

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER:

5/2020

PUBLICATION DATE:

29 JANUARY 2020

Evaluation of the Access Programme 2017 to 2019

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

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Access Programme Evaluation

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

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
CRM	Customer Relationship Management System
ERS	Access Employer Recruitment Support
ETS	Access Employer Training Support
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise
SOC	Standard Occupational Classification
VTS	Access Vocational Training Support
VTF	Valleys Task Force

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report documents the findings of Wavehill's independent evaluation of Welsh Government's Access programme. The evaluation was carried out between January and May 2019 by a team of independent researchers. The aims of the evaluation have been to assess the delivery of the Access programme and to identify the programme's impacts.
- 1.2 The Access programme is a Welsh Government employability scheme run in the Valleys Taskforce region since October 2017. The programme will run until the introduction of Welsh Government's new 'Job Support Wales' programme, anticipated to take place in April 2020.
- 1.3 The aim of the Access programme is to support unemployed adults to get a job and to stay in work by improving their employability skills. The programme is aimed at unemployed adults who are nearer to the labour market and have a reasonable chance of being ready for employment within six months of the intervention. Where individuals are eligible for ESF-funded employability programmes, they are signposted to these programmes in the first instance.
- 1.4 The programme has been delivered by Welsh Government in conjunction with Careers Wales. Careers Wales is responsible for engaging with potential participants, assessing their suitability for the Access programme and then referring them to the appropriate support. The core content of the Access programme comprises three main elements of support:
- i) A vocational training grant for individuals who need to update their skills to return to work, up to a maximum of £1,500
 - ii) Extra support to help remove barriers to vocational training
 - iii) A contribution towards wages and help with training costs for recruiting employers.
- 1.5 Careers Wales is also responsible for working with local employers, Jobcentres and regional representatives to ensure that the skills provided by the Access vocational training grant directly match those sought by recruiting employers. This should facilitate a localised approach to skills training, providing participants with the skills required within the local labour market.

Methodology

- 1.6 A mixed methods approach was agreed with Welsh Government following a series of scoping interviews with those involved in the management and delivery of the programme. The initial stage of the method involved the creation of a logic model for the intervention: the theory of how the programme should produce the desired outcome (i.e. helping people into employment). Based on the logic model, a monitoring and evaluation framework was developed (included in Annexe B).
- 1.7 The main research activities included:
- A review of programme monitoring data
 - In-depth telephone interviews with four key stakeholders within Welsh Government
 - A web-based survey of Access programme participants (68 responses)
 - In-depth telephone interviews with a sample of 30 survey respondents
 - In-depth telephone interviews with a sample of 11 Careers Wales advisers
 - In-depth telephone interviews with five businesses in receipt of support through the Access programme.
- 1.8 It is important to recognise the limitations of the method. The sample of programme participants is small and, given the limitations of programme monitoring data, it has only been possible to sample according to intervention outcomes. Additionally, only five businesses participated in the evaluation.

Process Evaluation Findings

- 1.9 The evidence collected during this evaluation indicates that the Access programme is widely perceived by both participants and stakeholders to be successfully administered and delivered within Welsh Government and Careers Wales.
- 1.10 Multi-agency delivery is seen as key to the programme's success, with Careers Wales providing local delivery and detailed labour market information that Welsh Government would not be able to independently of Careers Wales. Evidence indicates that this labour market information forms a key part of how courses are selected by participants. Information is gathered from formal sources, including

Careers Wales job trends data and Jobcentre Plus data, as well as informal conversations with local employers.

- 1.11 Minor issues around the availability of a customer relationship management (CRM) system and monitoring data collected by the programme have not negatively affected the programme for participants, although learning in these areas would improve programme delivery in the future.
- 1.12 A key finding is that Careers Wales advisers frame the intervention in terms of a longer-term journey into employment. During stakeholder interviews, Careers Wales advisers were keen to stress that the support available through Access alone was unlikely to lead to employment and communicating this was important in terms of managing participants' expectations, as well as encouraging participants to develop soft skills such as job search skills and interview skills.
- 1.13 Vocational Training Support is the most-used strand of the support available through Access. Evidence indicates that while Careers Wales advisers are making participants aware of Employer Recruitment Support and Employer Training Support, these options are not being widely used. Further, although there is wrap-around support for individuals provided by Careers Wales, there is no equivalent wrap-around support for businesses. This may partially explain the apparent low awareness and take-up this aspect of support.
- 1.14 Extra support to help overcome barriers to participating in training has been used in several instances, although the uptake of this support has been lower than anticipated. There is some evidence that the extra support has enabled individuals to attend training but, in some cases, there is likely to be deadweight with regards to this support.

Outcomes Evaluation Findings

- 1.15 The nature of the data that has been collected from programme participants mean that it is not been possible to track long-term outcomes for programme participants. This means that, in this area, the findings have to be treated with caution. Data from Careers Wales indicates positive employment outcomes for 359 participants (26% of all participants). However, it is not possible to calculate what proportion of the intervention group would have found employment anyway, and the robustness of the outcomes data at this stage is not clear.

- 1.16 While it has not been possible to produce a counterfactual analysis of outcome data, data collected in the participant survey and in-depth interviews indicates a perception that there has been some additionality for those individuals who have found employment.
- 1.17 Vocational Training Support, which has accounted for a significant majority of all programme activity, is perceived to be the mechanism that has had the greatest impact on employment outcomes for participants. Interviews with Careers Wales advisers and participants suggest that the qualifications achieved by individuals have helped these individuals to meet the minimum requirements of jobs. In other instances, the skills (both hard skills and soft skills) developed through participation have been important in moving individuals into employment.
- 1.18 In instances where there have not been successful employment outcomes for participants, there is some evidence that there have been outcomes which have moved individuals closer to employment than they otherwise would have been. The participant survey and in-depth participant interviews indicate impacts on confidence even where successful employment outcomes have not been achieved.
- 1.19 While Employer Recruitment Support and Employer Training Support have been taken up less frequently than had originally been anticipated, there is some evidence that these have produced additionality. There is also some limited evidence that individual businesses have recruited earlier or in greater numbers than they otherwise would have done without Employer Recruitment Support. At the same time, the available evidence suggests that there is likely to be some deadweight as a result of these aspects of the intervention, with some employers reporting that they would have employed Access candidates irrespective of the availability of the wage subsidy and training support.

Recommendations

- 1.20 **Recommendation One:** Welsh Government should work with Careers Wales and other partners (for example, Business Wales) to find ways to publicise the availability of Access-eligible participants to local businesses. Awareness appears to be a key barrier to businesses making use of Employer Recruitment Support and might drive increased uptake of this strand of support.

- 1.21 **Recommendation Two:** The Access programme has been hindered by not having a CRM system. While there is no evidence that this has negatively influenced programme participants, this has negatively affected the management and administration of the Access programme. Providing such resources is important for the smooth-running of the programme and also has knock-on impacts for tracking outcomes and carrying out monitoring and evaluation. Welsh Government should look to develop a CRM for any successor programmes.
- 1.22 **Recommendation Three:** Welsh Government should consider putting a more comprehensive monitoring data collection system in place, particularly with regards to tracking outcomes for participants. This would allow for more effective longitudinal analysis of Access participants and the kind of outcomes they have achieved. It would also permit more granular analysis of which courses and qualifications are effective in producing employment outcomes.
- 1.23 **Recommendation Four:** Welsh Government should consider an approach to support that addresses skills and employability barriers alongside other barriers to employment. Even in situations where there have been employment outcomes for participants, survey and in-depth interview data indicates that there are multiple barriers to employment for individuals. Alongside skills and qualifications, there would be value in investigating approaches to providing employability support that address other barriers such as mental health.
- 1.24 **Recommendation Five:** Careers Wales advisers reported that they framed the intervention as a longer-term journey into employment, and participant outcomes indicate that not all participants move into employment as a consequence of the intervention. There would potentially be value in Welsh Government investigating the impact of continued support for participants once the Vocational Training Support aspect of the programme has been completed. This may help ensure that momentum is not lost for participants as they begin to use the skills and qualifications they have gained to find employment.

2. Introduction/Background

2.1 This report documents the findings of Wavehill’s independent evaluation of Welsh Government’s Access programme. The evaluation was carried out between January and May 2019 by a team of independent researchers. The aims of the evaluation were:

- 1) to consider how the Access programme works in practice, highlighting key successes and areas for development.
- 2) to find out to what extent the Access programme is achieving what it set out to achieve, i.e. that supported individuals are improving their employability skills and obtaining sustainable employment.

The Access Programme

2.2 The Access programme was launched in the Valleys Taskforce region in October 2017. Although it was originally scheduled to close on the 31st March 2019, it will continue to run until the introduction of Welsh Government’s new ‘Job Support Wales’ employability programme is introduced, expected in April 2020. The Access programme supports Welsh Government’s ‘Taking Wales Forward’ commitment to redesign employability support for job-ready individuals to help them gain the skills and experience needed to gain and maintain employment. The programme also aims to contribute to Welsh Government’s commitment in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, in which the goal is to:

“develop a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.”¹

2.3 Another key context of the Access programme is Welsh Government’s 2018 Employability Plan, which states a commitment to provide an individualised approach to employability support. More specifically

2.4 “Our key ambition here is not only to find jobs for those who are unemployed, but also to give sensitive and intensive individual support to those who are economically inactive but who wish to work.”²

¹ [Well-being of future generations act: the essentials](#)

² [Employability plan](#)

- 2.5 The support provided by Welsh Government is intended to be tailored to the needs of the individual, targeted specifically at the barriers that the individual faces to entering employment.
- 2.6 The aim of the Access programme is to support unemployed adults to get a job and to stay in work by improving their employability skills. The programme is aimed at unemployed adults who are nearer to the labour market and have a reasonable chance of being ready for employment within six months of the intervention. The Welsh Government Communities for Work suite of programmes is in place to support those who are further away from the labour market.
- 2.7 The programme intends to contribute to the area wide 7,000 employment target for the region set by the Valleys Taskforce.³ It also supports the wider Welsh Government commitment to reshape employability support, specifically for individuals who are almost job ready, by helping them learn the requisite skills and experience to gain and maintain sustainable employment.

Programme Delivery

- 2.8 The programme has been delivered by Welsh Government in conjunction with Careers Wales. Careers Wales is responsible for engaging with potential participants, assessing their suitability for the Access programme and then referring them to the appropriate support, whereas the role of Welsh Government is to process the claims of applicants and provide a final judgement on whether support will be provided.
- 2.9 The core content of the Access programme comprises three main elements of support:
- i) A vocational training grant for individuals who need to update their skills to return to work, up to a maximum of £1,500
 - ii) Extra support to help remove barriers to vocational training
 - iii) A contribution towards wages and help with training costs for recruiting employers.

³ Welsh Government (2018), [‘Our Valleys, Our Future Delivery Plan’](#).

- 2.10 Careers Wales is responsible for working with local employers, Jobcentres and regional representatives to ensure that the skills provided by the Access vocational training grant directly match those sought by recruiting employers. This should facilitate for a localised approach to skills training, providing participants with the skills required within the local labour market.
- 2.11 Another part of Careers Wales' role in the Access programme is to forge relationships with local employers, Jobcentres and regional representatives to ensure that, where appropriate, the skills provided by the Access vocational training grant directly match the skills being sought by recruiting employers.

Assessing Programme Eligibility and Need

- 2.12 Careers Wales advisers are responsible for assessing individual barriers to employment and referring them to programmes depending on their needs. Those furthest from the labour market are referred to a range of ESF and Communities provision.
- 2.13 Those nearer to the labour market are referred onto current mainstream provision if they are eligible according to the specific criteria for each programme. Examples of these programmes include ReAct,⁴ Jobs Growth Wales,⁵ and the Employability Skills Programme.⁶
- 2.14 Suitable individuals who are close to the labour market but ineligible for these programmes are referred to the package of support available through the Access programme to help them improve their chances of gaining sustainable employment. This support is designed to be additional to, and add value to, other support offered by Welsh Government and partner organisations such as Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus.

⁴ ReAct is an ESF-funded programme which provides support to individuals who have been made redundant in the last three months or employers that employ someone who has been made redundant in the last six months. Support for individuals involves a Vocational Training Grant of up to £1,500 to pay for training costs. Support for employers includes Employer Recruitment Support of up to £3,000 during the employee's first 12 months in employment and Employer Training Support of up to £1,000 to pay for job-related skills training.

⁵ Jobs Growth Wales is a programme designed to help unemployed 16-24-year-olds living in Wales into employment for six months in a job paying at least the National Minimum Wage. The scheme pays up to 50% of the employee's wage for the six-month period.

⁶ Welsh Government's Employability Skills programme is intended to help unemployed adults get into employment. Participants can access a range of support and training, including work experience, help and advice on preparing for work, and training to develop essential skills. The programme is open to unemployed adults who have had little or no work experience during the last three months and have not achieved a full level 2 qualification or equivalent.

Aims and Objectives of the Evaluation

2.15 The aims of the evaluation were:

- i) To consider how the Access programme works in practice, i.e. highlighting key successes and areas for development in the context of the new Job Support Wales programme and Working Wales employment advice service.
- ii) To find out to what extent the Access programme is achieving what it set out to achieve, i.e. that supported individuals are improving their employability skills and obtaining sustainable employment.

3. Intervention Context and Literature Review

- 3.1 This chapter sets out the context for the intervention and briefly outlines the evidence collected from previous evaluations of similar skills-based employability interventions.

Employment Context

- 3.2 The South Wales Valleys region has long been recognised as a priority area for policy intervention, following several decades of significant industrial decline.⁷ While GDP is generally low across Wales, GDP within the South Wales Valleys has fallen even further behind the European Union (EU) average, with trends suggesting that GDP has fallen even further behind since devolution. Since the mid-1980s, unemployment rates have been among the highest throughout the United Kingdom. In 2006, only 64% of the working age population in the Heads of the Valleys were in employment compared to 69% in the Lower Valleys and 71% across Wales as a whole.⁸
- 3.3 Despite this, evidence collated for the Valleys Taskforce notes that aside from the recession in the late 2000s there have been large increases in employment rates across the Valleys areas driven by lower levels of inactivity.⁹ These increases appear to be associated in part with an improving skills profile for the population, increasing employment of females and increasing numbers of people in part-time work.¹⁰
- 3.4 The challenges faced in the South Wales Valleys aren't uniform: there are significant differences between different parts of the area. For example, a report commissioned by Welsh Government and produced by the Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA) in 2004 found that there are areas in which the problems are more severe than in others.¹¹ While the issues described in the IWA report have changed due to 15 years of regeneration activities, there remains significant local variation within the Valleys Taskforce area.

⁷ Throughout this report, the South Wales Valleys are defined as the area that falls within the Valleys Taskforce Area.

⁸ Welsh Assembly Government (2006), [Turning Heads: A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020](#).

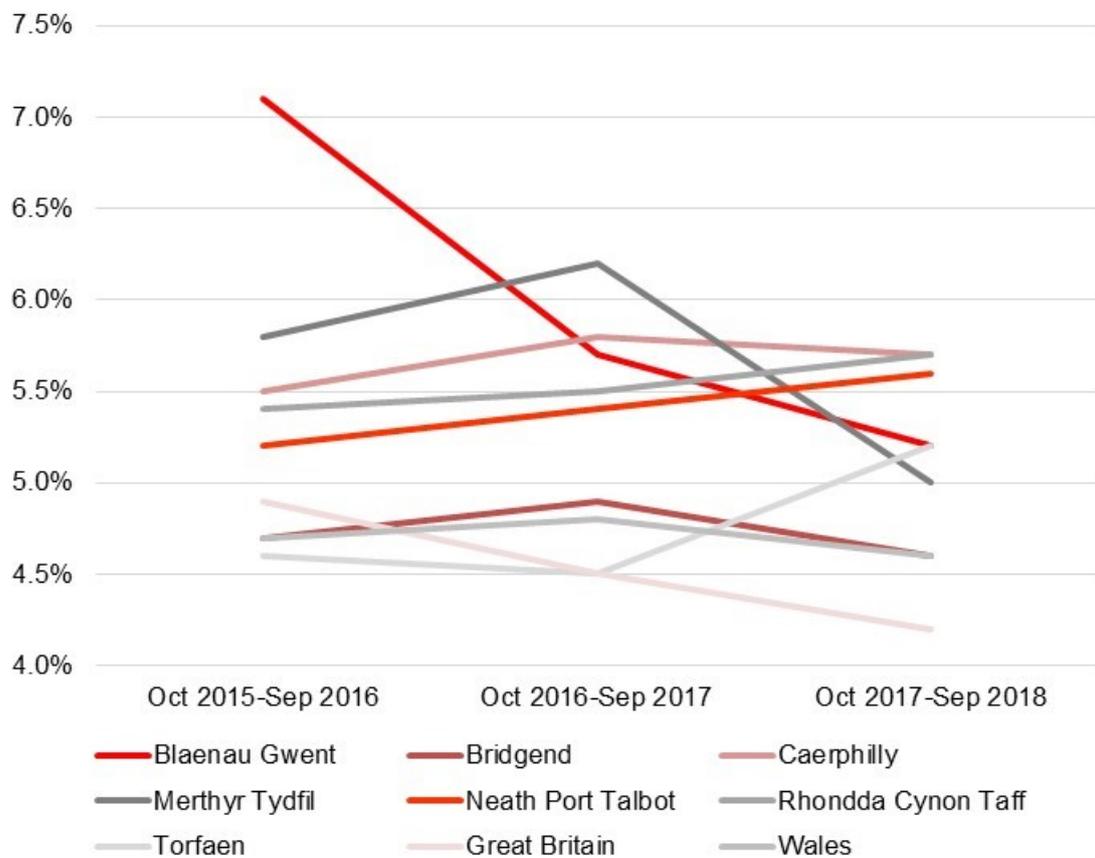
⁹ [Valleys Taskforce: summary of evidence](#)

¹⁰ [Valleys Taskforce: summary of evidence](#)

¹¹ Welsh Assembly Government (2004), The Socio-Economic Characteristics of the South Wales Valleys in a Broader Context, pp. 8-9.

3.5 As demonstrated by Figure 3.1, at a taskforce-wide level unemployment rates in the area are higher than the averages for Wales (4.6%) and Great Britain (4.2%). This represents unemployment rates in most South Wales Valleys local authorities falling faster than the Welsh average during the year ending March 2017.¹² However, whilst the unemployment rate has fallen for Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil, as is the case at a UK-wide level, in Neath Port Talbot and Rhondda Cynon Taf the rate has increased.

Figure 3.1: Unemployment rates in Valleys Taskforce local authorities, Wales and Great Britain (October 2015 – 2018)

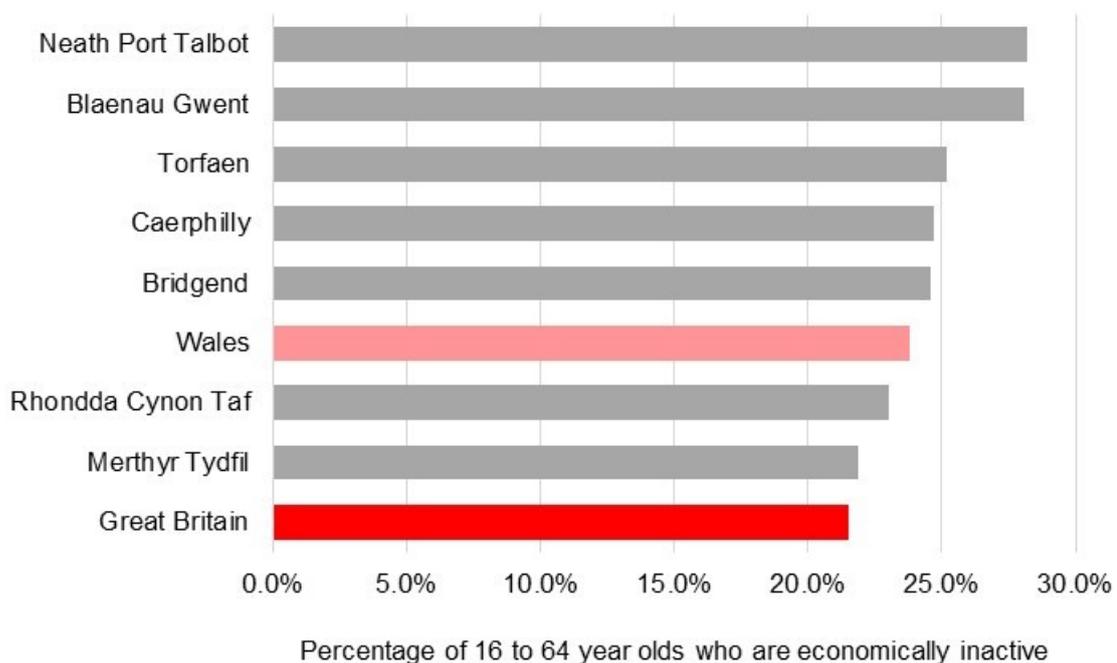


Source: ONS

¹² [Valleys Taskforce: summary of evidence f](#)

3.6 The problems faced in the Valleys Taskforce area, however, are less to do with unemployment than economic inactivity. The number of economically inactive people in the Valleys Taskforce area is a factor in the area’s low productivity. The percentage of 16 to 64-year olds who were economically inactive between October 2017 and September 2018 (Figure 3.2) is above the Wales average for most local authorities in the Valleys Taskforce area. However, the rates for Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil are closer to the average for Great Britain as a whole.

