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European Structural Funds Indicators Study – European Social Fund Report



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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
CQFW	Credit and Qualifications Framework
ESF	European Social Fund
EW	East Wales
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
NEET	Not in Employment, Education, or Training
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
ReAct	Redundancy Action Scheme
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
S.O.	Specific Objective
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
WCVA	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
WEFO	Welsh European Funding Office
WWV	West Wales and the Valleys

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Wavehill was appointed by the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) to undertake a study of the progress made against key Welsh European Programme indicators and identify reasons behind any indicators which are currently behind target or at risk of not meeting targets by the conclusion of the programme.
- 1.2 The indicators in scope for the review included indicators across five programmes:
- East Wales European Regional Development Fund 2014-20
 - West Wales and the Valleys European Regional Development Fund 2014-20
 - East Wales European Social Fund 2014-20
 - West Wales and the Valleys European Social Fund 2014-20
 - Ireland-Wales European Territorial Co-operation Programme 2014-20.
- 1.3 The study consisted of the following main tasks:
- Desk based analysis of background documents, including operational programmes and rationale documents setting out how original indicator targets were quantified
 - Desk based analysis of spend, indicator targets, commitments to date against these targets and achievement against indicator profiles. This work reviewed achievement to date, as well as achievement up to March 2020 – in order to allow analysis of changing trends in indicator achievement since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Interviews with stakeholders involved in management and administration of the programme, policy leads within Welsh Government and project delivery leads, to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the performance of the indicators in scope for this study
 - Additional contextual analysis to draw out wider evidence surrounding reasons for variance against performance indicators under the programme
 - Synthesising findings, sharing and testing these findings with delivery partners in WEFO and production of reports.

1.4 This report covers the findings relating to the two European Social Fund Programmes.

Content of the Report

1.5 The remainder of the report consists of the following:

- Section 2 sets out the methodology used in the study
- Sections 3 to 13 set out the findings of the analysis across the 11 Specific Objectives of the ESF programmes within scope for this study
- Section 14 provides a series of conclusions from the study.

2. Methodology

2.1 The sections below provide a high-level overview of the main quantitative and qualitative fieldwork methodologies used to gather evidence that has been synthesised to draw out the findings presented in this study. In addition, research tools are included in Annex A.

Desk based analysis of background documents

2.2 The review of background documents for the study primarily included a review of:

- East Wales European Social Fund 2014-20 Operational Programme
- West Wales and the Valleys European Social Fund 2014-20 Operational Programme
- Target Setting Methodology papers for each programme
- Annual Implementation Reports for each programme
- Indicator Definitions papers for each programme Priority Axis.

Desk based analysis of spend, indicator targets, commitments and achievements

2.3 This was undertaken at the outset of the programme using data up to the end of June 2021, then updated again in early 2022 for data up to the end of December 2021.

2.4 The analysis reviewed progress against the indicators in scope (which focused on those at risk of not meeting targets), as well as wider indicators within each Specific Objective, to help contextual understanding of achievements. It also reviewed commitments and achievements against targets/profiles up to March 2020, in order to allow for analysis of changing trends in indicator achievement since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interviews with stakeholders

2.5 This included interviews with stakeholders involved in management and administration of the programme, policy leads within Welsh Government and project delivery leads, to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the performance of the indicators in scope for this study. Consultees were provided by client leads within the Welsh European Funding Office and selected to provide a

range of perspectives across each Specific Objective area of the programmes (only those within which indicators in-scope for the study sat). This was designed to ensure insights gained from those involved in policy, programme management and project delivery.

- 2.6 A full set of consultees and topic guides used in the fieldwork is included in Annex A.

Additional contextual analysis

- 2.7 Where relevant, additional contextual analysis was undertaken with a view to test and verify key findings emerging from the fieldwork, which would help to explain performance of the indicators in scope for the study. This included:
- Analysis of secondary data sources, such as through the Office for National Statistics
 - Further review of project level evaluation evidence
 - Review of wider academic or other literature around relevant socio-economic trends.

3. Findings from ESF Specific Objective 1.1 – Helping People into Work (WWV only)

Overview of Specific Objective

- 3.1 The aim for Specific Objective 1.1, that applies only to West Wales and the Valleys (WWV) as set out in the ESF Operational Programmes was ‘To increase the employability of those closest to the labour market at most risk of poverty’.
- 3.2 Example activities for this specific objective included the following:
- Actions to support those with no or low skills or work limiting health conditions to access sustainable employment, including job search and alignment of existing skills and competencies with available work opportunities.
 - Actions to support those with no or low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability, and those impacted by redundancy, to update or improve their skills and qualifications.
 - Activities which provide access to broader and more sustainable employment opportunities by tackling work limiting health conditions or disabilities as a barrier to sustainable employment.
 - Actions to support individuals impacted by redundancy to diversify employment options and to access sustainable employment opportunities particularly in emerging areas of economic growth.
 - Targeted action to address the wider associated causes of the low pay / no pay cycle amongst the target group such as debt and finance management or care and childcare responsibilities.

Table 3.1: Output and Outcome Indicators for SO1.1

Outputs	Outcomes
Short term unemployed with no/low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability	Short term unemployed participants with low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability in employment upon leaving
Individuals impacted by redundancy	Short term unemployed participants with low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability gaining a qualification upon leaving
Operations integrating sustainable development into awareness raising, education and training programmes	Individuals impacted by redundancy in employment upon leaving
	Individuals impacted by redundancy gaining a qualification upon leaving

Note: Highlighted cells used to show the indicators in scope for this study

Target Setting Approach

- 3.3 The targets under this Specific Objective are primarily based on the following 2007-2013 projects:
- Wellbeing Through Work
 - COASTAL
 - South West Workways
 - ReAct
 - Life Skills
 - The Peer Mentoring Programme.
- 3.4 These selected projects were evaluated to include appropriate representation of the target group under the Specific Objective and were used as evidence to inform a policy-based approach to target the number of short term unemployed and those individuals at risk of redundancy.
- 3.5 In the case of the ‘short term unemployed with no/low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability’, the baseline reflects the past achievement of the specific target groups across these operations.
- 3.6 Outcomes for this group are generally lower than that of the general short term unemployed cohort. The target therefore has been based on the aspiration to increase outcomes for the target group to at least that of the general cohort.

- 3.7 In the case of ‘individuals at risk of redundancy’, outcomes for these individuals have been based on the 2007-13 ReAct operations with aspirational targets set to reflect the opportunities for increased outcomes resulting from improvements in the labour market environment.
- 3.8 Targets for the result indicators were based on a combination of using conversion rates from the 2007-2013 projects and a policy-based approach to reflect the aspirations of the Programme.

Table 3.2: Progress of ESF Specific Objective 1.1 Indicators which are at Risk of not Achieving Targets

Outputs / Outcomes	West Wales and the Valleys			
	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date
Spend (£m)	30.3	131%	N/A	30%
Short term unemployed with no/low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability	5,999	120%	4,872	15%
Individuals impacted by redundancy	12,001	127%	13,659	42%
Short term unemployed participants with low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability in employment upon leaving	33% (1,980)	179%	46% (2,233)	9%
Short term unemployed participants with low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability gaining a qualification upon leaving	50% (3,000)	163%	68% (3,306)	0%
Individuals impacted by redundancy in employment upon leaving	55% (6,601)	126%	49% (6,734)	22%

Note: Outcome indicator targets agreed with the EC are based on percentages of those supported who achieve the specified outcomes. For ease of comparison in this table we have included in brackets the equivalent numbers based on target and profiled to date. The highlighted percentages in the table for committed and achieved to date relate to the numbers of outcome indicators achieved, for ease of analysis alongside performance of the output indicators.

Table 3.3: Progress of SO1.1 Indicators at Risk and Summary of Explanatory Factors

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is over-commitment against all targets in this S.O. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No issues to highlight
Output Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is substantial under-performance against profile for both the short term unemployed and individuals impacted by redundancy output indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On individuals impacted by redundancy the demand for this type of support was far lower than originally anticipated. In particular the Government furlough scheme limited redundancies arising from the impacts of COVID-19, meaning insufficient demand for this activity. Projects are now decommitting funding against this activity. On the short term unemployed output, delivery was already lagging behind profile at the point of the COVID-19 outbreak, and the impacts of the pandemic and associated lockdowns has constrained progress with this output target with some providers closing for a period of time, and additional challenges of delivering this type of support in an online format – stakeholders for example highlighted that many participants didn't finish courses when studying online, meaning they could not be counted as outputs.
Outcome Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The two outcomes for short term unemployed participants (into employment and gaining qualifications on leaving) are both substantially under-achieving against profile (less than 10% achieved vs profile). Individuals impacted by redundancy into employment upon leaving is also under-achieving (only 22% of profile achieved) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To a large extent the outcomes associated with short term unemployed (into employment and gaining qualifications) largely are lagging behind in proportion to the lag on the 'individuals supported' outputs. The additional lag on those moving into employment partly reflects the indicator definition and more challenging economic climate – with many unable to secure new employment within four weeks of completing their support. The individuals affected by redundancy into employment is lagging further behind, similarly reflecting the additional challenge of securing new employment in a more challenging economic climate within the four weeks required by this indicator.

Expected Future Performance

- 3.9 Based on performance to date it is unlikely that the output targets will be fully met for this S.O., and in turn the associated outcomes are also unlikely to be met. Going forwards there is a further risk of reduced performance as delivery staff begin to leave posts as contract end dates start to draw nearer.

Wider Evidence

Evidence on changes over recent years on numbers of redundancies

- 3.10 The table below shows that at the time the 2014-20 programme was being developed, redundancy rates in Wales were between four to five people per thousand employees, however from 2017, at the point programme activity and spend was building momentum, redundancy levels dropped substantially to as low as two people per 1000 employees and did not return to the higher levels over the remainder of programme delivery to date.

Table 3.4: Change in Redundancy Rate

Date	Redundancy rate per thousand (Wales)
Dec-Feb 2013	4.6
Dec-Feb 2014	4.6
Dec-Feb 2015	4.9
Dec-Feb 2016	6.7
Dec-Feb 2017	2.0
Dec-Feb 2018	*
Dec-Feb 2019	2.3
Dec-Feb 2020	3.5
Dec-Feb 2021	4.3
Dec-Feb 2022	3.2

Source: [RED02: Redundancies by age, industry and region - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

- 3.11 The data shows that the impact of the furlough scheme across the UK meant that these figures still did not rise substantially even during the challenging economic conditions created by the outbreak of COVID-19.

Conclusions on the Indicators at Risk

- 3.12 The key output targets offering support to those short term unemployed and individuals impacted by redundancy are unlikely to be met, part of which is down to lower than anticipated demand, and part down to interrupted delivery as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19, exacerbating a slow start to delivery pre-COVID.
- 3.13 These indicators are not performance framework targets, but nevertheless the lower-than-expected activity will lead to underspend and under-achievement against targets. It would be sensible to decommit funding from the main project under this S.O. and proportionately reduce targets, and then redirect that funding to other parts of the programme where it could be utilised within the remaining delivery period.

4. Findings from ESF Specific Objective 1.2 Inclusion and Engagement in Labour Market (SO1.1 for EW)

Overview of Specific Objective

- 4.1 The aim for Specific Objective 1.2 as set out in the ESF Operational Programmes was 'To increase the employability of Economically Inactive and Long-Term Unemployed people aged 25 and over, who have complex barriers to employment'.
- 4.2 Example activities for this specific objective included the following:
- Activities, including the development of innovative solutions, to address and overcome the complex barriers faced by the target group in accessing sustainable employment and improving employability including for example, through the provision of mentor support.
 - Actions to address barriers such as care or childcare including innovative actions linked to improving the availability of affordable, high quality, childcare.
 - Actions to support the target groups to access sustainable employment opportunities, particularly in areas of economic and employment growth, including basic job search, CV writing and interview skills.
 - Actions to enhance employability including supporting access to work experience or work focused volunteering as a pathway to employment or self-employment where appropriate.
 - Actions which update and enhance skills levels, including essential skills, through gaining qualifications or work relevant certification.
 - Support for the Economically Inactive target group to develop self-confidence and perception of work as a meaningful and realistic option.
 - Targeted actions, where appropriate, to address other associated barriers to sustainable employment amongst the target group such as prolonged periods of worklessness, ICT, transport and finance and debt management.

Table 4.2: Output and Outcome Indicators for SO1.2

Outputs	Outcomes
Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment	Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment entering employment including self-employment upon leaving
Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment	Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving
Operations integrating sustainable development into awareness raising, education and training programmes	Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment entering employment including self-employment upon leaving Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving
	Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment engaged in job search upon leaving
	Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity
	Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity

Note: Highlighted cells used to show the indicators in scope for this study

- 4.3 The Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment output target is a performance framework target for the ESF programme in both regions.

Target Setting Approach

- 4.4 The targets under this Specific Objective are primarily based on the following 2007-2013 projects:
- Wellbeing Through Work
 - COASTAL
 - South West Workways
 - Life Skills
 - The Peer Mentoring Programme.
- 4.5 These selected projects were evaluated to include appropriate representation of the target group under the Specific Objective. Through this approach the output targets for ‘economically inactive’ and ‘long-term unemployed’ participants were set.
- 4.6 Targets for the result indicators were based on a combination of using conversion rates from the 2007-2013 projects and a policy-based approach to reflect the aspirations of the Programme.
- 4.7 As with SO1.1 above, targets have been set with the aspiration of supporting the harder to reach to achieve similar or higher success as those within the general cohort of the economically inactive or long-term unemployed group.

