Evaluation of the ESF Local Service Board Development and Priority Delivery Project

Final Formative Report

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Evaluation of the ESF Local Service Board Development and Priority Delivery Project: Formative Report

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

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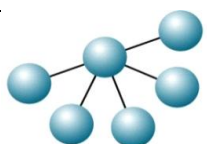Email: Jamie.smith@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1. This final formative report is the second main output from a three-year evaluation (2012-2015) of the ESF Local Service Board Development and Priority Delivery Project (hereafter ESF-LSB Project) commissioned by the Welsh Government. The ESF-LSB Project is funded under Priority Four, Theme 1 of the Convergence ESF Operational Programme for West Wales and the Valleys, which aims to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services through more effective collaborative working and by building the capacity of public services to deliver higher quality services. The evaluation was established to assess:

   - whether the ESF-LSB Project has led to better public services and outcomes for citizens;

   - how the ways in which the Project has been implemented and managed have contributed to these outcomes;

   - whether and how the Project is communicating and disseminating learning from the delivery projects, nationally and locally; and

   - how the Project has improved the integration of the third sector with LSBs, whether this has led to better services and outcomes, and if this progress is sustainable.

2. The evaluation included a literature review initially, which enabled us to identify the key themes and issues that were likely to influence the effectiveness of the attempts to build capacity, improve services and promote learning, which we needed to evaluate in the context of the ESF-LSB Project. Specifically the review highlighted the structural, contextual and behavioural determinants of collaborative effectiveness. We drew on these to develop an evaluation framework based on a 'theory of change' as shown below. This enabled the evaluation team to work with the Steering Group to identify the expected impacts of the Project and the processes or change mechanisms, which were likely to be important to achieving these (e.g. leadership, project managers, collaborative agreements).

Theory of Change for the ESF-LSB Project Evaluation
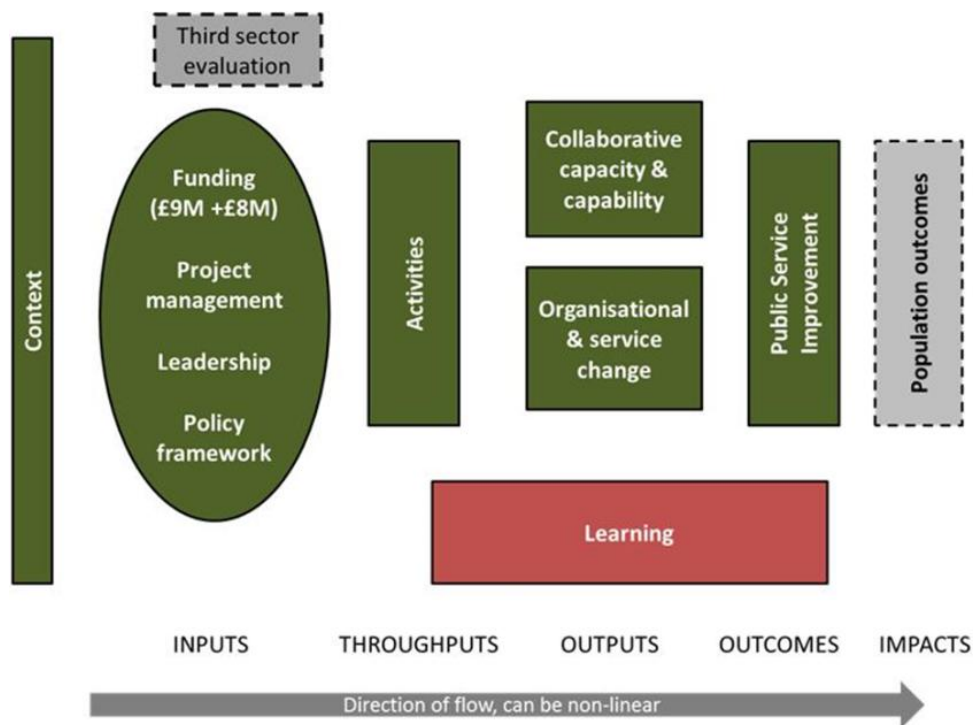
3. We then used the framework to design an evaluation methodology to test out the impact of the Project and the contribution of key processes to this in practice.

4. The methodology allowed us to draw on several sources of evidence for this Final Formative Report:

- two rounds of interviews with national stakeholders;
- an all-Wales Public Service Survey on collaboration:
- in-depth case studies of seven delivery projects; and
- analysis of discussions at three learning events.

National stakeholder interviews

5. Between July and September 2013, we conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with national stakeholders who had a detailed knowledge of the ESF-LSB Project. Interviewees included representatives of the Welsh Government, health service, police, WCVA, WLGA and Big Lottery Fund.

6. Five follow-up interviews were carried out during October 2014 to provide an opportunity for national stakeholders to reflect upon the Project from a range of

organisational perspectives. Interviewees included representatives from the Welsh Government, WCVA and WLGA.

7. Both sets of interviews focused on: the effectiveness of the Project design and set-up; leadership and project management roles by the Advisory Board and ESF-LSB national team; capacity-building and the integration of the third sector; impacts to date; and the potential for learning from the Project, particularly for Welsh Government, WCVA, LSBs and local authorities.

8. Overall, there was a high level of consensus and consistency in the perspectives of national stakeholders about the ESF-LSB Project.

9. Welsh Government officials and their partners thought that the selection of delivery projects had been transparent and the process had become more streamlined by the last round of approvals. There were some concerns that the delivery projects were not as innovative or strategic as had been expected. Interviewees believed that leadership of the Project from the Welsh Government was important to make the policy connections; likewise leadership from local authorities and LSBs is essential for the delivery projects to drive collaboration and ensure the learning is used to inform mainstream provision.

10. Capacity-building meant different things to different stakeholders. It encompasses cultural change and organisational development as well as enhancing strategic leadership and operational skills and resources. There was a consistent view that local authorities, LSBs, partner organisations and the third sector all require investment to increase their capacity to collaborate effectively. Some concerns were raised about delivery projects' analytical and evaluative capacity, with questions raised during the 2014 interviews about the ability of some delivery projects to either identify achievable and realistic outcomes or to measure them.

11. Stakeholders were also concerned about delivery projects' ability to address the Project's generic themes of equalities, scrutiny and environmental sustainability.

12. The third sector is seen as having the potential to make a major contribution to collaborative working and co-production, but stakeholders recognise there are a number of barriers to be overcome for this to be realised in practice.

13. The follow-up interviews showed that stakeholders thought the Project had led to better involvement and integration of the third sector by 2014, although this was only notable in the delivery projects that were either third sector-led and/or which relied heavily on the third sector for delivery. Interviewees also commented that there is little role for the third sector in some of the projects that are less about citizen outcomes and more about back-office improvements and internal change.

14. Generally, there was a view that the local third sector needs to be fully involved in collaborative service design – as well as delivery - and this is not happening as much as it should across the Project.

15. The follow-up interviews enabled more reflection on the extent to which the delivery projects had achieved outcomes. The consensus was that some outcomes for service users and citizens had been achieved in a minority of projects. Examples cited by interviewees included the Team around the Family in Swansea and Connecting Families in Bridgend, both of which are resulting in improved outcomes for children and families, and the Third Sector Health and Social Care Brokers, which is leading to more people being cared for at home.

16. Other projects, such as the North Wales ICT Collaboration, have used collaboration to make efficiencies rather than improve outcomes for citizens. Neither group of projects has yet delivered population level outcomes, which interviewees agreed would take longer but should be forthcoming if the collaboration that has led to beneficiary outcomes to date can be sustained.

17. There was a commonly held view that evidence on 'what works' in achieving outcomes through collaboration will be crucial to the sustainability of the Project. This learning needs to inform what's replicable across diverse areas and/or contexts and how to effectively 'scale up' from projects to mainstream delivery.

18. Several second round interviewees thought it would be useful for the Welsh Government to synthesise key learning points from the ESF-LSB Development and Delivery Project evaluation with other relevant evaluations such as on Making the Connections, Families First and the ESF-funded project on Collaborative Procurement.

19. Welsh Government interviewees stressed the importance of using the learning from this evaluation to inform ongoing and future public service reform including the development of Single Integrated Plans and the Well-being of Future Generations Bill.

All-Wales Public Services Survey – Baseline

20. The All-Wales Public Service Survey was distributed to leaders and senior managers from across the public service, including the civil service, and officers in the 22 local authorities, health, police, fire and rescue, and county voluntary councils (CVCs). It was designed to measure current capacity and effectiveness of collaborative working in public services, leadership and innovation; enablers and barriers to collaboration; and the impact of the delivery projects.

21. The survey was distributed in June 2013 and a response rate of 31% (355 responses) was achieved from a total sample of 1,200 individuals. Just over a third (125) came from people who were directly involved in ESF-LSB delivery projects. The remaining 230 responses came from those working with Local Service Boards (109), Regional Partnership Boards (34), Communities First Partnerships (12) or other forms of partnership working (75).

22. The main purpose of the first All-Wales Public Services Survey was to provide a baseline against which changes in partnership working and collaborative capacity can be assessed over the next two years. But in the short-term it also provides some useful insights into the way in which delivery projects are working and provides a means of comparing this with other partnerships in Wales.

23. While these comparisons are useful for a baseline assessment and raise questions to explore further, it is important to note that, in general, the delivery projects have been established as essentially operational partnerships, focused on a specific service area or policy theme, rather than as strategic partnerships aiming to embed an integrated approach more widely.

24. Many of the survey results reflect well on the ESF-LSB Project. The responses suggest a high level of additionality, with two-thirds of respondents reporting that their delivery projects would not have happened without ESF-LSB funding. The funding has speeded up collaboration and enabled partners to achieve outcomes sooner than would otherwise have been the case.

25. Delivery projects scored more positively than other partnerships in terms of encouraging learning, bringing together skills and resources from different organisations, and engaging a wide variety of stakeholders. The survey results also suggest that they are more likely than other partnerships to be focused on tackling 'cross-cutting' issues. Many respondents reported that they were already delivering benefits for their areas and had been successful at finding new solutions and delivering better and more joined-up services.

26. On the downside, there is little evidence that delivery projects are increasing citizen engagement, promoting equalities or encouraging environmental sustainability (three important objectives of the ESF-LSB Project).

27. Delivery projects are less likely to be dependent on a small number of individuals than other partnerships, but respondents saw third sector organisations as lacking the capacity to engage fully, despite the fact that this is one of the key aims of the ESF-LSB Project. The Making the Connections funding for the third sector (which has funded 15 Making the Connections Officers) is aimed at addressing this issue.

28. The early indications are that participants in delivery projects are learning, particularly from examples of good practice and through networking. However, differences in organisational cultures often act as a significant barrier to this.

29. Respondents from ESF-LSB delivery projects were more likely than those from other partnerships to report that they had access to the advice, support and funding that they need. LSBs were seen as being relatively supportive. The Welsh Government's role in supporting projects was mentioned by only a minority of respondents and there are indications that many respondents do not see the process by which funding was allocated as transparent or speedy. However, the survey results suggest that participants in delivery projects view their relationship with the Welsh Government more positively than respondents

from other partnerships.

Case studies

30. The seven case studies that have been undertaken are as follows:

- **Caerphilly Passport Programme** aims to reduce the number of young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) by providing work experience, mentoring and support to prepare them for work, before being 'passported' into employment opportunities. The model is not for people who have significant barriers to work but for those who, with support, can start positions immediately.

- **Delivering Collaboration Improvement Frameworks** is a joint project by Anglesey County Council and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to "drive forward service transformation and improve public sector delivery through joint working, integration and pooling of resources".

- **Hedfan** is a collaborative attempt by Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil local authorities working with Communities First, schools, children and their families, to improve learning outcomes for children aged 8 to 14 who are most at risk of being Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

- **Financial Inclusion Together (FIT)** aims to develop existing resources and services on financial inclusion across Conwy and Denbighshire. It intends to work with front-line staff and influence LSB partner organisations and funding bodies through an awareness-raising programme to support and prioritise resources, services and projects linked to financial inclusion.

- **North Wales ICT Collaboration Delivery Project** was designed to deliver cost efficiencies through the modernisation and sharing of ICT services in North Wales. The project encompasses 11 partners: the six local councils in North Wales, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Local Health Board, North Wales Police, and Bangor and Glyndwr Universities.

- **Powering Up Communities First** engages with households, particularly those living on low incomes, in Communities First areas or in fuel poverty, in Torfaen. The overall aim of the project has been to reduce energy usage and energy

costs for households through the installation of energy-saving measures and related community engagement and education activities.

- **Transforming Transport** aims to improve the provision of non-emergency patient transport by bringing together all transport providers within Cwm Taf through the creation of a centralised and fully integrated IT booking system. Partners include Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf Councils, Cwm Taf Local Health Board and third sector providers.

31. Our synthesis of the case studies revealed some common patterns with regard to impacts, processes (including enabling factors and barriers to achieving impacts) and learning. We used these to identify seven core themes across our case studies which are the main determinants of whether a project is making progress on collaboration and achieving service and/or process outcomes. These are:

- the nature of the collaboration;
- where the project sits within an organisation;
- the role of the project manager;
- how knowledge is shared;
- leadership and the role of the LSB;
- setting ambitious and realistic outcomes; and
- the sustainability of the project.

Learning from the Project

32. Facilitated discussion about 'what works' (in achieving outcomes) at the learning events in 2014, found that delivery projects had identified a number of common enabling factors, which echo those from the synthesis of case studies. In particular, projects identified:

- strong leadership, from someone with the authority and credibility to engage and galvanise partners;
- active buy-in from partners, not just being passively 'on board'; and
- shared and clear objectives that bind all partners to action.

33. Outside of the learning events, learning between projects has occurred opportunistically, as Welsh Government has linked-up projects, or they have met and made contact with each other. Within projects, learning has generally happened informally by colleagues working together for the first time and 'picking things up from each other'.

34. While the delivery projects are, in some cases, testing out innovative approaches in delivering a specific service, learning from these projects is ad hoc, tacit and is not currently being disseminated systematically across Wales (and beyond), either by the delivery projects themselves or the ESF-LSB national team.

Conclusions and recommendations

35. Our analysis of the findings from the formative evaluation of the ESF-LSB Project highlight a number of important issues that can be used to inform both the learning from and sustainability of the Project and the final summative stage of the evaluation.

36. The formative evaluation's findings lead us to conclude that there is some way to go before we can assess whether the ESF-LSB Project has led to better public services and better outcomes for citizens (although there are some exemplar delivery projects), and there are questions about whether it will be possible to demonstrate these outcomes.

37. As reflected in the Project's Theory of Change (ToC), most delivery projects need to improve collaboration before service and citizen outcomes and so these may not be achievable within the lifetime of the funded delivery projects.

38. In addition, a sizable number of the delivery projects have experienced difficulties in identifying ambitious and realistic outcomes, developing measures to evidence these and collecting, analysing and using monitoring and evaluation data to review progress against outcomes.

39. Our synthesis of the case study findings identified seven core themes, which contribute to determining the extent to which a project is making progress on

collaboration and achieving service and/or process outcomes. The seven themes are:

- the nature of the collaboration;
- where the project sits within an organisation;
- the role of the project manager;
- how knowledge is shared;
- leadership and the role of the LSB;
- setting ambitious and realistic outcomes; and
- the legacy of the project.

40. Involvement and integration of the third sector is noticeable mainly in the delivery projects that were either third sector-led and/or which relied heavily on the third sector for delivery. Unsurprisingly, there appears to be little role for the third sector in projects that are less about citizen outcomes and more about back office improvements and internal change.

41. National stakeholders think that the local third sector needs to be fully involved in collaborative service design – as well as delivery - and this is not happening as much as it should across the Project or wider Welsh public service.

42. Facilitated discussion at the learning events enabled delivery projects to share their experiences about 'what works' in achieving outcomes, namely:

- strong leadership, from someone with the authority and credibility to engage and galvanise partners;
- active buy-in from partners, not just being passively 'on board'; and
- shared and clear objectives that bind all partners to action.

43. While the delivery projects are, in some cases, testing out innovative approaches in delivering a specific service and sharing this through tacit and ad hoc learning within and between projects, this is not being disseminated systematically across Wales, either by the delivery projects themselves or the ESF-LSB national team.

44. National stakeholders were keen to use learning from the delivery projects in policy guidance to LSBs and local authorities. This type of learning needs to inform what is replicable across diverse areas and contexts and how to scale up from projects to mainstream delivery for sustainability.

45. In the final chapter of this we make a series of **recommendations** for the Welsh Government and its partners to consider in order to address these issues in a way that maximises and disseminates the learning from the Project.

46. We will be able to present more robust findings and conclusions about the impact of the ESF-LSB Project for the final summative report due in summer 2015. The next steps for the evaluation include facilitating a final learning event aimed at LSBs, producing a set of 'good-practice' cases and repeating the all-Wales Public Services Survey in 2015.

1. Introduction

1.1 This final formative report is the second from a three-year evaluation (2012-2015) of the ESF Local Service Board Development and Priority Delivery Project (hereafter ESF-LSB Project). The ESF-LSB Project is funded under Priority Four, Theme 1 of the Convergence ESF Operational Programme for West Wales and the Valleys which aims to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services through more effective collaborative working and by building the capacity of public services to deliver higher quality services.

1.2 The evaluation aims to assess:

- the main aspects of the ESF-LSB Project's implementation;
- whether (and if so, how) these processes have contributed to better public service;
- how information and knowledge gained through the Project is communicated and disseminated;
- whether the integration of the third sector and LSBs had led to better outcomes; and
- the extent to which the outcomes from the ESF-LSB Project impact on the population.

1.3 The size and scope of the ESF-LSB Project is significant. The Project's total funding amounts to £17m, of which 53% has been allocated to the delivery projects. The other 47% has been allocated to different streams, the most significant being: management of the Project, a series of evaluations of the different strands of the Project and funding of support officers (LSBs, Making the Connections and Communities First).

1.4 There are 38 delivery projects across Wales (the full list of projects is provided here: http://business.cf.ac.uk/LSB-ESF-evaluation). They cover a wide range of policy areas such as: social and health care, employment, transport and engineering, environment, housing, community development and support services (ICT and legal).

1.5	Table 1.1 below lists the general Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) indicators that are being used to assess the success of the Project, based on the latest full records of the performance of the delivery projects in June 2014.

Table 1.1: ESF-LSB Project Indicators

Indicator	Original Project total *	Current Project Total	Committed to Date by Projects	Achieved to Date #
OUTPUTS				
Dissemination Initiatives	35	80	91	**55**
Initiatives to support LSB Development	16	16	19	**16**
RESULTS				
Collaborative agreements between public service bodies	30	74	74	**38**
Secondment positions available	42	77	77	**42**
Organisational learning and development	5	15	36	**9**

* WEFO approved Business case v5 original case plus addition of Third Sector Making the Connections project.

verified by supporting information.

1.6	As shown in Table 1.1, three of the indicators were revised upwards as the number of delivery projects increased between 2011 and early 2013. Four of the indicators have achieved over half of the targets set. 'Organisational learning and development' is the indicator showing under-achievement.

1.7	In terms of the progress made by the 38 projects, six projects have been completed, although a few still need to submit a final report. Using a traffic light system (red, amber, green) – a tool to monitor projects and identify causes of concern - the ESF-LSB national team has rated 27 projects as 'green' and five projects as 'amber'. The main reasons projects are classed as 'amber' relate to concerns on staffing, broad and unrealistic objectives and changes in policy impacting on their aims and development.

Structure of the report

1.8   Chapter 2 provides a summary of academic, government and other literature on the kind of collaboration in public services which the ESF-LSB Project seeks to achieve. It helps us to understand how the Project sits within the Welsh Government's public service reform efforts and Programme for Government and relates to other major independent reports such as the Simpson Review (2011) and the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery (2014) and informs all aspects of the methodology for the evaluation.

1.9   Chapter 3 explains the evaluation framework we are using to assess both the processes and outcomes of the ESF-LSB Project. Given the range of different objectives of the ESF-LSB Project and the diversity of its 38 delivery projects, it was important to adopt a theory-based approach to provide a coherent framework for the evaluation. The evaluation framework we have developed seeks to articulate and then test connections between inputs, processes, outputs and different levels of outcomes. We also developed a learning framework which examines how people generate and use knowledge in the processes that are facilitated by the Project.

1.10   Chapters 4-7 present the results of the empirical analysis we have conducted to date. They draw on four sources of evidence:
- a series of interviews with national stakeholders;
- an all-Wales Public Service Survey on collaboration;
- in-depth case studies of seven delivery projects; and
- evidence on learning activities and outcomes.

1.11   Chapter 4 analyses the perceptions of national stakeholders who were asked for their views on how the ESF-LSB Project was performing and if there were any barriers or enablers that the research should focus upon. These views have been helpful in providing a broader range of perceptions to be contrasted with the views of actors involved in the implementation of the delivery projects 'on the ground'.

1.12   Chapter 5 presents the main results from the survey which was conducted during the summer of 2013. It is designed to provide an assessment of whether delivery projects and the activities they fund contribute to the achievement of

the overall objectives of the ESF-LSB Project. The results of the 2013 survey help to test assumptions, with regard to both the processes and outcomes of collaborative working in Wales. They also provide a baseline against which change can be assessed when the survey is repeated towards the end of the evaluation in 2015.

1.13   Chapter 6 reports on case studies of seven delivery projects: Summaries of the cases are provided with the full case studies presented in Annex 2 (a separate document). The structure of these case studies follows the logic of the evaluation framework explained in Chapter 3. The lessons from the synthesis of these case studies provide qualitative evidence that helps us understand in more detail the potential opportunities and challenges encountered by the ESF-LSB Project and the main factors that contribute to effective collaboration.

1.14   Chapter 7 discusses the learning that has been generated and shared within and between delivery projects together with the processes that have been used for the dissemination of learning.

1.15   Chapter 8 draws together our findings from all of these sources to provide conclusions on the effectiveness of the ESF-LSB Project, provides a series of recommendations for the Welsh Government and its partners and raises some issues to be addressed in the summative evaluation report.

2. Literature Review

Introduction

2.1 This chapter summarises the literature review on collaboration in public services which was undertaken at the outset of the evaluation. (The full review is available here http://business.cf.ac.uk/LSB-ESF-evaluation). The review covered five main areas:

- the policy context in Wales and the role and effectiveness of Local Service Boards, Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) and Communities First Partnerships (CFPs);

- the relationship between the ESF-LSB Project and other Welsh Government policy drivers;

- models of collaboration in public services, their outcomes and scale of action

- approaches to increasing collaborative capacity in public services and the third sector; and

- evidence from existing evaluations of LSBs and other programmes that have sought to improve outcomes for citizens by building up leadership and managerial capacity in public services.

2.2 The review informed the evaluation framework which we developed and enabled us to identify key issues to be explored through the survey, national interviews and in-depth case studies. It benefited from a peer review process which helped to strengthen both the review and the evaluation framework that we developed from it.

Welsh Government policy and the ESF-LSB Project

2.3 In its response to the Beecham Review (2006), the Welsh Government endorsed effective collaboration between local agencies as the best way of tackling problems of capacity, complexity and culture in the delivery of modern public services. It committed itself to helping to overcome these barriers

through the implementation of Local Service Boards (LSBs) within each local authority.

2.4 Eight years on, Wales has seen a proliferation of joint working arrangements at different levels and across multiple partners, including those partnerships working at a community level through the Communities First Programme, the development by the WLGA of Regional Partnership Boards among local authorities, and more recent arrangements led by NHS Wales with regard to primary, community and acute healthcare and social services (WAG, 2010a; WG, 2012a).

2.5 Collaboration can come in different forms and occur at different scales of action (regional, local and sub-local), with different mixes of partners, across different types of organisations, and involves different degrees of organisational integration (Martin *et al.*, 2013; Simpson, 2011). It has been implemented across a myriad of service areas.

2.6 Regionally the focus has been stronger on education, waste management, emergency planning, highways, ICT systems, regulatory services and procurement to support services such as libraries and social services (Simpson, 2011).

2.7 Locally and at a community level, collaboration has tended to excel in the provision of social services, social care and health, regeneration and crime (Amion Consulting and Old Bell 3, 2011; Martin *et al.*, 2011).

2.8 Successful partnerships in Wales have been identified as those with:
- strong leadership;
- clear governance arrangements;
- funding;
- processes of robust accountability and performance management
- vision; and
- capacity to engage citizens (Martin *et al.*, 2013).

2.9 But the majority of joint working arrangements have been weak at achieving clear evidence of outputs that address the quantity and quality of service and outcomes that benefit the general population.

2.10 Our analysis of recent policy documents found that there are some recurring themes when it comes to areas for improvement in partnership working (Simpson, 2011; WAO, 2010; WAG, 2009; WG, 2012b):

- enhanced capacity to 'roll out' or implement collaborative agreements;

- delivering better outcomes for citizen and users;

- an increased emphasis on preventive services, rather than reactive, by focusing on citizen and user needs;

- design and implementation of clear service performance frameworks;

- engagement, at all levels, of staff during implementation;

- efficiency savings whilst assuring service improvement;

- greater efforts amongst partners in pooling budgets; and

- enhanced relationships between local services and the NHS.

2.11 The report of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery reiterates many of these themes. It concluded that 'the balance of evidence shows clearly that collaboration has had little impact on service standards or on attaining outcomes' (Welsh Government, 2014: 22) and argued that collaboration needs to be more streamlined, more strategic and more effective.

Determinants of Network Effectiveness

2.12 There is a large literature on collaboration which has largely emanated from British, American and Dutch scholars from the early 1990s (Kickert *et al.*, 1997; Peters and Pierre, 1998; Rhodes, 1997). They emphasise that the implementation and management of public programmes through collaboration 'have now become more the rule than the exception' (Turrini *et al.*, 2010: 528) and that collaborative networks are 'increasingly seen as a suitable response to the question of how to tackle complex, uncertain and conflict-ridden policy problems' (Sorensen and Torfing, 2007a: 12).

2.13 A meta-literature review, carried out by Turrini and colleagues in 2010, synthesised a decade of research on the determinants of the effectiveness of collaboration. They conclude that there are three main groups of determinants of effectiveness:

- structure;

- behaviour; and

- context.

