



SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER:

47/2021

PUBLICATION DATE:

13/07/2021

# Evaluation of the ReAct III Programme (2015–2019): Case Studies

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

## Evaluation of the ReAct III Programme (2015–2019): Case Studies

Authors: Endaf Griffiths, Dr Tom Marshall, Paula Gallagher, Sam Grunhut

Full Research Report: Griffiths, E., Marshall, T., Gallagher, P., Grunhut, S. (2020). *Evaluation of the ReAct Programme (2015–2019): Main Report*. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 47/2021. Available at: <https://gov.wales/evaluation-react-iii-programme-2015-2019>



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

For further information, please contact:

Dr Kim Wigley

Senior Research Officer

Social Research and Information

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

E: [KASEmployabilityandSkillsResearch@gov.wales](mailto:KASEmployabilityandSkillsResearch@gov.wales)

T: 0300 062 8788

## Table of contents

List of figures.....	2
Glossary.....	4
1. Introduction .....	5
2. Case studies for individuals supported.....	7
3. Case studies for businesses supported.....	12
4. Redundancy situation case studies.....	16
5. Conclusion .....	63

## List of figures

Figure 4.1: Satisfaction with overall support available (scale of 0–4, where 4 is very satisfied).....	21
Figure 4.2: The perceived impact of the redundancy on the mental health of those made redundant .....	23
Figure 4.3: The impact of Careers Wales guidance on those that received it .....	26
Figure 4.4: Did Careers Wales support lead people to apply for jobs in different roles and sectors?.....	28
Figure 4.5: Awareness of and participation in ReAct among survey participants.....	29
Figure 4.6: Reasons for not participating in ReAct. Coded responses. Number of respondents .....	29
Figure 4.7: Reasons for not making use of the ReAct Employer Recruitment Support. Coded responses.....	32
Figure 4.8: Participants' perception of the benefit of the course undertaken with the support of the Vocational Training Grant.....	34
Figure 4.9: To what extent did the training course help secure current employment? .....	36
Figure 4.10: Overall perceptions of the value of ReAct on a scale of 0 (low) to 4 (high). Number of respondents.....	37
Figure 4.11: Do you believe that the fact that you were involved in a redundancy had any impact on your mental or physical health? If yes, please describe any impacts that you have experienced. Coded responses .....	44
Figure 4.12: Which of the following support was offered to you after you were told about the redundancy? Please now select the support that you used or events that you attended. Number of responses .....	45
Figure 4.13: Thinking of the ReAct Vocational Training Support, what made you decide to do this particular training? Number of responses, coded .....	46
Figure 4.14: Describe the main way in which you have benefitted as a result of the training. Number of responses, coded .....	47
Figure 4.15: Which of the following best reflects your situation at the moment? Number of responses.....	53
Figure 4.16: Do you believe that the fact that you were involved in a redundancy had any impact on your mental or physical health? Please describe any impacts that you have experienced. Coded responses .....	54
Figure 4.17: Thinking of the ReAct Vocational Training Support, what made you decide to do this particular training? What did you hope to get out of it? Coded .....	55

Figure 4.18: Which of the following best reflects your situation at the moment? .....58

Figure 4.19: Which of the following support was offered to you after you were told about the  
redundancy? Please now select the support that you used or events that you  
attended .....59

## **Glossary**

<b>Acronym/Initialism/Keyword</b>	<b>Definition</b>
CW	Careers Wales
ERS	Employer Recruitment Support
ESF	European Social Fund
ETS	Employer Training Support
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
VOC	Vocational Training

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Welsh Government commissioned Wavehill, working in association with the Learning and Work Institute, to undertake an evaluation of their ReAct programme as it operated from 2015 to the end of 2019 (formally known as ReAct III).
- 1.2 The research for the evaluation, including the case studies in this report, was completed prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Wales in 2020. There is, therefore, no reference made to the impact of the pandemic within the report.
- 1.3 The principal aim of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the ReAct programme for the period in question. The case studies in this report complement the main evaluation report, published on the Welsh Government website.
- 1.4 The case studies are for (a) individuals supported by ReAct, (b) businesses supported, and (c) four instances of redundancies that occurred during the period of evaluation.
- 1.5 The purpose of these case studies is to provide an insight into the programme from a participant perspective, be it a business or an individual. This includes the experience of accessing the programme, as well as the benefit of the support. The redundancy situation case studies then examine and contrast four redundancy situations that took place during the evaluation, covering the nature of the redundancies that took place, the support that was provided, as well as the perceived effectiveness of that support.

### *An overview of the ReAct programme*

- 1.6 The following is a brief overview of the ReAct programme, which is introduced in greater detail within the main evaluation report. It is included here for ease of reference.
- 1.7 ReAct provides support to people who have been made redundant or who are under notice of redundancy. Its objective is to remove barriers to obtaining new employment. There is a focus on responding quickly and positively to redundancy situations through a series of measures designed to alleviate the negative effects of redundancy and provide affected individuals with the skills necessary in order to secure new, sustainable employment in the shortest time possible.

- 1.8 The programme has three strands:
- a) A Vocational Training Grant for people who need to update their skills to return to work.
  - b) Extra support to help remove any barriers to Vocational Training (for reasonable travel, childcare, accommodation, and special equipment for participants with additional needs).
  - c) A contribution to an employer for wages and further help with training costs for recruiting employers.
- 1.9 ReAct is a Welsh Government programme delivered via Careers Wales<sup>1</sup> (CW) who assess the skill level of each redundant worker and match it with skills sought by recruiting employers in the vicinity. Where skills gaps are identified, Careers Wales supports individuals in applying to the Welsh Government for ReAct funding for Vocational Training (VOC) to help update their skills and support their return to work. An employer applies separately, directly to the Welsh Government, for financial support for wages and training costs when they employ an individual supported by ReAct.
- 1.10 ReAct is an all-Wales programme managed and funded by the Welsh Government. The European Social Fund (ESF) funds the delivery of the programme in West Wales and the Valleys, with the Welsh Government exclusively funding it in the rest of Wales.

#### *Structure of the report*

- 1.11 Chapters 2 to 4 present the case studies for individuals supported by the programme, businesses supported, and four examples of redundancies, respectively. Thereafter, chapter 5 draws together the key conclusions that we can draw from the case studies. The methodology used to select and then prepare the case studies is introduced at the beginning of each chapter.

---

<sup>1</sup> Initially through the Skills Gateway for Adults and then via Working Wales, formally launched on 1st May 2019.

## **2. Case studies for individuals supported**

### **Introduction**

- 2.1 The consultation undertaken for this evaluation with individuals supported by ReAct included both a telephone survey and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The telephone survey engaged with 1,155 participants,<sup>2</sup> with in-depth interviews engaging with a further 50 participants (from which the case studies below are drawn).
- 2.2 These case studies were chosen because they each reflect individuals who have engaged with ReAct to gain different forms of employment. Dewi used his training to pursue full-time employment, Helen used her training to seek part-time employment, and Paul used his ReAct support to help himself set up his own business. The names of the individuals concerned have been changed so as to protect their anonymity.

### **Case study one: Dewi**

- 2.3 Dewi worked as a systems manager at a major Welsh university for 17 years. He became redundant after the financial systems department at his university was merged with one from another in order to save money. His redundancy had a major effect on his mental health, and for a long time he was annoyed and angry at the Welsh Government, as well as the university, for allowing the merger to go ahead. His redundancy made him feel that his work, as well as the work of his colleagues of many years, was all for nothing.
- 2.4 Following the redundancy, Dewi found that he lacked the confidence with which to do anything, not just looking for work. However, he stated that talking to the other people who had been made redundant alongside him was helpful. It was his former colleagues who advised Dewi to get in contact with Careers Wales about the ReAct programme, about which, at first, he was sceptical:

“I was sceptical thinking it'd be like careers interviews in schools, and they were brilliant really. I think everybody who was being made redundant [was] automatically referred to Careers Wales.”

---

<sup>2</sup> The ESF Leavers Survey in West Wales and the Valleys and the ReAct participant survey in other parts of Wales (both using the same research tools).

- 2.5 He was reassured by Careers Wales, who talked through the pathways that were available to him as well as how the paperwork and training would work. Following discussion, he decided to undertake service management and project management training.
- 2.6 After completing the training, Dewi secured permanent, full-time employment as an analyst. Dewi described his new job as being similar to his previous work but with some significant differences, including a reduction in salary from £42,000 to £26,000 per year. The survey of ReAct participants found that a reduced salary is not uncommon amongst those who return to employment after having been made redundant. Often this is because the individuals concerned need to find a job as quickly as possible, meaning that they are happy to accept a reduced salary.
- 2.7 Dewi believed that his training through ReAct was important in getting him his job and that it allows him to carry out his job to a higher standard than if he had not undertaken it. Furthermore, he felt that his training allowed him to bring new perspectives to the current processes at work in the business and that, because of this, he had been able to streamline several of them:
- “With regards to service management, my organisation [skill] is poor, so this really helps, and, in my head, I can prioritise issues which others can’t and assess the impact of the things that I do.”
- 2.8 Besides securing employment, Dewi had been able to rebuild the confidence that he lost following his redundancy, and to alleviate the feelings of depression and worthlessness that he was having.
- 2.9 Reflecting upon his experience, he believed that there are several ways in which it could have been improved. Firstly, he felt that it should be compulsory for people undergoing redundancy to have to visit Careers Wales; reflecting back, he thought that this was something that he should have done sooner. Secondly, he felt that the Jobcentre could do more to signpost ReAct as an option to people, because without his co-workers he would not have known about it. Moreover, he believed that the time limit for the application process needs to be lengthened so that people have the time in which to process their redundancy in their minds before engaging with and thinking about their next steps.<sup>3</sup> Such a view was also expressed by

---

<sup>3</sup> Applicants must have become unemployed within the last three months as a result of redundancy to be eligible for support.

stakeholders interviewed as part of the evaluation, as discussed in the main evaluation report.

### **Case study two: Helen**

- 2.10 Helen had been a community development worker for 11 years before being made redundant. She knew that the funding for the post was coming to an end, so when she was made redundant she was happy to move on.
- 2.11 There was much discussion around her office about what people were going to do next and what support was available; it was at this point that she found out about the ReAct programme from a colleague who had been conducting some research of their own.
- 2.12 She got in contact with Careers Wales and, after a discussion about potential career paths, decided to undertake a teacher training course as well as a glass-working course. Helen selected these because she had always been interested in crafts and creative media and hoped that she could find work in this sort of area.
- 2.13 At the time of the interview, Helen was employed part-time by a charity as an art tutor. She originally joined the charity on a fixed-term contract, but that had subsequently developed into a permanent role.
- 2.14 For Helen, working part-time was an active choice so that she could spend more time with her grandchildren. This had an impact on her income, but she was happy with her decision to try to manage on a lower salary, as she was at an age at which she is eligible to receive her pension to support her financially. On top of this, she worked as a 'supporting artist' to earn extra money.
- 2.15 Beyond allowing her to secure a job, 'passing' the course itself proved to be something of which Helen was proud, and she was very grateful to have been given an opportunity to expand her knowledge via the training funded by ReAct.
- 2.16 Helen felt that she was able to use most of what she had learned from the training as part of her current work. The teacher training, in particular, had helped her to develop workshops, design teaching plans, and improve the quality of what she would have been able to offer otherwise:

"I definitely wouldn't be in my post. I was taken on in good faith, as I knew people from the past and they had faith in me. But I had to prove it to the rest of the company. The artistic side of my work has benefitted me and my confidence."

2.17 Helen believed that ReAct needs to be promoted more widely, as it could be of benefit to many people, some of whom may not be aware of it:

“Everyone needs to know it’s available and it’s there. I can’t remember the moment I found out, but it was probably a shock. There’s lots of redundancies going on at the moment — communication and promotion of this is needed.”

2.18 For Helen, the most significant benefit was not the job itself, but rather the additional benefits that the job brought with it. These included greater flexibility, lower stress levels, and the ability to spend more time supporting her family, which she may not have been able to do otherwise:

“The family now have a happy mum and nana to support them in their roles. My life is now flexible and I’m in control — I can choose what to do and what not to do. I’m on a low income but happy, as there’s not a lot at my age you need but don’t have. I chose to be supportive of my family and friends. There is too much stress in this world — my life is now stress-free.”

### **Case study three: Paul**

2.19 Paul worked for 10 years as a health and safety officer for a care company. His job involved training, auditing, and conducting various risk assessments. It became apparent to him that the organisation was seeking to cut back on staff numbers; therefore, he decided to accept voluntary redundancy.

2.20 In the lead-up to his redundancy, Paul decided that he wanted to set up his own business, providing sports massage treatments, and explored the training and qualifications that he would require in order to start his practice.

2.21 He became aware of ReAct after seeing a poster in his local library which encouraged him to go online to gain more information about the support available. This led him to Careers Wales and their advice and guidance:

“I didn’t get any advice about relevant work, because most people who do massage are all self-employed. They let me know about jobs that were similar to my previous work, but at that point I didn’t want to go back.”

2.22 Paul undertook a course in acupuncture. This was something that he had previously considered, to add to his skillset. Paul was pleased to find out that the course would take less time than he had anticipated. The reason as to why he had not taken the course previously was mainly that of the price being too high for him to afford. He

also wanted to train in cosmetic therapy in order to be able to help rehabilitate people who have suffered a stroke; however, he was informed that because this was classed as a 'beauty course', it could not be funded by ReAct.<sup>4</sup>

- 2.23 Having completed the training, Paul currently works two days per week from the treatment practice that he runs at home and three days per week as a manual handling and first aid trainer. He believed that his training has been very beneficial to his business, and felt able to treat more people and offer better results due to the training. Additionally, the training had helped his customers to feel "more at ease" while receiving treatment, which was extremely important to him.
- 2.24 Paul described himself as being much happier and less stressed in his new career, and stated that by splitting his working week as he had, he felt as though he was spending only three days at work and two days doing something that he enjoys.
- 2.25 Overall, Paul's experience with ReAct was a positive one that led to positive outcomes for him and his family. He believed that, as was the case with him, ReAct has the potential to improve not only the employability of those who engage with it but also their mental well-being:

"I went in with nothing, so everything I got was a bonus — it was brilliant. You feel like a bag of [expletive] when you're laid off, but that meeting with ReAct and finding out what was available changed all that."

---

<sup>4</sup> Labour market information forms a vital part of the consideration of ReAct grant applications. Decisions may be made from time to time to refuse grants for certain training where there is evidence that job prospects in those sectors are poor.

### **3. Case studies for businesses supported**

#### **Introduction**

- 3.1 The consultation undertaken for the evaluation with businesses supported included both a survey (70 responses) and in-depth follow-up interviews (15 responses), with both elements being undertaken in October–November 2018. The consultation with businesses focused on a range of issues, including their engagement with the programme and the benefit that they had derived as a result of the support provided.
- 3.2 The case studies in this chapter are based on the in-depth interviews and show how businesses in different stages of their development, and with different needs, have been able to utilise the support that ReAct is able to provide. Business A is an established company which was not intending to employ any new members of staff before becoming aware of ReAct. Business B, on the other hand, is a newer business who was aware of ReAct for a while and had been actively seeking to recruit new members of staff.

#### **Business A, Pembrokeshire**

- 3.3 Business A is a rural retreat in Pembrokeshire, West Wales. The estate operates as a venue for music, weddings, and private and corporate events, as well as having on-site accommodation. Furthermore, the business seeks to promote arts and culture in West Wales through events and activities. They currently employ three members of staff in addition to the owner.
- 3.4 The business came to hear about the ReAct programme after being approached by an individual who had been made redundant. The main survey of businesses for the evaluation found that this was typical of how many employers come to learn about ReAct support. After being introduced to the programme, the business operators were surprised and pleased to hear more about what ReAct could offer, with much of the information that the business received about ReAct support coming directly from the individual whom they were considering employing.
- 3.5 The business did not recruit very often due to the small number of employees, who also typically stay with the business for a long time. However, when the potential employee approached the company, discussions had taken place about taking on another member of staff.

