Evaluation of Working Skills for Adults 2: Final Report

MAY 2023

Torfaen County Borough Council

Authors: Philip Wilson and Hannah Russell

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. York Consulting LLP was commissioned by Torfaen County Borough Council to undertake an evaluation of Working Skills for Adults 2 (WSfA2) as it operated from 2015 until 2023. This is the final report of that evaluation.

2. WSfA2 was funded by the ESF under Priority Axis 2: Skills for Growth, Specific Objective 1. This objective supports activities to address the basic skills needs of employed people, particularly in SMEs and Micro businesses[1]. It covered 5 local authority (LA) areas Torfaen, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Life Leisure Trust (Blaenau Gwent) and Merthyr Tydfil. The rationale of the project was to increase the achievement of low skilled workers in this region to improve individuals' earning potentials, labour market mobility and sustained employment.

3. The project's revised profile targets were to engage 4,973 participants with 3,503 participants gaining a qualification or essential skill. The operational cost was £9,784,570 with an intervention rate of 71.80% and an ESF grant request of £7,025,322. The project also had a range of demographic targets and cross cutting theme project level indicators.

4. The methodology involved a mid-term evaluation report with interviews of 19 project delivery staff, trainers and partners. The final stage evaluation included a survey of 400 participants and 10 follow-up qualitative interviews, 7 final interviews with operational staff plus economic analysis of the project's cost effectiveness.

Key Findings

5. In terms of Policy fit, the project was in line with relevant Welsh Government policy and was well-designed to achieve the agreed outputs.

6. The project performed in line with participation profile and exceeded the overall target with 5,113 participants. There were some variations by LA area but all exceeded their re-profiles targets. This is a particular success when the effects of the COVID-19 lockdowns are considered.

7. The project also achieved the target number of participants achieving qualifications with 3,525 participants gaining qualifications by the project end.

Set-up and management

8. Partners were supportive of the project design. There is strong evidence that the project was managed effectively, with good working relations and partnership working between LA partners.

Marketing and referrals

9. All LA areas took a structured approach to marketing using a variety of elements to maximise awareness and understanding about the project. These included face-to-

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-social-fund-operational-programme-2014-to-2020/european-social-fund-england-operational-programme-2014-2020#investment-priority-21-enhancing-equal-access-to-lifelong-learning

face marketing in the forms of handing out flyers, attending leisure centres and job fairs and in some cases door knocking.

10. All LA areas discussed a variety of referral routes that participants had taken prior to engagement with the WSfA2 project. There is evidence of sensible adaptations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, using online provision and social media to engage participants.

Engagement, mentoring and assessment

11. The enrolment and assessment phases were identified as beneficial to highlighting potential barriers to engagement by prospective participants. Some identified the advantages of discussing additional needs before enrolling participants onto courses to aid individuals with any potential childcare/caring needs, travel and any health or wellbeing concerns. All LA areas provided positive feedback surrounding the assessment tool for the project, although some areas did mention potential improvements.

Support delivered

12. All LA areas provided training to individuals which included both accredited and non-accredited courses. Any additional support to this training varied between each of the areas in this project. For example, some regions deployed support officer roles to aid participants with softer skills such as CV writing, job search and interview skills.

13. The most common support received in addition to any training included access to a computer, CV writing and job searching. The majority (88%) of respondents stated they were quite or very satisfied with the training they received.

14. Just under two-thirds (65%) of surveyed participants (400) suggested that they had applied the skills or knowledge gained very or quite often since completing the training.

Outcomes

15. The most common outcome achieved through WSfA2, recorded by half the sample, was improved confidence (50%) followed by improving skills related to their job (46%). Over a third of survey respondents also specified that they had gained a further qualification as a result of WSfA2, demonstrating progression in learning. A few respondents reported changing job roles, receiving promotions and getting pay rises since undertaking the training. Most participants that expressed a view (80%) said that they would not have received any training or not the same amount of training without the support. Over three-quarters (77%) of participants responding to the survey felt more positive about learning as a result of the training.

Cost effectiveness analysis

16. The project delivered activities in a cost effective way. The cost per participant was £1,917 below the profiled unit cost and in line with similar projects elsewhere. The cost per qualification was £2,789, just above the profiled target by 1%.

Under-represented groups

17. Performance against the planned participant demographics was good with one major exception. The project met the target for participants who identify as being disabled or having a work limiting health condition, migrants, older people (aged 54+) and those with caring responsibilities. It narrowly missed the target for females and was well below the target for participants from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. There is good evidence that the project addressed cross cutting theme (CCT) project level indicators, this is outlined in Section 6: Project Performance.

Recommendations

18. The recommendations for future similar delivery include:

- Consider supporting higher level skills in future project designs.

- Maintain the dual level approach to project management.

- Develop the assessment tool further.

- Check demographic targets against population data.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 York Consulting LLP was commissioned by Torfaen County Borough Council to undertake an evaluation of Working Skills for Adults 2 (WSfA2) as it operated from 2015 until 2023.

1.2 Delivery of the project included the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, thus, there is reference to the impact of the pandemic on the project in this evaluation.

1.3 Working Skills for Adults 2 was a follow-on project from Working Skills for Adults which was completed in 2015.

Introduction to Working Skills for Adults 2

1.4 Working Skills for Adults 2 aimed to increase the achievements of work level transferrable skills up to level 2 across the workforce in parts of South Wales. These were directed towards supporting the low skilled workforce in community venues to aid sustained employment and increase earning potential for these workers.

1.5 This project was funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) to operate across five regions in south Wales. WSfA2 was funded by the ESF under Priority Axis 2: Skills for Growth, Specific Objective 1. This objective support activities to address the basic skills needs of employed people, particularly in SMEs and Micro businesses[2]. The central management team for the project was based in Torfaen County Borough Council with the four other delivery partners as follows: Aneurin Leisure Trust (Blaenau Gwent), Bridgend County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

1.6 There was a clear focus on community-based provision to support reluctant and low skilled learners to engage with the flexible learning opportunities on offer to take place outside of the workplace. The variety of training opportunities covered areas including literacy, numeracy, IT, vocational and generic transferrable skills. These were offered on a funded basis from essentials skills to level 2.

1.7 Alongside provision of these funded training opportunities, WSfA2 provided support to the learners with various aspects to aid sustained employment. Activities included CV writing and amendment, interview skills, job fairs, volunteering opportunities and access to work clubs whereby individuals can access equipment and support with online job searches and applications.

1.8 Individuals were referred to the project from a variety of agencies including, Job Centre Plus, Department for Work and Pensions and social services amongst others. Once referred to the project their eligibility was checked as this project was aimed specifically at people already in work, whether full-time, part-time or self-employed. The project was directed towards the lower skilled workers, with no qualifications or those who hold a qualification lower than a level 2.

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[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-social-fund-operational-programme-2014-to-2020/european-social-fund-england-operational-programme-2014-2020#investment-priority-21-enhancing-equal-access-to-lifelong-learning

1.9   Once accepted onto the project each individual was provided with one-to-one support to aid their progression in the project with advice given on the types of courses which may be most beneficial to them. These support workers ensured that the learners had access to CV writing and amendment services alongside other support activities described above. These services were not compulsory and thus they were supplementary to the training aspect of the project.

Cross cutting themes

1.10   The project developed a plan that clearly demonstrated its contribution towards the Cross Cutting Themes (CCT) of Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming including the Welsh Language, Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion. This included stakeholders developing effective ways to engage and provide support especially those individuals from under-represented groups to ensure these groups actively participated in and benefited from the project.

Report structure

1.11   This report covers the following sections:

- Methodology.
- Rationale and policy fit.
- Project design.
- Project delivery and implementation.
- Project performance.
- Cost effectiveness.
- Key findings.

2   METHODOLOGY

2.1   The evaluation was designed to address project delivery, the impact and effectiveness of WSfA2 in terms of:

- The impact of the project on participants.

- The impact of the project upon the community and wider society.

- The impact of the project upon enterprises.

- The impact of personal support on participants.

- The impact of advice and guidance given to participants.

- The cost effectiveness of the project.

- The management of the project.

2.2   The evaluation method covered a three-stage process: inception, mid-term assessment and final assessment. A range of stakeholders were involved in different aspects of the evaluation as outlined as follows:

Inception

2.3   Initial meetings with Torfaen County Borough Council representatives for WSfA2 took place to understand the basic project operation.

2.4   This was followed by introductions to the Operational Delivery Group (ODG) on 18th November 2021 and Strategic Management Board (SMB) on 2nd December 2021.

2.5   Review of key documents and data sources included:

- Original Business Plan, and subsequent amended versions.

- Progress reports.

- SMB and ODG meeting minutes.

- Participant reports by month.

2.6   An evaluation framework was designed to articulate success criteria for the evaluation. Within this, the evaluation questions, stakeholder groups, engagement methodologies and quantitative analysis techniques were specified (Appendix A).

Mid-term assessment

2.7   The mid-term evaluation focused on:

- The way in which Working Skills for Adults had been established.

- The overall design of the project.

- How well the central administration of WSfA2 was functioning.

- How effectively the project was in identifying and engaging with the intended participants.

- How the project was helping participants to overcome barriers to learning, to acquire job-relevant skills, and to achieve job-relevant qualifications.

- Whether WSfA2 was being delivered as intended.

- What the characteristics of participants were.

- What nature of support was being delivered.

- How the project was performing to date.

2.8 To address these aspects qualitative insight was gained through interviews and consultations with a variety of stakeholders. Interviews were undertaken with groups and individuals. Insight was gained from 19[3] interviews (against a target of 15) with stakeholders across all local authorities including Strategic Board Members, Operational Delivery Group members, delivery staff, partners and referral organisations. Contact details were provided by the Project Manager and other respondents were identified by initial interviewees.

2.9 Performance analysis of management information was assessed against targets, including project level indicators.

Final evaluation

2.10 After the mid-term report, focus of the evaluation moved towards the outcomes and impacts that the project had achieved. This involved qualitative and quantitative research with the direct beneficiaries of the project. The key aspects of this stage of the evaluation involved:

- Survey of 400 WSfA2 participants via telephone interview.

- 10 survey follow-up interviews[4].

- 7 summative interviews with LA staff.

- Cost effectiveness assessment.

- Assessment of performance against targets through analysis of monitoring data.

- Evaluation of the delivery of the cross cutting theme project level indicators.

Demographics of WSfA2 survey participants

2.11 The characteristics of the 400 respondents to the survey were as follows:

- Female (59%).

- Participants who identify as having a work limiting health condition (10%).

- Participants who identify as being disabled (7%).

- Participants aged 54+ (6%)

- Participants who received provision in the Welsh language (4%).

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[3] Blaenau Gwent (5), Bridgend (5), Caerphilly (3), Merthyr Tydfil (3), Torfaen (3)
[4] All case studies in this report that draw on YCL interviews have been anonymised and names changed.

- Participants from a Black and Minority Ethnic background (1%).

3   RATIONALE AND POLICY FIT

Rationale

3.1   The rationale of the Working Skills for Adults 2 project was to increase the achievement of low skilled workers in this region to improve individuals' earning potentials, labour market mobility and sustained employment.

3.2   The West Wales and the Valleys authorities have very high levels of adults with no qualifications. In the year 2020 the national average proportion of working adults with no qualifications was 7.6% in Wales. Four of the five Local authorities had greater proportions; Merthyr Tydfil (14.9%), Blaenau Gwent (10.5%), Caerphilly (10%) Torfaen (8.4%) and Bridgend with a slightly lower proportion (7.5%)[5]. WSfA2 specifically targeted those with no qualifications as a priority whilst also working with those with low level qualifications.

3.3   WSfA2 sat alongside two other ESF projects Bridges into Work 2 and Nurture, Equip, Thrive (NET) in the same five local authority regions. Bridges into Work 2 was a project supporting economically inactive and unemployed people to gain sustainable paid employment through delivering mentoring, volunteer opportunities and accredited qualifications. NET supported underemployed individuals and individuals with Work Limiting Health Conditions experiencing barriers to improve their employment situation through mentoring, job brokerage and any physical or mental health support they may need.

Fit with Welsh Government strategy

3.4   A range of Welsh Government strategies set the policy landscape against which WSfA2 operated.

3.5   *Prosperity for All[6]* was the national strategy for raising skills and employability identified as a priority for Welsh Government. Skills advancement is linked to securing employment, business growth and inward investment. To raise skills levels, the strategy argued the necessity of business support, development investment and the establishment of quality skills projects. WSfA2 fit with the ambitions of this strategy, specifically focussing on raising the skill levels of those with no or very low levels of skills and qualifications.

3.6   *The Welsh Government policy statement on skills[7]* included a focus on skills that respond to local needs, stating that, *"Wales must develop a skills system that is effective at delivering joined-up employment and skills support which reflects the needs of local communities and can work seamlessly alongside national support projects."* WSfA2 worked alongside this policy initiative to use labour market information to ensure the support provided to individuals is responsive to their needs and the needs of the local area, to guarantee bespoke packages of

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[5] https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/contents.aspx
[6] https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/prosperity-for-all-economic-action-plan.pdf
[7] https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/policy-statement-on-skills.pdf

employment training are delivered, whilst also being responsive to local recruitment and skills needs.

3.7   *The policy statement on skills* also included a focus on skills for employment, stating that, *"Wales must develop a skills system that can provide the employment support necessary to assist individuals into employment while supplying the tools to enable individuals to take responsibility for improving the value of their skills within the economy".* The WSfA2 project sought to address the latter aspect of this statement, supporting those who were already in work to improve the value of their skills to ensure their place in the labour market does not stagnate and they also increase their productivity levels.

3.8   *Wales: A vibrant economy*[8] made many links between the level of qualifications an individual holds and their level of earnings. This project sought to boost individual's skillset alongside the potential of gaining qualifications to boost their personal incomes, thus boosting and contributing to their local economies and community regeneration. WSfA2 also worked to introduce individuals to community-based skills training with hopes of leading them to undertake further qualifications and learning for personal benefit and meeting the local employer demand for skills and qualifications.

3.9   The *Employability Plan*[9] viewed upskilling as a means to respond to skills gaps. It encouraged businesses to take responsibility for their workers and signposts training opportunities. WSfA2 acted as a domain for employers to signpost their low skilled workers towards funded projects to aid their development and fill skills gaps. The mentor support provided to each participant also engaged them with labour market information to identify skills gaps for potential career progression or change in industry.