Table 4.2: Progress of ESF Specific Objective 1.2 Indicators which are at Risk of not Achieving Targets

Outputs / Outcomes	West Wales and the Valleys				East Wales			
	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date
Spend (£m)	96	115%	N/A	78%	22.3	104%	N/A	75%
Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment	36,000	133%	42,614	63%	12,700	136%	14,585	54%
Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment engaged in job search upon leaving	25% (9,000)	51%	9% (4,019)	58%	25% (3,175)	74%	12% (1,726)	43%
Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving	50% (18,000)	85%	31% (13,222)	65%	50% (6,350)	74%	23% (3,283)	64%
Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity	54% (19,440)	46%	18% (7,857)	54%	54% (6,858)	38%	14% (2,079)	50%
Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving	50% (5,400)	116%	26% (5,249)	108%	50% (1,900)	89%	21% (1,376)	114%
Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity	54% (5,832)	70%	17% (3,402)	77%	53% (2,014)	61%	16% (1,021)	64%

Note: Outcome indicator targets agreed with the EC are based on percentages of those supported who achieve the specified outcomes. For ease of comparison in this table we have included in brackets the equivalent numbers based on target and profiled to date. The highlighted percentages in the table for committed and achieved to date relate to the numbers of outcome indicators achieved, for ease of analysis alongside performance of the output indicators

Table 4.3: Progress of SO1.2 Indicators at Risk and Summary of Explanatory Factors

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The economically inactive output is over-committed in both regions. The three outcomes associated with support for economically inactive individuals (in job search, gaining qualifications, and completing work experience) are all substantially under-committed in both regions. The gaining qualifications outcome associated with long term unemployed is over-committed in WWV and slightly under-committed (89% of target committed) in EW The completing work experience outcome associated with long term unemployed is substantially under-committed in both regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No issues with outputs committed. Outcomes covered here are all under-committed, but this is counter-balanced by over commitment against targets associated with economically inactive and long term unemployed individuals supported into employment. The 'into employment' outcome is identified by stakeholders as the highest priority outcome for delivery partners and for beneficiaries.
Output Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The economically inactive output is under-achieving against profile to date in both regions. Although there is quite significant under achievement against profile (63% achieved in WWV and 54% in EW), these are against targets that were over-committed vs the original target. Hence achievement against the full programme target is currently 75% in WWV and 62% in EW. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 (in March 2020), achievement against profile targets in both regions was over 80% and has since dropped. Stakeholders identified that having to move to online delivery as a result of COVID-19 related lockdowns made achievement of outputs more challenging than face to face delivery, with individuals less engaged and weak IT skills or access to IT equipment creating additional barriers.

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Outcome Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The outcomes associated with economically inactive individuals are all substantially under-achieving against profile targets to date in both regions. The long term unemployed gaining a qualification outcome is currently over-achieving against profile to date in both regions. The long term unemployed completing work experience outcome is substantially under-achieving against profile to date in both regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The outcomes associated with economically inactive individuals are largely tracking at a similar level of under-achievement to the numbers of outputs achieved, so is mainly explained by the under achievement of the number of individuals assisted. The long term unemployed completing work experience outcome is lagging further behind than output numbers. This has worsened since the outbreak of COVID-19 and stakeholders highlighted this is largely due to the increased difficulty of establishing work placements or volunteering opportunities during COVID-19 due to lack of appropriate locations and the need for risk assessments by host organisations.

Expected Future Performance

- 4.8 Given progress to date it is anticipated that the economically inactive output target will either meet or be within an acceptable margin of the overall programme target by the end of the programme. There is higher confidence of this in WWV where 75% has already been achieved. In EW 62% of the target has already been achieved but is still expected to increase to within tolerance levels¹ of achievement against target.
- 4.9 The wider outcome targets are unlikely to be fully met by the end of the programme (other than the long term unemployed gaining a qualification outcome). These however are not performance framework targets.

Wider Evidence

Impacts of COVID-19 on volunteering

- 4.10 An inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on the voluntary sector by WCVA² noted that, despite seeing a surge in overall volunteering during the pandemic, many ongoing services had to be reduced or stopped in the short term whilst resource was redirected towards COVID-19, and organisations adapted to deliver activities digitally and responded to pressures around safeguarding and PPE. Some volunteering opportunities that were available pre-COVID-19 ceased altogether, due to factors such as self-isolation and restrictions limiting face-to-face contact. The report acknowledged that volunteers would not all return immediately when restrictions were lifted and that there may be long-term a shortfall, with organisations needing to recruit again.

Additional barriers to providing employability support virtually compared with face-to-face

- 4.11 A recent (2022) evaluation of the Working Wales service³ found that moving to the delivery of all consultations via telephone or video presented a number of challenges once the initial GDPR and confidentiality issues had been resolved. The preference of the team was to undertake consultations with customers via video rather than telephone, as video allows an individual's body language to be

¹ [Tolerance levels for achievement of performance framework targets are assumed to be at least 85% of the target being achieved by the end of the programme, in line with European Commission guidance.](#)

² WCVA (2020)

³ Griffiths et al (2020)

assessed during discussions. The number of individuals who chose to meet with a careers advisor via video was, however, much lower than expected. Members of the Working Wales team suggested that this was due to concerns regarding the quality of broadband connections, the quality of IT equipment, limited experience in communicating via video leading to nervousness, and concerns surrounding ‘appearing on camera’.

Conclusions on the Indicators at Risk

- 4.12 The key indicator to be closely monitored is Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment – which is a performance framework target in both regions. Although expected to be achieved, at least within tolerance levels of the programme target, this is more assured in WWV but less so in EW at this stage. Progress will continue to require close management over the remainder of the programme period, and any indication that the indicator will not reach within tolerance levels of the indicator target would trigger the need to consider renegotiation on this target with the European Commission.
- 4.13 The other outcomes analysed under this S.O. are unlikely to hit targets by the end of the programme (other than the long term unemployed gaining a qualification outcome) and may fall short even of the tolerance levels against these targets. To a large part this reflects the programme, delivery partners and beneficiaries placing a higher priority on the ‘into employment’ outcomes, where over achievement against targets is anticipated. In some cases it also reflects additional challenges of delivery following the outbreak of COVID-19 (particularly for outcomes relating to work experience and volunteering). For these outcomes it would be helpful to work with project deliverers to seek to ensure achievement against programme commitments is achieved, however the under-achievement against targets could reasonably be considered to be counter balanced by over-achievement against the ‘into employment’ outcomes.

5. Findings from ESF Specific Objective 1.3 – Helping People Stay in Work (WWV only)

Overview of Specific Objective

- 5.1 The aim for Specific Objective 1.3 as set out in the ESF Operational Programmes was ‘To reduce underemployment or absence rates for employed individuals and safeguard and increase the labour market participation of those with work limiting health conditions and/or other barriers to sustainable engagement with the labour market’.
- 5.2 Example activities for this specific objective included the following:
- Activities which help people (employed and self-employed) in the early stages of sickness absence to return to, and remain in, work to prevent poverty through loss of employment
 - Innovative activities which work with employed participants to help address barriers to mobility in the labour market (not including skills) and causes of underemployment such as ill health, caring or childcare responsibilities, transport barriers and substance and alcohol misuse
 - Activities with employers to support workforce development and to promote flexible working arrangements
 - Activities with employers to address health related issues within the workforce and to develop, or improve, appropriate workplace or occupational health programmes, adopting collaborative approaches in the delivery of occupational health services.

Table 5.3: Output and Outcome Indicators for SO1.3

Outputs	Outcomes
Participants Employed including self-employed with work-limiting health condition or disability	Supported enterprises having adopted or improved equality and diversity strategies and monitoring systems
Underemployed participants with barriers to full employment	Employed including self-employed participants with work limiting health condition or disability returning to work after a period of absence

Outputs	Outcomes
Number of micro small and medium-sized enterprises supported	Employed including self Employed Participants with Work limiting health condition or disability with an improved labour market situation upon leaving
Workplace health programmes	Underemployed participants with an improved labour market situation upon leaving such as increased hours permanent contract
Operations integrating sustainable development into awareness raising, education and training programmes	

Note: Highlighted cells used to show the indicators in scope for this study

Target Setting Approach

- 5.3 The targets under this Specific Objective are primarily based on the following 2007-2013 projects:
- Wellbeing Through Work
 - COASTAL
 - The Peer Mentoring Programme.
- 5.4 These selected projects were evaluated to include an appropriate representation of the target group under the Specific Objective. Through this approach, the output targets were set for each of the two ‘employed, including self-employed - with Work-limiting health condition or disability’ indicators, ‘Number of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises supported’ and ‘Workplace health programmes.’
- 5.5 For the each of the ‘underemployed participants with barriers to full employment’ targets comparable data was used with the ‘employed, including self-employed, with work-limiting health conditions.’
- 5.6 The target for the ‘Supported enterprises having adopted, or improved equality and diversity strategies and monitoring systems’ is based on targets from the 2007-2013 ESF Programme.
- 5.7 A policy-based approach was used to set the target for ‘Employed, including self-employed participants with work limiting health condition or disability returning to work after a period of absence’ which is primarily based on the Fit for Work project considering the small-scale pilot nature of this activity.
- 5.8 The indicators ‘Employed, including self-employed participants with work limiting health conditions or disability with an improved labour market situation upon leaving’

and ‘Underemployed participants with an improved labour market situation upon leaving’ introduce a new targeting approach to the ESF programmes, focus on specific demographic groups within the employed workforce and articulate a specific desired result for these groups.

- 5.9 Such target measures have not previously been in place within the ESF programmes, and comparable national data is not available due to the high degree of specificity within the demographic targeting. A policy-based approach was therefore used to set the targets for these indicators, reflecting the commitment within the programmes to achieve meaningful benefit for these target groups while acknowledging the complexities of interventions within this area.

Table 5.2: Progress of ESF Specific Objective 1.3 Indicators which are at Risk of not Achieving Targets

Outputs / Outcomes	West Wales and the Valleys			
	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date
Spend (£m)	23.6	96%	N/A	51%
Number of micro small and medium-sized enterprises supported	2,000	107%	1,271	64%
Workplace health programmes	300	266%	463	24%
Employed including self-employed participants with work limiting health condition or disability returning to work after a period of absence	50% (2,000)	217%	29% (2,712)	43%
Employed including self Employed Participants with Work limiting health condition or disability with an improved labour market situation upon leaving	50% (2,000)	8%	1% (101)	53%

Note: Outcome indicator targets agreed with the EC are based on percentages of those supported who achieve the specified outcomes. For ease of comparison in this table we have included in brackets the equivalent numbers based on target and profiled to date. The highlighted percentages in the table for committed and achieved to date relate to the numbers of outcome indicators achieved, for ease of analysis alongside performance of the output indicators

Table 5.3: Progress of SO1.3 Indicators at Risk and Summary of Explanatory Factors

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most indicators are over-committed, the only exception being the individuals with a limiting health condition or disability with an improved labour market situation upon leaving where only eight per cent of target committed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individuals with a limiting health condition or disability with an improved labour market situation upon leaving indicator is primarily under-committed due to stakeholder believing this to be an unsuitable indicator. In particular it was felt that a large proportion of those individuals engaging with activities supported under this S.O. had mental health challenges and weren't looking for more hours or promotion which would constitute an improved market position. The activities supported were typically therefore not seeking this type of outcome for beneficiaries.
Output Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of micro, small and medium sized enterprises supported is substantially below the output profile to date (64 per cent of profile achieved) Workplace health programmes also substantially below profile target (only 24 per cent of target achieved). Note, however that the wider target of number of employed participants supported has already exceeded targets (hence more people have been supported, just in fewer businesses than was anticipated) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020), the number of enterprises supported output had achieved 98% against its profile, however this has reduced since that point. Stakeholders highlight the additional challenges of supporting businesses under this S.O. as businesses adjusted to new home-working arrangements and staff were furloughed, meaning less time available to engage with programme activities. Workplace health programmes were already under-achieving against profile at the point of the pandemic outbreak, but for the same reasons as those above, engagement with businesses to implement workplace health programmes has been more challenging since the COVID-19 outbreak, constraining the ability of projects to catch-up progress against this target.
Outcome Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement is substantially below target profile at this stage for both outcome indicators (those returning to work after absence and those with an improved labour market position) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The outcome indicator achievement levels against profile largely mirror those for output achievement against profile, so the lag in outcomes primarily reflects the points above about lag in delivering workplace health programmes and supporting SMEs. The return-to-work outcome indicator has been particularly challenging due to the definition that it can only be applied to those who have had a period of four weeks or more of continuous absence prior to receiving support. In many cases where individuals needed support, they had not been absent for a continuous period of this

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
		length, and therefore many of those supported, could not be counted against this outcome indicator. As noted below in the wider evidence section, the support often helped to address issues of worker presenteeism as well as absenteeism.

Expected Future Performance

- 5.10 At present it appears unlikely that either output covered here will be fully achieved by the end of the programme (albeit number of employed participants supported has exceeded targets).
- 5.11 It is possible that the returning to work outcome could reach a point where it is within tolerance levels of the target by the end of the programme. The improved labour market situation outcome is not expected to increase significantly from its low level of achievement to date.