- 3.6 It was decided that, with the ReAct support, the candidate would be employed on a full-time basis. If ReAct support had not been available, Business A was unsure as to whether or not another employee would have been taken on.
- 3.7 Following this decision to engage with the candidate, they found the application process for the support to be easy. Business A applied for and received Employer Recruitment Support (ERS).
- 3.8 In addition to the obvious financial benefits, the extra member of staff increased capacity and allowed the team to focus on a more specific area of work than had been possible beforehand. Previously, the small team was required to be multifunctional and focus on a number of different priorities. The new employee was able to focus specifically on setting up and promoting memberships as well as activities happening in the area, resulting in a more targeted approach to promotional activities and engaging with audiences more effectively:
- “We have targeted audience and promotion much better than before. It has massively improved the way that we engage with audiences.”
- 3.9 Business A also took advantage of Employer Training Support (ETS). Prior to ReAct, basic training was provided in areas such as health and safety, hygiene, and so on. However, the ReAct funding allowed the company to provide a more comprehensive training offer to their new employee, enabling them to undertake a number of one- and two-day courses.
- 3.10 The employee also attended group sessions to encourage Welsh-speaking social media training and a number of other events in the local area. This was considered to be beneficial because it assisted the employee in becoming more proficient in their role. Moreover, it served as a useful networking exercise, providing Business A with an opportunity to make contact and develop links with neighbouring organisations.
- 3.11 Overall, the business’ experience with the ReAct programme was positive. Queries were dealt with promptly and they believed that contact with the programme team was sufficient. The support enabled their small company to expand their team and, in doing so, allowed them to increase their capacity to promote and engage with audiences in a way that they feel is much better than they were previously able to do.

## **Business B, Flintshire**

- 3.12 Business B operates in the aerospace industry, performing mechanical servicing, upgrades, and modifications to business jets. The business was formed following the closure of a larger aerospace company, when a number of existing employees who were being made redundant decided that they had the relevant skills and experience with which to form a new company.
- 3.13 Pivotal to the successful formation of the new company was ensuring the retention of members of staff from the closing business. This is where support from ReAct was utilised. The company currently has more than 40 employees, 12 of whom were employed using ReAct support.
- 3.14 Business B was made aware of ReAct due to a member of staff's involvement with a sector representative organisation. Following initial contact, discussions took place with the Welsh Government, which helped to highlight how the ReAct support could benefit the business. It was these discussions that led to the decision to pursue ReAct support.
- 3.15 Time was an important factor when considering whether to proceed with the support offered by ReAct, as it was important to secure employment of the highly skilled employees from the company that was closing down. The workers possessed a specialist skillset and it was of the utmost importance to retain as many employees as possible in order to ensure a smooth transition from the closing business to the new one.
- 3.16 The business successfully applied for Employer Recruitment Support, which provided financial assistance with which to recruit ReAct participants. The company had hoped that more employees could be supported. However, the time constraints and the speed at which the new company was established meant that it was unable to apply for as many people to use ReAct as they had initially intended. When interviewed, the company referred to the application process for Employer Recruitment Support as, in their opinion, being overly burdensome:
- “The process was difficult. It was quite archaic: doing one form for every single person.”

- 3.17 The company felt that the ability to complete multiple applications at once or an online system might have made the process more streamlined and less time-intensive for their administrative staff. This may have been a contributing factor as to why the company did not seek ReAct support for as many employees as they initially intended; however, this was not made explicit during the interview.
- 3.18 At the time, the additional financial support provided through Employer Recruitment Support helped with cash flow during the critical opening few months of trading as a new business and assisted with getting Business B up and running. In addition, they recognised the ReAct support to be an important factor in enabling the company to keep their skilled workers in employment in Wales, and averted redundancies leading to long periods of unemployment.
- 3.19 The other forms of support provided by ReAct were not used by the company. When asked to expand on the reasons for not taking advantage of Employer Training Support, the company felt that they were not in the position to specify the type of training that each recruit required, and believed that high levels of training had already been delivered to employees whilst in their post within the previous organisation. Top-up training for employees could have been delivered to those who required it. Under the programme's eligibility criteria, however, 50 per cent of the costs would have needed to come from their own funds, and it was not deemed to be a priority at that time.

## 4. Redundancy situation case studies

### Introduction

- 4.1 One of the early findings of the evaluation was that each redundancy scenario is unique in many respects, depending on a range of factors such as the sector of the business in question, its location, and the types of jobs that were being made redundant. The methodology for the evaluation was therefore adapted in order to examine in more detail a number of specific redundancies that took place during the lifetime of the research.
- 4.2 The research undertaken for each case study is introduced at the beginning of each one below. The approach was slightly different depending on the characteristics of the redundancy in question and the availability of data, such as the contact details for the individuals involved and the availability of stakeholders to be interviewed. Each case study, however, included a mix of surveys and in-depth follow-up interviews to explore certain issues in more detail.
- 4.3 A key difference in the fieldwork for these case studies in comparison to that undertaken for the main survey of participants for the evaluation was that the case studies included consultation with individuals who had not engaged with ReAct as well as those who had done. Furthermore, the consultations with participants were undertaken closer to the time of the redundancy than were the interviews for the main survey (which were undertaken at least 12 months after the individual had started the training course that had been funded by ReAct). In total, the case studies involved consultation with 180 individuals made redundant.

### **Tesco House, Cardiff**

#### *Background*

- 4.4 On 21st June 2017, Tesco announced that it was closing its call centre in Cardiff, i.e. Tesco House. The decision came as Tesco consolidated its Customer Engagement Centres into one site in Dundee, Scotland. Although 250 jobs were created in Dundee for which staff in Cardiff could apply, more than 1,100 jobs in Cardiff were lost as a result of the redundancy. The announcement was made six months in advance of the closure of the site, with Tesco House finally closing on 20th February 2018.

## *Methodology*

- 4.5 This case study was conducted using three key research methods:
- a) Stakeholder interviews
  - b) A survey of individuals involved in the redundancy
  - c) In-depth follow-up interviews with some of those individuals
- 4.6 Contacts for the survey were provided by Careers Wales, meaning that all of those engaged in this element of the research had some contact with that organisation. Careers Wales provided 495 contacts, 482 of whom included sufficient information (i.e. an email address or telephone number) with which to be contacted. The contacts provided were emailed directly by the research team and provided with a link to the online survey.
- 4.7 Response rates were relatively low, with 51 of the potential 482 contacts provided by Careers Wales responding to the survey (i.e. a response rate of 11%). This is a potential limitation of the case study, given that there is a significant likelihood that the survey sample will not be representative of the redundancy as a whole.
- 4.8 Participants in the online survey were subsequently asked whether they would be willing to be re-contacted to take part in in-depth telephone interviews. A total of 16 interviews were completed.

## *The support provided*

- 4.9 The announcement of the redundancy provoked a rapid reaction from the Welsh Government. On 22nd June 2017, the government's intention to convene a taskforce (drawing together a range of relevant and local stakeholders) to deal with the redundancy was announced. The wide-ranging package of support put in place to provide support to the workers at Tesco House included:
- advice on writing CVs, job interviews, and job hunting (e.g. using job search websites)
  - information about employers with current vacancies
  - help in coping with the stress and/or the other mental health impacts of redundancy
  - advice and guidance on future career options (e.g. different kinds of jobs that they could do or sectors in which they could work)
  - advice and guidance on training and education opportunities

- advice and guidance on self-employment
- advice and guidance on financial matters (e.g. advice on managing money, pensions, and claiming benefits)
- job fairs (i.e. events in which individuals could talk directly to employers who were recruiting)
- support from the ReAct programme.

4.10 It is important to understand the scale of the support that was provided in response to the Tesco House redundancy and the amount of resource that was committed to it. Thirty-five information sessions for employees were delivered on-site by the team (including Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff), with 10 days of group sessions including 20 employees each. In addition to the group sessions, one-to-one consultations with Careers Wales advisors were available at Tesco House. These were described as being booked ‘back-to-back’ and ‘all day, every day’, involving four or five career advisors every day. Of the 1,100 workers who were made redundant, it is estimated that 1,060 (96%) received one-to-one sessions with Careers Wales advisors.

4.11 Job fairs were held over two weeks in November and two weeks in January 2018, with up to 42 employers from the South Wales contact centre sector attending between November and January. The Welsh Government’s ReAct team approved 151 ReAct Vocational Training and nine Employer Recruitment Support applications following the redundancy.

4.12 As well as the support available on-site, the material was made available for those unable to attend. For example, an online version of the presentation provided to staff on-site by Careers Wales advisors and colleagues was made available to those whose jobs left them unable to attend, as well as to ‘homeworkers’ being made redundant. Moreover, Careers Wales provided a ‘train the trainer’ session for Tesco staff who would be delivering training sessions on CV development for their colleagues.

*Stakeholder perceptions of the support available*

4.13 The timing of the announcement, i.e. more than six months before the closure, was considered to be advantageous in two ways: there was a great deal of time in which to put measures in place (in many instances, little, if any, notice is provided by employers, making it difficult to put a comprehensive package of support in place),

and it provided time for relationships to be established, most importantly with Tesco, to enable the support to be delivered as effectively as possible.

4.14 Among the stakeholders, including the taskforce, perceptions of the support offered were generally very positive. They suggested that the package was very comprehensive, the various elements of the support dovetailed well with one another, and the cooperation amongst the partners involved was also effective (due to a track record of working in this way).

4.15 Stakeholders indicated that the taskforce had many strengths, including partnership working, the speed at which it worked, and the reassurance that it provided for people who were made redundant.

4.16 Stakeholders did not always agree on the strengths of the package. Some respondents highlighted the job fairs as being a highlight of the package; meanwhile, others identified the narrow focus on contact centres as being a weakness of the approach:

“The main strength was the job fairs on-site. This gave a real opportunity for people to get straight back into work and I know that a number of employers who attended the fairs recruited staff.”

“If I were to change anything about the response, I would have broadened job fairs to include other job roles other than contact centres. I heard lots of people were critical that it was only other call centres in the job fairs.”

4.17 Another prominent theme that emerged through stakeholder interviews was that the scale of the redundancy (i.e. the number of people involved) led to a more concerted, coordinated approach than would otherwise have been the case:

“The size of the redundancy was a big strength in a way. This was one of the largest redundancies I’ve dealt with. I’m more used to dealing with redundancies of 20, 30, 50 people [...]. The size meant that it was a big priority for the Welsh Government. Because it was high-profile, it was so multiagency. This was much bigger than in small-scale redundancies, where support is really provided only by the unions, Careers Wales, and JCP.”

“In terms of its package, I’d say it was more effective than smaller, less high-profile redundancies I’ve been involved in, simply because of the number of

agencies involved. Lots of redundancies see 20 people go and (at best) we have one careers advisor in for half a day.”

- 4.18 Several stakeholders noted that whilst all redundancies are challenging, the Tesco House redundancy was ‘less challenging’ than other large-scale redundancies that have occurred in Wales. This was because the individuals concerned were relatively highly skilled and Cardiff offered more alternative employment opportunities than would other parts of Wales.
- 4.19 Other redundancies in other parts of Wales are likely to be more challenging in respect of finding equivalent alternative employment opportunities quickly and therefore, arguably, be more justified in respect of the level of intervention/support provided. However, the general view was that there should not be any prioritisation or differentiation between instances of redundancy.
- 4.20 One particularly interesting insight emerging from the stakeholder interviews is a perception that Tesco perhaps was not expecting the level of engagement that the redundancy received from the taskforce. Tesco management seemed to be more used to dealing with Jobcentre Plus as a primary point of contact (rather than with a wider multiagency approach):
- “I wouldn’t change much, because I think, eventually, the right decisions were made, but maybe we could have sat down earlier with the taskforce. I think in the early stages of the redundancy, Tesco tried to sort things out on a one-on-one basis with JCP, an approach which might work in England, but it certainly doesn’t in Wales. In the end, when everyone was involved, we changed a few things, such as giving staff time off for things like one-to-one interviews, and if we’d done this earlier we would have been more effective because we ran out of time to do one-to-one interviews with everyone.”
- 4.21 Positive comments from stakeholders, especially those more directly involved in the provision of support, about the relationship with Tesco included a desire on the part of Tesco to provide effective support to employees being made redundant and the positive impact that had on the ability to deliver support via Careers Wales advisors ‘on-site’, which Careers Wales described as being crucial.
- 4.22 A perceived limitation of the offer was that it was too focused on getting people into work in the call centre sector (specifically in respect of the job fairs), with an insufficient focus on moving people into employment in another sector. However,

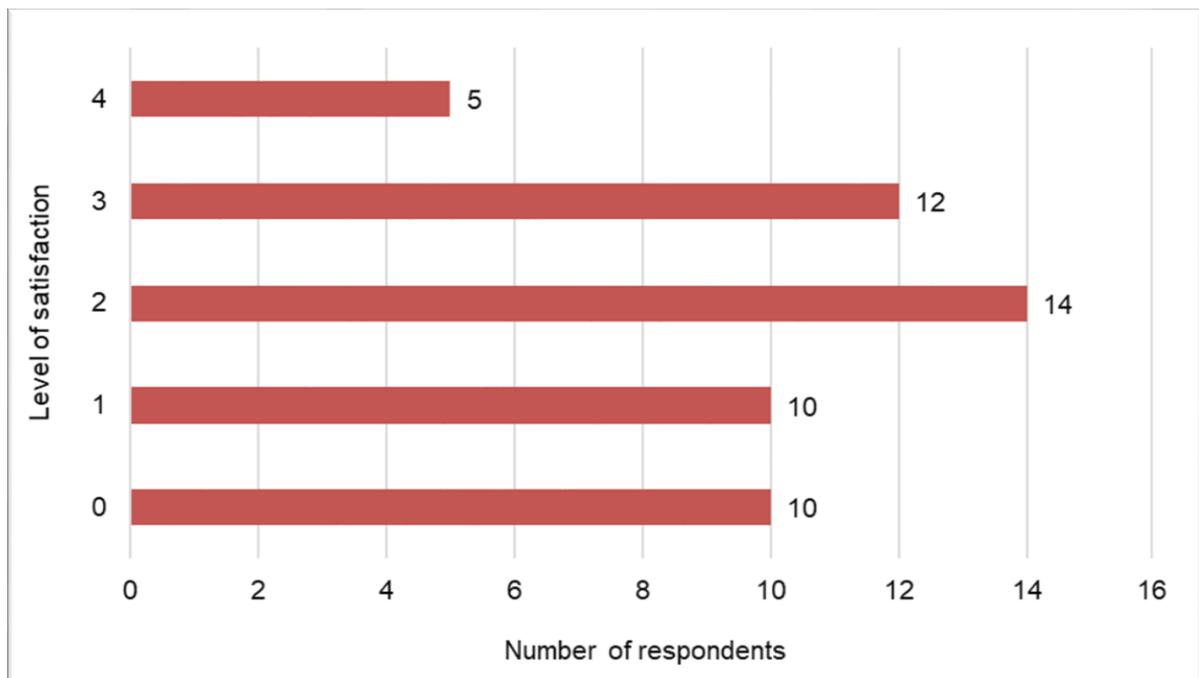
Careers Wales staff stressed that their approach was ‘led by the individual’ (rather than by any other agenda).

4.23 Another suggestion was that the response could have been more ambitious by, for example, attempting to draw employers to Cardiff by promoting the availability of a ready-trained workforce and the employer support potentially available via ReAct.

*The views of individuals affected*

4.24 Perceptions of the support offered were generally positive among stakeholders. However, the level of satisfaction with the support was more mixed among those to whom it was offered (i.e. participants). When asked to rate the offer on a scale of 0 (not at all satisfied) to 4 (very satisfied), 20 respondents rated the response as 0 or 1, whereas 17 respondents rated the response as 3 or 4 (see Figure 4.1 below).

**Figure 4.1: Satisfaction with overall support available (scale of 0–4, where 4 is very satisfied)**



All respondents, n=51

4.25 Respondents were asked about what support they were aware of, with all respondents (n=51) reporting that they were aware of ReAct. Awareness of CV-writing workshops (n=43), job fairs (n=44) and interview support (n=38) was also good, but awareness of the more specific guidance was much lower: careers guidance (n=6), guidance on training and education opportunities (n=13), and guidance on self-employment (n=3). Usage of these services followed this pattern,

with many more respondents making use of support with CV writing, job fairs, and interview support than the more specific guidance available.

4.26 In addition to this quantitative data, qualitative data was collected that focused on what additional support recipients would have liked to have been provided. While the responses received were very mixed, several key themes emerge from the data.

4.27 Firstly, there was a perception among some former employees that Tesco management could have done more to ensure that staff were able to make the best use of the support on offer (n=5). There was a perception that support sessions were sometimes held when certain staff members could not attend, such as staff members on night shifts (although Careers Wales noted that they did seek to accommodate this and provide an online alternative), and others were not given leave from manning phones to attend job fairs. This aligns with stakeholder concerns surrounding access to job fairs for employees:

“With hindsight, we needed to make sure that Tesco gave people the chance to visit the new employers who came to the sites. There were issues with break-only visits, which were particularly difficult for smokers and people with disabilities, and there were also some problems with Tesco only allowing three companies on-site at one time.”

4.28 Another common criticism of the support in place was that the support with writing CVs and with job interviews was provided by in-house Tesco staff, all of whom were themselves facing redundancy (n=4). To try to address this, ‘train the trainer’ sessions were provided by Careers Wales for the Tesco trainers. Despite this, however, there remained a perception among some respondents that they were promised help from external training providers that never materialised.

