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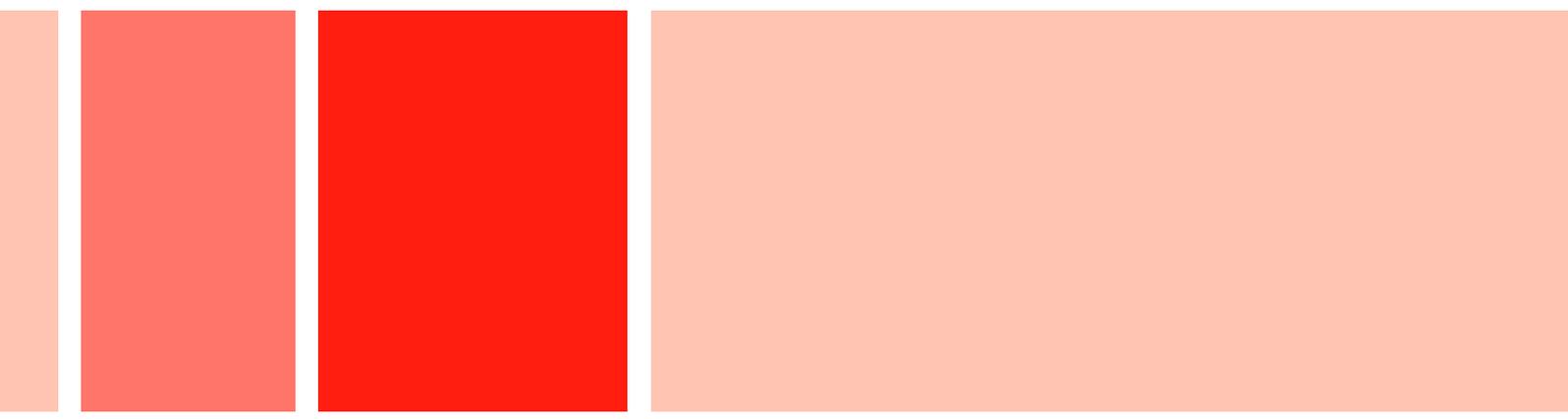
Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Social research

Number: 24/2015

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# Evaluation of the Single Adult Employment and Skills Programme (SAESP) Pilot



# **Evaluation of the Single Adult Employment and Skills Programme (SAESP) Pilot: A report to the Welsh Government**

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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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Welsh Government Social Research, 20 May 2015

ISBN 978-1-4735-3563-6

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## Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	7
2	Context.....	9
3	Rationale, Aims and Objectives.....	29
4	Delivery .....	35
5	Outcomes and Impact .....	43
6	Conclusions.....	54

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

1. SQW was commissioned by the Welsh Government (WG) to evaluate the Genesis Wales 2 (GW2) programme<sup>1</sup>. In June 2013, GW2 was integrated into the Single Adult Employment and Skills Programme (SAESP) Pilot. Given this planned development, a revised specification was sent to SQW with an objective to:

*Evaluate the Single Adult Employment and Skills Programme Pilot by conducting qualitative research with key stakeholders to assess how well the projects have integrated and how the geographic consortia has responded to individual and business needs with a view to establishing an evidence base to support the Employment and Skills model for 2014-20.*

2. The approach to addressing this objective involved: initial scoping consultations with local, regional and national stakeholders; a review of existing adult employment support projects within Wales; two follow-up rounds of stakeholder consultations; and analysis of South West Workways (SWW) monitoring data covering the period before and during the pilot.

### Rationale, aims and objectives

3. The decision to implement a phased closure of GW2 resulted in the transfer of active programme participants in the south west region into SWW. In recognition of some of the challenges faced by GW2 and other ESF-supported programmes, relating to coordinating support, it was decided to bring together a range of other projects operating in the region alongside SWW. This combined provision became the 'SAESP Pilot'.
4. The aim of the Pilot was to *“test and explore the opportunities to bring together key employment and skills delivery across the Pilot area to*

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<sup>1</sup> The final evaluation report can be downloaded from the following link: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-genesis-wales-2/?lang=en>

*ensure synergy, value for money, targeted support and avoid duplication of effort.*<sup>2</sup> The ambition for the project was to:

- provide strategic leadership on setting the policy context for **enabling delivery** of programmes
- avoid **duplication of effort** in engaging participants and employers
- prevent **patterns of multiple funding** where participants are recycled through similar, and potentially competing, programmes
- capture benefits of **utilising external expertise** in delivery with the acknowledgement that Government is a deliverer of last resort
- respond, **through demand led local delivery**, to geographical and sectoral need.

## **Delivery**

5. GW2 and SWW were the only projects to have integrated through the Pilot, although the scale of transfer of GW2 staff and participants into SWW was much lower than anticipated. This was because many 'active' GW2 participants were found to have had no substantive contact with the programme for some time or were not actively seeking work – a prerequisite for SWW support. A further six ESF-supported projects participated in the Pilot. These offered support ranging from initial engagement with hard to reach groups, through to workforce development for those in employment.
6. A Steering Group was set up to provide strategic direction and input to the Pilot. It was chaired by WG and included representatives from local, regional and national organisations delivering employment and skills support. The aim was to involve all major stakeholders and the view from consultees was that this had been achieved.
7. An Operational Group was established to take forward implementation of the Pilot. It included representation from each of the seven participating projects. However, a few months into the pilot, WG were found to be providing more operational input and direction than originally anticipated due to concerns over lack of progress.

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<sup>2</sup> SAESP Pilot Project Initiation Document (PID) January 2013

8. The (South West and Central Wales) RLP took over chair of the Operational Group in November 2013 and the view of consultees was that this brought focus and momentum to the later stages of the Pilot. From then until the end of the Pilot in March 2014, a range of activities were delivered to promote better communication and information sharing between projects; increase referrals between participating projects; reduce duplication of effort in engaging employers; and capture lessons learned.

### **Outcomes and impact**

9. Whilst the scale of transfer of GW2 participants into SWW was much lower than originally anticipated, those that did transfer achieved better employment outcomes when compared to GW2. However, this finding has to be caveated with the fact that those transferring were unlikely to be representative of the GW2 client group as a whole as they had to be actively seeking work in order to qualify for SWW support, whilst GW2 support was broader.
10. All seven participating projects were reported to have established referral protocols with each other as a result of the Pilot. This was facilitated by sharing of information relating to each other's remit, eligibility criteria and referral requirements. In addition to an increase in referral activity, there was a reported improvement in the quality of referrals being made as a result of projects having greater knowledge and awareness of each other's offer.

### **Conclusions**

11. The decentralisation of skills and employment services to the regional level has been on the agenda for some time in Wales. Prior to the start of the Pilot, the RLP had already made good progress in terms of bringing together key education and regeneration partners operating across the South West region to work together more collaboratively. The Pilot was symbolic in that it represented a clear and explicit endorsement on the part of the WG to this regional agenda.

12. The main success of the Pilot in relation to reducing duplication was the identification of where this existed. Moreover, there was anecdotal evidence of improved cross-referral, suggesting that where people were recruited to the 'wrong' programme they were being referred on to more suitable provision. This represents the starting point for developing measures to address this.
13. The system of monitoring referrals between projects introduced through the Pilot also provides a foundation for tracking participant journeys. Over time, this will provide an evidence base on how participants move through the system. It will also provide information on those that do not progress and therefore become 'recycled'. This will help inform the development of measures to address this and promote progression.
14. The improvement in the quality of referrals being made as a result of Pilot activity should also help reduce patterns of multiple funding as participants are more likely to be referred into provision that is suitable to meet their needs. However, to be fully effective the project will need to move beyond the fairly basic paper systems they used: moving to a shared database and common assessment approach.
15. In practice, the scale of the merger between GW2 and SWW was much smaller than originally anticipated. GW2 participants that did transfer over achieved slightly better employment outcomes than would have been expected through GW2, but were less likely to achieve qualifications or other positive outcomes. This provides some evidence that the merger was a success in terms of improving employment outcomes for participants. However, it also suggests that SWW was not suitable for GW2 clients that were facing labour market barriers. Together these findings highlight the importance of having a suite of opportunities to meet different needs, regardless of the providers involved.
16. The Pilot was found to have made some progress in getting providers and partners to think about geographical and sectoral needs, linking these to the range of provision already available, and identifying where there were gaps. This was not happening previously and so represented real progress. In the new regional model of employment and skills

delivery currently being rolled out across Wales, regions are being expected to develop a suite of provision that meets the needs of their respective labour markets. The Pilot could be considered to represent an early iteration of this model.

# 1 Introduction

1.1 SQW was commissioned by the Welsh Government (WG) in October 2010 to evaluate the Genesis Wales 2 (GW2) programme. In June 2013, GW2 was integrated into the Single Adult Employment and Skills Programme (SAESP) Pilot. Given this planned development, and learning and issues identified in the first stages of the GW2 evaluation<sup>3</sup>, a revised specification was sent to SQW in December 2012 with an objective to:

*Evaluate the Single Adult Employment and Skills Programme Pilot by conducting qualitative research with key stakeholders to assess how well the projects have integrated and how the geographic consortia has responded to individual and business needs with a view to establishing an evidence base to support the Employment and Skills model for 2014-20.*

1.2 This document reports on the findings from the work carried out to address this objective. There were six main stages to this.

- **Scoping** – initial consultations were carried out with 13 representatives from national, regional and local stakeholders involved in the SAESP Pilot during June / July 2013. The purpose of this stage was to develop an understanding of the rationale, aims and objectives of the Pilot, roles and responsibilities, progress made to date and future plans.
- **Review of existing provision** – a review of 18 existing ESF adult employability projects operating within Wales was carried out. This involved a desk review of previous evaluation reports, as well as consultations with programme managers. The aim was to understand the context for the SAESP Pilot and to identify lessons and areas of transferable good practice that could be taken forward to inform the development of the model.
- **Stakeholder consultations (1)** – a further round of consultations with 10 representatives from national, regional and local stakeholders

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<sup>3</sup> Further details of which are provided in the final evaluation of GW2, which can be downloaded from the following link: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-genesis-wales-2/?lang=en>

involved in the SAESP Pilot was carried out during December 2013. The aim was to reconfirm the aims and objectives of the Pilot, assess progress made to date, explore how the changes introduced were working in practice and identify what still remained to be done.

