%
All Wales	2130	1967	1576	-554	-26%

According to the latest Engage participant database<sup>23</sup> 281 participants have been supported who were considered NEET, however they range in age from 14-19 years old (as you'd expect). 130 of these were aged 16 and 17 years old when first enrolling on support (to more closely reflect the Destinations Survey data). Of the 130 participants, 47 entered further learning, 21 entered employment and 3 entered voluntary work following the support they received through Engage (equating to 71 participants no longer being NEET). A further 19 gained a qualification through the support they have received through Engage.

A further 29 participants on the Engage database were aged 14 or 15 when they began gaining support through Engage with 17 of these either going into further learning or entering employment. Therefore, a total of 88 participants who were once NEET up to the age of 17 had subsequently entered employment, training or volunteering following the support received through Engage. A crude comparison with the reduction in NEET figures within the Engage area over the project period suggests that approximately 47% (88/188) of this reduction could be linked to the Engage project.

Were 88 of the NEET reduction figures removed from the NEET numbers this would equate to a fall of 100 NEETs, equivalent to a 21% reduction in NEET levels – very similar to the rate of reduction in non-Engage areas of Wales, thereby suggesting a relatively accurate level of attribution.

Applying the benchmark costs to the number of NEETs that have been supported back into work and employment that are aged between 14-17 equates to a potential saving (if they remain in some form of EET) of between £9.15m and £10.56m depending on which form of costing benchmark is applied. Whilst this assessment does perhaps overstate the level of financial saving, particularly as we have no insight into the subsequent failure to remain in EET, it also ignores the financial gain of those who were NEET but began participating in Engage over the age of 17, which equates to a further 117 participants. In addition, there are a further 859 participants on the Engage database that were described as unemployed or economically inactive when they first accessed the support on offer and therefore sit within the 14-19 NEET cohort.

<sup>21</sup> A generation of disengaged children is waiting in the wings, Sodha, S., Margo.J, (2010), Demos.

<sup>22</sup> Careers Wales Destination Surveys 2009, 2010 and 2011

<sup>23</sup> Participant details to November 2012

### 4.5.2. School exclusion rates

Table 9 below provides details on the rates of secondary school exclusions within the Engage area compared to the rest of Wales. The table highlights that there has been a reduction of over two thirds in the number of pupils being excluded from mainstream secondary schools in Engage areas from the 2008-09 academic year to the 2010-11 academic year. This compares to a reduction of just over a quarter across Wales as a whole however the Engage area accounts for over 60% of this nationwide reduction as in non-Engage areas the number of permanent exclusions has fallen by just 14%.

**Table 9: Exclusions numbers for the Engage area and all-Wales 2008-9 and 2009-10 academic years**

Geographical Area	Number of permanent exclusions from maintained secondary schools				
	Academic Year 08-09	Academic Year 09-10	Academic Year 10-11	Difference in no. 09-11	% Change
Engage Area	47	23	15	-32	-68%
All - Wales	194	151	142	-52	-27%

The Engage project has supported 1,193 participants who were aged 14-15 when they first participated in the project, however it is impossible to know the proportion that may have subsequently been excluded from school. Whilst feedback from the cohort of participants consulted as part of the evaluation that were within school, aged 14-15 could be used to estimate a level of attribution the sample is extremely small and consequently, the margin of error would be huge. However the general tone of responses combined with the scale of difference in performance between Engage eligible areas and the rest of Wales would suggest that the project has played a role in helping to reduce the number of permanent exclusions from maintained secondary schools.

### 4.5.3. School attendance figures

Table 9 below provides an outline of the rate of school absenteeism (authorised and unauthorised) in secondary schools. The data highlights that whilst the non-Engage areas have experienced a greater rate of reduction when comparing 2008/09 to 2010/11, the most recent academic year of data highlights a more significant reduction in the Engage eligible area (of 3.5% compared to a 2.7% reduction in non-Engage areas). Participant data for the Engage project does not give detail on which participants have unauthorised absences so again, it is impossible to assess the scale of attribution to the support provided through the Engage project. However the recurrent over performance of Engage areas compared to Wales and non-Engage areas provides a substantial body of evidence in support of this assertion.

**Table 10: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained secondary and special schools – Average percentage of half day sessions missed due to all absences**

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	Change 08-10	Change 09-10
Engage Areas	8.90	8.94	8.63	-3.0%	-3.5%
Non-Engage Areas	9.07	8.93	8.68	-4.2%	-2.7%

#### 4.5.4. 16 year olds leaving school with no qualifications

Further analysis of potential impact associated with the Engage project is evidence within table 11 below which highlights a massive reduction in the number of pupils leaving school with no qualifications in Engage areas – falling by 41% in just one academic year. This compares to a reduction of 9% in non-Engage eligible areas.

**Table 11: Pupils leaving education with no qualifications**

	2008/09			2009/10			Percentage Change
	Pupils aged 15	No. left with no qualifications	%	Pupils aged 15	No. left with no qualifications	%	
Engage Areas	8865	88	0.99	8692	51	0.59	-41%
Non-Engage Areas	27718	228	0.82	27305	205	0.75	-9%

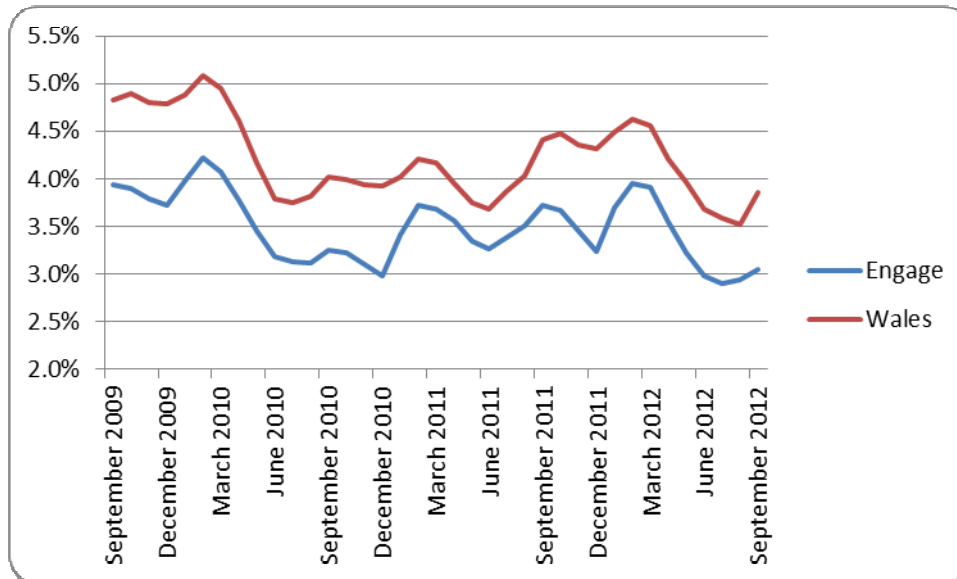
#### 4.5.5. Proportion of 16-19 year olds unemployed

According to the participant database Engage has supported around 1100 participants aged 16-19 that were not in employment, education or training when they first participated in the project. With this in mind an analysis of the 16-19 claimant count rate (the proportion benefitting from jobseekers allowance) was undertaken to assess any potential attribution to the Engage project. Mid-year population estimates were only available for an age cohort of 15-19 year olds so the rates are likely to be under-estimated, albeit consistently so. The table and subsequent graph illustrate that the Engage area continues to out-perform the Welsh average although the trends of claimant rates are broadly similar with a peak in the gap in performance at 1.1% in December 2009 and again in December 2011, whilst the gap narrowed to 0.4% during Spring 2011. More recently it has increased and the gap in rates currently stands at 0.8% (September 2012).