Figure 3.2: Percentage of 16 to 64-year olds who are economically inactive in Valleys Taskforce local authorities, Wales and Great Britain (October 2017 – September 2018)



Source: ONS

3.7 Although the employment situation in the region has improved recently, largely due to reduced economic inactivity, there is still a notable gap between the region’s performance in comparison to Wales-wide and UK-wide figures.¹³ The Valleys Taskforce area falls behind UK-wide and Wales-wide levels on a number of key indicators, including life expectancy, a healthy lifestyle and the number of children in receipt of free school meals. The Valleys Taskforce has also noted that there have been falls in relative wages both in the Valleys and Wales, and workshop

¹³ [Welsh Budget 2018: Chief Economist’s report](#)

feedback collected by the Taskforce indicated that financial security was a key pressure for those who were on low incomes.¹⁴

Literature Review

- 3.8 As part of this evaluation, a review of the evidence base for the effectiveness of skills-based training programmes in employability interventions was undertaken. This review has drawn heavily on a systematic review of skills-based employability programmes conducted by the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth.¹⁵ The review concluded that training has had a positive impact on participants' employment or earnings in around half of the 71 evaluations reviewed. The review found that short programmes (below six months, with a likelihood that programmes below four months are even more effective) are more effective in terms of less formal training activities, whereas longer programmes tend to be more effective when the content is more skill-intensive. There is also evidence that in-firm training programmes tend to outperform classroom-based training programmes, with classroom-based programmes that closely mirror actual jobs appearing to be more effective than more generic classroom-based provision.
- 3.9 Within the review, there is some evidence that these interventions have an impact on wages. Of the 71 evaluations, evidence reviews and meta-analyses which have taken place in the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth's systematic review, 21 considered the direct impact of employment training programmes on the wages of employees. In over half of these evaluations (11 out of 21) there were positive impacts, with a further two reporting mixed impacts. In cases where the training programmes were successful in increasing wages these increases were noted as being substantial, with one case study reporting an average wage increase of 12% as a direct result of the intervention.
- 3.10 These findings are echoed by a systematic review and meta-analysis of employment interventions aimed at young people conducted by Betcherman et al (2007), which found that skills training interventions generally improved employment outcomes for both women and men and often led to higher

¹⁴ [Valleys Taskforce: summary of evidence f](#)

¹⁵ [What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth](#)

earnings.¹⁶ The data indicated that the effect of training is higher for younger people and those on lower incomes.

- 3.11 The literature review found that there is a general lack of evidence regarding the relative value for money of different delivery models for this kind of programme.¹⁷ Notably, the What Works Centre for Economic Growth's review identified no evidence that local delivery is more or less effective than national or regional delivery models.¹⁸
- 3.12 The literature also indicates that for basic skills training, or interventions aimed at improving and increasing general employability, shorter programmes have a more significant effect on employment. For instance, a study involving wage growth premiums conducted by D'Costa and Overman found that increasing training length by up to 4.5 months had substantial positive outcomes; however, there was no additional effect beyond this period.¹⁹ If this result was to be generalised, the strongest and most positive outcomes may occur for courses which are months rather than days in length. Therefore, shorter training programmes are likely to have more of a significant impact on employment and longer training programmes are likely to have more of an impact on wages.
- 3.13 The majority of studies included in these systematic reviews have been studies of standardised employment programmes focusing on skills. There is limited evidence regarding the impact of employability programmes focused on individuals or programmes that consider wider barriers to employment beyond skills. Equally, there is little evidence regarding the efficacy of approaches which address other barriers alongside skills and qualifications barriers.
- 3.14 There are, however, examples of programmes that have taken this approach, as well as ongoing attempts to evaluate them. One such programme is Working Well, a programme funded by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority which has sought to reduce the number of long-term unemployed individuals using a range of interventions including housing, medical services and family support. The programme, which was piloted in 2014 in Salford and then extended across the Greater Manchester area, targets people who are out of work, many of whom are

¹⁶ Betcherman, G., Godfrey, M., Puerto, S., Rother, F. & Stavreska, A., (2007), [Global Inventory to Support Young Workers Synthesis Report](#).

¹⁷ [What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth](#), p. 31.

¹⁸ [What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth](#), p. 31.

¹⁹ [The urban wage growth premium: sorting or learning?](#)

living with long-term mental or physical health conditions. It links participants with a key worker who assesses their individual needs and helped them address problems in their lives, connecting them with appropriate opportunities and services in areas including healthcare, housing or training.

- 3.15 An impact assessment of this programme, carried out by the Learning and Work Institute, found no evidence that the intervention has increased the chances of individuals moving into work.²⁰ There is, however, some evidence that it has lengthened the time in work for those who do enter work when compared to the matched comparison group.²¹

²⁰[Greater Manchester Working Well: early impact assessment](#)

²¹[Greater Manchester Working Well: early impact assessment](#)

4. Methodology

- 4.1 A mixed methods approach was agreed with Welsh Government following a series of scoping interviews with project stakeholders and key members of the Access delivery team, senior managers working on other Welsh Government projects, and representatives of Careers Wales.
- 4.2 The initial stage of the method involved the development of a logic model for the intervention. This was based on insights into the programme and its aims gained from scoping interviews and a review of programme documentation. Based on the logic model, a monitoring and evaluation framework was developed (included in Annexe B).
- 4.3 The main research activities included:
- A review of programme monitoring data
 - In-depth telephone interviews with four key stakeholders within Welsh Government
 - A web-based survey of Access programme participants (68 responses)
 - In-depth telephone interviews with a sample of 30 survey respondents
 - In-depth telephone interviews with a sample of 11 Careers Wales advisers
 - In-depth telephone interviews with three businesses in receipt of support through the Access programme.
- 4.4 The web-based survey of participants was designed to obtain a broad picture of the Access programme participants, their situation before participating in Access, the barriers they felt prevented them from finding employment, and post-intervention outcomes. The survey also asked participants about the specific strands of support available through Access that they made use of, as well as any perceived barriers to accessing the support available through the programme. The survey was sent out in April 2019 to all who had participated in Access prior to December 31st 2018. The three reminder emails were sent out. The results of the survey were also used to sample participants for in-depth interviews.

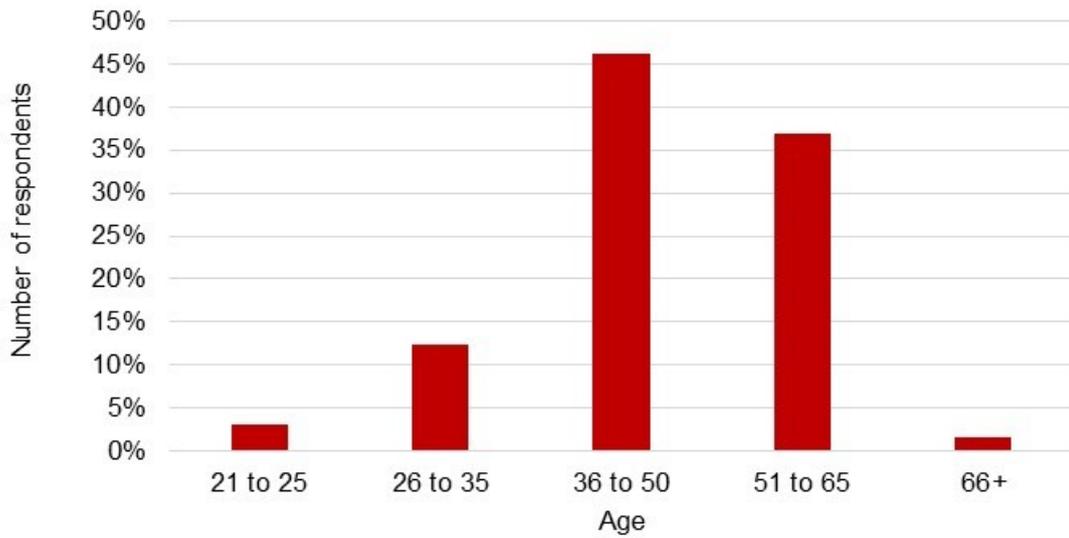
- 4.5 The in-depth telephone interviews (30) supplemented the data collected in the participant survey, focusing on Access participants' journeys and the role that Access played in these journeys. In particular, participants were asked about the contribution that Access provision had made to outcomes, as well as what role the specific aspects of support available through the programme had played in these outcomes.
- 4.6 Interviews with Careers Wales staff (11) were intended to provide insight into the process by which participants are referred to the Access programme. A secondary aim was to find out Careers Wales advisers' views on the 'closeness of fit' between the kind of support available through Access and the barriers to employment typically facing programme participants.
- 4.7 Finally, in-depth stakeholder interviews (4) with Welsh Government have been used to assess the fit between the Access programme and other skills and employability policies.

Sampling, Representativeness and Participation Rates

Access Participant Survey

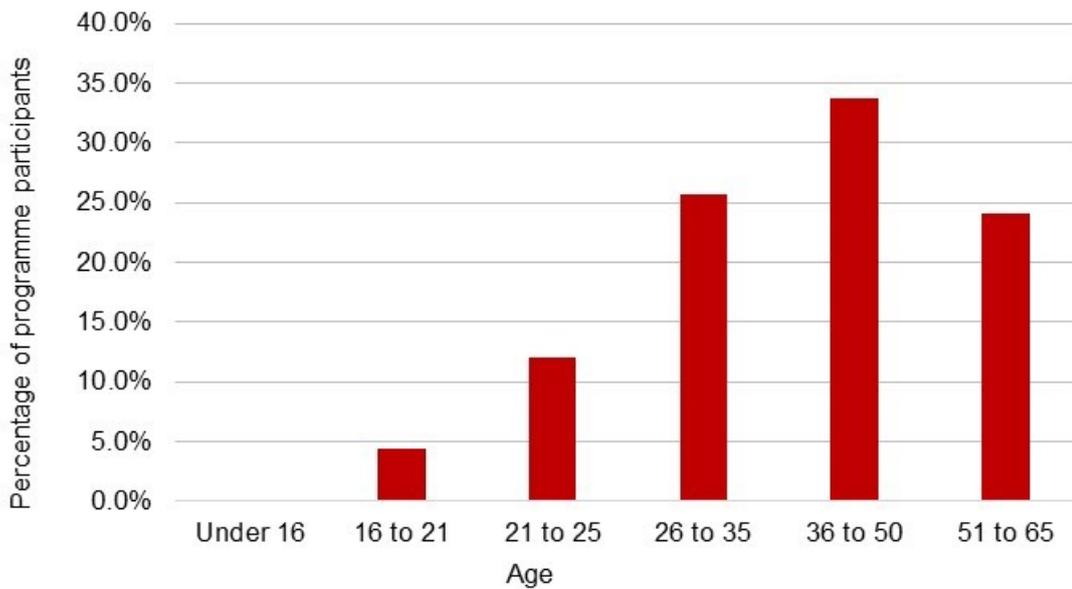
- 4.8 The survey was distributed to 758 live email addresses and received 68 responses, falling short of the targeted 100 responses. Following the initial email, three reminders were issued to increase survey response rates. The survey was removed from the field after 68 responses due to time constraints with the evaluation, resulting in a response rate of 8.97%.
- 4.9 As Figure 4.1 indicates, 36 to 50 and 51 to 65-year olds are particularly well represented in the sample, with the mean age of survey respondents 47.6. This is considerably older than the mean age of the whole cohort of survey participants, 39.5. Figure 4.1 also demonstrates that the reason for this discrepancy is largely due to the absence of respondents under 25 within the survey.

Figure 4.1: Age of survey respondents



Base=65 responses Source: Participant survey

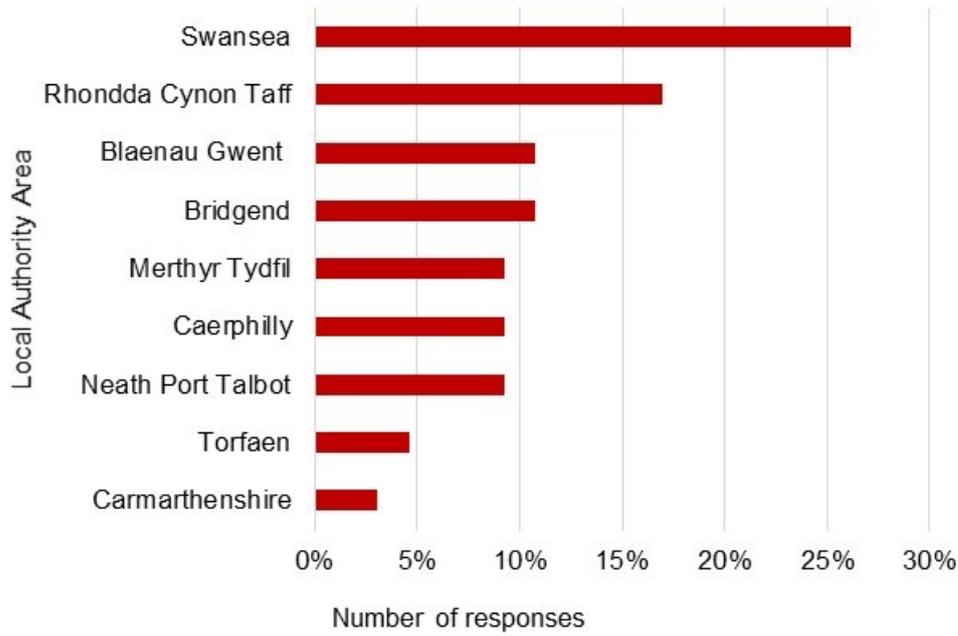
Figure 4.2: Age at application of programme participants



Base= 891 participants Source: programme monitoring data

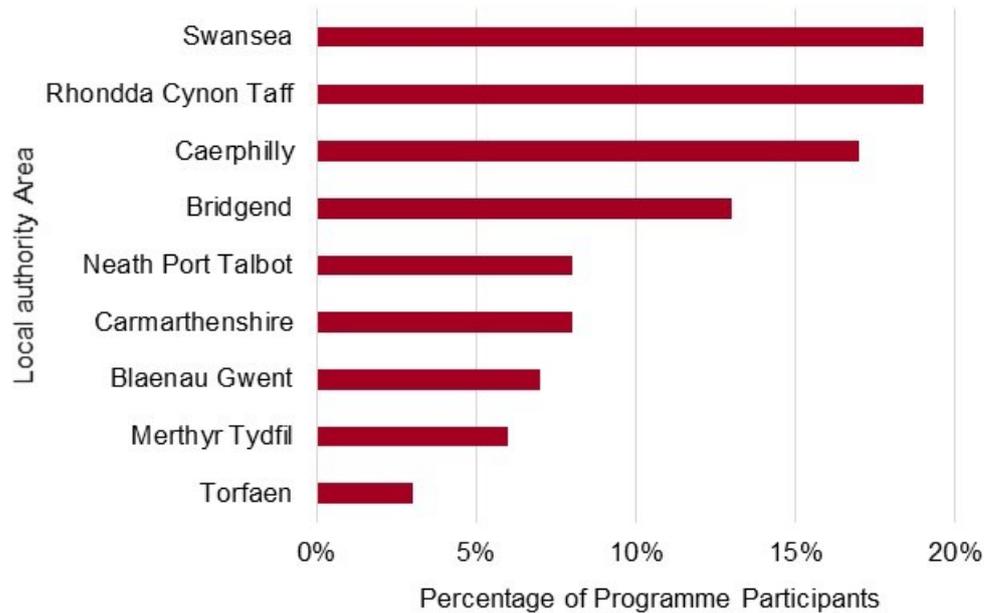
4.10 Survey responses were received from all local authority areas in the Valleys Taskforce area. While some local authorities are better represented in the sample than others, such as Swansea (n= 17), Rhondda Cynon Taf (n= 11), this generally reflects the local authorities that are more prominent within the data in terms of overall participant numbers (Swansea n= 19% and Rhondda Cynon Taf (n= 19%).

Figure 4.3: Survey respondents from each local authority area



Base=65 Source: Participant survey

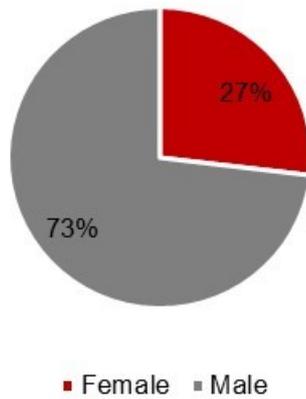
Figure 4.4: Programme participants from each local authority area



Base=912 responses Source: Programme monitoring data

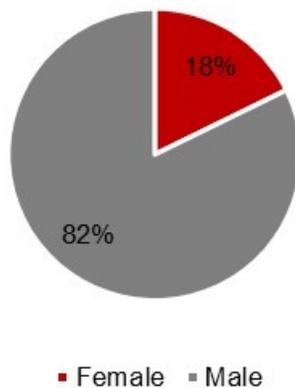
4.11 The gender profiles of the survey responses received are also broadly representative of the intervention group, although females are slightly better represented in the sample than they are within the population of Access participants.

Figure 4.5: Survey respondents disaggregated by gender



Base=67 Source: Participant survey

Figure 4.6: Programme participants disaggregated by gender



Base=808 responses Source: In-depth participant interviews

- 4.12 Thirty in-depth interviews with participants were targeted in order to provide a sample representative of the intervention group in terms of employment outcome, location, gender and type of course taken. However, as only 35 survey participants had provided contact details, the decision was made not to apply a sample to these in-depth interviews and 30 interviews were completed.

- 4.13 Of those who completed in-depth interviews, 15 reported that they are currently in employment, while another 15 reported that they are unemployed and looking for work. Interviewees were between 27 and 66 years of age, with a mean age of 48.86. Twenty-five interviews were completed with individuals who identify as male and five interviews were completed with individuals who identify as female.

Careers Wales In-depth Interviews

- 4.14 Contact details were received for 46 Careers Wales advisers who had referred participants to the Access programme. These contacts were sampled in order to provide interviews with Careers Wales advisers across each of the local authority areas in which the Access programme has been available, with the intention of carrying out a total of 16 interviews. However, due to low response rates, interviews were carried out with 11 Careers Wales advisers. Interviewees reported working in the following local authority areas:

Table 4.1: Careers Wales advisers by local authority area

Area	N
Caerphilly	2
Rhondda Cynon Taf	2
Swansea	2
Blaenau Gwent	2
Neath Port Talbot	2
Carmarthenshire	1
Bridgend	1
Torfaen	1

Base: 11 advisers Source: Careers Wales adviser interviews
 N.B. some advisers reported working in more than one area

- 4.15 As part of the interviews, advisers were asked how long they had been involved with the Access programme. All respondents reported that they had been involved with Access since the inception of the programme, the only exception being a trainee whose involvement with Access had started within the last six months. Advisers were also asked how many individuals they had referred to Access during the last six months. Responses ranged from 11 to 100 individuals, with the mean number referred by each adviser 40.

5. Process Evaluation Findings

Summary of Findings:

- The evidence collected during this evaluation indicates that the Access programme is widely perceived to be successfully administered and delivered. Minor issues around the availability of a CRM system and monitoring data collected by the programme have not negatively affected the programme for participants.
- Multi-agency delivery is seen as key to the programme's success, with Careers Wales providing local delivery and detailed labour market information that Welsh Government would not be able to independently of Careers Wales. Evidence indicates that this labour market information forms a key part of how courses are selected by participants. Information has been gathered from formal sources, including Careers Wales job trends data and Jobcentre Plus data, as well as informal conversations with local employers.
- A key finding is that Careers Wales advisers frame the intervention in terms of a longer-term journey into employment. During stakeholder interviews, Careers Wales advisers were keen to stress that the support available through Access alone was unlikely to lead to employment; moreover, communicating this was important in terms of managing participants' expectations, as well as encouraging participants to develop soft skills such as job search skills and interview skills.
- Vocational Training Support is the most-used strand of the support available through Access. Evidence indicates that while Careers Wales advisers are making participants aware of Employer Recruitment Support and Employer Training Support, these options are not being widely used. Further, although there is wrap-around support for individuals provided by Careers Wales, there is no equivalent wrap-around support for businesses. This may partially explain the apparent low awareness and take-up regarding this aspect of support.
- Extra support to help overcome barriers to participating in training has been used in several instances, although the uptake of this support has been lower than anticipated. There is some evidence that the extra support has enabled individuals to attend training but, in some cases, there is likely to be deadweight.