3.10   *Welsh Government Strategy for Older People*[10]. Recommendation 28 stated that local authorities should be encouraged to address unemployment at 50+. Initiatives to meet the needs of this age group should be reflected in the local regeneration and strategy plans that mirror the economic needs. WSfA2 planned to encourage those over the age of 50 who are working to gain new skills in order to retrain for alternative job opportunities and to increase their currency in the job market. It explored opportunities to use the expertise developed through the previous WSfA project in supporting learners, i.e., through assessing/ tutoring, etc.

3.11   *Welsh Government Tackling Poverty Action Plan (2012-2016)*[11] aimed to increase action to mitigate the impact of poverty, recognising that for more and more people, even being in work will not guarantee that they can escape poverty. The essence of the WSfA2 model and operation was to enable those who are suffering in work poverty to retrain and upskill increasing income and job security.

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[8] https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/media/1378/wd77.pdf
[9] https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/employability-plan-2.pdf
[10] https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/the-strategy-for-older-people-in-wales-2013-2023.pdf
[11] https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/24509/2/120625tackpovplanen_Redacted.pdf

WEFO objectives

3.12 WSfA2 was funded by the ESF under Priority Axis 2: Skills for Growth. The project was targeted at Specific Objective 1; to increase the skills levels, including work relevant skills, of those in the workforce with no or low skills.

3.13 Referring to the 'Needs and Opportunities in the WWV Project Area' section of the ESF West Wales and the Valleys Operation, the project planned to be receptive to the needs of the regional labour market by delivering, via community-based provision, participants that are appropriately skilled for the needs of the businesses that made up approximately 60% of private sector employment in the area. SMEs typically do not benefit from having recognised in-house training provision or access to large budgets for staff professional development and accordingly need external support to ensure that they have a workforce that is appropriately skilled.

3.14 In addition, grant funded work-based training disadvantages individuals who are unable to access these routes due to:

- Their employer not engaging with such routes and opportunities for economic reasons, such as small size of the organisation.

- Not wishing to share their intentions or needs with their employers because they wish to change careers/employers, feel stigmatised by their current skills level (especially essential skills).

3.15 The Project recognised the value of utilising accurate and timely Labour Market Intelligence to ensure that interventions achieve the required sustainable employment outcomes. Notwithstanding the participant focus that to a greater extent dictated demand for training, the project also focussed its community delivery by responding to the demands of local and regional employers through close liaison with employers directly; Business Wales and local economic development teams, as well as taking account of developments by the Learning, Skills and Innovation Partnership in Learning Observatory.

3.16 In terms of delivery, the project aimed to be personalised and focused on the needs of the individual in both the methods of engagement and delivery.

3.17 The project aimed to engage 4,973 participants with 3,503 participants gaining a qualification or essential skill. The targets were split by Local Authority areas as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Targets for participants by project end

	All areas	Torfaen	Bridgend	Caerphilly	Life Leisure Trust	Merthyr Tydfil
Number of participants	4,973	1,154	631	688	692	1,808
Number gaining a qualification	3,503	815	407	470	518	1,293

Source: WSfA2 Business Plan v2, 2018 plus amendment document

3.18 The overall targets to be achieved by the end of the project were also divided by participants without formal qualifications and those up to and including Level 2 qualifications. These categories have also been divided by participant sex showing the greater emphasis on female participation.

Table 3.2 Target participation by sex and prior qualifications

	Number of participants engaged			Number of participants gaining a qualification		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Participants with no formal qualifications	573	859	**1,432**	407	610	**1,017**
Participants with up to and including a Level 2 qualification	1,416	2,125	**3,541**	994	1,492	**2,486**
Total	**1,989**	**2,984**	**4,973**	**1,401**	**2,102**	**3,503**

Source: WSFA 2 Reprofile Options Paper 2022

3.19 WSfA2 provided a range of essential skills qualifications in accessible community settings which was expected to support the Welsh Government's targets prior to the start of their delayed Essential Skills in the Workplace 2 (ESIW2) operation.

Planned funding

3.20 The operational cost was £9,784,570 with an intervention rate of 71.80% and a grant request of £7,025,322. The cost and funding calculated for the project is set out in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Breakdown of project costs and funding

Cost line	Re-profiled to December 2022
Total Direct Staff	£6,988,978
FR-40 Calculated Costs	£2,795,592
Total Operation Cost	**£9,784,570**
Grant	£7,025,322
Total Match Funding	**£2,759,249**
From Cash / Beneficiary Staff time	£1,053,843
From FR-40 indirect costs	£1,705,406

Source: WSfA2 Business Plan v2, 2018 plus amendment document

Cross cutting themes

3.21 The project planned to contribute towards the Cross Cutting Themes of Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming including the Welsh Language, Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion.

3.22 The project aimed to support 'Inclusive' growth by offering opportunities for training and qualifications to women, people from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic heritage and people identifying as disabled , who may be disadvantaged

within the workplace in West Wales and the Valleys. The measurable demographic indicator targets for this project are set out in

3.23 Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 ESF Demographic targets

Indicator	Percentage of participants
Female	60%
WLHC / Disability	10%
Caring Responsibilities	38%
Black, Asian and minority ethnic	8%
Migrant	2%
Older Person (54+)	15%

Source: CCT WEFO assessment

3.24 Table 3.5 sets out the ambitions for the range of CCTs and project level indicators.

Table 3.5 Ambitions for CCT and project level indicators

CCT	Project level indicators	Ambition
Equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming	Disability Access Group engagement	Ensure all activities, materials, websites and publicity materials are made available in accessible formats
	Positive Action measures – Disabled people	Deliver support and / or advice services to individuals with disabilities which will remove barriers to them engaging with and / or participating in training to gain new and higher skills.
	Activity supporting speakers of the Welsh language	Identify and support opportunities to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language and support speakers of the language
	Female Participation in STEM	To promote high skills and high earning potential, joint beneficiaries will promote STEM subjects to all females
	Occupational segregation	Challenge occupational segregation by increasing the numbers of women and men training or retraining in non-traditional areas, focusing on areas where there are skills shortages
	Social Clauses / Community Benefits	Look to develop a diverse array of opportunities by maximising leverage over business contracts and supplier agreements
Sustainable development	Environmental awareness / Resource	Promote environmental awareness and good practices in the implementation of activity

	Efficiency measures	
	Eco Code	Joint beneficiaries will look to develop an Eco Code that can be used across the region
	Local Supply Chain activity	A training delivery procurement framework was planned which would be accessible to providers from all sectors and sizes of organisation including small local providers.
Tackling poverty and social exclusion	Mentoring / advocacy activity	All joint beneficiaries will provide mentoring and support staff with training subject to their own Local Authority objectives and training plans.
CCT General	Engaging / developing CCT Champions	It was agreed that a CCT Champion would be appointed to share best practice and support understanding across the operation.

Source: WSfA 2Business Plan v2, 2018 plus WEFO CCT assessment form

In addition, the project aimed to contribute to the CCT themes through:

- Focussing on growth, aligned with skills development interventions, enabling those experiencing in-work poverty to access more highly-skilled, better paid jobs.

- Recognising health and wellbeing as one of the corner stones of a healthy, vibrant economy.
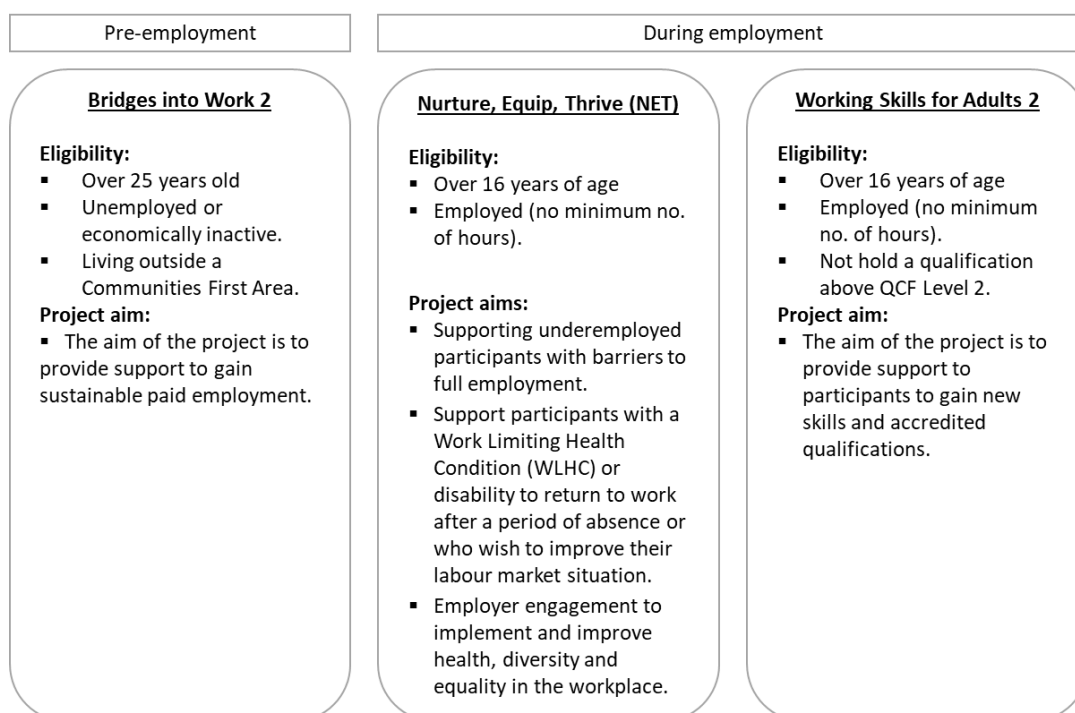
4   PROJECT DESIGN

4.1   A logic model was developed to set out the intended project operation and how this would create outputs, outcomes and impacts for learners (Appendix B for a summary version of the logic model). This logic aligns with the ambitions of the project and its expected results.

4.2   Strategic Board Members and Operational Delivery Group members were consulted regarding their views on the overall design and central administration of the project. Most LA areas started delivery in early 2018, however Bridgend started later in the middle of 2019.

4.3   All LA area stakeholders confirmed the importance of having such a project to support low skilled workers who are already employed. They went on to discuss that this project was a vital steppingstone for those previously supported in related projects such as Bridges into Work.

> *"Once participants had been supported into work, Working Skills provided the next steps for them to feel confident in their job role and provide training and skills for future progression."*

> *"Working Skills gave participants a strong grounding in their employment and allowed for them to progress onto level 3 courses or other further training to support their development."*

4.4   Some LA areas indicated that the design of the project has shown great value in their local authorities when looking at the conversion rate of the referrals to participants. Many LA areas also added that the project had an important place in relation to other projects already on offer.

4.5   Some LA areas developed local triage teams, dealing with referrals, who could easily identify which project would be most appropriate for a potential participant. This might be WSfA2 or sister projects such as Bridges into Work and NET as the eligibility and aims for each project was clearly defined as outlined in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 ESF funded employment projects in South East Wales

Pre-employment	During employment	
Bridges into Work 2 **Eligibility:** ▪ Over 25 years old ▪ Unemployed or economically inactive. ▪ Living outside a Communities First Area. **Project aim:** ▪ The aim of the project is to provide support to gain sustainable paid employment.	**Nurture, Equip, Thrive (NET)** **Eligibility:** ▪ Over 16 years of age ▪ Employed (no minimum no. of hours). **Project aims:** ▪ Supporting underemployed participants with barriers to full employment. ▪ Support participants with a Work Limiting Health Condition (WLHC) or disability to return to work after a period of absence or who wish to improve their labour market situation. ▪ Employer engagement to implement and improve health, diversity and equality in the workplace.	**Working Skills for Adults 2** **Eligibility:** ▪ Over 16 years of age ▪ Employed (no minimum no. of hours). ▪ Not hold a qualification above QCF Level 2. **Project aim:** ▪ The aim of the project is to provide support to participants to gain new skills and accredited qualifications.

Source: South East Wales regional engagement team[12],[13]

4.6 Triage teams were able to establish project suitability first based on employment status of the individual as Bridges into Work aids people in finding sustainable employment. NET supported employed individuals in the form of mentoring, job brokerage, physical and mental health support alongside support to overcome any other barriers identified through initial assessment. WSfA2 also supported employed individuals, however, the focus was on increasing participants' qualifications and skill sets, whilst also overcoming any barriers that may exist for them to take part in training.

4.7 The case study below is an example of an individual who was referred to the NET project.

> **Case Study: Mandy**
>
> Mandy contacted the WSfA2 project initially as she wanted support to increase her hours as a carer and some careers advice to help her to return to her previous job role as an accounts/payroll administrator. Mandy had been out of the labour market for 20 years, since getting married and moving to Wales from South Africa, she had brought up her children in this time and held several volunteer roles within the primary school that her children attended. Mandy confirmed that she did not want to undertake any short work-related courses but did want to apply to college to study her AAT[14] course.

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[12] https://www.sewales-ret.co.uk/category/projects/esf-priority-1/
[13] https://www.sewales-ret.co.uk/category/projects/esf-priority-2/
[14] Association of Accounting Technicians

Mandy was identified as a better candidate to the NET project; as the Employment Support Officer would be able to support her in finding a job with increased hours, but no more than 16 per week (to ensure that her children were still her priority), and also help her to apply for funding to enable her to return to college to begin her AAT course in the following September.

Source: WSfA2 Progress report Claim 24

4.8   Other relevant ESF provision available around the same time included: Communities4Work, PaCE, Healthy Working Wales, Active Inclusion and potentially Inspire 2 Work or the FE led ESF operation Upskilling @ Work.

Management

4.9   Torfaen County Borough Council managed the partnership of five LAs, facilitating regular meetings of the:

- Strategic Management Board.

- Operational Delivery Group.

4.10   They collated all project data and submitted claims to WEFO as required.

5   PROJECT DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Set-up and management

5.1   All LA stakeholders expressed positive views towards the strategic management arrangements in place.

5.2   Representatives of all LA areas identified benefits of having monthly management meetings in which all areas were involved. Members of these meetings stated they felt supported by the central administration team noting that communication and support was both constant and flexible to their needs. Knowledge sharing during these meetings was a key element that was praised by all areas. Examples included bouncing ideas off each other for marketing, advertising spaces on training courses, and support during the transition to online learning through COVID-19 lockdowns.

5.3   A strong partnership was built between the organisations and representatives who had worked together for a number of years.

