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Evaluation of the Lift Programme

Phase 2 - Implementation Study: The Structural Form and Operational Practice of Lift

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Evaluation of the Lift Programme – Phase 2: The Structural Form and Operational Practice of Lift

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

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
CCHA	Cardiff Community Housing Association
CfW	Communities For Work
CSCS	Construction Skills Certification Scheme
DOTS	Decisions Opportunities Transitions Self
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
LSOA	Lower Super Output Areas
NHS	National Health Service
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PT	Part-Time
TPAP	Tackling Poverty Action Plan
RCT	Rhondda Cynon Taff
RSL	Registered Social Landlords

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 In March 2015, the Welsh Government commissioned Wavehill to undertake an evaluation of the Lift Programme. The Programme is designed to respond to the Welsh Government's Tackling Poverty Action Plan (TPAP) 2013 and, more specifically, to the commitment to provide 5,000 training and employment opportunities for people in long-term workless households¹ by the end of 2017. It is envisaged that the support will help participants to secure jobs or considerably increase their prospects of finding employment.
- 1.2 The Lift Programme operates in nine delivery areas based on 12 Communities First Clusters² across Wales. Whilst most Lift Programme delivery areas cover a single Cluster, three delivery areas — Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Flintshire³ — cover two Clusters each; therefore, 12 Clusters in total are included in the Lift Programme.
- 1.3 In each delivery area, small teams of Mentors/job brokers (subsequently referred to as Mentors and typically two per delivery area) have been recruited to engage working-age adults living in long-term workless households (households where all members have been out of work for at least six months). Eligible participants access the Programme voluntarily, with the Mentors assessing a participant's aspirations for employment, training or education and helping them to develop personal development (action) plans to structure their move towards work. Suitable training and employment opportunities are then identified.
- 1.4 Mentors identify the training and employment opportunities at a local level. At a national level, Welsh Government departments, public bodies and others have been invited to expand the pool of employment and training opportunities that may be suitable locally for long-term workless people; these include Local Health Boards, Registered Social Landlords, and opportunities within existing Education and Skills Programmes.

¹ A workless household is one in which no-one aged 16 or over is in employment. These members may be unemployed or inactive. Inactive members may be unavailable to work because of, for example, family commitments, retirement or study, or they may be unable to work through sickness or disability (ONS 2014)

² There are 52 Clusters in total covering the most deprived communities (10 per cent) in Wales.

³ Flintshire and one of the Caerphilly areas joined Lift later.

1.5 The first Lift delivery area became operational in January 2014 and the last of the nine areas commenced work in the summer of that year. The previous Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty agreed a Programme budget for 2016-17 and 2017-18 to enable the Programme to continue up to March 2018.

Scope and Aims of the Evaluation

1.6 The evaluation has two overarching aims:

- To assess how the Programme has been set up in each of the nine delivery areas and how it is being operated; and
- To provide an indication of its effectiveness in helping participants to find work or to undergo activities that will considerably boost their job prospects.

1.7 The evaluation is being delivered over three phases, each of which has a specific focus on key elements of the Programme. The present report forms the culmination of research undertaken as part of Phase 2.

Phase 1 - The Logic of the Lift Model

1.8 The focus of the initial phase of the evaluation was on understanding the inherent logic underpinning Lift, i.e. testing the extent to which Lift is based upon a plausible 'theory of change' and the extent to which the Programme conforms to this model in the delivery areas.

Phase 2 – The Structural Form and Operational Practice of Lift

1.9 Phase 2 of the study has involved a detailed analysis of how the Programme has been set up in each area and the processes being applied during its implementation. This process included an examination of the adequacy of monitoring and reporting systems in each delivery area.

Phase 3 – The Effectiveness and Efficiency of Lift

1.10 Phase 3 of the evaluation will review the effectiveness of the Programme in achieving its intended outcomes. This will include an analysis of the costs and benefits accrued by the participants, as well as of the operational efficiency of the Programme and whether there is scope for improvements in Programme design.

Structure of this Report

1.11 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides an overview of the Lift Programme and reflects on the Programme's underpinning rationale
- Chapter 3 describes the methodological approach applied in the evaluation
- Chapter 4 explores the Lift model in greater depth (than that contained in Chapter 2), reviewing the business plan for the Lift Programme before comparing the details of the business plan with the research findings
- Chapter 5 reports on the findings from the primary research with Lift participants
- Chapter 6 summarises the findings presented in the previous chapters.

2. The Lift Programme

Introduction

2.1 This chapter provides an overview of the Lift Programme and revisits the rationale that justified its implementation.

The Lift Programme

2.2 The Programme currently operates in nine delivery areas across Wales based on 12 Communities First Clusters and is underpinned by a series of key principles and strengths:

- Community-based solutions
- Using community intelligence
- Community-based support
- Intensive support outreach workers
- Employment action planning.⁴

Programme Resources

2.3 The Lift Programme is operating with relatively limited resources having secured £2.5m of Welsh Government funding for the initial 2013/14-2015/16 Programme period. The amount of funding approved for 2016-17 and 2017-18 is approximately £1.1 million per year (the latter being subject to the approval of the Welsh Government's budget for 2017-18). The use of Communities First Clusters as the delivery vehicle drew on the assumption that Cluster infrastructure offers a degree of efficacy, enabling service delivery with limited resources. Much of the efficacy of this model, however, is reliant upon the Lift Programme linking with or drawing on other forms of support.

Identification of Delivery Areas

2.4 The proportion of the adult population in receipt of income-related benefits is higher in Communities First Clusters (30 per cent) than the Wales average (12 per cent).⁵ Using benefits as a proxy for worklessness, this translates to higher concentrations of workless households within Communities First Clusters.⁶

⁴ Welsh Government (2013), *Tackling Workless Households Programme* (unpublished).

⁵ Stats Wales, *Key Indicators by Communities First Cluster*, sourced from Welsh Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2012), <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Communities-First/KeyIndicators-by-CommunitiesFirstCluster>

⁶ Welsh Government (2013), *Employment related benefits as a proxy for worklessness* (unpublished).

- 2.5 The Welsh Government identified potential participant Clusters and invited them to take part in the Programme. The final selection criteria included (i) the extent to which the Clusters had a proven ability to deliver the existing Communities First Programme, and (ii) the need to trial the model in a range of settings under the assumption that the Programme's effectiveness would be influenced by geography, population and employment densities, and infrastructure.
- 2.6 The budget for each delivery area over the initial Programme period (2013/14-2015/16) varied from around £190,000 to £390,000, reflecting the level of funding requested and evidenced by each Lead Delivery Body. The finances and wider resources (financial and personnel/intervention-related) provide a high degree of flexibility in the nature of support available to participants to help overcome barriers to employment. This approach assumes that this flexibility will enable different participants in varying situations to respond positively and to actively engage with Lift.
- 2.7 This funding included an allocation of a local Barrier Fund. The Barrier Fund provides a flexible resource to Mentors to assist them (where no other resource is available) in overcoming any significant barriers faced by an individual in gaining or moving towards employment. Each delivery area has been allocated a proportion of their funding as a Barrier Fund; typically, this has averaged between £20,000 and £30,000 per delivery area, per annum.
- 2.8 Each identified delivery area has appointed at least two members of staff⁷ (a Broker/Mentor and Senior Broker/Mentor) to deliver the Lift Programme. The staffing quota is largely commensurate with the financial resources available and draws on the assumption that this level of staffing resources is sufficient to deliver the Lift Programme, albeit not without risk of discontinuity should staff members become unavailable.

⁷ A third broker/mentor has been recruited in Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Cardiff.

Programme Management and Governance

2.9 The Programme's delivery is managed by two Welsh Government staff members, initially with additional administrative support. A Programme board,⁸ which meets biannually, has also been set up to provide information, advice and assurance to the team in the following areas:

- strategic and cross-cutting issues and risks that impact on the Programme
- effectiveness of communication
- the adequacy and integrity of governance arrangements
- the delivery of the outcomes and benefits
- the resolution of strategic and operational issues from a strategic perspective.

Creating Opportunities

2.10 Creating opportunities for Lift relies on national employers (guided or encouraged by the Welsh Government), local employers and training providers establishing opportunities that are accessible and suited to the target cohort. Participation in these opportunities should facilitate 'lifting' the Programme's participants towards and into the labour market. This approach assumes that employers and training providers have opportunities accessible to and suitable for this target cohort; it also assumes a willingness amongst employers and training providers to 'buy-in' to the Programme.

Rationale for Intervention

2.11 Tackling poverty is set as one of the Welsh Government's highest priorities. In 2012, over one-fifth (21.5 per cent) of households in Wales containing someone of working age was workless (compared to 18.1 per cent across the UK). This equated to more than 200,000 households across Wales.⁹

2.12 A change in employment status or earnings is the main cause of moving in or out of poverty¹⁰ and the Welsh Government has responded to this with policy interventions including the Lift Programme.

⁸ Lift Implementation Board – Terms of Reference

⁹ Welsh Government, *Labour Market Statistics for Households, 2012* – Statistical Bulletin, 4 September 2013

¹⁰ Pantazis, C. et al. (2006) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain: The Millennium Survey*

- 2.13 The Communities First Programme (and specifically, the Communities First Clusters) was established in areas identified (within the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation) as being within the top 10 per cent most deprived in Wales. This provides an infrastructure system through which interventions of this nature can be effectively delivered.
- 2.14 The delivery of an employability Programme such as Lift within 12 of these Clusters therefore thought to provide an appropriate vehicle through which services could be delivered to address issues of deprivation. On this basis, it was believed that a greater concentration of workless households existed within these communities. The strength of this assumption is supported by the fact that the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation includes income and employment deprivation amongst the eight domains from which the overall Index is constructed.
- 2.15 Evidence available at the local authority level during the commencement of Lift illustrated the uneven distribution of worklessness where, according to 2012 data, almost one in three households in Blaenau Gwent (where 23 per cent of LSOAs¹¹ are in the 10 per cent most deprived) were workless compared to less than one in seven households in Monmouthshire (where no areas within the authority are within the 10 per cent most deprived). At the local level, it was estimated that almost two-thirds of households with working-age adults were workless in some neighbourhoods within Communities First Cluster areas.¹²
- 2.16 Lift targets members of households who have been workless for more than six months due to the likelihood that longer periods of worklessness will heighten the chances of experiencing severe and persistent poverty and deprivation, poor health and well-being, and the intergenerational transfer of certain risks and disadvantages.
- 2.17 Long-term unemployment and economic inactivity are associated with a range of adverse outcomes, including sharp increases in material deprivation, deteriorating mental and physical well-being (contributing to higher levels of stress and depression), the erosion of social support, and broader social exclusion, which

¹¹ LSOAs – Lower Super Output Areas – are typically local areas with a resident population of around 1,500

¹² Analysis of Census 2011 data by the Communities First Team in Welsh Government using Census 2011 based on the proportion of households where no adult (over 15) was in employment within their household by lower super output area

collectively can reduce the likelihood of secure employment being found and sustained.¹³

Barriers to Work

- 2.18 Workless people typically face a combination of barriers to work. Within Wales, poor health is the single most frequently stated barrier to work for both women and men. A considerable proportion of unemployed people with health conditions — just over 24 per cent— would like to work, suggesting that disabled people face a greater range of barriers to both finding and securing work.¹⁴
- 2.19 The growth of single-adult households has had a considerable impact on the number and rate of workless households both in Wales and throughout the UK. The majority of this cohort comprises single adults with no children; however, it also includes single adults with children. Although Wales-specific data is not available, UK statistics suggest that at least two thirds of children in workless households live with a lone parent.¹⁵
- 2.20 Research suggests that each barrier a person faces brings a considerable reduction in the probability of employment, regardless of the influence of other barriers. For instance, Blackaby et al. (2003) determined that only four per cent of individuals facing no barriers were unemployed compared with 90 per cent of those who faced multiple barriers (namely disability, low qualifications, being over the age of 50, being a member of an ethnic minority group, being without a partner, and living in an area with weak labour demand).¹⁶
- 2.21 The Lift model is flexible and designed to be personalised to individual circumstances and capabilities. This flexible, sustained form of support is designed to help overcome the various barriers that participants face in finding and sustaining employment.