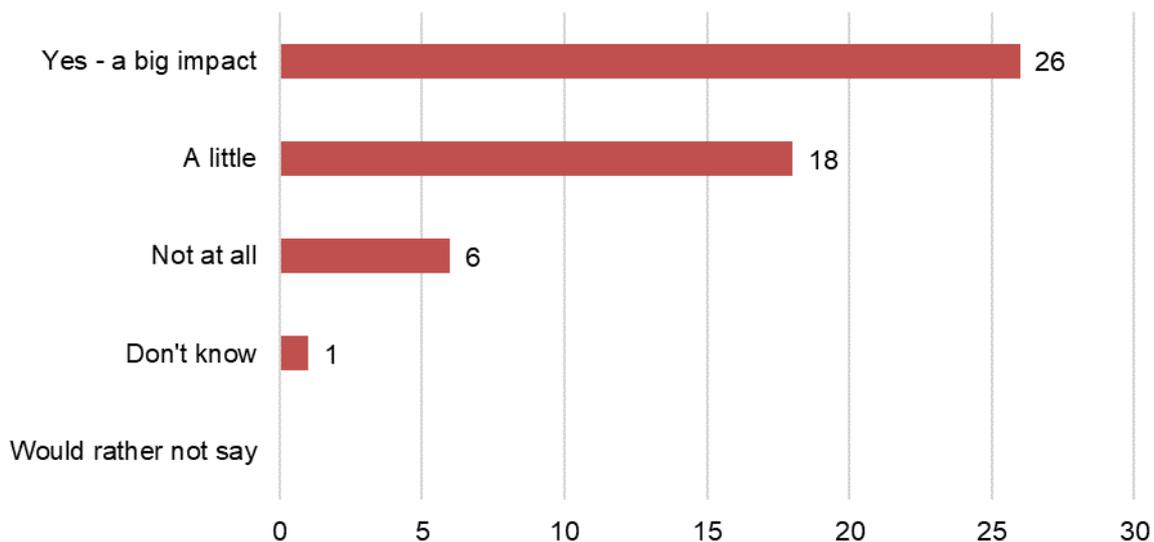
4.29 Another common theme within this qualitative data was that the support was not tailored to help users make proactive steps towards finding employment in new sectors or roles. Several respondents reported that while training opportunities were available, they thought that the support did not start early enough to allow them to retrain before the Tesco redundancy took place (n=4).

4.30 In addition, several respondents felt that the support did not provide enough opportunities for employees to move into different sectors of the economy or into different roles within contact centres (n=5). Rather, much of the support — particularly, for example, the on-site job fairs — was oriented towards getting those

made redundant into other call centre jobs in the South Wales area. As previously noted, similar concerns were expressed by some stakeholders, although the majority were, it is important to note, satisfied with the support provided.

- 4.31 One area in which there is potential to add to the support package is that of the mental and physical health support provided to individuals. Redundancy had an impact on the mental and physical health of those made redundant, as evidenced by the fact that 44 respondents to the online survey reported some impact on their mental or physical health (see Figure 4.2) because of the redundancy. This is consistent with the findings of other research for the evaluation, as discussed in the main report.
- 4.32 At the same time, only three respondents reported being made aware of where they could receive help with coping with stress and other mental health aspects of redundancy, an offer that no respondents reported taking up.

**Figure 4.2: The perceived impact of the redundancy on the mental health of those made redundant**



All respondents, n=51. Y-axis equals the number of respondents

- 4.33 The qualitative data with regard to this shows that for a substantial number of individuals involved in the redundancy, there were mental health impacts. Examples of the effects felt by those made redundant included depression, increased alcohol consumption, memory loss, suicidal thoughts, and decreased exercise:

“I got exceptionally depressed and couldn’t sleep [...]. I suppose I mentally reached rock bottom before I could move on.”

“I drank a lot of alcohol and was quite low as a result of the redundancy.”

“I suffered from severe depression and had suicidal thoughts. I increased my alcohol consumption, decreased exercise, and ate more unhealthily. I wasn’t taking care of my physical or mental well-being due to concerns over my future, my loss of my livelihood, and loss of so many close colleagues.”

“It’s hard to put in a few words, but the redundancy had a massive impact on my mental health. It took me three months to sort my head out with the aid of tablets from the doctor, which I didn’t want to take but I was very low.”

4.34 The qualitative data also indicates that perceptions of what mental health support was on offer, let alone its efficacy, vary greatly:

“There was support. There were a number of drop-in sessions, but I only went there once. There were counsellors at the sessions, and they had all been trained, but they were all so young. They don’t understand what I’m going through or the pressures I have in my life — they are too young to understand hardship.”

“I had to rely on my family and friends, as no counsellors were available. The only thing I received was the number for the Samaritans, which really isn’t right for that type of scenario.”

“For mental health, no, there wasn’t enough support. The only thing they did was open a room called the space. You could put in a code to have 10 mins. to yourself, but I don’t count that as support. The thing is, though, is that we were all in the same position. With the call sector work I was doing, it was actually easier for the support team to find new work than the managers and they were the ones who would normally be providing the support. Everyone needed support; they couldn’t support each other, because we were all in the same boat all throughout the structure. I think external support should have been provided. I don’t know what support would have been needed at that point, but managers were also getting fired as they were doing other redundancies. There was a point where they tried to set up games on the top floor to keep morale up, but at that point we didn’t need fun — we needed emotional support.”

4.35 At the same time, it is worth noting that this was not a deficiency identified by the majority of stakeholders, who (when pressed) suggested that there was sufficient support in place with respect to the mental health impacts of the redundancy.

4.36 The views of one stakeholder on the monitoring and evaluation of the support being provided are important to note. Whilst positive about the support provided, this stakeholder was concerned that there was little (if any) real-time monitoring or evaluation of the support as it was delivered:

“What was delivered was fantastic, but was there headspace to think about it? No [...]. It was just a matter of getting on with it [...]. There was no space to try different things.”

4.37 The concern from this stakeholder was that there was no questioning (until this ex post evaluation) of whether the support being provided was the correct support, whether it was having the desired outcome, who was using the support available, who was not using the support available, and so on. In other words, there was a focus on outputs (e.g. the number of people being supported) as opposed to outcomes (i.e. the difference that the support was making).

4.38 Having examined the package as a whole, as well as users’ perceptions of the overall offer made following the redundancy, the next sections examine some of the key aspects of the support offered, as well as users’ perceptions of these services in particular.

#### *Careers Wales guidance*

4.39 Tesco House employees were offered specific, one-to-one career guidance from a Careers Wales advisor as part of the support provided. Of those who responded to the online survey (51), 39 reported receiving Careers Wales support.

4.40 This is a surprising finding. Given that the research team received the list of contacts from Careers Wales, it would be reasonable to assume that all respondents had made use of Careers Wales’ services. This could be an issue of awareness or recall among participants, or it could be that respondents had not received one-to-one support from Careers Wales during the process.

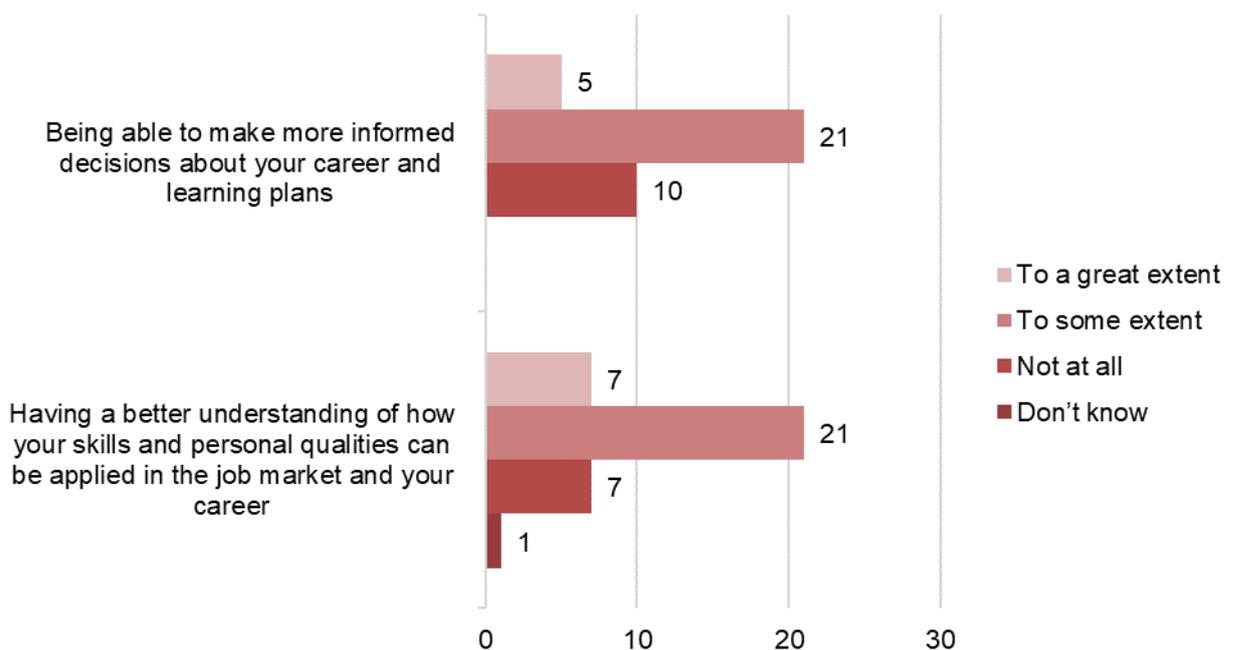
4.41 It is also possible that respondents understood ‘receiving Careers Wales guidance’ to mean one-to-one interviews with Careers Wales staff. Due to resource limitations, not all staff received this support; therefore, it may be that respondents are indicating that they had contact with Careers Wales, albeit not a one-to-one interview.

4.42 Those who received advisory support from Careers Wales were generally positive, with Figure 4.3 indicating that the majority of respondents who received Careers Wales guidance felt that it gave them a better understanding of how their skills and personal qualities could be applied to the job market and their career (n=28), as well as making them better able to make informed decisions about their careers and learning plans (n=26). This is supported by much of the qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews:

“They were great, very clear, and helpful and they gave me good suggestions about training providers who would be able to provide the courses I was interested in.”

“The Careers Wales advisor was lovely and really helpful. I told him what course I wanted to do [...] he helped me put the pack together, but also asked me what my backup plan was and found me an HR course I could do if the other course fell through. They were really informative.”

**Figure 4.3: The impact of Careers Wales guidance on those that received it**



All respondents who received Careers Wales guidance, n=36. Y-axis equals the number of respondents

4.43 Despite this generally positive response, a small but not insignificant minority of respondents were critical of the Careers Wales guidance that they were given, suggesting that Careers Wales advisors were keen to see them return to work in the contact centre industry even when they did not want to.

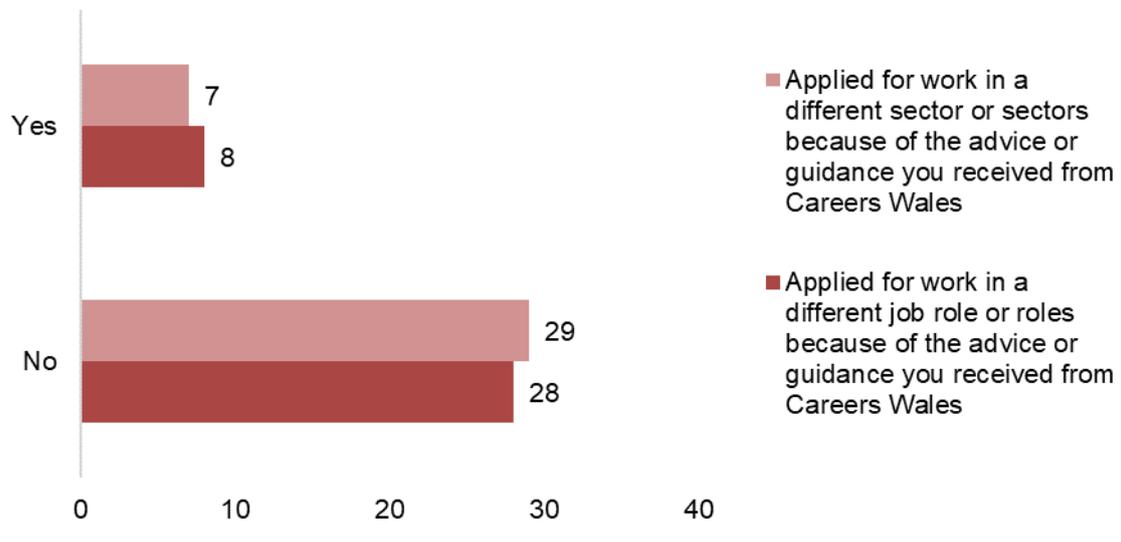
- 4.44 What is more, a small minority suggested that their advisor funnelled them into certain training schemes without making them aware of the wider range on offer, or that the advisors did not have sufficient knowledge of specific areas of training:
- “The first person I spoke to at Careers Wales wasn’t very good. I said I didn’t want to continue doing call centre work and [the advisor] just advised me to go to Pitman Training, but I didn’t want to do that. I then spoke with someone else after I had started the training and they said it’s not just Pitman you can do training with — you can do anything. I also hadn’t known that I was entitled to the training support money.”
- 4.45 It is important to consider this feedback within the context of the type of support provided by a Careers Wales advisor. The advisors described themselves as being ‘independent’, providing advice with no agenda that they are required to push. Inevitably, at times, the individual may not agree with the advice being provided, which may have contributed, at least in part, to the negative feedback that was provided. Furthermore, it is important to note that Careers Wales advisors were not able to comment on specific cases; therefore, the evaluation team were unable to consider Careers Wales advisors’ perspectives on these complaints.
- 4.46 While respondents who received Careers Wales guidance generally reported that this gave them a better understanding of how their skills and personal qualities could be applied to the job market, it did not lead to a high proportion of these participants applying for work in different job roles or sectors. This matches the findings of the main survey of participants for this evaluation, as discussed in the main evaluation report.
- 4.47 As Figure 4.4 indicates, a small number of participants who received the advice applied for jobs in different sectors or job roles as a result of receiving Careers Wales guidance. It is important to recognise, however, that given the remit of Careers Wales’ involvement in the taskforce, we should not necessarily expect Careers Wales advice to have led to these outcomes; therefore, this finding should not be taken as a particular weakness of Careers Wales’ involvement in the taskforce.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, it is important to recognise that given the small size of the

---

<sup>5</sup> As previously noted, the role of a Careers Wales advisor is to provide independent and impartial career information, advice and guidance. The focus is, therefore, not on encouraging participants to apply for employment in a different sector unless that is appropriate for their circumstances as well as for other factors such as the local employment market and so on. Judging the effectiveness of the support provided on that basis would therefore not be appropriate.

survey sample, this experience is not necessarily representative of all those who received Careers Wales advice.

**Figure 4.4: Did Careers Wales support lead people to apply for jobs in different roles and sectors?**



All respondents who received Careers Wales guidance, n=36. Y-axis equals the number of respondents

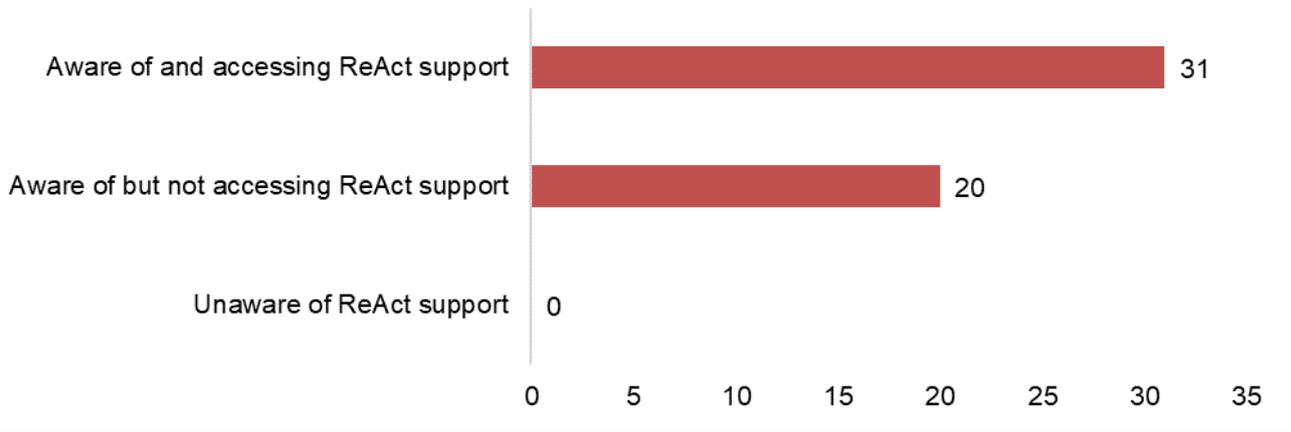
4.48 Careers Wales support was obviously limited by the availability of resources. Careers Wales aimed to conduct one-to-one interviews with all staff prior to the site closing; this was not possible because of resource limitations. Moreover, stakeholders reported that (ideally) Careers Wales would have been more involved in the delivery of CV and interview training; due to the limited resources available to them, however, training ended up being delivered by in-house Tesco staff, although Careers Wales did provide ‘train the trainer’ support.