5.4   A particular challenge faced by Bridgend related to their later start with the programme and the associated challenges of recruiting staff prior to the commencement of the project.

Marketing and referrals

5.5   All LA areas took a structured approach to marketing using a variety of elements to maximise awareness and understanding about the project. These included face-to-face marketing in the forms of handing out flyers, attending leisure centres and job fairs and in some cases door knocking.

5.6   Media had also been utilised to spread awareness with some areas mentioning radio and bus advertisements, but the most commonly referenced was the use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook. Most LA areas concluded that social media was the most effective marketing approach because it focused on the key target audience and the ability to adapt and tailor the marketing message easily depending on which courses had spaces.

> **Example: Torfaen's approach to marketing**
>
> Torfaen used a mixed approach to marketing making use of both online and face-to-face methods. Face-to-face marketing approaches have included handing out leaflets and door-knocking, approaching the community in shopping centres, at community events and job fairs. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, have been used to spread awareness of the project to target specific key audiences in Torfaen. These efforts have been noted as resulting in a high level of awareness of WSfA2 in Torfaen.

5.7   Some LA areas did not use the term WSfA2 as the marketing label for the project. For example, some used an overarching banner for all employability projects to centralise all marketing. Others used joint approaches with other projects to use the same platform, such as Facebook, to advertise more than one project.

> **Example: Bridgend's approach to marketing**.
>
> The marketing in Bridgend for WSfA2 fell under the realm of Employability Bridgend which undertook the marketing for all employability and skills projects in the Local Authority. This marketing approach included both English and Welsh language Facebook pages. There was a triage team working on expressions of interest to ensure participants were supported by the relevant projects and teams to achieve their goals.

5.8   All LA areas discussed a variety of referral routes that participants had taken prior to engagement with the WSfA2 project. Referrals from job centres, housing and benefits departments and from other projects such as Bridges into Work were mentioned by stakeholders in all areas. Some LA areas mentioned that self-referrals contributed significant proportions of their referrals. These have been as a result of online marketing approaches and, after commencement of delivery, through word-of-mouth from other WSfA2 participants.

5.9   All LA areas discussed the increasing importance and relevance of online and social media marketing after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. For some regions this transition was a smooth process as their social media presence and consequent referrals from this method were high prior to COVID-19. For others, this marked a shift in their marketing approach from their initial face-to-face strategies to use of more online mechanisms.

5.10 Of the 330 participants surveyed who could recall where they heard about WSfA2, most commonly they stated information or promotions at work (39%) as shown in Figure 5.1. With word of mouth being the next most common, this echoes the view shared by some LA staff that often when individuals completed training and support through WSfA2, they would inform their friends, colleagues or even managers which boosted self-referrals.

Figure 5.1 Where did you hear about Working Skills for Adults?
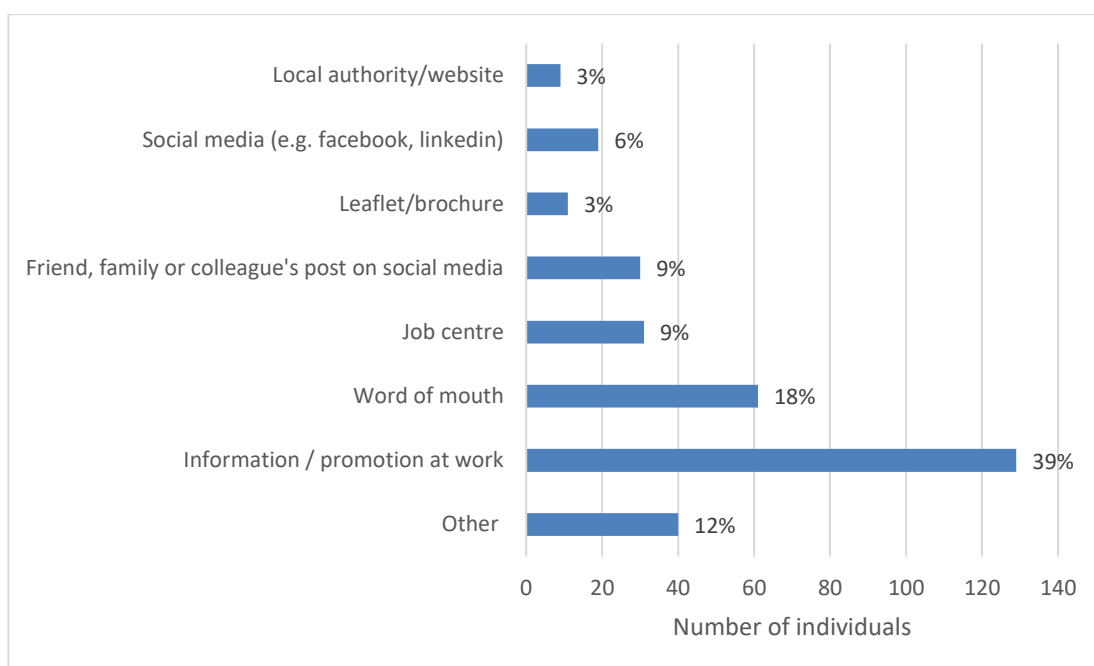
Source: York Consulting fieldwork 2022. Base: 399 respondents

Engagement, mentoring and assessment

5.11 The enrolment and assessment phases were identified as beneficial to highlighting potential barriers to engagement by prospective participants. Some identified the advantages of discussing additional needs before enrolling participants onto courses to aid individuals with any potential childcare/caring needs, travel and any health or wellbeing concerns.

5.12 All LA areas provided positive feedback surrounding the assessment tool for the project, although some areas did mention potential improvements. This assessment tool (Appendix C) was used by LA staff with all participants to explore their current work-based knowledge, understanding and skillset. Reasons supporting the use of the assessment tool included the diagnostic potential to discover any underlying needs participants may not want to voluntarily discuss, such as numeracy and literacy. Some respondents stated that, although the tool was a good starting point, its effectiveness lies with the team member delivering it to the participant; it enables effective communication with practitioners able to probe further into participants answers to gain a deeper insight.

5.13 A potential improvement to the assessment tool, suggested by some respondents, included making an online version; although limitations to this was WEFO requirement for wet signatures. Other points raised included the tool being too lengthy which can act as a discouragement for some participants. Some respondents noted the repetitiveness with some questions in the tool and some questions not being applicable or relatable for some candidates which can cause confusion. Overall, although there were slight variations in opinion, even within LA areas, all individuals were supportive of the assessment tool.

5.14 Once participants completed the assessment tool the information was used to inform individual action plans (see inset example below of how this was done). Many LA areas were satisfied with the processes in place for identification of plans for participants, the only concerns raised, by a small number of respondents, were about the follow-up aspect. Respondents felt there was a lack of follow-up information gathered regarding the longer-term impacts for individuals once they leave the project.

> **Example: Caerphilly's approach to engagement and assessment.**
>
> Participants completed the assessment tool, which was commonly talked though with a member of the team. This was followed by the action planning process in which team members had a protocol to follow where the needs identified in the assessment tool were transferred. The action plan and the findings from the assessment tool were sent to the participant for their approval prior to the commencement of training and support. Once the participant had completed their training, action plan, it was reviewed for monitoring and compliance.

5.15 Views of mentoring and coaching were more varied amongst the five LA areas. Some concluded that mentoring was everchanging and individual to each participant and was thus based around building personal relationships with the participants to find the most appropriate support. Other LA areas stated that they rarely received demand from participants needing additional support, such as interview skills and CV writing, as they were already in employment, thus reducing the demand for these services. Some LA areas concluded that mentoring services were more associated with other employability and skills projects in their area.

Support delivered in the project

5.16 All LA areas provided training to individuals which included both accredited and non-accredited courses. Any additional support to this training varied between each of the areas in this project. For example, some regions deployed support officer roles to aid participants with softer skills such as CV writing, job search and interview skills. Others stated that this was not delivered as an aspect of WSfA2, instead they referred these participants onto other projects, in line with eligibility, to ensure they still receive this support, such as NET or Bridges into Work.

5.17 Although some LA areas expressed that they did not provide some of the additional support as part of this project, including volunteering and CV skills, all concluded that this support would be met for the participants within the LA areas through other routes.

5.18 In regard to additional support needed prior to commencing training, such as childcare support, many regions stated that this support was not in great demand as the participants are already in employment so generally already have these forms of arrangements in place. Overall, most LA areas explained that participants rarely seemed to face barriers such as finance for transport and course supplies, but the support would be provided if needed.

> **Example: Bridgend's approach to support and delivery.**
>
> Triage officers worked to ensure all candidates were supported by placing them with WSfA2, NET or Bridges into Work. Once a candidate was placed onto WSfA2 they worked with the Marketing and Engagement Officer to complete the assessment tool. Weekly team meetings involved the Marketing and Engagement Officer passing participants over to the Skills Trainer. The Skills Trainer then liaised with the participant to book training courses after agreeing their preferences for delivery such as online or in-person.
>
> If the participant needed additional support regarding travel and childcare cost this was organised through the Skills Trainer. If support was needed such as CV and interview skills, or support with health and wellbeing they were directed to NET Bridgend as they had a greater role in coaching and mentoring.

5.19 All LA areas concluded that volunteering was rarely provided, due to a lack of demand from participants as they were already in employment. A few instances were mentioned where participants wanted to change careers so wanted some exposure to certain sectors. All five areas concluded that although volunteering was rarely used, they would provide such support if requested by participants.

5.20 The telephone survey of 400 participants showed that the most common support received in addition to any training included access to a computer (23%), CV writing (20%) and job searching (15%). General support refers to comments made by participants about the support they received from educators during their qualifications and courses.

Figure 5.2 What support did you receive alongside your training?
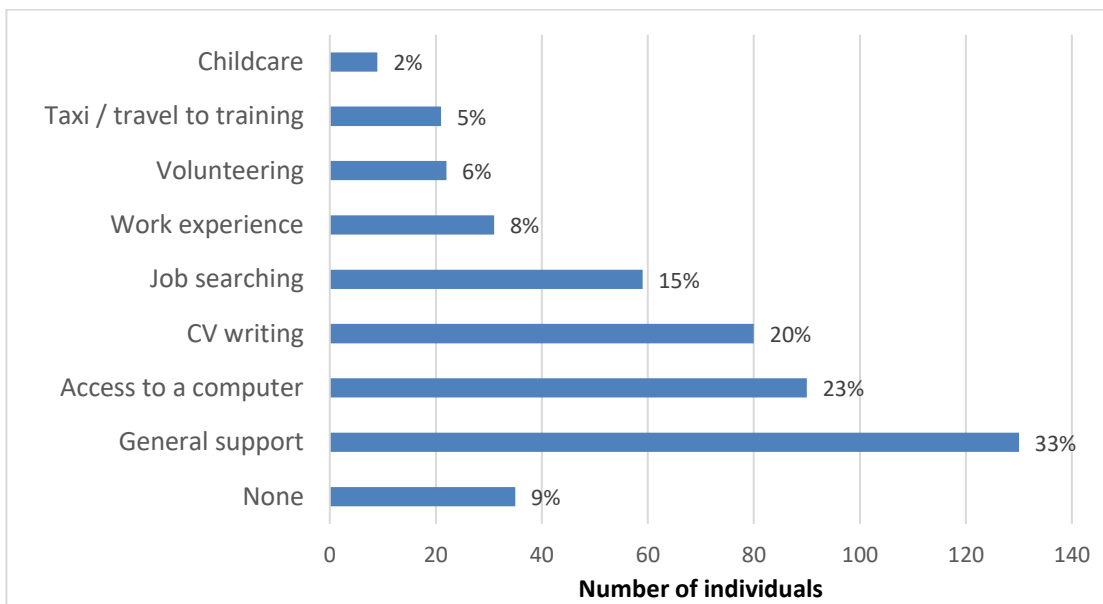
Source: York Consulting fieldwork 2022 Base:330 respondents

Learner case journey 1

Mark came across WSfA2 in an adult learning brochure. He was employed as a photographer but wanted to change careers and work in a school environment. He undertook Emergency First Aid at Work and Level 2 Support work in schools with WSfA2.

He benefitted from mentoring and support offered as he took advantage of the CV writing support to adapt his CV to the education sector. WSfA2 also supported him in finding a school to undertake his placement for his level 2 course.

Under recommendation from a WSfA2 worker, he also took GCSE maths to achieve a grade C as his maths O-level was achieved in the 80's. He expressed feeling confident in the support he received and that the staff were knowledgeable to direct him towards the best courses and qualifications to set him up for his career change.

"All the support provided me with a better outlook and improved confidence to have a career change later in life."

Since completing this training, he has secured employment in a school. He has considered completing further training such as Level 3 Higher level teaching assistant course.

Source: York Consulting fieldwork, 2022

5.21 In relation to the training courses and qualifications delivered. LA staff were confident that participants were generally satisfied with the qualifications they received. This view was echoed in the survey with the majority (88%) of respondents stating they were quite or very satisfied with the training they received (Figure 5.3).

5.22 A variety of courses were on offer for participants throughout WSfA2. The most common courses included; food safety and hygiene, first aid, personal licence[15], health and safety, IT and digital skills, and personal, social and work related development. Other courses covered areas in construction, teaching and support, business administration, Welsh language and health and social care.

5.23 Qualitative responses relating to satisfaction included positive views towards staff, tailoring of support to meet their needs and good communication and teaching skills. A few respondents commented that they felt *'cared for'* throughout their qualification and that the staff were very approachable.

"The staff were approachable and treated you as adults, not talking down to you. Very good course but made fun to learn with teaching staff."

"From the minute I picked course to going through the teaching and assessments the staff were always there to help me. Their support made the course good for me."

"Our teacher was enthusiastic about what he was teaching us, and nothing was a bother. He went through things over and over till we were happy we understood it."

---

[15] understand licensing law, and the responsibilities involved with the sale of alcohol

5.24 The 2% of respondents showing dissatisfaction commented on the size of their classes being too large, disliked with teaching methods and not remembering course content.