¹³ Crowther et al. (2000) 'Helping people with severe mental illness to obtain work: systematic review', BMJ <http://www.bmj.com/content/322/7280/204>

¹⁴ Annual Population Survey (2014), *Disability Level by Economic Activity*, <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>, accessed 27th August 2015

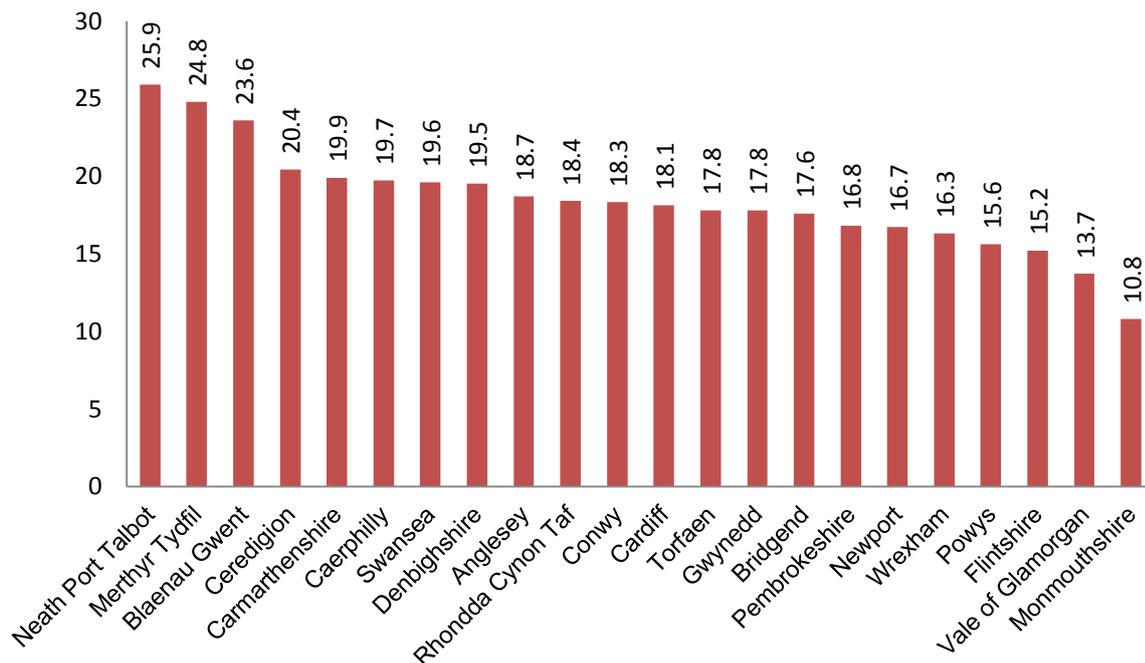
¹⁵ Families in the Labour Market, Labour Force Survey; ONS (2014)

¹⁶ Blackaby et al. (2003) *Identifying Barriers to Economic Activity in Wales*, Report for the Economic Research Unit, Welsh Assembly Government, 2003
<http://www.learningobservatory.com/uploads/publications/1179.pdf>

Revisiting the Rationale

- 2.22 As tackling poverty is one of the central elements of Welsh Government policy, there remains a clear rationale for interventions of this nature. The estimated proportion of households considered to be workless in Wales has fallen from 18.8 per cent for the April-June quarter 2014 to 15.9 per cent for the same period in 2016.¹⁷ The rate remains higher than the UK average (14.9 per cent), however the gap has narrowed considerably in recent years.¹⁸
- 2.23 Estimations of household worklessness at a Communities First Cluster level were derived from census data and no more recent information is available. Workless household data is however available for local authority areas (up to December 2015) and illustrates that workless household rates have fallen across most areas. The data also shows that rates typically remain higher in areas that have a higher proportion of communities within the top 10 per cent most deprived (according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation).

Figure 2.1: Percentage Rate of Workless Households - 2015¹⁹



¹⁷ Labour Force Survey Household Datasets covering April to June 2016 (Release date: 1st September 2016)

¹⁸ For the April-June 2013 period the workless household rate was three percentage points higher in Wales than the UK average (20.3 per cent compared to 17.3 per cent).

¹⁹ Annual Population Survey data (January-December 2015), ONS Website – Last Accessed 1st November 2016

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/worklesshouseholdsforregionsacrosstheuk/2015/relateddata>

In-Work Poverty

- 2.24 Whilst unemployment rates and rates of workless households continue to fall, evidence shows that those in poverty are increasingly from households where at least one adult is in work. In 2014, 67 per cent of children in income poverty across the UK lived in households where at least one adult worked, which is an increase from 54 per cent in 2003.²⁰ It is estimated that abolishing all household worklessness (based on 2014-15 figures) would only reduce income poverty among households with children from 28 per cent to 23 per cent²¹, suggesting a need for policy to shift towards the quality, salary and hours of employment.
- 2.25 In this context, the Lift Programme places significant emphasis on the quality of employment secured for participants (particularly through the national brokering of employment opportunities). It also encourages the provision of in-work support for participants once they secure work opportunities.
- 2.26 Reflecting on the latest evidence, there remains a clear rationale for Lift as a policy intervention. It seeks to reduce worklessness in areas of deprivation and aims to provide quality employment opportunities, thereby tackling the increased prevalence of in-work poverty evident throughout the UK.

²⁰Belfield, C. et al. (2016) Living standards, poverty and inequality 2016, Institute for Fiscal Studies

²¹ Ibid.

3. Methodological Approach

Methodological Approach to Phase 1

- 3.1 The first stage of the evaluation focused on explicating the logic model underpinning the Lift Programme. It explored the anticipated activities, outputs and outcomes of the Programme alongside the associated assumptions made in relation to how these elements are linked (often referred to as a theory of change).
- 3.2 The research culminated in the development of a theory of change (see Appendix 1²²) describing:
- what the Lift intervention does
 - why intervention is necessary
 - what it seeks to achieve
 - how, theoretically, the intervention will lead to achieving its desired goals
 - the underlying assumptions.

Methodological Approach to Phase 2

- 3.3 Phase 2 of the evaluation has focused on reviewing the operational practice of Lift, using a range of methods outlined below. The research material used throughout Phase 2 is attached in Appendix 2.

Programme Management Consultations

- 3.4 The research team interviewed Programme management representatives at the start of Phase 2 in order to discuss progress in delivery and to identify any specific areas of exploration with those staff involved in Programme delivery. A subsequent focus group was held towards the end of this phase with those involved in the Programme-wide management of Lift to gain perspectives on the Programme's progress to date and specifically the lessons learnt.

²² The model is also presented on page 10 of the Phase 1 report, which can be viewed at <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-lift-Programme/?lang=en> page 10

Review of Monitoring Systems

3.5 In each delivery area, the Lift teams, on behalf of their Lead Delivery Bodies, include the role of 'data controller'. This requires them to capture and store all beneficiary data related to the Programme's delivery. The previous phase of the evaluation identified that each team has designed its own systems and forms for capturing relevant data for each participant. A more detailed assessment was subsequently undertaken by the research team to identify:

- what specific data is being captured and at what point in the process is this data being captured?
- how is that information being stored?
- to what extent can the data captured for each participant be linked to track a participant's journey and outcome?

3.6 The review involved multiple discussions with Lift Staff within each delivery area, with a subsequent follow-up review of systems as part of the site visits (described later within this section).

Consultations with Cluster Managers

3.7 Cluster Managers were invited to engage in face-to-face interviews with the research team as part of site visits to each delivery area. Nine Cluster Managers from the delivery areas participated in discussions. The interviews were semi-structured in nature, exploring their perspectives on the operational approach in their delivery area, assess their progress to date in delivering Lift and to identify their perspectives on the extent to which Lift aligns with other provision in that area.

Consultations with Lift Mentors

3.8 The main focus of the site visits was the face-to-face interviews with Lift Brokers/Mentors (a total of 18 Mentors were interviewed). The interviews aimed to gain a detailed insight into the delivery model adopted in each area. The consultations also explored the approaches taken with regards to monitoring and evaluation for the Programme.

Face-to-Face Consultations with Participants

- 3.9 During site visits, the research team engaged with Lift Programme participants; the ability to engage with participants on a face-to-face basis typically presented itself where participants were on site attending a training or support session, thereby enabling a researcher to 'piggy back' onto these sessions. These consultations provided the opportunity to explore the backgrounds and experiences of participants and to pilot the discussion guide developed for the subsequent telephone survey.

Telephone Survey of Participants

- 3.10 The approach adopted for the telephone survey follows a type of repeat interview design, where the initial survey establishes the baseline for subsequent comparison and the subsequent re-interview captures progression over time. In the baseline interview, participants were probed about their situation prior to any engagement with Lift, as well as their first impressions of the programme and their experiences.
- 3.11 Participant contact details were obtained from each delivery area to enable a telephone survey to be undertaken with those who had engaged with the Lift Programme during the last six months. The telephone survey took place in June and July 2016 and targeted the population that had engaged with the Programme since January 2016. Contacts were provided by each delivery area, collectively providing 213 viable contacts. 105 of those individuals completed the survey, representing a response rate of 49 per cent.
- 3.12 The second interview with these participants will be more summative in nature, exploring participant outcomes and impacts and the perceived attribution of those to the support that they have received (approximately six months after the first interview, see Table 3.1).
- 3.13 When designing the methodology, it was anticipated that a larger population would be eligible for the survey. In light of the numbers being lower than expected, the survey design was adjusted to incorporate three separate waves of participant interviews, with the Wave 1 and Wave 2 interviewed twice and Wave 3 interviewed once (see Table 3.1 for the timing of the revised approach). These revisions aim at increasing the eligible population while retaining the short time between the initial engagement of Lift participants and their baseline interview.

Table 3.1: Participant Survey Waves

	May 2016	November 2016	May 2017
Wave 1	Interview	Re-Interview	
Wave 2		Interview	Re-Interview
Wave 3			Interview

Interviews with Employers

- 3.14 A series of semi-structured telephone interviews was undertaken with 10 employers who have Lift participants in work experience placements or in permanent roles within their organisations. The survey aimed to determine how employers first became aware of the Lift Programme and their experiences of engaging and employing Lift participants.
- 3.15 When designing the methodology, it was assumed that there would be more employers with whom the research team could engage. However, one of the emerging findings from this evaluation is that employers are often unaware of the Lift programme; they are also unaware that those that they have employed were Lift participants.

Limitations of the methodological approach

- 3.16 As outlined earlier, the evaluators encountered a smaller eligible population of participants and employers than anticipated. As a result, a degree of caution should be applied when drawing conclusions from the resultant findings.
- 3.17 Elements of the participant survey explored self-perceived impacts arising from the support. These remain subjective perspectives; the impact of the Programme will be tested through less subjective methods, matching reported and observed data, as part of the final phase of the research.

4. Findings

4.1 This chapter explores the Lift Programme in greater depth, reviewing the theoretical operation of the Lift Programme and comparing this to the approach taken in delivering the programme.

Resourcing the Lift Programme

Staffing in Delivery Areas

4.2 Chapter 2 has outlined the resources awarded to each Lift Programme delivery area. A key assumption within the theory of change is that two Mentors would be appointed per delivery area and that this would offer sufficient resource (whilst also providing sufficient continuity should staff changes occur) to deliver the Programme.

4.3 Table 4.1 below provides an overview of the staffing structure in each delivery area. The table illustrates that the majority of areas are operating with the expected staffing quota, with additional staff members typically appointed where multiple Clusters exist within one delivery area (Flintshire and Blaenau Gwent) or where the Cluster is particularly large (Cardiff East).

Table 4.1: Lift Programme Staffing Structure by Delivery Area

Delivery Area	Staffing ²³	Line Manager
Anglesey (Anglesey)	Mentors (x 2 FTE) Administrator (PT)	Môn Communities First Employability Manager
Flintshire East and West (Flintshire)	Mentors (x2 FTE)	Communities First Cluster Manager
Afan Valley (Neath Port Talbot)	Mentors (x 2 FTE) (one post unfilled April to August 2016)	Communities First Cluster Manager
Swansea North West (Swansea)	Mentors (x 2 FTE)	Swansea Lift & Communities for Work Manager
Llanelli (Carmarthenshire)	Mentors (x 2 FTE)	Communities First Cluster Manager

²³ In the table above the term 'Mentors' describes delivery staff whose job titles include Brokers, Senior Brokers or Senior Mentors

Delivery Area	Staffing ²⁴	Line Manager
Ebbw Fawr and Tredegar (Blaenau Gwent)	Mentors (x 3 FTE) – 1.5 in each Cluster	Communities First Cluster Manager
Caerphilly Basin and Upper Rhymney Valley (Caerphilly)	Mentors (x 3 FTE) 1 Mentor in each Cluster, 1 senior Mentor (the senior Mentor now manages Lift and CfW)	Senior Employment Mentor
Cardiff East (Cardiff)	Mentors (x 3 FTE) Administrator (PT) Volunteer Lift Participants (administration)	Cardiff Community Housing Association Representative
Taf West (RCT)	Mentors (x2 FTE)	Communities First Cluster Manager

- 4.4 The staff appointed to the Mentor role commonly hold a wide range of experience, typically in relation to employability related activity and/or community development. In most instances their previous experience is highly relevant to their work for the Programme and several delivery staff highlighted the importance of previous connections and/or existing networks as key to enabling them to engage with potential participants and to identify relevant training/employment opportunities.
- 4.5 In the Afan Valley, following the resignation of one staff member, one of the Mentor posts remained unfilled for several months.²⁵ This is reported to have affected the delivery of Lift, with the remaining Mentor unable to fulfil all service delivery and administrative tasks. The experience in Afan Valley illustrates the risk associated with relying on a small number of staff per delivery area.