**Table 12: Average annual claimant count unemployment rate for 16-19 year olds <sup>24</sup>**

	15-19 year olds	Sept 09-Aug 10 avg	Sept 10- Aug 11 avg	Sept 11-Aug 12 avg
<b>Engage</b>	49,700	1,834	1,676	1,708
<b>Rate - Engage</b>		3.69%	3.37%	3.44%
<b>Wales</b>	198,600	8,998	7,870	8,306
<b>Rate - Wales</b>		4.53%	3.96%	4.18%

<sup>24</sup> Proportion based on mid year population estimates for 15-19 year olds so understates rate

**Figure 15: Claimant count unemployment rate for 16-19 year olds**

NB: Proportion based on 15-19 age cohort drawn from Mid-2010 population estimates only.

Whilst the claimant count rates are probably a statistical area furthest from the sphere of influence of Engage intervention, there is a significant body of evidence that links consistent outperformance of Engage areas to those areas ineligible for Engage. This suggests that the project has had a substantial impact on a number of impact areas amongst 14-19 years olds in South West Wales.



## 5. Mainstreaming Engage Provision

As outlined within section 4 of this report, confirmation that the project was to end as initially planned (at the end of November 2012) was received in July 2012. It is fair to say that amongst some service providers there has been an element of drop off in the volume of services given the current academic year only commenced two months prior to project closure. A further impact on service provision has been the inevitable loss of staff who have sought to gain employment elsewhere following confirmation of the project's cessation.

To a certain extent (and perhaps amongst some providers more than others) there is also a focus on retrospective data and document capture and this in part reflects a lack of clarity and/or understanding regarding the nature of information required for a participant to be deemed eligible. Again, as highlighted earlier in the report, if consistent data capture mechanisms and participant database had been distributed amongst service providers this would have helped overcome some of these issues.

### 5.1. Plans for mainstreaming Engage Services

As part of the consultation, service provider leads were asked to outline any confirmed details for mainstream elements of the Engage service model within their area.

#### 5.1.1. Local authority provision

##### **Pembrokeshire County Council**

In Pembrokeshire Families First funding is being used to continue outreach service provision. The focus in Pembrokeshire has moved towards 18 year olds as the latest data suggests that the number of NEETs at this age appears to be on the increase. This provision has initially been resourced until March 2013 but it is hoped that there will be an extension of this to 2017.

In terms of the school based provision it is hoped that activity will be sustained through a combination of the school budgets and the pupil deprivation grant. All of the participating schools in Pembrokeshire are looking to continue through the use of these resources with a slight refocus of approach on reducing the number of school leavers leaving without a qualification.

The main loss in Pembrokeshire therefore will be the third party provision that had been procured through the Engage project, i.e. the extra-curricular or non-mainstream activities for those who struggle with school based education.

##### **City and County of Swansea**

In Swansea the pupil deprivation grant is again being used within schools to maintain provision. It is understood that those schools with a high level of deprivation will have sufficient resources to retain mentors. Other schools in Swansea have also sought to mainstream provision thereby leading to all secondary schools in Swansea maintaining provision of some kind.

The Youth Support Service, in recognition of the success of the outreach work carried out by Youth Workers and ELiS Workers has sought to integrate the provision into core delivery or support it through the use of Families First resources.

### **Ceredigion County Council**

In Ceredigion, combined contributions from the County Council's Capital Growth Fund and the Department of Education and Community Services budget will be used to sustain the Engage programme.

At post 16, the Keeping in Touch Strategy will be funded, to co-ordinate a joint multi agency approach to targeting and supporting NEET young people. The outreach provision will be sustained to link into this process as previously, but will also focus specifically on transition work, prior and post the statutory school leaving date.

School based provision will be sustained, but include Youth Service targeted delivery and a new programme of accredited short/long course provision. The service will also provide for earlier intervention at Key Stage 3, a continued service at Key Stage 4, but with a focus on transition work prior to the statutory school leaving date.

The external providers framework will be sustained, but developed to deliver a minimum qualification at BTEC level 1.

### **Carmarthenshire County Council**

In Carmarthenshire, one of the Engage posts – the Work Location post has been mainstreamed and, at the time of consultation there were plans being pulled together to potentially secure funding for a further five posts to deliver a "Keeping in Touch" model of support, although it was understood that this was in the early stages (and was also not envisaged to be limited to the 14-19 age group).

### **Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council**

Approximately half of the staffing resource is being retained in Neath Port Talbot CBC. The high intervention element of the NPT model is to be retained, albeit on a smaller scale, a reduction of staff from 16 to 12 (targeting 14-16 year olds with 45 places available compared to the 65-70 available through Engage).

For moderate interventions (primarily within schools) funding has been secured for Youth and Community Support Workers however they will be focussed on Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) – to tackle issues at an earlier stage than Engage would allow. The worker will have one day per week in each of the four inclusion centres which are based within secondary schools within the borough providing mentoring support and teaching with the aim of encouraging integration back into mainstream education.

Three of the Keeping In Touch staff are also being retained and, without the parameters of Engage, are able to concentrate on the 16-24 cohort.

### 5.1.2. College based provision

#### **Neat Port Talbot College**

The Engage model is being mainstreamed within the college which has led to some of the elements that pre-existed Engage being replaced or removed with extra hours assigned to the Engage type model. Resources for mentors are to increase from 71 hours per week of mentor time to 111 hours per week. This will unfortunately lead to a reduction of learning coaches within the Learner Services Department of the college from 17 to 15 posts who have a more academic focus but will now also have to be more proactive in their approach.

#### **Coleg Sir Gâr**

The college has provided funding to enable mentoring to continue albeit with a reduction in the volume of mentors from 15 down to 10.

Whilst the summer transition elements have been really successful the reduction in resources means that the scale of summer transition activities will be reduced substantially leading to a lower frequency and range of summer activities as part of the transition model.

#### **Pembrokeshire College**

Pembrokeshire College plans to continue to fund the delivery of the Work Skills course and the additional support element of the project so that the improvements in retention rates and qualifications gained can be sustained.

#### **Gower College Swansea**

The college plans to retain the existing Engage model of support at least until July following a recognition within the college of the impact in terms of increased retention, and an associated reduction in disengagement with retention rates of the key cohort of participants reportedly have increased from c.70% to c.90%. The college is looking to expand the roles of the support officers to increase the number they engage with in light of this impact.