Figure 5.3 Overall, how satisfied were you with the training you received?
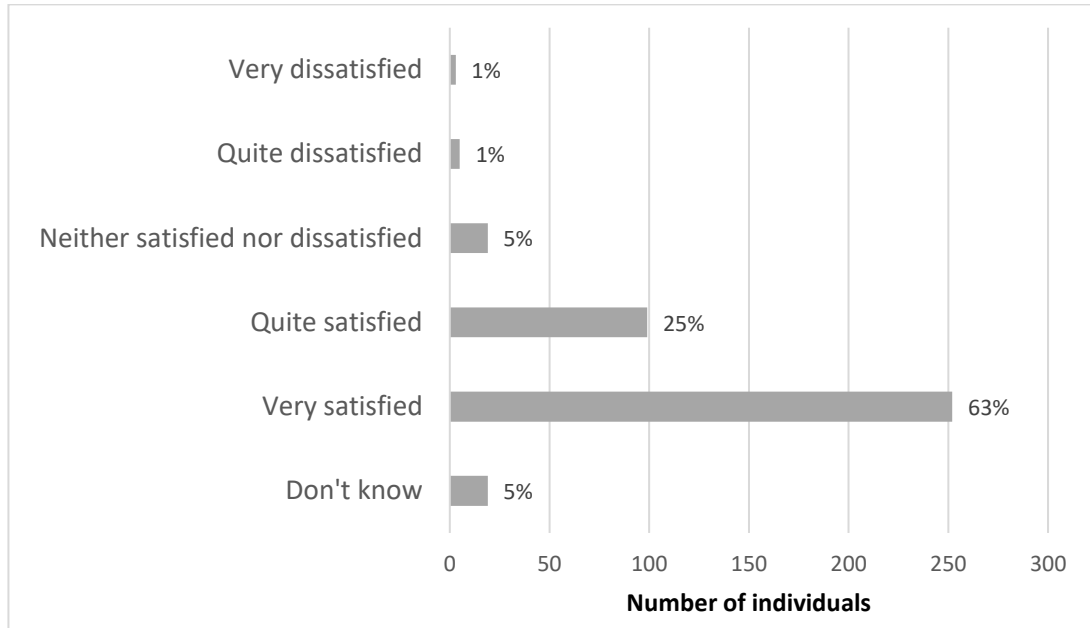
Source: York Consulting fieldwork 2022 Bae: 376 respondents

Challenges faced

5.25 LA staff involved in consultations were prompted to discuss any challenges they faced in the delivery of WSfA2. A common theme arose across all five areas related to the non-negotiable qualification ceiling for both the eligibility criteria and delivery which limits the potential number of participants. Reference to the First Aid at Work course, which has changed from a level 2 course to level 3, was commonly mentioned as this was a course which was regularly requested, but due to the change in level, the course could no longer be delivered through WSfA2.

5.26 In reference to the eligibility criteria some LA areas discussed demand from individuals holding qualifications greater than level 2, but wanting to change careers, thus wanting to undertake level 2 training but being unable to do so due to the criteria. Some LA areas argued that the eligibility criteria failed to take into account when qualifications were received. For example, individuals who held level 3 qualifications sometimes awarded decades ago, question their relevance towards the eligibility criteria. This often resulted in the exclusion of women who have recently returned from childcare (whose skills may need updating) and people who have recently changed occupation (who need occupation specific skills).

5.27 One respondent also raised a point that having the cap at level 2 for delivery can act as a barrier for low skilled and low paid workers to get out of their current situations as level 2 was still considered low-skilled. In these cases, practitioners referred participants onto other projects in order for them to progress.

5.28 Other challenges identified by project staff included:

- Reducing scepticism and raising awareness that funded training was available for employed workers.

- Attendance on some courses being greatly affected by participants. Other commitments on the day of delivery.

- The lack of follow-up to gather feedback about the impacts of the courses, although an acknowledgement was made that the objective of this project was for participants to gain qualifications, so the outcomes and impacts are not measured by the project.

- Challenges attributed to the COVID-19 outbreak have been summarised in a later section.

Outcomes and impacts

5.29 All five areas were satisfied with the outcomes they had achieved. Some regions explicitly mentioned sectors which saw a great deal of uptake including catering, cleaning, retail and notably HGV due to the recent national crisis in availability of drivers. Many areas were able to identify that participants were upskilling or gaining qualifications required for them to continue to carry out their current work, for example individuals renewing their Construction Skills Certification Scheme cards.

5.30 Many LA areas were also able to attribute an increase in job security and resilience to this project. They noted that participants engaged to re-skill or upskill in fear of redundancy due to the pandemic affecting a large proportion of low-skilled employment sectors such as hospitality and catering.

5.31 Just under two-thirds (65%) of surveyed participants (400) suggested that they had applied the skills or knowledge gained very or quite often since completing the training. Individuals who stated, they had not, or not very often, used the skills or knowledge gained shared reasonings for this such as First Aid certificates being a requirement, but not having needed to deliver any First Aid. Other reasons provided in the survey and interviews included development of Welsh language skills, in case, they required or the development of IT skills which did not relate to their current job role.

Figure 5.4 How often have you applied the skills and / or knowledge that you gained from the training in your day-to-day job?
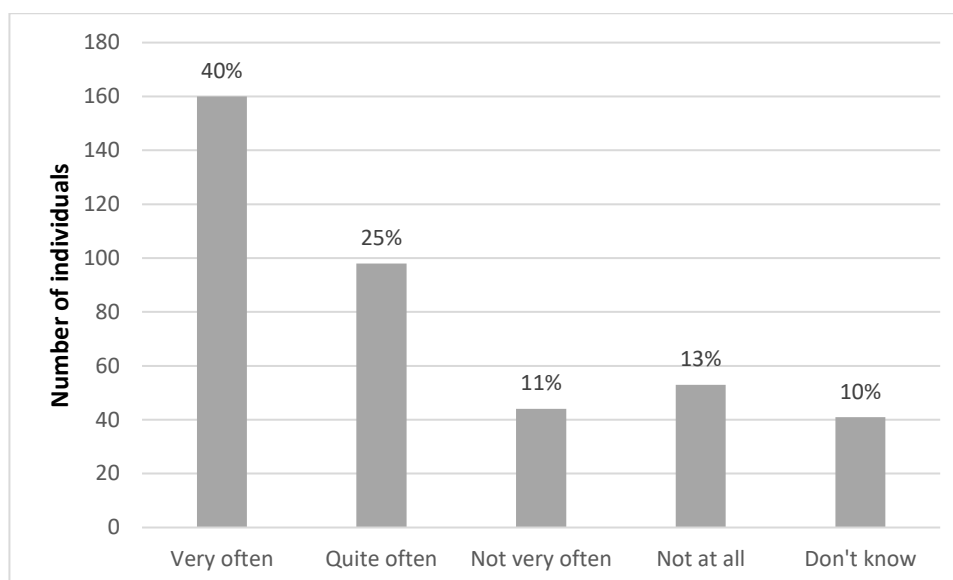
5.32 Impacts resulting from the qualifications gained through WSfA2 were mentioned as difficult to capture and quantify. Many LA areas discussed that promotions and career changes do not happen immediately once courses have been completed, therefore these impacts are not captured when action plans are reviewed. Many therefore found it difficult to discuss the longer-term impacts, other than a few cases where participants had been the focus of case studies for the project.

5.33 Many LA areas found it challenging to attribute the qualifications gained through WSfA2 to impacts such as promotions. This was ascribed to the absence of information gained from participants after completion of support from the project, so accurate conclusions could not be drawn other than for a few specific case studies.

5.34 The telephone survey of 400 participants showed that the most common outcome achieved through WSfA2, recorded by half the sample, was improved confidence (50%) followed by improving skills related to their job (46%). Over a third of survey respondents also specified that they had gained a further qualification as a result of WSfA2, demonstrating progression in learning.

5.35 Less commonly, survey respondents identified changing roles, receiving promotions and pay rises (Figure 5.5). The responses to this question were broadly representative of all respondent characteristics.

Figure 5.5 Which of the following outcomes have you experienced since undertaking the training?
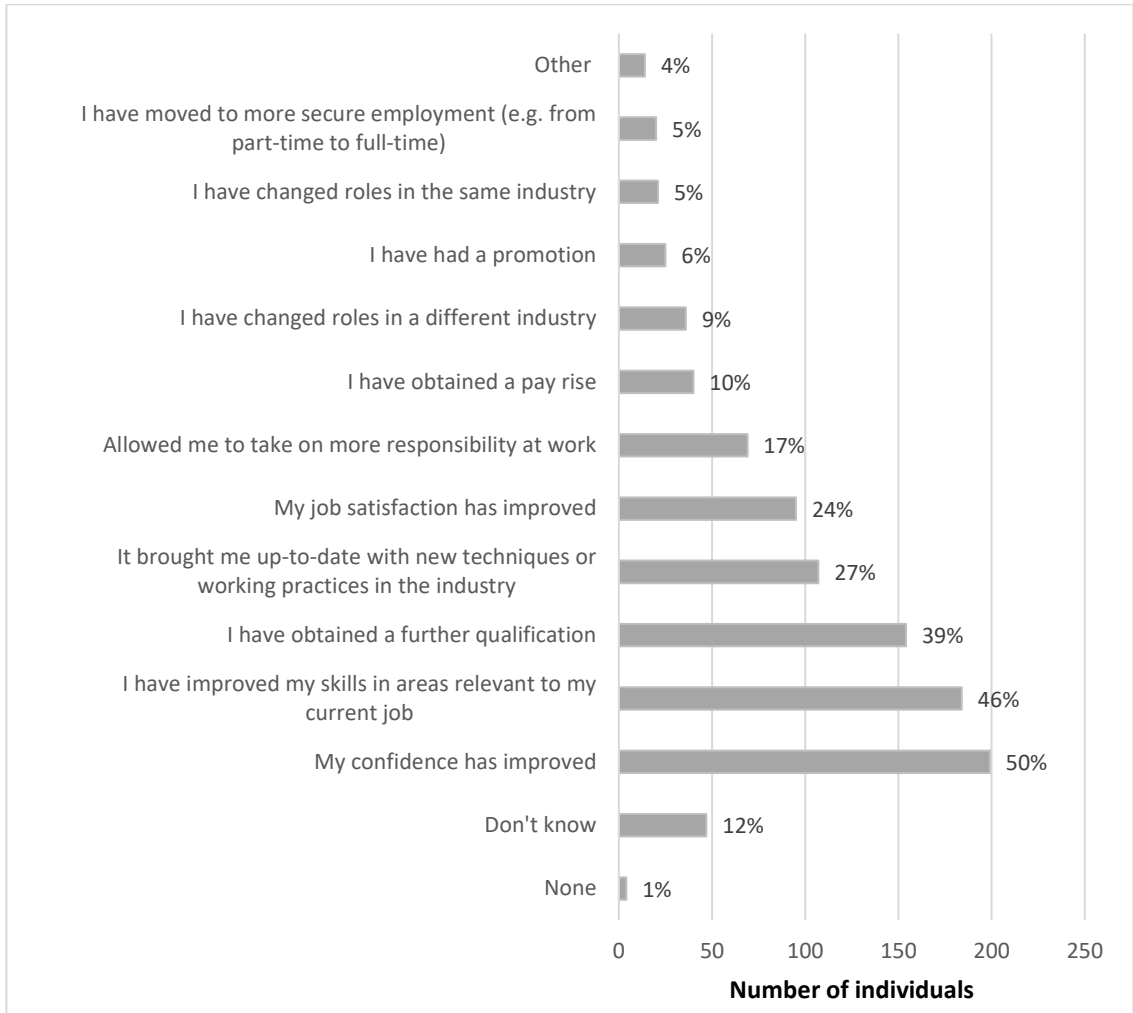
Source: York Consulting fieldwork 2022 Base: 400 respondents

Additionality

5.36 The telephone survey of 400 participants asked how much training they believe they would have received without WSfA2. Table 5.1 shows that 42% identified that without this support they would have received less or no training at all. This rises to 80% if those that said they did not know are excluded. This demonstrates the additionality of the project for a number of individuals.

Table 5.1 How much training do you think you would have received from your employer without the Working Skills for Adults funded training?

	Number of responses	**Percentage**
No training	96	24%
Less training	72	18%
The same amount of training	43	11%
Don't know	183	46%
Total	**394**	**100%**

Note: Total may not add to 100% due to rounding

Source: York Consulting participant survey 2022. Base=394 who responded to this question

5.37   Half of the respondents to the telephone survey also identified that as a result of the training they received, they are now very positive about learning. An additional 27% suggested they were quite positive. This suggests that as a result of accessing training through WSfA2 they may be more likely to engaged in education or training again in the future, further developing their skills and knowledge.

Table 5.2 As a direct result of the training, to what extent do you feel more positive about learning?
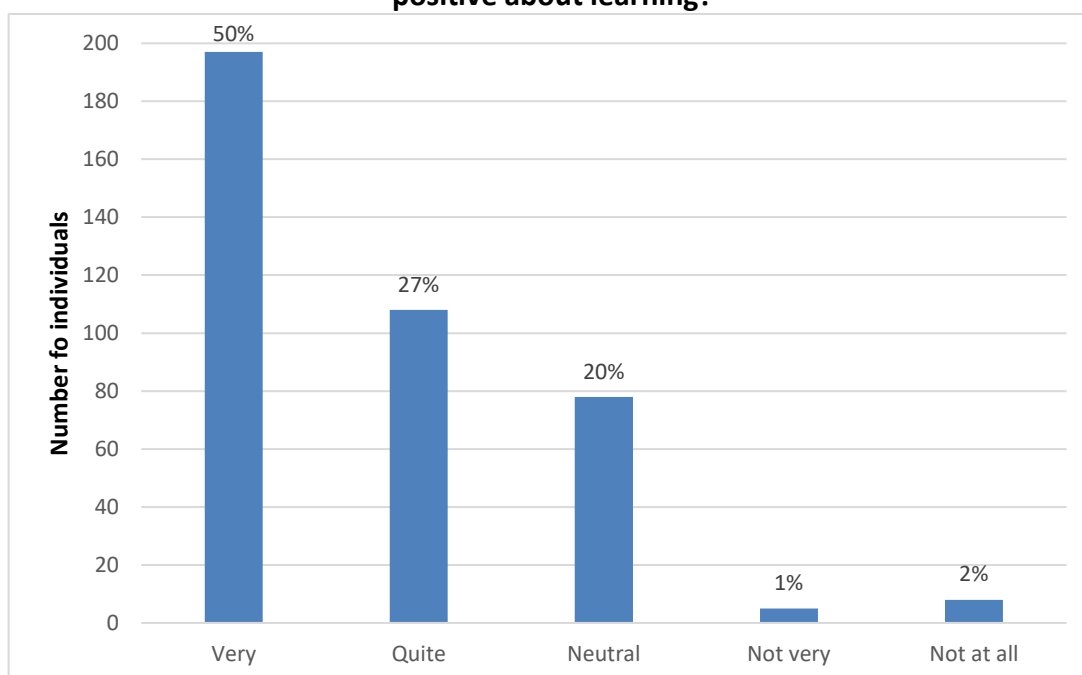
Source: York Consulting fieldwork 2022 Base: 396 respondents

5.38   A total of 92% of 395 respondents suggested they were somewhat, or very likely to recommend the training they accessed to a colleague or friend demonstrating their overall satisfaction with the support.

