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Evaluation of Communities for Work and Communities for Work Plus: Stage 1 (process evaluation and theory of change)

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Evaluation of Communities for Work and Communities for Work Plus: Stage 1 (process evaluation and theory of change)

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

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Glossary

| Acronym/Key word | Definition |
|-------------------------|--|
| AIF | Active Inclusion Fund |
| APS | Annual Population Survey |
| ASD | Autism Spectrum Disorder |
| CAB | Citizens Advice Bureau |
| CF | Communities First |
| CfW | Communities for Work |
| CfW+ | Communities for Work Plus |
| CCG | Children and Communities Grant |
| CSCS | Construction Skills Certification Scheme |
| CCT | Cross Cutting Themes |
| CV | Curriculum Vitae |
| CVC | County Voluntary Council |
| COM-B | Capability, Opportunity, Motivation – Behaviour |
| COVID | CoronaVirus Disease |
| DBS | Disclosure and Barring Service |
| DLUHC | Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities |
| DWP | Department for Work and Pensions |
| EA | Employer Adviser |
| EBS | Electronic Booking System |
| EI | Economically Inactive |
| ELO | Employer Liaison Officer |
| ELT | Employer Liaison Team |
| ESF | European Social Fund |
| ESA | Employment and Support Allowance |
| ESOL | English as a Second Language |
| EU | European Union |
| EW | East Wales |
| FSF | Flexible Support Fund |
| GAVO | Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations |
| HGV | Heavy Goods Vehicle |
| IB | Incapacity Benefit |
| IES | Institute Employment Studies |

| | |
|--------|---|
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |
| IMAP | Income Maximisation Action Plan |
| IS | Income Support |
| JCP | Jobcentre Plus |
| JETS | Job Entry Targeted Support |
| JSA | Job Seekers Allowance |
| LA | Local Authority |
| LDB | Lead Delivery Body |
| LTU | Long Term Unemployed |
| Môn CF | Môn Communities Forward |
| NHS | National Health Service |
| NEPT | National Employer and Partnership Teams |
| OHID | Office for Health Improvement and Disparities |
| OBR | Office for Budget Responsibility |
| ONS | Office for National Statistics |
| PEO | Participant Engagement Officer |
| N | Number or North |
| NEET | Not in Employment, Education or Training |
| PaCE | Parents, Childcare and Employment |
| SE | South East |
| SIA | Security Industry Authority |
| SPOA | Single Point of Access |
| SO | Specific Objective |
| T&S | Travel and Subsistence |
| UC | Universal Credit |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| WEFO | Welsh European Funding Office |
| WCVA | Wales Council for Voluntary Action |
| WW&V | West Wales and the Valleys |
| YEPF | Youth Engagement and Progression Framework |

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In September 2022, the Welsh Government appointed OB3 Research, in collaboration with People and Work, IFF Research, Cardiff University and Dateb, to undertake an evaluation of Communities for Work (CfW) and Communities for Work Plus (CfW+).
- 1.2. The broad aim of the programmes is to increase the employability (and employment) of adults with complex barriers to employment, and reduce the number of 16-24 year olds who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). The delivery, funding, and targets for the two programmes are described in more detail below.

Communities for Work

- 1.3. CfW is a Welsh Government sponsored labour market intervention supported by the European Social Fund (ESF). Established in 2015 it focuses upon increasing the employability and employment of those furthest away from the labour market. Designed and managed by the Welsh Government and delivered in collaboration with the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Jobcentre Plus (JCP), local authorities (LAs) and the third sector (who act as Lead Delivery Bodies (LDBs¹)), it aims to complement, rather than duplicate existing DWP provision.
- 1.4. The programme works with partners, most notably JCP, and referrals go through a triage process, to establish eligibility and assess the level of support needed, so that participants can be assigned to:
 - Community Employment Advisers, experienced employment advisers seconded from DWP to work with those who were assessed as needing the least support; and
 - Youth and Adult Mentors seconded from local authorities and third sector organisations to work with participants assessed as further than 12 months from employment, requiring more intensive support than that provided by advisers.
- 1.5. Advisers and mentors aim to meet participants regularly, building rapport and trust and providing intensive mentoring and specialist employment advice. They also facilitate access to training, work placements and/or volunteering opportunities and signpost to support services, to help strengthen participants' self-confidence and

¹ LDBs initially established to deliver the Communities First programme, are responsible for delivering CfW and CfW+ in each LA.

motivation and help them overcome barriers to employment (such as ineffective job search, low or no vocational and/or soft skills). In addition, in 2019, the scope to provide up to three months in-work support to those supported through CfW who, after starting work, needed additional support to sustain their employment, was introduced.

Targeting and target groups

1.6. CfW provides employment support in 52 areas that were previously Communities First (CF) clusters² across Wales, representing the most deprived communities (as defined by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation)³. It focuses upon three distinct groups of participants:

- long-term unemployed (LTU) people aged 25 and over, who have complex barriers to employment⁴;
- economically inactive (EI) people aged 25 and over who have complex barriers to employment⁵; and
- young people aged 16-24 not in employment, education or training (NEET).⁶

ESF Operational Programmes in Wales

ESF funding in Wales is provided via two Operational Programmes: the 2014-2020 West Wales and the Valleys (WW&V) ESF Programme and the 2014-2020 East Wales (EW) ESF Programme. Each Operational Programme is structured around Priorities, describing the high-level aim of the Operational Programme. CfW addresses two of the priorities these are:

- Priority 1 (P1): Tackling Poverty through Sustainable Employment; and
- Priority 3 (P3): Youth Employment and Attainment.

² Details can be found at [StatsWales: Cluster maps](#)

³ The WIMD is the Welsh Government's official measure of relative deprivation for small areas and identifies areas with the highest concentrations of different types of deprivation, such as Income, employment, health, education and access to services. Further information is available at [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation | GOV.WALES](#) The CF areas were based upon the 2011 WIMD.

⁴ This addresses ESF Priority 1 and Specific Objectives 1.1. and 1.2 in East Wales and West Wales and the Valleys respectively.

⁵ This addresses ESF Priority 1 and Specific Objectives 1.1. and 1.2 in East Wales and West Wales and the Valleys respectively.

⁶ This addresses ESF Priority 3 and Specific Objective 3.3. in East Wales and West Wales and the Valleys.

Each of these Priorities has a series of Specific Objectives (SO) outlining the socio-economic need and the specific results to be achieved through ESF investment.

CfW addresses:

- Specific Objective 1.1. of Priority 1 for EW and Specific Objective 1.2 of Priority 1, for WW&V: To increase the employability of economically inactive (EI) and long term unemployed (LTU) people aged 25 and over, who have complex barriers to employment; and
- Specific Objective 3.1. of Priority 1 for EW and for WW&V: To reduce the number of 16-24 year olds who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).

1.7. Tables 1.1. and 1.2. outline the targets for each group in each of the four ESF funded operations. In 2019, the CfW programme was extended to March 2023 and some of the targets were reprofiled to better reflect the programme's performance since 2015. In 2022, the programme was extended again with delivery to March 2023 and closure in October 2023.

Table 1.1. Communities for Work: Priority 1 targets, 2015-2023

| | WW&V | EW | Total |
|--|-----------------|-----------|--------------|
| Engagements – EI | 20,312 | 6,771 | 27,083 |
| Engagements – LTU | 10,464 | 3,488 | 13,952 |
| Job Entries – EI | 4,655 | 1,444 | 6,099 |
| Job Entries - LTU | 2,767 | 939 | 3,706 |
| Job Search – EI | 1,672 | 437 | 2,109 |
| Qualification or Work Relevant certification - EI | 3,414 | 1,163 | 4,577 |
| Qualification or Work Relevant certification - LTU | 2,459 | 679 | 3,138 |
| Completing work experience or volunteering placement - EI | 1,006 | 361 | 1,367 |
| Completing work experience or volunteering placement - LTU | 874 | 260 | 1,134 |

Source: Welsh Government

Table 1.2. Communities for Work: Priority 3 targets, 2015-2023

| | WW&V | EW | Total |
|--|-----------------|-----------|--------------|
| 16-24 year old NEET's enrolled – Male | 6,293 | 1,809 | 8,102 |
| 16-24 year old NEET's enrolled – female | 4,656 | 1,130 | 5,786 |
| 16-24 year old NEET's gaining qualifications upon leaving. | 880 | 271 | 1,151 |
| 16-24 year old NEET's gaining education or training upon leaving | 540 | 246 | 786 |
| 16-24 year old NEET's entering employment upon leaving | 5,292 | 1,359 | 6,651 |

Source: Welsh Government

ESF funding

1.8. CfW is jointly funded by the ESF, provided via the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO), the Welsh Government and the DWP. The funding for each CfW operation for the period 2015-2023 is set out in Table 1.3. below.

Table 1.3. Funding information for CfW Operations, 2015-2023

| Operation | Total ESF funding (£) | Total Operation Cost (£) |
|------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| WW&V SO 1.2 | 35,608,586 | 60,566,651 |
| WW&V SO 3.1 | 17,647,624 | 24,925,997 |
| EW SO 1.1 | 8,591,985 | 18,558,088 |
| EW SO 3.1 | 4,291,153 | 7,567,147 |
| Total | 66,139,348 | 111,617,883 |

Source: Welsh Government

1.9. As ESF programmes, the four operations must address cross cutting themes (CCTs) by integrating Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming⁷, and Sustainable Development, as well as taking action to Tackle Poverty and Social Exclusion.

1.10. Following the UK's exit from the European Union, the current ESF programmes in Wales are due to end in 2023 (and CfW is scheduled to end at this point). In 2022, the UK Government published plans for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which is intended to replace EU funds⁸, with interventions planned and delivered by LAs, and

⁷ The definition of Gender Mainstreaming used by the Welsh Government is 'the systematic integration of equality into all systems and structures, all policies, processes and procedures, and into an organisation's culture (Rees, 1998). It involves the integration of an equalities perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality and combating discrimination.' ([WG, 2020c](#), p. 6).

⁸ See e.g. [Welsh Government, 2022a](#) for a discussion of the financial implications.

which identifies ‘people and skills’ as one of the funds’ three investment priorities ([DLUCH, 2022](#)).

Communities for Work Plus

1.11. In 2017, the closure of the Communities First (CF) programme was announced, and in 2018 CfW+ was introduced in order to backfill the CF infrastructure (such as management support, premises and community engagement) which would have been lost (and which CfW depended upon) and extend support to those ineligible for either CfW or other regional ESF programmes and who are in or at risk of poverty. The initial expectations of the programme (outlined above) were modest, but the programme has expanded and is now comparable in size to CfW.

Funding for CfW+

1.12. Annual funding for CfW+ is outlined in Table 1.4. As the table illustrates, in July 2020, as part of the Welsh Government’s Employability and Skills COVID-19 Commitment, LAs were allocated additional funding totalling around £3m through the CfW+ programme, outside of the Children and Communities Grant (CCG)⁹, specifically for CfW+ activity during 2020/21. This was increased to £6m in 2021/22. Although the COVID-19 Commitment funding ended in 2021/22, the Welsh Government has allocated £8m to CfW+ through its Young Person’s Guarantee for the 3 years from 2022/23 to 2024/25.

Table 1.4. Funding for CfW+ 2018/19-2021/22

| Year | Funding for CfW+ | Increase (%) compared to baseline (2018/19) |
|-------------|-------------------------|--|
| 2018-19 | £11,587,805 | 0 |
| 2019-20 | £11,587,805 | 0 |
| 2020-21 | £14,330,693 | 24 |
| 2021-22 | £17,473,771 | 51 |

Source: Welsh Government

1.13. Funding to establish CfW+ was provided to LAs through the CCG. LAs submit annual delivery plans for the CCG, including a separate plan for CfW+. These plans include proposed targets and are reviewed and approved by the Welsh Government.

⁹ The CCG aims to address the needs of the most vulnerable children and adults and provide greater flexibility to LAs in how they respond through a range of early intervention, prevention, and support mechanisms. It brings together seven programmes: Childcare and Play; Communities for Work Plus; Families First; Flying Start; the Legacy Fund; the St David’s Day Fund and Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People.

Although funding (through the CCG) started in April 2018, the time it took LAs to recruit staff, meant CfW+ did not become fully operational until November 2018.

The CfW+ delivery model and targeting

- 1.14. The CfW+ delivery model broadly mirrors the CfW programme, but with some differences such as:
- staffing: CfW+ has Employer Liaison Officers (ELOs) and Participant Engagement Officers (PEOs) (unlike CfW) which support both programmes, but no seconded DWP staff (advisers) and no dedicated triage staff (CfW triage staff provide this function for both programmes). Moreover, unlike CfW, CfW+ Mentors are not restricted to working with either young people or adults aged over the age of 25¹⁰;
 - training: CfW+ training is commissioned locally while CfW adopts a centrally procured training model; and
 - coverage and eligibility: CfW+ is a pan Wales programme, including the three local authority areas not covered by CfW – Ceredigion, Monmouthshire and Powys (which did not have CF areas in the final phase of that programme) – and unlike CfW has no restrictions on eligibility based upon people’s post codes. Moreover, CfW+ is not restricted to young people who are NEET and those aged 25 and over who are either long term unemployed or economically inactive. Instead, it can work with those who are in or judged at risk of poverty, including for example, those on zero hour contracts and those who have not been out of work for long (i.e. are not ‘long term unemployed’), but who face barriers to employment.
- 1.15. The commonalities and differences between the two programmes are discussed in section four.
- 1.16. Unlike CfW, CfW+ does not have centrally determined targets. Instead, there was an expectation that each CfW+ delivery team would generate at least 30 job entries a year. As there are 55 delivery teams, this translates into an expectation of at least 1,650 job entries a year in total. It was assumed that given a ratio for around 3-4 engagement for each job entry, this would require teams to engage around 4,950-6,600 individuals a year in total. However, this expectation (for the number of job

¹⁰ CfW Mentors are restricted to working with either adults or young people who are NEET due to the separate funding streams for work with young people and adults aged 25 and over.

entries delivery teams would generate) does not allow for the expansion of the programme, outlined below, and it would be reasonable to assume that as the programme expanded, expectations for engagements and entries would also be raised (although this has not yet happened).

1.17. In addition, LAs identify their own targets for the numbers of engagements and job entries in their annual delivery plans which are assessed by Welsh Government officials. These are often higher than the Welsh Government's expectation of 30 job entries a year per CfW+ team, and are sometimes aspirational targets, which are intended to challenge areas, but which may not be achievable. Therefore, the performance of CfW+ is judged against the Welsh Government expectations rather than the targets set by LAs. This is broadly comparable to the approach taken to evaluating CfW performance which is also based upon targets set by the Welsh Government for CfW teams.¹¹ In addition, as part of the Welsh Government's commitment to close the disabled persons' employability gap, it was agreed that 20 per cent of the CfW+ employment outcomes should be achieved by disabled people. However, this target was suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic and has not been reinstated.

Evaluation of Communities for Work and Communities for Work+

1.18. An initial evaluation of CfW was commissioned in 2016. This focused upon the programme's theory of change; an evaluation of how the programme was established and operated; and an assessment of the programme's overall effectiveness. The evaluation concluded in 2018 ([Welsh Government, 2018](#)).

1.19. This follow up evaluation of CfW and also CfW+ aims to:

- review changes to the delivery of the CfW operations since the evaluation of the previous stages of CfW from 2015-2018 and to review delivery of CfW+ since its inception in 2018;
- assess the extent to which the programme and operation aims have been achieved and targets met for the lifetime of the programmes since 2015 and 2018 respectively;

¹¹ In setting targets, the Welsh Government assumed a ratio of 6 engagement to each job entry, and that each mentor (intended to work with those who need a high level of support) would generate 12 job entries a year and each adviser (intended to work with those who need a moderate level of support) would generate 25 job entries a year.

- provide evidence of the outcomes of the programmes for individuals; and
- undertake a counterfactual impact evaluation of the programmes, providing evidence of the impact for participants compared to a counterfactual group.

1.20. The evaluation involves three stages:

- Stage 1: An update to the previous process evaluation [of CfW] and the theory of change [to cover both CfW and CfW+] and a review of progress against targets, the focus of this report;
- Stage 2: An Outcome and Impact Evaluation in 2023
- Stage 3: Update to the Outcome and Impact Evaluation in 2023.

1.21. This report focuses upon the first stage of the evaluation. As outlined in the specification for this study, the objectives of this stage are to:

- review the effectiveness of the delivery of the CfW operations and CfW+ programme and consider how delivery of CfW has changed since the evaluation of the previous stages. This should consider the impact of Welsh Government and wider policy developments as well as external factors that have affected programme delivery, including COVID-19, EU exit, changes to EU funding programmes and the roll out of Universal Credit from April 2017;
- update the theory of change for the CfW programme to take account of changes referred to above. The evaluation should also consider whether the theory of change for CfW+ is the same as that for CfW or whether there are substantial differences;
- review how new elements of the CfW programme, such as the 'in work support element' are being delivered and contributing to the achievement of the programme aims and objectives;
- review the extent to which the delivery models meet the needs of specific groups; support the attainment of cross cutting theme targets and contributes to wider equality objectives of the Welsh Government
- review how the CfW operations have integrated and delivered activity relating to the cross cutting themes (CCTs);
- review how the programmes have identified the linguistic needs of participants and thus ensured the provision is undertaken in the participants' language of choice (Welsh or English);

- review the extent to which the programmes take into account the Welsh language skills, needs and aspirations of participants, and how these considerations inform the delivery of the programmes;
- review whether the rationale for targeting specific groups and geographies is appropriate, particularly with a view to informing future community employability programmes;
- provide an update on progress against targets for the programmes.

This report

1.22. Following this introductory section the remainder of the report is set out as follows:

- section two considers the policy and programme context;
- section three outlines the evaluation's approach and methodology;
- section four discusses the theory of change and delivery of CfW and CfW+;
- section five considers the impact of external factors upon the programmes;
- section six evaluates the effectiveness of programme delivery (programme performance);
- section seven explores participants motivations, access to opportunities, capabilities and behaviours;
- section eight outlines the conclusions; and
- section nine outlines the evaluation's recommendations.

2. Policy and programme context

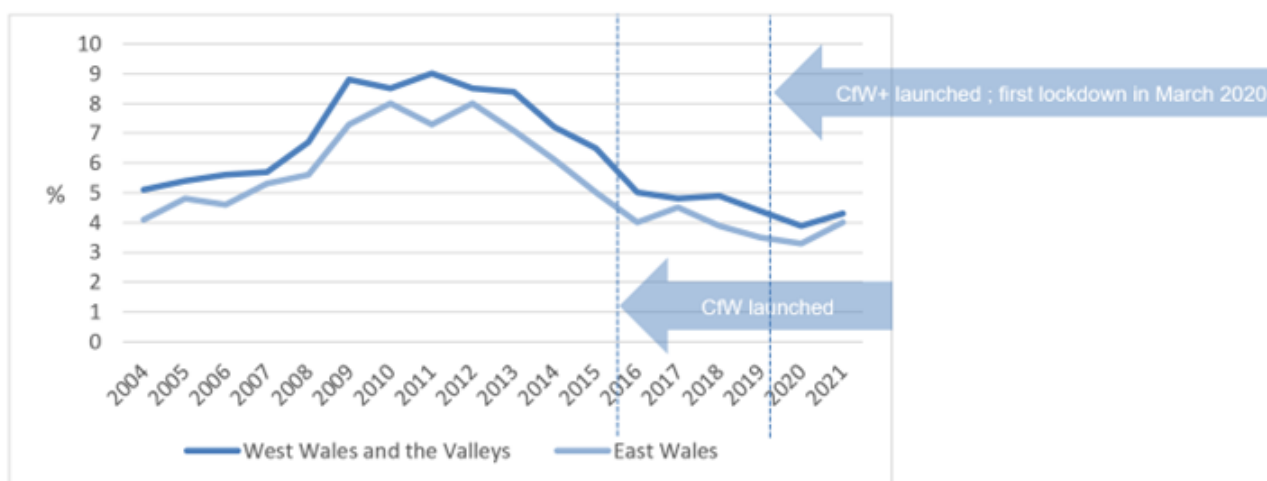
Introduction

- 2.1. This section sets out the policy context for the CfW and CfW+ programmes, including an overview of the Welsh labour market and the impact of unemployment and economic inactivity

The Welsh labour market

- 2.2. As Figures 2.1. and 2.2. illustrate, CfW was launched in 2015 at a time when the labour market was slowly recovering from the effects of the recession that followed the 2008 banking crisis. Unemployment and economic inactivity rates continued to decline, albeit at a slower rate until the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020.

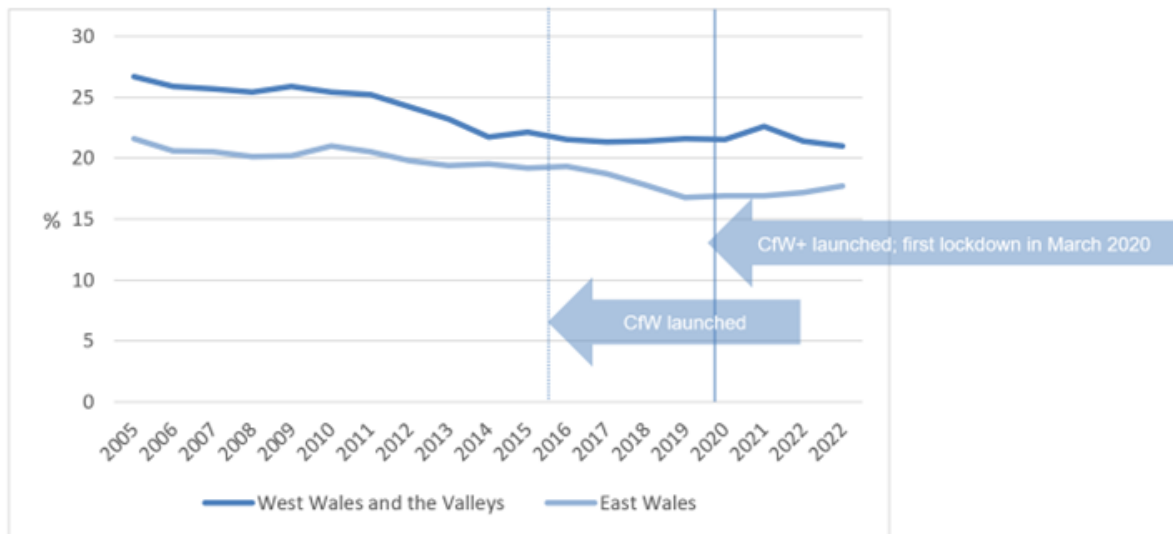
Figure 2.1. ILO unemployment rates¹² by Welsh local areas and year (%)



Source: [StatsWales](#)

¹² The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines people as unemployed if they are 'without a job, have been actively seeking work in the past four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks' or are 'out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start it in the next two weeks'. The ILO unemployment rate is a measure of unemployed persons as a percentage of the economically active population ([ONS, 2022](#)).

Figure 2.2. Economic Inactivity rates (excluding students) by Welsh local areas and year (%)



Source: [Stats Wales](#)

2.3. Although both unemployment and economic inactivity rose following the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact upon employment was tempered by measures taken by the UK and Welsh Governments, not least the ‘furlough’ Job Retention Scheme, business grants and business loan support ([Brewer and Tasseva, 2021](#); [ONS, 2020](#)). Therefore, the effects were smaller than forecast.

2.4. There was a recovery during 2021, with the employment rate increasing and the economic inactivity rate dropping ([Statistics for Wales, 2021a](#)) and an increase in the demand for workers ([Economics Observatory, 2021](#)). Looking forward, initial expectations for a continued recovery, have faded. While unemployment remains low, economic inactivity rates are rising, and the cost of living crisis in 2022 has led to a revision of forecasts, with the Bank of England reporting that the ‘United Kingdom is now projected to enter recession from the fourth quarter of this year’ (in August 2022) ([Bank of England, 2022](#)). All these factors would suggest an ongoing and growing need for employability support, particularly for the most vulnerable groups discussed above.

Policy environment

2.5. Given the economic, social and health costs associated with unemployment, an enduring conviction underpinning Welsh Government’s economic and

employment policy has been that ‘work is good for individuals’ and for society more widely ([Welsh Government 2018b](#)). For example the:

- 2012 **Tackling Poverty Action Plan** highlighted links between unemployment or economic inactivity¹³ and poverty and referred to the ‘enormous costs’ to society more generally in terms of ‘lower economic productivity, reduced social cohesion and increased demands on public services such as health care and children’s services’ (Welsh Government, 2012, p.1);
- 2015 **Wellbeing of Future Generations Act**, with its focus upon ‘allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated [by the Welsh economy] through securing decent work’ and promoting a ‘society that enables people to fulfil their potential, no matter what their background or circumstances’ ([Welsh Government, 2015b](#), p.7)
- 2018 **Employability Plan** also noted that ‘there is clear evidence that being in good work can promote health and wellbeing’, adding that money earned contributes to individuals’ ‘independence and self-determination’ ([Welsh Government 2018b, p.9](#))
- 2022 **Plan for Employability & Skills**, which will ‘prioritise and consolidate Welsh Government led, national employability support to ensure sure no one is left behind. Targeting those under-represented in the labour market, those in and out of work with long term health conditions, to find work and progress in employment’ ([Welsh Government. 2022](#), p12).

2.6. This mindset has also shaped the way in which European Social Fund (ESF) programmes have been structured in Wales. As outlined in section 1, Priority Axis 1 of the 2014-20 ESF Programmes for East Wales (EW) and West Wales and the Valleys (WWV) aims to ‘tackle poverty through sustainable employment’ and more specifically to ‘increase the employability of economically inactive and long-term unemployed people aged 25 and over who have complex barriers to employment’. Priority axis 3 of the ESF Programmes aims to support ‘youth

¹³ People are deemed to be unemployed if they are actively looking for and able to work, while those who are not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks, are deemed to be economically inactive.

employment' and 'reduce the number of 16–24-year-olds who are not in employment, education or training (NEET)' ([Welsh Government 2014a](#); [2014b](#)).

- 2.7. There has also been a strong emphasis on the importance of work in tackling poverty in UK welfare policies over the last decade. Most significantly, **Universal Credit**¹⁴ is intended to ease people's transition into employment and to encourage and enable them to sustain and increase their earnings once in work, thus reducing the risk and the effects of poverty.
- 2.8. Welsh Government employment/employability interventions also sit alongside UK wide programmes such as DWP 'payment by results' Work and Health Programme. There was a marked stepping up of the scale of DWP interventions in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic with, for example, a doubling in the number of work coaches; the introduction of a new Job Finding Support service; and the launch of new schemes such as **Restart**¹⁵ and **KickStart**¹⁶. However at the time of writing (November 2022) there was considerable uncertainty about future provision, as Kickstart closed to new applicants in December 2021, and given the lower than forecast increase in unemployment (following the COVID-19 pandemic), take up of Restart was lower than expected and it is thought that the programme is likely to finish in 2024.
- 2.9. There has been an increasing emphasis over time upon the quality and 'sustainability' of work to minimise in-work poverty and the 'revolving door syndrome' to which people with weak work histories are susceptible. The Employability Plan identifies that 'despite significant improvement in employment and labour market participation, concerns remain over the quality of work' and in response it aims 'to ensure that workers are fairly rewarded, heard and represented, secure and able to progress in a healthy, inclusive environment where rights are respected.' ([Welsh Government. 2022](#), p32).
- 2.10. The Welsh Government's 2018 Employability Plan recognised the importance of two key dimensions to supporting employability: individuals' own skills,

¹⁴ Which replaces six benefits: income support; jobseeker's allowance; employment and support allowance; housing benefit; child tax credit; and working tax credit.

¹⁵ Initially focused upon those out of work for at least 12 months and in receipt of benefits, the eligibility criteria were later relaxed, to make those out of work for at least nine months eligible. It is delivered in Wales by Serco, under a three year framework contract with DWP.

¹⁶ The scheme provided funding to employers to create short term (6 month) paid jobs for 16 to 24 year olds claiming Universal Credit.

experience, motivation, confidence aptitude and aspiration; and societal structures to support people to take up and sustain employment, including ‘an individualised approach to employability support’ ([Welsh Government, 2018b](#), p.20). In this context, it is notable that since CfW was first launched, the Welsh Government has committed to ‘reshape employability support’ ([Welsh Government, 2017a](#), p.9) and to ‘simplify the support offered to those people who want a job’ (ibid., p.31). This has included the creation of **Working Wales, Jobs Growth Wales+, and ReAct+**. Similarly, the 2022 Employability and Skills Plan aims to tackle ‘disadvantage in the labour market’, ‘by bringing together Welsh Government led employability programmes to deliver a new single operating model from 2023 onwards that will include ReAct+, Community Employability Programmes and Jobs Growth Wales Plus’ ([Welsh Government, 2022](#), p34).

- 2.11. Despite the simplification of the gateway to services, the delivery landscape remains inherently complex, particularly in relation to young people. The division of devolved (education and skills) responsibilities of Welsh Government and non-devolved (welfare to work policy) responsibilities of UK Government means that the support provided differs markedly for those aged up to 17 and those aged 18-25. Furthermore, policy in this area is evolving rapidly, with the **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework** (YEPP) currently being refreshed, the **Young Person’s Guarantee**¹⁷ being launched by the Welsh Government and the launch of the **DWP’s Kickstart programme**¹⁸ for young people on Universal Credit (and, thus, aged 18 and over).
- 2.12. In this complex landscape a key and innovative feature of the CfW programme has been collaborative working between Welsh Government, DWP, LAs and others. The 2017 Process and Outputs Evaluation of CfW found that the programme ‘breaks new ground in that it straddles devolved and non-devolved government departments and brings together diverse organisations in ways and on a scale not previously seen’ ([Welsh Government 2017c](#), p.109). Similarly, although not a formal partner, CfW+ teams have worked closely with DWP and

¹⁷ The Guarantee will offer young people support to gain a place in education or training, find a job or become self-employed.

¹⁸ Albeit that applications for Kickstart support closed in December 2021

local JCP offices and also CfW. In this regard, CfW and CfW+ embody the requirement set out in the **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act** (2015) that public bodies should 'work better with people, communities, and each other ... to prevent persistent problems such as poverty' ([Welsh Government, 2015b](#)).

3. Evaluation approach and methodology

Introduction

3.1. A theory-based approach to evaluation was adopted for the first stage of this evaluation of CfW and CfW+, and the programmes' theory of change was tested and refined by drawing upon data generated through a mixed methods approach including:

- a desk-based literature and document review;
- analysis of programme data; and
- qualitative research with stakeholders.

3.2. This approach and each of these methods is discussed in more detail below.

Reviewing the programmes' theory of change

3.3. A workshop was held with six senior Welsh Government officers (including DWP staff seconded to the Welsh Government) and an interview with one DWP manager of CfW and/or CfW+ to review the theory of change developed for CfW in 2017 (WG, 2017) and consider:

- if it needed changing or updating in light of changes in programme delivery and/or the wider context; and
- if a separate theory of change was required for CfW+.

3.4. As section four outlines, as a result of the workshop and interview, elements of the theory of change developed for CfW in 2017 were revised, to reflect:

- changes in the context, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and end of programmes such as CF; and
- changes in the delivery model, such as introduction of in work support and moves to deliver more support online.

3.5. This theory of change was used to describe how the programmes were expected to work in practice, including:

- the context for and the issues CfW and CfW+ aimed to address;
- the change they aimed to bring about (including the different groups expected to benefit) – i.e. the intended outcomes;

- the causal chain of events expected to bring about the change (including the ways in which the programmes are expected to alter participants' motivations, capabilities and/or access to opportunities, and ultimately, behaviours); and
 - the expected conditions required for the intervention to succeed ([Michie, et al, 2011](#); [Westthorp, 2014](#)).
- 3.6. In addition, as section four outlines, a simplified version of the theory of change, focusing upon CfW and CfW+'s support model, was developed, to enable the delivery and effectiveness of each element of the causal chain to be considered.
- 3.7. There was no clear decision in the workshop on whether separate theories of change were required for CfW and CfW+. It was felt that it might be advantageous to have a single model to provide a holistic overview, but it was stressed that the evaluation would also need to pick up the differences between the programmes. This question is further explored in sections four and eight.
- 3.8. The qualitative research and analysis of predominantly quantitative programme data, discussed below, was then used to test the theory of change, and enable any aspects where practice differed from that expected to be identified and considered.

Desk based literature and document review

- 3.9. The desk-based literature and document review focused upon:
- the business cases for the CfW operations, and proposed extensions, and supporting documents such as the CCG and application guidance for CfW+;
 - key Welsh Government policy documents discussed in section two; and
 - recent research and statistics on employment and economic inactivity in Wales, also discussed in section two.

Analysis of programme data

- 3.10. An anonymised version of the CfW data set was shared with the evaluation team and this was used to identify the characteristics of participants (e.g. in terms of their ethnicity and gender); the barriers reported by participants; outcomes for

different groups of participants; and performance of the four CfW operations (see section six).

- 3.11. CfW and CfW+ management information data was also shared and used to assess performance against targets over time (see section six), including performance before, during and after the lockdowns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3.12. In this context it is notable that although the CfW participant dataset is a rich resource, the scope to analyse and use it effectively is hampered by the fact that it is held in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet rather than a more sophisticated client management database. Further analysis of the CfW+ participant datasets held by LAs, is planned in the next stage of the evaluation.

Qualitative research with stakeholders

- 3.13. Research tools including interviews schedules, information sheets and privacy notices for the qualitative research were drafted and shared with the Welsh Government for comment. Questions were informed by mapping research questions against the areas of which different groups of stakeholders, such as senior CfW and CfW+ managers; operational staff (such as delivery managers, advisers, mentors and triage officers); and partners, were expected to have knowledge. Copies are set out at Appendix A.
- 3.14. Two phases of qualitative research with stakeholders were undertaken. The first involved a series of scoping interviews with a purposive sample of senior managers from the CfW and CfW+ programmes (n=six) with oversight of the programmes. The second focused upon interviews with operational staff and partners involved in the delivery of the programmes in a sample of eight CfW and CfW+ areas (n=64).
- 3.15. As Table 3.1. illustrates the eight CfW and/or CfW+ areas¹⁹ were sampled on the basis of four criteria:
 - the area's performance, in terms of engagements and outcomes (to include a mix of high and underperforming areas);

¹⁹ One of the eight areas proposed, Ceredigion, does not have a CfW team.