Wider Evidence

Impacts of COVID-19 on SME ability to engage with non-core activities

- 5.12 The social and trading restrictions introduced in March 2020 impacted on UK SMEs in a number of ways, resulting in businesses having to take measures accordingly. According to the Longitudinal Small Business Survey, 31% of SME employers reported that their business had closed completely (temporarily) during the lockdown restrictions, with 47% reporting that there had been a reduction in operations⁴.
- 5.13 SMEs undertook a number of other measures in response to the pandemic. Around 65% of SME employers furloughed staff, 49 per cent reduced staff working hours and 37% provided facilities for remote working. Other measures included asking staff to take on additional tasks (21 per cent), laying staff off permanently or making staff redundant (14 per cent), recruiting staff for the longer term (11 per cent), moving staff to new or different roles (11 per cent, laying staff off in the short-term without furlough (six per cent), and recruiting staff for the short-term (six per cent).

Evidence from Healthy Working Wales project evaluation

- 5.14 The project evaluation highlights that 75 per cent of the project's beneficiaries were presentees and only 25 per cent absentees, reflecting demand for the programme. This profile of beneficiaries however, affected the ability of the programme to meet targets which are defined by a period of absence of four weeks prior to support being received.

⁴ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (2021)

- 5.15 The data on beneficiaries supported also shows that around 44 per cent of all beneficiaries were seeking support for mental / emotional health/counselling, with the remainder seeking support for physical health.

Wider evidence on presenteeism vs absenteeism

- 5.16 Research on poor health in the workforce by University of Sheffield (2020)⁵ found that the presence of a chronic medical condition is more predictive of presenteeism than absenteeism. The research underlined the fact that productivity loss due to health problems can occur both through both absenteeism and on-the-job productivity loss (no reduction in hours but a reduction in output per hour). The study concluded that both developing a physical impairment or experiencing a worsening of mental health have a significant effect on the productivity of workers in the UK, and that both raise the probability of presenteeism (by seven percentage points from developing any physical impairment and by 12 percentage points from developing poor mental health).

Conclusions on the Indicators at Risk

- 5.17 While the number of workplace health programmes and number of SMEs supported is likely to fall substantially below target levels, the number of employed individuals supported has already exceeded the target level (hence there have been more beneficiaries supported but in a smaller number of businesses). The reason for having supported a smaller number of businesses than anticipated has mainly been due to a more challenging environment for working with business, as a result of disruption to businesses due to moving to remote working and furloughing staff during the post-COVID-19 period, when most of this work had been delivered.
- 5.18 The translation rate from individuals supported to those returning to work after a period of absence was expected to be one in every two supported, but to date has only been around one in seven. This is primarily due to the definition issue whereby the return-to-work outcome can only be counted if the individual had had a continuous absence of four weeks or more, which was not the case for many supported individuals.

⁵ Bryan, M.L. Bryce A.M. Roberts J. (2020), 4

- 5.19 The improved labour market outcome was viewed by most stakeholders as a new indicator that was not an effective measure – primarily due to the fact that a large proportion of the health issues addressed were mental health based and the outcomes of support was very rarely to seek for that individual to work more hours or seek a promotion, which was required by this indicator. The return-to-work outcome was a far more relevant and appropriate outcome indicator in these cases.
- 5.20 None of these indicators are performance framework indicators, and, particularly given the success in exceeding the target for number of employed individuals supported, there is a clear reasoning for why other output targets were not reached, and these do not strongly detract from the successes of activities under this S.O. The weaker translation rate from outputs to outcomes primarily reflects definition challenges for the return to work and improved labour market position outcomes. Given the stage the programme is at, it may not now be worth making changes to these indicators but working closely with delivery partners to better understand the outcomes and reframing these definitions for future programmes would be very valuable. Information from project level evaluations will be able to provide wider supporting evidence of the outcomes achieved under this S.O.

6. Findings from ESF Specific Objective 2.1 – Basic Skills

Overview of Specific Objective

- 6.1 The aim for Specific Objective 2.1 as set out in the ESF Operational Programmes was ‘To increase the skills levels, including work relevant skills, of those in the workforce with no or low skills.’
- 6.2 Example activities for this specific objective included the following:
- Actions to provide basic and essential skills provision at International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)⁶ Levels 1 (primary) and 2 (lower secondary education) for employed individuals with low skills (qualifications up to and including lower secondary education ISCED Level 2) or with no formal qualifications.
 - Actions to provide technical or job specific vocational qualifications at ISCED Levels 1 (primary) and 2 (lower secondary) for employed individuals with low skills (qualifications up to and including lower secondary education ISCED Level 2) or with no formal qualifications.
 - Provision of apprenticeships at ISCED Levels 1 and 2 for individuals in the target groups, and actions to encourage the availability and take up of apprenticeship places.
 - Developing skills at ISCED Levels 1 and 2 to break down barriers to engagement with technologies, such as digital skills, reducing social isolation and increasing access to work progression opportunities on-line.

⁶ [An international classification for organising education programmes and related qualifications by levels and fields. More detail on the standard can be found here](#)

Table 6.4: Output and Outcome Indicators for SO2.1

Outputs	Outcomes
Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education - Male	Employed including self-employed participants with up to and including a lower secondary education gaining essential skills or technical or job specific qualification at lower secondary level upon leaving – Male
Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education – Female	Employed including self-employed participants with up to and including a lower secondary education gaining essential skills or technical or job specific qualification at lower secondary level upon leaving - Female
Operations integrating sustainable development into awareness raising, education and training programmes	

Note: Highlighted cells used to show the indicators in scope for this study

- 6.3 Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education – both the male and female output targets are performance framework targets for the ESF programme in both regions.

Target Setting Approach

- 6.4 The targets for the indicators under this Specific Objective are primarily based on:
- Skills Growth Wales
 - Modern Apprenticeship World Class Skills For A Knowledge Economy
 - World Class Apprenticeships for Economic Renewal
 - Essential Skills in the Workplace RCE.
- 6.5 These selected projects were evaluated to provide an appropriate representation of the activity under the Specific Objective.
- 6.6 Targets for ‘male’/‘female’ are based on current population shares for the relevant region.
- 6.7 Targets for ‘Employed, including self-employed participants with no formal qualifications gaining essential skills or technical or job specific qualification upon leaving’ and ‘Employed, including self-employed participants with up to and including a lower secondary education gaining an essential skill or technical or job specific qualification at lower secondary level upon leaving’ were based on evidence from the 2012 ESF Leavers Survey.

Table 6.2: Progress of ESF Specific Objective 2.1 Indicators which are at Risk of not Achieving Targets

Outputs / Outcomes	West Wales and the Valleys				East Wales			
	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date
Spend (£m)	125.3	72%	N/A	44%	30.4	69%	N/A	45%
Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education - Male	24,291	138%	25,543	78%	9,309	152%	10,236	82%
Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education - Female	28,681	87%	19,417	93%	10,816	96%	8,780	105%

Table 6.3: Progress of SO2.1 Indicators at Risk and Summary of Explanatory Factors

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitments against both male and female participants with qualifications up to and including lower secondary education is close to or exceeding target levels (the lowest being females in WWV at 87 per cent) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall close to or exceeding target levels, although balance between male and female was not quite right in setting targets. Total number of participants committed to, when summing male and female exceeds the targets in both regions.
Output Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seventy-eight per cent of profile achieved for male participants in WWV and 82 per cent in EW • Ninety-three per cent of profile achieved for female participants in WWV and 105 per cent in EW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some delays following the outbreak of COVID-19 with need to shift delivery to online, and some challenges with businesses being less able to commit staff time to training in light of more uncertain business climate. This is reflected in the fact that in most cases the achievement against profile has reduced since March 2020 (other than for females in WWV where this has increased slightly). • More generally stakeholders highlighted there had been less demand for basic skills in the workplace than originally anticipated, which may reflect the continued up-skilling amongst young people in terms of qualifications achieved.

Expected Future Performance

- 6.8 Overall, the indicators in EW have already achieved outputs to within the tolerance levels for the programme (85-90 per cent achievement against target for both males and females). This is likely to further increase so targets overall are expected to be hit or at least within an acceptable margin.
- 6.9 In WWV, the figures are further behind with 76 per cent for males, but only 63 per cent for females, against targets. While the former is likely to achieve to within tolerance levels for that indicator, the latter is at greater risk of not achieving target.

Wider Evidence

Evidence on changes in workforce numbers with no / low qualification levels

Table 6.4: Proportion of Wales Working Age Population with No or Low Qualifications

Date	% with NVQ3 only - aged 16-64	% with NVQ2 only - aged 16-64	% with NVQ1 only - aged 16-64	% with no qualifications (NVQ) - aged 16-64
Jan 2013-Dec 2013	18.5	17.5	11.7	10.6
Jan 2014-Dec 2014	18.1	17.4	11.6	10.0
Jan 2015-Dec 2015	17.7	17.4	11.4	10.5
Jan 2016-Dec 2016	17.5	17.6	10.9	9.6
Jan 2017-Dec 2017	17.7	17.8	11.2	8.7
Jan 2018-Dec 2018	18.1	17.3	10.9	8.6
Jan 2019-Dec 2019	17.5	17.2	11.2	8.5
Jan 2020-Dec 2020	18.2	16.6	10.2	7.7
Jan 2021-Dec 2021	18.2	16.0	10.4	8.2

Source: NOMIS: Annual Population Survey dataset (ONS Crown Copyright) accessed 13th May 2022

6.10 The table above shows there has been a notable change in the proportion of the workforce with no or low qualifications, in particular those with no qualifications reducing from 10.6 per cent in 2013, at the point when the programme was being developed, to just 8.2 per cent in 2021. These reductions reinforce the points above that there has been a falling demand for support from workers with no or low qualifications, as the proportion of the workforce to which this applies has fallen.

Conclusions on the Indicators at Risk

- 6.11 Overall the indicators for EW are performing well and are likely to reach or come close to achievement of targets. In WWV there is a greater threat that the targets won't be reached, especially for female participants, where targets were notably higher than for males.
- 6.12 These indicators are all performance framework indicators in both regions, and as such, the WWV female participants indicator in particular might benefit from renegotiation, which could be a case of redistributing the target between males and females and/or seeking to negotiate one or both figures down with the European Commission, on the basis of weaker demand for this support and more challenging delivery climate.

7. Findings from ESF Specific Objective 2.2 – Adaptability and Progression

Overview of Specific Objective

- 7.1 The aim for Specific Objective 2.2 as set out in the ESF Operational Programmes was ‘To increase the number of people in the workforce with technical and job specific skills at an intermediate and higher level’.
- 7.2 Example activities for this specific objective included the following:
- Provision of apprenticeships and higher-level apprenticeships at ISCED⁷ Level 3 (upper secondary education) or above for individuals in the target groups, and actions to encourage the availability and take up of apprenticeship and higher-level apprenticeship places.
 - Actions to provide intermediate and higher level technical and job specific vocational qualifications at ISCED Level 3 (upper secondary) and above for employed individuals in the target groups to upskill the workforce and to address skills gaps, shortages, and mismatches.
 - Targeted interventions to stimulate demand for skills and workforce development and to provide the skills needed at ISCED Level 3 (upper secondary education) and above to support organisational growth and adaptability to economic and labour market challenges, including High Performance Working.⁸
- 7.3 It is worth noting that there were some modifications made to the indicators “Employed participants with no formal qualifications” with “Employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education” in 2018.

⁷ An international classification for organising education programmes and related qualifications by levels and fields. More detail on the standard can be found here [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_\(ISCED\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_(ISCED))

⁸ High Performance Working is an approach to managing organisations and using a wide range of business practices that aims to stimulate more effective employee involvement and commitment to achieve high levels of performance. A report on its implementation drawing on findings from the Employers Skills Survey conducted by the UK Government can be found [here](#)

- 7.4 This was due to incorrect assumptions about the definition of participants with no qualifications. In Wales there are very few participants with no qualifications as defined by Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQFW)⁹; reporting of ‘no qualifications’ is generally reported domestically as those with lower than CQFW Level 2 (self-reported). The demand for training for participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education” is also lower than expected but conversely the demand for intermediate training is higher than expected so the targets have been realigned to reflect this. The revised targets have been based on aggregated forecasts provided by operations adjusted to ensure that the overall number of people trained has remained the constant.

Table 7.5: Output and Outcome Indicators for SO2.2

Outputs	Outcomes
Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) - Male	Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) gaining a technical or job specific vocational qualification upon leaving at upper secondary (CQFW 3) level or above - Male
Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) - Female	Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) gaining a technical or job specific vocational qualification upon leaving at upper secondary (CQFW 3) level or above - Female
Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above - Male	Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above gaining a technical or job specific vocational qualification at or above upper secondary (CQFW 3) level upon leaving - Male
Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above – Female	Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above gaining a technical or job specific vocational qualification at or above upper secondary (CQFW 3) level upon leaving - Female
Operations integrating sustainable development into awareness raising, education and training programmes	

Note: Highlighted cells used to show the indicators in scope for this study

⁹ [The CQFW operates as a national qualifications framework for learners in Wales of all ages and abilities covering all learning in higher education, the provision of regulated qualification including vocational and general qualifications such as HNC/HNDs, GCSEs and A-Levels, and Lifelong Learning. Further detail on the framework can be viewed here](#)

7.5 Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) – both male and female output targets are performance framework targets for the ESF programme in both regions.

Target Setting Approach

7.6 The targets for the indicators under this Specific Objective are primarily based on:

- Enhancing Leadership and Management Skills
- LEAD
- Modern Apprenticeship World Class Skills For A Knowledge Economy
- World Class Apprenticeships for Economic Renewal.