- **Stakeholder consultations (2)** – the Pilot finished at the end of March 2014 and a final round of stakeholder consultations (8) was carried out during July / August 2014. The aim was to assess progress made towards the ambitions for the Pilot and to identify the key challenges and lessons learned.
- **Analysis of monitoring data** – South West Workways (SWW) programme monitoring data covering the period of the Pilot was reviewed, analysed and compared with historical (pre-Pilot) data. A sub-set of data tracking progress of the GW2 participants who transferred into the Pilot was also incorporated within this analysis.

1.3 The remainder of this document is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides **context** for the Pilot from a review of existing adult employment and skills support in Wales
- Chapter 3 outlines the **rationale, aims and objectives** of the Pilot
- Chapter 4 details the main **activities** delivered through the Pilot
- Chapter 5 summarises the **outcomes and impact** from these
- Chapter 6 concludes with an **assessment of progress made towards the ambitions** for the Pilot.

## 2 Context

### Summary – Context

A review of adult employability projects in Wales was carried out to provide context for the SAESP Pilot and to inform development of the model, focussing on ESF-supported projects. The aim was to develop an understanding of existing provision, with a view to identifying areas of transferable good practice, and to provide points of comparison for the evaluation of GW2<sup>4</sup>.

A number of projects were found to be offering engagement and pre-employment support to similar target groups, suggesting a high degree of overlap and duplication. The view from project managers was that the landscape for this type of provision was cluttered, resulting in competition between projects and challenges for individuals and employers trying to 'navigate the system'. A further contributing factor was the introduction of the Work Programme in 2012, which substantially reduced the potential client base that ESF-funded projects could work with.

The lessons from these projects include: the importance of collaboration and partnership working; taking a regional approach to delivery; incorporating local knowledge; taking a holistic and person-centred approach; engaging employers; and offering work experience opportunities.

A second category of projects offered engagement, pre-employment and in-work support. A review of monitoring data and evaluation evidence shows that these achieved better employment outcomes than those focussing solely on engagement and pre-employment. Success factors include: having accessible locations based either centrally or close to where participants live; having a single monitoring system for tracking project activity; and offering in-work

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<sup>4</sup> The final report of the GW2 evaluation can be downloaded from the following link: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-genesis-wales-2/?lang=en>

support to both employers and participants to ensure that job outcomes are sustained.

A third category of projects offered Pre-Employment, In-Work Support and / or Workforce Development. The factors that were found to work well for these projects include: breaking down 'silos' of delivery to offer fully integrated and multi-disciplinary packages of support; identifying the skills needs of individuals at the outset to ensure that support is matched to need; and adopting the 'learner-commissioned model' where beneficiaries take the lead on choosing the package of support they need.

## **Introduction**

- 2.1 The SAESP Pilot was testing a new model for the delivery of skills and employment support in Wales. The model being tested involved bringing together existing adult skills and employment provision into a single regional programme, and providing a point of comparison for GW2 performance.
- 2.2 To provide context for the Pilot and to inform the development of the model, a review of current adult employability projects was carried out during June/July 2013. This focussed on ESF-funded projects within Convergence Priority 2 (and Competitiveness Priority 1). The purpose of the review was to develop an understanding of existing provision with a view to identifying areas of transferable good practice that could be taken forward to inform the SAESP model and to provide points of comparison for the evaluation of GW2.
- 2.3 For each of the projects included, the review sought to identify the:
  - underlying rationale for the intervention
  - aims, objectives and target groups
  - potential fit with SAESP (conceptual and delivery) models
  - elements that have been found to work well
  - main challenges / potential areas for improvement.

## **Methodology**

2.4 There were two main elements to the review.

- Desk based review of previous evaluation reports.
- Telephone consultations with project managers.

2.5 18 projects were identified by WG for inclusion in the review, these are listed in **Table 2.1**, along with details of the information provided (previous evaluation reports and contact details) to inform the review. For some projects, previous evaluation reports and contact details for project managers were provided, whilst for others only previous evaluation reports or contact details were available.

**Table 2 1: Projects included within the review**

Name	Evaluation Report (s)*	PM Contact Details
1. COASTAL	X	X
2. ReAct	X	X
3. JobMatch	X	X
4. Cyrenians (supported employment)	X	X
5. Engagement Gateway	X	X
6. Qwest	X	X
7. Lifeskills	X	X
8. New Work Connections	X	X
9. Skillbuild	X	X
10. Wellbeing through Work (ILM)	X	X
11. Bridges into Work	X	X
12. South West Workways	X	X
13. Want2Work	X	X
14. Workways	X	
15. Skills for Industry	X	
16. Peer Mentoring		X
17. New Day		X
18. Family Employment Initiative		x

\* References to all evaluation reports included within the review can be found in **Annex B**

NB: All of the projects included within the review were ESF-supported.

2.6 The remainder of this chapter reports on the findings from the review. For the purposes of analysis and reporting, we have separated the projects into three distinct groups according to the stage(s) in the SAESP conceptual model that they focus on. **Box 2.1** sets out the stages.

## Box 2.1: Definitions of stages in the SAESP conceptual model

**Engagement:** support focussed on addressing non-labour-market barriers e.g. confidence building, coaching, childcare, health issues or money / debt problems.

**Pre-employment:** this is more labour market focussed support such as vocational training, work placements, help with CVs, job searching and interview techniques.

**In-work support:** provided to individuals and / or employers within the first 6 months of starting a job.

**Workforce development:** support (usually training / up-skilling) for individuals that have been in a job for 6 months or more.

2.7 **Table 2.2** shows the distribution of projects between these stages.

**Table 2.2: Groups of projects**

Group	Stage in the SAESP conceptual model	No of projects included
1	Engagement Only	3
	Engagement and Pre-Employment Support	7
2	Engagement, Pre-employment and In-Work Support	4
3	Pre-Employment, In-Work Support and / or Workforce Development	4

*Source: SQW*

### **Group 1 – Engagement or Engagement and Pre-Employment**

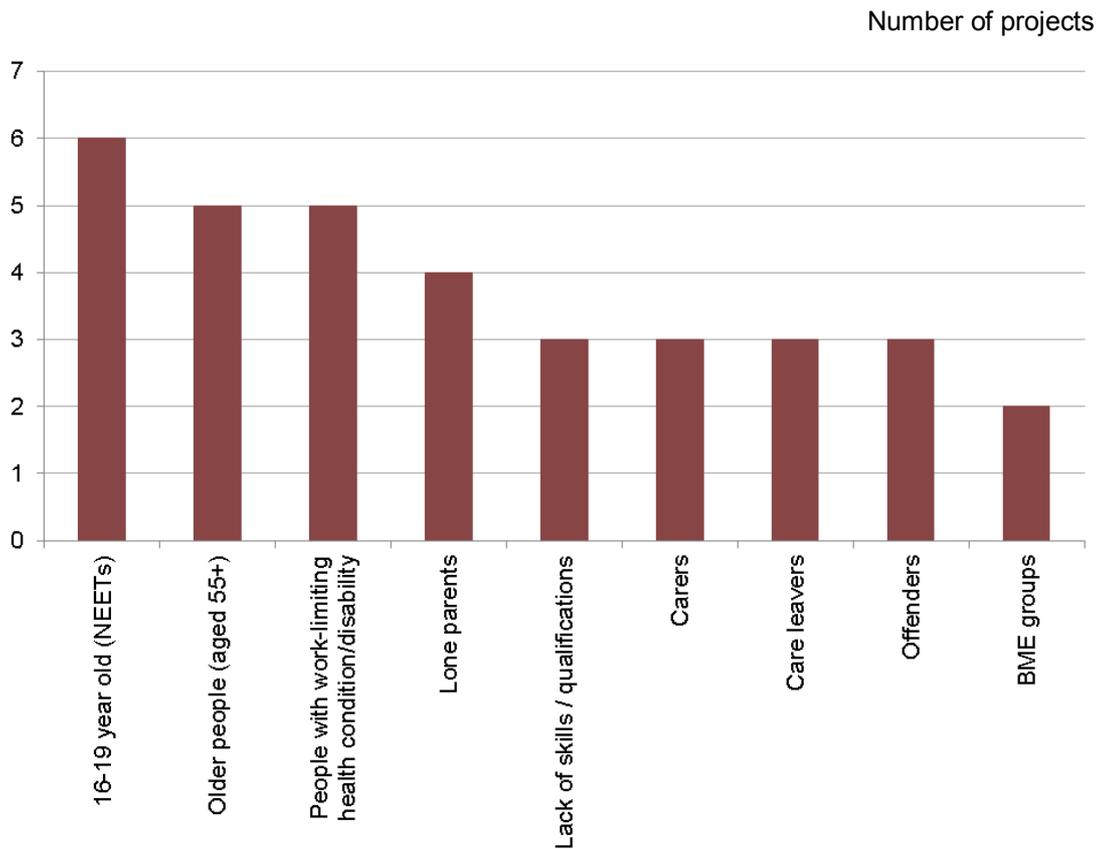
#### *Overview*

2.8 There were 10 projects included in Group 1 of the review. Of these, three offered engagement support only and seven offered engagement and pre-employment support. These were all ESF-funded and therefore had an end date within 12 months of this review.

### *Target Groups*

- 2.9 In terms of economic status, all of the projects in Group 1 targeted economically inactive adults. Of these, five also offered support to unemployed people and four also targeted the long-term unemployed.
- 2.10 Figure 2.1 provides further detail of target groups for the projects in relation to potential barriers faced by participants. At least half offered targeted support to NEETs, older people or those with a work limiting health condition or disability, including those with a history of substance misuse. Most of the other target groups shown were also fairly well covered, though each by a smaller number of projects.
- 2.11 Overall, this analysis suggests that there has been a good spread of provision across each of the main ESF target groups. However, the fact that there were so many projects offering engagement and pre-employment support to similar target groups suggests a high degree of overlap and duplication between projects, with a number covering the same location or operation across Wales. It is also noted that many sponsors were involved in more than one project.
- 2.12 The issue of overlap came through strongly from consultations with project managers. The general consensus was that the landscape for this type of provision was overly cluttered resulting in competition between projects to secure participants and challenges for individuals and employers trying to 'navigate the system'.