- the strength of local employment, including areas where unemployment rose sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as Newport (which may, for example, have aided engagements, but also hampered the achievement of employment outcomes);
- geography, to include a mix of rural, urban and valleys areas, and areas where Welsh is the main language, drawn from each of the four regions (based upon the four Regional Engagement Team areas²⁰); and
- the local integration of employment support services, to include areas like Bridgend and Cardiff which are reported to have strong integration, and areas such as Neath Port Talbot and Torfaen, where there is reported to be weaker integration²¹.

²⁰ In order to support EU investment, four regional teams were established covering North West Wales (Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire Gwynedd, Wrexham), Mid Wales (Ceredigion and Powys) , South West Wales (Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire and Swansea) and South East Wales (Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Cardiff, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Newport, Rhonda Cynon Taf, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan).

²¹ This information came from the scoping interviews (and was reported by programme managers).

Table 3.1. Characteristics of the sample of areas included in the fieldwork

| Area | Region | Character | Impact of COVID-19 ²² | CfW Performance ²³ | CfW+ Performance in 2020/21 ²⁴ | Integration of employment services |
|------------|----------|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Flintshire | N Wales | Rural/urban | High | Weak | Moderate | Not known |
| Anglesey | N Wales | Rural/urban, >60% can speak Welsh ²⁵ | High | Strong | Strong | Not known |
| Newport | SE Wales | Urban | Moderate | Weak | Mixed ²⁶ | High |
| Caerphilly | SE Wales | Valleys | Moderate | Weak | Weak | Not Known |
| Cardiff | SE Wales | Urban | Moderate | Mixed ²⁷ | Strong | High |
| Torfaen | SE Wales | Valleys | Moderate | Strong | Mixed ²⁸ | Weaker |

²² Impact of COVID-19 upon unemployment levels, change between 2019 and 2020. Please note caveats in the appendix.

²³ Performance in relation to engagements and outcomes, relative to profile or target.

²⁴ Performance in relation to engagements and outcomes, relative to profile or target.

²⁵ Based upon the percentage of adults (16+) who report they can speak Welsh (source: [Stats Wales](#)).

²⁶ Weak or weaker in terms of engagements, moderate or strong in relation to job outcomes.

²⁷ Weak or weaker in terms of engagements, moderate or strong in relation to job outcomes.

²⁸ Weak or weaker in terms of engagements, moderate or strong in relation to job outcomes.

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|---|----------|--------|---------------------|-----------|
| Carmarthenshire | W Wales | Rural/urban, 40% can speak Welsh ²⁹ | Moderate | Strong | Mixed ³⁰ | Not known |
| Ceredigion | W & Mid Wales | Rural/urban, around 50% can speak Welsh ³¹ | Moderate | N/A | Strong | Not known |

²⁹ Based upon the percentage of adults (16+) who report they can speak Welsh (source: [Stats Wales](#)).

³⁰ Strong in terms of engagements, but weak or weaker in terms of job outcomes.

³¹ Based upon the percentage of adults (16+) who report they can speak Welsh (source: [Stats Wales](#)).

3.16. Table 3.2. outlines the interviews planned in each area. As Table 3.3. illustrates in practice, the numbers of frontline staff were sometimes somewhat larger than planned, but it was not always possible to identify a partner who was willing to be interviewed, and in the case of Ceredigion, only the manager could be interviewed.

Table 3.2. Planned sample of operational staff and partners in each area included in the fieldwork

| Programme | CfW+ | CfW |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Operational staff | LA manager; and a small group discussion with frontline staff (n=2-3) | LA manager ³² DWP regional manager; and a small group discussion with frontline staff (n=2-3). |
| Other | A partner who knows and about refers to CfW and/or CfW+ (e.g. Careers Wales/Working Wales). | |

Table 3.3. Actual sample of operational staff and partners in each area

| Area | Managers (DWP, LDB) | Frontline staff (CfW and CfW+) | Partners |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| Anglesey | 3 | 8 | 1 |
| Carmarthenshire | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| Caerphilly | 2 | 4 | |
| Ceredigion | 1 | | |
| Cardiff | 1 | 6 | 3 |
| Flintshire | 2 | 5 | |
| Newport | 3 | 7 | |
| Torfaen | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Total | 16* | 39 | 7 |

* One manager covered two areas and is only counted once in the total.

3.17. In addition, a County Voluntary Council³³ (CVC)/DWP led model (as is the case in Blaenau Gwent) led model was explored. An interview with a manager from the DWP and two managers from Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO), the CVC in Blaenau Gwent delivering CfW and CfW+, were undertaken.

³² In some cases the LA Manager covered both CfW and CfW+ and in Anglesey, it was suggested that it would be more appropriate to speak to a manager from Môn CF rather than Anglesey CC.

³³ CVCs operate in each LA in Wales and provide advice and information to local voluntary and community groups on, for example, volunteering and funding.

Strengths and weaknesses

- 3.18. The rich qualitative and extensive quantitative data that was gathered and analysed enabled the theory of change for CfW and CfW+ to be tested, and for example:
- the impact of changes in the context, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic (and consequent effects upon the programme and participants) to be considered (see section five);
 - the delivery of the programmes and the intended mechanisms for generating change, to be evaluated (see section four); and
 - the extent which outcomes, including outcomes for different groups, were or were not generated³⁴ and the reasons for this, to be identified (see section seven).
- 3.19. However, the exploration of the mechanisms for generating change is primarily based upon the accounts of those involved in delivering support, such as CfW and CfW+ delivery managers, advisers and/or mentors, and at this stage, primary research with participants has not yet been carried out. Therefore, findings linked to participants are based on the observations and reflections of staff rather than interviews with the participants. This increases the risk that the evaluation of mechanisms does not fully capture how, for example, support is experienced by participants and their motivations, capabilities, and access to opportunities.
- 3.20. In addition, it was not possible to explore aspects of the CfW+ delivery model, most notably the Participant and Employer Engagement Officer roles, in as much depth as hoped, and further research focused upon these two roles is therefore warranted in the next stage of the evaluation.
- 3.21. In response to these gaps, the next stage of the evaluation will include interviews with Participant and Employer Engagement Officers and participants in the same areas included in the first wave of fieldwork.
- 3.22. Moreover, at this stage, the focus of the evaluation was primarily upon process evaluation and identifying what could be learned from the design and delivery of CfW

³⁴ The analysis of quantitative data provided a good understanding of project performance at both an overarching programme and operational level, including performance (in terms of engagements and outcomes) in relation to different groups of interest to the evaluation such as disabled participants and participants from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.

and CfW+, rather than their impact (the difference they made) or assessing their value for money ([HM Treasury, 2020](#)), which the next stages of evaluation will focus upon.

4. Programme delivery models

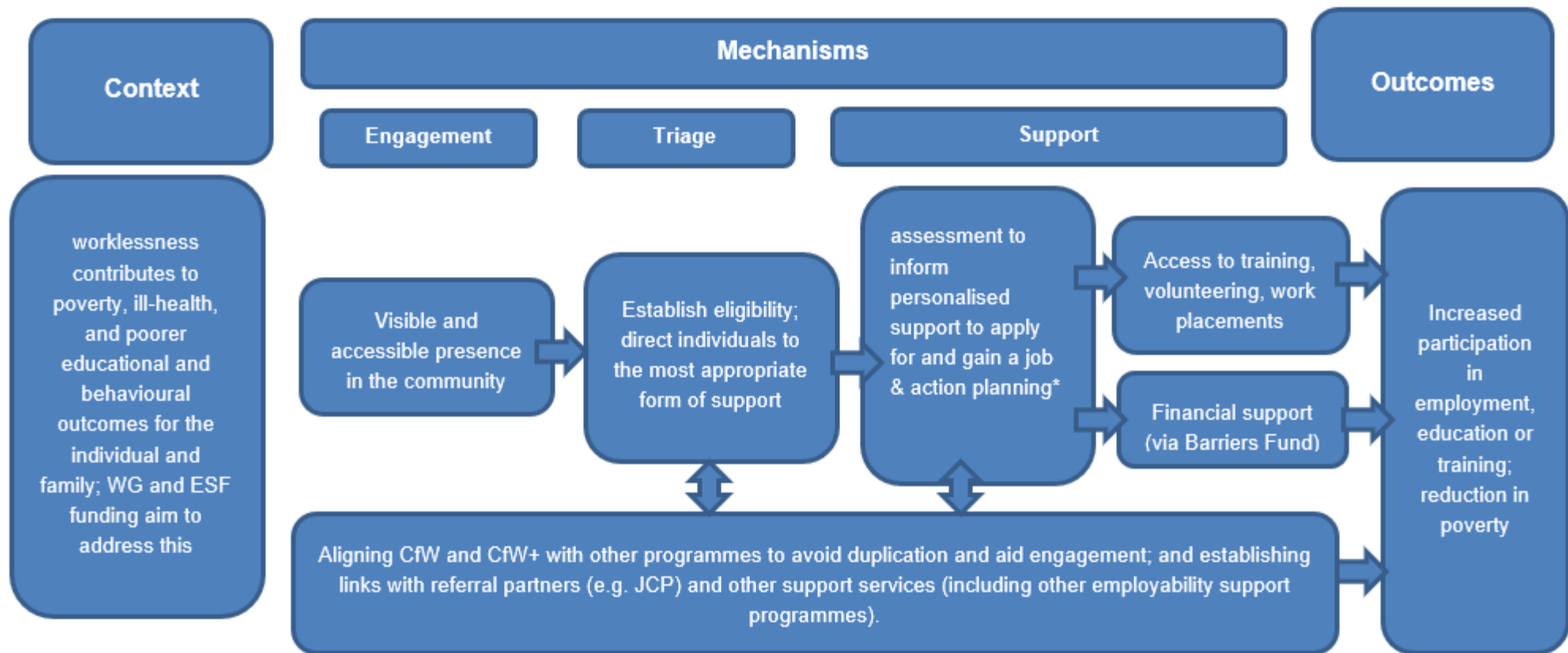
Introduction

- 4.1. This section considers the key elements of the CfW and CfW+ programme model, articulated in their theory of change, such as:
- community based and rooted programmes;
 - the process for engaging participants, including referrals, recruitment, and triage and the role played by CfW+ participant engagement officers;
 - the person centred support offered by CfW and CfW+ advisers and/or mentors;
 - access to training, work placements and volunteering opportunities;
 - financial support;
 - the offer of in work support;
 - the role played by CfW+ employer liaison officers; and
 - the role played by partnerships, including CfW's partnership between the Welsh Government and the DWP and the relationship between CfW and CfW+.
- 4.2. This section also considers the programmes' governance, rules and management, in order to assess both the CfW and CfW+ models (including commonalities and differences between them) and their delivery. The impact of external factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic upon delivery, and the programmes' responses, are considered in the next section (five).

The programmes' theory of change

- 4.3. A simplified theory of change for CfW and CfW+ is presented in Figure 4.1. It focuses upon the key mechanisms - the ways in which change is expected to be generated, rather than the detail of each component or element of the programme, such as different staff roles. A detailed theory of change, focusing upon the different elements, and highlighting differences in the CfW and CfW+ models, is presented in the appendix. Because CfW+ was modelled upon CfW, elements of the CfW model are discussed first and then the CfW+ model, including any differences to the CfW model, are discussed.

Figure 4.1. Simplified theory of change for CfW and CfW+



* This should outline what CfW/CfW+ can do to support a participant and what a participant needs to do themselves.

A community based and rooted programme

- 4.4. As the CfW business case outlines, it was originally envisaged that CfW staff would be situated within 'community based premises' such as Communities First premises or Integrated Children's Centres in order to help foster 'strong working partnerships with local access groups' such as Communities First and LA family and housing support services (Welsh Government, n.d. a., pp. 29, 31). As outlined in section one, the closure of Communities First was announced in 2017 and CfW+ was initially developed to help sustain the community infrastructure needed to underpin CfW.
- 4.5. The physical presence of CfW and CfW+ in communities was consistently seen as important by interviewees (during the fieldwork), and as one frontline staff member put it, a 'must'. It was reported that being close to (or in) communities increased accessibility, and 'visibility' and in some areas it was reported that frontline CfW staff have been in their roles a long time and are known in their communities, and former clients or staff at schools (for young people) refer people to them occasionally. In addition, in one area in particular, the reputation, profile of and trust in the LDB, was highlighted as important to support engagement. It was also reported that being based in community buildings such as LA hubs, created opportunities to 'have a chat with people', as one interviewee put it. This created opportunities to engage potential participants, and as discussed below, in some areas this was an important source of referrals.
- 4.6. Operating from community buildings was also reported by frontline staff to help create a more informal and welcoming atmosphere than JCP offices offered. For example, as a frontline staff member said, the hub they work from feels more 'informal' than JCP premises: advisers do not dress as formally when they are working in the hub; they sit alongside clients, often at a computer, rather than sitting across a desk from them; there is a café on site; and community events like carol singing happen at the hub. This creates a more relaxed atmosphere and reduces clients' fear of being sanctioned or having their benefits cut. Similarly in another area, frontline staff described how 'people prefer to be seen outside JCP ... the hair stands up on the back of the neck when they go to JCP ... even youngsters perceive it as a telling off or interrogation place ... a cup of coffee and a bit of a laugh in a comfortable environment is better'.

4.7. Although important, the interviews with managers and frontline staff, identified that a physical presence in communities was not in and of itself sufficient to engage potential participants. Examples were given of:

- the time it took to build trust and relationships within communities and as one interviewee described it, it was tough for the first year or two of CfW but over time they feel that they have built up their name. Building upon existing links and relationships was therefore valuable;
- how staff turnover, the closure of community buildings during lockdowns or moving to new premises, could sever links, particularly with more transient communities and reduce the visibility and profile of CfW teams in communities; and
- how the pandemic had given some teams the opportunity to review which community venues were a fruitful source of referrals (which the team would continue to use) and which were not.

4.8. The integration of CfW and CfW+ with other support services was also seen as important. Links between CfW and CfW+ and LA provision were reported to be strong, particularly where teams were co-located in LA hubs. One area offered a different, but analogous model, in which CfW and CfW+ were co-located with a range of services offered by a voluntary sector organisation. Nevertheless, it was also clear that while co-location could help strengthen links with other services, it did not necessarily do so, and several examples where, as discussed below, there was sense of a divide between DWP and LA or CVC staff.

Engagements: referrals, recruitment, and triage

4.9. The CfW business case identified that the CfW operation would engage ‘participants through a number of pathways and activities, many driven through local activity and knowledge and our strategic link with JCP.’ It goes on to identify a number of other Welsh Government led programmes expected to help engage participants including Families First, Supporting People³⁵, Primary Care and School and Parent Engagement (Welsh Government n.d. a, p13).

4.10. In practice, JCP was a key source of referrals for both CfW and CfW+, and the programmes’ partnership with JCP was seen as a key strength. As outlined below, in

³⁵ The Supporting People Programme provides people with the help they need to live in their own homes, hostels, sheltered housing or other specialist housing

the face of limited outreach work, the proportion of referrals from JCP increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was widely reported (in the areas included in the fieldwork) that without this partnership, the programme would have really struggled.

4.11. However, it is important to bear in mind that the programmes' reliance on JCP did not start with the pandemic. As outlined in section five, dependence upon JCP as a source of referrals has fallen somewhat as social distancing restrictions have been relaxed (meaning referrals from other source(s) have picked up) and also as new DWP programmes, such as Restart, have begun 'competing' with CfW and CfW+ for referrals from JCP (thereby reducing the number of referrals from JCP to CfW and CfW+). At the time the fieldwork was undertaken in Spring 2022, the CfW and CfW+ teams in areas included in the sample, reported that referrals from JCP accounted for around half to over three quarters of their participants.³⁶ Consequently, CfW and CfW+ teams often felt over-reliant upon JCP and were keen to diversify referral pipelines.

4.12. The other key pathways for recruitment were:

- direct recruitment via social media, which increased in both use and importance during the pandemic (see practice example), self-referrals, word of mouth recommendations, advertising, including social media campaigns (see practice example) flyers, shop front adverts, events³⁷, activity often supported by CfW+ Participant Engagement Officers (PEOs), whose role is discussed below; and
- referrals from other programmes such as Working Wales, and partners such as the LA hubs and services, Careers Wales (who run Working Wales), the youth service (for young people) and the Probation service.

4.13. In relation to direct recruitment, interviewees in several areas noted that young people who were NEET were more likely to respond to social media campaigns and those aged 25 and over were more likely to respond to events and activities taking place in their communities.

³⁶ The lowest estimated percentage of referrals from JCP was reported to be 50-60% in Blaenau Gwent and the highest was 70-90% in Carmarthenshire.

³⁷ For example, staff in one area reported running a lot of 'get into' events e.g. in the care or construction sectors and this can help to generate clients who are interested in finding work in those particular fields.

Practice example: Recruitment via social media

In one area the CfW and CfW+ teams reported that lockdown led them to take their social media marketing 'to a whole new level' (as they described it). They described how they had developed an in-house marketing team which met every Thursday for 60 to 90 minutes to promote themselves on social media, using Facebook, Instagram, Linked-In and Twitter. As well as publicising their offer the team described how they also made videos of themselves so that people could put names to faces.

The team felt that Facebook had been the most successful platform and that on Facebook, people who would find it challenging to phone to make an appointment can 'just do one tap and then we will call them back'. Nevertheless, they also acknowledged what was lost, such being able to 'read' participants' body language and emotions more effectively, when they met clients in person.

- 4.14. In relation to recruitment via referrals from partners, there was some disappointment in the areas included in the fieldwork, that partners (other than JCP) were not more fruitful sources. For example, in one area, it was argued that training providers should be referring people who complete or drop out of courses, but who had not entered employment, but this was not happening. It was also anticipated in the business case that 'CfW staff will work closely with local GP surgeries and community health practitioners in supporting patients [to] identify alternative employment opportunities as a means of offering health related benefits' (p.6, Welsh Government n.d. a) but there was little evidence of either CfW or CfW+ teams receiving large numbers of referrals from these sources in the areas included in the fieldwork³⁸. Indeed, over half of the areas included did not identify GPs as a source of referrals.
- 4.15. Frontline CfW staff in the areas included in the fieldwork also drew distinctions between the engagement of young people and those aged 25 and older, highlighting how differences in CfW's eligibility criteria effected engagements for the two groups

³⁸ In one area it was reported that before the pandemic, one of the Advisers had a desk at a GP's surgery and was called in to speak to patients who wanted to work, alongside the doctor (in essence, a form of social prescribing). A total of eight individuals had been recruited onto CfW this way and two of these had gone on to find jobs. However, this arrangement was stopped following the first national lockdown. A second area appeared had done some outreach with GP surgeries, but this was fairly informal, and also stopped following the first national lockdown. A third area identified receiving referrals from Mental Health Team, and GPs (amongst a long list of partners), but were clear that clear that most referrals were from JCP or self referrals

(unlike CfW+ which has more flexible eligibility criteria). The former (young people) were generally seen as easier to engage; for example, as a manager explained, 'under 25s don't have to be claiming for over a year'. In contrast, as staff in one area reported, those over 25 were viewed as facing more barriers making them harder to engage and meaning it was often a longer-term process to move them towards employment.

Engaging those with more complex barriers

- 4.16. The voluntary nature of the CfW and CfW+ programmes, and the time they allowed to support people were seen as crucial in engaging and supporting those with complex barriers. As an interviewee explained they were 'not pushing anyone to do anything they don't want to do, it's less pressurised... it's an opportunity to talk and to break problems down. We have the time to be patient and take things at the person's own pace'. Inevitably this often meant those with greater barriers need more support and time.
- 4.17. However, it was also noted that as the complexity of a person's barriers increased, it also generally became harder to engage them, and as the practice example illustrates, frontline staff reported that the programme struggled with some groups. For example, a Careers Wales adviser in North Wales reported, those further away from the market may have additional barriers such as mental health and motivation, and as a result it can sometimes be difficult to get them to identify that they need help or agree to help from another organisation. Given the challenges in proactively identifying potential participants with complex barriers, some areas reported relying upon JCP to help identify and refer or introduce them to the programme.

Practice example: difficulties engaging and supporting participants with complex needs

Notwithstanding the programmes' success in engaging people with barriers to employment, interviewees from the areas included in the fieldwork identified some groups who they felt the programme was unable to engage or support effectively.

For example, in one area:

- a Careers Wales adviser reported that there were many neurodiverse people such as autistic young people who were struggling to find employment, However as they put it, helping them is 'way out of the programmes' remit',

and ‘there is very little support for them’, Similarly, another interviewee in the area identified that they have young people with learning disabilities but as they put it: ‘I don’t have experience of learning disabilities and I find it difficult to know what I can offer’;

- frontline staff identified that ‘care leavers are also difficult to engage ... they get lots of support, support coming out of their eyes and ears but from what they tell us it’s not the support that they need’; and
- frontline staff identified that participants without essential skills could be caught in a Catch 22 situation where they lacked the skills needed to engage with training, but needed to access training to improve their skills. Those with additional needs, were highlighted as facing particular problems accessing training provision. Weak English language skills could also make it difficult for some participants, such as refugees, to access training (see e.g. [WG, 2020e](#)).

CfW+ Participant Engagement Officers

- 4.18. It was envisaged that Participant Engagement Officers (PEOs) would ‘work closely with local community groups and individuals to raise the profile and awareness of the programme, creating opportunities in which to identify new participants, engaging and enrolling them onto the programme.’ (Welsh Government n.d. g).
- 4.19. The value of CfW+ PEOs work was difficult for interviewers to identify and in some areas they were not mentioned at all. In one area included in the fieldwork there are no PEOs. Nevertheless, as the practice example illustrates, in some other areas visited, they were seen as more important.

Practice example: Participant Engagement Officer

In one area visited, it was reported that the CfW+ PEO generates around a fifth of the engagements across the CfW+ programme, albeit fewer across CfW.

It was reported that the PEO played a key role in helping organise marketing and social media which was crucial during the pandemic, given the lack of any face to face events and the team reported that they had a strong social media campaign across the county.

At the time of the fieldwork (in spring 2022), the PEO had recently moved to arranging face to face events, and for example, this included a recent Jobs Fair which generated 86 referral forms for employability initiatives across the county. The PEO has also reached out to libraries, food bank centres, COVID-19 vaccination centres and university settings with marketing literature.

Triage

- 4.20. The Triage Worker (or officer) post was one of the CfW programme's key innovations. In the CfW business case it was envisaged that:
- ‘The Triage Worker will support CfW advisers and mentors in establishing participant eligibility, gathering appropriate eligibility evidence and managing participant training referrals through to the managed service provider. Triage workers will also play a vital role in case management across the CfW and local partnership networks, ensuring the individual receives the appropriate level of service and support available and that support services are aligned, and duplication is minimised.’ (Welsh Government, n.d. a., p. 35).
- 4.21. In practice, the fieldwork suggested that Triage Workers' role were focused primarily upon establishing eligibility and allocating participants to advisers or mentors, to ensure they received the appropriate level of service and support.
- 4.22. Views on the effectiveness of the role were somewhat divided. The Triage Worker role was generally seen as helpful in establishing potential participants' eligibility for the programmes. In addition, in some areas, it was seen as effective in matching participants to the right programme and person and in ensuring transparency and fairness in the allocation of clients. This appeared to be most evident where there was a single point of access to employment services in the LA (discussed below) and higher levels of trust between the Local Delivery Board (LDB) and DWP. However, in areas where there was less trust between the LDB and DWP, demand for employment support services fell short of capacity, and there was greater competition within CfW between advisers and mentors for participants³⁹, the role was seen as less successful by some staff in terms of the allocation of clients. This appeared to be rooted in external factors, like a lack of trust and cultural differences between the DWP and LDB, rather than inherent problems with the role of triage officer.

³⁹ The performance of teams, rather than individuals, were measured but there were still individuals who fiercely protected their participants rather than triage appropriately.

Practice example: triage and access to employability support

In one area a single triage process has been established for a range of different national and regional employability support programmes including CfW, CfW+, PaCE, Working Wales, and Workways+.⁴⁰ The triage panel, known as the Employability Support Carmarthenshire group⁴¹, has representation from across all the key partners and reviews all new referrals on a weekly basis. The triage officer is funded via CfW but operates across all employment initiatives.

It was reported that this triage process works well because there is a strong degree of trust between partners and the flow of referrals into the triage panel is usually healthy (other than during the pandemic when numbers were reduced). It was also reported that partners have a very good understanding of what each other provides and this is important, in what was described as quite a complex ecosystem of employment support services, where eligibility determines a lot of the allocations made.

Interviewees reported that a key strength of the approach was that 'we can go into the job centre and sell employment support ... we avoid confusing partner agencies and customers' as they have no need to worry about the differences between various programmes. They can refer to the triage knowing that the panel will sort the eligibility issues out.

When compared to other areas, contributors thought that the area had a very good model – some had previously worked in another area and had found the model to be much more competitive with different initiatives fighting over referrals and protecting their client base.

4.23. Moreover, even in areas where the triage process was felt to work well, there were concerns raised by frontline staff in the areas included in the fieldwork:

- that because the triage officers were employed by LAs or CVC, rather than the DWP, they could not access DWP databases (which stopped them

⁴⁰ Workways+ is regional ESF funded programme in West Wales that works with unemployed adults by providing support in finding employment, training, work experience and volunteering opportunities.

⁴¹ The triage process is one aspect of the work of the Employability Support Carmarthenshire group – they also work together to arrange joint events such as job fairs in order to recruit new clients from across the county.

looking up details about clients and also to 'trawl' the database for potential clients); and

- that the triage process added another layer of bureaucracy, when for example, a work coach made a direct referral to a CfW adviser, who then had to pass the referral onto the triage officer, who might then allocate them back to the adviser. Although this is not required by the guidance,⁴² it was reported by frontline staff that it was practice in their area, and that this could slow the process of engagement and also increase the risk of losing a potential client (for example as, a frontline staff member explained, 'it was another voice' that clients had to be convinced was legitimate).

Support from advisers and mentors

4.24. Following triage, advisers and/or mentors follow up with clients and undertake a more in-depth assessment, to identify participants' aspirations and goals, their experiences, capabilities and potential barriers, and determine how much and what type of support is appropriate.

4.25. The flexible, person centred ethos was seen as a key strength of the programmes by all those interviewed. It means that advisers and/or mentors can:

- take the time needed to build a relationship and trust⁴³ which can encourage people to disclose sensitive barriers, like a criminal record;
- determine what support is appropriate (for example, as a frontline member of staff put it: 'each client is different, and each client responds differently to different approaches'); and
- do not have to rush people into unsuitable or unsustainable work.

4.26. As the practice example below illustrates, support from advisers and mentors is at the heart of the programmes. This included:

⁴² The CfW Business case identifies that 'The triage process is not restricted to the triage workers and is undertaken by each member of staff on first contact with participants to determine best manner of support for the individual.' (Welsh Government, n.d. a., pp34-35,)). The fieldwork identified that in some areas, advisers or mentors will accept direct referrals, where it is seen as expedient it to do so. For example, where a Work Coach makes a direct referral to an adviser. However, in other areas visited, advisers reported that even when this happened and they know that the clients will probably be referred back to them in time, they still refer the cases to the triage officer.

⁴³ As a manager from the DWP put it The time available to speak with people is so important. To sit with someone for an hour and get to know them and getting to know their background. 'You get to know what makes them tick and what holds them back'. Patience was also seen as important and staff in one area visited reported that advisers and mentors allow clients who do not turn up for appointments 'second chances' which allows trust to build and gives people the time they need to change.

- practical support to strengthen people’s capabilities, including:
 - activities such as job search, registration on job sites, emailing job vacancies and signposting to jobs fairs and events, to enhance participants’ access to and knowledge of employment opportunities and to strengthen the knowledge and skills needed to effectively search for jobs;
 - activities such as CV building, support with job applications, interview skills and mock interviews, to strengthen the knowledge and skills participants needed to effectively apply for jobs;
 - access to training, work placements and/or volunteering, to build skills and experience, strengthen CVs and potentially gain work related certification or qualifications;
 - referral to partners such as the Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) and LA services to help address challenges in peoples’ lives that would otherwise hamper applying for and/or sustaining employment, such as financial difficulties, housing problems and/or drug and alcohol misuse;
 - financial support via the barriers fund or the DWP’s Flexible Support Fund; and
- emotional support, to motivate and empower participants. For example, as one staff member put it, ‘It’s often about holding someone’s hand, telling them they’d be good at this job, boosting low confidence. Some don’t need a lot of help, others do. Building confidence, a belief in themselves, it’s about small steps, the journey should never end.’

Practice example: a CfW+ participant’s journey

A member of the CfW+ team in one area visited, described how JCP referred Chris (not his real name), to the triage officer, who checked his eligibility and undertook an initial assessment, and then assigned him to Steve (not his real name), a CfW+ mentor. Steve got in touch with Chris and had a long informal chat to get to know him better. Initially Chris said he just wanted to renew his forklift truck licence, but as Steve got to know Chris better, it emerged that Chris was a recovering drug addict with a driving ban, who felt that working during the day was difficult as he

had only just got custody of his child. It also emerged that Chris lived above a shop and there were concerns about the condition of his housing.

Steve helped Chris find a new flat with the support of a local authority team who provide holistic support for issues such as food poverty, debt or rent arrears, isolation or loneliness.

With his home life more settled, Chris was ready to start looking for work, and Steve booked him in, to develop his CV. This was done over the phone, and as Steve described he told Chris, 'you talk I type', to ensure that the CV was based around their own words, while also meeting the expectations of employers. Steve also arranged a mock interview and reminded Chris of the things he should - and should not say. Now that Chris was prepared, they started applying for jobs and Steve continued to work with Chris until he found a new job.

- 4.27. The voluntary nature of participants' relationship with CfW advisers' and CfW and CfW+ mentors was consistently seen as important by interviewees. It was reported to mean that participants were more likely to be motivated to find work and was contrasted to mandated programmes where participants might be 'going through the motions' as one frontline staff member in one area put it. This coupled with the programmes' community base helped differentiate CfW and CfW+ from JCP (despite delivery by DWP advisers in the case of CfW). This helped both initial and on-going engagement with the programmes, with participants taking 'ownership over their future' as one interviewee put it.
- 4.28. Nevertheless, interviewees acknowledged that there could be a degree of what could be described as 'soft conditionality' from DWP/JCP to engage with the programmes. For example, it was reported by frontline staff in the areas included in the fieldwork that:
- initially not all participants referred by JCP were aware or fully understood that participation in CfW or CfW+ was voluntary, and that participation in CfW or CfW+ could be used to fulfil claimant commitments to be actively searching for work;
 - during the pandemic, when JCP work related commitments were suspended, engagements to the programme fell (although this was not the only factor), an

issue discussed further in section five, when considering the impact of the pandemic upon the programme; and

- if CfW/CfW+ advisers cannot get hold of clients they can ask work coaches to chase them and provide an update for them on their status.

4.29. As section five explores, this soft conditionality could both help the programmes reach out to those who would not otherwise have engaged. However, it could also mean that the programmes wasted resources trying to work with people who had little interest in, or motivation to engage with the programmes.

Staff skills and knowledge

4.30. The social and emotional skills and knowledge of CfW advisers and CfW and CfW+ mentors are vital. This reflects the importance of developing a relationship of trust, that enables advisers and mentors to both support and, when appropriate, challenge participants, and identify, what as one interviewee put it, are the ‘real’ barriers to employment, in a way that often cannot be achieved at JCP. The fieldwork suggests that while many advisers and/or mentors brought skills and experience from previous roles, including, but not limited to other employability programmes and the DWP, they had also learnt on the job. It was also noted that there is no defined career pathway or qualifications for advisers or mentors, unlike for example youth and social work, which are degree level professionals. Although staff such as advisers may be trained by DWP (see practice example) or undertake Level 4 advice and guidance courses.

Practice example DWP staff training

A CfW manager described how DWP staff are trained for six weeks before they start as a DWP Work Coach. This training covers areas such as welfare benefits, creating a CV and looking at what people can do, rather than what they cannot. In addition DWP staff have:

- generally completed a Level 4 City & Guilds qualification in Managing the Delivery of Services to Customers (Operational Delivery);
- completed Autism Awareness training, Disability Confident training, Access to Work, Accessibility training and numerous other courses and are required to undertake regular annual training from Lone Working to Data Protection;

- have access to specialist in house sessions covering for example, supporting ex-offenders and those who are disabled; and
- have sessions with National Employer and Partnership Teams (NEPT) teams who cover a range of employment topics.

4.31. Although vital, the fieldwork (unsurprisingly) identified variation in the skills and commitment of different staff. As one manager put it: some staff ‘smash it out of the park’ while ‘others just do the minimum’. Given the small size of teams, the impact of underperformance, staff absence and/or problems recruiting staff was described as ‘massive’ in one area. While this was not raised as a prominent issue in the other areas included in the fieldwork, it is likely that the small size of teams would accentuate the impact of problems with even a small number of frontline staff upon delivery of the programme.

Training

4.32. The CfW business case identifies the link between unemployment and low or no qualifications and anticipates that participants, will in the main have no skills or predominately entry level skills.⁴⁴ (Welsh Government, n.d. a., p.8). As section six outlines:

- 22 per cent of CfW participants and 15 per cent of CfW+ participants have no qualifications; and
- 84 per cent of CfW and around 65 per cent of CfW+ participants do not have qualifications above level two.⁴⁵

4.33. Nevertheless, it is important to note that not all participants have low skills, and for example, over 750 CfW participants (under 3%) had qualifications at level 6 or over (equivalent to a degree) and that for some participants, training needs relate to the skills and/or certification required for a specific occupation (most commonly construction or security), rather than a more generalised lack of skills.

⁴⁴ Similarly, the business case identifies that ‘CfW will engage with 16-24 year olds Not in Education, Employment or Training in the 13 Communities First clusters in EW [East Wales] who predominantly have no or entry level skills’ (Welsh Government, n.d. p. 3).

⁴⁵ Differences in the way CfW and CfW+ collect and record data mean it is not possible to include a precise figure for CfW+, because some qualifications are recorded under an “other” category. It is thought that most will be qualifications below Level 2, such as Key Skills qualifications, but it may also include qualifications that do not easily fit within the Credit and Qualifications Framework categories, such as qualifications from other countries, which may be equivalent to qualifications above level 2.