²⁴ In the table above, the term 'Mentors' describes delivery staff whose job titles include Brokers, Senior Brokers or Senior Mentors

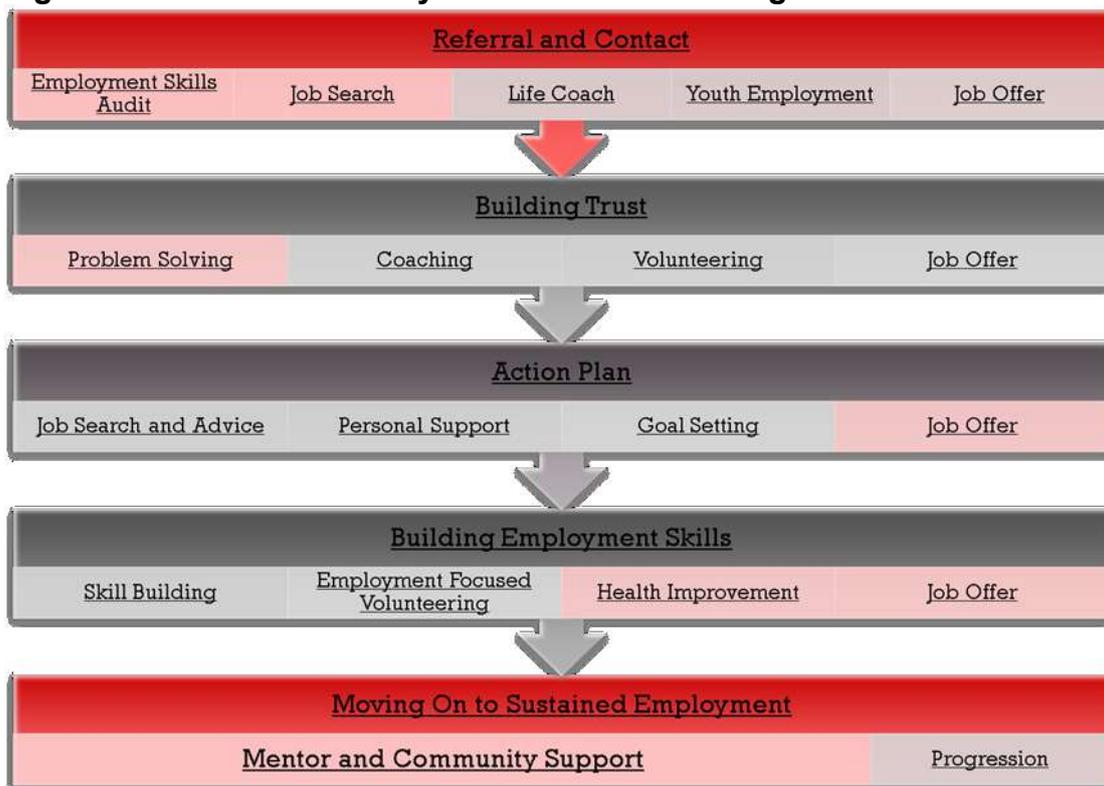
²⁵ As of April 2016

Activities Associated with the Lift Programme

Delivery Model

- 4.6 The Lift model incorporates a five-stage approach, allowing participants to progress quickly or benefit from more intensive, longer-term support if there are more significant barriers and needs. Figure 4.1 illustrates the key stages of referral and engagement, building trust, action planning, moving towards employment and ultimately gaining sustainable employment.

Figure 4.1: Planned Delivery Model for the Lift Programme²⁶



Referral and Contact - Assumptions

- 4.7 Due to the limited resources available the Programme was expected to rely on referrals as routes to engagement, including via community engagement events and activities run by the Cluster, referrals from advisors at the local Jobcentre and referrals from other agencies with a strong emphasis on community engagement/outreach. This model assumes that Lift teams are able to effectively engage with key referral agencies, particularly the Communities First Cluster and the local JCP offices.

²⁶ Tackling Workless Households Programme – Brief, Welsh Government (2013)

- 4.8 Furthermore, it was expected that eligibility for the Programme would be determined at point of entry based on the assumption that participants would self-declare their eligibility.

Identification of Eligible Participants - Findings

Local Jobcentres

- 4.9 The research identifies that delivery areas are indeed heavily reliant upon referrals to the Lift Programme, with Jobcentres most commonly identified as a referral route. Feedback from delivery staff indicates that the volume of referrals from local Jobcentres varies significantly from one delivery area to another and also from one Jobcentre to another. The volume of referrals appears to be largely reliant upon individual relationships between Mentors and Jobcentre Work Coaches, with one delivery area highlighting the importance of maintaining a close relationship with key referral agents: *'Because we've been going for two years we've identified the key Jobcentre Advisors who refer the bulk of people for us, so we consistently, on a monthly basis, give them a ring and talk to them if there are any issues or problems and see what referrals we can get'*. Another Mentor who had experienced varying referral volumes expressed concern that *'there appears to be no process in place to highlight this difference within the job centres [with JCP Area Managers]'*, which could lead to a more consistent relationship.
- 4.10 The nature of referrals from local Jobcentres is also rather varied, with some Mentors describing participants who, on initial engagement, would say *'the Jobcentre sent me'*, when they evidently do not wish to be there. In these circumstances, the voluntary nature of engagement is used to diffuse the situation.
- 4.11 Recognising that the local Jobcentre would find it challenging to understand everything on offer through the Programme, the Swansea Lift team secured a desk space at the Jobcentre for one day per week. Work Coaches would then bring potentially eligible candidates for the Programme to the Mentor, who could then discuss their eligibility and the potential benefits of Lift. The delivery team felt that this approach helped to avoid any miscommunication in relation to the Lift programme and the associated referral process.

- 4.12 Another common referral route is via Communities First engagement activities. Whilst this route has been widely recognised, Mentor’s perception of its effectiveness varied from area to area. In delivery areas where a strong relationship exists between the Communities First Cluster staff and the Lift delivery team there is a useful volume of referrals. In other areas, a weaker relationship was reported by delivery teams. The weaknesses were most typically at an individual rather than organisation-wide level. This reportedly impacted negatively on the volume and quality of referrals received.
- 4.13 Other common referral routes reported by Mentors included via Registered Social Landlords, Probation Services, Careers Wales, Job Fairs/Employer Engagement Events and Families First/Flying Start provision, whilst several delivery areas referred to word of mouth: *‘people phone us and say “oh, my friend told me to phone you”*.
- 4.14 Delivery areas are not solely reliant upon referrals, with several describing outreach activities in local community centres or hubs (this approach is particularly common in Communities First Clusters that are geographically disparate). Other delivery area teams, particularly those operating in prominent locations with high footfall, operate drop-in sessions or simply benefit from ‘walk-ins’ or self-referrals.
- 4.15 Several areas identified the boundary restrictions for the Programme as a challenge: *‘The Programme has such a good reputation and people want to be part of it, they come in through their friends who tell them to contact us, but we can’t help them. We can signpost them or send an email on their behalf’*. This created some frustration amongst Mentors, partly because other Cluster activities benefit from a less stringent assignment of geographical boundaries.

Building Trust

Building Trust - The Anticipated Lift Model

- 4.16 Lift is a voluntary scheme and its target client group is harder to reach/help. Thus, the model assumes that eligible participants want to work or progress towards work, and that the brokers are able to secure voluntary engagement from participants. The model also assumes that the communities view Communities First Clusters as trusted, independent organisations that are distinct from public sector services (such as Social Services or DWP) due to Communities First Clusters being embedded within the community.

Building Trust – Mentor Perspectives

- 4.17 As reflected in the business plan model for the Lift Programme, building trust with Lift participants was universally viewed by Mentors as critical to the engagement process. One Mentor described how the importance of building trust was influenced by the poor experience that a participant may have previously had of statutory services or previous Programmes. Participants have often been passed from one service to another with little discernible benefit, leading to increased scepticism about the provision they engage with.
- 4.18 Mentors spoke of the need for informality in their approach. Their engagement is person-centred with an initial emphasis on discussion of the participant's current situation (and where the participant is willing to divulge, their background) and exploring what they are interested in, what they are looking to get out of life and (if the client is ready) the type of work they might like to do.
- 4.19 The fact that engagement is voluntary was also helpful in building trust, but it did result in instances where participants failed to attend sessions with their Mentor. In these cases, one Mentor said that they emphasise their '*concern for [the participant's] welfare*' to try to increase attendance. If a participant regularly fails to engage, their approach shifts to '*equally, if you don't want to be here...*' to ensure resource is not wasted on those who show no commitment to participating.
- 4.20 Mentors described participants as typically low-skilled individuals, lacking confidence, suffering mental health issues and feeling socially isolated. Several mentors have described Lift participants in terms of the support needed and distance from the labour market; i.e. some require minimal support to access the labour market, whilst the majority require extensive support due to the scale and nature of barriers they face.
- 4.21 The range of participant situations that Mentors encounter demands a highly flexible approach. One Mentor described the variety of situations as follows:
- 'You might pay for them to get on a course... book the training and tell them where they're going, that's quite light touch. Whereas somebody else, you may be going to the doctors, talking about the fact that they want to kill themselves, or that they've got all these issues at home like drug abuse... so I suppose it's about having a different approach depending on the client.'* [Lift Mentor]

- 4.22 One regularly mentioned point is that the trust is cemented by '*making sure we do what we say we're going to do*'.

Action Planning

The Lift Model

- 4.23 The Lift model is centred on the development of an action plan to identify a series of goals and measurable steps. Once the participant has engaged with the Lift team and a reasonable level of trust has been established, the participant follows a structured plan to move towards and into employment. The action planning process seeks to identify the barriers that participants face and to find appropriate solutions. The goals identified within the action plan inform the brokers' judgement on the type of opportunities that would be most suited to an individual. Mentors are assumed to be able to identify and match relevant and accessible opportunities to participants. A diverse blend of nationally derived and locally obtained opportunities is critical to the success of this approach.

The Delivery of Lift

- 4.24 The approach to action planning varies markedly between the delivery areas. In some areas the approach is described by Mentors as somewhat ad hoc; sometimes unintentionally (due to lack of capacity), sometimes intentionally (to avoid placing too much pressure upon some individuals).
- 4.25 Alternatively, in other areas the action plan is a critical element of the Lift model of service provision.

'We agree an indicative time-scale with short-term (1-3 months) goals and long-term (3-6 months) goals. The action plan attempts to address barriers, but in most cases lots of barriers such as drugs & alcohol, caring, and mental health issues come out as we progress through the action plan, so it is constantly amended.'

[Mentor]

- 4.26 Several areas use existing tools (Swansea use the Work Star²⁷ whilst Taf use DOTS²⁸ and Ebbw Fawr/Tredegar apply a Rickter Scale²⁹ approach to their questioning) to help understand how far an individual is from the labour market, the nature of the barriers they face and to provide a baseline to measure an individual's progress against. The subsequent findings then help guide the action plan that is agreed with a participant.
- 4.27 The timing of the introduction of action planning with a participant varies from one delivery area to another and from client to client. Action planning has most typically been applied in the second or third appointment with a participant.
- 4.28 Where the action plan is a key element of the service provision it is regularly reviewed with clients:

'Every time they come in after that, each time we see them we fill in a mentoring form with any updates and we use this and the action plan to identify and track progress – we track when they came in, score their expectations and track performance measures.' [Mentor]

Ongoing Support

- 4.29 The frequency of appointments with participants is also highly flexible and again fluctuates from area to area. In several delivery areas Mentors aim to meet participants on a weekly basis; in others fortnightly meetings are held, whilst in one area a Mentor is meeting some participants on a daily basis. Flexibility is needed because some participants struggle with regularity and time keeping and, to a certain extent, the regularity of meetings is guided by participant needs.
- 4.30 Mentors who operate in prominent, accessible locations that benefit from high footfall also have participants dropping in and typically have to offer support in an ad hoc manner.
- 4.31 Mentors reported various challenges with engagement, as for example the need for appropriate safeguarding approaches for appointments, where there is a lack of detail regarding a participant's background, or there is evidence of previous criminal convictions.