**Figure 2.1: Group 1 projects by target groups**



Source: Programme monitoring data and evaluation reports

(Engagement Gateway and Lifeskills have been treated as separate projects in Convergence and RCE areas)

**Participation**

2.13 Information relating to the volume of participants engaged was available for 11 of the projects included within this category (as well as for GW2) and this is summarised in Table 2.3. The table is presented to give an overview of the magnitude of different projects only, not to comment in any way on performance.

**Table 2.3: Group 1 projects by level of participation**

Project	Average number of participants engaged (per year)
Want to Work	10,100
Bridges into Work	5,300
Family Employment Initiative	3,200
GW2	2,600
South West Workways	2,400
Engagement Gateway (RCE)	2,200
Engagement Gateway (Convergence)	1,600
COASTAL	1,000
New Work Connections	1,000
Qwest	800
Life Skills (convergence)	500
Life Skills (RCE)	400

2.14 Taken together, these projects have accounted for a combined total of over 30,000 engagements per year. There could be an element of double-counting in these figures as participants could have taken part in more than one project, although not at the same time. The number of unique individuals engaged per year is therefore likely to be somewhat lower. By way of context, there were almost 500,000 economically inactive residents in Wales in March 2013<sup>5</sup>. This suggests that, despite the volume of projects focussing solely on engagement and pre-employment support, penetration of this target group has not been extensive.

### *Outcomes*

2.15 Data relating to outcomes achieved were available for most of the projects reviewed within this category and also for GW2. This is summarised by outcome in the sections below.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Annual Population Survey March 2013

### *Employment outcomes*

- 2.16 The review was undertaken during July / August 2013 at this time, and based on available evidence, South West Workways (SWW) had the highest rate of progression into employment.
- 2.17 A key success factor for SWW, as highlighted in the evaluation report and by project staff, was a strong focus on getting people into jobs. The 'work-first' approach adopted meant that participants were generally put straight into work experience placements (Temporary Job Opportunities) with limited other pre-employment activity. However, it was acknowledged through consultation that it did predominantly work with those that were closer to the labour market and therefore likely to more 'work-ready' than those on some of the other projects.
- 2.18 A further success factor for SWW was effective employer engagement activities. This was achieved through a dedicated team of Employer Liaison Officers who focussed on engaging employers, identifying recruitment needs and sourcing appropriate candidates.
- 2.19 In relation to Want to Work, the project with the second highest progression rate, the comparatively good employment outcomes achieved were partly attributed in the consultation to good linkages with the wider Jobcentre Plus network. This enabled access to a wide range of employer contacts and knowledge of local labour markets and opportunities. Other success factors identified by evaluators include a focus on outreach work with many staff based in local communities and access to discretionary funding, which allowed them to tailor support to meet individual needs.

### *Qualification outcomes*

- 2.20 Overall, the Group 1 projects performed showed higher levels of progression on the qualification outcome measure than on employment. Achievement of qualifications varied between projects from 6 per cent to 51 per cent. This reflects the focus on the provision of pre-employment support. Bridges into Work, which had the highest achievement rate, engaged economically inactive clients living within deprived areas of

Wales with the aim of supporting them to acquire skills to become job ready and gain sustainable employment.

- 2.21 A key success factor for the project, identified through consultation, was the availability of the right level of course for the client group with a particular emphasis being placed upon entry level and lower level vocational course provision that is available free of charge and without long waiting lists.

#### *Further learning outcomes*

- 2.22 Monitoring data shows that progression into further learning varied from 1 per cent to 16 per cent. Engagement Gateway and Bridges into Work achieved the highest proportions of participants moving into education or further learning.

#### *Other positive outcomes*

- 2.23 It is more challenging to review and compare performance across the projects in relation to the achievement of 'other positive outcomes' for participants. This is due to differences between projects in relation to how these are defined and also variations in the way they are recorded. For example, some projects count each outcome achieved, whilst others count the number of participants achieving one or more outcomes. In the case of the former, individuals achieving multiple outcomes are counted more than once, whilst in the latter they are counted only once no matter how many outcomes they have achieved. Despite these issues, it was clear from the review that most of the projects in this category were delivering a high volume of 'other positive outcomes' to clients. This is particularly true in the case of projects such as COASTAL that were delivering support to hard-to-reach groups with complex needs and multiple labour market barriers. This project recorded over 6,000 'other positive outcomes' for a client group of 2,000.

## **Group 1 – what worked well?**

**Collaboration and partnership working** – a big lesson cited by several project managers was the importance of collaboration. Many of the projects developed good working relationships with each other and informal referral mechanisms. This proved beneficial for participants, and also for projects in terms of achieving engagement and outcomes targets.

**Regional approach** – for projects operating across multiple local authority areas the general consensus was that it is important to take a regional approach to management and delivery. This was found to help ensure consistency in relation to the service offer, avoid duplicate management structures and facilitate data sharing between areas.

**Local knowledge** – the importance of having good local knowledge was mentioned by several consultees as important to delivering an effective service. This referred to knowledge of the range of services available for clients, but also of local labour market conditions and employment opportunities.

**Holistic and person-centred approach** – many of the projects in this category work with individuals with complex needs that are not suitable for mainstream employment support. The barriers they face can be wide ranging and a person-centred approach is necessary to address these issues successfully.

**Work experience / temporary job opportunities** – most of the projects that were successful at achieving employment outcomes for clients had a strong focus on work experience placements. This was considered a useful stepping stone back into paid employment, particularly for those who have been out of work for some time or had never worked.

**Employer engagement** – linked to the point above, engaging employers was considered by several consultees as important for securing work placements and linking participants to potential job opportunities. It was also considered useful for understanding employer requirements and expectations so that support could be tailored to meet these. Analysis of evaluation evidence, performance figures and feedback from consultations would suggest that the projects that have been most successful at this are those with dedicated employer engagement teams.

### **Group 1 – what were the challenges?**

**Duplication and competition** – several of the project managers made reference to the volume of projects offering these types of services to similar client groups. There was a general feeling amongst project managers that there had been limited oversight and co-ordination in terms of approving projects, resulting in duplication and competition for clients. This was exacerbated by the introduction of the Work Programme in 2012, but had been an issue before then.

**Sharing outcomes** – the decision by WEFO not to allow projects to share outcomes had a particularly negative impact on some of the projects in this category, particularly those working with the most hard-to-reach client groups. These projects were designed to offer initial engagement and pre-employment support to participants with a view to progressing them onto other projects focussed more on employment, with the expectation that employment gains would come through the later projects. Without being able to count people placed in to work through the later projects, those activities earlier in the chain struggled to achieve their (employment) outcome targets.

**Economic conditions** – most of the projects were designed and developed pre-2008, i.e. before the economic recession. The focus on engagement and pre-employment was therefore perhaps better suited to a more buoyant labour market and many struggled to achieve what was expected in the

context of the decline in job opportunities. Projects were seeking to assist people who had been out of work for some time back to employment, at a time when competition from people with very recent work histories was rising. In the past job creation projects have been used as an alternative approach.

**Lack of clarity in relation to aims and objectives** – several of the project evaluations identified a lack of clarity in relation to project aims, objectives, target groups and outcome measures. These should have been clarified and agreed with WEFO at the project approval stage, along with accompanying evaluation criteria. However, in several cases, it seems that they were not fully agreed until some way into the project. This created confusion amongst those delivering the projects and possibly also contributed to some projects not achieving what was expected.

## **Group 2 – Engagement, Pre-Employment and In-Work Support**

### *Overview*

2.24 The second category of projects reviewed covers those offering engagement, pre-employment and in-work support. There were five in total, all of which received ESF funds. Of these, three were still active at the time of the review and one (Workways) closed in 2008.

### *Target Groups*

2.25 All four projects in this category targeted economically inactive adults. Three also targeted the long-term unemployed. In addition to the standard ESF target groups, two of the projects also targeted individuals facing specific non-labour market barriers:

- **Peer Mentoring** – this project focussed on engaging and supporting individuals with a history of substance misuse.
- **Cyrenians Cymru** – targeted support for homeless people, individuals with alcohol and drug misuse problems, and people with chaotic and unsettled lifestyles.

## *Participation*

2.26 In terms of scale, three of the projects in this category engaged an average of around 2,000 participants per year, as shown in Table 2.4. Peer Mentoring (RCE) was lower at 700 and Workways was lower again at just 400, as this was only delivered within one local authority area (Neath Port Talbot) whilst the others were regional projects. It is worth noting that they were all relatively small in scale meaning that the lessons may not necessarily be transferable to a regional or national project.

**Table 2.4: Group 2 projects by level of participation**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Average number of participants engaged (per year)</b>
Job Match	2,300
Peer Mentoring (convergence)	1,700
Cyrenians (CESA)	1,700
Peer Mentoring (RCE)	700
Workways	400

## *Employment outcomes*

2.27 In relation to outcomes, the only consistent data we have been able to source for these projects relates to the achievement of employment outcomes for participants. These have been sourced from a combination of WEFO monitoring information, evaluation reports and figures provided by project staff. More than half (54 per cent) of all Jobmatch participants achieved employment outcomes. This was considerably above the averages for each of the other projects within this category and in fact was the highest of all the projects included within the review.

2.28 One of the main success factors for Jobmatch was considered to be the significant investment made by the programme towards improving the coherence and inter-relationship of employability services within the areas that it operated. An evaluation of the programme identified a wealth of examples of synergies and co-operation between JobMatch and other providers. This included pooling of resources, both at strategic

and operational level, transition pathways between JobMatch and other support programmes and frontline staff doubling up to offer a joint offer to clients and employers.