2.14 We adapted this model to reflect the particular objectives and context of the ESF-LSB Project (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Model of the Determinants of Collaboration Effectiveness
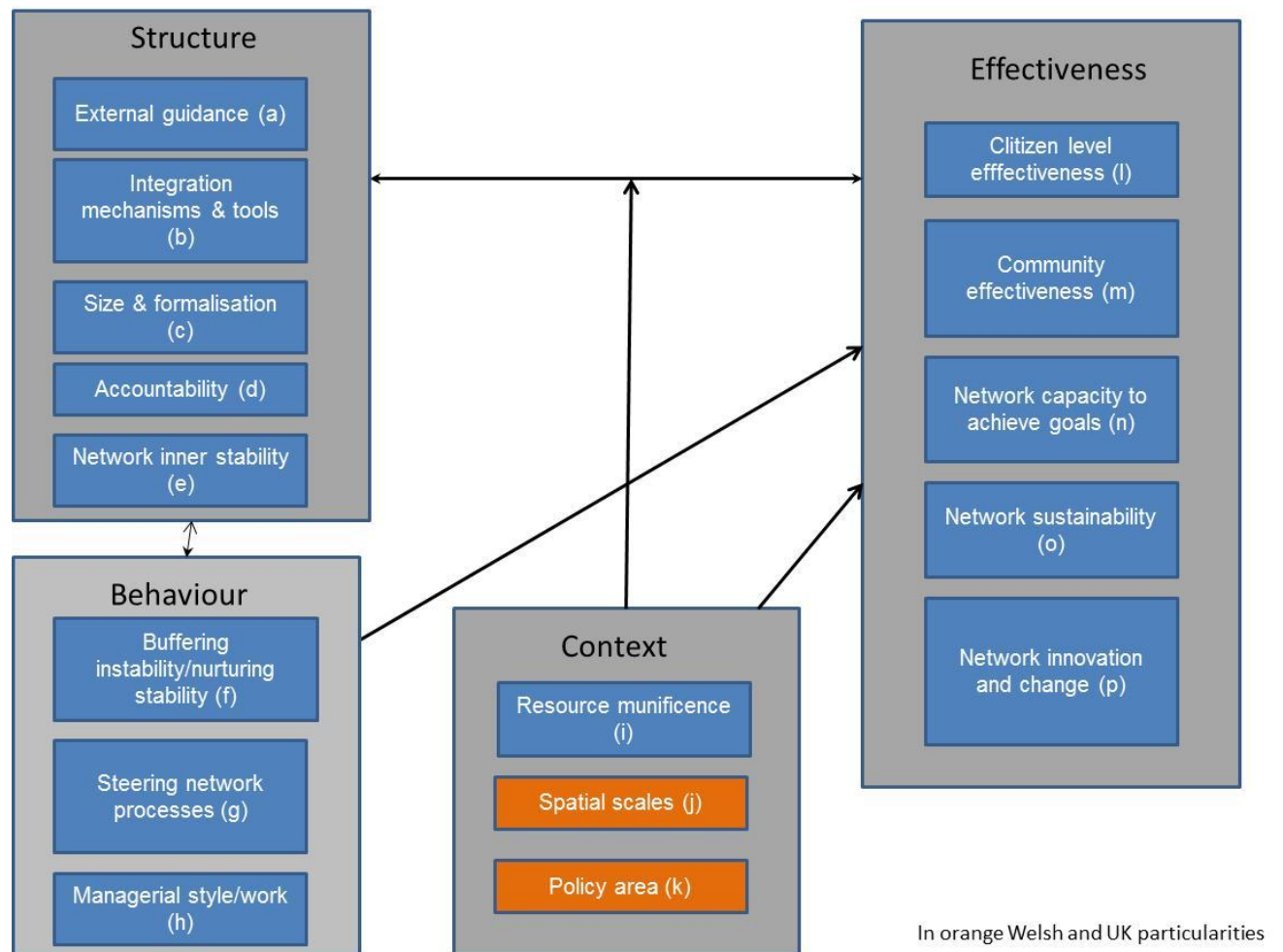
(Adapted from Turrini *et al.,* 2010)

Structure

2.15 Previous research highlights the importance of activities that implement or operationalise collaboration. These include:

- *External guidance* (a) – Research shows that the role played by state (regulatory) agencies influences the effectiveness of collaborative networks. In the Welsh context, regulatory agencies play a role in setting and monitoring the standards of service as well as evaluating the outcomes reached by collaborative arrangements. Equally, the Welsh Government has built a close relationship to steer collaborative arrangements through, for example, civil servant secondments in local partnerships, Welsh Government representatives on LSBs, and requisition of annual reports and project evaluations to partnerships such as LSBs and CFPs.
- *Integration mechanisms and tools* (b) – Research also highlights that the level of integration is an important factor. There are differences in effectiveness between networks where one organisation co-ordinates activities and those which operate in a more decentralised way (Provan and Milward, 1995).
- *Size and formalisation* (c) – Studies show that the optimum size depends on the context a network operates in and its objectives. They also suggest that there are differences between highly formalised networks which are governed by explicit rules (indicated by the existence of meetings, written agendas, explicit decision-making processes or monitoring frameworks) and looser arrangements.
- *Accountability* (d) – Previous research shows that external accountability 'forces the adoption of explicit and shared measures and techniques for evaluating the progress' of collaborative networks (Turrini 2010: 542). In Wales, LSBs, CFPs and RPBs all have to give an account of their performance (including business plans, monitoring and evaluation) either to the Welsh Government and/or to partners. This puts pressure on members to feel committed to their responsibilities, achieve results and improve the quality of services.

- *Network inner stability* (e) – The level of turnover of staff, and in particular 'network managers', is also a key determinant of effectiveness.

Behaviour

2.16 Turrini *et al.* highlight the importance of individual network actors' attributes and skills in achieving cultural change in the organisational arrangements through learning and knowledge transfer. (They refer to this as 'functioning characteristics'. We think 'behaviour' is a better description.)

2.17 *Buffering instability/ nurturing stability* (f) – These are the two sides of the same coin which concern the ability of managers or leaders to manage conflict. The governance rules of the network also play a central role as values, mission and vision are all important to achieve cohesion and activate at different points in time to achieve milestones and goals.

2.18 *Steering network processes* (g) – Closely linked to point buffering instability, this describes the ability of leaders to steer collaborative networks by establishing a shared vision, mission and values among partners. Leadership is also important for planning, activating members and resources, repositioning the network according to the external environment and carrying out decision-making through facilitating impartial and ethical interactions.

2.19 *Managerial style/work* (h) – Previous research also highlights the importance of administrative systems and processes that motivate staff and improve service delivery and responsiveness to citizens and service users.

Context

2.20 Context (or external environment) shapes organisations' and actors' behaviours. The literature associates context with macro institutions, such as economic and political regimes, socio-economic factors (income, population, employment), and historical organisational arrangements and beliefs that establish legacies within organisations and people's daily practices. It highlights three key factors:

2.21 *Resource munificence* (i) – Several studies confirm a positive influence of financial resources on network outcomes (including quality of service, improved access to services, capacity of achieving stated goals and overall community welfare). In general, the greater the resources and the more stability there is about resource allocation, the more likely it is that collaboration will achieve positive outcomes (Provan and Millward, 1995).

2.22 *Spatial scales* (j) – The degree of linkage between policies operating at community, local, regional and national levels is important. In Wales, this points to the importance of linking the activities of CFPs, LSBs and RPBs. The structural and behavioural elements shown in Figure 1 are equally applicable to all three scales of collaboration.

2.23 *Policy area* (k) – National evaluations of sub-local partnerships in the UK (e.g. neighbourhood management) show that the level of achievement of intermediate and final outcomes varies depending on the policy area. In particular, clear results have been seen in 'green, clean and safe' issues, which are often priorities of neighbourhoods. There is evidence to suggest that health, education and employment issues could also benefit from procedural characteristics identified in neighbourhood management (CLG, 2010; SQW, 2006). Given that the range of priority projects is quite broad, it may be relevant to explore the extent to which different types of policy projects are more successful in achieving outcomes than others.

Effectiveness

2.24 Judgements about effectiveness will depend on the criteria established to measure the performance of collaborative networks in achieving outcomes. The literature on public service improvement identifies two types of outcomes which have guided performance analyses: intermediate and final outcomes.

2.25 Some researchers adopt a strict definition of 'final outcomes' as positive changes that have an impact on the population such as reduction of crime, improvement in standards of health, better educational attainments and skills or user satisfaction of services. For them, intermediate outcomes are related to the improvement of quality and quantity of service provision as well as

reduction of service costs (Ashworth *et al.*, 2010). However, the literature on collaborative networks often blurs this distinction between final and intermediate outcomes.

2.26 Because of the requirement for the evaluation to assess outcomes for the population, we adopted the classification underlined by the improvement literature. However, based on debates of network effectiveness and a previous study on LSBs (Martin *et al.,* 2011), we consider it sensible to take a permissive approach to defining and distinguishing intermediate and final outcomes. Therefore, service improvement outcomes regarding better quality, quantity and efficiency savings will be considered as final outcomes, whereas changes in organisational processes that enhance the capacity of collaboration will be considered as intermediate outcomes (or outputs).

2.27 *Final outcomes* refer to *citizen* (labelled l on Figure 1) and *community* (m) *levels of wellbeing*. Measuring the achievement of final outcomes is not easy, but there are exemplars from the literature which show improved service quality (e.g. access and service-tailored based on users' needs) and positive impact on the overall community welfare through the involvement of the community (Conrad *et al.*, 2003; Fawcett *et al.*, 2000). And evaluations on neighbourhood management in the UK show increased satisfaction levels of service users (SQW, 2006; CLG, 2010). The Wales Audit Office (WAO, 2010) has reported that this type of outcome is the most difficult to assess because of the practical difficulties that LSBs, or other type of collaborative arrangements, encounter in the process of achieving this type of outcome (e.g. the prolonged time in sorting process arrangements).

2.28 *Intermediate outcomes*: The challenges posed by the measurement of final outcomes, have meant that previous research has often focused on measures of processes and intermediate outcomes (Klijn *et al.*, 2010). These generally include assessments of *collaborative capacity* (n) in order to achieve a network's goals in terms of: joint working, identification of opportunities and obstacles or *sustainability* (o) implementation of a programme or management of the collaborative network. All of these achievements may contribute to *organisational and cultural innovations* (p) such as the design and implementation of a new service model through, for example, service

integration or a joint performance framework.

Learning in collaborative networks

2.29 One of the aims of the evaluation is to assess how information and knowledge gained through the ESF-LSB Project is communicated and disseminated. This includes analysing:
- whether learning has been transferred from local settings to national policy-makers;
- the ways in which information and knowledge is communicated across the Welsh Government and other Project stakeholders;
- the success of learning events laid on by the national project; and
- the learning and development strategies aimed specifically at LSBs.

2.30 Organisational learning is a multi-stage process which occurs at different levels (Downe, 2010). First, individuals interact in a network or community of practice where knowledge and best practice is shared in 'free-flowing creative' ways to foster new approaches to problem solving, improvement, or develop professional skills. (Bate and Robert, 2002).

2.31 Second, once knowledge is acquired by individuals, it is taken to their organisations. In the next stage, they apply this new knowledge into the organisation's processes. If developed appropriately, and with organisational support, a change may reach the structural level where learning becomes embedded in organisational structures and routines.

2.32 By acknowledging this multi-stage process, it is possible to identify first, how learning can be interpreted either as a process or an outcome (Bate and Robert, 2002), and second, the significance of context upon knowledge management, which encompasses the acquisition, capture and sharing of knowledge.

2.33 The extent to which knowledge will be managed will depend on the culture within an organisation as well as on the consistencies between policy sectors, professions and types of organisation (e.g. primary care versus acute care)

when more than one organisation is involved (Rashman and Hartley, 2002; Currie and Suhomlinova, 2006).

2.34 A range of enablers of organisational learning and knowledge transfer have been identified (Downe, 2010). These include leadership, learning champions who co-ordinate knowledge, social ties within and between organisations and organisational culture which may welcome innovation and risk as well as provide support to knowledge management and transfer. Technology can be considered an enabler as long as it is used to make connections possible rather than expecting learning to happen through it.

2.35 The absence of enablers mentioned above can be considered as barriers to learning. In addition, the literature emphasises other problems such as: lack of trust between individuals or organisations, high levels of organisational complexity, lack of capacity in terms of money and time dedicated to learning, and individual negative attitudes towards learning (e.g. ignorance about other people's needs of learning, lack of motivation to share information).

The role of the third sector in collaborative networks

2.36 Collaborative arrangements between the public and third sectors are not new in the UK (Rees *et al.,* 2012). The New Labour administrations sought to enhance the role of third sector organisations (TSOs) in public service provision (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Taylor, 2003) and this process has been continued with the coalition government and rhetoric of the 'big society' (Cabinet Office 2010; Teasdale, *et al.*, 2012).

2.37 The third sector's role can be analysed in relation to the headings within Figure 1. For example, under 'Structure', the commissioning of local services such as social care, housing and community regeneration from TSOs has worked to the detriment of smaller TSOs, which can often lack the skills or capacity (in terms of resources and resilience to change over time) to respond to the requirements set by local commissioners. Larger organisations have been more proficient in articulating the managerial discourse of performance and minimisation of risk. Rees *et al* (2012) suggest that government and umbrella organisations can act as enablers, promoting integration of systems where small organisations can

share or integrate their administrative, financial or training responsibilities within the structures of larger organisations. Through these mechanisms, much of the risk encountered by the smaller TSOs will be minimised (Milbourne and Murray, 2011).

2.38 *Network inner stability* emphasises the importance of staff continuity as a main element of stability. One of the characteristics of small TSOs is the high turnover of staff resulting from the use of grant funding and fixed-term contracts. This can become a problem to public sector partners who rely on the support and continuity provided by third sector parties (Cornforth and Mordaunt, 2011).

2.39 Under 'Behaviour', the individual skills and attributes that *steering networks* and *management styles* involve, are very similar across public and tertiary sectors. In particular, leadership has been considered relevant in the public-third sector relationships (Taylor, 2003). It is advocated that although smaller organisations do not have the capacity to lead financially, they can be given leadership roles in other aspects in which they are good at, such as holding core values and providing alternative and innovative ways of service provision (Rees *et al.*, 2012). Hence, e*ffectiveness* should not be limited only to evidence-based results that focus on the increase or expansion of service provision, but also on innovative design and implementation. This observation, however, may pose challenges in the type of outcomes achieved by collaboration between the public and third sector organisations.

Conclusions

2.40 The literature review has enabled us to identify the key themes and issues that are likely to influence the effectiveness of attempts to build capacity, improve services and promote learning. The work of Turrini *et al.* (2010) and others provides a good evidence base about the main factors which influence network effectiveness and highlights in particular the importance of context, the ways in which networks are structured and the behaviours of key actors within networks.

2.41 The ESF-LSB Project has much in common with other public services networks, but there are also some distinguishing features. First, the Project is designed to facilitate learning about 'what works?' – between organisations, within and between networks. For this reason, we have examined the findings of previous research on the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative networks as a means of developing, managing and transferring knowledge and learning.

2.42 Second, the ESF-LSB Project seeks explicitly to increase the capacity of the third sector to engage with networks in Wales and, in particular, to increase its role in LSBs. The role of the third sector is an issue which the literature on network effectiveness does not emphasise. So we have drawn upon a range of literature on network effectiveness for third sector involvement to highlight the challenges it faces and the resources it can contribute.

2.43 The literature on networks defines effectiveness in a variety of ways. Often studies have restricted themselves to an examination of processes. Very few have considered their impact on public service performance and there is even less evidence about the link between networks and 'higher level' outcomes such as citizens' wellbeing, quality of life, poverty and economic activity. This highlights the challenges we face in seeking to identify the extent to which the ESF-LSB Project has these kinds of population level outcomes and the need for a robust evaluation framework, good research instruments and reliable evidence. The next chapter explains how we have developed these.

3. Methodology

Evaluation framework

A theory of change approach

3.1　It was agreed to adopt a theory of change (ToC) approach to the evaluation because this is well suited to understanding not just whether, but also *how* and *why* the ESF-LSB Project works. There are a number of outcomes that the Project is intended to achieve. A ToC approach enables us to present a logical sequence, from the context in which the Project is operating, to the inputs which are used to conduct the activities which are aimed at delivering outputs. If these outputs are achieved, then outcomes should occur.

3.2　The aim of the ToC is, therefore, to model the thinking (or assumptions) that underpin the ESF-LSB Project so that we can identify the evidence needed to test whether the Project is working the way it was intended and achieving the outcomes that its sponsors hoped for.

3.3　We started by examining evidence from official documents to determine the aims and objectives of the ESF-LSB Project and then discussed these in one-to-one interviews with national policy-makers. The literature review also fed into the development of the ToC by providing evidence on the likely outcomes of collaborative activities, the determinants of collaborative capacity and learning in public service networks. Armed with this knowledge, we began to map out all of the potential causal links between various parts of the ToC.

Key elements of the framework

3.4　Figure 3.1 illustrates the theory of change for the evaluation of the ESF-LSB Project. It contains six main elements.

Context

3.5　It is important that the evaluation takes account of the heterogeneity of delivery projects and of the different social-economic, cultural and political contexts in which they are implemented. The 'context' box covers a range of such factors

at both the national and local level and includes variables which distinguish different LSBs e.g. having different histories and trajectories of partnership working.

Inputs

3.6   The evaluation needs to assess the resources (financial, time, people) which are needed to make the Project work, the funding allocated to the ESF-LSB Project to distribute amongst the delivery projects and the resources invested locally to implement the projects. The policy framework and any new legislation set out by the Welsh Government is also a significant input.   Other inputs include the resources needed to manage the Project at the national level and leadership provided by the Welsh Government, which may include making delivery projects understand that their individual projects may contribute to improvement at the national scale.

Figure 3.1: Theory of Change for the ESF-LSB Project Evaluation
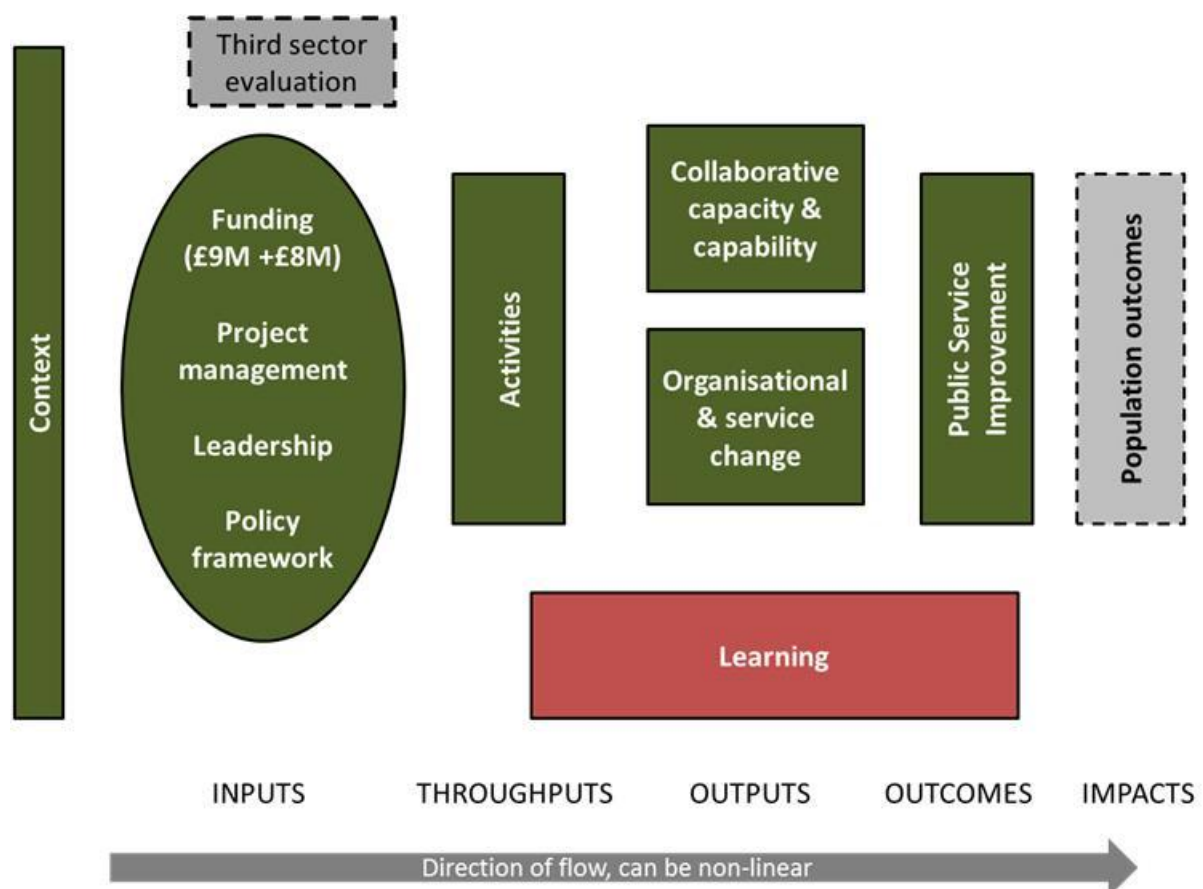
Throughputs

3.7   It is important to analyse the activities that produce outputs. These occur at two main levels:

- National - activities such as the application process designed by the ESF-LSB national team and the recommendations on funding by the ESF-LSB Advisory Board. The performance of all delivery projects are monitored centrally and an annual reporting structure is in place which, since 2014 has been supplemented by annual reviews so that performance is monitored every six months. The Welsh Government also provides support on evaluation to the projects.

- Local /regional - activities like the setting up of governance arrangements, creating project plans, signing collaborative protocols and agreements, informal networking, secondment placements, dissemination activities and reporting to Welsh Government. These activities are expected to lead to outputs, some of which are measured by WEFO indicators (see Table 1.1).

Outputs

3.8   We identified two main types of outputs: improvements in collaborative capacity/capability and changes in organisations and services achieved as a result of the delivery projects.

3.9   As described in Chapter 2, previous research has identified a number of markers of collaborative capacity. These include:
- communication protocols between project partners;
- leadership;
- values;
- vision (priorities and objectives);
- coherence (bureaucracy, duplication etc.);
- stability/turnover of key staff; and
- levels of trust created amongst partners.

3.10   Our interviews with national policy-makers revealed that the capability of officers working on the delivery projects is also a significant factor.

3.11 Where organisations and networks have these various factors in place, they are more likely to be successful and produce outcomes.

3.12 Organisational and service change includes:
- streamlining of processes which avoid duplication between partners;
- increased sharing of resources;
- improved levels of integration;
- more efficient service delivery models;
- creation of legal agreements;
- organisational redesign (i.e. greater emphasis on preventative approaches and targeted provision of services); and
- improved public engagement, particularly in relation to involving users and citizens in the design and delivery of services.

Outcomes

3.13 These include changes that deliver public service improvement for example:
- cost savings;
- improved access to services;
- expansion of service provision;
- better targeted services;
- more responsive services to citizens' needs; and
- increased user satisfaction.

Impacts

3.14 As explained in Chapter 2, there is no clear-cut way of isolating the impact of the delivery projects (let alone the ESF-LSB Project) from other external or contextual factors, such as other sources of funding, which may equally impact on the local population.

Learning

3.15 Learning underpins much of the design of the ESF-LSB Project and so key questions for the evaluation are:
- how learning and 'good practice' is shared;
- what type of stakeholders engage in learning; and
- the impact that learning has.

3.16 The Welsh Government is keen to understand what learning is taking place as a result of the Project:

- by individuals;
- within teams and groups in partner organisations;
- within partner organisations;
- between partner organisations; and
- between tiers of government.

3.17 It is also interested in different routes of learning including:

- between local projects;
- through informal or semi-formal means;
- between all projects nationally through more organised learning activities;
- between projects of geographic / thematic bases; and
- between the national and local evaluations.

3.18 To help us answer these questions, and identify how and where learning is taking place, the evaluation team designed a learning theory of change with input from Welsh Government. This is attached at Annex 1. It will be regularly reviewed and refreshed as we develop a better understanding of what learning is taking place through the programme. As a starting point, it sets out a working hypothesis about how learning is:

- generated;
- communicated and used; and
- contributes to the delivery of the Project's overall impacts.

3.19 It uses the same structure as our overall theory of change. Within the outputs and outcomes columns, the arrows help explain our working theory of how learning leads to behaviour change. We summarise it here and give a worked example below:

- initially, learning activities improve the dissemination of information;
- that information generates an increase in knowledge, which can be tacit or explicit;
- the increase in knowledge leads to improved awareness of a subject or issue;

- with a greater level of awareness, people or organisations may change their attitudes toward that subject or issue; and

- changed attitudes lead to changed behaviours.

3.20 Special attention was placed on the role of the third sector. Some of the elements in the outputs and outcomes columns are coloured red. These highlight a potential example of how these changes may come about in practice in relation to the role of the third sector in local partnerships.

3.21 Activities funded by a local project lead to increased information about the local third sector that is disseminated amongst and shared between local partners. This generates a greater shared understanding of the third sector e.g. better understanding of its scale and range.

3.22 In turn, this leads to greater awareness e.g. that the third sector does not solely play an advocacy and voice role, but is an increasingly significant provider of local services, and has experience of previous partnership-based projects that can be used to inform current activities.

3.23 This awareness translates into changed attitudes e.g. that partners see the third sector as a key partner in the delivery of local objectives, and not just as a stakeholder to be consulted. These attitudes lead to changed behaviours, with partners proactively partnering with the third sector to jointly deliver services and meet local needs.

3.24 Our understanding of how much learning is being shared and its impact is reported in Chapter 7.

Testing the Theory of Change

3.25 The design of the theory of change responded to the requirements of the Project evaluation. The evaluation aims to: assess the outcomes of the ESF-LSB Project; examine the planning, implementation and management of the project; assess how the knowledge gained is communicated and disseminated; assess the outcomes of the project for the population wherever possible; and evaluate the extent to which the integration of the third sector leads to better outcomes.

3.26 Any theory of change needs to be plausible, doable and testable (Connell and Kubisch, 1998). In order to test whether the ToC made sense and was practical to use as a framework for this evaluation, we held a workshop with key stakeholders from the ESF-LSB national team, other Welsh Government civil servants, and members of the ESF-LSB Steering Group, to discuss their views and revise the model.

3.27 We also presented the draft theory of change at the national Project Evaluation Workshop in February 2013. Participants suggested that the evaluation needed to recognise the difficulty of delivering population outcomes. We were told that many of these outcomes are likely to occur after the lifetime of the projects and are the result of multiple factors and interventions and not just the ESF-LSB funding. Linked to this, we also heard that there was a need to understand the fluid environment in which the delivery projects are operating as a result of organisational, funding, environmental and policy changes. Finally, we were reminded about the varying role of the third sector in different projects which depends on the nature of the project and the role/capacity of/ relationship with the third sector locally. The theory of change should be co-produced with key stakeholders and the model was revised after discussion at the workshop. We will continue to keep it under review and updated during the course of the evaluation.

3.28 Although the ToC can provide a framework for identifying and bringing together the evidence from different kinds of delivery projects in a way which enables an overall assessment of the outcomes to be made by the ESF-LSB Project, this evaluation takes a case study approach. The ToC also informs the design of all research instruments so that questions are posed on the importance of contextual factors, different activities, the extent to which collaborative capacity and capability is important, how learning is disseminated and whether organisational and service change is produced. We now turn our attention towards the various methods of data collection used in the evaluation to explore these issues.

Evidence and Methods

3.29 The initial findings presented in this report have been obtained using a number of different methods and sources of evidence.

Scoping Interviews

3.30 Between December 2012 and February 2013, the evaluation team conducted phone interviews with all existing ESF-LSB delivery projects (32 at the time). These interviews provided us with a better understanding of the wide range of themes covered by the projects and the diversity of local contexts in which they are being implemented.

National interviews

3.31 Between July and September 2013, we conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with national stakeholders. The selection was inherently biased towards informants with extensive knowledge of the ESF-LSB Project. These individuals included representatives from Welsh Government, health, police, WCVA, WLGA and the Big Lottery Fund. The interviews provided an overall picture of the relevance of the Project to national level agencies and agendas, perceptions on what it could be expected to achieve by the end of its lifetime in 2015, and expectations on how learning should be disseminated and used.

3.32 Five follow-up interviews were carried out during October 2014 to provide an opportunity for national stakeholders to reflect upon the Project from a range of organisational perspectives. Interviewees included representatives from the Welsh Government, WCVA and WLGA.

3.33 Chapter 4 provides an analysis of these two rounds of national interviews.

3.34 The interviews were used to inform the high-level research questions that the evaluation is addressing during its formative phase, specifically through the case studies (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Main research questions for the evaluation

1. To what extent has the ESF-LSB Project improved services, or to what extent does it have the potential to improve services in the future?
   a. If so, which services, in what ways and how?
2. In what ways do project managers of the delivery projects and LSB support officers contribute to improved services, or how will they contribute to improvements in the future?
3. To what extent have these improved services impacted on beneficiaries?
   a. If so, who has benefited and how?
4. What efficiencies are planned to be delivered – to what extent have they been achieved? How have they been achieved?
5. To what extent has the ESF-LSB Project strengthened collaborative working – and in what ways?
   a. What have been the key enablers for this?
   b. What have been the barriers or limitations?
6. What have been the advantages of working in collaboration?
7. What have been the disadvantages of working in collaboration?
8. How far has the ESF-LSB Project helped to reduce silo working:
   a. Within and between organisations at the local level; and
   b. Within the Welsh Government?
9. Are there mechanisms other than collaboration for achieving the same sorts of outcomes that are being delivered / planned to be delivered?
10. What is the role of the third sector? To what extent – and how – has the ESF-LSB Project strengthened the participation of the third sector?
11. To what extent has this strengthened participation of the third sector contributed to improved services (and impacted on beneficiaries)?
    a. How might the advantages and disadvantages differ?
12. How has the ESF-LSB Project shared learning and 'good practice'?
    a. With which stakeholders/audiences?
    b. What impact has this had?
13. Are there elements of the ESF-LSB Project which could be useful for others to learn from?

