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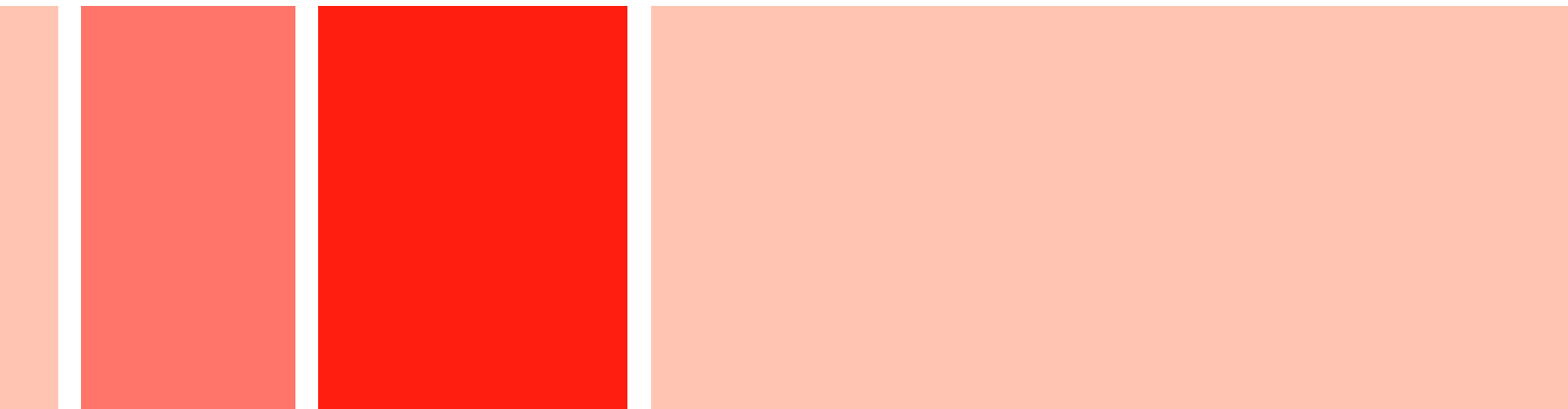
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# Final Evaluation of Reach the Heights



# Final Evaluation of Reach the Heights

## ICF GHK (GHK Consulting Ltd)

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

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## **Glossary of Acronyms**

ADEW: Association of Directors of Education in Wales

ALN: Additional Learning Needs

CJS: Criminal Justice System

CLIC: An online channel offering information, news and advice for all young people aged 11 to 25 in Wales

CPD: Continuing Professional Development

DCELLS: Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

DCSF: Department for Children Schools and Families

DFES: Department for Education and Skills

EBSCO: An information management system comprising academic research databases, e-journals and e-books

EDMS: European Data Management System

ESF: European Structural Fund

FE: Further Education

HE: Higher Education

IAG: Information, Advice and Guidance

MI: Management Information

NEET: Not in Employment, Education or Training

NFER: National Foundation for Educational Research

NQF: National Qualifications Framework

OCN: Open College Network

ONS: Office of National Statistics

PRU: Pupil Referral Unit

PSE: Personal and Social Education

PUPIL: Pupils Understanding Problems In their Locality (a Priority 1 European Social Fund project)

RCT: Rhondda Cynon Taff

SEN: Special educational needs

SENCO: Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

VCS: Voluntary and Community Sector

WBL: Work Based Learning

WCVA: Wales Council for Voluntary Action

WEFO: Welsh European Funding Office

YOT: Youth Offending Teams

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## **Executive Summary**

1. This is the final evaluation of Reach the Heights carried out by ICF GHK on behalf of the Welsh Government. It draws on research undertaken between June 2012 and June 2013.

## **Introduction**

### *The Reach the Heights projects*

2. Reach the Heights was a £29 million initiative part-funded through Priority 1 of the European Structural Fund (ESF) Convergence Operational Programme for West Wales and the Valleys, which aims to prepare young people for future employment by raising their aspirations and increasing their participation in learning.
3. Reach the Heights consisted of two projects – First Footholds, funded under Theme 1: Tackling Underachievement (which aims to improve the educational outcomes of young people at risk of underachieving), and Routes to the Summit, funded under Theme 2: Raising Skills and Aspirations (which aims to support young people to make a successful transition into employment).
4. The projects were overseen by a lead sponsor, the Welsh Government, who worked in partnership with ten joint sponsor organisations including eight voluntary and community sector organisations (the Arts Council of Wales, Children in Wales, Funky Dragon, Save the Children, Community Music Wales, SNAP Cymru, Techniquest and Urdd Gobaith Cymru) and two departments within the Welsh Government.

### *Purpose of the study*

5. The aims of the study were to:
  - Evaluate the effectiveness of the processes for designing, managing and delivering Reach the Heights;

- Assess the effectiveness of Reach the Heights in realising aims and objectives set out in the original business plan including Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) ESF targets, achieving beneficial outcomes and impacts for young people, and contributing to Welsh Government policy ambitions for young people; and
- Draw out lessons learned to inform the development of future interventions.

### *Limitations of the study*

6. The limited availability of Management Information (MI) and other robust evaluations of activities means that this report has had to overly depend on qualitative data. It has been unable to fulfil all of its requirements. The evidence available allows the report to draw robust conclusions about the processes for designing, managing and implementing Reach the Heights. It also provides an insight into the activities and features of their delivery that appear to contribute to positive outcomes. It does not, though, allow robust and general conclusions to be drawn about the impact of Reach the Heights nor lessons to inform future service delivery for young people.

### *Method*

7. The evaluation was carried out in four stages:

#### Stage 1: Scoping

8. Process and impact evaluation frameworks were developed and 14 case study activities (seven for each project) were identified. A short literature review was also carried out to identify evidence about features of effective practice in engaging and re-engaging NEET and at risk young people.
9. During the scoping stage a group of 12 young people aged between 11 and 20 from seven local authorities in the Convergence area took part in a participatory workshop. During the workshop, their views on the following

were explored: the main barriers to education, employment and training; what works well in providing support to young people; and the most and least important aspects of Reach the Heights. Drawing on participants' comments, we identified a set of research questions that young people considered the evaluation should focus on.

### Stage 2: Interim evaluation and Stage 3: Impact evaluation

10. Broadly, the purpose of Stage 2 (September 2012 to January 2013) was to gather evidence about the processes for designing, managing and implementing Reach the Heights while the purpose of Stage 3 (January 2013 to June 2013) was to assess the impacts of the projects. Therefore, the same key research tasks were carried out for each stage of the research but with a focus on processes in Stage 2 and a focus on learning about delivery, outcomes, impacts, legacy and sustainability in Stage 3.
11. The research tasks are described in detail in the main report but included:
  - **Establishing a list of activities delivered by each project.** This was not available and so information was collected on each activity that was expected to be commissioned including the target group for each activity, where activities were being delivered in the Convergence area, the nature of the activity, the allocated budget and whether the activity was delivered directly or contracted to other providers.
  - **Analysing the quarterly claim reports from the Welsh Government to WEFO** (expenditure; total number of participants; key characteristics of participants; and numbers of participants gaining qualifications, entering further learning and achieving other positive outcomes).
  - **In-depth interviews with joint sponsor organisations** (20 in each stage). In Stage 2 interviews focussed on processes for designing, planning, commissioning, managing and delivering activities. In Stage 3, interviews explored views on the delivery of activities and lessons learned about effective implementation, outcomes and impacts achieved, legacy and sustainability. Some staff within the Welsh Government responsible for developing and commissioning activities

were no longer in post and therefore we were not able to obtain their perspective.

- **Case study research:** In Stage 2, two half-day workshops were conducted for case study activity managers, one in North Wales and one in South Wales. Facilitated discussions drew out views on the commissioning process, how activities had been developed, partnership working and delivery. Participants of case study activities were also interviewed. In Stage 3, case study research included interviews with activity managers, delivery staff, delivery partners, referral partners, and participating young people and professionals. Typically, a one or two day visit to the project site was carried out. In total, 183 participants (162 young people and 21 professionals) were interviewed, 56 delivery staff and 17 referral partner staff.
- **Review of evaluation and project reports:** Evaluation reports commissioned by joint sponsors and project reports were reviewed to identify evidence of outcomes and impacts. Some of the evaluation reports did not present robust evidence about outcomes for young people, which limited their usefulness.
- **Telephone interviews with 10 wider stakeholders (Stage 3 only):** Telephone interviews were conducted with national stakeholders including Principal Youth Officers, representatives of voluntary sector umbrella bodies, and non-sponsor members of the steering group. Interviews explored views on: how Reach the Heights fits in the wider strategic and policy agenda for NEETs and young people in Wales; how this has changed and whether Reach the Heights has responded to this; how the projects were developed and implemented; and the learning and legacy.
- **Reflecting on the research findings with young people (Stage 3 only):** Six young people from the group who had reflected on the research questions during the scoping stage were brought together again to discuss the emerging study findings.

#### Stage 4: Additional research to address gaps MI:

12. Through the scoping stage and the initial analysis of MI, significant gaps were identified in the MI collected by the Welsh Government and joint sponsors. The main gaps were data on:

- Outputs, outcomes and expenditure at the level of individual activities;
- Short and medium-term outcomes which are stepping stones towards the longer term outcomes of progressing into furthering learning or gaining a qualification (such as completing a part qualification, completing a voluntary placement or remaining in education or training); and
- Outcomes for professionals.

13. Although additional data was submitted by some sponsors in January 2013, this was still insufficient. We therefore conducted some additional qualitative and quantitative research tasks to fill a few of these gaps, which are detailed in the main report.

#### **The effectiveness of processes for designing and developing the Reach the Heights projects**

##### *Evidence of need and gaps in services*

14. The project business plans accept the challenges faced by young people as read and widely understood. They refer to a wider consultation but do not present findings and draw on some research evidence which provides supplementary evidence of needs. Some of the evidence quoted appears less relevant and useful for identifying needs, such as a small scale qualitative study in one local authority area.

15. The joint sponsor business plans drew on some additional evidence about young people's needs, such as national statistics, findings from national consultations and large scale surveys.

16. The project business plans state an expectation for national activities delivered locally that would support existing local provision. However, they

do not map, either by local authority area or region, existing mainstream or other ESF initiatives to demonstrate how Reach the Heights activities would fill gaps and add value. Instead, general areas of service need are presented.

17. The joint sponsor business plans considered the scope of other services and projects in Wales to some degree to define how proposed activities would complement existing provision, but none carried out detailed mapping.
18. Nearly all stakeholders were concerned that some project activities and services were duplicating rather than filling gaps in local provision.
19. Broad expectations for fit with mainstream services are presented, with limited detail about expected referral and progression routes between services.

#### *Targets*

20. Most of the targets in the business plan relate to ESF related objectives rather than Welsh Government policy objectives.
21. There is limited evidence that targets were formulated on the basis of an assessment of supply and demand and estimated costs to achieve outputs and outcomes.

#### *Evidence of what works in achieving outcomes for at risk and NEET young people*

22. The business plans propose wide-ranging activities for NEET and at risk young people, including participatory arts activities, citizenship activities, intensive coaching support for young people in the youth justice system, information and advice and STEM engagement activities. In making the case for activities, the project and joint sponsor business plans draw on some evidence of what works in achieving outcomes, but this could have been much more comprehensive and robust.

## **The effectiveness of the processes for commissioning, delivering and managing the Reach the Heights projects**

### *Commissioning*

23. The commissioning process was delayed while decisions were taken at the mid-project review stage about priorities for the remainder of the delivery period by WEFO and the Welsh Government. This meant that for many joint sponsors commissioning and delivery was concentrated in the later stages, creating significant pressures.
24. A few joint sponsors reported that commissioning was affected by the level of match funding available. They noted that the targets for match funding had been defined before the economic downturn. When it came to trying to secure other sources of funding in 2008 and 2009, far less funding was available than had been anticipated when the project was being planned.
25. Several joint sponsors had limited experience of commissioning through competitive contracting and reported that they would have liked greater support from the Welsh Government to establish processes.
26. Most joint sponsors assessed tendering organisations against proven ability to engage the target group, evidence of partnerships with key stakeholders and ability to record, monitor and evaluate. Although price/cost was a consideration for most joint sponsors, it was generally not a key criterion against which bids were assessed.
27. Joint sponsors generally did not conduct research to benchmark unit costs to assess bids nor did they vary the approach to commissioning according to the size of contracts, suggesting that in some cases proportionality and value for money may not have been achieved.
28. Although they had been initially sceptical about the added value of the commissioning process, several joint sponsors reported that it had brought added value. For example, target groups that would not have otherwise been reached had been supported and new partnerships had been formed that will enhance provision for the target groups of young people in the future.



### *Establishment and set up*

29. In most cases joint sponsors did not collect MI data from delivery agents beyond what was required by WEFO. Some joint sponsors who were delivering activities directly collected additional MI but this was not passed on to the team in the Welsh Government managing the programme and was often kept in hard copy.
30. A major challenge for joint sponsors in issuing clear instructions to delivery agents was a lack of clear information from the Welsh Government about which participants counted towards ESF targets and the MI required.
31. Joint sponsors briefed delivery agents on monitoring and reporting requirements but nonetheless experienced difficulties in obtaining data from providers who, in some cases, had no previous experience of ESF funding.
32. Several delivery agents expressed the view that because many partner organisations were in receipt of ESF-funding for other projects, there was a reluctance among some agencies to collaborate and refer young people to their activities because of fear that they would not count towards the target for their own activity.

### *Delivery*

33. Joint sponsors established a range of mechanisms, including monitoring visits, observation of activities, and monthly progress reports, for monitoring and quality assuring delivery by contracted organisations and also their own direct delivery. Some strengthened processes during the life of the project, for example, increasing the frequency of update reports or visits, or refining requirements for information to be provided. However, most did not collect MI data other than that required for ESF purposes, which means a narrow range of outputs and outcomes have been monitored.
34. In general, it does not appear that quality assurance and monitoring processes were varied according to the size and duration of contracts. As

a result, some joint sponsors have found they have spent a disproportionate amount of time managing small contracts.

35. Contracted delivery agents and activity managers within joint sponsor organisations recruited young people from a range of partner organisations including Careers Wales, youth offending teams, youth clubs, Pupil Referral Units, schools, other voluntary and community sector organisations and key local authority services. In general, recruitment of participants appears to have been smooth and resulted in the targeted young people being offered access to additional opportunities.
36. Participants (both young people and professionals), were generally positive about the process of being recruited to activities. They mostly felt they had sufficient information about the activity beforehand and that the information they received made the activity appealing.
37. After being recruited to activities, the needs of young people have been assessed in many different ways. Some delivery agents incorporated Demonstrating Success into their assessment process but there was a general view that Demonstrating Success is better suited to intensive one to one work over a long time period. Some of the young people described the assessment tools used by activities, such as a scale to assess how optimistic young people felt about their futures. They found this useful and easy to understand.
38. Sponsors, delivery staff and young people considered that the following were effective in engaging NEET and at risk young people: offering young people a high degree of choice in activities; ensuring youth workers have the skills to build positive relationships with young people based on mutual respect and trust; delivering highly practical activities that are distinct to typical classroom activities; and ensuring support is offered over time to strengthen impacts. These findings support evidence in the literature about effective practice in achieving outcomes for NEET and at risk young people.

### *Management of the Reach the Heights projects*

39. There was agreement among joint sponsors that change of staff within the Project Management team within the Welsh Government led to inconsistent and untimely information and guidance.
40. Joint sponsors were generally disappointed that the central MI database had been established later than expected and that they could not directly upload MI. They considered that this would have cut down on the time and resources required for MI collection and submission.
41. Generally, joint sponsors considered that the Project Management Group meetings had been useful to address operational issues in relation to MI and quarterly claims but this had to some extent prevented a wider emphasis on sharing of learning and expertise between joint sponsors.
42. There was also consensus among joint sponsors that the Project Steering and Advisory Group had failed to involve senior policy leads within the Welsh Government and representatives from key national partners despite the best endeavours of the programme management team in the Welsh Government. This is unsurprising given other Convergence Area ESF programmes targeting the same groups of young people have similar groups established.

### **Achievement of aims and objectives in the business plan**

43. There has been a substantial underspend in Reach the Heights: the budget was initially almost £50 million but the final spend was £29 million.
44. The projects achieved their overall throughput targets: in total over 31,000 young people and 2,160 professionals participated in Reach the Heights (15,974 young people and 1,160 professionals in First Footholds and 15,786 young people and over 1,000 professionals in Routes to the Summit).
45. However, there have been difficulties in targeting: significantly fewer NEET young people were engaged in activities than anticipated (around a fifth of participants were NEET compared to the original target for almost half of young people to be NEET); in First Footholds, a greater proportion of 11-

13 year olds participated than expected (the original target was for 30% (5,130 young people) compared to the 40% (6,457 young people) who actually participated); and both projects could have been more effective in targeting ethnic minorities.

46. Specific at risk groups mentioned in the business plan – young people with additional learning needs, young disabled people and young people in the youth justice system – have been effectively engaged in projects.
47. Performance against targets was not consistent across sponsors, with some significantly overachieving against certain indicators and some significantly underachieving. This suggests that the targets were not always appropriate for the activities.
48. Project activities have been disproportionately provided in some areas compared to others. There is no clear rationale for this geographical variation in the Convergence area.
49. There is relatively strong evidence that both projects have led to improved personal and social skills among young people. Activities that have been particularly effective in doing so appear to be:
  - In First Footholds, The Arts Council of Wales participatory arts activities, the DFES Transition Key Worker activity and the Education and Learning Youth Justice activity;
  - In Routes to the Summit, one to one mentoring and music-based group workshops delivered by Community Music Wales and informal and non-formal learning opportunities delivered by the Urdd.
50. Some of the aims in the business plan have been achieved. In First Footholds, these include:
  - Developing and delivering training packages in innovative approaches to engagement for professionals who are front line contacts with young people;
  - Providing locally based and innovative support for young people, through a wide range of activities.And for Routes to the Summit:
  - Developing a range of information, advice and guidance and support for young people on learning, career and lifestyle issues (primarily

through the CLIC website and the SNAP Cymru activities, although a degree of information and guidance was embedded in many activities);

- Developing training resources on areas such as managing budgets and financial capability for teachers and other professionals;
- Delivering a range of interventions to young people who are likely to underachieve to ensure that they can achieve a higher level of qualification through new learning routes (through activities delivered by the Urdd and Community Music Wales).

51. However, some key aims in the business plans have not been achieved.

For First Footholds, these include:

- Developing, piloting and implementing systematic and innovative approaches to identifying NEET and at risk young people;
- Developing Wales-wide systems for keeping in touch with young people who are NEET; and
- Providing opportunities for young people to undertake short training programmes in work related skills and apply these through work related experience.

And for Routes to the Summit:

- Increasing opportunities for work type experience linked to key employers and industries.

52. The aims and objectives set out in the business plan in relation to the cross-cutting theme of equal opportunities appear broadly to have been achieved.

53. Although it is not possible to make a full assessment of whether all activities have effectively embedded environmental sustainability, there are several examples in both projects of activities that focus on issues related to the local environment. A key aim in Routes to the Summit of offering young people the opportunity to undertake work placements and volunteering in environmental organisations has not been achieved.

54. There were few activities that sought to identify and disseminate examples of good practice – a key aim of both projects' plans. Those activities subject to external evaluation (activities delivered by the Urdd, SNAP

Cymru, Arts Council of Wales, Education and Learning Youth Justice) will partly contribute to this aim if evaluation reports are circulated.

55. The activities that have been delivered to professionals and young people in both projects are generally relevant to the policy objectives of Extending Entitlement and the subsequent Youth Engagement and Action Plan but the low numbers of NEET young people engaged means the contribution to Delivering Skills that Work for Wales, the government's NEET reduction strategy, was limited.

### *Additionality*

56. In general, joint sponsors, delivery partners, referral organisations and some stakeholders considered that the outcomes achieved would not have happened in the absence of the programme. They agreed that Reach the Heights funding has allowed delivery to take place at a greater scale than would otherwise have been possible and that this has allowed more young people and professionals to be reached from a wider geographic area.

57. Significantly, though, stakeholders considered that the lack of comprehensive needs assessment at the start of the project and inadequate involvement of regional and local stakeholders has reduced added value and increased the potential for duplication rather than addressed gaps in provision.

58. The low numbers of NEET participants and the higher than expected numbers of at risk young people indicates beneficiaries outside the intended target group have benefited from the project.

59. There is no evidence of displacement or substitution of other activities.

### **Legacy and sustainability**

#### *Legacy*

60. Many of the activities can identify wider benefits and legacies such as the increased capacity of professionals and increased organisational capacity

through improved partnership working, better business processes, and development of tools and resources for future use.

### *Sustainability*

61. In June 2013, most activities had not secured funding to be sustained. Many joint sponsors highlighted the challenges of securing ongoing funding for Reach the Heights in the current economic downturn. Stakeholders reported that because Reach the Heights has not shared learning, awareness of activities is low among potential funders.
62. Joint sponsors accepted that several activities have worked in achieving outcomes for young people (although this is not based on robust monitoring and evaluation in all cases) and that, in principle, they should be sustained. Sponsors are currently seeking funding to sustain these activities and are waiting to hear whether submitted bids have been successful.
63. Some activities are being sustained and have secured ongoing funding. These include, in First Footholds, Children in Wales training for professionals about how to improve young people's participation in decision making, components of the Save the Children work, and Transition Key Workers in some local authorities. In Routes to the Summit, these include: Community Music Wales NEET mentoring, SNAP Cymru training and family support and some of the Urdd's informal and non-formal learning in Welsh.

### **Conclusions: lessons for planning, management and delivery**

64. There are ways in which large-scale projects and programmes like Reach the Heights could be developed, managed and delivered differently to improve their efficiency and effectiveness, increase the outcomes achieved, and ensure they provide learning for mainstream provision by government as well as the third sector.

## *Development of projects*

65. All projects and activities should be based on a logic chain that clearly articulates the rationale (ie what problems is the project or activity addressing, what gaps are being addressed, why is there a need for the project or activity); inputs; activities; outputs; intended short term and medium term outcomes; and expected impacts. In order to arrive at this logic chain, there should be extensive scoping and research. In particular:

- Future projects should begin with a detailed mapping exercise conducted at regional or local authority level to understand existing mainstream and ESF provision so that gaps can be effectively identified. This should be conducted using a combination of methods including desk-based research and analysis and stakeholder consultation. Draft findings of the gap assessment should be shared with key stakeholders for quality assurance and to achieve consensus on the priorities to be addressed.
- A systematic review of evidence about what works in achieving the expected outcomes of the project should be carried out and used to inform the nature of activities (what, how long, how, for whom). Local authority stakeholders should also have the opportunity to contribute knowledge about what works in local contexts as part of this process.
- Before commissioning there should be a thorough market review to: understand the solutions that may be available and to get feedback on how the requirement might be best met; decide the number and nature of suppliers; and assess what procurement model is most appropriate and scale/size/duration of contracts should be let.
- Clear definitions of key target groups should be developed and agreed between all stakeholders at the start of the project and the potential for cross referral identified to be built into targets and contract requirements.
- Targets should be based on a comprehensive assessment of supply and demand that takes into account the total target group



population, evidence of need, other provision for the target group, the likely take up of activities and appropriate information about supply costs to achieve outputs and outcomes based on benchmark data.

- Targets should be set for activities, rather than at project level, and should include geographic targets.
- The process for quality review of business plans should be improved to ensure greater scrutiny and challenge of the evidence and rationale presented and to move from an initial idea to a refined plan. As part of this, there should be opportunities for input from policy leads and expert practitioners. This should apply to internal joint sponsors as much as external sponsors.

### *Steering and management*

66. The mechanisms for steering large-scale ESF projects should be adapted to ensure all relevant strategic and operational stakeholders can be effectively engaged:

- Given the practical barriers to having a policy lead on each steering group of the many ESF projects in Wales, thematic policy groups should be established that oversee all projects relevant to their policy areas. Their role should be to monitor and facilitate contribution to policy objectives and to collect and disseminate learning about what works in achieving policy objectives.
- There should also be regional or sub-regional operational groups that engage a wide range of delivery organisations. The role of these groups should be to ensure activities match regional needs and fill gaps in provision and to facilitate operational partnerships that support outcomes for young people.

### *Delivery*

67. Commissioning is an important stage in ensuring that cost effective activities are provided which meet the aims and outcomes of the project.

- A clear rationale should be provided for why some activities are contracted and others are delivered directly by sponsors.
- When the decision is made that an activity needs to be contracted, the Welsh Government should provide a contracting expert to work closely with sponsors who do not have this expertise in house. Advice and guidance should be provided about how to conduct a market review prior to contracting, drawing up specifications, and ensuring monitoring and quality assurance are proportionate to the size of the contract.
- Providers bidding for contracts should be required to demonstrate their existing relationships with delivery and referral partners, including statements from partners that they will support delivery of the activity.
- Events should also be provided at a local level to facilitate operational partnerships between local authorities, voluntary and community and private sector organisations.
- To achieve positive education, training and employment outcomes for NEET or at risk young people, delivery should take place over a sufficient timeframe to enable youth professionals time to build a rapport with young people and to achieve meaningful outcomes that are more likely to be sustained. This requires activities' budgets and timeframes to be understood when they are commissioned.
- Monitoring of delivery should focus on both administrative processes for collecting, validating and submitting ESF data but also providing expert advice and guidance on how to adapt delivery to improve outcomes.

### *Learning*

68. Formative as well as summative evaluation should be a feature of future projects. External evaluators should be appointed at project inception

rather than mid-way through to work in collaboration with sponsors to establish robust processes for monitoring and evaluation of the achievement of ESF and Welsh Government policy objectives. Emerging learning should be shared regularly throughout the project with sponsors and stakeholders. In particular:

- There should be centralised collection of MI data at activity level. This should include data on key components of each section of the logic model underpinning the project (inputs, activities, short and medium term outcomes and impacts).
- Where required, capacity building support should be provided at the start of the project and on an ongoing basis to sponsors to enable them to effectively monitor and evaluate. This could include guidance to shape a logic chain for particular activities, provision of appropriate data collection tools and guidance on how data can be analysed regularly to inform delivery.
- A dissemination strategy should be established from the start of the project that includes opportunities for stakeholders to come together during the project to reflect on learning from the formative monitoring and evaluation.
- Evaluation should focus on ensuring it is possible to assess what is working to achieve the outcomes expected of activities with priority to those which are less well tested/being adapted and the truly experimental. Only then will there be evidence to underpin decisions by funders to provide funding.

### **Conclusions: lessons for policy makers and funders**

69. There were many missed opportunities to provide lessons from the activities in the projects. As a consequence it is not clear whether citizenship activities, for example, provide skills or whether arts activities, for example, re-engage young people in learning or in pursuing positive activities. There are relatively few findings which can be drawn out to make positive statements about what activities appear to be working to

contribute to key policy outcomes, how the activities should be delivered effectively to achieve the outcomes desired, and what activities engage young people so that they will acquire skills that they would not otherwise obtain from formal learning.

70. If this is to be achieved in future ESF programmes of this kind, it is important that policy makers and funders in Wales draw on the lessons above and:

- Are clear about the research questions that they wish to address as well as the outcomes they expect from the interventions for the target groups.
- Build systems for collecting MI and evidencing the outcomes from the outset (for all beneficiaries).
- Support learning throughout the programme in parallel to operational management arrangements, and ensuring that learning feeds into the needs of policy makers as well as those implementing policies on the ground.
- Ensure that learning from research literature is critically reviewed and embedded at the outset in the work of commissioners and delivery agents so that activities reflect what is known about what works and where experimental approaches need to be carefully assessed.
- Coordinate commissioning and provide continuity of coordination as well as delivery.
- Develop exit and dissemination strategies at the start of projects and activities.
- Provide support and training of sponsors to match the knowledge, skills and competences needed to participate in such programmes as commissioners and delivery agents with a prime role in the learning and evaluation.

# 1 Introduction

## Reach the Heights projects

- 1.1 Reach the Heights was a £29 million initiative part-funded between 2008 and 2013 through Priority 1 of the European Structural Fund (ESF) Convergence Operational Programme for West Wales and the Valleys, which aims to prepare young people for future employment by raising their aspirations and increasing their participation in learning.
- 1.2 Reach the Heights consisted of two projects – First Footholds, funded under Theme 1: Tackling Underachievement (which aims to improve the educational outcomes of young people at risk of underachieving), and Routes to the Summit, funded under Theme 2: Raising Skills and Aspirations (which aims to support young people to make a successful transition into employment). The projects delivered a range of activities and services to young people and also a significant amount of capacity building and development support to people working within the youth sector.
- 1.3 The projects were overseen by a lead sponsor, the Welsh Government, who worked in partnership with ten joint sponsor organisations including eight voluntary and community sector organisations (The Arts Council of Wales, Children in Wales, Funky Dragon, Save the Children, Community Music Wales, SNAP Cymru, Techniquest and Urdd Gobaith Cymru) and two departments within the Welsh Government.
- 1.4 Following on from an earlier interim evaluation by BMG Research and Wavehill Consulting, ICF GHK was commissioned in 2012 to conduct the final evaluation covering the period 2010 to 2013. The interim evaluation was not published.

## Purpose of the study

- 1.5 The aims of the final evaluation of Reach the Heights are to assess:

- The extent to which the two projects making up Reach the Heights, First Footholds and Routes to the Summit, have been delivered effectively and achieved their expected objectives over the period from July 2010 to March 2013;
- Which activities have been effective and can be continued on a sustainable basis;
- Which activities should influence the delivery of other and future interventions with the same aims; and,
- What has worked well with the management and implementation of the programme, in order to influence the arrangements for other large scale programmes with similar objectives and target groups.

1.6 In order to achieve these aims, the following specific objectives were defined:

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of the processes for delivering Reach the Heights (from design and management to implementation and data collection arrangements) which includes assessing how well it has:
  - Established activities to complement other services and initiatives and provided a coherent portfolio of activities that provide progressive pathways for young people from disengagement to employment or training;
  - Used research and development to shape its activities and the approaches they have adopted successfully (particularly in the three activities which have explicitly used a research and development approach);
  - Targeted young people who will benefit from the programme. This includes young people with special educational needs (SEN), disabilities, those in the criminal justice system (CJS) and those who are or at risk of becoming not in employment, education or training (NEET)
  - Provided early interventions which have engaged those at risk and used innovative methods of successfully engaging different groups of young people;

- Distributed resources appropriately across the target groups and across the Convergence area; and
  - Provided management arrangements which have ensured a match between activities and the programme and projects' aims from commissioning through to implementation.
2. To evaluate the overall effectiveness of Reach the Heights at the programme, project and activity levels, which includes assessing the extent to which it has:
- Realised its aims and objectives and targets as set out in the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) business plan (at the three levels) including the targets for participants: entering and remaining in work, education and training; achieving qualifications; participating in positive activities and their sustained engagement in these;
  - Achieved its outcomes and impacts with a beneficial impact on young people not just in relation to learning and accredited skills but also in skills and aspirations, well being and motivation and soft skills from non-formal learning activities; and
  - Contributed to Welsh Government policy initiatives and ambitions for young people.
3. To draw lessons and recommendations to inform:
- The development of future interventions;
  - The management and delivery of future large programmes with multiple activities;
  - A sustainability plan for the activities funded when the contribution from ESF comes to an end which draws on the extent of mainstreaming taking place and evidence of effective activities which suggests what should be shared and disseminated; and
  - The identification of good practice which should be shared and disseminated.

## Limitations of the study

- 1.7 The limited availability of Management Information (MI) and other robust evaluations of activities commissioned means that this final evaluation has had to depend on qualitative data. It is therefore unable to fulfil all of its requirements to evaluate the projects' performance and to assess whether ambitions have been met.
- 1.8 There are three significant gaps.
- 1.9 First, the only outputs and outcomes that have been systematically and centrally recorded across the projects are 'ESF outcomes' defined by WEFO. These outcomes are designed to help track the engagement of young people with the labour market and as such, they record information in relation to qualifications gained and participants entering further learning. Given that Reach the Heights, and First Footholds in particular, targets those young people who are particularly marginalised, these outcomes do not adequately capture the steps towards training and employment (such as completing part qualifications, completing a voluntary placement, remaining in education or training, sustaining participation in a positive social or leisure activity, and improving a generic skill). Instead, on the ESF returns, such outcomes have been grouped together under the generic heading of 'other positive outcomes.'
- 1.10 Second, most sponsors did not develop their own monitoring systems to record in more detail these other positive outcomes which would demonstrate the value of their activities and demonstrate the achievement of objectives set out in their business cases and the business case for Reach the Heights. Nor while delivering capacity building activities did they collect data on outcomes for professionals and organisations participating in these. A few activities have measured changes to young people's social and emotional dispositions and skills. Where this data is available, we draw on it as part of our assessment of outcomes achieved. In the main though there is only evidence which is based on self-reporting and a small proportion of beneficiaries.
- 1.11 Third, the MI is generally not available at activity level. This means the qualitative findings about process and outcomes of individual activities



cannot be contextualised by performance data nor can the activities be compared or benchmarked to assess whether they have provided value for money or provide evidence of what works to merit future investment. In addition, analysis of which activities have effectively targeted young people and where activities have been delivered cannot be undertaken.

1.12 Therefore, much of the evidence presented in relation to outcomes is qualitative in nature and draws on relatively small samples. This evidence allows us to draw robust conclusions about the processes for designing, managing and implementing Reach the Heights. It also provides an insight into the activities and features of their delivery that appear to contribute to positive outcomes. In the absence of appropriate MI, it is not however sufficient to allow us to draw robust and general conclusions about the impact of Reach the Heights and the lessons that could be drawn from the investment to inform future service delivery for young people.

1.13 In order to assess the outcomes and impacts of the projects and activities, we drew up the following to grade the quality of the evaluative evidence we have for analysis (Box 1 below). At the start of Chapters 5 and 6 we summarise the evidence base for the evaluation of the key activities' achievements. Most of the evidence we draw on is from categories C, D or E.

#### **Box 1 Grading of quality of evidence**

- Grade A: Strong quantitative evidence (large representative sample size or total population) and strong qualitative evidence (triangulates views of a large sample of all stakeholders).
- Grade B: Strong quantitative evidence (large representative sample size) but more limited qualitative evidence (for example, limited triangulation between views of all stakeholders and insufficient numbers, such as only views of joint sponsor leads and delivery staff but no views of young people, parents or referral partners)
- Grade C: Little quantitative evidence (quantitative evidence from a small sample possibly unrepresentative) but good qualitative evidence (triangulates views of a

large sample of all stakeholders).

- Grade D: No quantitative evidence or very limited quantitative evidence (small sample size, or quantitative data that we know is problematic, such as the quantitative data in relation to qualifications gained, that does not include information on part-qualifications and accredited units) and limited qualitative evidence (some triangulation but insufficient scale and coverage)
- Grade E: no quantitative evidence and no qualitative evidence beyond the delivery agents.

## **Methodology**

1.14 The research was carried out in four stages, which are described below. The Reach the Heights project manager and members of the Reach the Heights delivery team (at the time) took part in semi-structured interviews and provided information at various points throughout the evaluation.

### *Stage 1: Scoping*

#### Developing the evaluation framework

1.15 We carried out extensive scoping between June and August 2012 in order to develop a sound understanding of what Reach the Heights was expected to achieve. This included:

- An inception meeting with the Welsh Government to receive a briefing on the projects;
- The collection and review of MI about the projects;
- A review of key project documents such as business plans, implementation plans, progress reports and evaluation reports; and
- Scoping interviews with project leads and key delivery staff within the Welsh Government and each of the joint sponsors.

1.16 The key output of the scoping stage of the study was logic models for First Footholds and Routes to the Summit (0). The logic models present

the ‘theory of change’ for each project by setting out the underpinning rationale and the link between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and longer term impacts. The logic models were used as the basis of an impact evaluation framework (0 and 0) to assess performance and legacy. In addition, we developed a process evaluation framework (0) to assess design, commissioning and implementation.

### Case study sample selection

- 1.17 During the scoping stage, we also firmed up the supplementary research we would do to assess process and performance through case studies. We identified 14 case study activities (out of over 150 activities), seven delivered under First Footholds and seven under Routes to the Summit. At least one activity case study was selected from each joint sponsor organisation and for those joint sponsors receiving greater allocations of funding and participant numbers, additional case study activities were selected. In making our selection, we excluded activities that did not have participants (such as developing training materials or websites, or conducting research and consultation exercises); were subject to a separate independent evaluation; or were too small in scale to merit in depth research. A list of the case study activities selected can be found in 0.
- 1.18 Across the case study sample, we included a mix of different types of activity; for example, participation in a structured social and leisure activity (sports and physical activities, art, volunteering, or attending a club or society); participation in decision making and governance; information, advice and guidance; training young people to be trainers; Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) engagement activities. We also included activities with different target groups, including professionals, NEET young people, and young people at risk of becoming NEET.

## Engaging young people to reflect on the research questions

1.19 We worked in collaboration with Funky Dragon, one of the external joint sponsors, to carry out a workshop with young people. The purpose of the workshop was to ensure young people have the opportunity to inform the design of research questions for the study in a way that is meaningful and complies with the Welsh Government's National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation. We carried out participatory activities with a group of 12 young people aged 11-20 from seven local authorities in the Convergence area. The activities explored views on the main barriers to education, training and employment faced by young people, their views on what works well in providing support to young people to engage with or stay in education, training and employment, and their views on the Reach the Heights projects and what are the most and least important aspects of the projects. On the basis of participants' comments, we identified a set of research questions that young people considered the evaluation should focus on.

## Literature review

1.20 We reviewed evidence about effective practice in the delivery of interventions to support the continued engagement or re-engagement of children and young people who are not in education, employment or training, or who are at risk of being so. We used EBSCO to search a range of academic full text and abstract databases. We also searched the websites of government departments and agencies and charitable organisations engaged in research. Our inclusion criteria were that each item must be:

- Robust in research design: as far as possible, we identified systematic literature reviews and evaluations which drew on larger samples of beneficiaries, measurement of distance travelled and sufficiently in depth case studies to provide robust findings).

- Published since 2006: in a few cases, where the evidence was particularly relevant, we included studies published before 2006.
- 1.21 We focussed mainly on UK evidence but where relevant drew on evidence from elsewhere. We also focussed primarily on peer reviewed research but also included research and evaluation studies commissioned by UK government departments and agencies and third sector organisations.
- 1.22 The purpose of the literature review was to identify evidence about features of effective practice in engaging and re-engaging NEET and at risk young people in order to assess whether these were demonstrated by Reach the Heights activities. In addition, the review sought to identify benchmark activities. These are similar activities to those delivered under Reach the Heights, which have been subject to evaluation and therefore provide a benchmark for outcomes and achievements.
- 1.23 The review has informed an assessment of whether activities demonstrate features of effective practice. We were not, though, able to benchmark Reach the Heights activities against comparator activities because of the lack of evaluation evidence available about Reach the Heights activities.
- 1.24 The literature review is presented in Annex 5.

*Stage 2: Interim evaluation and Stage 3: Impact evaluation*

- 1.25 Broadly, the purpose of Stage 2 (September 2012 to January 2013) was to gather evidence about the processes for designing, managing and implementing Reach the Heights while the purpose of Stage 3 (January 2013 to June 2013) was to assess the impacts of the projects. Therefore, the same key research tasks were carried out for each stage of the research but with a focus on processes in Stage 2 and a focus on learning about delivery, outcomes, impacts, legacy and sustainability in Stage 3.
- 1.26 The research tasks undertaken in both stages are described below

## Establishing a list of activities delivered under Reach the Heights

1.27 Because a central record had not been kept, we dedicated a substantial effort to developing a definitive list of activities delivered by each of the joint sponsors, which included basic details such as: the target group for each activity, where activities were being delivered in the Convergence area, the nature of the activity, the allocated budget and whether the activity was delivered directly or contracted to other providers. This task was ongoing across the two stages of research and drew on phone conversations and emails with joint sponsors and data submitted by joint sponsors in January 2013. This also established what intended activities were not delivered and what allocations of funding were not used.

## Analysis of MI

1.28 For Stage 2, our analysis focussed on analysing the quarterly claim reports from the Welsh Government to WEFO to the end of September 2012. We analysed:

- The cumulative expenditure to date broken down into key areas of expenditure;
- Total number of participants by local authority;
- Key characteristics of participants; and
- Results in terms of numbers of participants gaining qualifications, entering further learning and achieving other positive outcomes by local authority, migrant status, gender, employment status, disability, age and ethnicity.

1.29 For Stage 3, we updated this analysis to include data from the June 2013 activity claim. It should therefore be noted that any reference to project MI does not relate to final data at the point of project closure.

1.30 Through the scoping stage and the initial analysis of MI, we identified significant gaps in the MI collated by the Welsh Government and joint sponsors. The main gap was a lack of data on outputs, outcomes and expenditure at the level of individual activities. To address this, on our

advice, the Welsh Government requested joint sponsors to provide a full list of activities funded with details of their inputs, outputs and outcomes to the end of September 2012. This data (submitted in January 2013) included:

- In most cases, a list of activities delivered directly and procured, the target group for the activities and the allocated budget;
- In some cases, actual spend on activities in comparison to the allocated budget; and
- In a few cases, information about the local authority areas in which the activities were delivered.

1.31 In some cases outputs were provided at activity level (e.g. the number of participants who took part in each activity) but in the main they were not.

1.32 Therefore, in Stage 3, some additional MI analysis was carried out about:

- The types of activities delivered and spend on different types of activities. It should be noted that for some activities actual spend was not provided and so we assumed that the allocated budget was the same as expenditure; and
- The proportion of activities delivered directly by joint sponsors and the proportion contracted to external providers.

1.33 However, it was still not possible to analyse and compare which activities performed particularly well by achieving their outcomes and doing so cost effectively. Nor was it possible to analyse where activities were delivered in the Convergence area and which participants benefited from which activities.

1.34 We also analysed data provided by the project team on the characteristics of project participants that were deemed to make them at risk of becoming NEET. Data was available for most participants but some of the definitions of categories were unclear.

### In-depth interviews with joint sponsor organisations

- 1.35 During Stage 2, we conducted 20 semi-structured in-depth telephone interviews with leads within the internal and external joint sponsor organisations. The aim of the interviews was to explore how activities have been set up to address and complement other services; the specification and commissioning process; how joint sponsors have worked with the commissioned organisations to develop activities or how they have developed activities themselves; how performance has been managed; progress to date; views on being a joint sponsor; key challenges and what has worked well. Typically interviews lasted around two hours each. A few, but not all, joint sponsor organisations provided supporting documentation, such as example specifications and contracts, criteria for scoring bids and quality assurance manuals.
- 1.36 Some staff within the Welsh Government responsible for developing and commissioning activities were no longer in post and therefore we were not able to obtain their perspective. This means there are some gaps in our understanding of processes for designing and implementing activities that were the responsibility of the Welsh Government.
- 1.37 During Stage 3, we conducted further in-depth telephone interviews with all external joint sponsors and also with providers contracted by the Welsh Government to undertake work. These interviews explored final views on the delivery of activities and lessons learned about effective implementation, outcomes and impacts achieved, legacy and sustainability.

### Case study research

- 1.38 During Stage 2, we conducted two half-day workshops for case study activity managers, one in North Wales and one in South Wales. We facilitated discussions in order to draw out key themes in relation to views on the commissioning process, how activities had been developed, partnership working and delivery of activities. The activity managers were either staff within the joint sponsor organisations



responsible for a particular activity or staff within contracted delivery agents responsible for activities. We also interviewed participants of case study activities about recruitment to the activity, the content and delivery of the activity, perceived benefits and future plans. We arranged interviews to coincide with participation in an existing Reach the Heights activity or event. A researcher attended the activity and interviewed young people either before, during or afterwards, as appropriate. Therefore, interviews took place in a range of settings including schools, Pupil Referral Units, youth clubs, community centres and sport and leisure facilities.

- 1.39 During Stage 3, we conducted in-depth case study research with the 14 case study activities, including interviews with activity managers, delivery staff, delivery partners, referral partners, and participating young people and professionals. Participants were mainly those currently accessing the activity, and also a few recent completers. Typically, we carried out a one or two day visit to the project site.
- 1.40 As part of the visits we explored in more detail the key themes raised at the case study activity manager workshop, and also focussed on lessons learned about delivery, outcomes and impacts achieved, plans for ongoing delivery, and examples of legacies achieved so far. The interviews with participants had a similar focus to those carried out as part of Stage 2. For the few participants who had completed the activity some time ago, there was an emphasis on ascertaining whether reported outcomes had been sustained over time. Overall we interviewed 183 participants (162 young people and 21 professionals), 56 delivery staff and 17 referral partner staff.