#### **Group 2 – what worked well?**

In terms of this group of projects as a whole, consultations with project managers and review of previous evaluation reports identified the following as having been found to work well:

- **Accessible locations** – being based somewhere centrally (such as in a town centre) or local to where residents live was found to help engagement, particularly for hard-to-reach groups
- **MI systems** – having a single system that can capture the full range of project activity was found to be a real advantage. This helped to better enable matching of participants to job vacancies and training opportunities
- **In-work support** – some clients, particularly those who have been out of employment for some time, or have in the past faced significant barriers, can often find the transition into work both challenging and stressful. Providing advice and support to both participants and employers in the early stages was found to make a big difference for some clients in ensuring that employment outcomes were sustained.

#### **Group 2 – what were the challenges?**

The main challenges identified through the consultations and review of previous evaluations were:

- **Ensuring consistency** – delivering a project across different local authorities made it difficult to ensure consistency. In some cases, it was felt that partnership working and sharing of best practice between areas could have been better
- **Engaging target groups** – some target groups proved particularly challenging to engage. This included young people, women and ethnic

minorities. The profile for participants tended to be strongly weighted towards males and those aged 25-49

- **Sourcing the right staff** – engaging and developing supportive relationships with individuals who are living chaotic lifestyles, and dealing with issues such as substance abuse and homelessness, requires a set of skills and aptitudes that can be difficult to find.

### **Group 3 – Pre-Employment, In-Work Support and / or Workforce Development**

#### *Overview*

2.29 The final four projects included within the review were the only ones not to offer engagement support. They were all focussed on the provision of pre-employment, in-work support and / or workforce development.

#### *Target Groups*

2.30 The four projects included within this category were predominantly working with individuals that were either fairly close to the labour market or already in work, as shown in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5: Target groups**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Target groups</b>
Skillbuild	Unemployed and economically inactive young people and adults looking to access job-specific training
Skills for Industry	Employers and individuals already in work
ReAct	Individuals that have become unemployed within the last 6 months or are under notice of redundancy
Wellbeing through Work	Individuals in employment that have (or are at risk of developing) a health problem or who are on sickness absence, including those claiming Statutory Sick Pay

### *Performance - Skillbuild*

- 2.31 Skillbuild<sup>6</sup> was launched in 1999 and aimed to support non-employed individuals (the unemployed and economically inactive) who were lacking in career focus, to identify possible vocations of interest and provide relevant training and skills development to aid progression in their chosen area. Skillbuild Adult, which was a subset of the Skillbuild project, was subsequently refocused as Steps to Employment.
- 2.32 Skillbuild performed well in terms of engagement, working with over 22,600 participants between 2007 and 2011 against a target of 21,300<sup>7</sup>. Of these, 4,770 moved into employment following completion of the project, against a target of 4,050. The project also exceeded target in relation to the number of participants gaining qualifications and was only marginally below target in terms of the number moving into further learning.

### *Performance – Skills for Industry*

- 2.33 Skills for Industry is a workforce development project operating across South West Wales. It offers vocational training to businesses within all industry sectors. The aims of the project were to increase workforce productivity and support businesses to respond to changing markets through sector specific training.
- 2.34 The original targets for Skills for Industry were to engage 10,500 individuals and 2,250 employers over the period 2011-15. However, mainly due to a delay in project activity getting underway, these targets were re-profiled in June 2013.
- 2.35 The new targets were to engage 7,000 learners within 1,600 businesses over the four years. The re-profiling was accompanied by a substantial reduction in the four-year budget for the project from £15m to £11m.
- 2.36 In terms of progress, the project appeared to be considerably behind the re-profiled targets, both in terms of engagement and expenditure. At June 2013 (half way through), actual expenditure was £1.7m; the

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<sup>6</sup> With ESF support in the Convergence area.

<sup>7</sup> Sourced from WEFO: <http://wefo.wales.gov.uk/programmes/progress/searchprojects/80074?lang=en>

number of individuals engaged was 16 per cent of target and the number of employers assisted was 21 per cent<sup>8</sup>.

### *Performance – ReAct*

2.37 It is difficult to consider the performance of ReAct in the same way as the other projects, in terms of engagement and target beneficiaries. The project offers support to people who have recently been made redundant, or who were facing redundancy. It therefore needs to be flexible to external events such as planned closures, but is clearly working with job ready clients. This means that it has undergone a number of re-profiling exercises to date.

2.38 Overall, ReAct has performed well in terms of engagement. Performance reports shared by WG show that it had achieved 92 per cent of target for individuals engaged and 90 per cent for employers engaged eighteen months ahead of the end of the funding round in September 2014<sup>9</sup>. The project has also performed well in relation to individuals gaining qualifications, having exceeded this target by 2 per cent at March 2013. The project had supported 9,800 individuals into work by March 2013.

### *Performance – Wellbeing through Work*

2.39 Wellbeing through Work supports individuals with (or at risk of developing) a work-limiting health condition or disability to stay in employment. It is available to employed individuals living in Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea.

2.40 The project was launched in August 2011 and will run until March 2015. It appeared to be performing well in terms of engagement, having already achieved its three-year target for number of individuals engaged only twelve months into the project<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: Performance reports provided by Skills for Industry Regional Programme Director.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Performance reports provided by WG.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Wellbeing through Work Achievement Report: The First Twelve Months.

### **Group 3 – what worked well?**

**Breaking down ‘silos’ of delivery** – the evaluation of Wellbeing through Work identified the development of a fully integrated and multi-disciplinary health and employment service as a key success factor for the project. This was facilitated by a partnership agreement between services to develop a dedicated team of employment advisors, physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

**Skills assessments** – identifying the skills needs of individuals at the outset was considered by consultees to have worked well in terms of ensuring that the support provided was matched to need.

**‘Learner-commissioned’ model** – this involved beneficiaries choosing the skills provision they require following an initial assessment and so influencing how the money provided by the WG was spent.

### **Group 3 – what were the challenges?**

**Impact of the recession** – there was a surge in demand in 2008/09 as the effects of the recession led to high levels of redundancies across Wales. This presented a number of challenges in terms of responding to the unprecedented number of individuals seeking support, processing high volumes of applications and, for some projects, securing additional resources to support this.

**Encouraging employers to invest in training** – according to consultees, it was sometimes challenging to get companies to invest even small amounts of money in staff training. This was the case even when the training was very heavily subsidised. Measures taken to overcome this included improving face-to-face engagement with employers and promoting the benefits of training on company performance.

**Maintaining quality of provision** – given the breadth of some of the projects, and the range of skills activities supported, feedback from consultees suggested that maintaining the quality of provision could be challenging.

**Limitations of existing provider make-up** – projects were limited by what training was available locally meaning that they were not always able to be as flexible in responding to individual and employer needs as they would have liked.

### 3 Rationale, Aims and Objectives

#### Summary – Rationale, Aims and Objectives

The decision to implement a phased closure of GW2 resulted in the transfer of active programme participants in the south west region into SWW.

In recognition of some of the challenges faced by GW2 and other ESF-supported programmes, it was decided to bring together a range of other projects operating in the region alongside SWW. This combined provision became the 'SAESP Pilot'.

The aim of the Pilot was to *“test and explore the opportunities to bring together key employment and skills delivery across the Pilot area to ensure synergy, value for money, targeted support and avoid duplication of effort.”*<sup>11</sup>

The overall ambition for the project set out in the PID was to:

- provide strategic leadership on setting the policy context for **enabling delivery** of programmes
- avoid **duplication of effort** in engaging participants and employers
- prevent **patterns of multiple funding** where participants are recycled through similar, and potentially competing, programmes
- capture benefits of **utilising external expertise** in delivery with the acknowledgement that Government is a deliverer of last resort
- respond, **through demand led local delivery**, to geographical and sectoral need.

#### Introduction

3.1 This chapter provides an overview of the SAESP Pilot based on a review of the Project Initiation Document (PID) and initial scoping consultations with national, regional and local stakeholders carried out during June /

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<sup>11</sup> SAESP Pilot Project Initiation Document (PID) January 2013

July 2013<sup>12</sup>. It outlines the rationale, aims and objectives of the Pilot and summarises the progress that had been made at the scoping stage, as well as issues arising.

## **Rationale**

- 3.2 A review of European-supported employment and skills programmes being delivered in Wales was commissioned in June 2012. This was in response to a request from the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and European Programmes to Ministers to review the performance of Structural Funds within their portfolio.
- 3.3 The review was carried out by officials within the WG Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and involved analysis and comparison of performance data across programmes, with a particular focus on cost per outcome achieved. It highlighted a number of issues across the portfolio in relation to duplication of effort, funding and activity. It also highlighted wide variations between programmes in terms of performance against targets and cost per employment outcome achieved. These findings are further confirmed from the review of existing employment and skills provision carried out as part of the current evaluation, the findings from which are summarised in Chapter 2.
- 3.4 GW2 had similar aims to South West Workways (SWW), another ESF-funded programme operating in South West Wales. SWW was found to be more successful than GW2 in terms of securing employment outcomes for participants at a lower cost per employment outcome. However, it was widely acknowledged that SWW was predominantly working with clients that could be considered closer to the labour market than GW2 and so the two programmes were not directly comparable.
- 3.5 When the decision was taken to implement a phased closure of GW2, the transfer of active programme participants within the South West region into SWW was negotiated and agreed between WG, the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) and the local authorities running the

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<sup>12</sup> See Table 1 in **Annex A** for a list of consultees

programme. This was subsequently expanded to include other programmes and become the 'SAESP Pilot'.

3.6 At the scoping stage, consultees were generally in agreement and clear on the rationale for the SAESP Pilot. This was identified as being based on a need for:

- **a more strategic/ joined-up approach** – the consensus was that there was a lack of co-ordination and oversight in terms of how projects were approved in the last EU funding round with limited consideration given to fit with existing provision, gaps and areas of duplication
- **less competition and duplication between programmes** – the lack of a co-ordinated approach to planning provision has resulted in a cluttered landscape with overlap and duplication between programmes in terms of target participants and services offered, as well as competition, between programmes, for clients
- **increased referrals between programmes** – the current system creates a disincentive for programmes to refer participants on to other services as they will lose any subsequent outcomes achieved. This has resulted in programmes often holding on to clients much longer than necessary, potentially holding back their progression
- **better knowledge of the range of support available** – an additional barrier to referral between programmes was identified as a lack of awareness of the full range of support available for participants, with programmes not fully aware of what others were offering
- **clearer pathways through the 'system'** – the cluttered landscape and lack of referrals was making it difficult for individuals and employers to successfully navigate the system getting the support they need to successfully progress.