7.7 These selected projects were evaluated to provide an appropriate representation of the activity under the Specific Objective.

7.8 Targets for ‘male’/‘female’ are based on current population shares for the relevant region.

7.9 A policy-based approach was used to set the targets for the groups: ‘with lower secondary education’ and ‘with upper secondary (ISCED 3) education or above’. This was based on the emphasis within the design of the programme on increasing the number of individuals in the employed workforce who are qualified to an intermediate level or higher, as well as updating and upgrading existing intermediate and higher-level skills. This was done to ensure that employers have a suitably qualified workforce to support the development of a modern knowledge-based economy.

7.10 A policy-based approach was also used to set targets for ‘Employed, including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (ISCED 2) gaining a technical or job specific vocational qualification upon leaving at upper secondary (ISCED 3) level or above’ and ‘Employed, including self-employed participants with upper secondary (ISCED 3) education or above gaining a technical or job specific vocational qualification at or above upper secondary (ISCED3) level upon leaving’. This approach was designed to reflect a genuine increase on the baselines, reflecting the emphasis within the design of the programme on the achievement of qualifications by the target group.

Table 7.2: Progress of ESF Specific Objective 2.2 Indicators which are at Risk of not Achieving Targets

Outputs / Outcomes	West Wales and the Valleys				East Wales			
	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date
Spend (£m)	84	159%	N/A	121%	20.6	174%	N/A	129%
Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) - Male	18,727	93%	12,741	81%	8,013	94%	5,655	99%
Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) - Female	21,606	89%	13,279	75%	9,669	85%	6,143	98%
Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above - Male	10,780	166%	13,644	97%	7,796	107%	6,938	103%
Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above - Female	9,814	229%	19,054	113%	8,785	126%	10,269	113%

Table 7.3: Progress of SO2.2 Indicators at Risk and Summary of Explanatory Factors

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants with lower secondary education are slightly under-committed for both males and females in both regions (all between 85 per cent to 94 per cent committed) Participants with upper secondary education or above are over-committed for both males and females in both regions. In both regions, the overall sum of commitments across all four output indicators exceeds the overall sum of target numbers for these four indicators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The demand profile was slightly different than originally anticipated, with less demand for support for those with lower secondary education and more from those with upper secondary or higher. A further factor has been a greater trend towards STEM subjects than was originally anticipated, which typically involve a more expensive unit cost for support, so fewer individuals are able to be funded.
Output Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those with lower qualifications there was under-achievement in WWV for both males and females (only 75 per cent to 81 per cent of profile target achieved to date). In EW the indicators were very close to profile targets (98-99 per cent of profile targets achieved to date) For those with higher qualifications performance was close to or exceeding profile targets for males and females in both regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main explanation highlighted by stakeholders is that there has been less demand for basic skills in the workplace than originally anticipated, which may reflect the continued up-skilling amongst young people in terms of qualifications achieved. Instead there was more demand for support than anticipated for those with upper secondary education or above.

Expected Future Performance

- 7.11 For those with upper secondary education or higher targets have mostly already been achieved (other than for males in EW, for which 92 per cent of target has been achieved to date. These targets for male and female and in both regions are expected to be met or exceeded by the end of the programme.
- 7.12 For those with lower secondary education, EW is performing slightly more strongly with males having achieved 70 per cent of target to date and females 62 per cent. The former is therefore likely to achieve to within the tolerance levels of the target, while the latter is a greater risk. In WWV, males has achieved just 54 per cent of the target to date, and females 46 per cent. There is a significant risk that these two indicators will not achieve to within the tolerance level of targets by the end of the programme.

Wider Evidence

Evidence on changes in workforce numbers with no/low qualification levels

- 7.13 Wider evidence on changes in workforce numbers with low or no qualifications are set out in Section 0.

Conclusions on the Indicators at Risk

- 7.14 Overall the indicators for those with upper secondary education or above are performing very well and are likely to exceed target levels, in some cases substantially so.
- 7.15 The indicators for those with lower secondary education are further behind and these indicators are performance framework targets for males and females and in both regions. In EW there remains a strong possibility that achievement will be within tolerance levels of the programme target. In WWV the risk of falling short of this benchmark is much higher.
- 7.16 These indicators might therefore benefit from renegotiation with the European Commission, which could be a case of redistributing the targets between those individuals with upper and lower education levels and/or reducing targets for those with lower education on the basis of weaker demand for this support and more expensive unit costs of support than originally anticipated.

8. Findings from ESF Specific Objective 2.3 – Research and Innovation (SO2.4 in EW)

Overview of Specific Objective

- 8.1 The aim for Specific Objective 2.3 as set out in the ESF Operational Programmes was ‘To increase the number of people with graduate degrees or equivalent undertaking research and innovation activities with enterprise.’
- 8.2 Example activities for this specific objective included the following:
- Actions to deliver research and innovation qualifications at ISCED¹⁰ Levels 7 (Master’s) and 8 (Doctoral) undertaken in partnership between learning providers and enterprise and aligned to the Grand Challenge areas in ‘Science for Wales’¹¹ of “Life Sciences and Health”; “Advanced Engineering and Materials”; “Low Carbon, Energy and Environment”; and “ICT and the Digital Economy.”
 - Actions driven by the private sector in collaboration with learning providers to increase the supply of individuals with higher skills in research and innovation.

Table 8.6: Output and Outcome Indicators for SO2.3

Outputs	Outcomes
Participants with graduate degree or equivalent - Male	Participants with a graduate degree or equivalent gaining a qualification upon leaving at Masters (CQFW 7) or Doctoral (CQFW 8) level – Male
Participants with graduate degree or equivalent – Female	Participants with a graduate degree or equivalent gaining a qualification upon leaving at Masters (CQFW 7) or Doctoral (CQFW 8) level – Female
Operations integrating sustainable development into awareness raising, education and training programmes	Participants with graduate degree or equivalent in employment upon leaving - male
Number of enterprises collaborating with learning providers	Participants with graduate degree or equivalent in employment upon leaving - female

Note: Highlighted cells used to show the indicators in scope for this study

¹⁰ [An international classification for organising education programmes and related qualifications by levels and fields. More detail on the standard can be found here](#)

¹¹ (The Welsh Government (2012), Science for Wales, A strategic agenda for science and innovation in Wales).

Target Setting Approach

- 8.3 The targets for the indicators under this Specific Objective are primarily based on the UK Research Councils' guidelines on costs of provision at ISCED Level 7 (Masters) and Level 8 (Doctorate), together with data on broadly comparable activity in the 'Steel Training Research and Innovation Partnership (STRIP)' and 'Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships' projects. These selected projects were evaluated to provide an appropriate representation of the activity under the Specific Objective.
- 8.4 Targets for 'male'/'female' are based on current population shares for the relevant region.
- 8.5 The target for 'Number of enterprises collaborating with learning providers' was set at around 50 per cent of the combined 'male'/'female' targets for 'Participants with graduate degree or equivalent'. This was based on experience of similar activities within the 2007-13 programme and to reflect the targeting approach within the relevant specific objective.

Table 8.2: Progress of ESF Specific Objective 2.3 Indicators which are at Risk of not Achieving Targets

Outputs / Outcomes	West Wales and the Valleys				East Wales			
	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date
Spend (£m)	42.4	125%	N/A	85%	8.6	125%	N/A	27%
Participants with graduate degree or equivalent in employment upon leaving - male	52% (408)	77%	17% (108)	134%	52% (65)	78%	4% (5)	0%
Participants with graduate degree or equivalent in employment upon leaving - female	52% (376)	50%	1% (7)	129%	52% (65)	75%	3% (4)	0%
Participants with a graduate degree or equivalent gaining a qualification upon leaving at Masters (CQFW 7) or Doctoral (CQFW 8) level - Male	63% (494)	136%	24% (152)	114%	63% (79)	190%	18% (23)	0%
Participants with a graduate degree or equivalent gaining a qualification upon leaving at Masters (CQFW 7) or Doctoral (CQFW 8) level - Female	63% (456)	103%	27% (137)	95%	63% (79)	185%	16% (21)	0%

Note: Outcome indicator targets agreed with the EC are based on percentages of those supported who achieve the specified outcomes. For ease of comparison in this table we have included in brackets the equivalent numbers based on target and profiled to date. The highlighted percentages in the table for committed and achieved to date relate to the numbers of outcome indicators achieved, for ease of analysis alongside performance of the output indicators

Table 8.3: Progress of SO2.3 Indicators at Risk and Summary of Explanatory Factors

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants in employment upon leaving is under-committed for males and females and in both regions (only between 50 per cent to 78 per cent committed) Participants gaining a qualification upon leaving is over-committed, for both males and females and in both regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The translation rate between participant outputs and those moving into employment on completion was committed at a lower rate than originally anticipated. Based on the targets around one in two supported participants would secure the into employment outcome on completion, however based on what has been committed to by project deliverers is closer to one in three. Stakeholders suggested this partly reflects a more challenging economic climate for delivery than may have originally been anticipated, as well as the specific definition of this indicator – which requires that participants secure employment within four weeks of completion – recognising that new recruitment of staff has been more challenging since the outbreak of COVID-19.
Outcome Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In WWV, performance against all four indicators is exceeding or very close to profile target to date. In EW there has been zero per cent achievement against profile to date across all four indicators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although achieving well against profile in WWV, the proportion of targets that has been achieved to date remains relatively low across all four indicators in both regions. To a large extent this has been down to delays to higher education work as a result of COVID-19 and associated lockdowns. These have constrained access to sites, laboratories and equipment pushing back timescales for multi-year qualifications. These indicators were always likely to be back-loaded towards the end of the programme, and are even so as a result of delays Delays to achieving qualifications has then had knock on effects for securing employment

Expected Future Performance

- 8.6 The current expectation on qualification achievement is that this will catch-up, but achievement will be backloaded towards the end of the programme.
- 8.7 Regarding the securing employment outcome, the early data on translation rates from those completing qualifications to those gaining employment is positive, but numbers are still relatively low to be able to confidently predict future performance. There remains a risk that achievement will fall short of target levels for these indicators.

Conclusions on the Indicators at Risk

- 8.8 Overall, the achievement of qualifications targets for males and females in both regions will be backloaded towards the end of the programme, however, there remains confidence amongst stakeholders that these will be met, at least within the tolerance levels of targets.
- 8.9 With the into employment outcomes, based on commitment levels, these are more likely to fall short of programme targets, even if they fully achieve against their commitments. The primary reasons for this being the definition of the indicator (requiring employment to be secured within four weeks) and the more challenging economic climate for securing employment. However, it is also possible that the translation level from qualifications gained to those securing employment will be higher than anticipated which could mean these targets hit or get much closer to targets.
- 8.10 These indicators are not performance framework indicators, and at this stage there remains good confidence that the more straightforward outcome (qualifications gained) will be hit, and reasonable potential for the employment outcome indicator to achieve more than has been committed (albeit this will not be known until late on in the programme delivery period).

9. Findings from ESF Specific Objective 3.1 – Youth Unemployment

Overview of Specific Objective

- 9.1 The aim for Specific Objective 3.1 as set out in the ESF Operational Programmes was ‘To reduce the number of 16–24-year-olds who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET)’.
- 9.2 Example activities for this specific objective included the following:
- Actions to ensure that young people gain the skills, competencies and experience required to access sustainable employment, including self-employment
 - Actions to support young people to return to education or training to further develop the skills for future employment
 - Actions to support young people to access and maintain sustained employment
 - Activities with enterprises and educators to challenge traditional assumptions and stereotypes and to raise participation levels in occupations and sectors where a particular gender or recognised equality group are under-represented.

Table 9.7: Output and Outcome Indicators for SO3.1

Outputs	Outcomes
NEET Participants (16 - 24 years of age)	NEET Participants (16 - 24 years of age) gaining qualifications upon leaving - with primary or lower secondary education
Operations integrating sustainable development into awareness raising, education and training programmes	NEET Participants (16 - 24 years of age) in education/training upon leaving
	NEET Participants (16 - 24 years of age) entering employment upon leaving

Note: Highlighted cells used to show the indicators in scope for this study

- 9.3 NEET Participants (16 - 24 years of age) is a performance framework target for the ESF programme in both regions.

Target Setting Approach

- 9.4 The targets for the indicators under this Specific Objective are primarily based on the following 2007-2013 projects:

- Jobs Growth Wales
 - All Age Skillbuild for the Unemployed Inactive and NEET.
- 9.5 These two projects were considered best match for youth unemployment actions which previously have not been delivered as standalone project activity but as part of wider adult employment initiatives.
- 9.6 Targets for ‘male’/‘female’ are based on current population shares for the relevant region.
- 9.7 A policy-based approach was used to set the targets for ‘gaining qualifications upon leaving - with primary or lower secondary education’ which was based on 20 per cent of male/female NEET Participants combined) for ‘at primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary education (ISCED 2)’, recognising the low starting point for many participants.
- 9.8 The policy-based approach was also used and combined experience from the 2007-13 Programme to set the target for ‘NEET participants entering employment’ (28 per cent of male/female NEET participants combined).