#### Review of evaluation and project reports

- 1.41 We reviewed evaluation reports commissioned by joint sponsors of specific activities and 'end of project' reports, in order to identify evidence of outcomes and impacts. A full list of the reports we reviewed is included in 0. Some of the evaluation reports did not present robust

evidence about outcomes for young people, which limited the usefulness of the reports.

#### Telephone interviews with 10 wider stakeholders (Stage 3 only)

1.42 We conducted semi-structured interviews with a wider set of national stakeholders including Principal Youth Officers from several local authorities in the Convergence area, representatives of voluntary sector umbrella bodies, and non-sponsor members (at various times) of the project steering group. Interviews explored views on: how Reach the Heights fits within the wider strategic and policy agenda for NEETs and young people in Wales; how this has changed and whether Reach the Heights has responded to this; how the projects were developed and implemented; and the learning and legacy.

#### Reflecting on the research findings with young people (Stage 3 only)

1.43 We reconvened the group of young people who had reflected on the research questions during the scoping stage. Six of the 12 young people who had taken part in the original consultation were still available allowing us to seek views on the emerging study findings.

#### *Additional research to address gaps in MI*

1.44 The additional MI data submitted by joint sponsors in January 2013 did not provide sufficient information to allow the aims and objectives of the evaluation to be fulfilled. We therefore defined further qualitative and quantitative research that could potentially be undertaken from what we understood to be the MI collected by joint sponsors on activities they had commissioned which could fill some gaps. We focused on activities where limited summary MI was available; there was no independent evaluation; and there were expected to be relatively large numbers of beneficiaries. We endeavoured to add evidence from the summary of data collected on beneficiaries and the outcomes achieved, additional

case studies, and further telephone interviews with staff delivering activities and stakeholders. However, given that the timing for this additional research (between March and June 2013) coincided with the end of the Reach the Heights funding, we found that most delivery staff had moved on to new roles, often in new organisations, that paperwork had been archived, and that organisations were no longer in contact with young people and professionals that had participated in activities.

Despite this, we were still able to complete the following:

- The collection and analysis of Demonstrating Success data (or variations of Demonstrating Success data) from Funky Dragon (for 31 young people; 0.5% of Funky Dragon participants), SNAP Cymru (for 52 young people; 3% of SNAP Cymru participants), Community Music Wales (for 497 young people; 83% of Community Music Wales participants) and six Arts Council of Wales contracted providers. Funky Dragon, SNAP Cymru and the Arts Council of Wales providers had collected before and after measurements of young people's social and emotional dispositions and skills in hard copy in young people's case files; we collected the forms and analysed the data. We were not informed whether the data related to a random or purposive sample. Community Music Wales provided data in an electronic format, which we analysed. The questionnaires were administered to all young people taking part in Community Music Wales activities.
- Review and analysis of 241 SNAP Cymru case files (approximately 14% of young people supported by the organisation selected at random from across all of the local authorities in which the organisation worked) to draw out outcomes recorded. It should be noted that outcomes were mainly recorded in staff's case notes and not in a systematic format. It is therefore likely that not all outcomes are captured in case files.
- Telephone interviews with transition key workers and their managers in five local authority areas to seek views on outcomes and impacts for young people, as well as organisational outcomes.

- Telephone interviews with nine youth professionals who had used the Participation Workers Network website to seek views on the usefulness of the website and to identify any resulting improvements to professional and organisational practice as a result of using the website.
- Three interviews with organisations contracted by Funky Dragon to deliver Active Citizenship workshops. These interviews explored views on process, outcomes, learning and legacy.
- One additional interview with a member of delivery staff at Children in Wales and three young people who had benefited from support from the organisation.
- A review of 30 end of project reports out of around 75 submitted by contracted providers to the Arts Council of Wales. We selected those reports that provided the most robust level of evidence. Robustness included the use of Demonstrating Success, before and after surveys, and case studies developed using triangulation of the views of young people, project staff, and other professionals involved in the care of the young people.

### **Structure of this report**

1.45 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 assesses the case made for Reach the Heights and the evidence shaping its ambitions and activities.
- Chapter 3 presents findings about the effectiveness of the processes for managing, designing, commissioning and delivering the Reach the Heights projects.
- Chapter 4 analyses the expenditure of each project and presents evidence about the key outputs.
- Chapters 5 and 6 synthesise evidence about the outcomes and impacts achieved by each project.
- Chapter 7 considers the legacy of the projects and the components that are being sustained.

- Chapter 8 draws conclusions about the effectiveness of the processes for designing, delivering and managing the Reach the Heights and draws out learning and recommendations to inform future similar large-scale initiatives.

## **2 The Reach the Heights projects**

2.1 In this chapter we set out and assess the rationale made for Reach the Heights and its ambitions – the problems it set out to address and the reasoning behind this – and how it was proposed to meet its objectives in the activities that were funded, developed and delivered. This provides the context for our analysis of the processes for designing, commissioning and delivering the projects (Chapter 3), the performance of the projects, and the outcomes achieved (Chapters 4, 5 and 6). We draw on the business plans and interviews of stakeholders and project sponsors.

### **Context**

#### *ESF Convergence Area Priority 1*

- 2.2 The Priority 1 Strategic Framework set out two themes (tackling underachievement and raising skills and aspirations) to address challenges across the Convergence area around the attainment and achievement of young people, the skills they have in readiness for employment, and their progression to further education and work.
- 2.3 As a consequence projects funded under Priority 1 are expected to improve educational outcomes. They are expected to do this by providing a range of support to promote and ensure better transitions and progression into and through further learning and future employment. The support should ensure that more young people stay in education and progress; more gain higher level skills especially in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects with gender stereotypes challenged; and more progress to employment, raising their skills in the process.
- 2.4 As a principle, programme funding of projects under this Priority should add value to domestic strategies and budgets towards these problems

and hence contribute to the progress that they are making towards the aims of changes in aspirations and attitudes, improved attainment and achievement, and higher levels of progression at ages 16 and 18 to training, further education and employment with fewer becoming NEETs.

- 2.5 As a consequence projects should be expected, for example, to provide alternative curricular activities to engage young people and provide learning outcomes, extend Personal and Social Education (PSE) activities and enhance citizenship skills, increase the range and quality of support for young people, and provide enhanced work experience and work readiness skills. At least 70% of funding should be allocated to those aged 14-19 with priority to those who are NEET, at risk of NEET or in a specific group who have challenges in progressing or achieving as well as others, such as young people with a disability. Projects can build the capacity of young people to help their peers and the capacity of adults working with young people.

#### *Welsh government policies and strategic objectives*

- 2.6 In 2008 the Welsh Government was addressing these problems through several interlinked strategies to guide mainstream funding and provide in some instances additional specific funding. These were:
- Getting it Right, a five year action plan for Wales setting out key priorities and actions in response to the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2008;
  - The Learning Country, ten year action plan to improve the education system (2008);
  - 14-19 pathways that offered individualised learning pathways with coaching, information, advice and guidance (2004);
  - Words Talk Numbers Count to address shortfalls in basic skills and their acquisition;
  - The Science Strategy for Wales (2006);
  - Delivering Skills that Work for Wales, the national skills and employment and skills strategy (2008);

- Extending Entitlement, the flagship policy for youth support services in Wales for 11-25 year olds (2006);
- Iath Pawb, the Welsh-language strategy (2003); and
- Making the Connections, Delivering Better Services for Wales, to maximise the efficiency of public services (2004).

2.7 In line with changes in government thinking and priorities and the deepening recession these have shifted considerably but with similar (though higher) ambitions than at the time Reach the Heights was conceived.

2.8 Figure 1 lists new and replacement policies and strategic frameworks which have emerged.

**Figure 1 New policies and strategies that have been introduced since 2008**

- *The Personal and Social Education Framework for 7-19 year olds, 2008.* A new framework that provides a balanced, holistic approach to PSE and features a range of experiences to promote the personal and social development and well-being of learners.
- *Science for Wales, 2012,* which supersedes the previous strategy but has a continued emphasis on engaging and developing young people and increasing the proportion of young people studying science and pursuing STEM-related careers.
- *The National Literacy and Numeracy framework, 2012,* which provides schools with annual expected outcomes in numeracy and literacy for all learners aged 5 to 14. It informs teachers of all subjects on the requirement to apply literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. Introduced in September 2012 with roll out expected across 2013.
- *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan, 2011-15.* This strategy takes a holistic view of the issues young people face and considers the journey of children and young people, from birth to 24 years old, who may become disengaged from learning. This resulted in £49m being allocated to support specific measures for 16 years old to give them “opportunities to gain suitable skills to progress into sustainable employment” in 2011. Additional funds were made available for the Skill Build programme (open to 16 and 17 year olds). On 25 September 2013 the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology confirmed the final update of the eighteen point Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan and the move to a new six point framework for Youth Engagement and Progression in Wales. The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework Implementation plan was published on 1 October 2013. It is based on six component elements of a system, proven to be effective at increasing youth engagement and progression: identifying young people most at risk of disengagement;



better brokerage and co-ordination of support; stronger tracking and transitions of young people through the system; ensuring provision meets the needs of young people; strengthening employability skills and opportunities for employment; and greater accountability for better outcomes for young people.

- *Youth Offending Strategy delivery plan, 2009-2011*. Includes an aim to increase participation in education, training and employment of young people in the youth justice system.
- *Child Poverty Strategy, 2011*. The three strategic objectives for tackling child poverty are to: 1) reduce the number of families living in workless households; 2) improve the skills of parents and young people living in low income households so they can secure well-paid employment; and 3) reduce inequalities that exist in health, education and economic outcomes of children and families by improving the outcomes of the poorest.
- *Iaith Fyw, Iaith Byw: A living language, language for living, 2010*. A new Welsh language strategy that seeks to increase the numbers of people that can speak Welsh and choose to do so.

## Rationale

2.9 To arrive at the projects' aims and objectives and the shape of Reach the Heights, Welsh Government staff undertook consultations with young people, those working with young people and policy makers<sup>1</sup> and carried out analysis of research that highlighted needs and gaps in services for young people to support the implementation of key strategies designed to raise young people's attainment and access to further education and employment as described above. External joint sponsors also carried out consultations with children and young people, service providers and strategic stakeholders about the need for their proposed activities.

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<sup>1</sup> This included national networks such as: the All Wales Young People Organisations Network, the Development Network for Information and Advice Services, the Principal Youth Officers Cymru Group and the 14-19 Executive Group. In addition, in September 2007, a Convergence area-wide two-day event was held in Aberystwyth to raise awareness of the project among potential stakeholders.

## *Evidence of need*

2.10 The approved business plans for the two projects accept as read and widely understood the challenges faced by young people and the key national strategies that are addressing these that the projects should be supporting. They refer to the wide consultation but do not present the findings in the business plans. There does not appear to be a substantive document that presents findings and implications for the shaping of either project. Stakeholders have indicated that the process drew out other areas of need which were not included in the projects, such as the need to support young people at stages of transition, which would have generally substantiated the support for the aims and areas of activity proposed for each project.

2.11 They draw on some research evidence which provides supplementary evidence of needs in relation to challenges faced by young people in their lives. This included:

- A survey of around 3,000 young people as part of a pilot study to evaluate *Extending Entitlement*<sup>2</sup>. This provided evidence about the difficulties young people experience in their school, home, family and social lives. Key findings include that over a third of young people feel worried about their futures; almost half agreed that they had behavioural or emotional problems; almost a fifth were affected by ‘marital discord’ between parents, and around a third did not consider themselves to be involved in any positive activities. Those reporting negative experience in their lives related to family and school life were least likely to be accessing positive social and leisure activities and employment, training and education opportunities, suggesting the need to focus efforts on these young people.

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<sup>2</sup> Haines, K., Case, S., Isles, E., Rees, I., and Hancock, A., 2004. *Extending Entitlement: Making it Real*. Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/130603realen.pdf> [Accessed 31 October 2013]

- A survey, 'Our Rights, Our Story' with over 10,000 young people about their views on their needs<sup>3</sup>, which highlighted that over a third of young people struggle to access information and advice on career options, around a fifth fail to see the relevance of education to their future life and work and around a quarter have limited or no awareness of school councils.

2.12 All external and some internal sponsors were required to submit business plans, and these drew on a similar range of evidence of need in most cases. A few referenced sources, such as the Youth Cohort Study a nationally representative survey with a large sample size (to evidence the needs of disabled young people, for example) and findings from national reviews and consultations. A few also drew on national statistics about, for example, education, training and employment outcomes for particular target groups, the prevalence of additional learning needs and young people's participation in STEM subjects.

2.13 Some of the evidence quoted appears less relevant and useful for identifying needs. This includes small scale qualitative research about the reasons for young people being NEET<sup>4</sup> and the influence of their family and educational background on their current NEET status (interviews with a small sample of young people in one local authority area).

2.14 External sponsors generally considered that the consultations undertaken with young people during the planning stage and on an ongoing basis were very valuable and helped to ensure that the content and format of activities were engaging and appropriate to needs.

#### *Evidence of gaps in services and activities*

2.15 The project level business plans do not present evidence of gaps in services at regional and local levels – a key issue highlighted by nearly all of the stakeholders interviewed for the study. For example, there is no

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<sup>3</sup> Funky Dragon, 2007. *Our Rights, Our Say*, Available at: <http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/uploads/publications/15.pdf> [Accessed 31 October 2013]

<sup>4</sup> Rees, G., Williamson, H., Istance, D., 1996. Status Zero: A study of jobless school leavers in South Wales. *Research Papers in Education*, 11 (2), p.p 219-235

mapping, by local authority or region, of existing mainstream services or other ESF initiatives, to demonstrate how the Reach the Heights activities can fill gaps and add value. Several stakeholders expressed concern about duplication of services and activities rather than filling gaps in what the projects and activities proposed to deliver. However it was made clear in the business plan that both First Footholds and Reach the Summit would be expected to have national activities delivered locally that would support locally delivered activities.

2.16 What the business plans do state are general service needs for young people which draw on the consultation and some of the research quoted although it is not always clear what the strength of evidence was to support the activities to be funded. For First Footholds, the following were identified as necessary for improving young people's skills and aspirations:

- enhanced out of school opportunities to help them to access entitlements;
- early intervention to challenge attitudes to education and progression;
- support for NEETs to take steps towards going back to education or into employment;
- early intervention to prevent young people becoming NEET longer term
- improved and more consistent processes for keeping in touch with young people who are NEET; and
- financial capability resources in basic skills.

2.17 For Routes to the Summit, the following were identified as necessary for improving opportunities for learning, advice, support and guidance:

- more young people to study STEM subjects and the related need for improved support for STEM teachers to effectively engage young people in STEM subjects;
- increasing opportunities for young people to access advice and guidance and greater involvement of young people in all aspects of designing and running CLIC;

- more Welsh Language youth provision and opportunities to practise Welsh (based on evidence from the Estyn Annual Report 2005-06);
- improved PSE lessons; and
- greater opportunities for young people to understand and access their rights and to contribute to local communities.

2.18 In most cases, joint sponsor business plans considered the scope of other services and projects in Wales to some degree, in order to define how proposed activities would complement and extend existing provision rather than duplicate it. For example, activities were defined as being intended to:

- Provide opportunities for more intensive, long term support to disadvantaged young people than currently available through mainstream services (SNAP Cymru, the Urdd and Save the Children);
- Extend activity concentrated in a particular geographic location across the Convergence area (Techniquet, Community Music Wales, Children in Wales);
- Offer an existing service to different age groups, where there was evidence of demand and need which was not currently being met (the Urdd, Community Music Wales);
- Offer existing small-scale services to a greater number of participants (the Urdd, Techniquet).

2.19 But none carried out any detailed mapping. Several joint sponsors commented on difficulties in establishing an overview of existing provision and suggested that the Welsh Government could have supported this process by leading a strategic planning exercise and opportunities for local consultation with Children and Young People's Partnerships.

#### *Fit with other services*

2.20 The business plans for First Footholds and Routes to the Summit state that the projects will “*work with other national (e.g. Genesis, Skill-build*

*and Basic Skills) regional and local projects in partnership [...] to ensure that the potential for duplication is minimised and activities are complementary*. It was intended that representatives of these national and regional projects would sit on the project steering group. The business plan also noted that “*discussions are ongoing with other projects for example, the Big Lottery, around how the projects can work together to cross refer beneficiaries and fill gaps in provision as they are identified*”. These stakeholders were invited to sit on the Advisory Group and despite efforts from the project management team to encourage them to participate, they did not attend. The project management team considered that one of the main reasons senior stakeholders were not engaged was the high number of other similar advisory groups ‘competing’ for membership from the same stakeholders.

2.21 Each of the business plans also set out the intended links between First Footholds and Routes to the Summit so that there would be “*progression of individuals through the projects*”. It was anticipated that a third of participants in First Footholds would move on to participate in activities focusing on information, advice and guidance within Routes to the Summit while a fifth of participants in Routes to the Summit would be referred for structured intensive personal support and participation opportunities in First Footholds activities. There is no evidence that this has taken place<sup>5</sup> or that this was included in sponsor plans.

2.22 Referral and progression pathways between existing services and proposed project activities are not defined in their business plans. Similarly, there is limited explanation of how different project activities would relate to each other and how they would refer to other planned Priority 1 projects such as Skillbuild.

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<sup>5</sup> The MI data shows that around 1.5% of young people received support from more than one joint sponsor (mostly from two sponsors) but does not indicate whether this was within the same project or whether there was progression between the two.

## *Welsh Government policy and strategic objectives*

The joint sponsor business plans also highlight the key national policies and strategies to which proposed activities were intended to contribute. In the main, there is alignment between the project and joint sponsor business plans, with most joint sponsors stating which key national policies their activities contribute to and also providing detail about other strategies, actions and policies relevant to their particular activities. Some of the joint sponsor business plans indicated activities which would support the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and contribute to Welsh Government efforts to embed a rights-based approach within children and young people's services.

### **Ambitions**

2.23 The ambitions for Reach the Heights – the aims and objectives for the projects and their targets within the funds allocated – are set out in the business cases in line with the two themes for projects within Priority 1 of the Convergence Area's ESF Strategic Framework. Theme 1, tackling under achievement, aims to improve the educational outcomes of young people at risk of underachieving and Theme 2, raising skills and aspirations, aims to support young people to make a successful transition into employment.

### *Aims and objectives*

2.24 In line with the aims of the two Themes, the two projects had differing aims set out in their business plans:

- First Footholds aimed “*to strengthen the current position in Wales of young people aged 11-19 who are, or are at risk of becoming NEET*”. It therefore expected to focus on identifying, engaging and supporting the most vulnerable and marginalised young people who were furthest from the labour market in order to help them develop

skills and competencies that would help them to remain engaged with education and training or help them to reengage;

- Routes to the Summit aimed “*to strengthen the current position in Wales for young people aged 11-19 in relation to opportunities for learning, advice, support and guidance*”. While Routes to the Summit also supported some of the most marginalised young people including NEET young people, it expected to support young people to progress within education and into further learning.
- In support of these aims, the business plans for the two projects list specific objectives that were expected to be achieved by the end of March 2013, when the projects ended. These are presented in Box 2 and Box 3 below.

#### **Box 2 Objectives of First Footholds as stated in the original business plan, 2008**

- Develop, pilot and implement standard Convergence-wide systems for early intervention with young people who are NEET and systems for keeping in touch with NEET young people;
- Pilot, evaluate and disseminate a range of new and innovative approaches to engaging with young people;
- Deliver a structured and accredited training programme in innovative methods for engaging with young people to a wide range of front line professionals across the Convergence area with accompanying resources;
- Deliver opportunities for accredited work-related skills training to a range of young people and provide opportunities for those young people to gain experience of using the skills acquired in a work setting;
- Provide specific and tailored support to young people with SEN, disabilities or who are in the criminal justice system (with an emphasis on females) to allow them to develop skills and access opportunities for further learning and training; and
- Develop and implement transnational components to the project – *this aim was removed part-way through the project due to restrictions on international travel for civil servants*

#### **Box 3 Objectives of Routes to the Summit as stated in the original business plan, 2008**

- Develop, pilot and implement a range of information, advice, guidance and support for young people on learning, career and lifestyle issues



and provide training in personal effectiveness for young people and professionals;

- Provide enhanced Personal and Learning Coach Support to assist young people in making decisions and locating opportunities to learn and gain skills;
- Promote interest in and the take up of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects and future careers options relating to them;
- Develop and deliver training and resources that promote applied basic skills for young people including areas such as managing budgets through financial literacy/capability;
- Deliver a range of interventions to young people who are likely to underachieve and provide opportunities for those young people to achieve a higher level of qualification through new learning routes including music; and
- Create a range of new opportunities for young people to undertake work type experience and gain skills that can be used either in further learning or employment (linked to key employers and industry).

### *Targets*

2.25 The original project business plans included ESF targets agreed between the Welsh Government and WEFO. These relate to:

- The total numbers of young people the projects will support, including specific targets for participants in different age groups (11-13 year olds and 14-19 year olds), female participants and NEET participants;
- The number of young people gaining qualifications and the qualification levels to be gained, and the number of young people gaining other positive outcomes

2.26 In addition, the First Footholds business plan identified young people in the youth justice system, young people with additional learning needs and young disabled people as particularly vulnerable groups that will be supported by the project. An overall target for the numbers of young people from these groups was included. The First Footholds business plan also provided a target for the number of professionals that would participate in structured and accredited training about effective and

innovative methods for engaging with young people but did not specify particular professionals that should be targeted.

- 2.27 Neither the business plans for the two projects nor the joint sponsor business plans specified targets for the local authorities in which activities should be delivered. Instead, a broad ambition for “*uniform activity across all 15 local authority areas*” was stated, with joint sponsors required to ensure that “*all activity is delivered in all 15 Convergence areas*”.
- 2.28 Project expenditure targets are presented in the business plan broken down into key areas, such as procurement, staffing, legal and professional fees and accommodation, and also broken down to show ESF funding and expected match funding. Expenditure targets were not set for particular activities either in the project business plan or the joint sponsor business plans.
- 2.29 Overall, there is limited evidence that targets were formulated on the basis of an assessment of supply and demand and estimated costs to achieve outputs and outcomes:
- **Target numbers of young people who are NEET or at risk within the Convergence area.** The business plan does not include: data on the total NEET population to estimate what proportion it would be reasonable to support in the project; data on the NEET population in each local authority, to show where activities should be targeted; or any evidence about the estimated population of ‘at risk’ young people based on research.
  - **The population for different target activities.** In the main, the project or joint sponsor business plans do not estimate the number of young people likely to take up different activities based on benchmark activities, previous monitoring and evaluation or population data.
  - **The types of activity proposed which would make a difference and their costs.** There appears to have been limited scoping and research to establish which activities make the most difference to young people and should therefore be included in the project and

what appropriate costs are for activities to achieve desired outputs or outcomes.

## Activities

2.30 The project business plans list activities to be delivered in an annex to the main document. These include wide-ranging activities for young people at risk of becoming or who are NEET to build their personal, social, emotional skills and dispositions and to support the development of employability skills, and also capacity building and training for professionals:

2.31 Activities intended to be delivered in First Footholds include: transition support from a key worker for young people with additional learning needs; mentoring and personalised education support for young people in contact with the youth justice system; a programme of participatory arts activities; citizenship activities; training for professionals on participatory approaches; and development of systems for identifying and keeping in touch with NEET and at risk young people. And, in Routes to the Summit, activities listed include: developing information and advice provided through the CLIC website; STEM engagement activities; participatory music activities; and informal and non-formal learning opportunities for young Welsh speakers.

2.32 As expected these offer alternative approaches to learning and gaining skills and provide opportunities to enrich the skills and capacity of organisations to provide these for those at risk.

**In making the case for these activities, the project business plans draw on some evidence of what works to achieve outcomes for young people they are focusing on. This includes (see**

2.33 Table 1):

- reports of projects and pilots which have been funded previously so that they can be expanded and continued under Reach the Heights, such as participation activities delivered by Funky Dragon; research into existing national and local systems for identifying, recording, responding to and tracking young people who are NEET; and a pilot

project to develop approaches to help families tackle debt. Some of the reports, however, do not draw on evaluations of outcomes achieved which would support investment rather the reflections of managers and some qualitative often unanalysed feedback from beneficiaries;

- research into the benefits of key-working based on a person-centred approach that highlighted the need for: a high degree of choice and control for service users, effective goal setting; high quality and accessible information; empathetic key workers with good listening skills; and a flexible approach;
- research into the benefits of participatory arts activities, which identified that young people involved in community arts activities had relatively higher ambitions to continue professionally in their chosen area of arts practice, attend FE or HE courses or to secure employment and identified features of effective practice; and
- evaluative evidence about what works well in supporting young people in the youth justice system to make a successful transition from custody to the community, which showed that personal coaching was effective in helping young people to access housing, health services and diversionary activities and in helping young people to keep focused on staying out of trouble upon release.

2.34 There is no:

- research or evaluative evidence about the effectiveness of higher intensity activities in achieving outcomes for NEET and at risk young people (beyond that for young people with additional learning needs and those in the youth justice system);
- reference to any systematic literature reviews of what works to achieve the outcomes expected from Reach the Heights or of effective targeting of the at risk and NEET groups to ensure added value;
- assessment of how the nature and intensity of activities needed to be shaped to achieve the outcomes expected;

- planned activity to synthesise evidence about effective practice from the literature, particularly robust evaluation studies;
- evidence to make the case for using STEM based activities as a means to effectively engage disaffected young people; and
- evidence presented that activities, such as improving citizenship knowledge and skills, have benefits for young people who are NEET or at risk of being so.

2.35 The nature of the evidence underpinning project activities is confirmed in the interviews of project sponsors.

**Table 1 Evidence used on what works well in achieving Reach the Heights aims and objectives - project business plans**

Research	Evidence used to inform Reach the Heights
<i>Evaluation of Funky Dragon, Arad Consulting, 2008.</i>	This evaluation highlights that Funky Dragon are leading the way in the UK and Europe in the participation of young people. The research provides limited evidence on outcomes for young people participating in participatory activities, focussing more on delivery processes. Some small scale qualitative evidence on perceived benefits is presented.
<i>Hand in Hand – Arts Based Activities and Regeneration, University of Glamorgan</i>	This study identifies that young people involved in arts-based activities had relatively higher ambitions to continue professionally in their chosen area of arts practice, attend FE or HE courses or to secure employment.
Research undertaken by the Social Policy Research Unit (University of York), Norah Fry Institute (University of Bristol) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation	This research has identified a range of benefits that arise for promoting skill and engagement from a key worker approach to working with young people with SEN.
<i>Extending Entitlement ESF Project Evaluation for West Wales and the Valleys and East Wales, Fundamentals Europe (2008).</i>	The business plan notes positive benefits for beneficiaries evidenced by the evaluation but does not state which features of effective practice have led to these outcomes.
<i>Evaluation of the Personal Support for Developing Learning Pathways in Custody Pilot Projects – People and Work Unit, 2006</i>  <i>Perceptions of Young People in Custody, NFER, 2006</i>	This pilot work assesses a personal support programme delivered to young people prior to release and immediately after release and gains the views of young people on the support they require.

Source: Project business plan (2008)

- 2.36 In the main, the joint sponsor business plans provide little additional evidence of what works and rely mainly on learning from previous service delivery, which tends to be based on reflections of management and delivery staff rather than on robust research evaluation (see Table 2 and Table 3). Joint sponsors considered that their ability to draw on experiences from previous service delivery was helpful and also made it easier to engage stakeholders during the planning stage.
- 2.37 A few sponsors draw on research and evaluation evidence, such as evaluations of previous ESF projects (the Arts Council of Wales), research into lessons learned from seven child poverty initiatives (Children in Wales) and good practice case studies from the National Behaviour and Attendance Review (SNAP Cymru).

**Table 2 Evidence used on what works well in achieving outcomes: First Footholds joint sponsor business plans**

Joint sponsor	Evidence used on what works well in achieving outcomes
Arts Council of Wales	External evaluation of previous projects delivered under ESF Objectives 2 and 3
Children in Wales	Learning from pilots of the proposed activity in the previous two years Joseph Rowntree Foundation report that highlights lessons learned from seven child poverty initiatives, including those with disabled young people
Funky Dragon	- Learning from previous service delivery although this is not based on robust monitoring and evaluation.
Save the Children (STC)	Feedback from young people and learning from previous programmes delivered between 2005-08. For example Making a Change was heavily based on STC's 'Inspiring local and national change' which was thoroughly evaluated.
Support for Learners Division	Previous experience of delivering community-based activities, including from pilot programmes.

Source: Interviews with joint sponsors and joint sponsor business plans

**Table 3 Evidence used on what works well in achieving outcomes: Routes to the Summit joint sponsor business plans**

Joint sponsor	Evidence used on what works well in achieving outcomes
Community Music Wales	Previous experience of delivering community-based activities.
SNAP	Evidence of best practice from case studies presented in the National

Joint sponsor	Evidence used on what works well in achieving outcomes
	Attendance and Behaviour Review. Learning from their previous service delivery.
Techniquest	Learning from previous service delivery
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	Learning from their own previous service delivery

Source: Interviews with joint sponsors and joint sponsor business plans

## Summary

### *Context*

- The Reach the Heights projects were expected to contribute to challenges in relation to the attainment and achievement of young people, the skills they have in readiness for employment, and their progress to further education and work. These challenges are part of the Priority 1 Strategic Framework and there were several interlinked Welsh Government policies addressing them in 2008.

### *Evidence of need and gaps in services*

- The project business plans accept the challenges faced by young people as read and widely understood. They refer to a wider consultation but do not present findings and draw on some research evidence which provides supplementary evidence of needs. Some of the evidence quoted appears less relevant and useful for identifying needs, such as a small scale qualitative study in one local authority area.
- The joint sponsor business plans drew on some additional evidence about young people's needs, such as national statistics, findings from national consultations and large scale surveys.
- The project business plans state an expectation for national activities to be delivered locally that would support existing local provision. However, they do not map, either by local authority area or region,

existing mainstream or other ESF initiatives to demonstrate how the Reach the Heights activities would fill gaps and add value. Instead, general areas of service need are presented

- The joint sponsor business plans considered the scope of other services and projects in Wales to some degree to define how proposed activities would complement existing provision, but none carried out detail mapping.
- Nearly all stakeholders were concerned that some project activities and services were duplicating rather than filling gaps in local provision.
- Broad expectations for fit with mainstream services are presented, with limited detail about expected referral and progression routes between services.

### *Targets*

- Most of the targets in the business plan relate to ESF objectives rather than Welsh Government policy objectives.
- There is limited evidence that targets were formulated on the basis of an assessment of supply and demand and estimated costs to achieve outputs and outcomes.

### *Evidence of what works in achieving outcomes for at risk and NEET young people*

- The business plans propose wide-ranging activities for NEET and at risk young people, including participatory arts activities, citizenship activities, intensive coaching support for young people in the youth justice system, information and advice and STEM engagement activities. In making the case for activities, the project and joint sponsor business plans draw on some evidence of what works in achieving outcomes, but this could have been more comprehensive and robust.



### **3 Commissioning, delivery and management of the Reach the Heights projects**

3.1 This section presents findings about the effectiveness of the process for commissioning, delivering and managing the Reach the Heights projects. It draws on interviews with joint sponsor leads, stakeholders and case study research to describe the process for each of the following key stages:

- The commissioning process;
- Establishment and set up of activities;
- Delivery of activities, including processes for monitoring and quality assurance; and
- The management of the two Reach the Heights projects, including steering arrangements.

3.2 We distinguish between the role of commissioners and delivery agents, defining the commissioners as the internal and external joint sponsor organisations and the delivery agents as either the organisations contracted by joint sponsors to deliver activity or teams within the joint sponsor organisations responsible for delivery.

3.3 For each stage, we also consider the role of the Welsh Government as the lead sponsor, responsible for coordinating work across the joint sponsor organisations.

#### **Commissioning**

##### *The process*

##### What commissioners did

3.4 Some external joint sponsor organisations had no or very limited experience of commissioning. The procurement requirements of Reach the Heights therefore presented significant challenges for these organisations, with staff having to learn a lot in a short period of time.

- 3.5 To help address these challenges, a few external joint sponsor organisations ensured that when recruiting new project staff, they included a requirement for experience of procurement and contract management. Joint sponsors were also supported by the Welsh Government to access training delivered by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and provided with templates, example specifications and contracts. Joint sponsors also shared examples of their specifications and contracts between themselves.
- 3.6 Internal and external joint sponsors were expected to develop their own application process and assessment criteria for bids. At this stage, a few but not all external joint sponsors were put in contact with the relevant policy leads within the Welsh Government for input and guidance to help shape the specification for the activity and ensure it was aligned to policy priorities. In the main, joint sponsors researched and planned what they would commission under Reach the Heights independently without consideration of what other joint sponsors were planning to commission. There was no collaborative planning across joint sponsor organisations of referral and progression pathways between commissioned activities, to map the target groups or locations in which contracted providers would be working or to discuss the possibility of joint commissioning.
- 3.7 There appears to have been limited market review during the planning and pre-commissioning stage. For example, there is little evidence that joint sponsors engaged with providers in the market to understand the solutions that may be available and to get feedback on how the requirement might be best met. It also appears there was a relatively ad hoc approach to deciding the number and nature of suppliers required and the length and type of contract. There was also limited consideration of different procurement models (eg joint commissioning to achieve economies of scale or procuring through a series of lots), including consideration of different procurement processes for different size contracts.
- 3.8 Arts Council of Wales, the only external joint sponsor organisation to contract all delivery, awarded contracts in three phases, with four lots in each phase based on different levels of funding. In the first phase, there

were separate lots for projects under £25,000, between £25,000 and £99,999, between £100,000 and £250,000, and above £250,000. Projects bidding for and receiving under £25,000 did not have to provide match funding (this was provided by the Arts Council of Wales) while larger projects did. This approach enabled the Arts Council of Wales to reach smaller, locally based delivery partners. The second and third phases of procurement also used lots based on different levels of funding but fewer projects under £25,000 were funded. Organising procurement in three phases enabled the Arts Council of Wales to ensure there was a good spread of projects in terms of geography, art form and target group. For example, after the first phase of procurement, there were gaps in provision in Gwynedd and Anglesey and so in the second phase of procurement the Arts Council of Wales indicated the need for more responses from North Wales, which was successful. Also, after the second phase of procurement they had enough projects targeted at young people at risk and so targeted projects in the third phase on NEET young people. Organising procurement in three phases also meant that smaller projects funded in the first phase were able to bid in future phases to continue after an initial pilot if they could demonstrate effectiveness.

3.9 All internal and external joint sponsors adopted a one-stage application process in line with EU requirements, with most identifying threshold criteria to assess whether a bid should be considered and then criteria against which all eligible bids were scored to decide who should be awarded any contract. Key assessment criteria used by most joint sponsors include:

- Ability to achieve the intended project outcomes;
- Ability to record monitoring information, report and evaluate;
- Relevant experience of recruiting and working with members of the target group; and
- Involvement of key stakeholders in steering/partnership development.

3.10 A few of the joint sponsors also used some of the following criteria:

- Plans for sustaining activity after ESF funding ended;
  - Involvement of children, young people and families in the development of activities;
  - Use of evidence-based practice;
  - Availability of match funding;
  - Quality assurance processes; and
  - Alignment of the activity's intended outcomes with the priorities of the local Children and Young People's partnership.
- 3.11 In addition, some joint sponsors had requirements for ability to deliver in a specific geographic catchment area. Most joint sponsors prioritised experience of working with the target group over experience of delivering ESF-funded projects when assessing bids.
- 3.12 Although price was a consideration for most joint sponsors, in the main it was not a key criteria against which bids were assessed,
- 3.13 Most internal and external joint sponsor organisations specified the maximum budget available and gave minimum participant numbers for commissioned activities. When establishing the indicative budget and output targets, they drew on their previous experience of delivery to assess what would be realistic and also considered their overall First Footholds/Routes to the Summit targets. It does not appear that joint sponsors did any wider research to establish benchmark unit costs against which to assess bids. Arts Council of Wales and Community Music Wales were the only joint sponsors that did not specify participant numbers for commissioned activities, leaving delivery agents to make an assessment of realistic targets and unit costs for their particular delivery model and target group.
- 3.14 All specifications were submitted to the Welsh Government project management team for approval and then issued on Sell 2 Wales, advertised on joint sponsor websites and sent directly to known providers to ensure as wide a circulation as possible.
- 3.15 There is little evidence that the contracting process has varied in its requirements according to the size of the contract being awarded.

3.16 Typically, a panel of assessors was established and bids were assessed independently by each member of the panel before a joint assessment was undertaken and agreement reached. In a few instances, as part of the assessment of bids, joint sponsors contacted bidders for clarification about aspects of the proposal. In some cases, where necessary, interviews were held.

#### What delivery agents did

3.17 In preparing tender documents in response to joint sponsor specifications, delivery agents presented evidence about what works in achieving positive outcomes for the intended target group, drawing mainly on their own delivery experience rather than wider published research and benchmarks.

3.18 Most specifications required delivery agents to provide evidence of their links and partnerships with other organisations. Therefore, delivery agents obtained letters of support from partners and used case study examples of previous projects to demonstrate partnership working.

3.19 When deciding what outputs and outcomes were achievable, delivery agents tended to use similar previous projects they had delivered to make their assessment. In general, it does not appear that delivery agents researched the total target population or the scale of other provision aimed at those groups to make an assessment of how many participants they could realistically work with.

#### *Commissioners' views on the process*

3.20 Interviews with joint sponsors about the commissioning process indicate that:

- All joint sponsors reported that they had been told by the Welsh Government to cease development and commissioning of activities following the interim evaluation report. This was because without WEFO agreement to continue the projects, there was no certainty

that funding would be available to fulfil any contracts issued. It was several months before a decision was made by WEFO to continue the projects and joint sponsors were able to re-start the process, following new guidance issued about the target group for the Reach the Heights projects. This delay meant that commissioning and delivery of activities was “*backloaded*” and a contributing factor to key expenditure and output targets not being achieved (see Chapter 4);

- A few joint sponsors reported that commissioning was affected by the level of match funding available. They noted that the targets for match funding had been defined before the economic downturn. When it came to trying to secure other sources of funding in 2008 and 2009, far less funding was available than had been anticipated when the project was being planned. For a few sponsors, such as Techniquest, this is reported to be a key contributing factor to their underspend and non-achievement of goals;
- Joint sponsors who accessed the WCVA training found it helpful in giving some guidance about good practice in procurement;
- A few joint sponsors noted that they had to make improvements to the process after the first round of commissioning as a result of lessons learned. For example, one joint sponsor reported that it had a low response to the first specification issued. Therefore, before the second round of procurement staff held two open days for potential bidders, one in North Wales and one in South Wales. This resulted in a higher volume of bidders;
- A few joint sponsors noted that they would have liked greater support and guidance from the Welsh Government on what to include in the specification and a more thorough process for checking and approval of final specifications. Some would also have benefited from procurement advice where this is not a key activity for them or a new area of procurement. For example, one joint sponsor with no previous experience of commissioning noted that their initial specification, which was approved by the Welsh Government, had

several weaknesses (in relation to terminology and omissions of key requirements). This was not picked up in the approval process, causing problems later on;

- Many joint sponsors commented that they shared templates, example specifications and contracts and learning about what works in an effective commissioning process between joint sponsors. They valued this “*spirit of partnership*”;
- A few joint sponsors reported that they were required by the Welsh Government to issue specifications and award contracts for sub-contracted delivery before final approval of their overall budgets (by Welsh Government and WEFO). There were concerns that this placed a high level of risk on joint sponsor organisations and a view that the sign off process should have been better managed to avoid this;
- Several joint sponsors had been initially sceptical about the added value of a competitive contracting process, considering that they were well-placed to deliver activities directly. Afterwards, they generally acknowledged that the requirement to commission had meant target groups that would not otherwise have been supported had been reached and that their organisational capacity had improved as a result. The Arts Council of Wales was very supportive of the requirement for a contracting process and reported that as a result they had formed new partnerships with organisations they would not have otherwise commissioned. Similarly, Techniquist reported that they had learned a lot about engaging more disengaged young people in STEM by working with Careers Wales. A couple of joint sponsors, however, considered that the time spent on commissioning and management of contracted providers was disproportionate to the outcomes achieved. They considered it would have been more efficient to establish the teams of staff required for delivery themselves.

### *Delivery agents' views on the process*

- 3.21 Delivery agents generally reported that the specifications issued by joint sponsors were clear and easy to understand and gave sufficient detail to allow providers to respond to the requirements. A few delivery agents reported though that some specifications left little room for innovation on the part of providers. There were also a couple of examples where providers considered the intervention or product stated in the specification was inappropriate for the target group. They attributed this to lack of specialist knowledge on the part of commissioners.
- 3.22 A few delivery agents reported that although they had tried to make realistic assessments of the numbers of young people they could recruit and support at the bidding stage, their assessments had sometimes been inaccurate because they had not been aware of the proposed targets of other successful bidders working with the same target group in the area. This had an impact on their own ability to deliver because in some cases the total target population was relatively small. They suggested it would have been helpful if there had been greater coordination across different activities to avoid this.

### *Stakeholders' views on the process*

- 3.23 Many stakeholders commented that local authorities had not been adequately involved in the commissioning process. They considered that local and regional stakeholders should have been invited to contribute knowledge and expertise about what works in achieving outcomes and existing provision. In their view, this would have led to significantly improved processes for commissioning activities and drawing up specifications.

## **Establishment and set up**

### *The process*



### What commissioners did

- 3.24 In most cases, there were limited post-tender negotiations between commissioners and contracted providers, with the targets and approach set out in the proposal broadly accepted and used as the basis for the contract. Generally, there was also limited input from Welsh Government staff, from within the Reach the Heights project management team or from other departments, into the refinement of delivery plans, models and approaches.
- 3.25 According to interviews with joint sponsors, contracts were issued that clearly stated start and end dates for delivery, ESF related output targets, key milestones, the roles and responsibilities of the activity manager within the contracted organisation and the contract manager within the commissioning organisation, requirements for collection and submission of monitoring data, requirements for self-evaluation and, in some cases, the requirement to contribute to an independent evaluation.
- 3.26 All joint sponsors held briefing meetings at the start of the contract period. At these meetings, contracted delivery agents were provided with template data collection tools and progress report pro formas, and given instructions and guidance on requirements for completing and submitting these. In addition, guidance was provided about the eligibility criteria as specified and needed for ESF. In a few cases, joint sponsor organisations produced accompanying booklets explaining the monitoring data requirements (including definitions of MI) for providers to take away as a reference.
- 3.27 Most joint sponsors did not shape a logic chain to define the MI to be collected as evidence required for evaluation. Some provided guidance on MI and records that should be kept, beyond those required by WEFO (such as in relation to the numbers of professionals trained or achieving a qualification or additional outcomes achieved). Generally, though, they have not required delivery agents to submit this MI to them and it has not been passed on to the Welsh Government.
- 3.28 Similarly, some joint sponsors delivering activities directly have set up systems for collecting data beyond that required by WEFO (such as data

about professionals taking part in training, feedback from parents, which organisations have referred to the activity, feedback from referrers, the time spent with each young person or more detailed outcomes data) but this is not submitted to the Welsh Government and has not been collated, and in the main is kept as hard copy records. Some of the joint sponsor organisations (Funky Dragon, Techniquest and Community Music Wales) required contracted organisations to use a specific model or approach that they had developed as the basis for delivery. In these cases, training was provided to staff in the contracted organisations at this initial briefing stage. These training sessions were seen also as an opportunity for the contracted providers to share their expertise in engaging the target group with the commissioner.

- 3.29 Following the interim evaluation in 2010/11 and oral guidance from WEFO, the Welsh Government issued a paper to all joint sponsors listing characteristics which contributed to a young person being at risk of being NEET. This marked a substantial shift in approach to delivery. Drawing on this paper, many joint sponsors reiterated to contractors eligibility requirements and checked delivery agents' plans for ensuring young people in these categories were recruited.

#### What delivery agents did

- 3.30 After contracts were awarded, delivery agents and joint sponsor organisations delivering directly focussed on recruiting staff and obtaining any necessary equipment.
- 3.31 At this stage, they also began to define more clearly how delivery would take place. In most cases, contracted delivery agents and joint sponsor organisations adapted previous activities and models for use in the Reach the Heights projects. For example, they modified existing delivery plans so they were appropriate and relevant to different target groups, or integrated additional content into existing materials. New and existing staff were given induction and training on the newly developed delivery plans and materials and criteria for targeting and selecting participants.

After the interim evaluation, there was substantial effort to reiterate who should be targeted and recruited to activities because the process had so far failed to make it clear. Joint sponsors reported they had to spend a lot of time “*re-educating*” delivery agents and staff about eligible participants.