### 5.1.3. Plans for subsequent collaborative approaches

The partnership were also continuing to look at future opportunities for working together with plans for the submission of a Youth Guarantee bid which would provide some resource that could bridge provision to the next European funding programme. It was felt that on further consideration the project required a significant amount of support mechanisms for a 12 month period and therefore a worthwhile plan might not be achievable given the level of resource that was on offer through the scheme.

The group also approached the Regional Learning Partnership to discuss the potential role of the Engage partners in continuing to act in a forum beyond the life of the Engage project to discuss the 14-19 NEET agenda and the prevention agenda pre-14. The RLP felt that the group's role would need to link into the larger Welfare to Work agenda which is being taken forward by the RLP.

## 6. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

This section provides a series of key findings, collated from each phase of the evaluation along with recommendations for future provision of this nature.

### 6.1. Project overview

The Engage project suffered a stuttering start after its rapid approval but gained momentum and became embedded within service provision for the 14-19 age group across South West Wales. The project made good progress once a full (or near to) complement of delivery staff were on board and appears to have had significant impact on its target group as evidenced by a number of indicators collectively providing a compelling case for the impact. Furthermore, in the months immediately following the cessation of delivery a review of data captured for participants has led to a massive upswing in delivery with all key targets being surpassed, some significantly so. The massive upswing conflicts with the performance trends exhibited by Engage project prior to the final quarter. Whilst it is acknowledged that this reflects the need to ensure that all information is in place for a participant for their result/outcomes to be deemed eligible, it does create a challenge for the ongoing external assessment of progress against outcomes/results throughout the duration of a project.

#### **Recommendation**

Reporting participant numbers (regardless of eligibility checks) and verified (confirmed as eligible) participant numbers (alongside outcomes/results) as part of quarterly monitoring returns may provide a clearer insight and additional reassurance of Project Development Officers and other external monitoring representatives of the true performance and progress of an initiative.

Whilst many view the project as operating over too short a timescale the success of the project has influenced service provision with all partners looking to mainstream elements of their Engage model. In an era of tightening public sector resources, the desire for mainstreaming Engage services is clearly a reflection on the widely perceived success and importance of the Engage model.

### 6.2. Project governance

The appointment of a lead partner team following the commencing of project delivery in some partner areas generated a number of challenges, including, for example the need to retrospectively amend data capture forms on several occasions.

The challenges in delivering Engage services were compounded by the fact that the Lead and the delivery partners have had to adjust to a strategic model of delivery and whilst the partnership approach builds on existing structures, the project still represents a step change in the extent to which partners are required to actively work together. Difficulties associated with confusion regarding eligibility and delays in terms of the release of guidance from WEFO also served to constrain the effective delivery of the project. The Lead Partner was placed in a difficult position with regards to service provider discussions, particularly where historically, partner areas had liaised directly with WEFO however all service providers were ultimately supportive of their role.

Fundamental structural changes in a number of partners (that were unforeseen), the loss of a further partner combined with a lack of guidance constrained the ability of partners to deliver to target and ultimately resulted in the re-profiling of targets.

Whilst partner relationships have strengthened considerably; sharing of practice, successes and lessons learned has been limited at managerial level and there is very little evidence of this taking place at the delivery level.

### ***Recommendations***

The Lead Partner has to be in place prior to delivery commencing to enable consistent processes and systems to be put in place that will offer efficiencies in delivery as the project progresses.

A greater sharing of resources, from a cross-project database through to data capture methods and mechanisms would have further aided the delivery of the project and strengthened integrated partnership working.

Key measures need to be included in approaches to encourage networking of delivery teams to share practice and experience - one celebratory event was held for the Engage project less than 12 months from project completion providing little scope to influence any change of approach.

A lead partner team on a regional project of this scale should also include experience of direct service delivery within the team to provide an “on the ground” perspective of deliverability when in discussion with WEFO.

## **6.3. Project delivery**

The regional procurement framework provided some level of frustration amongst service providers, however, where service providers procured at the local level additional challenges emerged that were not aided by the delays in the provision of guidance on approach.

Administrative requirements remained challenging throughout the project with a lack of clarity on data capture requirements (although this improved as the project progressed) leading to a number of partners having to retrospectively locate former participants to capture the necessary data to confirm them as eligible.

Data capture, management and sharing processes have been a crucial ingredient in the success of Engage across the majority of partners. Mechanisms for data capture have been developed alongside the project however Engage has helped to facilitate stronger relationships in many areas, enhancing the comprehensiveness and increasing the frequency of the sharing of information. By facilitating this change in data sharing the project has aided an increase in the effective targeting of resources that respond to specific participant needs.

Approaches to Engage service delivery vary from partner to partner but a level of consistency exists in terms of recognition of the crucial and most effective elements of support, namely:

- Outreach, Keeping in Touch provision for those on the verge of dropping out of school/college or who are already NEET
- One to one, mentoring support for young people in school or college
- Work experience opportunities and extracurricular activities to build confidence and social skills for those that struggle within the mainstream educational environment
- Transition provision to assist in the move from school to college
- Provision that remains independent (and therefore objective and confidential) from mainstream education within school or college
- Greater flexibility (in terms of multiple start dates) and the delivery of bridging courses for those on the cusp of college.

### **Recommendations**

- Continue to establish effective data sharing protocols and focus on engaging and signing up suitable partner organisations to strengthen the evidence base available.
- Build data sharing agreements amongst partner areas where the propensity for participant transition is greatest.

## **6.4. Impact**

Quantitative indicators that are closely tied to Engage project intervention continue to suggest noticeable and significant impact arising from the support on offer. Indications of NEETs and secondary school exclusion numbers continue to exhibit a steep trend of improvements. Whilst these trends are not solely attributed to the Engage project (indeed policy focus on reducing exclusions (for example) and Reach the Heights provision (for example) are also likely to be influential), the Engage area has continued to outperform the wider geographical comparators. Furthermore, analysis of the participant database highlights a large number of 14-19 year olds supported through the project with a significant proportion gaining positive outcomes.

Relatively crude analysis of participant data suggests that Engage support may be attributed with up to half of the improving trends exhibited by impact indicators. Whilst this analysis is flawed in many senses it does nevertheless give a useful insight into the scale of influence and potential impact that the project has generated over a relatively small timescale.

Unfortunately little impact data in relation to Strand B activities is available and the evidence available is insufficient to provide any comprehensive perceptions of the success of these elements. However, participants, delivery staff and indirect stakeholders have been universal in the praise for this provision (as they have for the other strands of Engage support) and where data has been provided by Further Education Colleges (college retention rates are one such example) it illustrates significant success and impact.

Wider, longer term project impacts are more difficult to identify and whilst youth claimant count levels continue to outperform the Welsh average it is extremely difficult to attribute this performance to Engage interventions. The evaluation framework suggested an approach to estimating the proportion of these who are now in sustainable employment through the commissioning of DWP and HMRC undertaking analysis of benefit data by participant National Insurance number. Unfortunately this wasn't possible for the evaluation, however the approach is feasible and the data exists. Given the importance of addressing youth unemployment and unemployment more generally, mechanisms should be put in place to better identify the role of support in enabling a participant to gain sustainable employment as an outcome.