## **Aims and Objectives**

3.7 The PID for the SAESP Pilot identifies the aim as being to:

“test and explore the opportunities to bring together key Employment and Skills delivery across the Pilot area to ensure synergy, value for money, targeted support and avoid duplication of effort.”<sup>13</sup>

3.8 The overall ambition for the project set out in the PID was to:

- provide strategic leadership on setting the policy context for enabling delivery of programmes
- avoid duplication of effort in engaging participants and employers
- prevent patterns of multiple funding where participants are recycled through similar, and potentially competing, programmes
- capture benefits of utilising external expertise in delivery with the acknowledgement that Government is a deliverer of last resort
- respond, through demand led local delivery, to geographical and sectoral need.

3.9 The more detailed objectives for the Pilot were to have:

- tested proof of concept of the Integrated Employment and Skills model being developed for the new Adult Employment and Skills Programme from 2014
- integrated key ESF supported Employment and Skills activities in the South West Wales area (initially GW2, SWW and Skills for Industry, but exploring the potential to integrate other ESF supported activities)
- developed and tested governance and management arrangements for a ‘geographically based consortia’ approach to delivery
- developed and tested data collection arrangements
- tested a single point of contact model
- maintained and improved upon current levels of outputs for the projects to be assimilated in the Pilot area.

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<sup>13</sup> SAESP Pilot Project Initiation Document, March 2013

## Understanding and early issues

3.10 At the scoping stage, consultees were broadly consistent in their understanding of the objectives of the Pilot (though it should be noted that the depth of understanding varied across consultees and was generally less well-developed at a local authority level). The consensus was that the new model of provision should be more focussed on meeting the needs of participants (both employers and individuals) and provide clearer pathways for them to enter and navigate the system.

3.11 However, in the summer of 2013 there remained some issues still to be resolved in relation to how the Pilot would work in practice and these are outlined below.

- **The first related to roles and responsibilities.** Whilst consultees reported that these were becoming clearer, there was still uncertainty over leadership. The WG was chairing the SAESP Steering Group with the expectation that the (South West and Central Wales) Regional Learning Partnership (RLP) would drive activity<sup>14</sup>. However, feedback gathered through the consultations suggested that the RLP did not see itself in that role, rather it was observing developments at that stage. This reflected timing as the RLP's future role and governance structure was under review with formal decisions still to be approved at a regional level.
- Related to leadership, a key question arising from the scoping stage was what 'involvement in the Pilot' actually meant: it was not clear who had been invited to be involved and for what purpose. In addition to GW2 and SWW, several other projects had joined the Steering Group and yet more had approached the RLP to enquire about being involved. This was reported by consultees to be happening in a relatively ad hoc manner, through word of mouth, rather than in a planned and systematic way. This brought in to question the extent to which the Pilot was genuinely seeking to engage the 'best bits' of existing provision or if it was simply working with the willing. Also,

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<sup>14</sup> The RLP is a partnership of education and regeneration partners operating across Central and West Wales. It aims to ensure that publicly-funded learning providers and associated organisations work collaboratively, effectively and efficiently to meet the needs of learners and the regional economy.

given the limited timescale for the Pilot, there was concern that continually adding partners would make an integrated approach harder to deliver (as it would require greater adaptations).

- **Secondly, in this context, it was perhaps not surprising that a number of operational issues remained to be tackled and a solution to be trialled had yet to be agreed.** Consultees were able to describe how the new system would work in terms of management, accountability and procurement. However, whilst there was support for the idea in principle, there remained considerable uncertainty about how it would operate in practice. Key questions raised include:
  - How will engagement be different?
  - Who will decide on where individuals get referred to?
  - How will individuals progress through the ‘system’?
  - How will information be shared?
  - How will outcomes be assigned?
- **Thirdly, there was concern that it may not be possible to fully test the extent to which the SAESP Pilot has resulted in improved outcomes for GW2 clients.** This was due to the limited number of participants transferring over to the Pilot (which is discussed in the chapter 4. This was:
  - insightful about GW2 clients and their motivations for being on the programme (i.e. some were clearly not looking for work)
  - unfortunate in terms of testing whether or not the SWW approach could work for a different client group.

3.12 A consistent theme identified in relation to each of these issues was uncertainty around what the Pilot would ultimately be judged by or on what criteria. As highlighted earlier, the scoping stage found broad support for the concept amongst consultees. However, it also identified a gap in terms of the success criteria that WG would use to test whether the concept had been delivered as hoped.

## 4 Delivery

### Summary – Delivery

This chapter describes the main activities delivered through the SAESP Pilot based on information gathered through the scoping phase and subsequent rounds of stakeholder consultations.

GW2 and SWW were the only projects to have integrated through the Pilot, although the scale of transfer of GW2 staff and participants into SWW was much lower than anticipated. This was because many ‘active’ GW2 participants were found to have had no substantive contact with the programme for some time or were not actively seeking work – a prerequisite for SWW support.

A Steering Group was set up to provide strategic direction and input to the Pilot. It was chaired by WG and included representatives from local, regional and national organisations delivering employment and skills support. The aim was to involve all major stakeholders and the view from consultees was that this had been achieved.

An Operational Group was established to take forward implementation of the Pilot. It included representation from each of the seven participating projects. However, a few months into the pilot, WG were found to be providing more operational input and direction than originally anticipated due to concerns over lack of progress.

The RLP took over chair of the Operational Group in November 2013 and the view of consultees was that this brought focus and momentum to the later stages of the Pilot. From then until the end of the Pilot in March 2014, a range of activities were delivered to promote better communication and information sharing between projects; increase referrals between participating projects; reduce duplication of effort in engaging employers; and capture lessons learned.

## Introduction

4.1 This chapter details the main activities that were undertaken as a result of the SAESP Pilot. It is based on information gathered through the scoping phase and subsequent two rounds of stakeholder consultations:

- **Round 1** – 10 telephone consultations were carried out during December 2013 with individuals identified by WG as being involved in the SAESP Pilot. Half of these were follow-up consultations with people who had been consulted during the initial scoping phase and the remainder were new consultees who had not participated in the evaluation previously<sup>15</sup>
- **Round 2** – A further eight telephone consultations were carried out following completion of the Pilot in July/August 2014. These were with individuals identified by WG and the RLP as having been involved in the Pilot. The majority of these had been consulted previously as part of the evaluation<sup>16</sup>.

4.2 The remainder of the chapter covers:

- assimilation of GW2 and SWW
- the Pilot Steering Group
- the Pilot Operational Group
- progress towards other planned activities
- challenges and lessons learned.

## Assimilation of GW2 and SWW

4.3 As outlined in the previous chapter, the assimilation of GW2 and SWW formed the basis of SAESP Pilot. This was approved by WEFO following submission of a Business Plan outlining a proposal for GW2 activity to be subsumed within SWW from April 2013. The intention was that all GW2 programme staff and active participants in the south west region would transfer into SWW following full closure of the GW2 programme at the end of June 2013. However, in practice, the scale of transfer of both staff and participants was found to be much lower than anticipated.

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<sup>15</sup> See **Table 2** in Annex A for a list of Round 1 consultees.

<sup>16</sup> See **Table 3** in Annex A for a list of Round 2 consultees.

- 4.4 In terms of GW2 staff, many either left the programme before full closure or transferred over to other projects within their respective local authorities. This is particularly true of individuals with more of a background in social care than employment / employability.
- 4.5 In relation to participants, less than a quarter of 'active' GW2 participants transferred into SWW. The main reasons for this were that:
- on closer inspection, many were not actually 'active' having not had any substantive contact or support through the programme for some time
  - many reported that they were not actively seeking work, a pre-condition for receiving SWW support.
- 4.6 For example, in one local authority area, a review of GW2 clients found that many were not actually looking for work and so they were either transferred over to other social care projects or left the Pilot altogether. In this case, GW2 staff were also absorbed within other projects meaning that there was no transfer of GW2 clients or staff into the Pilot.
- 4.7 So, whilst GW2 and SWW did assimilate within the south west region, the volume of staff and participants transferring over was relatively low. As a result, the view from consultees was that there had been no notable change of focus / activity in the SWW programme as a result of this integration. This is supported by the analysis of MI data for the programme carried out as part of this evaluation, the results of which are summarised in Chapter 5.

### **Pilot Steering Group**

- 4.8 A Steering Group was set up to provide strategic direction and input to the Pilot. It was chaired by WG and included representatives from colleges, universities and local authorities within the south west region, as well as the National Training Federation Wales, Jobcentre Plus, private sector employers or representatives (e.g. the Chamber of Commerce), private sector training providers and Careers Wales. The aim was to involve all major stakeholders and the view from consultees was that this had been achieved.

4.9 There was no fixed schedule of meetings for the Pilot Steering Group. It had met three times by December 2013. Agenda items included the Pilot, but also the wider landscape for delivery of employment and skills provision in Wales, including the establishment of clearer accountability structures across all three tiers of the system (national, regional and local). The impetus for these discussions was planning for the forthcoming round of European structural funds.

### **Pilot Operational Group**

4.10 During the scoping phase, it was widely understood that the role of WG was to set the strategic direction for the Pilot (through the Steering Group), with regional partners responsible for implementation. The mechanism for this was the establishment of an Operational Group, which included representation from each of the following projects that were identified by stakeholders as being 'affiliated' with the pilot:

- Strides Alliance
- Regional Essential Skills
- Skills for Industry
- South West Workways
- Want to Work
- WCVA Engagement Gateway
- WG Workforce Development.

4.11 Want to Work and COASTAL were also mentioned as having been involved in early discussions around joining the Pilot. However, neither was able to fully commit due to existing contractual obligations (specifically a need to meet existing employment outcome targets).

4.12 It is not clear how projects were chosen to participate in the Pilot. Consultees reported that some of those involved had 'put themselves forward' whilst others had 'been approached' to participate. Another consultee suggested that projects that have made enquiries to WG have been referred to the Pilot, suggesting an ad hoc rather than planned approach. This resulted in a perceived lack of transparency / openness amongst some stakeholders around what the Pilot was and what it was seeking to achieve.