4.34. Training was reported (by staff in the areas visited) to be both a tool for engagement – as one interviewee put it, the offer of training is a ‘selling point for any employability programme’ - and an important intervention to help participants achieve employment outcomes. Although as frontline staff in one area reported, getting participants on training was often a ‘challenge’, but once they are on the training it was thought to help participants realise their aspirations. The training accessed by participants in the fieldwork areas included:

- free courses, such as those funded by the DWP, housing associations, the voluntary sector⁴⁶ or local authorities⁴⁷, including free courses delivered by local colleges⁴⁸ or Adult Learning Wales;
- training delivered by ACT⁴⁹ (for CfW) or commissioned by CfW+ delivery teams; and
- less frequently, training paid for by the Barriers Fund, (as a short term measure during the COVID-19 pandemic), the DWP Flexible Support Fund (FSF), Personal Learning Accounts or another programme, such as ReAct.

Procured vs market training models

4.35. The CfW programme includes a procured training model delivered by ACT, which can only be accessed if there is no free alternative⁵⁰. In contrast, CfW+ uses a market model, in which each area has a training budget.

4.36. There were a small number of positive comments about the procured training model. For example, one CfW+ mentor who had recently moved to a CfW mentor role explained that ACT’s ‘catalogue is great and valuable. These bespoke courses online or face-to-face are great. They open up new options for people.’ It was also reported by frontline staff in one area, that whilst DWP is able to pay for training, the process of applying for FSF can be convoluted and booking ‘paid for’ training via the EBS [Electronic Booking System] is far easier. In a similar vein, strategic managers reported that they felt that the implementation of the EBS for training ‘has changed

⁴⁶ For example, Môn CF offer basic training in-house – health & safety, fire safety, first aid, mental health first aid, SIA security license and construction courses.

⁴⁷ For example, one area described an adult learning team which offers a range of short vocational courses such as: food hygiene and manual handling, while academies for care and construction offer sector specific training, placement and job opportunities.

⁴⁸ For example, one team refers people onto the Coleg Menai ‘Get Skilled Up’ course which builds both skill and confidence

⁴⁹ ACT is the trading name for Associated Community Training Limited.

⁵⁰ The only exception to this requirement is when a participant has a guaranteed job offer subject to achieving particular qualifications/certifications. In such cases, advisers are able to refer clients to ACT straight away.

things radically and for the better'. It has made a big difference to the speed at which courses can be booked and to the visibility of what is available, where, and when. The EBS has also 'standardised', 'formalised' and 'speeded up' the learning provider's communication with participants, including, for example, issuing invitations to training and the evidencing of qualifications achieved, as ACT no longer needs to send individuals paper certificates.

4.37. However, frustration with the process of accessing ACT training, limitations of their offer and their monopoly over CfW training provision⁵¹, was widely reported by frontline staff. This included:

- frustration with the requirement that advisers or mentors provide evidence that they have looked for and been refused free training before they are able to enrol participants onto ACT courses;
- frustration with what was seen as an overly bureaucratic process to place participants into training. This was reported to take time, and as a frontline staff member put it, the 'key word is urgency, when the opportunity is there, you've got to go for it';
- issues with courses not running, or being cancelled if ACT could not get the numbers required, which it was reported could undermine staff's relationship with participants; for example as one interviewee described it, they would tell a 'client trust me', but while they've done their job and booked them onto a course, ACT could still 'let them down'; and
- the limited (pre pandemic) ACT training offer in some areas, which meant that participants had to travel, which as outlined in section five, caused problems when people faced situational barriers to accessing training (or employment) such as a lack of transport⁵² and/or caring responsibilities;
- concerns about the quality and reliability of training; examples were given of courses which did not meet expectations (as they did not qualify people for the role⁵³); differences in the quality of courses delivered by different trainers;

⁵¹ It was reported that staff could not 'buy' provision that ACT is unable to provide.

⁵² As the CfW Business cases identifies, 'CfW will be focused on the most deprived communities in Wales, featuring both city and valley communities. Within these communities there is a vast variance in access to public transport, hindering the ability to attend training or employment opportunities.' And therefore proposed 'skills training being delivered within their community' (p. 30, Welsh Government, n.d. c)

⁵³ For example, it was reported that a teaching assistant course and gym instructor course did not provide people with the qualifications required, despite assurances from ACT that they did.

and of failures to adapt to participant's needs (illustrated by the practice example below) and

- concerns about what were felt to be overly stringent entry requirements, for a programme aimed at those with low or now skills. It was reported that CfW participants must have a certain level of literacy before enrolling on a course. While it was generally accepted that participants must have the skills needed to complete courses, some frontline staff and managers reported that it was discriminatory to require people to have a level 2 in English as many of their participants did not have that literacy level. People on probation were also particularly highlighted as a group disadvantaged by this policy.

Practice example: the importance of supporting learners

Because CfW and CfW+ work with people who have 'have fairly complex barriers', as one interviewee put it, it is important that training providers understand their needs and adapt provision in response. The problem as one interviewee from CfW (which relies upon training provided by ACT) put it, was that 'the trainers are not well versed into how to work with our participants' and their needs; they're not aware of their additional needs and they don't take a tailored approach. If we were using local providers we could talk to their providers directly and we could get them to understand the needs and it would be different'. Similarly, in another area, it was reported that unlike CfW+ staff, CfW staff were unable to discuss participants' needs with trainers to achieve a tailored response. An example was given of a man with learning difficulties who needed support to participate in online learning, and it was reported that CfW staff had emailed the trainer to make them aware. However, they reported that the man had not received support. They explained that the joining instructions had been sent in an email, even though the CfW staff member had told ACT that he could not read and would need phone support to join, and he had sat by his computer not knowing how to access the training and had afterwards contacted CfW staff in a rage about the training not starting on his computer. CfW staff stated, 'once they are with the trainer we are out of the communication loop. It's just the trainer and the learner.' It was also reported that they have receive written communications reprimanding them for trying to communicate with trainers over participants' learning needs.

4.38. In contrast, the flexibility within CfW+ to be able to buy training from the open market was seen as a huge advantage in that it was widely reported:

- to be quicker and easier (less bureaucratic) to organise training which was seen as important to get clients onto courses more quickly, maintain momentum (whilst participants were motivated) and because training tended to be offered locally, this made it easier for clients to attend (increasing take up);
- that it was sometimes cheaper to use local providers (although a systematic comparison of the costs of CfW's procured and CfW+'s market based models was beyond the scope of this evaluation); and
- that CfW+ staff could build relationships with local training providers, which could make it easier to be able to get people onto courses more quickly, to in-fill on courses that are running, to find training at a level that suited the participant and to discuss individual participant's needs with providers, such as language needs, and how these can be accommodated on the training course and to get updates on participants' progress.

Work placements and volunteering

4.39. It was envisaged in the CfW business case, that providing access to 'work experience and volunteering opportunities' would be key actions used to support participants, helping them gain valuable skills and experience⁵⁴, enhancing their CV and potentially making connections with employers, and also to demonstrate their commitment to the programme (Welsh Government, n.d. a). As outlined in section 5, 'completing a work experience placement or volunteering opportunity' was also a key outcome for adults aged 25 and over.

4.40. As Charts 4.1. and 4.2 outline, in both East Wales and West Wales and the Valleys, the numbers of CfW participants completing a work experience or volunteering placement were much lower than anticipated. The COVID-19 pandemic was a factor, as so few work placement or volunteering opportunities were available during the period of lockdown, and there was reported by interviewees to be much less interest amongst participants in taking up those opportunities. However, the numbers,

⁵⁴ Interviewees noted that this included both experience of the world of work and of managing (and overcoming) potential barriers to working, such as childcare or transport.

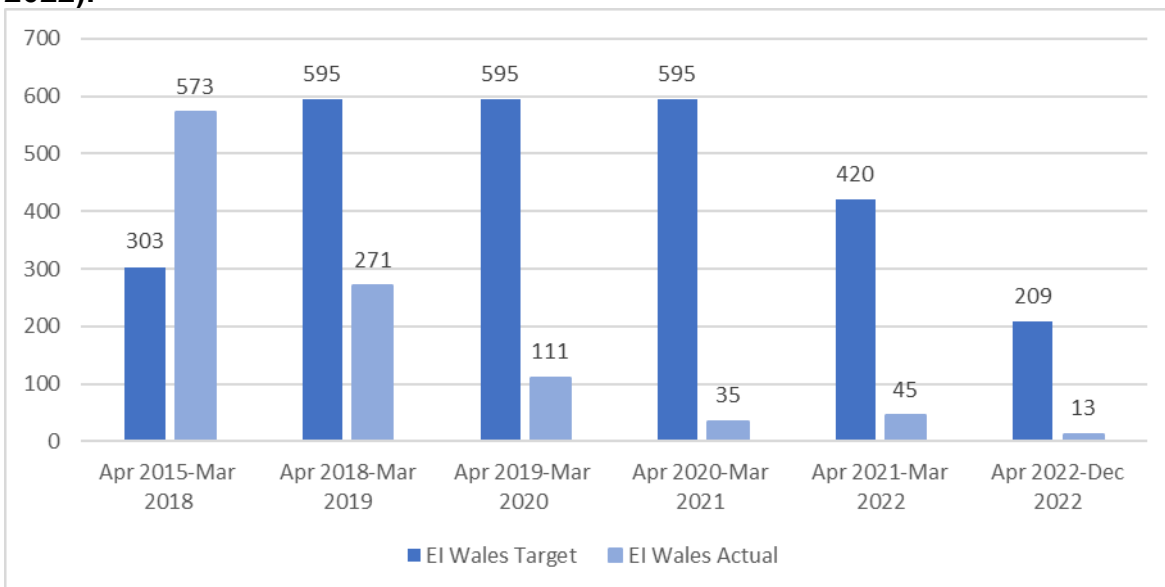
particularly the numbers of economically inactive participants, fell in the period before the pandemic (2018-2019 and 2019-2020), and have remained very low since, suggesting that other factors also contributed to this. In part this appears to be because many participants went directly into work, rather than completing volunteering or work placements first. However, it also appears that demand from those who would have benefitted, has been lower than anticipated. Nevertheless, as the practice example below illustrates, some types of work placement were seen as valuable.

Practice example: The NHS Step Into Work programme

In one area, CfW+ staff were keen to highlight the NHS Step Into Work programme that the LDB refers people to. As they described it, ‘it’s been really good for CfW+ participants to be able to do training, get work experience and employment in an NHS staff bank, it’s been so valuable for so many participants.’

As well as offering work experience, the programme guarantees an interview for people completing training.

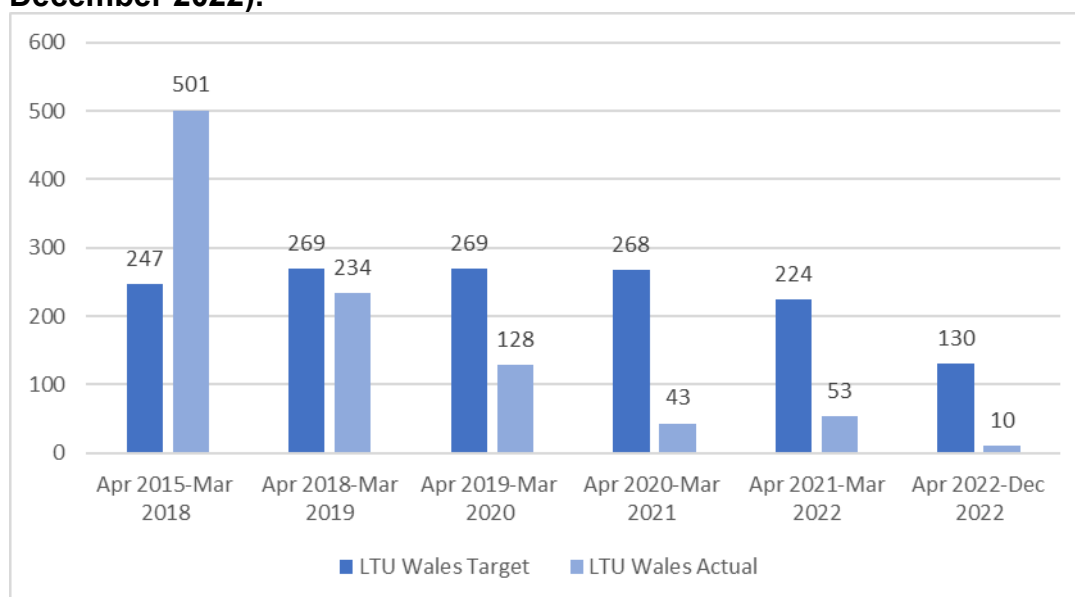
Chart 4.1. The numbers of economically inactive CfW participants* completing a work experience or volunteering placement compared to targets (April 2015 - December 2022).



*No targets were set for P3 participants

Source: Welsh Government

Chart 4.2. The numbers of long term unemployed CfW participants* completing a work experience or volunteering placement compared to targets (April 2015 - December 2022).



*No targets were set for P3 participants

Source: Welsh Government

Financial support

4.41. Most CfW and CfW+ participants have limited means and struggle to pay for work related costs before they receive their first pay cheque. The purpose of the Barriers Fund is to enable participants to overcome the final barrier to employment such as meeting the costs of transport, childcare or suitable clothing or tools, where this cannot be met by other sources of funding, such as the DWP’s FSF. However, the process of accessing the CfW Barriers Fund was consistently described as bureaucratic⁵⁵ and somewhat inflexible and, therefore, frustrating and time consuming. As a result, in one area, an interviewee explained that the CfW Barriers Fund has been a ‘struggle to spend, often underspent.’ In contrast, the CfW+ barriers fund, which has a simpler application process, was reported by interviewees to be easier and swifter to access.

⁵⁵ For example as frontline staff in one area described, the application process around the Barriers Fund is cumbersome and they reported that they felt that advisers and mentors should be trusted to make decisions about funding for small items such as a pair of shoes. It was noted that advisers and mentors have to put as much work into making the case for £15 to spend on a pair of shoes for an interview and £800 for a bike to get to work.

4.42. Despite the often bureaucratic process (in the case of CfW), the programmes' Barriers Funds were also described as the only funds that could pay for costs such as DBS checks⁵⁶ or childcare⁵⁷ and it was, therefore, seen as important in:

- engaging participants - as one interviewee put it, the 'Barriers Fund is something that can be sold to potential participants', and it also encouraged referrals to the programmes from work coaches, where JCP was unable to pay for certain costs; and
- helping them into work - as one interviewee put it 'addressing a financial barrier that was insurmountable' can make a big difference and was seen as important in helping clients' 'move forward' as another put it. Examples included: paying for clothing, equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE) and less commonly work related qualifications or licences⁵⁸.

In work support

4.43. CfW was initially focused upon entry into employment, education or training at which a point a participant would be exited from the programme. However, in July 2019 an in work support element was added to CfW⁵⁹ and when established CfW+ had a broader remit, which included, for example, supporting those in work, but still at risk of poverty.⁶⁰ As the practice example (below) illustrates, work support includes financial, practical, and emotional support.

⁵⁶ Frontline staff reported that JCP had recently change their policy and could now pay for DBS checks and this might have contributed to some of the drop off in referrals they had recently experienced.

⁵⁷ Long-term childcare costs are not covered by JCP, and the barriers fund was reported to be invaluable in, for example helping fund childcare for 15-week college courses, where it was reported that generally the college funds 90% and the Barriers Fund 10%.

⁵⁸ Examples given by interviewees included: £275 for a lifeguard qualification when a job was indicated and also co-funding with DWP, where for example, the JCP paid for a hackney taxi licence at £500 and CfW+ paid for cost of training, medical and the knowledge test at £180.

⁵⁹ As the Re-evaluation Business Plan Addendum outlines, the barriers fund was opened up to: 'further support participants we have supported into employment, who after starting work identify they require additional financial support. This additional financial support will be available for a set period for up to 3 months after starting employment. e.g. unforeseen childcare costs, transport costs etc.' (Welsh Government n.d. d, p. 2).

⁶⁰ Examples were given where a participant enters employment and receives continued support, such as assistance with childcare or transport until they receive their first pay cheque, but this is not recorded in any way that is reportable. CfW+ generally follows CfW's guidance, that the in work support should not continue beyond three months, but the programme retains the flexibility to continue support when a justifiable rationale is presented.

Practice example: in work support

In one area, interviewees explained that in their view, in work support has been especially helpful for young people who often 'need more help when they get into work ... at least until they get first wage package'. Other types of advice and support can also be valuable though, and one interviewee described how they had advised a participant on re-negotiating their hours because she was struggling to cope with working full time. The support is open to all, and interviewees reported that they tended to 'stay loosely in contact' with clients when they progress into work, by for example, 'sending them a text asking how it's going'. It was also observed that just 'the knowledge that we're still there can help'.

One interviewee also observed that the team 'didn't realise before the extent to which people in work struggled ... people talk about it more now after the pandemic' and that the ability to provide in work support has made a 'massive' difference. Although valued, interviewees also reported that most people progressing into work 'just disappear even though they know they can come back if they need to'.

- 4.44. Similarly, accessing the CfW barriers fund to pay for in work support was reported to be somewhat bureaucratic and take up was generally reported to be low, but valuable when taken up. Most commonly, examples, such as paying for petrol to travel to work, or for childcare, were given of how the Barriers Fund could help smooth the transition into employment, while people waited for their first pay cheque. In addition, in one area it was reported that financial support could be complemented by support from the CAB on budgeting.
- 4.45. In most areas, other types of in work support, such as practical and emotional advice, were reported to be offered in a fairly informal and reactive way. For example, as frontline staff in one area explained, 'a young person might say they expect me to go into work at 7:00 o'clock in the morning and we tell them that's fairly normal'. Similarly, in another area, as one frontline staff member put it: 'I always tell my customers that I'm there for them. We can do light touch support ... update their CV, provide some help without doing the paperwork ... I don't sign them up formally'. This approach was contrasted to programmes like Workways+ which was reported to

have formal reviews to identify any in work support needs at three and six months after entry into employment.

- 4.46. In addition, as one interviewee from a partner organisation put it, they had noticed a growth in the number of working people who want to up-skill in order to change career and interviewees in one area described referring people to a regional ESF project, Skills@Work (covering Cardiff, Monmouthshire and Newport) that could support upskilling, while in another area it was reported that where participants required more long term support they would be referred to Môn CF's In Work Support Programme.
- 4.47. Unlike CfW, CfW+ more flexible eligibility criteria mean it can work with those who are in work, but who remain at risk of poverty, such as those on zero hour contracts. Almost one in ten of CfW+ participants (8.6 per cent) were recorded as employed upon entry suggesting this is an important feature of the programme.

Employer Liaison Officers

- 4.48. As the CfW+ application guidance outlines, 'Employer Liaison / Work Placement Officers will be expected to develop effective and sustained working relationships with micro businesses, sole traders and other employers to secure appropriate work based training and employability opportunities for participants.' (Welsh Government, n.d. g).
- 4.49. The impact of the introduction of Employer Liaison Officers (ELOs) was often difficult to identify. A number of areas, reported having an 'employer liaison team' (ELT) (or similar) in place before CfW+, and CfW+ resources have been used to enhance this. This made it harder for interviewees to identify the impact. Despite this, in several areas, ELOs were specifically praised. For example:
- in one area, an interviewee described how their ELO had 'opened up a wealth of jobs for participants';
 - in another area, the ELO was described as liaising with companies which needed to employ workforces for new developments (e.g. following development of a new site) and running employment campaigns for the new roles that were being created. It was also reported in this county that in some cases the ELO might also identify and then help provide for employer's training needs such as food hygiene certification in (food) manufacturing;

- in a third area, the ELO's responsibilities were described as developing 'pathway programmes', training courses and helping to arrange events such as job fairs, drawing on intelligence gathered from advisers and mentors as well as partners such as JCP and Careers Wales. It was reported that they also shared intelligence about opportunities such as recruitment drives by particular employers with the CfW and PaCE teams;
- in a fourth area, while as staff described, before the establishment of the area's Employer Liaison Team (ELT) it was 'very much up to [mentors and advisers] to network with local employers ... contacting them on clients' behalf', the ELT meant that advisers and mentors now had more time to focus on participants' (rather than having to do so much employer liaison themselves).⁶¹

4.50. It was noted that the work done by CfW+ ELOs 'overlaps' with the work of DWP Employer Advisers (EAs), but that unlike EAs, ELO staff are 'out in the community not in jobcentres', as one interviewee put it. Partnership working between EAs and ELOs was reported to have strengthened in several areas, where it was reported that the ELOs collaborated with the EAs in JCP to share information about vacancies available and ensure that employers were not contacted by both JCP EAs and CfW+ ELOs.⁶²

The CfW DWP/Welsh Government partnership

4.51. The partnership between the Welsh Government, DWP and LAs or CVCs is one of the key innovations of CfW. The fieldwork found that the partnership between DWP and Welsh Government as well as the involvement of DWP staff in management and delivery, helped ensure good working relationships and links between CfW, CfW+ and JCP at an operational level. This was important in establishing a reliable referral pipeline which as section five outlines, proved particularly important in helping sustain the programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁶¹ Nevertheless, in one area, it was also reported that despite the ELT, from time to time, advisers and mentors still speak directly to employers, advocating their clients. For example, a mentor described speaking to an employer about offering flexible working hours in order to help them recruit people with childcare responsibilities to fill roles.

⁶² In one area, it was reported that ELOs work with colleagues in DWP (employer liaison staff) as well as with Carers Wales, but do not, however, go out to visit employers, relying instead on intelligence received from JCP and Careers Wales.

- 4.52. Nevertheless, as outlined in the next section, this partnership working at an operational level could not easily address strategic differences, where, for example, DWP programmes like Restart were seen as competing for the same pool of people as CfW and CfW+. Moreover, in one area it was reported that after the pandemic, it had proved harder than anticipated to secure desk-space in JCP offices, because advisers have lost touch with staff at Jobcentres (largely due to turnover within DWP) and existing staff were felt to not fully understand the value of CfW advisers. This suggests the involvement of DWP in and of itself may not be a sufficient condition for ensuring effective collaboration, and that factors like the strength of local relationships between DWP and CfW and CfW+ staff, are also important factors.
- 4.53. DWP and LA/CVCs staff were generally seen as bringing complementary skill sets. For example, as one interviewee put it: ‘DWP.... are the experts on employability ...we put [help] people into work. That is what we do.’ They also stressed the practical benefits of joint working: ‘having staff based at the DWP is important – because they are the people that have the skills and the knowledge of DWP systems and of the benefits system. They have lots of access to it and can reach colleagues who know things that no one else would’. In this context, it was argued by an interviewee that the involvement of DWP advisers in CfW is key to opening the door to jobcentres – ‘this is what the LDB wouldn’t have if it wasn’t for advisers’. On the other hand, LA/CVCs staff were seen as bringing important community links, where for example mentors had worked in communities for many years, and/or had experience of working with young people (in the case of many youth mentors). More broadly, the involvement of the LA in areas, or in the case of Anglesey, Môn CF, was reported to help strengthen links to other employability support programmes. The co-ordination of different employability support programmes is discussed further in section 5.
- 4.54. In most areas included in the fieldwork, there was reported to be an effective working relationship between DWP (advisers and managers) and LA or CVC staff (mentors, triage officers and managers). For example, in two areas included in the fieldwork, CfW and CfW+ staff work together from the same hub and were reported to work closely together as a single team. Although it was acknowledged that operating in this way had taken four to five years to realise (as one manager put it initially ‘we were worlds apart’, ‘but we’ve met in the middle’). In both areas, co-location and relationships between the DWP and LDB managers were seen as important.

- 4.55. However, in three areas included in the fieldwork, there was more of a sense of a divide between DWP and LA or CVC staff, and in two of these areas, relationships between the two were reported to be quite strained. This reflected cultural and organisational differences and also in some cases what appeared to be human factors. As a result, while structures and process to support joint working, such as a joint mailbox to triage access and sharing offices were in place, interviewees highlighted differences and distinctions between the two teams. For example as one interviewee observed that DWP is part of a civil service – and they work very differently to the LDB. For example, as another interviewee put it, the DWP was felt to be ‘too focused upon targets’, rather than people, which risked pushing people into unsustainable work, and there was reported to be little ‘rapport’ between the two teams.
- 4.56. The impact of this strained relationship, beyond the impact upon how staff felt, was harder to discern. There were specific examples like DWP staff in one area who were not aware of – and therefore did not benefit from the CfW+ Chromebook scheme. Conversely, it may for example, have meant that LA or voluntary sector staff did not benefit from DWP staff’s access to DWP databases.⁶³ It may also have meant that participants were not necessarily allocated to the mentor or adviser best placed to support them. In one area, it was also reported that differences in interpretations of the guidance between DWP and the LA meant that one team would fund an intervention through the Barriers Fund that their counterparts would refuse. This meant that participants may receive a different service from the same programme.
- 4.57. Moreover, even in areas where teams were working well together, a number of interviewees argued that as one manager put it, ‘it is too messy with the WG, DWP and the LDB’. It was not surprising therefore that one manager suggested that ‘one organisation should deliver these programmes with one manager’ which would involve seconding ‘staff to DWP or the other way around’.

⁶³ In one area, it was reported that advisers have access to the DWP’s UC database. DWP staff thought that it would be useful for triage officers and mentors to have the same access but recognised that the architecture of CfW does not allow this to happen. Although the DWP delivery manager acts as a conduit to DWP data for mentors, they have to ask him to access information for them.

Partners and partnerships

4.58. As the original business case identifies 'CfW recognise the importance of a joined up approach', particularly in relation to support for young people who were NEET and that:

'As a minimum, CfW teams will have regular monthly caseload meetings where Community Employment Advisers, Mentors and lead workers from other organisations (Local Authorities Lead Workers, Careers Wales, Lift, Communities First, operations through [the Regional Learning Partnership] RLP and dependent on need, Mental Health teams and substance abuse teams) will discuss engagement strategies, available provision (identifying available support and gaps in provision), good practices, caseloads and potential referrals' (Welsh Government n.d. c, p 18).

4.59. Although partners have changed, as programmes like Lift and Communities First have ended, partnerships were reported to be crucial. Partners include those who were part of the referral pipeline, most notably JCP, and to a lesser degree, LA hubs and services, housing associations as well as colleges and training providers and to a lesser extent still, health and support services like the CAB, other employment support programmes like PaCE, or where participants had entered employment, programmes like Skill@Work that supported progression. These partnerships were seen as 'incredibly successful' by one strategic manager. As they described it, the CfW/CfW+ delivery team 'can't be the master of everything' but they know who to signpost to, who to turn to for specialist support and get it arranged for participants.

Practice example: partnerships

Interviewees described what they saw as GAVO's unique relationship with Mind. They reported that colocation had helped the relationship develop as one of their delivery teams is housed in an asset transfer building owned by Mind. By being in the same building, the relationship grew to the point where CfW+ were commissioning a service (which pays for a member of Mind staff) to work with CfW/CfW+ participants who are suffering from low level mental health issues. As they reported, it works 'really well' and frees up CfW/CfW+ staff time to concentrate on participants' other barriers to employment.

Since then, interviewees reported that they have done something similar with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), as they identified that many CfW and CfW+ participants were waiting for advice from the CAB. They described how they had used their relationship with Mind as a model and commissioned a person at CAB to work for their participants, so that they could access advice without having to wait. The CAB staff paid for by CfW+ will help CfW and CfW+ participants with benefit checks, council tax or debt issues. Interviewees described how by addressing these issues, it lessens participants' stress and makes it easier for them to concentrate on seeking work (increasing their capability and motivation to search for work). This has been well received by the mentors and it is reported to help take the pressure of them.

- 4.60. Nevertheless, weakness or shortcoming in the support offered by partners were also identified. For example, in one area difficulties accessing mental health services were reported due to long waiting lists, even for those in crisis. It was reported that this puts an emotional drain on CfW/CfW+ staff who have to offer that support. This reflects wider problems accessing mental health services, given increasing demand, in part as a result of the pandemic, and the disruption of services during the pandemic, which created a backlog of cases (see e.g. [Senedd, 2022](#)).

The relationship between CfW and CfW+

- 4.61. As outlined in section one, CfW+ was initially established to backfill provision previously provided by the CF programme, and also to extend support to those ineligible for CfW. Interviewees in one area described how, for example, the offices and the outreach space for all the work that CfW mentors do are provided via CfW+. In addition, as outlined above, ELOs and PEOs funded via CfW+ can support CfW as well as CfW+, by, for example, sharing information about work opportunities which emerge across employers with all team members.

The commonalities and differences in CfW and CfW+ support offer

- 4.62. CfW and CfW+ were consistently reported to have a similar offer, and as a manager in one area put it, were 'brother and sister projects' and as another put it, the two projects 'connect' and 'complement each other' well. As a result, they described having a good understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses and that the triage process allows staff to agree who will pick up which clients.

4.63. Importantly, unlike some other employment support programmes (discussed below) CfW+ was seen by CfW staff in a positive light in that it complemented rather than duplicated or competed for clients⁶⁴. For example, as one staff member explained, CfW+ 'gives us somewhere to refer people who we might have had to turn away before'. This included:

- those (including former CfW participants) who had gone into but failed to sustain work;
- former Kickstart clients whose placements had come to an end without the offer of a job (although some of those still aged under 25 would have been eligible for CfW if they were 'NEET');
- those on zero-hour contracts, and
- those with no fixed abode.

4.64. As noted above, almost one in ten CfW+ participants (8.6 per cent) were employed when engaged, and as one interviewee put it:

'Being able to work with people on zero-hour contracts or the under-employed has been key for CfW+. This is a group of individuals who have traditionally been left out. It is a key offer – and they [CfW+] get a lot of those cohort. The in-work support is also an attractive element of the offer.'

4.65. Nevertheless, despite the commonalities in design and approach, the greater flexibility and responsiveness of CfW+ (outlined above) was reported to mean that CfW+ participants could sometimes access training and/or financial support more swiftly, and training delivered closer to them, than their counterparts in CfW. This was reported to be particularly the case for training linked to Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CCSC) or Security Industry Authority (SIA) certification, where CfW clients were reported to have to wait much longer for these training opportunities compared to CfW+ participants. Although, it was also reported that in some cases, it was possible for CfW+ to extend the offer to CfW clients, if for example, there were empty places on training courses.

⁶⁴ The main caveat was around those out of work for more than twelve months. In Carmarthenshire it was acknowledged that CfW+ clients should be referred into CfW when they become eligible (i.e. are out of work for over 12 months). The advantage of doing so was reported to be that CfW advisers/mentors have more time to spend with the clients than CfW+ advisers. However it was reported that this did not always happen as the client has established a relationship with the CfW+ advisor.

4.66. As well as benefiting participants who were ineligible for CfW, the establishment of CfW+ was said to have made it easier for CfW and CfW+ teams to communicate their employability support offer to clients and partner organisations, as the service was now available across the whole of the county and it was no longer important for partner organisations to understand the strict criteria set in place for CfW when referring clients. As one interviewee put it, partners 'can't be bothered with' criteria such as postcodes and length of time for which people had been claiming benefits. It was reported that this in turn had helped boost CfW's reputation with partner organisations.

CfW and CfW+ funding models

4.67. As outlined in section one, CfW has been funded (by ESF) on an eight year cycle, while CfW+ has been funded (by WG directly) on a year to year basis via the CCG and COVID Commitment / YPG. CfW's strength was seen by strategic managers as longer term period of funding which was reported to allow for better organisational and programme planning. It also ensures staff security and stability. In contrast, the strength of the CfW+ funding model was seen to be the greater flexibility it provides, which as outlined above, is reported to enable a swifter and more flexible support offer.

4.68. The main problem reported with annual funding was that it 'isn't great for retaining staff' and it 'also makes it difficult to plan provision with uncertainty hanging over you all the time' as two interviewees put it. It was reported that unlike CfW staff, CfW+ staff have had to work on annual employment contracts and some LAs have issued redundancy notices each December because of this. However, managers in the CfW and CfW+ teams included in the fieldwork reported that they felt that staff have got to understand the nature of the funding and although it creates uncertainty, they assume that the funding will continue, and that in practice they have not had any major staff turnover across CfW+. Going forward, moves to funding based upon one full year with two indicative years to follow subject to specific conditions, were therefore welcomed and it was felt would create better employment conditions for CfW+ staff.

Future funding for CfW and CfW+

4.69. There has been a decision to extend CfW delivery to March 2023. One interviewee described the planned exit strategy, which involves stopping engaging participants in

December 2022 - January 2023, so that training courses can be completed and by March 2023, CfW staff can provide any remaining participants with 'warm handovers' to other employability services, including CfW+.

- 4.70. Interviewees reported that the prospect CfW closure had caused some angst amongst frontline staff. As one put it: 'people [staff] get restless and move on' and one area included in the fieldwork reported that they are already starting to lose staff. It was therefore felt by some that this was the biggest challenge the programme now faced, as it threatened both delivery of support and also recording of data and processing of claims (as an ESF programme). It was suggested that this could affect CVCs more, as when their funding comes to an end then staff jobs end – they can't be pooled or sent to work elsewhere in the organisation, as LAs or the DWP could potentially do.

Programme governance and rules

- 4.71. As an ESF project, eligibility criteria and therefore access to CfW were reported to be much tighter than CfW+. In particular, the heavy reporting requirements were highlighted. For example, one strategic manager described how for each client there is an expectation that 60 data fields are completed. As one interviewee put it, completing the ESF forms 'wastes so much time' and could annoy or frustrate prospective participants (increasing the risk of disengagement). There was also widespread frustration about the process for evidencing outcomes for CfW, which was described as time consuming and difficult - as one mentor put it 'people don't always want to get back in touch'. It was reported that this meant that some outcomes could not be evidenced and therefore could not be claimed.
- 4.72. Operational managers acknowledged that it is widely felt that ESF programmes can be difficult to manage and are felt to be overly bureaucratic. They felt that the Welsh Government had attempted to make it as straightforward as possible and also said that there was now more flexibility across both the Barriers Fund and marketing fund and that this was a result of internal lobbying within Welsh Government to enable a change in the rules. Conversely, ESF funded projects such as CfW need reliable data to effectively measure the impact that interventions have and this is a way of evidencing the value that the funding has had. Equally, rules are required to ensure the appropriate and efficient use of public funds and the collection of robust monitoring data (which is important for ensuring there is reliable data to effectively measure the cost and effectiveness of interventions). Therefore, a balance needs to

be struck between the time and cost of complying with rules and monitoring requirements, and the negative impacts of overly loose rules and/or weakness in data collection.