- 5.1 This chapter assesses the effectiveness of the delivery of the Access programme. It draws on evidence from across the evaluation, including monitoring data, participant survey results, and findings from the qualitative research with Welsh Government stakeholders, Careers Wales advisers, businesses, and programme participants.
- 5.2 The chapter also examines the processes by which Careers Wales advisers are delivering the programme on the ground. In particular, it focuses on the way that Careers Wales advisers are identifying participant needs, monitoring labour market information and referring to specific courses supported through Access.

Programme Administration and Delivery

- 5.3 In-depth interviews with Welsh Government stakeholders and Careers Wales advisers indicate a perception that the programme has generally been well run. Although individual participants reported different experiences of programme delivery, there is no evidence of regional variation within this delivery. Adapting the 'ReAct model' to the Access programme has eased the administration of the programme, and there is a perception that because the programme is not ESF funded there has been a reduced administrative burden and management has been easier than it would be with an equivalent ESF project.
- 5.4 There have been some project management implications for the programme caused by not having a CRM system. In particular, the time taken to process claims by staff was highlighted by multiple Welsh Government staff members during stakeholder interviews. Although this issue has caused administrative issues for Welsh Government staff, there is no evidence that it has negatively influenced what the programme has been able to deliver to participants.
- 5.5 Issues were also raised around the availability of monitoring data to allow for 'real-time' analysis of the project outcomes. Monitoring data is collected by Careers Wales through routine follow-up calls six months after the intervention. Data from these follow-up calls is reported to Welsh Government as employment outcomes at the aggregate level. Presently, monitoring data does not allow outcomes to be tied to specific interventions. Providing this kind of data could allow for assessment of which courses are leading to employment outcomes and which are less successful. Feeding this data back in while the programme is ongoing could allow for adjustments to be made to what types of courses are funded by the programme.

- 5.6 With regards to support for the administrative process of applying for support through Access, participants and supported businesses are satisfied with the process of applying and the guidance that has been provided by both Careers Wales and Welsh Government's Access team. While Careers Wales has taken the lead on providing advice regarding the programme's application process, in certain instances Careers Wales has been unable to provide the information required. In these instances, applicants have been signposted to Welsh Government's Access team. However, there is a perception among some respondents that the Access team in Welsh Government has sometimes been 'hard to get hold of', although the small number of respondents needs to be taken into account when considering this finding.
- 5.7 There is no evidence that this has been due to failures in procedure on the part of Careers Wales or the Welsh Government Access team, but (if it is a reflection of the views of all participants) it is likely to have affected overall levels of satisfaction with the programme.

Multi-Agency Delivery

- 5.8 Both Welsh Government officials and Careers Wales staff interviewed as part of this evaluation were positive about the multi-agency delivery of the programme. There is a perception that there is a strong working relationship between Welsh Government and Careers Wales, and this relationship has been central to the success of the programme. There is also a perception that the multi-agency delivery adds value to both.
- 5.9 For Welsh Government, the main added value is that Careers Wales provides a referral service, monitors local labour market information and offers expertise that Welsh Government is unable to supply:

'The labour market information is a valuable part of the 'Access model'. I don't think we could really deliver Access without Careers Wales supporting us in this way.' (Welsh Government interview, 2019)

- 5.10 Delivering the programme in conjunction with Careers Wales is likely to reduce administrative costs for Welsh Government by ensuring that only participants who are suitable and eligible for the support are referred. This will reduce costs associated with processing claims that are later rejected.
- 5.11 Careers Wales staff interviewed during the evaluation were also positive about the collaboration with Welsh Government. All were generally very positive about the support available through Access, and advisers expressed a view that the provision of support through the Access programme adds value to the support offered to Careers Wales clients. Many of the Careers Wales advisers interviewed mentioned that this was exactly the kind of provision they thought was required to help people into work in their local area:

'When this provision started, it was like a light coming on in a dark room. This is exactly what was needed.' (Careers Wales Adviser interview, 2019)

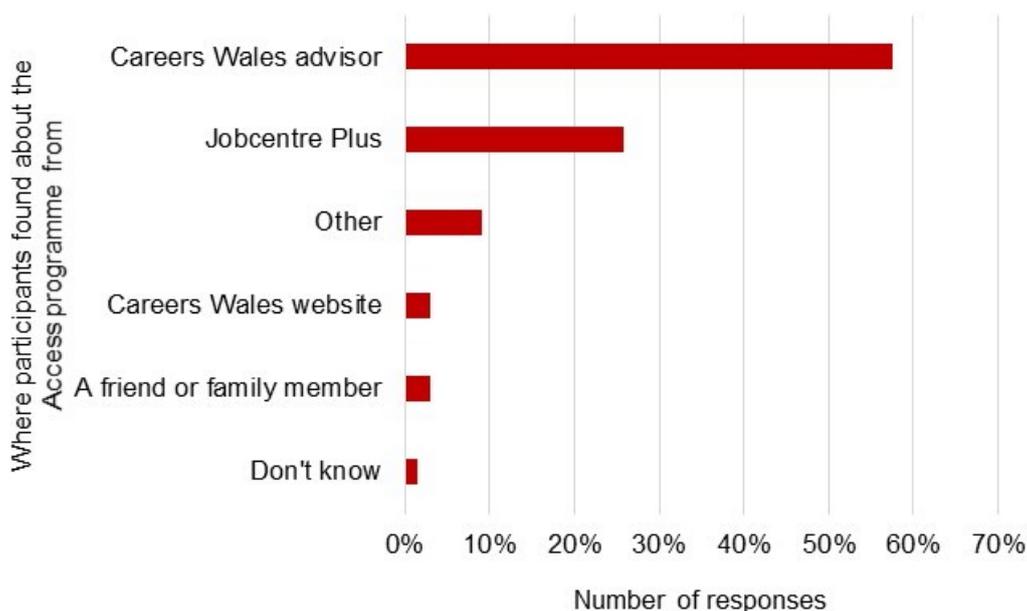
'Because of the financial aspect, it's probably helped us to make what we offer to clients a little more saleable. I think in certain cases it has encouraged people to come and talk to us. Guidance is still key to getting people into work, and I think Access has made people more receptive to that.' (Careers Wales Adviser interview, 2019)

Careers Wales' Identification of Participants and Referral to the Access Programme

- 5.12 As part of the interviews with Careers Wales advisers, interviewees were asked about the process through which clients are referred to the Access programme.
- 5.13 The data collected through stakeholder interviews with Careers Wales advisers suggests that, despite there being regional variations in the uptake of support available through Access, approaches to engagement differ more between individual Careers Wales advisers rather than regionally. Among the Careers Wales advisers interviewed, the mean number of individuals referred to Access during the last six months was 36. However, there was wide variation within the sample, with the number of individuals referred to Access ranging from 11 to 100.

5.14 Careers Wales advisers were asked about their perception of participants' motivations for seeking support through Access. Answers to this question were mixed, with some clients having heard about Access through word of mouth, others being referred by Jobcentre Plus to talk to Careers Wales about Access, and others coming to Careers Wales with needs where an adviser identifies they would potentially benefit from Access. The data collected in the participant survey indicates that most participants heard about Access from a Careers Wales advisers (n=38), while Jobcentre Plus was another common referral pathway (n= 17).

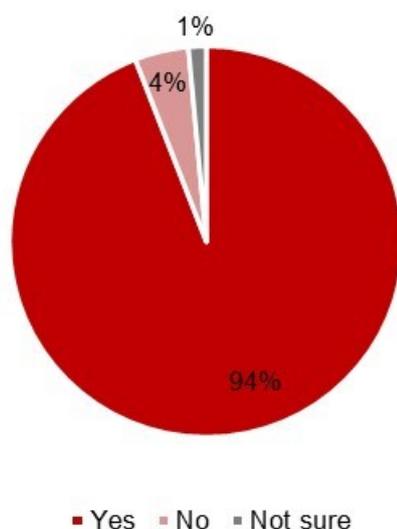
Figure 5.1: Where survey participants first heard about the Access programme



Base= 66 responses Source: Participant survey

5.15 As Figure 5.2 below indicates, 64 of the 68 survey respondents reported that they were active jobseekers immediately prior to their involvement with the Access programme. Of the four that reported they were not active jobseekers, respondents reported they were looking after family members/caring (n=1), suffering from a temporary health problem or injury (n=1), and suffering from long-term ill health problems/disability (n=1).

Figure 5.2: Proportion of survey respondents who were active jobseekers prior to involvement in the Access programme



Base= 68 responses Source: Participant survey

5.16 As would be expected, when deciding whether to refer clients to Access, programme eligibility criteria was the most frequently cited factor that Careers Wales advisers considered. The first consideration in this area was the eligibility of participants for ESF skills and employability programmes. The data available to the evaluation team, however, means that it has not been possible to assess the efficacy of this signposting process.

5.17 As acknowledged above, while skills and qualifications barriers are prevalent in this cohort, they are not the only barriers that clients face. As such, most advisers considering recommending or suggesting Access to clients would first identify whether training will address their primary barrier. A lack of motivation and other support barriers were highlighted as being the primary factors that would make a client unsuitable for Access:

'[A sign that someone isn't suitable is] if they don't take ownership, because they won't last on the course.' (Careers Wales Adviser interview, 2019)

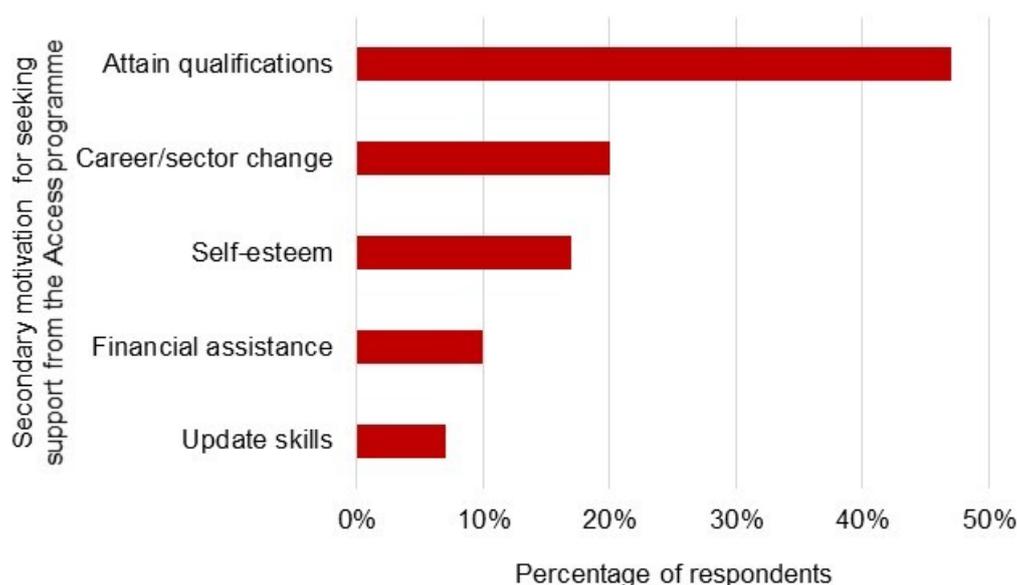
5.18 Most Careers Wales advisers interviewed reported that they tended to be more wary of referring those who were already aware of Access. Although many such individuals ultimately received support from the programme, many advisers reported that they were particularly keen to establish individuals' motivations and ensure that their expectations were realistic before providing a referral. The reason given for this is that such individuals sometimes have unrealistic expectations of

what the programme could achieve for them, or alternatively they have not been given a choice by Jobcentre Plus to discuss the Access programme with Careers Wales.

Motivation for Participation

5.19 For all who engaged with participant in-depth interviews (30), moving into employment was the primary motivation for participation in the Access programme. However, a range of secondary motivations were also discussed. Qualitative data relating to participant motivation was coded thematically, and as demonstrated by Figure 5.3 attaining qualifications was the most commonly identified secondary motivation for participation in the Access programme.

Figure 5.3: Secondary motivations for engaging with the programme



Base= 30 Source: In-depth participant interviews

5.20 For most participants, the motivation to gain skills and qualifications, with the expectation that these skills would lead to a job, was also tied to other motivations, for example the desire to break into a different sector or change career paths as well as improve self-esteem and confidence.

5.21 *'I needed to do something as I had been out of work for nine months and If I didn't get the skills employers were after I would end up stuck in the house and miserable. If I completed this course and got the qualification it would boost my chances of getting a job and improve my confidence as I would be doing something worthwhile with my time.'* (Participant in-depth interview, 2019)

5.22 *'Whilst it was important to get the qualification that would let me get a job it was also about my own personal development. The qualification meant that I was valuable again and could be a worthwhile asset, whereas before I was feeling discarded. Also, by getting this qualification and a quality manager job I was able to make a real difference in the workplace in terms of worker safety and company productivity.'* (Participant in-depth interview, 2019)

5.23 The majority of participants (17/30) claimed to have had no doubts about participating in the Access programme before engaging with it. When giving additional information, those reporting they had no doubts often cited the help of Careers Wales advisers as being the reason for this:

'No, I didn't [have any doubts]. My Careers Wales adviser gave me plenty of information on it, so it was all clear.' (Participant in-depth interview, 2019)

'No not at all, the lady was so amazing, filling out forms for me, helping me with everything, she just gave me so much confidence it was unbelievable, confidence to go forward saying I can do my forklift and have then got a chance to get back into work, it was just brilliant.' (Participant in-depth interview, 2019)

5.24 For those whom had concerns, these typically related to their own surprise that they were eligible (three participants), uncertainty about what they would be able to do during the programme (three participants), transport (one participant), and a lack of information about the programme (one participant):

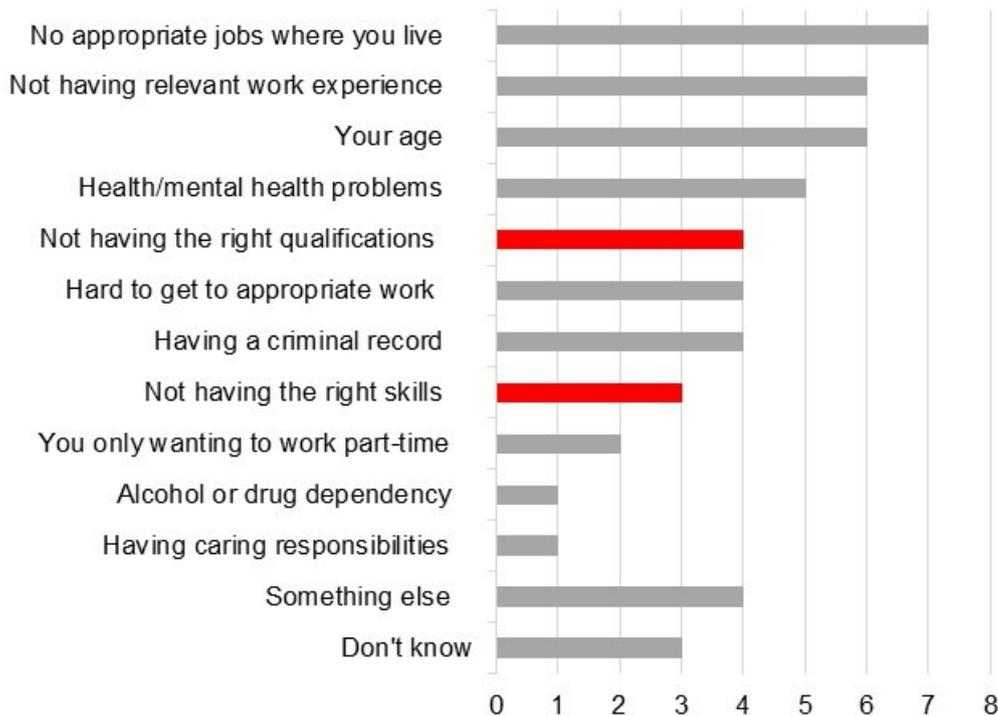
'Until I actually started, I was concerned that I wouldn't be eligible. I suppose it's like anything, where you think it's too good to be true until you have it in your hands.' (Participant in-depth interview, 2019)

'[I had doubts because] nobody seemed to explain anything about the courses and what I would be doing. They just wanted me to fill in the paperwork and get it done.' (Participant in-depth interview, 2019)

Suitability of the Intervention

5.25 Careers Wales advisers reported that, when referring participants to the Access programme, skills and qualifications were the primary barrier to accessing the labour market. It is important, however, to acknowledge that many the survey and in-depth interview respondents reported that they faced other barriers in addition to skills and qualifications. As indicated by Figure 5.4, a range of barriers were identified by participants in the in-depth interviews.

Figure 5.4: Participants' identification of barriers to entering employment



Base: 30 (N.B. multiple selections permitted)
Source: In-depth participant interviews

5.26 As indicated by Figure 5.4, health and mental health problems were identified by some participants as a barrier to finding employment. In-depth interviews indicated that some participants perceived their mental health to have worsened as a result of being out of work for a prolonged period. In these instances, participants suggested that sustained unemployment was thereby affecting their confidence and subjective wellbeing.

'I had been made redundant and had been looking for work for around nine months before going on the Access course. I was starting to get very depressed.'
(Participant in-depth interview, 2019)

'It was my physical pain really, and probably mental attitude. I went from a successful business to getting no money, to a degree I was suffering from depression.' (Participant in-depth interview, 2019)

5.27 Another commonly reported barrier was the age of participants. Several participants suggested that their age, and their proximity to retirement age, made it difficult for them to gain employment. One interviewee said:

'People would be interested until they knew my date of birth and then they would change their tune.' (Participant in-depth interview, 2019)

- 5.28 While in many cases outcomes for these participants suggest that Access was an appropriate intervention, it may be that in other cases, for instance where survey participants reported health problems (n=5) or alcohol or drug dependency (n=1) as a significant barrier to entering the labour market, Access was not the correct intervention for these participants, or at least this was not the only support they should have been accessing.
- 5.29 Regardless, there may be merit in exploring whether the skills and qualifications support available through the Access programme can function as part of a broader package of support that identifies other barriers to employment besides skills and employability.

Careers Wales Support for Participants

- 5.30 A significant finding of this evaluation is that Careers Wales have the key role in the delivery of Access. Ensuring a high-quality service from Careers Wales is therefore critical to the success of the programme.
- 5.31 Interviews with Careers Wales advisers indicate that when they work with individuals, they have framed the intervention in terms of just one step in a longer journey towards employment. Advisers identified this as important to establish motivation before referring participants, useful in managing participants' expectations, and helpful for starting conversations about other steps that need to be made to move into employment.

'Part of the process of referring to Access is looking at jobs in each sector/the sector their qualification might relate to. This frames it as a longer process in the mind of a participant. They know what the labour market in the sector is after training.' (Careers Wales Adviser interview, 2019)

- 5.32 Careers Wales advisers expressed a view that while the courses funded through Access have made programme participants more employable, these qualifications alone are not guaranteed to help individuals move into employment. Other factors such as the ability to find appropriate job opportunities in the area, interview skills, and luck are also significant factors in determining whether the intervention will result in successful employment outcomes. While these other factors are important, advisers reported that the support available through Access is complementary to the other support and guidance they provide.

5.33 A key part of Careers Wales’ role in the delivery of the Access programme is the collection of labour market information. As part of the stakeholder interviews, advisers were asked about how they compile labour market information to help clients make informed decisions. This information is collected both formally and informally, including through close interactions with local employers and monitoring job adverts in the local area. Advisers can access a wide range of labour market information from internal sources such as online job trends, internal meetings and emails, as well as from employment engagement advisers. While all advisers reported using these resources, most also stated that they would supplement them with insight from more informal sources. News articles were mentioned alongside knowledge provided by the clients themselves.