COVID-19

5.39 The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns provided challenges for all areas involved in WSfA2. The pandemic affected both the marketing approach and delivery. All areas were able to fulfil the needs of WSfA2 participants via online delivery, to varying degrees.

5.40 All five areas managed to deliver online training to continue the delivery during lockdowns. Some LA areas were able to work with local providers to continue training through Microsoft Teams and Skype, others accessed remote online training providers to deliver all courses. Respondents noted the challenges faced regarding the examination aspect required for some courses as this was required to be completed in-person. In some cases, participants completed their exams at a later date when restrictions were eased. In other cases, revision sessions were provided for individuals experiencing a large gap between their training and when they could take their exams.

5.41 Some participants furloughed during the COVID-19 lockdowns experienced declines in their mental health. In some cases, where appropriate, participants were offered non-accredited courses online to increase their productivity and give them something to work towards.

5.42 Reponses to the transfer of delivery to online course varied between regions. Some LA areas highlighted that the process was very quick, others found it more difficult to find providers to deliver online training.

5.43 Moving to online delivery affected the range and number of courses made available to participants. Mostly, LA areas noted that vocational courses requiring hand-on aspects for delivery were the ones affected most. Some LA areas did note significant reductions in the number of courses made available during periods of online-only learning.

> **Example: Merthyr Tydfil's response to COVID-19.**
>
> Merthyr Tydfil adapted swiftly as delivery of qualifications started online within one month. However, their engagement approach was greatly impacted as they became solely reliant on social media, when previously support workers were reaching candidates through face-to-face marketing. Attempts were made to continue all delivery online, however, due to some external courses not delivering online and the need for assessment elements to be completed in person, e.g. Essential Skills Wales, overall, they lost about half of their courses and qualifications when having to deliver online.

5.44 Participant numbers decreased in all regions during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting periods of lockdown.

5.45 A couple of LA areas identified a subsequent challenge of getting participants to finish courses they had started during lockdowns and furlough once they returned to work.

5.46 Longer term impacts due to the necessary change in delivery highlighted in many regions the preference for some learners to complete courses online due to the reduction in barriers such as childcare and travel expenses that are not required. Some LA areas also discussed an increase in interest in courses as participants are looking for greater job security after their experiences during the lockdowns and restrictions.

> **Example: Blaenau Gwent's response to COVID-19.**
>
> As a result of the pandemic, participation targets changed from an average of 10 participant starts per month to 2. From September 2020 the project team was able to engage 8 to 9 participants per month. By December 2020 the project team were back on track to meet overall project targets. Since transitioning to online delivery there has been a long-term preference for short courses focussed on transferrable skills. More courses have been delivered fully online or as a blended approach due to a greater level of flexibility and fewer barriers, such as travel requirements and finding community locations for training to take place.

Effective practice and future considerations

5.47 All areas were positive in their comments about WSfA2, with many stating aspects of the project that worked well so should continue, such as:

- Responding to need and demand of participants rather than organising courses first and attempting to fill them.

- Being creative with the courses offered.

- Ensuring there were enough delivery and support staff available to respond to demand.

- In one area they highlighted having an internal bank of tutoring staff that allowed for a wider variety of courses to be delivered, and to help respond to need.

- Maintaining online delivery of learning as an option as more individuals preferred this method of delivery.

- Social media marketing.

- Joined up marketing and triage approaches within LA areas.

5.48 A future consideration mentioned in all areas was refinement of the eligibility and delivery of qualifications above level 2. Many felt that the delivery should be increased to level 3 to meet more needs of participants before having to refer them on to other projects. Some also discussed the need for flexibility when assessing individuals' prior qualifications as sector and completion dates needed to be considered.

5.49 Some respondents felt the enrolment process could have been streamlined, made more efficient and less laborious. This could include paperless enrolment without the requirement of wet signatures.

5.50   Finally, a small number of references were made towards greater consideration for online courses, as this was not considered before COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, greater use of social media contact and approaching employers to boost engagement was now being utilised.

6   PROJECT PERFORMANCE

6.1   The target number of participants to be engaged across all five local authorities was 4,973, a total of 3,503 were profiled to have gained an essential skill or technical or job specific qualification upon leaving.

6.2   By the end of March 2023, a total of 5,113 participants had engaged with the project and 3,525 had gained a qualification (Figure 6.1). These numbers signify that 103% of the target number of individuals participated and 101% of the target number to gain a qualification had been achieved.

Figure 6.1 Current performance against end of project targets
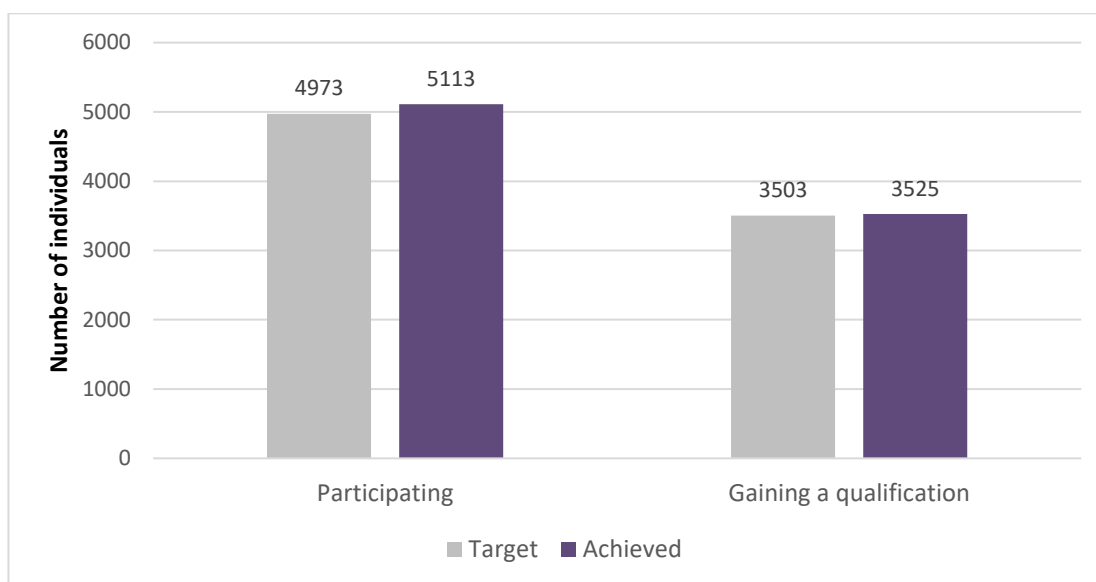
Source: Participant report 2023 from Torfaen central management team

6.3   Data had been gathered by the lead local authority, Torfaen, for the number of participants engaged and achieving such qualifications for each local authority up to March 2023. Breakdowns by local authority for comparison between the profiled targets and the actual numbers achieved can be seen in Appendix D.

6.4   Alongside end of project targets, monthly profiles tracked progression over time. Shown in Figure 6.2, the numbers participating in the project and those achieving qualifications were consistently above the profiled figures in the earlier stages of the project, however, the numbers of individuals gaining qualifications dipped below the profiled number from the end of October 2020. This was not matched in the overall numbers participating, as this only briefly dropped below profiled figures in June 2021.

6.5   In March 2022 a reprofile was conducted to split some of the remaining target numbers to be achieved between the LA areas that were overperforming. As a result, by the end of March 2023, both targets had been achieved. Given the seismic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, this represents a clear achievement for the project against a uniquely challenging operational background.

Figure 6.2 Number of participants against profiled targets
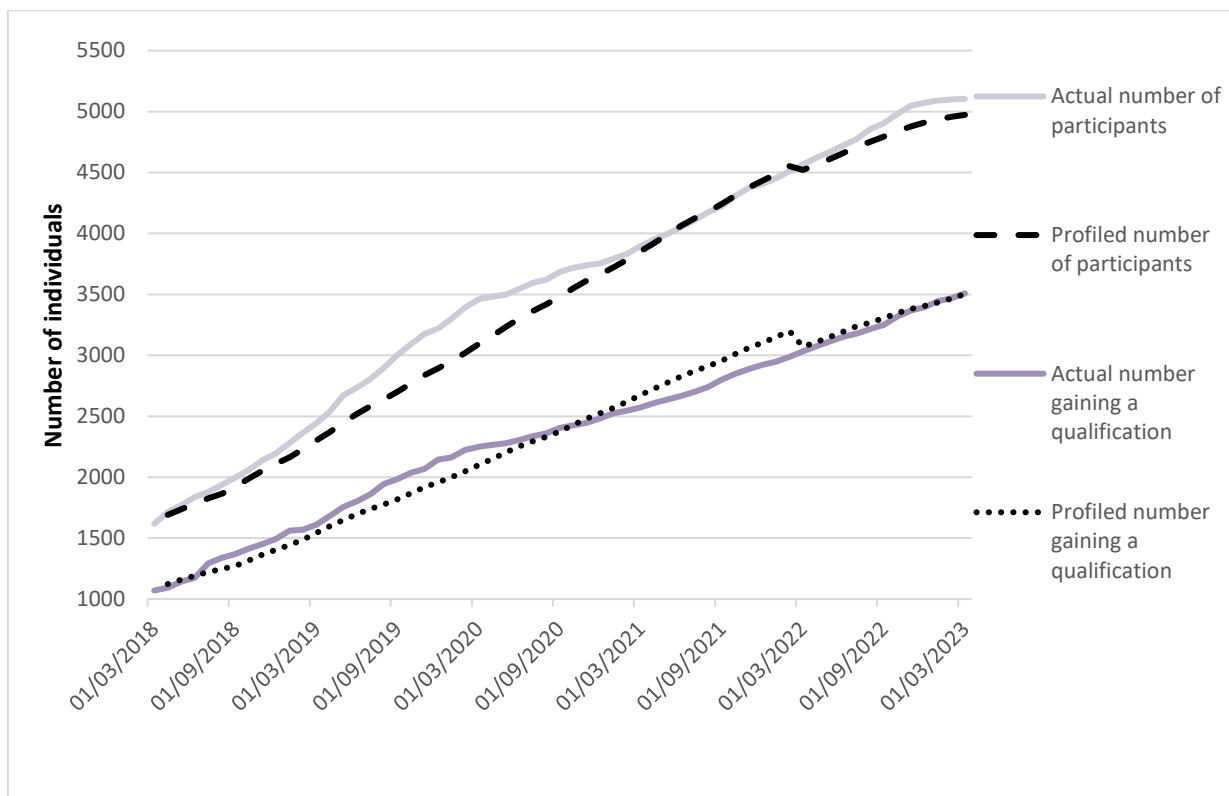
6.6   Three of the five local authorities consistently engaged a greater number of participants than their profiled targets, namely Torfaen, Caerphilly and Merthyr Tydfil.

6.7   Life Leisure Trust in Blaenau Gwent performed above target in reference to the number of participants until the end of April 2020. Bridgend experienced underperformance throughout delivery from 2019 to 2022 due to their delay in starting delivery. As a result of the reprofile in March 2022 Life Leisure Trust and Bridgend were able to meet or surpass their profiled targets until the end of the project.
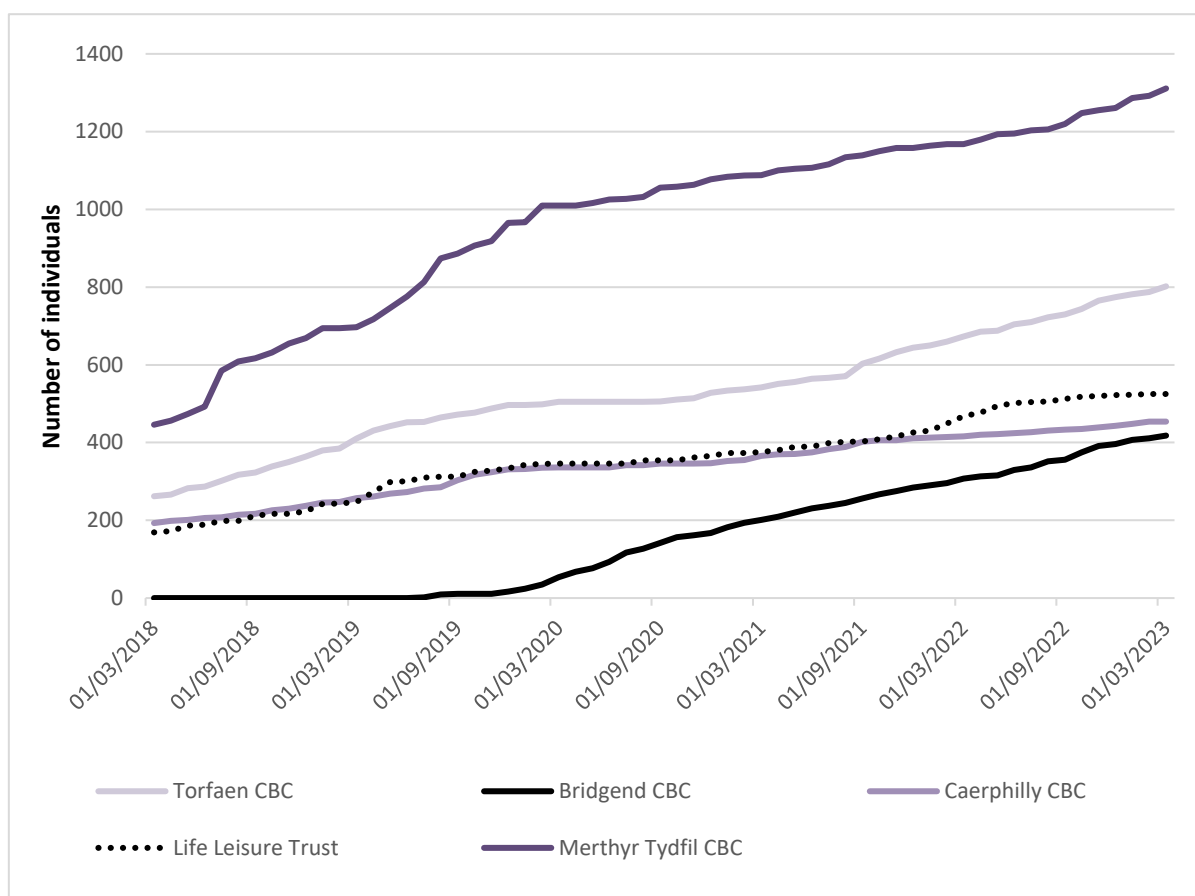
Figure 6.3 Number of participants by local authority

Source: Participant reports 2018 -2023 from Torfaen central management team

6.8   As of March 2023, the number of participants engaged in all LA areas had been achieved with overperformance by all LAs against reprofiled numbers. This resulted in an over performance of 140 in total for the project.