4.73. In order to strike what they felt would be better balance, several other proposals for streamlining CfW paperwork and processes were put forward by frontline staff, including:

- simplifying the process for establishing eligibility;
- reducing the level of detail required in participant portfolios;
- removing the 'exhaust other avenues of funding' rule, as the volume of paperwork involved in securing funding under the DWPs FSF or Low Value Procurement (LVP) processes were reported to be forbidding; and
- raising the limit for the amount CfW staff could spend at their discretion (i.e. without requiring a formal application to the Barriers Fund).

4.74. Because many of these rules and processes were put in place primarily to satisfy the requirements of the ESF, it was observed by senior CfW managers that there was scope to simplify processes for future post ESF employability programmes.

4.75. In contrast access to CfW+ was reported to be much simpler; as one interviewee explained, they only needed to collect proof of address or an Annex 12 from JCP. As one interviewee explained, they take what participants say to them at face value:

'If a participant tells us something, like they're on a zero-hour contract then we don't assume they're lying, we assume they're telling it as it is. The mentor will probe around a little, but we will simply support them. We don't want to go down the route of having to check things like that. If people need help, they can access it.'

4.76. Moreover, as one interviewee put it, the greater informality and flexibility of CfW+ 'allows people to open up a bit more'. In a similar vein, as outlined above, once engaged, accessing training and financial support and evidencing outcomes was felt to be much simpler and swifter with CfW+⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ For example an interviewee reported that CfW can't claim a job outcome until the paperwork (a self-declaration form) has been signed by the client, and if possible, other evidence such as a payslip is provided, whereas CfW+ can claim a job outcome based upon an email or payslip from an employer confirming that they've had a job.

4.77. There was also discussion in some areas about what was sometimes seen as a rigid distinction between CfW adviser and mentor roles, which was generally felt to be unnecessary (but dictated by separate ESF funding for Priority 1 and 3). There was recognition that the needs of different groups might vary, so enabling staff to develop experience and expertise working with different groups was desirable, but frustration when the distinction between roles prevented teams better managing their caseload or matching clients to the member of the team judged best able to support them. For example, as a manager reported, 'one size does not fit all'. They observed that there are sharp differences in the populations and numbers of eligible postcodes in each area - but each CfW area has the same staffing and targets, and they can't easily reallocate staff (and for example, switch adult to youth mentors, or move mentors around to other areas).

Programme management

4.78. It was reported that LDBs relationship with the Welsh Government was good, with a strong working relationship with strategic managers and a productive and honest relationship, with timely responses to questions. The perceived success in the programmes' response to the COVID-19 pandemic was celebrated and is discussed further in section five, and no serious concerns about the management of the programmes by the central teams were reported, other than frustration with the guidance, as discussed below. Local management by LDB or DWP staff was generally praised although there were hints at frustration of weaknesses in some areas.

The CfW+ management model

4.79. CfW+ was also able to 'piggyback' on CfW management arrangements which, combined with the absence of ESF reporting requirements, meant it could be operated by a much smaller, leaner management team than CfW. This helped minimise costs, but the small size of the Welsh Government team (three people) inevitably limited their capacity. The CfW+ team's capacity was stretched during the pandemic, and for example, the team had to spend a large amount of time responding to requests and concerns around digital exclusion, which led to the introduction of the Chromebooks scheme discussed in section five (see paragraph 5.29-5.31). Limited capacity also meant that strategic managers could not provide as much support and challenge to under-performing areas as CfW staff could. Similarly, CfW+'s smaller management budget meant that while the central programme team

was able to set up a network for ELOs, which was reported to be useful, they could not fund or support an equivalent network for PEOs.

Programme guidance

- 4.80. Most areas reported that the CfW guidance had improved since being first published in 2015, but there was widespread criticism of the early programme guidance. Despite the improvements, there was still frustration described above, about what were seen as overly restrictive eligibility criteria, particularly compared to CfW+.
- 4.81. Unlike CfW, CfW+ does not have dedicated operational guidance. Guidance was issued in 2017, to support LDBs in preparing applications and in establishing CfW+. However, further operational guidance was not issued, and instead LDBs have been advised to follow the principles of CfW guidance, but to ignore that which is specific to the ESF. As a result, in one area, an interviewee who was relatively new to post reported being surprised that when they started the role, because as they described it 'They [the Welsh Government CfW+ team] keep saying refer to the guidance but there is no guidance. I don't see the guidance – they just refer us to the CfW guidance – but we don't run CfW!' Although in general, the CfW guidance was felt (by CfW+ staff and managers), to be helpful, in several areas, CfW+ managers reported learning much of what they could and could not do as they went along. For example, quarterly pan-Wales meetings with other staff were viewed as useful for sharing ideas, and CfW+ managers reported asking the Welsh Government CfW+ team questions, when new issues arose.

Monitoring and evaluation

- 4.82. The comprehensiveness of CfW's management information (MI) was highlighted by several interviewees, as valuable in helping understand programme performance across, for example, different geographical areas and groups of participants. Nevertheless, some potential improvements in the way the data are presented were highlighted. For example, the volume of data presented in the MI packs may make it difficult to discern the wood for the trees, it only focuses upon job outcomes (and not other outcomes like entry into education or training). In terms of reporting, several interviewees felt that a balance should be struck between collecting enough data to understand programme performance and the paperwork and time associated with data collection (as outlined above, it was felt the demands the programme placed upon frontline staff to collect data were excessive). Moreover, although detailed MI

on CfW is available, the data this is drawn from are stored on an Excel spreadsheet which now has 62 columns. Consideration has been given to moving to a client management system, but factors such as cost and complexity have weighed against this.

- 4.83. In contrast, although CfW+ based its processes upon CfW, as it is not subject to ESF rules, it requires less data to be collected, and LAs are not required to share all the data they collect with the Welsh Government. The lighter reporting requirements for CfW+ means that the MI data on CfW+ were thought to be 'more basic', compared to CfW's more comprehensive MI pack (as one interviewee put it) and for example, it is not possible to explore outcomes for some groups, such as the long term unemployed or those from jobless households. It is not possible to explore the intersection of different characteristics, and for example, how outcomes for disabled people from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic groups compare to disabled people from white British/Welsh groups.

5. The impact of external factors and programmes' responses

Introduction

- 5.1. This section considers the impact of external factors that have affected programme delivery, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, EU exit, other employability support programmes and changes to welfare benefits (such as the introduction of Universal Credit) and the way the programmes responded. It also considers how CfW and CfW+ fit within a complex strategic and operational landscape with multiple different national, regional and local employability programmes.

The COVID-19 pandemic

- 5.2. The COVID-19 pandemic was consistently identified by interviewees as the biggest shock the programmes experienced, forcing changes in the programmes' and partners' practice and also changing participants' (and potential participants) capabilities, access to opportunities, motivation and therefore behaviour.
- 5.3. Those strategic managers interviewed consistently felt that, overall, both CfW and CfW+ adapted well during the COVID-19 pandemic (and the programmes were therefore resilient), but there were inevitable challenges that were difficult to overcome and the programmes had to transform their delivery model during the pandemic.

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic upon advisers', mentors' and triage officers' work with clients

- 5.4. The pandemic disrupted the workforce, particularly in the early stages. In many areas, DWP advisers and in some cases, LA or CVC mentors, were redeployed for a short period during the first lockdown. For example:
- DWP advisers were redeployed to the jobcentre to work on UC claims for several months, although in one area, it was reported that redeployment actually helped them because they had full access to the UC system (which they did not have at the hub previously) and developed a better understanding of UC and how to use the system; and
 - a smaller number of LA or CVC staff were taken off the programme, for example, some delivered food parcels while others provided cover for critical services.

- 5.5. It was felt that staff had worked hard through what one interviewee described as ‘very difficult’ circumstances, demonstrating flexibility in swiftly changing the way they worked. Another observed that CfW+ teams have been incredibly resilient during a time that was challenging for everyone, with, for example, people working from home, looking after children and/or shielding - and there was pride that the service continued throughout the pandemic.
- 5.6. The pandemic also disrupted the programmes’ delivery model, which as outlined in section four, was community based, often face to face and in the case of CfW, largely paper based.⁶⁶ In response, as an interviewee described, they had to deliver evidence and make connections in different ways, while respecting the core principles of the programme and, in the case of CfW, complying with ESF rules. For example:
- triage, which as the practice example illustrates, was initially usually done face to face, shifted to phone or online;
 - support from advisers and mentors, which had always included an element of delivery by phone or online, moved to a wholly remote delivery model (using the internet, such as MS Teams or email, and telephone, such as text messages and phone calls); and
 - training moved online (discussed below).

Practice example: Moving triage online

In one area it was reported that before the pandemic, an initial discussion was held over the phone, and the triage officer would then meet clients face to face to work through the paperwork with them. Following the stay at home order in late 2021, the triage process moved to a telephone based service, augmented by email and text communication.

The team reported that the triage process worked much quicker over the phone, because it meant the triage officer did not need to travel across the county and was able to speak to more clients each day than they previously could.

⁶⁶ For example, it was reported that EU funding (for CfW) requires all documentation in hard copy and when the pandemic struck, it was very difficult to obtain.

The triage officer reported that some clients were not happy to engage over the phone, at least initially because of fears of being scammed. However, it was reported that in such cases, they were generally happy to engage in the process having received an email from the triage officer. It was also reported to be helpful that JCP work coaches making the referral would tell clients that the triage officer would be in touch, so they knew to expect the call.

The triage officer reported that, on the whole, people were just as forthcoming over the phone as they had been face to face. She said that people seemed eager to talk to someone during the lockdown periods especially and disclosed more than she would have expected over the phone.

The process of moving staff triage meetings online proved more problematic though. Frontline staff described how initially, the team struggled to do triage remotely both because the technology was not in place and because individual mentors and advisers lacked the skills to use video conferencing software – as one put it, the ‘IT was a nightmare at first ... getting used to it’. However, over time, people’s confidence and skills increased and experiences improved, and it was reported that the weekly meetings helped maintain momentum, kept the team together and helped them support each other during a very challenging time.

- 5.7. The transition to new ways of remote working, outlined in the practice example below, was inevitably difficult. Some areas reported that in the early stages of the pandemic, they pushed the Welsh Government to allow them to do more electronically. In response, one of the major changes made by the Welsh Government was to allow teams to use email approval, clarifying what had been agreed.

Practice example: Moving to work remotely

Given the stay at home order, community venues and JCP offices were closed, and advisers and mentors worked from home, delivering a service to clients principally over the phone, augmented with text and email. For example in one area:

- enrolment forms were completed by CfW staff digitally and then sent to participants by email and they had to confirm their engagement by

completing a proforma return email to say 'I agree' rather than signing the form;

- some use was also made of text messaging, including to receive picture messages as evidence of clients' identity; and
- advisers used email to alert clients to job vacancies and to help them develop and hone CVs/job applications, generally having spoken to them over the phone first.

It was reported that DWP policy prevented advisers from using media such as WhatsApp, Facebook and MS Teams with clients (although platforms like MS Teams were used for communication within teams). While LA or CVC staff had greater flexibility to use platforms like MS Teams, the ability of participants to use the platforms could be limited by weak digital literacy, data poverty and/or lack of access to devices.

The costs and benefits of working remotely

- 5.8. There was a general view amongst staff interviewed that initial engagements were more difficult online or via telephone. For example, in one area, an interviewee described how 'selling over the phone is different and more difficult than selling [the programme] face to face'.
- 5.9. The move to deliver triage by phone was generally seen as positive, although it was reported by staff in one area that some people found it easier to share things over the phone, while others find it harder. In one area, a partner raised concerns that the initial assessment might therefore be too superficial.
- 5.10. Supporting clients remotely could also be challenging. For example, it was reported that:
- CfW and CfW+ clients could be very difficult to get hold of by phone, text or email. In contrast they reported that when they are required to drop into JCP on a regular basis it was much easier for CfW DWP advisers to arrange to meet with them after their session with the Work Coach or for them to drop into the nearby LA hub;

- supporting participants with more complex needs was also seen as challenging and it was felt that advisers or mentors really needed to see these participants on a face to face basis; and
- weak digital literacy, data poverty and/or lack of access to devices could limit participants' use of platforms. For example as one interviewee explained 'some [participants] couldn't put a computer on let alone operate one' and 'even [sending] screen shots [to establishing their eligibility by smart phone] could be a problem'.

5.11. Consequently, it was reported that there was a lot of work to support participants – and explaining to them how to use emails and websites, as they were not used to this approach. It was reported that while some adapted, and as one interviewee put it, 'it has changed the way the world is for them now', it remained a real struggle for others.

5.12. It was also reported that advisers and/or mentors often struggled to build relationships as effectively when they were no longer working face to face and could not get the same insight into clients' situations when working remotely. For example, as one interviewee explained, they do not 'see how they [participants] present themselves ... their body language' and cannot tell 'if they smell of cannabis ... or have poor personal hygiene';

5.13. Nevertheless, it was also reported by frontline staff across the sites included in the fieldwork that some participants prefer support on the phone (including email and text). These could include participants who:

- who are shy and nervous;
- who cannot drive and/or have caring responsibilities and struggle to travel to appointments;
- had relatively straightforward requirements, but busy lives, and who were more likely to pick up the phone than attend face to face appointments.; and/or
- were as one frontline staff member put it, 'digitally active' and 'didn't mind not seeing us'.

5.14. Young people, who were more likely to be 'digital natives' than those aged over 25, were generally reported, as one interviewee put it, to prefer 'the phone calls, the

emails or the WhatsApps' to face to face meetings. As a result staff in one area reported that they had had a 'higher take up [of support] than when we were working face to face'. However, they also reported that they had lost some participants aged 25 and over when working online and/by phone during the pandemic. Moreover, in other areas, frontline staff reported that young people were very reluctant to talk on the phone, although texting was ok, and that they struggled to maintain contact with young people during the pandemic. Another interviewee reported that generally young people are happier to ignore phone calls compared to those aged 25 and over. The picture was uneven though, and for example in another area, staff reported the switch to phone actually made keeping in touch with clients easier because 'people are more likely to pick up the phone rather than make the effort to come out to meet you'. Indeed, one adviser noted that individuals that she would not have expected to answer her calls prior to the pandemic did so willingly once lockdowns kicked in.

The impact of the pandemic upon referrals and workloads

- 5.15. As outlined in section six, across the areas included in the fieldwork, new engagements fell sharply during the pandemic because:
- fewer referrals came through JCP, both because participants were less motivated, as, for example, job vacancies fell sharply, people were fearful of catching COVID-19 and/or had additional caring responsibilities following the closure of schools, and because DWP advisers were more likely to receive referrals from work coaches when they are present in JCP offices;
 - outreach work ceased in LA hubs, schools, GP surgeries and 'street corners' and during the pandemic period, the programmes were reliant on people contacting them for direct recruitment; and
 - the programme support offer was curtailed as lockdowns prevented any face to face contact with clients and it took time to re-establish training online (discussed further below).
- 5.16. The impact of the pandemic upon advisers' and mentors' caseloads was mixed. Generally, the number of new referrals fell sharply, but as few participants were moving into work, caseloads remained fairly stable, but exceptions to this were reported. In addition, to shifting their support offer to a remote delivery model, some areas also described scaling back their support offer to participants; as a DWP CfW adviser put it during the early stages of the pandemic, the support was 'more

touching base ... checking that they were OK', which helped mentors and advisers manage their caseloads as they adjusted to new ways of working and life.

Reopening

- 5.17. As restrictions eased, face to face contact restarted and support for participants was scaled up. While staff were often keen to restart face to face work, the return could often be difficult, and for example frontline staff described being 'shattered' after their first couple of days in the office, not having seen or spoken to so many people in one day for such a long time.
- 5.18. Decisions about when and where advisers and mentors could work were often out of teams' control and depended on the policies adopted by the DWP and LDBs (i.e. LA or CVCs). The DWP was reported to be generally more risk averse and therefore generally somewhat slower than LAs or CVCs, in restarting face to face work, but there was considerable variation across the areas included in the fieldwork.
- 5.19. It took time for engagements to recover, even as restrictions were eased. It was reported that:
- potential clients were anxious about meeting mentors/advisers face to face. This was particularly the case for people with 'health anxieties' as one interviewee put it;
 - the service became less open, accessible, and inviting, given the need to observe social distancing and mask wearing rules. The introduction of glass screens was reported to add another barrier that undermined the previously welcoming atmosphere;
 - events such as employment fairs, which were previously open access, had to move to models with time slots pre-booked online, creating new barriers for those who were not digitally literate⁶⁷; and
 - the need to undertake multiple risks assessments before physical spaces could be used, added to the bureaucracy and made it harder and more time consuming to meet participants face to face.
- 5.20. Several areas, reported reassessing how they worked in the community. Rather than simply returning to use the same venues, which sometimes did not generate many

⁶⁷ An example in one area was given of an employment fayre which pre-pandemic had attracted over 1000 people, which had 80 when run for the first time after the pandemic.

referrals, there is a desire to explore other options, such as a mobile van in rural areas.

- 5.21. The consensus amongst frontline staff and managers in the areas included in the fieldwork, was that going forward a flexible, person centred approach, that blended face to face and online or phone contact, was appropriate. As one interviewee reported, 'we aimed to do what was easiest for the participants.' Equally, some interviewees were clear that the approach was not solely dictated by participants' preferences, given the difficulties (outlined above) they encountered in effectively supporting some clients solely on or offline.

The impact of COVID-19 upon training

- 5.22. Two distinct impacts upon training were identified: upon provision and people's ability to access online training (discussed below and further in section five (paragraph 5.26-5.36). Initially, as staff in one area reported, the first lockdown had a 'terrible' effect on the programme because it 'shut everything down' and 'there was a long period when nothing was available'. It was reported to be particularly frustrating that participants could not undertake things such as SIA and Personal Track Safety (PTS) training at a time when there were jobs to be had that demanded those qualifications/certifications. However, in one area, it was also reported that participants seemed to understand that they had to wait for training and, although it was said that training was an important 'hook' onto CfW and CfW+, contributors did not think the absence of training affected engagement levels much at a time when pandemic restrictions created so much uncertainty.
- 5.23. Several areas described how some local providers had been able to shift training provision online more swiftly than ACT (giving CfW+ an advantage). Nevertheless, it was also consistently reported (by interviewees across the areas included in the fieldwork) that the availability of online training offered by ACT increased over time. ACT's flexibility and wiliness to adapt was praised and examples of innovation and flexibility were cited. For example in one area, it was reported that ACT were offering a course on 'lash lifting' with a view to those who are considering homeworking and in another, ACT came in for particular praise for developing an online CSCS training package.
- 5.24. Even as face to face training became possible again (in 2021), social distancing restrictions meant that only half as many participants could be accommodated in

classrooms. As staff in one area reported, this affected courses such as CSCS training which booked up quickly, both to clear pent-up demand and to meet increased demand for construction workers. There were also ‘terrible backlogs’ reported for courses that necessarily involved an element of in-person training such as Security Industry Authority (SIA) certification, which involves physical contact during ‘restraint training’. However, by the time the fieldwork was undertaken in spring 2022, it was reported that these issues had settled down and there were no longer problems with backlogs.

- 5.25. In addition to changing provision and participants’ access to training, the pandemic also changed some staff’s views of the purpose of training. For example, as one interviewee explained, they had felt that training should only be provided where there is a specific employment opportunity that is suitable for the participant and the training is needed to enable them to take the opportunity. It was also reported that there had been much greater focus upon reducing ‘no-shows and cancellations’ (where participants did not attend training) before the pandemic. In response, ‘challenging participants’ to ensure that they were serious when they signed up for training was encouraged. However, during the pandemic, both managers and frontline staff reported that the approach to training changed somewhat and online training became a way of keeping participants engaged and motivated, even if it was not expected to necessarily swiftly lead into work.

The costs and benefits of moving training online

- 5.26. There were reported to be both advantages and disadvantages to online training delivery. For example:
- some interviewees reported that the moves to online delivery increased access. It could help reduce situational barriers such as caring responsibilities or difficulties travelling (as participants could learn at home). It could also widen options, as if there was an (online) course in say Cardiff and one space left, then someone from Anglesey could go on it. As an interviewee explained, it gave access to courses that people may not have thought about before: ‘we could encourage people ‘why don’t you have a go while you’re off.’;

- it was reported by staff that some self-learning provision, such as short courses in areas like health and safety, food hygiene, is well suited to online provision⁶⁸;
- staff reported that they felt that some young people were more confident doing training online;
- staff in one area reported that participants who had done essential skills courses through CfW, to improve their digital literacy, and were ‘at a point where they were moving’ and were able to ‘continue’ their learning journeys online, benefited as it helped consolidate and strengthen their digital skills; and
- staff in one area reported that online courses could be used as a test of how committed participants were, and if they completed a short course then that indicated that they could complete a longer, and more costly course.

5.27. Nevertheless, it was also reported that:

- there were some participants who would have attended in-person training but who found it more difficult to build the motivation to complete training at home and/or who were motivated because they enjoyed the social side of getting together for training courses;
- non-attendance and dropout rates on online courses were reported to be higher – with one area reporting that they would expect as many as half of participants to not turn up for face to face training, but the non-attendance rates for online courses were even higher;
- as well as helping motivate clients, it was reported that the social dimension of provision was an important part of many adult participants’ development, and could, for example, help them overcome anxiety issues by being in a new environment, and develop their communication skills by mixing with others;
- some groups struggled to access online training because they were ‘digitally excluded’ and needed some face to face help to ‘even turn on a device’ and log on to a training course⁶⁹ and/or did not have the IT devices needed to

⁶⁸ For example, one LA was praised for offering short courses leading to basic certifications (e.g. in first aid, food hygiene etc) online: this was said to have been useful in filling in clients’ CVs ‘to make it look as if they’ve been doing something’. Achieving these quick certifications was also reported by frontline staff to help boost participants’ confidence.

⁶⁹ It was noted that indeed, a key part of a mentor/adviser’s job is to sit with people as they grapple with technology and help develop their skills as part of the process.

undertake training online. As one interviewee reported, many tried to do courses on their phones, but this was not conducive to meaningful training; and

- not all online courses were accredited to the level that people needed for specific work roles.

5.28. Overall it was felt by interviewees that the pandemic had helped to ‘revolutionise’ the way training is delivered. It was felt that both the quantity and the quality of online training has improved and given the potential advantages of online provision (outlined above), there is a case for both an online and face to face learning offer.

Addressing digital exclusion / Chromebooks

5.29. During the early stage of the pandemic, in response to requests asking if the Barriers Fund could be used to fund laptops, some of the additional funds allocated to CfW+ to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic was used to commission Digital Communities Wales to deliver a Chromebook loan scheme for CfW and CfW+ clients.⁷⁰ In several areas, this supplemented the loan of LA equipment and the purchase of reconditioned laptops for clients, using JCP funding, when individuals needed devices for longer periods.

5.30. Where the scheme worked well, as the practice example below illustrates, it was reported that, the Chromebooks had been used by clients to access courses and to prepare CVs. Some participants were also reported to have also used them for job searching. In one area, it was reported that although their use has not necessarily converted into employment opportunities, the offer of Chromebooks became an extra tool in CfW/CfW+ teams’ toolbox, and probably helped to make the case for why some clients should be referred to the service during the lockdown periods. Nevertheless, the take up was reported to be very variable, ranging from ‘very good’ to ‘not great’ across the eight areas included in the fieldwork.

Practice example: The impact of the CfW+ Chromebook scheme

In one area, it was reported that there was a very high take-up of Chromebooks and the scheme has been ‘excellent’. As a manager described, the LDB and the DWP have used the scheme as much as possible and they ‘don’t ever hear

⁷⁰ It was reported by a strategic manager that CfW+ decided to loan them out, as participants only required the Chromebook for a defined period of time and loaning them out, rather than giving them out (as the DWP had done), was judged to offer the best value for money.

anything bad about it'. They explained that during lockdown the triage assessments would ask participants about their access to IT, so advisers and mentors knew if this was a potential barrier from the start and they could ensure that those who needed them, got access via Chromebooks.

The manager described how the scheme helped keep participants busy during the lockdowns. For example, the LDB had online courses set up and they installed the CSCS package on all the Chromebooks and several people did that course during lockdown.

Although, the manager noted that there were waiting lists for Chromebooks and that it was hard work to keep track of them all and 'clean' them before they were loaned out again, the scheme was felt to have been a huge help during lockdown. They also explained that in contrast to the CfW+ Chromebook scheme, which was felt to be very accessible, the DWP appeared reluctant to use the FSF to pay for tablets, which CfW/CfW+ staff found frustrating.

In another area, a manager described how although they felt the take-up of Chromebooks was low⁷¹, that when it was taken up, the impact was significant. For example, as they reported, 'one person had no laptop at home, and he would have been unable to get the job had we not given him the Chromebook to do the interview online. He got the job.'

5.31. Problems were reported with delays in receiving Chromebooks (due to the world-wide demand associated with the pandemic), the process of 'recycling' them to new clients (such as cleaning them) and weak digital skills amongst some clients. For example frontline staff in one area reported that it was hard to support participants online, 'as [advisers or mentors] had to be there to help them switch it on'. Therefore, even as in another area where Chromebooks were loaned out, it was reported that often the individuals who received them did not use them, or would have problems logging in. Moreover, despite the training offered by Digital Communities Wales and the identification of digital champions in each team, some CfW staff also acknowledged that they themselves had little experience using Chromebooks (which is likely to have limited their capacity to encourage and support participants to use

⁷¹ Although frontline staff in Anglesey were more positive and reported that there was 'a steady use of them'.

them). However, no clear reason why take-up varied so much across areas was identified (as these problems were not unique to areas with low take-up).

Practice example: overcoming challenges associated with the CfW+ Chromebook scheme

In one area it appeared that it took some time to work out how best to deploy the Chromebooks, but once the triage officers 'put together packs in nice bags' containing pens, paper, a Chromebook and a note on how to use it and mentors supported them, clients' use of Chromebooks increased. The team reported that take-up fluctuated but on average about 10 would be out at any one time. Loan periods varied from a few days to three to four weeks. Participants were allowed to keep hold of Chromebooks after doing a short course to support their job search activities and also to enable them to do more e-learning should they choose. Use increased over time, as more online training became available. Indeed, it was noted that since Christmas 2021 the Chromebooks are working well, partly because people know that they 'need to make a start and move forward', post pandemic. As a manager summed it up the Chromebooks 'have been a brilliant extra resource'.

The legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic

5.32. Despite the huge hardship and difficulties caused, in some respects the COVID-19 pandemic was felt by interviewees to have left a positive legacy. This included:

- the expansion of the CfW+ programme;
- the move to online or blended training offer (discussed above);
- the development of a more efficient, blended model of support, which, as noted above, suited some clients and meant that, less time was 'wasted' travelling to meet and/or waiting for clients, who might not always turn up;
- telephone based triage, which staff reported, enabled a quicker turnaround and allowed participants to see an adviser or mentor faster than they would have before;
- a greater understanding and awareness of digital divides, linked to weak digital skills, a lack of access to data and/or devices, and their impacts upon participants; impacts which were laid bare by the pandemic, and which were

accentuated by the pandemic, but which continue to be of ever increasing importance as work and society increasingly move online;

- the opportunity to reflect on what worked and what worked less well. For example in one area, a LA manager reported that previously they had ‘tried to be everything to everyone but now we realise it’s more effective if we can signpost people more effectively’. For example, they explained how now they signposted people to the Building Resilient Communities team, and ‘they could do that well-being work instead of us’.

The impact of other external factors and programme responses

5.33. Other external factors that impacted upon the programmes included:

- welfare reforms, which impacted primarily upon participants’ motivations and, in some cases, capabilities (an issue discussed further in section six);
- the UK’s exit from the European Union, which impacted upon the labour market, and also by the planned end of European funding in 2023, which will have implications for the CfW programme (given its reliance upon ESF match funding), discussed in section four; and
- other employment support programmes including those developed in response to the pandemic, such as Restart, which are discussed in the next sub-section.

Welfare reforms

5.34. The business case (Welsh Government, n.d. a) anticipated that the impact of welfare reforms would ‘be negative, with a potential to increase poverty for those on low incomes and furthest from the labour market and groups with protected characteristics such as women, disabled people and black and ethnic minority groups’ (p. 5, *ibid.*) The largest impacts were forecast to be upon the South Wales Valleys, which include areas in Wales with large numbers of working-age benefit claimants, and therefore likely to be particular hard hit by cuts in welfare benefits’ ([Welsh Government, 2019a](#)):

5.35. Interviewees were asked about the impact of welfare reforms, and in particular the roll out of Universal Credit (UC). It was reported by strategic managers that the roll out of UC, which incorporates in-work benefits, initially led to a degree of confusion as to who was eligible for CfW/CfW+ support and how eligibility should be evidenced.

In response, the CfW/CfW+ referral form was revised to make it easier for JCP work coaches to understand the eligibility criteria and things have become clearer over time. However, by easing and encouraging the transition into work (by increasing financial incentives to work), the introduction of UC also helped the programmes. It was also reported that the roll out of the UC from 2015 had led to an increase in the numbers of economically inactive individuals referred by JCP (although the numbers referred fell sharply during the pandemic, as work coaches focused attention upon the unemployed). Therefore, overall, the introduction of UC was by now seen 'as a positive' from a CfW/CfW+ perspective (as one strategic manager put it).

- 5.36. The impact of UC reported by frontline staff was mixed. Some reported that it had a modest positive impact; for example, it was reported that better off calculations helped demonstrate the impact of UC upon moving into work, and because 16 or 17 year olds are generally ineligible to claim UC, it was reported to make them more motivated to look for work.⁷² However, in several other areas, frontline staff reported that the introduction of UC had little or no impact or that it was difficult to assess the impact.
- 5.37. In one area, the withdrawal of the £20 a week UC uplift in 2021 (a measure introduced in response to COVID-19 pandemic) was reported to have contributed to the financial poverty and resultant 'crisis' that some participants faced. This was felt to be compounded by the five weeks' wait for the first payment and other welfare reforms such as the so called 'bedroom tax' and benefit cap. It was reported that this financial pressure could help motivate some participants to find work, but the difficulties coping on a low income, also consumed participants' mental bandwidth⁷³, reducing their capability to undertake an effective search for work (and therefore becoming another barrier to finding work).

⁷² 16 or 17 years can claim UC if they have a health condition or disability and have medical evidence for it, such as a fit note; they are caring for a severely disabled person; are responsible for a child; live with a partner, have responsibility for a child and their partner is [eligible for Universal Credit](#); they are pregnant and expecting their baby in the next 11 week; they've had a baby in the last 15 weeks; or do not have parental support, for example they do not live with their parents and are not under local authority care.

⁷³ The concept is derived from the work of Shafir and Mullainathan (2013), who highlighted the demands coming with poverty placed upon people's mental energy and capacity, identifying that scarcity meant that the poor were more likely to make mistakes and bad decisions than those with higher incomes.

The UK's exit from the European Union

- 5.38. Interviewees were asked about the impact of the UK's exit from the European Union. Some areas in North Wales, reported modest impacts upon the labour market, as a result of EU citizens leaving the area, contributing to vacancies and/or higher pay in some sectors. In addition, in one area, the creation of Inland Border Posts⁷⁴, was also cited as creating new job opportunities. However, there were also concerns about a longer term negative impact. In many areas though, it was felt that there was either little or no impact or that it was difficult to assess the impact.
- 5.39. The macro level impact of the UK's exit from the European Union is challenging to model, but it is worth noting that the UK Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) assumes a negative overall impact upon economic growth and employment ([OBR, 2022](#)). This may increase demand for employability support programmes, but also make it harder for employability support programmes to achieve job outcomes.

Strategic fit with other employment support programmes

- 5.40. CfW and CFW+ sit in a complex ecosystem of employment support programmes, and as one strategic manager explained, the aim is to link up with other programmes, and that clients 'don't need to see the wiring underneath...but there should always be someone who can support them'. In their view 'if all [the employment support programmes] stayed within their criteria it works'. As outlined below, interviewees highlighted programmes that they felt did this and complemented CfW and CfW+'s offer, such as Kickstart⁷⁵ and Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS)⁷⁶, whilst those such as Restart⁷⁷ and Active Inclusion Fund projects potentially overlap with CfW and CfW+, creating competition.
- 5.41. Programmes that were seen as complementing CfW and CfW+ at a strategic level were generally those that focused upon different groups and/or had different support offers, which meant they were either:

⁷⁴ The post are sites where customs and border checks, such as the inspection of goods like animals, plants and products of animal origin entering Wales via the Port of Holyhead from outside of the UK can be undertaken.

⁷⁵ A work placement on Kickstart can be counted as CfW job outcome.

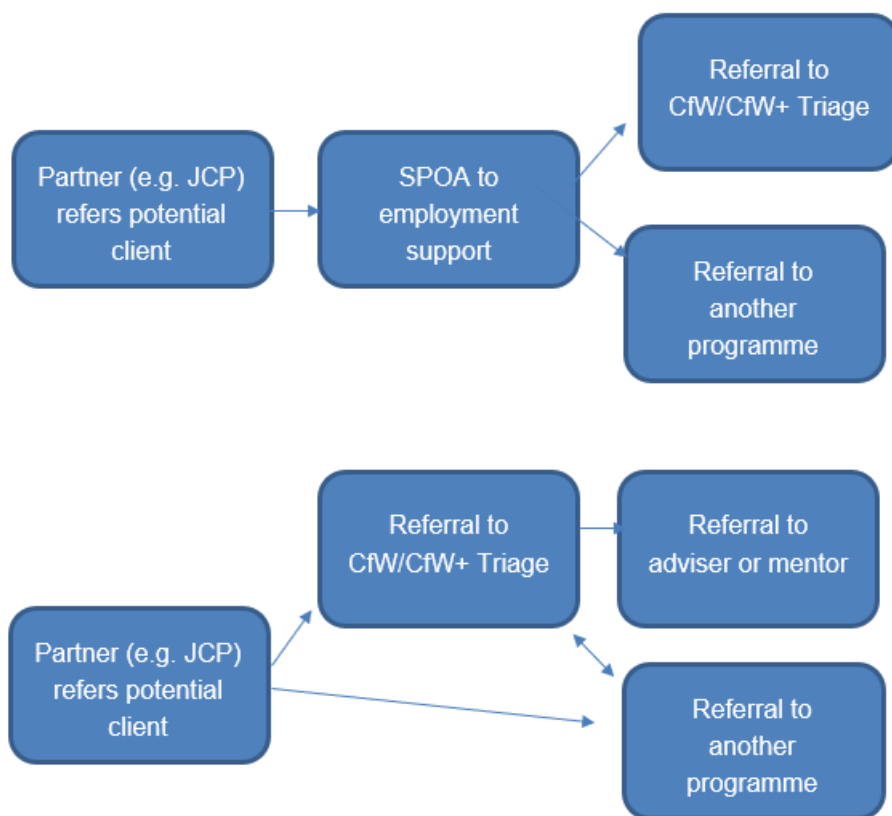
⁷⁶ JETS offers light touch support to help people to find work who have been unemployed and in receipt of benefits for at least 13 weeks.