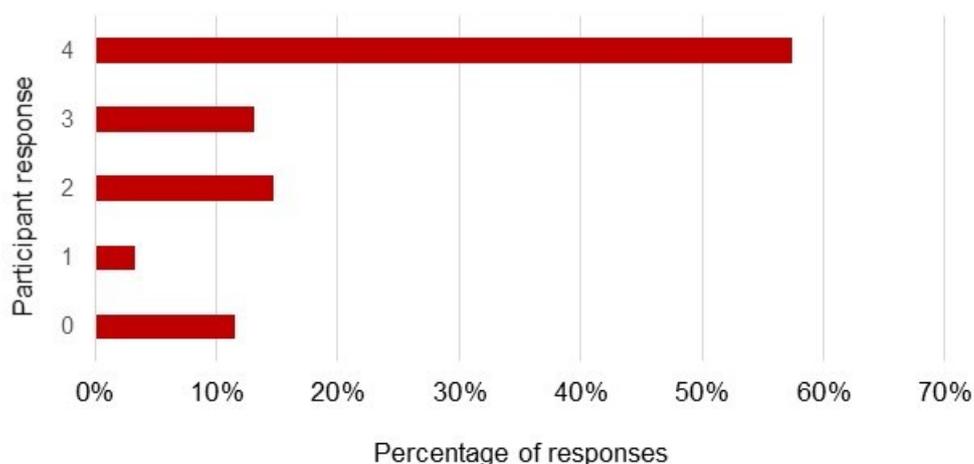
Table 5.1: Sources of labour market information for Careers Wales advisers

Category	Method	N
Careers Wales	Careers Wales job trends	4
	Employment engagement advisers	2
	Other Careers Wales sources, e.g. Colleagues, area reports	4
Jobcentre	Jobcentre employer liaison officers	1
	Jobcentre vacancies	1
Local employment research	Job sites / searches	3
	Local job market	1
Other	News / online articles	3
	Radio	1
	Clients	3

Source: Careers Wales adviser interviews

5.34 Participants were broadly positive about Careers Wales’ involvement in the delivery of the Access programme. In particular, participants were positive about the role of Careers Wales advisers in helping select appropriate courses and participant survey data suggests that Careers Wales advisers play a significant role in influencing decisions about what course to take. This response does not differ significantly compared to employment outcomes.

Figure 5.5: How important was your Careers Wales adviser's advice when choosing which course to take? Please rate on a scale of 0-4, where 4 is very important, and 0 is not at all important



Base=61 Source: Participant survey

5.35 This suggests that the information and guidance provided by Careers Wales advisers is an important part of the process by which Access participants are selecting courses.

5.36 Qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with participants indicates a perception that the consultation was client-led, with the individual's needs and personal development at the heart of the process.

'Careers Wales went through my CV and highlighted my skills and which courses were relevant to me. They helped me find information about each course and helped me decide which one suited me best.' (In-depth participant interview, 2019)

5.37 Careers Wales advisers suggested options for courses that were aligned with clients' career aspirations; however, these were not always required as demonstrated by the following responses:

'I went to them being aware of which direction I wanted to go in and I knew what I was after in terms of what qualifications I needed. I explained that to the person I spoke to at Careers Wales and because I was so focused and clear on what I needed they didn't really need to offer me any advice.' (In-depth participant interview, 2019)

'My Careers Wales adviser had no idea whatsoever about the training I needed. I organised it, I told him what was needed, who could do it, so I advised him and he said I have never talked to a pilot before about doing this, but he was very good, very helpful and supportive.' (In-depth participant interview, 2019)

5.38 This is consistent with the approach taken by Careers Wales throughout, making the individual the centre of the process. In only one case did a participant report that the advice provided by the Careers Wales adviser with whom they had consulted was unhelpful:

'I did a six-day course locally that would give me the qualification that I needed to operate plant machinery. However, what I really needed was a rail track safety licence as there are far more jobs in this area, but the Careers Wales adviser didn't tell me about this.' (In-depth participant interview, 2019)

Specific Aspects of Support Provided by the Access Programme

5.39 Both programme monitoring data and participant survey data indicate that Vocational Training Support was the most used aspect of the support available through Access. As Table 4.2 shows, this was represented in the sample, with 61 respondents indicating that they received Vocational Training Support.

Table 5.2: Strands of support used by participants

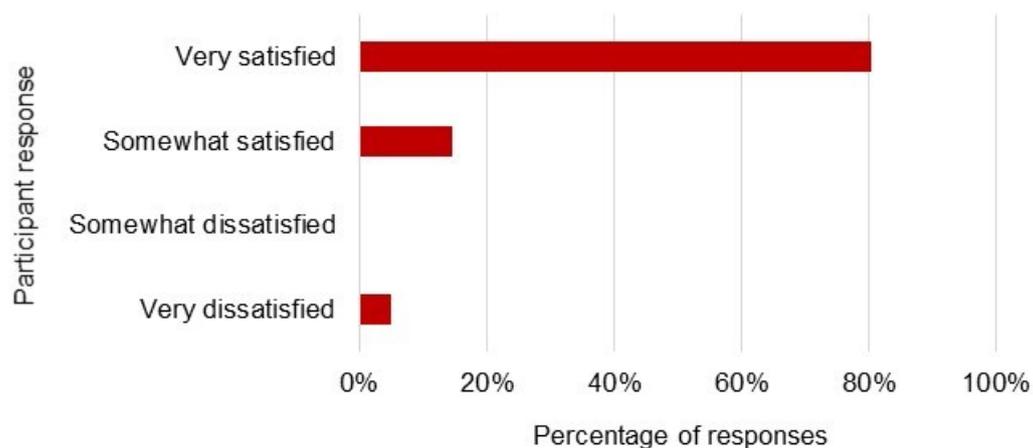
	Vocational Training Support	Employer Recruitment Support	Employer Training Support
Total successful applications (base= 1,574)	1531	36	7
Total unsuccessful applications (base= 16)	16	0	0
Total applications in the sample (base= 68)	61	2	5

Sources: Project monitoring data and survey sample

Vocational Training Support

5.40 Survey respondents were generally happy with the support received through the vocational training course they received. As demonstrated by Figure 4.5, 80% (49) of the respondents reported that they were 'very satisfied' with the support they had received through Access Vocational Training Support.

Figure 5.6: Participant satisfaction with training provided by Access Vocational Training Support



Base= 61 responses Source: Participant survey

5.41 In-depth interviews with participants indicate that one of the main reasons why they were satisfied with the Vocational Training Support is that the delivery model provided the freedom to choose courses:

'I did the health and safety management course. It was available locally with a training provider that I knew had a good reputation. It was a five-day course and then there was an exam to sit at the end of the course. This was the most convenient course for me as it gave me the qualification that I needed, was convenient in terms of location and could be completed quickly.' (In-depth participant interview, 2019)

5.42 Conversely, a source of frustration for some participants was the programme's restrictions as they were unable to take their preferred courses. Some participants had wanted to take online courses, but these were not approved, and in other cases courses exceeded the maximum value of the course that the programme would fund:

'I considered doing Prince 2, but it was very expensive, and the Careers Wales budget couldn't cover it.' (In-depth participant interview, 2019)

'I think the courses need to be more flexible in the way they are delivered and allow more home learning.' (In-depth participant interview, 2019)

Employer Recruitment Support

- 5.43 Programme monitoring data and interviews with the Welsh Government core team indicate that Employer Recruitment Support has been used less than was initially anticipated.
- 5.44 Interviews with companies in receipt of support indicate that the majority of recipients are SMEs and microbusinesses. However, it should be recognised that as only five interviews were carried out, the data available for the evaluation in this area is limited. What is more, the evaluation did not engage with businesses that have not made use of the Access programme, so it is difficult to assess potential barriers faced by businesses in accessing and using the fund.
- 5.45 Participant survey data indicates that some recipients of Vocational Training Support who have moved into employment did not make use of the Employer Recruitment Support because they did not think it was necessary. This is a positive finding because it indicates reduced deadweight. A small number reported that their employer did not want/need the support. Additionally, a small number (n= 7) of Access Vocational Training Support recipients who found employment reported that they were not aware that they were eligible for Employer Recruitment Support.
- 5.46 While the Careers Wales advisers interviewed during the evaluation reported that they advised participants about all of the support available, participant interviews indicate that not all participants were aware of the availability of Employer Recruitment Support. Similarly, a common theme that emerged from interviews with supported businesses is that in general awareness of this support is low. Low uptake and awareness of this support is not necessarily a negative aspect of the programme: if the Employer Recruitment Support is not required to help participants move into employment, it should not be used. However, it is not possible to say how many more employment outcomes would have been created if awareness and uptake of the Employer Recruitment Support and Employer Training Support was higher.
- 5.47 Interviews with businesses that have made use of Employer Training Support suggest that Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus have been playing a brokerage role for some businesses. Some businesses interviewed reported that they approached Careers Wales for help with recruiting appropriately skilled people. In response to this, Careers Wales put them in touch with individuals who had done

relevant training courses with support from Access. In other cases, Jobcentre Plus appears to have contacted businesses to inform them that they have a candidate with a particular skillset and is eligible for a wage subsidy through Employer Recruitment Support. The availability of this kind of support appears to vary regionally depending on the Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus approach taken in each area.

- 5.48 Given the apparent strength of this brokerage function where it has been employed, it would potentially be of value to increase Business Wales' involvement in the programme in order to provide the same kind of wrap-around support that Careers Wales has provided for Vocational Training Support. Promoting the programme to businesses and helping them to make contact with Access participants who have recently completed relevant qualifications could add value to the programme, as long as employment outcomes as a result of this did not result in deadweight.

Employer Training Support

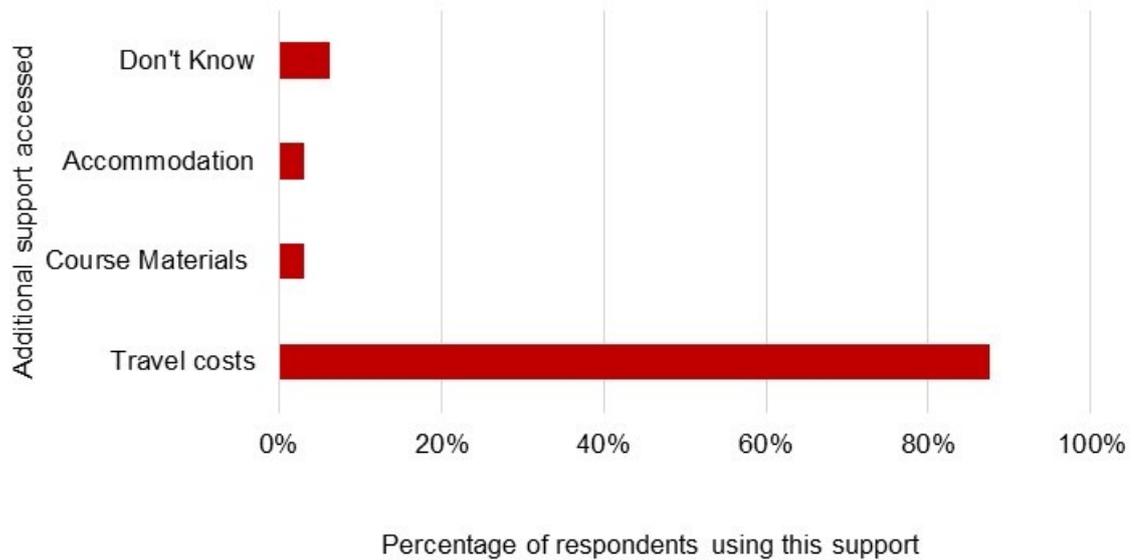
- 5.49 Based on the available evidence, there does not appear to be significant additionality as a result of the Employer Training Support aspect of the support. All of the individuals and businesses who used the support reported that this was not a significant factor in creating employment. There was, however, limited additionality from this support, with training enabling employees to operate on a higher level or adapt more quickly to the new role. There is a potential that the training produces more sustainable employment for participants. However, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions based on the limited evidence available.
- 5.50 A small number of participants reported using Employer Recruitment Support without receiving Employer Training Support. The programme would not permit Employer Training Support to be used without first using Employer Recruitment Support. These responses suggest that survey respondents were not entirely aware of what form of support they had received.

Extra Support

- 5.51 In addition to the main strands of support available through the Access programme, participants were able to access an additional fund to overcome obstacles to undertaking training. Programme monitoring data indicates that this fund has been accessed 1159 times. Survey participants were asked about this

fund, with 32 of the 68 respondents reporting that they had accessed it. As Figure 5.7 indicates, in the majority of cases (28/32) it was used to pay for transport costs.

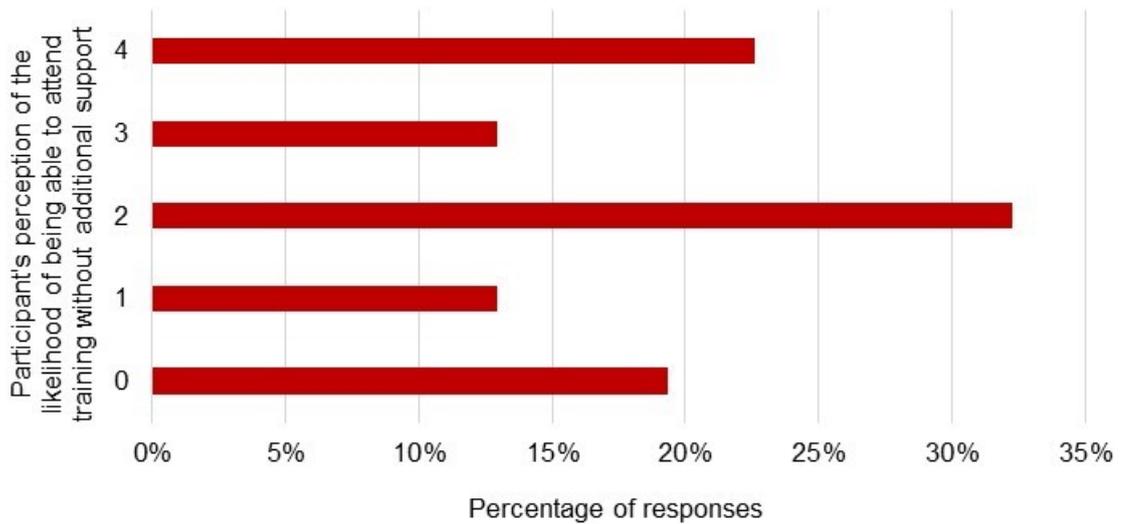
Figure 5.7: Use of additional support by survey participants



Base: 30 responses Source: Participant survey

5.52 Figure 5.8 shows that participants gave a mixed response as to how far this support had enabled them to take up the training. Based on this evidence, it can be said that while the extra support has made training accessible to some Access participants, in other cases there is likely to be deadweight, with participants who would otherwise have attended training anyway accessing extra support.

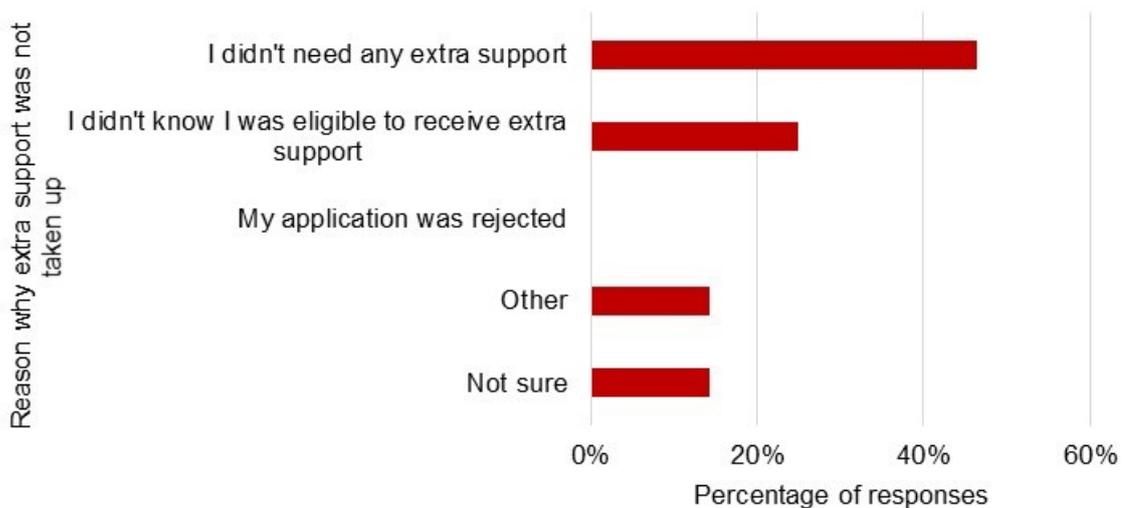
Figure 5.8: Impact of extra support on barriers to accessing training



Base: 32 Source: Participant survey - If you hadn't received this extra support, how likely is it that you would have been able to attend the training course? Please rate on a scale of 0-4, where 0 is not at all likely, and 4 is very likely

5.53 Figure 5.9 below suggests that where participants didn't access the extra support, this was chiefly because they felt it was unnecessary which, again, is positive if the positive outcome occurred without the need for this additional support. Some participants reported that they were unaware of the availability of the support. It is not clear whether this has proved a barrier to accessing support as the evaluation did not engage with individuals who consulted with Careers Wales about the Access programme and subsequently did not take up the support.

Figure 5.9: Reasons why extra support was not taken up



Base: 28 Source: Participant survey

6. Outcome & Impact Evaluation Findings

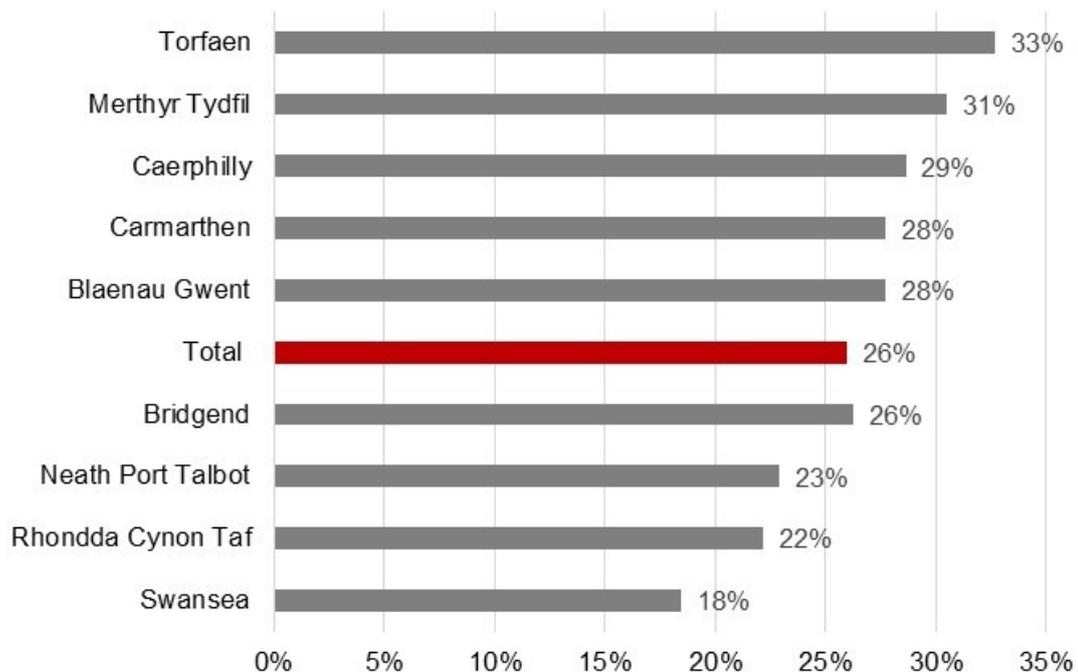
Summary of Findings:

- 6.1 Data from Careers Wales indicates positive employment outcomes for 359 individuals from 1400 applicants. It is not possible to calculate what proportion of the intervention group would have found employment anyway and the robustness of outcomes data collected is not clear.
- 6.2 While it has not been possible to produce a counterfactual analysis of outcome data, the data collected in the participant survey and in-depth interviews is indicative of a perception that there has been some additionality for those individuals who have found employment.
- 6.3 Vocational Training Support, which accounts for a significant majority of all programme activity, is perceived to be the mechanism that has had the greatest impact on outcomes. Interviews with Careers Wales advisers and participants suggest that the qualifications achieved by individuals have helped these individuals to meet the minimum requirements of jobs. In other instances, the skills (both hard skills and soft skills) developed through participation have been important in helping individuals move into employment.
- 6.4 There is some evidence that in instances where there have not been successful employment outcomes for participants, there have been outcomes which have moved individuals closer to employment than they otherwise would have been. The participant survey and in-depth participant interviews highlight impacts on confidence even in situations where successful employment outcomes have not been achieved.
- 6.5 While Employer Recruitment Support and Employer Training Support have been taken up less frequently than had originally been anticipated, there is some evidence that these elements have produced additionality. It is also evident that individual businesses have recruited earlier or in greater numbers than they otherwise would have done. At the same time, there is likely to be some deadweight as a result of these aspects of the intervention.

Outcomes for Supported Individuals

- 6.6 Data from Careers Wales indicates positive employment outcomes for 359 individuals from 1400 applicants, representing 26% of all applicants. However, the robustness of the outcomes data is unclear and it has not been possible to definitively calculate how many of these outcomes would not have happened without support from the Access programme.
- 6.7 When disaggregated by local authority, as in Figure 5.1 below, there is substantial variation between areas, ranging from 33% of participants experiencing positive outcomes in Torfaen to 18% of participants in Swansea.