#### *ReAct support*

4.49 The support available via ReAct appears to have been well publicised as part of the redundancy, as everyone who responded to the online survey conducted in July 2018 was aware of the support available through the scheme (n=51). The fact that all respondents had contact with Careers Wales does, however, need to be taken into account; we cannot state what the level of awareness was amongst Tesco House staff more generally.

4.50 As indicated in Figure 4.5, of these respondents, 31 reported accessing this support, with 20 respondents not making use of the scheme.

**Figure 4.5: Awareness of and participation in ReAct among survey participants**



All respondents, n=51. Y-axis equals the number of respondents

4.51 When pressed about why they had not made (or were not making) use of ReAct support, a variety of answers were given, as indicated in Figure 4.6. The most common responses were that respondents wanted to return to work as soon as possible (n=6) and that they felt as though additional training was not needed for them to find work (n=5). Of the ‘other’ responses given (n=6), the qualitative data collected in response to this question indicates that some respondents had personal circumstances that made it impossible for them to take part in ReAct (n=2), while two others were not interested in any of the support offered through ReAct (n=2).

**Figure 4.6: Reasons for not participating in ReAct. Coded responses. Number of respondents**



Respondents not participating in ReAct (multiple selections permitted), n=20

4.52 The qualitative data collected by means of in-depth interviews with participants indicates that some people wanted to return to work as soon as possible and were put off by the time taken to complete training:

“I went to the ReAct meeting and there was confusion about what it could do for you. It was interesting to find out about but all I really wanted to do was find a new job that was similar to my old one. They didn’t have a database that you could search through to look for jobs [...] that’s all I really needed, but they said you have to do that side of it off your own back [...]. I thought after that first ReAct meeting that it wasn’t right for me and then found my job and applied for it of my own accord.”

“I didn’t have a clear goal job in mind, didn’t want to narrow my focus to one career, and [didn’t want to take time doing a course because I might] risk missing other opportunities.”

4.53 A small minority of respondents stated that they were put off by Careers Wales from taking up any of the training opportunities available through ReAct. There were three different ways in which this small minority of respondents put off by Careers Wales were discouraged. One theme is that for some people the Careers Wales advice was overly focused on returning to work in the contact centre sector:

“The careers advisor was extremely negative about anything that I wanted to do. [The advisor] basically said to just apply for call centres and save the taxpayers money. I felt very deflated after my meeting.”

4.54 For others, the process did not give specific advice tailored to the career goals of participants, either placing the onus on recipients to choose a course or promoting a few basic courses:

“The CW advisor said you needed to find what you wanted to study off your own back and then they could say if they could fund it or not. I didn’t want to do that and I don’t need a Microsoft course (which is the one course they seemed to be pushing).”

4.55 These respondents seemed to want an intermediate level of support, which did not leave responsibility with participants to find a course that they wanted to take, provided advice based on what they wanted to achieve, but was not overly prescriptive in pushing participants to particular courses.

4.56 In other cases, small numbers of participants stated that the Careers Wales talks and one-to-one sessions put them off participating with ReAct, with Careers Wales not selling the support effectively to potential participants:

“I didn’t take up ReAct after the discussions I had with [Careers] Wales, which were a complete waste of time. It was too heavy on what funds are available and their benefits, and reading the stuff [...] is all drip, drip, drip of funds. If funds are there to help, I think it should come a lot sooner than being offered.”

4.57 In addition to issues surrounding how effectively Careers Wales sold the training to participants, a small number of potential users stated that they did not take up the support because they were told that they would not be allowed to take courses online:

“I ended up not using ReAct as it was too rigid. For example, too much notice was required before starting a course and this doesn’t really reflect our modern, fast-moving times. Also, for what I wanted to do, IT, most courses (all except basic IT, really) are online [...] I was told this wasn’t an option for ReAct.”<sup>6</sup>

4.58 Another reason given for not using ReAct support, although it is important to recognise that it was not a common one, was that the timescale for doing a course funded through ReAct was too tight:

“ReAct involved a lot of jumping through hoops and you had to do it in a certain timescale. It was bureaucratic and too complicated. They also don’t appreciate that people work in different timescales. I couldn’t do the training because of the timing — I needed to look after my children. Now that they have gone back to school, I do have the time, but it’s too late now.”

### *ReAct participants*

4.59 Among those who participated in ReAct, the most used element of the programme was the Vocational Training Support, with 26 of the 31 respondents reporting that they had made use of the support. Only two respondents reported that their

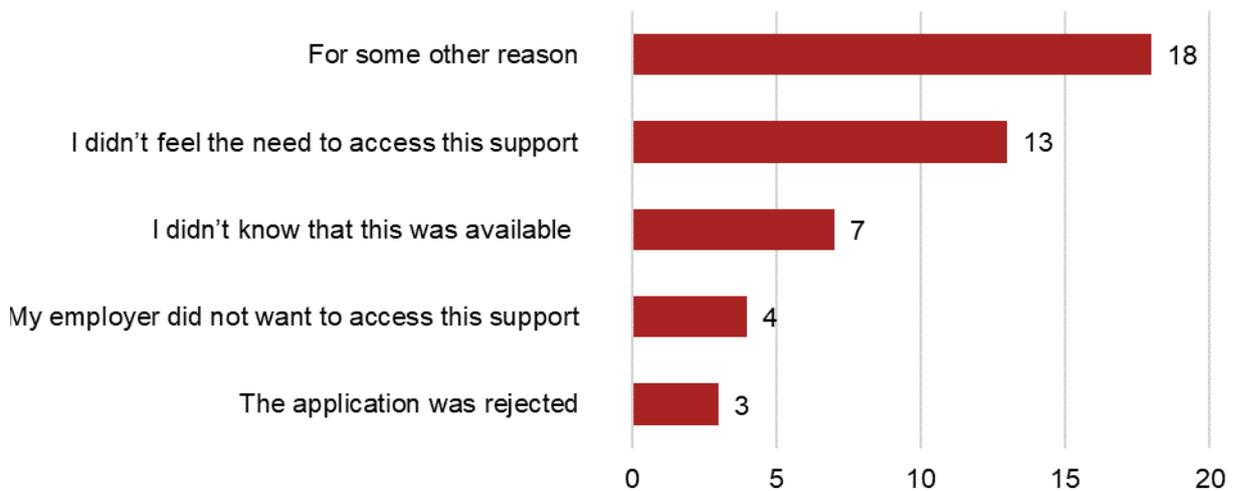
---

<sup>6</sup> This is not strictly true. In certain circumstances, participants are allowed to take online courses, such as if disabilities prevent them from attending a course in person or this training is not available at a training centre. Even if this is not actually a barrier, it is important to recognise that this is a *perceived* barrier to using ReAct.

employer had made use of Employer Recruitment Support, while four respondents reported making use of Employer Training Support after starting a new job.<sup>7</sup>

4.60 Only two respondents reported making use of Employer Recruitment Support. The online survey gave a number of reasons as to why their employer had not made use of the Employer Recruitment Support Grant. The reasons given for this were varied, as shown in Figure 4.7.

**Figure 4.7: Reasons for not making use of the ReAct Employer Recruitment Support. Coded responses**



All respondents in work who had not used ReAct Employer Recruitment Support (n=29) (multiple selections possible). Y-axis equals the number of respondents

4.61 Given that many of those who have returned to work have gone into roles in which they would be eligible to receive Employer Recruitment Support, it seems to be strange that employers have not made use of this. Stakeholders suggested some possible reasons as to why this might be the case:

“In my experience, the employer wage subsidy isn’t as well used as you’d think. Often, redundant workers go to work for large multinationals and they can’t be bothered with the paperwork. Public sector employers can’t draw the money down anyway.”

“The subsidy is potentially important for employers but I’m not sure how much it is used. The wage subsidy can be a great marketing tool for someone but (in our

<sup>7</sup> Again, this is a surprising finding. It is not possible for an employer to make use of Employer Training Support without also making use of Employer Recruitment Support. It may be that some respondents to the online survey became confused between Vocational Training Support and Employer Training Support, as well as there being potentially wider confusion among participants with regard to the different strands of support available through ReAct.

experience) it isn't used very often. Generally, someone leaving a job in a redundancy situation has great transferable skills and that's what attracts employers. In our experience, we've never had an employer reluctant to attend an event with redundant employees, because they know they will find the kind of people they want to employ."

4.62 This is backed up by participants, about half of whom suggested that the process was bureaucratic and employers were not necessarily interested in making use of it. In addition, the qualitative data collected here also appears to indicate that there is some confusion surrounding the scheme, as many people suggested that they did not apply for this support because their employer was ineligible for the subsidy:

"Most small businesses in Wales, such as hairdressers/beauty therapy, aren't funded by ReAct."<sup>8</sup>

"The company is too big."

4.63 One stakeholder, in particular, suggested that a more comprehensive approach to 'selling' ReAct to employers could be beneficial:

"The Welsh Government needs to get better at selling employer subsidies to microbusinesses and SMEs. Often, employers do not find out about it until the interview stage, so it's not really an incentive for them to take people on."

"If there was a database of ReAct participants that could be shared with employers or Regional Skills Partnerships, you could say to an employer [that] 'there are these people with these skills and you can get a subsidy if you employ them'. I think this would be a far more effective way of getting these people back into work."

4.64 Those who reported taking up the Vocational Training Support available through ReAct were asked about their motivations for doing so. The data indicates two main motivations for this: (a) gaining skills that will allow them to find new employment, and (b) gaining a qualification that will allow them to move into new areas of work.

4.65 The qualitative data collected suggests that there were diverse motivations for wanting to move into other sectors and/or roles or to become self-employed,

---

<sup>8</sup> Vocational Training in these areas is not provided through ReAct, as research indicates that job prospects for those undertaking training in these areas are poor. ERS is, however, available to employers in these sectors.

including moving somewhere with more job security, finding a less stressful workplace, and wanting a better work–life balance:

“I wanted to get out of call centres once and for all. They close down all the time, are easy to move overseas, and are high-stress.”

“I didn’t want to go back to another call centre, as I don’t like the target-driven/monitoring environment. To be honest, Tesco House wasn’t as bad as lots of them, because it was about the customer.”

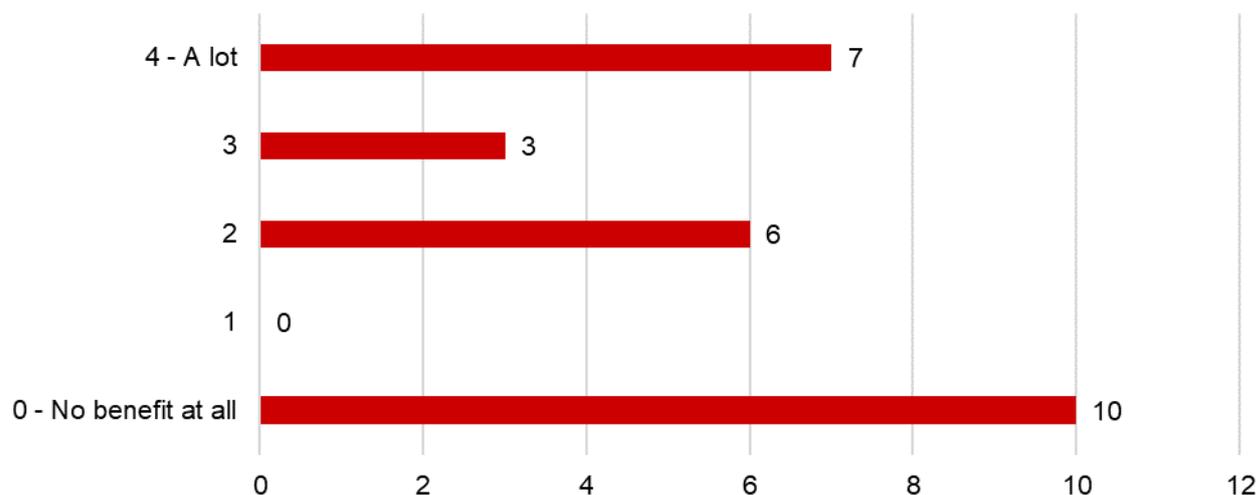
“I didn’t want to work in a call centre. I wanted to go self-employed so I could work from home and spend more time with my children.”

“I wanted to find something different to get a better work–life balance.”

#### *Perceived outcomes*

4.66 Participants’ perceptions of the benefit of the course funded by Vocational Training Support were generally mixed. As shown in Figure 4.8 below, many believed that there was no benefit, whilst others perceived a substantial benefit.

**Figure 4.8: Participants’ perception of the benefit of the course undertaken with the support of the Vocational Training Grant**



Respondents participating in ReAct who used Vocational Training Support (multiple selections permitted), n=26

4.67 To underline that perceptions of the benefit of the course are quite mixed, there are a number of positive stories told by those who took the courses:

“I’ve been able to develop new IT skills in web development and start a portfolio of my designs. It’s given me the confidence to explore and improve my skills while putting myself out there.”

“As a result of the training, I have been able to apply for other roles outside of my last job.”

“I’m now a qualified learning support officer for schools and education. I did a six-month fast-track course — CACHE Level 3 in learning and support in education. It has been fantastic! I joined a teaching agency in April and my first job is in a comprehensive school in Bridgend. I love it!”

“The training has enabled me to get a qualification in sports massage therapy [...] after that I became self-employed.”

“There’s reassurance that I already knew more than I thought, but I’ve also learned a few things as well. I can only hope the certification will help me find clients or gain employment.”

- 4.68 There were also criticisms of ReAct Vocational Training Support. For roughly half of the respondents who provided qualitative feedback, the process was very bureaucratic and a great deal of documentation was required in order to prove eligibility. For example, one respondent stated that they missed the start date of the course that they were taking because of the bureaucracy involved in proving eligibility:

“The most frustrating thing about accessing ReAct was the paperwork and lots of delays. Having to do all this stopped me looking for jobs. The paperwork took so long that the course I wanted to do had already started, so I had to wait for the next round to actually do it.”

“They don’t accept photocopies and I had to obtain lots of bits of evidence to access the course (despite it being beyond any doubt I was made redundant).”<sup>9</sup>

“I gave it a low score because my course hasn’t started yet. ReAct took so long to process the paperwork that I still haven’t started five months after losing my job! Dealing with ReAct was a nightmare and laden with bureaucracy.”

- 4.69 For others, the courses available were not very flexible, either in terms of changing a course or in terms of modes of study, with online courses not generally funded through ReAct. Meanwhile, other respondents complained that they had not been

---

<sup>9</sup> This is not strictly true, as certified copies are accepted. However, it is important to recognise that this is a *perceived* barrier to accessing ReAct.

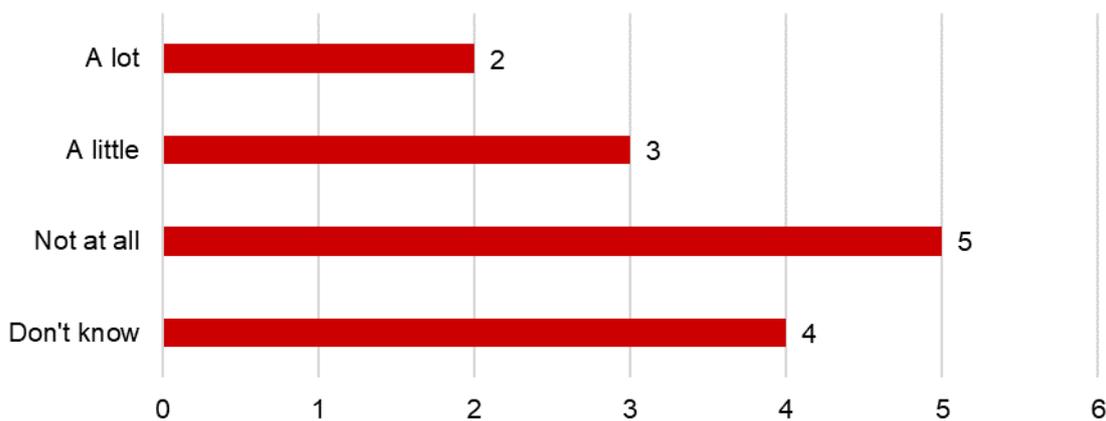
able to start a ReAct-funded course before the date of the redundancy, which they felt would have helped them to return to work more quickly.