⁷⁷ Restart offers enhanced, tailored support for up to 12 months for UC claimants who have been out of work for 12-18 months

- working with different groups of participants to CfW and CfW+, such as programmes like PaCE focused upon those whose main barrier to employment is childcare;
- working with participants at different times - or stages in participants' employability journeys - to CfW and CfW+, such as pre-engagement support, offered by programmes like Inspire 2 Work or support to progress once in employment, offered by programme such as Skills@Work; or
- working with participants simultaneously to CfW and CfW+, where participants were eligible to be supported by more than one programme, such as Working Wales, which was not ESF funded.

5.42. CfW's rigid eligibility criteria are designed to ensure it does not duplicate other provision, similarly most ESF funded regional employment programmes are focused upon areas not covered by CfW (i.e. areas that were not CF areas). In contrast, because CfW+ has looser eligibility criteria than CfW, the risk that it overlaps with (or duplicates provision offered by) other employment support programmes is potentially greater. CfW+ aims not to work with people eligible for ESF national or regional programmes, and it was reported that the model worked well in ILAs where all the employment support programmes 'sit in the same place in the LA', so there are 'no unseemly squabbles' as one interviewee put it. This is illustrated by the practice example below. However, it was noted that it can be more difficult in areas where different employment support programmes sit in different LA departments. These two different approaches are illustrated by Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. Single and multiple points of access to employment support programmes



Practice example: A Single Point of Access (SPOA) to employment support services

Interviewees described how in one area the gateway team provides a single point of access (or ‘gateway’) into a range of services available via the LA’s Into Work Service. This involves a screening process designed to gather three key pieces of information that enable clients to be referred to the most appropriate form of support: date of birth, postcode and benefits received.

Individuals engaging with the LA’s Into Work Service are pre-screened by the gateway team and then referred on to the most appropriate of the range of projects/services, which are ‘hosted’ by the Into Work Service. The programmes covered by this screening process include national programmes, such as CfW, CfW+, PaCE and regional programmes such as Inspire 2 Work; Skills@Work and Journey2Work.

The CfW/CfW+ triage process sits within the broader gateway screening process, and if CfW or CfW+ is identified as the most appropriate service by the initial screening, CfW triage workers undertake a more detailed needs assessment with clients before allocating them to mentors or advisers.

the LA's Into Work Service has been an important source of referrals for CfW and CfW+ and it is reported that referrals have started to build up again recently, post pandemic.

DWP programmes: Restart, Kickstart and JETS

- 5.43. As outlined in section four (paragraph 4.51-4.57), the partnership between DWP and Welsh Government and the involvement of DWP staff in both the management and delivery of the CfW programme, helped ensure good working relationships and links between CfW, CfW+ and JCP at an operational level. Nevertheless, as the experience of Restart and Kickstart (both DWP programmes established as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic), illustrates, the complementarity of CfW and CfW+ offer to JCP's offer was vital to the success of this partnership.⁷⁸
- 5.44. Interviewees in the areas included in the fieldwork consistently reported that they felt that Restart and Kickstart were developed by the DWP without adequate consultation with or consideration for existing programmes in Wales such as CfW and CfW+. For example, as staff in Cardiff described it, programmes such as CfW were 'a small fish in a big pond' and simply did not register on DWP policy makers' radar – 'they ploughed money into it without any conversation about what was already happening here in Wales ... where was [the] joined up thinking'?
- 5.45. As a CfW strategic manager explained, when the new DWP programmes, such as Kickstart and Restart were announced, arrangements were put in place for them to work alongside CfW (and CfW+).⁷⁹ Similarly, as they explained, there were 'good discussions with DWP Wales and local DWP staff were very supportive, saying if someone is engaged on a CfW or CfW+ action plan, they shouldn't be referred to Restart'. However, it was also observed that DWP staff managers in JCP were telling

⁷⁸ CfW and CfW+ can work with (and support) existing JCP clients and offer more time and support than JCP work coaches can.

⁷⁹ Similarly, the Re-evaluation of CfW identifies that 'Assurance has been provided by DWP that the Kickstart programme is for individuals closer to the labour market and not requiring the intensive support of CfW.' (CfW Re-evaluation - WWV P3 Business Plan Addendum).

their teams that they had to send people to Restart. As a DWP manager put it, this was felt to run against the principle of referring to the programme best suited to the individual.⁸⁰

- 5.46. As a consequence, Restart was widely reported, as staff in one area put it, to be ‘hugely disruptive’ to the referral pipeline from JCP, particularly for adults aged 25 and over (Priority 1) as the two programmes essentially aim to serve the same customers. As staff in one area put it, whilst the advisers have ‘good relationships’ with work coaches at [the local jobcentre], when Restart started, referrals from JCP ‘fell off a cliff’ because it is mandatory for individuals to participate in Restart and JCP work coaches referred them to Restart rather than CfW as a matter of course.⁸¹ Staff reported that this worsened when eligibility criteria for Restart were softened, opening the programme up to people unemployed for nine rather than 12-18 months.
- 5.47. As well as frustration that work coaches were reported to have been told to refer potential participants to Restart rather than CfW or CfW+, there was frustration when existing CfW or CfW+ participants were moved onto the Restart programme by JCP. A strategic manager explained that if someone on CfW or CfW+ is referred to Restart, staff try to investigate why and ask DWP to refer them back. However, this can be difficult and as the practice example illustrates, CfW and CfW+ are trying to prevent this happening by ensuring that work coaches are aware that someone is engaged with CfW or CfW+, by annotating their UC journals.

Practice example: CfW and Restart

A manager in one area reported that to address the tensions between CfW, CfW+ and Restart, there are now local agreements in place with JCP – and where a participant’s journal records that they are working with CfW, then the agreement is that a work coach will contact the CfW advisers or CfW/CfW+ mentors working with that individual before referring them to Restart. They reported that this means that ‘at least there is a conversation and an opportunity for us to fight out corner’. They noted that, CfW advisers or CfW/CfW+ mentors will have invested time and money in supporting that individual and it was felt to be only ‘fair’ that they could continue to support them and hopefully claim an outcome as a result. There was also:

- a strong sense that CfW and CfW+ were more effective than Restart, which was described as too target driven, in contrast to the more person centred approach taken by CfW and CfW+; and
- a feeling amongst DWP staff in particular, that their work for CfW was being undermined by decisions taken by other DWP staff, which as one manager in another area put it, 'was quite demoralising. It hurts more because it is our employer, and our colleagues are doing this to us.'

More positively, as the manager explained, there was now better awareness and understanding of the issues and as a result of the agreement with JCP, they now lost few participants to Restart.

- 5.48. However, it was reported by staff in one area that conversations with JCP work coaches about not referring CfW or CfW+ participants to Restart had been largely futile and the Welsh Government was felt to have been tepid in its defence of the CfW and CfW+ team in challenging referrals of its clients to Restart. This was challenged by Welsh Government officials though, who as outlined above (paragraph 5.44), described working with DWP to address the issues.
- 5.49. More positively, looking forward, it was anticipated that Restart clients who fail to find work will start being referred to CfW from about June 2022 onwards, when their 12 month period on Restart comes to an end. While it was expected they would probably have complex and possibly entrenched barriers, meaning they were likely to be 'hard nuts' to crack, as frontline staff put it, these are the sort of participants CfW was designed to work with.
- 5.50. Strategic managers also reported that CfW+ have been piloting a scheme in Blaenau Gwent, Flintshire and Gwynedd, where people made redundant and on the React programme can be referred to CfW+ for additional mentoring support. This was reported to be easier for CfW+ as it does not need to claim job outcomes in the same way as CfW does. However, they noted that there have been far fewer redundancies than anticipated (as a result of the pandemic and the impact of policy responses like the introduction of the furlough scheme during national lockdowns), meaning that they have not had the numbers to properly test this model and they are considering expanding the pilot to other areas.
- 5.51. In contrast to Restart, as the practice example below illustrates, Kickstart, which provides funding to create new jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on UC who are at risk of

long term unemployment, was generally seen as complementing CfW and CfW+, as young people who were NEET could be eligible for both Kickstart and CfW or CfW+. Indeed, as one interviewee explained, they felt that Kickstart supported them with the engagement of under 25-year-olds. Nevertheless, in one area, it was reported that initially there had been a good deal of confusion, although the team later identified the potential for CfW and CfW+ to provide training and online courses for young people looking to get placements via Kickstart. However, as staff explained, 'jobs were slow in coming through', which made things difficult for the team (and young people) as 'there was nowhere for them to go' once they had completed the training.

Practice example: Kickstart and CfW

In one area, it was reported that advisers and mentors played a part in helping young people who were NEET develop CVs and in preparing them for job interviews. They explained that they sought to turn clients' CVs around within 24 hours 'with help from the LA's Into Work Service' colleagues, who run drop-in job clubs within LA hubs but, who unlike CfW and CfW+ advisers and/or mentors, do not have a caseload or access to financial support (such as that offered through the Barriers Fund or DWP FSF). They explained that large retailers such as TK Maxx and JD Sports, as well as some smaller employers, became involved with Kickstart. They also explained that referrals from work coaches for help in getting young people who were NEET, interview ready for placements with these employers, proved fruitful for advisers and/or mentors. They reported that CfW and CfW+ were well placed to help these young people because:

- JCP work coaches were inundated and did not have time to deal with all their clients interested in Kickstart;
- some clients needed more time than work coaches were able to give them and;
- CfW/CfW+ was able to provide individuals with training they needed to secure particular placements.

5.52. The DWP's JETS programme, a light touch employment programme for unemployed adults who have been claiming either UC or New Style JSA for at least 13 weeks, was occasionally mentioned by interviewees, but there was no real sense that the

programme had made any difference to CfW/CfW+. This probably reflects the programme's targeting upon those who only need 'light touch' support.

Welsh Government and regional employment support programmes and projects

- 5.53. As noted above, there is a complex patchwork of different national and regional employment support programmes sponsored by the Welsh Government, LAs and the voluntary sector, often with support from the ESF. In relation to Welsh Government programmes, CfW and CfW+ and PaCE were seen as complementary programmes that focused upon supporting different groups (with PaCE focused upon those for whom childcare responsibilities was their main barrier to work). However, relationships with Working Wales, which aims to provide a national single point of contact for employment support, were less developed, in part as it is a relatively new programme (launched in May 2019). For example, as staff in one area explained, they don't have good links with Working Wales / Careers Wales (who deliver Working Wales) at the moment and that needs to be picked up.

Practice example – inter-agency working

Frontline staff described how there is a tradition of strong inter-agency working in one area. There is a single triage process for CfW, CfW+ and PaCE, with strong working relations reported between the three teams. Furthermore, a 'jobs and skills steering group' (JSTE) was established several years ago and both Working Wales (WW) and DWP are members of that, alongside CfW/CfW+ and PaCE representatives.

Membership of the JSTE has remained fairly consistent for a number of years, which means that members know each other well and are accustomed to sharing information. As one manager described, the partners are 'constantly in dialogue and it works really well'. Indeed, it was noted that clients sometimes try to 'play [agencies] off against each other', but that the relationships between partners are well enough developed to allow staff to 'pick up the phone to discuss clients' needs'. It is also recognised that individual organisations have strengths and are better placed to work with particular kinds of clients: for example, the DWP works with Afghan refugees.

- 5.54. Many of the regional employability programmes are managed by LAs, which also manage CfW and CfW+. Some of these regional projects are seen as complementary programmes that referred to CfW and CfW+ or that CfW and CfW+ referred people to. They include projects focused upon:
- supporting the first steps toward re-engagement with education, training or employment, such as Inspire 2 Work in central South Wales; or
 - supporting progression once in work like Skills@Work⁸² in South East Wales.
- 5.55. Alongside these LA managed programmes, the Wales Council for Voluntary Action's (WCVA) Active Inclusion Fund (AIF) supports 'organisations to support people who have or still experience profound challenges to help them move towards work, or to provide them with work experience and, for those ready, help into longer term employment.' ([WCVA, 2021](#)). AIF projects sit alongside Welsh Government and LA sponsored provision and were widely reported by managers and frontline staff in the areas included in the fieldwork, to duplicate or compete with CfW and CfW+⁸³, although in some cases, it was reported that projects AIF funded also provided a place for CfW or CfW+ to refer individuals, where appropriate. In addition, concerns were voiced by interviewees that a plethora of existing or forthcoming Community Renewal Fund (CRF) projects will also be delivering locally and there was a lack of clarity about who they can work with; as one manager put it, 'they seem to be able to do anything with anyone' which it was reported is already making things a little more difficult for CfW, CfW+ and the JCP too. The potential impact of this upon creating an untidy patchwork of localised provision, for future employability programmes, is considered in the conclusions.

The factors that contribute to a good strategic fit at an operational level

- 5.56. As well as a good strategic fit, in the sense that programmes focused upon different groups and/or had different support offers to CfW and CfW+, the fieldwork suggested that the co-ordination and management of employment programmes was important and having a single point of access to employment support programmes (see above) was of help. In some areas, the co-location of all employment initiatives programmes

⁸² Skills@Work aims to help participants in work acquire generic, transferable skills from entry level 1 to level 2, in order to improve the mobility of the workforce and support sustainable employment.

⁸³ This is despite CfW representation on the Active Inclusion Employability Board and WCVA representation on the CfW Strategic Board.

was reported to work well and for example, in one area, staff undertake joint training and share resources and information.

5.57. However, it also appeared that the balance between demand for employment support and the capacity of programmes was important. For example, in one area, where it was felt that there was strong demand for employment support, there was less a sense of competition between providers, unlike other areas where there has been a tendency to 'keep clients', as one interviewee put it. In another area, the range of support offered was welcome: as an interviewee explained:

'It is clear that there's never been so much help for those looking for work: [Personal Learning Accounts] PLAs for training; ReAct for those [made] redundant⁸⁴; CfW/CfW+ offering short courses; DWP with JETS, Restart [and] Kickstart. Remploy with their own scheme. It's important to work out which are the best and most appropriate ones [schemes] for our customers.'

5.58. In contrast, there was frustration in other areas about the number of programmes in effect competing for the same clients, particularly in areas where engagements were below target. For example in one area it was reported that there were so many programmes and that as one interviewee put it: 'they all fight for the same clients, there were nine different support programmes for the job centre to refer to and they all target the same people'.

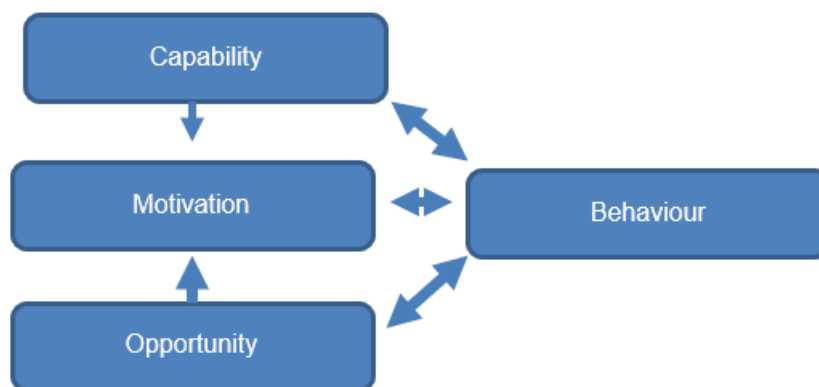
⁸⁴ ReAct supports those who have been made redundant or unemployed in the past 12 months, or you are under current notice of redundancy, and offers Recruitment & Training Support and also grants to cover training and support.

6. Participants motivations, access to opportunities, capabilities, and behaviours

Introduction

- 6.1. This section considers the data reported by managers and frontline staff in the areas included in the fieldwork about the thinking and behaviour of CfW and CfW+ participants.
- 6.2. The COM-B model (Michie, et al, 2011) was used to help explore and better understand participants' behaviours, such as choosing to engage with the project or engaging in job search and training activity. As Figure 6.1. illustrates, the COM-B framework enables **B**ehaviour to be understood as the consequence of the interaction of:
- people's **C**apabilities (such as their health and skills);
 - access to **O**pportunities (such as education and training and employment opportunities); and
 - **M**otivations.

Figure 6.1. The COM-B model of behavioural change



Source: [Michie, et al, 2011](#)

- 6.3. People's capabilities, access to opportunities, motivations and behaviours are not fixed and interact in a dynamic way. For example, people's belief that they have limited opportunities and/or cannot perform a particular behaviour (such as job searching) undermines motivation. This can mean they do not take up opportunities, such as education or training opportunities, which could boost their capabilities,

enhance their motivation, and open up new opportunities to them (e.g. access to jobs requiring particular skills or qualifications).

Participant motivations

- 6.4. CfW and CfW+ advisers, mentors and managers reported that as voluntary programmes, the main motivation for participants was wanting to find work. As one interviewee put it:
- ‘People come because they want to make a change in their life, they may not know how to do it, they may not be clear what change they’d like to make, they may not believe they can do it, but generally people are motivated to change their circumstances’.
- 6.5. In order to help people realise their aspiration of finding work, the programmes’ offer of funded training and support, was seen as particularly important in motivating participants to join CfW or CfW+. Similarly, training linked to certification required for specific roles, such as CSCS or SIA cards, where employer demand was strong, was also seen as a key ‘hook’. Smaller numbers of participants were reported to want help with job matching or support with job searching. Word of mouth and the programmes’ reputation, where for example, someone had heard of, or knew of someone helped by the programmes, was also reported by staff to be important in motivating people to choose CfW or CfW+.
- 6.6. The voluntary and person centred nature of the programmes was also seen as important in sustaining participants’ motivation and their continued engagement. As one staff member put it, the voluntary nature of the programmes helps as clients feel it is going to support them, and not ‘force them’ to do things. It was also noted that people’s motivation could ebb and flow and as staff in one area described, some will initially engage on what is a ‘good day’ for them, when they are willing to ‘look for help’, but their next appointment might fall on a ‘bad day’ and ‘they won’t turn up’.
- 6.7. Nevertheless, as noted in sections three and four, a minority of participants initially engaged, as a result of what could be characterised as soft conditionality or compulsion from JCP. As one interviewee put it ‘if they’re [JCP’s] squeezing or pushing a cohort, we know about it’. They explained that a work coach might refer people who were not motivated, as they needed to do something in the intensive job search stream, so they were looking for provision that might help fulfil the claimant commitment. The problem, they explained, was that ‘we could help, but they [the

potential participants referred by work coaches in this way] won't answer the phone'. As they explained, those referred by work coaches were 'probably the least engaged' as although CfW and CfW+ are voluntary programmes, 'they feel that they should engage in case they are sanctioned by JCP'. Indeed in one area, it was reported that although some participants referred by work coaches, initially think the programme is mandatory⁸⁵, some of these were then persuaded by the programmes' offer, and their motivations shifted, as they recognised the potential for the programmes to help them change their lives for the better. However, others were not persuaded, and were, as one mentor in another area put it, going through the motions or dropping out when they discovered that the programme was voluntary⁸⁶.

6.8. Other catalysts for engagement with the programmes included:

- parents who were motivated to improve their children's lives by increasing their household income. This was reported by frontline staff in one area to be particularly apparent in September as children returned to school and parents began thinking about how they would pay for Christmas presents⁸⁷;
- the pandemic, which meant some participants had lost their jobs and/or reassessed what they wanted to do, discussed further below; and
- the impact of cuts in welfare payments and the cost of living crisis. For example, as frontline staff in one area described; 'I've seen P3s [young people] where the parents have said to the younger people you need to get a job' to contribute to the household budget. They also reported more referrals of adults aged 25 from the financial inclusion service for people dealing with financial crisis.

The differing levels of motivation of young people who were NEET and those aged 25 and over

6.9. It was generally reported that young people who were NEET were generally more motivated than those aged 25 and over. As one interviewee, described, 'young people are ready and willing to work, and it is often the first time they are going through this process.' It was also the case that staff in one area reported that young people who were NEET were more 'ambitious', while older participants were often more 'jaded'

⁸⁵ It was also reported that young people who were NEET were less likely to turn down a suggested referral to CfW or CfW+ from a Work Coach, as they lacked experience of the employability support 'system' and the confidence to say 'no'.

⁸⁶ For example, as one interviewee reported, they get a small number of people they described as 'licence collectors': people who know 'how to play the system, going through the motions to keep Job Centre Plus off their backs'.

⁸⁷ The evaluation of PaCE (Welsh Government, forthcoming) identified similar motivations.

and 'stuck in their ways'. Moreover, as outlined in section four, they explained that in their experience, 'older participants will have more barriers – and the negative experiences that build up from life and work,' particularly as they have had to be out of work for at least 12+ months, or to be economically inactive, to be eligible for support from CfW. It was also noted that those who have been long term unemployed and previously referred to other programmes, such as the Health Programme, without success, could face the most complex barriers and be the most demotivated. In response, as a staff in one area described, part of an adviser's and/or mentor's job is to convince participants, particularly older participants, that 'work is a good thing', through for example, better off calculations.

The impact of the pandemic

- 6.10. As outlined in section five, it was constantly reported by frontline staff and managers in the areas included in the fieldwork that that the pandemic suppressed participants' motivation. For example as an interviewee in one area put it, initially 'people were in shock' and 'some people had no motivation in the pandemic. The P3's [young people] saw it as a jolly, they said we could do nothing now for months and nobody will push us' and few new engagements were made. Similarly, in another area it was reported that 'the DWP was not open, people did not have to show that they were doing the job searches or applying for work'. This illustrates the extent to which a degree of 'encouragement' or soft conditionality from JCP may underpin participants' voluntary engagement with the programme. As outlined below, the emergence of new barriers, such as caring responsibilities while schools were closed, also demotivated some participants.
- 6.11. As restrictions eased, it was reported that it took time to re-engage and remotivate participants. For example, interviewees reported that they felt that some CfW participants (more so than CfW+ ones) had lost their 'work ethic', while others were still 'wary' or fearful of catching COVID-19. As a result it was felt that some participants had gone back a few steps and regressed.
- 6.12. Nevertheless, it was also reported that some clients who 'went to ground' during the pandemic period were re-engaging when the fieldwork was underway in Spring 2022 and the loss of jobs and income during the pandemic motivated some. For example, in one area, it was reported that the business of traditional taxi companies had been eroded by Uber even prior to the pandemic and this situation was exacerbated by COVID-19 lockdowns. It was reported that taxi drivers came in search of help to find

other jobs, in many cases as HGV drivers, partly as a consequence of the media coverage which shortages in that sector received.

- 6.13. Moreover, as restrictions eased, it was observed that the pandemic had been a turning point for some participants, because for example, as one interviewee put it:

‘They’ve had time to think through the pandemic, their circumstances may have changed, many have left hospitality or want a change of career after being furloughed. They just need support to realise what they can achieve.’

- 6.14. In one area, it was also reported that engagements increased as social distancing restrictions eased, the increase in UC payments ended, and pressure upon participants from work coaches increased as claimant commitments (the agreement UC claimants make to prepare for and look for work, or to increase their earnings) which had been suspended during the pandemic, were reactivated.

Access to opportunities

- 6.15. As outlined in section four, the programme provided access to training, which could strengthen people’s capabilities and also their motivation (e.g. by strengthening their self-belief in their ability to find employment) and could both improve people’s knowledge of job opportunities (e.g. through support with job search) and in some cases, directly link them to job opportunities (e.g. through the work of ELOs).
- 6.16. Although the programmes could enhance understanding of, and in some cases directly link people to employment opportunities, access to employment opportunities was still dependent upon the strength - or weakness - of local labour markets at the time our fieldwork was undertaken.

The impact of the pandemic

- 6.17. Employment opportunities contracted sharply during the pandemic, particularly during the early stages, with a record fall in the number of job vacancies in April-June 2021 ([House of Commons Library, 2022a](#)) This made progression to employment harder and undermined participants’ motivation (compounding the barrier). Nevertheless, the pandemic also created new opportunities, (such as track and trace workers); jobs for which demand had surged during the pandemic, such as security guards in supermarkets; and also new opportunities to work from home for some (which could help reduce situational barriers such as childcare responsibilities, which would otherwise limit access to employment opportunities).

6.18. The strong recovery in employment as restrictions were eased, meant in Spring 2022 when the fieldwork was undertaken, the general view amongst advisers, mentors, and managers was, as an interviewee put it, ‘there is work out there at the moment’. However, it was noted that this might often require participants to either:

- travel to city centres, business parks or out of town shopping centres, meaning problems with public transport, such as cost, unreliability and/or a lack of connections at the times and/or the places people lived, to the times and places where jobs were; and/or
- forego their aspirations. For example, as an interviewee from a partner agency in one area put it:

‘It’s difficult in a time when there is plenty of work, but it may not be the kind of work that people want to do. There are plenty of opportunities in hospitality, but not everyone wants to do work in that industry’.

6.19. This raises questions about the quality of work into which people were progressing. For example, interviewees reported that there was a high demand for care workers during the pandemic, but the rates of pay being offered were poor so that many participants would have been worse off in work had they taken care jobs, by the time they paid for costs such as childcare and travel.

6.20. Low pay was also reported by frontline staff to have impacted upon participants’ motivation, and for example, in one area, it was reported that both young people and adults were fearful of progressing into work for fear of compromising their financial stability, even if their incomes, while out of work, were very low. In some cases, advisers and mentors felt that these individuals’ fears were well founded and that moving into work might have little impact or even worsen financial poverty, undermining a key aim of the programmes.

Capabilities

6.21. CfW is intended to work with those with complex barriers to employment and this is reflected in what were described as the constrained capabilities of most participants. For example, as one interviewee put it, [we don’t see those who want to work] and who are ‘competent and capable’ and able to find work independently and as another interviewee put it, ‘those who can get work themselves are doing so’ and:

‘Essentially, we are looking at those who can’t find work on their own. Some will need specific skills such as job search, filling in an application, CV writing,

interview preparation. Others will need specific qualifications if they don't have any, those are often short-term vocational courses. Others will need information on their options. Others will need their confidence and self-belief developed ... Some will need support with additional barriers such as debt relief, mental health, housing issues.'

- 6.22. This meant that motivating factors, such as cuts in welfare payments, had not been sufficient on their own to move people into work.
- 6.23. However, in one area, it was reported that the pandemic brought about a change in the nature of people engaging with CfW and CfW+. Several had lost jobs as a result of the pandemic and came for support to find alternative employment. These individuals (mostly aged up to 24) were 'just more work ready', as one interviewee put it.
- 6.24. CfW teams were confident that they were effective at engaging participants with complex barriers into employment, most notably people with mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression which limited their capabilities, and undermined motivation, and which were felt to be becoming more common.⁸⁸ In one area, it was estimated that up to 60 per cent of CfW mentors' caseloads had some sort of mental health issues, although it was reported that these may not become apparent at the outset, but only emerge as trust is built between the client and adviser/mentor.
- 6.25. The other key limitations upon people's capabilities were reported to be;
- weak essential skills, such as literacy, numeracy and/or ICT skills; and
 - weak job search skills and/or understanding of local labour market opportunities and expectations.
- 6.26. It was generally felt by frontline staff in the areas included in the fieldwork that young people were more capable than people aged 25 and over. For example, as staff in one area described, young people who were NEET were 'more likely to be within some system or just left', with recent experience of, for example volunteering, Kickstart or college, even if not experience of permanent employment. In contrast, those aged 25 and over, who were either economically inactive or had been unemployed for more than 12 months when joining, often had much less recent

⁸⁸ Data on this is not captured in the participant database, although for example, severe mental health difficulties, could be recorded as a disability or work limiting health conditions (if it has a significant, adverse and long-term effect on individuals' ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities).

experience of education, training or employment, compared to younger people. This meant that their capabilities, such as social and emotional skills, and/or vocational/work related skills, had often deteriorated over time. There were of course exceptions to this general picture. Examples were given of young people who were NEET in one area, who were very far away from the labour market and who required long-term intensive support.

- 6.27. Some participants were felt to have particularly constrained capabilities given the complexity of their barriers to employment. These included those held back by:
- drug or alcohol misuse;
 - disabilities, poor physical and/or mental health, but who were deemed fit to work by JCP;
 - 'difficult' or 'chaotic,' lives, as result, for example of domestic violence, post-natal depression, disability, and those who faced 'entrenched problems';
 - situational barriers such as caring responsibilities for young children; and/or
 - those with criminal records, which could restrict the roles for which they could apply and/or restrict the number of employees willing to employ them.

The impact of the pandemic

- 6.28. Interviewees consistently reported that the pandemic impacted upon many people's capability to engage with the programmes (albeit effects that were not peculiar to CfW/CfW+ participants). For example, as outlined in section five, the pandemic amplified the impact of digital illiteracy, data poverty and/or limited access to devices; increased situational barriers, such as caring responsibilities for some (although this was sometimes offset by moves to deliver training and support remotely); and the pressure of the pandemic added to people's mental load, limiting their mental bandwidth (and reduced their capacity to effectively search for and apply for jobs). For example as an interviewee in one area reported when mentors spoke to people on the phone:

it was about 'bread and butter things not jobs ... it was more about how they were feeling ... not about if they had a job or were doing training ... they [mentors'] were more concerned with referring people to the foodbank'.

- 6.29. More acute examples were also highlighted, and for example staff in one area reported that the pandemic led to increased levels of marital breakdowns and

domestic violence, which meant that clients were simply not in a position to think about looking for work.

- 6.30. For some, these and other difficulties, contributed to heightened levels of fear, anxiety and mental health difficulties as a result of the pandemic ([OHID, 2022](#)). Advisers spoke of phoning clients during the pandemic to check that they were ok and individuals 'crying' because they were afraid and alone. These individuals were reported to not really be in a position to think about work.
- 6.31. However, a mixed picture about the legacy of the pandemic was reported. Some areas reported that problems continued, with participants presenting with more complex difficulties than they had before the pandemic. In contrast, in other areas, it was reported that the issues with which people are now presenting are very much the same as they were pre-pandemic such as difficulties accessing childcare, transport, and/or training.

Behaviours and outcomes

- 6.32. Advisers and mentors described behavioural changes associated with participation in the programme, such as:
- engaging in job search more actively and effectively, asking for more frequent appointments and appointments becoming more productive, with, for example, participants becoming more attentive and more focused, as their motivation and capabilities, including self-belief, strengthened;
 - improved timekeeping and reliability (such as keeping appointments), increasing their capability of successfully finding and sustaining work; and
 - individuals becoming more open and disclosing things they have not previously talked about, because they trusted advisers or mentors and were more confident disclosing and discussing sensitive issues. It was reported that this could enhance the advice and support (including access to opportunities) advisers or mentors could offer.
- 6.33. Advisers and mentors also described how finding work 'can change people's lives'. For example, in one area they described how:
- 'One woman came to us after her children had been taken off her [taken into care]. Working with us, she went into employment, is looking at a promotion now,

is part of the driving programme^[89] and now has supervised contact with her children....The impact [of this] is beyond income; she's earned family respect and has better relationships with her family'.

'Another man came out of rehab after a suicide attempt, he went onto volunteering opportunities and did several courses with us. He had a new-found purpose to stay sober... and is now part of the NHS Step Into Work programme. He did have a relapse, but is back on track. The barriers will always be there.'

- 6.34. Equally, as staff in another area reported, in work poverty was 'becoming a growing issue' and was reducing the positive impacts of the programme. They described how even in 'good jobs' many people struggle to pay their family bills now.
- 6.35. Finally, it was also noted that positive outcomes were not limited to entry into employment education or training, with for example interviewees described how the rather than entering work, the impact of participation in the programmes might be reducing social isolation or going back to the community as a volunteer. They celebrated the fact, that as they put it, the programme had a 'more rounded offer' than some other employment support programmes.

⁸⁹ The LDB offer support to help people pass their driving test through their [Driving project](#).

7. Effectiveness of programme delivery

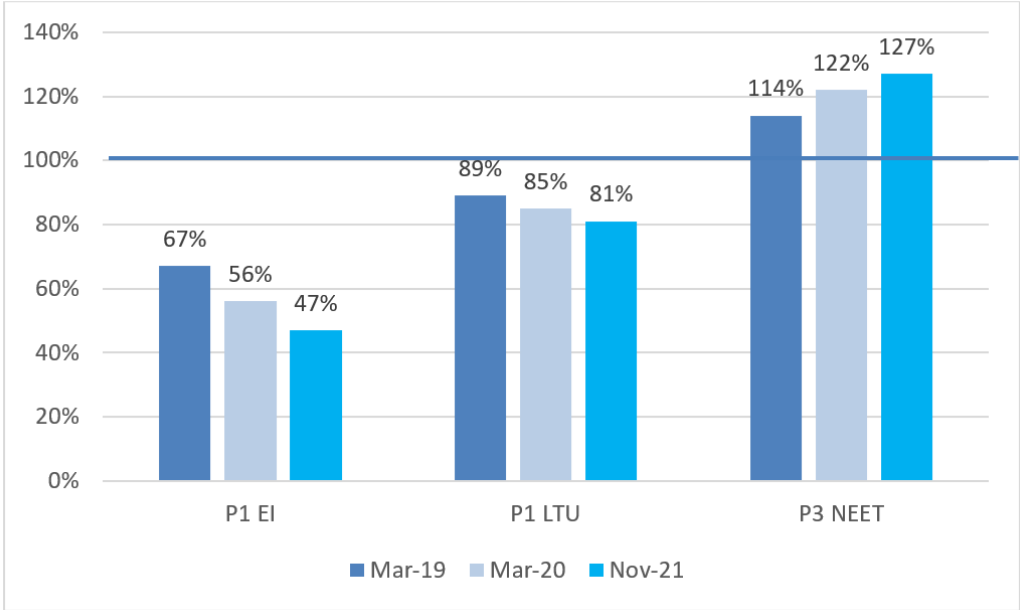
Introduction

- 7.1. This section reviews the effectiveness of the delivery of the CfW operations and CfW+ programme by assessing progress against targets in relation to
- engagements;
 - job outcomes; and
 - in the case of CfW, other outcomes, such as work placements.
- 7.2. It also considers the extent to which changes in performance were correlated with the COVID-19 pandemic. It then:
- assesses the activity to address CfW's Cross Cutting Themes and both programmes' contribution to wider Welsh Government equality objectives and the Welsh language offer; and
 - considers programme funding, expenditure and efficiency.