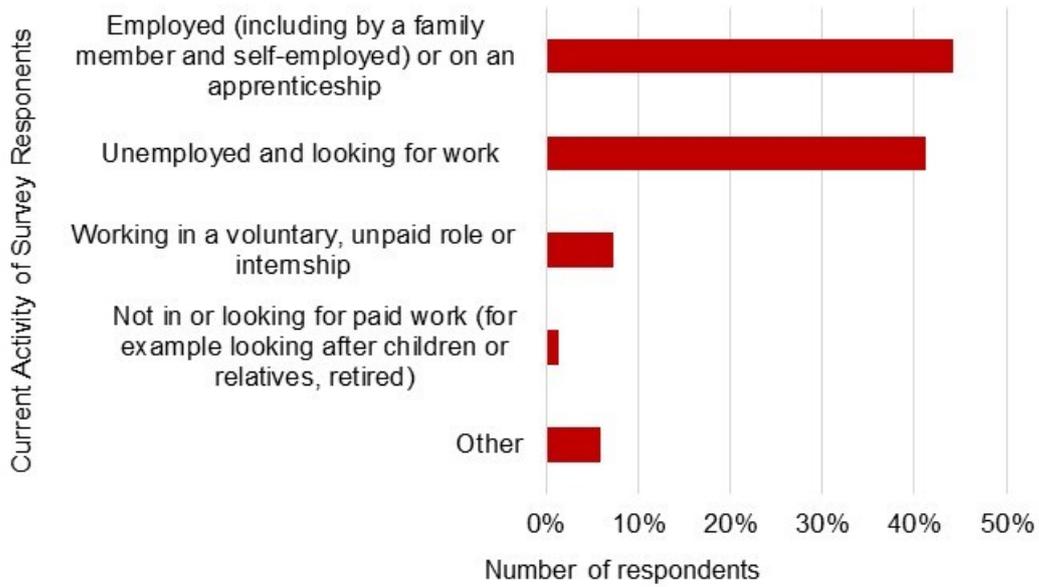
Figure 6.1: Percentage of participants with positive outcomes disaggregated by local authority



Base= 1400 total outcomes and 359 successful outcomes

- 6.8 Within the participant survey sample, 30 participants reported currently being employed, 28 participants were unemployed and looking for work, and five respondents reported working in a voluntary, unpaid role or internship.

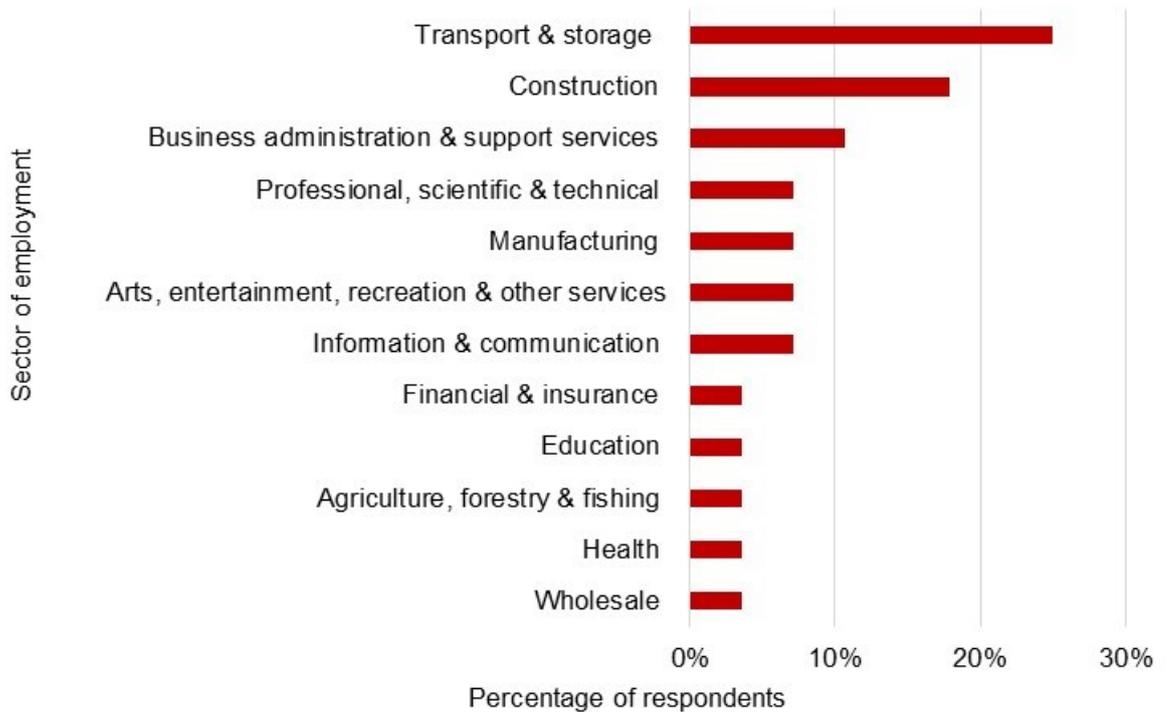
Figure 6.2: Current activities of survey respondents



Base= 68 respondents Source: Participant survey

6.9 Those who reported being in employment were asked about the sector of employment into which they had moved. These results are shown in Figure 6.3.

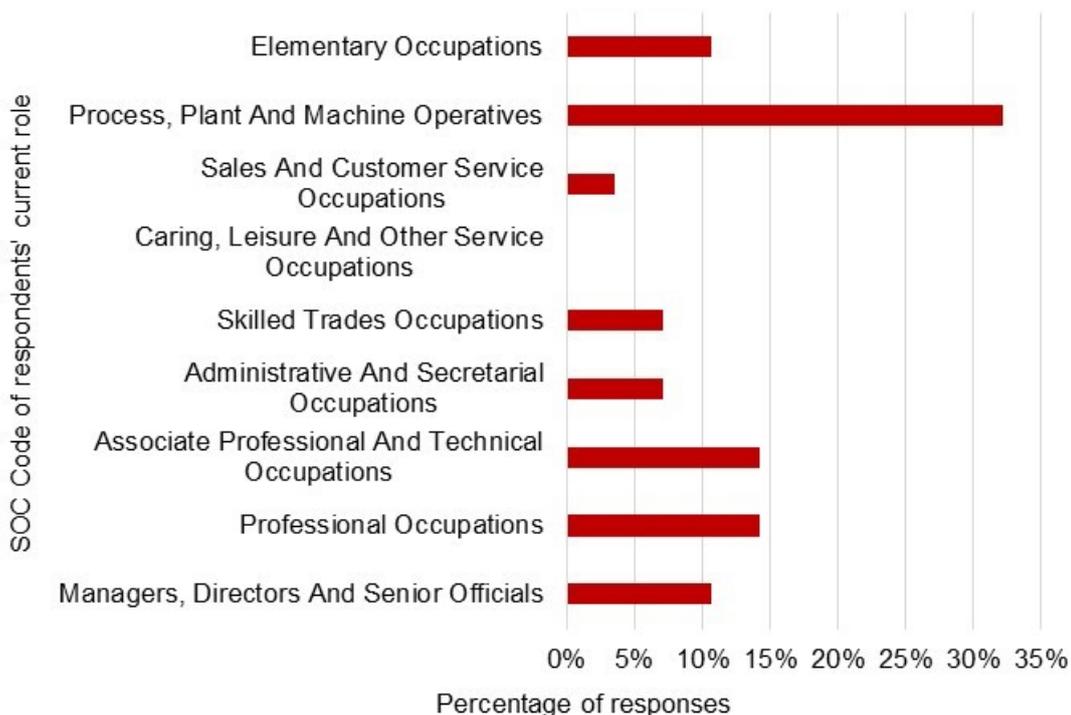
Figure 6.3: Sector of employment for survey participants



Base=28 Source: Participant survey

6.10 Survey data indicates that participants have moved into a range of job roles. Job titles have been coded by Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes. The data indicates that Process, Plant and Machine Operatives was the most common category reported (n= 9), although 'Managers, Directors and Senior Officials' (n= 3) and Professional Occupations (n= 4) also appeared in the sample. This suggests that Access is not only being used by individuals looking to move into low-wage work but also by some people who move into higher-level professions.

Figure 6.4: SOC codes for current roles of survey participants



Base= 28 responses Source: Participant survey

The Additionality of the Intervention

6.11 An important part of evaluating the Access programme is assessing the additionality of the intervention. According to H.M. Treasury's Green Book, additionality is defined to the impacts arising from an intervention that would not have occurred in the absence of the intervention, or:

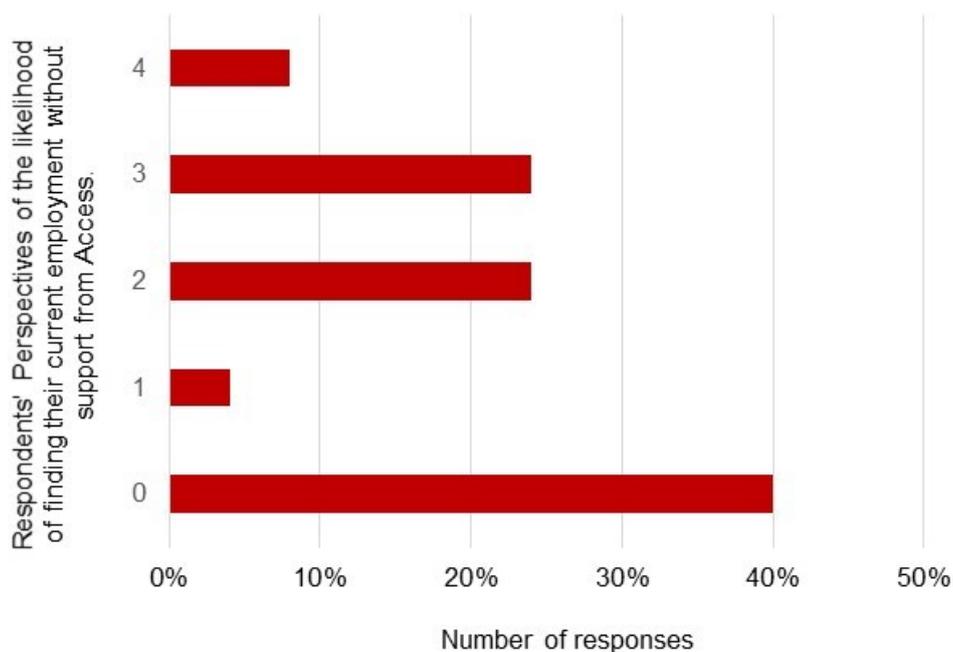
*'The extent to which activity takes place at all, on a larger scale, earlier or within a specific designated area or target group as a result of the intervention.'*²²

²²[The green book](#)

- 6.12 Due to the timeframe of the evaluation and the availability of longitudinal monitoring data, this evaluation has not developed a robust counterfactual approach to outcomes data. In its place, qualitative data from participants and businesses has been employed in order to provide the counterfactual aspect of the evaluation. Although this approach can provide insight into the perceived impact of the support for participants, it will not produce the same robust insight as a counterfactual approach based on outcomes data.
- 6.13 The participant survey, in-depth participant interviews and interviews with Careers Wales advisers all indicate that the intervention provides some additionality. At the same time, the small nature of the sample means that the conclusions drawn from the qualitative data has to be treated with caution.
- 6.14 In the participant survey, those who reported being in employment were asked about the impact of the support available through Access on their current employment. As Figure 6.5 indicates, participants had mixed perceptions about the impact of the intervention on their employment outcomes.

Figure 6.5: Perceptions of additionality for the intervention

How likely is it that you would be in this job if you hadn't received support through the Access programme? Please rate on a scale of 0-4, where 4 is very likely and 0 is not at all likely



Base= 25 responses Source: Participant survey

Mechanisms of Change

- 6.15 Of these aspects of support, Vocational Training Support is the aspect of support perceived to have made the most significant difference to outcomes for individuals. This was a particularly strong theme in the interviews with Careers Wales advisers, who suggested that not having the requisite qualifications was a barrier to meeting the minimum requirements for jobs or many Access participants:

“[Vocational Training Support] is a very important part of the package. One of the reasons it works quite well is that in so many sectors, they have introduced so many skills and qualifications barriers to getting into jobs.” (Careers Wales Adviser interview, 2019)

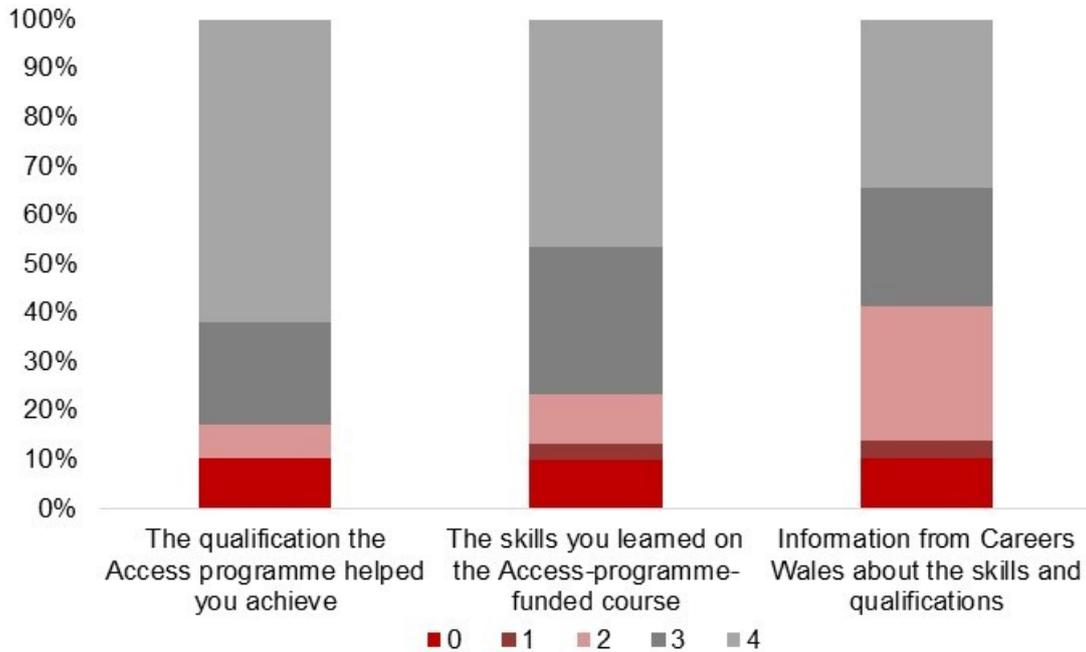
- 6.16 This can even be the case for individuals who have recent work experience in the relevant sector:

‘Labour market requirements are changing so regularly, for some people five months unemployment means they’re out of date with their skills. [Access is] matching up to the needs of this group.’ (Careers Wales Adviser interview, 2019)

- 6.17 These findings were replicated in participant interviews. As suggested by Figure 6.6 below, the participant survey data displays a perception that the qualifications that participants financed through Access played a significant role in helping them to find employment. This was more significant than both the skills gained through the intervention and the advice and guidance from Careers Wales advisers.

Figure 6.6: Participant perceptions of the impact of VTS on employment outcomes

How much, if at all, do you think the following things have contributed to you finding employment? Please rate on a scale of 0-4, where 4 is very much and 0 is not at all



Base=30 responses Source: Participant survey

6.18 In-depth interviews indicated a perception that it was important for jobseekers to evidence their skills and experience with up-to-date qualifications. Equally, 11 of the 14 individuals supported by the programme who reported that they were currently in employment identified that they had used the skills they had learned on the Access-funded course in their current employment. Other participants identified both the skills and qualifications gained through the Access-funded course as essential to their current employment:

'I had been told by employers that they couldn't give me the job despite my experience working in admin for 20 years as I had no experience of using SAGE software and [they] didn't have the time or money to train me to use it.' (In-depth participant interview, 2019)

6.19 As Vocational Training Support was the most frequently used aspect of support, accounting for around 90% of programme activity, it is not a surprising finding that this is perceived to be the primary driver of change. At the same time, there is also

evidence that the other support available through Access has had an impact on programme participants.

- 6.20 Careers Wales advisers suggested that the importance of the advice and guidance received lies in helping recipients of support to place the training in context. By having guidance at the start of the intervention, Careers Wales advisers argued that it frames the support that follows, allowing clients to access the most relevant support and use it to its full potential. It also helps participants to put the training to best use once they have finished the course. One Careers Wales adviser suggested:

'I think that [advice and guidance] has got to be the most important part, if that's not covered properly, I don't think the programme is being use the best way. It's giving people that power to make those decisions themselves.' (Careers Wales Adviser interview, 2019)

Soft Outcomes

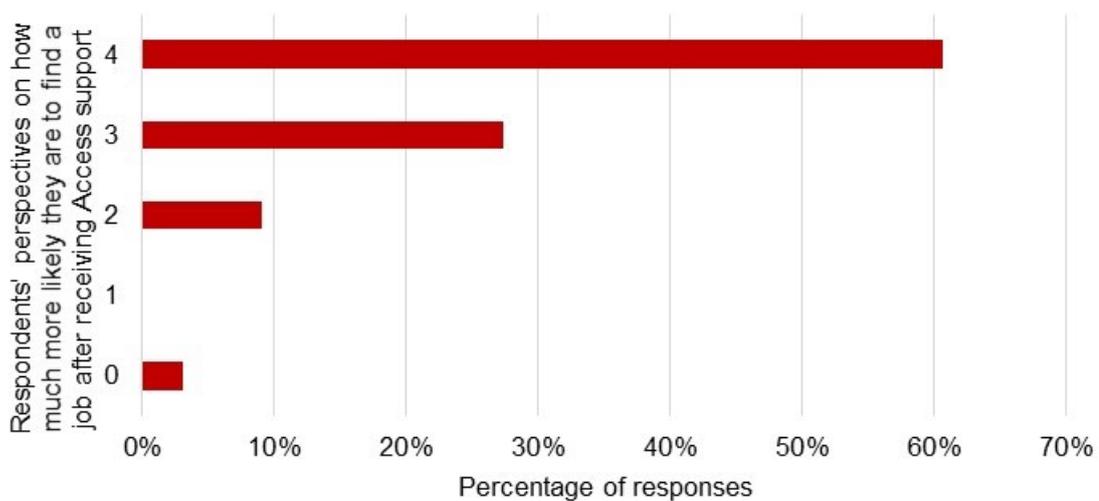
- 6.21 Careers Wales stress that it is important to understand the impact of the Access Vocational Training Support in the context of a longer journey towards employment. As shown by project monitoring and the participant survey, there are a significant number of individuals for whom Access support does not produce short-term employment outcomes. It is important to examine the additionality of the intervention for individuals who have not moved into employment following the support they have received.
- 6.22 There is some evidence of additionality even for individuals who have not secured employment outcomes as a consequence of the intervention. During the in-depth interviews, participants who had not found employment were asked about the benefits of the course; all of the 16 participants who completed in-depth interviews and reported that they were not in work identified benefits from participation. This benefit was typically identified as having gained a qualification which was required for the career they wanted to pursue and/or developed soft skills, particularly confidence and self-esteem, which have led to a feeling that participants are more employable.
- 6.23 Interviews with Careers Wales advisers were indicative of a perception that Access is changing behaviour among participants, encouraging them to think

holistically and proactively about their journey into employment. For Careers Wales advisers, this is the key added value of their involvement in the programme.

6.24 Regardless of whether or not participants had gained employment post-participation in the Access programme, all in-depth interview respondents and a significant majority of survey participants reported that the programme was beneficial. As part of the survey, respondents were asked how much more likely they were to find employment after taking a training course with support from Access. Respondents were positive about the impact the course has had for them, with a majority of respondents identifying that they were 'much more likely' to find employment as a result of the support.

Figure 6.7: Participant perceptions of the impact of VTS on employment outcomes

In your view, how much more likely are you to find a job now that you have received this support through the Access programme? Please rate on a scale of 0-4, where 4 is much more likely and 0 is not at all more likely



Base= 33 Source: Participant survey

6.25 In follow-up interviews, participants who had not been successful in finding employment were asked about the reasons why they felt they were more employable as a result of the intervention. Participants typically articulated this in terms of having gained a qualification which was required for the career they wanted to pursue or having developed soft skills, particularly confidence and self-esteem, which have led to a perception that they are more employable as a result of the intervention.