- 3.32 While there was a substantial amount of set up activity before delivery began, activity managers also noted that the initial delivery plans and supporting materials were regularly reviewed and adjusted during the delivery period.
- 3.33 During this stage, contracted providers and joint sponsor organisations also invested time in further developing partnership working and protocols for referral and progression. A key part of this activity was making sure referring agencies understood the criteria for referring young people to activities. For example, some youth workers reported that they “*spent time getting to know all the local players and telling them about what we were offering*”. One delivery agent sought commitment at the bidding stage from several partners to refer to the activity and support delivery. After winning the contract, there were efforts to establish service level agreements with these partners, clearly setting out the rights and responsibilities of all parties. Some contracted delivery agents offered taster sessions to referring organisations to help them better understand the service offer and its benefits.
- 3.34 Many delivery agents set monthly or quarterly targets at this stage for delivery staff of the number of young people or professionals they had to work with.

#### *Commissioners’ views on the process*

- 3.35 Joint sponsors reported that:
- Although a substantial resource was required to plan and run the briefing meetings and develop written guidance about monitoring and evaluation requirements they were a crucial component of the set up process;

- A major challenge in issuing clear instructions to contractors was a lack of clear information from the Welsh Government about which participants counted towards ESF targets and the MI required. For example, several joint sponsors commented that the requirement to collect National Insurance numbers was not communicated by the Welsh Government until later on. This meant that they also had to go back to their contractors and change the requirements for MI, which resulted in substantial additional work. In addition, accredited outcomes such as Agored Cymru units could not count towards the target for young people achieving qualifications. There was a lack of clarity among sponsors about this distinction, which has partly contributed to the inability to meet the target for basic skills and level 1 qualification targets (see Chapter 4).

#### *Delivery agents' views on the process*

- 3.36 Delivery agents reported that in the main the meetings arranged by joint sponsors in which MI and administration requirements were explained were helpful. They noted though that guidance was regularly changed which was confusing and resulted in additional work.
- 3.37 There were mixed views among delivery agents about the process for developing operational partnerships. In some cases, where there was a history of joint working, it was relatively straightforward to establish working arrangements for the Reach the Heights activities. However, a few delivery agents reported that despite efforts to seek commitment from new partners at the bidding stage, when they re-approached partners they experienced difficulties in establishing service level agreements.
- 3.38 Many delivery agents expressed the view that because many partner organisations were in receipt of ESF-funding for other projects supporting NEET and at risk young people, there was reluctance among some agencies to collaborate and refer young people to their activities

because of fear that they would not then count towards the target for their own activity.

- 3.39 Joint sponsors delivering directly reported initial difficulties in engaging some local authorities. There was a perception that these local authorities' staff were not keen to cooperate because they considered they should have been able to bid directly to WEFO for the funding.

## **Delivery**

### *The process*

#### What commissioners did

- 3.40 Although external joint sponsors developed their own approaches to managing the performance of contracted providers, all included the following mechanisms for monitoring and quality assurance of delivery:
- *Regular collection of ESF MI and progress reports from contractors.* Some joint sponsors required providers to submit ESF MI and accompanying progress reports on a quarterly basis while others required monthly submission. One joint sponsor used receipt of monthly MI data as a trigger for payment to the contracted provider. In progress reports, contractors were generally required to show achievement to date of targets and milestones and to provide a qualitative description of achievements. A few joint sponsors asked contractors to rate the scale of risks to delivery using scores or a Red/Amber/Green system. If the MI or progress reports raised concerns about performance, joint sponsors arranged a face to face meeting or teleconference with providers to discuss means to improve delivery;
  - *Face to face monitoring visits.* Typically, these visits included observation of delivery, feedback based on observation, checks of financial management records and discussion of any particular performance issues. Joint sponsors working with a relatively small number of contractors (such as Funky Dragon and Community

Music Wales) were able to provide more monitoring visits and to ensure that all providers received at least one visit. Joint sponsors overseeing large numbers of contracts (such as the Arts Council of Wales and the Support for Learners Division) took a more targeted approach, focussing monitoring visits on those contractors where there were concerns about underperformance or poor financial management processes;

- *Ongoing telephone and email support.* In addition to the more formal monitoring visits, all joint sponsors tried to stay in regular email and telephone contact with contractors and to respond to queries;
- *Final activity reports.* In most cases, contracted providers were expected to submit a final activity report that summarised final achievements.

3.41 In general, it does not appear that quality assurance and monitoring processes varied according to the size and duration of the contract to ensure proportionality.

3.42 In cases where joint sponsors have delivered activities directly, although there has not generally been a formal 'internal commissioning' model (ie one department managing and overseeing delivery by another department), quality assurance and monitoring processes have been established nonetheless. For example, Funky Dragon, the Urdd and SNAP Cymru have brought all delivery staff together regularly to allow them to share learning and to allow the activity manager to review delivery across sites to ensure consistency. A few joint sponsors delivering directly also reported that they analysed MI data to monitor delivery; for example, to ensure consistent participation across all local authorities and consistent performance across members of the delivery team.

3.43 SNAP Cymru, the Urdd, the Arts Council of Wales, Education and Training Youth Justice and the youth policy team responsible for the CLIC project commissioned external evaluations of delivery and outcomes. We have drawn on these reports to inform this final evaluation, except the SNAP Cymru report which was not completed in

time. The other joint sponsors made no plans for formal evaluation, beyond participation in the overarching Reach the Heights evaluation.

### What delivery agents did

- 3.44 Contracted delivery agents and activity managers within joint sponsor organisations reported recruiting young people from a range of partner organisations including Careers Wales, youth offending teams, youth clubs, Pupil Referral Units, schools, other voluntary and community sector organisations and key local authority services. Some of these partnerships had existed before Reach the Heights, while others were formed as a result of the initiative. Some delivery agents had established formal processes for referral that required referring agencies to complete a form showing how young people met the referral criteria, which was then followed by a telephone or face to face discussion with the referrer to check and confirm that the young person was eligible to take part in the activity. Some group-based activities relied on teachers to assess which young people met eligibility criteria and therefore should take part in the intervention, and did not carry out detailed separate assessments of whether young people met eligibility criteria thereafter.
- 3.45 As would be expected given the wide ranging nature of the activities delivered under the Reach the Heights projects, after being recruited to activities, the needs of young people have been assessed in many different ways. Some delivery agents incorporated Demonstrating Success into their assessment process or used adapted versions of the Demonstrating Success tools tailored to their particular activity. Some one to one, intensive interventions, for example, used 'before' and 'after' self-assessment tools with young people to assess confidence, the extent to which the young person feels part of the community and aspirations.
- 3.46 Most delivery agents reported that they had made adjustments to the original delivery plan in response to experience and the particular needs of the young people they were working with. For example:

- One activity allowed young people to choose the focus and nature of the activity. This meant that in some cases additional partners had to be involved so that the young people's needs could be met;
- Another activity had factored in five weeks for young people to decide on an issue they would like focus on. In practice, young people tended to have a clear idea early on of the issue they were interested in, so the timetable was amended;
- In some cases, it became apparent that young people could not manage the literacy and numeracy demands of workshops and that they could not concentrate for the proposed two-hour duration of the workshops. As a result, the delivery agents worked closely with the joint sponsor to adapt the content, delivery mode and duration to prevent the young people from becoming disinterested.

3.47 Feedback from young people to inform delivery has been collected informally (through chats with youth workers) and more formally from focus groups and questionnaires.

3.48 Many of the activities have had a celebration event at the end to showcase the achievements of the young person, to involve parents and families where possible and appropriate and to present outcomes and achievements to decision makers.

### *Commissioners' views on delivery*

3.49 Commissioners indicated that:

- In general, they had underestimated the amount of time and resource required to oversee commissioned activities and in future would ensure more staff time was allocated to this. A few joint sponsors noted that they had learned that it was not efficient to award large numbers of small-value contracts and that the administration costs outweighed the outcomes achieved;
- A few joint sponsors who had limited previous experience of commissioning delivery reported that they had initially not taken a sufficiently thorough approach to monitoring providers during the



delivery period. As issues of underperformance emerged, they revised their monitoring processes so they were more stringent and included more levels of checks and greater quality assurance;

- Monitoring and quality assurance processes identified underperformance among contractors and there were a few examples of commissioners terminating contracts and re-awarding. One internal joint sponsor gave an example where activities were well-monitored but insufficient action was taken to tackle underperformance;
- Those joint sponsors who have required monthly submission of MI have found that this had helped to ensure gaps in data were identified early on;
- Some joint sponsors reported that although they had built in requirements for contractors to regularly assess risks to delivery, initially some contractors were making inaccurate assessments and failing to identify key risks. In these instances, commissioners had to provide contractors with additional guidance and direction to ensure risks were mitigated. In future, they would make clearer at the start what a thorough risk assessment means;
- The decision to prioritise experience of supporting the intended target group over experience of ESF when assessing bids was considered to have been appropriate and conducive to achieving the best outcomes for young people. However, it was acknowledged that this meant contracted organisations with limited previous ESF experience found it difficult to collect the required monitoring data;

#### *Delivery agents' views on the process*

3.50 Delivery agents had mixed views on the value of monitoring visits. Some considered visits were too focussed on administration and data requirements, but a few felt the visits were very constructive and considered the feedback they received helped them to improve delivery.

- 3.51 Some delivery agents reported that at times they had to wait a long time for responses to queries from the project management team within the joint sponsor. They recognised the resource constraints on the team and suggested that in similar future initiatives a full time post was required to liaise with contractors.
- 3.52 There were mixed views on Demonstrating Success among delivery agents. Most agreed that the broad areas of social and emotional dispositions and skills defined within Demonstrating Success were helpful, but found the associated data collection tools and scoring methodology too complicated and not suited to all types in delivery. In general, delivery agents considered that Demonstrating Success is better suited to intensive one-to-one work over a long time period than group work. As a consequence, many delivery agents had opted not to use Demonstrating Success.
- 3.53 Some delivery agents experienced difficulties in partnership working with schools. They reported that even if schools could see that activities offered potential benefits for pupils, they could not easily schedule activities because of lack of space in the timetable. STEM engagement workshops delivered by Technquest were a key example of this. The workshops were designed to be delivered as three workshops, one in each term. All three workshops had to be delivered to count as a meaningful intervention for a young person. In some cases, Technquest has experienced difficulties in delivering the final workshop, which falls in the Spring term, because school timetables tend to be very full owing to exams and preparation for them. This has contributed significantly to Technquest's ability to meet WEFO output, outcome and results targets.

#### *Participants' views on the process*

- 3.54 For many of the young people interviewed as part of the case study research, participation in activities was mandatory. For example, some activities were run in Pupil Referral Units, others in school for those on alternative curriculums or for those identified as requiring additional

support owing to poor attendance, behaviour or achievement. In these cases, young people were normally told about the activity by their teacher, learning support assistant or a member of staff providing pastoral care. In most cases, young people felt they had been given a good idea of what to expect from the activity although some young people reported that they did not really know what the activity was about before they started attending and would have liked more information beforehand. The young people that expressed this view were participating in different activities and were still keen to participate in the activities, mainly because they felt it would offer something different to what they were used to. For those young people who were able to choose whether or not they took part in an activity, the main reason stated for opting in was the fact that the activity seemed as though “*it would be something different to school*” and “*what we normally do*”. Generally, young people liked activities that seemed to be “*fun*” and “*practical*” and where, in some cases, they would have the chance to use equipment or try activities they had not previously come across.

- 3.55 Young people who participated in activities where there was a high degree of choice in deciding what topics and activities to focus on, valued this choice and appeared to engage well with activities, speaking enthusiastically about the activity delivered.
- 3.56 Professionals participating in training had been emailed about the training available. They had been keen to attend because they were not aware of any other similar training courses and also because changes to their role meant the training was particularly relevant.

## **Management of the Reach the Heights projects**

### *The process*

#### Monitoring and quality assurance

- 3.57 The Reach the Heights projects were managed by a Project Leader overseeing a team of staff responsible for finance, projects delivered by

internal sponsors and projects delivered by external joint sponsors. While three team leader posts were intended for the team, these were never all filled. A total of eight other project management and administration staff were employed within these teams. All posts were funded by ESF.

- 3.58 The Reach the Heights project management team visited each of the joint sponsor organisations at least once each year. In general these visits focussed on assessing the financial processes and systems established by external joint sponsors. In addition, the project management team carried out activity visits to each of the joint sponsors. The main aims of these visits were to improve the project management team's understanding of what is being delivered and the outcomes achieved and to draw out learning about effective practice to inform future provision.
- 3.59 Joint sponsors were required to submit quarterly MI reports to the Welsh Government accompanied by a more qualitative progress report. The MI reports showed overall expenditure to date, participant numbers and participant characteristics in line with ESF data requirements but did not provide this information for individual activities. The Welsh Government did not set additional output or outcome targets beyond those set by WEFO to assess the projects' contribution to wider Welsh Government policy objectives.
- 3.60 It was intended that a central MI database would be established so that joint sponsors could input data directly. However, two years after the start of Reach the Heights, the project management team was informed that owing to government information security rules external joint sponsors would not be able to access the database. Instead, the project management team had to collect quarterly return spreadsheets from joint sponsors and upload them to the database. This caused substantial additional work for the project management team. It also meant that joint sponsors were not able to easily update existing participant records with new data about outcomes achieved. This caused additional work for joint sponsors.

## Steering arrangements

3.61 A Project Management Group for the two projects was established and first met in the summer of 2009. It has met on a quarterly basis and is intended to address implementation issues related to: claims; project monitoring; audit; evaluation; and publicity and communication.

3.62 Attendees were expected to be key members of the Reach the Heights team within the Welsh Government (Project Manager and team leaders) and operational leads for each of the joint sponsor organisations.

3.63 There was, in addition, a Project Steering and Advisory Group, which was formally created and first met in June 2010. This was intended to be a senior strategic group overseeing management of Reach the Heights. The Terms of Reference for the group note that members should include:

- Young People (e.g. young people from Funky Dragon or those young people delivering training to others);
- Association of Directors of Education in Wales;
- Association of Directors of Social Services in Wales;
- Welsh Local Government Association & Partnership Support Unit;
- Third Sector (Umbrella Body e.g. WCVA);
- Business Community (e.g. Sector Skills Councils);
- Regional or Strategic ESF projects;
- Other local or regional interests;
- Project Sponsors; and
- Welsh Government policy and management interests (e.g. Basic Skills, Employability, Information Systems).

3.64 However, in practice, those attending were mainly the internal and external joint sponsors and the Reach the Heights project management team, with only a few who were not closely involved. This meant that the memberships of the Project Management Group and the Project Steering Advisory Group were largely the same.

3.65 The Project Steering and Advisory Group was expected to:

- Provide an external perspective to the project;

- Contribute to the successful implementation of the project;
- Contribute to the successful future mainstreaming of effective services delivered using the evidence generated through the project;
- Promote the project to wider networks;
- Enhance the expertise available to the project; and
- Empower the project through access to spheres of influence and decision-makers.

3.66 Its remit was to facilitate referrals between Reach the Heights activities and mainstream provision and other ESF provision, reduce duplication in service provision, and ensure learning about effective practice is shared among key stakeholders.

*Joint sponsor views on monitoring, quality assurance and steering arrangements*

3.67 Joint sponsors indicated that:

- Changes of staff within the Project Management team within Welsh Government led to inconsistent and delayed information and guidance which adversely affected the way the projects were managed;
- They were generally disappointed that the central MI database was established later than expected and that they could not upload records directly. In their view, this created additional administrative work;
- The Project Management Group meetings were useful to address operational issues in relation to MI and quarterly claims but the focus on administrative issues in the Project Management Group prevented a wider emphasis on sharing of learning and expertise between joint sponsors. Many joint sponsors consider this to be a “*missed opportunity*”.
- The Project Steering Advisory Group did not involve the key strategic stakeholders listed as potential members in the original Reach the Heights business plan (such as senior policy leads within

the Welsh Government, representatives from key national partners such as Careers Wales, the Association of Directors of Social Services and representatives of the business community). These stakeholders were invited to sit on the Advisory Group and despite efforts from the project management team to encourage them to participate, they did not attend. They have acknowledged that as a consequence clear strategic objectives were not articulated early on, activities were not as well connected to other services as they should have been, and senior decision makers were not able to influence development and delivery of activities to a sufficient extent. The ambition to involve senior strategic stakeholders set out in the business plan was arguably unrealistic given the high number of other similar advisory groups on ESF programmes and other initiatives in Wales that are 'competing' for membership from the same stakeholders.

#### *Stakeholder views on monitoring, quality assurance and steering arrangements*

3.68 Several stakeholders, including those on the steering group, noted that limited performance management data was available. As a consequence, they found it difficult to understand what the impacts and achievements of the projects have been. They also considered that the agendas for steering group meetings did not reflect the strategic remit of the group and focussed instead on operational details.

### **Summary**

#### *Commissioning*

- The commissioning process was delayed while decisions were taken after the interim evaluation in 2010/11 about priorities for the remainder of the delivery period by WEFO and the Welsh Government. This meant that for many joint sponsors commissioning

and delivery was concentrated in the later stages, creating significant pressures.

- A few joint sponsors reported that commissioning was affected by the level of match funding available. They noted that the targets for match funding had been defined before the economic downturn. When it came to trying to secure other sources of funding in 2008 and 2009, far less funding was available than had been anticipated when the project was being planned. For a few sponsors, such as Techniquet, this is reported to be a key contributing factor to underspend and non-achievement of goals.
- Several joint sponsors had limited experience of commissioning through competitive contracting and reported that they would have liked greater support from the Welsh Government to establish processes.
- Most joint sponsors assessed tendering organisations against proven ability to engage the target group, evidence of partnerships with key stakeholders and ability to record, monitor and evaluate. Although price/cost was a consideration for most joint sponsors, it was generally not a key criteria against which bids were assessed.
- Joint sponsors generally did not conduct research into benchmark unit costs against which to assess bids or vary the approach to commissioning according to the size of contracts, suggesting that in some cases proportionality and value for money may not have been achieved.
- Although they had been initially sceptical about the added value of the commissioning process, several joint sponsors reported that new partnerships had been formed that served to enhance provision for disadvantaged young people.

#### *Establishment and set up*

- In most cases, there were limited post-tender negotiations between commissioners and contracted providers, with the targets and



approach set out in the proposal broadly accepted and used as the basis for the contract.

- In most cases joint sponsors did not collect MI data from delivery agents beyond what is required by WEFO. Some joint sponsors who were delivering activities directly collected additional MI but this was not collated centrally by the Welsh Government and was often kept in hard copy.
- A major challenge for joint sponsors in issuing clear instructions to contractors was a lack of clear information from the Welsh Government about which participants counted towards ESF targets and MI required.
- Joint sponsors briefed delivery agents on monitoring and reporting requirements but nonetheless experienced difficulties in obtaining data from providers who in, some cases, had no previous experience of ESF funding.
- Several delivery agents expressed the view that because many partner organisations were in receipt of ESF-funding for other projects, there was reluctance among some agencies to collaborate and refer young people to their activities because of fear that they wouldn't count towards the target for their own activity.

### *Delivery*

- Joint sponsors established a range of mechanisms for monitoring and quality assuring delivery by contracted organisations and also their own direct delivery. In general, it does not appear that quality assurance and monitoring processes varied according to the size and duration of the contract. As a result, some joint sponsors found they spent a disproportionate amount of time managing contracts.
- Contracted delivery agents and activity managers within joint sponsor organisations recruited young people from a range of partner organisations including Careers Wales, youth offending

teams, youth clubs, Pupil Referral Units, schools, other voluntary and community sector organisations and key local authority services.

- After being recruited to activities, the needs of young people have been assessed in many different ways. Some delivery agents incorporated Demonstrating Success into their assessment process but there was a general view that Demonstrating Success is better suited to intensive one to one work over a long time period.
- There were mixed views on the value of monitoring visits among delivery agents. Some considered visits were too focussed on administration and data requirements, but a few felt the visits were very constructive and considered the feedback they received helped them to improve delivery.
- Participants (young people and professionals), were generally positive about the process of being recruited to activities and mostly felt they had sufficient information about the activity beforehand and that the information they received made the activity appealing.
- Many of the young people in PRUs and on alternative curriculum programmes in schools commented on the fact that they liked that activities were practical rather than “*loads of reading and writing*”.

#### *Management of the Reach the Heights projects*

- There was agreement among joint sponsors that change of staff within the Project Management team within the Welsh Government led to inconsistent and delayed information and guidance.
- Joint sponsors were generally disappointed that the central MI database had been established later than expected and that they could not directly upload MI and considered that this would have cut down on the time and resources required for MI collection and submission.
- Generally, joint sponsors considered that the Project Management Group meetings had been useful to address operational issues in relation to MI and quarterly claims but this had to some extent

prevented a wider emphasis on sharing of learning and expertise between joint sponsors.

- There was also consensus among joint sponsors that the Project Steering Advisory Group had failed to involve senior policy leads within the Welsh Government and representatives from key national partners. These stakeholders were invited to sit on the Advisory Group and despite efforts from the project management team to encourage them to participate, they did not attend. This means clear strategic objectives were not articulated early on, activities have not been as well connected to other services as they should have been and senior decision makers have not been able to influence development and delivery of activities to a sufficient extent.

## 4 Expenditure and outputs

4.1 In this chapter we describe as far as is possible with the data available the projects' expenditure against the budgets allocated, the outputs achieved against the targets, the distribution of expenditure and outputs against needs, and the activities funded against intentions. Where possible this is disaggregated by project and project sponsor. We include an assessment of the extent to which aims and objectives in relation to the cross-cutting themes have been achieved. In this chapter we focus only on WEFO output targets and assess achievement of WEFO outcome and result indicators in Chapters 5 and 6, as part of a wider assessment of the projects' performance, outcomes and impacts against the evaluation framework. This chapter draws on project and joint sponsor MI data, interviews with sponsors and evaluation reports.

### Budget and expenditure

4.2 As Table 4 below shows there has been a substantial underspend in Reach the Heights:

- In 2009, the initial budgets were £28.6 million for First Footholds and £20.3 million for Routes to the Summit, resulting in a total budget for Reach the Heights of £48.9 million.
- In June 2013, at the end of the project, after two re-profiling exercises, the total budget was substantially reduced to £29.3 million. For First Footholds, the project's budget was almost halved to £16.7 million and for Routes to the Summit, the revised budget was £12.6 million (around three fifths of the original budget).

**Table 4 Reach the Heights budget**

	ESF funding - £ million			Match funding - £ million			Total budget - £ million		
	Initial (2009)	Revised (2011)	Revised (2013)	Initial (2009)	Revised (2011)	Revised (2013)	Initial (2009)	Revised (2011)	Revised (2013)
First Footholds	15.9	10.8	8.5	12.7	9	7.1	28.6	19.7	16.7

	ESF funding - £ million			Match funding - £ million			Total budget - £ million		
	Initial (2009)	Revised (2011)	Revised (2013)	Initial (2009)	Revised (2011)	Revised (2013)	Initial (2009)	Revised (2011)	Revised (2013)
Routes to the Summit	11	8.8	6.8	9.2	7.3	5.6	20.3	16.1	12.6
<b>TOTAL for Reach the Heights</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>16.3</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>29.3</b>

Source: WEFO official grant letters to Welsh Government and decommitment letter. Revised 2013 budget is based on an estimate provided by the project team in June 2013.

### *First Footholds*

4.3 The **total spend for First Footholds at the end of June 2013 was £16.7 million<sup>6</sup>**. As Table 5 below shows, none of the sponsors was able to reach their spending targets even after the mid-project re-profiling exercise, although Children in Wales, Funky Dragon and Save the Children almost met their targets.

4.4 Arts Council of Wales expenditure (£6.2 million, 39%) and DFES expenditure (£4.8 million, 30%) accounts for almost two thirds of the total spend (see Figure 2 below).

**Table 5 First Footholds expenditure to end of March 2013**

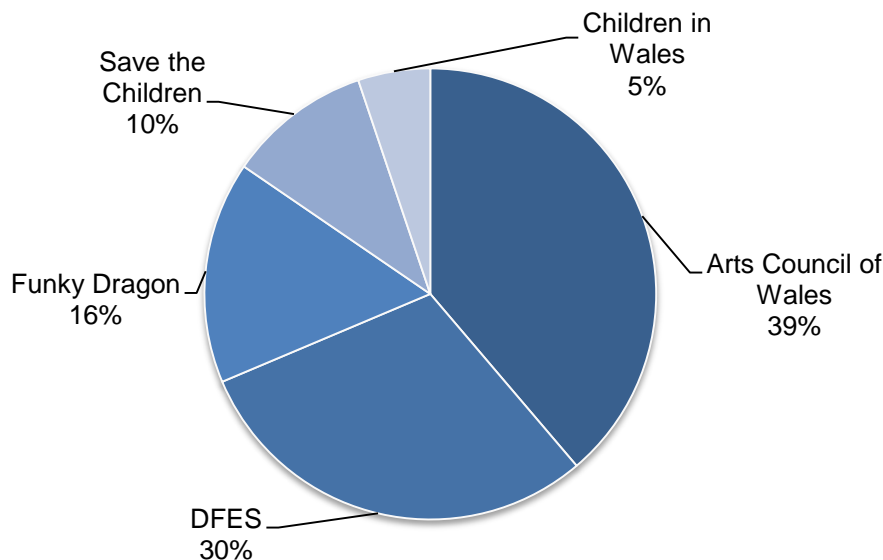
	Target expenditure- Original (2008) (£)	Target expenditure - after first reprofile (2011) (£)	Cumulative expenditure to March 2013 (£)	Percentage achieved in relation to original target (2008)	Percentage achieved in relation to 2011 target
Arts Council of Wales	12,029,163	8,030,776	6,186,354	51%	77%
Children in Wales	919,835	840,825	823,736	90%	98%
Funky Dragon	2,613,629	2,613,599	2,539,686	97%	97%
Save the Children	1,771,559	1,771,559	1,639,356	93%	93%

<sup>6</sup> Based on breakdown of expenditure for each project provided by the Reach the Heights project team.

	Target expenditure-Original (2008) (£)	Target expenditure - after first reprofile (2011) (£)	Cumulative expenditure to March 2013 (£)	Percentage achieved in relation to original target (2008)	Percentage achieved in relation to 2011 target
DFES	11,259,853	6,484,930	4,760,581	42%	73%
TOTAL	<b>28,594,039</b>	<b>19,741,689</b>	<b>15,949,714</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>81%</b>

Source: Data on actual spend from Claim 17 Jan-March 2013 from joint sponsors to Welsh Government; original profiled spend for external sponsors from Joint Sponsor Agreement letters; figures for DFES and target after first reprofile exercise supplied by the Reach the Heights team

**Figure 2 First Footholds – Joint sponsor share of expenditure**



Source: Claim 17 forms submitted by joint sponsors to Welsh Government, March 2013

Table 6 shows that:

- As would be expected, the highest proportion of the budget was allocated to staff (youth professionals to oversee and deliver activities) and procurement of delivery of services from external providers (22% and 69% respectively). At the end of June 2013, staff costs were approximately 5% less than expected and procurement costs were around a fifth (19%) less than expected in the 2011 re-profile figures;

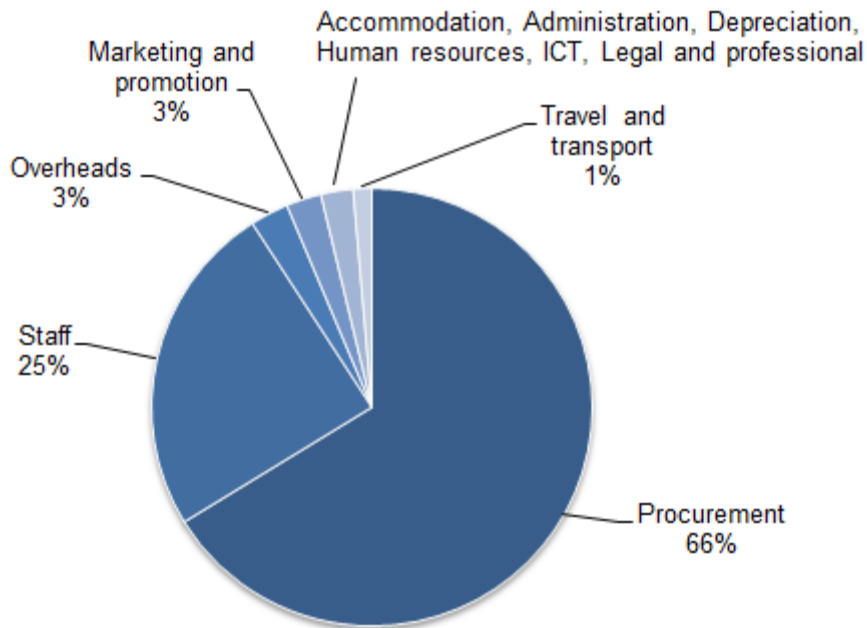
- Costs were less than expected in all areas except accommodation, depreciation of furniture and equipment and legal and professional fees.
- Analysis of when spend was recorded shows that substantial procurement costs (approximately £4 million, 39% of all procurement costs) were incurred during the last six months of the project. This reflects the greater than expected amount of delivery during the final year of the projects.

**Table 6 First Footholds expenditure to end of June 2013**

Type of expenditure	Cumulative expenditure to July 2013 (£)	Total forecast costs (2011) (£)	Variance between the cumulative expenditure and forecast costs
Accommodation	14,281	14,281	0%
Administration	32,037	34,611	-7%
Depreciation of furniture and equipment	3,677	3,029	+21%
Human resources	89,205	102,963	-13%
ICT	34,856	47,124	-26%
Legal and professional	222,292	199,541	+11%
Marketing and promotion	433,422	520,054	-17%
Overheads	473,308	600,471	-21%
Procurement of youth services	11,075,123	13,666,604	-19%
Staff to manage and deliver activities	4,107,019	4,313,412	-5%
Travel and transport	228,745	234,122	-2%
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>16,713,965</b>	<b>19,736,213</b>	<b>-15%</b>

Source: Report from EDMS in July 2013 and revised expenditure profile for June 2013, provided by the Reach the Heights project management team

**Figure 3 First Footholds – types of expenditure**



Source: Report from EDMS in July 2013 and revised expenditure profile for June 2013, provided by the Reach the Heights project management team

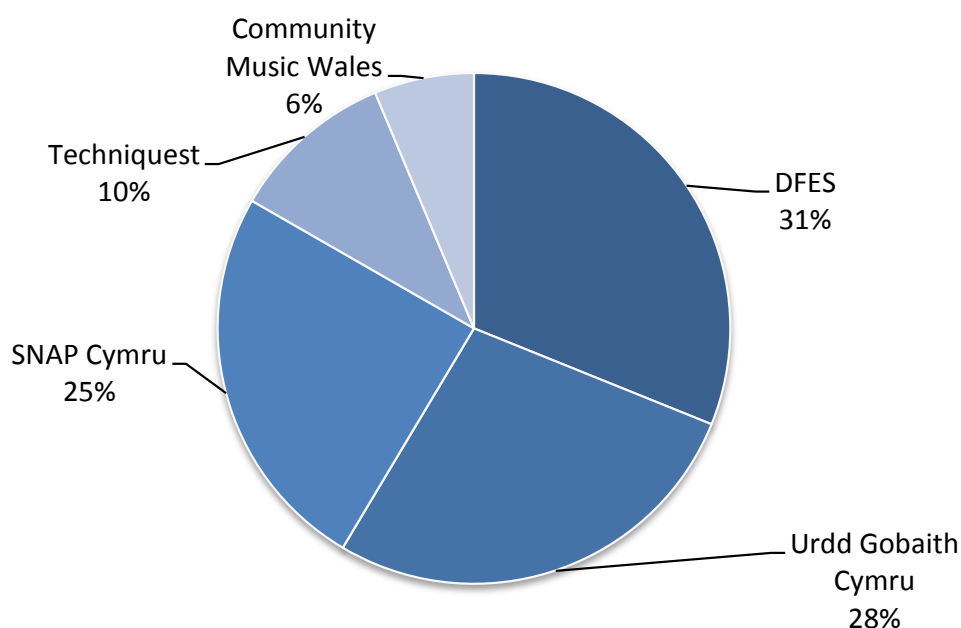
*Routes to the Summit*

**4.5 The total spend of Routes to the Summit at the end of June 2013 was £12.4 million and DFES and the Urdd were responsible for just under three fifths of this expenditure (**



Figure 4).

**Figure 4 Routes to the Summit – Joint sponsor share of expenditure**



Source: Claim 17 forms submitted by joint sponsors to Welsh Government, March 2013

4.6 In Routes to the Summit, as a result of the re-profiling exercise of 2011, the expenditure targets for Techniquest and DFES were substantially reduced. Despite the reduction in the expenditure target, none of the providers met their spending targets with Techniquest in particular experiencing substantial difficulties, only achieving 33% of the revised target (Table 7). The key reasons put forward for these by Techniquest were the lack of available match funding and difficulties in scheduling all the workshops in the STEM outreach programme in some schools.

**Table 7 Routes to the Summit expenditure to end of March 2013**

	Target expenditure-Original (2008) (£)	Target expenditure –after first re-profile (2011) (£)	Cumulative expenditure to March 2013 (£)	Percentage achieved in relation to original target (2008)	% achieved in relation to 2011 target
Community Music Wales	782,334	782,334	696,583	89%	89%
SNAP Cymru	2,837,578	2,837,578	2,735,421	96%	96%
Techniquest	4,768,509	3,519,050	1,146,225	24%	33%
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	4,192,144	4,192,146	3,030,633	72%	72%

	Target expenditure-Original (2008) (£)	Target expenditure –after first re-profile (2011) (£)	Cumulative expenditure to March 2013 (£)	Percentage achieved in relation to original target (2008)	% achieved in relation to 2011 target
DFES	7,803,937	4,861,590	3,438,096	44%	71%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20,384,502</b>	<b>16,192,700</b>	<b>11,046,958</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>68%</b>

Source: Data on actual spend from Claim 17 Jan-March 2013 from joint sponsors to Welsh Government and all information on targets provided by the Reach the Heights project team based on EDMS data

#### 4.7 Table 8 indicates that:

- As with First Footholds, the highest proportions of the budget were allocated to staff and procurement costs (55% and 26% respectively). At the end of June 2013, staff costs were just 1% less than expected and procurement costs were almost half of what was expected (-46%) in the 2011 re-profile figures.
- Costs were less than expected in all areas except legal and professional fees and depreciation of furniture and equipment.

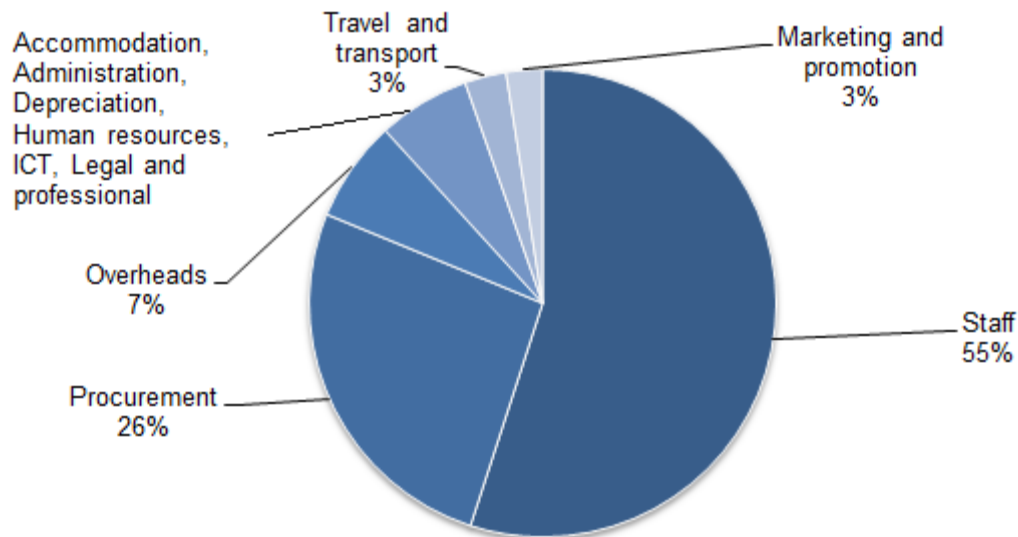
**Table 8 Routes to the Summit expenditure to the end of June 2013**

Type of expenditure	Cumulative expenditure to June 2013 (£)	Total forecast cost (2011) (£)	Total forecast costs (2013) (£)	Variance in relation to 2011 forecast %
Accommodation	26,633	41,191	26,633	-35%
Administration	150,343	303,321	150,343	-50%
Depreciation of furniture and equipment	1,473	1,271	1,473	16%
Human resources	290,455	331,937	290,455	-12%
ICT	72,452	134,613	72,452	-46%
Legal and professional	251,268	186,751	251,268	35%
Marketing and promotion	311,362	447,221	311,362	-30%
Overheads	874,979	1,297,455	3,263,935	-33%

Type of expenditure	Cumulative expenditure to June 2013 (£)	Total forecast cost (2011) (£)	Total forecast costs (2013) (£)	Variance in relation to 2011 forecast %
Procurement of youth services	3,263,935	6,116,541	3,263,935	-47%
Staff to manage and deliver activities	6,840,389	6,898,198	6,840,389	-1%
Travel and transport	356,219	378,809	356,219	-6%
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>12,439,510</b>	<b>16,137,308</b>	<b>14,828,466</b>	<b>-23%</b>

Source: Data on expenditure from EDMS report dated July 2013; revised expenditure profile for June 2013, provided by the Reach the Heights project management team; and 2011 forecast costs from EDMS report from October 2012

**Figure 5 Routes to the Summit – types of expenditure**



Source: Report from EDMS in July 2013 and revised expenditure profile for June 2013, provided by the Reach the Heights project management team

## Outputs

### *First Footholds*

### Achievement of WEFO ESF output targets

4.8 Table 9 shows that:

- Despite substantial underspends, First Footholds has performed well in relation to its target for the total number of participants. Overall **15,974 young people have benefitted from support provided by the project**. This represents 93% of the original target achieved and 98% of the revised 2011 target;
- **However, around a fifth (19.7% n=3,145) of all participants in First Footholds were NEET, which is substantially less than was anticipated.** The original targets were for almost half of young people (46.7%, n=7,980) taking part in the project to be NEET. During the two re-profiling exercises, this target was revised. In 2011, the target for NEET young people was almost halved from 7,980 to 4,000 and then reduced by a quarter in the final re-profile of 2013 to 3,000. Only 40% of the revised 2011 target and 79% of the final 2013 target was achieved;
- The **proportion of females participating in the project was slightly lower than expected** (7,456, 47% achieved compared to a 2011 target of 8,330, 51%);
- It was originally intended that 70% of participants would be aged 14-19 and that the remaining 30% would be aged 11-13. At the mid-project review stage, the targets were slightly adjusted. The new targets specified that 64% of participants should be aged 14-19 and 36% aged 11-13. This balance was not quite achieved, with a **greater proportion of 11-13 year olds participating than expected** (40%, 6,457);
- A target was set for all projects to use soft outcome measurement systems and the EDMS database indicates that this has been achieved. However, interviews with joint sponsors and delivery agents indicate that this has not been the case for all activities.

**Table 9 First Footholds – achievement against output targets**

Outputs	Original target (2008)	Revised target (2011)	Revised target (2013)	Achieved (March 2013)	% achieved in relation to initial target (%)	% achieved in relation to 2011 target

Total participants (11-19)	17,100	16,356	15,600	15,974	93%	98%
Female participants	8,550	8,330	7,250	7,456	87%	90%
11-13 year olds	5,130	5,920	6,100	6,457	126%	109%
14-19 year olds	11,970	10,436	9,500	9,492	79%	91%
NEET young people	7,980	4,000	3,000	3,145*	40%	79%
Projects using soft outcome measurement systems	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-
Projects integrating sustainable development into awareness raising, education and training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-

\*Based on the number of young people recorded as unemployed, long-term unemployed (over one year) and economically inactive (excluding those in full time education or training) on the summary EDMS report

Source: Target information from initial and revised business plans and information on achievements from summary report from EDMS provided to the research team on 6 June 2013, except data on number of NEET young people, which is from an EDMS report run on 18 September 2013

#### 4.9 In relation to the achievement of output targets by individual joint sponsors,

Table 10 shows that:

- Save the Children and Funky Dragon achieved the revised 2011 targets for the numbers of participants and the Arts Council of Wales performed relatively well, achieving 82% of the revised target for total number of participants;
- Children in Wales experienced substantial difficulties in achieving all output targets;
- Save the Children substantially overachieved against its target for the number of NEET participants. The degree of overachievement in comparison to the original targets suggests that the target was not appropriate for the activities provided.

**Table 10 First Footholds – Achievement of output targets by joint sponsor**

Outputs	Arts council of Wales		Children in Wales		Funky Dragon		Save the Children	
	% original target achieved	% revised target achieved	% original target achieved	% revised target achieved	% original target achieved	% revised target achieved	% original target achieved	% revised target achieved
Total participants (11-19)	44%	82%	12%	14%	189%	100%	59%	139%
Female participants	31%	64%	14%	16%	258%	138%	70%	254%
11-13 year olds	41%	81%	18%	19%	187%	104%	30%	101%
14-19 year olds	46%	82%	10%	12%	189%	98%	71%	149%
NEET young people	10%	36%	1%	1%	77%	66%	802%	160%

Source: Target achieved data from an EDMS report generated in June 2013, provided by the project team; original target data from Claim 7 submitted by joint sponsors to the Welsh Government; and revised target data from Claim 18

### Characteristics of young people participating in First Footholds

#### 4.10 According to EDMS summary data provided by the Welsh Government in June 2013:

- 6% of young people participating in First Footholds considered themselves as having a disability. According to Census data<sup>7</sup>, 4% of 0-15 year olds and 3% of 16-24 year olds in local authorities in the Convergence area consider their day to day activities are limited a lot or a little as a result of a long term health problem or disability. This suggests that First Footholds has engaged young disabled people relatively well<sup>8</sup>;

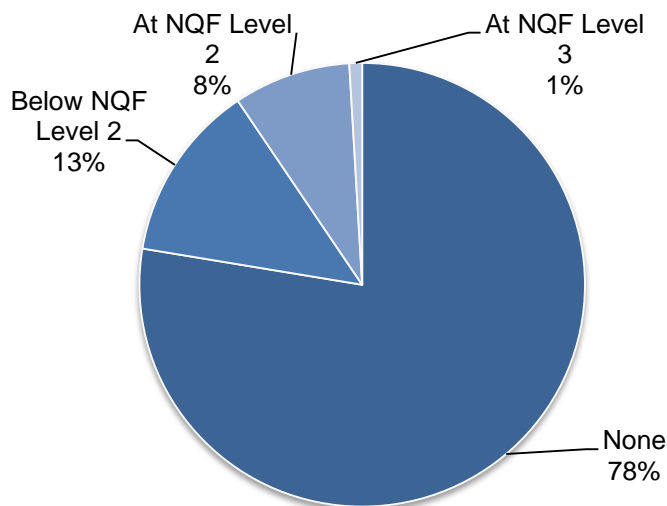
<sup>7</sup> 2011 Census: DC3302EW - Long term health problem or disability by health by sex by age [from Nomis on 2 August 2013]

<sup>8</sup> Many of the Reach the Heights sponsors used the question, 'I have a work limiting health condition – yes/no' while the Census asked respondents to rate agreement with the statement, 'My daily activities are limited by a health problem or disability'. Some project sponsors and activities also used other questions. Therefore, although the project participant and Census data are not directly comparable, this is the most accurate and relevant comparison possible.



- 2% (376 young people) of First Footholds participants reported themselves to be black or minority ethnic. According to 2011 Census data<sup>9</sup>, 5% of the 10-19 year old population in Convergence area local authorities considers itself to be black or minority ethnic<sup>10</sup>, suggesting First Footholds could have been more effective in targeting ethnic minorities;
- Most participants (78%) had no existing qualifications when they joined First Footholds; around a tenth had a qualification at Level 2 (8%) or Level 3 (1%), with the remainder holding a qualification below Level 2 (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6 Existing qualification level of First Footholds participants**



Source: EDMS report from the project team, July 2013

- First Footholds supported young people with wide ranging barriers to education, training and employment. Young people in rural areas with limited access to services, ex-offenders and those with low levels of literacy and numeracy were some of the key groups supported by First Footholds (see Table 11 below).