As identified within the interim report, whilst support within Engage appears to be having a significant impact upon participants, it is unclear as to the extent to which this provision has sufficiently equipped individuals when they are no longer eligible for the project (or the project ceases to exist). Indeed, a recurrent concern amongst delivery staff was the “cliff-edge” in terms of support drop-off experienced by participants after they move out of the eligible age group.

### Recommendations

- For WEFO to continue to explore with DWP and HMRC a potential approach for capturing PAYE evidence as a means for testing the sustainability (and therefore effectiveness) of employment outcomes.
- To track destinations of participants and the sustainability of these destinations post intervention to ensure continuity in support is achieved and that the impact of the support offered through Engage is not lost.
- To consider the expansion of the eligible age group (or status) of participants to ensure that all young people can access appropriate support as necessary.
- To build effective relationships with employment support initiatives (established – for example Job Centre Plus provision and emerging – for example Jobs Growth Wales) to help increase the proportion of individuals reaching what should be the ultimate goal for a project of this nature – sustainable employment/mainstream tertiary education for their participants.

The lack of a consistent approach to the measurement of soft outcomes does limit the extent to which participant progress and impact can be explored and analysed. Whilst partners were initially keen to identify a consistent approach, the active pursuit of this waned as the project progressed. It is recognised that the method does not work for all participants, particularly where provision is flexible and participant led in its entirety however evidence through the participant consultation highlights that it remains a crucial element of the impact of service provision.

### Recommendation

- Partners to continue to explore a consistent approach for capturing soft outcomes and distance travelled, considering the triangulation methodology mooted by the study team within the interim evaluation (where, ideally a participant, support provider and parent guardian complete a perception/self-perception tool – or (in reality) two of the three complete it to give a rounded assessment) at agreed milestones within support.

Despite the frustrations encountered in the delivery of Engage and the associated tightening of timescales for active delivery the project appears to have had a huge impact on participants, delivery staff and partner institutions. A number of partners have restructured to better accommodate Engage-type provision and all partners have sought to resource at least some elements of the model following the cessation of the project. The Engage project therefore provides a prime example of European funding enabling partners to trial innovative approaches to interventions. The desire to mainstream and identify resource to retain provision in an era of public sector austerity is perhaps the strongest indicator of the widespread value and perceived return associated with the services offered through Engage.



# Annex 1: Evaluation Framework

## Level 1 - Project Processes (Process Evaluation)

	<b>(A) Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)</b>	<b>(C) Data Source</b>
1	<b>Were the project outputs achieved? If not why?</b>	<p>Analysis of project outputs at evaluation reporting intervals. Aggregated analysis and disaggregated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LA and Partner.</li> <li>• Key Intervention Groups.</li> </ul> <p>A supplementary contextual analysis will also be provided which takes account of qualification / accreditation outputs which have been 'superseded' and 'over-written' in the WEFO returns by later outputs achieved by the participant at a higher level.</p> <p>Qualitative data to supplement output analysis, focussing on reasons for output patterns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success factors accounting for strong performance</li> <li>• Barriers faced in achieving under-performing targets and profiles.</li> <li>• Discussion of profiling, 'deferred' outputs and rates of output maturation.</li> <li>• Specifically, this analysis will also explore the fact that currently Engage is succeeding in meeting its target for engaging female beneficiaries (which other projects are currently failing to do).</li> </ul>	<p>Dataset to be supplied by Central Project Team.</p> <p>Qualitative semi-structured interviews with Engage partners, schools and second tier commissioned providers.</p>

	<b>(A) Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)</b>	<b>(C) Data Source</b>
2	<b>How efficiently were project outputs achieved?</b>	<p>Cost benefit analysis of project output against spend, aggregated analysis and disaggregated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LA and Partner.</li> <li>• Output type / provider.</li> </ul> <p>Benchmarking of cost-benefit analyses with similar Priority 1 programmes where data is accessible and comparable.</p> <p>Qualitative data to supplement cost-benefit analysis, focussing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success factors accounting for efficient and effective delivery of outputs.</li> <li>• Barriers faced in achieving efficiency and effective provision.</li> <li>• Wider structural considerations, such as procurement issues, ‘market’ maturity, demand-led provision.</li> </ul>	<p>Dataset to be supplied by Central Project Team.</p> <p>Qualitative semi-structured interviews with Engage partners, schools and second tier commissioned providers.</p>
3	<b>Could outputs have been achieved in another way, more efficiently or effectively?</b>	<p>Literature review of effective models of provision and practice, preventative approaches and cost and structural models to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic studies.</li> <li>• Applied research and evaluation studies in similar or transferable contexts.</li> <li>• ‘Grey’ literature for policy-making audiences.</li> </ul> <p>Qualitative data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme structure</li> <li>• Delivery and commissioning mechanisms.</li> <li>• Which delivery models have experienced greatest levels of efficiency and effectiveness and why?</li> <li>• Are there transferable lessons</li> </ul>	<p>Social and educational research databases, academic libraries, National Library of Wales, web-based sources (Google scholar, policy literature portals and repositories).</p> <p>Qualitative semi-structured interviews with strategic level stakeholders, both within and outside the Engage project.</p>

	<b>(A) Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)</b>	<b>(C) Data Source</b>
4	<b>How efficient and effective were the processes of the project in terms of planning, implementation and review?</b>	Qualitative data on project planning, implementation and review at all levels (Regional Steering Group, Central Project Management Team, Regional Officers Group, and Teams by partner. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonality and clarity of strategic objectives.</li> <li>• Commonality and clarity of purpose in operational planning.</li> <li>• Regularity of meetings to plan and review.</li> <li>• Clear expectations and standards.</li> <li>• Quality of support and guidance provided.</li> <li>• Commonality of objectives in implementation.</li> <li>• Which delivery models have experienced greatest levels of efficiency and effectiveness and why?</li> <li>• Has the diversity of delivery models posed challenges?</li> <li>• What other challenges in planning, implementation and review have been encountered?</li> </ul>	Qualitative semi-structured interviews with Regional Steering Group members, Central Project Management Team, Engage partners, schools and second tier commissioned providers.
		Document review of meeting minutes (Steering Group and Officer's Group), guidance documents provided and annual or periodic review records.	Data to be supplied by Central Project Team.