'Completing the course made me much more confident and eager to continue my education. I have signed up to do a course that the university is funding to hold a more senior role in NHS administration. By completing both of these qualifications I think I will be much more employable in the future.' (In-depth participant interview, 2019)

'Completing the course and getting the Prince 2 qualification gave me the faith in my own ability and gave me a way to show employers that I had the skills to do a project management job and so I thought it would make more employable.' (In-depth participant interview, 2019)

Additionality of the Intervention for Supported Businesses

- 6.26 Reflecting the fact that Employer Recruitment Support has been used relatively infrequently, with only 36 Employer Recruitment Support applications approved as of June 2019, engagement with employers was a relatively limited part of the evaluation. In-depth interviews were carried out with five employers who have made use of the support. The small size of this sample means that the findings of this section of the report need to be treated with particular caution.
- 6.27 All of the businesses that took part in the in-depth interviews are SMEs or micro-businesses.²³ As the evaluation has not included businesses that would have been eligible for support through Access but did not make use of it, it is not possible to ascertain the extent to which the intervention has reached businesses that would have created jobs through the intervention had they been aware of it.
- 6.28 Based on the interviews with employers that did make use of the support, there is some limited evidence of additionality due to the intervention. Specifically, some employers reported recruiting sooner, or in greater numbers, due to the availability of support through Access. The reason for this was that the Access Employer Recruitment Support has had an impact by reducing the initial risk of employing staff.
- 6.29 In this sense, there is some additionality in giving supported businesses the confidence to recruit earlier or in greater numbers than they would otherwise have done so. Two employers reported that they had been able to recruit where

²³ Here, an SME is- in accordance with EU Recommendation 2003/361- defined as a business with fewer than 250 employees, and a micro-business is defined as an enterprise with fewer than 10 employees and an annual turnover below €2m.

otherwise they might not have done, something that has had longer-term benefits for the business.

‘The finance side of it was key for us as a business as it took some of the pressure off, it also gave us that breathing space. We have been able to grow quite a bit after the new employees joined as it meant that more CCTV could be monitored. It has been very positive.’ (Supported business interview, 2019)

- 6.30 At the same time, it is likely that there is some deadweight from the intervention. The majority of those who were interviewed (three) reported that they would definitely have recruited anyway without the availability of support through Access. No employer reported turning down other qualified candidates as a result of the support available through Access, although in some cases, where candidates were brought to the attention of employers by other agencies, recruitment processes were not started where otherwise they would have been. Overall, the available evidence suggests that there is some deadweight from the Employer Recruitment Support aspect of the intervention.
- 6.31 Employers reported that where Careers Wales or Jobcentre Plus had played a brokerage function, this had eased recruitment significantly. This is likely linked to the fact that for SMEs and micro-businesses, recruitment is a greater burden than larger firms with dedicated recruitment functions. Interviews with supported businesses reported that the process was generally led by businesses contacting Careers Wales about the need to recruit certain skills. In some cases, businesses were referred to Careers Wales to talk about Access by Jobcentre Plus.
- 6.32 Interviews with supported businesses indicate that, where used, Employer Training Support has provided added value, allowing recipients to contribute at a higher level than they would otherwise be able to. However, other employers reported that they were unaware of the availability of Employer Training Support, and no employer reported that they would have been unwilling to employ a candidate without the availability of this support. Although these findings are based only on a small sample of interviews, based on the available evidence, it is likely that there has been some deadweight from the Employer Training Support element of the intervention.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 7.1 This section draws on all the evidence presented throughout evaluation report in order to conclude on the achievements of the Access programme between October 2017 and March 2019.

Summary of conclusions

- 7.2 Given the relatively small samples used as part of this evaluation, and the absence of robust outcomes data which would allow for longitudinal monitoring of participants, this evaluation can only draw limited conclusions. Likewise, the conclusions that have been drawn here have to be treated with caution. The process evaluation is indicative of a widespread perception that the programme is well run. Careers Wales' involvement in the programme is a major asset to programme delivery. Stakeholder interviews demonstrate a perception that Careers Wales' involvement has added value to the programme by providing local labour market information and a point of contact for applicants. Similarly, the availability of Access support is perceived to add value to what Careers Wales is capable of offering to clients.
- 7.3 There is some evidence that the programme has had an impact on employment outcomes for participants. However, this assessment is based on qualitative data collected from participants, Careers Wales advisers, and businesses, and has not included long-term longitudinal monitoring or a robust counterfactual based on outcomes.
- 7.4 With regards to programme aims, specifically supporting the wider Welsh Government commitment to reshape employability support for individuals who are almost job ready by helping them gain skills and experience which would lead to individuals gaining and maintaining sustainable employment, it can be concluded that the Access programme has contributed to this aim; however, it has not been possible to quantify exactly what the contribution has been.
- 7.5 Likewise, there is evidence that the programme has contributed to Welsh Government targets to help 7,000 people move into work in the Valleys Taskforce area. Again, it has not been possible to quantify to what extent the programme has contributed to this target.

Process Evaluation

- 7.6 The evaluation has found that there is a general perception among participants and key stakeholders that the delivery of the programme has been successful. The design of the programme, drawing on the model used to deliver ReAct, is perceived to have eased its implementation.
- 7.7 Multi-agency delivery between Welsh Government and Careers Wales has been a key reason for the success of the programme. Careers Wales adds value to the programme by acting as a point of contact for individuals and businesses in relation to the programme. Likewise, the local labour market information provided by Careers Wales has provided significant added value, providing equipping participants with advice and guidance tailored to local labour market conditions. There is also a perception that the programme has added value to Careers Wales' offer, particularly through driving engagement with the advice and guidance they provided.
- 7.8 Careers Wales involvement also adds value to the programme by filtering out unsuitable applications at an early stage. This is likely to reduce the management and administration burden on Welsh Government caused by dealing with unsuitable or ineligible applications.
- 7.9 Participants were generally satisfied with the delivery of the programme, although some issues were raised in the participant survey around eligibility criteria for courses. These concerns were focused on courses that were not funded by the programme, either because they were too expensive or delivered online.

Impact Evaluation

- 7.10 As part of the evaluation, an assessment of the additionality of the intervention has been attempted. Project monitoring data indicates positive outcomes for 359 individuals out of 1400 programme applicants.
- 7.11 Although a robust counterfactual assessment of participant outcomes was not possible within this evaluation due to time constraints and the availability of data, participant interviews provide some evidence of a perception that the support available to participants has had additionality.

- 7.12 Interviews with participants and Careers Wales advisers suggest a perception that Vocational Training Support, which has accounted for roughly 90% of programme activity, has had the most significant impact on employment outcomes for individuals.
- 7.13 Careers Wales advisers stressed that the support available through the Access programme was part of a longer journey into employment. This assessment is supported by evidence from programme monitoring data and the participant survey, which suggests that for many participants the intervention has not led to employment outcomes. After receiving support from Access, individuals have to find and apply for jobs; however, in many cases, the qualification achieved through Access alone has not been sufficient to help the individual find employment.
- 7.14 Although it has not been widely used, there is some evidence that the Employer Recruitment Support and Employer Training Support has helped to drive employment outcomes in some cases. Interviews with businesses also indicate that there is a perceived benefit for businesses as Employer Recruitment Support has reduced the risk of employment for SMEs and microbusinesses and Employer Training Support has allowed the individuals who have been recruited to participate at a higher level than would otherwise have been possible.

Recommendations

- 7.15 **Recommendation One:** Welsh Government should work with Careers Wales and other partners (for example Business Wales) to find ways to publicise the availability of Access-eligible participants to local businesses. Awareness appears to be a key barrier to businesses making use of Employer Recruitment Support, and this might drive increased uptake of this strand of support.
- 7.16 **Recommendation Two:** The Access programme has been hindered by not having a CRM system. While there is no evidence that this has negatively influenced programme participants, this has negatively affected the management and administration of the Access programme. Providing such resources is important for the smooth-running of the programme and also has knock-on impacts for tracking outcomes and carrying out monitoring and evaluation. Welsh Government should look to develop a CRM for any successor programmes.

- 7.17 **Recommendation Three:** Welsh Government should consider putting a more comprehensive monitoring data collection system in place, particularly with regards to tracking outcomes for participants. This would allow for more effective longitudinal analysis of Access participants and the kind of outcomes they have achieved. It would also permit more granular analysis of which courses and qualifications are effective in producing employment outcomes.
- 7.18 **Recommendation Four:** Welsh Government should consider an approach to support that addresses skills and employability barriers alongside other barriers to employment. Even in situations where there have been employment outcomes for participants, survey and in-depth interview data indicates that there are multiple barriers to employment for individuals. Alongside skills and qualifications, there would be value in investigating approaches to providing employability support that address other barriers such as mental health.
- 7.19 **Recommendation Five:** Careers Wales advisers reported that they framed the intervention as a longer-term journey into employment, and participant outcomes indicate that not all participants move into employment as a consequence of the intervention. There would potentially be value in Welsh Government investigating the impact of continued support for participants once the Vocational Training Support aspect of the programme has been completed. This may help ensure that momentum is not lost for participants as they begin using the skills and qualifications they have gained to find employment.

Annexe A: Specific Evaluation Questions

The aims of the evaluation were:

- To consider how the Access programme works in practice, highlighting key successes and areas for development in the context of the new Job Support Wales programme and Working Wales employment advice service.
- To find out to what extent the Access programme is achieving what it set out to achieve, i.e. that supported individuals are improving their employability skills and obtaining sustainable employment.

Based on these specific evaluation questions, more specific research questions were developed to guide the evaluation:

1. How does the Access programme work in practice?
 - a. How do Careers Wales advisers make the decision to recommend the Access programme to participants rather than other provision?
 - b. Are Careers Wales advisers using local labour market knowledge, e.g. to identify potential opportunities or to manage applicants' expectations?
 - c. What is Careers Wales' engagement with potential employers?
 - d. What aspects of support led to employment?
 - e. Is there anything in particular about Valleys Task Force areas that made the programme effective or not effective?
 - f. What is working well?
 - Why?
 - g. What challenges have there been?
 - How have these been addressed?
2. Is the Access programme achieving what it set out to achieve?
 - a. Who is participating in the programme?
 - Against the target group of unemployed adults (18 +) who live in Valleys Task Force areas²⁴ with limited current, relevant and transferable work experience, who are not eligible for European Social Fund interventions, with a reasonable chance of being work ready in six months.
 - b. Who is not participating? Why?
 - Unsuccessful participants
 - What is the difference between Access programme participants and the general job seeking population in the Valleys Task Force area?
 - Are there people who would be otherwise eligible for the support but who aren't taking it up?

²⁴ Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, and Torfaen.

- c. What are the outcomes of the support?
- Training attended
 - Length of course
 - Qualifications gained
 - Employment gained
 - Employment sustained.
- d. What other outcomes are achieved?
- Unexpected/unintended consequences.
- e. Who returns to the programme and why?

Annexe B: Logic Model and Evaluation Framework

Program: Access programme				
Rationale: The provision of short-term vocational training will support individuals that have been unemployed for a substantial period back into employment.				
Aim: The aim of the Access programme is to support adults who are unemployed but relatively close to the labour market to get a job and to stay in work by improving their employability skills.				
INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WG policy context, including <i>Prosperity for All</i> and WG's <i>Valleys Taskforce</i> programme WG staff time WG investment Research findings from previous evaluations of WG employability schemes Partners: Careers Wales and Business Wales 	<p>Partnership working between WG Employability and Skills Division, Business Wales and Careers Wales. Careers Wales monitors/collects labour market information and builds relations with local employers, Jobcentres and regional representatives to identify skills sought within the local economy. Careers Wales advisers recruit eligible participants and help participants identify suitable training courses. Careers Wales advisers develop an action plan for participants. Referral of individuals to other support available, including ReAct, Jobs Growth Wales and the Employability Skills Programme.</p> <p>Provide supported individuals with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A vocational training grant up to a maximum of £1,500 Extra support to help remove barriers to vocational training <p>Provide supported employers with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A contribution towards wages up to a value of £3,000 	Outputs and short-term results	Intermediate results	Long-term results
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants are referred to other appropriate support mechanisms Additional support helps overcome barriers to participation in training Participants enrol on and complete appropriate training courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soft outcomes for participants, e.g. confidence Participants gain skills and qualifications that make them more employable Participants move into sustainable employment Employers employ staff with requisite skills or employ staff when they would not otherwise have done so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower unemployment rates and higher job density in the VTF area Improved GVA in the VTF area due to employment stimulating increased economic inactivity and skills gaps being addressed Reduced social impacts of long-term unemployment
		INTERNAL OUTCOMES for WG and partners		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help with training costs, up to 50% of fees up to £1,000 			
<p><i>Assumptions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of skills is the primary barrier that participants face in terms of entry to the labour market • The type and level of skills support provided to participants is appropriate to overcome the barriers they face • Allowing participants to receive support multiple times will produce effective results • The support received through the Access programme could not be accessed elsewhere • There is no substitution effect or deadweight loss due to the intervention • There is no duplication of other support 		<p><i>External Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broader economic trends affecting employment in the Valleys Taskforce area • The availability of other employment support programmes • Internal changes within partner agencies 		
<p><i>Potential barriers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interest in the support available from individuals and/or businesses • Lack of awareness of the support available amongst individuals and/or businesses • Lack of appropriate, high quality training providers • Poor quality LMI • Poor quality advice from Careers Wales staff 		<p><i>Enablers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with stakeholders, businesses and individuals about the need for support • Research to demonstrate the need for support and appropriateness of the support proposed • Marketing/publicity of the availability of support • Promotion of the programme to potential training providers • Accreditation of training providers • Collation/analysis of high quality LMI • CPD for Careers Wales staff 		

Access Programme Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Question	Evaluation perspective	Metrics	Source
To what extent is the provision of short-term training appropriate to help people at this distance from the labour market to move into employment?	Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings of previous evaluations of Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) Findings of academic literature on ALMPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature review
How does the Access programme fit with other support available? To what extent does it add value to this support?	Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judgement of key stakeholders Judgement of Careers Wales staff judgement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder interviews Careers Wales staff interviews

Activities:

Evaluation Question	Evaluation perspective	Metrics	Source
How effective is partnership working between Welsh Government, Careers Wales and Business Wales?	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welsh Government staff judgement Careers Wales staff judgement Business Wales staff judgement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder interviews
How successful have Careers Wales staff been in identifying and recruiting suitable participants for the programme?	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of participants recruited to the programme Proportion of enquiries that result in applications Number of applications received that are rejected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring data
How effective have Careers Wales staff been in monitoring LMI and skills gaps to identify suitable training courses for applicants that meet regional demand?	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers Wales staff views Employers' judgements Stakeholders' judgements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers Wales staff interviews Employers interviews Stakeholder interviews
How successfully have participants been signposted to other relevant support schemes (particularly ESF schemes)?	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of candidates referred to other schemes Number of candidates referred by other schemes to the Access programme Careers Wales advisers' judgements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme monitoring data Careers Wales staff interviews

Outputs and short-term outcomes:

Evaluation Question	Evaluation perspective	Metrics	Source
How successfully has additional support helped supported individuals overcome barriers to participate in training?	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of participants using additional support Participants' judgements of the effectiveness of support Careers Wales staff judgements of the effectiveness of support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme monitoring data Participant survey Participant in-depth interviews Careers Wales staff interviews
Have supported individuals enrolled on and participated in courses?	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of participants registering for training courses Number of completing training courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme monitoring data
To what extent have participants gained relevant skills/qualifications?	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of qualifications gained Participants' judgements of suitability of skills/qualifications Careers Wales staff judgements regarding the suitability of skills/qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme monitoring data Participant survey Participant in-depth interviews

Intermediate outcomes:

Evaluation Question	Evaluation perspective	Metrics	Source
To what extent has participation in activities – training courses or employment – supported by the Access programme resulted in soft outcomes for participants, e.g. increased confidence?	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of participants citing positive soft outcomes resulting from support²⁵ Participants' judgements of soft outcomes Careers Wales staff judgements of soft outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant survey Participant in-depth interviews Careers Wales staff interviews
How successful has the Access programme been in helping participants move into sustainable employment?	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of participants in employment six months after completing training course Participants' judgements of the Access programme's role in helping move into sustainable employment Careers Wales staff judgements of the Access programme's role in helping participants' move into sustainable employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme monitoring data Participant in-depth interviews Careers Wales interviews

²⁵ Practically, this will be measured by the number of participants citing increased confidence as a result of the support received through the Access programme.

Evaluation Question	Evaluation perspective	Metrics	Source
To what extent has the Access programme helped employers to recruit staff with requisite skills?	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers' judgements of the Access programme's role in helping provide candidates with requisite skills Employers' judgements of the Access programme's role in helping provide staff with higher-quality skills than would usually be available Employers' judgements of whether staff have been employed when they would not otherwise have done so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer in-depth interviews
To what extent have businesses created jobs/employment when they would not otherwise have done so?	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers' judgements of whether staff supported by Access would otherwise have been employed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer in-depth interviews
To what extent have employers provided additional and/or improved training for new staff as a result of the support available through the Access programme?	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers' judgements of whether training available to staff supported by the Access programme would otherwise have been provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer in-depth interviews
How far, and in what ways, has learning from the Access programme informed the development of Working Wales policy and future regional approaches to employability support?	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers Wales advisers' judgements of increased ability for partnership working Stakeholders' judgements of increased ability for partnership working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers Wales staff interviews Stakeholder interviews
To what extent has providing support through the Access programme helped Careers Wales to improve engagement with clients?	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers Wales advisers' judgements of the impact on engagement with clients Participants' judgements of the impact on engagement with Careers Wales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers Wales staff interviews Participant survey In-depth participant interviews

Long-term outcomes:

These long-term outcomes will not be a focus of this evaluation. They have been included to indicate the kind of impact that would be expected as a result of the activities and outcomes included in the logic model.

Evaluation Question	Evaluation perspective	Metrics	Source
To what extent has the Access programme helped to reduce unemployment rates and economic inactivity in the VTF area?	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Decrease in) unemployment and economic inactivity rates in the VTF area • (Increase in) employment rates in the VTF area; • (Decrease in) economic inactivity rates in the VTF area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics
How successful has the Access programme been in improving GVA in the VTF area due to employment stimulating increased economic inactivity and skills gaps being addressed?	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Increase in) GVA in the VTF area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GVA calculations for the VTF area
How far have the social impacts of long-term unemployment been reduced as a result of the Access programme?	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Reduction in) proportion of children in workless households in the VTF area • (Reduction in) proportion of children in long-term workless households in the VTF area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics

Testing assumptions & programme design:

Evaluation Question	Evaluation perspective	Metrics	Source
To what extent are skills the primary barrier to employment for the Access programme's target cohort?	Programme design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants in employment six months after leaving the programme • Number of participants in unemployment who were previously economically inactive six months after leaving the programme • Careers Wales staff judgements • Participants' judgements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme monitoring data • Careers Wales staff interviews • Participant survey • In-depth participant interviews
How appropriate are each of the particular strands of support to overcome the following skills barriers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer Recruitment Support • Employer Training Support • Vocational Training Support 	Programme design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants making use of each type of support • Value of each type of support claimed • Participants' judgements regarding the suitability of support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme monitoring data • Participant survey • In-depth participant interviews

Evaluation Question	Evaluation perspective	Metrics	Source
To what extent is it appropriate to allow participants to receive support multiple times?	Programme design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants making multiple claims • Employment outcomes for repeat claimants • Participants' judgements • Careers Wales staff judgements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme monitoring data • Participant survey • In-depth participant interviews • Careers Wales staff interviews
To what extent has there been substitution/deadweight loss?	Programme design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessed employer counterfactuals • Self-assessed participant counterfactuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer interviews • Participant survey • In-depth participant interviews

Additional evaluation questions developed during the scoping stage:

Evaluation Questions	Evaluation perspective	Metrics	Source
To what extent – and why – has engagement with the programme differed by gender?	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants making use of each type of support by gender • Differences in types of training undertaken by gender • Participants' judgements on barriers to participation by gender • Participants' judgements on suitability of support by gender • Careers Wales staff judgements on drivers of participation by gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme monitoring data • Participant survey • In-depth participant interviews • Careers Wales staff interviews
To what extent – and why – has engagement with the programme differed by area (defined in terms of Careers Centre and local authority area)?	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants referred to the programme disaggregated by career centre; • Differences in types of training undertaken by career centre • Differences between Careers Wales staff judgements of drivers of participation by careers centre • Differences between participants' judgements of drivers of participation by careers centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme monitoring data • Participant survey • In-depth participant interviews • Careers Wales staff interviews
What are the key motivations for engagement with the programme, and what, if anything, have been key enablers for participation?	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants' judgements of why they engaged with the programme • Participants' judgements of whether previous support received has enabled Access participation • Careers Wales staff judgements of whether support received has enabled Access participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant survey • In-depth participant interviews • Careers Wales staff interviews

Annexe C: Research Tools

Participant Survey

- 1. Are you happy to continue with the survey? Please note you can stop completing the questionnaire at any time if you decide you do not want to continue.**

Yes

No

- 2. Just to confirm, have you received support from Welsh Government's Access programme?**

Access is a programme of support which provides vocational training grants to help participants in the South Wales Valleys update their skills and improve their employment opportunities. Participants receive a grant of up to £1,500 to take training, *and/or* employers receive a subsidy of up to £3,000 to contribute to wages during the employee's first year in their new job.