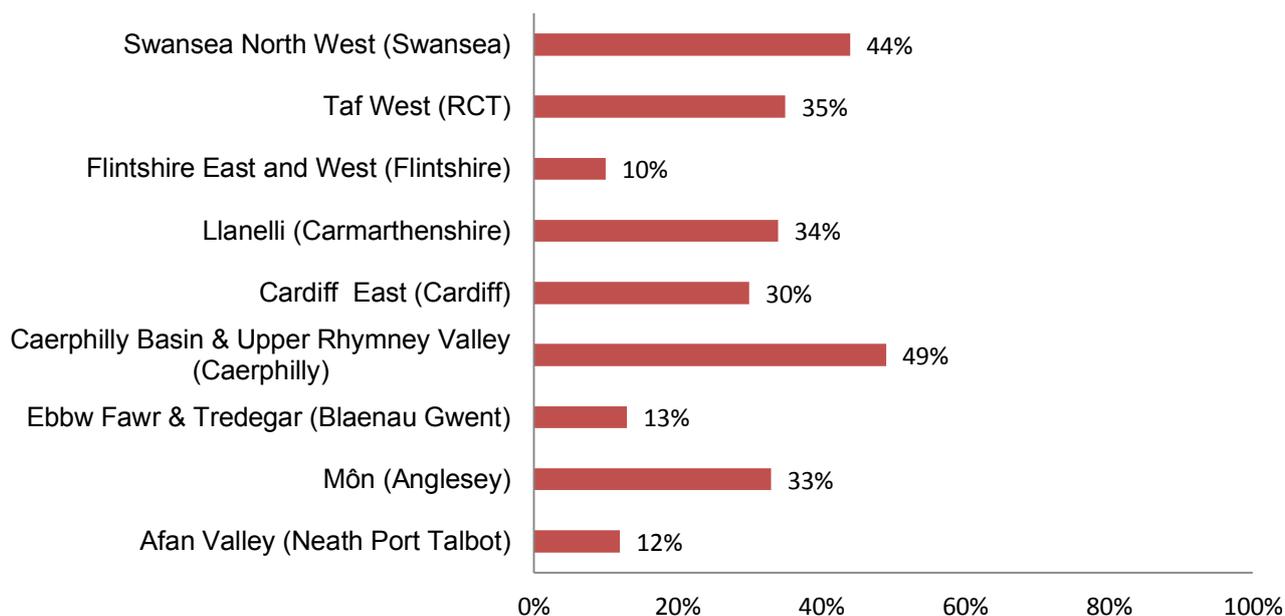
²⁷ See www.outcomesstar.org.uk/work/

²⁸ Decision learning, Option awareness, Transition learning, Self awareness – for further information see Kidd, J.M. (1996) The Career Counselling Interview. In Watts et al., *Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance: Theory, Policy and Practice*, London: Routledge, pp 189-209.

²⁹ A tool based around a set of sliding scales which are designed to measure soft indicators and distance travelled - see <http://www.rickterscale.com/what-we-do/the-rickter-scale>

4.32 Others described how the nature of clients has changed as the Programme has progressed, necessitating a change in approach: *'[We] have had the quick fixes – now getting towards the hard to reach – e.g. those that have been unemployed for 15-20 years. With this in mind we need to consider how the nature of a journey changes'*. Figure 4.2 below illustrates the prevalence of long-term unemployed people in delivery areas and highlights that in some areas almost half of Lift participants have been out of work for at least five years or have never worked.

Figure 4.2: Proportion of Lift Participants (April 2014 - March 2016) out of work for five years or more or who have never worked³⁰



4.33 Other Mentors reflected on the challenge of dealing with multiple barriers and prioritising accordingly: *'We have clients with multiple barriers, e.g. substance misuse, domestic abuse, homelessness, debt, criminal records, child care. We deal with these barriers based on a hierarchy of needs so if we are talking about a training course available and someone is about to be made homeless then obviously we prioritise the latter barrier'*.

'We've got some participants who are really keen on training and placements, but they're so far behind in rent arrears; the last thing they can be thinking about is a job because they've got to keep a roof over their head. So we'll look at their housing and all the services, to provide the right support for that person before they attend any training. So we stabilise family life and try to do that.'

[Mentor]

³⁰ Welsh Government Participant Tracking Data – Cumulative Data for 2014 and 2015

- 4.34 One such situation arose during an interview with a Mentor where a Lift participant entered the room, saying *'I have two kids, I am in debt, I need to get a job but I have no money for child care, I am at risk of losing my benefits and I have been served an eviction notice so in two weeks me and my children will be homeless'* [Lift Participant].
- 4.35 These situations illustrate the breadth of scenarios that Mentors are faced with, which demands detailed knowledge of the service provision available. When faced with these situations one Mentor described the challenge of *'maintaining the boundaries of the role, i.e. not becoming a key worker and allowing the client to become dependent on us for everything'*.
- 4.36 They also illustrate the scale of barriers faced by participants and therefore the intensity and duration of support required to get them closer to employment: *'Some are really far away, for some it's fifteen months since they first engaged, but they are constantly engaged and they are actively achieving mini goals'*.

Case Study

Charlie³¹ was introduced to the Lift Programme in the summer of 2015. He was unsure what his next step would be after failing to secure an employer placement that would have enabled him to continue with his Electrical Installation training. He had already passed his Level 1 and 2 and was eager to continue with his training in this area.

The initial support Charlie received was guidance and support related to what his options were, in addition to producing an up-to-date CV. He did not wish to sign on to claim benefits as his heart was set on a career within the area he had recently studied. The reality for Charlie was, however, that unless he found an employer who would be willing to take him on as an Apprentice Electrician, he would not be able to re-commence college in September 2015 to complete his Electrical Installation course.

Charlie was initially signposted and supported to register on the Careers Wales website to look at wider apprenticeship opportunities. He received support to apply for positions in related areas such as Mechanical Engineering. Unfortunately, Charlie was not successful in his applications. By this point, he had become quite despondent and low in confidence.

³¹ Participant names have been changed to provide anonymity

It was suggested to Charlie that he may benefit from undertaking a Work Experience opportunity, which would build his confidence and provide him with some meaningful work experience he could use to help him to find a suitable job or training in the future. Charlie was keen to work with Lift to find a suitable opportunity. It was suggested that a role utilising and demonstrating his interest in practical skills would be suitable for him. Lift found Charlie an opportunity in a Furniture Restoration business near to his home so that he would be able to attend. Lift also persuaded the employer that if Charlie was successful and the employer found him suitable he could even progress to a paid role through Jobs Growth Wales after his placement had finished.

Charlie successfully completed a two-week placement but found that the role was not what he was looking for. He did, however, gain valuable confidence and benefited from his time in the workplace. Lift continued to support Charlie to find his ideal opportunity.

At the beginning of 2016 Charlie signed on to claim benefit as no one in his family was working and he needed to claim a small amount to provide for himself. Both adults in the house were Lift participants and not working; Charlie also had a younger sister at home living at home with him.

He was encouraged to attend a course that the Job Centre had signposted him to in the Construction Industry. Charlie attended the programme which involved some skills development and team building work. Charlie gained a CSCS card at this point, supported by Lift. He was also supported to apply to, and attend an interview for, a position as Groundworker Apprentice with a company near to his home. Unfortunately, Charlie was not offered an Apprenticeship despite him preparing well for the interview. Again, Charlie was disappointed.

Whilst on his placement Lift identified an employer in Merthyr, who were finding it hard to fill a Job Growth Wales vacancy. They had advertised a vacancy for a Control Panel Technician on the Careers Wales website but had not managed to find anyone suitable. The employer wanted someone who would be interested in becoming a trained Electrical Control Technician able to undertake work using Electrical Control Panels. They had large contracts in the USA to maintain and run electrical components on fairground rides.

Lift contacted the employer and suggested that Charlie could undertake a 2-week work trial to see if he would be suitable for the role. Charlie was also keen to try and impress the employer and was excited at the thought of travelling to the USA as he had never been abroad before. Charlie had, in fact, spent little time outside of Tredegar in his life. Lift also persuaded the employer that if Charlie was suitable they could employ Charlie on a Jobs Growth Wales placement. The employer agreed to take Charlie on an initial 2-week placement.

Lift quickly arranged Charlie's transport for two weeks and stayed in close contact with the employer during the placement period. Charlie quickly impressed the employer and agreement was made to convert the placement into a paid position through the Jobs Growth Wales programme. Lift liaised with the Jobs Growth Wales Programme Managing Agent, Job Centre Plus and the Employer which resulted in Charlie starting work for the first time in his life in April 2016.

The final twist in the story of Charlie is that he has now travelled to both Utah and Florida in the USA since April 2016 and is currently in Universal Studios in Florida working for the company as an Electrical Control Panel Technician. His journey from Tredegar to Universal Studios would not have been possible without the support Lift provided to realise his ambitions, develop his skills and enter a job which is taking him, literally, around the world.

Building Employment Skills

- 4.37 Mentors typically support participants in developing their employment skills by encouraging them to participate in volunteering and work placements along with vocationally orientated training courses.
- 4.38 Some Mentors also have a series of in-house courses that they deliver with participants in relation to confidence building and interview skills courses, while others utilise the local Job Clubs for this type of service.

In-house Placements

In Llanelli, a market stall was set up selling items made by people with learning difficulties or mental health needs; some Lift participants volunteered on the stall to gain retail experience in a somewhat protected environment. The stall was so successful that the local authority took over the shop opposite the hub to expand the sale of the products.

- 4.39 In pursuing opportunities Mentors described the importance of managing expectations: *'The expectations of the client are often a barrier to both training and employment. They find it difficult to understand that they need skills for a job they think they can do'*.
- 4.40 Managing the training budget is described as an associated challenge: *'We get a lot of people who expect us to pay for training that is unrealistic... We need to invest in people to do training that will result in them getting a job'*. Due to the reductions in funding for adult/community learning, this has reportedly heightened the challenge of finding suitable provision in less accessible locations.
- 4.41 Different delivery areas have differing perspectives on the availability of training, volunteering or employment opportunities. Mentors based in areas in close proximity to major conurbations typically described an abundance of opportunities (with some facing difficulties in allocating all the opportunities presented to them). Conversely, in more isolated, disparate Clusters identifying suitable opportunities is described as a challenge.

'Rhondda Housing have offered construction opportunities but this was too far away for most participants. RCT is three valleys; it would take 1hr 20 mins for a participant to get a bus from one valley to another so the biggest barrier is transport because very few have a car.' [Mentor]

Employment Opportunities

- 4.42 In some areas (Anglesey for example) the Communities First Cluster team and/or the relevant Local Authority department played a key role in securing employment opportunities due to their ongoing dialogue with local employers.

'Communities First in Holyhead has an Employer Engagement Officer who is a vital link between the Lift staff and employers. Once in post one staff member is responsible for follow up telephone calls to maintain the link, and this ensures that where the job does not work out we are able to re-engage with clients.' [Mentor]

4.43 In other areas, for instance Llanelli and Swansea, the Mentors themselves undertake the liaison with employers.

'They [local employers] have been into the office and have spoken with Lift participants; they do a kind of interview with them to build their confidence and give them experience and then when ready there will be employment opportunities with them. We also have community benefit clauses with employers.' [Mentor]

'We work very closely with construction companies, we develop courses with them, and then, for the people who attend the courses, we attach opportunities for placements.' [Mentor]

4.44 In the majority of delivery areas (five of the nine) local employers are reportedly unaware that they are recruiting Lift participants. This is because participants typically secure employment through the open market, usually following successful completion of work placements. In the remaining areas where local employers are aware of Lift, work placement opportunities tend to be offered where participants may progress on to permanent positions with that employer.

4.45 Construction opportunities are typically described as the most popular sectors for Lift participants, with Care related opportunities and opportunities in the Retail sector also popular.

Nationally Brokered Opportunities

4.46 The usefulness and utilisation of nationally brokered opportunities also varies significantly from one area to another. The Lift Clusters in Flintshire reported that less than one per cent of their opportunities have been secured through nationally brokered agreements, with those on offer typically described as unsuitable or inaccessible. Other areas (Taf West and Cardiff East for example) have drawn significantly from these opportunities: *'We have more than enough opportunities through Welsh Government – we concentrate on these ones...99 per cent are opportunities offered by Welsh Government, NHS or local housing associations'*.

4.47 Table 4.2 below presents reported figures on the number of nationally brokered opportunities offered and taken up by each delivery area and illustrates the variation between delivery areas.

Table 4.2: Number of Nationally Brokered Opportunities Offered and Taken Up by Delivery Area April 2015 - March 2016³²

Delivery Area	DFES		Housing		Health		Total	
	Offered	Taken Up	Offered	Taken Up	Offered	Taken Up	Offered	Taken Up
Afan Valley	N/A	11	20	11	9	0	29	22
Môn	N/A	0	0	0	13	12	13	12
Ebbw Fawr & Tredegar	N/A	3	2	2	10	10	12	15
Caerphilly Basin & Upper Rhymney Valley	N/A	1	4	1	7	1	11	3
Cardiff East	N/A	0	113	60	50	40	163	100
Llanelli	N/A	0	1	0	16	4	17	4
Flintshire East and West	N/A	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Taf West	N/A	1	42	14	32	32	74	47
Swansea North West	N/A	1	3	0	9	2	12	3
Total	N/A	18	185	88	146	101	331	207

4.48 In other areas where nationally brokered opportunities typically represent between 10-20 per cent of opportunities, these are typically secured through specific organisations: *‘Approximately 20 per cent of our clients access opportunities identified through Welsh Government departments. If we refer to the NHS they are guaranteed an interview which helps a lot with confidence. We’ve not had many opportunities through the Housing Associations though’.*

³² Welsh Government Participant Tracking Data – note that there is no data on DfES offered opportunities, only on the take up of DfES related opportunities.

- 4.49 The perceived value of nationally brokered opportunities has been outlined by Mentors: *'Opportunities identified through Welsh Government like the NHS have only started to arrive this year; some providers such as the RSL have still been very slow providing opportunities – but these opportunities will be high quality and decent opportunities with good pay and conditions... a real incentive for our customers to get involved'*.