4.70 At the same time, other respondents suggested that there were no issues whatsoever with respect to the process and that entry into the course was very straightforward. This suggests that the bureaucracy of the process may well vary depending on where individuals were trying to sign up to courses, and on the course for which they were applying.

*Outcomes of support*

4.71 The perceived impact of ReAct Vocational Training Support in getting people back into work was also mixed, with some people seeing a real, tangible benefit and others perceiving no benefit whatsoever (Figure 4.9).

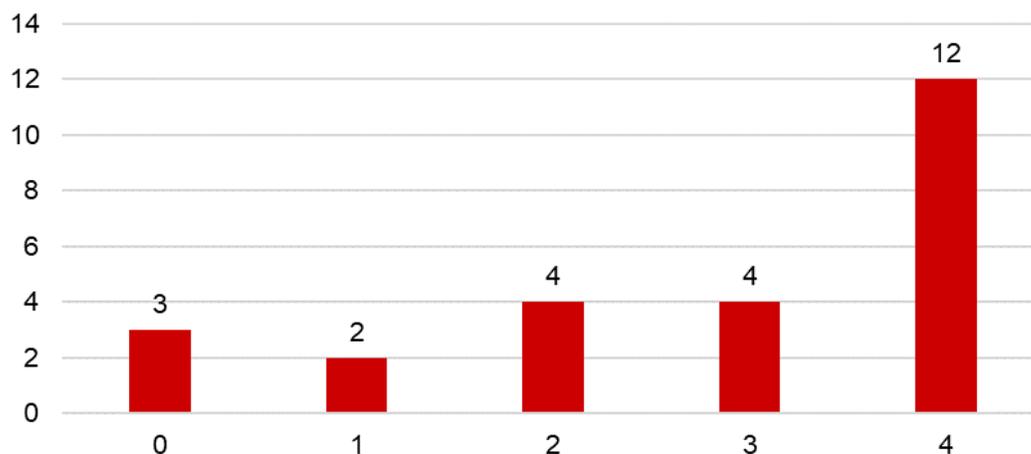
**Figure 4.9: To what extent did the training course help secure current employment?**



All respondents in employment who made use of ReAct Vocational Training Support (n=14). Y-axis equals the number of respondents

4.72 Despite some criticisms, recipients of ReAct support were generally positive about it. As part of the online survey, respondents were asked to rate the value of ReAct support from 0–4. As Figure 4.10 indicates, many respondents thought very highly of it, with almost half of the respondents rating it as 4.

**Figure 4.10: Overall perceptions of the value of ReAct on a scale of 0 (low) to 4 (high). Number of respondents**



This question was open to all respondents who reported using ReAct, but an answer was not required (n=31). Y-axis equals the number of respondents

- 4.73 While the majority of users of ReAct cannot state that ReAct demonstrably led to them finding employment, for many participants its principal value was that it gave them reassurance and the confidence with which to go and seek a job after years in the same job. This was also highlighted as a particular strength of the scheme in the stakeholder interviews:

“From our perspective, the most important aspect of ReAct is the group sessions that employees get. They talk about how to tailor a job search, and help people to match their skills to the kind of roles that are available. The [Department for Work and Pensions] team can also help with benefits advice, help them to know the best job sites, giving them advice and helping them to sell themselves, giving hope to people when they are facing redundancy.”

“I think the advice and guidance element of it is absolutely massive, probably the most important part. Often we go into a workplace following the announcement of a redundancy and the staff are hostile and upset, but we do a series of sessions/one-to-ones and they have confidence and motivation to go out and get a new job.”

- 4.74 This is something that was reflected in data collected by means of participant interviews:

“It’s given me confidence and given me a life. Financially I’m no better off, but [having completed my course] I have a sense of achievement and I look forward to doing something new [...] I know I can do it now.”

“I thought the support available was great. It really helped me to think about what I wanted to do next and support me to do my training. It made me feel like I wasn’t being left high and dry at a very difficult time.”

“Going to do training left me feeling really hopeful. The atmosphere was professional and almost like being in work. I was dressed smartly and felt like I was achieving something. I was thrilled — it really felt like a godsend at that point. I think I was motivated by the fact that someone out there could help me and I could get some qualifications and go out and do something.”

4.75 Among the stakeholders, the perception was that this was a useful form of support, albeit one focused on short-term outcomes rather than on long-term retraining, with one respondent suggesting that it might be useful for the Welsh Government to consider more long-term approaches to skill acquisition in order to achieve more sustainable, long-term employment outcomes. While some people have successfully used ReAct to move between sectors, there was a perception that it was less effective at doing this than would be more long-term skill training:

“ReAct is about getting people back into the workforce quickly. As it’s a short, sharp shock, it doesn’t really give people the higher-level skills to move into new sectors, so much as just update their skills [or get up-to-date certification for skills that they already possess]. For some people this works really well, but do we run the risk of these people ending up going through multiple redundancies?”

“Could the Welsh Government take a more long-term view? ReAct could be repurposed towards allowing access to higher-level qualifications, perhaps part-funding more substantial retraining.”

### **Quinn Radiators, Newport**

#### *Background*

4.76 Quinn Radiators was established in 1975 in Newport, South Wales, and operated as a manufacturer of commercial radiators. At its peak, the business produced 3.5 million radiators per year.

4.77 The company went into administration on 10th June 2019 due to financial troubles attributed to an increase in the price of raw materials that were used in the manufacturing process, as well as to an increase in the popularity of cheaper, imported brands. At the time at which the company entered administration, they

employed 300 workers, 280 of whom were made redundant,<sup>10</sup> with the remaining 20 being kept on in order to seek a buyer for the company's remaining assets. Moreover, they owed £9.7 million to various creditors, including Tata Steel (to whom they owed £2.4 million). In 2016, Quinn Radiators received a £3m loan from the Welsh Government in order to create a further 120 jobs and to safeguard the jobs of its 290 employees at the time.<sup>11</sup>

- 4.78 Employees were informed of their immediate redundancy as they arrived at work on the morning of 10th June 2019 via an unaddressed letter from the company handling the administration; some employees even claimed to have found out from the story being reported in the news. Many also claimed that there were rumours that the owners were seeking to sell the company if they could find a buyer, but to the majority the news came as “unexpected” and “out of the blue”.<sup>12</sup>
- 4.79 Part of the company was eventually bought by Rettig ICC, a Finnish manufacturing firm who were interested in the decorative, tubular steel. The deal ensured that the Newport factory would remain open for a further nine months. At the time of the research, the company was operating as ‘Design by Barlo’ and a subsidiary of Rettig ICC.

#### *Methodology*

- 4.80 The research for this case study included:
- A workshop with the Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus staff who had provided support to individuals affected by the redundancy
  - An interview with the Welsh Government official leading the response to the redundancy
  - A telephone survey of 61 individuals who lost their jobs
  - In-depth follow-up interviews with three of those individuals

#### *The support provided*

- 4.81 ReAct supported 88 individuals made redundant by Quinn Radiators, with the vast majority being male (78 per cent).<sup>13</sup> This represented 31 per cent of the 280 people made redundant. There was a fairly even spread in terms of the age group of the

---

<sup>10</sup> [WalesOnline article about Quinn Radiators entering administration](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Grant Thornton made administrator of Quinn Radiators](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Quinn Radiators: 280 jobs go with firm in administration](#)

<sup>13</sup> Source: Welsh Government ReAct programme management information.

individuals supported, with 26 per cent in the age group of 50+ years, 27 per cent 40 to 49, and 33 per cent 30 to 39. Only 11 per cent of those supported were in the age group of 20 to 29 years.

- 4.82 A key feature of the response to this redundancy was the speed of the response. There was essentially no warning that this redundancy was going to take place, meaning that there was, in contrast to the Tesco House case study, no time in which to pull together a taskforce or design a bespoke response. Despite this, a support event was organised and delivered on Wednesday after the redundancy notices were issued on Monday. The event brought together a range of local support providers, including Careers Wales, Jobcentre Plus, Newport City Council, and Citizens Advice, with the objective of sharing information about the support available and, as required, booking follow-up individual interviews with a career advisor.
- 4.83 In the research workshop, Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus officers described the event as being less structured than a regular information-sharing event would be, due to the need to organise it quickly. Participants were able to move between a number of tables that had been set up in the room to share information as they wanted. Estimates for the numbers that attended ranged from 140 to 170 of the individuals affected by the redundancy.
- 4.84 The speed of the response was highlighted by stakeholders as an indication of the strength of the process that has now been established and in place for a number of years in order to deal with redundancy situations. The team is well established, well networked in the local area, and well used to working together, with all of the necessary materials being in place. Because of that, a quick response to such situations is possible:
- “I’ve known [the Careers Wales manager] for a long time, so I could just pick up the phone to her.”
- 4.85 The scale of the event meant that Careers Wales’ advisors were drawn into the event from the surrounding regions in order to ensure that adequate members of staff were available on the day to deal with a large number of participants (as was the case for the Tesco House redundancy). The ability to do this was highlighted by the Careers Wales team as being vitally important:

“It causes disruption and can be a nightmare, but it’s all hands on deck [...]. You clear your diary.”

“You always have the [information] packs ready just in case. I carry a load around in the boot of my car!”

- 4.86 English was the second language for a large proportion of respondents, as many employees were migrants; this was a key barrier that had to be overcome.
- 4.87 During the research workshop, Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus staff described those individuals as seeming “lost”, emphasising the fact that they were “in shock” as a result of the lack of warning about the redundancy. They had no idea what their next step should be.
- 4.88 As migrants, many of those affected by the redundancy relied much more heavily on the factory for their social network than may otherwise have been the case. The fact that many of the individuals affected had been employed by Quinn Radiators for an extended period of time and/or had no experience of working anywhere else was also highlighted during discussions with Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus staff. These factors amplified the impact of this redundancy on the individuals concerned.
- 4.89 The impact of the redundancies at Quinn Radiators was identified as being much more than merely a loss of employment and income. The fact that many of the individuals involved relied on the factory to provide their social network, and the fact that it was also being lost as a result of the redundancy, was emphasised.
- 4.90 One of the features of the impact of the ‘shock’ nature of the redundancy was that the individuals affected had taken action themselves to help deal with the situation, with Facebook groups being set up, for example, to provide mutual support and share important information such as the support that was available and how it could be accessed:

“Their world has just been turned upside down [...], no matter what your level.”

“Lots of people get very upset.”

- 4.91 Simply providing a positive message to the individuals affected was considered to be a very important outcome by participants in the workshop:

“It just puts something positive on the table.”

4.92 The need to return to employment as quickly as possible was identified as being extremely important to many of the individuals affected by the redundancy. Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus staff believed that in the majority of cases the individuals concerned could not afford to be unemployed for an extended period of time. Undoubtedly, this is often the case with redundancies, but was especially so in this instance because there had been no opportunity to save money or change spending patterns prior to being made redundant, which individuals who are given a prior warning (as they had been at Tesco House) are able to do.

4.93 The strong view of Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus staff participating in the research workshop was that there should be a 'health' partner as a permanent member of the team that was in place to support redundancies, as it was a key issue:

“We're not experts but you have to deal with [people being upset].”

4.94 There was also a view that Careers Wales staff should not be expected to provide advice and guidance on mental health or any other issues outside of their remit and area of expertise. They should, however, be aware of the support available and be able to refer individuals to that support, as necessary:

“Signposting is part of the toolkit of a careers advisor.”

4.95 ReAct is considered to be vitally important as a “tool in the box” for career advisors. It was identified as being vital in offering something to individuals other than merely advice, as well as being a key motivator to individuals for that reason:

“It has a massive benefit [...] it's essential.”

4.96 The strong view of those participating in the research workshop was that individuals at all levels had gaps in their qualifications which ReAct could help to fill. The particular issue in instances such as Quinn Radiators was that employees had often received training for a particular role 'in-house'. Because of that, they had not received a qualification/certification. This was clearly a significant barrier to those individuals' ability to gain employment elsewhere. The example given was the need for a forklift truck driver qualification:

“If you haven't got the basic qualifications [that other companies recognise that] you need, you can't get a job doing what you may have been doing for years anywhere else. ReAct helps address those kinds of issues [...] it's essential.”

4.97 Local employers also attended the event. For example, Amazon was recruiting in the local area; therefore, they were asked to attend. Local knowledge is essential to enabling this kind of thing to happen:

“If you know that a local employer is looking for people, you can get them involved [...]. It can be a big benefit to them.”

4.98 A stakeholder interviewed also highlighted the high level of commitment from the individuals providing support. This was something that the individual in question felt needed to be highlighted and acknowledged:

“The individuals involved are highly committed to [supporting people made redundant] and they deliver [...]. I’m very proud of the people involved.”

*The views of individuals made redundant*

4.99 The survey found that just over three quarters (47/61) of the respondents had been able to secure employment following the redundancy, with a further eight still actively seeking future work. The remaining 11 were found to be economically inactive.

4.100 Looking at the nature of the employment, 19 of the 47 respondents reported that their salary was currently higher than it was prior to being made redundant, with slightly fewer (16) reporting that their salary had declined. The remaining 12 reported that there was no change. This highlights the need to consider the nature of the jobs into which individuals move after having been made redundant; it is not merely a case of finding employment.

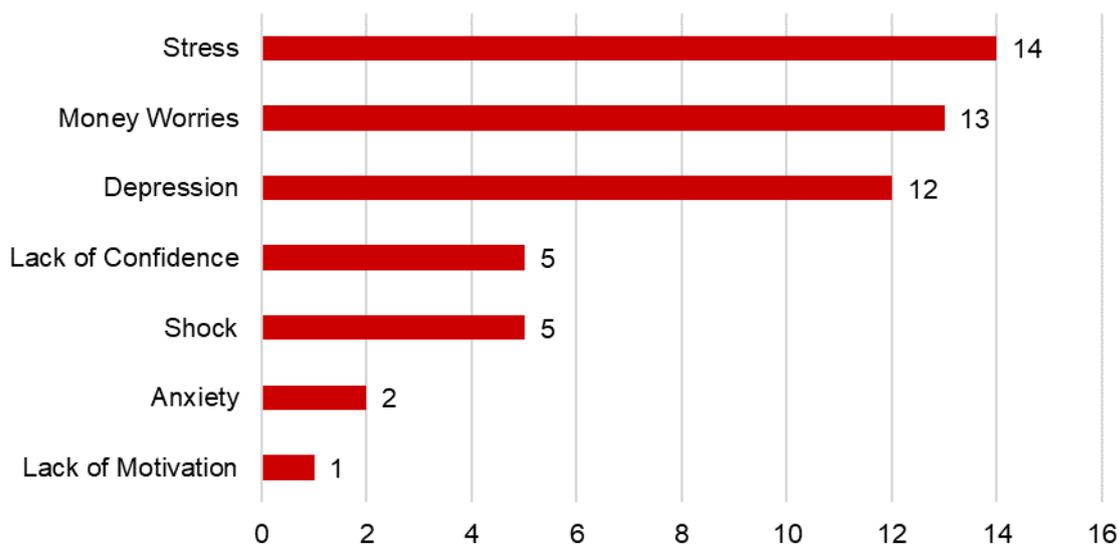
4.101 In terms of how many hours individuals were working in comparison to what they were working at Quinn Radiators, 19 reported that their hours had not changed, 16 reported that they were working fewer hours, and 12 were working more:

“My job was very similar; however, I did feel that because of the size of the company being smaller, I was stepping back 10 years and was now back at a starting point. However, I was paid more than before.” (Female, 48)

4.102 The survey asked respondents to comment on the effect that redundancy had on their mental and physical health, with the vast majority (38/47) (Figure 4.11) identifying some kind of impact. The most common issues reported were increased stress levels, growing worries surrounding money, and depression:

“It caused a massive impact on my life; obviously, it caused a lot of stress in the family. We had no warning of what was happening. We got in a couple of thousand pounds of debt over the three weeks after I lost my job, as we needed to pay bills and the rent was due, so it was really bad timing.” (Male, 39)

**Figure 4.11: Do you believe that the fact that you were involved in a redundancy had any impact on your mental or physical health? If yes, please describe any impacts that you have experienced. Coded responses**