CfW performance: engagements

- 7.3. In the period from May 2015 to February 2022, CfW engaged over 34,000 people. As Chart 7.1. illustrates, CfW programme performance against engagement targets for Priority 3 (P3) has been much stronger than expected, and was at 127 per cent of profile in November 2021 compared to a somewhat more disappointing performance across Priority 1 (P1) where engagements of economically inactive participants stood at 47 per cent and engagements of long term unemployed participants stood at 81 per cent of profile in November 2021.

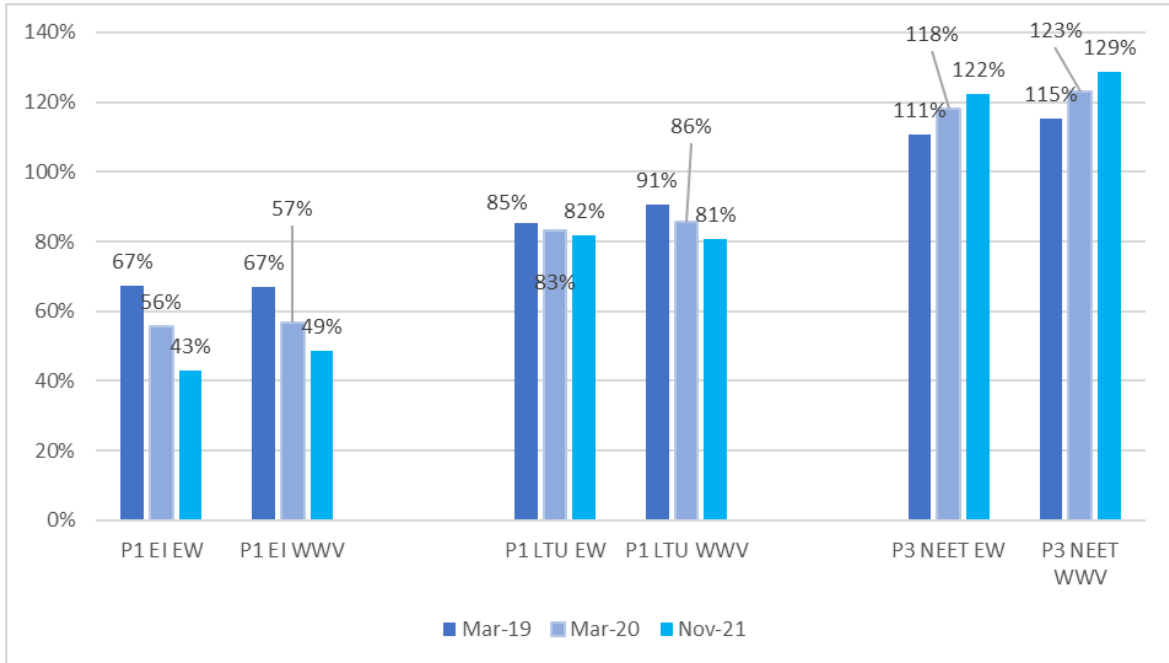
Chart 7.1. CfW cumulative programme performance against engagement targets for Economically Inactive (EI) and Long term Unemployment (LTU) participants (Priority 1) and Young People who are NEET (Priority 3), March 2019, March 2020, and November 2021



Source: Welsh Government

7.4. Chart 7.2. shows that the performance patterns to March 2019, March 2020 and November 2021 were similar in both East Wales (EW) and West Wales and the Valleys (WWV).

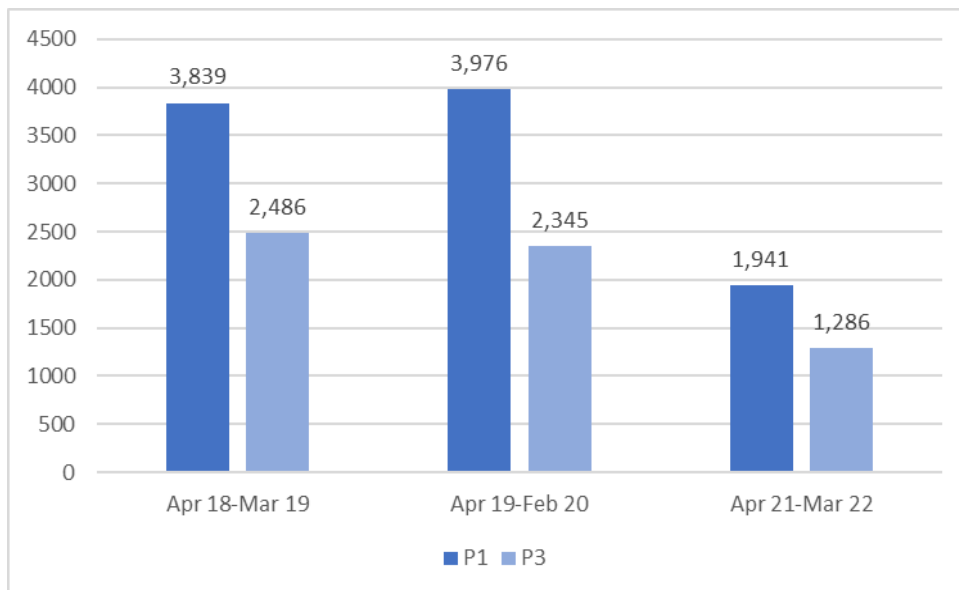
Chart 7.2. CfW cumulative programme performance against engagement targets, (March 2019, March 2020 and November 2021) WWV and EW



Source: Welsh Government

7.5. As Chart 7.3. illustrates the decline in CfW P1 engagements, and or a lesser degree, P3 engagements, is associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns from March 2020 onwards.

Chart 7.3. Total number of CfW engagements per year (April 2018-March 2019, April 2019-February 2020, and April to March 2021)



Source: Welsh Government

7.6. As Table 7.1. shows, in response to the disappointing performance even prior to the pandemic, the engagement targets for P1 were reprofiled in 2019, with the targets for engagements of EI and LTU participants cut. This was partially offset by increases in the target for the number of young people who are NEET (P3) to be engaged.

Table 7.1. Communities for Work reprofiled targets for 2023

| Group | Original Target | Revised (reprofiled) targeted | % change |
|--------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| EI EW | 6,771 | 3,119 | -54 |
| EI WWV | 20,312 | 10,383 | -49 |
| LTU EW | 3,488 | 2,656 | -24 |
| LTU WWV | 10,464 | 7,982 | -24 |
| P3 EW | 2,565 | 2,939 | 115 |
| P3 WWV | 7,693 | 10,949 | 142 |
| Total | 51,293 | 38,028 | -26 |

Source: Welsh Government

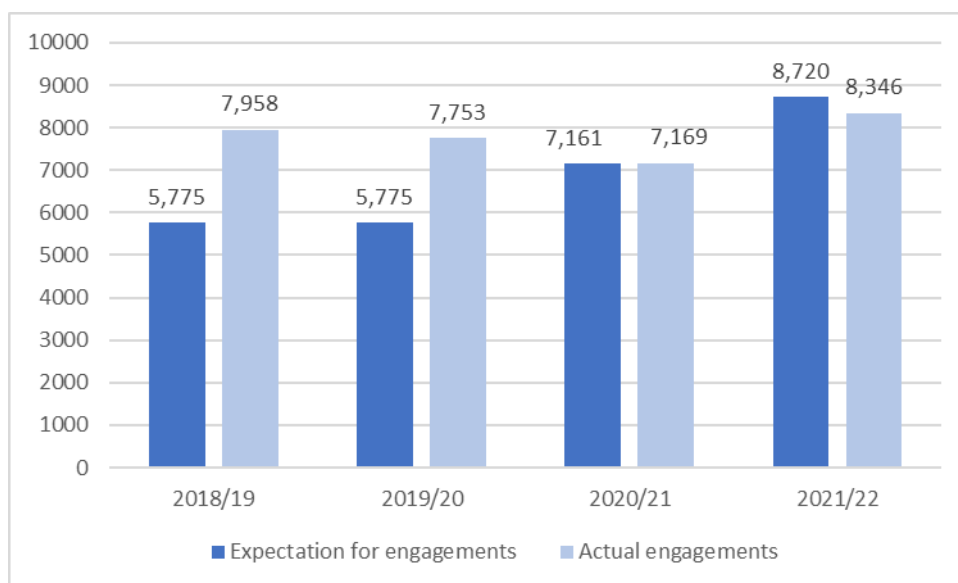
CfW+ performance: engagements

7.7. In the period from April 2018 to the end of February 2022, CfW+ had engaged 30,304 people. As Chart 7.4. illustrates, CfW+'s performance in 2018/19 and 2019/20 was strong, and Welsh Government expectations for engagements and job outcomes were exceeded.⁹⁰ The programme's strong performance has been sustained even in the face of the challenges posed by the expansion of the programme (discussed in paragraph 1.12 and 7.52) and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon potential and current participants and also delivery of the programme (discussed in paragraphs 5.2-5.28). Therefore, although engagements declined somewhat following the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns from March 2020 onwards, meaning the project no longer exceeded expectations, given the challenges it faced,

⁹⁰ As outlined in paragraph 1.16, unlike CfW, CfW+ does not have centrally determined targets. Instead, there was an expectation on the part of the Welsh Government, that each of the 55 CfW+ team would generate at least 30 job entries a year. In order to allow for the expansion of the programme in 202/21 and 2021/22, expectations have been raised in line with the increase in funding (a 24% increase in 2020/21 and a 51% increase in funding in 2021/22 compared to levels in 2018/19 and 2019/20, see paragraph 1.12). This was the increase for the whole programme. However, it should be noted that the increase in each LA funding, may differ from this, because the programme moved to a different allocation formula based on employment deprived people.

matching the higher expectations of CfW+ teams in 2020/21 and 2021/22, was a considerable achievement.

Chart 7.4. CfW+ Welsh Government expectations* and actual programme performance: participant engagements



*This sets the expectations for engagements as midway between the Welsh Government's lower and upper expectations of 4,950-6,600 engagements a year and increases them in line with the increase in funding in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Source: Welsh Government

7.8. In interpreting performance, as Chart 7.4 illustrates CfW+ engagements (and also as outlined below) job outcomes, rose during the pandemic, but it is unclear how much this reflected increased CfW+ capacity (following increased funding) and how much this reflected an increase in need for employment support. Exploring this question further is likely to be a fruitful line of inquiry for the evaluation.

Key factors that effected engagements

7.9. Interviewees identified three overarching factors that determined the number of engagements:

- the size and profile of the local population (and therefore the size of the 'pool' of potential participants);
- the strength of relationships with partners, most notably JCP, and competition from other programmes most notably, Restart, launched in August 2021⁹¹ (discussed in section five, see paragraph 5.4-5.57); and

⁹¹ In addition, unlike other areas, one area specifically identified the impact of Kickstart upon P3 engagements in late 2021 and early 2022.

- the COVID-19 pandemic (also discussed in section five) which both depressed the overall number of engagements⁹², and increased reliance upon JCP as a source of referrals.

- 7.10. In addition to the total number of potential participants in an area, differences in participants' motivations, capabilities and access to opportunities (discussed in section six), which it was felt could differ from area to area, were also considered to be important by some frontline staff and managers in the areas included in the fieldwork. For example, an interviewee described how deprivation was a barrier; as they put it: they were working in what they described as 'really tough areas' that were 'difficult to get into' with populations with high levels of unemployment, economic inactivity and ill-health, with some potential participants who were 'happy with their circumstances' and therefore 'difficult to engage'.
- 7.11. What was described as 'competition' from other employment support programmes (discussed in section five, see paragraphs 5.4-5.57) and eligibility criteria was also felt to limit the size of the 'pool' from which CfW and CfW could recruit. The total number of unemployed or economically inactive adults (or young people) was considerably greater than the programmes' engagement targets. However, in practice, the programme was only able to engage a proportion of them, because some of these adults were, for example ineligible, supported by another programme, or not ready to engage with a programme like CfW or CfW+. As a result, one area reported that the potential 'pool of people within CfW' areas had 'been exhausted over time'.
- 7.12. As a result, several areas which had struggled reported that the targets set for P1 engagements were 'completely unrealistic ... way too high' as one interviewee put it. While, as another described:

'It's the other employment programmes they have the biggest impact it's the sheer number of ESF funded programmes they take all our engagements ... they're taking people who are eligible for CfW they just tell us they're working with these people already....I looked at the figures and we have 260 people that we have given 'permission' to go and work with other employment programmes and

⁹² Although engagements fell, overall it was noted that, for example, in one area that the closure of the hospitality sector helped maintain youth engagement numbers to a degree.

that's probably an undercount so that's 260 that we have lost that has a massive impact.'

- 7.13. As outlined in section four, it was also observed by CfW frontline staff that eligibility criteria for those aged 25 and over, meant they were likely to have more barriers, making them harder to engage. In contrast, the broader eligibility criteria for young people meant they were easier to engage and in one area, staff reported they felt the engagement targets for young people who were NEET may not have been stretching enough and as noted above, when the project was reprofiled, targets for engaging young people who were NEET were raised. Similarly, because CfW+ has broader eligibility criteria than CfW, staff reported that it was easier to engage participants.
- 7.14. As outlined in section four, the qualitative research also identified a heavier reliance upon referrals from JCP in all the areas than anticipated, alongside disappointment that other potential partners were not more fruitful sources. This constriction of the referral pipeline contributed to the CfW under-performance in relation to adults aged 25 and over, Nevertheless, as noted in section four, the partnership with JCP also helped ensure the pipeline to both CfW and CfW+ was not cut off during the pandemic (sustaining the programme during a very challenging period). Interviewees also observed that the reliance upon JCP may have limited the number of economically inactive participants engaged by the programmes, as work coaches concentrated on working with unemployed people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Engagement of participants with complex barriers

- 7.15. The CfW business case identifies that the programme:
- 'will engage with the people furthest away from the labour market (those who don't traditionally engage with mainstream services; i.e. long term unemployed, economic inactive people, who could have one or more complex barriers such as low or no skills, a work limiting health condition, care or childcare responsibilities, are over 54, or from a jobless household) with the aim to support them into employment' (Welsh Government n.d. a., p5).
- 7.16. Table 7.2. outlines the percentages of CfW participants with complex barriers and also those who are disabled and Table 7.3. outlines the percentages of CfW participants with more than one of the following barriers: coming from a jobless household (which is by far the most common barrier), care responsibilities, working limiting health conditions, no qualifications and/or being disabled. It is notable that

only a minority of participants have one barrier (and that most of those the programme works with face multiple potential barriers). This analysis also confirms the findings from qualitative research, discussed in section four and six, that adults aged over 25 (P1s) typically faced more barriers than young people who were NEET (P3s). It also confirms that approaching 90 per cent of all participants faced at least one potentially significant barrier to entering employment.

Table 7.2. Percentage of CfW participants with selected barriers, February 2022

| Type of barrier / Area | All | EWP1 | WWVP1 | EWP3 | WWV3 |
|---|-----------|------|-------|------|------|
| Work limited | 30 | 32 | 40 | 20 | 17 |
| Care and childcare responsibilities | 45 | 51 | 43 | 28 | 19 |
| No qualifications | 22 | 16 | 27 | 10 | 21 |
| From a jobless household | 68 | 79 | 79 | 49 | 51 |
| Homeless or affected by housing exclusion | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| Disabled | 11 | 14 | 13 | 10 | 7 |

Source: Welsh Government

Table 7.3. Percentage of CfW participants with more than one barrier*, February 2022

| | All | EWP1 | WWVP1 | EWP3 | WWVP3 |
|-------------------------|-----|------|-------|------|-------|
| At least one barrier | 86 | 94 | 96 | 66 | 71 |
| At least two barriers | 85 | 94 | 96 | 64 | 70 |
| At least three barriers | 80 | 93 | 92 | 62 | 61 |
| At least four barriers | 74 | 89 | 86 | 53 | 55 |
| At least five barriers | 68 | 79 | 79 | 49 | 51 |

*The barriers considered were those listed in Table 7.1

Source: Welsh Government

7.17. Table 7.4. outlines the percentages of CfW+ participants with different characteristics. It supports the qualitative research discussed in section four and six, where it was reported that in general CfW+ participants had fewer and/or less complex barriers than CfW participants. While this suggests that the programme is able to reach out to a broader group than CfW, this also means it is less targeted upon those with complex barriers. It is also notable that the percentage of disabled CfW+ participants is lower than the estimated proportion of disabled working age adults.⁹³ However, it is also notable that the percentage of CfW and CfW+ participants reporting a Work Limiting Health Condition (WLHC) is considerably higher and given the similarities between the definition of a disability and WLHC, this may indicate some under-reporting of rates of disability.

⁹³ It is difficult to precisely measure the prevalence of disability, and using the definition used in the Annual Population Survey may not be that used when people self-report they have a disability to CfW or CfW+ (meaning direct comparison should be made with care). Nevertheless, an estimate that around 20% of the working age population are disabled seems reasonable (see e.g. [House of Commons Library, 2022b](#)).

Table 7.4. The percentage of CfW and CfW+ participants with selected barriers, CfW data is for the period May 2015 to February 2022; CfW+ data is for the period April 2020-March 2022, compared to the Welsh population

| Characteristics* | % of CfW+ participants | % of CfW participants | Welsh population |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| No qualification | 14 | 22 | 7 |
| Work limited health condition | 13 | 30 | 23** |
| Disabled | 5 | 11 | 22** |
| Care and childcare responsibilities | 20 | 45 | N/A |
| From a jobless household | 42 | 68 | N/A*** |
| Homeless or affected by housing exclusion | 4 | 3 | N/A |

* Because participants can identify more than one barrier, they may for example report both a work limiting health condition and a disability

**Based upon the population aged 16 to 64 identified as disabled in the Annual Population Survey (APS). ([WG, 2022b](#))

*** Data on the number of workless households is collected – but not the proportion of adults living in workless households

Source: Welsh Government ; [Statistics for Wales, 2021b](#)

CfW performance: job outcomes

- 7.18. The number of job outcomes is necessarily constrained by the number of engagements, and in general areas with higher levels of engagements also had higher levels of outcomes. Therefore, performance broadly reflects patterns in engagements, discussed above.
- 7.19. However, although the initial business case identified a ratio of six engagements to one job entry ⁹⁴ (Welsh Government, n.d a. p.54.), in practice, the ratio of engagement to job outcomes has been higher at 2.4. The weaker than anticipated performance in relation to engagements (discussed above) has therefore not constrained job outcome achievements as much as it could have. Indeed, as Table 7.5. illustrates, given the strong performance in the first phase of the programme, the

⁹⁴ With targets reduced by 50% in the first year of operation to allow for establishment. Using historical information from Want to Work, CfW Community Engagement Advisers will have a Job Outcome target of 2 job entries per month and CfW Mentors 1 job entry per month.'

job entry targets for long term unemployed adults and for young people who were NEET were reprofiled and increased in 2019, while job entry targets for economically inactive were cut.

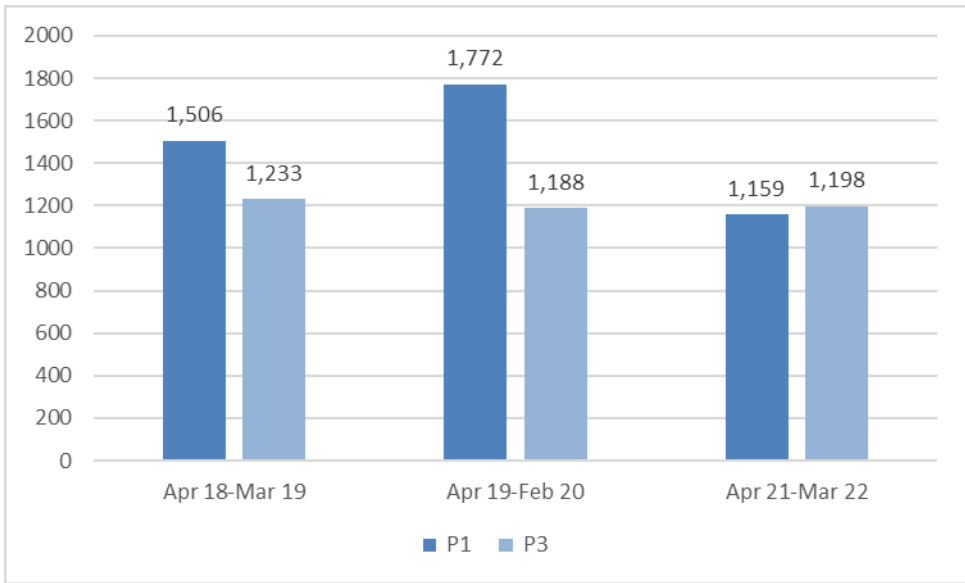
Table 7.5. Reprofiled CfW job entry targets

| Group | Original Target | Revised (reprofiled) target (2019) | % change |
|--------------|------------------------|---|-----------------|
| EI EW | 1,697 | 1,444 | -15 |
| EI WWV | 4,973 | 4,655 | -6 |
| LTU EW | 834 | 939 | 13 |
| LTU WWV | 2,449 | 2,767 | 13 |
| P3 EW | 1,220 | 1,359 | 11 |
| P3 WWV | 4,204 | 5,292 | 26 |
| Total | 15,377 | 16,456 | 7 |

Source: Welsh Government

7.20. As Chart 7.5. illustrates, a decline in P1 job entries is observed, when the pre-pandemic periods of April 2018-March 2019 and April 2019 - February 2020 are compared to the job entries in April 2021-March 2022. However, in contrast, the number of P3 job entries remained fairly stable over this period.

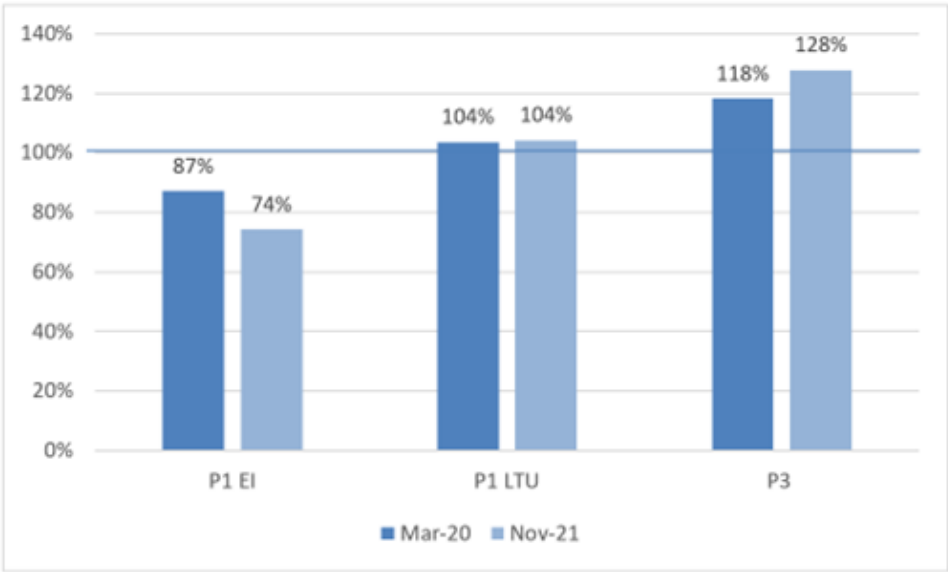
Chart 7.5. The number of CfW job entries in April 2018-March 2019, April 2019-February 2020 and April 2021-March 2022



Source: Welsh Government

7.21. By the end of July 2022 CfW had supported 13,458 people to enter work and as Chart 7.6 illustrates, despite more demanding targets, and the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, performance against job entry targets for Priority 3 has been very strong, and was 128 per cent target in November 2021, with 15 months left to go until the operations end in March 2023. In contrast, programme performance against job entry targets for Priority 1 while fairly good, was weaker, at 84 per cent of profile overall in November 2021, with strong performance in relation to LTU participants helping somewhat offset disappointing outcomes for EI participants.

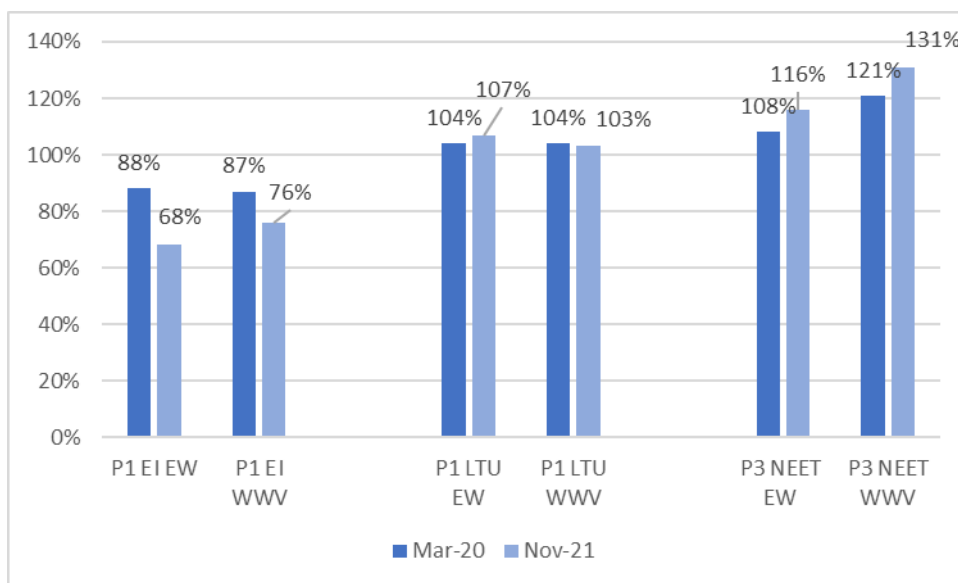
Chart 7.6. CfW cumulative programme performance against job entry targets for Economically Inactive (EI) and Long term Unemployment (LTU) Participants (Priority 1) and Young People who are NEET (Priority 3), March 2020 and November 2021



Source: Welsh Government

7.22. As Chart 7.7 illustrates, in relative terms, CfW performance in both East and West Wales has been broadly comparable, with the somewhat stronger performance in engaging P3 participants in West Wales and the Valleys reflected in higher job entries. The somewhat higher conversion rate in East Wales (40 per cent of P1s, compared to 38 per cent of P1 in West Wales and the Valleys), helped offset somewhat lower levels of engagements in East Wales.

Chart 7.7. CfW performance against job entry targets for Economically Inactive (EI) and Long term Unemployment (LTU) Participants (Priority 1) and Young People who are NEET (Priority 3), in East Wales and West Wales and the Valleys, March 2020 and November 2021



Source: Welsh Government

CfW+ performance: job outcomes

- 7.23. As outlined in Chart 7.8, CfW+ continued to perform strongly even in the face of the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic posed, and although as one programme manager put it, CfW+ job entries ‘took an immediate hit’ when the first lockdown was announced, numbers picked up towards the end of 2020 and into 2021, and the programme continues to exceed expectations. Like CfW, the ratio of engagements to job entries (2.3:1 over the four years of the programme (2018/19-2021/22⁹⁵) has been lower than expected (it was expected to be 3 - 4:1) and very similar to CfW (2.4:1).
- 7.24. In assessing performance, as with the analysis of CfW+ engagements, expectations for job entries have been raised in line with the increase in funding for CfW+ in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

⁹⁵ If the first year of the programme, when job entries were low is excluded (on the basis that there is likely to be a lag between engagement and job entries), the ratio falls to 2:1, with fewer engagements needed for each job entry (this covers the period 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22).

Chart 7.8. Welsh Government expectations and actual performance: CfW+ job entries

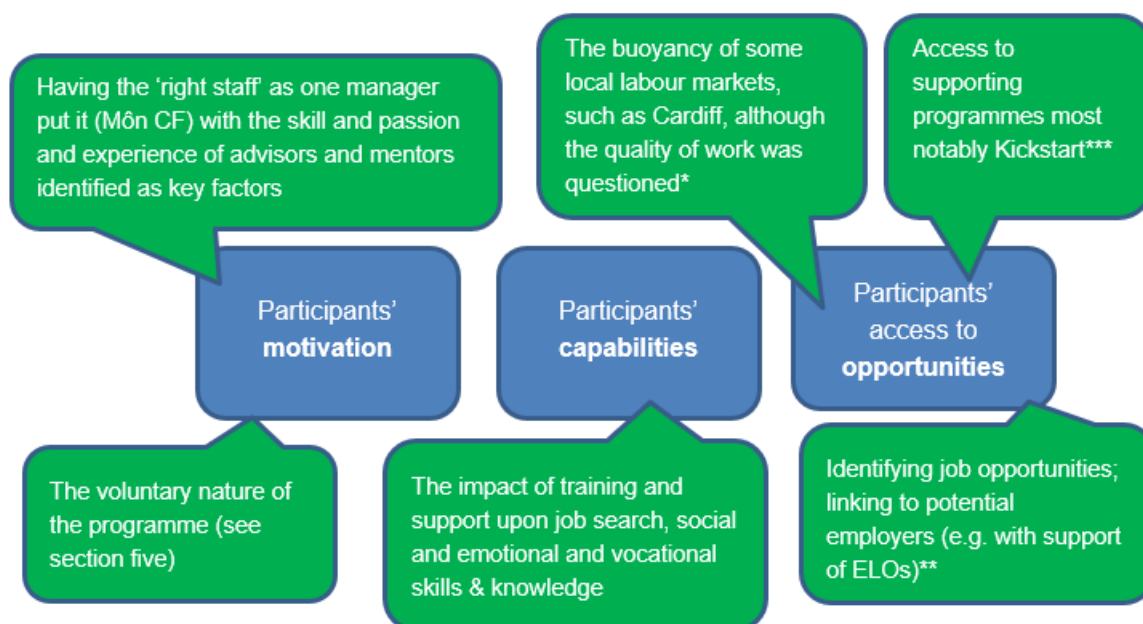


Source: Welsh Government

The key factors that effected job entries

7.25. The strong conversion rate of engagements to job outcomes helped the programmes offset weakness in engagements (outlined above). Factors interviewees identified that contributed to this (in green) are outlined in Figure 7.1. and factors interviewees identified as hindering this (in red) are outlined in Figure 7.2. In addition, as outlined in section four (paragraph 4.31), weakness in CfW or CfW+ teams, could cause particular problems given the small size of teams and reliance upon staff to generate engagement and job entries. For example, managers interviewed during the fieldwork described the impact where staff were sick, could not be replaced, or were felt to underperform. It was also observed that excessive adviser or mentor caseloads, diluted the support they could offer each individual participant (which impacted upon participants' motivation and access to education, training or employment opportunities).

Figure 7.1. Supporting factors that aided progression to employment

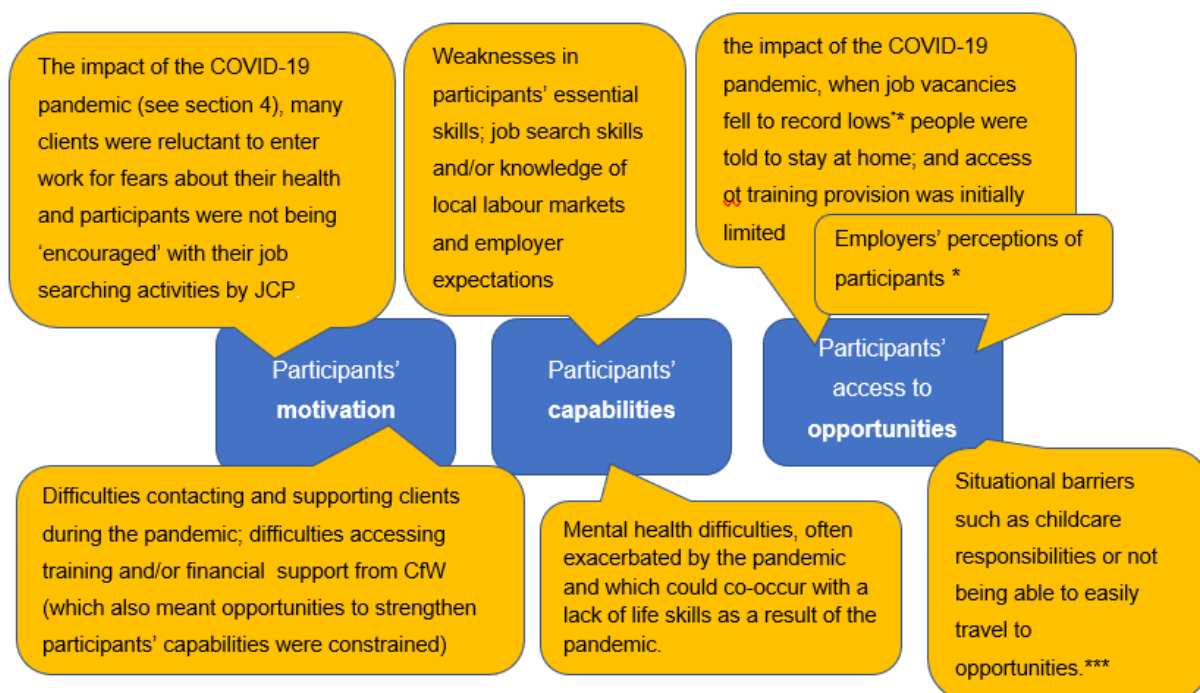


* As a manager in one area put it: 'there does seem to be work out there especially in hospitality and care homes. However, the wages are relatively low and that is an issue.' Similarly, as outlined in section six, as another manager put it 'There are loads of jobs out there at the moment. They may not be the work you want, but there are jobs out there.'

**Links to employers, particularly in one area, where it was reported that taking full advantage of a local Business Support Team linked to the LDB, meant that 'often employers come straight to us because they trust us'.

*** For young people, Kickstart was described as giving them 'them a taste of work and money and independence' as well as skill and experience for their CV, as one staff member put it, providing access to valuable work experience opportunities that could then help them find worth through CfW or CfW+.

Figure 7.2. key constraints upon progression to employment



*These included perceptions that, for example, older people with lengthy periods of unemployment, would not make good employees

** Although as outlined in section five it was noted that even at the height of the pandemic, some participants had gone into construction and care work because as a youth mentor put it, 'those were the jobs that were there', while later others had found work as for example track and trace workers.