Table 6.1 Number of participants engaged by March 2023

	Profile numbers to March 23	Actual numbers to March 23	Difference	Percentage of profile achieved
Torfaen	1154	1227	73	106%
Bridgend	631	645	14	102%
Caerphilly	688	715	27	104%
Life Leisure Trust	692	707	15	102%
Merthyr Tydfil	1808	1827	19	101%
Overall	**4973**	**5113**	**140**	**103%**

Source: Participant reports 2018 -2023 from Torfaen central management team

6.9   The number of participants gaining a qualification by local authority demonstrates a similar pattern to that of the numbers engaged with the project.

Figure 6.4 Number of participants gaining a qualification, by local authority
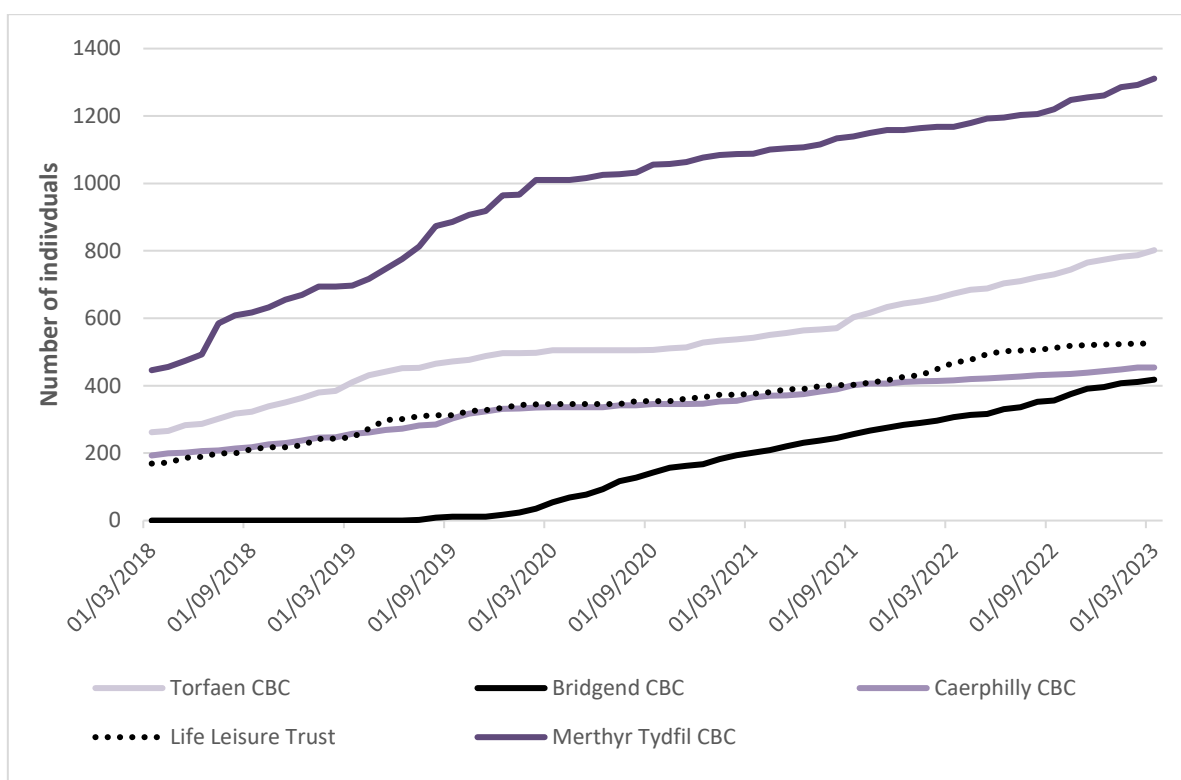
6.10   Overall, the project performed at a 69% rate for the proportion of participants gaining qualifications, one percentage points below the profiled target for the end of the project.

6.11   The variation in number of participants gaining a qualification compared to profiled numbers is shown in

6.12   Table 6.2. It shows that overall 3,5025 participants gained a qualification by the end of March 2023, exceeding the profiled target when combining all areas.

Table 6.2 Number of participants gaining a qualification by March 2023

	Profiled number to March 2023	Actual number to March 2023	Difference	Percentage of profile achieved
Torfaen	815	815	0	100%
Bridgend	407	418	+11	103%
Caerphilly	470	454	-16	97%
Life Leisure Trust	518	525	+7	101%
Merthyr Tydfil	1293	1315	+22	102%
Overall	**3503**	**3525**	**+22**	**101%**

6.13 Figure 6.5 shows the percentage of participants who have gained a qualification calculated from the cumulative number of participants by month. The proportion between the start of the project and March fluctuated between 64% and 69%. There was a decrease in the conversion rate throughout 2019 to 2021 with a subsequent increase until the end of the project.

Figure 6.5 Cumulative percentage of participants gaining a qualification
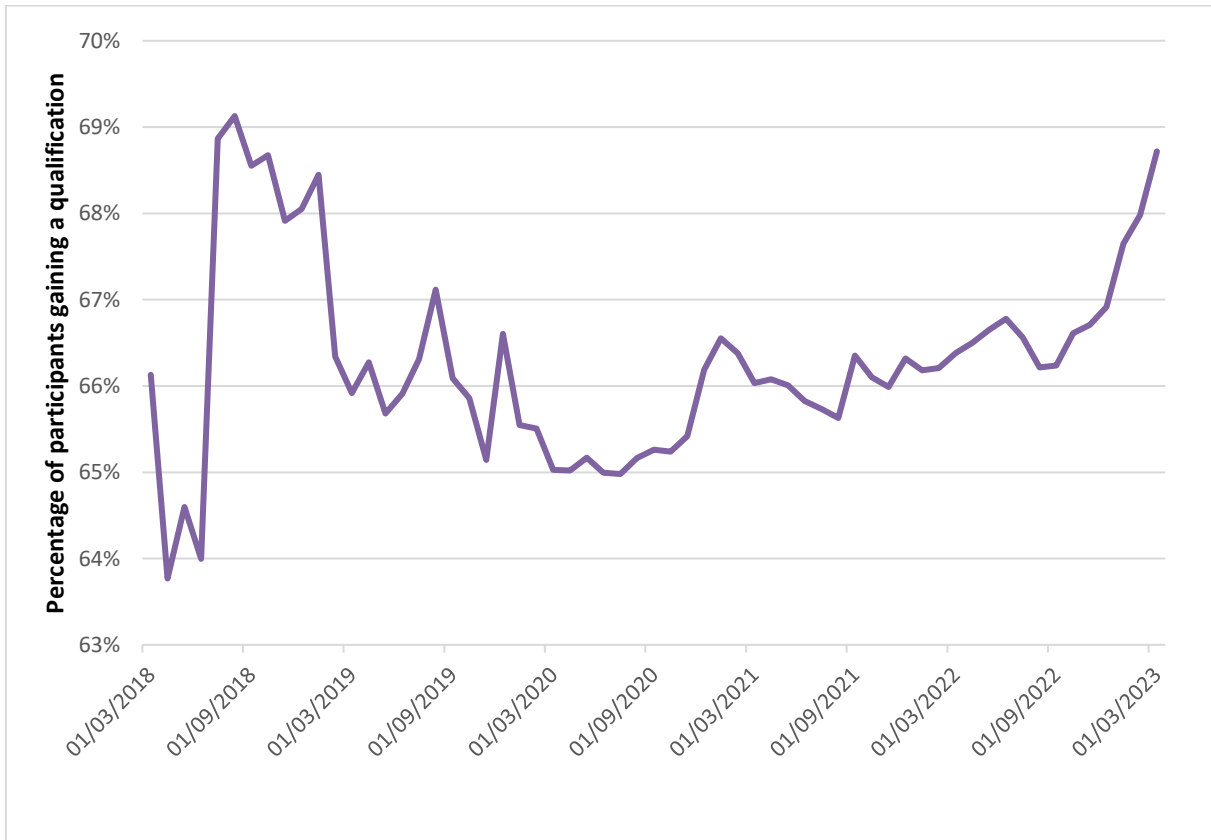
Source: Participant reports 2018 -2023 from Torfaen central management team.

6.14 In conclusion, with 103% of the profiled target number of participants engaged and 101% of the target number of participants gaining a qualification by the end of the project the overall performance of the project was achieved.

6.15 Of those who achieved a qualification 2,494 (71%) were CQFW Level 2, 711 (20%) were below CQFW Level 1 and 320 (9%) were at CQFW Level 1.

Early leavers

6.16 Participants who left the project without any qualifications or training completed were classified as early leavers. Reasons for participants being classified as early leavers which were shared during fieldwork included:

- Withdrawal due to work commitments

- Illness (including COVID)

- Pregnancy

- Changing job roles prior to completion

> **Learner case journey 2**
>
> Steven came across WSfA2 on his local authority website. He was searching for training courses to improve his IT skills to become a receptionist at his workplace. After discussion with WSfA2 staff, he started a 6-week IT course at a local centre. However, he could not complete the course due to work commitments. During the course he was needed at work to cover colleague's shifts and work extra hours so could no longer attend the course.
>
> For the sessions he did attend, he was introduced to Excel which he had never used before. However, he has not used any of the skills he gained in those sessions as he has been unable to move into the IT based receptionist role without completing the IT training.

Source: York Consulting fieldwork, 2022

Performance facilitators

6.17 During the final interviews with LA delivery staff, individuals highlighted key facilitators they believe supported the achievement of project targets in relation to participant numbers and qualifications achieved. These included:

- **Reprofiling**: The reprofiling that took place during the project allowed for realistic but challenging targets to be set whilst also allowing for those over-achieving to absorb undelivered volume.

- **Regional collaboration**: Many LA areas identified that the collaborative approach to the project supported project delivery as LA areas worked cooperatively sharing best practice and in some cases sharing course delivery across borders.

- **Central management:** All LA areas emphasised the effect of the central management team in ensuring project progression. Stakeholders reported feeling well-informed and supported by a knowledgeable central team at Torfaen.

Participant characteristics

Prior qualifications

6.18 The project also outlined targets in relation in participants' previous qualification levels. Table 6.3 shows the targets for number of participants with no formal qualities and those up to and including Level 2. These figures show an overperformance for those with formal qualifications, but an underperformance for those with no previous formal qualifications.

Table 6.3 Target participation and participants gaining qualifications by prior qualifications

	Number of participants engaged		Number of participants gaining a qualification	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
Participants with no formal qualifications	1432	1339	1017	935
Participants with up to and including a Level 2 qualification	3541	3774	2486	2590
Total	**4973**	**5113**	**3503**	**3525**

Source: WSFA2 Reprofile Options Paper 2022

6.19 Analysis of previous qualifications (Table 6.4) of all 5,113 participants demonstrated that just under two-thirds of engaged participants already had level 2 qualifications (64%) followed by just over a quarter with none (26%).

Table 6.4 Engaged participants' previous level of qualification

Previous qualification	Number	Percentage
None	1339	26%
Below CQFW Level 1	56	1%
CQFW Level 1	459	9%
CQFW Level 2	3259	64%
Total	**5113**	**100%**

Source: WSfA2 Participant database, 7th March 2023

6.20 Participants were most likely to have achieved a level 2 qualification during their time with WSfA2 than any other qualification, irrespective of their previous qualification level (Figure 6.6).

6.21 Across all previous qualification levels, participants were least likely to gain a level 1 qualifications from WSfA2. The proportion of early leavers (those leaving without a qualification) ranged from 21% to 34% with those previously holding level 1 qualifications most likely to leave early.

Figure 6.6 Percentage of qualification level gained split by previous qualification level

Source: WSfA2 Participant database, 7th March 2023
Note: total participants with existing and achieved qualification recorded = 4,935

Cost effectiveness analysis

6.22 The cost per participant was £1,914 based on the same calculation methods made in the Business Plan which profiled a unit cost of £2,004. The lower actual cost compared with profile is due to the higher numbers of participants engaged than planned.

6.23 The value of £1,914 was just below an average cost estimated by the European Commission[16] looking across similar projects over a similar timescale of £2,145.

6.24 The cost per qualification was £2,776 which was very similar to the calculation made in the Business Plan which profiled a unit cost of £2,763.

6.25 This indicates that the project has delivered activities in a cost effective way.

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[16] European Commission 2020 Study for the Evaluation of ESF support to Education and Training (Thematic Objective 10) Final report Page 132, Table 15

Participant demographics

6.26 On 7th March 2023, for the overall project, the following proportion of participants were recorded against the demographic categories, shown in Figure 6.7.

6.27 Four of these indicators are on or above the target set for the end of the project in December 2022.

6.28 The targets set for project level demographic indicators shows that by the end of the project four of the six targets had been reached. The proportion of participants identifying as; disabled or having a work limiting health condition (WLHC), migrant, those with caring responsibilities and older people (aged 54+).