<sup>9</sup> 2011 Census: DC2101EW - Ethnic group by sex by age, ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 26 July 2013]

<sup>10</sup> Based on those reporting themselves to be White: Irish; White Gypsy or Irish Traveller; White: Other White; Mixed/multiple ethnic group: Asian/Asian British; Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; belonging to another ethnic group

**Table 11 Barriers faced by First Foothold participants**

<b>Priority group</b>	<b>No. of young people</b>	<b>% of total First Footholds participants</b>
14-19 year olds in danger of being excluded or who have been excluded from school	3,153	20%
11-13 year olds in danger of being excluded or who have been excluded from school	1,579	10%
People living in rural areas	1,466	9%
Ex-offenders	816	5%
Young people who need help with writing / reading / numeracy / IT	773	5%
Young people who need other support to get things done	662	4%
Young people with a reason why they can't get a job	297	2%
Young people living in a household in which no one has a job	231	1%
Young people living in care	221	1%
Young people with drug and alcohol misuse problems	164	1%
Young people with English as a second language	145	1%
Disability	134	1%
Homeless young people	123	1%
Teenage parents	93	1%
Young people coming out of prison soon	77	0%
Young people with mental health problems	74	0%
Young people with learning difficulties	71	0%
Lone parents	60	0%

Source: EDMS data provided by the Reach the Heights project team, June 2013

### Professionals

4.11 At least 1160 professionals took part in training or capacity building activities delivered in First Footholds by Children in Wales and the Arts

Council of Wales<sup>11</sup>, which is over twice the target of 500 professionals. Data was not made available about the organisations for which these professionals worked or where in the Convergence area they were located.

4.12 In relation to the types of professionals that took part, data on participants' job titles and interviews with project staff suggest that a wide range of professionals working with young people participated. These include:

- Social workers
- Youth workers
- Play workers
- Women's refuge staff
- Teachers
- Trainers responsible for training other youth professionals
- Volunteer youth workers
- Volunteer coordinators within voluntary and community sector organisations
- Nurses
- Youth offending officers

4.13 As well as youth professionals, some of the Arts Council of Wales training projects worked with professional artists to help develop their skills in supporting young people.

### *Routes to the Summit*

### Achievement of WEFO ESF output targets

4.14 Table 12 shows that:

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<sup>11</sup> This is based on data provided by the Arts Council of Wales and Children in Wales. For two of the Arts Council of Wales training projects, because we did not have data on the actual number of participants, we assumed that the targets set out in the contract were achieved and that these were not repeat participants?. For one training project, there was neither information on targets or actual participants, so professionals taking part in this training are not included in the estimate.

- Routes to the Summit has overachieved in relation to the total number of participants, with **15,786 young people participating in total**. This represents 37% more than the original target and 32% more than the revised 2011 target;
- As with First Footholds, the number of NEET young people engaged has been substantially less than intended. A total of 351 NEET young people took part in the project, which represents just 16% of the original target and 35% of the revised 2011 target.

**Table 12 Routes to the Summit – achievement against output targets**

Outputs	Original target (2008)	Revised target (2011)	Revised target (2013)	Achieved (March 2013)	% achieved in relation to initial target (%)	% achieved in relation to 2011 target
Total participants (11-19)	11,550	12,000	15,000	15,786	137%	132%
Female participants	5,720	5,945	7,400	7,775	136%	131%
11-13 year olds	4,620	4,845	7,000	7,144	155%	147%
14-19 year olds	6,930	7,155	8,000	8,574	124%	120%
NEET young people*	2,200	1,000	400	351	17%	37%
Female participants retraining in Mathematics Science, Engineering and Technology	2,860	2,860	Unknown	3,311	116%	Unknown
Projects using soft outcome measurement systems	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Employers collaborating with education/ training providers	83	60	Unknown	29	35%	48%

\*Based on the number of young people recorded as unemployed, long-term unemployed (over one year) and economically inactive (excluding those in full time education) or training on the summary EDMS report

Source: Target information from initial and revised business plans and information on achievements from summary report from EDMS provided to the research team on 6 June 2013, except data on number of NEET young people, which is from an EDMS report run on 18 September 2013

4.15 It is also the case that roughly equal numbers of males and females participated in Routes to the Summit (males: 8,011, 51%; females: 7,775, 49%), which is in line with the balance specified in targets. It was originally intended that 60% of participants would be aged between 14 and 19, with the remainder falling in the 11 to 13 age group. The project nearly achieved this balance, with 54% of participants aged 14 to 19. In relation to achievement of output targets by individual joint sponsors, Table 13 shows that:

- All joint sponsors experienced difficulties in meeting their target for the number of NEET young people to be engaged, although Community Music Wales performed relatively well, achieving almost three quarters of its target;
- SNAP Cymru and the Urdd performed relatively well in relation to all targets, except the target for NEET young people;
- Techniquet was not able to meet any of its output targets, except the target to engage females in STEM learning.

**Table 13 Routes to the Summit – achievement of output targets by joint sponsors**

	Community Music Wales		SNAP Cymru		Techniquet		Urdd Gobaith Cymru	
	% original target achieved	% revised target achieved	% original target achieved	% revised target achieved	% original target achieved	% revised target achieved	% original target achieved	% revised target achieved
Total participants (11-19)	51%	51%	92%	92%	30%	30%	80%	74%
Female participants	46%	46%	115%	115%	31%	31%	70%	66%
11-13 year olds	11%	11%	98%	98%	37%	37%	90%	74%
14-19 year olds	77%	77%	84%	84%	24%	24%	76%	74%
NEET young people	71%	71%	27%	27%	0%	0%	6%	6%

Source: Target achieved data from an EDMS report generated in June 2013, provided by the project team; original target data from Claim 7 submitted by joint sponsors to the Welsh Government; and revised target data from Claim 18

### Characteristics of young people participating in Routes to the Summit

4.16 According to EDMS summary data provided by the Welsh Government in June 2013:

- As in First Footholds, 6% of young people participating in Routes to the Summit considered themselves as having a disability. According to Census data<sup>12</sup>, 4% of 0-15 year olds and 3% of 16-24 year olds in local authorities in the Convergence area consider their day to day activities are limited a lot or a little as a result of a long term health problem or disability. This suggests Routes to the Summit has been effective in engaging young disabled people<sup>13</sup>.
- 1.2% of Routes to the Summit participants (194) reported themselves to be black or minority ethnic, which is a lower proportion than in First Footholds. As 5% of the total 10-19 year old population in the Convergence area is black or minority ethnic according to Census data<sup>14</sup>, this suggests Routes to the Summit has not been effective at engaging ethnic minority groups;
- Most Routes to the Summit participants (86%) had no existing qualifications when they joined the project; 7% held a qualification below Level 2; and 6% held a qualification at Level 2. Therefore the qualification level of Routes to the Summit participants was lower than that of First Footholds participants (see Figure 7);
- Data collected by the Urdd indicates that approximately 90% of young people engaged in the Urdd's activities could understand,

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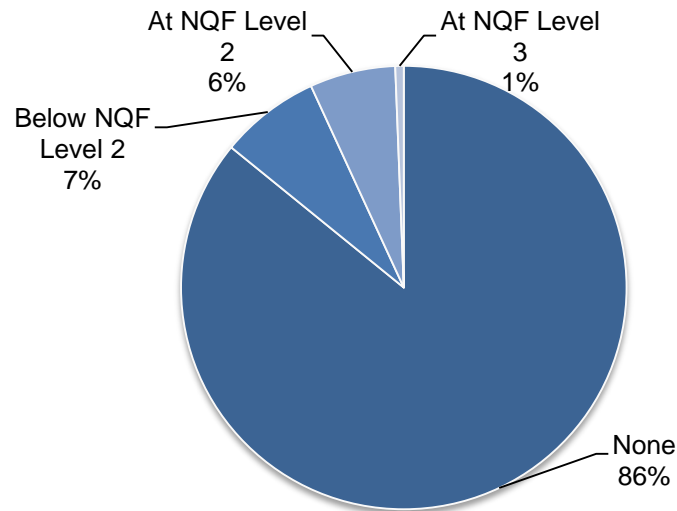
<sup>12</sup> 2011 Census: DC3302EW - Long term health problem or disability by health by sex by age [from Nomis on 2 August 2013]

<sup>13</sup> Many of the Reach the Heights sponsors used the question, 'I have a work limiting health condition – yes/no' while the Census asked respondents to rate agreement with the statement, 'My daily activities are limited by a health problem or disability'. Some project sponsors and activities also used other questions. Therefore, although the project participant and Census data are not directly comparable, this is the most accurate and relevant comparison possible.

<sup>14</sup> 2011 Census: DC2101EW - Ethnic group by sex by age, ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 26 July 2013]

speak, read and write in Welsh. Only 58% of young people indicated that Welsh was their language of preference when they registered for the activities provided by Urdd, suggesting that the Urdd had successfully recruited young people who would benefit from support to use Welsh more in their daily lives<sup>15</sup>.

**Figure 7 Existing qualification level of Routes to the Summit participants**



Source: EDMS report from the project team, July 2013

4.17 As in First Footholds, the young people who took part in Routes to the Summit had wide-ranging barriers to education, employment and training in their life. Issues that affected high proportions of young people include being at risk of exclusion from school, low levels of literacy and numeracy and isolation as a result of living in rural areas. Even though there was not a specific activity targeting young people in contact with the youth justice system as there was in First Footholds, over 100 ex-offenders benefitted from Routes to the Summit (

<sup>15</sup> *An Evaluation of Urdd Gobaith Cymru's Routes to the Summit project*, Wavehill, March 2013

Table 14).



**Table 14 Barriers faced by Routes to the Summit participants**

<b>Priority Group</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total Routes to the Summit participants</b>
English second language <sup>16</sup>	3,383	21%
14-19 year old at risk of being excluded or who have been excluded from school	1,734	11%
People living in rural areas	1,245	8%
11-13 year olds at risk of being excluded or have been excluded from school	885	6%
Young people who need other support to get things done	772	5%
Young people who need help with writing / reading / numeracy / IT	720	5%
Young people with mental health problems	149	1%
Ex-offenders	131	1%
Young people with drug and alcohol misuse problems	125	1%
Young people living in a household in which no one has a job	118	1%
Young people with a reason why they can't get a job	81	1%
Living in care	46	0%
Experiencing homelessness	27	0%
Lone parent	27	0%
Teenage parent	8	0%
Coming out of prison soon	1	0%

Source: EDMS data provided by the Reach the Heights project team, June 2013

### Professionals

4.18 Over a thousand (1,103) professionals took part in training or capacity building activities delivered in Routes to the Summit by SNAP Cymru and the DFES-led CLIC project. Because delivering training was not an objective in the project business plan, targets were not set for the

<sup>16</sup> It is not clear whether this refers to young people with Welsh as a first language or young people from migrant communities who speak English as a second language.

number of professionals to participate. For around a quarter (287 professionals) learning was accredited. The types of professionals who took part included staff from Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), Careers Wales, colleges, and local authority staff. Fifteen different courses were delivered by SNAP Cymru covering different aspects of providing support to young people with additional learning needs, disabilities and those at risk of exclusion. Practitioners participating in the CLIC project obtained qualifications at levels 1-3 in developing online information services for young people.

## **Activities**

### *First Footholds*

#### Types of activity

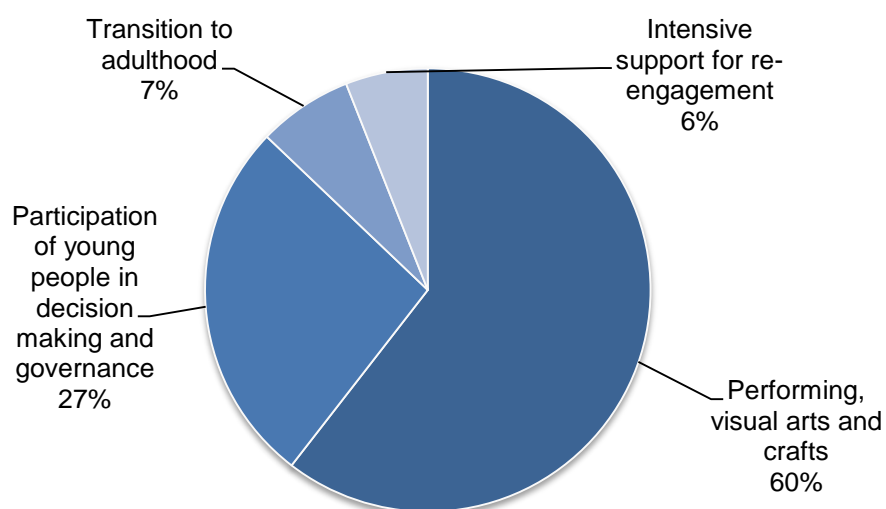
- Around a tenth of the budget (11%) was spent on activities targeted at professionals working with young people. This amounted to a total spend of £1.15 million. Of this, around four fifths was spent on developing resources to support professionals, such as:
  - The Participation Workers Website;
  - Toolkits for health professionals to raise awareness of the UNCRC;
  - Guides about how to run workplace mentoring programmes for young people;
  - Lesson plans to support teaching of the UNCRC in the workplace;
  - Self-directed training modules; and
  - Monitoring and evaluation support resources (Demonstrating Success).

4.19 Almost £50,000 was spent on delivering training to professionals on a range of topics in relation to effectively engaging NEET young people and those at risk of being so (by Children in Wales and the Arts Council of Wales). Interviews with joint sponsors suggest that some volunteers also benefitted from this training. The three most well-attended courses

were: consultation training (246 participants); understanding special needs (240 participants); and training for YOTs (121 participants). As a consequence, the bulk of spend was on activities targeted directly at young people (Figure 8)

- Reflecting the allocation of funds to the Arts Council of Wales, three fifths of the budget was spent on activities that used performing, visual arts or crafts to engage young people;
- Over a quarter of the budget was spent on activities that sought to improve young people’s participation in decision making and governance. Examples of types of participation activities include training programmes for young people to support them to take part in Welsh Government consultations, training and awareness raising activities about the UNCRC, and activities in which young people research local issues of interest and concern and present their findings to local decision makers;
- 6% of the budget provided young people (mainly those in contact with the youth justice system) with intensive support for re-engagement and 7% with support to achieve a successful transition to adulthood (mainly through the Transition Key Worker project).

**Figure 8 First Footholds – proportion of budget spent on different types of activities**



Source: Sponsor business plans, internal documents sponsor interviews and additional MI data submitted in February 2013.

4.20 As well as activities delivered to young people, there was a small amount of research and evaluation activities, which were intended to inform the future development of services. These include:

- Keeping in Touch: consultation and research to inform the development of national approaches to keeping in touch with young people aged 11-25 who are NEET or are likely to become NEET;
- Mapping of the National Participation Standards to the UNCRC;
- Research about the lack of inclusion and representation in current pupil participation practice; and
- Evaluation of each local authority Participation Strategy against the requirements within the Local Participation Strategy Guidance.

4.21 In assessing these activities for their appropriateness and relevance to the aims of First Footholds and the needs presented in the business plan, we have found that:

- There are few activities contributing to the aim of developing, regionally piloting and implementing systematic and innovative approaches to identifying young people who are NEET or at risk of being so. A piece of work to review research evidence about characteristics of young people at risk of becoming NEET was started but was not completed;
- There was no activity to develop Wales-wide systems for Keeping in Touch with young people who are NEET only a piece of research and consultation with local authorities and piloting of different approaches, for which there was no follow up or dissemination;
- The activities delivered to professionals and young people are relevant to the aims and objectives of the project although the positive activities for young people were mainly focussed on arts-based, participation and citizenship activities. There were no sports activities.
- There were very few activities that offer experiences to young people to apply skills gained in work-related experience and none explicitly provided training in work-related skills. Funky Dragon had intended

to offer work experience placement themselves and through partners but this only happened on a very small scale (exact numbers unknown); seven young people participated in work experience through Save the Children; in the Education and Learning Youth Justice project, many staff working with young people tried to find work placement opportunities for young offenders with local businesses. They reported that it was difficult to secure placements because most businesses, apart from a few large businesses with well-established Corporate Social Responsibility policies, did not want to participate. Data on numbers of young people completing placements is not available.

- Given the importance of volunteers in the delivery of youth services (which is increasing as budgets for youth services are stretched), there were few activities focussed on capacity building of volunteers or on supporting VCS organisations to develop their volunteer infrastructure;
- There were very few activities delivered that sought to identify and disseminate examples of good practice although some activities (participatory arts activities delivered by the Arts Council of Wales and the Education and Learning Youth Justice project) were subject to independent external evaluation, which contributed to this aim;
- There are activities clearly designed to contribute to providing specific and tailored support to young people with additional learning needs and young people in the youth justice system (a specific objective of the business plan) but these were a small proportion of the overall activity.

4.22 The activities are relatively well aligned to the policy priorities of the Welsh Government because:

- Most activities appear relevant and appropriate to the aims of the Welsh Government's youth services policy, both *Extending Entitlement* and the subsequent *Youth Engagement and Action Plan* in that they address key objectives in these policies, such as: providing recreational and social opportunities in a safe and

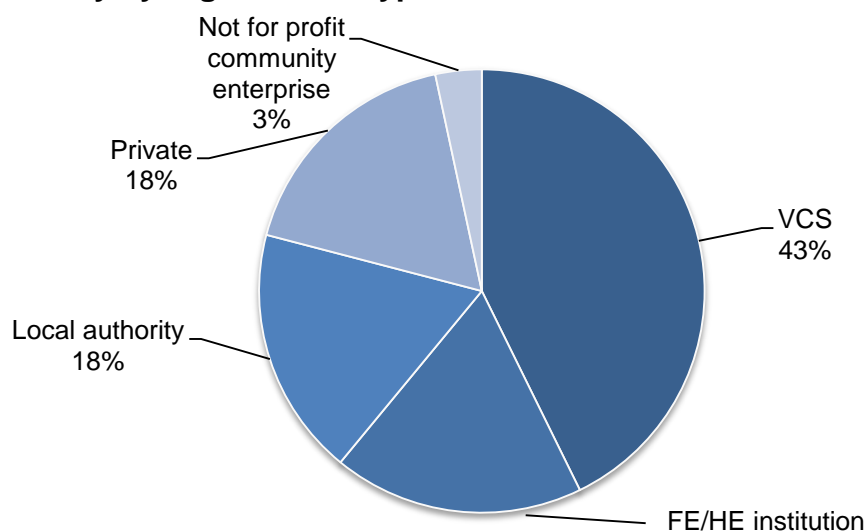
accessible environment; building young people's capacity to become independent, make choices and participate in the democratic process; and providing high quality information and advice.

- Activities focused on young people at risk of becoming NEET or who were NEET in line with the objectives of *Delivering Skills that Work for Wales*, the Welsh Governments' strategic approach to reducing the number of NEET young people in Wales; although there was little activity focused on gaining work related skills and no activity to design and implement a national system for identifying and Keeping in Touch with NEET young people.
- Several activities listed in the original business plan did not take place. Interviews with joint sponsors suggest that the main reason for planned activities not taking place was that after the interim evaluation report, when there was significant effort to reiterate which young people should be targeted, it was decided that some planned activities were no longer appropriate. Because costs were not attached to particular activities in the business plan, it is not possible to assess the scale of delivery that was planned and did not take place or was modified to have a substantially different focus. The main activities that did not take place in First Footholds are listed in 0.

#### Direct or sub-contracted delivery

4.23 In First Footholds, there were approximately 130 contracts in total, ranging from around £1,450 in value to over £750,000 (for the Transition Key Worker programme). The modal contract value was £25,000 and the median was £39,626, indicating that there were a relatively high number of low value contracts. Almost half of the total spend on sub-contracted activity went to voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, with the remainder shared relatively equally between private sector organisations, local authorities and Further Education (FE)/Higher Education (HE) institutions (Figure 9).

**Figure 9 First Footholds – proportion of total spend on sub-contracted activity by organisation type**



*Source: Sponsor business plans, internal documents sponsor interviews and additional MI data submitted in February 2013*

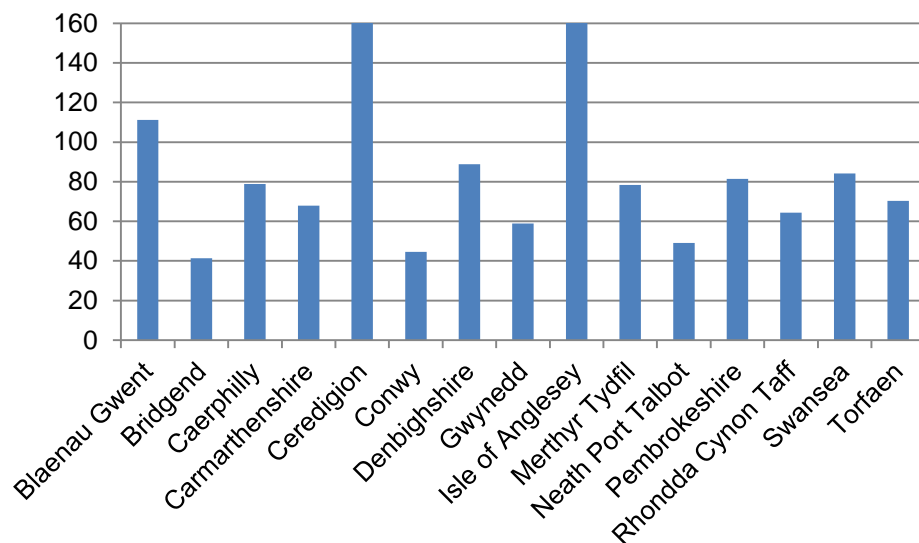
### Geographic location

4.24 Because monitoring information has not been collected at activity level, it is not possible to state whether each activity has been delivered in each local authority. An analysis of participants' per local authority of the 11-19 population<sup>17</sup> (Figure 10 below) shows that in First Footholds there were participants from all local authorities in the Convergence area although there is substantial variation in the numbers and proportions. For example, in Ceredigion and the Isle of Anglesey, there were 160 participants per 1,000 of the 11-19 year old population, while in Bridgend and Conwy, there were around 40.

4.25 It is not possible to make a robust assessment of the reasons for such variation with the data available.

<sup>17</sup> 2011 Census: Usual resident population by single year of age and sex, Wales, Office for National Statistics. We have used participant local authority data recorded on the EDMS database for this analysis.

**Figure 10 First Footholds – participants by local authority per 1,000 population of 11-19 year olds**



Source: EDMS report, June 2013

4.26 All joint sponsors delivered in each local authority, but as Table 15 shows:

- Children in Wales worked with relatively few participants in Caerphilly (3), Ceredigion (4), Conwy(3) and Merthyr Tydfil (2);
- Save the Children worked with relatively few participants in Neath Port Talbot (13) and Conwy (20) but many more in Denbighshire (164) and RCT (289);
- Funky Dragon had few participants in Torfaen (86), Carmarthenshire (92) and Neath Port Talbot (161) while considerably more were from Caerphilly (954) and Rhondda Cynon Taff (494);
- The Arts Council of Wales had relatively few participants in Conwy (152) and Gwynedd (334) but considerably more in Isle of Anglesey (833) , Ceredigion (997) and Carmarthenshire (1021); and
- The Transition Key Worker activity did not record any participants in Conwy, Denbighshire or Neath Port Talbot and recorded just one participant in Swansea.



**Table 15 First Footholds – participants per local authority by joint sponsor**

Joint sponsor	Arts Council of Wales	Children in Wales	Funky Dragon	Save the Children	DFES (Transitional Key Workers)	DFES (Criminal Justice Project)	Grand Total
Blaenau Gwent	607	28	124	52	28	44	<b>883</b>
Bridgend	132	17	286	53	14	125	<b>627</b>
Caerphilly	407	3	954	155	2	80	<b>1601</b>
Carmarthenshire	1021	35	92	71	36	99	<b>1354</b>
Ceredigion	997	4	382	156	51	68	<b>1658</b>
Conwy	152	3	285	20	-	70	<b>530</b>
Denbighshire	324	40	296	164	-	107	<b>931</b>
Gwynedd	334	45	234	100	10	61	<b>784</b>
Isle of Anglesey	833	36	379	90	10	3	<b>1351</b>
Merthyr Tydfil	209	2	179	59	10	60	<b>519</b>
Neath Port Talbot	514	14	161	13	-	33	<b>735</b>
Pembrokeshire	543	13	400	57	1	86	<b>1100</b>
Rhondda Cynon Taff	749	18	494	289	13	108	<b>1671</b>
Swansea	1373	52	417	252	1	106	<b>2201</b>
Torfaen	556	21	86	45	7	36	<b>751</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8770</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>4770</b>	<b>1578</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>1086</b>	<b>16718</b>

Source: EDMS report, June 2013

### *Routes to the Summit*

#### Types of activity

- Routes to the Summit was focussed on delivering activities directly to young people; a very small proportion of spend (less than 0.5%)

was used to deliver activities for professionals<sup>18</sup>. As a consequence, over £11 million was spent on activities for young people. As shown in

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<sup>18</sup> We have categorised the DFES-led Youth Work Apprenticeship project as an activity delivered to young people rather than training for professionals. It should be noted, however, that in a few local authorities, apprentices were young people aged 16-19, while in others they were older people already working in the youth sector.

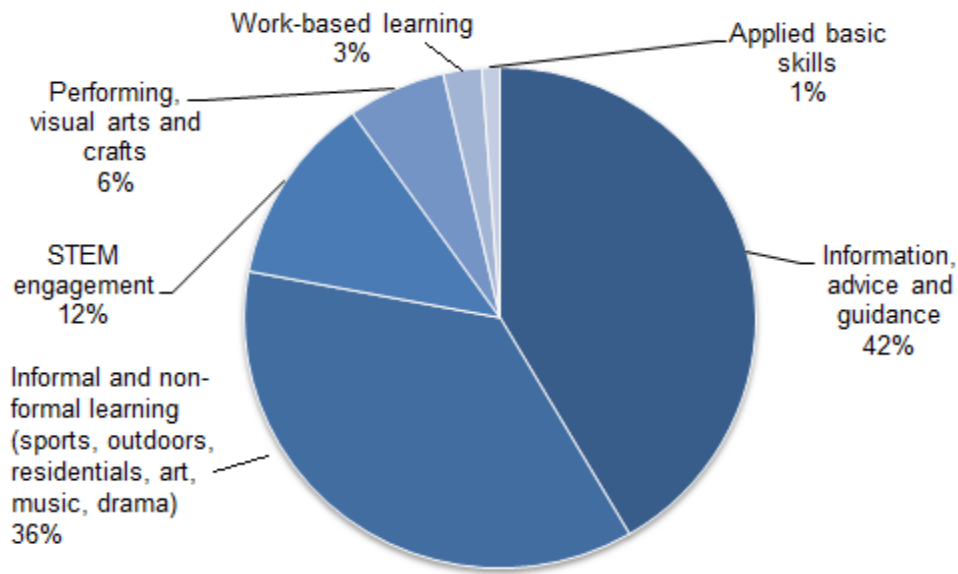
Figure 11, reflecting the allocation of funding to the Urdd, over a third of spend was on informal and non-formal learning opportunities for young people, including sports, outdoors activities, residential experiences, drama and arts;

- Almost half of the total expenditure was spent on information, advice and guidance activities<sup>19</sup> (mainly for CLIC and the bespoke services provided by SNAP Cymru);
- The remainder of expenditure was shared mainly between performing, visual arts and crafts (delivered by Community Music Wales), STEM-based activities delivered by Techniquest, and work-based learning (the Youth Apprenticeship programme).

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<sup>19</sup> In developing this typology, we have categorised activities that have information, advice and guidance as their primary focus, such as the CLIC website and the support provided by SNAP Cymru, as information, advice and guidance activities. There are, though some inevitable overlaps in the categories we have developed. For example, many activities provided information, advice and guidance as part of a wide package of support and engagement activities, such as the Urdd. In these cases, information, advice and guidance was a secondary focus and the activity has therefore not been categorised as an information, advice and guidance activity, although this is still an important feature of the activity.

**Figure 11 Routes to the Summit – proportion of budget spent on different types of activities**



Source: Sponsor business plans, internal documents sponsor interviews and additional MI data submitted in February 2013.

4.27 In relation to the aims of Routes to the Summit (

Table 16) shows that:

- The activities are relevant to some but not all of the aims and objectives of the project, with significant gaps being activities contributing to the objectives of delivering work type experience (linked to key employers and industries) and increasing financial literacy;
- Many of the activities as with First Footholds were focused on performing arts (the activities delivered by Community Music Wales, and, to some extent, the Urdd). The nature of these activities is relatively similar to some activities delivered in First Footholds through the Arts Council of Wales. It is not clear what the distinction is between the arts-focussed activities in the two projects in terms of outcomes expected.

**Table 16 Routes to the Summit – Assessment of how appropriate activities were to the project aims**

<b>Project aim (as listed in the initial business plan)</b>	<b>Assessment of whether activities are relevant to aim</b>
Develop a range of information, advice guidance and support for young people on learning, career and lifestyle issues	The main activities that contribute to this aim are the CLIC website and bespoke advice and support delivered by SNAP Cymru.
Enhance Personal and Learning Coach Support to assist young people in making decisions and locating opportunities to learn and gain skills	A Level 3 and 4 training module for Learning Coaches was developed for professionals providing intensive coaching to NEET young people and made available but there was no additional funding for implementation or follow up.
Promote interest and the take up of STEM based subjects and future careers options relating to them	Techniquet activities contribute to this aim – although as highlighted above- there was a substantial underspend for this activity.
Develop and deliver training and resources that promote applied basic skills for young people including areas such as managing budgets through financial literacy/capability	DFES commissioned the development of resources for use by teachers and professionals in other youth settings but no activities were delivered to young people.
Deliver a range of interventions to young people who are likely to underachieve to ensure that they can achieve a higher level of qualification through new learning routes including music	Activities delivered by Community Music Wales, and to some extent the Urdd, contribute to this.
Create a range of new opportunities for young people to undertake work type experience and gain skills that can be used either in further learning or employment (linked to key employers and industry)	Activities with a focus on work type experience were limited. Community Music Wales activities required young people to apply literacy and numeracy skill in a music-based activity (for example, planning a concert) and Techniquet activities required the application of science, literacy and numeracy to real life scenarios such as planning a pop concert or evacuating an area due to a natural disaster. There have been few links with employers. Techniquet reported 29 employers engaged with education and training providers and one of the Arts Council of Wales activities provided opportunities for young people to visit local businesses in the creative industries.
Promote the identification and sharing of good practice	Sharing of good practice has been undertaken by individual sponsors to varying degrees (see Chapter 7 on 'Added Value, Legacy and Sustainability')

Source: Project business plans, joint sponsor business plans and sponsor interviews

4.28 The activities are relatively well aligned to the policy priorities of the Welsh Government:

- Techniquiest activities contribute to the aims of the *Science Strategy for Wales* and the subsequent *Science for Wales*;
- The Urdd's Welsh-language youth engagement activities contribute to *laith pawb* and *laith Fyw, laith Byw: A living language, language for living*;
- Most activities appear to contribute to *Extending Entitlement* and the subsequent *Youth Engagement and Action Plan* although they have contributed little to *Delivering Skills that Work for Wales*, the government's NEET reduction strategy, with the low numbers of NEET young people engaged in activities.

4.29 As in First Footholds, some activities listed in the business plan did not take place. These are listed in 0 . The reasons provided by Routes to the Summit joint sponsors for this were the same as those provided by First Footholds sponsors (see 4.22).

#### Direct or sub-contracted delivery of activities

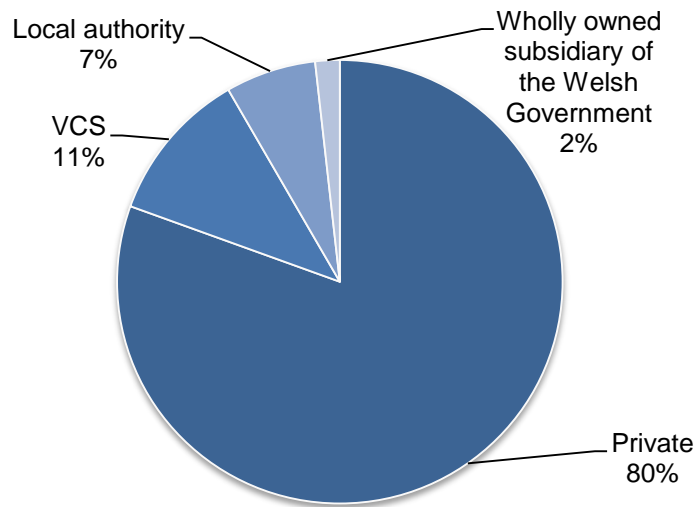
4.30 Mainly as a result of the large contract awarded to a private sector organisation to deliver the CLIC website, four fifths of the total spend on sub-contractors went to private sector organisations, with the remaining fifth shared between local authorities and voluntary and community sector organisations (

Figure 12).

4.31 Fewer contracts were awarded under Routes to the Summit (32) but the modal contract value was £2,109, reflecting a high number of low value contracts.



**Figure 12 Types of subcontractors Routes to the Summit**

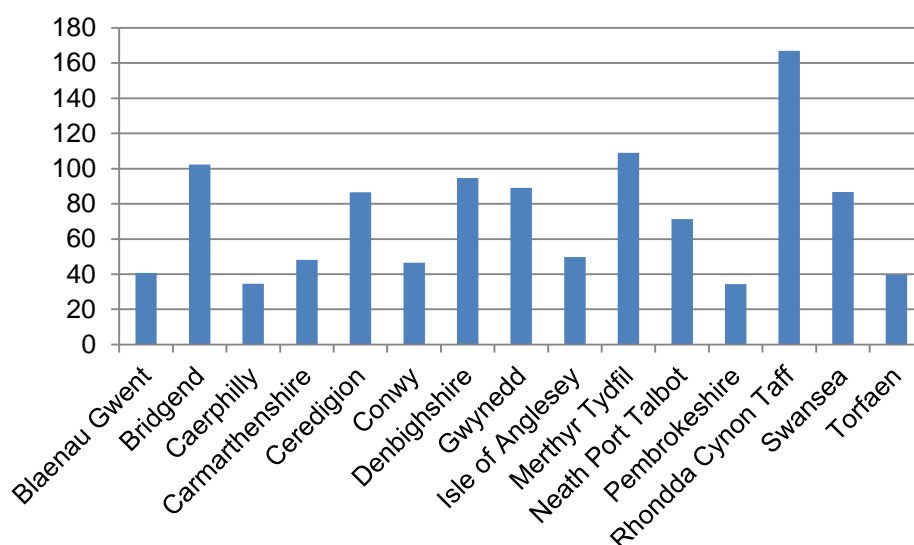


Source: Sponsor business plans, internal documents sponsor interviews and additional MI data submitted in February 2013

### Geographic location

4.32 In Routes to the Summit, although the variation is slightly less marked than in First Footholds, there were far fewer participants per 1,000 of the population in Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Pembrokeshire. Again, it is not possible to assess what the reasons for this are but the variation is significant (Figure 13).

**Figure 13 Routes to the Summit – participants by local authority per 1,000 population of 11-19 year olds**



Source: EDMS report, June 2013

4.33 All joint sponsors delivered in all local authorities, apart from the DFES-led Youth Work apprenticeship project which does not record participants in Gwynedd, the Isle of Anglesey, Swansea or Torfaen and only records one participant in Caerphilly (Table 17).

4.34 Reflecting additional resources available in Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT), the Urdd was particularly successful in reaching larger numbers of young people in the local authority (1,289) than elsewhere.

4.35 Variations are quite significant. For example:

- Community Music Wales had fewer than 20 participants in five local authorities and over 50 in four (Gwynedd 109);
- SNAP Cymru had relatively few participants in Ceredigion (49) and Pembrokeshire (53), compared to Swansea (188) and RCT (192);
- Techniquet had relatively small numbers across the western and northern local authority areas (except Denbighshire) and very large numbers in Swansea (1,641) and RCT (2,675);
- the Urdd had as might be expected small numbers in areas such as Blaenau Gwent (64) and Torfaen (157) but larger numbers in areas such as Rhondda Cynon Taff (1,289), Bridgend (633) as well as Gwynedd (689).

4.36 Some differences will reflect the cooperation of local authorities where the activities had to engage schools.

**Table 17 Routes to the Summit – Participants per local authority by joint sponsor**

Joint Sponsor	Community Music Wales	Snap Cymru	Techniquet	Urdd Gobaith Cymru	DFES- Youth Work Apprentice Project	Total
Blaenau Gwent	13	130	113	64	3	<b>323</b>
Bridgend	7	105	740	633	69	<b>1,554</b>
Caerphilly	7	132	201	361	1	<b>702</b>
Carmarthenshire	16	103	135	422	285	<b>961</b>
Ceredigion	56	49	147	325	200	<b>777</b>
Conwy	37	82	177	243	14	<b>553</b>
Denbighshire	49	77	537	322	9	<b>994</b>
Gwynedd	109	111	275	689	-	<b>1,184</b>
Isle of Anglesey	51	92	40	162	-	<b>345</b>
Merthyr Tydfil	10	91	410	187	23	<b>722</b>
Neath Port Talbot	11	157	396	312	192	<b>1,068</b>
Pembrokeshire	25	53	102	167	119	<b>466</b>
Rhondda Cynon Taff	48	192	2675	1289	132	<b>4,336</b>
Swansea	84	188	1641	353		<b>2,266</b>
Torfaen	29	131	107	157		<b>424</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>1,693</b>	<b>7,696</b>	<b>5,723</b>	<b>1,049</b>	<b>16,717</b>

Source: EDMS report, June 2013

## **Cross cutting themes**

*First Footholds*

Equal opportunities

4.37 The First Footholds project business plan stated that the cross-cutting theme of equal opportunities would be addressed by:

- Promoting equal opportunities throughout all activities in accordance with the guidance provided by WEFO;
- Piloting innovative approaches to engaging young people from specific groups including those with disabilities, those in the criminal justice system, young carers and young people who are NEET;
- Ensuring that all training provided through the project challenged gender stereotypes. For example, in relation to music-based activities, the project would challenge the perception that music is a male-dominated industry. It was also intended that the citizenship activities would highlight that relatively few women participate in politics;
- Seeking advice from specialist organisations to ensure appropriate modifications were made to activities to facilitate the participation of disabled young people;
- Producing project documentation that was accessible to all young people;
- Establishing an equal opportunities policy for the project that was aligned to the individual equal opportunities policies of the individual joint sponsors.

4.38 Because MI data has not been collected at activity level, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about how effectively all the aims and objectives relating to equal opportunities have been achieved. However, the project MI shows that First Footholds was successful in engaging the specific disadvantaged groups mentioned in the business plan and supported young people with wide ranging barriers to education, training and employment including young people in rural areas with limited access to services, ex-offenders and those with low levels of literacy and numeracy (see paragraph 4.10 and Table 11).

4.39 Interviews with joint sponsors, the case study research and also a review of the qualitative progress reports provided by joint sponsors to

the Welsh Government also provide some insight into the ways in which equal opportunities have been addressed. This evidence suggests that the aims in the business plan in relation to equal opportunities have broadly been achieved.

- 4.40 Most First Footholds sponsors considered that equal opportunities were “*an integral part*” of their activities because they were targeting disadvantaged young people and endeavouring to give them the same opportunities as other young people. Children in Wales and the Transition Key Worker project, for example, highlighted that their focus was on disabled young people and young people with additional learning needs.
- 4.41 Many First Foothold sponsors used the topic of equal opportunities as the basis of activities they ran with young people. For example, as part of the Active Citizenship workshops, Funky Dragon discussed the topic of stereotypes with young people and, in some cases, asked young people to make short films about stereotyping.
- 4.42 Several of the First Footholds activities have taken a participatory approach to designing and delivering activities. For example, Save the Children reported that to ensure young people have equal opportunity to participate in decision making, they established a youth panel to make decisions about how funding should be allocated and what activities should look like. The Education and Learning Youth Justice project consulted with minority ethnic young people who were in contact with the youth justice system to find out young people’s views on how the support provided could be enhanced and developed.
- 4.43 All sponsors had equal opportunities policies in place which underpinned their work. Sub-contractors were expected to comply with these.
- 4.44 There is at this stage little evidence that addressing the cross-cutting themes as part of the Reach the Heights has led to increased application of the cross-cutting themes by sponsor organisations in other areas of work.

## Environmental sustainability

4.45 The project business plan stated that the cross-cutting theme of environmental sustainability would be addressed by:

- Ensuring that all activities in the project raised awareness of environmental sustainability among young people;
- All sponsors making efforts to reduce waste, reuse materials and reduce carbon emissions from travel;
- Including environmental sustainability as one of the criteria against which activities would be assessed during any tendering process.

4.46 Again, because of the lack of activity level MI, it is not possible to make an assessment of which activities effectively embedded environmental sustainability. Interviews with joint sponsors and case study research indicate, though, the following measures to address the theme of environmental sustainability:

- All joint sponsors had environmental sustainability policies in place, which staff and sub-contractors were expected to comply with. Reducing paper waste and reducing carbon emissions from travel were key components of the policies;
- Many sponsors also gave examples of activities that were about issues related to the local environment. For example:
  - One of the Arts Council of Wales contracted providers aimed to work with young people and to build pride in their local area by making neighbourhoods cleaner, safer and greener. Young people took part in tree planting and made films about local environmental problems;
  - Save the Children's Making a Change project required young people to choose an issue in their local area that they were interested in. For example, one group of young people in South Wales were worried about syringes being dumped at their local beach. Young people were supported to make posters and films, to interview other local residents about their views on the

problem, and then to present their findings to local decision makers.

### *Routes to the Summit*

#### Equal opportunities

4.47 The Routes to the Summit project business plan stated that the cross-cutting theme of equal opportunities would be addressed by:

- Promoting equal opportunities through all activities in accordance with the guidance provided by WEFO;
- Piloting innovative approaches to providing information and advice and wider opportunities for young people to learn and in so doing removing barriers to learning and creating independence;
- Supporting the development of professionals in order to engage better with disadvantaged young people;
- Establishing an equal opportunities policy for the project that was aligned to the individual equal opportunities policies of the individual joint sponsors;
- Challenging gender inequality in the workplace, particularly in relation to STEM professions. It was intended that Techniquest would deliver female only sessions;
- Seeking advice from specialist organisations to ensure appropriate modifications were made to activities to facilitate the participation of disabled young people;
- Producing project documentation that was accessible to all young people.

4.48 As with First Footholds, the lack of activity level MI means it is not possible to fully assess whether these aims and objectives have been met. The MI on the wide range of disadvantaged groups engaged in the project suggests though that the project has been successful at placing equal opportunities at the core of activities. This is supported by interviews with joint sponsors, who all considered that the key aim of their work was to provide social and educational opportunities to

disadvantaged young people who would otherwise not have the same opportunities as others.

4.49 Interviews with joint sponsors and case study research also show that:

- All sponsors had equal opportunities in place, which staff and sub-contractors were expected to comply with;
- Training was delivered to professionals to improve their skills in supporting disadvantaged groups;
- Techniquet delivered a programme of female only STEM workshops.

4.50 This suggests that broadly the aims and objectives in the business plan relating to equal opportunities have been fulfilled.

#### Environmental sustainability

4.51 The project business plan stated that the cross-cutting theme of environmental sustainability would be addressed by:

- Ensuring that all activities in the project raised awareness of environmental sustainability among young people;
- All sponsors making efforts to reduce waste, reuse materials and reduce carbon emissions from travel;
- Including environmental sustainability as one of the criteria against which bids to provide activities would be assessed during any tendering processes;
- Improving young people's understanding of environmental issues as part of Techniquet's STEM outreach programme. It was intended that the STEM outreach workshops would improve young people's understanding of pollution, the effects of climate change, carbon reducing activities, alternative energy solutions, environmental careers, and it will increase the young people's awareness of sustainable practices;
- Providing young people with opportunities to take part in environmental work experience and volunteering.



4.52 We cannot assess whether all activities embedded the theme of environmental sustainability but joint sponsor interviews and case study research indicate that:

- All sponsors were aware of the requirements to reduce waste, reuse materials and reduce carbon emissions from travel and reported that they made efforts to do this and that all sponsors had supporting policies in place.
- Techniquet developed workshops that focussed on environmental sustainability issues. For example, a workshop entitled the Size of Wales explored the topic of diminishing rainforests in Africa and the impact of this on everyday life in Wales. Through facilitated discussions, young people considered the effects of their individual choices on the environment. There is though limited evidence that this had led to improved knowledge and understanding among young people or a change in their behaviour.

4.53 The aim of providing opportunities for work experience in environmental organisations does not appear to have been fulfilled and there is little evidence at this stage that joint sponsors have changed their practice in relation to environmental sustainability beyond the project activities.

## **Summary**

- There has been a substantial underspend in Reach the Heights: the budget was initially almost £50 million but the final spend was £29 million.
- The projects achieved their overall throughput targets: in total over 31,000 young people participated in Reach the Heights (15,974 in First Footholds and 15,786 in Routes to the Summit).
- However, there have been difficulties in targeting: significantly fewer NEET young people were engaged in activities than anticipated (around a fifth of participants were NEET compared to the original target for almost half of young people to be NEET); in First Footholds, a greater proportion of 11-13 year olds participated than

expected (the original target was for 30% (5,130 young people) compared to the 40% (6,457 young people) who actually participated); and both projects could have been more effective in targeting ethnic minorities. Both projects have engaged young disabled relatively effectively.