## Level 2 - Project Outcomes

	(A) Evaluation Questions	(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)	(C) Data Source
5	<p><b>Did the project achieve the stated objectives? If not, why?</b>  <b>Objective 1:</b> Support and engage young people in activities that will contribute to tackling underachievement and raising skills and aspirations delivered to 13401 participants.</p>	<p>Analysis of project relevant outputs at evaluation reporting intervals. (See B1 above).</p> <p>Qualitative data from project participants on the effectiveness of the support interventions received in raising skills and aspirations.</p> <p>Contextual management information and participant outcomes data from partners.</p>	<p>Dataset to be supplied by Central Project Team.</p> <p>Interviews, observations, focus groups and video evidence from young people, as deemed appropriate by project staff and participants themselves.</p> <p>Partners to provide as relevant and accessible, via Central Project Team.</p>
6	<p><b>Objective 2:</b> Supporting young people to remain or re-engage in education and achieve the skills and confidence to succeed in education, employment and training assisting 11361 young people to have the potential to engage in economic activity</p>	<p>Retention rates at FE colleges, for the Engage period, benchmarked against previous years' retention date.</p> <p>Analysis of project outputs at evaluation reporting intervals. (See B1 above).</p> <p>Analysis of employment rates beyond project exit, based on aggregated (and anonymous) NI data obtained via DWP.</p>	<p>Partners to provide as relevant and accessible, via Central Project Team.</p> <p>Dataset to be supplied by Central Project Team.</p> <p>Central Project Team to provide NI numbers, disaggregated by partner.</p> <p>Wavehill to seek analysis from DWP and present employment rates at reporting intervals.</p>

(A) Evaluation Questions	(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)	(C) Data Source
<p>7 <b>Objective 3:</b> Targeting action to identify and keep in touch with young people who are or are at risk of becoming NEET and delivering preventative and curative interventions ensuring that 11361 are not “lost in the system” and receive the targeted interventions they need.</p>	Analysis of project relevant outputs at evaluation reporting intervals. (See B1 above).	Dataset to be supplied by Central Project Team.
	Analysis of NEET levels within each local authority at each reporting interval.	Careers Wales; Destinations Survey; NEET Registers. Contextual data will also be provided by local authority area where more detailed data collection procedures exist.
	Mapping and analysis of referral and keeping in touch mechanisms.	Interviews with project teams.
	Qualitative data from project participants on the effectiveness of the support interventions received in raising skills and aspirations.	Interviews, observations, focus groups and video evidence from young people, as deemed appropriate by project staff and participants themselves.
<p>8 <b>Objective 4:</b> Increase the number of Learning Coaches to allow more young people to overcome barriers to learning and raise their skill levels. Employ/upskill 727 Learning Coaches to work with young people in educational settings, both formal and informal to provide them with support and motivation to achieve to their abilities.</p>	Mapping of staff structures before and during Engage to demonstrate added provision and value.	Business Plan data on operational baseline.
	Analysis of project outputs at Evaluation reporting intervals. (See B1 above).	Dataset to be supplied by Central Project Team.
	Qualitative data from interviews with Learning Coaches on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The nature of their role.</li> <li>• The training and support received under Engage.</li> <li>• Their perceptions on the impact of the training and support received on themselves and their ability to support learners.</li> </ul>	Qualitative semi-structured interviews with Learning Coaches.

	<b>(A) Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)</b>	<b>(C) Data Source</b>
9	<b>Objective 5:</b> Provide assistance for those not attending school/ college, and additional support for young people from Pupil Referral Units, care leavers, young offenders and those with basic skills below level 1. Provide 3445 young people who are most disengaged and disadvantaged in education and training with intensive support to enable them to gain access to mainstream education and training.	Qualitative data from project participants on the effectiveness of the support interventions received in raising skills and aspirations.  Analysis of PRU referrals and exclusion rates at each local authority and participating school, benchmarked against pre-Engage figures.	Interviews, observations, focus groups and video evidence from young people, as deemed appropriate by project staff and participants themselves.  Schools, Local Authority School Improvement Service(s). StatsWales.
10	<b>Objective 6:</b> Train volunteer Peer Mentors and Peer Education Trainers and Peer Mentors and Peer Educators to support the target group. The project will train 227 Peer Mentors and Peer Educators who will work with young people in both formal and informal settings, providing informal advice and support. The project will also train 25 Peer Mentor Trainers to ensure that Peer Support programmes across South West Wales are sustainable beyond the end of the project.	Analysis of project outputs at Evaluation reporting intervals. (See B1 above).  Qualitative data from interviews with Peer Mentors on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The nature of their role.</li> <li>• The training and support received under Engage.</li> <li>• Their perceptions on the impact of the training and support received on themselves and their ability to support learners.</li> </ul>	Dataset to be supplied by Central Project Team.  Qualitative semi-structured 'round-table' interviews with Peer Mentors.

(A) Evaluation Questions	(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)	(C) Data Source	
11	<b>Objective 7:</b> Employ/up-skill outreach Youth Workers, and other specialist staff to provide community based activities such as volunteering, Duke of Edinburgh, sport, personal development and emotional intelligence activities to re-engage the participants. 116 specialist staff, including Youth Workers, Sports Leaders, Outdoor Activity Leaders, Work Placement Officers, Sign Language/Deaf Awareness Trainers will be employed/procured/up-skilled to address the particular additional needs of young people in the project.	Mapping of staff structures before and during Engage to demonstrate added provision and value.	Business Plan data on operational baseline.
		Interviews with delivery teams at all project sites, to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The nature of their role.</li> <li>• The training and support received under Engage.</li> <li>• Their perceptions on the impact of the training and support received on themselves and their ability to support learners.</li> </ul>	Qualitative semi-structured 'round-table' interviews with Youth Workers.
12	<b>Objective 8:</b> Increase the number of supported and extended work placements for young people through engagement with employers in order to provide 621 young people with opportunities for a range of vocational work tasters and placements. The project aims to engage with 371 employers to provide the work placements	Mapping of provision before and during Engage to demonstrate added provision and value.	Business Plan data on operational baseline.
		Qualitative data from work-based learning providers on the successes and challenges of this provision type.	Qualitative semi-structured interviews with providers.
		Qualitative data from project participants on the effectiveness of this provision type in securing employment and employability skills.	Interviews, observations, focus groups and video evidence from young people, as deemed appropriate by project staff and participants themselves.

(A) Evaluation Questions	(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)	(C) Data Source
13	<b>Objective 9:</b> Expand vocational provision at KS4 using specific learning themes such as enterprise and sustainable development to improve environmental awareness and management with 3595 young people and engender an enterprise culture through learning and training opportunities. This has been mainstreamed within the project and the curriculum areas and support services funded by Engage, so will apply across all levels of consultation.	Mapping of provision at Key Stage 4 before and after Engage.
	Qualitative data from project participants on the effectiveness of this mainstreamed provision type in securing enterprise and employability skills and raising awareness of sustainable development issues.	Business Plan and semi-structured interviews with project staff at FE sites.
	Qualitative Data from staff employed at all levels of curriculum and support delivery.	Interviews, observations, focus groups and video evidence from young people, as deemed appropriate by project staff and participants themselves.
14	<b>Objective 10:</b> Implement or expand school/college transition programmes to ensure that young people have the best opportunities for a smooth transition and make the best possible choices post 16 delivered to 767 young people in order to pilot innovative models of provision, at key transitions at ages 14 and 16.	Retention rates at FE colleges, for the Engage period, benchmarked against previous years' retention date. (see 6B above).
	Mapping of transition provision between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 before and after Engage.	Partners to provide as relevant and accessible, via Central Project Team.
	Qualitative data from transition project participants on the effectiveness of this provision type in ensuring:	Business Plan and semi-structured interviews with project staff at school and FE sites.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence to attend the FE setting.</li> <li>• Motivation to attend.</li> <li>• De-mystifying the FE experience.</li> <li>• Subsequent engagement and retention.</li> </ul>	Interviews, observations, focus groups and video evidence from young people, as deemed appropriate by project staff and participants themselves.