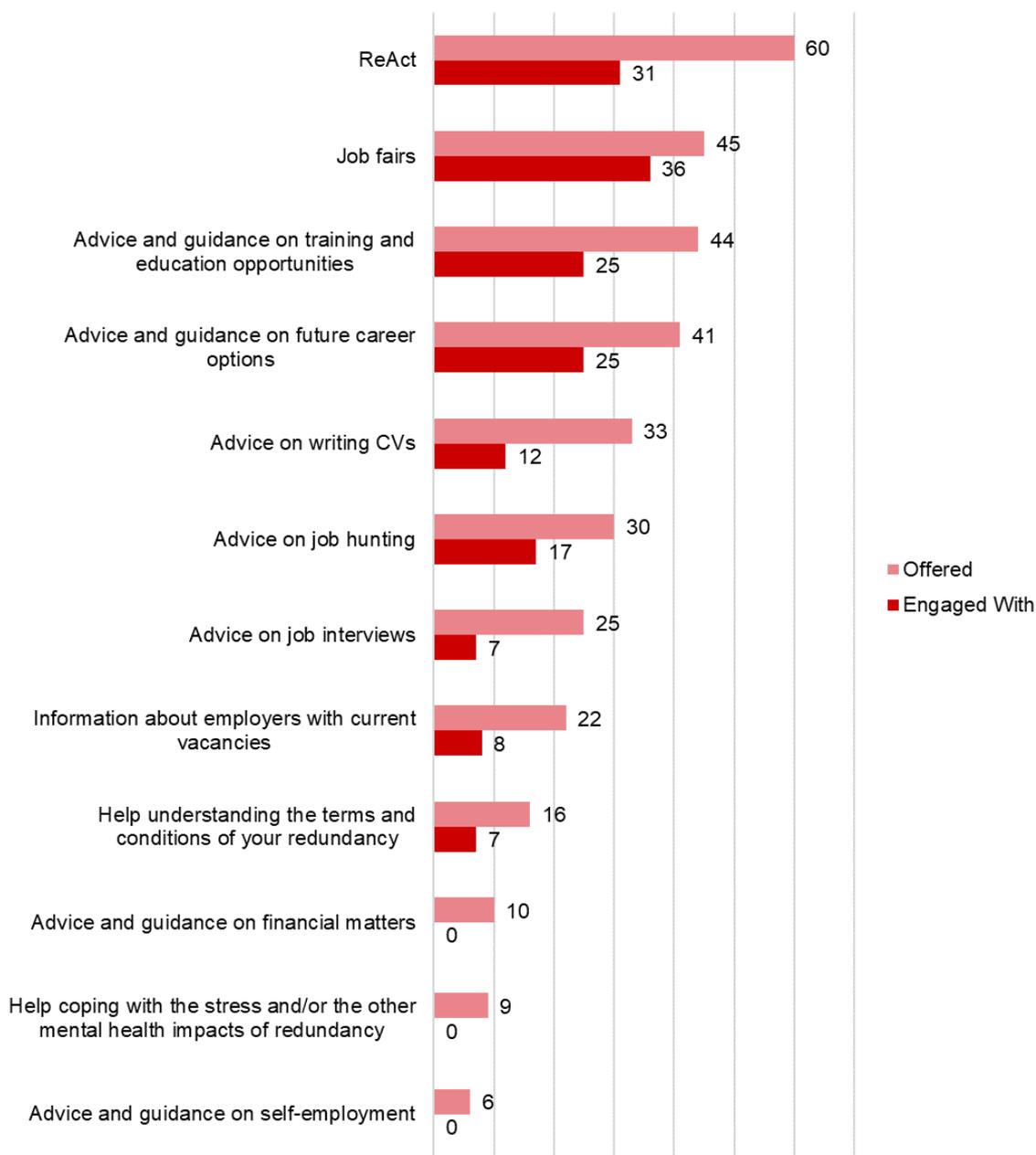
The total number of responses = 47. Number of respondents (multiple responses possible)

- 4.103 As shown by Figure 4.12, the most common form of support that these individuals were offered was ReAct, with 60 of the 61 individuals reporting that they had been informed of it. Awareness was also relatively high for other forms of support, including job fairs (45), advice on training and education opportunities (44), and advice on future careers (41).
- 4.104 Once awareness had been established, survey respondents were asked whether or not they have ‘used’ that support, which is also shown in the graphic below, with job fairs being identified as the most used support.
- 4.105 Whilst awareness was high, only just over half of those aware of ReAct had engaged with the programme (31/60). The main reason put forth by individuals for choosing *not* to engage with ReAct was that they wanted to return to work as soon as possible (n=19). This is in line with the feedback from career advisors when they were asked to explain why some chose not to engage with the support that ReAct could provide.

4.106 Other less common reasons for not engaging with ReAct included finding employment before applying (6), a belief that they did not need any additional training to secure work (4), and a perception that the application process was too time-consuming (4):

“I signed up for a course and was accepted, but it was after I was accepted for my new role and then I wasn’t able to do it. I was eligible but I was right in the middle of starting a new role, so couldn’t take a week out.” (Female, 34)

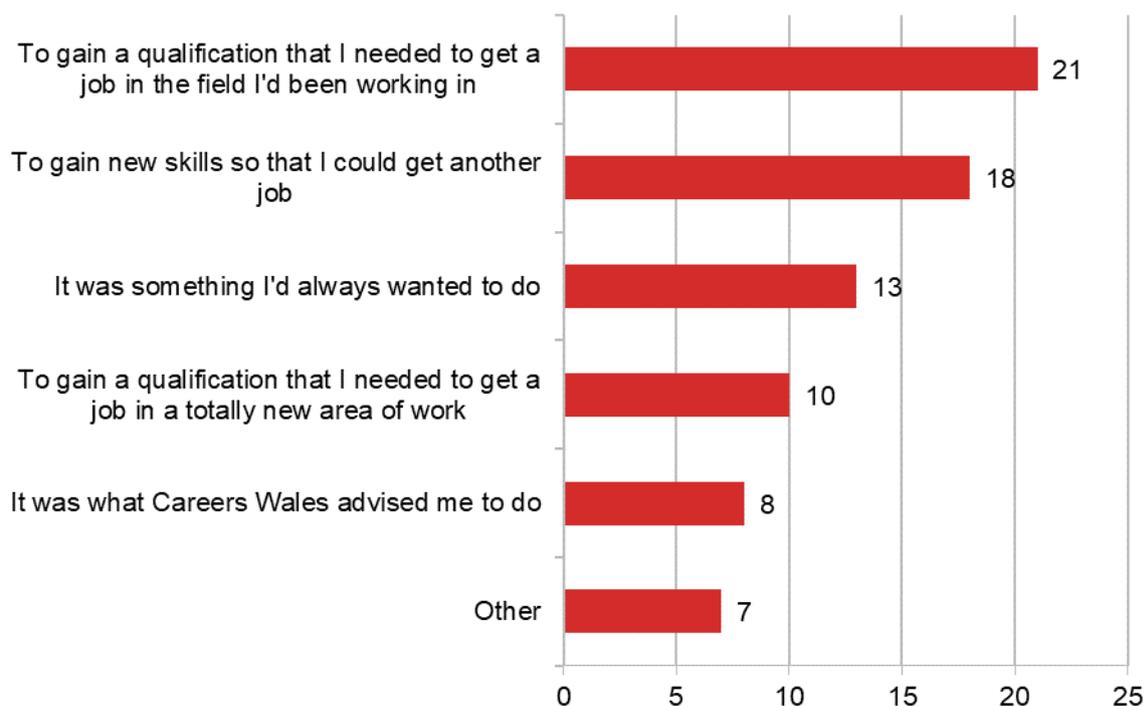
**Figure 4.12: Which of the following support was offered to you after you were told about the redundancy? Please now select the support that you used or events that you attended. Number of responses**



Total number of responses = 61

- 4.107 For those individuals who chose to engage with ReAct Vocational Training, their motivation for doing so was often in order to gain a qualification that was required for them to obtain a job in the same field in which they had previously been working. Undertaking training to gain new skills, or to secure new qualifications, with which to secure work in a different sector or field of work was another popular motivation for engaging with ReAct provided in the survey (Figure 4.13).
- 4.108 It was clear that for those surveyed, an individual's own belief that they require Vocational Training was a more significant factor than the belief of career staff that they require training, due to the fact that advice from career advisors, training providers, and Careers Wales staff was less frequently given as a decision-making factor.

**Figure 4.13: Thinking of the ReAct Vocational Training Support, what made you decide to do this particular training? Number of responses, coded**



Total number of respondents = 31

- 4.109 Vocational Training Support was the most popular form of ReAct support used by former employees of Quinn Radiators, with 31 individuals choosing to engage with this. This is in line with the findings of the much larger survey for the main evaluation. A total of 19 individuals accessed Employer Training Support, and two individuals were recruited using Employer Recruitment Support.

- 4.110 One of the major reasons for not engaging with either of the employer elements of ReAct was that the individuals in question seemed to be unaware of their availability. A total of 14 respondents to the survey stated that they were unaware that anything other than the Vocational Training was available.
- 4.111 Another reason given was a perception that either the individual or their employer felt that they did not need to access it (16 for Employer Recruitment Support, seven for Employer Training Support):

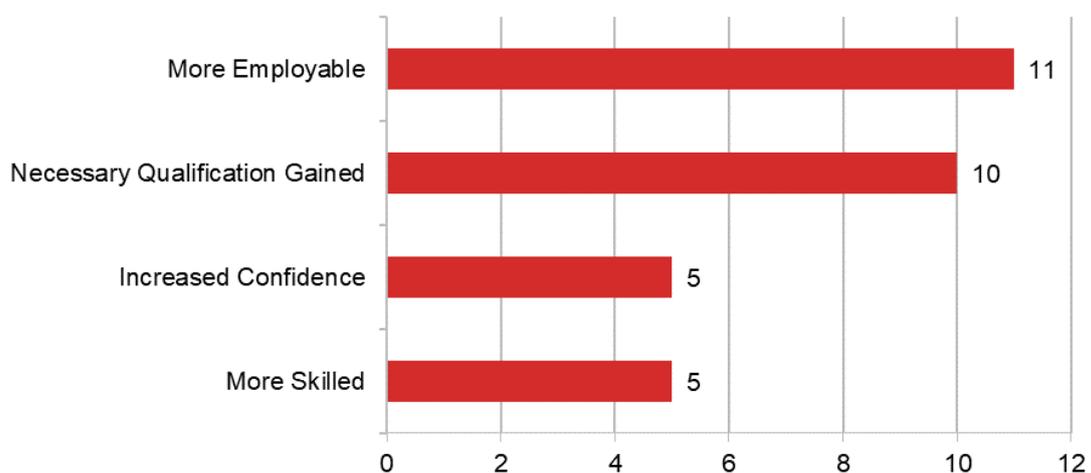
“I don’t like the sound of the Employer Recruitment Support because I think it could mean that a company see what’s in it for them and they’ll take you on for a year and then when the money runs out they will just let you go then.” (Male, 57)

*The benefit of the support*

- 4.112 The majority (23) of the 31 individuals who engaged with ReAct reported that they had benefitted from their experience, whilst a further six believed that it was too early to be able to determine whether or not they would benefit.
- 4.113 The specific benefits that individuals identified included gaining qualifications that are essential to attaining their desired career, a belief that the training had made them more employable, increased confidence, and gaining useful skills (Figure 4.14):

“The training allowed me to get my licences updated that would help me get back into work. The training also got me out of the house and meeting with different people, which improved how I felt about myself.” (Male, 36)

**Figure 4.14: Describe the main way in which you have benefitted as a result of the training. Number of responses, coded**



Total number of respondents = 31

*Individual case study: Rhian, 42*

- 4.114 Rhian worked as a technical operator at Quinn Radiators; to ensure her anonymity, her name has been changed. She had worked at Quinn Radiators for 12 years and her role centred on the operation of various machines in the factory.
- 4.115 At the time of the interview, she was undertaking training funded by ReAct, which she hoped would allow her to start a new career working from home so that she could support her child whilst being in full-time employment.
- 4.116 Prior to her redundancy, Rhian was satisfied with her job. She considered it to be secure work and that many employees felt assured that if the company fell on hard times there would be support available. The sudden closure of the business, therefore, came as a shock.
- 4.117 The biggest impact that her redundancy has had has been the effect on her finances:
- “I used to have a weekly salary. Now I have to manage my money a lot more so that I am able to support my family.”
- 4.118 Another major impact was the negative effect that it had on her mental health:
- “Psychologically it has been very difficult. My job was a big part of my life for 12 years and it had gone. I would be working 50–60 hours a week normally, so it was a big thing. I still talk to a lot of my old colleagues, but since the closure it feels like part of me has died. It’s frustrating, as if it was managed better it would still be there easily and these people would have jobs.”
- 4.119 This network of old colleagues played an important role following her redundancy. In addition to her family and the Jobcentre, these former colleagues were an important line of support, as there remained a sense of community which was really important for those involved.
- 4.120 Like many people who were working at Quinn Radiators, Rhian found out about the closure as she turned up for work. She was informed by administrators that there was going to be an event held later that week in which they would be put in contact with career advisors and recruiters. It was at this event that Rhian first encountered ReAct.

- 4.121 At first glance, ReAct seemed like a good opportunity for her to change career paths, although she did have some initial concerns. There had been a long gap since the last time that she had studied; therefore, she was concerned about whether she could still do it again. Her other concerns were the requirements that were involved in the process as well as the prospect of having to pay the money back should something go wrong.
- 4.122 Regardless of these concerns, she chose to engage with ReAct. Her main motivation was to build upon an existing degree in economics in her home country that had not been recognised since she moved to Wales. Furthermore, she wanted to secure a job in which she would be able to work from home on a full-time basis in order to help care for her child. She believed that the training would lead to her securing better pay and self-employment if she were to become a qualified accountant:
- “I thought a couple of years ago about doing the course — I even bought the books — but then I saw how expensive the course would be and that put me off.”
- 4.123 She received advice from Careers Wales regarding what training to undertake and what job opportunities were available through that training. Careers Wales got in contact with potential training providers on Rhian’s behalf and advised her on what jobs she should consider applying for following her accountancy qualification.
- 4.124 Rhian faced no difficulties in accessing the support that she wanted, as it was all available to her. Rhian’s only criticism was that there was a lack of practical courses in accountancy available in Wales, as she found out that she would have to travel to England for up to a month, which she was unable to do due to her family commitments.
- 4.125 Rhian was still undergoing her ReAct-funded training. However, she felt more confident as well as more employable. She had been able to form contacts in the industry and had become more aware of what was available in terms of employment in accountancy.
- 4.126 Overall, Rhian felt as though the programme had helped her to start thinking about changing her career for the better, which she would have been unable to do previously. Moreover, she felt that the support had improved her general outlook on life and that things could have been much different had she not accessed the support:

“It’s very different — I have the potential with this training. I know with this training my life can change completely. With my old job, anyone could do it and your age matters there [...] I am getting older. I now have a chance of better pay and self-employment — the opportunity is life-changing.”

## **Allied Bakeries, Cardiff**

### *Background*

- 4.127 Allied Bakeries operates from several sites across the UK. In June 2019 it was announced that its bakery in Llanishen, Cardiff, was to be closed on 13th September 2019 and would be repurposed as a distribution centre in order to improve the efficiency of the company’s delivery service to Wales and South West England.<sup>14</sup> As a result of this, it was announced that 176 members of both management and operations staff would lose their jobs.<sup>15</sup>
- 4.128 This announcement came soon after it was revealed that Allied Bakeries had lost its contract to produce Tesco’s own-label products, and has been perceived to be an attempt by Allied Bakeries to cut costs.<sup>16</sup> During the employee consultation process for the repurposing of the site, there was reported dissatisfaction amongst employees, as it was felt that the company entered the consultation with their mind already made up and that there had been a lack of communication between the company and the union.<sup>17</sup>
- 4.129 Following the confirmation of the transition, the 176 employees who were to lose their jobs were offered redundancy packages and other support. The support was centred on encouraging employees to look to redeploy either into one of the other Allied Bakeries sites or into the local community.

### *Methodology*

- 4.130 The research for this case study included:
- A site visit to observe the delivery of information sessions about the support available to staff affected by the redundancy
  - An interview with the Careers Wales manager for the region in question

---

<sup>14</sup> [WalesOnline article](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Food Manufacture article](#)

<sup>16</sup> [British Baker article](#)

<sup>17</sup> [WalesOnline article](#)

- A workshop with the Careers Wales staff who had provided support to individuals affected by the redundancy
- Telephone interviews with 23 individuals who lost their jobs.