- Performance against targets was not consistent across sponsors, with some significantly overachieving against certain indicators and some significantly underachieving. This suggests that the targets were not always inappropriate for the activities.
- The target for the number of professionals receiving training was exceeded by a substantial margin (in First Footholds, 1160 professionals participated compared to a target of 500, and in Routes to the Summit, over 1000 professionals participated with no specific targeted stated).
- There were participants from all local authorities in the Convergence area but there is substantial variation in the numbers and proportions.
- Some of the aims in the business plan have been achieved:

In First Footholds, these include:

- Developing and delivering training packages in innovative approaches to engagement for professionals who are front line contacts with young people;
- Providing locally based and innovative support for young people, through a wide range of activities.

And for Routes to the Summit:

- Developing a range of information, advice and guidance and support for young people on learning, career and lifestyle issues (primarily through the CLIC website and the SNAP Cymru activities, although a degree of information and guidance was embedded in many activities)
- Developing training resources on areas such as managing budgets and financial capability for teachers and other professionals

- Delivering a range of interventions to young people who are likely to underachieve to ensure that they can achieve a higher level of qualification through new learning routes (through activities delivered by the Urdd and Community Music Wales).
- However, some key aims in the business plans have not been achieved:

For First Footholds, these include:

- Developing, piloting and implementing systematic and innovative approaches to identifying NEET and at risk young people;
- Developing Wales-wide systems for Keeping in Touch with young people who are NEET; and
- Providing opportunities for young people to undertake short training programmes in work related skills and apply these through work related experience.

And for Routes to the Summit:

- Increasing opportunities for work type experience linked to key employers and industries.
- There were few activities that sought to identify and disseminate examples of good practice – a key aim of both projects plan. Those activities subject to external evaluation (activities delivered by the Urdd, SNAP Cymru, Arts Council of Wales, Education and Learning Youth Justice) will partly contribute to this aim if evaluation reports are circulated.
- The activities that have been delivered to professionals and young people in both projects are generally relevant to the policy objectives of *Extending Entitlement* and the subsequent *Youth Engagement and Action Plan* but the low numbers of NEET young people engaged means the contribution to *Delivering Skills that Work for Wales*, the government's NEET reduction strategy, was limited.
- The aims and objectives set out in the business plan in relation to the cross-cutting theme of equal opportunities appear broadly to have been achieved.

- Although it is not possible to make a full assessment of whether all activities have effectively embedded environmental sustainability, there are several examples in both projects of activities that focus on issues related to the local environment. A key aim in Routes to the Summit of offering young people the opportunity to undertake work placements and volunteering in environmental organisations does not appear to have been achieved.

## 5 Impacts of First Footholds

5.1 In this section we assess the outcomes of the First Footholds project, considering the benefits for both young people and professionals against the key outcomes expected, which were set out in the logic model. We assess whether there have been differing levels of outcomes for different target groups and, as far as possible, whether particular activities have been successful in achieving outcomes. We draw on interviews with joint sponsors, case study research, end of project reports, independent evaluation reports (where available) and all the available MI.

### Outcomes achieved by young people

5.2 Table 18 assesses the evidence available about the short and medium-term outcomes achieved by young people (see Box 1 in Chapter 1), which can be evidenced during and immediately after the project activity. Improved social and personal dispositions and skills is the outcome for which there is strongest evidence. While there is some evidence of the following medium term outcomes, the evidence is weak:

- Improved knowledge and understanding of rights;
- Improved participation in education and training; and
- Qualifications gained.

**Table 18 First Footholds – assessment of strength of evidence of key short and medium term outcome areas**

	Improved personal and social disposition and skills	Improved knowledge and understanding of rights	Improved participation in education and training (including attendance and behaviour)	Qualifications gained
Arts Council of Wales	C	-	E	D
Children in Wales	D	D	-	D
Funky Dragon	D	D	-	D

	<b>Improved personal and social disposition and skills</b>	<b>Improved knowledge and understanding of rights</b>	<b>Improved participation in education and training (including attendance and behaviour)</b>	<b>Qualifications gained</b>
Save the Children	D	D	-	D
DFES Transition Key Worker	C	-	E	D
DFES Youth Justice	C	-	D	D

5.3 There is generally no evidence about the extent to which these short and medium term outcomes have been sustained after young people have finished the First Footholds activities, whether acquiring knowledge, skills and abilities has changed aspirations, attitudes and intentions, and whether they have contributed to the achievement of outcomes, such as:

- Improved attendance at school or college;
- Improved educational attainment;
- Improved basic skills;
- Sustained participation in community activities or an interest; and
- Improved progression into further and higher education.

5.4 Given that a significant proportion of participants only completed activities relatively recently and that many activities delivered in First Footholds are intended to bring about initial engagement of young people who are NEET – by changing attitudes towards learning and taking part – we should not expect so much evidence that they have affected attendance and attainment at this point.

*Improved personal and social dispositions and skills*

**Young people developed a wide range of personal and social skills and dispositions as a result of taking part in activities, including interaction with adults and other young people, motivation and taking part, independence and respect for independence and respect for others. Across all the activities joint sponsors, delivery staff, young**

sponsors, delivery staff, young people and partners provided many examples of young people examples of young people who, when they joined activities, had significant difficulties in significant difficulties in communicating with adults and other young people. For some, especially people. For some, especially disabled young people, previous opportunities to take part in social opportunities to take part in social and leisure activities with others had been limited. For others, been limited. For others, although opportunities had been available, they had struggled to sustain had struggled to sustain participation and build positive relationships. The most disengaged The most disengaged young people, lacked motivation to get up in the morning and leave their morning and leave their homes. Most of the activities appear to have helped young people to helped young people to overcome these challenges and develop personal and social skills. personal and social skills. Examples are provided in **Box 4, Box 5, Box 6 and Box 7** and

5.5 Figure 14, below.

#### **Box 4 Key worker support to improve personal and social dispositions and skills among young people with additional learning needs**

In the Transition Key Worker programme, young people with additional learning needs, who were very isolated and disengaged, participated in social activities with peers. Key workers gave them information about what was available and also accompanied them until they gained confidence to attend independently. There were several examples where transport had been a barrier for young people and key workers had taken time to 'practice' journeys so young people felt confident to be able to use public transport and follow the route themselves. Parents, carers and young people appreciated this practical support and reported that as well as improving young people's ability to socialise with others, it reduced stress on the family<sup>20</sup>. There is some evidence from the project workers that young people have continued to access social activities and use transport independently since the assistance ceased.

#### **Box 5 Using participatory arts activities to improve personal and social dispositions and skills**

In many of the Arts Council of Wales activities young people have learnt skills to work in groups. This has led to an improved ability to get on with others. Also, as a result of the self-esteem gained, this has led to increased motivation to take part.

<sup>20</sup> *The costs and benefits of transition key working: an analysis of five pilot projects*, Holtom, D, Lloyd-Jones, S, Bowen, R and Watkins, J The People and Work Unit, 2012

A review of 30 end of project reports presented evidence of improvements in ability to interact with others among young people (17), improved respect for others (13) and improved independence (15) and around two thirds presented evidence of improvements in young people's motivation and willingness to take part (22).

This is supported by interviews with delivery staff, partners and young people. One participant of a drama-based activity explains:

*"I agreed to be involved in drama although I didn't really care about drama. I became more focused, I began to get to know the group. In drama you have to work together, we had a laugh and they supported me. I want to work harder now and wouldn't be doing any of this without Reach the Heights. They believed in me when I didn't believe in myself"<sup>21</sup>.*

Another participant of a multimedia activity commented that:

*"I've made more friends from the project than I had already. I wouldn't have been friends with anyone here if it wasn't for this".*

These findings confirm evidence in the literature that participating in performing arts has a positive impact on adolescent health and behaviour and, in particular, supports improved communication and listening skills, ability to get on with peers and increased self confidence<sup>22,23</sup>.

### **Box 6 Using group-based citizenship activities to improve personal and social skills**

In Funky Dragon Active Citizenship workshops the young people taking part achieved improved interpersonal skills as a result of the group exercises that required negotiation and giving presentations to others.

Typical comments from participants include:

*"Speaking in front of a group is a big thing but I did it and know I can do it" and "I feel a lot more confident speaking to others in a group".*

A few completed before and after ratings in relation to their confidence to interact

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<sup>21</sup> *Evaluation of the Reach the Heights Arts Participation Programme*, Arad Research, June 2013

<sup>22</sup> Daykin, N., Orme, J., Evans, D., Salmon, D., McEachran, M. and Brain, S. (2008) The impact of participation in performing arts on adolescent health and behaviour: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 13 (2). pp. 251-264.

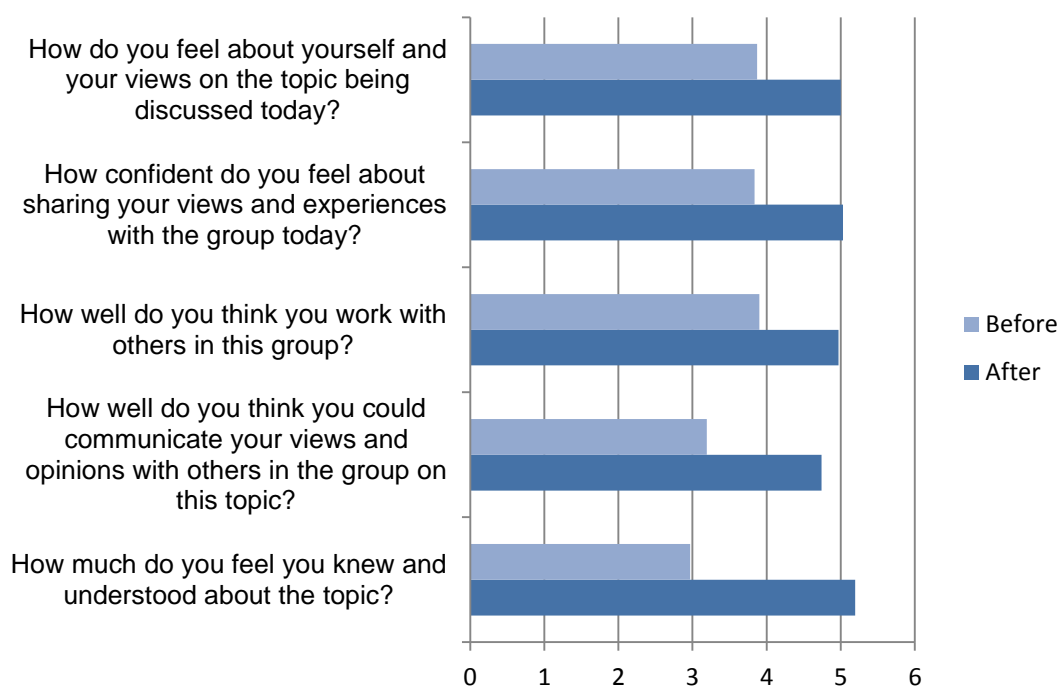
<sup>23</sup> Wilkin, A, Gulliver, C and Kinder, K (2005) *Serious Play – An evaluation of arts activities in Pupil Referral Units and Learning Support Units*. London: Calouse Gulbenkian Foundation



with others (0) and their ability to communicate their views. Most reported improved confidence and skills after the workshops.

These findings broadly reflect those of evaluations of other citizenship activities. For example, the evaluation of the Big Lottery Fund’s Young People’s Fund, which included a substantial proportion of citizenship activities, found that young people had improved confidence and ability to form and maintain positive relationships with peers and adults <sup>24</sup>. The evaluation also indicated that young people considered that citizenship activities, similar to those delivered under Reach the Heights, helped them to enjoy school more (58%), to improve their behaviour (46%) and to get better grades at school (31%).

**Figure 14 Funky Dragon Active Citizenship workshops: increase in self-reported scores in relation to social and personal skills**



Source: Before and after questionnaires administered by Funky Dragon before and after a programme of Active Citizenship workshops (random sample base = 31)

**Box 7 Residential weekends for disabled young people to improve personal and social skills**

Children in Wales ran residential weekends for disabled young people that provided

<sup>24</sup> Gen and Wavehill Consulting (2011) *Evaluation of Young People’s Fund Year 5 Report*.

opportunities to socialise with other young people in an informal environment and also to learn about their rights under the UNCRC. Delivery staff reported that:

*“For many young people this is their first time away from home, and they are learning new life skills that they wouldn’t otherwise have an opportunity to do. These are through experiences such as staying in a hotel, checking themselves in, ordering their own food – these help to reinforce basic skills we are trying to develop such as confidence in speaking out in front of other people and general interpersonal skills”.*

Young people who took part in the residential activities agreed that these had helped to develop their personal and social skills. For example, one young person noted:

*“I feel a lot more confident in speaking to others in a group. Before joining the group here, I wouldn’t have done. I would just sit and put my head down and people used to look at me and think I couldn’t speak or hear”.*

- 5.6 There is little evidence that improved personal and social skills and dispositions has affected aspirations for the future or attitudes towards participating in further learning.

#### *Improved knowledge and understanding of rights*

- 5.7 According to delivery staff, young people and partners, citizenship activities delivered by Children in Wales, Funky Dragon and Save the Children have resulted in increased knowledge and understanding among young people of their rights and responsibilities. These have been gained by both young people in education and training and those who were NEET. Case study examples are provided below in Box 8.

#### **Box 8 Improved knowledge and understanding of rights among young people as a result of citizenship activities**

- Young people who took part in the Together 4 Rights workshops delivered by Children in Wales improved their understanding of their rights and entitlements under the UNCRC. Delivery staff considered this to be a key

outcome and young people agreed:

- *“Coming to these activities has given me the confidence to say what is important to me and know what I should expect – what my ‘rights’ are. Before coming here I wouldn’t have had the confidence to say ‘ I want an electric wheelchair – I want to be like her over there’. Before coming here I didn’t even know who the Children’s Commissioner was – and now I am actually joining Funky Dragon and the Commissioner’s panel.’*
- Young people who took part in the Funky Dragon Active Citizenship workshops reported that they had previously given little consideration to their rights or issues such as discrimination. They considered that taking part improved their knowledge, as exemplified by statements such as *“I like it when they come here to teach us about rights and stuff- it’s things we haven’t learnt before”*.
- Similarly, the Save the Children Young Inspectors activity led to a better understanding among young people of their rights and responsibilities. Young inspectors considered they had *“learnt how they should act towards younger people, and how adults should have treated you when you were little”* and delivery staff agreed. Delivery staff agreed and commented that young people were *“much more confident about knowing what their rights are”*.

5.8 There is no evidence that improved knowledge and understanding of rights has led to sustained participation in community activities or increased participation in decision making.

#### *Improved participation in education and training*

5.9 The ESF MI data indicates that 1,144 young people (7% of First Footholds participants) entered further learning<sup>25</sup>. This is substantially

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<sup>25</sup> The definition provided by WEFO for ‘entering further learning’ is “Further learning can include formal academic or vocational education and less formal skills development training (including soft outcomes). For example, a young person who is classed as NEET (16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training) enters vocational training after receiving intensive careers advice funded by the project; or, an individual moves into formal training following outreach work funded by the project. Projects must only report against this indicator

fewer than expected initially (5,700), but represents an overachievement of the revised 2011 target (Table 19). Most young people who progressed into further learning took part in participatory arts activities delivered by the Arts Council of Wales or the Education and Learning Youth Justice project.

**Table 19 First Footholds – number of young people entering further learning**

Indicator	Original target (2008)	Revised target (2011)	Revised target (2013)	Achieved (March 2013)	% achieved in relation to original target (2008)	% achieved in relation to 2011 target
Participants entering further learning : 16 – 19 year olds	5,700	815	400	1,144	20%	140%

Source: EDMS report, June 2013

5.10 For some activities such as the Transition Key Worker project, the Education and Learning Youth Justice project and Arts Council of Wales activities, there is some anecdotal evidence from delivery staff and partners that young people have increased their participation in learning as a result of the activity. This includes young people at risk of becoming NEET receiving support (along with their families) to stay in school or college and improve their attendance as well as becoming more motivated and interested in learning. Examples include:

- In the DFES Education and Learning Youth Justice project some participants have engaged in training placements for longer periods than the delivery agents had anticipated based on those who have not been supported: *“There has been a definite impact – we have high numbers sustaining longer placements – these young people were just not engaging with Careers Wales before”*<sup>26</sup>.

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if the participant enters further learning within six months of completing provision. See: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/wefo/publications/deliveringguidance/rme/130322esfindicatordefinitionen.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> *Evaluation of the Support into Education and Learning (Youth Justice) Project*, February 2013, Red Kite Research Consultancy

- In one of the Arts Council of Wales activities delivery staff reported that young people’s enjoyment and interest had increased as a result of taking part in arts activities delivered in a PRU, which has led to improved attendance during the project. In another, young people were more likely to engage with other out of school youth activities as a result of participating in the activity.
- In the Transition Key Worker activity key workers providing support to young people with additional learning needs reported that they were more settled at school as a result of the support they had provided. They and partners considered that this was improving attendance and improved participation in classes and school or college activities. In some cases this was among young people “*who had been on the point of refusing to go to school*”.

*Qualifications gained*

5.11 The ESF MI indicates that around 3% (n=461) of First Footholds participants obtained a qualification, mostly in basic skills or at level 1 (2.3%, n=372). As Table 20 shows, this is significantly fewer than intended.

**Table 20 First Footholds – qualifications gained**

Results	Original target (2008)	Revised target (2011)	Revised target (2013)	Achieved (March 2013)	% achieved in relation to original target (2008)	% achieved in relation to 2011 target
Participants gaining qualifications – 11-19 year olds	4,560	1,762	500	461	10%	26%
Basic skills qualifications and Level 1 qualifications gained <sup>27</sup>	2850	1609	400	372	13%	23%

<sup>27</sup> We have combined the targets for basic skills qualifications achieved and level 1 qualifications achieved because data has been collected using the category ‘Below NQF level 2’.

Level 2 qualifications gained	1,710	153	100	89	5%	58%
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Source: EDMS report, June 2013

5.12 In addition, we are aware that many young people completed part qualifications such as Agored Cymru and OCN accredited units. Delivery staff and partners considered that these have helped to develop basic literacy skills and been an important means of building self esteem and motivation among participants. These are not counted so they cannot be quantified. These are recorded along with other positive outcomes, such as taking part in voluntary work experience, as an 'other positive outcome'. A total of 6,214 young people (48% of the 2011 target of 12,952) were recorded as achieving other positive outcomes and it is likely that some of these outcomes relate to part qualifications.

### **Outcomes achieved by professionals**

*Improved understanding and knowledge of how to engage and motivate NEET and at risk young people and the application of this in professional practice*

5.13 The training and capacity building activities delivered under First Footholds have led to positive short and medium term outcomes for youth professionals. In the main, participants considered the training they took part in was relevant and helpful. This resulted, in their view, to improved understanding and knowledge of how to effectively support young people who are NEET or at risk of being so. For example, around three quarters of professionals taking part in training delivered by Children in Wales (71%, n=289) completed feedback forms immediately after the course and reported that they had 'improved skills and confidence in dealing with challenging behaviour'. There has been some limited follow up with a small sample of participants (in the form of the trainer ringing participants for an informal conversation), which suggests that learning from the course has continued to be relevant and useful.

5.14 In a few cases, there are concrete examples of how this understanding has been applied to everyday professional practice. These are shown in Box 9 below.

**Box 9 Improved engagement and motivation of young people among professionals**

Practitioners working with young people taking part in Arts Council of Wales training reported that the knowledge they had gained has helped them in their roles.

For example, one youth worker used to make young people stand outside the room or in a corner because of their bad behaviour. Since the training she has an improved understanding of adolescent development and how this affects behaviour and interaction with others. and has adopted “*a more tolerant and inclusive approach*” in her work. For example, she now rarely temporarily excludes young people from the activity.

Another youth worker noted that the course’s emphasis on involving young people in the design and delivery of courses, has meant she now builds in more choice and control into activities.

5.15 Staff in local authorities with a responsibility for young people’s participation in decision making commented that taking part in the Save the Children young inspectors project enhanced their understanding of participatory approaches: *‘the training we received, working with young people to support young inspections, and the positive feedback from services inspected have really enhanced my understanding of the value of young people’s participation in this area; it is a message I am taking through into my meetings as a Curriculum and Community Development Officer elsewhere in the borough’*.

5.16 Professionals that were relatively inexperienced and new to their careers as well as those who have worked in the sector for several years reported similar benefits.

5.17 In relation to materials and resources developed under First Footholds, there is little evidence of how they have enabled practitioners to work more effectively with young people. For the Participation Workers website managed by Children in Wales, interviews with nine users

indicates that although most thought the website was relatively useful for finding out about participatory approaches used in other organisations, the information they accessed did not affect their professional practice. A few noted that other channels existed for sharing good practice which were more accessible than the website (such as the regular meetings that take place between members of the Participation Workers Network). A few of the users have adapted their practice to improve the involvement of young people in decision making. For example, one youth worker noted that as a result of a case study she had read on the Participation Standards section of the website, she established a young people's service development group.

#### *Increased participation in professional development*

5.18 In a few cases there is evidence that youth professionals who have taken part in First Footholds training have increased motivation to undertake further professional development. For example, a few professionals who undertook accredited Level 4 training in working with young people and the use of the arts as a medium in engaging young people commented that they had made enquiries in continuing their studies and completing a full degree. In the main, they reported that they would have been unlikely to have this aspiration previously. There is no data available on the qualification achieved by professionals.

#### **Outcomes for different target groups**

5.19 The ESF MI data shows that:

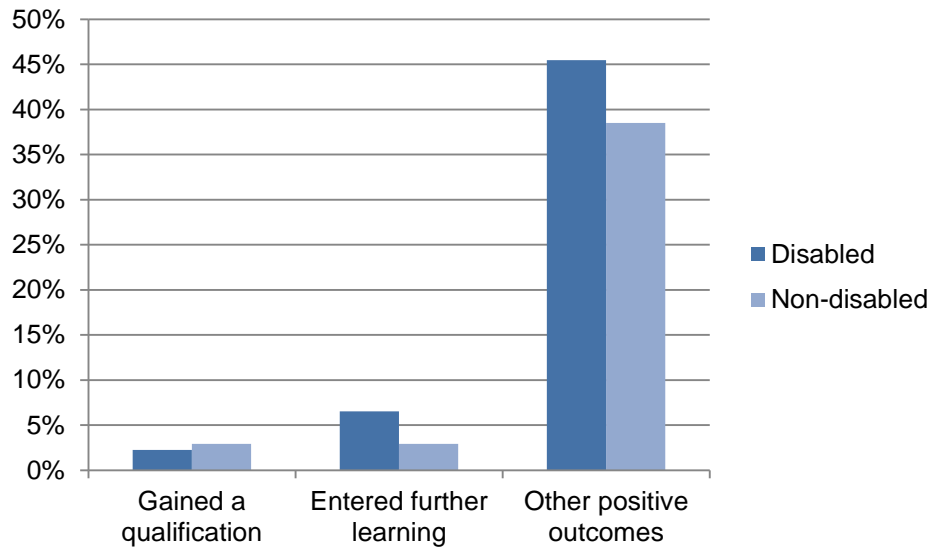
- A slightly higher proportion of disabled participants entered further learning and achieved other positive outcomes than non-disabled participants (Figure 15);

**As would be expected, a higher proportion of NEET young people entered further learning than those already in full time education, although a slightly higher proportion of young people in education achieved other positive outcomes than NEET young people (**



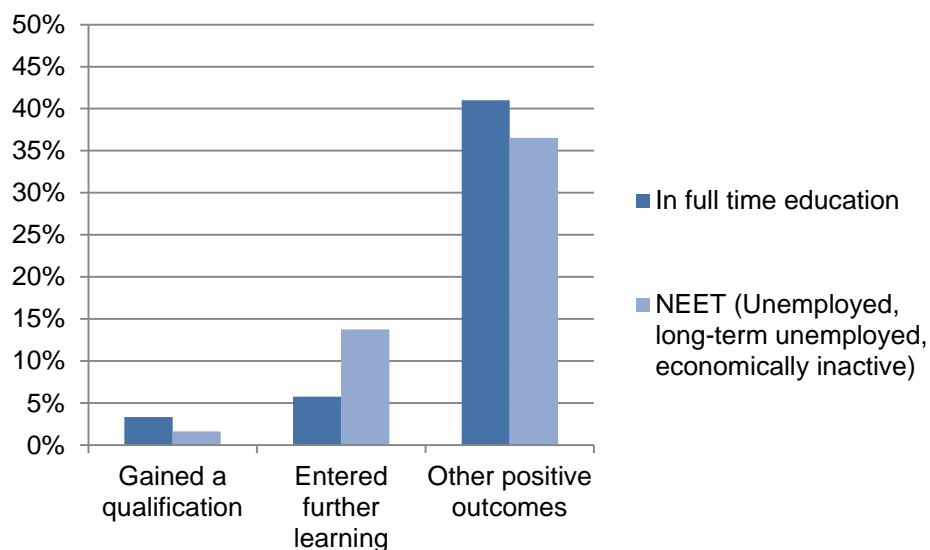
- Figure 16); and
- There is little difference in outcomes achieved by female and male participants (Figure 17);

**Figure 15 First Footholds – comparison of outcomes for disabled and non-disabled participants**



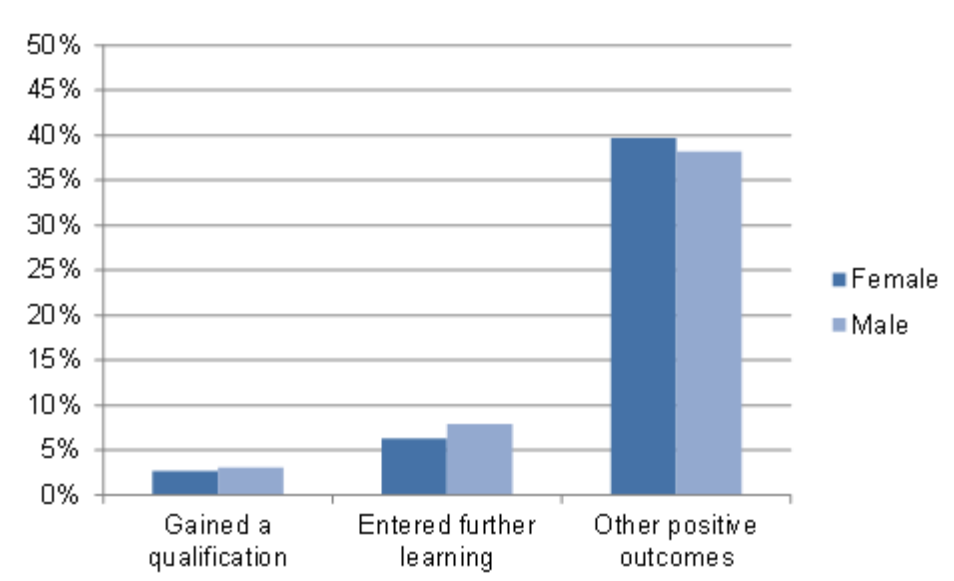
Source: EDMS data provided by the project management team in June 2013

**Figure 16 First Footholds – comparison of outcomes for NEET participants and those in education**



Source: EDMS data provided by the project management team in June 2013

**Figure 17 First Footholds – comparison of outcomes for female and male participants**



Source: EDMS data provided by the project management team in June 2013

**Outcomes achieved by local authority area<sup>28</sup>**

5.20 Given the varying provision and take up of different activities within the Convergence area, differences in the proportions achieving recorded outcomes would be expected. The MI cannot be related to activities. On

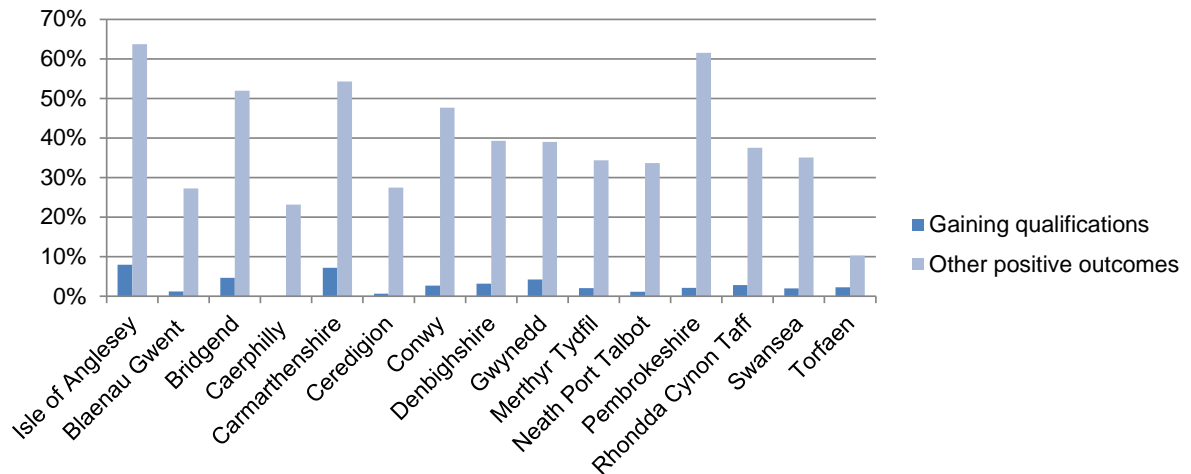
<sup>28</sup> The breakdown of participants entering further learning by local authority was not available in the EDMS report provided to the research team and so this analysis has not been included

average 3% of all participants in each local authority gained a qualification but there was over twice this proportion in the Isle of Anglesey (8%) and Carmarthenshire (7%) with none in Caerphilly and very few in Ceredigion (1%) and Blaenau Gwent (1%) **Error! Reference source not found.**)

On average almost two fifths (39%) of participants achieved other positive outcomes but over three fifths of participants in the Isle of Anglesey (64%) and Anglesey (64%) and Pembrokeshire (62%) achieved other positive outcomes, with just a tenth in Torfaen (10%) (see

5.21 Figure 18 below).

**Figure 18 First Footholds – percentage of participants gaining qualifications and achieving other positive outcomes by local authority**



Source: EDMS report, July 2013

### Outcomes achieved by joint sponsors

5.22 Although an analysis of the performance of individual activities is not possible with the data available, an analysis of joint sponsor achievement of ESF WEFO outcomes and results targets begins to give an indication of the types of activities that have been successful in achieving outcomes.

5.23 Table 21 below shows that:

- All of the joint sponsors experienced difficulties in achieving the targets for the total numbers of qualifications gained. Nonetheless

the participatory arts activities delivered by the Arts Council of Wales and the citizenship activities delivered by Funky Dragon appear to have been relatively successful in supporting young people to gain Level 2 qualifications. This may be an indication that more realistic targets were set by these sponsors than others;

- Similarly, Arts Council of Wales participatory arts activities and Funky Dragon citizenship activities appear to have been successful in supporting young people to enter further learning and reasonably successful in supporting the achievement of other positive outcomes. However, the extent to which some targets have been overshoot could suggest that the comparison is dependent on accurate target setting rather than being an indication of a particularly successful activity;
- Children in Wales did not perform well against outcomes and results targets. Interviewees considered that this was because the disabled young people who they worked with experienced more complex and entrenched barriers to education and employment than groups that other sponsors worked with and that the targets set for them were more challenging.

**Table 21 First Footholds – joint sponsor achievement of outcomes and results**

	Arts Council of Wales		Children in Wales		Funky Dragon		Save the Children	
	% of original target achieved	% of revised 2011 target achieved	% of original target achieved	% of revised 2011 target achieved	% of original target achieved	% of revised 2011 target achieved	% of original target achieved	% of revised 2011 target achieved
Participants gaining qualifications – 11-19 year olds	N/A	Unknown	0%	0%	35%	35%	1%	N/A
Basic skills qualifications and Level 1 qualifications gained	N/A	23%	0%	0%	29%	32%	1%	N/A

	Arts Council of Wales		Children in Wales		Funky Dragon		Save the Children	
Level 2 qualifications gained	N/A	138%	0%	0%	N/A	67%	0%	N/A
Participants entering further learning : 16 – 19 year olds	10%	175%	1%	1%	4%	933%	50%	73%
Participants gaining other positive outcomes	40%	63%	4%	5%	99%	52%	33%	9%

Source: Target achieved data from an EDMS report generated in June 2013, provided by the project team; original target data from Claim 7 submitted by joint sponsors to the Welsh Government; and revised target data from Claim 18

## How outcomes have been achieved

5.24 Because of the lack of activity level MI that covers an appropriate range of outcomes, it is not possible to make a robust assessment about features of design, delivery and practice that result in positive outcomes. Nonetheless, the reflections of joint sponsors, delivery staff and young people begin to provide insights into what works in engaging NEET young people and those at risk of becoming NEET. Some of their reflections on effective practice support evidence in the literature:

- Relationships between staff and young people based on mutual trust and understanding were reported to be key to achieving positive outcomes.** Many of the First Footholds joint sponsors and delivery staff interviewed highlighted the importance of youth professionals who have the skills to listen, take an empathetic approach and to treat young people with respect. For example, delivery staff noted that the young people they work with lack confidence to express their views and find it difficult to identify their strengths. They highlighted the need to “*ground delivery in constant encouragement and positive reinforcement*” to help young people to gain confidence to participate. Young people interviewed also

recognised the positive attitude of youth workers as a feature of the activities they participated in. For example, some homeless young people who took part in a participatory arts activity commented: “*you feel comfortable around these adults. They’re different. You can’t feel comfortable with some adults. They’re like family, you can’t feel comfortable talking to them. But here, it’s different. They don’t judge us. They understand what people have gone through and how rough it can be*”. Other young people participating in other activities expressed similar views. The importance of relationships between youth workers and young people is evidenced by research and evaluations of participatory arts activities<sup>29</sup>, sports-based diversionary activities<sup>30</sup> and citizenship activities<sup>31</sup>.

- **Taking a young-person centred approach that offers a high degree of choice is also considered to be effective in engaging and then working with young people.** Across First Footholds joint sponsors and delivery staff, there was agreement on the importance of ensuring that activities are tailored to the particular needs and interests of young people. A needs assessment at the start of an intervention should be the starting point for a young person-centred approach. A few sponsors noted that in order to respond to the individual needs and interests identified, having a wide range of partners can help. Sponsors and delivery staff also commented that young people’s needs can change quickly, for example, from one hour to the next within a single session as well as between sessions. They highlighted the importance of being able to adapt quickly to these changing needs and to be flexible. Other small-scale research studies have also highlighted the importance of adapting planned sessions to meet needs on any given day<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Wilkin, A, Gulliver, C and Kinder, K (2005) *Serious Play – An evaluation of arts activities in Pupil Referral Units and Learning Support Units*. London: Calouse Gulbenkian Foundation

<sup>30</sup> Home Office (2006) *Positive Futures Impact Report: End of season review*. London: Home Office.

<sup>31</sup> GHK (2009) *Identifying Effective Practice in Raising Young People’s Aspirations*. Learning and Skills Council

<sup>32</sup> Young People’s Learning Agency and the Office for Public Management. (2010) *Improving outcomes for disadvantaged young people. Case studies of effective practice*.

Ensuring choice is built into activities and throughout the activity thereafter is also important. For example, one activity provided young people with a broad range of taster sessions in different artistic mediums. Young people were then able to select which types of activity they would like to focus on. A youth worker delivering one of the citizenship activities believed that many of the young people they work with are used to adults making decisions on their behalf, which can contribute to disaffection. She noted that “*even if it’s as simple as cutting up our lesson plans and asking them what order they’d like to do the session in*”, can help instil a sense of ownership, which supports engagement. This supports evidence from an evaluation of post-16 citizenship projects commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills in England which found that involving young people in decisions about their learning works well<sup>33</sup>. Research commissioned by the Welsh Government also recommended that children and young people should be involved in the design and delivery of citizenship initiatives. Staff interviewed as part of the research noted that when children and young people draw up the rules and agenda for participation, they understand their role and responsibilities and are more likely to engage<sup>34</sup>.

- **Practical activities that are distinctive from school experiences and formal education support engagement.** In many of the First Footholds case study activities sponsors, delivery staff and young people commented on the importance of activities being different to traditional school learning and, crucially, being highly practical in nature. For example:
  - Delivery staff at Save the Children found that activities in which young people were given a specific role, such as a young inspector or researcher, were particularly effective in engaging young people. Young people were not just equipped with skills but were given the opportunity to apply those skills in practice.

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<sup>33</sup> Craig, R, Kerr, D, Wade, P, Taylor, G. Taking Post-16 Citizenship Forward: Learning from the Post-16 Citizenship Development Projects (2004) DFES

<sup>34</sup> York Consulting (2010) *Children and young people’s participation in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government

This consolidated knowledge and understanding and also gave young people a sense of worth and self-esteem;

- Young people in a PRU and on alternative curriculums in schools used video cameras to film each other discussing views on whether the driving age should be reduced. The young people commented that they liked being able to express themselves orally and liked that the activity was practical rather than “loads of reading and writing”.

5.25 These findings support widespread evidence in the literature, such as from qualitative research with 69 pupils, teachers and artists involved in arts activities in PRUs and an evaluation of citizenship activities, which both found that young people responded well to practical action<sup>35,36</sup>.

- **Supporting young people over a period of time helps to sustain impact over time.** Many joint sponsors and delivery agents observed that achieving positive outcomes depends on having time to build a strong relationship with young people. It can take time to build trust, respect and establish ground rules and many interviewees were of the view that without this foundation, young people would not fully engage and participate in activities. This supports the findings from a systematic review of literature about providing effective support to young offenders<sup>37</sup> and research on success factors in engaging young people in PRUs through arts activities<sup>38</sup> which draws out the importance of sustained and longer activities achieving more positive results than activities over a short period.
- **Ensuring resources are available to continue to attract and retain young people’s interest.** Several joint sponsors and delivery agents believed that it is important to have resources to buy food and refreshments and to hire a pleasant venue to ensure

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<sup>35</sup> Craig et al, 2004

<sup>36</sup> Wilkin, A, Gulliver, C and Kinder, K (2005) *Serious Play – An evaluation of arts activities in Pupil Referral Units and Learning Support Units*. London: Calouse Gulbenkian Foundation

<sup>37</sup> Mason, P and Prior, D (2008) *Engaging Young People who Offend*, Youth Justice Board

<sup>38</sup> Wilkin et al 2005



continued engagement. The delivery agent of one of the larger activity's commissioned by the Arts Council of Wales found that they had not anticipated how important providing food would be for the success of the activity. Most of the young people who participated in the activity were not provided with packed lunches by parents and carers and found it difficult to concentrate without a proper meal.

## Summary

5.26 Overall, there is evidence of some of the expected short and medium term outcomes but little evidence that these have been sustained when participants have left activities and that they have contributed to longer term outcomes such as improved attendance, behaviour and attainment in education or improved progression into further and higher education:

- Improved personal and social dispositions and skills (such as interaction with adults and other young people, motivation and taking part, independence and respect for others) is the outcome for which there is strongest evidence. Across all the activities, joint sponsors, delivery staff, partners and young people gave examples of positive outcomes in this area, which is supported by some quantitative evidence. There is little evidence that improved personal and social dispositions and skills have affected aspirations for the future or attitudes towards participating in further learning.
- There is some evidence of improved knowledge and understanding of rights, though the evidence is weaker. The main activities that have contributed to this outcome are the citizenship activities delivered by Children in Wales, Funky Dragon and Save the Children. There is no evidence that improved knowledge and understanding of rights has led to sustained participation in community activities or increased participation in decision making.
- Only 7% (n=1144) of First Footholds participants entered into further learning, which is substantially fewer than expected. Most young people who progressed into further learning took part in participatory arts activities delivered by the Arts Council of Wales and the DFES-led Education and Learning Youth Justice project.
- Only 3% (n=461) of First Footholds participants were recorded as having obtained a qualification. Delivery staff, sponsors and young people reported that many others obtained part qualifications such as Agored Cymru and OCN units, but data is not available to quantify these.

- The training and capacity building activities in First Footholds have led to positive short and medium term outcomes for professionals, with evidence of improved knowledge and understanding of how to engage and motivate NEET and at risk young people. In a few cases, there are concrete examples of how this understanding has been applied to everyday professional practice.
- As would be expected given the varying provision and take up of activities in different local authorities, the proportions of participants in each local authority achieving positive outcomes has also varied.
- A full and robust assessment of what has worked well in achieving outcomes is not possible with the data available. Nonetheless, interviews with sponsors, delivery staff and young people have highlighted some features of delivery they consider to be effective in achieving positive outcomes for NEET and at risk young people which supports evidence in the wider literature. These include: relationships between staff and young people based on mutual trust and understanding; ensuring activities are focussed on a young person's individual needs and interests; offering a high degree of choice in activities; ensuring activities are practical in nature and different to typical school learning; and ensuring support is offered over longer periods to strengthen impacts.

## **6 Impact of Routes to the Summit**

6.1 In this section we assess the outcomes of the Routes to the Summit project, considering the benefits for both young people and professionals against the key outcomes expected set out in the logic model. As far as we can with the evidence available, we assess whether there have been differing levels of outcomes for different target groups and whether particular activities have been successful in achieving outcomes for young people. We draw on interviews with joint sponsors, case study research, end of project reports, independent evaluation reports (where available) and available MI data.

### **Outcomes achieved by young people**

6.2 Following the same approach as with First Footholds, we have assessed the evidence available about the outcomes achieved by young people which can be evidenced during and immediately after the project activities (

Table 22). There is some evidence of the following:

- Improved personal and social dispositions and skills;
- Improved confidence and motivation to use the Welsh language, as a result of the Urdd's activities; and
- Improved information, advice and guidance, as a result of the CLIC website and SNAP Cymru activities.

6.3 There is also some evidence of improved participation in education and training, including improved behaviour and attendance, although the evidence is weaker.

**Table 22 Routes to the Summit – assessment of strength of evidence of key short and medium term outcome areas**

	Improved personal and social skills	Improved participation in education and training (including improved behaviour and attendance)	Improved confidence and motivation to use the Welsh language	Improved information, advice and guidance
Community Music Wales	B	E	-	-
SNAP Cymru	D	D	-	C
Techniquest	-		-	-
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	C	E	C	-
DFES CLIC	-	-	-	B/C

6.4 There is generally little evidence about the extent to which short and medium term outcomes have been sustained after young people have finished the Routes to the Summit activities, whether the learning gained from the activity has been used or changed aspirations and intentions, and whether it has contributed to longer term outcomes such as:

- Improved attendance at school or college;
- Improved educational attainment;
- Improved basic skills;
- Sustained participation in community activities;
- Increased competence in the Welsh language;
- Provided information, advice and guidance resources which are used to make informed decisions; and
- Improved progression into further and higher education and prevented young people from becoming NEET.

*Improved personal and social dispositions and skills*

6.5 Activities delivered by Community Music Wales, SNAP Cymru and the Urdd have resulted in improved personal and social dispositions and skills among young people such as interaction with adults and other

young people, motivation and taking part, independence and respect for others.

- 6.6 Delivery staff and partners reported that before joining activities many of the young people they worked with had experienced significant difficulties in communicating with others, motivating themselves to work independently and participating regularly in positive activities. Many of them described young people who did not feel confident to leave home or who, when obliged to be in group activities, struggled to interact positively with others. Over time, by participating in new activities and building strong relationships with youth workers, young people developed their personal and social skills. Many delivery staff considered that an important part of activities was that they showed young people the importance of “*being on time, polite, respectful and well-presented*”. Young people who took part in Urdd and Community Music Wales activities agreed that their personal and social skills had improved.
- 6.7 In the Urdd activities, 1,344 participants (about 30% of all the participants) showed improvements in their interaction skills, motivation, independence and respect for others. Table 23 below shows average before and after scores, based on a scale of 1-4<sup>39</sup>.

**Table 23 The Urdd – improvements in each element of Demonstrating Success**

Social, emotional, personal skill	Average score prior to the activity	Average score after the activity	% increase
Interaction	1.6	2.4	50%
Motivation and active participation	1.7	2.4	43%
Independence	1.8	2.3	33%
Respect for others	1.9	2.5	27%

Source: An Evaluation of Urdd Gobaith Cymru’s Routes to the Summit project, Wavehill, March 2013

<sup>39</sup> Wavehill (2013) *An Evaluation of Urdd Gobaith Cymru’s Routes to the Summit project*

6.8 This is supported by the case study interviews which found that young people developed confidence to work in groups and to motivate and encourage each other through new experiences (Box 10 below). This also supports evidence in an evaluation of the Positive Futures programme run until March 2013 by the Home Office in England, which reported improved relationships with peers and family members among participants<sup>40</sup>.