Case Studies

Jennifer³³ was a former Social Worker who had become unemployed during her battle with a serious illness. These events had a detrimental effect on her confidence and self-esteem, which she identified as a significant barrier to returning to employment now that her health had improved. Tasha³⁴ had been out of work for nineteen years having been a full-time carer for her disabled son. Now that her son had settled into college and adult services, she felt ready to begin the process of restarting her career.

Jennifer took advantage of Môn Communities First 'fundamental' courses, but was most interested in the Confidence Building and Interview Skills course. By working alongside other learners in similar situations to complete activities aimed at increasing self-esteem, Jennifer carved her path to self-belief. She attended a series of mock interviews and received feedback that grew in positivity. Repeating this exercise was of huge value to her, and Lift now encourages all learners on this course to attend the mock interview session as many times as possible.

Tasha had a background in administration, but having been out of employment for almost twenty years she felt she needed to brush up on her skills. She was enrolled onto the Steps to Success: Administration course, where she gained practical experience in the reception area of Lift's Academy and completed a series of general and sector-specific qualifications, including Agored Cymru units in Administration & Customer Service.

Both Jennifer and Tasha were extremely interested in the NHS programme. Very early in the process Lift was made aware by our contacts in the NHS of vacancies for administrators within the training department at Ysbyty Bryn Y Neuadd. Lift supported Jennifer and Tasha to apply for these roles, and both were offered interviews under the Lift/NHS guaranteed interview scheme. All of the mock interviews paid off and by all accounts both Jennifer and Tasha excelled.

³³ Participant names have been changed to provide anonymity

³⁴ Participant names have been changed to provide anonymity

With a total of twenty-two years out of work and a lengthy journey where they overcame what had felt like insurmountable barriers, Jennifer and Tasha were offered the jobs and have since settled into working life as members of NHS staff. Lift “*could not be prouder of them or more grateful for the support of [their] colleagues within the BCU Health Board*”.

The Barrier Fund

- 4.50 The Barrier Fund is universally considered a vital element of the offer to Lift Participants: *‘You can use it for buying advance tickets for a bus to enable individuals to get to an interview’ [Mentor].*

‘[The] Barrier fund [is] a life saver! ... We have bought shoes for people to work in the NHS, work placement clothing, pay for birth certificates, wellington boots, CSCS tests etc. They could not do some of these opportunities without this fund. We have flexibility with the barrier fund.’ [Mentor]

- 4.51 The fund’s flexibility of use and accessibility (thereby making it a responsive tool) were widely welcomed. Mentors struggled to identify how the Barrier Fund could be improved other than by increasing the scale of funding available. One Mentor described a desire to increase flexibility further by enabling its continued use for participants immediately after they have secured employment to provide support until they receive their first salary payment. In another delivery area however, they described providing the fund post-employment for that very reason: *‘In many cases we still provide lunch vouchers for the first week and transport costs for the first month’.*
- 4.52 One concern raised by several Mentors was that the Barrier Fund had become a victim of its own success. The relative simplicity through which the fund can be accessed compared to complicated procedures in Jobcentres or Careers Wales for similar resource has led to partner organisations relying on or referring to the Barrier Fund for Lift participants rather than using their own resources: *‘JCP will often ask us to pay for something through our barrier fund because it is a much simpler and quicker process than their own’.* Furthermore, another Mentor described it as:

'On the negative side it does sometimes appear to be a cash cow and clients are only referred to or engage with us for the fund rather than the whole package of support. People can get annoyed if we insist they follow a process before accessing the fund when at times they've been told that they can get funding support through us.' [Mentor]

Post-Employment Support

- 4.53 Once an opportunity has been taken up, Mentors typically follow-up via telephone, although this is most often undertaken on a needs led basis. Where participants secure employment Mentors report difficulties in maintaining contact with them (although where participants secure employment through Jobs Growth Wales there is a more formal in-work support approach). It is usually very difficult to maintain contact with clients once they start work and quite often they work similar hours to Mentors and therefore do not respond to calls.

Case Study

Alun has been on sick benefits for around six to seven years suffering from various Diabetes-related health problems. The housing association told him about a course with Communities First in *'barista and customer services'* training. He went to visit Communities First to find out more but *'they weren't sure who would fund it, either them or Lift. So I went to see [Lift Mentor] and Lift funded the course'*. Through meeting with [Lift Mentor], Alun attended the barista course and *'signed all the paperwork'*. [the Mentor] was also able to give Alun *'loads of [careers] advice'*.

After completing the course, Alun got a part-time job working in the local FE College in the coffee shop – *'without training I wouldn't have gotten the job'*. The Mentor also managed to obtain funding for him to sit his driving theory test, as well as a practice CD. This was in response to the transport difficulties posed by the early morning starts required as a barista: *'I was struggling to get to work in the early mornings'*.

He now feels absolutely work ready and is confident both finding and keeping work. He says that Lift has helped him with everything: *'They know where to go and what to do... They are there to speak if you have a problem... I cannot recommend them enough'*.

Integration with Other Programmes

The Lift Model

- 4.54 The Lift model recognised that Communities First Cluster areas benefit from a number of targeted interventions which aim to contribute to similar outcomes, in addition to the various activities delivered by the 'Prosperous' teams in each Cluster. The alignment of Lift with the Clusters aims to reduce the risk of overlap, duplication or competition with other interventions.

Mentor Perspectives

- 4.55 As mentioned previously, the Lift Programme operates within Communities First Clusters and therefore should draw on the infrastructure that Communities First provides. However, Lift is also heavily reliant upon other organisations and service providers, operating in the areas, for the identification and engagement of participants. Mentors deal with participants who have multiple barriers to employment who therefore require appropriate support to best help them overcome those barriers. Collectively, Lift's effective integration with other service provision is a key factor in its success.

Communities First Clusters

- 4.56 Aided by the line management of Lift teams by Cluster Managers in the majority of areas, most Lift teams are closely integrated with the Communities First Cluster teams. The Clusters offer useful routes to engagement (as outlined earlier) but also provide useful access to learning provision and employment opportunities.
- 4.57 However, whilst the majority of Lift teams benefit from good referral routes and from piggy backing on existing events, in a minority of areas the Lift teams derive limited benefit from their Cluster, primarily (reportedly) down to relationships between individuals.

Communities for Work

- 4.58 The launch of Communities for Work (CfW)³⁵ in all Communities First Clusters, which aims to increase the employability (and employment) of adults with complex barriers to employment, has raised concerns for Lift teams due to potential marginalisation (given the similarity of intervention and the relative scale of CfW in comparison to Lift). Concerns were particularly evident amongst Mentors who had a weaker relationship with their Communities First Cluster: *'The Jobcentre is also*

³⁵ <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities-for-work/?lang=en>

building up a case load of people who could be Lift eligible, ready to hand over the Communities for Work team so that is why they were not referring anyone to us. Why? Because they want Communities for Work to be successful' [Mentor].

- 4.59 At the time of interview, CfW was in its implementation phase and in the midst of staff recruitment, so it was difficult for Lift Mentors to provide an informed perspective on the impact of the Programme. To facilitate this process of referral, Triage Officers have already been appointed in some areas (at the time of interview) and have weekly interviews about the allocation of potential participants:

'...Putting it simply, you have three Programmes all aligned together working in the community, working with slightly different eligibility criteria – they can drop into whichever suits their criteria best. There are three separate Programmes with three separate delivery plans but we all work in the same community so the ambition is they all work together to the best advantage to the participant; they are not in competition, they complement each other.' [Mentor]

'Being in the same building (as Communities First) helps as well really because if we as Mentors are struggling with where to put someone, we can go down to the offices and sign them up to some courses that they've got on. So we're addressing as many actions and agreed goals that they want to achieve a bit at a time, so having that link with Communities First in both areas, and the Families First team that we work closely with is great because with the cross-referral process we know who to contact. As soon as they get referred in the support starts.' [Mentor]

- 4.60 A focus group was held with the Lift Programme management team in July 2016 following the commencement of delivery on CfW. Initial indications suggest a tangible increase in the number of referrals coming through to Lift after the launch of CfW. The current perception is that this may relate to the increased resource availability and the resultant employability support that CfW brings.
- 4.61 Other Programmes of importance to Lift include Jobs Growth Wales, whilst other Mentors have also highlighted Careers Wales³⁶ and Flying Start.³⁷

³⁶ <https://www.careerswales.com/en/>

Employer Perspectives on the Lift Programme

4.62 The employers who contributed to the research comprised a community centre, social enterprises, two housing associations and four construction companies. Many were therefore already involved in socially orientated activities reflective of their organisation's ethos/orientation. Typically, employers became aware of the Lift Programme through prior engagement in community development activity:

'If there are any schemes in the area we work in then we try and get involved. The Cardiff Lift project is run by CCHA so I went to see them to see if we could work together and they said they could provide a participant for unpaid work experience.' [Employer]

4.63 Others were approached by either a Lift broker, their Local Authority or the Welsh Government.

'We were working on a contract for Carmarthenshire County Borough Council and they asked us if we would provide a placement for two weeks' work experience which we did. A while later we were working on a different project in Llanelli and we phoned them and asked if they wanted us to do this again and they referred us to Lift.' [Employer]

4.64 Respondents typically reported that both the Programme's reputation in the community, as well as the quality of the offer for those the Programme intended to reach, were main factors in their decision to become involved. Some also mentioned the enthusiasm and passion of the Lift brokers as another motivating factor: *'It struck a chord with me because that support is so much better compared with other programmes we have worked with... Lift work with people most in need and that appeals to me'* [Employer].

4.65 The majority of employers interviewed had offered some form of work experience to Lift participants. In most instances these opportunities were established with a view to both preparing and assessing a candidate for a more permanent paid role.

'We basically take someone on a voluntary basis; it's an opportunity to see if they like the work and if we think they will work out OK we offer them a contract of work.' [Employer]

³⁷ <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/parenting-support-guidance/help/flyingstart/?lang=en>

'The kind of opportunities we can offer are trainee care assistant, placement food assistant – basically the hourly paid roles such as care, domestic, kitchen etc. They are unpaid opportunities which give people the opportunity to see if they like the role and give us an idea of the skills they have. If a trial is successful it can lead to a permanent position, but even if there are no vacancies the person still learns new skills and we put them on different training courses so it is still worthwhile for them.' [Employer]

Case Study: Our Club Wales in partnership with the Lift Programme

Our Club is a bespoke training programme which supports the transformation from unemployment to sustainable career development. The programme was jointly created by Morrisons and the Centre of Coaching Excellence (CCE).

Our Club delivers personal development coaching across four pillars - employment skills, life skills, community, and health and well-being which is designed to inspire change in those that take part. It takes place against the backdrop of learning in the workplace with participants spending four weeks of the six week course on a work experience placement with local employers.

The Our Club programmes are always based at a major sporting facility and Our Club Wales was launched in January 2016 at the Liberty Stadium in Swansea and involved 23 Lift participants from the Carmarthenshire, Afan Valley and Swansea Lift areas.

The programme started with two weeks of employability training at the Liberty Stadium, followed by four weeks of work experience with five local employers – Morrisons, DVLA, Wheelies, William Hill and Gwalia Housing who hosted work placements in a number of locations across the three delivery areas.

The programme ended with a Graduation Event at the Liberty Stadium on 18 February where each participant was presented with an achievement certificate and received recognition for progress they'd made. Nineteen of the 23 participants completed the programme with eight securing employment as a result of their participation and many of the other participants continuing to receive support through the Lift Programme.

4.66 When asked about the nature of the opportunities provided, respondents predominantly reported that the opportunities with which the Lift participants engaged had been specially created in response to the Programme. A minority of employers had diverted pre-existing opportunities that may have gone out to the open market towards Lift participants:

'Generally these opportunities would have gone elsewhere and any paid jobs as a result would have gone to the open market, however would a Lift participant have applied for and got the job? Probably not without the Lift intervention.' [Employer]

Recruiting Lift Participants

4.67 Most of the employers interviewed reported that Lift participants were recruited in a scaled-down version of their usual hiring process in recognition of the challenges that Lift participants typically face. Inviting the Lift applicant to an 'informal' or 'mock' interview was the most common procedure:

'The interview is a scaled down version of what we would do for a permanent position.'

'We used an informal interview which gave me a chance to suss out their commitment and competence.'

4.68 Conversely, one employer said that they used a normal selection process regardless as they were required to act with transparency when recruiting:

'We have to be open and transparent when recruiting so we advertised the position and Lift brokered the job opportunity for Alison and she was the best candidate so she got the job. I know that Lift gave her a lot of support to prepare her for interview and so forth.'

4.69 When considering the matching of applicants to employment opportunities, some employers provided a highly positive perspective:

'They don't just send anyone and everyone to us, they only refer people who they think will work out which is good.'

'If they know Asda are recruiting they will look at offering retail skills in order to match this opportunity.'

4.70 In other instances, concerns arose over the quality of referrals due to negative experiences with participants:

'[They need to] be more careful when matching participants to a job... it doesn't work when you just try and slot someone into any role, they have to want to do it.'