- 4.13 As highlighted earlier in this report, there was also a lack of clarity at the scoping stage in relation to the role of the RLP in delivering the Pilot with a range of differing views / perspectives put forward by the various stakeholders. By December 2013, two things had changed:
- WG was providing more operational input / direction than originally intended, prompted by concerns over lack of progress
  - the RLP had become more actively involved, having recently taken over chair of the Operational Group.
- 4.14 This latter development was introduced at the third meeting of the Operational Group in November 2013 and appears to have represented a turning point in terms of bringing focus and momentum to the later stages of the Pilot. It is a change that most consultees were positive about. The RLP was perceived as independent / impartial and therefore fairly well placed to handle sensitivities and conflicts between the various parties involved. A further advantage of the RLP being actively involved was that it created a direct link between the emerging findings from the Pilot and the Regional Development Plan and the Employment and Skills Strategy – both of which the RLP was developing.
- 4.15 The Pilot was originally intended to run from January to December 2013. However, given that there had been limited activity by November 2013, it was subsequently extended to March 2014 to allow more fulsome testing of the new measures that were introduced from that point onwards. From November 2013 until the end of the Pilot in March 2014, the Operational Group were reported to have delivered a range of activities aimed at enhancing partnership working between projects and providing an evidence base to inform the development and implementation of future ESF funded employment and skills interventions<sup>17</sup>.
- **Increasing communication between participating projects** – included the sharing of information relating to each projects' remit, eligibility criteria and referral requirements

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<sup>17</sup> Final Report of the Regional Employment & Skills Pilot Operational Group (April 2014).

- **Developing a system of referrals between projects** – involving the development of a common referral process and standard form.
- **Reduced duplication of effort in engaging employers** - SWW were reported to be working more closely with partners to co-ordinate this activity and avoid duplication / multiple approaches.
- **Tracking referrals between projects** – this involved collecting and sharing data on referrals made between projects.
- **Capturing lessons learned** – including the identification of gaps in provision and evidence of good practice through case studies.

### **Progress towards other planned activities**

4.16 It is worth noting that there were a number of activities planned for the Pilot where limited progress was made.

- **No single point of entry** – individuals were still coming into the programme at different points and there was evidence of some continued duplication of effort in terms of engaging participants.
- **No standard process for assessment** – programme staff had increased knowledge and awareness of the range of support that was available to meet participant needs. In theory, this should have resulted in more standard needs assessments. However, whilst consultees felt (anecdotally) that the process had improved, there was no clear evidence of this and no standard assessment tool was being used.
- **No major changes to the way in which core activity was monitored** – all of the projects involved in the Pilot were monitoring core activity in the same way that they had previously. A paper-based monitoring system had been put in place to track referrals between the various programmes involved. Consultees recognised that this was not ideal, but were restricted in terms of what could be shared electronically whilst programmes were still operating as separate entities.
- **No evidence that the system was more responsive to need** – in particular, there was no evidence cited by consultees of the use of LMI to understand geographical / sectoral needs.

## **Challenges and lessons learned**

### *Communication*

- 4.17 The consensus amongst consultees was that communication between the various partners involved in the Pilot could have been better. In particular, messages did not always make their way between the Steering Group and the Operational Group. This resulted in a lack of clarity and consistency between people within the same organisations around what the Pilot was doing and what it was seeking to achieve. This was a particular issue amongst local authority partners, but also for some of the others, including WG.
- 4.18 This issue came through strongly in the scoping consultations, but also in the final set of consultations that were carried out following completion of the Pilot. A number of people put forward by WG or the RLP as having been actively involved in the Pilot and therefore suitable for consultation at the final stage, reported that they did not feel able to participate as they did not know what the Pilot was and had not been involved. In one example, the person had actually managed the integration of GW2 and SWW within their area, but did not know that this formed part of a wider Pilot.
- 4.19 Related to this point, some projects were reported to have taken a long time to understand and recognise what the Pilot was trying to do. Those that were involved from the outset were clearer on this than those that joined later. Also, some of those that joined later were of the view that it had been 'sewn up' in favour of the earlier projects (i.e. SWW). The lesson is that things would have worked better had all of the relevant partners been around the table from the beginning and if the aims and objectives been more clearly communicated to everyone involved. Though given the nature of a pilot this was challenging.

### *External challenges*

- 4.20 A particular challenge to the Pilot was that it was operating within the constraints of existing contracts that projects had with the WEFO / WG.

This meant that the disincentives to refer individuals into other projects were still there. Some programmes faced high financial penalties if they did not achieve employment outcome targets, making them reluctant to fully commit to the Pilot. This raised questions around the extent to which a new approach could be fully tested within the constraints of existing contractual arrangements.

4.21 Related to this, the criteria individuals had to fulfil in order to receive support had not changed. There was therefore no change in the type of participants that were being targeting. As a result, there was continued competition between participating projects for participants and detectable animosity between some of those involved.

4.22 Overall, whilst appetite and buy-in to the new approach was established from the outset, the process of implementation took much longer as demonstrated by the fact that there was no real activity until November 2013. The reasons cited by consultees for this include the fact that:

- some projects required more consultation and negotiation than others before agreeing to be involved
- the new approach required a culture shift with projects being asked to act in the interests of the Pilot / wider regional approach, rather than their own organisations – this change of mindset and practice takes time and effort
- the Pilot was ‘not the only show in town’ and there was a sense of hesitation and sitting back on the part of some projects who were observing developments before making a firm commitment to the new approach
- it was a busy time for projects as they neared the end of the ESF funding round and their future was uncertain, the Pilot was therefore not always top of the list of priorities
- there were still signs of entrenched positions and competition between projects and this was likely to take more time to overcome.

## 5 Outcomes and Impact

### Summary – Outcomes and Impact

Those GW2 participants that did transfer achieved better employment outcomes when compared to GW2. However, this finding has to be caveated with the fact that those transferring were unlikely to be representative of the GW2 client group as a whole as they had to be actively seeking work in order to qualify for SWW support.

The profile of SWW participants changed slightly following integration with GW2 and during the later stages of the Pilot. There were reductions in the proportion of females, lone parents and young people under the age of 25 receiving support. The main outcome measure for SWW is the share of participants achieving employment outcomes and this increased slightly during the Pilot.

All seven participating projects were reported to have established referral protocols with each other as a result of the Pilot. This was facilitated by sharing of information relating to each other's remit, eligibility criteria and referral requirements. In addition to an increase in referral activity, there was a reported improvement in the quality of referrals being made as a result of projects having greater knowledge and awareness of each other's offer.

The Pilot was considered by consultees to have informed the development of the model for regional skills delivery that is now in the early stages of being implemented across Wales. Whilst a move towards a regional approach to skills planning and delivery was in discussion prior to the start of the Pilot, the learning from the Pilot has helped inform and accelerate the process.

### Introduction

5.1 This section provides evidence of the outcomes and impact of the SAESP Pilot in terms of:

- outcomes for GW2 participants
- profile and outcomes of SWW participants

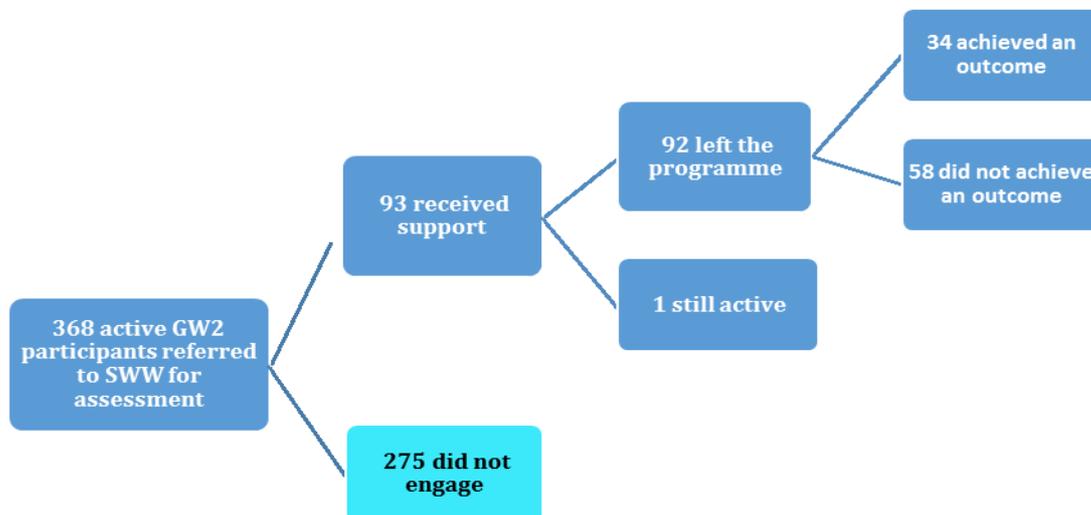
- referrals between participating projects
- the wider landscape for employment and skills provision.

5.2 This chapter is based on analysis of monitoring data for SWW (including separate analysis of the cohort of GW2 participants that transferred into SWW) and feedback from the final round of stakeholder consultations carried out in July/August 2014<sup>18</sup>.

### Outcomes for GW2 participants

A total of 367 GW2 participants in the south west region were identified as 'active' at the point of full closure of the programme in June 2013. They were all referred to SWW for assessment and 93 went on to receive support (25 per cent of the total). Almost all of these had left SWW by July 2014 – including both completers and non-completers / early leavers – and only one was still active, as shown in Figure 5.1.

**Figure 5 1: Progress of GW2 participants referred to SWW, July 2014**



Source: SQW analysis of SWW Monitoring Data June 2013 – July 2014

<sup>18</sup> See **Table 3** in Annex A for a list of consultees.

5.3 Of the 275 that did not engage with SWW, the main reasons were that they could not be contacted, declined support or did not attend (see Table 5.2). The fact that only one quarter of GW2 participants in the Pilot area identified as 'active' actually transferred into SWW is insightful in terms of their motivations for being on the programme and the extent to which they were in fact 'active'.