Workshops

3.35 As mentioned above, we presented our outline ToC at the national Project Evaluation Workshop in February 2013. This event revealed that the projects have a clear and shared interest in learning from each other through the evaluation but had not, until that point, been bought together as a group. A number of participants stressed the importance of sharing learning in 'real time', so projects can learn from emerging good practice at the earliest opportunity. Delivery projects were particularly concerned about demonstrating the difference their project had made.

3.36 In June and July 2014, we ran two Learning Workshops following the completion of the interim formative report. These brought together senior Welsh Government officials, partners such as the Welsh Local Government Association, and participants from all the funded projects.

3.37 The purpose of the events was to disseminate the key findings from the interim formative phase and provide an opportunity for the projects to reflect on what those findings meant for them. Participants were also encouraged to reflect on their own learning about their engagement of partners and citizens and 'what worked' in achieving outcomes. They shared this with other projects through facilitated discussions to identify common learning between projects.

Secondary Data

3.38 These data include an analysis of socio-economic baselines produced for the case studies (visit: http://business.cf.ac.uk/LSB-ESF-evaluation). The baselines are composed of four core indicators at a local authority level and a set of specific indicators that show how each delivery project might have an impact on the population. It is important to stress that in estimating the delivery projects' impact on socio-economic indicators, the evaluation team has found several limitations: the wide range of external factors that could affect the indicators, the timeliness of available data, and the time-lag between the Project's activities and changes 'on the ground'. These limitations reflect to some extent, lack of consideration at proposal stage (on the part of the delivery projects) as to how activities would bring about the intended outcomes. Although the ESF-LSB national team acted as a conduit

for the Advisory Board to help shape proposals via feedback to applicants, the connection between project inputs, outputs and outcomes is not always clear. This applies especially to longer-term 'population outcomes', which are often difficult to relate to delivery projects.

3.39   As it is shown in Chapters 6 and 7, implementing joint-working is not a straightforward process; many procedural barriers have to be overcome in order to achieve intermediate outcomes, let alone population outcomes. Furthermore, the average life span (one or two years) of the priority projects is not enough to observe population outcomes. As discussed in Chapter 4, the members of the Advisory Board understand and accept these limitations. Despite these caveats, we have used the baselines as a frame of reference for the majority of our case studies. Wherever possible, the baselines prepared for the case studies during 2013 will be compared to 2015. However, many of these statistics are not produced on an annual basis, which will restrict the opportunity to analyse change over time.

All-Wales Public Service Survey

3.40   The all-Wales Public Service Survey was distributed to leaders and senior managers from across the Welsh public service, including the civil service, and officers in the 22 local authorities, health, police, fire and rescue, and county voluntary councils (CVCs). It was designed to measure current capacity and effectiveness of collaborative working in public services, leadership and innovation; ways of enhancing collaboration and its barriers; and the impact of the delivery projects.

3.41   The survey was distributed in June 2013 and a response rate of 31% was achieved from a total sample of 1,200 individuals. The results presented in Chapter 5 include a descriptive analysis of the general statistics and compares the delivery projects sponsored by the ESF-LSB Project against other types of partnership (non-ESF funded) existing in Wales. Statistical differences between both groups were calculated using a confidence level of 95%.

Case studies

3.42 We followed a rigorous method to select seven delivery projects from a total of 38 encompassed by the ESF-LSB Project. Given that the start and end times of the delivery projects are staggered, it was more valuable to choose projects that were 'live' at the time of fieldwork and have a year or more left in order to assess future progress.

3.43 Following these initial criteria, the number of eligible delivery projects was reduced to 22. We analysed these projects using five characteristics which are important features of the national ESF-LSB Project:

- amount of grant received;
- whether the grant funds a project manager or other team members;
- if the project involves more than one local authority;
- whether third sector organisations and Community First structures play a key role in the project design or implementation; and
- if the grant funds a service model.

3.44 We then clustered the 22 projects into different groups according to geographical location, political salience, coverage of regional projects (RPB-WLGA) and ensured a representation of projects within each group. Finally, we received advice from the steering group to arrive at the final list of seven case studies (see Table 3.2).

3.45 The case studies were not designed as evaluations in their own right, but as exemplars of the ways in which connections are made between inputs, processes and outcomes. We have written up each case study to show these connections for the particular project and used the findings across case studies to contribute to a thematic analysis in Chapter 6 of this final report. The case studies explore how local stakeholders understood outcomes and the challenges they encountered in achieving them and communicating their learning. The cases of Powering Up and North Wales ICT Collaboration were included in the Interim Final Report. All seven case studies are included in Annex 2 of this report (as a separate document).

3.46 The research methods were tailored to each case study, but included a combination of:

- analysis of national and local policy documents and progress reports,
- semi-structured interviews,
- focus groups, and
- non-participant observation of some of the delivery projects' activities (i.e. training workshops).

Table 3.2: Summary of the seven ESF-LSB case studies

Delivery project	Local authority/ region	Finish date	ESF resources	Case study fieldwork
Powering Up	Torfaen	12/2014	£291,700	Sept-Dec 2013
North Wales ICT Collaboration	North Wales	11/2013	£151,830	Sept-Dec 2013
NEET-Hedfan	Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil	12/2014	£500,000	Mar-May 2014
Financial inclusion and anti-poverty	Conwy and Denbighshire	12/2014	£241,300	May-June 2014
Passport	Caerphilly	12/2014	£372,220	July 2014
Anglesey Collaboration	Anglesey	12/2014	£169,801	May-July 2014
Transforming Transport	Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil	12/2014	£275,149	Sept 2014

4. National Stakeholder Interviews

Introduction

4.1 Between July and September 2013, we conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with national stakeholders who had a detailed knowledge of the ESF-LSB Project. Interviewees included representatives of the Welsh Government, health service, police, WCVA, WLGA and Big Lottery Fund.

4.2 The interviews focused on:

- the effectiveness of the Project design and set-up;
- leadership and project management roles by the Advisory Board and ESF-LSB national team;
- capacity building and the integration of the third sector;
- impacts to date; and
- the potential for learning from the Project, particularly for Welsh Government, WCVA, LSBs and local authorities.

4.3 Five follow-up interviews were carried out during October 2014 to provide an opportunity for national stakeholders to reflect upon the outcomes and learning generated by the Project from a range of organisational perspectives. Interviewees included representatives from the Welsh Government, WCVA and WLGA.

4.4 Interviews were typically between 45 minutes and an hour in duration and were semi-structured (a topic guide was used to provide consistency whilst allowing flexibility to customise the interview to the roles of different stakeholders). They were recorded and some were transcribed with others stored as audio files. A manual thematic content analysis was carried out across both rounds of interviews to identify key findings, which are discussed below.

Objectives

4.5 Interviewees had a clear and widely agreed view of the objectives of the ESF-LSB Development and Priority Delivery Project. They believed it was trying to bring about service improvement through collaboration and citizen engagement, which most Welsh Government officials linked to the wider public

reform agenda. Within this common understanding some interviewees stressed particular objectives which reflected their role and relationship with the Project, for example, citizen engagement, third sector involvement or collaboration across local authority boundaries.

Project design and set up

4.6   Members of the Advisory Board and ESF-LSB national team felt that there had been a clear and transparent application and selection process for potential delivery projects, which fulfilled ESF requirements and attracted a range of applicants from local authorities, LSBs and CFPs.

4.7   However, the majority of those interviewees with a view on project design and set-up felt these ESF requirements, together with the governance arrangements, meant that the selection process was "slow and laborious" with "too much paperwork". This contributed to delays in project start-up and first-year spend. Some offered views about how the process could have been streamlined. Many believed that the ESF-LSB national team and other Welsh Government officials could have worked with applicants to strengthen their proposals *before* these came to Advisory Board. This approach was in fact adopted for later application rounds with active input from some departments. Another idea would be for applicants to present their proposals to the Advisory Board so that any queries could be quickly resolved.

4.8   Interviewees thought that the selection criteria for delivery projects reflected the objectives of the Project and had attracted good geographical and thematic spread. However, several, both from the ESF-LSB national team and the Advisory Board, raised concerns in the first round of interviews about how innovative delivery projects were and whether they had sufficient links with the relevant LSBs and local authorities to "embed learning", "be scaled-up", "have an impact on mainstream delivery" and "drive system change".

4.9   The follow-up interviews confirmed this view and raised questions about whether there could have been a better articulation of what the policies were for delivery project applications. Senior Welsh Government officials reflected that some projects were looking for continuation funding rather than submitting

applications that were about changing systems for improving citizen outcomes. This raised questions of whether the projects had been thought through adequately to identify ambitious but realistic outcomes with plausible means of delivering and measuring these.

Leadership and project management

4.10 The Project documentation recognises the Welsh Government's leadership role. Most interviewees identified with the concept of leadership in the context of a project relying on collaboration at several levels, which they saw as needing senior level and inter-departmental buy-in from Welsh Government to emphasise its importance to informing policy priorities and collaborative practice.

4.11 They believed that the Advisory Board should play this leadership role through making links between the Project's activities and Welsh Government policy to identify the contribution that the Project can play in testing this practice to inform policy development. Current policy areas where officials saw the Project as particularly relevant included integrated planning, encouraging a cross-cutting approach within mainstream services and demonstrating the added value of citizen-engagement.

4.12 There were mixed views about how this Advisory Board leadership role has worked in practice. Some interviewees felt it had insufficient time initially to discuss these more strategic issues because meetings were focused on "business matters" such as selecting delivery projects and receiving progress reports.

4.13 Several senior officials stressed that this type of leadership required "walking the talk" by individuals (i.e. outside Board meetings) such as through setting up communication channels with delivery projects in policy areas for which they were responsible (e.g. reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)) and then using the learning from these projects to promote benefits of collaboration for service improvement.

4.14 The second round of interviews provided examples of this approach, for example, through Welsh Government representatives linking delivery projects

around children and families to other programmes within this policy agenda and representatives from WCVA linking the Project to *Making the Connections* and the involvement of CVCs. The second round of interviews also showed the spread of members' policy and delivery experience has meant that the Advisory Board has helped to redesign delivery projects when necessary.

4.15 Advisory Board members agreed that the ESF-LSB team was important in supporting the Board and leading the Project. Interviewees talked about the national team having to "marshal", "facilitate" and "drive" the process of getting Welsh Government buy-in. However, members of the national team explained it was sometimes difficult to secure the level of inter-departmental communication that this approach requires.

4.16 At a local level, stakeholders felt the Welsh Government was more of a catalyst with the LSBs – as well as local authorities and elected members - needing to play the active leadership role required by delivery projects. However, some second round interviewees felt that this leadership role was not being played in an active enough way with too much attachment to organisational boundaries and insufficient focus on outcomes for the citizen.

4.17 Some interviewees felt that LSBs are often not strategic enough and/or are too focused on delivery issues to play this leadership role. Others questioned whether the necessary governance arrangements were in place for the accountability and scrutiny of delivery projects and to enable learning generated by projects to inform wider strategic decisions.

4.18 Turning to project management, interviewees who felt they could express a view thought the ESF-LSB national team does a good job liaising with delivery projects, Advisory Board members and the wider Welsh Government as well as supporting Advisory Board meetings.

4.19 They were aware that the ESF-LSB national team has put reporting processes in place for the delivery projects to record and provide WEFO indicators and other relevant data quarterly to the national team. There was positive feedback on the move from annual to six monthly review visits to the delivery projects by the team, with one interviewee commenting that, in hindsight, this should have happened earlier. Members of the national team see these six monthly review

visits as a supportive and constructive role, which can also act as an early warning system, so if a project is having difficulty with making progress, they can help it to get "back on track".

4.20 The Project has to meet ESF requirements by reporting against WEFO indicators (see Table 1.1). Some members of the Advisory Board and the national team expressed concerns that these indicators are too narrow and place the emphasis on activities rather than outcomes. Although the reason for using the WEFO indicators is so they can be aggregated across the Project, this can send out mixed messages to the delivery projects about the Project's objectives and the importance of measuring outcomes, particularly if the link between activities and outcomes is not clear because delivery projects may not have a theory of change.

4.21 Several Welsh Government officials thought there should be more attention given to the Project's generic themes of equalities, scrutiny and environmental sustainability through the performance management criteria. Specifically, there were concerns that "only lip-service is being paid to equalities" and whether "scrutiny and democratic accountability are being built into [the project's] governance arrangements".

4.22 Members of the ESF-LSB national team reported that facilitating networking of delivery projects was an important part of their project management role. This was increased when the Project began to develop regional networks, with team members responsible for specific networks, but budgetary constraints have meant that only the North Wales network has continued.

4.23 Two interviewees in the first round of interviews questioned whether facilitating learning between delivery projects was sufficient and several thought that the Advisory Board, supported by the ESF-LSB national team, should be doing more to disseminate the learning from the Project to local authorities and LSBs as they are in a position to use it to inform and drive transformational change with mainstream services. This theme is discussed further in Chapter 7.

Capacity-building

4.24 Interviewees had very different views about what and whose capacity needed building. To a large extent, these views reflected their roles and the nature of their contact with LSBs and local authorities.

4.25 A key aim for the WLGA in relation to the nine inter-authority projects it sponsors is to develop what it calls "boundary spanners"; individuals who are able to work across geographical and service boundaries to develop collaborative working and embed this as a way of working.

4.26 For the ESF-LSB national team, developing the capacity of LSBs invariably included 'back room' support (i.e. administrative, financial) to free up LSB co-ordinators or project officers to focus on supporting projects to deliver outcomes. Members of this team also pointed to the need to build LSB evaluative capacity (and capability). This requires analytical skills so that data can be collected and used to generate evidence for learning about 'what works, for whom, why and in what circumstances' to identify success factors and the most cost-effective activities to achieve desired outcomes. This would help to underpin a more strategic, evidence-based approach to project planning and development as well as performance management and scrutiny of delivery projects. However, as reported from the survey results and case studies this type of analytical capacity is not necessarily in place.

4.27 Other stakeholders from the Advisory Board and Welsh Government more widely, saw strengthening LSB capacity as being more about cultural change and organisational development than increasing resources or specific skills. Examples of this type of capacity-building – in relation to both needs and solutions – included strengthening local authorities' leadership capacity where the corporate centre is relatively weak and/or passive, enhancing the capacity of councillors to be effective in their scrutiny role; and the identification and use of 'champions' in services and partner agencies to drive change through collaboration.

4.28 The ESF-LSB project was designed and resourced to utilise secondments (mainly from Welsh Government) as a way of building LSB capacity. Those interviewees who were aware of this strand reported that secondees had been

difficult to recruit, which resulted in time delays and lack of support for LSB capacity-building. Some first round interviewees questioned whether the LSB or Welsh Government would benefit most from secondments as they could help to improve Welsh Government's understanding of local partnerships as much as support LSBs. This question – and the experience of recruiting secondees – requires further exploration.

Integration of the third sector

4.29 There was a consensus among interviewees about the potential contribution of the third sector to developing a strategic, collaborative approach to service improvement. Some mentioned that this role should include co-production as well as formal engagement through partnerships.

4.30 Alongside this recognition of the third sector's potential role, the majority of first round interviewees raised concerns about the challenges of realising this potential in practice. This point is also raised by the survey results in Chapter 5. Stakeholders were worried about the lack of clarity about the multiple roles of the third sector and pointed out that the third sector can be involved in advocacy and lobbying, as well as service delivery. This can raise conflicts of interest, particularly when an organisation is primarily focused on securing grant funding for the delivery of its own services, which may make it difficult to play a more strategic role in, for example, service design and commissioning.

4.31 A second concern related to the fragmented nature of the third sector and therefore the importance of WCVA and CVCs for co-ordination and leadership (with CVCs also a useful source of information about local third sector involvement in LSBs). Some believed that national leadership from both Welsh Government and WCVA was needed to drive the strategic integration of the third sector in collaboration through, for example, Single Integrated Plans.

4.32 Others raised questions about the best way of involving the third sector in the regional and/or cross boundary projects, which means having to address potential trade-offs between bringing services closer to citizens and realising economies of scale. This concern is evidenced in some of the case studies discussed in Chapter 6.

4.33 A third area of concern about enabling effective involvement from the third sector concerned its capacity and sustainability because of its use of short-term funding and staff on fixed-term contracts. It was clear that the ESF-LSB Project funding *alongside* the Making the Connections funding for the third sector (which has funded 15 Making the Connections Officers), has been important in addressing these concerns and, according to some interviewees, is already showing positive effects such as more effective communications between LSBs and third sector organisations . Recent evidence suggests, however, that this has only been achieved to a limited degree (Old Bell 3, 2014).

4.34 Second round interviewees thought that the Project had led to better involvement and integration of the third sector, although this was only notable in the delivery projects that were either third sector-led (such as Third Sector Brokers in West Wales) and/or which relied heavily on the third sector for delivery (e.g. Hedfan in South East Wales and FIT in North Wales).

4.35 They also commented that there is little role for the third sector in some of the projects that are less about citizen outcomes and more about back office improvements and internal change, such as the North Wales Legal Services and ICT Collaboration projects.

4.36 Generally there was a view that the local third sector needs to be fully involved in collaborative service design and this is not happening as much as it should across the Project.

Impacts

4.37 In the first stages of the Project, a lack of clarity and different expectations among members of the Advisory Board of what delivery projects would be able to achieve caused some confusion. It was not clear for the first round of delivery projects what they were supposed to achieve with regard to citizens, but interviewees agreed that it was too early to expect improvements in services which would benefit citizens. They emphasised, at this early stage, the benefits were likely to be improvements in processes such as better communication and increased partnership capacity.

4.38 Several first round interviewees had concerns about what impacts delivery projects could realistically be expected to achieve and how these would be measured. They also worried about whether changes would be attributable to the ESF-LSB project, commenting that "the projects are not very innovative so would it [the outcomes] have happened anyway" and that the projects "are useful but not world changing – they haven't hit the headlines". Our early evidence suggested that these reservations were valid but while some of the delivery projects may not be particularly innovative, there is significant scope for learning from how the projects have been managed and governed as well as the outcomes produced (see Chapter 7).

4.39 The follow-up interviews enabled more reflection on the extent to which the delivery projects had achieved outcomes. The consensus was that some outcomes for service users and citizens had been achieved in a minority of projects. Examples cited by interviewees included the Team around the Family in Swansea and Connecting Families in Bridgend, both of which are resulting in improved outcomes for children and families, and the Third Sector Health and Social Care Brokers, which is leading to more people being cared for at home.

4.40 Other projects such as the North Wales ICT Collaboration and North Wales Legal Services have made efficiencies through collaboration rather than citizen outcomes. Longer-term systems change has been more difficult to achieve.

4.41 Neither group of projects has yet delivered population level outcomes, which interviewees agreed would take longer but should be forthcoming if the collaboration that has led to beneficiary outcomes to date can be sustained.

4.42 Welsh Government officials involved in the follow-up interviews questioned the ability of some delivery projects to either identify achievable and realistic outcomes or to measure them. They were aware that 'project delivery takes priority over monitoring and evaluation of outcomes'.

4.43 Interviewees saw the effectiveness of the LSB leadership, the local authority chief executive and/or local politicians acting as a champion, and the skills of the delivery project manager as key determinants of the success of delivery projects. Some interviewees added the importance of a common focus on outcomes for citizens to break down potential organisational barriers.

4.44 They believed that barriers to success included: the lack of strategic approach, poor or passive LSB leadership, insufficient innovation or ambition, prioritisation of individual organisational priorities and 'ways of working' over a collaborative approach, not enough third sector involvement, and the effects of cuts in public spending.

Learning

4.45 There was a consistent view from interviewees that the Project is an opportunity to test out new approaches, and in particular to develop preventative approaches by working to improve social outcomes in priority thematic areas for the Welsh Government (including older people, families with complex needs and young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

4.46 The interviewees also hope the projects will provide learning about 'what works' (and does not) in delivering better, more cost-effective outcomes for citizens on a range of service areas. Welsh Government officials were keen to use this learning in policy development and guidance to local authorities. Several interviewees stressed the importance of learning about effective processes to deliver outcomes, for example, around citizen engagement and co-production and for feedback on policies such as the move to Single Integrated Plans.

4.47 In addition to a desire to learn from the Project to inform and develop policy areas for which they were responsible, interviewees were also keen that the delivery projects learn from each other, including within regions and between sub-sets of projects, as well as learning from the ESF-LSB project as a whole.

4.48 Echoing their perspectives on capacity-building and cultural change discussed above, interviewees thought that learning opportunities should be offered to local authorities and LSBs to help service directors in local authorities and partner organisations, such as Health Boards, to see the benefits and risks of collaboration, and how to maximise the former and mitigate the latter, which would help drive culture change.

4.49 There was a commonly held view that learning needs to inform what's replicable across diverse areas and/or contexts and how to effectively 'scale up' from projects to mainstream delivery.

4.50 A few interviewees suggested that the Advisory Board and ESF-LSB national team have the potential to do more to promote learning between delivery projects, for local authorities and LSBs, and within Welsh Government.

4.51 Several second round interviewees thought it would be useful for the Welsh Government to synthesise key learning points from the ESF-LSB Development and Delivery Project evaluation with other relevant evaluations such as on Making the Connections, Families First and the ESF-funded project on Collaborative Procurement.

4.52 Welsh Government interviewees stressed the importance of using the learning from this evaluation to inform ongoing and future public service reform including the development of Single Integrated Plans and the Well-being of Future Generations Bill.

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5. All-Wales Public Services Survey - Baseline

5.1 This chapter sets out the detail of findings from the first All-Wales Public Services Survey, carried out to establish a baseline of the extent of collaboration within and between the public and third sector in delivering public services.

5.2 The survey coverage was informed by findings from the literature review, the development of the theory of change, and previous evaluations carried out in Wales (Martin *et al.*, 2011). Topics covered by the questionnaire included the following:

- the context in which the project/partnership is operating;
- the focus of the project/partnership and its set up (who is involved and to what extent), the collaborative capacity of members;
- the delivery of the project/partnership – leadership, behaviours and integration between members;
- the support the project receives from members and the ESF-LSB national team and Welsh Government more widely; and
- the impact of the funding and the success of projects against their stated aims.

5.3 This survey establishes a baseline on the nature and extent of collaborative working in the Welsh public services in 2013. A repeat of the survey will be carried out in 2015, at which stage it will become possible to analyse change over time and this will contribute to the analysis of the effectiveness of the ESF-LSB Project. In the meantime, the data collected in the first survey provide a useful snapshot of partnership working across the public services and an early look at the ESF-LSB funded projects.

5.4 The survey methodology is described in Chapter 3. In terms of the analysis, where significant differences are referred to, they are based on a t-test at a 95% level of confidence.

Responses

5.5 There were 355 responses. Just over a third (125) came from people who were directly involved in ESF-LSB delivery projects. All but one of the 38 projects that were in existence at the time of the survey was represented in the responses, and 22 responses came from those involved in WLGA Regional Partnership Board projects.

5.6 The remaining 230 responses came from those working with Local Service Boards (109), Regional Partnership Boards (34), Communities First Partnerships (12) or other forms of partnership working (75) (see Figure 5.1). For the purposes of analysis, these were all referred to as "other" partnerships (as opposed to ESF-LSB delivery projects).

Figure 5.1: Responses by type of partnership

Base: All respondents (355)
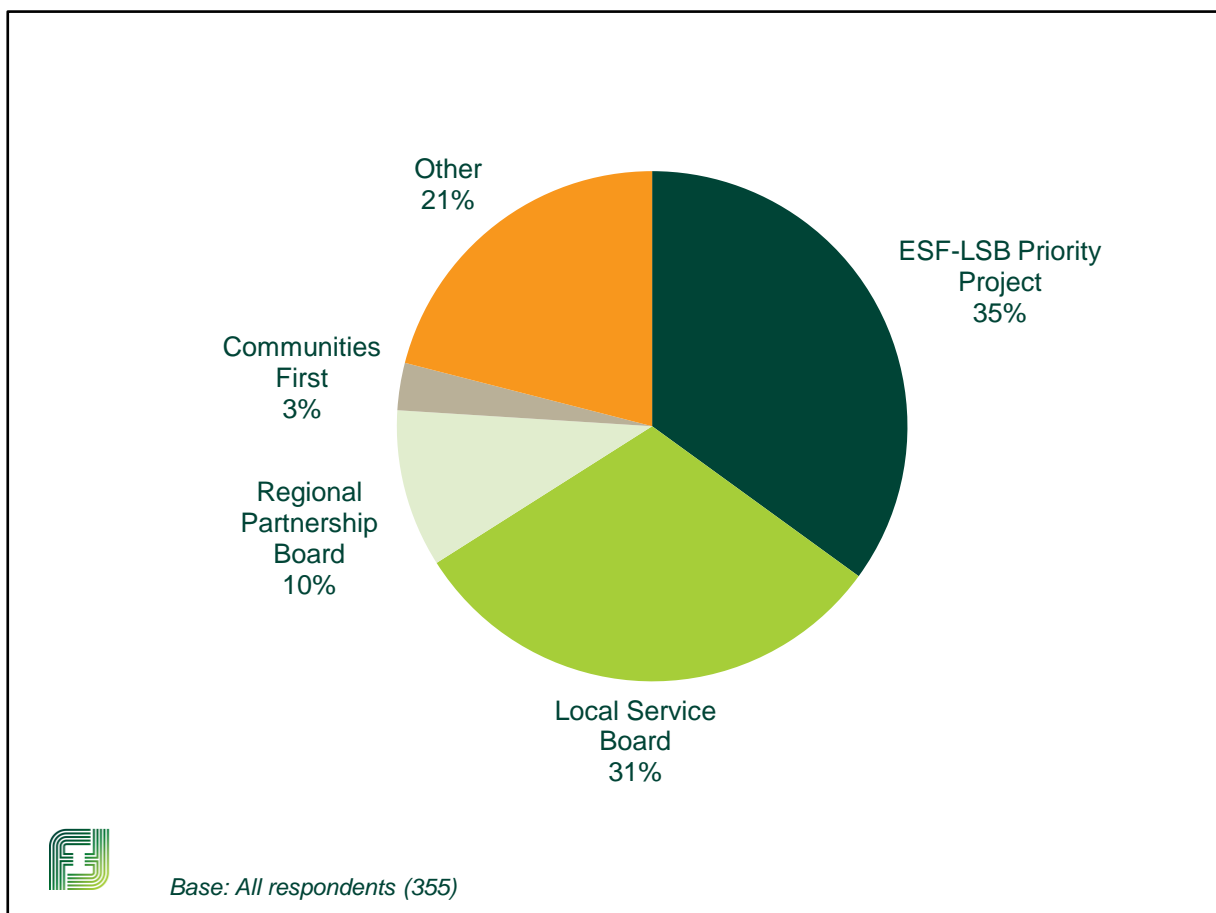
5.7 The survey included responses from people in a wide range of different roles, including ESF-LSB delivery project members and project managers, members of LSBs and RPBs, Communities First co-ordinators and Heads of Service and second level officers in local authorities and CVCs. Figure 5.2 shows the respondent profile by role.