4.71 Some respondents also mentioned that they would like to be able to support a greater number of struggling individuals, however they were not receiving enough applicants:

'We do not see as many applicants coming through Lift as we thought we would. I don't know if this is because people are not getting paid for the opportunities or because Lift staff are not proactive enough in recruiting.' [Employer]

'I suppose [Lift could be improved] in terms of numbers... Not everyone is eligible to be supported which is a shame.'
[Employer]

Employer Experience of Lift Participants

4.72 Overall, the employers interviewed had mixed experiences with Lift participants, although it should be noted that in some instances employers felt it was too early to provide an opinion. Negative experiences mainly centred on absence, lateness and poor attitude.

'Not great...She started turning up late or not turning up at all so I spoke to [Mentor] at Lift and explained the situation and said we were considering letting her go but we really didn't want that to happen. [Mentor] and I decided we would both communicate with her... so we could explain the situation... She resigned.'

'We only had one placement but he had personal problems, Lift did not make us aware of these and he started not turning up.'

'I think where possible Lift should think about barriers like travel, financial etc. and try and get placements where people can walk to or can easily access by public transport. We worked with another scheme and their participants all lived near the site so their attendance was better and also because they were working in their area there was pride there as well.'

- 4.73 Despite some employers reporting mixed experiences, almost all employers interviewed said that they would recommend participation in the Lift Programme to similar organisations. In nearly every instance this response was attributed to the ‘*commendable*’ motives underpinning the Lift Programme, which matched their own organisational values.

‘We are keen as a housing association to give back to the community. Our tenants are typical Lift participants and anything that can help them to progress is good as far as we are concerned.’

‘It is a brilliant idea. I remember going back to work after I had children and how daunting it was. The only support available to me was the Jobcentre so I think Lift is a great opportunity for people to get proper support to go back to work.’

Employer Experience with the Lift Delivery Team

- 4.74 While some employers felt that they had a ‘*good relationship*’ with their broker, others expressed frustration regarding the quantity and quality of contact.
- 4.75 Most of the communication appears to be light-touch and is typically conducted through phone conversations. However, a common response from employers was the desire for Mentors to adopt a more ‘*proactive*’ approach to engaging employers to ensure that the relationships established between the Lift brokers and businesses continue to meet the aims of the Programme. As one respondent emphasised, ‘*Lift need to fit around the employer – they can’t expect the employer to fit around them*’.

‘I think Lift could be more proactive... Perhaps Lift could be more in control of who is still looking for work but also informed of people who have a job so we can take them off our list of potential work experience opportunities.’

‘I was not impressed because there seems to be a distinct lack of organisation... In reality if the Lift staff had been more organised we could have offered a series of placements.’

4.76 More broadly, respondents also reported a lack of communication both internally and externally, as well as a lack of Programme-specific information:

'I think it would help if employers understood more about the process of how Lift recruit participants, how they come to Lift, what happens to them etc. [An] understanding [of] the process and the background would help employers engage more.'

'When I asked about Lift at the start I was given a leaflet; I think it would be nice if there was a more personal service. I think more employers would help if a Lift broker made a personal visit to them on site.'

4.77 Employers were also asked what elements of the Lift model they considered to be critical to its success. They emphasised both the one-to-one, bespoke nature of support that offered flexibility for the individual and the dedication of brokers:

'We had one candidate who came from Lift and was doing work experience and we were getting him ready for an interview but he had holes in his shoes. I spoke to [Mentor] and they bought him some shoes so that he was presentable for the job interview. He got the job.'

4.78 Employers' general attitude towards the Lift Programme is reflected in the following comment *'the principle of the project is fantastic so it is really important to improve the process to ensure that employers retain an interest in supporting it'*. Moreover, involvement has largely been viewed as a positive experience: *'I think the Programme has started dialogue and relationships with employers, which is great; we need to ensure that the momentum is kept going'*.

4.79 The findings suggest that there remains a clear desire to engage with the Lift Programme amongst employers and a strong sense of commitment to the ethos of the Programme. The responses from all employers were delivered in a constructive manner that captured the spirit of partnership that exists. However, they do highlight a desire for greater interaction and proactivity from delivery staff to aid the Programme's success.

5. Exploring Participant Perspectives on Engagement, Activities and Journeys

Introduction

5.1 This chapter provides perspectives on the Lift Programme from participants who have engaged with the Programme for less than six months (from January 2016). It focuses on their routes to engagement and their initial journey through the Programme. Their perspectives were obtained via a telephone survey³⁸ that secured feedback from 105 Lift participants.

Participant Engagement

5.2 Participants responding to the telephone survey were asked how they had first become aware of the Lift Programme: just over one-third (37 respondents) were referred by their local Jobcentre; fifteen respondents had heard about the Programme through word of mouth; and other sources of awareness (21 respondents) were typically linked to referrals through Communities First or operations associated with Communities First, for example jobs fairs or clubs.

5.3 There were a range of motivational reasons for engagement with Lift. These have been coded and presented in Table 5.1 below. One important aspect is the role that participants felt Lift could play in helping to secure employment and fund training and qualifications. Of those who specifically cited employment as their ultimate goal, 15 viewed Lift as a stepping-stone towards employment whereas nine stated that paid employment was their immediate objective.

'I wanted to get some qualifications to go on my CV to get into work. I didn't do a lot in school so I needed something.'

'I have just heard [Lift] can help people get jobs or do courses.'

Some respondents enrolled on Lift without a specific idea of what they wanted to gain from it.

³⁸ See Chapter 3, pp.18-19. Also see Appendix 2, pp. 87-73 for the survey script.

Table 5.1: Respondents' aspirations from participating with Lift (Question 9, Coded Multiple Response)

When you first started engaging with the Lift programme, what were you hoping to get out of it?	n
Training/qualifications	40
A stepping-stone towards employment	15
Didn't know	14
Work placement/volunteering opportunity	13
Paid employment	9
Help with job searches	8
Other	7
CV help	7
CSCS card	5
Interview practice	2
Literacy and numeracy	2

Base: 105 responses (telephone survey, June-July 2016)

Participants' Perspectives on Lift Support

5.4 Respondents were asked to describe the types of support and advice they had received from their Mentor. Many were able to describe various elements of support despite having only engaged with the Programme relatively recently; examples include support into training, obtaining qualifications, and the creation or revision of a CV. Many participants had also attended work placements organised by their Mentor in addition to assistance with both searching and applying for paid employment.

'Met up with [Mentor], showed her my CV and what I wanted to do. We've been meeting up regularly, she's been brilliant. She's updated my CV; I've been on three or four courses; she's done mock interviews with me. We've done job applications together. She's gone through all the questions most employers ask you, I've got an interview with the council coming up, an office admin job and I'm [feeling] quite confident.' [Lift Participant]

5.5 Participants also recognised the role Mentors played in overcoming personal (often practical) barriers to engagement in opportunities.

‘[My Mentor] helped me with paperwork [and] found me a volunteering place at [a care home]. She had to drive me there because of the crazy bus service. She is going to help me read the bus timetables, so that I can get there by myself.’ [Lift Participant]

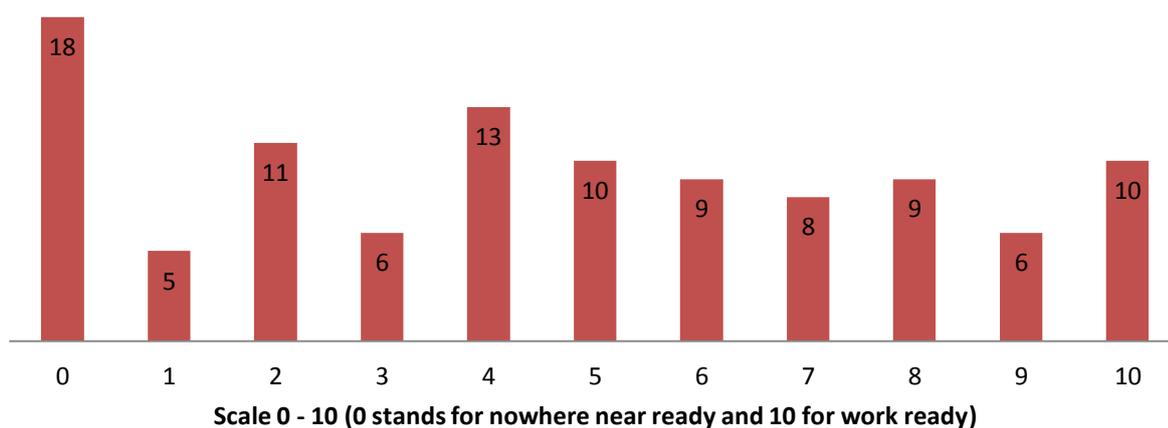
‘I couldn’t get on courses because I had no photo ID... He did an application for me to get a provisional licence, so now I will have [one]...They’re amazing.’ [Lift Participant]

Participant Perspectives on their Distance from the Labour Market

5.6 Participants were asked to report how far they felt from being able to find a job prior to receiving support through Lift. The distribution of responses is presented in Figure 5.1 below. These were roughly evenly spread, although the largest single proportion (18 respondents) rated their confidence at 0 (nowhere near work ready), indicating that the Programme is reaching its target population.

Figure 5.1: Respondents’ ratings on their perceived distance to the labour market prior to engagement with Lift (Question 5)

Question 5: On a scale of 0-10 could you tell us how near or far you personally felt you were from being able to find a job before you began receiving support through the Lift Programme? (0 nowhere near and 10 work ready)



Base: 105 responses (telephone survey, June-July 2016)

5.7 Respondents were also asked to describe their current situation. Most were unemployed and looking for work (73). Of the rest, thirteen were in some form of employment (either full or part time), nine were unemployed due to long-term illness or disability whilst eight were in other situations not covered by the above, such, caring for a loved one, or waiting to commence a new role or training.

Table 5.2: Respondents' description of their current employment situation.

Question 4: What is your current situation? (tick all that apply)	N
Unemployed - Looking for work	73
Unemployed – Long-term sick	9
Other	8
Working full-time	7
Working part-time	6
Stay at home parent	1
Volunteering	1

Base: 105 responses (telephone survey, June-July 2016)

5.8 Respondents were asked about the main challenges they faced in finding work. They typically referred to a lack of confidence in their abilities, being unable to afford childcare, and not having enough, or the correct qualifications.

5.9 Some respondents reported that older age had also prevented them from engaging with opportunities generated through the Programme as well as securing employment. In some instances, age insecurities served to intensify their lack of confidence. Health problems typically associated with older age were also more prevalent in this group.

'I haven't done any courses. I don't know if many people my age do courses and I'm not too good in crowds or with strangers...I'm in constant pain with arthritis and fibromyalgia, the base of my spine is wearing away.' [Participant, age 55]

'I've been unemployed for a while; I think my age is against me, I'm 51... [I have] arthritis in the ankle. Because of my age finding work has been a problem.'

'I think it's the gap in my CV and my age (36) that puts people off giving me a job.'

- 5.10 For some individuals, caring for dependents was also identified as a barrier in getting closer to employment.

'I hadn't worked for seven or eight years as I'd been caring for my mother in law. I split from my husband and so I wasn't caring for his mother any more. I'd been caring for years, not socialising and I was severely depressed.'

'Because I've been a full-time carer for my daughter I've had nothing else in my life so a job would give me independence.'

Case Study

A 50-year-old female, Joanne³⁹, was first referred to Lift through an event in a local Jobcentre in mid May 2016. Her last job was piece work as a home worker on an ad hoc basis around 2000. Prior to qualifications becoming an essential part of raising standards in the Care Sector, this individual had a job with a local employer that finished in 1997. There is no record of any other employment. School involved nine different locations as her father was in the forces, which had some impact.

Joanne's family background was limited, her mother had passed away and her father (now living abroad) had recently been diagnosed with cancer and was not contactable in person through lack of funds to visit, which Joanne was struggling with. She described her position on first meeting as having had depression and still feeling low. She had married in 2003 and did not have any children.

Lift, positioned in the borough as part of the wider Communities First team, allowed a quick intervention with an introduced referral to Kirstie James the Physical Activities Officer. Prior to leaving the area Joanne attended weekly circuit classes, a total of seven sessions, with a visible improvement in confidence and engagement with others. She even attended early on a few occasions to help Kirsty set up.

Alongside these classes, a Lift Mentor met with Joanna regularly and encouraged progression towards employment through attendance of some relevant courses, such as Customer Service Level 2 and COSHH Level 2, as well as support to continue increasing her Essential Skills training by attending an employability course run by an outreach college.

Joanne also had other barriers to work, such as the lack of a birth certificate, which she needed to obtain a DBS check required to gain a position in the Care sector.

³⁹ Participant names have been changed to provide anonymity

Lift sourced and paid for this alongside reimbursement of all travel costs to attend courses.

Having worked on increasing her confidence, work was then undertaken to alter Joanne's CV and re-focus it. It was at this session that she first shared that her husband verbally abused her. The Lift Mentor explored whether the situation was under control; Joanne felt that it was and was seeking out her own housing.