*The support provided*

- 4.131 This, like the Tesco House case study, is an example of a redundancy situation in which it was possible to plan a response. The company gave three months' notice that the redundancies would be taking place. It was, however, also a challenging redundancy to deal with because a large proportion of the workforce had been employed at the site for a considerable amount of time, with some having not worked anywhere else. This was one of the factors that led to extremely high levels of anxiety and stress amongst the individuals affected, with some being described as being "in denial" about the situation.
- 4.132 The Careers Wales team engaged with 40 to 50 individuals affected by the redundancies at the site.
- 4.133 Due to these circumstances, following discussions with the HR team at the site, Careers Wales decided to take what the Careers Wales manager described as a "more informal" approach to their engagement with the employees affected than they normally take. This is an example of how Careers Wales can and do adapt their approach to the particular circumstances of the redundancy with which they are dealing.
- 4.134 Careers Wales are also aware of the risk that people can become overwhelmed by the amount of information that is being provided to them, especially when they are anxious about the situation. In such circumstances, the key message — there is support available for you should you need it — needs to be very clear.
- 4.135 Low levels of skills, particularly IT skills, amongst employees at the site were key considerations for the Careers Wales team. This was highlighted as being very different from a redundancy in a situation in which employees may have higher, more transferable skills, e.g. employees at a call centre such as Tesco House. Moreover, it requires a 'gentler' approach when discussing options with affected individuals.
- 4.136 There was, however, also some positivity amongst the Careers Wales team dealing with the redundancy on the basis that Cardiff was a relatively buoyant job market,

meaning that opportunities to return to employment quickly did exist. As one stakeholder put it: “If you want a job, there are jobs available.”

- 4.137 Alongside the support provided via Careers Wales, there was a job fair on the site in the run-up to the redundancies taking place. Additionally, support was offered by Cardiff City Council via their IntoWork Service, which provides free help for any Cardiff resident seeking work or to upskill in their current job.<sup>18</sup> The availability of this additional support was a cause of some debate. Whilst the availability of any support to those being made redundant was welcomed, there was also a concern in some quarters that the offer of support from multiple sources could lead to confusion and, potentially, individuals missing out on the support that was available to them.
- 4.138 The Careers Wales team stressed the importance of a clear and simple message at a time when the individuals with whom you were trying to communicate were likely to be under stress and anxious. Furthermore, they underlined the value of the independent nature of the advice and guidance that were being provided by Careers Wales, which were not linked to any particular type of training, college, and so on. Because of that, the advice could be genuinely focused on the needs of each individual and not biased towards any particular type of subsequent support.

*The views of individuals made redundant*

- 4.139 A total of 23 former Allied Bakeries employees took part in telephone interviews regarding their experiences with redundancy. Of these individuals, 10 reported that they were currently employed and eight reported that they were unemployed and actively seeking work, with the remaining five being economically inactive and not currently searching for any form of work (Figure 4.15).
- 4.140 Of those 10 employed individuals, four reported that they were currently earning a lower salary than in their previous role, with three reporting that they were earning more than they had previously.
- 4.141 Those who had previously been in management or supervisory roles constituted five of the eight individuals who remained unemployed. A common barrier to employment amongst these individuals was a lack of appropriate jobs in their area (3), which was more prevalent than a belief that they needed to undergo further

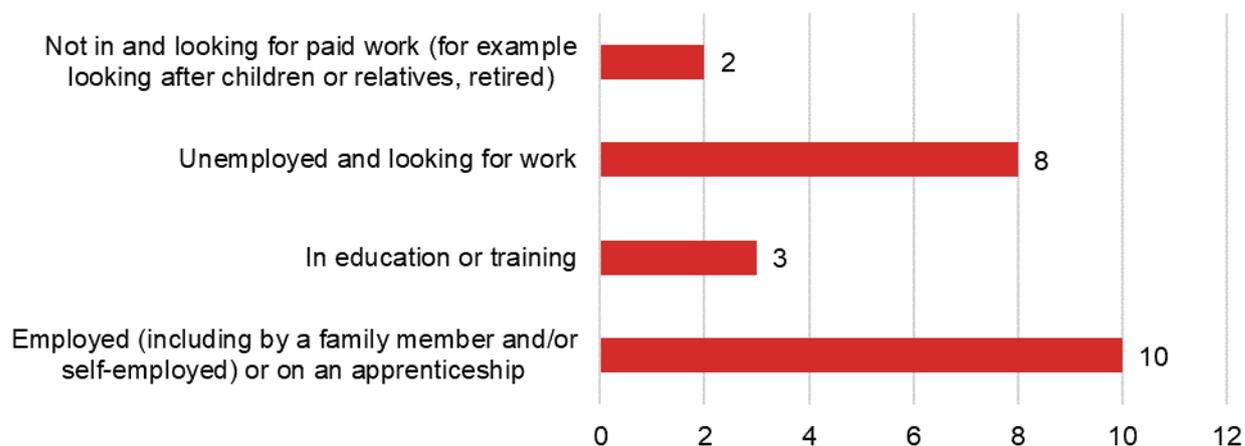
---

<sup>18</sup> [Into Work Cardiff](#)

training (1) or that they lacked relevant skills and experience (1) which ReAct could provide:

“The current climate with Brexit is making employers very nervous to commit to senior-level roles in particular, which is where I sit, and people are also, therefore, not moving on, so the market’s pretty static at the moment.” (Female, 48)

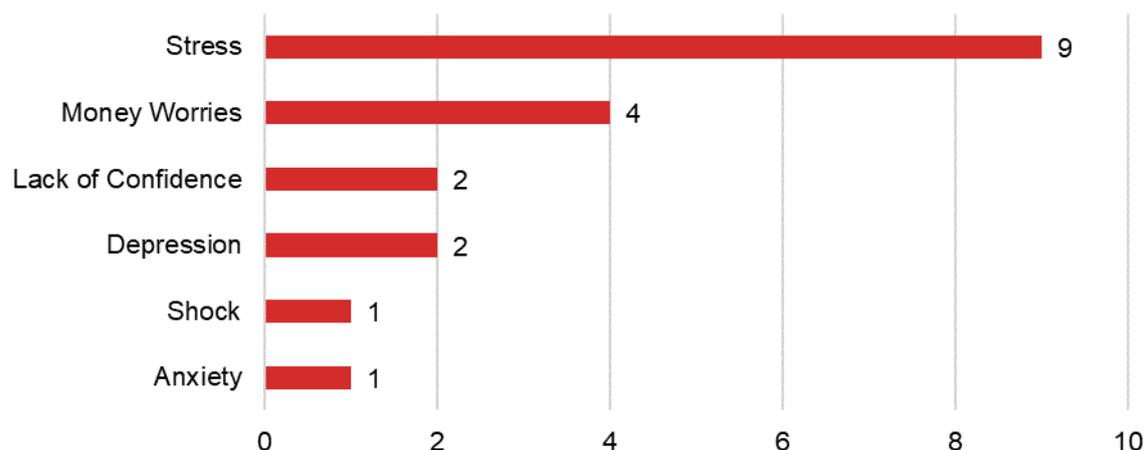
**Figure 4.15: Which of the following best reflects your situation at the moment?  
Number of responses**



Total number of respondents = 23

4.142 It was reported that 17 of these former Allied Bakeries employees had suffered from issues surrounding their mental and physical health following their redundancy. Increased stress was the most prominent mental health issue experienced (9). However, other mental health impacts, including depression (2), anxiety about finances (4), and a loss of confidence (2), were also mentioned by those surveyed (Figure 4.16).

**Figure 4.16: Do you believe that the fact that you were involved in a redundancy had any impact on your mental or physical health? Please describe any impacts that you have experienced. Coded responses**



Total number of respondents = 17

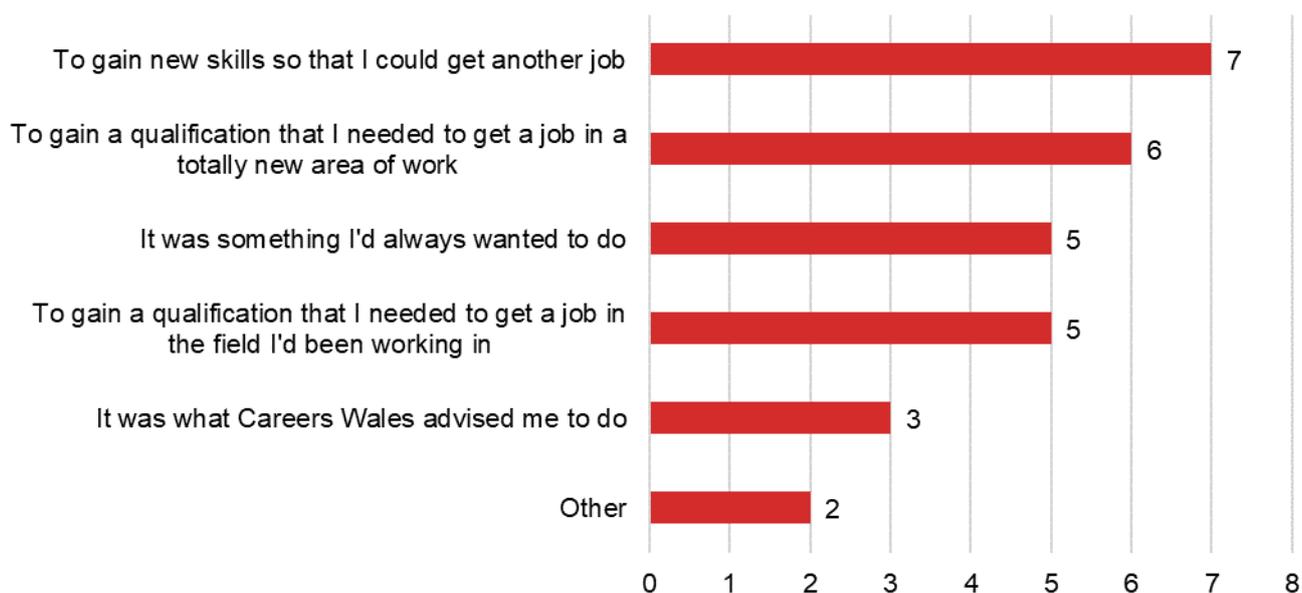
4.143 All 23 survey respondents had been informed about and offered ReAct support following their redundancy. Of these 23 respondents, 14 went on to utilise ReAct. All 14 of these individuals underwent Vocational Training Support, with a further nine engaging with Employer Training Support. However, none of the individuals surveyed reported that their employer had utilised Employer Recruitment Support.

4.144 There was no consensus with regard to why individuals had been less likely to engage with the support for employers available via ReAct. Some individuals' reasons included a lack of awareness that these forms of support were available (3), they or their employers did not believe that they were necessary (2), and they did not have the time in which to undertake the administration necessary (1):

“I have been really busy with starting a new job and just never got around to filling in the forms. If somebody from Careers Wales had contacted me and followed up, I might have done the training.” (Male, 30)

4.145 Wanting to learn new skills so as to help secure employment (7) and to gain qualifications in order to change careers (6) were the biggest motivations for individuals to undergo ReAct's Vocational Training Support. Meanwhile, other popular motivations were wanting to obtain a job in the field in which they were working before redundancy (5) and wanting to undertake training that they had not been able to previously (5) (Figure 4.17).

**Figure 4.17: Thinking of the ReAct Vocational Training Support, what made you decide to do this particular training? What did you hope to get out of it? Coded**



Total number of respondents = 14

- 4.146 One individual who underwent ReAct training felt that they had not benefitted at all from the support. However, they attributed this to personal reasons (rather than to the programme itself). On the other hand, seven individuals reported that they had benefitted as a result of their engagement.
- 4.147 The remaining six individuals reported that it was too early to tell whether or not they had benefitted. This is likely due to the fact that at the time of the survey, Allied Bakeries' closure was quite recent, meaning that eight of the 14 individuals engaging with ReAct support were still undergoing their training; therefore, they would not have been able to experience the benefits of gaining these new qualifications and skills.
- 4.148 The most prominent benefit amongst those surveyed was that they had gained a qualification either that had directly contributed to them obtaining a job or that they felt had made them more employable. However, gaining increased knowledge of their work and developing transferable skills were also included in the benefits that former Allied Bakeries employees reported to have received.

## **Dawnus, Swansea**

- 4.149 Dawnus was a construction firm based in Swansea that was incorporated in 2001. On 14th March 2019, it was announced to employees that the company had gone into administration and that 700 of them had been made redundant.<sup>19</sup>
- 4.150 Before entering administration, the company consisted of six regional offices and 44 construction sites, operating UK-wide as well as internationally. It was considered by the Welsh Government to be an “anchor company”, meaning that it was an organisation with a considerable global reach that was based and had a headquarters in Wales. In 2001 it was named the South Wales Evening Post’s Business of the Year, and at its peak in 2012 it reported a revenue of £176 million.<sup>20</sup>
- 4.151 There have been several reasons put forth for the company going into administration, including sluggish productivity, ongoing contract disputes, and the impact of the uncertainty surrounding Brexit. In 2017 the company reported a pre-tax loss of £1.4 million and revenue of £118 million, £58 million less than its peak revenue.<sup>21</sup> What is more, it was reported that the company owed a total of around £50 million to various creditors, including £40.5 million to other businesses, £5 million to its employees, and £3 million in tax, and they were also yet to repay a £1.5 million loan from the Welsh Government.<sup>22</sup>

### *Methodology*

- 4.152 An interview was undertaken with the Welsh Government official leading the response to the Dawnus redundancy for this case study. There were 44 responses to a telephone survey of individuals made redundant, with three in-depth interviews subsequently undertaken so as to explore some issues in greater detail. Furthermore, an interview was undertaken with an employer who had used Employer Recruitment Support to employ several of Dawnus’ workers following their redundancy.

---

<sup>19</sup> [Building article](#)

<sup>20</sup> [WalesOnline article](#)

<sup>21</sup> [WalesOnline article](#)

<sup>22</sup> [WalesOnline article](#)

### *The support provided*

4.153 The Dawnus redundancy was described as being untypical in that there was a strong demand in the local area and regionally for the skills of a large proportion of the individuals who were made redundant, i.e. construction workers. Thus, the need for ReAct support was considered to be lower in this instance than it was in other sectors in which finding alternative employment is more challenging. However, it is important to recognise that the Dawnus redundancy was broader than merely construction workers:

“A lot of people walked straight into other jobs [...] or they took the opportunity to retire.” (Stakeholder)

4.154 As was the case for the other case studies, the package of support made available in redundancy situations was considered to be very effective and comprehensive. The view of the Welsh Government official interviewed was that ReAct was the most effective when provided as part of a broader package of support which included other support such as job fairs and help in developing CVs. An understanding of local circumstances and opportunities by those managing and delivering the support was also identified as being important.

4.155 There was a particular emphasis, in discussions with regard to this case study, on the support that ReAct provided to employers to recruit individuals who had been made redundant. Five businesses accessed support from ReAct linked to the Dawnus redundancy. The view of the Welsh Government official interviewed was that businesses were not always aware of the support that was potentially available to them. His perception was that the level of awareness of the support available to businesses, in general, was low within the construction sector — it was not an issue that was unique to ReAct:

“This sector, in particular, can be reluctant to access support. They will not engage unless it’s something that is sector-specific.”

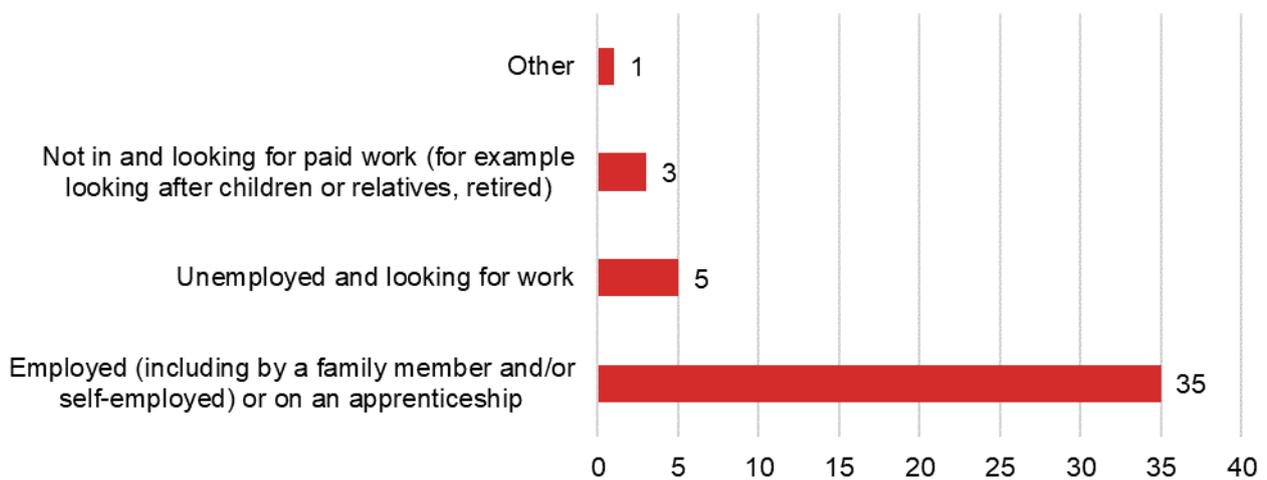
4.156 When asked to speculate as to why the number of applications for support from businesses for ReAct Employer Recruitment Support was low, he highlighted the fact that recruitment in the construction sector was often a very quick process, with businesses having to respond quickly to opportunities as they arose due to high levels of competition within the sector. That meant that businesses did not seek support. What is more, he believed that there was a perception within the sector

that applying for support from the public sector was a bureaucratic and time-consuming process, leading to a reluctance to do so.