Figure 5.2: Profile of respondents by role

Base: All respondents (355)
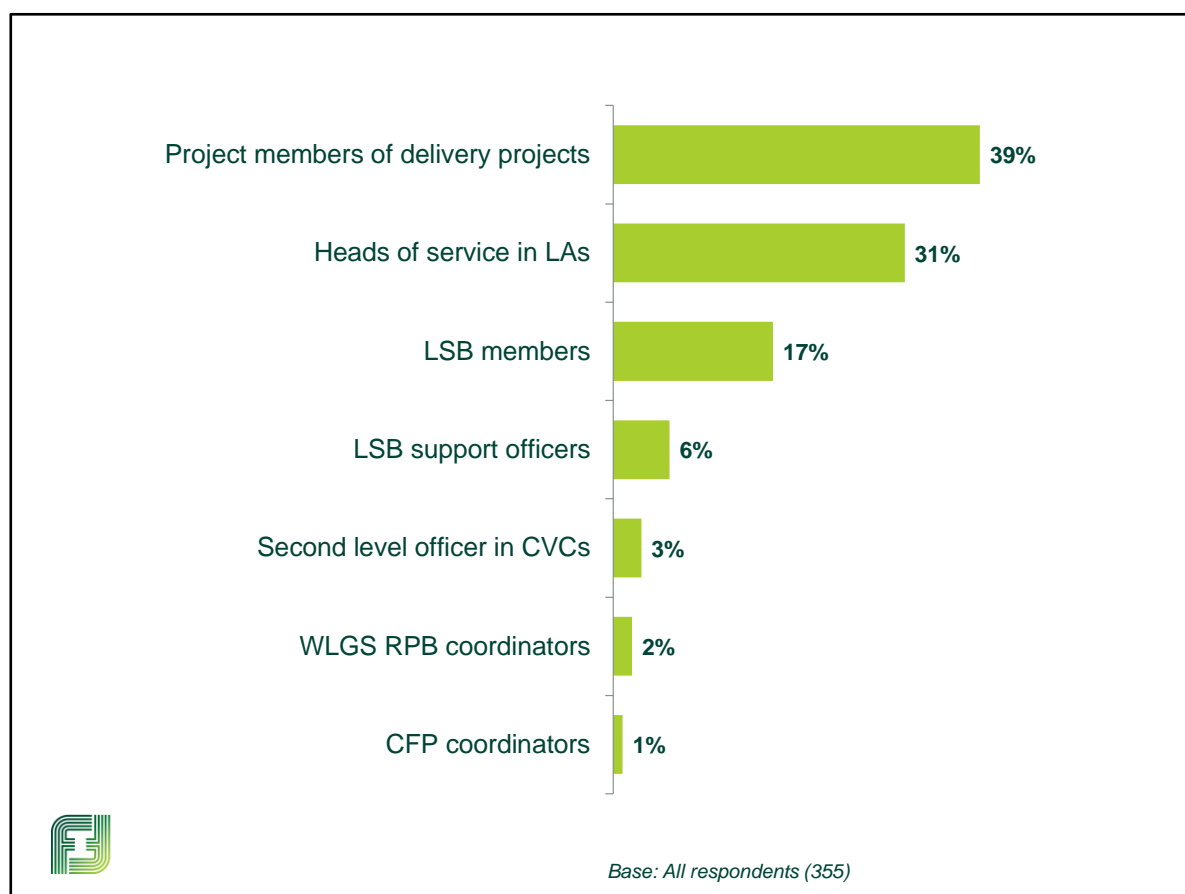
Nature of projects and partnerships

5.8 Typically, projects and partnerships tended to be made up of representatives from organisations whose remits varied from strategic to more operational activities. Most commonly, (39%) respondents reported on projects and partnerships that involved 6-10 organisations. Around a fifth (19%) of respondents said the partnership/project in question involved five or fewer organisations, and a similar proportion (18%) said it involved 10 or more; a quarter (24%) were not sure. This demonstrates the size and complexity of the

partnerships under discussion. The profile was similar for both ESF-LSB delivery projects and for other types of partnership.

5.9   All of the delivery projects had been running for less than one year at the time of the survey. Other partnerships were typically longer-standing – just 10% had been operating for a year or less and 9% had been operating for more than a decade (Figure 5.3). It is important to take the age of the other partnerships into consideration when making comparisons in the analysis, as longer-standing partnerships might be expected to be better established and had more time to secure success in delivering outcomes.

Figure 5.3: Age of other non-ESF funded partnerships for comparison

One year or less 10%

2-3 years 19%

4-5 years 14%

6-10 years 21%

Over 10 years 9%

Don't know 26%

Base: All non-national level respondents involved in "other" partnerships (117)
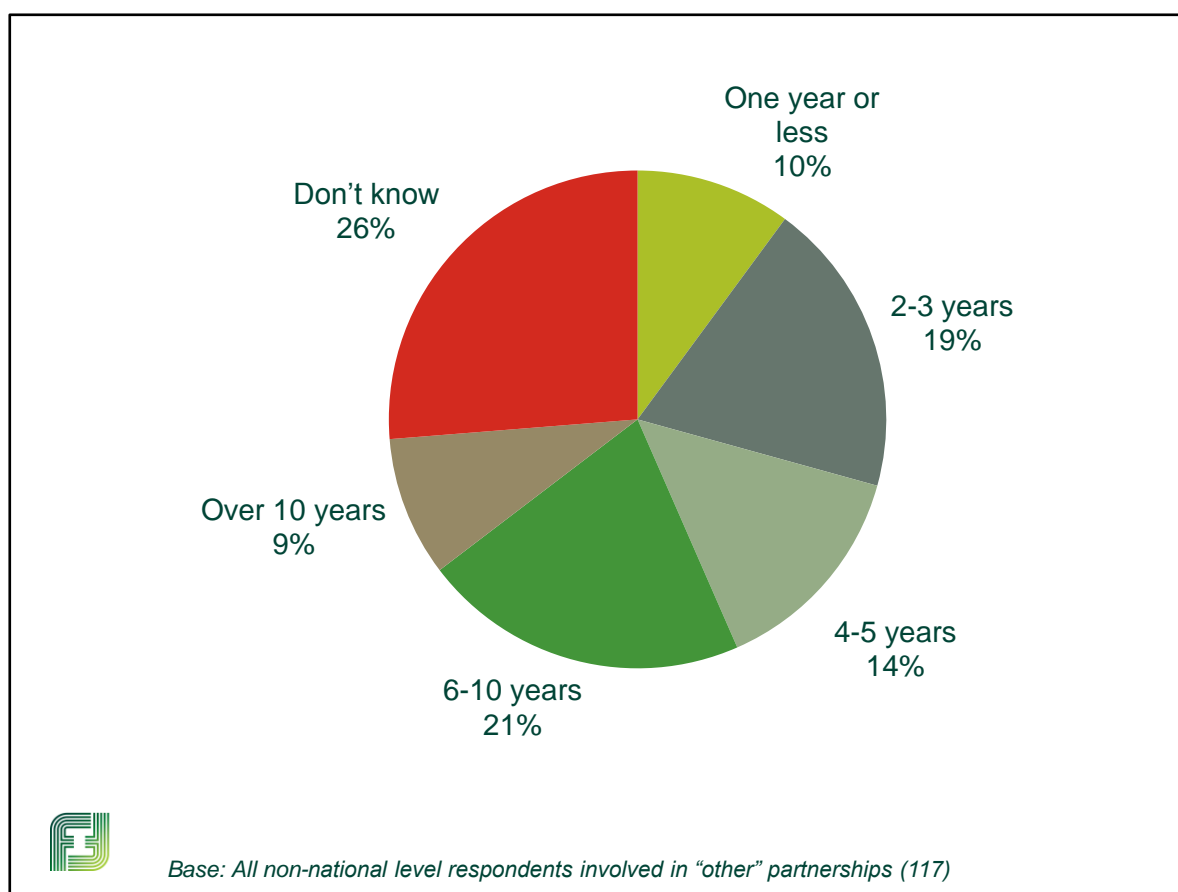
Project/Partnership Focus

5.10 In making comparisons it is important to understand the foci of the delivery projects and other partnerships, to establish the extent to which we are

comparing like with like. This also enables us to consider the extent to which the delivery projects' objectives reflect the overarching aims of the ESF-LSB Project.

5.11 The focus of each delivery project was assessed through a series of statements that respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represented "a major focus" and 7 "not really a focus at all". Figure 5.4 shows the proportion of respondents that rated each statement as a "major focus" (a score of 1 or 2) and those who said it was "not really a focus at all" (a score of 6 or 7) – for delivery projects and other partnerships.

Figure 5.4: Foci of projects/partnerships

Base: All respondents (355) – ESF-LSB Delivery project (125), Other project/partnership (230)
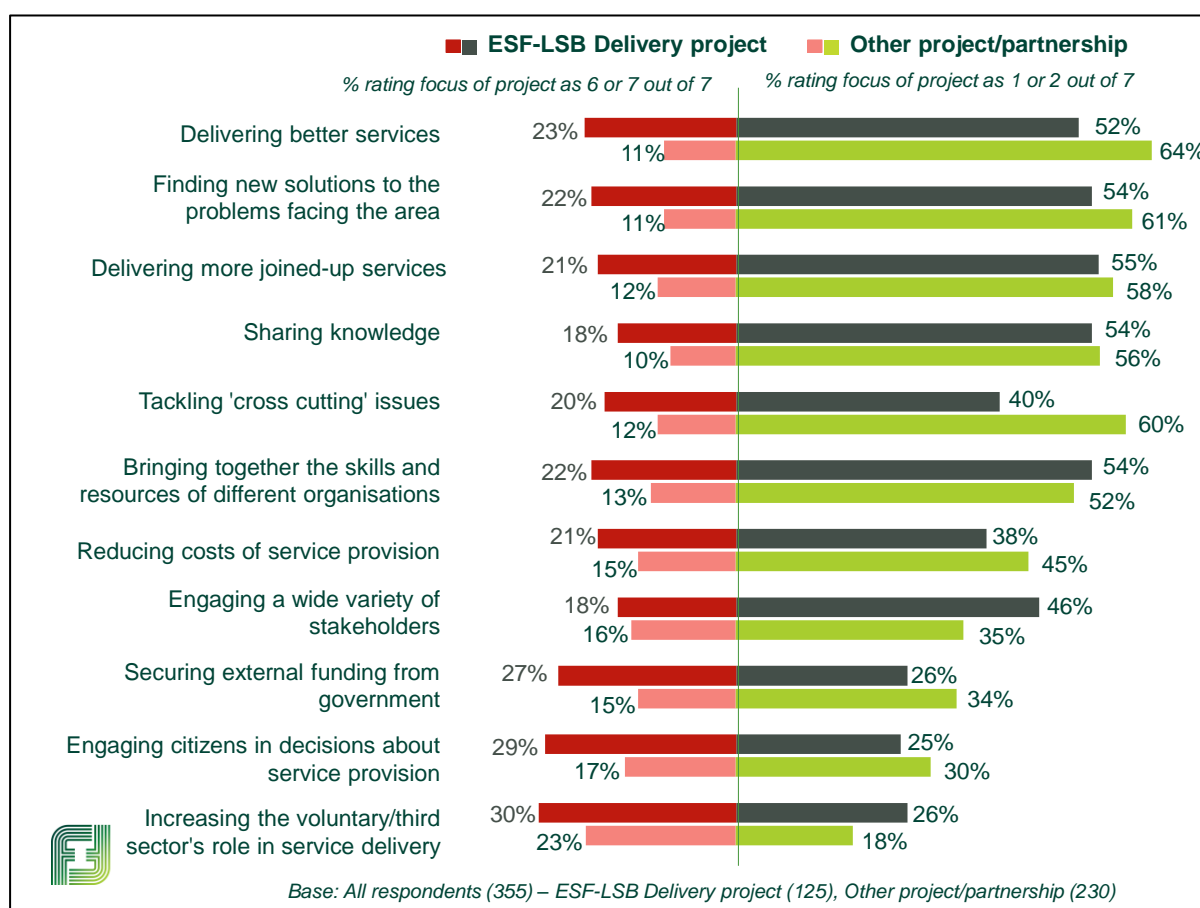
5.12 The most common foci of ESF-LSB funded projects were:

- delivering more joined up services (55%);
- finding new solutions to the problems facing the area (54%); and
- bringing together the skills and resources of different organisations (54%).

5.13 This reflects the ESF-LSB Project's aim of improving collaborative capacity and using resources more effectively. However, there was much less emphasis on increasing citizen engagement (25%), and the role of the third sector in service delivery (26%) 30% of respondents suggested that the third sector were not a focus at all in their delivery project in spite of this being one of the key aims of the ESF–LSB Project (for similar findings see Old Bell 3, 2014).

5.14 Broadly speaking, respondents from the other (non-ESF-LSB) partnerships reported similar foci to delivery projects, suggesting they are a suitable comparator to the delivery projects. However, a significantly greater proportion reported that their partnerships were focused on:

- delivering better services;
- tackling 'cross cutting' issues; and
- engaging a wide variety of stakeholders compared to other partnerships.

Project/Partnership Delivery

5.15 The survey asked about a range of behaviours that previous research has indicated contribute to effective collaboration. When the follow-up survey is run, comparisons will be made to determine whether there is any difference in reported behaviours between projects that achieved their objectives and those which have been less successful. At this formative stage, it is useful to look at the results of the first survey to see how the delivery is being conducted and identify if there are any differences in the way delivery projects and other non-ESF funded partnerships are set up.

Project Managers of ESF-LSB delivery projects

5.16 The ESF-LSB Project is predicated on the assumption that project managers are central to the delivery projects. It is their performance that will shape the success or failure of a project, subject to other local institutional factors. Indeed, in the majority of instances the ESF funding has been used to fund project managers.

5.17 In order to better understand the effectiveness of project managers in delivery projects, respondents from ESF-LSB projects were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with a range of statements regarding their role. Responses

are shown in Figure 5.5 below. A few (13%) respondents were project managers and therefore reporting on themselves. Whilst they were slightly more positive about their performance than the other respondents, this did not significantly alter the overall figures so their responses have been included in the analysis.

Figure 5.5: The role of project managers
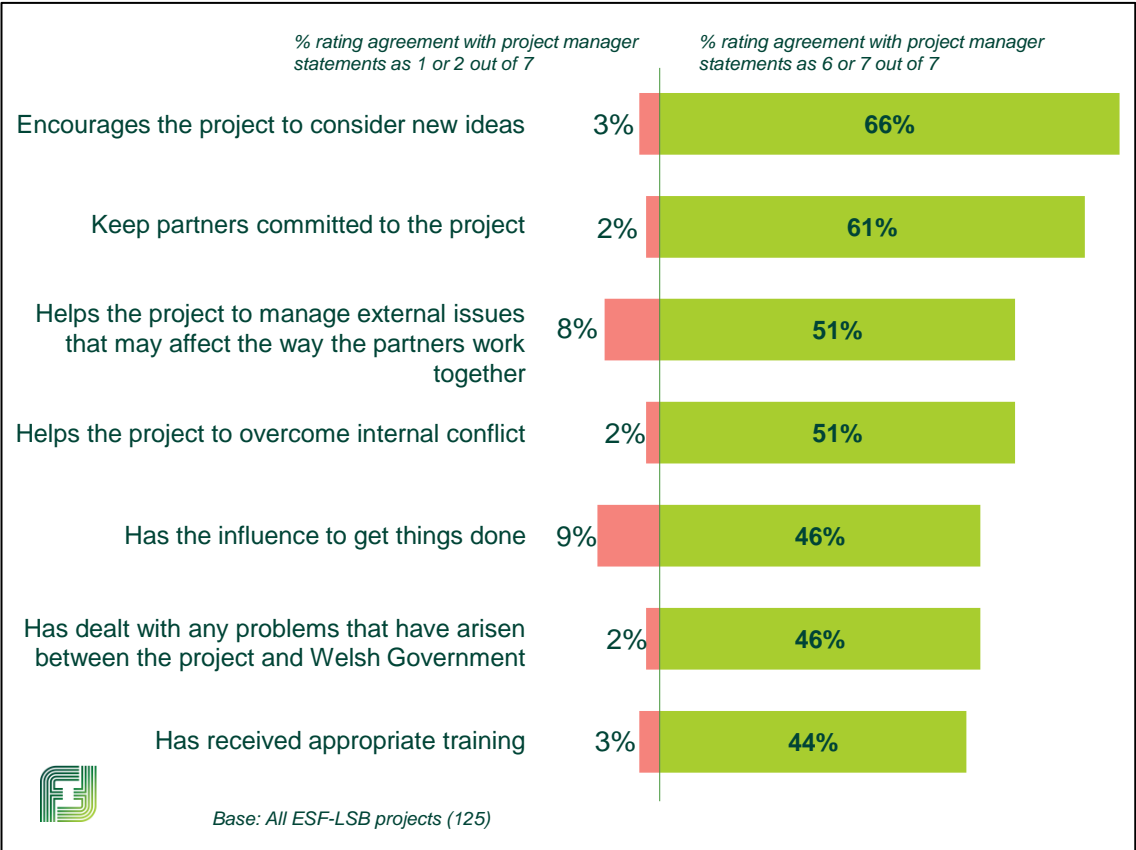
5.18 As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, project managers were seen as having a number of important roles including:

- encouraging projects to consider new ideas (66% agreed/strongly agreed); and

- keeping partners committed to the project (60%).

5.19 However, fewer than half of respondents believed they had been effective in getting things done and dealing with problems between the project and the Welsh Government. Only 41% reported that their project manager had received appropriate training.

Collaborative Behaviours

5.20 To better understand governance arrangements, all respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements concerning the inner workings of the delivery project or partnership (Figure 5.6).

5.21 The indications, when the ESF-LSB delivery projects are compared to other partnerships, is that these projects are viewed as more collaborative and are less likely to rely on any one individual person or organisation when making decisions. Those involved with ESF-LSB delivery projects were significantly less likely to strongly agree that 'a small number of players make the most of the key decisions in the partnership' than those involved with other partnerships (30% compared with 49%). This suggests that when considering decision-making behaviour, ESF-LSB funded projects appear more collaborative and democratic. This could be a result of delivery projects using Project Boards as the decision-making body. They were also less likely to agree that the partnership depends on the quality of personal relationships between local service leaders (49% compared with 64% for other partnerships) which may reflect the self-contained nature of delivery projects as opposed to partnerships trying to influence mainstream delivery.

5.22 Those involved with delivery projects were also more likely to strongly agree that the partnership has clear vision and shared goals (61% responding a 6 or 7 out of 7).

5.23 Across most other statements there was little difference between the views of respondents from delivery projects and those from other partnerships.

Figure 5.6: Project or partnership working (most cited features)

Base: All respondents (355) – ESF-LSB Delivery project (125), Other project/partnership (230)
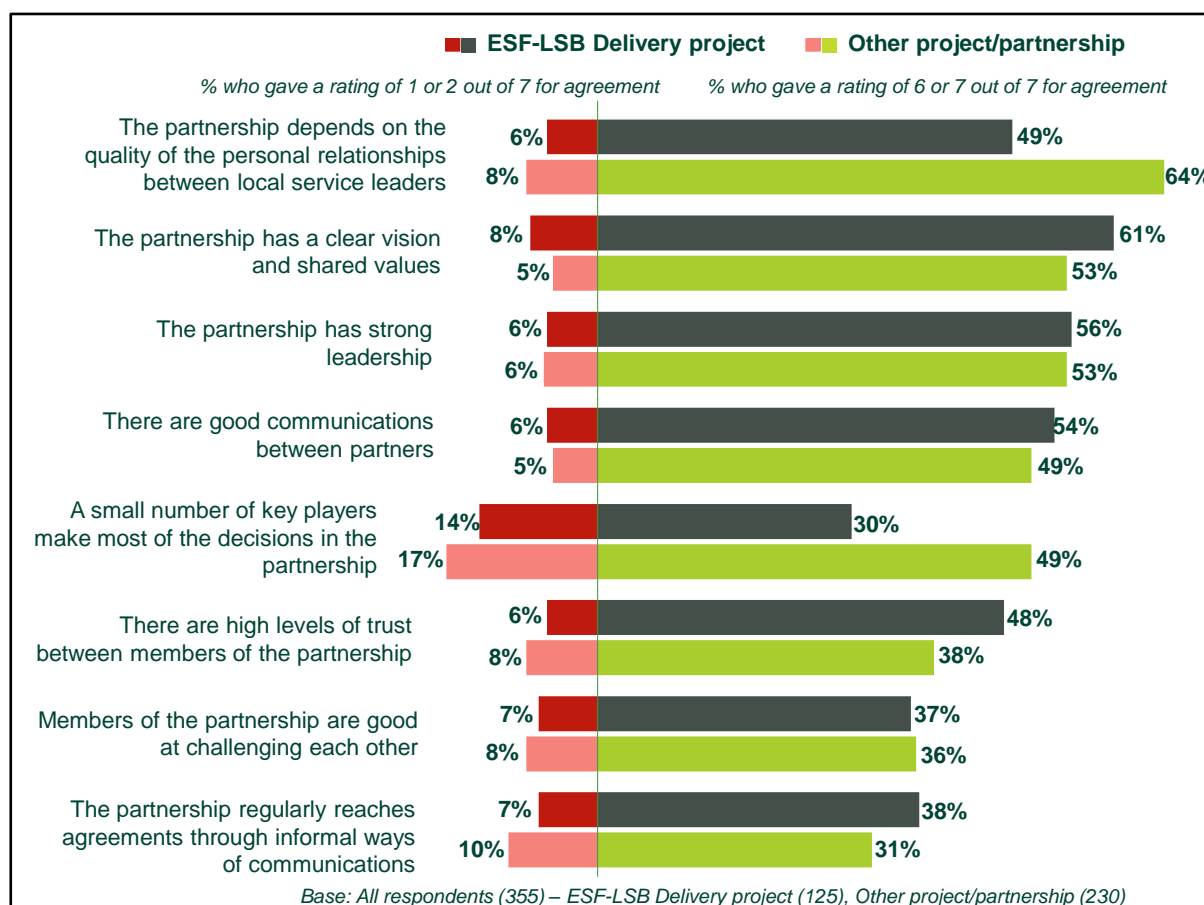
5.24 The statements shown in Figure 5.7 were asked as part of the same question as those in Figure 5.6, but have lower levels of agreement. The main differences between delivery projects and other partnerships were that the level of collaboration appears higher in delivery projects and significantly more respondents involved with delivery projects strongly agreed that the contributions, risks and rewards are fairly distributed among partners than among those involved with other partnerships (29% compared with 19%).

5.25 There is also evidence that delivery projects are seen as more effective. A significantly larger proportion of respondents from these projects strongly disagreed that 'the partnership takes a long time to get anything done' (33% rating this a 1 or 2 out of 7 compared with 25% from other partnerships).

5.26 Overall, the ratings for delivery projects in relation to partnership working were more positive than for other partnerships, with respondents rating them as

having a clearer vision, strong leadership, good communications and more trust between partners.

Figure 5.7: Project or partnership working (least cited features)

Base: All respondents (355) – ESF-LSB Delivery project (125), Other project/partnership (230)
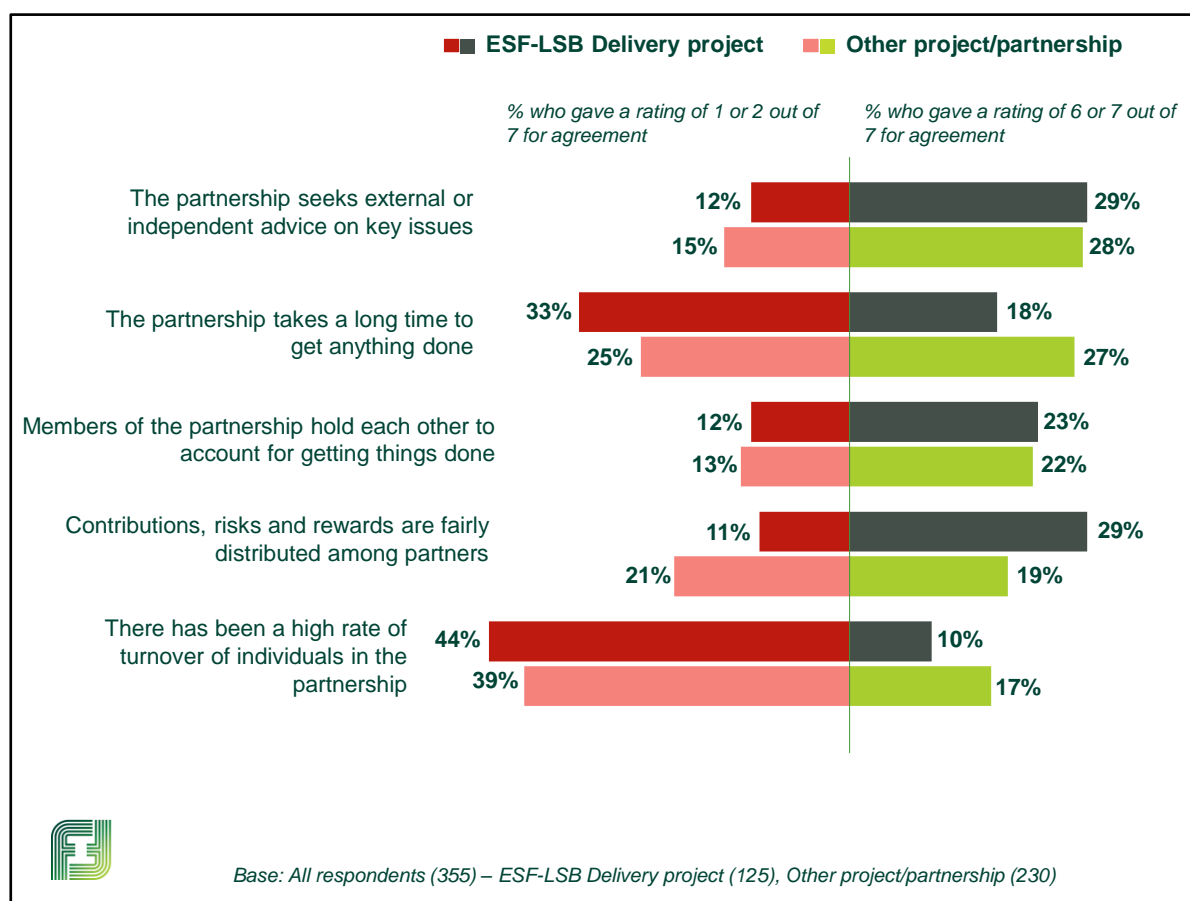
Integration

5.27 Respondents were also asked to respond to a series of statements about the level of integration amongst member organisations within their projects and partnerships – a key indicator as to the level of collaborative working. The proportion that rated the extent of integration a 6 or 7 and the proportion that rated integration a 1 or 2 out of 7 for each statement are shown in Figure 5.8.

5.28 The most common forms of integration within both ESF-LSB delivery projects and other partnerships were that they would 'Share information with each other' (rated 6 or 7 by 53% for ESF-LSB delivery projects, 47% by respondents from other partnerships), and 'Undertake joint activities to address specific problems' (rated 6 or 7 by 40% for delivery projects, 47% for other partnerships).

5.29 Significantly more respondents involved with delivery projects rated the level of integration highly for making 'joint use of buildings/ office space/ other equipment' compared with other partnerships (38% rated this 6 or 7 out of 7 for integration compared with 27%). Respondents involved with delivery projects were less likely to rate the extent of integration highly for the project having 'joint strategies and plans to address specific problems, issues or needs' compared with other partnerships (36% compared with 47% respectively) which is likely to reflect the confines of the delivery-based project rather than more strategic partnerships.

5.30 Integrated IT systems were uncommon in both delivery projects and other partnerships, though significantly more respondents rated the level of integration for this statement as low (a score of 1 or 2 out of 7) for other partnerships than for delivery projects (57% compared with 44% respectively).