Progression continued and the refocused CV led to an application form for a local Care vacancy. Over two days and two sessions Lift worked with Joanne on providing competency examples for the form. It was evident she wanted to progress, turning up dressed to impress at the second session, conscious that she was going to drop her application form direct to the employer afterwards. So confident was the Lift Mentor of the quality of Joanne's efforts that the mentor pre-booked an interview skills session for her.

- 5.11 Participants who were not employed were asked what difference employment would make to their lives. Aspects of improvement that participants mentioned included improved mental wellbeing and improved confidence, particularly with regard to getting out of the house: *'[It would] get me out of house and stop me from being depressed, it would make a big difference'*.

'I didn't use to get out of the house, and I really want to find some work because I hate being on benefits... The anxiety is rubbing off on my kids and they stay in the house, I want to show them the way by working.'

- 5.12 Other aspects of improvement mentioned included positive impacts on financial circumstances - *'[It would make] a big difference, I am struggling with council housing and they brought in the bedroom tax'* – as well as overall quality of life: *'I could start doing things I enjoy. I want to learn to drive but you can't do that without money'*.

- 5.13 These individuals were also asked about the difference becoming employed would make to the lives of those close to them in order to explore potential spillover effects arising from support through the Lift Programme. Many mentioned benefits for their children:

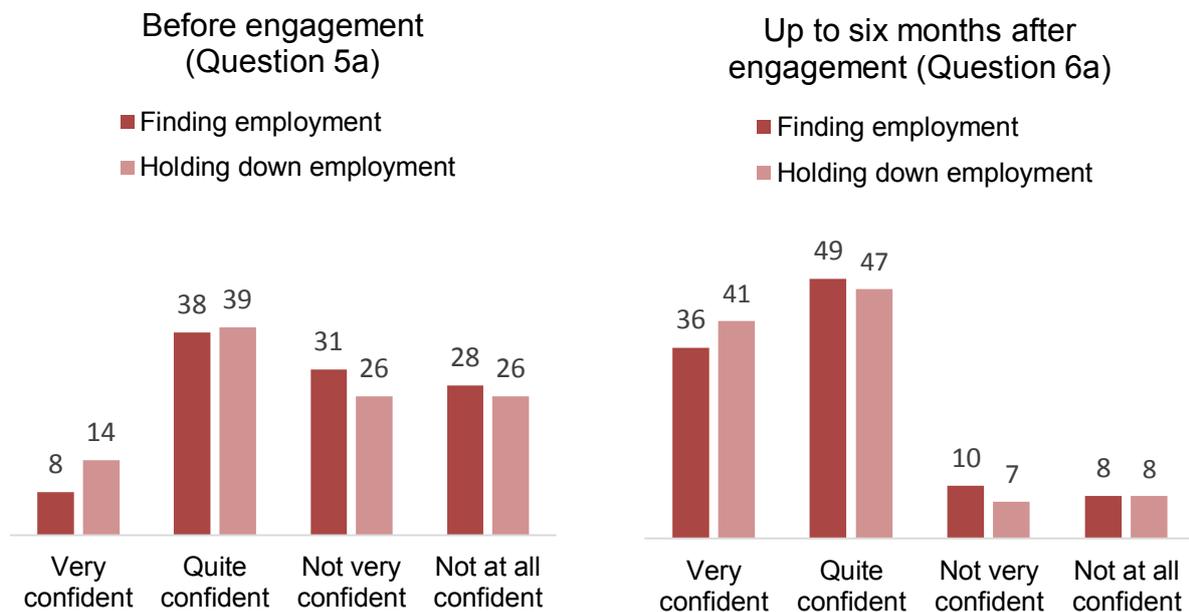
'My kids will be more proud of me. I'd be able to do more with them instead of saying we can't do [things] because we need to buy food.'

'I have been benefit capped so we live on a stupid amount of money for nine people.'

Subjective Impacts Arising from Support

- 5.14 Participants were asked to rate their confidence in finding employment, and in holding down that employment, at the point of initial engagement with the Programme. Fifty-nine respondents reported that they lacked confidence finding employment at that point. Slightly fewer (52 respondents) reported a lack of confidence in their ability to 'hold down' a new position (Figure 5.2 below).
- 5.15 By contrast, the majority (88 respondents) reported that having received support through the Lift Programme, they were either 'very' or 'quite confident' of holding down employment. A similar proportion (85 respondents) reported having greater confidence with regards to finding work.

Figure 5.2: Reported confidence levels for finding and holding down employment. Comparing responses before and up to six months after engagement with the Lift Programme



Base: 105 responses (telephone survey, June-July 2016)

- 5.16 Over half (61 respondents) thought that their job prospects were better since their enrolment in Lift. Of the rest, 14 respondents said it was too early to say and five did not give a specific answer.

- 5.17 Participants were also asked whether their participation in the Programme had changed the way they felt about gaining employment. Fifty-nine respondents felt it had, most commonly in relation to boosting their confidence (18 respondents) or making them more employable as a result of the work experience and/or qualifications gained:

'I think maybe I can do it now, they've been so friendly and they really are building up my confidence.'

'I'm waiting to hear back about this six-week placement with the health board, if I get this I will be over the moon. It is a change of direction for me and if I do get it Lift will have exceeded all my expectations.'

- 5.18 Participants cited a number of aspects of the support they had received from the Programme that they had found the most helpful with regards to securing employment. Seventeen respondents had found the courses they had attended to be the most beneficial aspect, followed by the motivational support of the brokers themselves; the confidence they had built throughout engagement; the help they had received with their CVs; and finally placements they had attended.

Other Support

- 5.19 Participants were asked whether they had received support in the past to achieve their employability aims from other sources besides Lift. Thirty-six out of 105 participants confirmed that they had received previous support, and of those that had over three-quarters (28/36) stated a preference for the support received from Lift.

- 5.20 There was also a clear preference for the informal approach of the Mentors.

'[They are] more like people like us, on our level and down to earth, like speaking to a friend. They are all about community too, not stuck up.'

'[the Mentor] speaks in layman's terms; he explains everything to me.'

- 5.21 Responses also focused on the quality and quantity of communication:

'[Mentor] has been really good, she's given me lots of opportunities, she keeps in touch and pushes me, is really supportive without being on top of me all the time.'

'Lift is 10 times better [than other Programmes]; they listen to you and sit down with you to help you.'

'Their support is for the individual.'

5.22 It is important to note that the majority of respondents had not received previous support, which might indicate that Lift is engaging with harder-to-reach individuals. As reported earlier, 14 per cent of those contacted first became aware of Lift through word-of-mouth, typically through a friend or family member who had engaged with the Programme themselves.

'I'd been laid off work, got another job but had a knee injury so was out of work again and my neighbour told me about them.'

'I lost my job and I'd been out of work for about six months, my confidence and motivation was going down. It was my mum who told me about Lift.'

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The Lift Programme targets a series of localities with a diverse range of characteristics. As a consequence, the Programme delivery model has been designed with a high degree of flexibility and this has enabled it to adapt to local circumstances and retain a person-centred approach.

Rationale

- 6.2 Tackling poverty remains one of the Welsh Government's highest priorities and given the substantial evidence that links worklessness to poverty there is ample justification for policy intervention of this nature. Whilst there is clearly a relationship between unemployment and poverty, there is also increased evidence of in-work poverty. The Programme's emphasis on securing nationally brokered opportunities, perceived to offer strong career opportunities, illustrates that Lift is, at least in part, seeking to address this increasingly evident socio-economic challenge.

Resources

- 6.3 Lift operates on a limited budget. In the vast majority of delivery areas, the Programme has made effective use of the platform offered by Communities First. The model for the programme anticipated reliance upon the Clusters for promotion, referral and engagement, which is reflected in the delivery areas to varying degrees.
- 6.4 Due to the limited resources, the allocation of staff to the Programme predominantly reflects suggested allocations in the business plan (namely two Mentors/Brokers per Cluster), with additional staffing only evident where the delivery area has been expanded, or where the Cluster is particularly large. This level of resource for a Programme providing high intensity support appears sufficient, although employers would reportedly appreciate a greater level of support. Furthermore, this level of staffing resource brings with it a high degree of risk in terms of staff absence. The loss of one staff member can significantly undermine the delivery of the Programme.

Brokered Opportunities

- 6.5 The business plan stressed the importance of nationally brokered opportunities. Their number, range (in terms of the number of organisations providing opportunities) and relevance to Lift participants has increased as the Programme

has progressed. Mentors have reported that participants perceive national opportunities as jobs with strong employment/career prospects, which adds to their perceived value. The geographical distribution of employment opportunities, however, is far from uniform: while two delivery areas are dominated by nationally brokered opportunities, several are benefitting from few or none. The next phase of the evaluation will explore whether there is a relationship between the prevalence of nationally brokered opportunities within a delivery area and the achievement of Programme outcomes.

Activities

Engagement/Referrals

- 6.6 As originally intended, Lift's design is heavily reliant upon referrals from other organisations. Relationships with key referral agencies such as local Jobcentres have strengthened as the Programme has progressed. However, the quality of referrals depends on individual relationships, which vary greatly from one Jobcentre to another, as well as from one Work Coach to another. The organisation/programme origin of other referrals to the Programme varies markedly between delivery areas.
- 6.7 Another factor that aids engagement and referrals is the fact that Lift is community-based. Delivery areas where facilities are based in prominent locations that enjoy high footfall, benefit most from ad hoc engagement through drop-ins or self-referrals.

Trust

- 6.8 Building trust is perceived to be critical to the success of the Programme and all Mentors ensure it is a priority during initial engagement with participants. The association with the Cluster, the disassociation with mainstream service provision, and the voluntary nature of engagement have all helped in this regard.
- 6.9 The approach to building trust is also highly consistent with the application of a person-centred approach. From a participant perspective it is clear that this is valued, as is the ability of Mentors to engage with them on an informal basis.

Action Planning

- 6.10 In some areas, action planning is a central element of the Lift delivery model; in others it is more peripheral to the approach. Some Mentors felt it placed undue pressure on participants, whilst others felt it was critical for identifying goals.

- 6.11 Analysis of monitoring data shows significant variation in the distance from the labour market of Lift participants and this may have influenced the emphasis on action planning within the delivery model.

Training and Employment Opportunities

- 6.12 As anticipated in the business plan, participants within the Lift Programme often require support for 12 months or more to help them progress towards employment. These participants are often constrained by multiple barriers to employment. Integration with other localised provision enables Mentors to broker to other wider support if there are immediate priorities/barriers that need addressing before employment, training or volunteering opportunities can be explored.
- 6.13 Once participants are in a position to progress towards employment, delivery areas have established suitable routes to employment and training. In the majority of delivery areas local employers are reportedly unaware that they are recruiting Lift participants as they typically secure employment through the open market. In the remaining areas local employers generally offer work placement opportunities where participants may progress on to permanent positions with that employer.
- 6.14 Areas that are more geographically isolated, or have accessibility constraints, are most likely to identify challenges in the identification of suitable opportunities for their participants.
- 6.15 Nationally brokered opportunities are highly valued in those locations where they play a significant role and are reportedly viewed enviously by other Programmes. However, they tend to be most prominent in the most accessible locations where, paradoxically, local training and employment opportunities would be more prevalent. This leads to a situation where some areas feel saturated with opportunities, with an associated fear that many will remain unfilled, whilst other areas face challenges in identifying a sufficient number of suitable opportunities for their participants.
- 6.16 The Barrier Fund is highly valued by all Mentors, with its flexibility and ease of access being particularly important. These have meant that the Barrier Fund has become a highly responsive tool that can react to barriers as they emerge. Its effectiveness has gained wider recognition to the point that it is something of a victim of its own success with other provision readily referring to the offer as a more straightforward alternative to their own.

Integration of Activities

- 6.17 The Lift Programme has, in the majority of areas, aligned well with existing provision. The introduction of CfW has raised concerns amongst delivery staff, although as the implementation of CfW progresses the concerns are beginning to subside. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the volume of referrals in delivery areas has increased since its launch, which could reflect close alignment and clear delineation (aided by the Triage officers) between the two intervention strategies.

Post-Employment Support

- 6.18 Support for participants once they gain a work placement and/or employment is currently undefined, partly as a result of the challenges of engaging a participant once they are in post. Employer feedback from the research was mixed. It suggests that once a suitable outcome is secured, Mentors are limited in their ability to support participants (and/or employers) sustain their employment. This may also reflect capacity related limitations and warrants further investigation over the next phase of the research.

Participant Perspectives

- 6.19 Participants are mostly positive about the support they have received through the Programme. A high proportion have been long-term unemployed or have never worked, with only a few having engaged in previous initiatives to support them into employment; suggesting that Lift is effective at engaging with those furthest away from the labour market. Where participants have engaged in other employment programmes, over three quarters of the participants surveyed (see pp.18-19) said they preferred the approach adopted through Lift. It will be important for the next phase of the research to analyse the extent to which the perceived value of the Lift Programme is ultimately reflected in sustained employment outcomes.