### **Box 10 Using outdoors activities to improve personal and social skills**

Delivery staff at the Urdd observed young people's increased confidence to voice opinions and participate during a weekend residential trip that included climbing and abseiling activities:

*"Those two are quiet as mice usually but here they're full of it".*

Young people too reported that they felt encouraged by their peers and had gained the confidence to try something new:

*"I didn't like heights and being a bit shy with strangers – I wasn't sure about staying away from home. You can't back out when you're up there though! Everyone's cheering you on. It's brilliant!"*

**In the Community Music Wales activities young people's perceptions of their skills and their skills and competences rose on average by the end of the activity<sup>41</sup>. Figure 19 and**

6.9 Figure 20 show an increase in confidence in working independently and with others, an increased sense of being part of a local community and having friends, and increased aspirations for a job in the future. This is supported by case study interviewees. Delivery staff, young people and referral partners agreed that that through a combination of one to one and group work, young people had gained confidence to interact with others. For example one young person who lives in a hostel explained that normally he does not mix much with others in the hostel but attending the music-based sessions means he feels *"a bit more able to*

<sup>40</sup> Home Office (2006) *Positive Futures impact report: End of season review*.

<sup>41</sup> An adapted version of Demonstrating Success was used. The questionnaire and scale used is not the same as that used by other sponsors.



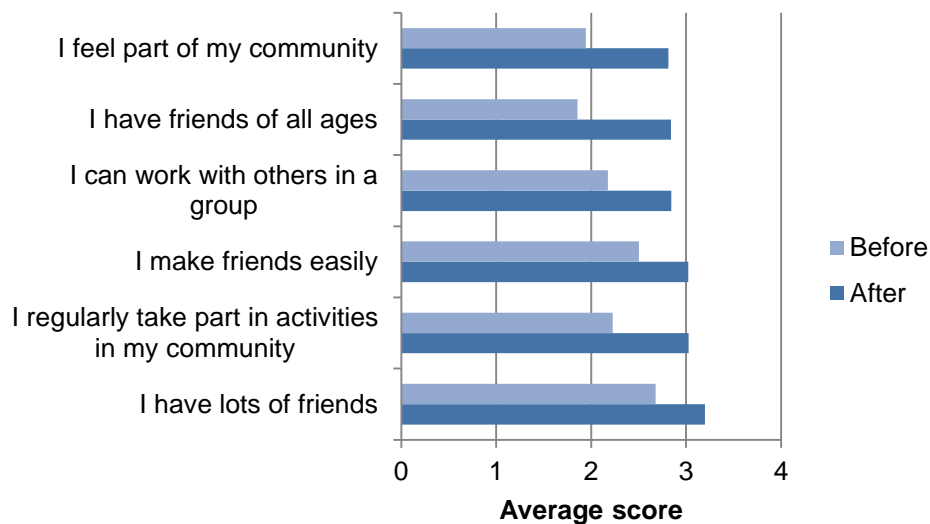
*“speak to others in the hostel”*. A referral partner considered that young people’s sustained participation in the Community Music Wales activities was an important indication of improved motivation.

**Figure 19 Community Music Wales: increase in self-reported scores in relation to confidence**



Source: Data provided by Community Music Wales based on before and after questionnaires administered to 83% of participants (457 young people). Young people were asked to rate their agreement with statements on a scale of 1-4.

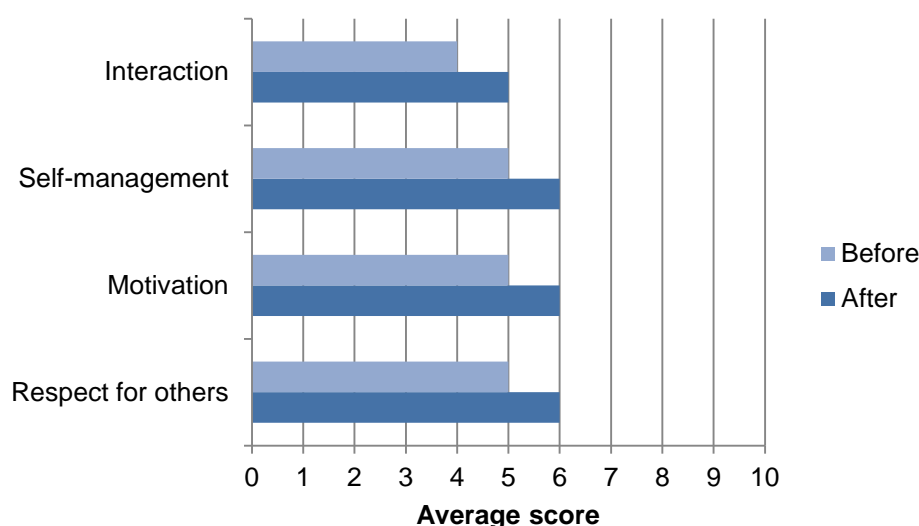
**Figure 20 Community Music Wales: increase in self-reported scores in relation to social skills, friendships and sense of community belonging**



Source: Data provided by Community Music Wales based on before and after questionnaires administered to 83% of participants (457 young people). Young people were asked to rate their agreement with statements on a scale of 1-4.

6.10 In SNAP Cymru activities, a small proportion (3%, n=52) of the young people who benefited from bespoke advice and guidance reported small improvements in their ability to interact effectively with others, self-management, motivation and respect for others. Participants were asked to read a series of statements that described different competences and skills and score themselves using a scale of one to ten, to show how good they considered their skills to be. The competences were grouped into four areas: interaction, motivation, self-management and respect for others. In each of these areas, the average self-reported score, increased by one after the intervention (Figure 21).

**Figure 21 SNAP Cymru: increase in self-reported scores in relation to personal and social skills**



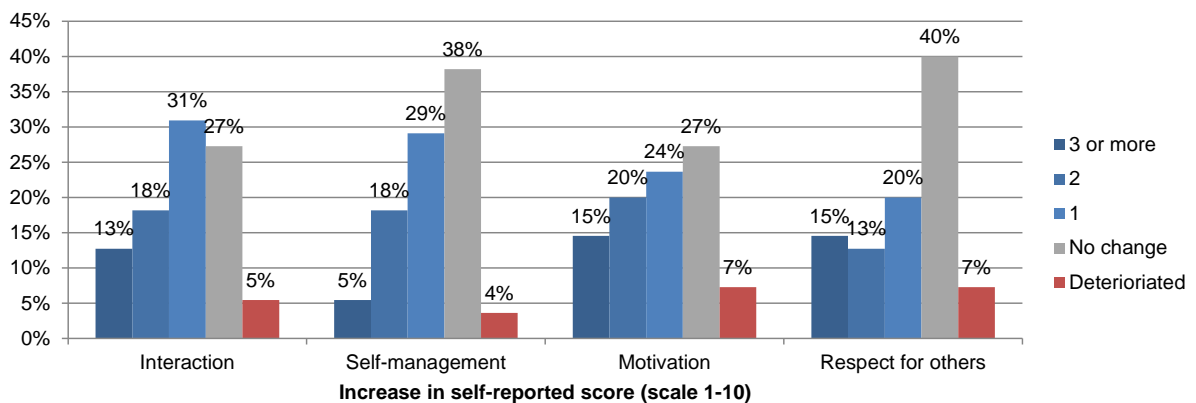
Source: Before and after questionnaires administered by SNAP Cymru before and after provision of one to advice and guidance (random sample base = 52)

6.11 A more detailed analysis of the proportion of young people whose self-reported score increased by one, two or three or more points or did not change at all (Figure 22), shows that<sup>42</sup>:

<sup>42</sup> This data should be interpreted with caution; without contextual data it is not possible to assess whether, for example, lower scores are an indication that a young person has moved into a situation or environment in which they feel less comfortable, for example a new school or training placement.

- In relation to interaction and motivation, around three fifths of the young people had an increased score (62% for interaction and 59% for motivation);
- For self-management and respect for others, around half of young people's self-reported scores changed after the intervention (53% for self-management, 48% for respect for others); and
- For a small proportion of young people, there was a decrease in scores, with a slightly higher decrease for motivation and respect for others.

**Figure 22 SNAP Cymru – proportion of young people with an increase in self-reported scores**



Source: Before and after questionnaires administered by SNAP Cymru before and after provision of one to advice and guidance (random sample base = 52)

6.12 There is no evidence whether improved personal and social skills have been used by young people after leaving activities to help them progress in education, training and employment.

*Improved participation in education and training*

6.13 The ESF outcomes MI shows that only 106 Routes to the Summit participants (less than 1% of all project participants) progressed into further leaning. This is substantially fewer than anticipated and represents just 2% of the 2011 target (Table 24). Some joint sponsors reported that they experienced difficulties in tracking young people to

verify future destinations which may partly explain why this figure is so low.

**Table 24 Routes to the Summit – number of young people entering further learning**

Indicator	Original target (2008)	Revised target (2011)	Revised target (2013)	Achieved (March 2013)	% achieved in relation to initial target (%)	% achieved in relation to 2011 target
Participants entering further learning : 16 – 19 year olds	4,400	4,400	50	106	2%	2%

Source: EDMS report, June 2013

6.14 There is qualitative evidence that some young people’s participation in education has improved as a result of taking part in Routes to the Summit activities. For example, there are instances of improved attendance at school because young people are more engaged and interested and also examples of improved behaviour, with the young people interacting positively rather than being withdrawn or disruptive.

6.15 For example:

- Delivery staff and referral partners involved in Community Music Wales activities noted that the music engagement activities had helped to reduce absenteeism from school and that this improvement had been noted by head teachers. A local authority officer who referred young people to the Community Music Wales activities explained: “*truancy rates have been reduced and when teachers see young people at risk of becoming NEET engaged in something and wanting to do more, it makes the school happy*”;
- Delivery staff and partners in two activities reported improved behaviour among their participants once back in school. A teacher in one of the schools who referred young people to activities delivered by Urdd Gobaith Cymru reported that they had seen “*tangible improvements in behaviour at school and re-engagement with mainstream activities*”. 27% of young people surveyed by the Urdd

when they left the project (295 of 1,182 young people) reported that taking part had helped their school work. Similarly delivery staff at Community Music Wales reported that they had feedback from teachers who had noticed improved behaviour among pupils;

- A few delivery staff from Urdd and Community Music Wales activities reported anecdotal evidence of young people going on to take part in voluntary activity or work placements after the Routes to the Summit activities;
- In SNAP Cymru, in over a quarter of the 241 case files reviewed (28%)<sup>43</sup>, young people had been supported to remain in education because provision or support had been put in place to allow young people who refused to go to school or those who had been excluded to return to education, either in their previous school, a new school, alternative or home provision. In over a tenth of cases, there was evidence of longer term outcomes, with records indicating young people had continued to attend, were achieving well in school and were happy and settled.

6.16 There is also evidence from evaluations of activities and interventions similar in nature to those delivered under Routes to the Summit, that they can support improved behaviour at school, increased enjoyment of school and better grades<sup>44,45</sup>

### *Qualifications gained*

6.17 Around 8% of Routes to the Summit participants (1,270 young people) obtained a qualification, compared with 3% of First Footholds participants. Three in four of those Routes to the Summit participants gained a basic skills or level 1 qualification (76%, n= 966), As Table 25 shows, this is significantly fewer than intended. Most young people (90%, n=1,139) who obtained a qualification took part in activities delivered by the Urdd.

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<sup>43</sup> Based on a review of 241 case files.

<sup>44</sup> Home Office (2006) *Positive Futures Impact Report: End of season review*. London: Home Office.

<sup>45</sup> Gen and Wavehill Consulting (2011) *Evaluation of Young People's Fund Year 5 Report*.

**Table 25 Routes to the Summit – qualifications gained**

Results	Original target (2008)	Revised target (2011)	Revised target (2013)	Achieved (March 2013)	% achieved in relation to original target (2008)	% achieved in relation to 2011 target
Participants gaining qualifications – 11-19 year olds	3,300	3,300	1,350	1,270	38%	38%
Basic skills and Level 1 qualifications gained	1,650	1,650	1,000	966	59%	59%
Level 2 qualifications gained	990	990	350	304	31%	31%
Level 3 qualifications gained	660	660	0	0	0%	0%

Source: EDMS report, June 2013

6.18 As with First Footholds, part qualifications achieved by young people have been recorded as other positive outcomes, along with outcomes such as completing voluntary experience. A total of 1,823 young people were recorded as achieving other positive outcomes (20% of the 2011 target of 8,920).

6.19 As part of the CLIC project, 211 young people were awarded qualifications or awards such as Agored awards in creative writing, photography and producing photo stories.

*Increased interest in STEM subjects and careers*

6.20 In the Techniquet activities delivered by Careers Wales in schools, young people valued the practical components of the workshops. They recognised they were more “*practical and fun*” than normal learning activities in school. Teachers also reported that pupils enjoyed the workshops, with over half stating that pupils enjoyed them a lot or quite a lot (91%, n=394).

6.21 There is limited evidence that taking part has led to increased interest in STEM subjects or careers. Some young people interviewed after a workshop commented that: “*they didn’t really talk about how any of what they showed us might link to a career. It was just ‘here’s a type of earthquake, how it happens’. How is that linked to jobs?*”. A few delivery staff acknowledged that the careers links were not particularly well developed and considered that the workshops would not have a significant impact on career planning or uptake of STEM subjects by themselves. A few considered that the workshops helped to “*open young people’s eyes to different opportunities*”. Techniquet staff recognised that the careers links were not prominent enough initially and that they had therefore made efforts to bring careers information to the fore and to include additional career-focussed components in later workshops. Most of the teachers surveyed (86%, n=373) agreed ‘quite a lot’ or ‘a lot’ that as a result of the workshop, my pupils should now know more about how the topic related to real life<sup>46</sup>. Around three fifths, agreed ‘quite a lot’ or ‘a lot’ that as a result of the workshop, pupils should now know more about career opportunities in Maths (60%, n=260), although a third (29% n=125) indicated they agreed with this statement only ‘a little’.

#### *Improved confidence in use of the Welsh Language*

6.22 Although the scale of delivery through the medium of Welsh has not been captured through project MI, interviews with joint sponsors and delivery staff indicate that several activities have included a component of Welsh language delivery.

6.23 The Urdd had a specific objective to normalise the use of the Welsh language in activities it provided for young people and there is evidence to suggest it has been successful in achieving this objective. 1,182 (25% of all participants) were surveyed when they left the project and 48%

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<sup>46</sup> The questionnaire used by Techniquet included a five-point scale, with point 1 labelled ‘not at all’, point 3 (ie the mid-way point) labelled ‘a little’ and point 5 labelled, ‘a lot’. Points 2 and 4 were not labelled. Typically, in such a scale, the mid-point would be labelled ‘some’ and all points would be labelled to ensure the respondent was clear about the view they were expressing. In our analysis, we have called point 4, ‘quite a lot’, but this terminology was not used with respondents.

reported that their Welsh had improved as a result of the activities they had taken part in<sup>47</sup>. This is supported by case study evidence (Box 11).

**Box 11 Providing relaxed and informal opportunities for young people to gain confidence in speaking Welsh**

On one of the residential weekends observed as part of the case study research, all instructions were given in Welsh. Young people were encouraged to speak Welsh but there was no pressure to do so, with the emphasis on using the Welsh language in a fun and social context.

One typical comment by a young person who took part in the activity was:

*“My friends at school don’t speak to each other in Welsh but here everything has been in Welsh. I thought I’d be a bit quiet because of that, but I haven’t been at all”.*

Another young person expressed a similar view;

*“I’m a bit more confident about speaking Welsh. I don’t think about it so much so I’m not so self-conscious”.*

*Increased aspirations for the future*

6.24 Many delivery staff and partners considered that the activities helped to broaden young people’s horizons. As well as having the chance to meet other young people beyond their immediate families and localities, activities introduced new hobbies and, in some cases, new career options. Delivery staff and partners felt this was successful in raising the aspirations of some young people. Evidence on this however has not been commonly collected by activities.

6.25 Community Music Wales collected information on young people’s views on their futures before and after participation in the one to one mentoring programme. This shows increased aspirations about jobs and education and confidence about their futures (see Figure 23).

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<sup>47</sup> An Evaluation of Urdd Gobaith Cymru’s Routes to the Summit project, Wavehill, March 2013



**Figure 23 Community Music Wales: young people’s aspirations for the future before and after participating in Reach the Heights activities**



Source: Data provided by Community Music Wales based on before and after questionnaires administered to 457 young people

*Improved access to information, advice and guidance*

6.26 CLIC, a universal information, news and advice website for young people in Wales aged 11-24 has been part-funded through Routes to the Summit. An independent evaluation of the website<sup>48</sup> drawing on a survey of 2.6% of unique visitors to the website<sup>49</sup> demonstrated that users have been assisted in accessing information and advice which they use. The evaluation highlights that:

- The website had facilitated young people’s access to information, advice and guidance: over two thirds of young people surveyed had looked at another website to get further information and advice after being signposted through CLIC; and two thirds reported that they had used information on the CLIC website itself to decide ‘what to do’ about an issue they were facing;
- Two in five users reported that they had made direct contact with an organisation to gain further support as a result of using CLIC.

<sup>48</sup> *Evaluation of CLIC: Final Report*, ICF GHK, December 2012

<sup>49</sup> This means that for a 95% level of confidence the results have an interval of  $\pm 3.9$ , which is large.

## Outcomes achieved by professionals

6.27 In Routes to the Summit, training was delivered to professionals by SNAP Cymru and the DFES sponsored CLIC activity. In addition, the Welsh Government's Youth Work Apprenticeship programme offered funding for up to 30 youth work apprenticeships at Level 2 or Level 3.

6.28 Practitioners participating in SNAP Cymru's training found it to be relevant and expect it to be useful and applicable to their professional practice in future

- All of the 89 professionals participating in training for Youth Offending Services reported that the training would "*have a positive impact on their work with young people*";
- All of the 45 careers advisers participating in training for Careers Wales on additional learning needs and disability agreed that the training "*helped them focus on the most effective ways of supporting clients with additional learning needs and disability*";
- Most participants interviewed in the case study research considered that their awareness of disabilities had improved: "*I'm now more aware of 'invisible' disabilities and have gained a new perspective*". Representatives from Careers Wales noted that as a result of the training Careers Wales advisors are better able to identify different condition that young people with additional needs may have and have a better understanding of the statementing process.

6.29 Whether participants have applied learning from the course to their work with young people, is not so clear. A small scale follow up exercise with staff in YOTs to which eight staff responded suggests that they have:

- Used the information from the training to challenge decisions and advocate more effectively for young people;
- Worked more closely with Youth Offending Education Workers as a result of the training;
- Considered that they have greater understanding of the issues faced by young people with additional learning needs which has helped them to provide more effective support;

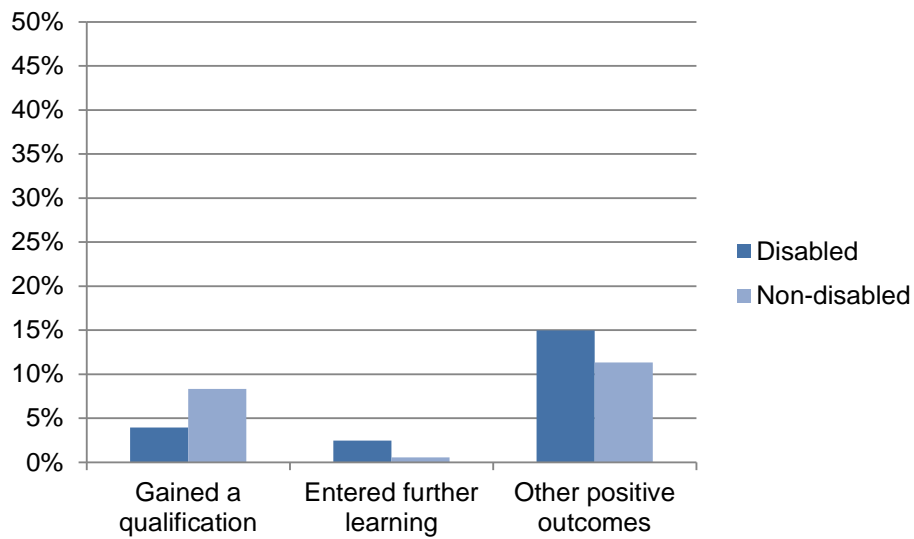
- Become more confident to work directly with young people and families, work with other professionals, and discuss special educational needs in meetings; and
- In the DFES Youth Work Apprenticeship activity, the apprentices interviewed reported that undertaking the training and work experience had given them confidence to shape and deliver their own youth engagement activities, which had led to increased self-esteem and confidence to participate among young people.

### **Outcomes achieved by different target groups**

6.30 The ESF MI data shows that:

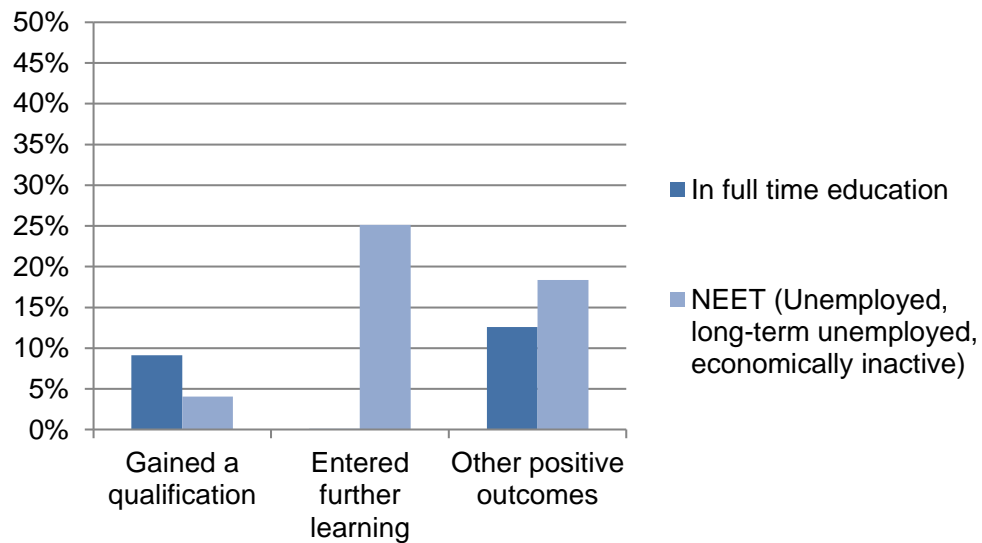
- As with First Footholds, a slightly higher proportion of disabled participants entered further learning and achieved other positive outcomes than non-disabled participants (Figure 24);
- As would be expected, a higher proportion of NEET young people entered further learning than those already in full time education. A higher proportion of NEET young people achieved other positive outcomes (Figure 25) ; and
- There is little difference in outcomes achieved by female and male participants (Figure 26).

**Figure 24 Routes to the Summit – comparison of outcomes for disabled and non-disabled participants**



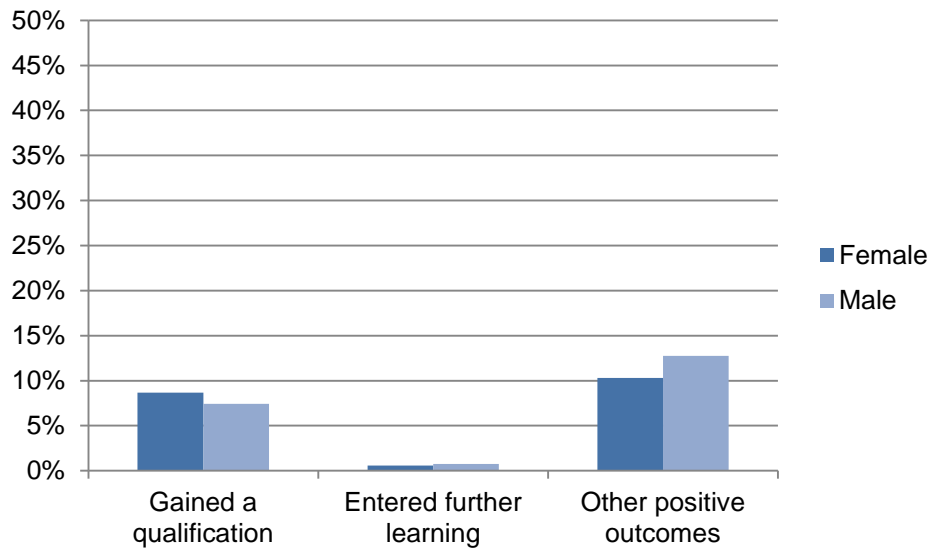
Source: EDMS data provided by the project management team in June 2013

**Figure 25 Routes to the Summit – comparison of outcomes for NEET participants and those in education**



Source: EDMS data provided by the project management team in June 2013

**Figure 26 Routes to the Summit – comparison of outcomes for female and male participants**

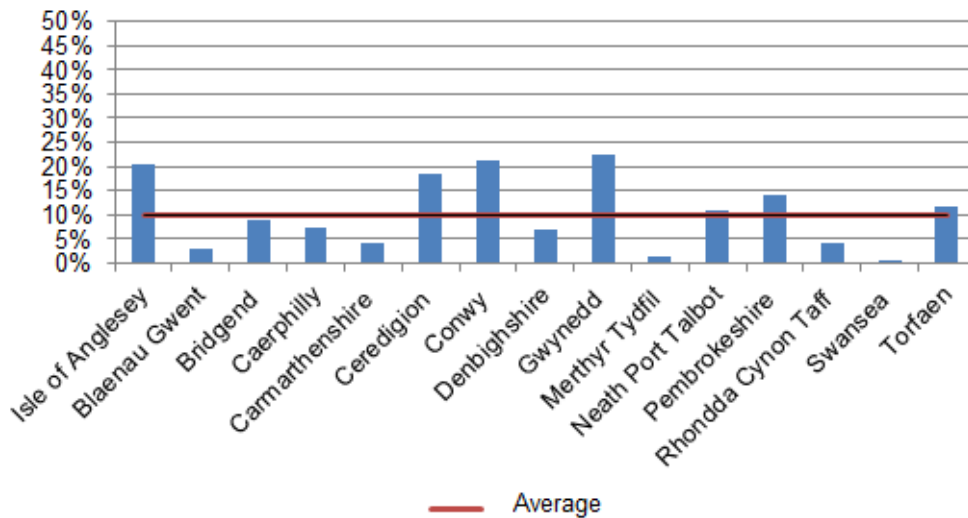


Source: EDMS data provided by the project management team in June 2013

### **Outcomes achieved by local authority area**

6.31 The ESF MI (see Figure 27) shows that on average, 10% of all participants in each local authority gained a qualification. More than twice the average proportion achieved a qualification in Isle of Anglesey, Conwy and Gwynedd. A relatively low proportion of participants gained qualifications in Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil with none in Swansea.

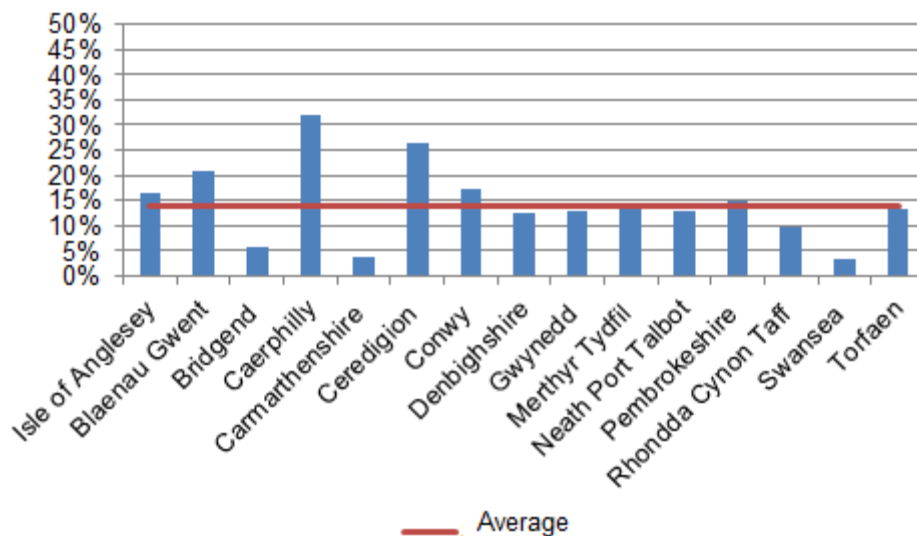
**Figure 27 Routes to the Summit – percentage of participants gaining qualifications by local authority**



Source: EDMS data provided by the project management team in June 2013

6.32 There was similar variation in the proportion of participants achieving other positive outcomes but a different pattern (see Figure 28). In Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Ceredigion, between two and three fifths of participants achieved positive outcomes, while in Swansea and Carmarthenshire the proportion was just 4%.

**Figure 28 Routes to the Summit – percentage of participants gaining other positive outcomes by local authority**



Source: EDMS data provided by the project management team in June 2013

## Outcomes achieved by activities

6.33 Although an analysis of the performance of individual activities is not possible with the data available, an analysis of joint sponsors' achievements of ESF outcomes (Table 26) indicates that:

- The Urdd's Welsh-language youth service activities appear to have been relatively successful in equipping participants with basic skills and level 1 qualifications;
- All sponsors experienced substantial difficulties in supporting young people into further learning and achieving other positive outcomes, making it difficult to identify activities that have been successful in achieving these outcomes.

**Table 26 Routes to the Summit – joint sponsor achievement of outcomes and results**

	Community Music Wales		SNAP Cymru		Techniquest		Urdd Gobaith Cymru	
	% of original target achieved	% of revised target achieved	% of original target achieved	% of revised target achieved	% of original target achieved	% of revised target achieved	% of original target achieved	% of revised target achieved
Participants gaining qualifications – 11-19 year olds	-	-	12%	12%	-	-	52%	57%
Basic skills qualifications and Level 1 qualifications gained	-	-	4%	4%	-	-	165%	146%
Level 2 qualifications gained	-	-	28%	28%	-	-	17%	20%
Participants entering further learning : 16 – 19 year olds	0%	0%	42%	42%	0%	0%	6%	10%
Participants gaining other positive outcomes	2%	2%	24%	24%	4%	4%	17%	15%

Source: Target achieved data from an EDMS report generated in June 2013, provided by the project team; original target data from Claim 7 submitted by joint sponsors to the Welsh Government; and revised target data from Claim 18

## How outcomes have been achieved

6.34 As is the case with First Footholds, the lack of activity level MI data means a full assessment of what has worked in achieving positive outcomes for young people participating in Routes to the Summit has not been possible. Interviews with joint sponsors, delivery staff and young people have, though, highlighted features of delivery that they consider to have been effective in supporting the engagement of NEET and at risk young people. These findings are broadly the same as for First Footholds and reflect wider evidence in the literature:

- **Offering young people a high degree of choice is important for securing their participation and engagement.** Many Routes to the Summit sponsors designed their activities to ensure young people had choice and control over what they did. For example, many sponsors started their activity with a needs assessment that sought to identify which areas of their life young people would like support. They worked with young people to prioritise areas of focus. Many also offered a wide range of activities, from which young people could choose, working with a several partner organisations to enable this. Delivery staff at Community Music Wales explained, for example, that: *“they get to choose what to do; that way they have ownership and the offer is flexible so they can always change their minds”*. Similarly, in most local authorities, young people working with the Urdd had a high degree of choice about the type of recreational activity they participated in. Delivery staff from across the sponsor organisations agreed that this approach helped to motivate young people. This is supported by interviews with young people, who were in the main enthusiastic about activities. This supports evidence in the literature about effective practice in engaging young people. As well as the literature on participatory arts and citizenship activities mentioned in the previous chapter, a review



of literature about re-engaging disaffected young people through physical activity programmes found that positive benefits are achieved, particularly in relation to personal and social development, when activities are carefully selected and planned with young people having the opportunity to inform the design and nature of activities<sup>50</sup>.

- **Youth workers who have the skills to build positive relationships with young people based on mutual respect are crucial to success.** As in First Footholds, many of the joint sponsors and delivery staff acknowledged that effectively engaging young people relies on a good rapport between young people and youth workers. One youth worker explained, “*we always give positive feedback to the young people as it gives them the confidence and encouragement to stick at an activity*”. Another youth worker considered that “*the main lesson I’ve learnt from the work is that you have to understand people are different. It’s all about encouragement and positive reinforcement*”. Delivery staff observed that it is necessary to work with young people over an extended period of time to achieve this.
- **Practical activities that are different from normal school activities help to engage young people.** In all Routes to the Summit activities, it was recognised by sponsors and delivery staff that using highly practical activities is necessary and effective in engaging NEET and at risk young people. With STEM activities, for example, some of the young people participating in the workshops delivered in schools reported that they preferred the parts of the workshop that were practical (that used equipment or required young people to make something) rather than those that were more focused on paper-based reading and writing exercises. Typical comments made by young people include “*it’s more hands on*” and “*it’s testing your brain by doing things in a fun way*”. Delivery staff also highlighted that information, advice and guidance needs to be

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<sup>50</sup> Sandford, R; Armour, K; Warmington, P (2006) Re-engaging disaffected youth through physical activity programmes. *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol.32, No.2, April 2006, pp251-271

interactive and based on listening to a young person about their interests and needs, and finding practical responses to this. The evaluation of the CLIC website highlighted that the interactive components of the website were valued by young people<sup>51</sup>. As in First Footholds, these findings support evidence in the literature. For example, an evaluation of a STEM programme in England<sup>52</sup> and research by the Wellcome Trust<sup>53</sup>, highlighted the importance of practical, interactive activities.

## Summary

6.35 As in First Footholds, there is evidence that Routes to the Summit has achieved some of the expected short and medium term outcomes. There is though generally little evidence about the extent to which short and medium term outcomes have been sustained after young people have finished the Routes to the Summit activities, whether the learning gained from the activity has been used or changed aspirations and intentions, and whether it has contributed to longer term outcomes such as improved attendance at school or college, improved attainment, or improved participation in community activities:

- Activities delivered by Community Music Wales, SNAP Cymru and the Urdd have resulted in improved personal and social dispositions and skills among young people such as interaction with adults and other young people, motivation and taking part, independence and respect for others.
- Only 106 Routes to the Summit participants (less than 1% of all project participants) progressed into further learning. This is substantially fewer than anticipated and represents just 2% of the 2011 target.

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<sup>51</sup> *Evaluation of CLIC: Final Report*, ICF GHK, December 2012

<sup>52</sup> Springate, I, Harland, J, Lord, P, Straw, S. Evaluation of the 2008-09 DCSF-funded Specialist Schools and Academies Trust STEM Pathfinder Programme (2009)

<sup>53</sup> National Foundation for Educational Research (2011) *Exploring young people's views on science education*. Wellcome Trust

- There is some weaker evidence (qualitative data from a small sample with limited triangulation) that Community Music Wales, SNAP Cymru and Urdd activities have led to improved attendance and participation in education and improved behaviour.
- Around 8% of Routes to the Summit participants (1,270 young people) obtained a qualification, compared with 3% of First Footholds participants. Three in four of those Routes to the Summit participants gained a basic skills or level 1 qualification (76%, n= 966). This is significantly fewer than intended. Most young people (90%, n=1,139) who obtained a qualification took part in activities delivered by the Urdd.
- Although young people generally valued the fun and practical nature of Techniquest activities, there is limited evidence that taking part has led to increased interest in STEM subjects or careers.
- The Urdd had a specific objective to normalise the use of the Welsh language in activities it provided for young people and there is evidence to suggest it has been successful in achieving this objective.
- Community Music Wales collected information on young people's views on their futures before and after participation in the one to one mentoring programme. This shows increased aspirations about jobs and education and confidence about their futures.
- The Clic website has been effective in assisting users in accessing information and advice which they use.
- Practitioners participating in training delivered by SNAP Cymru found it to be useful and relevant although whether participants have applied learning from the course to their work with young people is not so clear.
- As in First Footholds, there are variations in the ESF outcomes achieved in each local authority.
- A full and robust assessment of what has worked well in achieving outcomes is not possible with the data available. Nonetheless, interviews with sponsors, delivery staff and young people have

highlighted some features of delivery they consider to be effective in achieving positive outcomes for NEET and at risk young people and which support evidence in the literature. These include: relationships between staff and young people based on mutual trust and understanding; offering a high degree of choice in activities; and ensuring activities are practical in nature and different to typical school learning.

## **7 Additionality, legacy and sustainability**

- 7.1 In this chapter we consider the added value that Reach the Heights was expected to provide, the wider benefits including its legacy for policy makers and those providing services for young people, and the extent that its activities will be sustained.

### **Additionality**

- 7.2 Below we assess the added value of the project activities, considering the evidence about whether: project activities have addressed gaps in provision; the benefits associated with activities would have occurred anyway; project activities have resulted in reduced activity elsewhere; project activities have led participants to substitute one activity for another; and unintended beneficiaries have benefited from the activities.
- 7.3 Because MI data is not available about the geographic location in which activities were delivered or onward referrals and only some MI is available about the characteristics of young people deemed to make them at risk, a full assessment of additionality is not possible.

#### *Have project activities addressed gaps in provision?*

- 7.4 Activities funded under Priority 1 are required to add value to domestic strategies and budgets and to demonstrate that they are addressing gaps in existing provision.
- 7.5 Many stakeholders noted that a detailed mapping exercise of existing mainstream and ESF provision had not taken place. Although some were able to give examples of individual activities that have addressed gaps in provision, most were also concerned that as a result of a lack of strategic planning, some project activities duplicated mainstream or other ESF provision.

- 7.6 Similarly, many joint sponsors and delivery staff noted difficulties in identifying NEET young people who were not already engaged in ESF-funded provision working towards similar or the same outcomes. This suggests that gaps have not always been filled and this will have contributed as noted in Chapter 3 to difficulties in setting targets.
- 7.7 A review of other Priority 1 projects shows potential overlap in aims and objectives, target groups and delivery model. For example the Pupils Understanding Problems In their Locality (PUPIL) project worked with all 80 secondary schools, including PRUs and special schools, in Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Torfaen. It sought to address the problem of young people leaving school without the soft skills required by employers such as the ability to work well with team members, to communicate effectively and to follow instructions. Young people selected issues they were interested in and carried out community-based work in relation to the topic, such as researching a topic through interviews with people in the community and desk research, planning and running an awareness raising campaign and presenting their views to decision makers. A very similar approach was used in the citizenship and participation-focussed activities in First Footholds. However, there is no evidence of collaborative planning, working and coordination with the PUPIL project.
- 7.8 Most of the participants, both young people and professionals, reported that they were not aware of similar services elsewhere. Given that most participants were young people at risk of becoming NEET, this could indicate lack of knowledge about available services rather than evidence of gaps being addressed.

*Would outcomes achieved by activities been realised anyway?*

- 7.9 There was consensus among joint sponsors, many case study activities and some stakeholders that the project funding has allowed delivery to take place at a greater scale and volume than would otherwise have been possible. In the main, sponsors and activity managers did not consider that they would have been able to secure funding from other

sources and so activities would not have been provided. As a result, they considered that outputs and outcomes have been additional:

In First Footholds:

- The Arts Council of Wales considered that in the absence of the programme, activities would not have been delivered in such a wide geographic area and a more limited range of arts would have been available to young people;
- Children in Wales reported that Together 4 Rights would have been delivered at a much smaller scale with a limited proportion of special schools, and would therefore have worked with fewer young people;
- The Transition Key Worker project would have remained a pilot in five local authority areas, rather than being extended across the Convergence area.

In Routes to the Summit:

- Community Music Wales indicated that although they would like to have worked with some PRUs, the project funding has allowed them to offer a wider choice of activities, which has helped to engage and motivate young people, and allowed them to work in a wider geographic area;
- For Techniquist, the funding has allowed the organisation to extend its geographic reach for delivery of STEM outreach activities.

7.10 In a few cases, sponsors noted that although the same benefits would have been realised over time, project activities have acted as a catalyst and allowed benefits to be experienced more quickly. For example, SNAP Cymru reported that the organisation has been moving towards a model of delivery that focussed on young people rather than parents and offered a more holistic package of support to address social, educational, health and emotional needs. Reach the Heights has helped to allow this shift to take place more quickly. In the case of the Transition Key worker activity, the activity lead said that local authorities who have been developing key working over the years without additional financial input have taken much longer to achieve the same benefits than the

local authorities who participated in Reach the Heights. Stakeholders were, in the main, not sufficiently informed about the achievements of activities to comment on this.

*Have unintended beneficiaries benefited from project activities?*

7.11 The target for the number of NEET young people was not achieved and the proportion of young people who already had a qualification was relatively high (around a fifth in First Footholds), indicating that to a degree young people who were not originally intended to benefit from the project may have done so. There is little evidence to suggest that young people who were not at risk of becoming NEET have been engaged in project activities and it appears that projects have succeeded in engaging at risk young people through close working with wide ranging referral partners. According to the MI data, just a handful of young people (21) from outside of the Convergence area have been recorded as receiving support and this may be accounted for by re-location part-way through an activity.

*Have the projects led to reduction in provision elsewhere?*

7.12 In the main, joint sponsors, referral and delivery partners did not consider that other support services had been reduced as a result of Reach the Heights activities. In most cases, extra staff were employed as a result of the project, allowing additional activities to be delivered.

*Have existing services or activities been substituted for another activity as a result of the projects?*

7.13 Most participants report that they took part in Reach the Heights activities in addition to other activities and none reported that they had chosen the Reach the Heights activity instead of another existing service or activity. Similarly, delivery staff noted that they had not substituted



delivery of an existing activity for a Reach the Heights activity, pointing to the employment of extra staff as evidence of this.

### **Wider benefits**

7.14 Many of the activities can identify wider benefits and legacies such as the increased capacity of professionals and increased organisational capacity through improved partnership working, better business processes, and development of tools and resources for future use.

#### *Increased capacity of professionals*

7.15 The business plans note that the projects were expected to improve the capacity of front line professionals working with young people to identify and engage NEET and at risk young people through training and professional development. As a result of participating in project activities, they would have improved skills and competences to be able to deliver positive activities that complement and enrich the school curriculum.

7.16 In both projects, there is some evidence that participating in Reach the Heights has contributed to increased capacity among professionals to effectively support young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET. The training delivered by sponsors (for example, by SNAP Cymru, Children in Wales and the Arts Council of Wales –see sections 5.13 and 6.27) to a range of youth professionals, has resulted in increased knowledge and understanding of how to effectively support at risk young people.

7.17 A few joint sponsor leads also report that the ESF funding has allowed them to invest more in skills and development of staff than might otherwise have been possible. In some cases, sponsors were working with new target groups and therefore the scale of learning experienced by individuals was considered to be substantial. Examples provided by sponsors include:

- Arts Council of Wales contracted providers reported that their capacity to work with NEET and at risk young people has improved,

which has enabled work with these groups to take place on a larger scale and more effectively than previously. *“The project has directly influenced the development of staff working with this target group and as such several more projects have taken place working with young offenders”*<sup>54</sup>.

- Techniquet reported that as a result of delivering a more targeted intervention than they would normally, and working in partnership with Careers Wales staff, the organisation has gained: *“a lot of insight and a fresh approach”* and is *“more skilled in identifying opportunities and ways of engaging kids in STEM learning and being interested in a STEM careers”*. They have used this learning to improve their programmes of work. This was confirmed by staff at Careers Wales.
- Community Music Wales developed a new enhanced mentoring role as a result of Routes to the Summit. *“Existing staff have a broader skill set than previously and are more able to provide intensive ongoing support to NEET and at risk young people”*.

7.18 Most sponsors have not been able to retain all the staff recruited to deliver Reach the Heights and have therefore lost some of the skills and capacity developed through the project. Assuming that these staff are successful in securing new positions there should, however, be a contribution of increased capacity among professionals to the youth sector more widely.

*Increased organisational capacity*

Improved partnership working

7.19 The main outcome for organisations as a result of Reach the Heights has been improved partnership working. Most joint sponsor and case study organisations considered that improved partnership working has contributed to an increased profile in the youth sector and has helped to

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<sup>54</sup> *Evaluation of the Reach the Heights Arts Participation Programme*, Arad Research, June 2013

build positive reputations with funders. In some cases, Reach the Heights has helped to extend existing relationships, while in others new partnerships have been formed.

7.20 The two main reported benefits for organisations of having improved partnerships were: firstly, young people have better access to a wider range of expertise and can be provided with services that are well-tailored to their needs; and secondly, organisations can more effectively identify and reach young people who are NEET or at risk of being so.

7.21 Key examples of improved partnership working within organisations include:

- 95% of providers contracted by the Arts Council of Wales strongly agreed or agreed that they had developed new partnerships with organisations in the arts, education and social sectors<sup>55</sup>;
- Several local authority areas in the Education and Learning Youth Justice project reported ‘improved communication with a wide range of partner organisations, including Careers Wales, training providers, FE colleges and for under 16s, schools and the local education authority’. This resulted in some cases in more training and employment placements being offered by partners to young people in contact with the youth justice system. In addition, improved information sharing between Careers Wales and YOTs was reported, which meant YOT staff were able to better track young people on placements and in training and provide additional support where required<sup>56</sup>;
- In the Transition Key Worker activity, many key workers and their managers reported that the programme had led to improved joint working between social services, children and adolescent mental health services and education. Several key workers reported that they dedicated substantial effort to explaining the challenges faced by young people with additional learning needs to other services.