	<b>(A) Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)</b>	<b>(C) Data Source</b>
15	<b>Objective 11:</b> Information, advice, guidance and support interventions for young people in a range of accessible settings, and highlight opportunities, support informed decision making and use innovative approaches, including information technology, to provide services to meet the needs of young people, delivered to 13401 young people aged 14-19 to help them to develop their learning skills and motivation to facilitate entry to more testing learning routes and higher level qualifications, and make more effective decisions in their learning careers	<p>Project output data on positive outcomes and progression routes.</p> <p>Qualitative data from project participants on their positive outcomes and progression routes, as well as reflections on any negative experiences and progression not achieved. To include discussion of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectiveness, accessibility and suitability of the intervention and support received.</li> <li>• Critical success factors in their engagement, retention and progression. What can policymakers learn from them?</li> </ul>	<p>Dataset to be supplied by Central Project Team.</p> <p>Interviews, observations, focus groups and video evidence from young people, as deemed appropriate by project staff and participants themselves.</p>
16	<b>How has the project impacted upon its target participant group?</b>	<p>(See 1B) Analysis of project outputs at evaluation reporting intervals. Aggregated analysis and disaggregated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LA and Partner.</li> <li>• 3 Intervention groups (strands) in Business Plan.</li> </ul> <p>Participant consultation to be undertaken at all level of intervention, across all settings, strands and cohorts.</p>	<p>Dataset to be supplied by Central Project Team.</p> <p>Interviews, observations, focus groups and video evidence from young people, as deemed appropriate by project staff and participants themselves.</p>

	<b>(A) Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)</b>	<b>(C) Data Source</b>
17	<b>How has the project impacted upon partner's organisational structures processes and practices?</b>	Mapping of pre-existing 'landscape' in each local authority area and arrangements sponsored under Engage, and subsequent organisational 'legacy', through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of operational baseline from Business Plan.</li> <li>• Interviews with project partners.</li> </ul> This will address issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added value in relation to provision, and increased capacity.</li> <li>• Added value in terms of joint delivery, referral mechanisms, meeting shared objectives, transitioning.</li> </ul>	Business Plan.  Qualitative semi-structured interviews with Engage partners
18	<b>How changes in the external context have affected the project outcomes and whether this was addressed within the life of the project?</b>	Labour market analysis to be conducted to supplement analysis of employment outcomes.	NOMIS.
		Wider contextual analysis of national educational indicators against which progress can be benchmarked.	Welsh Government Schools Data, PLASC.

	<b>(A) Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)</b>	<b>(C) Data Source</b>
19	<b>What would have happened without the intervention?</b>	<p>Final Summative Report to include full cost-benefit analysis of the potential savings made by the preventative aspect of the project, based on cost modelling, and adjusted for deadweight and displacement. This could take account of, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projected lifetime spend on a young person who becomes NEET.</li> <li>• Lifetime economic value of qualifications at various levels.</li> <li>• Projected spend on interventions for young people who offend or who graduate to offending via ASB.</li> </ul>	Social and educational research databases, academic libraries, National Library of Wales, web-based sources (Google scholar, policy literature portals and repositories).

**Level 3 - Project Impact**

	<b>(A) Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)</b>	<b>(C) Data Source</b>
20	<b>How many participants have received part qualifications as a result of the project?</b>	<p>Analysis of project outputs at Evaluation reporting intervals. Aggregated analysis and disaggregated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LA and Partner.</li> <li>• 3 Intervention groups (strands) in Business Plan.</li> </ul> <p>A supplementary contextual analysis will also be provided which takes account of qualification / accreditation outputs which have been ‘superseded’ and ‘over-written’ in the WEFO returns by later outputs achieved by the participant at a higher level.</p>	Dataset to be supplied by Central Project Team.

(A) Evaluation Questions	(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)	(C) Data Source	
21	<b>What has been the impact on wider indicators of educational achievement in the counties?</b>	Trend analysis of school exclusions for the statutory (14-16) cohort, benchmarked against national trends.	Welsh Government Schools data. Local Authority Schools Improvement Service. Individual schools.
		School-level data (at programme and LA level): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSI at end of Key Stage 3 (analysed longitudinally, adjusted to take account of wider national improvement).</li> <li>• % of pupils leaving KS3 with no qualifications.</li> <li>• Fischer Family Trust / Value Added Data on fulfilment of projections between KS2 and 3.</li> <li>• Value Added Data.</li> <li>• CSI at KS3 for Gypsy Roma pupils, and other marginalised groups.</li> </ul>	PLASC, Fischer Family Trust, Schools, Welsh Government Data.
		Trend analysis of FE retention rates for the post-16 cohort, benchmarked against national trends.	FE College Partners. StatsWales.
		Further Education CSI at KS4.	FE Colleges, School Improvement Service, StatsWales.
		NEET indicator: Engage area benchmarked against national trends.	Careers Wales.
		JSA Claimant levels for the 16-19 cohort.	NOMIS.
		% of people aged 16-19 with no qualifications	NOMIS.
		Datasets showing contextual and proxy indicators from relevant thematic partners within the LA: e.g. YOTs, Probation Service, Careers Wales, Social Services.	As appropriate.
Data on access to services and rural poverty to take account of specific context of rural areas covered by Engage.	WIMD;		

	<b>(A) Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>(B) Indicator(s) and/or Data Type(s)</b>	<b>(C) Data Source</b>
22	<b>Soft Outcomes and other personal and contextual Positive Outcomes.</b> Need to agree precise arrangements for capture of soft outcomes. If consistency is not possible across partners, a sample approach needs to be agreed, or a partner-specific analysis using systems in place, which would not allow for meaningful aggregation.		

# Annex 2: Research Tools

## Project Coordinators

### Questions for discussion

1. Over the last 6 months, what have been the key challenges you have encountered in delivering support to participants? Have these changed/evolved as the project has progressed?
2. In your opinion, how, (if at all) have/could these challenges be overcome?
3. Please describe what 'success' would look like in relation to participant impacts as far as your/your team's contribution to Engage is concerned?
4. What information or data are you capturing which will help us to evaluate the success of the project? Is there anything that you think could be collected which currently is not?

### Cross Cutting Themes Element

5. The project appears to have been particularly successful at engaging and supporting females, (over-delivering against target) – do you have any thoughts as to why this has been the case?
6. To what extent have care leavers or young offenders been engaged as part of the service? What type of approaches have you used and how successful have these been?
7. How have you promoted environmental sustainability through the project?
8. In what ways have you supported individuals to pursue non-traditional areas /sectors?
9. With the project coming to an end soon, which elements would you consider most vital for mainstreaming or resourcing (where possible) from other means?
10. Are you aware if there are any plans to sustain any elements of the Engage project in your area beyond the funding timescales?
11. What have been the main lessons learned in delivering the support?
12. If starting the project again how would you approach it differently?
13. Finally, are there any other issues that you would like to discuss relating to the evaluation?