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Appendix 1: Lift Programme – Theory of Change



Appendix 2: Research Tools

Site Visit – Process Review with Brokers and/or other Lift Programme Delivery Staff

Lift Delivery Model Overview

1. Talk me through the approach to delivering the Lift Programme in your area
 - a. **Engaging Participants**
 - i. Key routes to direct identification and engagement of participants
 - ii. Referral routes - which organisations refer to Lift, what role does JCP play in those process and how effective are each of the referral processes?
 - iii. Voluntary engagement – the advantages and disadvantages that this brings
 - b. **Building Trust** – Methods/approaches applied following initial engagement to build trust/rapport with participants
 - c. **Action Planning** – Specifically the identification of barriers to employment, timing of the action planning process, the approach to action planning, the usefulness of the approach and the role of the action plan throughout engagement
 - d. **Building Employment Skills** – How opportunities are identified, accessed and monitored
 - e. **Moving on to Sustained Employment** – Including what support is offered post-employment

Alignment of Lift

2. How does the delivery of Lift currently work alongside Communities First in your cluster?
 - a. Are there advantages/disadvantages to delivering within a Communities First area?
3. How does Lift currently work alongside other initiatives in your cluster? Particularly Communities for Work?
 - a. What advantages does Communities for Work bring to the delivery of the Lift Programme in your area?
 - b. What disadvantages does Communities for Work bring to the delivery of the Lift Programme in your area?
4. To what extent, if at all, do you link with schemes other than Communities First and Communities for Work?
 - a. Is it important to do so?
5. Do you have many enquiries for support from those residing outside of the Communities First area?

Key Delivery Elements

6. On average, how regularly do you meet with a participant?
 - a. What factors influence how frequently you meet?

7. What types of challenges do participants face when engaging with the Lift Programme?
 - a. What Challenges do *you* face when engaging with participants?
 - b. What challenges does the *Lift Programme* face when engaging with participants?

8. Also, what are the typical challenges that you encounter when identifying and offering training and employment opportunities to Lift participants?

Identifying training and employment	
Offering training and employment	

9. What role (if any) does the Barrier Fund provide in overcoming challenges/barriers for participants?
 - a. How useful is this fund? Could it be improved at all?

Training and Employment Opportunities

10. How do you ensure there are:
 - a. Sufficient numbers of opportunities for the participants you are engaging with
 - b. Suitable opportunities for the participants you are engaging with?

11. How do you 'match' opportunities with/to participants?
 - a. Are there any opportunities that are particularly popular?
 - b. Are there any opportunities that are particularly unpopular?
 - c. Are there gaps in the type of opportunities that you have available to offer?

12. Which other organisations or service providers do you work with?
- What different opportunities do they provide to Lift participants?
 - How, if at all, do they enhance the support available?
13. To what extent do you feel that you have a comprehensive range of opportunities available to participants?
- Are there any key employers or training providers locally that you have been unable to engage with?
14. Approximately what proportion of opportunities accessed by participants are opportunities offered by Welsh Government Depts, NHS Wales, or local Housing Associations?

Reflections

15. What elements of the Lift model do you consider as critical to its success when supporting this group of individuals? Why do you think this?
- Can you provide some examples of individuals the Lift Programme has worked with that have achieved successful outcomes?
16. Are there any elements of the Lift model that could be improved?
- What are these and in what way can they be improved upon?

Monitoring and Evaluation

17. Please show me and talk me through the monitoring information you capture for a typical Lift participant from engagement through to outcomes.

(Interviewer)

- *Ask to see the databases, casefiles etc.*
- *What information is being captured?*
- *How often is information updated?*
- *How do they track post-employment?*
- *What support do they provide post-employment?*

18. A key part of the evaluation is to measure the impact the project is having on Lift participants.
- a. In your view, how are participants benefitting/will participants benefit from the support they're getting from the Lift Programme beyond the core outcomes of the programme?
 - b. Are there any wider benefits? i.e. have you noticed improvements in other aspects of the participant's life – within their family etc.?

Staffing Structure

19. Can you outline the staffing structure in relation to the Lift Programme in your delivery area?
- a. How many staff (full-time or part-time) are directly involved in delivering Lift? what are their specific roles? (note these are two separate questions)
 - b. Who is your line manager?
 - c. There are various approaches to the structure and positioning of Lift teams amongst local authorities, please outline the structure in your LA. Please outline what a typical day involves in your job role.
 - d. Does your job involve delivery of any other support services outside of the Lift Programme?
 - e. What background/experience did you have in this field prior to your employment on the Lift Programme?

And finally....

20. Are there any questions that you think are important or valuable for this evaluation to explore with participants?
21. As part of the evaluation, we are keen to engage with providers of opportunities (Delivery Agents), particularly those that offer employment opportunities.
- a. Are local employers typically aware that they are employing someone through the Lift Programme?
 - b. Could you provide details of up to 10 local employers (and key contacts within those employers whom we can contact as part of the evaluation)?
22. Do you have anything to add, or would you like to raise an issue that we have not discussed?

Participant Survey

Introduction

Wavehill have been asked by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the Lift Programme which it has funded.

We understand that over the past few months you've had support from <xxxx/xxxx> (Mentor/Coach names) from <xxx> (Communities First Cluster). We would be grateful if you would take part in a 10-minute telephone survey to tell us about your initial experiences of the support, as your views are very important in helping the Welsh Government to understand how effective the Lift Programme is.

I would like to assure you that all the views you give will be kept in the strictest confidence, your participation in the survey is voluntary and you can stop the interview at any time without any consequences. You will not be individually identifiable from any of your views in the reports or data that provided to the Welsh Government.

Key Questions for Discussion with Lift participants

1. We'd like to find out a little about yourself and how you came to be supported by the Lift Programme:
 - a. Specifically, how did you become aware of the programme?
 - b. Roughly when did you first engage with the programme?
2. When you first started engaging with the Lift Programme, what were you hoping to get out of it?
3. Can you provide an overview of the type of support and advice you've received?
 - a. From your mentor/broker (**Interviewer note:** reference names of Lift employees if required to help participant)
 - b. Through the opportunities you've participated in

4. What is your current situation? (tick all that apply)

- a. Working full-time
- b. Working part-time
- c. Self-employed
- d. In training/education
- e. Volunteering
- f. Work experience
- g. Unemployed Looking for work
- h. Unemployed – long-term sick
- i. Stay at home parent
- j. Other

5. On a scale of 0-10 could you tell us how near or far did you personally feel you were from being able to find a job before you began receiving support through the Lift Programme?

(0 nowhere near and 10 work ready)

a. Thinking back to when you first engaged with the Lift Programme, how confident did you feel:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident
Finding employment				
Holding down that employment				

6. On a scale of 0-10 could you tell us how near or far do you personally feel you are from being able to find a job before you began receiving support through the Lift Programme?

(0 nowhere near and 10 work ready)

a. Having received support through the Lift Programme, how confident do you now feel with regards to:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident
Finding employment				
Holding down that employment				

7. (Only ask of those who are not employed) What do you still need to do to get to that stage (of having a job and holding it down)?

a. Are there any specific barriers that you feel you need to overcome to get to that stage?

8. (Only ask of those who are not employed) What difference would having a job make to your life?

a. And to the lives of those close to you?

9. What do you feel are the main benefits to you from your participation in the Lift Programme?

10. Has participation in the Lift Programme changed how you feel about education or training in any way (yes/no)

a. (If yes) – in what ways

b. (If no) – please explain why

11. Has participation in the Lift Programme changed how you feel about gaining employment?

- a. (If yes) – in what ways
- b. (If no) – please explain why

12. Do you think your job prospects are better now/since your enrolment in Lift?

- a. Is that due to the support that you've received?

13. Is there any type of support that you need that is not available through Lift?

14. Thinking back to the support you have received from the programme so far, which aspect have you found the most helpful with regards to securing employment?

15. Can you recall receiving any support to help you access employment in the past?

Yes/No/Don't know

15b. (If yes) Can you recall the names of the companies that provided this support?

15c. (If yes at 15) Could you tell us how the Lift Programme compares with the other programmes?

A lot better than other programmes	Somewhat better than other programmes	About the same as other programmes	Somewhat worse than other programmes	A lot worse than other programmes
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15d. Could you please tell us why?

15e. Open box for any additional comments for Q15

16. Could you please tell us whether you:

Live alone (skip to next)	
Live with parents (skip to b)	
Live with a partner or as part of a family	
Other, please specify	

- a. Does your household include anyone, excluding yourself, over the age of 16?
- b. Is anyone else in your household receiving support from the Lift Programme?

Longitudinal Element: Telephone interviews only

The following questions are a list of statements about how you respond to a range of situations. Please can you tell me how far you agree with each item using the following scale:

1 = Not at all true 2 = Hardly true 3 = moderately true 4 = exactly true

All 20 questions will be administered randomly

General Self-efficacy Scale:

1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.
2. If someone opposes me, I can find a way of getting what I want.
3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.
8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.
9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.
10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way.

Self-efficacy for Learning Scale:

11. I find learning new skills interesting.
12. When I see that I need to, I can develop new skills.
13. I get a lot of out of learning.
14. I find it straight forward to attend a training course.
15. I find I remember the things we cover in training.

Attitudes towards Employment:

16. I could get a job if I wanted one.
17. Work can be rewarding.
18. There is a job out there for me.
19. If I can't get one job, I will get another one.
20. I can achieve my goals around work.

ONS Wellbeing Questions:

21. The following questions are about your current feelings. Please answer each on a 0-10 scale, where 0 is not satisfied at all and 10 is completely satisfied:

- a. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- b. Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do are worthwhile?
- c. Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
- d. Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

Interviews with Organisations involved in the Provision of Opportunities to Lift Participants

Background

23. Could you briefly outline what your organisation does and what your role is within the organisation?

Awareness

24. Can you recall how you become aware of the programme (and from whom)?

25. For what reasons did you decide to become involved in the Lift Programme?

Nature of Involvement

26. What types of opportunities have you offered to Lift Participants? (Please provide the approximate number if you have offered multiple types of opportunity)

27. How were Lift participants then recruited to those opportunities? (Did you apply some form of selection process for example?)

28. Are the opportunities that Lift participants have engaged in:

- a. "New" (additional) opportunities created in response to the Lift Programme
- b. Pre-existing opportunities which may have gone out to open market that have instead been targeted at Lift participants
- c. A mixture of the above (if so roughly what percentage are new)

29. Prior to Lift participants engaging with opportunities, what contact (if any) did you have with the Lift Mentor/Broker?

- a. How useful was this?
- b. Could the nature of engagement with the Broker/Mentor be improved at all?

Experience of Lift Participants

30. What type of experience have you had with the Lift Participants?
- Have participants regularly attended all required meetings?
 - How has their attitude been?
 - How have they performed in opportunities provided compared to those recruited through other means?

Impact of the Lift Programme

31. What, in your view, are the typical effects you've noticed on participants as a result of their engagement in the opportunities your organisation has provided?
32. Would you recommend participation in the Lift Programme to other organisations like yours?
- Why do you say that?
33. Prior to becoming involved with the Lift Programme did you typically recruit individuals:
- From the Communities First area (yes/no)
 - Who have been out of work in excess of six months (yes/no)
34. (If no to either of the above) For what reasons (if any) did you not recruit/engage individuals with this background?
35. Has your experience of the Lift Programme led to any changes in practice/approaches to recruitment/engagement? If yes, what and why?
36. Has your participation in the Lift Programme had any other impact (positive or negative) on your organisation?

Reflections

37. What elements of the Lift model do you consider as critical to its success when supporting this group of individuals? Why do you think this?
38. Are there any elements of the Lift model that could be improved?
- What are these and in what way can they be improved upon?
39. Do you have anything to add that we haven't touched on, or would you like to raise an issue that we have not discussed?

Programme Management Consultations – Discussion Guide

Programme Delivery

1. How do you feel that the programme is progressing?
2. How do you think the programme is currently performing against profiled targets and spend?
 - a. Have any patterns or trends emerged over the last six months?
 - b. Are there any areas of concern?
 - c. If so what are these?
 - d. What is being/could be done to address them?
3. Are there any further strategic or operational risks that you think could prevent the programme from being successful?
4. There has been some variance in performance across the delivery areas of Lift, what variances are you aware of?
 - a. Do you have thoughts on what is influencing this/these variance/s?
5. How successful do you think the provision of opportunities from Welsh Government departments, NHS Wales and the RSLs has been? Have some areas benefitted more than others? (If so why?)

Programme Alignment and Integration

6. Since the Lift Programme started a number of other initiatives have emerged; how well do you think the Lift Programme has aligned with these other activities? Please explain your answer
7. To what extent have Lift teams integrated with Communities First Cluster teams?
 - a. What advantages have you identified as a result of integration?
 - b. What disadvantages have you identified as a result of integration?

Reflections:

8. In your opinion, reflecting on delivery to date, what are the strengths of the Lift model?
 - a. In what ways, if at all, do you feel it is effective in supporting workless households?
9. Reflecting on performance to date, what, if any, are the weaknesses in the Programme's design?
 - a. How do you think these could be mitigated or addressed?

Conclusions:

10. Do you have anything to add, or would you like to raise an issue that we have not discussed?