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<sup>55</sup> *Evaluation of the Reach the Heights Arts Participation Programme*, Arad Research, June 2013

<sup>56</sup> *Evaluation of the Support into Education and Learning (Youth Justice) Project*, February 2013, Red Kite Research Consultancy

This led to improved knowledge and understanding among professionals in these other services;

- In the Urdd, existing relationships with local authorities were considered to have been extended and strengthened through the project. An example of the benefits of this is in Pembrokeshire, where close working with the local authority allowed Urdd to provide support to young people at risk of becoming NEET in rural schools who would otherwise have had limited access to services.

7.22 In the main, interviewees were confident that new partnerships would be sustained over time and this is supported by evidence from a survey of all Phase 2 Arts Council of Wales providers, in which 90% reported that partnerships developed would be maintained<sup>57</sup>.

7.23 Conversely, most joint sponsors expressed disappointment that they had worked in partnership with other joint sponsors to a very limited degree.

7.24 In relation to views on whether partnership working with DFES had improved as a result of Reach the Heights, joint sponsor views were mixed. Some of them felt that Reach the Heights had allowed them to build improved relationships with policy leads within the Welsh Government, but several others were disappointed that their expectation of an improved strategic partnership with the Welsh Government had not been realised.

#### Improved processes for business development

7.25 A few sponsors reported that participating in Reach the Heights had allowed them to improve their approach to marketing. They have, for example, produced and disseminated leaflets and posters, improved information and functionality of their websites and promoted their services through new channels. This, combined with the improved partnership working, is perceived to have led to improved reputations and position within the sector. For example, SNAP Cymru reported

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

increased traffic to their website and an increased number of requests for training via the website as a result of these improvements.

- 7.26 A few sponsors reported that they have significantly developed their processes for monitoring and evaluation as a result of the project. Although they generally recognised that there are still improvements that could be made, they have used new data collection tools and established new databases to gather information that supports service development and helps to identify new opportunities. For example:
- SNAP Cymru now has a comprehensive directory of youth organisations, which they plan to use for proactive marketing of their services in future;
  - Urdd staff reported that they have greater capacity to monitor performance and delivery which “*which wouldn’t have been possible without Reach the Heights*”.

#### Improved capacity to manage and administer ESF projects

- 7.27 All the external sponsors felt that that they have improved capacity to manage and administer ESF projects as a result of Reach the Heights and would be well-equipped to bid directly for funding to WEFO in future or to be part of a consortium. A few sponsors reported that sub-contracted providers also had improved capacity to deliver ESF-funded services and this was generally confirmed by activity managers who were interviewed across the whole range of the activities.

#### *Dissemination of learning*

- 7.28 The project business plans set out an expectation that learning would be identified and disseminated. The business plans stated that sponsors should be responsible for this and that members of the steering group also should play a role in disseminating learning about what works and does not work in achieving education, employment and training outcomes and progression towards these.

- 7.29 Generally, sponsors did not have well-developed dissemination strategies and dissemination of learning has not so far been a focus for sponsors in either of the projects. The fact that a substantial proportion of delivery has taken place in the latter half of the project has, to some degree, diverted attention and resources from synthesising and disseminating good practice and learning.
- 7.30 There have been some small-scale efforts to ensure learning is shared to inform future initiatives. For example:
- Save the Children has produced a practical guidance document that shares learning and offers practical advice and guidance about how to run similar activities in future. This was sent to a range of stakeholders;
  - A few other sponsors have produced end of project reports describing the work undertaken in the project but these documents tend to be descriptive rather than analytical and do not in all cases draw out learning about what works well to inform others;
  - A few sponsors, such as the Urdd, the Arts Council of Wales and DFES commissioned independent evaluations. The CLIC evaluation has been published and the others may be made publicly available;
  - A few sponsors have presented activities to external audiences.
- 7.31 Around half of the external sponsors (Techniquet, Arts Council of Wales, SNAP Cymru and Funky Dragon) and most of the internal sponsors have not so far disseminated any good practice and have no firm plans to do so in future.
- 7.32 There is also no evidence that members of the steering group have disseminated learning from the projects. As noted by steering group members, this is partly because learning has not been shared in steering group meetings to allow them to take anything to a wider audience.
- 7.33 A few sponsors indicated that as a result of participating in Reach the Heights, lessons have been learned in effective monitoring and evaluation. For example, one sponsor that had not set specific targets for local authority areas, recognised that this would have helped to monitor performance and ensure consistent delivery and stated that in

future they would make better use of targets. Another sponsor reflected that they had not built in adequate systems for tracking young people and measuring outcomes beyond participation in project activities. They reported that they intend to consider this for future initiatives.

### *Resources and tools for future use*

7.34 Most sponsors reported that they have developed resources and tools during the project, which will be available for future use and are therefore an important legacy of Reach the Heights. Examples include:

- Active citizenship session plans and resources developed by Funky Dragon for use by teachers and youth professionals are freely available on the organisation's website for download;
- All of the resources currently on the Participation Workers Website, including the National Participation Standards self-assessment guide will continue to be available;
- Training activities funded by the Arts Council of Wales have developed qualifications such as a Level 4 accredited short course on the working with young people;
- Teacher resources developed by Techniquet to support STEM outreach workshops;
- Through participation in Reach the Heights, SNAP Cymru have become an Agored-approved provider of level 2-4 qualifications in disability awareness and intend to maintain this status after the programme has finished.

7.35 Although existing resources will continue to be available, a few sponsors noted that resources will require updating in time but that they are unlikely to have the resources available to do so.

### **Sustainability**

7.36 At this point most activities had not secured funding to be sustained. Many joint sponsors highlighted the challenges of securing ongoing

funding for Reach the Heights in the current economic downturn, with local authorities experiencing significant constraints on youth services budgets. Several stakeholders also believed that because Reach the Heights has not shared learning about effective practice and information about outcomes achieved with Children and Young People’s Partnerships in each local authority, awareness of project activities and their effectiveness was limited among potential funders. In their view, this has increased the risk of unsustainable “*pop up services*”.

7.37 Joint sponsors accepted that several activities have worked in achieving outcomes for young people (although this is not based on robust monitoring and evaluation in all cases) and that, in principle, they should be sustained. Sponsors are currently seeking funding to sustain these activities and are waiting to hear whether submitted bids have been successful. Activities in this category are presented in Table 27 and Table 28.

**Table 27 First Footholds – project activities for which sponsors are seeking funding**

Joint sponsor	Activity and status
Arts Council of Wales	15 of the Reach the Heights contractors have been awarded additional funding between April and June to sustain activities. There is a longer term intention to use Lottery funding to fund similar activities focused on ? groups in future.
Children in Wales	Work with young disabled people – grant applications have been submitted.  Participation Workers website – grant applications submitted but no funding secured yet.
Save the Children	National Standards work – Save the Children will not continue this work but have developed a proposal that other organisations wishing to take forward the work could use to help them to secure funding.
Education and Learning Youth Justice	Half of the YOTs (6 out of 12) interviewed in October and November 2012, indicated that ‘plans were under discussion’ to try and keep at least some of the work going after the funding ceases. However, most respondents said that



Joint sponsor	Activity and status
	decisions could not be made until YOTs were clearer about the funding they would be receiving for 2013/2014.

Source: Joint sponsor interviews and exit strategy documents

**Table 28 Routes to the Summit – project activities for which sponsors are seeking funding**

Joint sponsor	Activity and status
Community Music Wales	Community Music Wales is exploring the possibility group workshops at full cost to local authorities and is currently developing its offer
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	Other sources of funding to maintain the work are being explored.
Techniquet	Techniquet are looking for additional funding to sustain and expand STEM engagement outreach activities

Source: Joint sponsor interviews and exit strategy documents

7.38 Those activities which are being sustained and for which ongoing funding has been confirmed are presented in Table 29 and Table 30.

**Table 29 First Footholds – activities that have been sustained**

Joint sponsor	Activity and source of funding secured to sustain activity
Children in Wales	<p>Children in Wales's training is being offered at full cost. There is not yet data or evidence on take up of the full cost training provision.</p> <p>The Youth Experts activity included some consultation with young people, which is being continued through the organisation's core funding. Other components of the Youth Expert activity, such as media-based projects, will not continue.</p>
Save the Children	A Participation and Accountability hub has been established within Save the Children, which will be staffed by two of the First Footholds development officers. The hub will advise internal departments on how to ensure young people are included in decision making and design and delivery of services. Learning from First Footholds about what works well in engaging young people will inform the hub's

<b>Joint sponsor</b>	<b>Activity and source of funding secured to sustain activity</b>
	work in future.
Transition Key Workers	The extent to which key working practice developed through First Footholds will be sustained varies across local authorities. Key working will continue in some local authorities but not in others.

Source: Joint sponsor interviews and exit strategy documents

**Table 30 Routes to the Summit – activities that have been sustained**

<b>Joint sponsor</b>	<b>Activity and source of funding secured to sustain activity</b>
Community Music Wales	Funding has been secured for two posts to continue delivery of one to one NEET mentoring from a combination of sources (Arts Council of Wales, HLF and Engagement Gateway funding).
SNAP Cymru	<p>The training offer will remain and is available at full cost. So far, one contract has been secured (from Careers Wales to train advisors).</p> <p>The young people and family-focussed work is being funded and delivered by SNAP Cymru. A recent internal restructure makes provision for 'family and young people's officers' who will deliver this work. Some current funding has been reallocated to fund these roles. In addition, bids have been submitted to the Big Lottery Fund and various local authorities (for Families First funding).</p>
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	A local authority in North Wales has committed to ongoing funding for the two youth officers delivering Welsh language informal and non-formal learning opportunities (principally through outdoors education). Local authorities in six other local authorities have committed to funding to sustain some components of Reach the Heights activities.

Source: Joint sponsor interviews and exit strategy documents

7.39 Key activities which at present seem unlikely to be sustained include Active Citizenship workshops delivered by Funky Dragon.

7.40 Contracted providers interviewed as part of the case study research had in the main not yet secured funding to sustain activities, although many had submitted grant applications. Half of the providers contracted by the

Arts Council of Wales reported that arts engagement activities funded through First Footholds would be continued<sup>58</sup>. Many noted that future ESF funding was their most likely source of funding for ongoing delivery of similar activities. The exceptions included the following Save the Children activities, which are being sustained by contracted providers:

- Young Inspectors – one of the local authorities<sup>59</sup> has included staff time to continue running this activity in existing roles and allocated a budget to cover young people’s travel costs.
- Making a Change activity – a contracted provider is funding a similar activity to provide a pathway for young people not yet ready for youth employment programmes funded through Jobs Growth Wales.

## Summary

### *Added value*

- In general, joint sponsors, delivery partners, referral organisations and some stakeholders considered that the outcomes achieved would not have happened in the absence of the programme. They agreed that Reach the Heights funding has allowed delivery to take place at a greater scale than would otherwise have been possible and that this has allowed more young people and professionals to be reached from a wider geographic area.
- Significantly, though, stakeholders considered that the lack of comprehensive needs assessment at the start of the project and inadequate involvement of regional and local stakeholders has reduced added value and increased the potential for duplication rather than addressed gaps in provision.

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<sup>58</sup> *Evaluation of the Reach the Heights Arts Participation Programme*, Arad Research, June 2013

<sup>59</sup> We have not asked all local authorities who participated in the activity about their plans for sustaining the activity.

- The low numbers of NEET participants and the higher than expected numbers of at risk young people indicates beneficiaries outside of the intended target group have benefited from the project.
- There is no evidence of displacement or substitution of other activities.

### *Legacy*

- Many of the activities can identify wider benefits and legacies such as the increased capacity of professionals and increased organisational capacity through improved partnership working, better business processes, and development of tools and resources for future use.

### *Sustainability*

- At this point most activities had not secured funding to be sustained. Many joint sponsors highlighted the challenges of securing ongoing funding for Reach the Heights in the current economic downturn. Stakeholders reported that because Reach the Heights has not shared learning, awareness of activities is low among potential funders.
- Joint sponsors accepted that several activities have worked in achieving outcomes for young people (although this is not based on robust monitoring and evaluation in all cases) and that, in principle, they should be sustained. Sponsors are currently seeking funding to sustain these activities and are waiting to hear whether submitted bids have been successful.
- Some activities are being sustained and have secured ongoing funding. These include, in First Footholds, Children in Wales training, components of the Save the Children work, and Transition Key Workers in some local authorities. In Routes to the Summit, these include: Community Music Wales NEET mentoring, SNAP

Cymru training and family support and some of the Urdd's informal and non-formal learning in Welsh.

- Key activities which at present seem unlikely to be sustained include Active Citizenship workshops delivered by Funky Dragon.

## 8 Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 This chapter draws together the findings and the analysis presented in the previous chapters to present conclusions in relation to the key objectives of the study which are to:

- Assess the effectiveness of the processes for managing, designing and delivering Reach the Heights;
- Evaluate the performance of the two projects in relation to expenditure, output and outcome targets; and
- Assess their legacy and sustainability

8.2 It goes on to draw out the lessons for future programmes and projects of this kind to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery; the quality and extent of the outcomes and wider benefits which can be achieved; and the ability to learn from the experience to inform policy development and implementation.

### **The effectiveness of the processes for managing, designing and delivering Reach the Heights**

8.3 The tables below summarise what has been found in relation to the different aspects of managing, designing and delivering the projects and the activities commissioned.

#### *Managing*

8.4 We have found that (Table 31):

**Table 31 What has worked well and challenges in managing Reach the Heights**

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Management of the projects	The Project Management Group has functioned throughout the project and addressed	Changes of staff within the project management team within the Welsh Government have not helped with the consistency and timeliness of advice and

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
	operational issues.	<p>guidance to sponsors.</p> <p>Senior policy leads and key national partners were not engaged in the Project Advisory Group.</p> <p>A lengthy delay in deciding whether to continue the projects held back activities from achieving expected outcomes.</p>
Leadership and coordination	Staff within the external joint sponsor organisations came together in meetings.	<p>Project Management Group and Advisory Group meetings did not focus on joint planning, underpinning research about what works to achieve the outcomes expected and learning from the projects.</p> <p>Limited facilitation of partnership working between joint sponsor organisations.</p>
Monitoring		<p>The central MI database took longer than expected to develop</p> <p>Not possible to let joint sponsors access and upload participant records themselves, which meant the process had to be centralised, which was more time consuming for the project management team and joint sponsors.</p> <p>No activity level data.</p> <p>Visits from the project management team largely focused on administration and data collection rather than MI for evaluative purposes to learn lessons about effective delivery and support for the target groups.</p> <p>No MI collected beyond what is required for ESF purposes by the Welsh Government to demonstrate achievements of activities and contributions to policy priorities. Although some joint sponsors collected additional MI this was patchy and not always recorded electronically, making analysis difficult.</p> <p>A lack of clear information about the MI data requirements from WEFO and the Welsh Government.</p>

8.5 This indicates that:

- There have been limited benefits of the model of having a lead sponsor overseeing joint sponsors (as opposed to having several sponsors who have a direct relationship with WEFO) and that there has been limited coordination of activities and sharing of experience between joint sponsor organisations.
- The Reach the Heights projects have not benefitted from steering from a project advisory group because senior stakeholders who were invited to be members of the advisory group did not participate. This has limited the projects' performance and their ability to add value.
- There has been inadequate collection of MI, with a notable lack of centralised, consistent MI about the range of activities delivered within the project. This makes an assessment of performance very difficult and also impedes learning for similar future initiatives.

8.6 This suggests that for future similar initiatives:

- Different steering arrangements will need to be established that can provide adequate advice and guidance to steer a project of this kind across the whole Convergence area. Given the large number of ESF projects run by the Welsh Government, consideration should be given to establishing thematic policy groups that steer several projects. The role of this group should be to ensure activities are aligned to Welsh Government policy priorities, the ESF Priority framework and the business plan's objectives so that different ESF projects complement each other, stay on track and do not overlap.
- Alongside this strategic steering group, there is value in establishing an operational steering group for internal and external joint sponsor organisations. This should focus on ensuring that activities are in line with outcomes and underpinned by robust research evidence unless they are designated as experimental.
- External evaluators should be appointed at the project inception so they can work with the project management team to establish adequate monitoring and evaluation from the start. This should



include the collection of MI about the extent to which activities are contributing to Welsh policy objectives as well as to ESF objectives and targets.

- There should be centralised collection of MI data in relation to individual activities (i.e. the different interventions delivered by joint sponsors), and this information should be analysed regularly as part of the ongoing performance review of projects and joint sponsors.

*Design and development of the projects (pre- and post-commissioning)*

8.7 We have found that (Table 32):

**Table 32 What has worked well and challenges in the design and development of Reach the Heights**

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Evidence of need	Activities are relatively well-aligned to needs prioritised in Welsh Government policies and strategies.	<p>Findings from wider consultation were not analysed and presented in business plans or supplementary documents.</p> <p>Stakeholders reported that areas of need raised in the consultation were not included in the projects.</p> <p>Some of the research evidence presented in the business plans appears less relevant and useful for identifying needs.</p> <p>Business plans were required from some but not all internal sponsor activities.</p> <p>Existing provision was not mapped to identify gaps that could be filled by project activities.</p>
Match between project aims and Welsh Government policy and activities	<p>The activities that have been delivered to professionals and young people are generally relevant to the aims and objectives of the projects.</p> <p>There are activities clearly designed to contribute to providing specific and tailored support to young people with additional learning needs and young people in the youth justice system (a specific objective of the business plan).</p>	<p>There are few activities contributing to some of the key aims of the projects listed in the business plan.</p> <p>There are only a few activities that offered experiences to young people to apply skills gained in work-related experience.</p> <p>It was intended that a key contribution to the objectives of <i>Delivering Skills that Work for Wales</i> would be the design and implementation of a national system for identifying and keeping in</p>

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
	The activities are relatively well aligned to the policy priorities of the Welsh Government, with most activities appearing relevant and appropriate to the aims of <i>Extending Entitlement</i> and the subsequent <i>Youth Engagement and Action Plan</i> .	touch with NEET and at risk young people. This did not take place.
Evidence of gaps in services	Business plans state general service needs for young people which draw on the consultation and some of the research evidence presented.  Most joint sponsor business plans consider the scope of other services and projects in Wales to some degree to show how project activities would extend and complement existing provision.	Neither project level business plans nor joint sponsor business plans present evidence about gaps in services at regional and local levels and stakeholders considered that project activities might be duplicating existing services rather than filling gaps.
Fit with other services		The Steering Group was not able to recruit members who could advise on existing provision to minimise risk of duplication.  There is little explanation in the business plans of how different project activities relate to each other or other Priority 1 projects.  Referral and progression pathways between existing services and proposed project activities are not defined in the business plan or subsequent documents.
Formulating targets		Most targets were poorly developed. Targets do not appear to have been formulated on the basis of an assessment of supply and demand.  Specific activities within projects did not necessarily have output targets towards the targets agreed with joint sponsors.
Making the case for the type, nature and delivery	Project business plans used research and evaluative evidence about what works in achieving outcomes for a few key activities (such as the Transition Key Worker project, Education and	A lot of the evidence of what works in achieving outcomes for target groups presented in the business plan was not based on evaluations of outcomes achieved which would contribute to the

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
model of activities	<p>Learning Youth Justice and the Arts Council of Wales participatory arts activities).</p> <p>A few sponsors drew on research and evaluative evidence and recent experience to inform the nature and shape of activities.</p>	<p>projects' outcomes.</p> <p>No systematic literature review was undertaken to underpin the project plan.</p> <p>There was no detailed analysis of the nature and intensity of activities required to achieve the desired outcomes.</p> <p>No evidence was presented to make the case for using the STEM-based activities or citizenship activities as a means to effectively engage NEET and at risk young people.</p>
Market review for commissioning		<p>Project sponsors had limited engagement with providers in the market to understand the solutions that may be available and to get feedback on how the requirement might be best met.</p> <p>Project sponsors had a relatively ad hoc approach to deciding on the number and nature of suppliers required, and the size, length and type of contract.</p> <p>There was limited consideration of different procurement models and methods, including consideration of different commissioning processes for different sizes of contracts.</p> <p>There was no research to establish benchmark unit costs against which to assess bids and consider value for money.</p>
Securing resources for contract management or direct delivery	<p>Generally contract managers were in place from the early procurement phases resulting in the timely appointment of staff with the appropriate skills and qualifications.</p> <p>Some joint sponsors recognised a lack of contract management expertise within their organisations and recruited staff with skills to</p>	<p>Some contract managers had limited previous experience of contract management.</p>

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
	address this.	
Contracting, including post-tender negotiations	<p>Joint sponsors with more experience of procurement have supported less experienced sponsors by sharing specifications, contracts and learning from their own experience.</p> <p>The Welsh Government supported joint sponsors to access WCVA training, which was found to be helpful.</p> <p>Specifications issued generally give sufficient detail to allow providers to respond to the requirements.</p> <p>Evaluation of tenders against pre-defined criteria, including ability to record monitoring information, report and evaluate, relevant experience of recruiting and supporting the target group, and ability to achieve the intended project outcomes.</p> <p>Adjustments by joint sponsors to the process as a result of lessons learned.</p> <p>New partnerships formed as a result of the commissioning process.</p>	<p>Significant delays to the commissioning of activities following the interim evaluation report.</p> <p>Some joint sponsors required to begin the procurement process before final approval of their overall budget by the Welsh Government and WEFO.</p> <p>Insufficient support and advice provided by the Welsh Government to some joint sponsors new to procurement.</p> <p>Some specifications left little room for innovation on the part of providers and demonstration of value for money.</p> <p>Price was a consideration for most joint sponsors but price and value for money was not a key criterion against which bids were generally assessed.</p> <p>Limited post-tender negotiations to refine approach and define MI and targets, beyond those required for ESF.</p>

#### 8.8 This indicates that:

- There was some use of evidence to identify the main challenges faced by young people that project activities should seek to address, such as large scale surveys of young people about the difficulties they experience in education, health, family and social life, national statistics and findings from national consultations. Some of the evidence quoted appears less relevant and useful for identifying needs. Findings from stakeholder consultations do not appear to have been analysed and documented in detail.
- Although the project business plans state general service needs and the joint sponsor business plans consider the scope of other services in Wales to some degree, there is no evidence in the business plans about gaps in services at regional or local level or how the projects will complement existing services for young people.
- There was little explanation in the project business plans about how different project activities relate to each other.
- The process of formulating targets does not appear to have drawn on adequate evidence of supply and demand.
- The strength of evidence presented about the effectiveness of particular activities in achieving desired outcomes is mixed; there was no systematic literature review underpinning the rationale for project activities and indicating which activities could be benchmarked and which were experimental.
- There has been in most cases a lack of market review before commissioning, a lack of assessment of different procurement models and methods, and little consideration of value for money in assessing tenders. This has meant mixed success in relation to the commissioning process, which is a contributing factor to the performance of the Reach the Heights projects.

#### 8.9 This suggests that in future similar initiatives:

- A detailed mapping exercise should be conducted, involving regional and local stakeholders, to identify gaps in services to be addressed by project activities.
- There should be a high-level planning process early on that maps and compares activities proposed by sponsors to avoid duplication, to establish

referral and progression links between activities and to ensure coherence across the suite of activities.

- A systematic literature review to identify what works in out of school activities to contribute to tackling underachievement and raising skills and aspirations should be used to shape all project activities.
- At the outset it should be clear which activities are experimental and which are reflective of practice elsewhere with evaluation and MI requirements set out to match these.
- Targets need to be formulated using evidence of supply and demand (e.g. the total target group population and its geographic location, likely take up of specific activities based on benchmark activities or previous monitoring and evaluation, and reasonable costs for activities to achieve desired outputs and outcomes based on an understanding of the time and intensity of the activities to achieve these).
- Enhanced processes should be established for critically reviewing business plans submitted by joint sponsors to assess the case for proposed activities in relation to need, fit with mainstream and other ESF provision, and evidence of what works.
- Clear guidance should be provided to joint sponsors about how to conduct an adequate review of the market prior to commissioning, to establish the most appropriate procurement model and methods.
- There needs to be a senior responsible owner for overseeing procurement activity across the joint sponsor organisations who works more closely with joint sponsor leads during the procurement process.
- Greater consideration should be given to achieving value for money through commissioning (for example, through including cost/price as a key criteria against which bids are assessed, ensuring resources invested in commissioning and contract management are proportionate to the value of the contract awarded, and establishing benchmark unit costs).

*Delivery*

8.10 We have found that (Table 33):

**Table 33 What has worked well and challenges in delivering Reach the Heights**

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Operationalising	<p>Most sponsors and activity managers have been able to secure the staff, volunteers and equipment needed to deliver activities.</p> <p>There are examples of effective promotion and marketing activities to the target groups and of staff building effective relationships with partners at an early stage.</p> <p>There are examples of effective approaches to targeting NEET and at risk young people through a range of partner organisations including PRUs, schools (e.g. young people on alternative curriculums), SENCOs, YOTs, youth clubs, social services and youth forums.</p> <p>The needs of young people were assessed and taken account of using a wide range of tools and approaches.</p>	<p>Some partner organisations in receipt of ESF-funding for other projects were reluctant to refer young people for fear that young people would not count towards their own targets.</p> <p>Some local authorities were reported to be uncooperative because they considered they should have been able to apply directly for funding to WEFO.</p> <p>It has taken time to build relationships with some partners. Some activities had difficulties in engaging schools in some parts of the Convergence area</p> <p>Because of delays after the interim evaluation, delivery has had to take place over a much shorter period than was anticipated.</p>
Recruitment of participants	<p>Both projects appear to have engaged young people with wide- ranging barriers to education, training and employment. Young people in rural areas with limited access to services, ex-offenders and those with low levels of literacy and numeracy were some of the key groups who participated in activities.</p>	<p>Significant difficulties occurred in recruiting young people that met the eligibility criteria – delivery agents reported that in some areas all NEET young people were already engaged in other ESF activity intended to achieve similar outcomes.</p> <p>The data shows that the projects over-recruited at risk young people (as opposed to those who are NEET) and</p>



	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
		First Footholds engaged many more 11-13 year olds than expected.
Providing appropriate activities to achieve expected outcomes	<p>Young people were involved in designing activities.</p> <p>Young people enjoyed learning activities that offered something different to school and college to acquire skills.</p> <p>Young people valued the skills and qualities of delivery staff.</p> <p>Several sponsors have been able to accredit young people's achievements, which they did not do previously.</p> <p>The adoption of effective practice supported by the research literature to engage NEET and at risk young people: offering young people a high degree of choice in activities; ensuring youth workers have the skills to build positive relationships with young people based on mutual respect and trust; delivering highly practical activities that are distinct to typical classroom activities; and ensuring support is offered over time to strengthen impacts.</p>	<p>Some activities reported that schools found it difficult to find space in the timetable to schedule activities, even if they could see potential benefits</p> <p>Because of delays to contracting after the interim evaluation, delivery was 'back-loaded' with a substantial proportion taking place in the latter half of the project. This placed significant pressure on delivery staff and may have reduced the intensity and duration of activities to provide desired outcomes.</p> <p>Lower than expected levels of literacy among young people meant activities had to be adapted.</p>
Adjustments to delivery and learning	<p>Most delivery agents and joint sponsors made adjustments to the original delivery plan in response to the experience and particular needs of the young people they were working with.</p> <p>Feedback from young people informed the content and delivery of activities.</p>	

8.11 This indicates that:

- Delays as a result of the interim evaluation appear to have resulted in a lot more delivery happening over a shorter period of time than anticipated.
- In the main, delivery agents and joint sponsor organisations delivering activities directly have been able to secure the staff, volunteers and equipment they require to start delivering activities.
- Developing partnerships to support delivery has been easier where there were existing links with partner organisations and in other cases, delivery staff have had to work hard to promote their work to partners (particularly some local authorities), explain benefits and secure engagement.
- Some delivery agents have reported problems in identifying NEET young people who are not already supported by ESF-funded provision working towards the same outcomes. Activities over recruited at risk young people aged 11-13.
- Young people participating in case study activities have been largely positive about their experiences of being recruited to and participating in activities.
- Effective practice to engage young people who are NEET or at risk has been learnt and adopted by most project sponsors and delivery agents.

8.12 This suggests that in future similar initiatives:

- Events should be held to bring key providers in local areas together so they can establish a clear understanding of each other’s work and to help build effective partnerships.
- Activities commissioned should reflect the target groups.

*Monitoring, review and learning*

8.13 We have found that (Table 34):

**Table 34 What has worked well and challenges in monitoring, review and learning**

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Monitoring performance and quality assurance	Joint sponsors generally established clear processes for collecting MI to measure achievement of ESF targets	Instructions to delivery agents about MI required were not clear and accurate because understanding and

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
	<p>and progress reports from contractors.</p> <p>Most joint sponsors established clear processes for face to face monitoring visits that included observations, checks of financial management data and checks of how participants are targeted.</p> <p>Joint sponsors delivering directly have established good processes for monitoring quality and consistency of delivery.</p>	<p>interpretation of guidance from the Welsh Government changed / was inconsistent.</p> <p>MI was collected about non-ESF output and outcome targets by few of the activities.</p> <p>Monitoring and quality assurance processes were not varied according to the size of contracts, reducing the value for money of the contracting process.</p> <p>Monitoring visits did not always contribute to improving delivery of activities to achieve expected outcomes.</p>
Collecting evidence of outputs and outcomes		<p>Providers with limited previous ESF experience and poorly developed data collection and MI systems have struggled to submit the evidence of outputs and outcomes required.</p> <p>Particular lack of data in relation to outcomes achieved in relation to the aims and objectives of the projects.</p> <p>Some difficulties in the use of Demonstrating Success; variants used by some activities.</p> <p>Independent evaluation was not carried out by all sponsors; some evaluations failed to provide evidence that had not been collected by activities and project sponsors about outcomes.</p>
Collecting and disseminating learning		<p>Lack of a well-developed dissemination strategy means there has been little collection and dissemination</p>

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
		<p>of learning.</p> <p>Steering group meetings have not been organised to facilitate the sharing of learning.</p> <p>Steering group members have not collected information to enable them to share learning with stakeholders.</p>

8.14 This indicates that:

- Joint sponsors have generally established clear processes for collecting ESF MI data from providers and quality assuring delivery but have generally not collected or commissioned additional MI to assess the outputs and outcomes of the activities and provide evidence of what works.
- Where additional data was collected, it tended to be limited and collected in hard copy which made monitoring and analysis difficult for joint sponsors to use. Evaluations of activities have not been systematically commissioned not have they all filled gaps.
- Most joint sponsors established clear processes for face to face monitoring visits that included observations, checks of financial management data and checks of how participants are targeted.
- It appears that in some cases the resources invested in managing and monitoring contracts was disproportionate to the contract value.
- There have been some difficulties because the guidance about what ESF MI was required and definitions of eligibility have changed and also because some delivery agents have struggled to collect the necessary MI.
- There has as yet been little dissemination of learning.

8.15 This suggests that future similar initiatives should:

- Invest increased time and resources early on to ensure clear information about the MI required, understanding about what counts towards ESF targets and what is required to evidence wider non-ESF aims and objectives of projects and activities.

- Ensure that resources invested in contract management and monitoring are proportionate and focused on the quality of delivery and the provision of evidence of what works.
- Ensure that learning is shared between sponsors and external stakeholders on an ongoing basis through steering group meetings and also other forums. This should be based on robust formative and summative monitoring and evaluation.

## The performance of the Reach the Heights projects

8.16 We have found (Table 35):

**Table 35 What has worked well and challenges in relation to the performance of the projects**

	Worked well	Challenges
Achieving aims and objectives in the business plan, including WEFO expenditure and output targets	<p>Overall throughput targets have been achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both projects performed well in relation to targets for the total number of participants. In total over 31,000 young people participated in Reach the Heights (15,974 in First Footholds and 15,786 in Routes to the Summit).</li> <li>The target for the number of professionals receiving training was exceeded by a substantial margin (in First Footholds, 1160 professionals compared to a target of 500, and in Routes to the Summit, over 1000 professionals with no specific targeted stated)</li> </ul> <p>The business plans' aim of engaging with specific at risk groups – young people with ALN, young disabled people and young people in the youth justice system – has been achieved.</p> <p>Aims that have been achieved include, for First Footholds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing and delivering training packages in innovative approaches to engagement for professionals who are front line contacts with young people;</li> <li>Providing locally based and innovative support for young people</li> </ul> <p>And for Routes to the Summit:</p>	<p>There has been a substantial underspend in Reach the Heights: the budget was initially almost £50 million but the final spend was £29 million; activities were probably less substantial (duration, intensity, breadth) than anticipated.</p> <p>Significantly fewer NEET young people were engaged in activities than anticipated (around a fifth of participants were NEET compared to the original target for almost half of young people to be NEET). In First Footholds, a much greater proportion of 11-13 year olds participated than was anticipated.</p> <p>Performance against targets was not consistent across sponsors, with some significantly overachieving against certain indicators and some significantly underachieving. This may be partly attributable to inappropriate targets.</p> <p>Some activities listed in the business plan were not delivered and others were varied.</p> <p>Key aims listed in the business plan do not appear to have been achieved. For First Footholds, these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing, piloting and implementing systematic and innovative approaches to identifying NEET and at risk young people;</li> <li>Developing Wales-wide systems for Keeping in Touch with young people who are NEET;</li> </ul>

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a range of information, advice and guidance and support for young people on learning, career and lifestyle issues (primarily through the CLIC website and the SNAP Cymru activities, although a degree of information and guidance was embedded in many activities)</li> <li>• Developing training resources on areas such as managing budgets and financial capability for teachers and other professionals</li> <li>• Delivering a range of interventions to young people who are likely to underachieve to ensure that they can achieve a higher level of qualification through new learning routes (through activities delivered by the Urdd and Community Music Wales.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing opportunities for young people to undertake short training programmes in work related skills and apply these through work related experience.</li> </ul> <p>And for Routes to the Summit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing opportunities for work type experience linked to key employers and industries;</li> <li>• Identification and dissemination of good and innovative practice has taken place to a limited extent in both projects.</li> </ul>
Achieving aims and objectives in relation to the cross-cutting themes	<p>The aims and objectives set out in the business plan in relation to equal opportunities appear broadly to have been achieved.</p> <p>Although it is not possible to make a full assessment of whether all activities have effectively embedded environmental sustainability, there are some examples in both projects of activities that focus on issues related to the local environment.</p>	A key aim in Routes to the Summit of offering young people the opportunity to undertake work placements and volunteering in environmental organisations does not appear to have been achieved.
Achievement of outcomes that contribute to Welsh Government policy ambitions	<p>Project activities have contributed to some of the core entitlements of the Extending Entitlement youth services policy (2002) such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided recreational and social opportunities in a safe and accessible environment and provided opportunities for sporting, artistic, musical and outdoors experiences to develop talents and broaden horizons – there are many examples of this;</li> <li>• A focus on building young people’s capacity to become</li> </ul>	The projects’ potential contribution to Vision into Action (2006), the ten year action plan for education and training, has not been fulfilled because of the significant underachievement against the target for the number of young people entering further learning. It is difficult to fully assess contribution to this policy because there is limited evidence of whether short term outcomes evidenced during and shortly after participation in project activities have been sustained over time and contributed to longer term outcomes such as improved attendance, behaviour and attainment in education or improved progression into further and higher education.

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
	<p>independent, make choices and participate in the democratic process – there is some evidence of improved knowledge and understanding of rights among participants;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal support and advice – there is evidence of improved information, advice and guidance as a result of the CLIC website and SNAP Cymru activities in Routes to the Summit.</li> </ul> <p>Routes to the Summit has contributed to the national Welsh Language strategy. This is principally through the Urdd's activities, for which there is evidence of improved confidence and motivation to use the Welsh language among participants.</p> <p>There is relatively strong evidence that both projects have led to improved personal and social skills among young people. Activities that have been particularly effective in doing so appear to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In First Footholds, The Arts Council of Wales participatory arts activities, the DFES Transition Key Worker activity and the Education and Learning Youth Justice activity;</li> <li>• In Routes to the Summit, one to one mentoring and music-based group workshops delivered by Community Music Wales and informal and non-formal learning opportunities delivered by the Urdd.</li> </ul>	<p>The projects' potential to contribute to Delivering Skills that Work for Wales (the national NEET-reduction strategy), has been reduced because fewer than expected NEET young people participated and also the Keeping in Touch initiative did not take place at the intended scale and did not develop and implement national systems for identifying and keeping in touch with NEET and at risk young people.</p> <p>There is limited evidence that Routes to the Summit has effectively contributed to the Science Strategy for Wales (2006)</p>
Distribution of resources across target groups		More resources than anticipated were spent on at risk young people than NEET young people.
Distribution of resources across the Convergence area	In both projects there have been participants in all local authorities in the Convergence area.	There is substantial variation in the number of participants in each local authority. This may reflect variations in need and existing service provision but it is not possible to make a robust assessment



	Worked well	Challenges
		<p>of the reasons for such variation with the data available.</p> <p>Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In First Footholds, Children in Wales worked with relatively few participants in Caerphilly, Ceredigion, Conwy and Merthyr Tydfil ; Save the Children worked with relatively few participants in Neath Port Talbot and Conwy but many more in Denbighshire and RCT; Funky Dragon had few participants in Torfaen, Carmarthenshire and Neath Port Talbot while considerably more were from Caerphilly and RCT; The Arts Council of Wales had relatively few participants in Conwy and Gwynedd but considerably more in Isle of Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire;</li> <li>• In Routes to the Summit, Community Music Wales had fewer than 20 participants in five local authorities and over 50 in four ; SNAP Cymru had fewer in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire than in Swansea and Rhondda Cynon Taff; Techniquet had relatively small numbers across the western and northern local authority areas (except Denbighshire) and very large numbers in RCT and Swansea ; the Urdd had as might be expected small numbers in areas such as Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent but larger numbers in areas such as Bridgend as well as Gwynedd.</li> </ul>
Added value	<p>Project funding has allowed delivery to take place at a greater scale and volume than would otherwise have been possible.</p> <p>Some activities have acted as a catalyst and allowed benefits to be experienced more quickly.</p> <p>No evidence of displacement or substitution of other provision.</p>	Evidence that project activities have not successfully addressed gaps in provision.

#### 8.17 This indicates that:

- There has been a substantial underspend in Reach the Heights representing a failure to take advantage of funds allocated to improve the situation of young people in the Convergence area.
- The aims and objectives set out in the project business plans have only partially been achieved, with some key aims not fulfilled.
- Although the projects performed well in relation to the targets for the total numbers of young people participating in projects, most other WEFO targets (on expenditure, outputs, and results indicators) have not been achieved. In particular, far fewer than intended NEET young people have participated. This may in part reflect the processes for formulating targets, which meant that targets were in some cases unrealistic, and may also indicate the need for improved processes for identifying and engaging the target group.
- Specific at risk groups mentioned in the business plan – young people with ALN, young disabled people and young people in the youth justice system – have been effectively engaged in projects.
- Project activities have contributed to some Welsh Government policies and strategies:
  - For example, to some of the core entitlements set out in *Extending Entitlement* (2002). In particular, there is evidence of: activities that have provided social and recreational opportunities, including artistic, musical and; outdoors experiences to develop talents and broaden horizons; improved knowledge and understanding of rights among participants; and, improved information, advice and guidance as a result of the CLIC website and SNAP Cymru activities in Routes to the Summit.
  - Both projects have led to improved personal and social skills among young people.
  - Routes to the Summit has contributed to the Welsh Language Strategy.

- The projects' potential contribution to Vision into Action (2006), Delivering Skills that Work for Wales (2008) and the Science Strategy for Wales has not been fulfilled.
- Project activities have been disproportionately provided in some areas. There is no clear rationale for this.
- There has been some added value as a result of the projects: project funding has allowed delivery to take place at a greater scale and volume than would otherwise have been possible. However, project activities do not appear to have addressed gaps in existing provision as effectively as they might have.

8.18 As a consequence, similar future initiatives should:

- Ensure there is better planning in the early stages, using evidence of what works and what is realistic, to ensure intended activities, outputs and outcomes can be achieved in the timeframe and in the areas of need.
- Define more clearly the specific government policy objectives to which particular activities are intended to contribute, to allow closer ongoing monitoring and evaluation of their contribution.

### Legacy and sustainability of Reach the Heights

8.19 We have found that (Table 36):

**Table 36 What has worked well and challenges in relation to the legacy and sustainability of Reach the Heights**

	Worked well	Challenges
Legacy	<p>Increased knowledge and understanding among youth professionals of how to identify, engage and motivate NEET and at risk young people.</p> <p>Increased investment in staff development in a few joint sponsor organisations.</p> <p>Improved partnership working among youth organisations.</p>	<p>Limited evidence so far that improved knowledge and understanding has been applied to practice or changed organisational approaches.</p> <p>Limited evidence of improved partnership working between joint sponsors and joint sponsors and DFES.</p> <p>No detailed dissemination strategy at project and joint</p>

	<b>Worked well</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
	<p>Improved processes for business development in a few joint sponsor organisations.</p> <p>Improved capacity to manage and administer ESF projects among joint sponsor organisations.</p> <p>Development of resources and tools for future use.</p>	<p>sponsor level.</p> <p>Little dissemination of learning so far.</p>
Sustainability	<p>Several activities were accepted in principle as successful in achieving intended outcomes and joint sponsors have applied for funding to sustain them, although this had not been secured.</p>	<p>At this point, most activities have not secured funding to sustain activities.</p> <p>Owing to the lack of evidence collected, there is limited awareness among potential funders of the effectiveness of activities.</p>

8.20 This indicates that:

- There have been some wider benefits for joint sponsor organisations as a result of participating in Reach the Heights, which are considered to be an important legacy. These include increased knowledge and skills among youth professionals of how to identify, engage and motivate NEET young people, improved partnership working with other youth organisations (although generally not between project sponsors), improved business processes and improved capacity to manage and administer ESF projects.
- There has been limited dissemination to date, which reduces the legacy of the projects.
- At this point, most activities have not yet secured funding to be sustained and joint sponsors indicated that they would not be; several other activities were accepted in principle as being successful in achieving intended outcomes and joint sponsors were seeking ongoing funding.

8.21 As a consequence, similar future initiatives should:

- Ensure a detailed dissemination strategy is agreed from the start of the project and implemented. Learning, based on robust monitoring and

evaluation, should be shared with the widest possible audience and particularly future potential funders, during and after the project.

## **Conclusions: Lessons for the future**

8.22 There are ways in which large-scale projects and programmes like Reach the Heights could be developed, managed and delivered differently to improve their efficiency and effectiveness, increase the outcomes achieved, and ensure they provide learning for mainstream provision by government as well as the third sector. Below we set out some of the lessons from our assessment of the challenges arising from Reach the Heights.

### *Development of projects*

- All projects and activities should be based on a logic chain that clearly articulates the rationale (i.e. what problems is the project or activity addressing; what gaps are being addressed; why is there a need for the project or activity); inputs; activities; outputs; intended short term and medium term outcomes; and expected impacts. In order to arrive at this logic chain, there should be extensive scoping and research. In particular:
- Future projects should begin with a detailed mapping exercise conducted at regional or local authority level to understand existing mainstream and ESF provision so that gaps can be effectively identified. This should be conducted using a combination of methods including desk-based research and analysis and stakeholder consultation. Draft findings of the gap assessment should be shared with key stakeholders for quality assurance and to achieve consensus on the priorities to be addressed.
- A systematic review of evidence about what works in achieving the expected outcomes of the project should be carried out and used to inform the nature of activities (what, how long, how, for whom). Local authority stakeholders should also have the opportunity to contribute knowledge about what works in local contexts as part of this process.
- Before commissioning there should be a thorough market review to: understand the solutions that may be available and to get feedback on how

the requirement might be best met; decide the number and nature of suppliers; and assess what procurement model is most appropriate and scale/size/duration of contracts should be let.

- Clear definitions of key target groups should be developed and agreed between all stakeholders at the start of the project and the potential for cross referral identified to be built into targets and contract requirements.
- Targets should be based on a comprehensive assessment of supply and demand that takes into account the total target group population, evidence of need, other provision for the target group, the likely take up of activities and appropriate information about supply costs to achieve outputs and outcomes based on benchmark data.
- Targets should be set for activities, rather than at project level, and should include geographic targets.
- The process for quality review of business plans should be improved to ensure greater scrutiny and challenge of the evidence and rationale presented and to move from an initial idea to a refined plan. As part of this, there should be opportunities for input from policy leads and expert practitioners. This should apply to internal joint sponsors as much as external sponsors.