**Table 5.2: Reasons for GW2 participants not transferring to SWW**

Reason	Carmarth enshire	Neath Port Talbot	Pembrok eshire	Swansea	Total Number	Percenta ge
Unable to contact	17	53	28	16	<b>114</b>	<b>41</b>
Declined Support	31	27	18	2	<b>78</b>	<b>28</b>
Failed to attend	47	5	9	1	<b>62</b>	<b>23</b>
Not eligible	7	1	6	1	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
Moved address	1	1		1	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
Found work	1				<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
Referred to other organisation (Coastal Project)	1				<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
Referred to other organisation (Swansea Workways)	1				<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: SQW analysis of SWW Monitoring Data June 2013 – July 2014*

5.4 Of the 92 GW2 participants that transferred into SWW and had left the programme by July 2014, a total of 34 were recorded in the monitoring data as having achieved an outcome (37 per cent). A breakdown of the outcomes achieved is provided in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3: Outcomes achieved by GW2 participants transferring into SWW, July 2014**

Outcome	Number	Percent
Gaining qualifications	7	9
Entering employment	15	16
Entering Further Learning	4	4
Gaining Other Positive Outcomes**	23	25
No outcome achieved	58	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: SQW analysis of SWW Monitoring Data July 2013 – July 2014*

*Base: All GW2 participants that transferred to SWW and left the programme by July 2014.*

*NB: Individual participants could achieve more than one outcome*

*\*\* Attended a job interview, completed a non-accredited course or entered voluntary work*

- 5.5 The shares of participants that gained qualifications or other positive outcomes were much lower than the equivalent rates for GW2, which were in the region of 30 per cent and 50 per cent respectively<sup>19</sup>. However, the share of participants gaining employment was higher (16 per cent relative to 9 per cent<sup>20</sup>). This partly reflects the greater focus of SWW on securing employment outcomes for participants, rather than addressing barriers as in GW2. However, a survey of GW2 participants carried out as part of the final evaluation found that 16 per cent of participants who had been out of work on entry to the programme reported entering work immediately on leaving, in line with the equivalent figure for SWW.
- 5.6 An important caveat to these findings is that, whilst SWW achieved better employment outcomes for GW2 participants, the programme worked with only a minority of active GW2 participants in the region. Most (75 per cent) did not transfer into SWW, meaning that those who did were not necessarily typical of the GW2 client group. In particular, GW2 clients were required to be actively seeking work in order to qualify for support through SWW, and many were not actually in this position,

<sup>19</sup> Source: Final Evaluation of GW2: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-genesis-wales-2/?lang=en>

<sup>20</sup> Source: GW2 monitoring data.

reflecting the broader aims of GW2 to move people closer to the labour market.

### **Profile and outcomes of SWW clients**

5.7 For the purposes of the SAESP evaluation, SQW was provided with a database containing SWW monitoring data covering the period from programme inception in 2009 up to the end of the Pilot in March 2014. Feedback from both rounds of stakeholder consultations suggested that there was no Pilot-related activity happening prior to full closure of GW2 at the end of June 2013. As highlighted in Chapter 3, Pilot activity (including the introduction of the new system for tracking referrals) stepped up substantially from November 2013 onwards. The analysis in this section is therefore presented for the following three time periods:

- **July 2012 – June 2013:** the 'pre-pilot' phase covering the 12 months immediately preceding closure of GW2
- **July 2013 – November 2013:** the period immediately following full closure of GW2
- **November 2013 – March 2014:** the final months of the Pilot when most Pilot-related activity was reported to have happened.

5.8 The remainder of this section compares the profile and outcomes of SWW participants over these three time periods.

#### *Profile of participants*

5.9 It was originally anticipated that the profile of SWW participants would change following the integration with GW2. In particular, the merger was expected to result in SWW working with a higher proportion of economically inactive people. However, as outlined earlier in this chapter, the volume of participants that transferred from GW2 was much lower than expected. The view of SWW staff was that the volume of participants they were working with had increased as a result of the Pilot, but that the characteristics and economic status of individuals had not changed substantially.

5.10 Table 5.4 shows that the volume of SWW participants did not increase as a result of the Pilot. In fact, it declined slightly. There were an average

of 206 participant starts per month between July 2013 and March 2014, compared to 224 per month in the 12 months immediately preceding that.

- 5.11 In terms of participant characteristics, females accounted for a lower share of SWW participants immediately following integration with GW2, and in the final months of the Pilot, relative to the preceding 12 months. This is perhaps surprising given that the vast majority of GW2 participants were female and suggests that other factors were influencing the gender ratio of programme participants.
- 5.12 In the final months of the Pilot, the age profile of SWW participants was notably older than during the Pre-Pilot period. A fifth (20 per cent) of those starting on the programme between December 2013 and March 2014 were under the age of 25. This compares with a quarter (25 per cent) in the 12 months before closure of GW2.

**Table 5.4: Profile of SWW participants**

		Percentages		
	Pre-Pilot	Jul-13 - Nov-13	Dec-13 - Mar-14	
<b>Gender:</b>				
Male	62	66	68	
Female	38	34	32	
<b>Age:</b>				
16-19	5	7	3	
20-24	20	16	16	
25-54	66	68	71	
55+	8	9	10	
<b>Ethnicity:</b>				
Ethnic minority	4	4	4	
Non-ethnic minority	96	96	96	
<b>Migrant status:</b>				
Migrant (rest of world)	1	1	0	
Migrant (EU)	3	3	3	
Non-migrant	96	96	97	
<b>Total participants (Number)</b>	<b>2,696</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>887</b>	

Source: SQW analysis of SWW Monitoring Data July 2012 – March 2014

5.13 In the months immediately following integration with GW2, there was a decline of four percentage points in the proportion of SWW participants that were lone parents. This fell by a further three percentage points in the final months of the Pilot. Again, this is perhaps surprising given that lone parents accounted for the majority of GW2 clients<sup>21</sup>. The proportion of SWW participants that were economically inactive did not change significantly and actually fell by one percentage point towards the end of the Pilot.

**Table 5.5: Caring responsibilities, health and economic status of SWW participants**

	Percentages		
	Pre-Pilot	Jul-13 - Nov-13	Dec-13 - Mar-14
<b>Caring responsibilities:</b>			
Lone parent	15	11	8
Receiving support with caring responsibilities	1	<1	<1
<b>Health condition:</b>			
Disability recorded	4	3	3
Work limiting health condition	8	4	5
<b>Economic status:</b>			
Economically Inactive	46	46	45
Unemployed	54	54	55
<b>Total participants (Number)</b>	<b>2,696</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>887</b>

Source: SQW analysis of SWW Monitoring Data July 2012 – March 2014

### Outcomes

5.14 SWW has a clear focus on moving people into paid employment and this is the main outcome measure for the programme. In the 12 months prior to the start of the pilot, 45 per cent of all SWW completers moved into paid work, above the programme target of 35 per cent. There was concern that this might fall as a result of Pilot activity due to the expectation that the programme would be working with a more challenging client group. However, Table 5.6 shows that the proportion

<sup>21</sup> Source: Final Evaluation of GW2: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-genesis-wales-2/?lang=en>

moving into work actually increased slightly to 48 per cent during the Pilot.

**Table 5.6: Outcomes of SSW participants (percent of all leavers)**

	Percentages		
	Pre-Pilot	Jul-13 - Nov-13	Dec-13 - Mar-14
Gaining qualifications	5	3	2
Entering employment	45	48	48
Entering further learning	1	1	<1
Entering voluntary work	2	1	<1
No outcome achieved	51	49	52
<b>Total leavers* (Number)</b>	<b>2,675</b>	<b>866</b>	<b>590</b>

Source: SQW analysis of SSW Monitoring Data July 2012 – March 2014

\*includes completers and non-completers / early leavers

### Referrals between participating projects

5.15 As outlined in Chapter 4, one of the main activities of the Pilot was to introduce a new referral process and standard referral template for use by participating projects. This was implemented following the November 2013 meeting of the Operational Group.

5.16 The final report of the Operational Group states that three of the participating projects had an established system for referrals prior to the start of the Pilot<sup>22</sup>. However, as a result of the Pilot, all seven projects were reported to have established referral protocols with each other. This was facilitated by the sharing of information relating to each other's remit, eligibility criteria and referral requirements.

5.17 A paper-based monitoring system was put in place to track referrals between projects. It was recognised by consultees that this was not ideal, but there were restrictions in terms of what could be shared electronically whilst programmes were still operating as separate entities.

5.18 The final report of the Operational Group was shared with the evaluation team and includes data on the volumes of referrals made between participating projects during the Pilot period. It also includes some

<sup>22</sup> Final Report of the Regional Employment & Skills Pilot Operational Group (April 2014).

comparator information on levels of Pre-Pilot referral activity. This covers a range of different time periods and so is difficult to read across and interpret accurately. For example, the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) engagement project is made up of several separate projects. These each had different start dates meaning that data on referrals to and from WCVA cover different time periods. Similarly, some projects only collected data for the final three months of the Pilot (e.g. SWW), whilst other collected data going back to January 2013. Whilst this was the official start date of the Pilot, there was no Pilot-related activity happening until much later in the year. Despite this lack of comparable data, the commentary and analysis in the Operational Group report does suggest that there was an overall increase in referral activity between projects as a result of the Pilot.

- 5.19 Consultees also reported that, in addition to an overall increase in referral activity, there was a notable improvement in the quality of referrals being made between projects. This was attributed to projects having greater knowledge and awareness of each other's offer.
- 5.20 Anecdotally, the new approach to referrals was considered by several consultees to be likely to result in more sustainable outcomes for participants of the various programmes involved. Despite the lack of 'hard' evidence, consultees were generally positive about how the Pilot was working. They could detect a notable shift in attitudes and better joint working between projects; though it was noted that this had taken longer than expected.

### **Wider landscape for employment and skills provision**

- 5.21 A key theme arising at the final consultation stage was the impact of the Pilot on the wider landscape for employment and skills provision in Wales. Several consultees were of the view that the Pilot represented an early iteration of the model for regional skills delivery that is now in the early stages of being implemented by regional partnerships on behalf of WG.