*** For example, those in rural or some peripheral urban areas reliant upon public transport to reach job opportunities, often experienced barriers linked to its cost, reliability and/or inconvenience.

CfW and CfW+ job outcomes for different groups

- 7.26. As Tables 7.6 and 7.7. illustrate, employment outcomes differ for different groups in CfW and CfW+. Direct comparisons between CfW and CfW+ should not be made because (a) the time periods differ⁹⁶; (b) the methods for calculating percentages differ for CfW and CfW+⁹⁷; and (c) as outlined in paragraph 7.17, the evidence suggests that overall, CfW+ participants have less complex barriers to employment than CfW participants.
- 7.27. Further analysis of the CfW+ data over the lifetime of the programme also suggests that the period covered by the analysis of CfW+ data (i.e., April 2021-September 2022) was a period in which the proportion of participants entering employment was high, compared to other periods. Therefore, data based upon this period is not likely to be representative of the proportion of participants with different characteristics entering employment over the lifetime of the programme to date (i.e. April 2018-February 2023) and the proportion of CfW+ participants with different characteristics entering employment over the lifetime of the programme is likely to be somewhat lower than the percentages in Table 7.7.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ For example, the CfW+ data does not include data on the mobilisation period, when participants were being engaged, but it was too early for many to progress to employment. It also covers a period when the economy was growing strongly after the pandemic.

⁹⁷ The CfW data is based upon the participant database, and is based upon the percentage of individuals with a particular characteristic who enter employment. Whereas the CfW+ analysis compares the percentage of all participants engaged by the programme with a particular characteristic and the percentage of all participants with that particular characteristic entering work. Given the interval between engagement and outcomes, changes in the composition of participants engaged by the programme, could distort the figures. For example, if the engagement of participants from Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups increased, the percentage of participants from Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups entering employment would fall, until those new participants began entering employment.

⁹⁸ This is based upon a comparison of the percentage of all participants entering employment over the lifetime of the programme (April 2018-February 2022) and the percentage of all participants entering employment during the period covered by this analysis (April 2021-September 2022). Unfortunately, it is not possible to compare the percentage of participants with different characteristics entering employment over the lifetime of the programme and the percentage of participants with different characteristics entering employment during the period covered by this analysis to confirm this.

Table 7.6. the percentage of CfW participants with different characteristics entering employment, May 2015- Feb 2022

| Characteristics | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| Work limiting health conditions | 31 | 47 |
| Disabled | 29 | 44 |
| Long term unemployed | 36 | 49 |
| From a jobless household | 39 | 50 |
| From Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups | 48 | 42 |

Source: Welsh Government CfW programme management information

Table 7.7. the percentage of CfW+ participants with different characteristics⁹⁹ entering employment, April 2021-September 2022

| Characteristics | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| Work limiting health conditions | 44 | 59 |
| Disabled | 39 | 56 |
| From Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups | 50 | 56 |

Source: Welsh Government CfW+ programme management information

7.28. Subject to the caveats outlined above, as might be expected, those groups considered more likely to have complex barriers to employment, such as disabled people, the long term unemployed, and those with a work limiting health condition, were less likely to enter work. This is important given the programme’s aspiration to help those with complex barriers to overcome them and enter employment.

⁹⁹ Data on participants who were long term unemployed or from a jobless household is not available because unlike CfW, there is no CfW+ database of participants that records the full range of both participant characteristics and outcomes.

- 7.29. Rates of employment amongst disabled people (49 per cent) are much lower than employment rates of non-disabled people (82 per cent) ([StatsWales, 2022b](#)) and the programmes have made significant effort to share best practice in supporting these individuals, including establishing a network of disability leads in each delivery teams, and working with Disability Wales, to provide training on the Social Model of Disability to mentors and advisors. Nevertheless, as table 7.5 illustrates, there is still a gap in employment outcomes between disabled and non-disabled people, which is a concern given the programme's aspirations in relation to equality objectives and are discussed further below.
- 7.30. Conversely, overall rates of employment amongst people from Black, Asian or minority ethnic communities (65 per cent) are lower than the white British or Welsh population (74 per cent), although this overall rate disguises marked differences for different ethnic groups ([StatsWales, 2022c](#)). Therefore, the higher rate of CfW participants from Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups entering employment is a strength and may merit further investigation.

Other outcomes

- 7.31. As Table 7.8. illustrates, targets for alternative primary outcomes (i.e. job search or gaining work related certification or qualifications for P1 participants or entering education or training for P3 participants) have not yet been achieved. It is reasonable to infer that this is because engagements have been weaker than anticipated (due in large part of the COVID-19 pandemic) and because strong job outcomes 'crowded out' other outcomes. To the extent to which these other outcomes, were substituted for job outcomes, this can be considered a desirable result (as job outcomes are preferable to alternative primary outcomes, given the aims of CfW to reduce poverty by helping people into work).

Table 7.8. Outcomes for CfW participants upon leaving the programme (May 2015 - February 2022).

| Outcome upon leaving | EW P1 Profile | EW P1 Actual | WWV P1 Profile | WWV P1 actual | EW P3 Profile | EW P3 Actual | WWV P3 Profile | WWV P3 Actual |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| Job Search* | 533 | 218 | 1,588 | 1,066 | - | 82 | - | 419 |
| Entering education/training | - | 90 | - | 104 | 169 | 193 | 246 | 416 |
| Qualification gained | - | 332 | - | 1083 | - | 244 | - | 747 |
| Work relevant certification | - | 874 | - | 3,158 | - | 471 | - | 2,181 |
| <i>Qualification + certification</i> | <i>1,926</i> | <i>1,206</i> | <i>5,713</i> | <i>4,241</i> | <i>-</i> | <i>715</i> | | <i>2,928</i> |

*EI participants only

Source: Welsh Government

Local variation

7.32. The focus of this section is upon the overall performance of the two programmes, but it is important to note that there is a large variation in performance between areas and in some areas, between different teams in the same LA area. Qualitative research suggests that local factors, such as differences in co-ordination between different employment support services (which may be easier where demand is more closely matched to capacity) discussed in section five (see paragraphs 5.4-5.57), and differences in the size and profile of the population teams cover, discussed above, may help explain differences in the relative performance (against targets) of different teams. This will be further explored through Qualitative Comparative Analysis¹⁰⁰ in the next stage of the evaluation.

¹⁰⁰ The purpose of a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is to identify the contribution of different conditions (or factors) to an outcome of interest, in this case the performance of CfW and CfW+ teams (see e.g. [White and Phillips, 2012](#) and [Ragin, 1987](#)). It aims to identify which sets of conditions are associated with particular outcomes and it enables hypotheses to be tested, for example: that engagements are harder in large sparsely populated local authorities; that engagements are harder in areas with low levels of unemployment and economic inactivity; and that it may be harder to translate engagements into job outcomes in areas of high levels of unemployment.

Activity to address CfW's cross cutting themes

7.33. Much of the activity relating to CfW's cross cutting themes (CCTs) was described by frontline staff in the areas included in the fieldwork as 'embedded into the programme's way of working' as one interviewee put it, and reflected the clients they were working with (who were, for example, often in poverty). Similarly, as a manager put it, 'we do it without thinking' (although they explained that this activity was also recorded and reported). In addition, as outlined below, specific actions in relation to engaging and supporting disabled people; gender mainstreaming and to a lesser degree, engaging Black, Asian or minority ethnic participants, were reported. One area also highlighted activity to support those with gender identity issues. Across all the areas, in general, the emphasis appeared to be more upon how they supported these groups, rather than how they actively reached out to engage people from these groups.

Equal opportunities

7.34. The CfW business case identified the importance of 'gender mainstreaming' and promoting 'equal opportunities', for, for example those 'facing deprivation, disability and ethnic minorities' (Welsh Government, n.d. a , p.14). The strategy (outlined in the business case) includes:

- targeted support for those who are disadvantaged such as disabled people and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds;
- challenging traditional employment roles and occupational segregation by increasing the numbers of women and men in training or retraining in non-traditional areas; and
- support around childcare.

Actions to support disabled people

7.35. In total, 11 per cent of CfW participants and seven per cent of CfW+ participants were disabled individuals. As a youth mentor in one area observed many disabilities – or impairments¹⁰¹ are 'hidden', such as neurodiversity and mental health

¹⁰¹ An impairment is 'the thing about a person which is different' while disability describes 'the things which society/the environment/policy/ practice does to a person with an impairment which disadvantages them'. The term 'hidden impairments' is therefore preferable to 'hidden disability' as it reflects the social rather than medical model of disability ([WG, 2020d](#), p.26)

difficulties¹⁰², meaning staff awareness and understanding of different impairments was an important element of effective support. Several areas reported specific activities to support disabled people, most notably by working with partners with expertise in this area. In addition:

- in one area, staff reported that the LDB has a Disability Working Group and a mentor described how ‘becoming a Disability Lead was an eye opener’, they also explained that the organisation has attained the level 2 Disability Confident kite mark and enabled them ‘to employ a more diverse approach’;
- in one area staff reported tailoring marketing, by for example, including images of disabled people, to help reach and engage with disabled people; and
- staff in one area, reported working with Business Wales’ disability employment manager to identify employers that are equipped/minded to take-on people with disabilities, including learning difficulties.

7.36. Staff with lived experience of impairments were also seen as valuable. For example:

- one area reported that they have a deaf CfW mentor and staff have all had British Sign Language (BSL) awareness training; and
- another area reported that one of their officers is partially deaf and another has knowledge and skills in dyslexia and additional needs, which helped them identify what was and what was not working well.

Actions to support people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups

7.37. As outlined above, CfW, and to a lesser degree CfW+, has performed strongly in terms of employment outcomes for people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. One area in particular reported putting on events and activities for people from these communities that aim to get clients into non-traditional roles, such as civil service jobs and administrative jobs in the NHS. They also reported upon activities to help refugee medics get into NHS doctoring jobs. While a number of CfW and CfW+ teams cover areas, particularly in cities like Newport, Swansea and Wrexham, with large Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, the selection of teams included in the fieldwork meant that few areas with large Black, Asian and minority ethnic

¹⁰² Mental health difficulties are a disability under the equality act when they have a long-term effect on an individual’s normal day-to-day activity.

communities were included in the fieldwork, and this may help explain why activity in support of this did not feature more.

Actions to promote gender mainstreaming

- 7.38. Several areas highlighted strategies to challenge gender segregation, by, as they most commonly described, treating people equally. For example an interviewee in one area explained that, 'we treat everybody the same whatever that dream is we will help them to find it. We had a female HGV driver, a male hairdresser, a woman in construction'. Although equal treatment is important, more pro-active action is likely to be required to challenge gender segregation, and as outlined below, gender mainstreaming goes deeper than equal treatment. A small number of examples were given by staff of actively promoting non-traditional roles. For example, staff in one area reported putting on events and activities at the hub, showcasing women working in non-traditional sectors. Childcare was also considered and addressed as a barrier, although as noted in sections two and four, for those whose main barrier was childcare, PaCE will often have been a more appropriate programme to support them.
- 7.39. The evaluation of PaCE (Welsh Government, 2023b), and the qualitative data collected through interviews with frontline CfW and CFW+ staff and managers suggests that while the cost of childcare can be an important barrier, and one that can be difficult for employment programmes to address, given the costs of paying for childcare, the nature of childcare barriers are more nuanced than first anticipated. For example, as the evaluation of PaCE identifies:

'whilst childcare is seen by participants as a big issue when they first become involved in PaCE, this often reflects a lack of knowledge of the support that is available. Individuals are overwhelmed by the prospect of simultaneously trying to hold down a job, manage financially and look after their children. On top of that, it is difficult to get to grips with precisely what kind of childcare is needed in the abstract, without first being clear about working hours and the costs of childcare. In essence, the way in which childcare acts as a barrier to employment is more complex than simply the availability or affordability of formal childcare. In order for individuals to feel able to use formal childcare (in any of the myriad ways it is used), they first need to understand what is available, how it works, how much it costs, what help can be accessed to meet those costs, how that help

can be accessed and how to go about sorting things out with childcare providers.’
(Welsh Government, forthcoming).

Tackling poverty and social exclusion

- 7.40. The CfW business case identifies tackling poverty and social exclusion as ‘central’ to CfW, ‘by engaging with those furthest from the labour market and who traditionally have avoided engaging with mainstream services either through lack of services, access or desire’ (Welsh Government, n.d. a., p.7). Similarly reducing poverty by targeting individuals who are, or are at risk of experiencing poverty, is the key aim of CfW+. Moreover, CfW+ has a broader remit than CfW, and can, for example, support those experiencing in work poverty. This ethos was consistently voiced by interviewees; for example as staff in one area put it, both programmes as a whole are about tackling poverty and exclusion – ‘it’s about getting people into work’.

Sustainable development

- 7.41. The CfW business case identifies ‘ensuring staff are fully trained on sustainability and understand the role they play’ in order to ‘minimise the operation’s carbon footprint’ through for example, more sustainable travel and reduce waste and increase recycling (Welsh Government, n.d. a. p.16). However, there was little evidence of awareness or activities to promote sustainable development in the areas included in the fieldwork. For example, in one area, the term ‘sustainable development’ did not resonate with staff in relation to their jobs and in another area, staff described promoting job opportunities in green industries, when asked, rather than minimising the operation’s own carbon footprint.

Contribution to Welsh Government equality objectives and wellbeing goals

- 7.42. As the CfW business case identifies, by ‘engaging participants from the most deprived communities with the aim of helping them into work, CfW will provide a significant contribution to the Well-being of Future Generations Act’s long term goals of providing prosperous, resilient, healthier and more cohesive communities’ (Welsh Government n.d. a. p.16). CfW+ can be expected to make similar contributions.
- 7.43. As outlined above, by contributing to reductions in unemployment and/or increasing participation in education or training, particularly amongst socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and communities, the programmes makes important direct contributions to a number of the Welsh Government’s equality goals, such as ‘elimination of inequality caused by poverty’; and its wellbeing goals, most notably, a

‘more prosperous’ and a ‘more equal Wales’ ([WG, 2020a](#)). Increasing employment and participation in education or training is also likely to contribute to goals such as a ‘healthier Wales’ and a ‘Wales of cohesive communities that are resilient, fair and equal’ (cf. [Schuller, 2017](#); [What Works Wellbeing, 2017](#)). In addition, as part of the Welsh Government’s anti-racism plan ([WG, 2023a](#)), all Welsh Government’s employment programmes (such as CfW and CfW+) are committed to increasing participation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals.

7.44. The magnitude of the programmes’ contribution to realising these goals will depend upon two key factors:

- the effectiveness of the programmes in engaging people who are unemployed or economically inactive, and supporting them into employment, education or training (and as outlined above the programme has performed fairly strongly in terms of job outcomes); and
- the quality of employment, education or training into which participants progress, as for example, the gains in terms of reduction of financial poverty and social exclusion, will depend upon factors like rates of pay, job security and opportunities for progression (with bigger gains associated with higher quality work), where the qualitative feedback from interviews suggests that the evidence of programme effectiveness is more mixed.

7.45. In addition, through the CCT (such as the focus upon gender mainstreaming) for CfW and Welsh Government equalities targets for CfW and CfW+ (such as increasing the number of disabled participants), the programmes make important contributions to a number of other Welsh Government’s equality goals such as ‘Wales is a world leader for gender equality’ and ensuring that ‘the needs and rights of people who share protected characteristics are at the forefront of the design and delivery of all devolved public services in Wales’ ([WG, 2020a](#)).

7.46. Programme design and delivery is also an important factor that will have shaped the programmes’ impact and, for example, the limitations of activity in these areas, outlined above, are likely to have constrained the impact. In a similar vein, the differences in emphasis suggested by the fieldwork (outlined above), in how the programmes have sought to actively reach out to engage different groups of people with protected characteristics, such as disabled people (where more proactive action was identified) and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (where

less proactive action to reach out and engage, was identified), suggests the programmes' contribution to achieving equality goals in relation to different groups, will have been uneven.

The programmes' Welsh language offer

- 7.47. CfW and CfW+ staff in all the areas included in the fieldwork reported that they offered participants the choice of using English or Welsh. It was reported that in the areas included in the fieldwork, prospective participants were asked about their language preferences, typically through enrolment forms and, Welsh speaking staff would be allocated these clients, when required. However, in the areas included in the fieldwork, English appeared to be the default language¹⁰³ and this may have deferred people from expressing a preference for Welsh.
- 7.48. The proportion of CfW participants reporting a preference for Welsh, is one per cent, while for CfW+ it was two per cent, rates which are both much lower than the general population.¹⁰⁴ Although data from the 1990s suggests that overall unemployment rates amongst Welsh speakers were lower than amongst English speakers ([WG, 2020b](#)) (suggesting we would expect fewer Welsh speakers to seek support from CfW or CfW+), this is unlikely to explain all the difference observed in CfW and CfW+ participants' language preferences.¹⁰⁵ It is possible (but conjecture) that this may reflect a lack of confidence on the part of participants whose language preference would be Welsh on expressing this, or a fear that it will be more difficult to access services in Welsh, when services' default language is English (see e.g. [CAB, 2015](#)).

Programme funding, expenditure, and efficiency

Programme expenditure

- 7.49. For CfW, the programme's expenditure is reported to be within one per cent of total programme profile, although there are reported (by interviewees) to be variations across different budget headings. For example while expenditure on items like training, the Barriers Fund and travel and subsistence (T&S) fell during the

¹⁰³ It was not possible to explore this in Ceredigion and it should be noted that the fieldwork did not cover areas like Gwynedd, where it is more likely that Welsh would be the default language.

¹⁰⁴ Data on language preference is not available, but if ability to speak Welsh is used as a proxy, albeit one that is likely to over-estimate language preference, as not all who can speak Welsh would necessarily choose Welsh as their language preference, this suggests around 19% of the population aged 16 and over were able to speak Welsh ([Welsh Government, 2019b](#)).

¹⁰⁵ Comparable data on the number of CfW+ participants identifying Welsh as their preferred language is not collected by the programme.

pandemic, this was mitigated by the high proportion of costs allocated to salaries, which the EU agreed could continue to be paid throughout the pandemic. In response, the programme has been reprofiled financially to increase the budget for salaries.

- 7.50. In contrast CfW+ was underspending against its 2020/21 allocation, and the delays in recruiting new staff (which caused the underspend) will inevitably have limited the impact of the planned expansion of CfW+ in anticipation of what was forecast to be a large rise in unemployment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (discussed in section five). This was reported by strategic managers to reflect delays in getting grant approval letters out to LAs due to Welsh Government's budget setting processes and the time needed to recruit staff (and establish larger services) in response to the additional allocation of funding in 2020/21 and 2021/22. In addition, unlike CfW, which is based upon multi-year 'grant' awards, under or over-spends in the CfW+ programme cannot be moved between financial years, creating a degree of inflexibility in the programme's ability to respond to challenges and opportunities.

Programme efficiency and cost effectiveness

- 7.51. The CfW unit cost per job outcome, was forecast to be £6,475.71 (Welsh Government n.d.a), as the business case identifies, 'this compares favourably with other programmes seeking to provide employment support for the long term unemployed and economically inactive'. These varied from a low of £4,650 per job outcome for the Work Programme, to £6,000 for Jobs Growth Wales, and £6,500 for Future Jobs Fund.¹⁰⁶ The cost of CfW+, which is a 'leaner' programme, have been considerably lower and the per job outcome for CfW+ in 2020/21 stood at £3,368, almost half the cost per job of £6,478 for CfW.¹⁰⁷ It is thought (by CfW+ staff) that this is primarily due to the slimmer management, and simpler governance structure of CfW+ outlined in section four (see paragraphs 4.62-4.66).
- 7.52. Given the economic, social and personal benefits associated with participation in employment, education or training (see e.g. [Welsh Government, 2017a](#); [Schuller, 2017](#)) the impact upon participants of entering employment, education or training is

¹⁰⁶ The business case identifies that 'Financial incentives per participant for JSA customers aged 25+ and that are seriously disadvantaged in the labour market, including some who have recently received incapacity benefits are recorded as totalling £6,600 per participant.' And that 'Financial incentives per participant for Employment Support Allowance customers aged 25+ and who are required to attend, and Support Group, and have recently received incapacity benefits are recorded as totalling £13,700 per participant.' (Welsh Government n.d)

¹⁰⁷ These figures are based upon total programme costs divided by number of job outcomes, discounting underspend. They also do not allow for CfW+ funding which supports CfW.

likely to be much greater than the impact of participation in the programme, which does not lead to one of these outcomes. Therefore, the main measure of programme effectiveness is the number of people entering employment, education or training and programme efficiency, in terms of the cost of generating each outcome, will have been boosted by the high conversion rate of engagements into outcomes.

7.53. Those designing and delivering the programmes had to choose how much resource to devote to generating engagements and how much to devote to converting engagements into outcomes. Provided that the programmes are able to generate enough engagements to achieve their outcome targets, in general, allocating greater resources to converting engagements to outcomes, than to generating more engagements, will have been more efficient. However, where (as the field work suggests was the case) this meant that targets for engaging under-represented groups, such as disabled people, were not met, this would not be an efficient approach. The precise distribution of the costs of engaging participants and converting those engagements into outcomes is not known. However, as the bulk of programme costs are allocated to staff salaries, and fieldwork suggests the bulk of frontline staff time is allocated to supporting, rather than engaging participants, it is reasonable to conclude that the bulk of costs are related to support rather than engagements.

7.54. In relation to the efficiency of the support model, the fieldwork suggests that:

- as section five outlines, the efficiency of support has been increased by moves to deliver more support online or by phone (although as noted a blended model of support is appropriate);
- as section four outlines, the bureaucracy associated with accessing the CfW Barriers Fund has probably reduced take up, which will have reduced expenditure (and costs), but which also creates additional costs in terms of staff time. Conversely, the accessibility of the CfW+ Barriers Fund is likely to have had the opposite effect. If the effect of this inaccessibility, is to prevent an outcome being generated, this would be a false economy. The fieldwork suggests frustration with the bureaucracy and inaccessibility of the CfW barriers fund, but few examples where it prevented an outcome being generated;

- similarly, the difficulties accessing training via ACT (for CfW) outlined in section four, has probably reduced the take up of training. This will have reduced expenditure (and costs). However, where, as was sometimes suggested by interviewees, the impact of a participant not being able to access training, is to prevent a job entry being generated, this would be a false economy (assuming the benefits of the job entry outweighed the cost of training). As noted in section four, frontline staff also perceived that the cost of training delivered through CfW's procured training model could be more costly than CfW+'s market model, and that it was also less responsive and could mean participants had to travel further to access training. A thorough review of the costs and benefits of the two systems is planned to inform future employability programmes. This could also consider the relative cost effectiveness of online, blended and face to face delivery of training.

7.55. Finally it is worth noting that the 'leaner' CfW+ management model, aided in part by not needing to comply with ESF rules and regulations, is likely to have increased efficiency further (compared to CfW) and is reflected in the much lower cost per job achieved by CfW+ (see paragraph 7.53). However, it is important to note that CfW+ has been able to benefit from approaches and structures developed and paid for by CfW. Equally, elements of CfW delivery are underpinned by CfW+ expenditure. Therefore, a direct comparison of costs between the two programmes is somewhat misleading.

8. Conclusions

Introduction

8.1. In this section we consider:

- the theory of change and delivery of CfW and CfW+;
- the impact of external factors, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic;
- the importance of considering participants' motivations, access to opportunities, capabilities and behaviours;
- the effectiveness of the programmes in contributing to Welsh Government and EU objectives; and
- reflections on the CfW and CfW+ models and implications for future employability programmes.

The theory of change and delivery of CfW and CfW+

8.2. As section four illustrates, the theory of change for CfW and CfW+ was similar, although CfW+ had greater flexibility in who it could support, how it supported them and how it reported on this. This means that a single theory of change for both programmes is appropriate.

8.3. As sections four, five and seven outline, the programmes were largely implemented as planned, and the process – the pathways participants followed (triage, support, access to training, work placements and/or volunteering opportunities) - broadly reflected that envisaged in the programmes' original theory of change.

8.4. Despite working in similar ways, with essentially the same theory of change, CfW+ exceeded expectations while, in contrast, CfW fell short of expectations, particularly in relation to engagements. Therefore, to fully explain why CfW has sometimes fallen short of its targets, while CfW+ exceeded them, there is a need to consider what was not considered (or anticipated) in the programmes' original theory of change. In particular, the qualitative research identifies that:

- the closure of the Communities First programme somewhat undermined, CfW's community based delivery model, and later and more significantly, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, severely constrained CfW's community based delivery model. The programmes' community base proved valuable in helping create a more informal and welcoming atmosphere than JCP

premises (which aided initial and sustained engagement with the programme), but did not prove as effective as anticipated in supporting direct recruitment to the programme; and

- most fundamentally the referral pipeline from partners proved less diverse (with greater reliance upon JCP than anticipated) and less productive than anticipated (with smaller numbers referred, or directly recruited, than anticipated). In large part, as outlined below, this was due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this was not the only reason, and as community based programmes, both direct recruitment, and the cultivation of relationships with local partners (other than JCP) who could help refer people to the programmes, was weaker than anticipated.

8.5. However, because these factors also affected CfW+, although they help explain CfW's weaker than expected performance in terms of engagements, they do not explain the relative difference in performance between CfW and CfW+.

8.6. The evidence suggests that two other factors help explain the difference in performance between the two programmes:

- CfW+'s benefitted from more flexible eligibility criteria, which meant the programme was open to larger numbers of potential participants,¹⁰⁸, across larger geographical areas. Although this created challenges, most notably in covering large rural areas, overall, it made it easier to engage participants, even allowing for the 'priority' given to CfW for those prospective participants eligible for CfW¹⁰⁹
- however, these two factors do not appear to explain all the difference. In comparing the two programmes, it is also important to note that the expectations for CfW+, in terms of engagements, were lower than those for

¹⁰⁸ Historical data (from 2012) on CF areas suggests there were around 195,000 economically inactive people of working age and 54,800 unemployed people in CF areas, compared to 470,600 economically inactive people of working age and 29,000 unemployed people in non CF areas (source: [StatsWales](#)). Because it has generally proven harder to recruit economically inactive people, the smaller number of unemployed people in non CF areas may be important, but as amongst adults aged 25 and over, roughly half of the participants were economically inactive and half were long term unemployed, the effect of this should have been offset by the much larger number of economically inactive people of working age in non CF areas.

¹⁰⁹ If someone is eligible for CfW they will typically be referred to CfW rather than CfW+.

CfW, and this helps explain much of the difference in each programmes' performance against Welsh Government expectations.¹¹⁰

- 8.7. In contrast to engagements, job outcomes for both programmes were stronger than anticipated (or expected), despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrating the effectiveness of the programmes' support model.¹¹¹ In particular, the flexible, person-centred ethos of the approach taken was a key strength of the programmes. It enabled CfW and CfW+ advisers and/or mentors, to provide:
- practical support to strengthen people's capabilities, such as help with job searching and applications, access to training, work placements and/or volunteering, referral to partners, financial support, and advice on how to overcome potential situational barriers such as caring responsibilities or the need to travel to work by public transport; and
 - emotional support, to motivate and empower participants to apply for jobs, and in a small number of cases, to sustain employment.
- 8.8. Nevertheless, the qualitative research also identifies that elements of the CfW programme model such as Barriers Fund and to a lesser degree the procured training model, were not as flexible as their equivalents in CfW+ and therefore not as responsive or effective as anticipated.
- 8.9. The voluntary nature of the programmes was also important. It helped strengthen CfW and CfW+ advisers' and/or mentors' relationships with participants and probably meant that overall, participants were more motivated to find work than those on mandated programmes. Although the fieldwork suggests that a degree of soft conditionality from JCP helped increase engagements from a cohort who were perhaps initially at least less motivated to find work.
- 8.10. The partnership between the Welsh Government, DWP and LDBs (local authorities or CVCs) is one of the key innovations of CfW and was critical to the programme, particularly during the pandemic, as it helped sustain referrals. However, cultural and

¹¹⁰ As outlined in paragraph 1.16, the expectation was that each CfW+ delivery team would generate around 90-120 engagements a year. This was based upon a higher conversion rate of 3-4 engagements for each job entry, compared to CfW, which assumed 6 engagements for each job entry. Because the ratio of engagements to job entries was lower, this meant that Welsh Government expectations for CfW+, in terms of engagements, were lower, compared to CfW, as CfW+ was expected to need fewer engagements to generate each job entry.

¹¹¹ The ratio of engagements to job entries for both programmes was very similar (2.4:1 for CfW and 2.3:1 for CfW+) and as outlined above, this ratio was lower than expected, as fewer than expected engagements were required to generate each job entry.

organisational differences between the DWP and LDBs, and/or competition between DWP and LDB teams, particularly where areas were struggling to achieve targets, have sometimes hampered team working at an operational level.

- 8.11. Partnerships between the programmes and other partners have been important, as sources of referrals and/or support (including those programmes, CfW and CfW+ refer participants on to). Nevertheless, anticipated links with some partners, such as GPs have not materialised to the extent anticipated, and competition with other employment support programmes, most notably Restart, has caused tensions and is felt to have suppressed engagements.
- 8.12. Importantly, the fieldwork suggests that the problems caused by the cultural and organisational differences between DWP and LDB teams and employability programmes' overlapping eligibility criteria, have been sharply exacerbated in areas where the demand for employment support appears to be less than the capacity of employment support services. This meant that DWP and LDB staff and different programmes struggled to recruit enough participants to achieve their targets and felt they were competing for participants.
- 8.13. Finally, in considering the programmes, it is important to note that the initial expectations for CfW+ to be a modest programme intended to support CfW by helping backfill the infrastructure lost when CF closed and extend employment support to those not eligible for CfW, have been surpassed. In terms of scale, CfW+ is comparable to CfW, CfW+ teams have exceeded Welsh Government expectations, particularly in relation to job entries, and as outlined below, the approach it has pioneered, is in many ways more flexible, responsive and efficient than CfW's.

The impact of the pandemic

- 8.14. The COVID-19 pandemic was the biggest shock experienced by the programmes. It affected both programme delivery and participants' motivation, capabilities, and access to opportunities.
- 8.15. The move to working online, or by phone, from home rather than face to face from community venues impacted both upon engagements and the support advisers or mentors could provide, and was seen as a particular challenge, particularly in relation to those with more complex barriers; as one interviewee put it 'community based one-to-one is what makes the programmes work well'. Both CfW and CfW+ initially

experienced a drop in engagements during the two lockdown periods but levels recovered afterwards.

8.16. The COVID-19 pandemic and policy responses like lockdown and the suspension of claimant commitments, effected participants' motivation and capabilities, access to opportunities and behaviours. For example:

- it demotivated many, who were fearful and demoralised given the collapse in job vacancies and/or who no longer felt the pressure to find work, although it also motivated small numbers who lost their jobs during the pandemic;
- it enhanced the importance of capabilities such as digital literacy and the ability to engage with support and job search activity online, and those who lacked this struggled;
- it limited people's access to opportunities, such as training, volunteering or work placements which could increase their employability, as opportunities were initially suspended, and some people's caring responsibilities increased, and also their access to job opportunities (given the collapse in job vacancies); and
- many participants' behaviour changed (they were less active in searching for work or engaging in activities like training, which could increase their employability).

8.17. Arguably the impact of the pandemic upon participants was bigger than the impact upon programme delivery, given what was reported to have been effective management and delivery during a very challenging time. The programme was able to move to deliver support remotely, but both engagements and job outcomes fell, due to the impact upon participants.

8.18. Some support was provided by phone or text before the pandemic, and the pandemic accelerated the delivery of triage, support and training remotely. For some participants, this is a more efficient, and less commonly, a more effective model (in those cases where clients responded better to remote support) and interviewees concluded that a flexible, person centred, blended model of support is the future.

Participants' motivations, access to opportunities, capabilities, and behaviours

8.19. The fieldwork illustrates the importance of considering participants' motivations, capabilities, and access to opportunities. For example:

- welfare reforms which have increased the financial benefits of moving into work, but also in some cases, cut people's incomes, may motivate participants, but if they lack the capability to search for, apply for and/or sustain work, they can simply increase people's poverty;
- the value of providing access to opportunities, such as training or work-placements, is enhanced, when underpinned by action to strengthen people's motivation and their capability to search for and apply for work (as both CfW and CfW+ do); and
- as the complexity of a potential participants barriers increased (e.g. as a result of constraints upon their capability to effectively search for, or take up work, and/or to access employment opportunities) their motivation to engage with voluntary (non-mandated) programmes like CfW and CfW+ tended to decline. This could be exacerbated by dispositional barriers, such as a belief they would be no better off financially in work, and helped explain why young people who were NEET (who generally faced fewer barriers) were generally considered easier to engage than adults aged 25 and over. This may also have contributed to the greater than anticipated reliance upon JCP as a source of referrals. Participants referred by JCP, were almost certainly engaged with JCP and in many cases, likely to be required to be actively seeking work, and therefore more likely to also be open to, or interested in seeking support finding work from projects like CfW and CfW+, than those not engaged with JCP.

8.20. Effective outreach and engagement, with for example those who are economically inactive, will be crucial for future employment support programmes (IES, 2021). The experience of CfW and CfW+ highlights the ways in which a community base and community links, coupled with 'soft conditionality' from JCP, can help engage those who are motivated – or open to be motivated by persuasion – enabling the programme to strengthen their motivation, and also their capabilities and access to opportunities. Nevertheless, the heavy reliance upon JCP as a source of referrals, suggests more effort may be required in future employability programmes to reach out to engage groups such as those who are economically inactive, and also other groups such as disabled people, who are under-represented in the programmes. The role that those who are known and trusted by those who are long term unemployed, economically inactive, or not in employment, education or training, can play in

introducing them to employment support programmes, like CfW and CfW+, is likely to be important here.

The effectiveness of the programmes in contributing to key Welsh Government and EU objectives

- 8.21. The programmes' stronger than anticipated performance in converting engagements into job outcomes has helped offset the impact of CfW's disappointing performance in relation to engagements, and the drop in CfW+ engagements during the pandemic, and means the programmes are likely to have made important contributions to reducing poverty. However, concerns about the quality of work, and in-work poverty, mean the impact is probably not as great as it could have been. The impact of the programmes will be explored further in the final report.
- 8.22. The programmes also make important contributions to Welsh Government equality objectives, such as reducing inequalities linked to people's gender, ethnicity or disabilities. However, differences in the degree to which the programmes have targeted work with different groups is likely to mean the impact of the programmes upon different groups has been uneven.