Yes

No - thank you

Unfortunately, you must have received support from Welsh Government's Access programme to participate in this survey. Thank you for your time. To exit this survey, you can close this tab in your browser.

Your current situation:

- 3. Which of the following best reflects your situation at the moment? Please choose one**

Employed (including by a family member and self-employed) or on an apprenticeship

Unemployed and looking for work

In education or training

Working in a voluntary, unpaid role or internship

Not in or looking for paid work (for example looking after children or relatives, retired)

Othe.

4. All who select in employment Which of the following best describes the sector in which you work?

- Agriculture, forestry & fishing
- Mining, quarrying & utilities
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Motor trades
- Wholesale
- Retail
- Transport & storage
- Accommodation & food services
- Information & communication
- Financial & insurance
- Property
- Professional, scientific & technical
- Business administration & support services
- Public administration & defence
- Education
- Health
- Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services

5. What is your job title?

[Text box]

6. On average, how many hours a week do you work?

[Text box]

7. Please can you tell me roughly what your gross pay is, including any overtime, bonuses, commissions or tips but BEFORE any deductions for tax, national insurance, pension contributions and so on?

You can provide a figure for a year, month or week. But you only need to pick one – we don't need you to give us a figure for the year, month and week.

Annually

Monthly

Weekly

12a. Annually

Less than £2,000	£15,000 - £17,999
£2,000 - £3,999	£18,000 - £20,999
£4,000 - £4,759	£21,000 - £23,999
£4,760 - £5,999	£24,000 - £26,999
£6,000 - £7,999	£27,000 - £29,999
£8,000 - £9,999	£30,000+
£10,000 - £11,999	Don't know
£12,000 - £14,999	Don't want to tell you

12b. Monthly

Less than £166	£1,250 - £1,499
£166 - £333	£1,500 - £1,749
£334 - £396	£1,750 - £1,999
£397 - £499	£2,000 - £2,249
£500 - £666	£2,250 - £2,499
£667 - £832	£2,500+
£833 - £999	Don't know
£1,000 - £1,249	Don't want to tell you

12c. Weekly

Less than £38	£193 - £230
£38 - £76	£231 - £289
£77 - £91	£290 - £346
£72 - £114	£347 - £403
£115 - £153	£404 - £461
£154 - £192	£462 - £519
£520 - £577	£578+
Don't know	Don't want to tell you

8. All who select not in or looking for paid work Are you not looking for work for any of the following reasons? Please select all that apply

Looking after the family, home or caring for dependents

Temporary health problems or injury

Long-term health problems or disabled

Retired

Doing unpaid voluntary work

Not needing or wanting employment

Not looking for work as there are no jobs available

Don't want to say

Other, please specify

9. All who select not in or looking for paid work which, if any, of the following things make it difficult currently for you to find paid work? Please select all that apply

Not having the right qualifications

Not having the right skills

Not having relevant work experience

Not able to afford childcare

Having caring responsibilities

Health problems

Your age

Alcohol or drug dependency

Having a criminal record

No appropriate jobs where you live

Hard to get to appropriate work

You only wanting to work part-time

Believing you would not be better off financially in work

Something else

Don't know

None of these

Applying to the Access programme:

10. All Before you applied for support through the Access programme, were you looking for a job?

Yes

No

Not sure

11. All who answered no to previous question: Why weren't you looking for a job?

Looking after the family, home or caring for dependents

Temporary health problems or injury

Long-term health problems or disabled

Doing unpaid voluntary work

Not needing or wanting employment

Not looking for work as there were no jobs available

Don't want to say

Other

Not sure

Other, please specify

[Text box]

12. Thinking back to before you received support from Welsh Government's Access programme, where else did you receive support to look for a job?

Jobcentre Plus

Careers Wales

Other

12a. Other, please specify

[Text box]

13. Where did you first hear about the Access programme? [Only one option available]

Careers Wales adviser

Business Wales website

Jobcentre Plus

Don't know

A friend or family member

Other

Careers Wales website

13a. All who answered previous question with 'other' Please specify where you first heard about the Access programme

[Text box]

14. What was your motivation for making use of the support available through the Access programme? [Multiple choice]

To gain new skills so that I could get a job

To gain new skills so that I could get a job in a particular sector or role

To move from part-time into full-time employment

To learn a particular skill or get a qualification

It was what Careers Wales advised me to do

Other

14a. Other, please specify

[Text box]

15. Which aspects of support available through the Access programme have you made use of? Please select all that apply

VOCATIONAL TRAINING SUPPORT (i.e. Welsh Government paid for you to undertake some training **before** you started a new job)

EMPLOYER RECRUITMENT SUPPORT (i.e. Welsh Government awarded your new employer a grant to help pay your first year's wages)

EMPLOYER TRAINING SUPPORT (i.e. Welsh Government paid for you to undertake some training **after** you started your new job)

Questions about specific strands of support:

16. All who chose Vocational Training Support We'd like to know a little bit about what course(s) the Access programme helped you to take.

Please can you provide us with a short description of the training you took?

[Text box]

17. All who chose Vocational Training Support How important was your Careers Wales adviser's advice when choosing which course to take? Please rate on a scale of 0-4, where 4 is very important, and 0 is not at all important.

18. All who chose Vocational Training Support Did you make use of any of the extra financial support available to help you attend the course paid for with Vocational Training Support (e.g. help with paying for childcare or transport)

Yes

No

Not sure

19. All who chose Yes to Q.18 What did the extra support help you with?

[Text box]

20. All who chose Yes to Q. 18 If you hadn't received this extra support, how likely is it that you would have been able to attend the training course? Please rate on a scale of 0-4, where 0 is not at all likely, and 4 is very likely.

21. All who chose No to Q. 18 You said you didn't take up any extra financial support to attend your course. Why is this? Please select all that apply.

I didn't need any extra support

I didn't know I was eligible to receive extra support

My application was rejected

Other

Not sure [Mutually exclusive]

21a. All who chose Other to Q. 21 Please specify

[Text box]

22. All who chose Employer Recruitment Support How likely is it that you would be in your current job if you hadn't received Employer Recruitment support?

Very likely

Somewhat likely

Somewhat unlikely

Not at all likely

23. All who chose Employer Recruitment Support We're interested to hear about the training that your employer provided after you started your new job. Please provide us with a short description of the training that your employer provided.

[Text box]

24. All who chose Employer Recruitment Support To the best of your knowledge, would this training have been provided if Employer Recruitment Support have been available?

Yes

No

Not sure/can't remember

25. All who chose Employer Recruitment Support In your view, would you have been given this job if Employer Recruitment support hadn't been available?

Yes

No

Not sure/can't remember

26. All who didn't choose Employer Recruitment Support but are in employment Was there any reason you didn't use the Access Employer Recruitment Support (i.e. Welsh Government awarded your new employer a grant to help pay your first year's wages)? Tick all that apply.

I didn't know that this was available

I didn't feel the need to access this support

My employer did not want to access this support

My employer wasn't eligible for the support

The application was rejected

For some other reason

26a. Other, please specify

[Text box]

Impacts:

27. Overall, taking into account all the support that you received through the Access programme, how satisfied are you with this support?

Very satisfied

Somewhat satisfied

Somewhat dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

27a. Please explain your answer.

[Text box]

28. All in employment How likely is it that you would be in this job if you hadn't received support through the Access programme? Please rate on a scale of 0-4, where 4 is very likely and 0 is not at all likely.

Seed in answers to question on types of support received

Vocational Training Support

Employer Recruitment Support

Employer Training Support

29. All in employment How much, if at all, do you think the following things have contributed to you finding employment? Please rate on a scale of 0-4, where 4 is very much and 0 is not at all.

The qualification the Access programme helped you achieve

The skills you learned on the Access programme funded course

Information from Careers Wales about the skills and qualifications

30. All not currently in employment In your view, how much more likely are you to find a job now that you have received this support through the Access programme? Please rate on a scale of 0-4, where 4 is much more likely and 0 is not at all more likely.

Overall Views of Access:

31. How likely are you to recommend the Access programme to a friend or family member? Please rate on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not at all likely, and 10 is very likely.

About you:

We would like to know more about the people who are have made use of the support available through the Access programme. We will not use of this information to identify you personally.

[N.B. none of these answers will be forced, allowing participants to skip if they prefer not to answer. Can add 'prefer not to say' boxes if client prefers]

32. Can you please tell us your age?

[Text box]

33. In which local authority area do you live?

Blaenau Gwent

Bridgend

Caerphilly

Carmarthenshire

Merthyr Tydfil

Neath Port Talbot

Rhondda Cynon Taff

Swansea

Torfaen

34. How do you think of yourself?

Male

In another way

Female

35. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?

Welsh

Other British

Irish

Any other white background (PLEASE SPECIFY)

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other mixed background (PLEASE SPECIFY)

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian background (PLEASE SPECIFY)

Caribbean

African

Any other Black background (PLEASE SPECIFY)

Arab

Gypsy / Romany / Irish Traveller

Any other (PLEASE SPECIFY)

Would rather not say

Q35a Any other white background, please specify

Q35b Any other mixed background, please specify

Q35c Any other Asian background, please specify

Q35d Any other Black background, please specify

Q35e Any other, please specify

36. Which of the following best describes your ability to speak Welsh?

I'm fluent in Welsh

I can just say a few words

I can speak a fair amount of Welsh

I don't speak any Welsh

I can only speak a little Welsh

Participant in-depth interviews

Questions for discussion

1. To begin the discussion, can you tell me about what you were doing before you got involved with the Access programme?

Interviewer prompts:

Were they looking for work?

If working, what were they doing?

How long had they been doing it?

2. Before you started to receive support from the Access programme, what were the main barriers you were facing that were preventing you from finding work?

Prompt for:

Try to find out whether – and to what extent – skills was the primary barrier to finding employment?

(Recent) experience?

Questions for discussion:

3. Tell me a little bit about your current situation. Specifically, what's your current employment status?

4. If employed: Can you tell me a little bit about your job?

Prompt for:

What is your job title?

What sector are you in?

How many hours a week do you work? Does this vary?

How quickly after you accessed support through the Access programme did you get this job?

- 4(a): If employed: Is this the only job you've had since you received support from the Access programme?

If no, prompt for an understanding of the other job(s) they have had since they took up support through Access. Seek to map out the journey of the interviewee.

5. If not working at Q3: Tell me about what you're currently doing.

Prompt for:

Are you looking for work?

What's making it difficult to find work? Are these still the same barriers you faced before taking up support through Access?

What kind of work are you looking for?

What kind of support are they accessing?

Would other support would be helpful in getting a job?

5(a): If not working: Have you being doing anything different in the time since you were supported by the Access programme? For example, did you have a job for a time?

If yes, prompt for an understanding of the other roles or job(s) they have had since they made use of Access. Seek to map out the journey of the interviewee.

Now, I want to ask a few questions about the Access programme support you made use of:

6. Can you tell me a little bit about the support that you received from Access?

Prompt for:

Did you receive vocational training support (a grant to take part in a training course)?

Did your employer receive a wage subsidy for employing you?

Did you receive employer training support (money to take part in a training course after you started your new job)?

Did you receive any extra support (e.g. money to pay for transport, childcare, etc.) through Access?

7. How did you find out about the support that was available to you via Access?

Prompt for:

Who told you about the support? Careers Wales? Jobcentre Plus? Anywhere else?

8. What did you think when you first found out about the support that was available to you via the Access programme?

9. What was your main motivation for using the support that Access could provide?

Prompt:

Was the motivation just to get a job? Or were respondents using this as an opportunity to do some training that they had always wanted to do? If there are several motivations, what was the main one?

10. Did you have any doubts or concerns about accessing Access?

11. What, if any, alternatives did you consider when considering whether to access the support that Access could provide?

Prompt:

Why did you decide that Access was the best option for you?

12. Tell me a little bit more about the training course you undertook with the support of Access...

Prompts:

Why did you choose this course? Was it just with a view to getting a job or a broader reason than that? Link to response to previous questions.

Had you thought of doing this course before?

13. Can you tell me a little bit more about the advice that you received from Careers Wales about which training course to undertake?

Prompts:

How important was each element of advice and guidance?

Which was most important?

14. What kind of advice, if any, have you received about the jobs market in the local area, the type of jobs that are available in the local area, and the type of employee local employers are looking for?

Prompts:

Where and/or from who did you get that advice?

15. Looking back, how good was the advice that you received?

Prompts: ask the respondent to rate all the different types of advice that they have identified in response to the previous questions. Which was the most valuable and why?

16. Was the type of training that you wanted to do available?

Prompts:

Subject of training, location, timescales, language – specifically ask whether they wanted to undertake the training in Welsh and, of so, whether that was possible.

17. What alternative training courses, if any, did you consider and why did you make the decision you did?

Impact:

18. How did you benefit, if at all, from the support you received from Access?

Prompt for benefits beyond helping to find a job: If still undertaking the training prompt for benefits they may have already realised and anticipated further benefits. If they've been supported by the vocational training and the employer support, which was most important and why?

19. We're interested in *why* you think you benefited in the way(s) that you've identified.

Prompts:

So, for example, if the respondent says that they got a job, which element(s) of the support they received from Access led to that benefit? Was it the training? Was it the advice? Was it because their confidence had increased as a result of the advice provided? Did the training tick a box that they had to have to get the job?

20. [if a number of benefits is identified] Which of the benefits you've identified is the most significant? Which one made the biggest difference to you and why?

Prompt for whether the benefit they perceive from Access would have happened anyway – how had Access added value to the other support they have accessed?

21. How have you used any new skills or abilities that you developed via the training that you undertook as part of your work?

Prompt: Can you give any examples of how you've used new skills at work? How well would you have been able to do the job if you hadn't learnt these new skills/abilities? If you haven't used skills – why not?

22. How, if at all, have other people in your life benefited as a result of the support you received? Friends, family, etc.

Prompt: what has been the knock on of the benefit that you got as a result of support from Access?

23. What, if anything, do you think would be different about your situation today if you had not been supported by Access?

Prompt for whether the benefit they perceive from Access would have happened anyway, REFERRING BACK TO THE ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED DURING YOUR DISCUSSION. In particular, would they be in employment without the support of Access? Would they be in the same job without the support of Access?

24. Did the support you received from Access meet your expectations? If so, why? If not, why?

25. How, if at all, could the support you received via Access be improved?

26. Is there anything else you would like to say about Access and your experience of it?

Careers Wales in-depth interviews

1. To begin, please introduce yourself and your role within Careers Wales.
2. What is your role in relation to the Access programme?
3. In which local authority area or areas do you primarily work?

The Access Programme:

4. What is your understanding of the Access programme?
 - A. How strong do you believe this rationale to be?
5. To what extent does the support available through the Access programme add value to other support that is potentially available to the target group for this programme?
 - A. Please explain your answer to the previous question.
6. For people who have been unemployed for less than two years, what are the main barriers to finding and staying in work?
 - A. How significant are skills barriers when compared to other barriers to finding and staying in work?
7. Roughly how many individuals have you referred to Access programme support over the last six months?
8. What are the factors you have to consider when deciding whether or not to refer someone to support from the Access programme?
 - A. What kind of things would make a client *unsuitable* for support through the Access programme?
 - B. How do you collect and analyse Labour Market Information in order to inform participants about what course to take? Do you have enough information to provide advice to clients?
9. If you can comment, does the motivation for taking up the support primarily come from clients, or is this something driven by you as a Careers Wales adviser?

10. To what extent has engagement with Access differed with gender?
- A. If there are differences, do you have a view on why there are these differences?
11. How do you manage client expectations about the support they are receiving through the Access programme?
12. To what extent do you discuss the support available through Access other than the training support? i.e. the extra support to remove barriers, Employer Recruitment Support, etc.

Impact of Access Programme:

13. Thinking about those individuals you have referred to Access, what proportion of these individuals have found and sustained meaningful employment?
- A. Are there any particular success stories you can think of?
14. How important are each of the following 'tools' in respects of achieving the principal objectives of the Access programme [for ease of reference, to support unemployed adults to get a job and to stay in work by improving their employability skills and providing the individuals in question with the skills necessary to secure sustainable employment]?
- A. provision of general information, advice and guidance
- B. vocational training grant
- C. extra support grant
- D. employer support grants (covering wages and training)
- E. anything else?
15. Roughly, what proportion of the individuals that you have referred to Access would have found some employment regardless of the support they received from Access? Just to stress that there is no right or wrong answer here; we want an honest view from practitioners on this issue.
- A. Please explain your response above.

16. Roughly, what proportion of the individuals that you have referred to Access would have found the same level/quality of employment regardless of the support they received from Access? Just to stress that there is no right or wrong answer here; we want an honest view from practitioners on this issue.

A. Please explain your response above.

Close:

17. What changes, if any, would you like to see made to the Access programme (and what effect would these changes have)?

18. To close, do you have any further comments you would like to make on the issues discussed in this questionnaire or on any other issue relating to the Access programme?

Employer In-Depth Interviews

Questions for Discussion

NOT TO BE SENT TO THE INTERVIEWEE IN ADVANCE

1. To begin the discussion, can you please tell me a little bit more about your business, the services or products that you provide, number of employees and so on.
2. How did you first hear about the Access Programme?
3. What were your thoughts when you first found out about Access?
Prompt: Were you surprised that this support was available? Were you pleased that this support was available?
4. Did you receive any advice or guidance about the Access Programme? Where did you receive this advice/guidance from? How helpful was it?
Prompt: WG's Access team? Careers Wales? Anyone else? Why was the advice helpful/not helpful? If not helpful – is there any kind of advice that you would have liked to receive
5. What were the main things you considered when considering whether or not to apply for support from the Access Programme?
Interviewer: Seek to identify any perceived barriers to applying and how they were overcome.
6. What other options, if any, were available to you at that time and why did you make the decision that you did?
Prompts: Did you consider any other types of support? For example, ReAct, Jobs Growth Wales. Did you consider not recruiting?
7. How many employees have you recruited with the help of Access Employer Recruitment Support?
8. How many of these employees are still with the company today?
Prompt if employees are not with the company: how long did they stay? Why are they no longer with the company?

BLOCK A: EMPLOYER RECRUITMENT SUPPORT (ERS) QUESTIONS

Interviewer: Please note, all interviewees will have made use of ERS.

9. Generally, how would you describe your company's attitude to the recruitment of new staff?

Prompts: Is it a regular occurrence within the business? Why/why not? Seek to get a sense of whether, say, frequent recruitment is a product of growth or high staff turnover? Or, do they recruit only when its completely necessary? Are you wary of the risk of recruitment or is it something that you are looking to do all the time?

10. Can you tell me a little bit more about how, if at all, the fact that Access Employer Recruitment Support was available influenced the recruitment process?

Prompts: Would you have hired someone anyway? Why did the recruitment happen sooner than you had planned (if this was the case), and so on... Did you change your plans in any other way?

11. Did Access make any difference to the pay/terms and conditions you offered the new employee?

Prompts: Please explain why – was it just the fact that the wage could be subsidised for a period?

12. Were there other candidates that could have done the job who were rejected because you took on the Access participant? Can you please tell me a little bit more about that decision? *Prompts: Were they better or worse qualified? Did they have more or less skills and experience? What difference, if any, did the fact that they had recently been made redundant make to your decision?*

13. In what ways has the business benefited as a result of the wage contribution made by Access?

Prompt: Why do you think those benefits have occurred?

14. What improvements, if any, can you suggest could be made to the Access Employer Recruitment Support?

Prompt: Level/amount of financial support, application processes, availability of advice and guidance

15. Has your experience with Access made you more or less likely to recruit someone who is unemployed in the future? Can you tell me a bit more about why you think that?

Prompts: Given your current recruitment plans, how likely is that you will recruit from unemployed/redundant?

BLOCK B: EMPLOYER TRAINING SUPPORT (ETS)

Interviewer: Please check whether the employer made use of ETS support

16. Generally, how would you describe your company's attitude to training, and how much training is provided to your staff?

Prompts: Is it a priority for the business? Is it a regular occurrence within the business? Does it only happen when it's completely necessary?

17. You said you used Access funding to pay for training. Can you tell me more about the type of training that you provided using Access funding and, in particular, why you decided to use the funding to provide that training course?

Prompts: Was the training essential to the appointment and ability to undertake the role? How were the employee's skills needs assessed? How much thought went into selecting the training that would be undertaken?

18. Would you have provided the same training if support had not been available? If you wouldn't have provided this training, what would you have done instead and what kind of impact do you think this would have had?