Table 9.2: Progress of ESF Specific Objective 3.1 Indicators which are at Risk of not Achieving Targets

Outputs / Outcomes		West Wales and the Valleys				East Wales			
		Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date
Spend (£m)		114.9	103%	N/A	69%	31	102%	N/A	60%
NEET Participants (16 - 24 years of age)	42,700		133%	50,125	81%	21,200	133%	24,336	59%

Table 9.3: Progress of SO3.1 Indicators at Risk and Summary of Explanatory Factors

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEET participants target is over-committed in both regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No issues to highlight
Output Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In WWV, 81 per cent of profile to date has been achieved, but only 59 per cent in EW. Note though, compared to overall target level 95 per cent of overall target already achieved in WWV and 67 per cent in EW. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall the assumed unit cost of support for EW was lower than that available for WWV. EW has a target number of outputs that are half that of WWV but has less than a third of the budget for these activities as WWV. Based on achievements to date however, the unit cost of outputs in both areas has been similar, which means that EW is further behind target. Wider factors highlighted by stakeholders as impacting on delivery include the closure of certain Government and Job Centre Plus offices as well as having to move support from face-to-face to online delivery – both challenges coming as a result of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns. This point is reinforced by data showing that achievement against profile was higher in both regions pre-pandemic (March 2020).

Expected Future Performance

- 9.9 In WWV 95 per cent of targets have already been achieved and so full targets are expected to be achieved or be very close to achievement.
- 9.10 In EW, only 67 per cent of the target has been achieved to date, which leaves more of a risk that the target will not be reached, however stakeholders remain confident that the activities supported will deliver to at least within the tolerance level for this indicator by the end of the programme period.

Conclusions on the Indicators at Risk

- 9.11 NEET Participants (16 - 24 years of age) is a performance framework target for the ESF programme in both regions so is important to closely monitor progress on this indicator. However in WWV the target has almost been reached already and in EW there is strong confidence that the activities supported will at least get this indicator to within tolerance levels of achievement by the end of the programme period. This suggests no further action is needed against this indicator.

10. Findings from ESF Specific Objective 3.2 – Youth Attainment and Engagement

Overview of Specific Objective

- 10.1 The aim for Specific Objective 3.2 as set out in the ESF Operational Programmes was ‘To reduce the number of those at risk of becoming NEET, amongst 11–24-year olds’.
- 10.2 Example activities for this specific objective included the following:
- Early targeted action to combat disaffection, provide access to a broader and innovative range of learning options supporting the acquisition of both vocational and higher-level skills and prevent young people from falling out of education
 - Actions to equip young people with a range of skills that allow them to be more flexible and adaptable in a fast-changing labour market and to gain sustainable employment, encouraging linkages between career choices and longer-term labour market trends and tackling traditional gender stereotypes in employment
 - Supporting the development of practitioners to better engage with disadvantaged young people and to improve linkages with, and knowledge of, the private sector
 - Removing barriers to learning, helping create independence, and providing individual mentoring and advocacy advice to young people.

Table 10.8: Output and Outcome Indicators for SO3.2

Outputs	Outcomes
Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24)	Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11-24 years of age) gaining qualifications upon leaving - with primary (CQFW 1) or lower secondary education (CQFW 2)
Operations integrating sustainable development into awareness raising, education and training programmes	Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11-24) into education/training upon leaving
	Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24) at reduced risk of becoming NEET upon leaving

Note: Highlighted cells used to show the indicators in scope for this study

Target Setting Approach

- 10.3 The targets for the indicators under this Specific Objective relating to reducing the number of 11–24-year-olds at risk of becoming NEET are primarily based on the following 2007-2013 projects:
- Prevent 14 – 19
 - Engage
 - Potensial
 - World Class Traineeships with engagement for Young People.
- 10.4 A policy-based approach is used to set the target for those at risk of becoming NEET gaining a qualification. Reflecting the likely level of disengagement and the potential outcome of this disengagement this is set at 70 per cent of total qualifications gained by this group for the ‘at primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary education (ISCED 2)’ level.
- 10.5 No target was set for reducing risk of NEET, reflecting the novel nature of the targeting and delivery and the consequent lack of evidence upon which to base a calculation of a target value.

Table 10.2: Progress of ESF Specific Objective 3.2 Indicators which are at Risk of not Achieving Targets

Outputs / Outcomes	West Wales and the Valleys				East Wales			
	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date
Spend (£m)	63.3	123%	N/A	89%	16.7	108%	N/A	71%
Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24)	44,978	63%	23,793	81%	14,638	78%	9,342	86%
Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11-24 years of age) gaining qualifications upon leaving - with primary (CQFW 1) or lower secondary education (CQFW 2)	7% (3,148)	92%	9% (2,165)	93%	27% (3,952)	42%	14% (1,312)	63%
Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11-24) into education/training upon leaving	19% (8,546)	38%	9% (2,231)	71%	18% (2,635)	48%	8% (709)	119%
Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24) at reduced risk of becoming NEET upon leaving	-	-	41% (9,796)	67%	-	-	48% (4,463)	71%

Note: Outcome indicator targets agreed with the EC are based on percentages of those supported who achieve the specified outcomes. For ease of comparison in this table we have included in brackets the equivalent numbers based on target and profiled to date. The highlighted percentages in the table for committed and achieved to date relate to the numbers of outcome indicators achieved, for ease of analysis alongside performance of the output indicators

Table 10.3: Progress of SO3.2 Indicators at Risk and Summary of Explanatory Factors

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output targets are substantially under-committed in both regions (only 63 per cent committed in WWV and 78 per cent in EW) • Target for the 'gaining qualifications' outcome is mostly committed in WWV (92 per cent) but substantially under-committed in EW (42 per cent) • Target for 'into education/training' outcome is substantially under-committed in both regions (38 per cent in WWV and 48 per cent in EW) • No targets set for the 'reduced risk of NEET' outcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding outputs, the unit cost of support for participants was higher than originally envisaged (with more intensive support required than had been originally anticipated) and project delivery partners were unable to commit to higher targets within the available funding. This area of the programme was new to WEFO and to the European Commission, so limited benchmarks for unit costs were available at the outset. • For the gaining qualifications outcome, the conversion rate from outputs to outcomes expected in WWV is seven per cent (i.e. seven per cent, or one in 14, of those supported was expected to gain qualifications). In EW this conversion rate was 27 per cent (i.e. around one in four were expected to gain qualifications). In terms of commitments, WWV have committed to a slightly higher conversion rate (around 9 per cent). In EW, although they have committed to a higher conversion rate than WWV (around 14 per cent), this still falls far short of the originally anticipated 27 per cent conversion rate, which appears to have been over-ambitious. As above, this largely reflects that this is a new area of work for which there was limited benchmark data available at the point of target setting. • Similarly for the 'into education/training' outcome, the original targets aimed for just under one in five participants to secure this outcome, but in both regions a conversion rate of just under one in 10 was committed to by projects. As above, these targets appear to have been set at an overly ambitious level, as a result of limited benchmark data at the point of target setting.
Output Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight one per cent of profile achieved of Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24) in WWV and 86 per cent in EW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The primary reasons for under-achievement against participants supported is the lag in programme delivery caused as a result of school closures and disruption to schedules as a result of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns. Prior to the outbreak (March 2020) the achievement against profile in both regions was over 90 per cent

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Outcome Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of the outcomes across both regions are under-achieving against profile to date – with the exception of the ‘into education/training’ outcome in EW (119 per cent of profile target to date achieved) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To a large extent, the achievement of outcomes has tracked at a similar level of under-achievement to that of the outputs – similarly reflecting the lags in delivery triggered by the COVID-19 outbreak. This again is reinforced by reviewing achievement against profiles from March 2020, pre-pandemic, where achievement against almost all outcome indicators in both regions was higher than it is currently. For the gaining qualifications outcome target, stakeholders highlight that in many instances the qualifications indicators weren’t appropriate as colleges weren’t going to produce qualifications/HE due to the types of courses, being delivered, with more participants going straight to employment, which had further constrained achievement against this indicator.

Expected Future Performance

- 10.6 At present it looks likely that the programme will not achieve the Participants at Risk of becoming NEET output targets in either region, even falling below the tolerance levels of targets.
- 10.7 As a result of this it is also very likely that the other outcome targets in scope will also fall below target levels (other than for the reduced risk of becoming NEET outcome for which no target has been set).

Conclusions on the Indicators at Risk

- 10.8 Overall this S.O. was a new area of programme delivery for WEFO and the European Commission in this round of ESF funding, and targets were set based on limited benchmark information available from other programmes. While much has been learnt through delivery of this programme, it has meant that the targets originally set have proved to have been over-ambitious and are unlikely to be reached.
- 10.9 None of these indicators are performance framework targets, but it would nevertheless be valuable to capture the learning about what has been achieved and what target levels might have been more realistic to support future programme planning. This evidence may be needed in providing a wider narrative to the European Commission around delivery under this S.O. at the closure of the programme. WEFO could also consider renegotiating the targets with the Commission at this stage, based on the evidence set out above.

11. Findings from ESF Specific Objective 3.3 – STEM (WWV only)

Overview of Specific Objective

- 11.1 The aim for Specific Objective 3.3 for WWV only as set out in the ESF Operational Programmes was ‘To increase the take up of and attainment levels in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects amongst 11–19-year-olds.’
- 11.2 Example activities for this specific objective included the following:
- Actions that increase the engagement and attainment levels of young people 11–16 in STEM subjects and increase the proportion of the cohort that continue to study STEM subjects post 16
 - Actions that increase the engagement and attainment levels of girls 11–19 in STEM subjects, increasing the proportion of girls who continue to study STEM subjects post 16 and closing the participation gap between girls and boys
 - Actions that promote STEM related career paths, encouraging linkages between career choices and longer-term labour market trends and tackling traditional gender stereotypes in employment.

Table 11.9: Output and Outcome Indicators for SO3.3

Outputs	Outcomes
Young People 11 -19 years of age - Male	Young People 11-19 years of age completing training in Maths Science Engineering and Technology - Male
Young People 11 -19 years of age – Female	Young People 11-19 years of age completing training in Maths Science Engineering and Technology - Female
Operations integrating sustainable development into awareness raising, education and training programmes	11-19 years of age participants who continue to study a Maths Science Engineering and Technology subject post 16 - Male 11-19 years of age participants who continue to study a Maths Science Engineering and Technology subject post 16 - Female

Note: Highlighted cells used to show the indicators in scope for this study

Target Setting Approach

- 11.3 Under this Specific Objective, targets for '11-19-year-old participants – male' and '11-19-year-old participants – female' are primarily based on the STEM Cymru and Technocamps 2007-2013 projects.
- 11.4 The female targets reflect an ambition articulated within the programmes to address the higher levels of female disengagement with STEM subjects. The targets for those 'completing training in Maths, Science, Engineering and Technology' and those 'who continue to study a Maths, Science, Engineering and Technology subject post 16' are similarly based on the policy ambition within the programme.

Table 11.2: Progress of ESF Specific Objective 3.3 Indicators which are at Risk of not Achieving Targets

Outputs / Outcomes	West Wales and the Valleys			
	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date
Spend (£m)	9.3	155%	N/A	93%
11-19 years of age participants who continue to study a Maths Science Engineering and Technology subject post 16 - Male	45% (3,421)	24%	9% (567)	102%
11-19 years of age participants who continue to study a Maths Science Engineering and Technology subject post 16 - Female	45% (6,109)	9%	4% (308)	94%

Note: Outcome indicator targets agreed with the EC are based on percentages of those supported who achieve the specified outcomes. For ease of comparison in this table we have included in brackets the equivalent numbers based on target and profiled to date. The highlighted percentages in the table for committed and achieved to date relate to the numbers of outcome indicators achieved, for ease of analysis alongside performance of the output indicators

Table 11.3: Progress of SO3.3 Indicators at Risk and Summary of Explanatory Factors

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial under-commitment of targets for both males (24 per cent committed) and females (only nine per cent of target committed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main issue with commitments for these indicators is down to the indicator definition. While this support is available to 11–19-year-olds, this outcome can only be captured in relation to those participants within Year 11 – for which the outcome of whether they study a STEMN subject post-16 can be ascertained. As such the target of 45 per cent of participants achieving this outcome was unrealistic. In practice the conversion rate on these indicators committed to is around four per cent for female participants and eight per cent for male participants
Outcome Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One hundred and two per cent of male profile and 94 per cent of female profile achieved to date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School closures and disruption to schedules as a result of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns has affected achievement against profiles (although the profiles have since been revised, so appear to be close to profile rates in the table above).

Expected Future Performance

- 11.5 Due to inappropriate nature of the indicator definition given the range of support, neither the male nor female indicators here will achieve close to target levels by the end of the programme.

Conclusions on the Indicators at Risk

- 11.6 The two outcome indicators included here will fall substantially short of programme targets by the end of the delivery period. This is primarily due to the definition of these indicators which mean they can only be applied to a very small subset of the participants receiving support (i.e. those in Year 11).
- 11.7 These indicators are not performance framework targets, but it would nevertheless be valuable to capture the learning about what has been achieved and what target levels might have been more realistic to support future programme planning. This evidence may be needed in providing a wider narrative to the European Commission around delivery under this S.O. at the closure of the programme.

12. Findings from ESF Specific Objective 3.4 – Early Years (WWV only)

Overview of Specific Objective

- 12.1 The aim for Specific Objective 3.4 for WWV only as set out in the ESF Operational Programmes was ‘To increase the skills of the Early Years and Childcare workforce’.
- 12.2 Example activities for this specific objective included the following:
- Supporting the development of skills in the early years and childcare sector including both current and potential childcare practitioners.