5.31 Taken as a whole, the level of integration appears broadly similar across delivery projects and other non-ESF partnerships, though there are some signs of greater integration in terms of "hardware" with the delivery projects (e.g. sharing building space).

Figure 5.8: Integration amongst partner organisations

Base: All respondents (355) – ESF-LSB Delivery project (125), Other project/partnership (230)
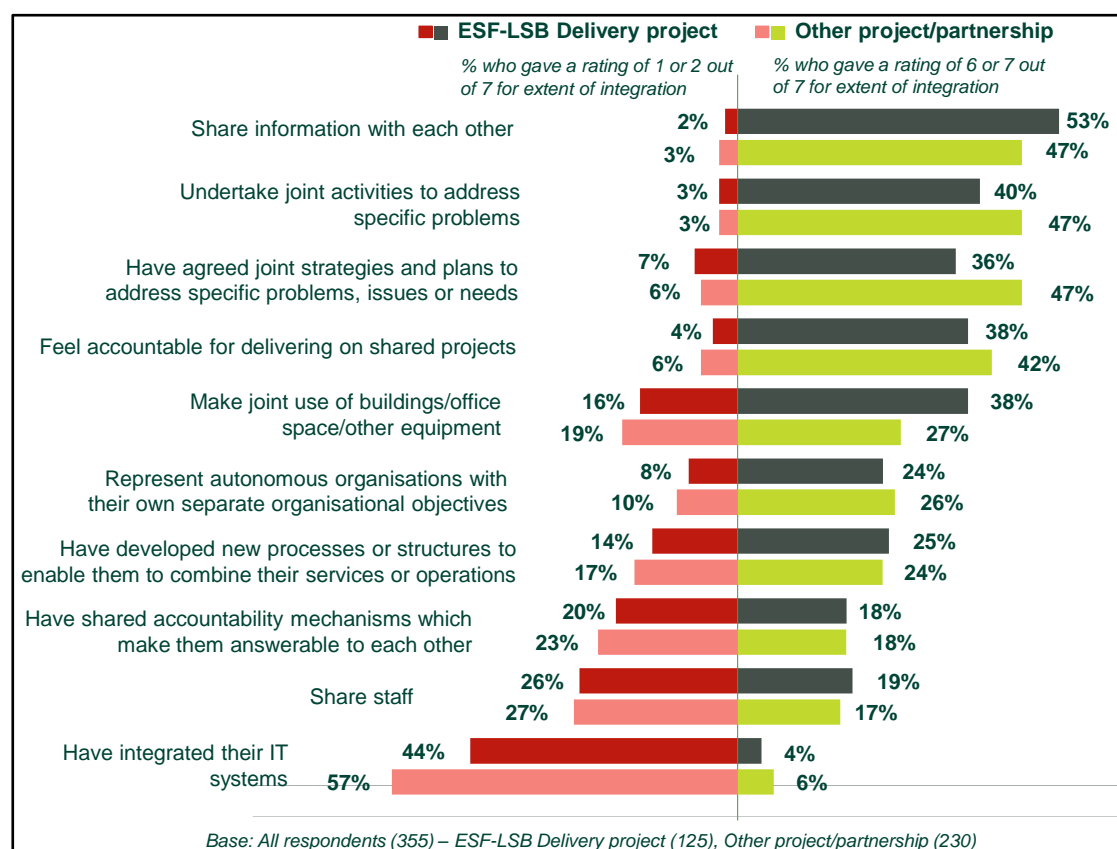
Project/partnership record of collaboration

5.32 Respondents were also asked to rate their project/partnership's record of sharing resources, funding and finding solutions to benefit the local area (Figure 5.9).

5.33 More than half (54%) of all respondents involved with ESF-LSB delivery projects strongly agreed that the project had a good record of 'Finding solutions to problems facing the area', significantly higher than that found among other partnerships (35%). Just under half (49%) strongly agreed that they had a good record of sharing resources, again this was significantly higher than among respondents from other partnerships (18%). This provides evidence that delivery projects are, on the whole, more 'joined up' and collaborative than is the norm in Wales.

5.34 Delivery projects and other partnerships were found to have similar records for securing new funding. In both cases, only a small proportion of respondents reported that their project/partnership had a good record.

Figure 5.9: Sharing resources and funding and finding solutions

Base: All respondents (355) – ESF-LSB Delivery project (125), Other project/partnership (230)
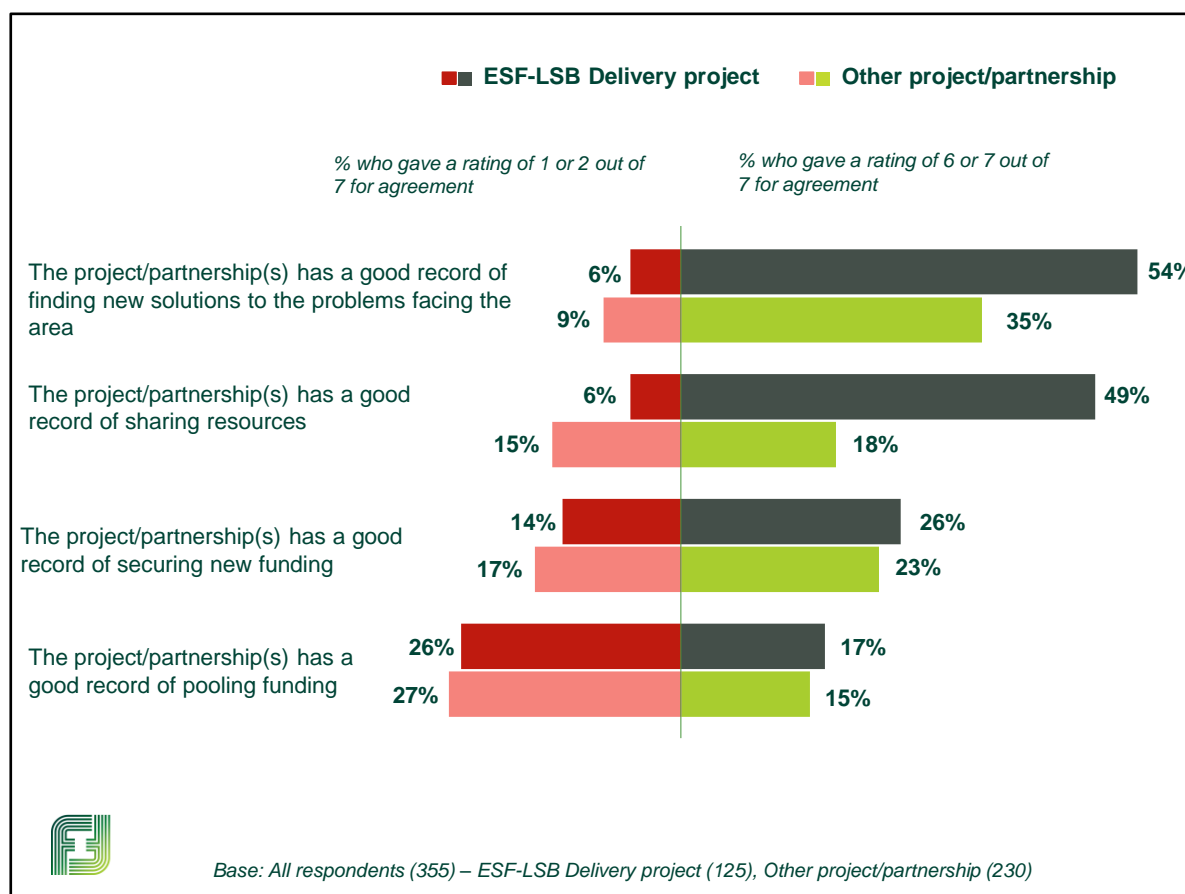
ESF-LSB Delivery Project Support

5.35 The level of support afforded to delivery projects by their Local Service Board and the Welsh Government ESF-LSB national team is likely to impact on the success of the project as a whole. The survey therefore gathered views from respondents as to how effective this support had been.

Support from local and national teams

5.36 Just over half of respondents involved with delivery projects strongly agreed that their LSB has been supportive of the project (54%); just 3% strongly disagreed (a score of 1 or 2 out of 7). This is a surprisingly low given that these projects are meant to be led by the LSB. A large majority (81%) of project managers agreed, however, that the LSB had been supportive and none strongly disagreed.

5.37 Respondents were also asked to rate the extent to which their project/partnership had received support from the ESF-LSB national team in Welsh Government. Figure 5.10 shows the proportions that strongly agreed (score of 6 or 7 out of 7) or strongly disagreed (score of 1 or 2) that they received support.

5.38 Just under half (47%) of respondents reported that the national team had a good relationship with their project. Only 4% strongly disagreed. Two-fifths (40%) strongly agreed that the national team monitored their performance closely. Only 30% believed that the national team is good at disseminating good practice and 26% felt that it helped the project to achieve its WEFO indicators or provides advice on how to tackle problems. It is worth noting however that very few respondents actively disagreed with these statements.

5.39 Overall respondents were positive about the support they received, but a large proportion of respondents, particularly those who are not project managers, said they did not know what involvement the ESF-LSB national team had had with their project.

Figure 5.10: Agreement with statements regarding support from the LSB and the ESF-LSB national team

% who gave a rating of 1 or 2 out of 7 for agreement   _% who gave a rating of 6 or 7 out of 7 for agreement_

The Local Service Board has been very supportive of the project — 3% | 54%

The ESF LSB national team…

% who gave a rating of 1 or 2 out of 7 for agreement   _% who gave a rating of 6 or 7 out of 7 for agreement_

Has a good relationship with the project — 4% | 47%

Monitors the performance of the project very closely — 2% | 40%

Is good at disseminating good practice — 5% | 30%

Helped the project to achieve its WEFO indicators — 6% | 26%

Provides advice on how to tackle practical problems — 7% | 26%

Base: All ESF-LSB projects (125)

Capacity of key members of project/partnership

5.40 Another measure of the support which delivery projects and other partnerships are receiving, is the capacity of partners to engage with them. Figure 5.11 shows the proportion of respondents who reported (a score of 6 or 7 out of 7) that certain organisations or representatives (represented by the darker bar) were key members of delivery projects. Respondents were then asked the extent to which they agreed that each particular organisation has the capacity (staff, financial resources, knowledge) to engage fully in the project. The proportion strongly agreeing (a score of 6 or 7 out of 7) that the organisation does have capacity to fully engage is represented by the lighter bars.

Figure 5.11: Key members of projects

Base: ESF-LSB Delivery project (125)
% who gave a rating of 6 or 7 out of 7 for agreement.
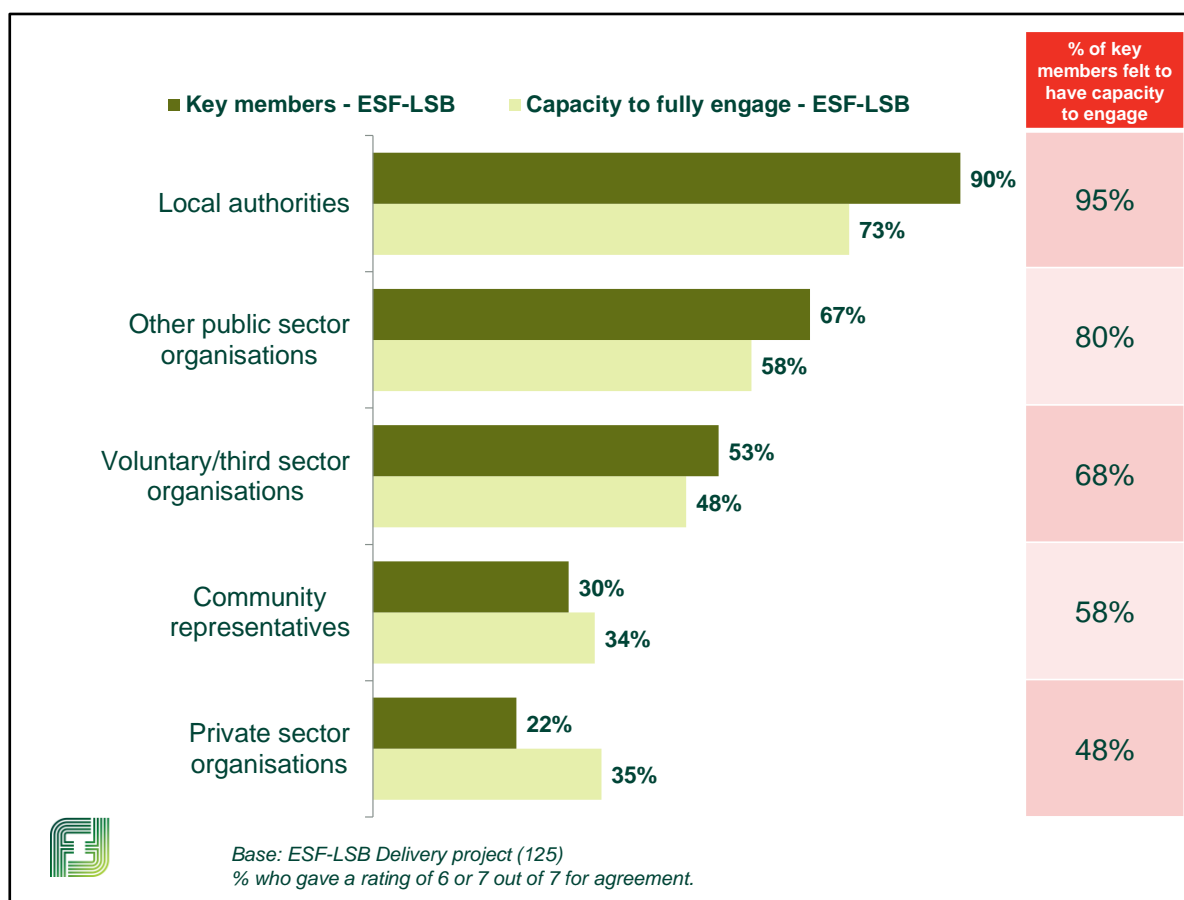
5.41 The figures in the table on the far right of Figure 5.11 show the proportion of respondents who reported that each organisation was a key member of the project, also said they had the capacity to fully engage.

5.42 The results show that, where local authorities are seen as key members, they are also usually seen as having the capacity to engage fully with the project. Almost all respondents from delivery projects said their local authorities were key members of the project (90%). Overall 73% of all projects said local authorities had the capacity to engage with the project whether or not they were a key member, and of those who said they were key members this went up to 95%. A similar pattern was apparent in respect of other public sector organisations. However, fewer respondents saw third sector organisations as having the capacity to engage fully, even though they often saw them as key members of a project. This is a concern because one of the aims of the ESF-LSB funding is to increase collaboration with the third sector; further analysis

and evidence from the Making the Connections evaluation (Old Bell 3, 2014) will be undertaken to explore this finding. Only a minority of respondents saw community representatives and the private sector as key members of projects.

Impact of funding for ESF-LSB delivery projects

Additionality of ESF-LSB funding

5.43 Two-thirds (67%) of respondents representing delivery projects believed that they would not have happened without ESF-LSB funding. This result is positive and tallies with views from our case studies. We will be testing this perception further in our second phase of case studies.

5.44 Half of the respondents indicated that delivery projects were sustainable. A third (34%) thought that they were fairly likely to continue beyond the ESF-LSB funding; 16% said they were very likely to do so. This suggests that the ESF-LSB funding has generated a lasting commitment to projects which should have longer-term benefits for the local areas. However, a quarter (26%) felt that it was unlikely the projects would continue without the funding. The remaining 26% did not know whether their projects had a long-term future. Austerity within public sector funding will continue in the next few years and this may result in a difficult environment for projects to continue after the ESF-LSB funding ends. A case in point is the North Wales ICT Project (Chapter 7) which ceased to carry on after funding ended (also see IPC, 2013).

Decisions on the allocation of ESF-LSB funding

5.45 Respondents were asked for their views on the transparency and speed of the decision-making process about ESF-LSB funding to their projects. Fewer than half (38%) strongly agreed that the decisions were transparent. Most were either neutral or unsure.

5.46 Just over a fifth (21%) strongly agreed that decisions on the funding of delivery projects were made quickly, but a very similar proportion (22%) strongly disagreed. These results coincide with the reflections made by national stakeholders in Chapter 4.

Impact of funding

5.47 Respondents were asked about what the ESF-LSB funding had enabled partners in the projects to achieve. Figure 5.12 shows the proportions that said each outcome had been enabled to 'a great extent' (score of 6 or 7 out of 7) and 'not at all' (score of 1 or 2 out of 7).

5.48 Just over half (54%) reported that the funding had helped to 'speed up collaboration' (only 4% that scored it a 1 or 2). Half of respondents involved in delivery projects believed that the funding enabled outcomes to be achieved sooner than they would have done without funding. Similar findings were reported in the case studies chapters and these will be validated in future research, including examining the results of local evaluations of projects.

Figure 5.12: Extent to which ESF funding has enabled benefits

Extent ESF funding has allowed partners to…

% who gave a rating of 1 or 2 out of 7 for extent of each | % who gave a rating of 6 or 7 out of 7 for extent of each

	1 or 2	6 or 7
Speed up collaboration	4%	54%
Produce outcomes sooner than would otherwise have been possible	4%	50%
Produce outcomes that would not have been possible without it	6%	50%
Bring in added expertise	6%	45%
Make collaboration more sustainable	8%	45%
Promote equality	11%	22%
Promote environmental sustainability	17%	19%

Base: All ESF-LSB projects (125)

5.49 Few respondents believed that ESF funding has allowed partners to promote equality (22%) or to promote environmental sustainability (19%). These are both key stated aims of the provision of ESF funding and it will be important for our future case study work to find out why this is happening.

Delivery success of projects/partnerships against major foci

5.50 Respondents were asked to report on the success of delivery projects and other partnerships in addressing the foci outlined earlier in this chapter. Figure 5.13 shows the proportion that strongly agreed (a score of 6 or 7 out of 7) or strongly disagreed (a score of 1 or 2 out of 7) with each statement.

Figure 5.13 Success in meeting project or partnership goals

Base: All respondents (355) – ESF-LSB Delivery project (125), Other project/partnership (230)
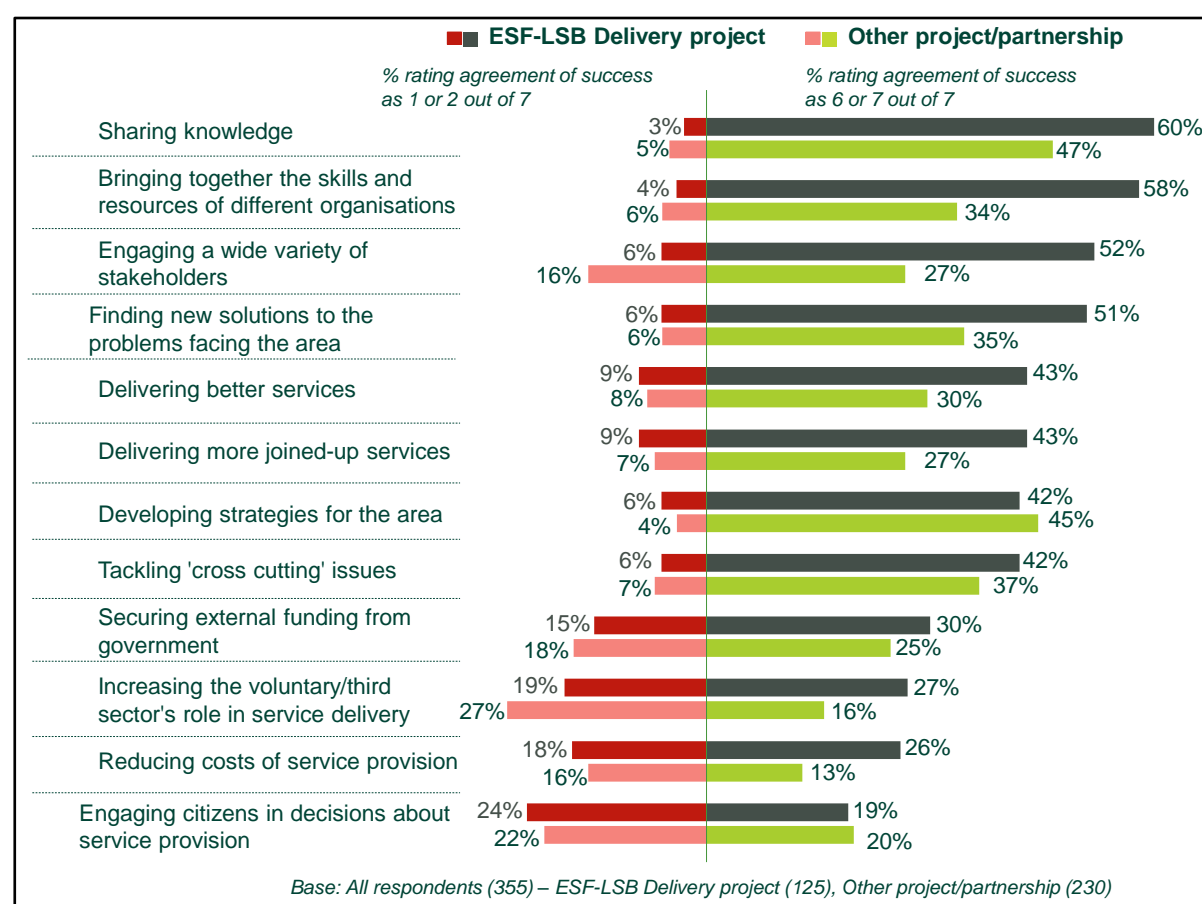
5.51 Even at this early stage, respondents from ESF-LSB delivery projects were more positive about the extent to which they are meeting their objectives than their counterparts from other partnerships.

5.52 Delivery projects scored particularly highly in terms of 'sharing knowledge' (60% strongly agree the project has been successful in this regard) and 'bringing together the skills and resources of different organisations' (58% strongly agree this has been successful). On both of these measures, delivery projects scored significantly higher than non-ESF partnerships (47% and 34% respectively). Similar findings are reported in the case study chapters.

5.53 The levels of strong agreement that projects have been successful in 'engaging a wide variety of stakeholders' were also significantly higher among respondents involved with delivery projects (52% compared with 27% respectively). This particular focus showed the largest difference between ESF-LSB delivery projects and other partnerships and almost three times as many non-ESF respondents strongly disagreed that the partnership was successful on this (16% compared with 6% for delivery projects – a significant difference).

5.54 Delivery projects also score well in terms of outcomes to benefit the local area, with respondents significantly more likely than those rating other non-ESF partnerships to strongly agree that the project had been successful at 'finding new solutions for the problems facing the area' (51% compared with 35%), 'delivering better services' (43% compared with 30%), and 'delivering more joined-up services' (43% compared with 30%). The case study findings point toward similar results, except for the delivery of better services. Further evidence needs to be assessed in future stages of the evaluation.

5.55 According to the survey, delivery projects perform least well when it comes to 'engaging citizens in decisions about service provision', and this was the only area where respondents that strongly disagreed outweighed those that strongly agreed (24% compared with 19%). This result may reflect the fact that citizen engagement may not be a focus for some delivery projects. Scores on this question are also low for non-ESF partnerships, suggesting a more systemic issue for Welsh public services to address (Welsh Government, 2014). Only 27% of respondents agreed that their delivery project has increased the role of the third sector in the delivery of services. This suggests that there is room for improvement in getting citizens and organisations engaged in co-producing services.
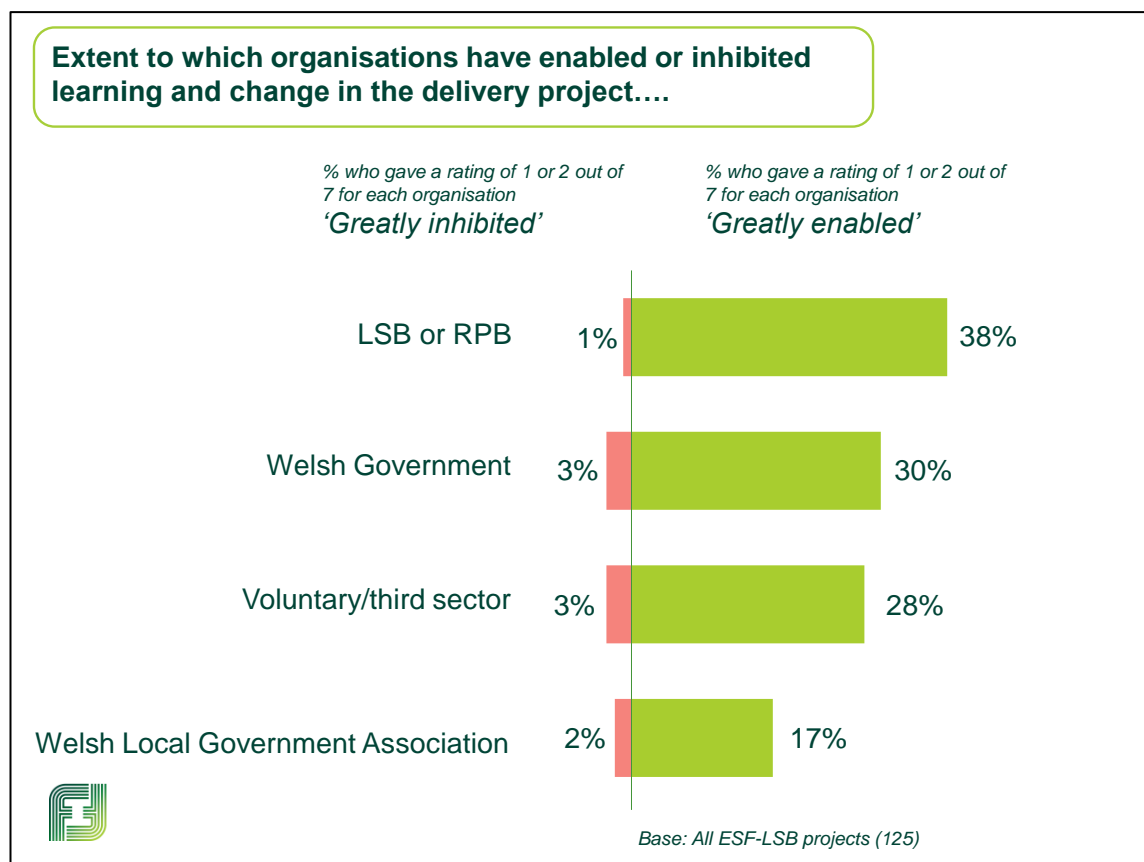
Project learning and change

5.56 Increasing learning and sharing of knowledge and best practice across public services is another key aim of the overarching ESF-LSB Project. Respondents answering about delivery projects were asked to rate factors and organisations that have most contributed to this learning.

Organisations that have enabled or inhibited learning and change

5.57 Local Service Boards and Regional Partnership Boards were seen by respondents involved with delivery projects as the organisations that had the greatest impact in enabling learning and change in the delivery of the project. Just under two-fifths of respondents rated the extent to which LSB or RPB had enabled learning and change as a 6 or 7 out of 7, compared to only 1% who felt they had greatly inhibited learning and change (a score of 1 or 2 out of 7 – see Figure 5.14).

5.58 Only 30% of respondents reported that the Welsh Government had played a very significant role in enabling learning and change, compared to 28% who said this was true of the third sector. Only 1 in 6 respondents felt that the Welsh Local Government Association had greatly enabled learning and change. Across all organisations, the majority of respondents either did not know if the organisation had enabled or inhibited learning and change, or remained neutral. Despite the self-reporting nature of these results, they provide some food for thought on how national or representative organisations need to co-ordinate better between themselves to promote learning.

Figure 5.14: Organisations that have enabled or inhibited learning and change

Extent to which organisations have enabled or inhibited learning and change in the delivery project….