***Thank you***

## Project Delivery Staff

### Questions for discussion

1. As an introduction, can you please introduce yourself and your role with regards to the Engage project?
  - *Name:*
  - *Job title:*
  - *Job role:*
  - *Organisation:*
  - *LA area that you work in:*
2. What is your/each of your roles in terms of achieving the objectives of Engage?
3. Which of the three priority groups do you work with:
  - 14-16 in education at risk of exclusion/underachievement/becoming NEET
  - 16-19 in FE at risk of dropping out and becoming NEET
  - 14-19 currently NEET
4. For the priority groups you work with, could you describe the typical challenges/barriers that they encounter?
5. For each priority group that is relevant to your role, can you outline the approach that you adopt?
6. As the project has progressed, has the approach you have adopted changed at all?
7. Over the last 6 months, what have been the key challenges you have encountered in delivering support to participants? Have these changed/evolved as the project has progressed?
8. In your opinion, how, (if at all) have/could these challenges be overcome?
9. Please describe what 'success' would look like in relation to participant impacts as far as your/your team's contribution to Engage is concerned?
10. What information or data are you capturing which will help us to evaluate the success of the project? Is there anything that you think could be collected which currently is not?

### **Cross Cutting Themes Element**

11. The project appears to have been particularly successful at engaging and supporting females, (over-delivering against target) – do you have any thoughts as to why this has been the case?
12. To what extent have care leavers or young offenders been engaged as part of the service? What type of approaches have you used and how successful have these been?
13. The project has delivered services to a far greater proportion of individuals of BME origin than expected, have you any views as to why this is the case (particularly have any approaches adopted helped to increase inclusivity)?
14. In what ways have you supported individuals to pursue non-traditional areas /sectors?
15. With the project coming to an end soon, which elements would you consider most vital for mainstreaming or resourcing (where possible) from other means?
16. Are you aware if there are any plans to sustain any elements of the Engage project in your area beyond the funding timescales?
17. What have been the main lessons learned in delivering the support?
18. If starting the project again how would you approach it differently?
19. Finally, are there any other issues that you would like to discuss relating to the evaluation?

***Thank you***



## Participant Discussion Guide

1. Could you please tell your name and how old you are?
2. Can you recall whether you spoke to Wavehill in October/November last year?  
Yes/No
3. When did you first start receiving support from the team here?
4. How did you become aware of the support offered through Engage/the team here?
5. Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself and the kind of support that you've received?
6. What do you think about the support you've received? Good and bad.

a) What has been the best aspects of the support you've received?	b) What, if anything, could be improved?
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7. How have you benefited from the support that you've received? Has anything about you or your life changed?

<b>Aspiration and motivation:</b> whether participants know what work they want to do/or what they want to get out of their course (if in school/college), are motivated to do it and believe that it is possible for them.
<b>Basic/key skills/qualifications gained:</b> literacy, IT, numeracy, NVQ 1/2/3 etc.
<b>Social skills for training/work:</b> how participants relate to others and meet expectations in a learning or work situation. It includes, getting on with people, self-confidence, turning up on time, behaving appropriately, etc.
<b>Stability:</b> improvements to the day to day pattern of participants lives; it covers issues relating to drugs and alcohol, dept problems, insecure housing, etc. – issues that may affect participants ability get a job or further education/training.
<b>Job-specific skills:</b> the extent to which participants have the skills and experience necessary to get a job
<b>Job-search skills:</b> the skills participants need to find and get a job or training – researching opportunities, confidence on the phone using a computer, feeling able to present their strengths in a CV or interview, etc.
<b>Challenges:</b> the practical issues that participants may see as barriers to participating in learning or in work; childcare responsibilities, health issues, disability, age, loss of benefits, etc.
<b>Anything else that does not fit into any of the above categories:</b>

8. If you hadn't have received this support, would your life be different in anyway?
9. And finally, would you like to make any other comments about the project?

**Thank you**

## Annex 3: STEM Courses

Course	Level	Male	Female
Babysitting	At NQF Level 1		15
Basic First Aid	At NQF Level 1		8
Beauty Therapy	At NQF level 1		4
C&G Level 1 Certificate in Hair and Beauty Studies	At NQF Level 1		3
Cookery	At NQF Level 1	1	
ESW Application of Number	At NQF Level 1		2
ESW IT	At NQF Level 1		2
Internet Safety Awareness	At NQF level 1	1	3
Level 1 Certificate in Creative Hair and Beauty Studies	At NQF Level 1		5
Life Skills Course Level 1	At NQF Level 1	8	4
Motorcycle Maintenance XH11WE003	At NQF Level 1		8
Music Technology Level 1	At NQF Level 1	11	1
OCN 1 - Introduction to Rock & Pop Singing	At NQF Level 1		1
Skills used in and around DJ mixing - OCN Level 1	At NQF Level 1		1
Team building	At NQF Level 1		1
Babysitting Level 2 OCN	At NQF level 2		13
BTEC National Diploma Applied Science - Forensic & Medical	At NQF level 2	1	
C&G Level 2 Certificate in Hair Services	At NQF Level 2		14
CG Certificate in Vehicle Maintenance and Repair L2	At NQF level 2		
CGLI L2 Certificate in Electrotechnical Technology	At NQF Level 2	1	
CGLI Level 2 Certificate In Basic Plumbing Studies	At NQF Level 2	2	
EAL L2 NVQ Diploma in PEO - Engineering Technology	At NQF level 2	2	
EAL L2 NVQ Diploma in PEO - Plumbing	At NQF level 2	1	
EAL Level 2 NVQ Diploma in PEO - Plumbing	At NQF level 2	1	
EAL NVQ 2 PEO Units Only Umbrella (NB287P FT)	At NQF level 2	1	
EAL NVQ in Performing Engineering Operations L2 Plumbing	At NQF level 2	5	
ECITB	At NQF Level 2		1
EDEXCEL BTEC in Business and IT	At NQF level 2	11	
EDEXCEL BTEC L2 Diploma In Creative Media Production	At NQF level 2		1
EDEXCEL BTEC L2 Diploma in IT (QCF)	At NQF level 2	5	
EMTA NVQ 2 PEO - Engineering Technology	At NQF level 2	1	
Extended Diploma in Music L3	At NQF level 2		1
FAC6FORM	At NQF Level 2	1	1
Fire Safety	At NQF Level 2		11
Food Safety & Hygiene	At NQF Level 2		16
Forgework	At NQF Level 2	2	
GCSE	At NQF Level 2	2	3
GCSE Maths	At NQF Level 2		2
GCSE Plus Maths & Science	At NQF Level 2	10	21