Table 12.10: Output and Outcome Indicators for SO3.4

Outputs	Outcomes
Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector - male	Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector gaining qualifications upon leaving - Male
Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector – female	Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector gaining qualifications upon leaving - Female
Operations integrating sustainable development into awareness raising, education and training programmes	

Note: Highlighted cells used to show the indicators in scope for this study

Target Setting Approach

- 12.3 Under this Specific Objective, targets for the Early years activity (3,000 Employed, including self-employed participants from early years and childcare sector – male / employed, including self-employed participants from early years and childcare sector – female) are based on workforce data from the early years and childcare plan on workforce size and skills levels and comparable unit cost data from other skills initiatives in the 2007-13 programme (see Skills for Growth above).
- 12.4 A policy-based approach is used to set targets for those in the early years and childcare sector gaining a qualification upon leaving. Targets are based on comparable activity within the 2007-13 skills priorities and take into consideration the supply side nature of the intervention and the aspirations for improving the outcomes for the sector.

Table 12.2: Progress of ESF Specific Objective 3.4 Indicators which are at Risk of not Achieving Targets

Outputs / Outcomes		West Wales and the Valleys			
		Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date
Spend (£m)		9	52%	N/A	0%
Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector - male		272	50%	75	28%
Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector - female		2,444	111%	1,514	31%

Table 12.3: Progress of SO3.4 Indicators at Risk and Summary of Explanatory Factors

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female participants over-committed compared to target levels (111 per cent) however under-commitment against male participant targets (only 50 per cent of target committed). This also partly reflects that only around half of the funding allocated to this S.O. has been committed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across males and females, there is an over-commitment in total, however it is more concentrated on females and less on males than originally anticipated. This split is based on what delivery bodies felt was deliverable, given the employment split in this sector.
Output Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial under-achievement against targets for both male and female participant targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demand for this type of support has been found to be much lower than anticipated, with lots of other support already available for this area of work. In addition, the impacts of the outbreak of COVID-19 and associated lockdowns have meant delays to project delivery which has further constrained delivery over the last two years.

Expected Future Performance

- 12.5 Stakeholders felt that targets against these indicators were unlikely to be achieved by the end of the programme delivery period, even to within tolerance levels of targets.
- 12.6 Similarly it is expected that there will be substantial underspend against original spend allocations.

Wider Evidence

Evidence on gender split in childcare sector

In 2019 Early Years Wales reported that in England and Wales only three per cent of staff working in early years education are male¹². This reflects the challenges outlined above with regard to meeting the target for male beneficiaries.

Conclusions on the Indicators at Risk

- 12.7 Overall the participant output targets both males and females are unlikely to achieve target levels or even to within tolerance levels of targets by the end of the programme. This is primarily due to weaker than expected demand for these interventions, which is also reflected in under-commitment of funding in this S.O.
- 12.8 These are not performance framework targets, but nevertheless there could be value in re-allocating funding from this S.O. into other areas of the programme where there is greater demand and reducing the output targets proportionately to this.

¹² Early Years Wales (2020)

13. Findings from ESF Specific Objective 5 – Collaboration and Innovation in Public Service Delivery

Overview of Specific Objective

- 13.1 The aim for Specific Objective 5 as set out in the ESF Operational Programmes was 'To support Public services reform and regional working'.
- 13.2 Example activities for this specific objective included the following:
- Assessments of capacity and capability for collaborative working, including development/application of toolkits and the transfer of new/improved methods and procedures. This could include transnational activity and international benchmarking
 - Building capacity and capability within existing partnerships, moving them to a more sustainable footing. For example addressing specific gaps in provision, investing in skills, governance, integrating different policy areas, or using new tools, methods and procedures
 - Targeted investments for specific regional or collaborative partnerships where a capacity and capability assessment has been completed and a clear plan to sustainably address constraints and weaknesses is in place
 - Innovative activities that promote social innovation, the use of new technology/techniques, delivery of new services, and integration of services. Support might be expected to cover idea development, piloting, evaluation and dissemination of results
 - Development and implementation of new approaches to integrated service delivery, linked to local government reform, including skills and shared services (e.g. via digital solutions, online provision, aggregated administration, one-stop-shops, joint/shared services, pooled specialist services, etc.)
 - Training to provide staff with skills, models, and tools to deliver organisational change and service improvement, particularly leadership.

Table 13.11: Output and Outcome Indicators for SO5

Outputs	Outcomes
Number of entities participating in projects target public administrations or public services at national, regional, or local level	Number of new methods, procedures, and tools developed and disseminated
Number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level	
Number of methods, processes and tools being developed with support	

Note: Highlighted cells used to show the indicators in scope for this study

Target Setting Approach

- 13.3 The targets for this specific objective were based on the functional regions within Wales and the related partnerships within those regions: North Wales; South East Wales; South West Wales; and Central Wales.
- 13.4 While these regions cover the whole of Wales it is anticipated there will be at least one project in each and additionally more thematic projects, such as for encouraging innovation in regional delivery. Based on these expected projects, estimates are made for the number of tools (with innovation elements expected to generate additional tools for piloting).
- 13.5 The number of partners is also an estimate based on there being 22 local authorities in Wales (seven in East Wales and 15 in West Wales and the Valleys), and several other third sector, public, private and other organisations involved in regional working (depending on the focus area).

Table 13.2: Progress of ESF Specific Objective 5 Indicators which are at Risk of not Achieving Targets

Outputs / Outcomes	West Wales and the Valleys				East Wales			
	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date	Target	% of Target Committed	Outputs Profiled to date	% of Spend / Profiled Outputs Achieved to date
Spend (£m)	8.5	120%	N/A	17%	4.8	63%	N/A	9%
Number of entities participating in projects target public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level	15	353%	26	71%	15	140%	14	96%

Table 13.3: Progress of SO5 Indicators at Risk and Summary of Explanatory Factors

	Summary of Progress	Explanatory Factors
Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicator is over-committed in both regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No issues to highlight
Output Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seventy-one per cent of profile to date target achieved in WWV and 96 per cent in EW Given the over-commitment however, this means the programme target has already been achieved in WWV and is close to being fully achieved in EW (90 per cent achieved) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially some lag in delivery due to delays in project set up and appointing delivery staff. Largely now all caught up however.

Expected Future Performance

- 13.6 Indicator targets expected to be fully achieved and achievement to date is already within tolerance levels of targets in both regions.

Conclusions on the Indicators at Risk

- 13.7 Targets are expected to be fully achieved and achievement to date is already within tolerance levels of targets in both regions. No further action therefore required with respect to this indicator.

14. Conclusions

14.1 This section draws together a summary of the conclusions set out for each of the ESF indicators in scope for this study.

Indicator	Conclusions
Specific Objective 1.1 – Helping People into Work	
Short term unemployed with no / low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>High risk of both output indicators not being achieved</u>, although these are not performance framework targets.
Individuals impacted by redundancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main reason being that there has been insufficient demand with redundancy rates having dropped over the course of programme delivery. May be beneficial to decommit funding from this S.O. and reduce targets proportionally.
Short term unemployed participants with low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability in employment upon leaving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>High risk of all three outcome indicators not being achieved</u>, due to reduction in individuals supported outputs above, although these are not performance framework targets..
Short term unemployed participants with low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability gaining a qualification upon leaving	
Individuals impacted by redundancy in employment upon leaving	
Specific Objective 1.2 Inclusion and Engagement in Labour Market	
Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Medium risk – indicator is currently expected to be achieved within tolerance levels of targets in both regions, although slightly higher risk in EW.</u> <u>Indicator is a performance framework target in both regions</u> and will require continued close progress monitoring.
Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment engaged in job search upon leaving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>High risk of these outcome indicators not being achieved in both regions</u>, although not performance framework targets.

Indicator	Conclusions
Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary reason is that the ‘into employment’ outcome has been prioritised (and is expected to exceed targets) For the work experience and volunteering outcome, these opportunities were also significantly constrained by Covid-19 related restrictions.
Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity	
Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving	
Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity	
Specific Objective 1.3 – Helping People Stay in Work	
Number of micro small and medium-sized enterprises supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>High risk of these output indicators not being achieved in both regions</u>, although not performance framework targets
Workplace health programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainly due to business disruption as a result of Covid-19 meaning businesses needing to focus on other priorities
Employed including self-employed participants with work limiting health condition or disability returning to work after a period of absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>High risk of outcome indicator not being achieved in both regions</u>, although not a performance framework target. A primary reason is that the outcome can only be counted if the individual had had a continuous

Indicator	Conclusions
	absence of four weeks or more prior to support, which was not the case for many supported individuals. In many cases there were issues of presenteeism rather than absenteeism.
Employed including self Employed Participants with Work limiting health condition or disability with an improved labour market situation upon leaving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>High risk of outcome indicator not being achieved in both regions</u>, although not a performance framework target. • Main challenge was that a large proportion of the health issues addressed were mental health based and the outcomes of support was very rarely to seek for that individual to work more hours or seek a promotion, which was required by this indicator..
Specific Objective 2.1 – Basic Skills	
Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education – Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Medium risk</u> – stakeholders still expect both targets to be met, at least to within tolerance levels, however there is greatest risk for the ‘females’ target in WWV, which requires close monitoring, and there could be a case to renegotiate this target. <u>Both are performance framework targets</u>
Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education - Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary reason for the shortfall is lower than expected demand for support, in part reflecting disruption linked to Covid-19, as well as a reducing proportion of the workforce having no or low level qualifications, over the course of programme delivery
Specific Objective 2.2 – Adaptability and Progression	
Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) – Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Medium risk</u> – targets for EW are more likely to be met, at least to within tolerance levels, although remains a risk. In WWV both targets are at higher risk of not achieving within tolerance levels. which requires close monitoring, and there could be a case to renegotiate these target. <u>Both are performance framework targets in both regions.</u>
Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) - Female	

Indicator	Conclusions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary reason for the shortfall is lower than expected demand for support, in part reflecting disruption linked to Covid-19, as well as a reducing proportion of the workforce having no or low level qualifications, over the course of programme delivery.
Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above – Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Anticipated that the targets will be achieved in both regions.</u>
Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above - Female	
Specific Objective 2.3 – Research and Innovation	
Participants with graduate degree or equivalent in employment upon leaving – male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Medium risk</u> – targets are under-committed although exceeding against profile to date, so could achieve within tolerance levels of targets, although achievement will be backloaded towards end of programme. These are not performance framework targets.
Participants with graduate degree or equivalent in employment upon leaving - female	
Participants with a graduate degree or equivalent gaining a qualification upon leaving at Masters (CQFW 7) or Doctoral (CQFW 8) level – Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Anticipated that the targets will be achieved in both regions.</u> albeit this will be backloaded towards the end of the programme.
Participants with a graduate degree or equivalent gaining a qualification upon leaving at Masters (CQFW 7) or Doctoral (CQFW 8) level – Female	
Specific Objective 3.1 – Youth Unemployment	
NEET Participants (16 - 24 years of age)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Anticipated that the target will be achieved in WWV</u>

Indicator	Conclusions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In EW, there is a <u>medium risk</u>, although it is anticipated that activities will deliver to within tolerance levels of targets. <u>This is a performance framework indicator.</u> Primary reason for under-achievement against profiled targets to date is disruption as a result of Covid-19 – including closures of key organisations and having to move to online delivery.
Specific Objective 3.2 – Youth Attainment and Engagement	
Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>High risk of this output indicator not being achieved in both regions</u>, although not a performance framework target. Primary reason is that this was a new area of work and initial programming under-estimated the unit cost of support, meaning it has not been possible to deliver fully against targets.
Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11-24 years of age) gaining qualifications upon leaving - with primary (CQFW 1) or lower secondary education (CQFW 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>High risk that targets will not be achieved in both regions</u>, although these are not performance framework targets. Main reason is due to under-achievement against the output targets above.
Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11-24) into education/training upon leaving	
Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24) at reduced risk of becoming NEET upon leaving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No target set for this indicator.
Specific Objective 3.3 – STEM	
11-19 years of age participants who continue to study a Maths Science Engineering and Technology subject post 16 - Male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>High risk that targets will not be achieved in both regions</u>, although these are not performance framework targets. Main reason is due to the definition of these indicators which mean they can only be applied to
11-19 years of age participants who continue to study a Maths Science	

Indicator	Conclusions
Engineering and Technology subject post 16 - Female	a very small subset of the participants receiving support (i.e. those in Year 11)
Specific Objective 3.4 – Early Years	
Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector - male	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>High risk that targets will not be achieved in both regions</u>, although these are not performance framework targets.
Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector - female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary reason is weaker demand than expected for this type of support, alongside disruption associated with Covid-19 constraining delivery.
Specific Objective 5 – Collaboration and Innovation in Public Service Delivery	
Number of entities participating in projects target public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Anticipated that the targets will be achieved in both regions.</u>

Reference section

[Bryan, M.L. Bryce A.M. Roberts J. \(2020\). Presenteeism in the UK: Effects of physical and mental health on worker productivity \(Department of Economics Policy Brief No. 3/2020\), University of Sheffield](#)

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[Early Years Wales \(2020\). Men in the early years – why we need more of them and how we can recruit them](#)

Accessed 16/05/2022

[Griffiths, E. Lees, C. Hagendyk, D. Sharp, N. Grunhut, S. \(2020\). Evaluation of the Working Wales Service: The Theory of Change, the Impact of COVID-19, and the Evaluation Framework. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 3/2022.](#)

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[WCVA \(2020\). Equalities, Local Government and Communities committee inquiry: the impact of COVID-19 on the voluntary sector](#)

Accessed 19/05/2022

Annex A

The sections below set out:

- A list of consultees engaged as part of the consultation fieldwork for this study
- Copies of three topic guides used for different stakeholders in the study.