% who gave a rating of 1 or 2 out of 7 for each organisation *'Greatly inhibited'*

% who gave a rating of 1 or 2 out of 7 for each organisation *'Greatly enabled'*

Organisation	Greatly inhibited	Greatly enabled
LSB or RPB	1%	38%
Welsh Government	3%	30%
Voluntary/third sector	3%	28%
Welsh Local Government Association	2%	17%

Base: All ESF-LSB projects (125)

Factors contributing to learning and change

5.59 Respondents were also asked to consider other factors contributing to learning and change in their delivery project (Figure 5.15).

5.60 Respondents mentioned a wide variety of mechanisms which had promoted learning and change. The most frequently cited were 'examples of good practice' (70%), 'networking with other delivery projects' (64%) and 'reviewing and redesigning processes' (62%).

Figure 5.15: Factors contributing to learning and change in delivery projects

Factors contributing to learning and change in the delivery project….

Examples of good practice	70%
Networking with other delivery projects	64%
Reviewing and redesigning processes	62%
Evidence based data	54%
Managerial leadership	48%
Evaluation	46%
Staff training	43%
None of these	6%

Base: All ESF-LSB projects (125)
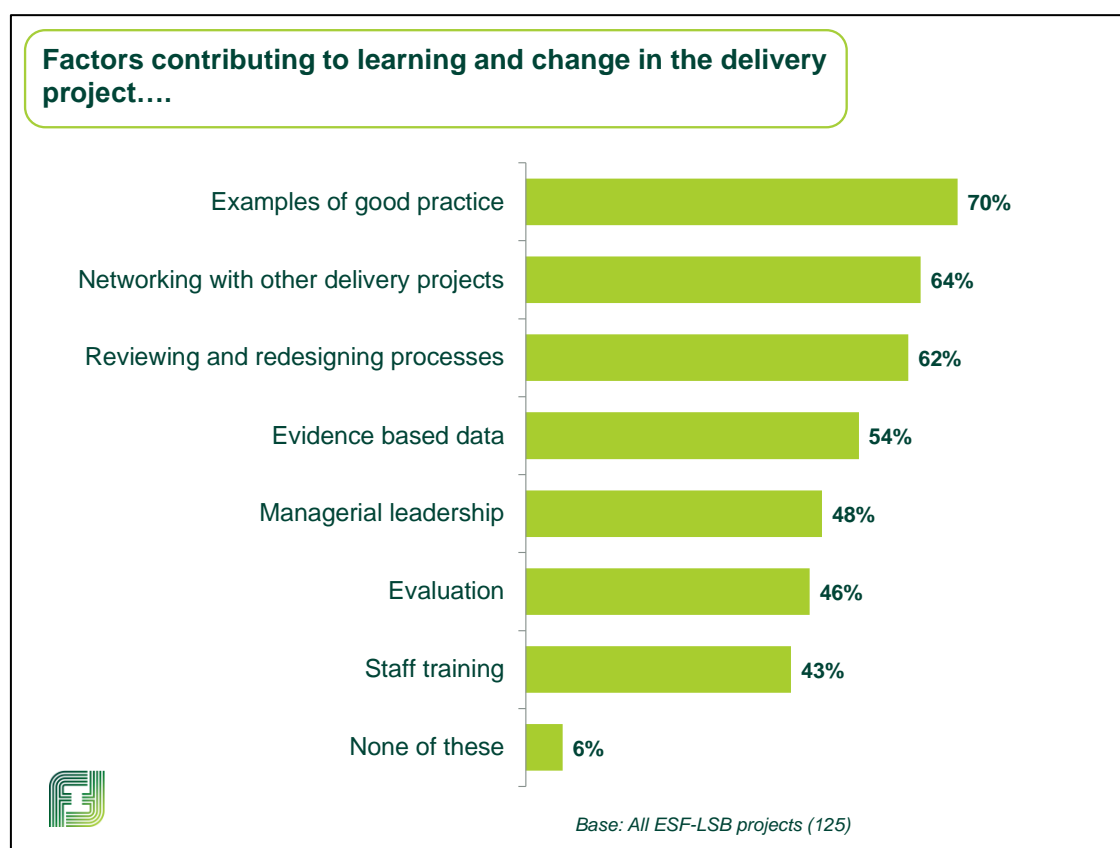
Barriers to learning and change

5.61 It was perceived that the main barrier to learning and change in delivery projects was differences in organisational cultures (58%), followed by a lack of time (45%) and the different professions involved (26%). These are significant barriers which need to be overcome in attempting to deliver learning and change.

Figure 5.16: Barriers to learning and change in delivery projects

Barriers to learning and change in the delivery project....

Barrier	Percentage
Different organisational cultures	58%
Lack of time	45%
Different professions involved	26%
Lack of knowledge sharing	18%
Lack of leadership*	2%
Lack of priority*	2%
None of these	19%

Base: All ESF-LSB projects (125)
* Indicate unprompted responses
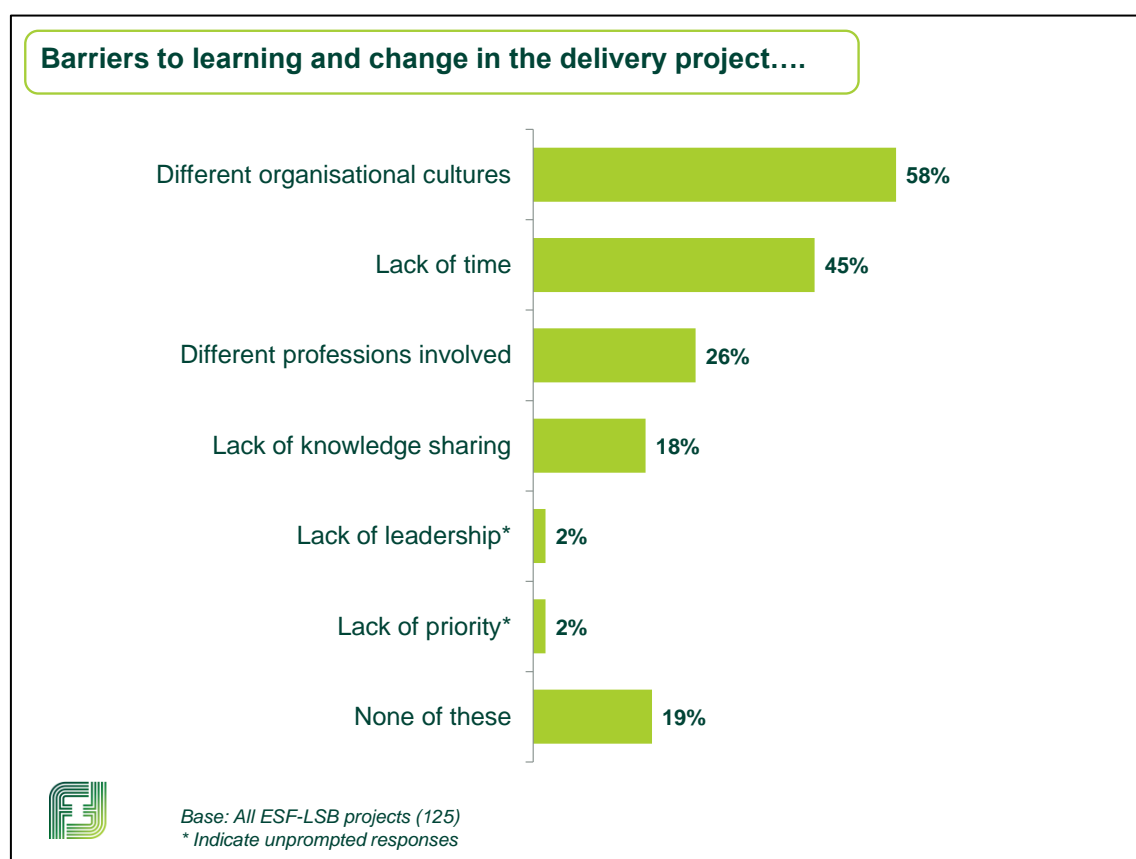
**Relationship with the Welsh Government**

5.62 Encouragingly, around half of respondents involved with delivery projects strongly agreed that 'The project or partnership has a good relationship with the Welsh Government' (49%). Only 1% strongly disagreed (compared to 5% of respondents involved with other partnerships). Similar findings are reports by the case studies.

5.63 A third of respondents from delivery projects strongly agreed that 'The Welsh Government closely manages the project/partnership's performance' and a slightly smaller proportion (22%) thought that 'The Welsh Government helps the project/partnership(s) to manage its performance'. Chapter 7 provides more in-depth reflection on the latter point.

5.64 These results suggest that the Welsh Government is seen to have a clearer role in monitoring and supporting the performance of delivery projects than other partnerships.

5.65 Respondents answering about other non-ESF partnerships were significantly more likely than delivery project respondents to strongly agree that 'Different Welsh Government policies pull the project/partnership(s) in different directions' (40% compared with 19% respectively); this low figure for the delivery projects is encouraging and suggests that, for the majority, government policy is not working against them or hindering success and/or that the delivery projects are mostly concerned with a single policy area.

Figure 5.17: Relationship with the Welsh Government

Base: All respondents (355) – ESF-LSB Delivery project (125), Other project/partnership (230)
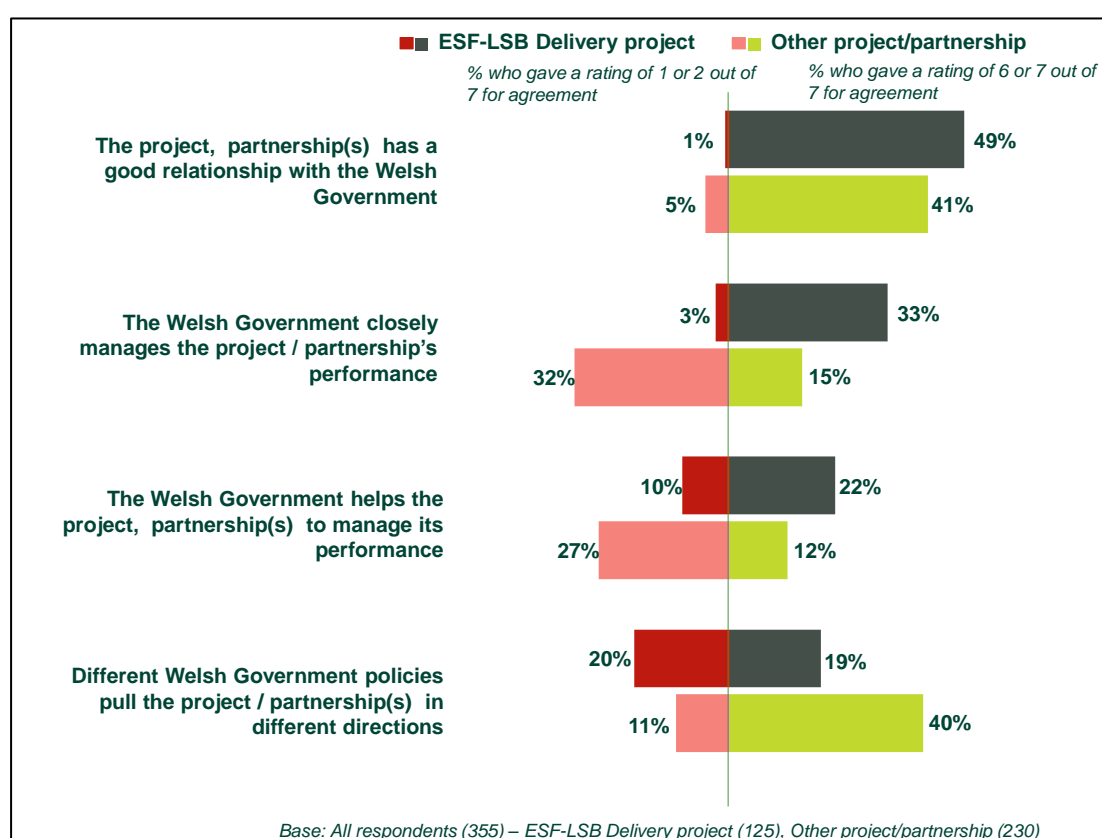
5.66 The differences seen between delivery projects and other partnerships on these measures are to an extent inevitable due to the way the projects are funded, their roles and remit. It is interesting to see that, despite them being more likely to say the Welsh Government supports them, the proportion strongly agreeing for many of the attributes is still fairly low.

Summary

5.67 The main purpose of the first All-Wales Public Services Survey was to provide a baseline against which changes in partnership working and collaborative capacity can be assessed over the next two years. Its limitation is that the results are self-reported as opposed to being externally assessed. However, in the short-term it provides some useful insights into the way delivery projects are working and provides a means of comparing this with other partnerships in Wales. When the survey is repeated, it may show how changes in public service reform have impacted on respondents' view on collaboration. While these comparisons are useful for a baseline assessment and raise questions to explore further, it is important to note that in general the delivery projects have been established as essentially operational partnerships, focused on a specific service area or policy theme, rather than as strategic partnerships aiming to embed an integrated approach more widely.

5.68 Many of the survey results reflect well on the ESF-LSB Project. They suggest that many delivery projects would not have gone ahead without ESF funding. Respondents suggest that delivery projects have speeded up collaboration and enabled partners to achieve outcomes sooner than would otherwise have been the case. We will explore these perceptions in subsequent stages of the evaluation.

5.69 Delivery projects scored more positively than other partnerships in terms of encouraging learning, bringing together skills and resources from different organisations, engaging a wide variety of stakeholders.

5.70 The survey results also suggest that they are more likely than other partnerships to be focused on tackling 'cross-cutting' issues.

5.71 Many respondents reported that they were already delivering benefits for their areas and had been successful at 'finding new solutions' and 'delivering better and more joined-up services'. The case study findings point towards similar results, except for the delivery of better services. Further evidence is needed to validate these points.

5.72 On the downside, the survey provided little evidence that delivery projects are increasing citizen engagement, promoting equalities or encouraging

environmental sustainability (three important objectives of the ESF-LSB Project). However, there are exceptional cases, not covered in this report, which suggest differently (IPC, 2013).

5.73 Delivery projects are less likely to be dependent on a small number of individuals than other partnerships, but respondents saw the third sector organisations as lacking capacity to engage fully despite the fact that one of the key aims of the ESF funding is to increase collaboration with the third sector.

5.74 The early indications are that participants in delivery projects are learning, particularly from examples of good practice and through networking. However, differences in organisational cultures often act as a significant barrier to this.

5.75 Respondents reported from ESF-LSB delivery projects were more likely than those from other partnerships to report that they had access to the advice, support and funding that they need. LSBs were seen as having been relatively supportive. The Welsh Government's role in supporting projects was mentioned by a minority of respondents and there are indications that many respondents do not see the process by which funding was allocated as transparent or speedy. However, the survey results suggest that participants in delivery projects view their relationship with the Government more positively than respondents from other partnerships.

5.76 More thought has to be given by national and representative organisations on how to co-ordinate better between themselves to disseminate learning and provide more useful support.

6. Case studies

6.1 This chapter provides a summary and analysis of the findings from the seven case studies undertaken for the formative evaluation. The full case studies can be found in Annex 2 of this report (a separate document).

Narrative case study summaries

6.2 Summaries of the seven case studies are shown below.

Powering Up Communities Torfaen

Summary

Powering Up Communities First is a delivery project which engages with households, particularly those living on low incomes in Communities First areas or in fuel poverty in Torfaen. The overall aim of the project is to reduce energy usage and energy costs for households through the installation of energy saving measures and related community engagement and education activities.

The project was granted £291,700 to support activity between April 2012 and March 2015.

Context

According to the 2011 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey, 8.6% of households in Torfaen live in fuel poverty. The Torfaen Affordable Warmth Strategy sets out a number of actions and commitments that should contribute to the Welsh Government's target that by 2018 no household should live in fuel poverty.

The project also fits with the Welsh Government's Arbed programme, which aims to "reduce climate change, help eradicate fuel poverty and boost economic development and regeneration in Wales".

Arbed was established in 2009, and through Phase 1 of the programme, invested £68m in measures that improved 7,500 homes. Phase 2 of the programme, which was launched in May 2012, will spend up to £45m on:

- improving the energy efficiency of a number of at least 4,800 homes by the end of 2015; and

- reducing at least 2.54 kilo tons of carbon of greenhouse gas emissions by 2015.

Key partners

The project is run in partnership with Melin Homes, Torfaen County Borough Council, Communities First and Bron Afon Housing Association. Melin Homes is the main delivery partner.

Key workstreams activities

The project's original three work streams were to:

- fit photovoltaic units onto at least 100 properties;

- support two community organisations to generate green energy through photovoltaic or hydro generation; and

- produce a Wales-wide best practice toolkit.

However, the different elements of the project have evolved over time in response to the changing context and new opportunities. In particular, the community involvement and awareness-raising aspect of the project has grown more prominent.

How/why the project changed

When the project was originally being designed in 2010, feed-in tariffs (the amount of money that households get from their energy supplier when they create renewable energy) were set at a rate that made renewable energy generation highly competitive. However, they have since been reduced

and the rules on eligibility have been tightened by the UK's Department for Energy and Climate Change. These changes reduce the incentive for developers to install photovoltaic panels and for households to use them.

Approach to/style of learning within the project

The project manager proactively supported learning and saw that as something which should happen in the context of an open, communicative manner of team working. For example, learning occurred between members of the project team and Melin Homes on ways to engage residents.

Progress toward intended outcomes

By December 2013, the project had:

- recruited 97 Green Energy Champions

- organised and run a series of community events which, from early 2013, included the use of an energy saving board game and jigsaw;

- retro-fitted 15 photovoltaic panels;

- fitted photovoltaic panels on seven retail units; and

- expanded its range of partners, in the public and third sector, and "created good partnership working with its partners and stakeholders", according to the local baseline evaluation report.

Key lessons

Installing new equipment does not help if households do not understand how they can use it to reduce their energy usage and, thereby, their bills. New technology needs to be supported by new behaviours.

Behaviour change is facilitated by: tangible, meaningful benefits such as saving money; stressing messages that make people feel good rather than chide or make people feel guilty; shape behaviour at an early age.

The project successfully engaged different parts of the local community, though this has required persistent effort. This has been achieved by: a focus on simple, practical messages, most obviously around saving money; using play and interaction as a hook; and ensuring messages about behaviour change are encouraging and incentivising, not 'finger wagging'.

The high level of trust and openness between the delivery partners was a key enabler. This was attributed to their shared interests in meeting the needs of often hard-pressed communities, and the open, problem-solving style of leadership and working.

A project manager with the requite skills is crucial to progress.

Future plans/sustainability arrangements

Partners were reviewing options for supporting an expansion of the project to different areas

Hedfan

Summary

The Hedfan project is a collaborative attempt by Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil local authorities to improve learning outcomes for children aged 8 to 14 who are most at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET).

It would do this by:

- developing and improving the early identification of young children at risk of becoming NEET;

- developing a community-based approach to NEET prevention by improving children's participation in OSHL activity and involving them in their design;

- promoting effective collaboration between providers to optimise the OSHL offer; and

- assessing the impact of the project on OSHL participation and its further impact on school attendance, behaviour and attainment

The project was given two and half years and £0.5m in funding.

Context

Blaenau Gwent has a higher rate of unemployment than the average in Wales. An estimated one in three children also lives in poverty. In 2012 there were 1,400 young people in the NEET category between the ages of 16 and 24 of whom 1,200 received benefits.

Merthyr Tydfil is the most deprived local authority in Wales. The authority acknowledged in its Single Integrated Plan 2013-17 that it needed to do more around prevention and early intervention in order to break the cycle of dependency and to promote social mobility. Like Blaenau Gwent, it has a higher than average level of child poverty (28.2% in 2010 vs 22.2% for all Wales) and has the lowest performance in literacy, numeracy and in relation to Core Subject Indicator at Foundation Phase, Stage 2 and Stage 4.

Key partners including main delivery partner(s)

The key partners are Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil local authorities and Communities First – Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil. The latter is the main delivery partner.

Key workstreams/activities

The key activities were:

- mapping the provision of OSHL services

- identifying gaps in provision

- developing cluster profiles that give an overview of school performance, OSHL provision and levels of participation

- consulting schools, children and families on OSHL need

- bringing together providers, including smaller third sector providers that were not known to statutory providers

How/why the project changed

The project was originally a joint initiative between the Heads of the Valley Education programme (Hovep), both local authorities and Communities First.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council was the recipient of the grant and hosted the project team.

The impact of this, plus the restructuring of Communities First led to some initial disruption with the project.

Approach to/style of learning within the project

The learning between partners and between different staff on the ground has taken place informally. The project team have been more focused on making connections, to help with the profiling and raising awareness of Hedfan, but the team felt their open way of working led to informal learning.

Progress toward intended outcomes

The first steps of the project were devoted to mapping the actual provision of OSHL services, identifying the gaps in provision, and designing the seven Communities First cluster profiles which give an overview of school performance, OSHL provision and levels of participation. This information provided a common starting point across both authorities.

The project improved in Blaenau Gwent and developed in Merthyr Tydfil a framework for the early identification of children at risk of becoming NEET that uses information generated from the schools.

To inform and guide the use of the directories, the project developed cluster profiles that gave an overview of deprivation, school achievements and OSHL provision. Hedfan raised awareness of OSHL activities with families, schools and children and gathered the views of children about their needs.

Key lessons

From a practical point of view, the key learning point has been the importance of the directories and cluster profiles as well as the practices in identifying children at risk. The information is available to the public, has been posted in libraries and in schools, and has been cascaded to families by Communities First staff.

The project has helped to develop and share lessons about key ways to engage young people e.g. empower young people by enabling them to design the services; establish strong presence on the ground to establish trustful long-term relationships; including with parents; offer services at a walking distance.

The results of the performance assessment of the activities carried out by Communities First over the last year will provide a more detailed overview of performance and should be used as a valuable source of learning about what works and how in terms of increasing participation.

HOVEP: Head of the Valleys Education Programme was a partnership between the Welsh Government, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Councils, Coleg Gwent, College Merthyr Tydfil and the Universities of South Wales committed to improving skills and employability across the region.

Delivering Collaboration Improvement Frameworks

Summary

Delivering Collaboration Improvement Frameworks is a joint project by Anglesey County Council and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to "drive forward service transformation and improve public sector delivery through joint working, integration and pooling of resources".

It sought to develop up to six integrated service frameworks under-pinned by formal agreements - known as Section 33 agreements - for:

- Specialist Children's Services.

- Single Point of Access Services.

The case study focuses in on the Specialist Children's Services element of the project, where the most valuable learning was to be found.

The project was granted funding of £169,801 in April 2011 to support activity up to December 2014.

Context

The integration of health and social care is one of the great challenges facing public services in Wales. The population is ageing, more people are living with long-term conditions, and health inequalities are widening. All of these challenges required sophisticated and joined-up responses.

Integrating health and social care in Wales is important in Anglesey, considering the local challenges and demographic factors:

- in 2012, 14% of children and young people in were living in severe poverty (i.e. in a household that earned 50% or less of median household income); and

- 21.9% of the population of Anglesey was aged 65+ in 2010 – the third highest proportion amongst local authorities in Wales

Key partners including main delivery partner(s)

The two key partners are Anglesey County Council and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

Key workstreams/activities

From the start, the project focused in on promoting further collaboration in Specialist Children's services. This culminated in the signing of a Section 33 Agreement by the Council and Health Board.

In practical terms, this meant:

- the appointment of a service manager at the head of a combined team;

- relocation of the team into a new building;

- action to join up policies and procedures and pool resources; and

- work on communication and engagement activities.

The team evolved over time but in addition to the service manager, brought together social workers, a nurse team leader, a child and adolescent mental health services officers and a carers officer.

Approach to/style of learning within the project

The approach to learning was informal and practical, taking the form of professionals sitting together and learning from each other.

Progress toward intended outcomes

The main outputs from the project were:

- the successful delivery of a Section 33 agreement for Specialist Children's services;

- the creation of the Integrated Delivery Board, which should have a key role to play in sustaining and promoting further collaboration after the lifetime of the project; and

- playing an important role in the formation of the Integrated Family Support Service, including co-ordinating the office staff and IT requirement and contributing to the business plan and other strategic documents.

Key lessons

Trust is vital to collaboration. For individuals and teams to share or transfer powers or budgets with and between one another, they need to have a level of confidence in one another. This was the case with the Specialist Children's services and one of the reasons progress was made so quickly in that area. At the start of a process of collaboration, it may be worthwhile investing in some trust-building measures to facilitate further progress.

High turnover of staff at senior and operational levels was a barrier to progress. During the period of the project, many partners were going through significant re-organisations, leading to posts being left open, being abolished and changing hands. In practical terms, this made it difficult to build up the individual knowledge and trust that leads to collaboration. A need for continuity of integrated services management is recognised, one direction of travel and senior management buy-in.

Following on from that, it is important to then **identify all the practical factors** such as IT systems that will enable – or otherwise stymie – the successful delivery of collaboration. Being proactive about aligning or amending the organisational 'nuts and bolts' will prevent the project constantly running into unexpected barriers.

Future plans/sustainability arrangements

The project sought to address this by creating the **Integrated Delivery Board**, with the aim of facilitating integration and providing the basis of a legacy of ongoing collaboration after the project has ended. Looking ahead, there may be scope for other time-limited projects to establish similar legacy-type bodies.

ICT collaboration delivery project

Summary

This project was designed to deliver cost efficiencies through the modernisation and sharing of ICT services in North Wales. The large majority (70%) of the £151,000 funding was spent on employing a project manager who provided the capacity to undertake the detailed implementation work. This was intended to act as an enabler to improve other council services through redistributing savings achieved to other front-line services.

The project started in December 2011 and finished in November 2013. The grant largely supported the time for the project manager.

Context

The origins of the programme derived from the monthly meetings across all heads of ICT (HoICT) in the six councils in the region, which have taken place since mid-2000's and provided an opportunity to share knowledge and discuss technological challenges of dealing with the increased complexity of information and communication systems.

Key partners including main delivery partner(s)

The project encompasses collaboration among 11 partners: the six local councils in North Wales, both convergence and non-convergence areas (Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, and Wrexham), North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Local Health Board, North Wales Police, and Bangor and Glyndwr Universities.

Key workstreams/activities

The case study focuses on three strands of activity:

- Shared Service Desk Software (SSDS) which aimed to standardise an IT desk system through a procurement process of an IT service management solutions;

- Web Content Management System (WebCMS) which was focused on procuring shared web content management software that had the potential to store the content information of all partners in the project through a common platform and design; and

- North Wales Directory Service, which aimed to build the ICT mechanisms to exchange the directory information between employees in all partner organisations. It included a proof of concept tested through the pilot of the social service Emergency Duty Team.

Progress toward intended outcomes

During its lifetime, the SSDS activity achieved an overall £122,000 in cost savings, reflected in better economies of scale across the three partner councils. The majority of these cost savings were generated by a better deal provided by the supplier of a shared service desk platform and reductions in staff time operating the system within the partner organisations.

Approach to/style of learning within the project

Learning has occurred at three different levels. At an individual level, the project manager sharpened her skills and strengthened her career development through the programme. Learning also occurred at a team and organisational levels. The sharing of knowledge between ICT teams across the partners

covered three dimensions:

- Administrative knowledge: partners would learn from the different procedures used in other organisations.

- Technical knowledge: partners would learn from each other with regard to ICT matters because partner organisations had different skills and areas of specialisation.

- Organisational knowledge: partners learnt and understood better the organisational cultures and visions of their partners.

Key lessons

Two main learning lessons that the programme identified are important to share in the development of similar projects across Wales:

- Having a procurement expert as part of a project seeking cost savings through collaborative ICT procurement processes, and

- A well organised governance model that includes open and clear channels of communications across the programme's teams.