Figure 6.7 Participation against demographic indicator targets
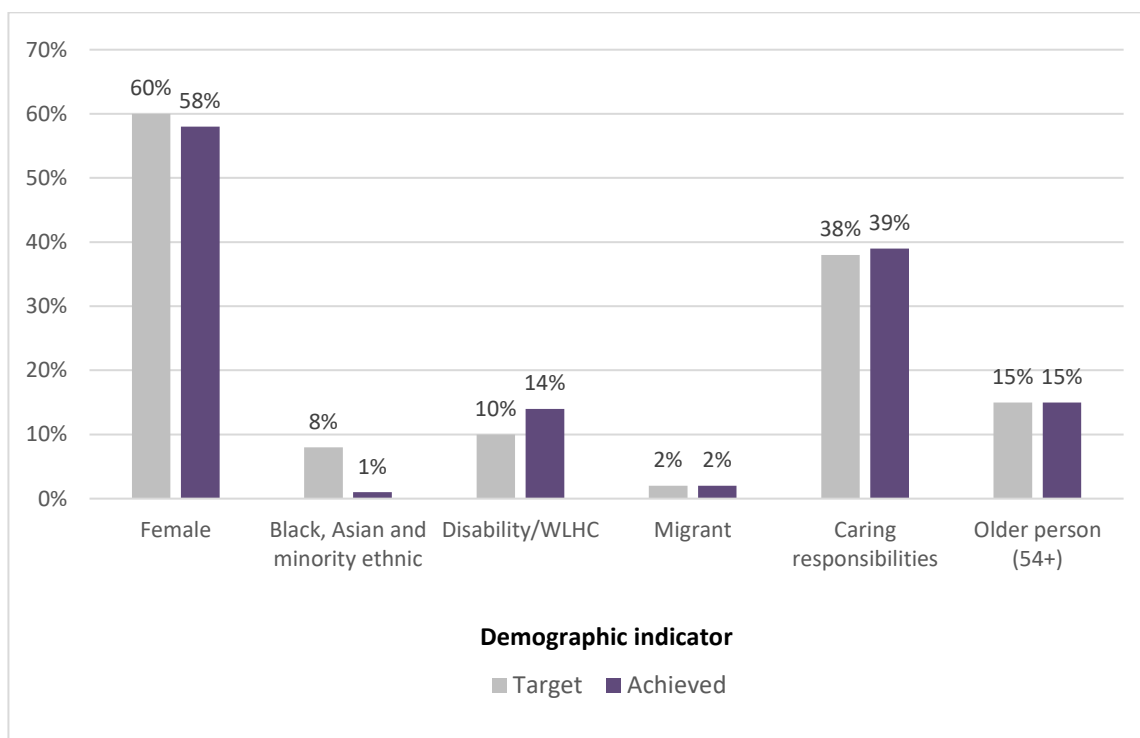
Source: WSfA2 Participant database, 7th March 2023

6.29 The overall project delivered a 69% conversion rate of participants achieving a qualification, comparisons with groups of individuals with particular characteristics is shown in Figure 6.8. This shows that females, participants from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, and older people (aged 54+) had a greater conversion rate than that for all participants.

6.30 Participants identifying as being disabled or having a work limiting health condition had the lowest conversion rate at 4 percentage points below the conversion rate for all participants.

Figure 6.8 Proportion achieving a qualification by demographic indicator
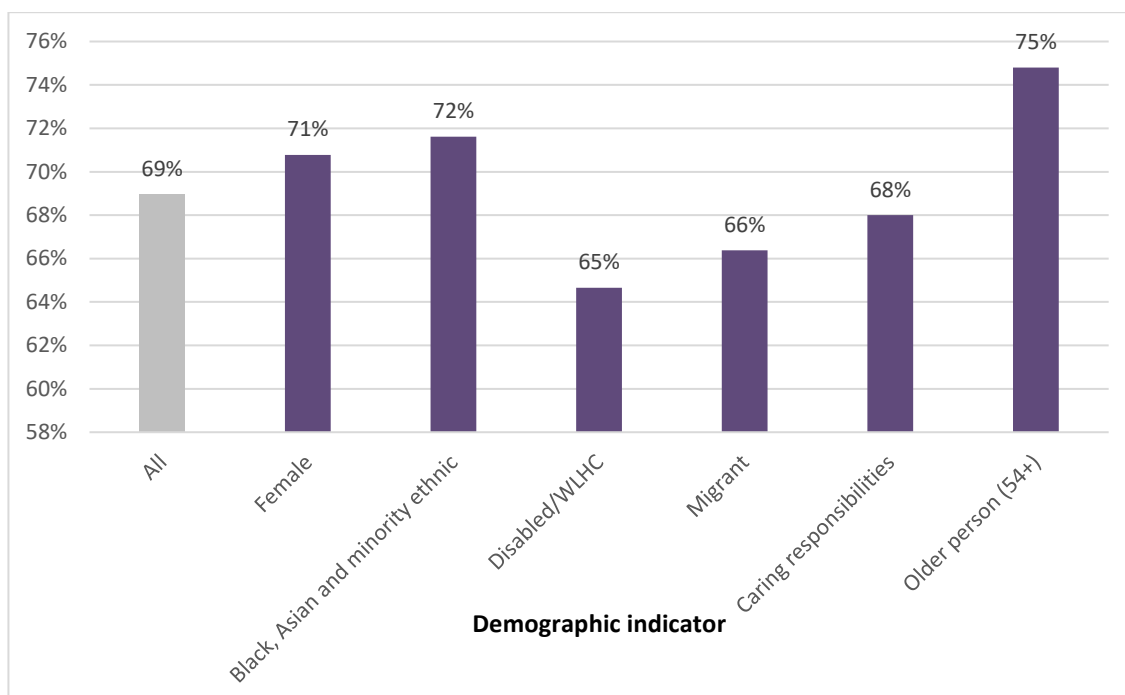
6.31   A breakdown by participant characteristics is shown in Table 6.5. This shows that there were similar proportions achieving each qualification level across the range of participant characteristics.

Table 6.5 Qualification level achieved by participant characteristics

	CQFW Level 2	CQFW Level 1	below CQFW Level 1	No qualification
Female	1624 (55%)	71 (2%)	412 (14%)	870 (29%)
Back, Asian and minority ethnic	38 (51%)	3 (4%)	12 (16%)	21 (28%)
Disability/ WLHC	334 (46%)	54 (7%)	84 (12%)	258 (35%)
Migrant	54 (47%)	6 (5%)	17 (15%)	39 (34%)
Caring responsibilities	978 (49%)	110 (6%)	266 (13%)	637 (32%)
Older person (54+)	373 (54%)	25 (4%)	117 (17%)	176 (25%)
All participants	**2494 (49%)**	**320 (6%)**	**711 (14%)**	**1588 (31%)**

Female participants

6.32   Females made up 58% of the number of participants engaged by March 2023, just below the target for the project (60%).

6.33 Female participants were referred onto Chwarea Teg, a charity supporting the economic development of women, where appropriate.

Example: Female participation (Torfaen)

A female participant identified that her work situation was affecting her mental health. She was supported to increase her confidence, skills and Torfaen supported her in gaining a new position within a new employer.

Source: WSfA2 Progress report claim period 24

Case study: Trish

Trish struggled with learning at school due to poor eyesight and not wanting to wear glasses, leaving school at 16 with no qualifications, she left her work training programme to become a stay-at-home mum. Confessing to having no computer skills, she lacked confidence in her own ability when she started WSfA2. Trish stuck with the remote video sessions overcoming so many barriers. Trish felt more confident overall using the computer as a result of the training and is capable of utilizing the skills she learnt for her day-to-day activities - accessing emails, downloading files, searching the Internet, accessing word and amending documents.

Trish enjoyed learning, practicing tasks and was very proud of showing off her new abilities to her grandchildren. Trish has used her new computer skills to keep in contact with her family/friends, during this time over video call. She stated it had been wonderful to be able to use the technology to see them.

Source: WSfA2 Progress report claim period 23

Black, Asian and minority ethnic participants

6.34 The greatest difference can be seen regarding the proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic heritage participants which was 7 percentage points lower than the project target of 8%. The percentage range for the Black, Asian and minority ethnic population across the five LA areas was between 1.1% and 2.7%[17]. The proportion achieved in March, shown in Figure 6.7, is within this range, albeit, at the lower end. Throughout the delivery of the project 8% looked to be an unachievably ambitious target.

6.35 A particular challenge identified by some LAs was participants choosing not to identify themselves as Black, Asian and minority ethnic, thus potentially under-reporting these numbers.

6.36 There were some instances where these groups were reached including a large number of participants in the Polish community in Merthyr Tydfil.

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[17] StatsWales, 2022. Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Torfaen (June 2021); Merthyr Tydfil (December 2020) due to small numbers in June 2021

Example: Polish participants (Merthyr Tydfil)

Merthyr Tydfil was able to support some members of the Polish community who struggled with English whilst others held qualifications which were not recognised in the UK. WSfA2 was able to support them to complete Essential Skills and courses relating to their qualifications which were not recognised in Wales.

Source: YCL fieldwork, 2021

Case study: Sannah

Sannah, an individual of Asian heritage, was a self-referral to the project as she was interested in a career change and wanted to train as a classroom assistant. To support Sannah with the career change she accessed several work-related on-line qualifications through Working Skills for Adults2, she completed Health & Safety in the Workplace, Food Safety, Basic life support (BLS) and use of an automated external defibrillator (AED). She was also supported with applying for classroom assistant posts and was forwarded a link to the Family Information Service regarding childminding training.

Source: WSfA2 Progress report claim period 24

Disability and WLHC

6.37 Throughout the operation a number of participants who identified as being disabled or having a work limiting health condition (WLHC) were engaged. This meant the target of 10% was surpassed for the project with 14% of participants engaged identifying themselves in this category.

Case study: Adam

Adam was in his early twenties and had autism spectrum disorder (ASD). As far as his schooling was concerned, he attended Alternative Provision because of his condition and the education he received, he reports, was not challenging or wide enough for him. As a result, he felt like he had missed out on so much and was motivated to gain as much knowledge as possible subsequently.

Adam was supported to continue to complete his English course digitally throughout lockdown. He worked to complete his Level 2 Essential Communication skills and Level 2 Essential Application of Number skills, as he left school without GCSEs in maths and English and recognised their importance.

Since signing up with Working Skills for Adults 2 for his Essential Skills training, he began to attend college part time and was making excellent progress in his ICT course.

Source: WSfA2 Progress report claim period 24

Migrants

6.38 The target of 2% of engaged participants being migrants was achieved by March 2023.

Participants with caring responsibilities

6.39 Nearly two-fifths of participants to June 2021 (39%) had caring responsibilities, one percentage point above the target of 38%.

Learner case journey 3

Tracey heard about WSfA2 from a friend. She was looking to change job roles as she was a foster carer with her last placement. She was interested in using her experience to work in a school setting.

WSfA2 organised her to attend an Introduction to Teaching and Learning course alongside career preparation. In order to complete the qualification, she was supplied with a laptop to be able to access the training as her caring responsibilities meant she could not easily access shared computers in hubs or libraries.

As a result of completing her training and having support with CV and interview prep, she secured a job at the local school commencing the following September after her course.

Source: YCL fieldwork, 2023

Older People (aged 54+ years)

6.40 The proportion of participants aged 54 and over, by June 2021 was one percentage point below the target of 15%.

Learner case journey 4

Rowena came across Working Skills for Adults 2 on social media and through the council's advertisement. She was interested in the project as it was offering funded courses and she had recently moved into a new role where she needed to update her first aid training and wanted to complete a customer service course, related to her new role.

The courses were both 1-day courses which were completed in-person at local centres. She did not require any additional support related to accessing these courses, or for any other employment support. The sessions were run in groups of between 8 and 10 people which she deemed a good size.

Overall, she found the courses and being involved in the project *"Very straightforward and helpful"*. Although she has not completed any additional training since this, she was confident that she would be able to in the future.

Since completing the training, *"I have not used the first aid training directly but it was a qualification I needed. The customer services level 2 really improved my confidence moving into an office management role in groundworks from my previous role at a university"*.

Source: YCL fieldwork, 2022

Cross Cutting Theme (CCT) project level indicators

6.41 Many LA areas were able to identify some cross cutting theme case level indicators although some were less confident about what examples could be given to support other case level indicators. An individual from one of the LAs expressed a potential for greater guidance from the CCT Champion to be provided surrounding some of the case level indicators, to break them down and share examples of meeting these, as they may have been met without them knowing.

6.42 The project planned to contribute towards the Cross Cutting Themes of Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming including the Welsh Language, Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion. Case study examples referring to the CCT project level indicators are outlined below.

Female participation in STEM

6.43 A couple of LA areas expressed difficulties trying to reach participants that would be included under the female participation in STEM theme with reasons including the inherent difficulty in challenging these stereotypes in lower skilled work but also STEM roles generally being associated to higher skills level roles than level 2.

Example: Female participation in STEM (Bridgend)

During the first quarter of 2020:

- 1 female participant completed a Sage Book Keeping Stage 1 course.

- 1 female participant began a Sage Book Keeping Stage 2 course.

- 1 female participant began a Sage 50 Accounts course.

- 1 female participant completed a 10 day PTS course (Railway personal track safety).

Source: Torfaen management CCT project level indicators

Positive action measures – disabled people

6.44 A target was set of 10% of all participants engaged to identify as being disabled or have a WLHC. By the project end a total of 14% was achieved. Participants who identify as being disabled or having a work limiting health condition were supported through WSFA2. In addition staff training was undertaken to support their communication skills during project delivery.

Caerphilly Example: Document accessibility (Caerphilly)

In Caerphilly the WSfA2 staff attended Document Accessibility training. This course raised awareness on how to produce documents suitable for all abilities, for example reducing the content of a document and adding pictures to correspond with literature to make it user friendly for those with learning difficulties.

Source: WSfA2Progress report claim period 24

Positive action measures – disabled people.

6.45 To support participants to engage with and access training on offer WSfA2 staff ensured suitable arrangements were made including; venue accessibility, additional tutoring support, reasonable adjustments from qualification boards and the provision of interpreters where required.

Example: Positive action measures – disabled people. (Caerphilly)

In early 2020 the Caerphilly delivery team provided sign language interpreters on Food Safety courses to support a group of learners with hearing impediments. The Caerphilly staff have also attended a session on basic sign language to help them support and engage participants with hearing impairments.

Source: Torfaen management CCT project level indicators

Example: Positive action measures – disabled people. (Merthyr Tydfil)

In Merthyr Tydfil (Apr-June 19) one disabled participant was able to access training through WSFA2 due to adaptations that were provided by the team. He has severe cerebral palsy and was a wheelchair user, for this reason we were limited as to where the training could be carried out as lifts were essential, so the training was delivered at an appropriate venue. As the participant also had a considerable speech impairment and little fine/ gross motor control in his upper limbs he is unable to use a pen and so special permission had to be obtained from Pearson Edexcel so that tutors could type up his portfolio whilst he dictated the answers. This course provided the participant with the confidence to enable him to believe he can move forward in his life, he then signed up to complete an apprenticeship with a partner organisation. He said "the course has given me a new confidence and I will miss the sessions and I am looking forward to joining the IT Modern Apprenticeship".