Reflections on the CfW and CfW+ models and future employability programmes

- 8.23. CfW and CfW+ have similar models and approaches. The main difference is the greater flexibility CfW+ has in who it works with (given more flexible eligibility criteria), how it supports them (most notably the greater accessibility and responsiveness of training and the Barriers Fund) and how it records this (as it is not required to comply with EU rules). The combination of greater flexibility and less bureaucracy, was widely reported to make the CfW+ programme:
- more accessible and more open; in particular, there was little support amongst frontline staff for restricting eligibility as much as CfW does, and for example it was reported that delaying access, by requiring adults aged 25 and over to be out of work for 12 months or more (or to be economically

inactive), was contrasted negatively with more flexible criteria for those aged 16-25 or for CfW+;¹¹²

- more responsive to, and therefore more effective and/or swifter at meeting the needs and aspirations of participants; for example, as one interviewee put it: ‘if you want something to happen with CfW+, you can make it happen’, whereas a delivery manager put it, with CfW, the programme is ‘so complex. Even now the staff still have to think [can I do this? How can I do this?];’
- more efficient, given less paperwork/bureaucracy and greater flexibility around training (which it was felt by delivery managers, advisers and mentors, offered better value for money than CfW’s procured training model¹¹³); and
- more resilient and better able to respond to programme wide shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic, illustrated by the way the programme could be expanded, in response to forecasts of a large rise in unemployment, and innovations such as the Chromebook programme, introduced, given the way the COVID-19 pandemic accentuated the impact of digital exclusion.

8.24. Therefore, the qualitative research suggests a clear preference for the CfW+ model amongst most of those interviewed. For example as one interviewee put it, CfW+ is ‘a funding model that’s worked. The flexibility of CfW+ is brilliant and responding to people in that way is amazing. That is the bedrock of where we need to be. The flexibility helps so much’. In addition, it is important to note that the cost per job outcome for CfW+ (£3,368) in 2020/21 was almost half the cost per job outcome for CfW (£6,476).

8.25. However, there are elements of the CfW+ model that raise questions about future employability programmes, which were either underpinned by CfW, or that were seen as less effective than their equivalents in CfW. For example:

- the openness of CfW+ raises questions about targeting – as both the qualitative and quantitative data suggests that CfW works with more adults

¹¹² These eligibility criteria for those aged 25+ were felt to hamper engagements and could mean that the negative impacts of long term unemployment upon people’s motivation, capabilities and access to opportunities, become more entrenched, and therefore more costly and slower to address. It was also felt that CfW’s eligibility criteria for adults aged 25+ could disadvantage those who entered work, but were unable to sustain it or those suffering from in work poverty.

¹¹³ This data is anecdotal, and further analysis of the relative costs of a centrally vs locally procured model is warranted

aged 25 and over with more complex barriers (whose needs are therefore greater) than CfW+ does - and the best use of scarce resources;

- CfW+ was also able to 'piggyback' upon the CfW programme, and benefit from, for example the close links between CfW and JCP and the guidance and approaches pioneered by CfW. Although, CfW was also able to benefit from CfW+ roles like PEOs and ELOs;
- the annual funding for CfW+ was seen as a challenge, which could increase staff turnover and/or hamper recruitment – and as noted staff are a key asset for both programmes and meant that under or over spends cannot not be smoothed out over more than one financial year; and
- the narrower dataset collected by CfW+, limits the scope to, for example, assess programme performance in reaching out to and supporting different groups into employment.

A whole systems approach to increasing employment

- 8.26. The qualitative research also suggests the value of a whole system approach to employment support, focused upon a range of services and founded upon a strong partnership and collaborative relationships between them, at a LA level (and covering the whole LA, rather than just defined areas/postcodes). Models based upon a single point of contact and access to a range of different employment programmes are reported to be easier for partners, as they do not need to choose which programme to refer someone to or worry about the differing eligibility criteria for different programmes. However, DWP programmes like Restart, which sit outside LA structures, but which may overlap with LA or Welsh Government programmes, were seen as a key challenge. It also appeared that the relationship between LA structures providing access to a range of employability programmes, and Working Wales, which can play a similar role, was not always fully worked out.
- 8.27. A single point of access to employability support, coupled with effective triage processes, should help ensure that participants are placed on the programme that best meets their needs. It may also help minimise friction or competition between different employment support programmes, although this may also only be possible when the capacity of the range of employment support programmes in an area does not exceed demand. Where capacity exceeded demand, interviewees suggested either reducing targets for individual programmes, or reducing the number of

programmes, rather than just focusing upon improving coordination through a single point of access and triage model.

8.28. However, in considering demand, it is important to consider the mismatch between the numbers of people who are unemployed or economically inactive in a given area, and the numbers actually seeking support to find employment or who have been persuaded to do so. As noted above, effective outreach and engagement, with, for example, those who are economically inactive (and therefore not currently seeking work), will be crucial for maximising the impact of future employment support programmes upon poverty (IES, 2021). This is likely to require a robust understanding of why more people who are long term unemployed or economically inactive do not appear to be actively seeking support from programmes like CfW and CfW+ to help them find work. For example, this may reflect their:

- personal circumstances, and barriers such as caring responsibilities or low skills that limit their capabilities;
- their perceptions of the quality and range of labour market opportunities that they feel they can travel to, given consideration such as cost, feasibility and difficulty of travel; and/or
- their expectations of the likely personal and financial costs and benefits of entering employment, which will shape their motivation to, for example, engage with employment support and overcome potential barriers.

8.29. The qualitative research also suggests that:

- effective links with others support services, including those provided by the voluntary sector, such as CAB and MIND (Mental Health Charity), are important, and weaknesses in services, such as mental health services, where, for example, there are long waiting lists, can undermine the effectiveness of programmes like CfW and CfW+; and
- the scope for programmes like CfW and CfW+ to help participants overcome structural barriers, such as the high cost of childcare, the shortage of childcare provision in some areas, weakness in public transport, such as unreliability or limited transport connections in some areas, and low paid and poorly skilled work, with few opportunities for progression, can be limited, and action elsewhere in the system is required (as this cannot be addressed by employability programmes like CfW or CfW+).

8.30. Given the forecast for high inflation and a cost of living crisis, addressing in work poverty may become increasingly important over the remaining duration of the programmes. The take up of in work support, including both formal support, most notably financial support and often more informal advice and guidance, was reported to be relatively low on both programmes, but valuable where required. Strengthening links between programmes offering employability support to those looking to upskill, once people enter work, may also be important here.

9. Recommendations and lessons for future employability programmes

- 9.1. Although the evaluation is not yet complete and further evaluation of aspects of the CfW+ model, such as the role of PEO and ELO, are warranted, the evaluation suggests a number of key lessons for future employability programmes. Interviewees were keen that the learning from CW and CfW+ be used and their experiences help shape new programmes to avoid having to 'continually reinvent the wheel' as one put it.

Recommendations for CfW and/or CfW+

- 9.2. In order to maximise the programmes' contribution to the Welsh Government's equality goals, more proactive action is needed to reach out to, and engage key groups, such as disabled people and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. CfW's detailed database provides scope to further explore differences in performance across different areas and appreciative inquiry may be appropriate to identify good practice in areas with stronger performance.
- 9.3. Given the uncertainty about the reliability of the identification of disabled participants by the programmes, considering adopting a new question for participants as part of the enrolment process would be appropriate. There is a strong case for using the same questions across different employability programmes (to facilitate benchmarking), and this could, for example, use the Government Statistical Service question: (a) Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more? and if yes (b) Does your condition or illness/do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities? Participants answering yes to both would be recorded as having a disability.
- 9.4. Although there is no 'silver bullet' that can increase engagements or diversify the referral pipeline, the evidence suggests that practical steps, such as raising and maintaining awareness of the programmes with partners; swiftly contacting those who are referred; and both helping them and providing feedback to referral partners on how they have been helped and any outcomes achieved, can build trust and encourage future referrals. Sharing good practice in this area across the programmes will be important.

- 9.5. The pandemic has helped accelerate the delivery of support and training online, or by phone, and going forward, a flexible, person-centred approach, that blends face to face and online or phone contact, is appropriate.
- 9.6. Given the apparent mismatch between demand and capacity in some areas, exploring the scope to give CfW delivery managers greater flexibility in for example the allocation of advisers and mentors to different areas (within a LA) and/or groups (such as those who are judged more than 12 months from work and those judged to be closer) would be appropriate.
- 9.7. Managing the potential impact of the loss of staff upon the programmes, given the end of the ESF funding for CfW will be important. The evaluation has not identified a simple solution and exploring what can be done to retain staff alongside contingency planning on how the impact of unfilled staff roles will be managed, is likely to be appropriate.

Key lessons and recommendations for future employability programmes

- 9.8. There is clear need and demand for employability support from programmes like CfW and CfW+. However, in order to maximise their impact upon reducing poverty, further work to support progression in work may be required, and changes to the outcome measures (which currently focus upon entry into work, rather than the quality of work) may be warranted to reduce the risks that people get stuck in 'poor work' (and are exposed to in work poverty).
- 9.9. A community based model can increase the visibility and accessibility of employment support programmes and help foster a distinct identity from JCP, but is not of itself sufficient to generate engagements from communities. Further research and piloting new innovative approaches to increase engagements may be warranted. This could include, for example a focus upon:
- brokerage models, in which those who are known by and trusted by those who are long term unemployed, economically inactive, or not in employment, education or training, have a key role in introducing them to employment support programme;
 - greater 'mainstreaming' of employment support within other public and voluntary sector services that work with those who are long term unemployed, economically inactive, or not in employment, education or training. Models such as the partnership between GAVO and Mind (in Blaenau Gwent),

between CfW and GP surgeries (in Flintshire) and the range of partnerships Môn CF have forged (in Anglesey) outlined in section four, may offer examples that can be developed and/or scaled up; and

- exploring other models, such as the Jobs-Plus Model¹¹⁴ in the USA (IES, 2021).

- 9.10. CfW and CfW+ suggest that a voluntary model of engagement can help increase people's motivation and engagement with employment support programmes, but more work is required to improve ways to engage those who are demotivated. 'Soft conditionality', where, for example engagement with a programme like CfW or CfW+ forms part of a claimant commitment, can help introduce people to such programmes that could help them, but will not in and of itself ensure they engage effectively.
- 9.11. A single point of access to employability support, followed by a triage process to match people to the programme best suited to help them realise their aspirations and meet their needs, is appropriate.
- 9.12. The effectiveness of employment support programmes like CfW and CfW+ cannot exceed the effectiveness of its frontline staff and recruiting, training and retaining staff with the right skills and ethos is therefore vital.
- 9.13. A whole systems approach to planning employability support, which considers (i) the strategic fit of different employability programmes to ensure they complement rather than duplicate their offer; and (ii) the current and anticipated future demand for employability support – and therefore the capacity that is appropriate to meet this. However, as the experience of Restart illustrates, decisions by the UK Government (and DWP) and the replacement of the ESF, with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, may complicate this (as decisions will be increasingly taken by LAs rather than the Welsh Government). Indeed, this is set out as an aim in the Welsh Government's Employability Strategy, *Stronger, fairer, greener Wales: a plan for employability and skills* ([WG, 2022c](#)). For instance, the aim to 'prioritise and consolidate Welsh Government led, national employability support to target young people, those under-

¹¹⁴ The Jobs Plus model focuses upon three mutually supportive elements: 'Intensive, co-ordinated and neighbourhood-based support to prepare for and find work – delivered through an integrated local hub that brings together housing, employment and other local partners, and which is open to all in the targeted community – a saturation approach – rather than specific groups of residents (so removing barriers and stigma in taking part)'; 'Community support for work – with residents providing peer support, outreach, and championing the service – as well as engaging in local design and oversight' and 'Rent incentives to make work pay – so ensuring that it always pays to work, and that transitional costs including transport, childcare or suits and boots can be covered'. ([Wilson & McCallum, 2018](#), p.3).

represented in the labour market and those in and out of work with long term health conditions to find work and progress in employment'. The Welsh Government may therefore 'need to achieve more through influencing the wider employment system than through directly funding and commissioning new programmes' (IES, 2021). In addition, linking employability support to wider actions to address situational barriers linked to, for example, childcare responsibilities or shortcomings in public transport, is likely to be appropriate (Ibid.).

- 9.14. The partnership between the Welsh Government, JCP, LAs and CVCs, was a key strength of the CfW programme (and should be considered in future programmes), and its contribution to the referral pipeline has been crucial to the success of CfW and CfW+. However, it also created tensions at an operational level, and it took time to overcome barriers linked to cultural and organisational differences and contributed to an overreliance upon JCP for referrals (which also need to be considered if this model is replicated in the future).
- 9.15. CfW and CfW+ suggest that models such as co-location of different teams and employment programmes can help strengthen collaboration at an operational level, provided that there is sufficient demand, so that services or teams are not competing for the same potential participants.
- 9.16. The CfW+ model, which is more open and accessible and more flexible than CfW's, is more responsive and was generally favoured by those delivering the programmes but is also less precisely (or effectively) targeted upon those furthest from the labour market.
- 9.17. The volume of data collected about CfW participants creates a rich dataset, and in comparison to CfW+, offers much greater scope to explore, for example, the characteristics of, and the effectiveness of the programme in supporting different groups of participants. However, collecting this data adds costs and the scope to analyse and use it effectively is hampered by the decision to input it into a spreadsheet rather than a more sophisticated client management database. There is a need to assess current and future data requirements (for programme management, research and evaluation), and to consider what data is collected, how it is stored, and the costs of doing this.
- 9.18. The evaluation illustrates the impact that the initial expectations of a programme in terms of job engagement and job entries (and therefore the targets set), have upon

judgments of programme performance. Regularly benchmarking performance against comparable programmes, is likely to be important in calibrating the expectations used to set targets for programmes, so that they are challenging but achievable, and that the relative performance of different programmes can be more easily considered.

- 9.19. The value for money offered by CfW's centrally procured training model compared to alternatives such as CfW+ market based model, warrants further investigation.
- 9.20. The extent to which effective approaches to engage and support groups who may have complex barriers, such as some disabled people or people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, can be mainstreamed, is not clear. Nor is it clear how complex the barriers of those supported are (and beyond the risk of experiencing discrimination, being from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic communities, does not of itself constitute a barrier to employment, although it is often associated with other barriers, such as, weaker English language skills, in the case of some migrants and refugees ([Holtom, et al, 2013](#); see e.g. [WG, 2020e](#))). The qualitative evidence discussed in section four also suggests that the programmes have, for example, sometimes struggled to support neurodiverse people, with more complex barriers. Their needs may sometimes be better met by targeted programmes, such as Engage to Change¹¹⁵. It is possible that both mainstreaming support for different groups into programmes like CfW and CfW+ and the development or funding of more targeted programmes, like Engage to Change, is appropriate. As outlined above, consideration should also be given to the planning and management of different employability programmes, as part of a systems wide approach, to ensure coherence (and minimise unnecessary duplication or competition); accessibility (for example, through single points of access to employability programmes); and assessment and assignment, to match people to the most appropriate programme (for example, through roles such as triage workers).

¹¹⁵ Engage to Change is an employability programme that supports young people aged 16-25 who have a learning difficulty, learning disability and/or autism.

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Annex A. Sample Research instruments

CfW Interview schedule

CfW/CfW+ Management Staff at DWP and LAs

The Welsh Government have commissioned OB3, Dateb, People and Work, Cardiff University and IFF Research to evaluate the implementation and impact of the impact of both the CfW and CfW+ programmes. The evaluation has a number of parts, including interviews with stakeholders such as yourself, involved in the management and delivery of CfW or CfW+.

Material from the interviews, along with other data from the evaluation will be used to inform reports for the Welsh Government, which are expected to be published. The reports will not identify you by name. If there is anything particularly sensitive that you want us to treat as 'off the record' which informs our understanding, but which is not included in reports, please let me know.

[Provide plain language information sheet and privacy notice if not already provided]

Are you happy to take part in the evaluation? Do you have any questions?

[Ensure that they understand that participation is voluntary, that they can ask questions and they consent to take part]

For reference the **aims** of the evaluation are to:

- To review changes to the delivery of the CfW operations and CfW+ programme since the evaluation of the previous stages of CfW from 2015-2018;
- To assess the extent to which the programme and operation aims have been achieved and targets met for the lifetime of the programmes since 2015;
- To provide evidence of the outcomes of the programmes for individuals;
- To undertake a counterfactual impact evaluation of the programmes, providing evidence of the impact for participants compared to a counterfactual group.

Key questions for the evaluation are highlighted in **bold** in the schedule.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Interviewer's name | |
| Interviewee's name: | |
| Location / area | |
| Date | |

Introduction

- 1. Can you please start by briefly telling me about your current role and responsibilities in relation to CfW and/or CfW+?**

Context for CfW and/or CfW+

- 2. Can you please tell me how CfW and CfW+ 'fits' with other programmes such as Working Wales, Restart, and the support JCP offers?**

- Are people referred into or out of CfW/CfW+ into these programmes?
- What impact do they have upon engagements?
- Are there overlaps between what you do and offer and what they do and offer? If so, what are these?
- How are the relationships between different programmes managed?

- 3. Can you please describe the relationship between CfW and CfW+ [where relevant – not all areas have CfW]? How do you collaborate?**

- Do CfW+ Employment Liaison Officers (ELOs) and Participants Engagement Officers (PEOs) support CfW? How?
- Are CfW+ resources used to support CfW?¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ It was reported that CfW+ funds can be used to cover ineligible costs incurred via CfW such as room hire for advisers or mentors to meet with clients; and

- Are CfW or DWP resources used to support CfW+?¹¹⁷

4. Who else do you work with or consider partners? This could include for example mental health services, housing associations or local authority services.

- Can you please describe partners' roles?
- What do they offer? How do they help participants?
- What specialist services are accessed to help support clients?

The CfW and CfW+ models and delivery

5. [CfW+ only] Can you please describe CfW's offer in this area?

- Who do you work with? Do you have targets for different groups?
- **Where are the main 'flows' of referrals from?**
- How do PEOs and ELOs work?
- How do you determine what was needed?

6. [CfW only] How effectively do CfW DWP and LA (or CVC) staff work together?

- **Where are the main 'flows' of referrals from?**
- Do most referrals go through the triage officer?
- What's gained by the partnership between DWP, WG and LAs/CVCs?
- Does the partnership approach pose any challenges? For example, is competition between staff a challenge?
- I understand that only DWP staff can access DWP records (e.g. on welfare claims). Is this correct and does it cause any problems?
- What impact does the lack of DWP involvement and staff in CfW+ have?

¹¹⁷ It was reported that although DWP does not receive any CfW+ monies, they are supporting the programme, for example, during client triage meetings, a DWP member will meet up to discuss cases, despite them not getting paid for that element of work

7. How have CfW and/or CfW+ changed since 2018?

- **What happened during the COVID 19 pandemic?** (e.g. were you redeployed? How did you make the transition from working in the community to working online / by phone?)
- What impact did it have upon your caseload?
- **How swiftly and effectively did the programme respond to lockdown?**
- What impact did moving online or to telephone engagement and support have?¹¹⁸ What was lost and what was gained?
- What impact did the shift towards more electronic record keeping rather than a reliance on paper based forms and 'wet signatures' make?
- How effectively did the online triage process work?
- **What impact did the lockdown have upon CfW or CfW's training offer?**
- What impact did this have upon engagements and participants' progression?
- What impact has the implementation of the electronic booking system (EBS) for training had?
- [if appropriate] **Can you please tell me about take up of the Chromebook scheme?** What accounts for any high or low take up? What difference has it made?
- [if appropriate] how was the additional funding for CfW+ in 2020 and 2021, to support the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, used? What difference did it make? Did it come in time?¹¹⁹

8. Looking beyond the pandemic, what other important changes have there been to the context, the programme and/or the way it is delivered since 2018?

- **How much impact has the in-work support offer made?** How many people need it? Why do they need it?
- What difference have the changes made? How effective have they been?
- What impact if any, has the roll out of Universal Credit (since 2017) had?
- What impact if any, has Brexit had?

¹¹⁸ It is reported that LA/CVC mentors were able to meet up virtually via MS Teams but that DWP advisers were not allowed to support participants virtually (be that Teams or Zoom, and that continues to be the case) and could only liaise with clients by phone or email.

¹¹⁹ There is likely to have been a lag between the allocation of additional funding being allocated and the expansion of CfW+ operations.

9. How effectively has the programme been led and managed?

- Is the programme guidance issued by the central CfW/CfW+ team helpful and clear?
- [If not covered above] How swiftly and effectively have the central CfW / CfW+ team responded to challenges and opportunities, like the COVID 19 pandemic and the establishment of new DWP programmes like Restart and Kickstart?
- Has anything limited your ability to provide your team with leadership, clear targets and direction?
- Has anything limited your ability to support and challenge your team?
- How swiftly and effectively do you feel you responded to challenges and opportunities, like the COVID 19 pandemic and the establishment of new DWP programmes like Restart and Kickstart?

Programme Performance

10. Why do you think that engagements of young people have been much stronger than engagements of those aged 25 and over?

- What drives this? [consider causes e.g. weak motivation; lack of capabilities; constrained access to opportunities]
- **How successful has the programme been in engaging participants with complex barriers?**
- How do you think engagements of those aged 25 and over could be increased?
- [if not already answered] What impact did the pandemic have upon engagements?¹²⁰
- How do the numbers and types of engagements now compare to them pre-pandemic?

¹²⁰ Note: it is reported that both CfW+ engagements and job outcomes rose during the pandemic. It is not known how much of this was down to the increased capacity of CfW+ and how much to an increase in need/demand for employment support as a result of the pandemic

11. Why do you think job outcomes have been relatively strong?

- What drives this? [consider causes e.g. impact of the programme upon motivation; capabilities; access to opportunities; changes in participants' behaviour]
- [if not already answered] What impact did the pandemic have upon job outcomes?

12. How do engagements and job outcomes in your area compare to other areas?

- What drives this? [consider e.g. difference in local labour markets; differences in delivery]
- Was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic different in this area? Why?

Funding for CfW and CfW+

13. CfW is jointly funded by the ESF, WG and DWP, while CfW+ is funded by the WG through the Children and Communities Grant (CCG). Do the different funding models have an impact upon delivery?

- Does CfW+ funding via the CCG offer greater flexibility? [if yes][how has this flexibility been used?
- Does the annual funding for CfW+ cause any challenges? For example, does it make it harder to recruit and retain staff? Does it hamper long term planning?
- What impact does the additional bureaucracy and paperwork associated with ESF funding have upon CfW?
- [If appropriate explore] How and to what extent is funding from the CCG used to support CfW+ activity in Local Authority areas? [Note: This may be more easily done through a desk-based review of local delivery plans].

14. What actions have been taken to promote Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming?

- In your view, how effective have these been?
- Were they appropriate for a programme like CfW?
- **How are participants language preference identified? And how are their language needs met?**

15. What actions have been taken to promote Sustainable Development?

- In your view, how effective have these been?
- Were they appropriate for a programme like CfW?

16. What actions has the project taken to tackle Poverty and Social Exclusion?

- In your view, how effective have these been?
- Were they appropriate for a programme like CfW?

Reflections of the CfW and CfW+ models

17. Thinking about the programme as a whole, what are its key strengths? What's worked well? Why?

- Are there particular examples of good practice you would like to highlight?
- **In your view, how important is CfW and CfW+'s community-based model?**
- [if not already answered] What impact did the pandemic have upon this?
- In your experience what are the strengths and weakness of online provision compared to face-to-face provision?

¹²¹ Note: questions on the Welsh language should be covered earlier in the interview.

- Would CfW and CfW+ have worked, if they had started online, rather than being physically based in communities? (and as they did following the COVID pandemic, later moved online)

18. What hasn't worked so well? Why?

- With the benefit of hindsight, what would you have done differently?
- What has held the programme back?

19. If you were designing a new employment support programme, what do you think are the key lessons to take from CfW and CfW+?

- Do you think the CfW and CfW+ target groups were appropriate?
- Would you focus the programme upon specific geographical areas, as CfW did?
- CfW was constrained by ESF guidelines, whereas, CfW+ had greater flexibility. How much flexibility do you think should be built into future programmes? And does this create risks?

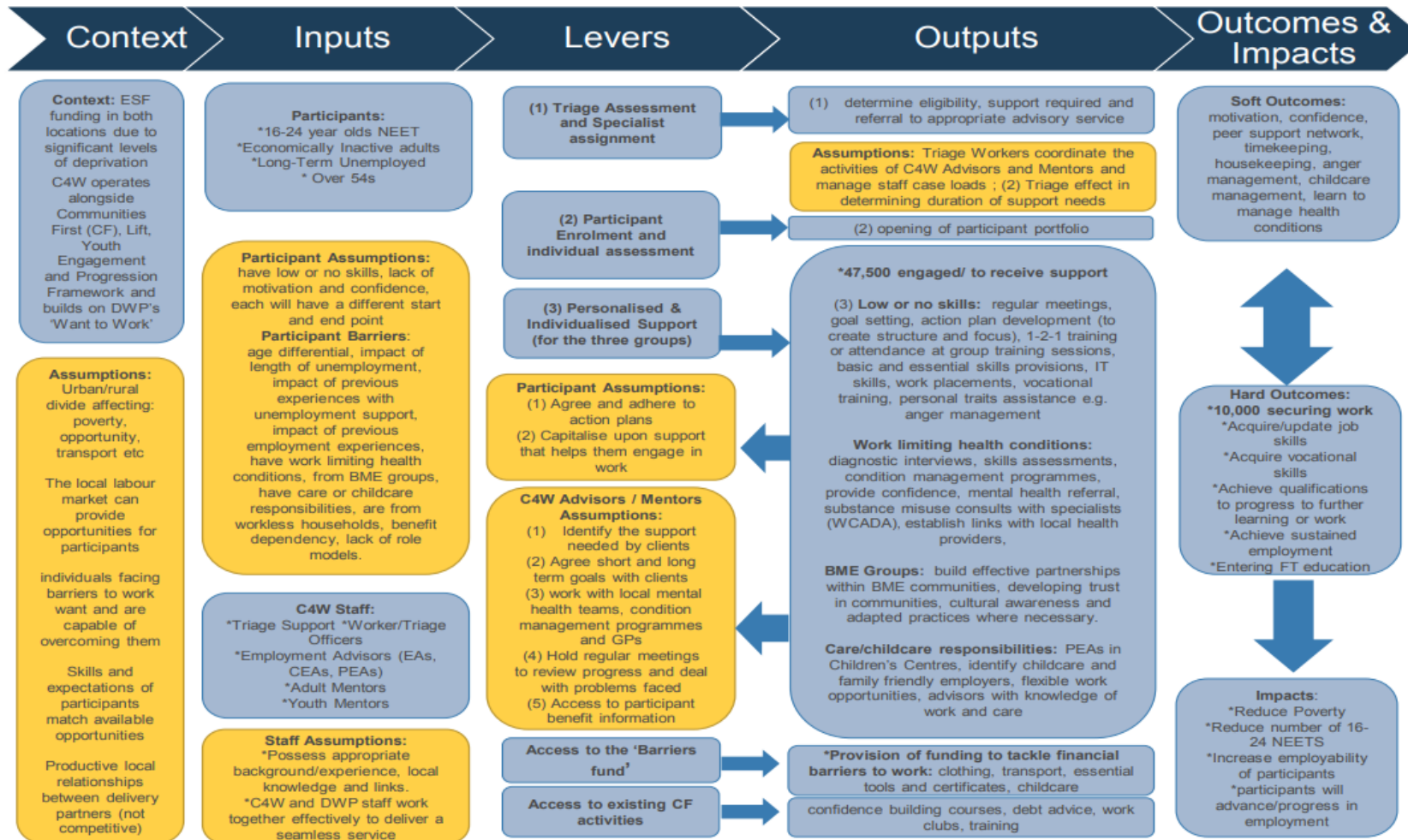
20. Is there anything else we have not talked about that you think is important?

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you very much for your time.

Annex B. Detailed Theory of Change for CfW and CfW+

Figure 1: Communities for Work Overarching Theory of Change Model



Annex C. Data sources for the sample for qualitative research

Table C.1. ranks the 22 CfW+ teams in terms of job outcomes achieved over the last year as a percentage of their target. For the purpose of comparison, the 19 CfW teams are presented alongside (but are not ranked, as the ranking of CfW and CfW+ teams differs). LAs in the sample are highlighted in bold.

In order to illustrate the relative performance of LAs in terms of performance in relation to CfW and CfW+:

- the top six teams in terms of outcomes and top six teams in terms of engagements are coloured **green**;
- the middle seven teams in in terms of outcomes and in terms of engagements are coloured **amber**; and
- the bottom six teams in in terms of outcomes and in terms of engagements, are coloured **red**.

Direct comparisons between CfW+ and CfW performance should be made with care as the periods over which performance was assessed differ (CfW+ covers performance in 2021/22 only, while CfW performance is assessed from the programme start to November 2021).

Table C.1. CfW+ Performance in 2021/22 only, engagements and job outcomes achieved by December 2021 as a percentage of April 2022 target and CfW Team Performance Start - November 2021, engagements and job outcomes achieved as a percentage of profile

| Region | LA | CfW+ Engagements (%) | CfW + Job outcomes (%) | CfW Engagements (%) | CfW Job outcomes (%) |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| N Wales | Gwynedd | 68 | 169 | 87 | 93 |
| W Wales | Bridgend | 50 | 157 | 65 | 88 |
| SE Wales | RCT | 130 | 155 | 79 | 100 |
| N Wales | Anglesey | 94 | 117 | 105 | 132 |
| SE Wales | Cardiff | 66 | 117 | 72 | 115 |
| M & W Wales | Ceredigion | 71 | 115 | N/A | N/A |
| N Wales | Wrexham | 50 | 109 | 55 | 69 |
| M & W Wales | Powys | 52 | 105 | N/A | N/A |
| SE Wales | Torfaen | 42 | 77 | 83 | 114 |
| N Wales | Conwy | 62 | 76 | 65 | 95 |
| N Wales | Denbighshire | 46 | 74 | 74 | 83 |
| SE Wales | Merthyr Tydfil | 24 | 72 | 71 | 85 |
| SE Wales | Newport | 41 | 68 | 63 | 83 |
| W Wales | Neath Port Talbot | 53 | 66 | 67 | 101 |
| SE Wales | Vale of Glam' | 65 | 65 | 65 | 90 |
| W Wales | Carmarthenshire | 64 | 62 | 88 | 154 |

| | | | | | |
|----------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| SE Wales | Monmouthshire | 57 | 55 | N/A | N/A |
| W Wales | Swansea | 50 | 55 | 70 | 114 |
| N Wales | Flintshire | 33 | 51 | 51 | 53 |
| SE Wales | Caerphilly | 38 | 43 | 53 | 81 |
| W Wales | Pembrokeshire | 41 | 42 | 63 | 86 |
| SE Wales | Blaenau Gwent - GAVO | 19 | 39 | 55 | 98 |

Source: Welsh Government . Sampled areas noted in bold.

Table C.2. ranks the 22 LA areas in terms of the percentage points (PPTs) change in unemployment between 2019 (the year before the pandemic) and 2020 (the year in which the pandemic hit). LAs have been ranked, with the four areas recording the largest reduction in unemployment coloured green, the middle 14 coloured amber and the four areas recording an increase, or no change, in unemployment rates, coloured red. LAs in the sample are highlighted in bold.

Table C.2. LA areas ranked by impact of COVID 19 (increase in unemployment between 2019 (Jan-Dec) and 2020 (Jan-Dec))

| | | 2019 (%) | 2020 (%) | Change (PPTs) |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| SE Wales | Merthyr Tydfil | 4.7 | 5.5 | -0.8 |
| Mid & W Wales | Powys | 2.7 | 2.9 | -0.2 |
| N Wales | Isle of Anglesey | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| N Wales | Flintshire | 3.2 | 3.2 | 0 |
| N Wales | Gwynedd | 3.5 | 3.4 | 0.1 |
| N Wales | Conwy | 3.7 | 3.6 | 0.1 |
| Mid & W Wales | Ceredigion | 3.4 | 3.3 | 0.1 |
| SE Wales | The Vale of Glamorgan | 3.6 | 3.5 | 0.1 |
| W Wales | Swansea | 4.5 | 4.3 | 0.2 |
| SE Wales | Rhondda Cynon Taf | 4.8 | 4.6 | 0.2 |
| W Wales | Carmarthenshire | 3.8 | 3.5 | 0.3 |
| SE Wales | Cardiff | 4.1 | 3.8 | 0.3 |
| SE Wales | Monmouthshire | 2.9 | 2.6 | 0.3 |
| W Wales | Neath Port Talbot | 4.2 | 3.8 | 0.4 |
| N Wales | Denbighshire | 4 | 3.5 | 0.5 |
| W Wales | Bridgend | 4 | 3.5 | 0.5 |
| SE Wales | Caerphilly | 4.6 | 4.1 | 0.5 |
| SE Wales | Blaenau Gwent | 4.7 | 4.2 | 0.5 |
| SE Wales | Torfaen | 4.4 | 3.8 | 0.6 |

| | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| SE Wales | Newport | 4.6 | 3.9 | 0.7 |
| N Wales | Wrexham | 4.5 | 3.6 | 0.9 |
| W Wales | Pembrokeshire | 4.2 | 3.3 | 0.9 |

Notes: the largest rise in unemployment was between March-April 2020, after which it plateaued and then started to fall over the course of 2020 ([Senedd Research, 2021c](#)). The data focuses upon a year, as the alternative ONS data set covering 2019/2020 runs April 2019 - March 2020 (so includes the rise in March 2020). The claimant count could also be used as an alternative measure, rather than the unemployment rate, although neither measure is perfect (ibid.). Altering the time period could also alter the rankings, with areas like Conwy, Newport and RCT experiencing a large rise in the claimant count over the period March – Sep 2020 ([McCurdy, 2020](#)), but a smaller rise in the unemployment rate over the whole year. Consideration could also be given to including changes in economic inactivity, as for example, some people might become discouraged from seeking work during the pandemic. Given these considerations, it is difficult to choose a definitive measure of the impact of COVID-19 upon the CfW and CfW+ programmes' target groups, for the purposes of sampling.