*The views of individuals made redundant and businesses supported*

4.157 Of the total of 44 individuals who responded to the survey, 35 were currently in employment, with a further three having not had paid employment since being made redundant (Figure 4.18). This supports the view of the Welsh Government official that the majority of the workers would have found employment. However, of the 35 individuals in employment, 24 reported that their salary was lower than it was when they were employed by Dawnus (although the sample of respondents includes a range of staff, not merely construction workers).

**Figure 4.18: Which of the following best reflects your situation at the moment?**

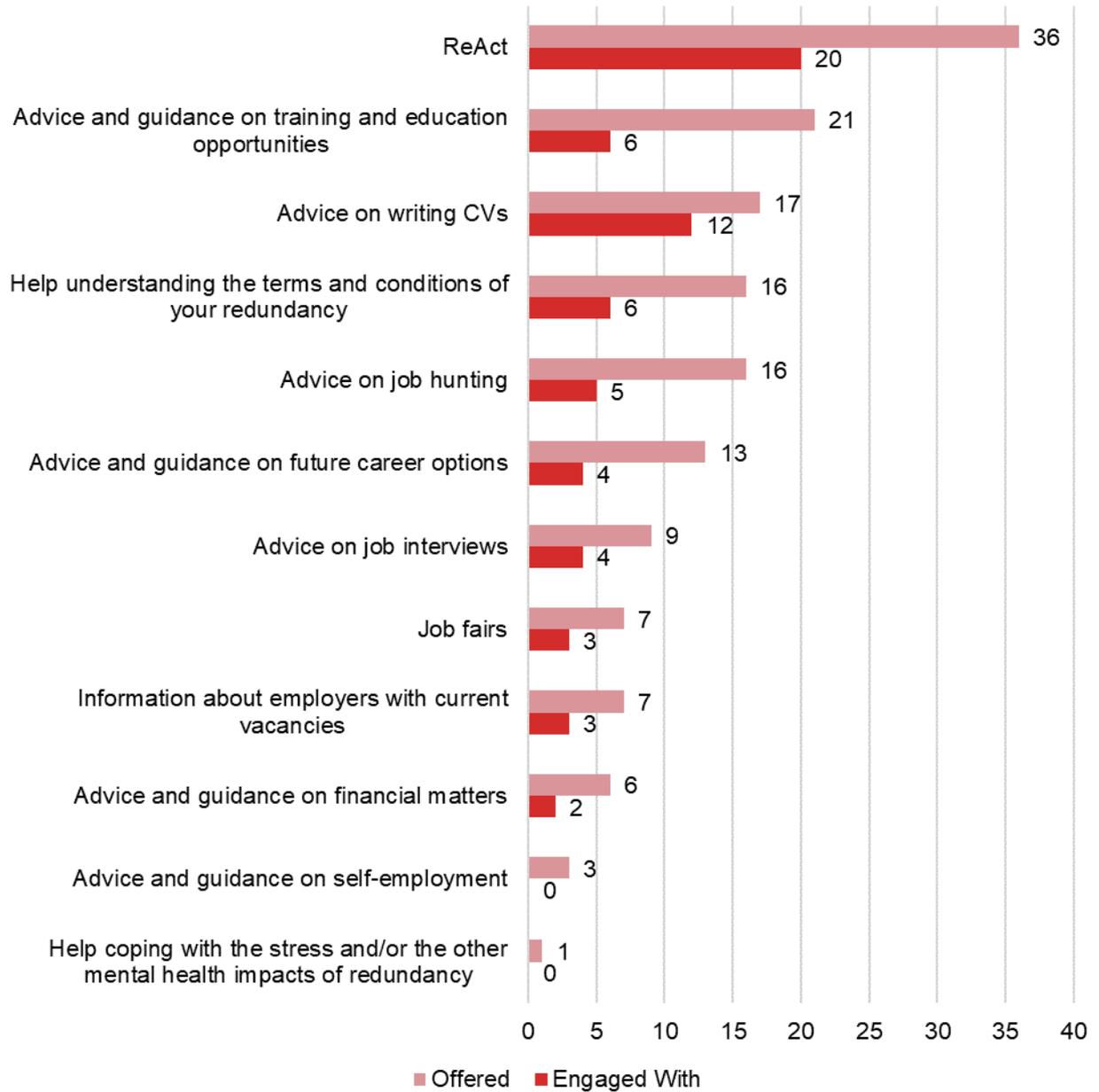


Total number of respondents = 44

4.158 Of the 44 respondents to the survey, 36 stated that they were offered some form of ReAct support, making it the most prominent form of support that was offered (see Figure 4.19 below). The next most prominent forms of support were advice on training and education opportunities (21) and advice on writing CVs (17).

4.159 ReAct was also the most popular form of support that was used by the individuals surveyed, with 20 engaging with it in some form. For those who chose not to engage with ReAct, reasons included wanting to return to work immediately (8) and finding employment before applying (4).

**Figure 4.19: Which of the following support was offered to you after you were told about the redundancy? Please now select the support that you used or events that you attended**



Total number of respondents = 44

- 4.160 More of the former Dawnus employees engaged with ReAct in order to gain a qualification with which to remain in their current field (13) than in order to gain a qualification that would allow them to enter a new area of work (7). This suggests that for those respondents, continuing in their previous occupation was more attractive than diversifying or fully transitioning to a different career path.
- 4.161 The reported benefits experienced by individuals who underwent the ReAct training were reminiscent of these initial motivations. In total, 18 of the participants in the

programme stated that they had benefitted to some extent, with the most common of these benefits being an increased sense of employability (6) and receiving recognised qualifications that have enabled them to secure employment (6):

“It’s given me the certificates and qualifications that I needed to work on building sites, and made me employable in a lot more [and] different roles on a building site. It also increased my options in terms of jobs I could now apply for.” (Male, 42)

4.162 From our interview with the employer who had utilised Employer Recruitment Support to recruit former Dawnus employees, it was clear that for them the support was seen to be an ‘added bonus’ (rather than a reason to recruit):

“We are always looking for staff anyway; the extra money is just a bonus for us really, as we wouldn’t take them on if they weren’t the right candidate [...]. We thought they were the best people for the job; otherwise we wouldn’t have offered it to them.”

4.163 Employer Training Support was also viewed by the employer in a similar way. They noted that they regularly offer staff training opportunities and that it is very likely that those taken on would have undergone training at some point.

4.164 However, they also acknowledged that the training that they ‘usually’ supplied would most likely have not been as ‘in-depth’ as what they were able to fund using the support of ReAct:

“It’s quite a common occurrence for us. They all underwent plant and first aid training, which was decided through a discussion with them and based on the needs of the company [...] they have benefitted (as they are more trained with regards to different parts of our business) and we have benefitted (as there are more skills in the workplace).”

*Case study: Gethin, 51, office worker*

4.165 Gethin worked in a management/administration position for Dawnus; his name has been changed in order to protect his identity. He had worked for the company for 14 years and was in a position that was earning him upwards of £50,000 per year at the time of his redundancy.

4.166 Following Dawnus’ closure, he elected not to engage with the ReAct programme and is currently employed by a public sector organisation in an office role. His salary

in his new role is substantially lower than it was prior to being made redundant. That, along with much lower levels of 'job satisfaction' in his current role, had led to him exploring the potential to retrain and he had recently booked an appointment with Careers Wales:

“When I finished working for Dawnus International in July, I saw a job on Indeed, [job title], so I am currently doing that. It’s a much smaller salary — only £24,000 a year — and it’s not what I want to be doing. What I really need to do is retrain.”

- 4.167 Another motivation for Gethin to retrain was what he perceived to be limited local opportunities within his skillset. He felt that for most of the positions for which he was appropriate, their salary was much lower than what he would like.
- 4.168 Gethin noted that, although he was aware of the programme, he did not clearly understand exactly what ReAct could offer and what was involved in the process of securing support. His only contact regarding ReAct came in the form of an email on the day on which he was made redundant. On that day, he had no contact with any of the company directors, external career advisors, or recruitment agencies. The only advice that he received was with regard to filling out the forms required for him to receive his redundancy pay.
- 4.169 Gethin reported that in several instances he had helped others with their paperwork after the administrators had left, as there was nobody available to provide any assistance. What made this more frustrating was the fact that they had seen on the news a politician promising to “pull out all the stops” in order to support the Dawnus workers, but Gethin believed that nothing that was promised was done.
- 4.170 Due to his desperation with respect to finding new employment immediately in order to avoid what he described as “the embarrassment of being unemployed”, he moved into a fixed (short-term) position. In retrospect, he felt that this was a mistake because it made him ineligible for much of the support of which he was aware. Had he been in the same position again, he would have taken more time to think about what to do next, but he acknowledged that at the time this felt impossible due to his desperation with regard to finding new employment as soon as possible.
- 4.171 Other impacts of Gethin’s redundancy include being in poor mental health, uncertainty surrounding support, and the knowledge that, despite what was stated on the news, “the cavalry isn’t going to come”, all of which meant that even during his interview he was still not in a good place and was desperate for a fresh start.

4.172 Overall, Gethin considered himself to have been let down by the support that he received following his redundancy. He believed that if someone had visited the site, rather than merely receiving an email, it would have been much more beneficial and provided all of the former employees with a much better starting point. He believed that many of his former colleagues would also feel the same way and that the fact that the support was promised but never received had also caused a great deal of anger. Gethin summed up his feelings towards ReAct as follows:

“It doesn’t matter how good ReAct or the other support that is available is if no one knows about it.”

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The case studies in this report added value to the evaluation process in a number of important ways. Several important issues not covered in other aspects of the evaluation were explored in the redundancy situation case studies in particular, including consultation with individuals who had not accessed ReAct support and those who had been made redundant much more recently than respondents to the main survey had been.<sup>23</sup>
- 5.2 The case studies for individuals supported highlight several factors that are apparent from the analysis of the main survey of participants undertaken for the evaluation. These include a willingness (or need) to accept a lower salary in order to return to employment as quickly as possible. The negative impact on the individual's confidence and on their mental health is also very apparent from the case studies. This highlights the need to consider providing mental health support alongside employment support, which is an issue discussed within the main evaluation report. Concern surrounding the level of awareness of the support available is also a consistent theme within the case studies.
- 5.3 The case studies demonstrate that there are examples of how individuals have used the fact that they have been made redundant (together with the training that ReAct can fund) to change their career and lifestyle more generally. Sometimes this has led to a change in their work–life balance and provided an opportunity to, for example, move into a job that allows them to spend more time with their family. The fact that individuals have not always moved into employment which is equivalent to that which they had before being made redundant (which is not uncommon according to the main participant survey) is not, therefore, necessarily a negative outcome. This is important because it highlights the need to look beyond indicators such as salary levels when making judgments about the outcomes of employability programmes.

---

<sup>23</sup> The main evaluation survey consulted with individuals supported at least 12 months after they had started the training course that had been funded by ReAct. Those interviewed for the redundancy situation case studies had lost their jobs much more recently.

- 5.4 The main evaluation report questions the value of the support being provided to businesses via ReAct, highlighting concerns surrounding the level of deadweight<sup>24</sup> within that element of the programme in particular. The business case studies in this report, however, demonstrate the difference that ReAct support can make; Business A, for example, decided to move ahead with employing an additional member of staff because of the support that they could receive from the programme. That decision benefitted the business considerably. Business B is an example of how ReAct support can be used to employ a relatively large number of staff at the same time and make a substantial contribution to the development of a new business. ReAct support has made a big difference in that instance.
- 5.5 The case studies looking in detail at specific redundancies allowed the process of responding to a mass redundancy to be explored in greater detail than other aspects of the research for the evaluation allowed. One of the things illustrated by the case studies, especially that of Tesco House, is that the scale of the response to redundancies in Wales can be substantial, with a ministerial taskforce being set up. However, the appropriateness of the scale of the response is an interesting question to consider.
- 5.6 Any large-scale redundancy clearly justifies a response. However, it would seem that it is the scale (and profile) of the redundancy which derives the response (rather than the need for support). For example, while the Tesco House redundancy was large-scale in terms of the numbers involved, it was described in some quarters as being 'less challenging' than other redundancies due to the advanced notice of the redundancies, the high skill level of many of the individuals concerned, and the relative buoyancy of the local job market. The question is whether a less high-profile redundancy, with perhaps fewer jobs being lost but much lower prospects of local re-employment, should generate the same response.
- 5.7 It is, of course, difficult to answer that question, although the response to each of the case studies examined for this evaluation would seem to have been comprehensive (if not perhaps as comprehensive as the Tesco House example) if lower-profile without a ministerial taskforce being set up.

---

<sup>24</sup> Deadweight refers to the proportion of an outcome that would have happened anyway, regardless of the support provided. In this instance, the issue is whether the business receiving the financial support from ReAct would have employed the individual in question anyway. The finding of the evaluation is that in many cases they would have done.

- 5.8 The case studies have found that whilst the package of support available is generally consistent, the way in which it is delivered is adapted according to the characteristics and circumstances of each particular situation. For example, the approach for Allied Bakeries was different from that for Tesco House due to the particular characteristics of the workplace in question. The response following the closure of Quinn Radiators was also different as a result of the suddenness of the closure of the site.
- 5.9 In our view, this ability to adapt so as to fit each particular situation is a positive finding and reflects the knowledge and experience that have developed within the teams delivering the support over a considerable period of time. Local knowledge and understanding are considered to be essential to the effectiveness of the support provided (e.g. understanding of the local labour market).
- 5.10 The relationship that ‘support providers’ are able to build with the businesses in which redundancies are taking place is very important — the better the relationship, the more effective the response that can be put in place. Linked to this, the amount of time that is available to prepare a response to redundancies is important — the longer, the better. The structure that is in place to respond to redundancies in Wales is, however, so well established that it is able to respond to redundancies very quickly and very effectively (as was the case when Quinn Radiators closed its doors). The speed at which the response was prepared in that instance was due in large part to the fact that the process is now well established with teams and relationships in place and effectively ‘ready to go’.
- 5.11 Those who received advisory support from Careers Wales were generally positive, with the majority of respondents who received Careers Wales guidance feeling that it gave them a better understanding of how their skills and personal qualities could be applied to the job market and their career. This finding is consistent with that of the larger survey of participants discussed in the main evaluation report. Moreover, the case studies highlight the importance of supporting the individuals affected in considering options and opportunities in a range of different sectors. For example, workers in a call centre should be supported in considering their options in other occupations.
- 5.12 However, a key finding of the evaluation, via these case studies as well as the main survey, is that in the majority of cases the advice provided was not perceived to have led to a change in the action that the individual in question wanted to take.

Rather, it affirmed and helped to implement a 'direction of travel' that the individual in question already had in mind.

- 5.13 As previously noted, a key difference in the research for the case studies was the fact that there was consultation with individuals made redundant who had not accessed the support available from ReAct. The most common reason as to why individuals had not utilised ReAct support (when they were aware of it) was that they wanted/needed to return to employment as quickly as possible and/or felt that additional training was not needed for them to find work, which is not surprising.
- 5.14 The in-depth interviews for the case studies, however, also highlight the fact that individuals can find it difficult to fully consider their options in the immediate aftermath of being made redundant, and may make decisions that they later regret, such as returning to employment too quickly. This supports a view expressed by some stakeholders and discussed in the main evaluation report that the potential to continue to support individuals made redundant even when they have returned to employment may be appropriate in some circumstances.
- 5.15 Feedback from individuals about the link between the support provided by ReAct and their ability to return to employment was, as in the main participant survey, mixed, with some individuals identifying a substantial benefit but others not. As identified by the main survey, the benefits of ReAct support are considered to be the most significant for those with lower levels of qualifications and skills.
- 5.16 An additional finding of the case studies is that redundancy clearly has an impact on the mental and physical health of those made redundant. Accordingly, one area in which there is potential to add to the support package that is being made available is that of the mental and physical health support provided to individuals.
- 5.17 While Careers Wales advice and ReAct support following redundancy are not a substitute for mental health support (other than referrals to specialist support), it is significant that many participants identify positive mental health outcomes as a consequence of participating in ReAct.
- 5.18 The case studies also highlight that the impact of being made redundant is wider than simply losing a job. Individuals lose people, a social and support network upon which they have become reliant in many ways, especially where they have been employed in the same place for an extended period of time.