Future plans/sustainability arrangements

The strengthened collaboration did not mean a shared integrated service throughout the region, but it provided particular projects with different combinations of partners that potentially could lead to a regional holistic collaboration if partners decide to integrate teams and share assets in the future. However, for this to happen, the programme requires a strong commitment and willingness from strategic leaders which have largely been absent.

Financial Inclusion Together (FIT)

Summary

The Financial Inclusion Together (FIT) project aims to develop existing resources and services on financial inclusion across Conwy and Denbighshire. It intends to influence LSB partner organisations and funding bodies through an awareness-raising programme to support and prioritise resources, services and projects linked to financial inclusion. The project targeted frontline workers in particular with financial inclusion knowledge and resources to support people they have contact with to be financially included.

The project was awarded funding in mid-2012 but did not begin until April 2013 due to delays in recruiting staff. The large majority (70%) of the £241,000 funding covers the salaries of the project manager and a development officer.

Context

The project focuses on the relatively poor position of Conwy and Denbighshire on measures of access to economic opportunity, and concerns to raise levels of financial inclusion among the population as a whole, including improved advice and signposting to different types of financial services both on and off line.

Key partners including main delivery partner(s)

The main partners of the project are members of the Local Service Board (LSB) and include Conwy and Denbighshire Councils, Coleg Llandrillo, Voluntary Services Councils (VSCs), local housing associations represented by Cartrefi Conwy, North Wales Police, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, and third sector organisations which provide financial inclusion services.

Key workstreams/activities

The project has been delivered through the use of four task-and-finish groups. These were created at different times during the development of the project and included a:
- Baseline group. This undertook a mapping of service providers and outlined a set of performance indicators to monitor the project.
- Awareness-raising group. This produced a training course and information pack for frontline workers to raise awareness of financial inclusion.
- E-learning group. This designed an online training course to be used after the ESF grant ends.
- Referral system. This group prepared the ground to launch a single referral system across eight partner organisations.

Approach to/style of learning within the project

Learning has taken place throughout three dimensions. Firstly, frontline workers have learnt through the training sessions promoted by FIT. They have increased their knowledge and confidence on financial inclusion which has helped to change their own attitudes and behaviour. Second, learning within partner organisations has raised awareness and changed attitudes among middle and senior managers about financial inclusion. Finally, collaborative learning has also been experienced through the myriad of partner organisations that have contributed to the development of the design, implementation and monitoring of FIT.

In the WebCMS sub–project, each partner organisation avoided a cost of £79,000 by investing £50,000 each. The NWDS aimed at generating cost savings for the social services EDT who were one of the beneficiaries of the project. The savings were envisaged to be about £100 per employee by replacing the electronic mechanism to access secured databases containing citizens' personal information.

Key lessons

Two main lessons that may be important to share in the development of similar projects across Wales include:

- having a procurement expert as part of a project seeking cost savings through collaborative ICT procurement processes; and
- a well organised governance model that includes open and clear channels of communications across the programme's teams.

The evidence suggests that this delivery project strengthened collaboration in ICT across the region. The governance model enhanced the channels of communication between heads of ICT and it created new ways for ICT teams across the region to communicate and share knowledge. Collaboration was also strengthened by extending the membership of partners by inviting and consolidating the working relationships with non-council partners, in particular, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

Future plans/sustainability arrangements

The strengthened collaboration did not mean a shared integrated service throughout the region, but it provided particular sub-projects with different combinations of partners that could potentially lead to a regional holistic collaboration if partners decide to integrate teams and share assets in the future. However, for this to happen the delivery project requires a strong commitment and willingness from strategic leaders, which has largely been absent.

Progress towards intended outcomes with short explanation

The project has achieved four out of five of its targets. It is difficult to isolate the effect of FIT from other initiatives in Wales and the UK that focus upon raising levels of advice and awareness on financial inclusion.

A particular difficulty is determining the direct impact on the citizen. In an attempt to overcome this problem, the project management team designed a template and asked trained front-line workers to describe the impact of attendance at the training sessions on the citizen. In addition, the project has also used the proxy of front-line workers reported benefits on feeling more financially included.

Key lessons

One of the challenges of the project is to turn all partners' commitments into actions that promote financial inclusion into their daily working processes. Where this has been achieved, more needs to be done to learn from this 'good practice'.

Future plans/sustainability arrangements

One of the aims of the project was to 'ensure a sustainable legacy of quality joint working processes and services on financial inclusion of all relevant organisations'. The e-learning resource and 'train the trainer' events may help to do this but this will be harder without the push of the dedicated staff funded by ESF.

Caerphilly Passport Programme

Summary

The Passport Programme aims to reduce the number of young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) by providing work experience, mentoring and support, to prepare them for work, before being 'passported' into employment opportunities. The model is not for people who have significant barriers to work but for those who, with support, can start positions immediately.

The programme started in November 2012 and is due to finish in December 2014. The large majority of the £372,220 funding from ESF covers the salaries of staff to facilitate the model.

Context

Caerphilly CBC has the fourth highest rate of unemployment in Wales and there are particularly high rates of economically inactive 16-24 year olds - the NEET population is high at around 2,200 people. The demography of the Council workforce also reveals a 'succession time-bomb' as 30% of the population is aged over 50, so it is important to have an educated workforce who can be ready for work.

A mapping exercise revealed more than 50 different support interventions in place to support young people. These were mainly focused upon skills and training with no end product in terms of sustainable employment. Passport is a holistic and integrated employment support programme for young people aged 16 to 24 which bring both the employer perspective and employment support together.

Key partners including main delivery partner(s)

The programme relies upon significant collaboration between a number of partners which includes Caerphilly County Borough Council, Job Centre Plus, Communities First, Aneurin Bevan Health Board, Careers Wales, Educ8 (work-based learning provider) and the Caerphilly Business Forum. The programme also relies upon the Welsh Government's Jobs Growth Wales fund. While the council is the largest employer in the area, the problem it faces of getting young 'work ready' people into work is common across public sector partners and the business community.

Key workstreams/activities

The programme provides a progression route for unemployed young people into employment. An unpaid placement is carried out for up to eight weeks and the young person is able to claim benefits during this time and travel expenses to get to and from their placement. A member of the Passport team meets regularly with each individual during this period to assess whether they can progress into the Jobs Growth Wales placement which is paid at the national minimum wage.

Approach to/style of learning within the project

Learning has occurred at different levels. At an individual level, staff have attended training events organised by the ESF-LSB team. Learning has also occurred at a team level where various improvements have been made to the process over time e.g. re-introducing case meetings between Job Centre Plus, Community First and Educ 8 to try and match people to opportunities, refining health and safety checks etc.

Officers have in the last six months looked to disseminate the lessons from the programme to neighbouring local authorities. They have visited Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Cardiff who are interested in piloting Passport. There is potential for the Welsh Government to do more to share the learning from this project with others across Wales.

Progress towards intended outcomes

The programme set out clear outcomes which were expected to be achieved from the ESF resource. Previous performance in their existing work experience programme was examined and targets were designed that were 'realistic and deliverable' given the context and the partnership that they had to build on.

Between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014, 533 young people were referred into the programme. More than six in 10 of these people have been referred from Job Centre Plus. During that period, 176 placements have been facilitated, 150 JGW placements have been filled and 77% of those young people undertaking a Jobs Growth Wales placement have found sustainable employment or returned to full-time education. 52% of these young people have come from Community First areas.

Key lessons

The programme has managed to join-up the various funding streams available from Welsh Government (Community First, JGW, and WHQS) and ESF to deliver more than the sum of its parts. It would not have gone ahead in the same way without the ESF funding. Equally, it could not have delivered without the Welsh Government's Jobs Growth Wales element.

The Welsh Government should:
- Consider whether they could better align programmes so that there is a co-ordinated approach across directorates.
- Provide a strategic overview of the projects receiving different types of grant funding to ensure that there are no overlaps and that projects' outcomes are aligned.

Future plans/sustainability arrangements

The Passport team has secured further grant funding from the Job Centre Flexible Support Fund that will sustain the programme until March 2014. There is the problem, common with many European projects, that knowledge and skills developed over 18 months will be lost when the project finishes as staff will go back to their original jobs.

There is potential for Passport to be delivered on other councils' behalf if further funding is available or for councils to learn lessons from the experience of Caerphilly and introduce their own Passport model.

Transforming Transport – aka Mavis

Summary

Transforming Transport aims to improve the provision of non-emergency patient transport by bringing together all transport providers within Cwm Taf through the creation of a centralised and fully integrated IT booking system.

A mapping exercise revealed how vehicles from Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf councils (RCT), Cwm Taf Local Health Board and third sector providers were following each other up and down the valleys. Not only is this duplication costly, but the current system is also complex and confusing for users. This situation is encapsulated by the experience of a patient called 'Mavis' who is an 85 year-old woman required to make a number of phone calls to different people to book vehicles for different journeys.

The project started in December 2011 and is due to finish in December 2014. The grant largely supports the time for the project manager.

Context

The project fits within the remit of the Griffiths Review into non-emergency transport in Wales which concluded that the current service for citizens/patients is fragmented and not economical, and that there are opportunities across the public sector and third sector to improve service delivery. The project manager leads on how Cwm Taf Local Health Board is responding to the Griffiths Review and Transforming Transport forms one half of his role.

Key partners including main delivery partner(s)

The key partners for the project span sectors and include the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board (a collaboration of the two council's Local Service Board), Cwm Taf local health board, the two local Councils, the Community Transport Association (CTA), the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST) and other third sector providers. The project is a priority goal of the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board.

Key workstreams/activities

Time was spent at the beginning of this project setting out each partner's expectations. The 'end project' document – which maps the relative priority of the different organisational agendas – was signed-off by all partners. This generated a clear picture of potential risks and raised some questions about organisational gains/losses and future organisational positioning. What are we going to gain from this project? What are we giving up? What will closer integration mean for us? At what level are we integrating? What are we surrendering?

How/why the project changed

Difficulties in partnership working have meant that a different approach is needed.

A new plan for the project has been produced which contains six distinct components – it was described as being a stepped approach. Once all six of these steps have been completed, all the key organisations will be in a position to have a single point of access for integrated non-emergency transport across Cwm Taf. According to one interviewee, it does not have the gold bar at the outset of the process – but is something they will work towards.

Progress towards intended outcomes

While there were clear outcomes intended from the project, no progress has been made to date on achieving them. Partners still seem supportive of the rationale for the project but the revised plan still needs to be signed-off by the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board.

Key lessons

At the outset of the project, it was suggested that this could be a test case for integration. 'If it could work here, it could work elsewhere'. The problem, to date, is that the project has not worked due to difficulties between key partners.

- There needs to be a clear vision at the beginning with timings of what needs to be done and by whom.
- A project needs a clear vision which partners are signed-up to.
- The choice of the IT system could have been left open in the proposal so that all partners were involved in choosing the best system.
- The project may have been too ambitious.
- More needs to be done to integrate health and social care and then the transport arrangements should fall out of that. This project tried to do it the other way around.
- More could have been done to develop shared outcomes to stop organisations focusing upon their own targets.
- Building relationships across partners and keeping the focus on the outcomes for Mavis and other residents within Cwm Taf, could have provided motivation to keep the project 'on track'.
- The person who develops the bid shouldn't necessarily manage it because you can lose objectivity.
- More support or enabling action at the chief executive level (or at director level) was needed across all organisations.

Future plans/sustainability arrangements

At the time of the interviews, the project was being re-designed and a new Project Brief was being produced for the Cwm Taf Regional Collaboration Board to consider.

Summary of case study findings

6.3   This chapter aims to synthesise the findings from across the seven case studies. It begins by using the Project's Theory of Change to summarise our findings from across all cases (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Synthesis of our seven ESF-LSB case studies

	Context	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Intermediate outcomes	Service and process outcomes
Powering up Communities First (Torfaen)	To reduce energy usage and energy costs for households, particularly those living on low income in Torfaen.	£291,700 to support activity between April 2012 and March 2015.	Supporting two community organisations to generate green energy through photovoltaic or hydro generation.	The recruitment of Green Energy champions; running a series of community events; expanding its range of partners in the public and in the third sector.	Some organisational and service change; engagement with the local community; recruiting highly engaged volunteers to promote energy saving.	Trust, openness and strong relationship between organisations; increased collaboration capacity; and on a smaller scale, organisational change.
NEET (Hedfan)	Improving learning outcomes for children (8-14 years old) at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET).	£0.5m to support activity over two and half years.	Creating shared goals and supporting a range of activities across the clusters of Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil, including working with schools, families and children, developing new tools to support more strategic, targeted and effective OSHL provision.	The project improved in Blaenau Gwent and developed in Merthyr Tydfil a framework for the early identification of children at risk of becoming NEET.	Raising awareness of OSHL activities and gathering the views of children about their needs.	Bringing down the number of young people (aged 16 to 24) who were registered as NEET from around 14% to 4% since 2012. It is suggested that there is a link between the improvement in OSHL provision and participation and an improvement in children's attainment and behaviour at school.
Delivery collaboration improvement framework (Anglesey)	Delivering collaboration improvement framework which is aimed to drive forward service transformation and to improve public	£169,801 to support activity from April 2011 up to December 2014.	Collaboration in specialist children services.	Creation of the integrated delivery board which is meant to be the key factor in sustaining and promoting further collaboration which exceeds the project's	Improvement in services in terms of solutions and responses to problems and a better understanding of overall strategic	Better establishment of transition service to young people with needs.

	sector delivery through joint working, integration and pooling of resources for health and social care.			lifetime; Faster responses to needs as colleagues can act together and within the same structure.	objectives.	
ICT collaboration delivery project (North Wales)	Delivering cost efficiencies through the modernisation and sharing of ICT services in North Wales.	£151,830 to support activity from October 2011 to November 2013.	Collaboration activities among 11 partner organisations (local councils, fire and rescue service, local health board, north wales police, Bangor and Glyndwr Universities).	Reduction of staff time operating the system.	Strengthened the collaboration in ICT across the region; enhanced channels of communication between heads of ICT; creating new ways for ICT teams across the region to communicate and share knowledge.	The project and associated sub projects (particularly the SSDS) have improved the overall operation of the system and led to a significant cost saving which were also expressed through the reduction of staff time operating the system.
FIT Financial inclusion together (Conwy and Denbighshire)	Influence LSB partner organisations and funding bodies through an awareness-raising programme to support and prioritise resources, services and projects linked to financial inclusion among the population of Conwy and Denbighshire.	£241,300 to support activity which began in April 2013 and is due to end in December 2014.	A range of activities utilising the four task-and-finish groups which were created at different times during the development of the project.	It is difficult to isolate the effect of FIT from other initiatives in Wales and the UK. However, it is suggested that outputs in a form of financial inclusion have been produced, using the proxy of frontline workers reporting on the benefits of feeling more financially included.	The challenge faced by the project's team to turn all partners' commitments into actions that promote financial inclusion into their daily working processes has been achieved.	
Passport (Caerphilly)	Reduce the number of young people who are NEET (Not in Education,	£372,220 funding to facilitate the model for a	A range of activities aiming to provide progression route for unemployed young	Between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014, 533 young people were referred	Although achieving cost savings was not an aim of the programme,	Allowing young people to gain valuable work experience which

	Employment or Training) by providing work experience, mentoring and support, to prepare them for work, before moving into employment.	programme which started in November 2012 and is due to finish in December 2014.	people into employment.	into the programme; During that period, 176 placements have been facilitated, 150 JGW placements have been filled and 77% of those young people undertaking a Jobs Growth Wales placement have found sustainable employment or returned to full-time education.	interviewees suggested that it has been excellent value for money and lead for an employment support programme.	aimed to help them into work. The programme of funding provided evidence that a large number of young people are not ready for work after leaving school and demonstrated the need for introduction of a pre-Passport programme for young people 14-16.
Transforming Transport (Cwm Taf)	Bringing together all transport providers in Cwm Taf to deliver non-emergency patient transport for citizens utilizing a centralised and fully integrated booking system in order to improve the provision of non-emergency patient transport within Cwm Taf in public and third sector.	A grant of £275,149 to be used between December 2011 and December 2014 to largely support the time for the project manager.	Setting out expectations from partners and identifying potential benefits and loses from the collaboration; Agreeing on an IT system to model the data; Agreeing on six distinct components, which when delivered, enable the different organisations to consider a platform for consolidated access to integrated transport services.	While there were clear outcomes intended from the project, no progress was made to date on achieving them. The project has not worked due to difficulties between key partners; Partners still seem supportive of the rationale for the project but the revised plan still needs to be signed-off by the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board.	Although there was a collaborative agreement in terms of rational, this was less so the case in practice and as such it is difficult to assess progress or outcomes.	

6.4 Our synthesis has identified seven core themes across our case studies. These are:

- the nature of the collaboration;
- where the project sits within an organisation;
- the role of the project manager;
- how knowledge is shared;
- leadership and the role of the LSB;
- setting ambitious and realistic outcomes; and
- the sustainability of the project.

The nature of the collaboration

6.5 The nature of the collaboration is critical as the ESF-LSB projects are often based on the establishment of good partnerships. There are a range of factors which help to determine the success of collaborative project work. These include whether there is an established culture of collaborative working; if there is a strategic approach in place; the attitudes of individual partner organisations toward the collaboration; whether all partners see benefits from the project; and how organisations work in collaboration with the public or third sectors. In addition, the importance of trust and open communications between project partners helps to determine whether the collaboration produces 'value added' i.e. how it improves services in a way that could not have been provided by the individual partner organisations.

6.6 A range of examples from our case studies demonstrate the extent to which different forms of collaborations influence the outcomes of projects. For instance, improved communication between project partners and partnership capacity had a positive potential on the collaboration and citizen engagement in the 'Powering up Communities' project, which resumed good working relations with partners and stakeholders. Similarly, the Passport project shows how good working relationships between existing partners helped to contribute towards positive outcomes of this project.

6.7 The North Wales ICT project illustrates how collaboration has been strengthened in ICT across the region and that this has improved the likelihood of future joint working. This project demonstrated how cost savings through collaborative ICT procurement processes could be achieved through an

organised governance model that included open and clear channels of communication across the programme's team. The use of task and finish groups in the FIT project was important in helping to deliver outcomes.

6.8 Examples from our cases also demonstrate how less than ideal collaboration may result in projects not achieving their full potential. The Hedfan project showed the difficulties of establishing collaborations with small third sector organisation as potential service deliverers. While the Transforming Transport project provides an example of the real difficulty in getting a number of organisations across sectors (local government, health, third sector) to work together to produce a more integrated service.

Where the project sits within an organisation

6.9 The location of the project within the organisational structure is important as it can influence the number of levers which can be pulled and what support the project receives. Where a project is located in a cross-cutting department as opposed to a specific service department, it can provide organisational reach. For instance, the Passport project was based within the Human Relations (HR) department and this was said to have contributed towards its' success. As HR is attached to all parts of the organisation, officers were able to operate across the council and to hold good conversation with other HR professionals. In the Delivering Collaboration Improvement Frameworks project in Anglesey, the project established an Integrated Delivery Board for Health and Social Care Services to drive the integration of services between the two partners.

6.10 Our analysis suggests that where a project is strongly embedded within the organisational structure, it has a better potential for it to be integrated and to become sustainable.

The role of the project manager

6.11 The project manager role is critical for the success of the delivery projects. In fact, the whole Project relies significantly upon these 38 individuals. Their skills, background (previous experience in a similar role), as well as other characteristics such as how they manage relationships, transfer knowledge, and negotiate with partners all contribute towards the likelihood of success. This point is reflected through the broader move away from traditional public

sector managerial approach and experience (i.e. transactional, hierarchical, usually in only one organisation) to the skills needed to lead partnerships (i.e. transformational, motivational, relationship management).

6.12 The managers of the Passport and Hedfan projects demonstrated how strong partnership and project management skills were considered to be a significant asset.

6.13 The project manager cannot always act alone. In some projects, there was a lack of a senior leadership role from across partners, which may have inhibited the project's outcomes and the potential for future collaborative (see for example North Wales ICT and Transforming Transport).

How knowledge is shared

6.14 The fourth factor we have identified reflects the extent to which knowledge is being shared within the various components of the project and beyond. This may cover a number of issues related to: learning from other delivery projects, enhancing informal learning, sharing knowledge within the different parts of the partnership and partner organisations. The extent of knowledge-sharing may also be related to where the projects sits within the organisation and the role played by the project manager.

6.15 Our synthesis reveals the importance of having a capable project manager, but there are also dangers of having so much 'project knowledge' centred within the hands of one individual. This may limit the potential for sharing knowledge within organisations and make it harder to embed knowledge more deeply within the organisation and beyond.

6.16 Sharing knowledge is also something that needs to be considered in terms of the individual project teams. For instance, the Financial Inclusion Together case study demonstrated how project workers have increased their knowledge and confidence on financial inclusion which has helped to change their own attitudes and behaviour. Furthermore, the partnership model also helped to enhance the channels of communication between those who took a leading role in the project and this in turn created new ways for ICT teams across the region to communicate and engage in knowledge exchange. Learning within partner organisations has raised awareness and changed attitudes among middle and

senior managers about financial inclusion, and some of the participating organisations have incorporated financial inclusion processes into daily working practices. Such collaborative learning also highlighted the value of bringing the third sector into the project by broadening the understanding of financial inclusion provision.

6.17 The Welsh Government and LSBs have some influence upon the extent of knowledge-sharing and learning from individual projects. While there is evidence across the case studies that learning has taken place across different levels - from individuals attending training events to the team level where improvements have made to processes over time - there is less evidence that organisations have learnt and that things have been imbedded.

6.18 The ESF-LSB national team has developed an overview document with links to key information received from all delivery projects and posts, such as annual reports, evaluation reports, closure reports, power point presentations, and events. This is used to advise/inform colleagues throughout Welsh Government. It is unclear whether the Welsh Government has a plan and the capacity collect learning from across all delivery projects so that lessons are learnt for future rounds of funding.

6.19 There is clear potential for both public sector organisations and the Welsh Government to learn from the experiences of some of the LSB-ESF delivery projects so they can assess whether a project could be revised and replicated across Wales. Evidence from independent project evaluations will be helpful here. Of our case studies, the Passport project has the potential to be 'rolled-out' as long as there is awareness that it would need to take account of context and not be a 'cut and paste'.

Leadership and the role of the LSB

6.20 Leadership is a significant factor in every collaborative project and can be manifest in different ways, forms and levels. While the project manager role may be indicative of one dimension of collaborative working, a range of other factors both structural and inter-organisational are equally critical for maximising the chances of a successful project. This may address issues concerning strategic leadership (i.e. managerial and political leadership; the

role of the LSB in developing/initiating leadership within the individual projects; the support provided by the Welsh Government and local councils); distributed leadership (between different parts/levels of the organisation and across partners) and operational leadership. Our case studies provide a range of examples, addressing the different levels and forms of leading and their significance within the individual projects.

6.21 For instance, the lack of strategic leadership within the Transforming Transport and the North Wales ICT projects demonstrated the difficulty of resolving issues which are impacting upon the projects' progress. Alternatively, the Passport project showed how good political and senior managerial support has helped the project to deliver. This was replicated in other projects. Second, we noticed that having a senior leadership from that department where the project is located helps to give the project credibility and clout across the organisation/partnership and is another factor for the project's success.

6.22 The synthesis shows how although the LSB was involved in the signing off of projects, in a number of cases (see Transforming Transport and ICT) it had minimal engagement in the project after that. While the Transforming Transport regularly reported to the joint LSB, it is not clear what role they played in trying to get the project 'back on track'.

Setting ambitious and realistic outcomes

6.23 Our synthesis has revealed a number of factors related to projects' outcomes. There is a question about whether projects have set ambitious, yet realistic, outcomes and to what extent they are likely to impact upon citizens. Several of the case studies have suffered from not having clear outcomes, which are measurable and shared amongst partners and other stakeholders. Three out of our seven cases (Hedfan, Powering Up, Delivering Collaboration Improvement Frameworks, and Transforming Transport) had to be re-cast after they were granted funding. What is striking in these projects is how quickly after the funding had been received it became apparent that the projects' aims were not feasible and too ambitious to be delivered within the project timescale.

6.24 Another significant point relates to measuring project outcomes which is a long-standing issue in public management projects. Whilst outcomes can be

understood in a number of ways (such as different measures of service improvement including improved access, higher quality, more efficient), there is concern over the extent to which the outcomes from a project can be isolated and quantified during the project lifespan. Indeed, our stakeholder interviews raised questions regarding the measurement of efficiency and effectiveness of services and whether there are other ways to evaluate service improvement.

6.25 Furthermore, a question mark has also been raised regarding the particular difficulty of measuring outputs of LSB projects given the nature of indicators used by WEFO. This means that there is an increased importance of local monitoring and evaluation by projects, but these don't always provide additional evidence. For example, the evaluation of the North Wales ICT project demonstrated the lack of performance indicators which were collected by public sector partners and this impacted upon whether quantifiable outcomes could be measured. Likewise, the Financial Inclusion Together project demonstrated the difficulty of disentangling the impact on citizens.

6.26 There is also the difficulty of measuring outcomes which may only be revealed after the project lifetime. The case studies and national stakeholder interviews have revealed that it is often too early to say if outcomes for citizens have been achieved.

The sustainability of the project

6.27 There are real concerns across our case studies regarding the future of projects once the funding has run out. A number of projects have already identified possibilities for further funding which would in turn be helpful for sustaining the project over time. For instance, in Transforming Transport, the project manager has developed a business case ready to present to the Cwm Taf Collaboration Board by the end of 2014 in order to outline how the future could look if pooling of budgets are enabled and in place. In the Passport project, further grant funding has been secured from the Job Centre Flexible Support Fund that will sustain the programme until March 2015.

6.28 Some projects are at a relatively early stage of service delivery. In addition to seeking additional funding, structures need to be set up to try and ensure that improvement can continue beyond the project lifespan.

6.29 Sustainability in skills and knowledge is another aspect here. A common problem across the LSB delivery projects relates to the possible loss of knowledge and skills, as staff who were seconded for the projects go back to their original jobs. One way to overcome this is to build relationships with project partners in order to enable the transfer of skills and knowledge amongst staff and partner organisations. In the Financial Inclusion Together project, the e-learning resource and 'train the trainer' events may help to do this.

6.30 In a number of cases, there is a concern that relationships which have taken time to build up will be at risk (e.g. with the business sector in Caerphilly in the Passport programme) if the project does not continue. The dedicated staff funded by ESF has enabled projects to be delivered, once this capacity has gone, it is not clear whether there is going to be sufficient resource and mechanisms to co-ordinate effort.

Conclusions

6.31 The seven core themes raised in this synthesis across the seven case studies will be explored further in the summative phase of the research.

7. Learning from the Project

7.1 Understanding the role of learning in the ESF LSB Programme is an important element of this evaluation.

7.2 The second of three key questions from the process strand of the evaluation is "[How far] is information and knowledge generated, communicated, disseminated and learnt from", and questions about learning – at different levels, in different ways – have been included in all parts of the fieldwork.

7.3 To further help answer the above key question, the evaluation team developed a learning theory of change, with considered input from the Welsh Government. The theory of change, which is included as an annex to this report, describes:

- The **rationale** for the importance of learning.
- The **inputs** that will resource learning as part of the programme.
- The **activities** that derive from those inputs and that should promote learning.
- The intended **outputs** from those activities.
- The **outcomes** that should flow from those outputs.
- Finally, the **ultimate impacts** to which learning, as part of the programme, should contribute.

7.4 As with the theory of change for the entire ESF-LSB development and delivery Project , the learning theory of change is not a definitive statement of fact: rather, it is a hypothesis that sets out a series of logical assumptions about how learning can come about, which will be tested and refined by the evaluation.

7.5 Using the learning theory of change, this chapter explores to what extent and how learning has taken place, and some of the impacts this may have had.