Consultees

Name	Stakeholder Type
Michael Parkinson	Welsh Government
Hannah Taylor	Welsh Government
Michelle Brennan	Welsh Government
Stephen Craddock	Welsh Government
Scott Morgan	Welsh Government
Eleri Lewis	ESF Project Lead
Mark Cook	ESF Project Lead
Alun Gosney and Nikoleta Stastna	ESF Project Lead
David Warren	ESF Project Lead
Michelle Robinson	ESF Project Lead
Martyn Jeffries	ESF Project Lead
Lisa Jones	ESF Project Lead
Barbara Burchell	ESF Project Lead

Topic Guide A: WEFO and Policy Teams

ERDF and ESF Indicator Review Study – WEFO / Policy Team Consultation Topic Guide

Questions

Introduction

Could you start by giving an overview of your role and the European Programme investment priority and Specific Objective areas you work most closely with.

[Direct Questions to the Specific Objective Areas of greatest relevance. Aim to cover a maximum of 4 Specific Objective areas within one consultation]

Refer to Sections A and B of the SO Specific Information – Indicators in Scope for Analysis; and Programme Commitments

1. Have there been changes in policy / strategy since the outset of the programme which have:
 - a. materially altered the type of projects that partners wanted to fund under this Specific Objective?
 - b. contributed to under-commitment against the indicators outlined above?
2. Are there certain project types where there were no or fewer than expected funding applications, that has led to under-commitment against the indicators outlined above?

Refer to Section C of the SO Specific Information – Output and Outcome Delivery

3. To what extent has there been disruption to project delivery for projects within this Specific Objective area, relating to COVID-19 or other factors, and what has the effect of this been e.g.:
 - a. Made some activities no longer possible
 - b. Slowed down delivery
 - c. Led to higher costs for activities
4. To what extent has there been lower demand for project activities from potential beneficiaries than expected, and if so, is this related to:
 - a. economic climate
 - b. changes made to project delivery e.g. moving to online delivery
 - c. changes to the wider market offer e.g. competitor projects
5. Are there any larger scale projects with delivery challenges that are disproportionately affecting performance against these indicators?

6. Have changes in socio-economic conditions affected what beneficiaries do, or opportunities available after receiving support through this Specific Objective?
 - a. To what extent has this affected outcome target achievement?
 - b. Is outcome achievement lower overall, or are outcomes just taking longer to materialise?

Refer to Section D of the SO Specific Information – Original Assumptions for Target Setting

7. Are there issues with how these indicators are defined?
 - a. Are these indicators less relevant now for this Specific Objective?
 - b. Have there been any issues with projects collecting the required evidence for output or outcome indicators under this Specific Objective?
8. Does the rationale for setting these targets still hold?
 - a. Have any deliverables proved more costly to deliver than originally anticipated, leading to under-commitment?
 - b. Has the translation from outputs to outcomes been weaker than expected due to wider socio-economic conditions?
 - c. What other factors make this rationale for target setting less appropriate now?
9. Do you feel the projects funded under this Specific Objective differ significantly from the projects from the previous programme which were used to help set indicator targets?
 - a. If so, in what way?
 - b. Do you see this as a factor which may help to explain any risks of under-performance against indicators under this Specific Objective?
10. Are there any other factors not covered here which you believe are relevant in understanding any risks of under-performance against indicator targets?
11. Do you believe there are future factors over the next two years, not already discussed, which could affect performance of the indicators under this Specific Objective?
 - a. If so, please outline what these are and how you think they might affect future delivery and achievements
12. What changes do you believe may be needed to these indicators and targets – including addition / removal of possible indicators or re-quantification of targets?
 - a. What is the basis for this?
 - b. Is there any wider data / evidence you are aware of that supports this suggestion?

ESF Specific Objective 1.1: Helping People into Work (WWV only)

Section A - Indicators in scope for this review relating to the Specific Objective:

- Short term unemployed with no / low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability
- Individuals impacted by redundancy
- Short term unemployed participants with low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability in employment upon leaving
- Short term unemployed participants with low skills or a work limiting health condition or disability gaining a qualification upon leaving
- Individuals impacted by redundancy in employment upon leaving

Section B - Programme Commitments:

- Spend is fully committed (131% committed)
- All targets fully committed (all at least 120% committed)

Section C - Project Output and Outcome Delivery:

- All indicators under this specific objective are below 50% of profile to date

Section D - Original Assumptions for Target Setting

- Targets primarily based on the following 2007-2013 projects: Wellbeing Through Work; COASTAL; South West Workways; ReAct; Life Skills; and The Peer Mentoring Programme.
- Projects used to set targets for the number of Short Term Unemployed and those individuals at risk of redundancy.
- Targets for the result indicators were based on a combination of using conversion rates from the 2007-2013 projects and a policy-based approach to reflect the aspirations of the Programme.

ESF Specific Objective 1.2: Inclusion and Engagement in Labour Market (SO1.1 for EW)

Section A - Indicators in scope for this review relating to the Specific Objective:

- Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment.
- Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving.
- Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving.
- Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment engaged in job search upon leaving.
- Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity.
- Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity.

Section B - Programme Commitments:

- **Indicative funding** is at 113% committed in WWV and 105% committed in EW.
- **Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment** is fully committed in both WWV and EW.
- **Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment engaged in job search upon leaving** is at 54% committed in WWV and 73% in EW.
- **Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving** is at 85% committed in WWV and 66% committed in EW.
- **Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity** is at 45% committed in WWV and 38% in EW.
- **Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving** is fully committed in WWV and at 89% committed in EW.
- **Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity** is at 70% committed in WWV and 61% in EW.

Section C - Project Output and Outcome Delivery:

- **Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment** - profile to date target is 67% achieved in WWV and 57% achieved in EW.
- **Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment engaged in job search upon leaving**- profile to date target is at 59% achieved in WWV and 46% achieved in EW.
- **Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving** - profile to date target is at 70% achieved in WWV and 67% achieved in EW.
- **Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity** - profile to date target is at 56% achieved in both WWV and EW.
- **Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving** - profile to date target has been fully achieved in both WWV and EW.
- **Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity** - profile to date target is at 82% achieved in WWV and 68% achieved in EW.

Section D - Original Assumptions for Target Setting

- The targets under this Specific Objective are primarily based on the following 2007-2013 projects: Wellbeing Through Work; COASTAL; South West Workways; Life Skills; and The Peer Mentoring Programme.
- These selected projects were evaluated to include appropriate representation of the target group under the Specific Objective. Through this approach the output targets for 'inactive' and 'long-term unemployed' were set.
- Targets for the result indicators were based on a combination of using conversion rates from the 2007-2013 projects and a policy-based approach to reflect the aspirations of the Programme.
- Targets have been set with the aspiration of supporting the harder to reach to achieve similar or higher success as those within the general cohort of the Economically inactive or Long-term unemployed group.

ESF Specific Objective 1.3: Helping People stay in Work – WWV only

Section A - Indicators in scope for this review relating to the Specific Objective:

- Employed including self-employed participants with work limiting health condition or disability returning to work after a period of absence.
- Employed including self Employed Participants with Work limiting health condition or disability with an improved labour market situation upon leaving.
- Number of micro small and medium-sized enterprises supported.
- Workplace health programmes.

Section B - Programme Commitments:

- **Indicative funding** is at 96% committed.
- **Employed including self Employed Participants with Work limiting health condition or disability with an improved labour market situation upon leaving** is at 11% committed.
- All other targets are fully committed.

Section C - Project Output and Outcome Delivery:

- **Employed including self-employed participants with work limiting health condition or disability returning to work after a period of absence** - profile to date target is at 36% achieved.
- **Employed including self Employed Participants with Work limiting health condition or disability with an improved labour market situation upon leaving** - profile to date target is at 33% achieved.
- **Number of micro small and medium-sized enterprises supported** - profile to date target is at 61% achieved.
- **Workplace health programmes** - profile to date target is at 24% achieved.

Section D - Original Assumptions for Target Setting

- The targets under this Specific Objective are primarily based on the following 2007-2013 projects: Wellbeing Through Work; COASTAL; and The Peer Mentoring Programme.
- These selected projects were evaluated to include an appropriate representation of the target group under the Specific Objective. Through this approach the output targets were set for the two 'employed, including self-employed - with Work-limiting health condition or disability' indicators, 'Number of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises supported' and 'Workplace health programmes.'
- A policy-based approach was used to set the target for 'Employed, including self-employed participants with work limiting health condition or disability returning to work after a period of absence' which is primarily based on the Fit for Work project taking into account the small-scale pilot nature of this activity.

- The indicators ‘Employed, including self-employed participants with work limiting health conditions or disability with an improved labour market situation upon leaving’ and ‘Underemployed participants with an improved labour market situation upon leaving’ introduce a new targeting approach to the ESF programmes, focus on specific demographic groups within the employed workforce and articulate a specific desired result for these groups.
- Such measures have not previously been in place within the ESF programmes and comparable national data is not available due to the high degree of specificity within the demographic targeting. A policy-based approach was therefore used to set the targets for these indicators, reflecting the commitment within the programmes to achieve meaningful benefit for these target groups while acknowledging the complexities of interventions within this area.

ESF Specific Objective 2.1: Basic Skills

Section A - Indicators in scope for this review relating to the Specific Objective:

- Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education - Male
- Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education – Female

Section B - Programme Commitments:

- **Indicative funding** is at 72% committed in WWV and 69% committed in EW.
- **Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education - Male** is fully committed in both WWV (138%) and EW (152%).
- **Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education – Female** is at 87% committed in WWV and 96% committed in EW.

Section C - Project Output and Outcome Delivery:

- **Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education - Male** – profile to date target is at 79% achieved in WWV and 84% achieved in EW.
- **Employed including self-employed participants with qualifications up to and including a lower secondary education – Female** - profile to date target is at 95% achieved in WWV and has been fully achieved in EW.

Section D - Original Assumptions for Target Setting

- The targets for the indicators under this Specific Objective are primarily based on ‘Skills Growth Wales’; ‘Modern Apprenticeship World Class Skills For A Knowledge Economy’; ‘World Class Apprenticeships for Economic Renewal’; and ‘Essential Skills in the Workplace RCE’.
- These selected projects were evaluated to provide an appropriate representation of the activity under the Specific Objective.
- Targets for ‘male’/ ‘female’ are based on current population shares for the West Wales and the Valleys region.
- Targets for ‘Employed, including self-employed participants with up to and including a lower secondary education gaining an essential skills or technical or job specific qualification at lower secondary level upon leaving’ were based on evidence from the 2012 Leavers Survey

ESF Specific Objective 2.2: Adaptability and Progression

Section A - Indicators in scope for this review relating to the Specific Objective:

- Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) – Male.
- Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) – Female.
- Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above – Male.
- Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above – Female.

Section B - Programme Commitments:

- **Indicative funding** is at 159% committed in WWV and 174% committed in EW.
- **Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) – Male** is at 93% committed in WWV and 94% committed in EW.
- **Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) – Female** – is at 89% committed in WWV and 84% in EW.
- **Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above – Male** is fully committed in both WWV and EW.
- **Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above – Female** is fully committed in both WWV and EW.

Section C - Project Output and Outcome Delivery:

- **Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) – Male** - profile to date target is at 82% achieved in WWV and 99% achieved in EW.
- **Employed including self-employed participants with lower secondary education (CQFW 2) - Female** - profile to date target is at 75% achieved in WWV and 97% achieved in EW.
- **Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above - Male** - profile to date target is at 98% achieved in WWV and has been fully achieved in EW.
- **Employed including self-employed participants with upper secondary (CQFW 3) education or above – Female** - profile to date target has been fully achieved in both WWV and EW.

Section D - Original Assumptions for Target Setting

- The targets for the indicators under this Specific Objective are primarily based on ‘Enhancing Leadership and Management Skills’; ‘LEAD’; ‘Modern Apprenticeship World Class Skills For A Knowledge Economy’; and ‘World Class Apprenticeships for Economic Renewal’. These selected projects were evaluated to provide an appropriate representation of the activity under the Specific Objective.
- Targets for ‘male’/ ‘female’ are based on current population shares for the West Wales and the Valleys region.

- A policy-based approach was used to set the targets for the groups: ‘with lower secondary education’ and ‘with upper secondary (ISCED 3) education or above’. This was based on the emphasis within the design of the programme on increasing the number of individuals in the employed workforce who are qualified to an intermediate level or higher, as well as updating and upgrading existing intermediate and higher level skills, in order to ensure that employers have a suitably qualified workforce to support the development of a modern knowledge-based economy.

ESF Specific Objective 2.3: Research and Innovation (SO2.4 in EW)

Section A - Indicators in scope for this review relating to the Specific Objective:

- Participants with a graduate degree or equivalent gaining a qualification upon leaving at Masters (CQFW 7) or Doctoral (CQFW 8) level – Male.
- Participants with a graduate degree or equivalent gaining a qualification upon leaving at Masters (CQFW 7) or Doctoral (CQFW 8) level – Female.
- Participants with graduate degree or equivalent in employment upon leaving – Male.
- Participants with graduate degree or equivalent in employment upon leaving – Female.