Prompts: What are they key factors that you consider? Would the employee have been less effective in their job without the training? In what ways?

19. How likely is it that you will replicate the training that you've provided using Access funding in the future, *without funding being provided*? Please explain your answer.

Prompts: What are they key factors that you will consider when making that decision?

20. Please tell me more about how the individuals in question have benefited as a result of the training that has been provided using Access funding.

Prompts: Have they been able to apply their skills directly in the workplace – any examples?

21. Can you please tell me more about how the business has benefited from this training?

Prompts: Can you tell me a little bit more about why you think the individual and the business benefited in that way? What were the key things that led to that benefit?

22. What improvements, if any, can you suggest could be made to the Access Employer Training Support?

BLOCK C: EMPLOYERS WHO DIDN'T USE EMPLOYER TRAINING SUPPORT (ETS):

23. [if the interviewee did not use the Employer Training Support] You didn't receive the grant that was available via Access to help with the costs of training new recruits. Can you please tell me more about why you decided not to access that support?

Prompt: What were the key factors that influenced this decision? See prompts table below for follow up questions.

<i>Follow ups Q23</i>	
<i>Reason given</i>	<i>Potential follow ups</i>
The application was rejected	Why rejected? What training? Did they provide training anyway? If not - how would training have benefitted them, what was impact of not training?
The individual being recruited didn't need any additional training	Not much else we can say here? If not covered elsewhere – (how) did they assess skill needs? Possibly: In hindsight was there any training they would have liked to provide using ETS? If so what and how would training have benefitted them, and what was the impact of not training?
Wasn't aware that the support was available	Would you have used the support if you'd known? If yes – what training, what benefits, etc.
There was no appropriate / suitable training available	What (if any) training did they want to provide? Did they talk to anyone about finding an appropriate course? How would training have benefitted them, and what was impact of not training?
Training was being provided or funded in-house or paid for from another source	What source? Why use in-house/other funding rather than ETS?
The amount of grant available was insufficient to pay for the training that was needed	By how much? What training? Did they provide training anyway? If not - how would training have benefitted them, what was impact of not training?
We were not sure what training the individual would need at the time they were recruited	In hindsight was there any training they would have liked to provide using ETS? If so what and how would training have benefitted them, and what was impact of not training?

<i>Follow ups Q23</i>	
<i>Reason given</i>	<i>Potential follow ups</i>
We were put off by the application process for training support	What training did they want to provide? Did they provide training anyway? If not – how would training have benefitted them, what was impact of not training?
Don't know [DON'T READ OUT]	Do they remember hearing about ETS? If not, do they think they might have used it? Try and probe for reasons

CLOSE:

24. To close, what do you think the main benefits to the business of using Access support?

Can you tell me a little bit more about *why* you think you benefited in that way? What were the key things that led to that benefit?

25. Were there any negative impacts on the business?

What if anything would be different about your business today had you not been supported by the Access programme?

26. Do you have any further comments that you would like to make?

Welsh Government Stakeholder Interviews

Introduction:

1. As an introduction, could you please introduce the department of Welsh Government you work for and your specific role within it?
2. What involvement/contact have you had with the Access programme?

Policy Fit:

3. What is your understanding for the rationale of the Access programme?
 - a. How strong do you consider this rationale to be?
 - b. To what extent does this rationale continue to be valid?
4. In your view, how well does the Access programme fit with other policies in the Valleys Taskforce area?
 - a. With a particular view towards support in the area of employability?
5. In your view, how well does the Access programme fit with other Welsh Government policies around employability?

Delivery:

6. If you can comment, in your view, how successful has the Access programme been in delivering employment outcomes for participants?
 - a. Are there any particular successes?
 - b. Have there been any challenges? Are there any areas of the support that haven't worked as well?
7. How effective has the multi-agency approach been?

Programme Design and Learning:

8. If the Access programme was to be run again, would you make any changes to the programme as it currently is?
9. What, if anything, are the lessons learned from the Access programme?
10. How, if at all, has learning from the Access programme been taken into the design of Welsh Government's new Working Wales employability support?

Close:

11. Is there anything you would like to add about the Access programme?

Annexe D: Privacy Notice

Access Programme Evaluation

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Welsh Government has commissioned Wavehill to undertake an evaluation of the Welsh Government's Access programme. The evaluation started in January 2019 and is expected to complete in April 2019. An independent evaluation will enable a robust assessment of design, implementation and outcomes of the Access programme and provide learning for future practice in this area.

The evaluation will explore the process by which the programme has been delivered, bringing out key successes and areas for further development in the context of the new Working Wales programme and Work Advice Wales, as well as assessing the impact of the programme on beneficiaries as well as the broader impact on the Valleys Taskforce area. As part of this evaluation, Wavehill is gathering information through interviews with funded beneficiaries, Welsh Government officials and sector stakeholders who have engaged with the programme.

The information collected during the project will be included in a report published on the Welsh Government website, and possibly other publications by Wavehill and Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government is the data controller for the research. However, Wavehill will delete any personal data provided through the interviews, and anonymise the raw data, before it is shared with the Welsh Government.

If you have any questions about the evaluation, please contact Tom Marshall at Wavehill (tom.marshall@wavehill.com).

PRIVACY NOTICE

Personal Data

Personal data is defined under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as “any information relating to an identifiable person who can be directly or indirectly identified by reference to an identifier”.

Wavehill will use your personal data to contact you for the purpose of setting up an interview. The email addresses and telephone numbers are provided to Wavehill by Welsh Government.

Access programme beneficiary consultation:

Email addresses / contact telephone of beneficiaries will be provided to Wavehill by Welsh Government.

Employer interviews:

Email addresses / contact telephone of employers will be provided to Wavehill by Welsh Government.

Careers Wales interviews:

Email addresses / contact telephone of Careers Wales employees will be provided to Wavehill by Welsh Government.

Key stakeholder interviews:

Email addresses / contact telephone of key stakeholders will be provided to Wavehill by Welsh Government.

Your participation is voluntary and if you do not wish to take part or be sent reminders then please reply to the invitation email and your details will be removed. Wavehill will only use email addresses and telephone numbers for the purposes of this evaluation.

If personal data is provided in open-ended question responses, we do not try and identify you from, or link your identity to, the responses you provide.

If you raise a query or complaint and provide personal data requesting a response, the researcher will forward the request only to the Welsh Government officer and subsequently delete it from the research data. All personally identifiable information will be removed from the raw data by Wavehill before analysis and the results will be made anonymous.

What is the lawful basis for collecting the data?

The lawful basis of processing information in this data collection exercise is our public task; that is, exercising our official authority to undertake the core role and functions of the Welsh Government.

Participation is completely voluntary. However, research studies such as this are important for the Welsh Government to collect information and actionable evidence about its ability to deliver government priorities.

How secure is any personal data submitted?

Personal information provided to Wavehill is always stored on a secure server. The data can only be used by a limited number of researchers who are working on the evaluation. Researchers from Wavehill will only use participant contact details to contact them for research purposes.

Personal data and any details which could identify an individual will be omitted from the evaluation reports that will be published on the Welsh Government website. Although the Welsh Government is the data controller for this evaluation, any personally identifiable information will be removed from the interview transcripts by Wavehill. As a result, no personally identifiable information from this evaluation is provided to the Welsh Government.

Wavehill has put in place procedures to deal with any suspected data security breaches. If a suspected breach occurs, Wavehill will report this to the Welsh Government who will notify you and any applicable regulator where we are legally required to do so. Wavehill has Cyber Essentials certification.

All data gathered through this research will be reported in an anonymised format. It will not contain your contact details and any identifiable information in open-ended answers will be removed. Wavehill will use the data to produce a report for Welsh Government. This report will not include any information that could be used to identify individual participants.

In addition, Wavehill will provide Welsh Government with an anonymised version of the dataset. This means the dataset will not include information that could identify you. In particular, your name, address and other contact details will be deleted from this dataset.

How long do you keep any personal data submitted?

Wavehill will hold personal data during the contract period, and any personal data not already removed will be deleted three months after the end of the contract.

Individual rights

Under GDPR, you have the following rights in relation to the personal information you provide as part of this evaluation. You have the right to:

- Access a copy of your own data;
- Require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data;
- To object to or restrict processing (in certain circumstances);
- For your data to be 'erased' (in certain circumstances); and
- To lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection.

The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are: Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Phone: 01625 545 745 or 0303 123 1113.

Website: www.ico.gov.uk

Further Information

If you have any further questions about how the data provided as part of this study will be used by Welsh Government or wish to exercise your rights using the General Data Protection Regulation, please contact:

Jenny Madge (Employability and Skills Division, Welsh Government), Telephone: 03000255948, Email: Jenny.Madge@gov.wales

Welsh Government's Data Protection Officer can be contacted at:

Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ,

Email: DataProtectionOfficer@gov.wales.

Annexe E: Access Case Studies

Business Industrial Solutions

- 8.1 Business Industrial Solutions (BIS) are a sales and marketing company based in Ebbw Vale, predominantly providing industrial supplies and consumable products. Having been operating since 1973, BIS' team currently consists of approximately 45 members of staff. Products they typically sell include: hand tools, protective clothing and facilities management services.
- 8.2 Through the help of Access Employer Recruitment Support they have been able to recruit one additional member of staff who is still working at BIS today. They were first made aware of the Access Programme through the local Jobcentre Plus, when someone who worked at Jobcentre Plus contacted the organisation and mentioned that they had a candidate that they thought might be valuable to the business. During this conversation they also mentioned that support was available to them via the Access Programme should they choose to take the individual on.
- 8.3 When considering whether or not to apply for support through Access, other than the obvious financial aspect of the programme the following issues were considered: the quality of potential candidates, the ease of the admin process, and the time required to complete the process. BIS has previously engaged with Jobs Growth Wales but has not previously used any other recruitment support schemes.
- 8.4 BIS' attitude towards the recruitment of new staff is largely a targeted approach that is specific to what they are looking for, a process that is driven by the requirements of the business at the time:
- “It goes in cycles, but we don't have a high staff turnover, it's driven a bit more aggressively when we try to diversify what we offer.”*
- 8.5 For example, they reported that they have lately gone more and more into facilities management and therefore, has been more of a demand to recruit tradesmen. Regardless of these trends in recruitment, it was reported that the core staff remains consistent regardless of changes in demand.
- 8.6 With regards to the influence that Access Employer Recruitment Support has had on BIS's recruitment process it was acknowledged that it did on this one instance change their normal procedure:

“It was a factor because at the time we weren’t necessarily looking to fill a role”

8.7 What convinced BIS to move away from their normal targeted recruitment procedure was the fact that they perceived the Access Programme as being a cost-effective route to take on a new member of staff. The fact that the person who had been put forward to them was someone who may possibly be a good fit for their organisation played a role in the decision, but the added financial incentive meant they were more willing to commit to taking them on straight away rather than going through their traditional recruitment process.

8.8 It is also important to note that this was the only part of BIS’ recruitment process that was influenced by the Access Programme. It was reported that the employee who was hired with the support of the programme received the same pay and contract terms as any other employee working in their current role, and that no other job candidates were overlooked during this process as they were approached by their local Jobcentre Plus and the role was never advertised publicly.

8.9 BIS were unable to comment regarding the ways in which the business may have benefitted as a result of Access’ wage contribution due to the fact that at the time the interview with the organisation was carried out, they had not yet received any of the payment from the Access Programme. This was said to be due to a communication issue regarding the paperwork involved in the application process, and while the required document has since been sent off, BIS claims they are still waiting for some form of reply or an acknowledgement of the receipt of the required document. This communication issue said to be the only issue that the employer has had with the Access Employer Recruitment Support Process:

“It wasn’t made very clear, I only heard about it several months into the employee’s employment with us, there should be some kind of check in place to avoid this and if not, I should have been notified earlier on.”

8.10 BIS reported that they were unaware of the Employer Training Support available through Access, however they acknowledged that this could be due to the way in which they found out about the Access Programme, through Jobcentre Plus. The employer mentioned that as most of their training is done in-house, it would be unlikely to have had too much of an impact for them, however, they acknowledged

that there could potentially have been some additional training that would have been relevant to their business.

- 8.11 The main benefit of Access support identified by the employer is that it granted the business the opportunity to work with an individual who may not have been successful in their usual high-volume interview process. It allowed the organisation to gain an understanding of the employee's skillset in a working environment that would not have been achievable if they had gone down their traditional recruitment route.

"We've found an employee who has become part of the team quickly, whose become part of the daily running of the office that we may not have found, and its taught me that you can't always judge a book by its cover."

- 8.12 With regards to how the programme has influenced the likelihood of BIS to recruit someone who is unemployed in the future, the company reports that since their experience with Access they have taken on another person in a similar position. They felt that the process has helped them "appreciate the skills of someone who has been unemployed for a while", showcasing how the programme has not only influenced attitudes but is actually influencing future business decisions in participating organisations.

"Without access to this programme you won't realise that given the opportunity people can rise to the mark quickly, it's getting that opportunity in front of them."

Transcend Packaging

- 8.13 Transcend Packaging was established in 2017 and is a privately-owned company based in Ystrad Mynach. They are a manufacturing company specialising in 3 different product categories: paper cups, printing and packaging, and finally their biggest and most profitable category, the manufacturing of paper straws. The company has a core team of 65 people, however, they also make use of agency staff of which they have 95 available to them. The company has recruited a total of four employees with the help of the Access Employer Recruitment Support. Of these four individuals, three are still employed by the company with the other having left the company after working there for around five or six months.
- 8.14 The main reason for the company choosing to apply for support from the Access Programme was the financial incentive provided by Access. The employer reported that the wage contribution has freed up money to pay for the initial costs

of developing the business such as establishing the machine infrastructure at the site. Helping support the salaries of those recruited through Access for the first few months of their employment, provided them with more stability in their jobs than they may have had without the additional funding as there was less risk to expanding the company's wage bill.

8.15 With regard to the company's recruitment policy, Transcend Packaging reported that they would have recruited regardless of the availability of financial support. Recruitment is ongoing within the organisation and has been quite vigorous throughout 2019, during which the company has grown from between 20 to 30 people at the beginning of the year to their current staffing levels. which when agency staff are taken into account can reach as high as 160 people. Their employee turnover is reported to be about average for the manufacturing industry, with most people who choose to leave the company quickly being agency staff who decide that the work is not for them. Transcend Packaging reported that the turnover of their core employees is lower than the average for the sector.

8.16 In terms of whether or not the Access Employer Recruitment Support has influenced the recruitment process at Transcend Packaging, it was suggested that the programme had not had a significant impact on recruitment:

"I don't think it has [had an impact] to be honest. I don't think we are actively using Access as part of the recruitment process, it's not a deliberate thing, we've been so busy at the moment and we're recruiting through different ways."

8.17 Access support also does not appear to have influenced either the pay or the terms and conditions offered to new employees. Similarly, the company stated that the availability of the support had not influenced who they ended up recruiting:

"They wouldn't have overlooked anyone who was more qualified or skilled. It was just to help us as a start-up, it was an extra beneficial resource rather than a decision maker in terms of who we should employ."

8.18 Employees recruited with the assistance of Access Employer Recruitment Support went through the same recruitment process as any other candidate and have been treated in the same way as other candidates, rather than the financial benefits being a determining factor in the recruitment process.

- 8.19 The company suggested that the only improvement that they felt could be made to the Access Employer Recruitment Support would be with regards to the paperwork that is required in order to apply. Specifically, they felt that for companies such as themselves that pay their employees on a monthly basis, it was quite cumbersome to work out their weekly wage breakdowns in order to satisfy the needs of the application process, and initially the thought of having to do this was off-putting.
- 8.20 Transcend packaging also made use of the Employer Training Support available through Access. The specific training that the company was able to provide to their staff with the assistance of the Access funding was first aid. However, they reported that the skills involved in the training were not critical in terms of individuals getting the job or being able to carry out their day-to-day work. Rather, the availability of training was a marginal benefit for the business:
- “The main reason we used Employer Training Support is that it’s always useful to have more first aiders on site.”*
- 8.21 The company felt that it was very likely that they would replicate the training that was provided using Access funding in the future because they acknowledge that it is important for their business to have as many people on site trained in first aid as possible.
- 8.22 With regards to how the Employer Training Support has benefitted the business, as a result of the support, individuals have achieved new skill sets from which they have benefited from personally, as prior to the training none of the employees recruited through Access had any form of first aid training. From a company-wide perspective, it was felt that the training had helped to add to the skillset of employees, allowing them to contribute using more than just their manufacturing and management expertise.
- 8.23 Overall, the main benefits of Access support for Transend Packaging were that it allowed them to recruit more members of staff, it made the jobs more secure, and also the fact that they were able to provide training to members of staff which they claimed was beneficial not only because of the broadening skill set within the company but also because it ensured that staff “could see we were investing back into them.”

- 8.24 The company reported that following the support that they have received from Access, they would be more likely to recruit someone who is unemployed in the future than they would have been previously, although they would be slightly cautious about using Access support again due to the slightly cumbersome nature of the claims process.
- 8.25 Overall, Transcend Packaging felt that had they not received the support from the Access programme, there would not be substantial differences in how their business currently operates. This was down to the fact that they had only recruited four members of staff with support of the programme, a small number compared to the total staff they employ.

Abertawe Sectional Buildings

8.26 Abertawe Sectional Buildings business erects concrete buildings. The business has one site, in Llansamlet, where the business was founded 35 years ago. The company is a family business and the majority of those employed by the company have been family members.

8.27 Until recently, the company employed two non-family-members who had each worked for the business for over ten years. These employees were responsible for the general building and surveying work. However, both of these employees left without providing a notice, which put the owner in a very difficult situation.

“Before they left everything was running smoothly, we had a good pool of clients, and everything was going well. When they left all that changed. They left without giving a notice, so I was basically stranded. I had to turn down work because I had no one to do it. I went from being mainly in the office, to then going out on site visits. We lost a lot of money.”

8.28 The owner found out about the support available through Access from a contact at the local Jobcentre Plus. Initially, the owner was surprised that this support was available.

8.29 The owner suggested that it was the financial assistance which initially prompted him to apply, and that it was only after he applied that he fully realised he would be employing someone he knew nothing about.

“For me it was mainly about getting financial assistance. I didn’t really consider the fact that I was going to employ someone who I knew nothing about until it dawned

on me after I had applied. No, I don't think this would have deterred me, but maybe it would have been good to have a profile of the person first."

- 8.30 The business owner also indicated that he would have liked to have had more direct contact with the WG Access team at this early stage:

"I did receive information, but I never spoke to anyone directly, I tried, but every time I phoned up, I was told the person I needed to speak to was in a meeting. I feel as though I was prepared anyway, off my own back, but it would have been beneficial to have received some sort of person to person support, even if it was just a 5-minute phone call to talk me through everything."

- 8.31 Whilst sure that he would have had to recruit someone regardless of the support from Access, the owner reported that due to running the business on his own, he 'struggled' to find the time to recruit new employees.

"I was working self-employed and all on my own so I didn't have the time to search far and wide for support, it was only the fact that someone else found this one for me. I needed the support, so recruitment was necessary, but I just wasn't in a position to search for someone myself."

- 8.32 In this regard, there is likely to be additionality of Access support in speeding up recruitment, helping with the process of recruitment and also de-risking it:

"I would have eventually hired someone, but it gave me the push I needed to do it now rather than later. I was in a difficult financial situation, so having that support meant that recruitment wasn't as big of a risk as I had previously thought."

- 8.33 The owner suggested that it provided him with new opportunities to develop the business, reducing the financial burden of recruitment somewhat, and enabling him to focus on building up the business whilst knowing that he had assistance to run the day to day operations.

"It gave me some breathing space between hiring someone and having to start paying for their wages, it meant I could get some jobs under my belt first, it was priceless to me. It took away some of that stress."

- 8.34 Despite the financial assistance of Employer Recruitment Support, the owner felt that he was only able to pay National Minimum Wage until the business was more stable.

“Having the wage subsidised did help, but at the moment I could not have sustained anything more than minimum wage. We are going to do annual reviews and the option is there to increase it if the situation develops.”

- 8.35 Another area in which there has been additionality for the business has been through the availability of Employer Training Support. The fund enabled the business to provide training which it otherwise would not have been able to provide:

“I didn’t really have the capacity to pay for training myself, but the fund enabled me to provide training which I otherwise would have struggled to provide. We had a talk and discussed what sort of training was essential, and which training courses would be beneficial, from there I made a list in order of priority, starting from health and safety, all the way through to machine management. He didn’t really have any training or skills in this area of work, so I was building from scratch really.”

- 8.36 Overall, the owner reported that Access support has provided an important boost to the business, reducing the risk of recruitment and allowing for the new employee to operate at a higher level than would otherwise have been possible through funding training courses. The only area in which the owner would have changed the experience would have been to have had more direct support from the Access team.