Learning activities

7.6 The learning theory of change sets out a series of intended learning activities. Some of these stemmed directly from the evaluation:

- **Planned learning events** – three of these were arranged and facilitated by the evaluation team, one in early 2013 and two in summer 2014.

- **Website** – the Project's website was used to disseminate materials from the national evaluation (including the evaluation theory of change, research instruments and interim formative evaluation report). There was more potential to share knowledge from across the LSB-ESF projects but this wasn't fully realised, as the website was not widely promoted or used.
- **Learning notes** – the evaluation team produced a learning note after the two rounds of learning events mentioned above.

7.7 Other learning activities stemmed from the Welsh Government's national programme inputs and activities and included:

7.8 **Linking between projects by Welsh Government** has been facilitated by officers in the Welsh Government's ESF-LSB Project Team, usually by email, on issues of common interest and where one project has made progress in an area that is relevant to another. For example, the Welsh Government connected Advice and Support Carmarthenshire with the Denbighshire Financial Inclusion and Anti-Poverty project on shared issues around joint working to help families living in poverty. Again prompted by the Welsh Government, the North Wales ICT Collaboration Project and the Legal Service Collaboration Project linked to look together at the ICT limitations to collaborative and discuss how they might be addressed.

7.9 There have been **regular regional Project Managers' meetings in North Wales**, but only one in South Wales. (It is understood that the South East and South West Wales Learning Events were discontinued due to the expenses involved at a time when the Welsh Government was having to make substantial savings – the North Wales events were more established and were able to continue on a self-supporting basis.) Prior to the meetings, the Welsh Government shared an agenda, which often focused on learning from other projects, and useful documents such as project summaries.

7.10 There was some **promotion of wider training activities** to the projects by Welsh Government e.g. circulating programmes like 'Public Engagements Events and Training 2013 – 2014' that were free to participants involved in ESF-LSB projects.

7.11 The number and extent of local evaluation activities varied according to local evaluation arrangements and some projects struggled to commission local evaluations. Even where a project was able to commission a local evaluation, the general feedback from case study areas was that the pressure to deliver left little time for using the local evaluations as a basis for more structured learning activities.

7.12 There was some contact between projects that enabled informal learning around issues of common concern or where there were opportunities to learn. For example, the Financial Inclusion project team shared their lesson on referral forms with the PEP project

7.13 There were a number of Ministerial visits to projects, including a visit to the Torfaen case study area. Documents about the visits were made available to LSBs, but it is not clear how these were used to promote learning.

Learning outputs and outcomes

7.14 The outputs and outcomes columns of the learning theory of change suggest that the following set of logical steps will take place:

- The **improved dissemination of information** amongst and between local, regional and national partners in the Programme will lead to…
- **Increases in knowledge**, when that information is taken on board, by individuals or organisations, creating…
- **Raised awareness**, as that knowledge is reflected upon, made part of the person's or organisation's way of thinking, leading to…
- **Changed attitudes**, shaped by this awareness, which lead ultimately to…
- **Changed behaviours** e.g. better lifestyle choices by individuals or more effective ways of working collaboratively by partner organisations.

7.15 The learning theory of change includes a theoretical example of this kind of change, focusing on the involvement of the Third Sector in local partnership working. In practice, thus far in the evaluation, have we seen actual examples of this kind of change?

7.16 **Projects shared information and Welsh Government disseminated information about effective interventions**. This was done through the learning events, notes and emails between projects. A common theme, for

example, was the challenge of engaging citizens, particularly seldom heard groups, and the related difficulty around capturing soft outcomes in order to demonstrate impact. This was the theme of several discussions at all three learning events. Some of these conversations were maintained when projects kept in touch.

7.17 The **main increase in knowledge** was found at the local level as partners become more aware of each other, including their roles and functions, through local projects. This was a basic building block of collaboration. Through the Powering Up Communities First project, for example, Torfaen County Borough Council **and Melin Homes developed their mutual understanding and started to discuss ways of working together beyond the project.**

7.18 In many cases, increased knowledge has also led to **improved awareness** of partners' capacity and the opportunities for collaboration. Through the Caerphilly 'Passport' project, for example, local partners became more familiar with each other and local businesses. As highlighted in this case study, this led to various process improvements such as the re-introduction of case meetings between some of the core partners.

7.19 The Hedfan and FIT case studies **provide real-life examples of the case set out in the learning theory of change**. Both projects benefited from teamwork which raised awareness of their third sector, which was increasingly engaged in the project as time went on. In the case of FIT, this led to greater co-ordination of activities and reduced duplication between the public and third sectors.

7.20 **Awareness of common enabling factors** was also shared between projects. For example, at the learning events in 2014, discussions between projects highlighted three enabling factors in particular:
- Strong leadership, from someone with the authority and credibility to engage and galvanise partners.
- Active buy-in from partners, not just being passively 'on board'.
- Shared and clear objectives that bind all partners to action.

7.21 There is some evidence of **changed attitudes**, again with regard to partnership working. Chapter 6 of this report pulls out the common themes from across the case studies and gives examples of learning leading to changed attitudes in the

FIT project. Front-line workers have increased their knowledge of financial inclusion, which has helped to change their own attitudes and behaviour, as evidence by a survey carried out for the case study. In addition, learning within partner organisations has raised awareness and changed attitudes among middle and senior managers about financial inclusion.

7.22 All the projects led to **some changes in behaviours**, but the extent to which those changes led to the desired outputs and outcomes is highly variable across the range of projects. Similarly, the role that learning has played within that is also likely to be highly variable. We will develop our findings on this at the final stage of the evaluation in the summative evaluation report.

Enablers and barriers to learning

7.23 From the fieldwork, and the case studies in particular, we identified a number of enablers. **The enablers to learning are similar to those for collaboration**:

- **The attitude and skills of the project manager** - in the Powering Up Communities First case study, for example, the project manager had a positive and proactive approach to learning, and saw that as something which should happen in the context of an open, communicative manner of team working.

- **Trust** – where partners had invested trust in one another, they were more likely to be open to learning, whether formally or informally.

- **Clear outcomes** – having a shared and clear sense of objectives meant partners could guide their learning toward what would help them deliver those outcomes e.g. members of the Powering Up Communities First focused on skills around community engagement as this became a clearer priority for the project.

7.24 The barriers to learning are, to some extent, the inverse of the enabling factors listed above.

- **Lack of trust** – where there was a lack of trust, partners were less likely to be open to learning. In these contexts, learning could be as a sign of failure and/or an admission of weakness.

- **Unclear outcomes** – learning was less likely to take place in projects which had unclear outcomes because the purpose of learning was unclear.

- **Short-termism** – as many project encountered initial delays, there was pressure to catch up and generate visible outputs. This may have led to a short-termism focus in which learning was regarded as a luxury and/or a distraction from the 'real work'.

Conclusions

7.25 **Within projects, learning has generally happened informally** e.g. by colleagues working together for the first time, and 'picking things up from each other'. This tacit learning can happen easily and naturally, but it is fragile because of its vulnerability to specific individuals remaining in post and unlikely to be sustained as there is no structure around it.

7.26 Outside of the learning events, **learning between projects has occurred opportunistically**, as Welsh Government has linked-up projects, or they have met and made contact with each other.

7.27 This kind of ad hoc learning is simple to arrange and is not burdensome. However, as there is no structure or record of the learning that takes place, the learning may be lost and will not be more widely available to other projects and professionals.

7.28 In the final stages of the evaluation, we will look to see in more detail what role learning played in supporting projects toward delivering their outcomes.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 This chapter synthesises the emerging issues from the formative evaluation of the ESF-LSB Project. It highlights the key conclusions and their implications for the remainder of the Project, particularly in relation to disseminating learning and addressing sustainability, and for the final summative stage of the evaluation. We also present recommendations based on our formative stage findings for the Welsh Government and its partners.

8.2 As discussed earlier, the evaluation aims to assess:
- whether the ESF-LSB Project has led to better public services and better outcomes for citizens;

- how the ways in which the Project has been implemented and managed have contributed to these outcomes;

- whether and how the Project is communicating and disseminating learning from the delivery projects, nationally and locally; and

- how the Project has improved the integration of the third sector and LSBs; whether this has led to better services and outcomes, and if this is progress is sustainable.

Better public services and better outcomes for citizens

8.3 Although the ultimate aim of the Project is to lead to better public services and better outcomes for citizens, the evaluation has demonstrated that only a small minority of projects have shown tangible evidence of these impacts. The national stakeholders we interviewed in 2013 recognised that projects would focus on making improvements to processes initially, such as better communication and increased partnership capacity, collaboration and citizen engagement.

8.4 This was consistent with the theory of change that we are testing and developing through the evaluation. Stakeholders who were interviewed in 2014 raised concerns that there is not more evidence of impacts near the end of the

funded Project given that delivery projects specified their expected outcomes at the applications stage,

8.5 National stakeholders were concerned that delivery projects have not generally set clear, quantifiable outcomes for their projects and this has made it difficult to assess what difference the Project has actually made. It is difficult to measure the value added by projects because of changes in context and the ambiguity of setting measures for process outcomes (e.g. how do you measure improved co-ordination, leadership, increased knowledge exchange, etc.?) But it may be that these changes can be assessed qualitatively.

8.6 In the initial stages of the Project, the parameters for assessing the evaluation were closely related to the WEFO indicators (see Table 1.1). From 2011, as reform in public services started to become more prevalent in policy, the importance of outcomes has been gradually aligned with the development of local theories of change to move beyond checking whether outputs have been delivered and encourage learning about 'what works, for whom, in what circumstances and why'.

8.7 In most of the case studies, outcome measures to determine benefits to citizens (direct beneficiaries, service users or the wider population) were not set out at the start of the project so it has been difficult to determine 'success' on the ground.

8.8 Notwithstanding the lack of measures, monitoring data and findings from local evaluations, there are two main factors which make it difficult to detect change in outcomes for citizens: (a) timing - improvements in some outcomes, such as health status, are likely to take some years to achieve, possibly beyond the end of the funding provided by the ESF-LSB; and (b) attribution - it is difficult to isolate the effect of the delivery project from other factors and to know what the counterfactual would have been. It is possible, for example, that public spending cuts could more than cancel out the beneficial effects of the ESF-LSB Project.

8.9 In addition, some delivery projects, such as the North Wales ICT Collaboration case study or the North Wales Legal Services project are focused on 'backroom functions' rather than citizen-facing services (like information and

advice or social care). National stakeholders characterised these types of projects as generating efficiency savings rather than outcomes for citizens directly. (Although it could be argued that cashable savings from such efficiencies could be reinvested in other services although this may be less likely given current public expenditure reductions.)

8.10 The All Wales Public Service Survey points out that the Project is producing changes in processes which might reasonably be expected to lead to improvements in public services and outcomes in the future. Respondents from ESF-LSB delivery projects were more positive about the extent to which they are meeting their objectives (i.e. project goals) than their counterparts from other partnerships. However, many of the goals asked about by the survey were processes (e.g. sharing knowledge, securing external funding). Although 43% of ESF-LSB delivery projects believed that they were having success in delivering better services (compared to 30% by other partnerships), it is difficult to know how specific the desired outcomes were, the extent of progress (e.g. how much better?) or whether these improvements translate into better outcomes for citizens because of the absence of external measures validating this type of response.

8.11 National stakeholders raised concerns about whether the delivery projects were sufficiently innovative and had the ability to drive systems change, which also raises questions about whether they will ultimately drive better outcomes for citizens.

8.12 The findings from the case studies are consistent with our theory of change, in that collaborative processes and citizen engagement are necessary (although not necessarily sufficient) for achieving better services. However, they suggest that it will take time for improvements in 'capacity' and 'organisational change' to produce 'service improvement' and may not occur within the lifetime of the projects funded by ESF.

8.13 Moreover, the outcomes (or outputs) achieved may be less ambitious than was expected originally.

8.14 For example, the North Wales ICT Collaboration Delivery Project did achieve cost savings through a number of the sub-projects despite the long process in

setting procurement arrangements among multiple partners. However, the case study found that although this delivery project strengthened collaboration in ICT across the region, it did not lead to a shared integrated service that maximised the costs saved. An increased commitment and willingness from strategic leaders would be required to enable partners to integrate teams and share assets in the future as well as to emphasise benefits for citizens within the project.

8.15 The findings lead us to conclude that there is some way to go before the evaluation can assess whether the ESF-LSB Project has led to better public services and better outcomes for citizens (although exceptions exist such as Team Around the Family in Swansea and Connecting Families in Bridgend), and there are questions about whether it will be possible to demonstrate these outcomes.

8.16 It will be important to continue to explore this issue and seek to identify such outcomes during the summative phase of the evaluation as well as assessing the extent to which the management of the Project has contributed to these. In doing this, we will draw on the findings of the second wave of the All Wales Survey and review LSBs' and councils' future arrangements for supporting delivery projects and related service improvements to identify the potential continuation approaches that should lead to improved outcomes.

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Implementation and management processes

8.17 A second key issue for the evaluation is to analyse how the ways in which the Project has been implemented and managed have contributed to better public services and better outcomes for citizens.

8.18 Previous research has shown that there are good grounds for believing that collaboration can improve public services in three main ways by:
- bringing together a range of agencies with complementary skills and resources;
- enabling more 'joined up' services which produce better outcomes for citizens; and

- reducing duplication between agencies which enables them to make cost savings.

8.19 There are a number of factors which help to facilitate effective collaboration including leadership, skilled management of partnerships and the relationships within these, and the provision of external funding, advice and support. We have reflected these in the 'inputs' column of the theory of change that underpins the evaluation framework.

8.20 The ESF-LSB Project seeks to enable collaboration by providing precisely this sort of assistance. It has offered:
- funding for delivery projects;
- resources to enable partnerships to employ project managers;
- advice, support and sharing of good practice facilitated by the ESF-LSB national team; and
- capacity for the third sector through funding additional posts (Making the Connections Officers) within each county voluntary council (CVC) in convergence areas.

8.21 Two-thirds of survey respondents reported that their project would not have happened without ESF-LSB funding. Resources have speeded up collaboration and enabled partners to achieve outcomes sooner than would otherwise have been the case. These responses chimed with the findings of the case studies, which often stated that their project would have not gone ahead without external funding, particularly in the current context of cuts in public sector budgets.

8.22 Survey responses also suggest that delivery projects are better funded and supported than other (possibly more strategic) partnerships, and are seen as having greater potential for encouraging learning, bringing together skills and resources from different organisations, engaging a wide variety of stakeholders and tackling 'cross-cutting' issues.

8.23 The bulk of ESF-LSB funding to delivery projects has been used to employ project managers. The survey findings suggest that the level of progress achieved to date has benefited greatly from the role of project managers. They have enabled local partners to achieve intermediate outcomes such as

collaborative agreements and organisational restructuring as well as improving the sharing of information across partners.

8.24 Evidence from the case studies confirms the importance of project managers with dedicated time to enable the partnerships to achieve these aims, through deploying skills in project co-ordination and management, building relationships with a wide range of partners and facilitating knowledge transfer between individuals and organisations.

8.25 Our synthesis has identified seven core themes across our case studies. These are the main determinants of the extent to which a project is making progress on collaboration and achieving service and/or process outcomes and comprise:

- the nature of the collaboration;
- where the project sits within an organisation;
- the role of the project manager;
- how knowledge is shared;
- leadership and the role of the LSB;
- setting ambitious and realistic outcomes; and
- the sustainability of the project.

8.26 The ESF-LSB national team has played a valuable role in supporting the Advisory Board and liaising with delivery projects. These projects have six-monthly review meetings with the national team and have also received advice and support from the team on evaluation. However, the experience of playing this role has highlighted need to build LSB evaluative capacity and analytical skills more generally. This would enable a more strategic, evidence-based approach to identifying outcomes, as discussed above, as well as project planning and performance management.

Learning from the delivery projects

8.27 The ESF-LSB Project is expected to generate learning that could help improve mainstream service delivery through collaboration and in turn contribute to better outcomes for citizens.

8.28 The survey results showed that LSBs and RPBs were seen as the two organisations that had the greatest impact in enabling learning and change in the delivery of the project (38% respondents scoring them as having 'greatly enabled' learning and change compared to 30% for Welsh Government and 28% for voluntary/third sector).

8.29 However, the results from this learning were not clear from the survey and the evidence casts doubt on the effectiveness of either tacit or explicit knowledge transfer since around half of survey respondents cited barriers to learning and change due to 'different organisational cultures (58%) and lack of time (45%).

8.30 The records of the 2014 learning events and the case study analysis support the survey findings and show that, within projects, learning has generally happened informally by colleagues working together for the first time and 'picking things up from each other'. This tacit learning can happen easily and naturally, but it is fragile as it depends on individuals and is unlikely to be sustained without an infrastructure.

8.31 Outside of the learning events, learning between projects has occurred opportunistically as Welsh Government has linked-up projects, or they have met and made contact with each other. This kind of ad hoc learning is simple to arrange but, as there is no structure or record of the learning that takes place, the learning may be lost and is unlikely to be more widely available to other projects and professionals.

8.32 So, while the delivery projects are, in some cases, testing out innovative approaches in delivering a specific service, learning from these projects is not currently being disseminated systematically across Wales (and beyond), either by the delivery projects themselves or the ESF-LSB national team.

8.33 There are opportunities for the ESF-LSB national team to work more closely with the LSB policy team (both are in the Local Government Partnerships Division) to encourage LSBs to support and learn from delivery projects in a prompt and timely manner. Without this support, it is likely that projects and LSBs will focus more on the management of processes than on the achievement of outcomes.

8.34 Facilitated discussion about 'what works' (in achieving outcomes) at the learning events in 2014 found that delivery projects had identified a number of common enabling factors, in particular:

- strong leadership, from someone with the authority and credibility to engage and galvanise partners;
- active buy-in from partners, not just being passively 'on board'; and
- shared and clear objectives that bind all partners to action.

8.35 In the final stages of the evaluation we will look to see in more detail what role learning has played in supporting projects toward delivering their outcomes.

8.36 National stakeholders said that they were keen for delivery projects to test out innovative, collaborative approaches to delivering priority outcomes and place particular emphasis on:

- increasing citizen engagement;
- tackling inequalities; and
- achieving environmental sustainability.

8.37 The survey results and the case studies cast doubt on the extent to which delivery projects have increased citizen engagement, tackled inequalities or promoted environmental sustainability explicitly. However, citizen engagement, in particular, has clearly been an important part of a number of case studies and we understand that all three themes were included in the 2014 round of compliance visits. We suggest that the Welsh Government make these priorities clearer for future ESF-funded projects and discuss how progress on a collaborative approach to these cross-cutting issues can be best captured.

Integration of the third sector and LSBs

8.38 National stakeholders emphasised the importance of increasing the capacity of the third sector to engage in partnership working and contribute towards transforming public services. However, our survey findings revealed that only a quarter of survey respondents felt that the major focus of their projects was to increase the role of the third sector in service delivery. The same proportion of delivery projects (which was lower than for other partnerships at 30%) had a

focus on engaging citizens in decisions about service provision, an activity often facilitated by third sector organisations.

8.39 National stakeholder interviews in 2013 showed a common perception that third sector organisations often lack the capacity to engage fully in delivery projects, partly due to the fragmented nature of the sector and potential role conflict and/or confusion between advocacy and delivery roles. Evidence from the Making the Connections evaluation will be useful in exploring whether capacity has been improved.

8.40 Questions were also raised about the potential role of citizens via the third sector in regional collaboration and whether it is possible to bring services closer to citizens while also achieving economies of scale.

8.41 Second round interviewees thought that the Project had led to better involvement and integration of the third sector by 2014, although this was only notable in the delivery projects that were either third sector-led (such as Third Sector Brokers in West Wales) and/or which relied heavily on the third sector for delivery (e.g. Hedfan and Powering Up in South East Wales and FIT in North Wales).

8.42 They also commented that there is little role for the third sector in some of the projects that are less about citizen outcomes and more about back office improvements and internal change, such as the North Wales Legal Services and ICT Collaboration projects.

8.43 Generally, there was a view that the local third sector needs to be fully involved in collaborative service design – as well as delivery - and this is not happening as much as it should across the Project. Where national stakeholders were aware of instances of improved collaboration (between public sector bodies as well as with the third sector), they were keen that this is embedded in LSBs and single integrated plans and questioned the extent to which the LSB support officers and Making the Connections (MtC) officers were working with the delivery project managers to this end.

8.44 In the summative stage of the evaluation, we want to understand how effective such processes have been and the nature of their impact. The findings of the Making the Connections evaluation will be useful to draw on in relation to this

point as well as drawing on local evaluations e.g. Team Around the Family in Swansea and Connecting Families in Bridgend.

Recommendations

8.45 Below we make a series of recommendations for the Welsh Government and its partners to consider in order to address these issues in a way that maximises and disseminates the learning from the Project.

i. In our interim report, we recommended that the ESF-LSB Advisory Board and national project team should continue to work with LSBs and project leads to identify outcomes, measure impacts and help develop local theories of changes to understand the drivers and enablers of effective collaboration. Recognising the ESF-LSB Project has effectively ended, we feel this recommendation should be extended by the Welsh Government to **working with LSBs/Public Service Boards (PSBs)** in this way on other public service reform initiatives and projects, both current and future.

ii. Where evidence suggests that the approach developed by a project or group of projects is effective, the Welsh Government should actively consider its **suitability for wider roll-out** for national, regional or local service delivery.

iii. The Welsh Government should consider designing and developing a **structured programme to build evaluative and analytical capacity of all LSBs/PSBs** to improve their focus on, among other things, setting and demonstrating outcomes, using theories of change (ToC) and utilising qualitative evidence. This capacity-building programme should be linked to the delivery of Single Integrated Plan (SIP) priorities (or in future, well-being assessments/plans) and the thinking in the Future Generations Bill.

iv. The ESF-LSB national team should work closely with the LSB policy team (both are in the Local Government Partnerships Division) and others to agree a **learning and dissemination programme** to encourage LSBs/PSBs to support and learn from delivery projects (and related projects and initiatives) in a prompt and timely manner. This should help LSBs/PSBs in future to focus on the delivery of agreed and shared outcomes rather than on the management of processes.

v. Recognising the ESF-LSB Advisory Board and national project team have started to disseminate learning about outcomes and effective collaborative approaches on **specific policy themes**, we recommend this approach is developed further and widened in future.

vi. Specifically, the Welsh Government should ensure it captures and disseminates the **learning generated from using ESF funding to employ collaborative project managers**. Their skills in managing projects spanning multiple organisations and sectors are likely to be highly valued in Welsh public services, where relationship management is becoming increasingly important to take forward collaboration.

vii. Given that the evidence to date indicates variable impact, the Welsh Government should consider how it can work with WCVA and others to encourage LSBs and their partners to do **more to integrate the third sector**, not only in the delivery but also in the design and planning of services, where their input is most relevant and could make the most impact.

viii. The Welsh Government should consider undertaking and/or commissioning a **meta-analysis of relevant evaluations**, including Making the Connections, LSB Support Officers, Families First, Collaborative Procurement, and Invest to Save, to draw out common lessons about effective collaboration that can lead to system change and population outcomes. There is significant potential to bring together learning from across different funding streams, so learning is not conducted in silos.

ix. In line with its research and evaluation principles, the Welsh Government should agree how it wants to use the findings of this evaluation to help ensure there is a **legacy from the Project**. In the post-project closure period, the Welsh Government should put greater emphasis on learning and sharing good practice from the Project, to ensure the most valuable lessons are surfaced and shared. The responsibility for embedding and acting on these lessons should be shared across Welsh public services.

x. The Welsh Government and the wider public sector also need to take responsibility for disseminating the **learning from other evaluations** to sustain and embed collaboration and inform wider public service reform.

Implications for the summative stage of the ESF-LSB Project evaluation

8.46 In the final stage of the evaluation, we will collect more evidence to explore the issues discussed above and be able to present more robust findings and conclusions about the impact of the ESF-LSB Project for the final summative report due in summer 2015. The next steps for the evaluation include facilitating a final learning event aimed at LSBs, producing a set of 'good-practice' cases and repeating the all-Wales Public Services Survey in 2015.

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Annex 1. Learning Theory of Change

Rationale	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Process evaluation question 2: • "[How far] Is information and knowledge generated, communicated, disseminated and learned from?" We want to understand how the project encourages learning: • By individuals • Within teams / groups in partner organisations • Within partner organisations • Between partner organisations • Between tiers of government Desire from the projects to learn from each other. Complementary local and national evaluations that create the scope for: • Learning between projects nationally • Learning between projects on geographical / thematic bases • Learning between the local and national evaluations Learning is implicitly relied upon as the main mechanism for transferring good practice?	ESF Local Service Board Project Team Learning lead in the public service reform division Other WG learning leads/drivers Evaluation team Delivery-project leads [– how does the role / seniority of project leaders affect the capacity / likelihood of learning?] Local learning projects leads (not required but may emerge locally) The demand for learning – what level of demand is there? Is there need / scope to increase demand? Potential enablers of learning [– how far are they in place nationally / locally?] • Leadership • Champions • Social ties • Organisational culture • Technology (as a way to make connections) Facilitated opportunities and forums for learning	Activities to promote learning. The evaluation: - Learning events - Website - Learning notes Facilitating linkages between projects by Welsh Government – common issues emails Regional project-manager meetings Promotion of wider training activities to the projects by Welsh Government Local evaluation activities Projects contacting and learning from each other Ministerial visits to promising delivery projects	**Improved dissemination of information** Sharing information about service users between partners Information about the current and potential role of partners is shared across the partnership Information about effective interventions is shared between areas Information about local third sector is shared by local partners Local evaluation reports/case studies and annual reports National evaluation outputs ⬇ **Increases in knowledge** [Need to explore further what is **tacit and explicit**] Partners have a greater understanding of their service users – through collaboration and knowledge sharing	**Intermediate outcomes** Partners have greater knowledge of each other's roles – and potential to play greater role Partners and the partnership as a whole has greater knowledge about the current and potential role of partners third sector has increased knowledge of LSBs and other partnerships **Changed attitudes** Public services regard the third sector as a key partner in delivery Changed attitudes to citizens – as co-designers in/co-producers of services, not passive recipients Changed attitudes within public services to other parts of the same service/other services – seen as potential partners not a separate silo ⬇ **Changed behaviours** Public service proactively partner with the third sector to address local needs	Public services are transformed through more effective collaboration Higher quality public service across Wales Demonstrable improvements in effectiveness and value for money in public services **CONTINUES NEXT PAGE…**

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	Barriers to learning - how far are they in place nationally / locally? • lack of trust • organisational complexity • lack of capacity • individual negative attitudes • difficulty identifying pertinent learning points and the right audience to disseminate to Learning outcomes/things to learn from projects. How are they identified? How do we know what is worth learning to begin with?		Knowledge about effective interventions (what works etc.) in projects is captured by LSBs and shared across boundaries Partners have greater shared knowledge of the local third sector ⬇ **Raised awareness** Partners have a greater understanding of the role and capacity of the third sector Areas are more aware of the potential for collaboration across boundaries Partners are more aware of how to connect and work together Partners are more aware of effective approaches that could be adapted and applied locally	Areas collaborate across boundaries on areas of joint concerns Citizens are better able to access, contribute to and help shape public services Partners work together on joint commissioning and new models of service delivery Evidence of effectiveness plays a greater role in service and project design? More willingness to trial and evaluate new approaches before implementing in full? **Outcomes** LSBs provide a sustainable support and delivery learning infrastructure There is less duplication of activities and greater learning between partners and between local areas and the Welsh Government The third sector is a recognised partner and plays an active role in LSBs and other public service planning groups LSBs are able to better deliver collaborative change projects The role of citizens in shaping, improving and assessing the performance of public services is understood, developed and widened. LAs and LSBs embed positive approaches to collaboration in mainstream service design and delivery	