Section B - Programme Commitments:

- **Indicative funding** is at 125% committed in WWV and 124% committed in EW.
- **Participants with graduate degree or equivalent in employment upon leaving - male** is at 77% committed in WWV and 78% in EW.
- **Participants with graduate degree or equivalent in employment upon leaving - female** is at 50% committed in WWV and 75% in EW.
- **Participants with a graduate degree or equivalent gaining a qualification upon leaving at Masters (CQFW 7) or Doctoral (CQFW 8) level – Male** is fully committed in both WWV and EW.
- **Participants with a graduate degree or equivalent gaining a qualification upon leaving at Masters (CQFW 7) or Doctoral (CQFW 8) level – Female** is fully committed in both WWV and EW.

Section C - Project Output and Outcome Delivery:

- **Participants with graduate degree or equivalent in employment upon leaving - male** - profile to date target has been fully achieved in WWV and hasn't been achieved at all in EW (0%).
- **Participants with graduate degree or equivalent in employment upon leaving - female** - profile to date target hasn't been achieved at all in WWV or EW (0%).
- **Participants with a graduate degree or equivalent gaining a qualification upon leaving at Masters (CQFW 7) or Doctoral (CQFW 8) level – Male** - profile to date target has been fully achieved in WWV and hasn't been achieved at all in EW (0%).
- **Participants with a graduate degree or equivalent gaining a qualification upon leaving at Masters (CQFW 7) or Doctoral (CQFW 8) level – Female** - profile to date target has been fully achieved in WWV and hasn't been achieved at all in EW (0%).

Section D - Original Assumptions for Target Setting

- The targets for the indicators under this Specific Objective are primarily based on the UK Research Councils' guidelines on costs of provision at ISCED Level 7 (Masters) and Level 8 (Doctorate), together with data on broadly comparable activity in the 'Steel Training Research and Innovation Partnership (STRIP)' and 'Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships' projects. These selected projects were evaluated to provide an appropriate representation of the activity under the Specific Objective.
- Targets for 'male' / 'female' are based on current population shares for the West Wales and the Valleys region.

ESF Specific Objective 3.1: Youth Unemployment

Section A - Indicators in scope for this review relating to the Specific Objective:

- NEET Participants (16-24 years of age)

Section B - Programme Commitments:

- **Indicative funding** is at 103% committed in WWV and 102% committed in EW.
- **NEET Participants (16-24 years of age)** has been fully committed in both WWV and EW (both at least 130%).

Section C - Project Output and Outcome Delivery:

- **NEET Participants (16-24 years of age)** - profile to date target is at 81% achieved in WWV and 56% in EW.

Section D - Original Assumptions for Target Setting

- The targets for the indicators under this Specific Objective are primarily based on the following 2007-2013 projects: 'Jobs Growth Wales' and 'All Age Skillbuild for the Unemployed Inactive and NEET'. These two projects were considered best match for youth unemployment actions which previously have not been delivered as standalone project activity but as part of wider adult employment initiatives.

ESF Specific Objective 3.2: Youth Attainment and Engagement

Section A - Indicators in scope for this review relating to the Specific Objective:

- Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24).
- Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11-24 years of age) gaining qualifications upon leaving - with primary (CQFW 1) or lower secondary education (CQFW 2.)
- Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11-24) into education/training upon leaving.
- Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24) at reduced risk of becoming NEET upon leaving.

Section B - Programme Commitments:

- **Indicative funding** is at 123% committed in WWV and 101% committed in EW.
- **Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24)** is at 63% committed in WWV and 76% committed in EW.
- **Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11-24 years of age) gaining qualifications upon leaving - with primary (CQFW 1) or lower secondary education (CQFW 2)** is at 92% committed in WWV and 45% in EW.
- **Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11-24) into education/training upon leaving** is at 38% committed in WWV and 38% committed in EW.
- **Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24) at reduced risk of becoming NEET upon leaving** has no target for either WWV or EW.

Section C - Project Output and Outcome Delivery:

- **Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24)** - profile to date target is at 83% achieved in WWV and 88% in EW.
- **Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11-24 years of age) gaining qualifications upon leaving - with primary (CQFW 1) or lower secondary education (CQFW 2)** - profile to date target is at 95% achieved in WWV and 66% achieved in EW.
- **Participants at risk of becoming NEET (11-24) into education/training upon leaving** - profile to date target is at 66% achieved in WWV and has been achieved in EW.
- **Participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11-24) at reduced risk of becoming NEET upon leaving** - profile to date target is at 68% achieved in WWV and 73% achieved in EW.

Section D - Original Assumptions for Target Setting

- The targets for the indicators under this Specific Objective relating to reducing the number of 11-24 year olds at risk of becoming NEET are primarily based on the following 2007-2013 projects: 'Prevent 14 – 19'; 'Engage'; 'Potensial'; and 'World Class Traineeships with engagement for Young People'.

- A policy-based approach is used to set the target for those at risk of becoming NEET gaining a qualification. Reflecting the likely level of disengagement and the potential outcome of this disengagement this is set at 70% of total qualifications gained by this group for the ‘at primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary education (ISCED 2)’ level.
- No target has been set at this stage for reducing risk of NEET, reflecting the novel nature of the targeting and delivery and the consequent lack of evidence upon which to base a calculation of a target value. An evaluation will therefore be undertaken to provide the evidence required to set a target value for this indicator Qualifications gained is based on 5,000 male/female participants at risk of becoming NEET combined, modelled on the selected 2007-2013 projects.

ESF Specific Objective 3.3: STEM – WWV only

Section A - Indicators in scope for this review relating to the Specific Objective:

- 11-19 years of age participants who continue to study a Maths Science Engineering and Technology subject post 16 – Male.
- 11-19 years of age participants who continue to study a Maths Science Engineering and Technology subject post 16 – Female.

Section B - Programme Commitments:

- **Indicative funding** is at 155% committed.
- **11-19 years of age participants who continue to study a Maths Science Engineering and Technology subject post 16 – Male** is at 24% committed.
- **11-19 years of age participants who continue to study a Maths Science Engineering and Technology subject post 16 – Female** is at 9% committed.

Section C - Project Output and Outcome Delivery:

- **11-19 years of age participants who continue to study a Maths Science Engineering and Technology subject post 16 – Male** - profile to date target is at 70% achieved.
- **11-19 years of age participants who continue to study a Maths Science Engineering and Technology subject post 16 – Female** - profile to date target is at 47% achieved.

Section D - Original Assumptions for Target Setting

- Under this Specific Objective, targets for ‘11-19-year-old participants – male’ and ‘11-19-year-old participants – female’ are primarily based on the STEM Cymru and Technocamps 2007-2013 projects.
- The female targets reflect an ambition articulated within the programmes to address the higher levels of female disengagement with STEM subjects. The targets for those ‘completing training in Maths, Science, Engineering and Technology’ and those ‘who continue to study a Maths, Science, Engineering and Technology subject post 16’ are similarly based on the policy ambition within the programme.

ESF Specific Objective 3.4: Early Years (WWV only)

Section A - Indicators in scope for this review relating to the Specific Objective:

- Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector – Male.
- Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector – Female.

Section B - Programme Commitments:

Indicative funding is at 52% committed

- **Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector – Male** is at 50% committed.
- **Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector – Female** is fully committed.

Section C - Project Output and Outcome Delivery:

- **Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector – Male** - profile to date target is at 27% achieved.
- **Employed including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector – Female** - profile to date target is at 32% achieved.

Section D - Original Assumptions for Target Setting

- Under this Specific Objective, targets for the Early years activity (3,000 Employed, including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector – male / Employed, including self-employed Participants from early years and childcare sector – female) is based on workforce data from the early years and childcare plan on workforce size and skills levels and comparable unit cost data from other skills initiatives in the current programme.

ESF Specific Objective 5: Collaboration and Innovation in Public Service Delivery

Section A - Indicators in scope for this review relating to the Specific Objective:

- Number of entities participating in projects target public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level.

Section B - Programme Commitments:

- **Indicative funding** is at 120% committed in WWV and 63% committed in EW.
- **Number of entities participating in projects target public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level** has been fully committed in both WWV and EW.

Section C - Project Output and Outcome Delivery:

- **Number of entities participating in projects target public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level** - profile to date target has not been achieved at all in WWV or EW (0% in both areas).

Section D - Original Assumptions for Target Setting

- The targets for this specific objective were based on the functional regions within Wales and the related partnerships within those regions: North Wales; South East Wales; South West Wales; and Central Wales.

The number of partners is also an estimate based on there being 22 local authorities in Wales (7 in East Wales and 15 in West Wales and the Valleys), and a number of other third sector, public, private and other organisations involved in regional working (depending on the focus area).

Topic Guide B: Project Deliverer

ERDF and ESF Indicator Review Study – Project Lead Consultation Topic Guide

Questions

Introduction

1. Could you start by giving an overview of what the project is delivering and your role in this.
2. Overall, to what extent is this project on track with delivery against its output and outcome indicators?
 - a. Which indicators, if any, are behind target?
 - b. Have you needed to renegotiate targets, or will you need to do so?
 - c. For any that are behind target, to what extent do you believe you will be able to catch-up on achievement against these?
3. To what extent has there been disruption to project delivery, relating to COVID-19 or other factors, and what has the effect of this been e.g.:
 - a. Made some activities no longer possible?
 - b. Slowed down delivery?
 - c. Led to higher costs for activities?
 - d. Other effects (if so, please state)?
4. To what extent has there been lower demand than expected for the activities delivered by the project, from potential beneficiaries, and if so, is this related to:
 - a. Economic climate?
 - b. Changes made to project delivery e.g. moving to online delivery?
 - c. Changes to the wider market offer e.g. competitor projects?
 - d. Other factors (if so, please state)?
5. Have changes in socio-economic conditions affected what beneficiaries do, or opportunities available after receiving support through this project?
 - a. To what extent has this affected outcome target achievement?
 - b. Is outcome achievement lower overall, or are outcomes just taking longer to materialise?
6. Are there issues with how any of the indicators are defined?
 - a. Are any of the indicators less relevant now for this project?
 - b. Have there been any issues with collecting the required evidence for output or outcome indicators under this project?
7. Does the rationale for the scale of these targets still hold?
 - a. Have any deliverables proved more costly to deliver than originally anticipated, leading to under-achievement?
 - b. Has the translation from outputs to outcomes been weaker than expected due to wider socio-economic conditions?

8. Are there any other factors not covered here which you believe are relevant in understanding any risks of under-performance against the project's indicator targets?
9. Do you believe there are future factors over the next two years, not already discussed, which could affect performance of the indicators under this project?
 - a. If so, please outline what these are and how you think they might affect future delivery and achievements.

Topic Guide C: Regional Engagement Team

ERDF and ESF Indicator Review Study – RET Consultation Topic Guide

Questions

Introduction

1. Could you start by giving an overview of your role with the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Fund Programmes and how long you have been working in this area.
2. Across the different Specific Objective areas of the programme, do you feel there have been any changes in policy / strategy since the outset of the programme which have altered the type of projects partners are seeking funding for, or affected commitment levels in that area?
 - a. In answering please state which Specific Objective areas of the ERDF, ESF or ETC programme your answers refer to (full list at the end of the topic guide).
3. Are there certain project types where there were no or fewer than expected funding applications, that has led to under-commitment in any of the Specific Objective areas?
4. To what extent has there been disruption to project delivery, relating to COVID-19 or other factors, and what has the effect of this been in terms of timings, costs or feasibility of delivery?
 - a. In answering please state which Specific Objective areas of the ERDF, ESF or ETC programme your answers refer to (full list at the end of the topic guide).
5. To what extent has there been lower demand than expected for the activities provided by funded projects, from potential beneficiaries?
 - a. If so, in which Specific Objective areas?
 - b. What do you believe were the factors addressing this, such as:
 - i. economic climate
 - ii. changes made to project delivery e.g. moving to online delivery
 - iii. changes to the wider market offer e.g. competitor projects.
6. Are there issues with how any of the programme indicators are defined?
 - a. Are any indicators less relevant now for the Specific Objectives they are linked to?
 - b. Have there been any issues with projects collecting the required evidence for output or outcome indicators that you are aware of?
7. Are there any other factors which you believe are relevant in understanding any risks of under-performance against indicator targets across any of the ESI Fund programmes?
8. Do you believe there are future factors over the next two years, not already discussed, which could affect performance of the indicators under the ESI Fund programmes?
 - a. If so, please outline what these are and how you think they might affect future delivery and achievements.

Summary of Specific Objectives in Scope for this Study

(Note: Numbering refers to the West Wales and the Valleys Programmes. Numbering for the East Wales Programmes are slightly different)

ERDF <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1.1 – Research Capacity• 1.2 – Commercialisation• 2.1 – Access to Finance• 2.2 – Start-ups• 2.3 – ICT Take-up and Exploitation• 2.4 – Employment Growth in SMEs• 2.5 – Risk Capital Finance• 3.1 – Marine Energy• 3.2 – Community Energy• 3.3 – Energy Efficiency in Housing• 4.2 – Public Transport• 4.4 – Strategic Sites	ESF <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1.1 – Helping People into Work• 1.2 Inclusion and Engagement in Labour Market• 1.3 – Helping People Stay in Work• 2.1 – Basic Skills• 2.2 – Adaptability and Progression• 2.3 – Research and Innovation• 3.1 – Youth Unemployment• 3.2 – Youth Attainment and Engagement• 3.3 – STEM• 3.4 – Early Years• 5 – Collaboration and Innovation in Public Services
ETC <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 – Increase Intensity of Knowledge Transfer Collaborations• 3 – Realise Potential of Natural and Cultural Assets in Increasing Visitor Numbers	