5.22 In January 2014, WG published a policy statement on skills<sup>23</sup>. This detailed future policy priorities in relation to the following four areas:

- skills for jobs and growth
- skills that respond to local needs
- skills that employers value
- skills for employment.

5.23 In terms of 'skills that respond to local needs', the policy statement details a strategic ambition to develop a skills system that is effective at delivering joined-up employment and skills support which reflects the needs of local communities and can work seamlessly alongside national support programmes. The priority areas of action identified in relation to this were to:

- Integrate and streamline employment and skills support to make it simpler for both individuals and employers to access
- Stimulate demand for employment and skills support by providing the flexibility to develop responses based upon local and regional need.

5.24 The policy statement was followed up by *Skills Implementation Plan: Delivering the policy statement on skills*, published by WG in July 2014<sup>24</sup>. It details a regional approach to future delivery of post-19 employment and skills support in Wales. Specifically, it tasks regional partnerships with:

- producing and analysing LMI aligned to economic intelligence to inform the skills requirements in the regions and to inform future priorities for funding linked to the WG co-investment policy
- providing a mechanism to review regional skills provision and advise WG on future prioritisation of skills funding in line with regional employment and skills needs
- acting as a strategic body effectively representing regional interests to inform a demand-led and sustainable skills system, ensuring that this is informed by strong industry engagement and takes into account the level of skills utilisation in the region

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<sup>23</sup> <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/policy-statement-on-skills/?lang=en>

<sup>24</sup> Available to download from the following link:

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/policy-statement-on-skills/skills-implementation-plan/?lang=en>

- acting collectively and strategically to maximise future available funds acknowledging the likely reduction in public funds over the coming years.

5.25 Whilst a move towards a regional approach to skills planning and delivery was in discussion prior to the start of the Pilot, the learning from the Pilot appears to have helped to inform and accelerate the process.

## 6 Conclusions

- 6.1 This report has described the findings from research carried out to address the following objective set out in the brief for the study:

*Evaluate the Single Adult Employment and Skills Programme Pilot by conducting qualitative research with key stakeholders to assess how well the projects have integrated and how the geographic consortia has responded to individual and business needs with a view to establishing an evidence base to support the Employment and Skills model for 2014-20.*

- 6.2 This final section provides summary conclusions structured around the five ambitions for the Pilot as set out in the PID.

### **Ambition 1: provide strategic leadership on setting the policy context for enabling delivery of the programme.**

- 6.3 The decentralisation of skills and employment services to the regional level had been on the agenda for some time in Wales (going back to the Guildford Review). Prior to the start of the Pilot, the (South West and Central Wales) RLP had already made good progress in terms of bringing together key education and regeneration partners operating across the South West region to work together more collaboratively. The Pilot was symbolic in that it represented a clear and explicit endorsement on the part of the WG to this regional agenda.
- 6.4 There was some confusion in the early stages of the Pilot in terms of the role of the RLP. Whilst this reflected that the governance and operation of the RLP was under review at the time, it did contribute to a general lack of clarity around what the Pilot was and what it was seeking to achieve. The RLP taking over chair of the Operational Group mid-way through represented a turning point in terms of bringing focus and momentum to the later stages of the Pilot.
- 6.5 The Pilot could have achieved more had this leadership been in place earlier. It could have avoided uncertainties about which projects were in

scope and the expectations of projects. However, this is part of the nature of Pilots.

**Ambition 2: avoid duplication of effort in engaging participants and employers.**

- 6.6 There was some progress made towards this ambition as a result of the Pilot. However, a particular challenge was that projects were operating within the constraints of existing contracts with WEFO / WG. This meant that the criteria individuals had to fulfil in order to receive support had not changed and so the same type of participants were being targeting. As a result, there was continued competition between participating projects in targeting the same client groups and some evidence of continued duplication of effort in engaging participants.
- 6.7 There is evidence of some progress towards reducing duplication in engaging employers. In particular, Skills for Industry were reported to have reduced their employer engagement activity with Welsh Government Workforce Development advisors taking the lead on this.
- 6.8 The main success of the Pilot in relation to this ambition was the identification of where there was duplication in existing provision and activity across the region. Moreover, there was anecdotal evidence of improved cross-referral, suggesting that where people were recruited to the 'wrong' programme they were being referred on to more suitable provision. This represents the starting point for developing measures to address this.

**Ambition 3: prevent patterns of multiple funding where participants are recycled through similar and potentially competing programmes.**

- 6.9 The system of monitoring referrals between projects that was introduced through the Pilot provides a foundation for tracking participant journeys. Over time, this will provide an evidence base on how participants move through the system. It will also provide information on those that do not progress and therefore become 'recycled'. This will help inform the development of measures to address this and promote progression. The improvement in the quality of referrals being made as a result of Pilot

activity should also help reduce patterns of multiple funding as participants are more likely to be referred into provision that is suitable to meet their needs. However, to be fully effective the project will need to move beyond the fairly basic paper systems they used: moving to a shared database and common assessment approach.

**Ambition 4: capture the benefits of utilising external expertise in delivery with the acknowledgement that Government is a deliverer of last resort.**

6.10 In large part, this ambition was not tested through the Pilot. However, the Pilot did provide limited evidence on the effectiveness of different approaches. The original basis for the SAESP Pilot was the integration of GW2 and SWW, thereby decentralising management and delivery of the programme from the national to the regional level. In practice, the scale of the merger between GW2 and SWW was much smaller than originally anticipated. GW2 participants that did transfer over achieved slightly better employment outcomes than would have been expected through GW2, but were less likely to achieve qualifications or other positive outcomes.

6.11 This provides some evidence that the merger was a success in terms of improving employment outcomes for participants. However, it also suggests that SWW was not suitable for GW2 clients that were facing labour market barriers. Together these findings highlight the importance of having a suite of opportunities to meet different needs, regardless of the providers involved.

**Ambition 5: respond, through demand led local delivery, to geographical and sectoral needs.**

6.12 In retrospect, this ambition was not likely to be realised within the timeframes of the Pilot. The lead-in times associated with developing new provision are just too long. Where the pilot did make progress was in getting providers and partners to think about geographical and sectoral needs, linking these to the range of provision already available and identifying where there were gaps. This was not happening previously and so represented real progress.

6.13 In the new regional model of employment and skills delivery currently being rolled out across Wales, regions are being expected to develop a suite of provision that meets the needs of their respective labour markets. The Pilot could be considered to have facilitated a first step towards this.

## Annex A: Consultees

Table 1: Scoping Consultations – June / July 2013

Organisation
Carmarthenshire Local Authority / (South West and Central Wales) Regional Learning Partnership (2 representatives)
Ceredigion Local Authority
Neath Port Talbot
Powys Local Authority
Swansea College / (South West and Central Wales) Regional Learning Partnership
Swansea Local Authority
Swansea Local Authority / (South West and Central Wales) Regional Learning Partnership
Welsh Government (5 representatives)

Table 2: Round 1 Stakeholder Consultations – December 2013

Organisation
(South West and Central Wales) Regional Learning Partnership (2 representatives)
Gower College / Skills for Industry
Swansea Workways
Bridgend Workways
Carmarthenshire Workways
Neath Port Talbot Workways
Pembrokeshire Workways
Regional Learning Partnership
Welsh Government

Table 3: Round 2 Stakeholder Consultations – July / August 2014

Organisation
Bridgend Workways
Careers Wales
Gower College / Skills for Industry
(South West and Central Wales) Regional Learning Partnership (3 representatives)
Welsh Government (2 representatives)

## Annex B: Evaluation reports reviewed

Programme	Evaluation reports reviewed
COASTAL	<p>Evaluation of the COASTAL Project: Inception Report and Evaluation Framework, Wavehill, June 2010</p> <p>Evaluation of the COASTAL Project: Report 2, Wavehill, October 2011</p> <p>Evaluation of the COASTAL Project: Report 3, Wavehill, February 2012</p>
ReAct	Interim Evaluation of ReAct, Welsh Government Social Research, 2011
JobMatch	<p>Evaluation of Job Match: Final Report, Cambridge Policy Consultants, July 2008</p> <p>Head of the Valleys City Strategy: Interim Evaluation, Cambridge Policy Consultants, August 2013</p>
Cyrenians (supported employment)	Final Evaluation of Cyrenians Cymru, Wavehill, May 2012
Engagement Gateway	<p>The Engagement Gateway Project Evaluation: Phase 2 Evaluation Report, ERS, April 2012</p> <p>Final summative evaluation of the Engagement Gateway Project within the Regional Competitiveness and Employment area, Wavehill, October 2012</p>
Qwest	Quest: Formative Evaluation Report, Cotyledon Community Interest Company, October 2012
Lifeskills	<p>Ongoing evaluation of the Life Skills Project: Interim Report 1, Wavehill, March 2012</p> <p>Ongoing evaluation of the Life Skills Project: Interim Report 2, Wavehill, June 2013</p>
New Work Connections	Ongoing evaluation of the Taith i Waith / New Work Connections project: Report 2, Wavehill, October 2012

Skillbuild	<p>Evaluation of Skill Build: Refine or Refocus?, York Consulting, June 2005</p> <p>Evaluation of Work-Based Learning in Wales 2007-2011, Welsh Government Social Research, 2012</p>
Wellbeing through Work (ILM)	<p>Evaluation of the Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) Programme: Second Annual Report, Wavehill, July 2011</p> <p>Wellbeing through Work: Evaluation Report, Institute for Employment Studies, July 2011</p>
Workways	<p>Workways Evaluation Report, The Improved Consultancy, February 2008</p>
Skills for Industry	<p>Evaluation Services for the Skills for Industry ESF Project: Baseline Report, Gower College Swansea, September 2012</p>
Bridges into Work	<p>Bridges Into Work: Draft Mid-Term Evaluation, Wavehill, March 2013</p>
South West Workways	<p>South West Workways Project Evaluation: Final Report, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, July 2013</p>
Want2Work	<p>Summary of Want to Work Final Evaluation Report, Howard Reed, May 2013</p> <p>Evaluation of Want to Work: Interim Report, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, February 2012</p> <p>Evaluation of Want to Work: Final Report, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, May 2013</p>