Course	Level	Male	Female
GCSE Science	At NQF Level 2		1
L3 Extended Dip in IT Yr 2	At NQF Level 2	1	
Level II DIP IT WBQ	At NQF Level 2	4	6
Motor Vehicle Yr 2	At NQF Level 2	9	
NVQ II 0663 Process Eng Maint Texaco	At NQF Level 2	2	
NVQ II 2251 Performing Eng Ops	At NQF Level 2	21	1
NVQ II 2251 Performing Eng Ops Electrica	At NQF Level 2	2	
NVQ II Performing Eng Ops	At NQF Level 2	5	
OCN - Fire Safety Level 2 & Introduction to First Aid (entry3)	At NQF level 2		3
Pre-GCSE	At NQF Level 2	2	1
VRQ Catering	At NQF Level 2	30	23
A Levels: Media Studies, Sociology & English	At NQF Level 3	1	
Advanced Digital Photography	At NQF Level 3		1
AS Levels (unknown)	At NQF Level 3	1	1
As Levels: Biology	At NQF Level 3		1
As Levels: Chemistry & Biology	At NQF Level 3		1
AS Levels: Maths	At NQF Level 3	1	
CGLI Prog Award In Electrical & Electronic Servicing	At NQF Level 3	1	
Childrens Care & Development BTEC National Diploma	At NQF Level 3		2
EDEXCEL BTEC L3 Extended Diploma In Creative Media Production	At NQF level 3	1	
EDEXCEL BTEC L3 Extended Diploma In IT	At NQF level 3	1	
EDEXCEL BTEC L3 Extended Diploma In Music Yr2	At NQF level 3		1
EDEXCEL BTEC National Diploma In Vehicle Technology	At NQF level 3	1	
EDEXCEL L3 BTEC National Certificate In Health And Social Care	At NQF level 3		1
EDEXCEL National Certificate Business Y2 - Finance Academy	At NQF level 3	1	
EDEXCEL National Diploma In Art & Design YR 2	At NQF level 3		1
EDEXCEL National Diploma in Performing Arts Y1	At NQF level 3		1
FAC6FORM	At NQF Level 3	2	
GCE Advanced Level	At NQF Level 3		3
GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level	At NQF Level 3	2	1
General Education Year 2 (A Levels)	At NQF Level 3	1	2
International Bacculaureate Diploma YR 2	At NQF Level 3	1	
ND Computers/Design	At NQF Level 3		1
ND Engineering Electrical/Electronics	At NQF Level 3	4	
ND Health Science	At NQF Level 3	7	25
ND Music Technology	At NQF Level 3	3	

Course	Level	Male	Female
An introduction to Food Technology NH6ECY001	Basic skills/entry level		6
Basic Babysitting EL2	Basic skills/entry level		2
Entry level in: Hair and Beauty	Basic skills/entry level		3
First Aid	Basic skills/entry level	16	13
GCSE Entry Level Maths	Basic skills/entry level		2
GCSE Entry Level Science	Basic skills/entry level		1
Introduction to Basic Cookery	Basic skills/entry level		3
Introduction to Fire Safety	Basic skills/entry level		4
Know Your Computer - CN1E1CY002	Basic skills/entry level		11
Media: Plan and Produce a Print Product KH5EWN001	Basic skills/entry level		7
Media: Plan and Produce an Animation Sequence KJ2EWN002	Basic skills/entry level		1
OCN Entry Level 1 in Nature	Basic skills/entry level		1
OCN Entry level 1: Introduction to Sports and Leisure Activities: Using the Gym	Basic skills/entry level		1
Producing a Digital Story CQ6E3CY001	Basic skills/entry level		13
Taster Course Photography - Entry Level	Basic skills/entry level		1
Textile Design - Race for Life	Basic skills/entry level		5
Access to Building Engineering Services	Below NQF level 2	8	2
BTEC Extended Dip HSC	Below NQF level 2		1
BTEC L2 Certificate in IT	Below NQF level 2	1	
BTEC L3 Extended Diploma in Sport	Below NQF Level 2	1	
BTEC Level 2 Diploma In IT	Below NQF Level 2	2	1
CAMP CRAFT	Below NQF Level 2	2	
CGLI Certificate In Vehicle Fitting Operations L1	Below NQF Level 2	1	
CGLI Certificate In Vehicle Maintenance L1	Below NQF Level 2	1	
Construction	Below NQF Level 2	26	
Craft Course in Veh Fitting Ops L1	Below NQF Level 2	1	
DJ Music Tech	Below NQF Level 2	15	
Duke of Edinburgh	Below NQF Level 2	14	
EAL Certificate in Electronics L1	Below NQF Level 2	5	
EAL Level 1 NVQ Certificate in PEO Digital Technology	Below NQF Level 2	1	
EAL NVQ 1 PEO - Electrical	Below NQF Level 2	2	
EAL NVQ In Performing Engineering Operations L1 Plumbing	Below NQF Level 2	2	
Engineering Construction Craft	Below NQF Level 2	35	
Ext Dip in Applied Science (Forensics)	Below NQF Level 2	1	
FAC6FORM	Below NQF Level 2		2
Farriery	Below NQF Level 2	5	
Gateway to IT	Below NQF Level 2	3	1
GCSE Maths	Below NQF Level 2		14

Course	Level	Male	Female
GCSE Science	Below NQF Level 2		2
ICT	Below NQF Level 2	8	
Introduction Dip in IT & Works	Below NQF Level 2	2	
L2 Dip Exercise Health Fitness Instruction	Below NQF Level 2	1	1
L2 Diploma in IT	Below NQF Level 2	1	
L3 Extended Dip In IT	Below NQF Level 2	2	
NVQ I 2251 Performing Eng Ops	Below NQF Level 2	77	4
NVQ I 2251 Performing Eng Ops Boat Build	Below NQF Level 2	16	
NVQ I 2251 Performing Eng Ops from SB	Below NQF Level 2	11	1
NVQ I 2251 Performing Eng Ops Marine Eng	Below NQF Level 2	20	
NVQ I 2251 Performing Eng Ops Mech	Below NQF Level 2	25	1
OCN Progression To Technology	Below NQF Level 2	5	
OCN Progression To Technology from SB BW	Below NQF Level 2	1	
OCN Progression To Technology from SB CJ	Below NQF Level 2	4	
OCN Progression to Technology MV	Below NQF Level 2	5	
Phoenix	Below NQF Level 2	6	
Physics	Below NQF Level 2	1	
Planning an Event	Below NQF Level 2	9	
Science	Below NQF Level 2	3	
VRQ 1 - Motor Vehicle	Below NQF Level 2	1	
WBL Engagement Engineering	Below NQF Level 2	3	1
Woodlands	NQF Level 1	12	1
Adv Dip Eng Tech (Mech) PTD Yr1 TP	Unknown		1
Pre-Apprentice In Engineering (Weld D)	Unknown	1	
Pre-Apprentice in Engineering (Elec grp)	Unknown	1	
The Craft Workshop Practice - Woodwork WK21CT002	Unknown		10
VRQ2 Cert in Maintenance & Repair	Unknown	1	
BIIAB Level 1 Award in Essentials of Catering	At NQF Level 1		8
C&G Level 1 Award in Introduction to the Hospitality Industry	At NQF Level 1		6
OCR Entry Level Award in Using ICT	Basic skills/entry level		3
OCR Level 1 Award in IT User Skills	At NQF Level 1		1
OCR Level 1 Award in Text Processing	At NQF Level 1		3
RSPH Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering	At NQF level 2		106
<b>Total</b>		<b>463</b>	<b>529</b>

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