### *Steering and management*

8.23 The mechanisms for steering large-scale ESF projects should be adapted to ensure all relevant strategic and operational stakeholders can be effectively engaged:

- Given the practical barriers to having a policy lead on each steering group of the many ESF projects in Wales, thematic policy groups should be established that oversee all projects relevant to their policy areas. Their role should be to monitor and facilitate contribution to policy objectives and to collect and disseminate learning about what works in achieving policy objectives.
- There should also be regional or sub-regional operational groups that engage a wide range of delivery organisations. The role of these groups should be to ensure activities match regional needs and fill gaps in

provision and to facilitate operational partnerships that support outcomes for young people.

### *Delivery*

8.24 Commissioning is an important stage in ensuring that cost effective activities are provided which meet the aims and outcomes of the project.

- A clear rationale should be provided for why some activities are contracted and others are delivered directly by sponsors.
- When the decision is made that an activity needs to be contracted, the Welsh Government should provide a contracting expert to work closely with sponsors who do not have this expertise in house. Advice and guidance should be provided about how to conduct a market review prior to contracting, drawing up specifications, and ensuring monitoring and quality assurance are proportionate to the size of the contract.
- Providers bidding for contracts should be required to demonstrate their existing relationships with delivery and referral partners, including statements from partners that they will support delivery of the activity.
- Events should also be provided at a local level to facilitate operational partnerships between local authorities, voluntary and community and private sector organisations.
- To achieve positive education, training and employment outcomes for NEET or at risk young people, delivery should take place over a sufficient timeframe to enable youth professionals' time to build a rapport with young people and to achieve meaningful outcomes that are more likely to be sustained. This requires activities' budgets and time frames to be understood when they are commissioned.
- Monitoring of delivery should focus on both administrative processes for collecting, validating and submitting ESF data but also providing expert advice and guidance on how to adapt delivery to improve outcomes.

## *Learning*

8.25 Formative as well as summative evaluation should be a feature of future projects. External evaluators should be appointed at project inception rather than mid-way through to work in collaboration with sponsors to establish robust processes for monitoring and evaluation of the achievement of ESF and Welsh Government policy objectives. Emerging learning should be shared regularly throughout the project with sponsors and stakeholders. In particular:

- There should be centralised collection of MI data at activity level. This should include data on key components of each section of the logic model underpinning the project (inputs, activities, short and medium term outcomes and impacts).
- Where required, capacity building support should be provided at the start of the project and on an ongoing basis to sponsors to enable them to effectively monitor and evaluate. This could include guidance to shape a logic chain for particular activities, provision of appropriate data collection tools and guidance on how data can be analysed regularly to inform delivery.
- A dissemination strategy should be established from the start of the project that includes opportunities for stakeholders to come together during the project to reflect on learning from the formative monitoring and evaluation.
- Evaluation should focus on ensuring it is possible to assess what is working to achieve the outcomes expected of activities with priority to those which are less well tested/being adapted and the truly experimental. Only then will there be evidence to underpin decisions by funders to provide funding.

### **Conclusions: Lessons for policy makers and funders**

8.26 There were many missed opportunities to provide lessons from the activities in the projects. As a consequence it is not clear whether citizenship activities, for example, provide skills or whether arts activities, for example, re-engage young people in learning or in pursuing positive activities. There are relatively few findings which can be drawn out to make positive statements about what activities appear to be working to contribute to key policy outcomes, how the



activities should be delivered effectively to achieve the outcomes desired for young people at risk and who are NEET, and what activities engage young people so that they will acquire skills that they would not otherwise obtain from formal learning.

8.27 If this is to be achieved in future ESF programmes of this kind, it is important that policy makers and funders in Wales draw on the lessons above and:

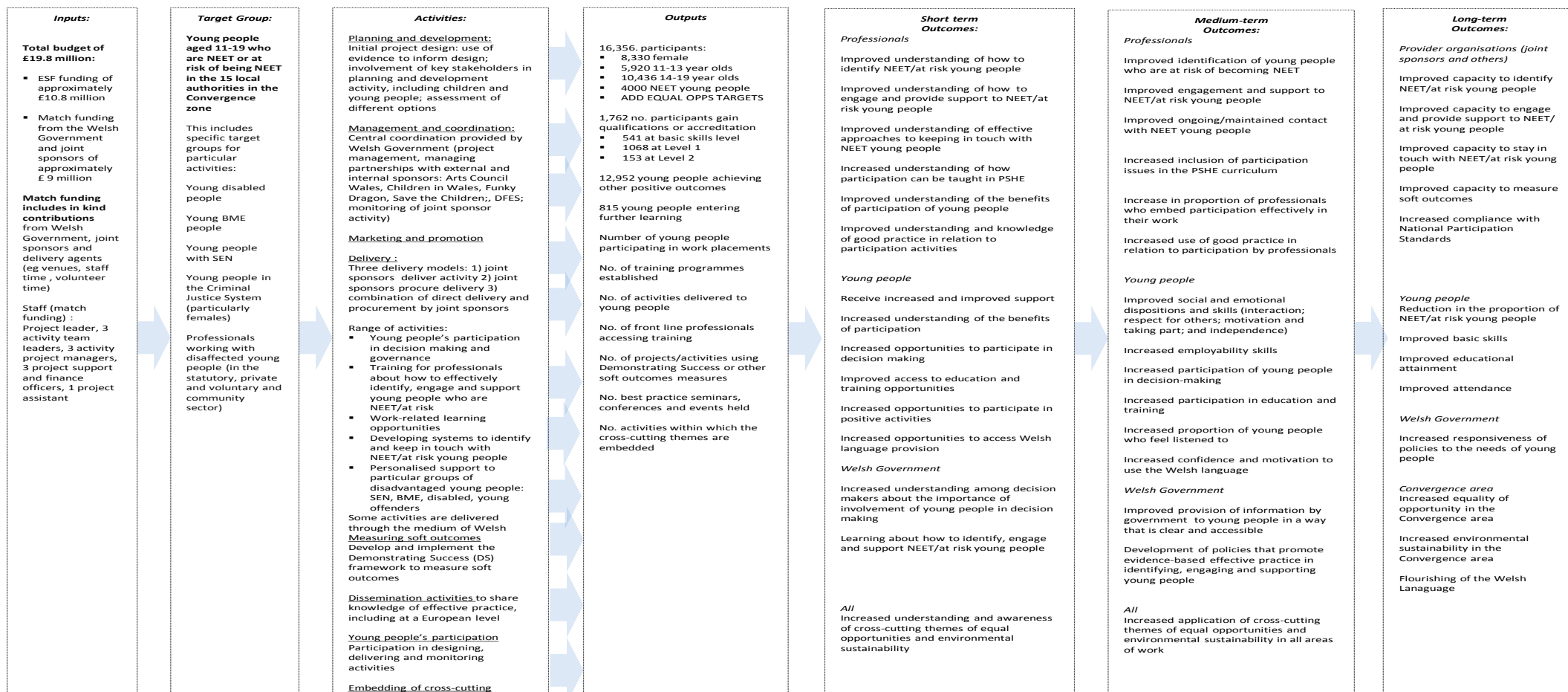
- Are clear about the research questions that they wish to address as well as the outcomes they expect from the interventions for the target groups.
- Build systems for collecting MI and evidencing the outcomes from the outset (for all beneficiaries).
- Support learning throughout the programme in parallel to operational management arrangements, and ensuring that learning feeds into the needs of policy makers as well as those implementing policies on the ground.
- Ensure that learning from research literature is critically reviewed and embedded at the outset in the commissioners and delivery agents so that activities reflect what is known about what works and where experimental approaches need to be carefully assessed.
- Coordinate commissioning and provide continuity of coordination as well as delivery.
- Develop exit and dissemination strategies at the start of projects and activities.
- Provide support and training of sponsors to match the knowledge, skills and competences needed to participate in such programmes as commissioners and delivery agents with a prime role in the learning and evaluation.

## **Annexes**

# Annex 1 Logic models

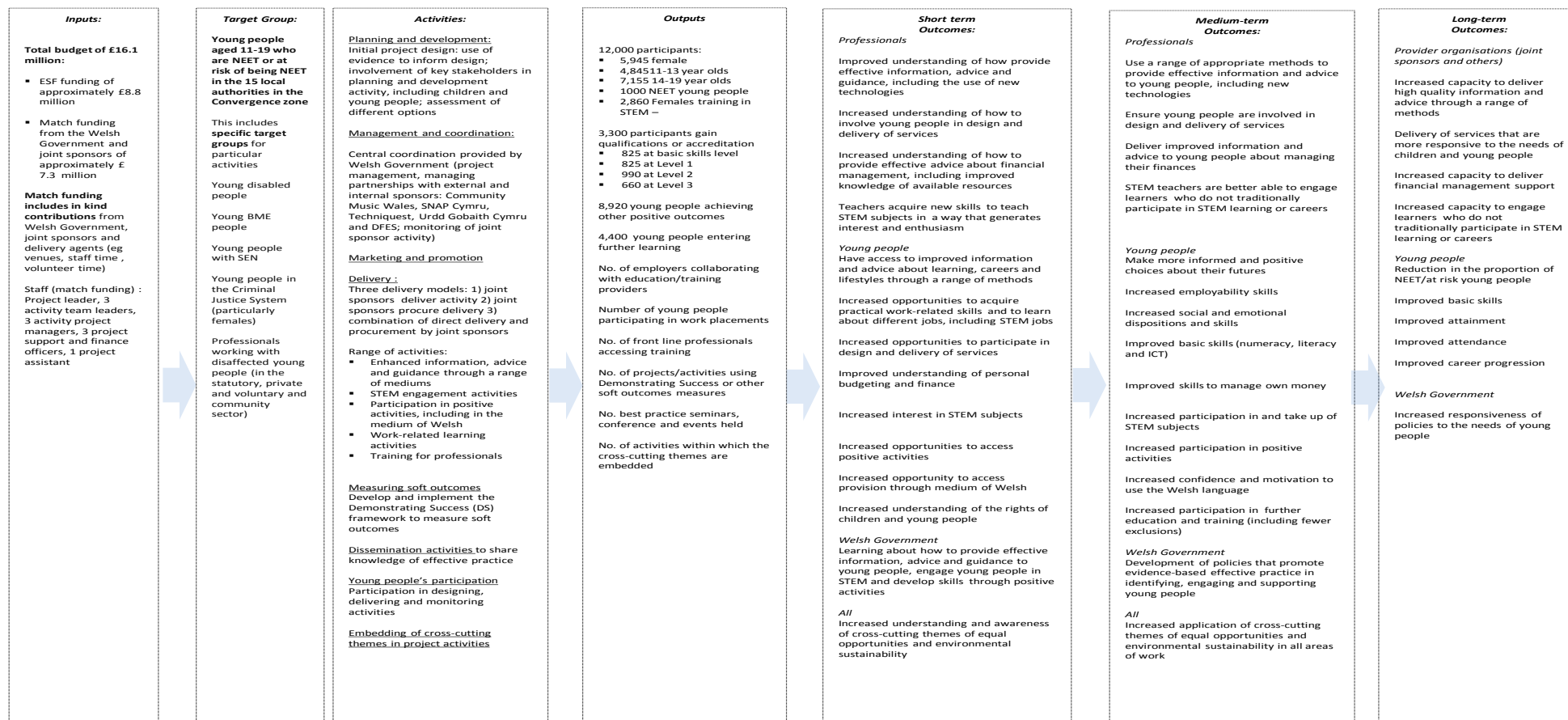
## Logic model for First Footholds

**Rationale for First Footholds:** First Footholds is intended to contribute to the following key Welsh Government policies: Extending Entitlement; Rights to Action; Delivering Skills that Work for Wales; Learning Pathways 14-19 strategy; Learning Country vision; Words Talk:Numbers Count (2005) basic skills strategy; and Iaith Pawb



# Logic model for Routes to the Summit

Rationale for First Footholds: First Footholds is intended to contribute to the following key Welsh Government policies: Extending Entitlement; Rights to Action; Delivering Skills that Work for Wales; Learning Pathways 14-19 strategy; Learning Country vision; Words Talk:Numbers Count (2005) basic skills strategy; and Iaitn Pawb



## Annex 2 First Footholds impact evaluation framework

Element of logic model	Indicator	Tool/method for evidence collection
Rationale	<p>There is a clearly evidenced need for First Footholds</p> <p>Its design allows it to contribute effectively to Welsh Government policy objectives.</p>	<p>Internal documents: business plans at project and joint sponsor level</p> <p>Activity case studies</p> <p>Wider stakeholder interviews</p> <p>Programme and project manager interviews</p>
Input	<p>Expenditure in relation to procurement, accommodation, human resources, ICT, legal and professional costs, marketing, overheads, travel and transport (combination of ESF and match funding)</p> <p>In kind contributions</p>	<p>WEFO quarterly claim report</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p>
Target Group	The intended target group has been reached	<p>Participant MI</p> <p>WEFO quarterly claim reports</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Activity case studies</p>
Activities	Comprehensive description of the activities delivered	<p>Documents provided during the scoping phase and ongoing document review</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Activity case studies</p>
Outputs	<p>WEFO ESF outputs</p> <p>No. of young people participating in work placements</p> <p>No. of training programmes established</p> <p>No. of front line professionals accessing training and achieving qualifications</p> <p>No. of best practice seminars, conferences and events held</p>	<p>Participant MI/WEFO quarterly claim reports</p> <p>Additional MI to be collected from joint sponsors where available</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p>

	No. of activities within which the cross-cutting themes are embedded	
Short-term outcomes	<p><i>Professionals</i></p> <p>Improved understanding of how to identify NEET/at risk young people</p> <p>Improved understanding of how to engage and provide support to NEET/at risk young people</p> <p>Improved understanding of effective approaches to keeping in touch with NEET young people</p> <p>Increased understanding of how participation can be taught in PSHE</p> <p>Improved understanding of the benefits of participation of young people</p> <p>Improved understanding and knowledge of good practice in relation to participation activities</p> <p><i>Young people</i></p> <p>Receive increased and improved support</p> <p>Increased understanding of the benefits of participation</p> <p>Increased opportunities to participate in decision making</p> <p>Improved access to education and training opportunities</p> <p>Increased opportunities to participate in positive activities</p> <p><i>Welsh Government</i></p> <p>Increased understanding among decision makers</p>	<p>Activity case studies (5 case studies of activities targeted at professionals: Arts Council Wales training; DFES participation training; DFES training for professionals on early intervention; SNAP training for professionals; Techniquet CPD delivery for teachers)</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Additional MI from joint sponsors where collected</p> <p>Activity case studies</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Evidence from existing evaluations</p> <p>Wide stakeholder interviews</p>

	<p>about the importance of involving young people in making decisions about policies and services that affect their lives</p> <p>Learning about how to identify, engage and support NEET/at risk young people</p> <p><i>All</i></p> <p>Increased understanding and awareness of cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and environmental sustainability</p>	<p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Activity case studies</p> <p>Wider stakeholder interviews</p>
<p>Medium term-outcomes</p>	<p><i>Professionals</i></p> <p>Improved identification of young people who are at risk of becoming NEET</p> <p>Improved engagement and support to NEET/at risk young people</p> <p>Improved ongoing/maintained contact with NEET young people</p> <p>Increased inclusion of participation issues in the PSHE curriculum</p> <p>Increase in proportion of professionals who embed participation effectively in their work</p> <p>Increased use of good practice in relation to participation by professionals</p> <p><i>Young people</i></p> <p>Improved social and emotional dispositions and skills (interaction; respect for others; motivation and taking part; and independence)</p> <p>Increased employability skills</p> <p>Increased participation of young people in decision-making</p> <p>Increased participation in education and training</p> <p>Increased proportion of young people who feel listened to by professionals in their lives, members of their community or government organisations</p>	<p>Activity case studies (5 case studies of activities targeted at professionals: Arts Council Wales training; DFES participation training; DFES training for professionals on early intervention; SNAP training for professionals; Techniquet CPD delivery for teachers)</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Additional MI from joint sponsors where collected</p> <p>Activity case studies</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Evidence from existing evaluations</p> <p>Participant MI/WEFO claims (if available)</p>

	<p><i>Welsh Government</i></p> <p>Improved provision of information by government to young people in a way that is clear and accessible</p> <p>Development of policies that promote evidence-based effective practice in identifying, engaging and supporting young people</p> <p><i>All</i></p> <p>Increased application of cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and environmental sustainability in all areas of work</p>	<p>Wide stakeholder interviews</p>   <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Activity case studies</p> <p>Wider stakeholder interviews</p>
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## Annex 3 Routes to the Summit impact evaluation framework

Element of logic model	Indicator	Tool/method for evidence collection
Rationale	<p>There is a clearly evidenced need for Routes to the Summit</p> <p>Its design allows it to contribute effectively to Welsh Government policy objectives.</p>	<p>Internal documents: business plans at project and joint sponsor level</p> <p>Activity case studies</p> <p>Wider stakeholder interviews</p> <p>Programme and project manager interviews</p>
Input	<p>Expenditure in relation to procurement, accommodation, human resources, ICT, legal and professional costs, marketing, overheads, travel and transport (combination of ESF and match funding)</p> <p>In kind contributions</p>	<p>WEFO quarterly claim report</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p>
Target Group	The intended target group has been reached	<p>Participant MI</p> <p>WEFO quarterly claim reports</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Activity case studies</p>
Activities	Comprehensive description of the activities delivered	<p>Documents provided during the scoping phase and ongoing document review</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Activity case studies</p>
Outputs	<p>WEFO ESF outputs</p> <p>No. of young people participating in work placements</p> <p>No. of front line professionals who work with young people accessing training</p> <p>No. of best practice seminars, conference and events held</p> <p>No. of activities within which the cross-cutting</p>	<p>Participant MI/WEFO quarterly claim reports</p> <p>Additional MI to be collected from joint sponsors where available</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p>

	<p>themes are embedded</p>	
<p>Short-term outcomes</p>	<p><i>Professionals</i></p> <p>Improved understanding of how provide effective information, advice and guidance, including the use of new technologies</p> <p>Increased understanding of how to involve young people in design and delivery of services</p> <p>Increased understanding of how to provide effective advice about financial management, including improved knowledge of available resources</p> <p>Teachers acquire new skills to teach STEM subjects in a way that generates interest and enthusiasm</p> <p><i>Young people</i></p> <p>Have access to improved information and advice about learning, careers and lifestyles through a range of methods</p> <p>Increased opportunities to acquire practical work-related skills and to learn about different jobs, including STEM jobs</p> <p>Increased opportunities to participate in design and delivery of services</p> <p>Improved understanding of personal budgeting and finance</p> <p>Increased interest in STEM subjects</p> <p>Increased opportunities to access positive activities</p> <p>Increased opportunity to access provision through medium of Welsh</p>	<p>Activity case studies (5 case studies of activities targeted at professionals: Arts Council Wales training; DFES participation training; DFES training for professionals on early intervention; SNAP training for professionals; Techniquet CPD delivery for teachers)</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Additional MI from joint sponsors where collected</p> <p>Activity case studies</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Evidence from existing evaluations</p>

	<p>Increased understanding of the rights of children and young people</p> <p><i>Welsh Government</i></p> <p>Learning about how to provide effective information, advice and guidance to young people, engage young people in STEM and develop skills through positive activities</p> <p><i>All</i></p> <p>Increased understanding and awareness of cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and environmental sustainability</p>	<p>Wider stakeholder interviews</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Activity case studies</p> <p>Wider stakeholder interviews</p>
<p>Medium term-outcomes</p>	<p><i>Professionals</i></p> <p>Use a range of appropriate methods to provide effective information and advice to young people, including new technologies</p> <p>Ensure young people are involved in design and delivery of services that they are intended to benefit from</p> <p>Deliver improved information and advice to young people about managing their finances</p> <p>STEM teachers are better able to engage learners who do not traditionally participate in STEM learning or careers</p> <p><i>Young people</i></p> <p>Make more informed and positive choices about their futures</p> <p>Increased employability skills</p>	<p>Activity case studies (5 case studies of activities targeted at professionals: Arts Council Wales training; DFES participation training; DFES training for professionals on early intervention; SNAP training for professionals; Techniquet CPD delivery for teachers)</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Additional MI from joint sponsors where collected</p> <p>Activity case studies</p> <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Evidence from existing evaluations</p>

	<p>Increased social and emotional dispositions and skills</p> <p>Improved basic skills (numeracy, literacy and ICT)</p> <p>Improved skills to manage own money</p> <p>Increased participation in and take up of STEM subjects</p> <p>Increased participation in positive activities</p> <p>Increased confidence and motivation to use the Welsh language</p> <p>Increased participation in further education and training (including fewer exclusions)</p> <p><i>Welsh Government</i> Development of policies that promote evidence-based effective practice in identifying, engaging and supporting young people</p> <p><i>All</i> Increased application of cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and environmental sustainability in all areas of work</p>	<p>Participant MI/WEFO claims (if available)</p>         <p>Wide stakeholder interviews</p>  <p>Joint sponsor interviews</p> <p>Activity case studies</p> <p>Wider stakeholder interviews</p>
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## Annex 4 Process evaluation framework

Stakeholder	Initial Design (pre-commissioning)	Commissioning	Refinement and Implementation (post commissioning)	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
<b>Commissioners</b>	<p>The use of evidence of need</p> <p>The use and promotion of evidence of what works</p> <p>The use of research commissioned</p> <p>Fit with other funded activities</p> <p>Fit with key government strategies for young people</p>	<p>Consultation with stakeholders about the process</p> <p>Development of any application process and assessment criteria for bids</p> <p>Estimation of costs/targets to assess budget and outputs against benchmarks</p> <p>Specification with outputs, outcomes and quality standards specified</p>	<p>Systematic assessment of and feedback to applicants</p> <p>Assessment of approach, time scale and expected achievements</p> <p>Review of delivery arrangements and plans for quality assurance and risk management</p> <p>Review and specification of MI to be provided</p>	<p>Systematic monitoring and review of MI</p> <p>Assessment of risks</p> <p>Monitoring of delivery checks</p> <p>Evaluation</p> <p>Identification of learning for dissemination and future planning</p>
<b>Delivery agents</b>		<p>Use of research and benchmarks to identify what works and how with what resources needed</p> <p>Assessment of different options for delivery</p> <p>Consultation with providers, practitioners and partners about solutions and approaches</p> <p>Assessment of outputs and outcomes achievable</p>	<p>Development of delivery and resource plan</p> <p>Securing resources to deliver</p> <p>Management and delivery arrangements established including any criteria for targeting and selecting beneficiaries</p> <p>Development of partner working for referral and identification</p> <p>The consideration of young people's views</p>	<p>Learning from implementation to adjust delivery to achieve targets and milestones</p> <p>Production of MI for monitoring and evaluation of performance and reporting</p> <p>Obtaining feedback from beneficiaries to monitor quality of delivery</p> <p>Communication and dissemination about activity and achievements</p>

Stakeholder	Initial Design (pre-commissioning)	Commissioning	Refinement and Implementation (post commissioning)	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
			The shaping of a logic chain and MI to monitor and evaluate	

## **Annex 5**

### **Evidence of effective practice in the literature**

A5.1 In this Annex we present the findings of a review of evidence about effective practice in the delivery of interventions to support the continued engagement or re-engagement of children and young people who are not in education, employment or training, or who are at risk of being so. The key types of activities delivered under Reach the Heights for young people were:

- Participatory arts activities
- Interventions using physical activity
- Engagement in STEM subjects
- Support for young offenders
- Active citizenship and participation in decision making and governance
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and mentoring

A5.2 We have therefore focussed our review on evidence about how these types of activities can be effective.

### **Method**

A5.3 The aims of the literature study are twofold: firstly, to identify key features of effective practice in relation to the main types of intervention delivered under Reach the Heights; and secondly, to identify benchmark activities to help assess the relative achievements of Reach the Heights activities.

A5.4 We used EBSCO to search a range of academic full text and abstract databases. These included: Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, SocIndex, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Families Studies Abstracts, Social Sciences Full Text and Family & Society Studies Worldwide. We also searched the websites of government departments and agencies and charitable organisations engaged in research such as the Wellcome Trust and the Nuffield Foundation. Our inclusion criteria were that each item must be:

- Concerned with engagement or re-engagement strategies;

- Robust in research design: as far as possible, we have identified systematic literature reviews and evaluations that provide strong evidence because they are sufficiently large in scale (for example adopting adequate sample sizes to enable robust statistical analysis, or based on sufficiently in depth case studies to allow full explanation of findings).
- Published since 2006. In a few cases, where the evidence was particularly relevant, we included studies published before 2006.
- In addition, although we have mainly focussed on UK evidence, where relevant we have drawn on evidence from elsewhere.

A5.5 Our review focuses primarily on peer reviewed research. It also includes research and evaluation studies commissioned by UK government departments and agencies and third sector organisations<sup>60</sup>.

A5.6 In a few instances where the evidence base is more limited, we have included examples of practitioner research, which is not underpinned by rigorous research methods or subject to peer review. While this type of research provides a useful insight into features of effective practice and challenges encountered in delivery, it also has methodological limitations which should be taken into account. We have clearly indicated where we have drawn on practitioner research.

A5.7 We have provided a bibliography in the Annex.

### **Participatory arts activities**

A5.8 A systematic review of literature on the impact of participation in performing arts on adolescent health and behaviour found evidence that improved communication and listening skills, ability to get on with peers and increased self-confidence were key outcomes<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> We limited this because only 5 consultancy days were allocated to this task and the review of the policies to which Reach the Heights activities are intended to contribute (presented in the scoping report).

<sup>61</sup> Daykin, N., Orme, J., Evans, D., Salmon, D., McEachran, M. and Brain, S. (2008) The impact of participation in performing arts on adolescent health and behaviour: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 13 (2). pp. 251-264.



A5.9 Qualitative research conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) with 69 pupils, teachers and artists involved in arts activities in Pupil Referral Units and Learning Support Units supported these findings, and also discovered the following success factors for good practice in these educational contexts:<sup>62</sup>

- *The personality and style of the artist or facilitator.* Pupils valued facilitators who were ‘on their wavelength’; had a more informal teaching style; a positive attitude towards young people; and an ability to listen to pupils’ ideas;
- *Project planning.* Relevance of project content (e.g. introducing more youth-oriented art forms), venue, a celebratory end product, and having follow-up work to sustain and strengthen impact; and
- *Distinctive nature of the arts.* Activities were most successful when they were distinctive from pupils’ usual school learning experiences. For example, they were practical rather than academic, contemporary in nature and allowed young people to express their views.

A5.10 Case studies developed jointly by the Young People’s Learning Agency and the Office for Public Management of providers demonstrate an effective practice in improving outcomes for disadvantaged young people. These case studies include an example of a music-based entry to employment programme for disengaged 14-18 year olds<sup>63</sup>. Although it should be noted that this small-scale case study research draws on practitioner experiences rather than rigorous research methods, it provides useful learning about what works in engaging disaffected young people. The research supports findings from the NFER study about the need to ensure activities use methods which learners will not associate with ‘traditional learning approaches’ and also highlights the need to:

- Develop a learning environment that has the ‘feel’ of a workplace rather than a traditional educational establishment;

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<sup>62</sup> Wilkin, A, Gulliver, C and Kinder, K (2005) *Serious Play – An evaluation of arts activities in Pupil Referral Units and Learning Support Units*. London: Calouse Gulbenkian Foundation

<sup>63</sup> Young People’s Learning Agency and the Office for Public Management. (2010) *Improving outcomes for disadvantaged young people. Case studies of effective practice*.

- Maintain a high staff-to-learner ratio (for example, one staff member to every five learners); and
- Be sensitive to young people's moods and their experiences outside the learning environment and adapt planned sessions to meet needs on any given day.

### **Interventions using physical activity**

A5.11 A review of literature about re-engaging disaffected young people through physical activity programmes<sup>64</sup> notes that positive benefits are achieved, particularly in relation to personal and social development, when:

- Activities are carefully selected and planned, with young people having the opportunity to inform the design and nature of activities;
- Activities are delivered to relatively small groups of young people;
- Collaborative partnerships are formed between schools, community providers and family members, to ensure that delivery staff are familiar with a young person's wider social context; and
- Activities are designed as an enrichment activity that enhances and complements formal learning provision.

A5.12 The Home Office 'Positive Futures' programme provided prevention and diversionary activities including many sports-based activities, for 10-19 year olds at risk of offending or drug abuse. A three-year evaluation<sup>65</sup> found that a high number of participants moved on to education and training, and reported improvements in relationships with project staff leading to staff being able to offer support and advice. The evaluation highlighted that employing appropriate staff with the right skills was a key success factor. In particular, learning about effective practice included that:

- It is important to employ youth officers and coaches with a range of experiences and backgrounds;

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<sup>64</sup> Sandford, R; Armour, K; Warmington, P (2006) Re-engaging disaffected youth through physical activity programmes. *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol.32, No.2, April 2006, pp251-271

<sup>65</sup> Home Office (2006) *Positive Futures Impact Report: End of season review*. London: Home Office.

- Staff who were local and who shared a background with participants were able to make stronger connections with young people;
- Central to positive relationships is respect between staff and participants; and
- Levels of sport skill are less important than skills in working with young people

### **Engagement in STEM subjects**

A5.13 An evaluation of a STEM Pathfinder Programme in England<sup>66</sup>, funded at the time by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)<sup>67</sup>, assessed the effectiveness of different STEM activities and approaches. Evidence from the evaluation suggested that STEM activities were successful when:

- Delivered by enthusiastic teachers who were willing to try something new;
- When specialist STEM partners and employers external to the school were involved; and
- There was: a clear focus; a ‘real-life context; a competitive element for students; some freedom for students to experiment and think for themselves; practical and interactive aspects to the activities; and a good balance between science, mathematics, technology and engineering.

A5.14 These findings are supported by those of a recent research study commissioned by the Wellcome Trust<sup>68</sup> about young people’s views on science education. 240 young people took part in interviews and focus groups. Young people participating in the research expressed a preference for hands-on activities, which they believed made learning science more interesting and subsequently easier to understand. Higher levels of pupil engagement in science also related to perceptions of its applicability and transferability to ‘real-world’ situations, including further study (at university level) and employment opportunities. Young people in the study

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<sup>66</sup> Springate, I, Harland, J, Lord, P, Straw, S. Evaluation of the 2008-09 DCSF-funded Specialist Schools and Academies Trust STEM Pathfinder Programme (2009)

<sup>67</sup> The DCSF has been rebranded since and is now known as the Department for Education (DfE).

<sup>68</sup> National Foundation for Educational Research (2011) *Exploring young people’s views on science education*. Wellcome Trust

emphasised the ‘fun’ and enjoyable aspects of activities outside the traditional classroom environment. The study suggested that providing more opportunities for experiences outside the classroom environment could be a useful way of encouraging student engagement in science education.

A5.15 The importance of parents in helping to shape their daughters’ aspirations is emphasised in a longitudinal study of high school students and their parents in the United States.<sup>69</sup> The researchers sent a sample of parents a brochure providing information about the importance of mathematics and science for daily life and various careers; a year later they mailed the same parents another brochure emphasising the same themes and with a link to a website featuring resources related to STEM professions. The control group received no materials. The study found that students with parents in the intervention group had more conversations with their parents about course choices, educational plans, and the importance of mathematics and science. As well as indicating the effectiveness of targeting information interventions at parents for increasing enrolment in STEM courses, the findings also provide evidence that this approach could help to close gaps in student enrolment that result from differences in parental education.

### **Support for young offenders**

A5.16 A rapid evidence assessment for the then DCSF in England, found that:<sup>70</sup>

- Programmes that have a focus on developing young people’s personal and social skills are effective in reducing anti-social behaviour;
- School-based violence prevention programmes help to reduce violent, aggressive and disruptive behaviour.

A5.17 In addition, a systematic review of literature undertaken by Mason and Prior (2008) states that effective support to young offenders is characterised by:

- Early assessments of need and risk;

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<sup>69</sup> Harackiewicz, J.M., Rozek, C.R., Hulleman, C.S., & Hyde, J.S. (2012) [Helping parents to motivate adolescents in mathematics and science: An experimental test of a utility-value intervention](#). *Psychological Science*, 40, DOI: 10.1177/0956797611435530

<sup>70</sup> Thomas J, Vigurs C, Oliver K, Suarez B, Newman M, Dickson K, Sinclair J (The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre - EPPI-Centre) (2008), Effective Early Interventions For Youth At Risk Of Future Poor Outcomes A Rapid Evidence Assessment, DCSF.

- Relationships between the practitioner and young person that are based upon empathy, warmth, trust, respect and rapport;
- Being individually tailored, focussed on a wide range of social, emotional, health and educational needs, long-term and flexible to respond to changing needs and circumstances; and
- Strong multi-agency working<sup>71</sup>.

A5.18 The Asset tool is used across the UK for the purpose of assessing various risk factors that contribute to offending behaviour e.g. low self-esteem or wellbeing<sup>72</sup>. Some researchers have suggested that Asset is a valuable tool in structuring a complex assessment process and ensuring all potential areas of need are addressed.<sup>73</sup> Decision-making has been said to become more transparent<sup>74</sup> and using the same criteria helps to ensure fairness and consistency.<sup>75</sup> However, other authors agree that the assessment's margin for error is problematic since this may result in young people becoming the target for unnecessary interventions.<sup>76</sup> Further criticism has pointed out that Asset is unlikely to reveal the particular factor or factors explaining an individual's episode of offending, or to predict the nature of future offences.<sup>77</sup>

### Active citizenship and participation

A5.19 Evidence suggests that adolescence is a formative period in citizenship, and young people's citizenship practices change significantly during this period. As a result, targeting citizenship education interventions at this age group may be particularly effective.<sup>78</sup> An evaluation of post-16 citizenship projects commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in

<sup>71</sup> Mason, P and Prior, D (2008) *Engaging Young People who Offend*, Youth Justice Board

<sup>72</sup> For further information about the Asset tool, see: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/youth-justice/assessment/asset-young-offender-assessment-profile>

<sup>73</sup> Dugmore, P. (2006). Assessing young people. In P. Dugmore, J. Pickford, & S. Angus (Eds.), *Youth justice and social work* (pp. 105–121). Exeter, England: Learning Matters

<sup>74</sup> Whyte, B. (2004). Effectiveness, research and youth justice. *Youth Justice*, 4(1), 3–21.

<sup>75</sup> Annison, J. (2005). Risk and protection. In T. Bateman & J. Pitts (Eds.), *The RHP companion to youth justice* (pp. 119–124). Lyme Regis, England: Russell House.

<sup>76</sup> Paylor, I (2011), 'Youth justice in England and Wales: a risky business' in *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, vol 50 , no. 4, pp. 221-233

<sup>77</sup> Annison (2005) op. cit.

<sup>78</sup> Keating, A, Benton T and Kerr, D (2011) 'Tracing the trends and transitions in young people's citizenship practices: what are the implications for researching citizenship and citizenship education?' in *Educational Research*; Jun2011, Vol. 53 Issue 2, p223-235

England<sup>79</sup>, identified the following as features of effective citizenship provision:

- A clear definition of what citizenship means, and what the project seeks to achieve, tailored to the needs, skills, interests and experiences of young people;
- Dedicated and enthusiastic staff with sufficient resources and development opportunities;
- An emphasis on gaining knowledge, understanding and skills through practical action and activities; and
- Involvement and participation of young people in decisions about their learning, and the development of a student voice.

A5.20 Research commissioned by the Welsh Government in 2010 about children and young people's participation in decision making supported these findings.<sup>80</sup> It indicated that a key success factor in delivering citizenship education is presenting clear aims and objectives so that everyone understands what participation in decision making means; why it's good to do; how it can be done; and what the outcomes and benefits will be. The report also noted that:

- It is important to provide feedback to children and young people about what has changed as a result of their involvement;
- The relationships developed between young people and staff are critical to the success of participatory approaches. Staff and young people noted that relationships had to be based on mutual respect and understanding; and  
Children and young people should be involved in the design and delivery of citizenship initiatives. Staff interviewed as part of the research noted that when children and young people draw up the rules and agenda for participation, they understand their role and responsibilities and are more likely to engage. Other research has supported this finding, noting that involving young people in the design and delivery of interventions helps

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<sup>79</sup> Craig, R, Kerr, D, Wade, P, Taylor, G. Taking Post-16 Citizenship Forward: Learning from the Post-16 Citizenship Development Projects (2004) DFES

<sup>80</sup> GHK (2009) *Identifying Effective Practice in Raising Young People's Aspirations*. Learning and Skills Council

create ownership, boosts confidence and ensures the service is tailored more closely to needs of young people.

### **Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and mentoring**

A5.21 A comprehensive review of the literature relating to effective practice in supporting young people who are NEET<sup>81</sup> found that information, advice and guidance should be: impartial, tailored, at the right level, delivered in a way that is appropriate to the preferred learning style of individuals, specific, provided on a one-to-one basis and provided by experienced and knowledgeable advisers. It should also be provided at key transition points such as between primary and secondary education.

A5.22 A systematic review of evidence from the UK, Australia, the United States, New Zealand and Asia undertaken by Costello and Thomson (2011) notes that in general there is limited evidence about the effectiveness of mentoring programmes. There is, however, evidence that purposeful matching of mentors and mentees, providing appropriate training to mentors, and building in monitoring and evaluation, are key success factors.<sup>82</sup> This is supported by evidence from a synthesis of published research on mentoring and befriending in the UK<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> GHK (2009) *Identifying Effective Practice in Raising Young People's Aspirations*. Learning and Skills Council

<sup>82</sup> Costello, L and Thompson, M (2011) *Youth Mentoring*, Australian Housing and Urban Design Institute

<sup>83</sup> Philip, K and Spratt, J (2007) *A Synthesis of Published Research on Mentoring and Be-friending*, Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

## Annex 6 Case study selection

### A6.1 First Footholds case study activities

Joint sponsor	Activity case study	Target group	Nature of activity
Arts Council Wales	1. Targeted programme of participatory arts activities including dance, music, drama/theatre, visual arts, digital arts, film and media, creative writing	At risk and NEET young people aged 14-19	Participation in positive activity Engagement of NEET/at risk
	2. Targeted programme of participatory arts activities including dance, music, drama/theatre, visual arts, digital arts, film and media, creative writing	At risk and NEET young people aged 14-19	Participation in positive activity Engagement of NEET/at risk
	3. Training programmes/modules for professionals working in a variety of youth contexts.	Professionals that work with young people	Training for professionals Engagement of NEET/at risk
Children in Wales	4 Together 4 Rights: Developing and piloting of models to facilitate the participation of disabled young people in decision making and governance. Training of young disabled people to become disability awareness trainers among non-disabled people	Young disabled people aged 11-19	Participation of young people in decision making and governance Training for young people to be trainers Engagement of NEET/at risk
Funky Dragon	5. Active Citizenship programme-accredited learning that links into the mainstream PSE curriculum. Delivered in the form of workshops that cover topic in relation to the UNCRC, participation and equality and diversity.	Young people at risk of becoming NEET aged 11-19	Participation of young people in decision making and governance
Save the Children	6. Making a Change	16-18 year olds who are NEET	Participation of young people in decision making and governance
Save the Children	7. Young inspector teams. Delivered directly by Save the Children.11 participating LAs. The participation coordinator in each LA delivers training to young people who are members of the local authority youth forum to enable them to go and inspect different youth and education settings to assess whether they comply with the National Participation Standards. Ongoing support is provided.	11-19 year olds who are members of local youth forums	Participation of young people in decision making and governance



## A6.2 Routes to the Summit case study activities

Joint sponsor	Activity case study	Target group	Nature of activity
Community Music Wales	1. Group work – open access participatory music workshops	Young people who are NEET or at risk of being NEET, aged 11-19	Information, advice and guidance Participation in positive activities Engagement of NEET/at risk Basic skills & WBL learning
Snap	2. Delivery of accredited training to professionals from education, social care, health and youth offending teams aimed at enhancing understandings of the legal framework with respect to exclusion and the rights of the child	Professionals working with young people	Training for professionals
Techniquest	3. STEM engagement workshops for 11-14 year olds (Key Stage 3 and 4) / Work-related experience workshops / Post-16 contemporary science debates (North Wales)	14-19 year olds who are underachieving	STEM engagement
	4. STEM engagement workshops for 11-14 year olds (Key Stage 3 and 4) / Work-related experience workshops / Post-16 contemporary science debates	14-19 year olds	STEM engagement Work-based learning
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	5. Employment of youth work officers in local authorities in order to deliver community-based group activities to young people- informal and non-formal learning opportunities that use a wide range of vehicles (sport, art, drama, climbing, music etc). Includes accredited training (eg Duke of Edinburgh/Millennium Volunteers).	14-19 year olds, including Welsh speakers	Promotion of the Welsh language Participation in positive activities Engaging NEET/at risk
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	6 Employment of youth work officers in local authorities in order to deliver community-based group activities to young people.	14-19 year olds, including Welsh speakers	Promotion of the Welsh language Participation in positive activities Engaging NEET/at risk
DFES	7. Youth Work Apprenticeship Programme – Level 1 and Youth Work Apprenticeship Programme – Level 2	16-18 year olds	Work-based learning

## **Annex 7 Evaluation reports reviewed**

*Evaluation of the Reach the Heights Arts Participation Programme*, Arad Research, June 2013

*An Evaluation of Urdd Gobaith Cymru's Routes to the Summit project*, Wavehill, March 2013

*The costs and benefits of transition key working: an analysis of five pilot projects*, Holtom, D, Lloyd-Jones, S, Bowen, R and Watkins, J The People and Work Unit, 2012

*Evaluation of CLIC: Final Report*, ICF GHK, December 2012

*Evaluation of the Support into Education and Learning (Youth Justice) Project*, Red Kite Research Consultancy, February 2013

## **Annex 8 Activities listed in the business plan that did not take place**

### **First Footholds**

- Training Learning Coaches using the Level 3 and Level 4 training module developed;
- Activity to raise the profile of participation and persuade key stakeholders of its value, working towards a more integrated approach to policy making ensuring young people are involved in the decision making process. This was intended to include recruitment and training of more divisional link officers within the Welsh Government.
- Development of transnational components of the projects, for example, through membership of European youth networks and international best practice events. This component of the original business plan was removed at the mid-project review stage, in recognition of the difficulties of international travel when organisational travel and expenses budgets have been reduced to the minimum.
- Development of a young people's style guide for Welsh Government officials to help ensure policies and related information are accessible to young people.
- Development of systems for tracking young people who are NEET. Although pilot activity was undertaken in some local authorities, learning was not disseminated and successful models were not rolled out.
- Development of approaches to identifying young people in danger of becoming NEET. Although sponsors have all worked with a range of partners to trial different approaches to identifying young people at risk, a Convergence-wide approach to which all key stakeholders are committed has not been developed.
- Expanding the piloting of the Demonstrating Success outcomes model within a larger number of local authorities. Although Reach the Heights activities were in principal required to use the Demonstrating Success model, many do not appear to have done so.

- Procuring services of an organisation to employ qualified youth workers to support with the engagement of NEET young people or those at risk of becoming NEET.
- Linking young people and their organisations to local and national forums. This activity has been delivered on a much smaller scale than anticipated as a result of the re-focus on at risk groups.
- Facilitating the on-going inputs of young people into Welsh Government policy making via the Grand Council Members and Ministerial Advisory groups. Again, this activity took place, but on a much smaller scale than originally planned.

## **Routes to the Summit**

### *Welsh Government DCELLS*

- leading the dissemination of best practice;
- Providing opportunities for young people to build upon training with work-related experiences and the opportunity to coach and mentor other less experienced young people.
- Youth Service: The intention is to procure services of an organisation to employ qualified youth workers in order to improve the Youth Service's engagement with young people who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), or who may possibly become NEET. There will be two qualified youth workers in each ADEW region (SC, SW and Mid, North, and SE) of Wales. Using outreach youth work (contacting and informing young people of services that exist in their community and encouraging them to use those services), they will involve young people in a range of positive activities, which will encourage active participation, wider skills development, and enhanced emotional competence. The type of activities open to the young people will include (this list is illustrative): outdoor activities, international exchanges, internet broadcasting, and mountain biking, to name but a few.

## *Techniquest*

- Engaging young people into university: The project culminates in innovative approaches to help raise young people's aspirations and awareness of the benefits of higher education, particularly amongst those from disadvantaged groups and those who might not have considered university. To do this Techniquest will work with Welsh universities to develop and deliver workshops that will give the participants the opportunity to engage in science experiments that they would be unable to carry out in school or college due to time, costs or Health and Safety constraints, but which are part of the post-16 specifications. The workshops will complement A-Level and Welsh Baccalaureate specifications in Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Engineering and Psychology.
- Teacher Continuing Professional Development (CPD): All organisations that refer young people will have the opportunity to participate in CPD. Techniquest will provide teachers with pre-and post -visit materials and train them in their use. It will highlight links to the learning objectives of the programme.
- An online forum, the Virtual Network, will support the Outreach programmes for teachers and other professionals. The two-way virtual network will encourage and consolidate teacher feedback, and promote teacher/teacher and teacher/Techniquest discussions to complement the programmes. Supplementary resources for the programme will also be available on the network.