Source: Torfaen management CCT project level indicators

Activity supporting speakers of the Welsh Language

6.46 Plans were developed for the specification for a procurement framework covering the training delivery of the project (including Welsh language delivery). Specialist advice was being sought from Torfaen CBC's Head of Procurement and Welsh Language unit to incorporate appropriate measures within the framework and contracts awarded.

6.47 LA respondents said that demand from participants electing for Welsh language delivery was limited. There were some examples of such demand resulting in a large turnout to some Welsh language-based courses.

Example: Welsh language provision (Merthyr Tydfil)

A group of women were one of the first in the borough of Merthyr Tydfil to benefit from a new qualification, Welsh language nursery skills. The group completed this qualification to enable them to increase their Welsh language skills and make them feel more confident when speaking to the children they look after in Welsh. The 8-week course was delivered around people's work rotas so they could attend easily and fit it in around their other commitments.

"Learning words and phrases we can use every day in sessions helped build my confidence" commented one of the learners.

Another learner said *"The tutor was very supportive and approachable and always helped when she could see I was struggling. It was good to do it within our setting as a group which helped us as we supported each other in work"*

Conversational "Paned a sgwrs" or "Cuppa and a chat" sessions ran on a weekly basis. These informal sessions gave existing Welsh speakers the opportunity to use their Welsh in a supportive environment, increasing their confidence to use the language in the work.

Source: Torfaen management CCT project level indicators

Integration of social clauses

6.48   Through the use of a procurement framework, WSfA2 contracted work to a variety of businesses, including sole traders. In some cases, this also allowed for those businesses to expand their team, thus recruiting more staff.

Example: integration of social clauses

The regional training delivery framework (2016 -2020) procured ten suppliers to deliver courses and qualifications for the Bridges into Work and Working Skills for Adults Operations. The framework was designed to include over 600 individual lots with no minimum or maximum amount a supplier could bid for.

As a result, the framework attracted suppliers of all sizes from pan Wales and UK suppliers including sole traders and micro businesses. Reviewing the framework two suppliers indicated the activity generated from Working Skills for Adults allowed them to expand and recruit more staff. In addition, one small company stated that the extra work allowed them to retain their existing workforce.

Source: Torfaen management CCT project level indicators

CCT Champion

6.49   The operation appointed the Senior Funded Operations Manager to take on the role of CCT Champion who followed-up and reported on the operation's progress against the Business Plan's CCT aims and commitments.

6.50   To increase awareness and encourage the project staff to share CCT case studies the champion facilitated several CCT workshops particularly in the first few years of project delivery. Cross Cutting Themes was also a regular agenda item for the

monthly Operational Delivery Group Meetings and managers shared challenges, ideas and best practice.

Eco Code

6.51 Collaboration took place with the central management team and project managers across all five participating LA areas to develop a suitable eco-code for the project.

> **Example: Eco-code**
>
> An Eco-code poster was developed collaboratively by the central project team and project managers from the joint beneficiaries. The Eco-Code was then displayed in all project staff areas across the region. It covered the following topics:
>
> - Reduce, reuse, recycle.
> - Transport
> - Purchasing
> - Water
> - Energy
> - Biodiversity
> - Raising Awareness
>
> The aim was to encourage all staff and participants involved in WSfA 2to reduce their carbon footprint and deliver project activities in a sustainable and environmentally positive way.

Source: Torfaen management CCT project level indicators

Resource efficiency measure

6.52 To minimise the use of paper resources, IT devices were utilised where possible in course delivery and qualification completion.

> **Example: Resource efficiency measure** (all areas)
>
> - All Agored IT provision moved to being delivered and assessed digitally. These qualifications no longer required paper copies of workbooks which minimised the use of all resources connected with this.
>
> - Where appropriate other qualifications will move over to being assessed digitally.
>
> - Ipads were being utilised in essential skills sessions to complete tasks to minimise use of paper and resources.

Source: Torfaen management CCT project level indicators

Local/Sustainable Supply chain

6.53 The majority of suppliers procured through the training delivery framework for WSfA2 were local to the south east Wales region. These businesses ranged from small to large in size.

Example: Local supply chain development

In 2016 the procurement of a training delivery framework covering the Bridges into Work 2 and Working Skills for Adults 2 operations was completed. It covered in excess of 100 training courses over five local authority areas and was designed so companies could bid for as much work or as little as they wished. This enabled small suppliers to bid for single lots of one LA area and larger supplies to enter multiple bids.

Thirty-nine suppliers expressed an interest and following the tender scoring ten suppliers were awarded places on the framework. Those suppliers ranged in size from micro businesses employing one or two people to larger companies with over 100 staff members. Eight of the ten suppliers were local and based in the SE Wales region.

Source: Torfaen management CCT project level indicators

Sustainable development champion

6.54 The operation appointed the Senior Funded Operations Manager to take on the role of Sustainable Development Champion.

Mentoring

6.55 Participants were supported with any additional needs identified by WSfA2 staff. This support and mentoring included referral to support agencies and programmes.

Example: Mentoring and advocacy (Caerphilly)

Caerphilly supported a number of participants with mental health issues and referred these participants to Mind for support. Caerphilly also worked with a Mental Health Officer and were able to refer participants onto courses that they delivered based on stress and wellbeing.

Caerphilly found that participants with mental health issues also tended to have housing related issues. Therefore, they linked with the Supporting People Programme in Caerphilly to provide support in this area. They also linked on a regular basis with Family Information Services and the Family Start for Parenting Programme.

Occupational segregation activity

6.56 The project saw participants engage with training to support career changes in some cases. This allowed for participants to re-train to move into non-traditional areas.

> **Case study: Female (Torfaen)**
>
> A female participant was supported to gain a change in career from cleaning to working as a gate keeper on a Construction site.
>
> After successfully completing the pre-employment in Construction, and obtaining her CSCS Card, the WSfA2 team liaised with a contractor on her behalf who then offered her the position.

Source: Torfaen management CCT project level indicators

Wellbeing of Future Generations Act

6.57 The business plan recognised the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and stated the intention to address the various goals. A general principal was that "operations will ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

6.58 Examples linked to each of the goals (with some overlap to other headings in this section) include:

- A Prosperous Wales – Supporting individuals to prosper through employment and by maximising opportunities to use resources more efficiently, which will bring significant financial savings.

- A Resilient Wales - The adoption, implementation or improvement of an environmental sustainability strategy had an important role in meeting this objective. Joint beneficiaries endeavoured to develop and utilise innovative technologies and processes to increase resource efficiency. Joint beneficiaries utilised innovative ICT systems to reduce travel need wherever possible, incorporating the use of technologies e.g. Video Calling to reduce the need for travel and make more efficient use of time.

- A More Equal Wales – The project has supported individuals to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances. A range of participants with different characteristics have participated in this project.

- A Healthier Wales – Project staff have been very aware of the physical and mental well-being of participants engaged with WSFA2.

- A Wales of Cohesive Communities – Support from each local authority through established and newly developed networks across their areas has been a feature of their delivery.

- A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language – The project has supported specific delivery through the medium of Welsh and provided equal access to Welsh medium provision.

- A Globally Responsible Wales - Companies /organisations which employ participants under this project were encouraged to develop, promote or improve a sustainable development strategy to encourage economic savings, improved management and environmental benefits.

7   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

7.1   Working Skills for Adults 2 was successfully designed and implemented alongside 2 other sister projects Bridges into Work 2 and Nurture, Equip, Thrive.

7.2   Project performance against high-level targets was good with the number of participants (5,113 against profile of 4,973) and the number gaining a qualification (3,525 against profile of 3,505) exceeded. The project has been cost effective, delivering in line with planned unit costs and at levels comparable to other similar projects.

7.3   All LA areas exceeded the latest profile for numbers of participants. There was a very small variation in achievement of profiled participants gaining a qualification by LA area – 2 were slightly behind profile and 3 were slightly ahead.

7.4   LA areas worked well together as a group at a management level and at an operational level. There were clear examples of open dialogue, information sharing and development of good practice between delivery teams. In particular, sharing course delivery across borders helped maximise delivery efficiency.

7.5   Promotion of the project was effective utilising traditional means and social media communication. The main ways participants heard about the project in order of mentions, was through their workplace, word of mouth, jobcentre or social media. Key challenges identified by staff were overcoming scepticism about funded training for employed workers and availability of participants to attend training due to commitments on the day of delivery (given all were employed).

7.6   Half of all participants gained a CQFW Level 2 qualification (50%), followed by qualifications below CQFW Level 1 (14%) and qualifications at CQFW Level 1 (6%). Just under a third of participations did not achieve a qualification (30%) due to certificates not yet received or early drop out. There were some frustrations that the project was not able to support participants beyond level 2 qualifications.

7.7   Partners were supportive of the project design. This worked well including the use of the assessment tool, links with referral partners and delivery of training and support. Respondent satisfaction was very high with 88% selecting very or quite satisfied with the training received. Additional support received alongside participants' training, in order of mentions, included general support, access to a computer, CV writing and job searching.

7.8   There was evidence of sensible adaptations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, using online provision and social media to engage participants.

7.9   The lack of follow-up activity with participants limited the knowledge of outcomes resulting from participation in the project. The participant survey helped to better understand this, indicating that in order of most mentions, participants gained confidence, improved skills, and obtained further qualifications. Some selected that their job satisfaction had improved or they had taken on more responsibility at work. A few selected that they had obtained a pay rise, changed roles in a different

industry or gained a promotion. Nearly four-fifths of those who were able to say, indicated that they would have received no training or less training from their employer without the project. Over three-quarters said that they felt very or quite positive about learning as a result of the training.

7.10 The design of the project was in line with relevant Welsh Government policy and was well-designed to achieve the agreed outputs. Performance against the planned participant demographics was good with one exception. The project met the target for participants who identify as being disabled or having a work limiting health condition, migrants, older people (aged 54+) and those with caring responsibilities. It narrowly missed the target for females and well below target for participants from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. There is good evidence of the project addressing cross cutting theme (CCT) project level indicators.

Recommendations

7.11 The recommendations for future similar delivery include:

- **Consider supporting higher level skills in future project designs.** Some potential participants were unable to start the project (due to their previous qualification levels being higher than Level 2) and some who started the project could have been supported to progress further in their learning if above Level 2 were supported.

- **Maintain the dual level approach to project management.** The existence of the management and operational groups who met regularly was an important aspect to the success of this project. They created effective forums for the sharing of ideas and for the central team to communicate performance, progress and project policies.

- **Develop the assessment tool further.** A potential improvement to the assessment tool included making an online version; although a limitation during this project was the WEFO requirement for wet signatures.

- **Check demographic targets against population data.** The target for participants from Black Asian minority ethnic backgrounds was unrealistic given their presence in the population across the partners. A comparison against population data in the project plan would help inform the setting of targets.

APPENDIX A: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Aims of evaluation	Qual LA	Qual partners & referral	Performance analysis	Telephone survey	10 case journeys	Qual 20 employers	Summative with LA and partner	Counterfactual assessment	Cost-effectiveness	Research questions	Method/Comments
The impact of the project on participants.			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		• Has the project/training had a direct impact on participants' employment status? • Has the project impacted participants' salary? • Has the project altered participants' views/confidence towards training? • Has your productivity increased in the workplace? • How have previous barriers to learning been removed? • Do any barriers remain? • Will/have participants continued in their learning because of the project?	A survey of the beneficiary and follow up interviews plus management information data will help to build up a picture of the experiences and resulting impact for participants. This will include exploring the impact on their wider lives. The counterfactual will assess the additionality of the project by asking participants whether they would have undertaken the training anyway in the absence of the project. We will sense-check the results against comparable public domain findings.
The impact of the project upon the community and wider society.	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓		• What are the characteristics of the participants engaged? • What is the distribution of participants across the 5 regions? Are there particular	The survey and interviews with beneficiaries will contribute to this, together with reviews of wider documents and interviews with local authority stakeholders and key partners/referral agencies. In addition, the interviews with employers will

Aims of evaluation	Qual LA	Qual partners & referral	Performance analysis	Telephone survey	10 case journeys	Qual 20 employers	Summative with LA and partner	Counterfactual assessment	Cost-effectiveness	Research questions	Method/Comments
										regions where engagement is low?	help to build up a picture of wider community coverage.
The impact of the project upon enterprises.						✓			✓	• Why did employers engage? • Did participants complete training in work hours? • Have employers seen an increase in productivity/output? • Are employees more likely to undertake training in the future?	The interviews with employers will help to build up a picture of the impact on their businesses, plus we will ask them to provide evidence of how the training has influences productivity.
The impact of personal support.		✓		✓	✓			✓		• Did participants feel their support was individual? • Were participants learning preferences and previous skills considered?	Through telephone interviews with participants and follow-up interviews, we will build up a picture of the impact of personal support. We will triangulate this against the views of project staff and practitioners who have worked with participants.
The impact of advice and guidance given to participants.				✓	✓					• What advice and guidance were participants provided with? • Were participants introduced to new skills/careers through the project?	Evaluating the impact of IAG will be achieved through the survey and beneficiary interviews. We will ask participants what IAG activities they received and the extent to which they helped them to gain employment or progress in the labour market.

Aims of evaluation	Qual LA	Qual partners & referral	Performance analysis	Telephone survey	10 case journeys	Qual 20 employers	Summative with LA and partner	Counterfactual assessment	Cost-effectiveness	Research questions	Method/Comments
										• Did participants grow in confidence?	
The cost-effectiveness of the Project in comparison with other projects seeking to engage employed adults.									✓	• What is the unit cost per participant? • What is the unit cost per participant gaining a qualification in the project?	Cost-effectiveness will be measured in two ways: • Data items most closely aligned with the project targets (e.g. cost per participant, cost per participant gaining a qualification) will be the most comparable with other schemes, but do not tell the full story. • We will also take into consideration in-work progression, employer benefits and community benefits to present a more rounded picture.
The management of the project.	✓	✓					✓			• Has management and delivery been consistent across all 5 regions? • Have regions experienced different challenges?	This will be assessed through dialogue with delivery practitioners and participants. We will also assess through interviews with the project management team. The early stages of the project will involve developing a model of success criteria for the project to measure its performance from a delivery perspective.

APPENDIX B: LOGIC MODEL

Context	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
- ESF funding. - LA staffing. - Employment support workers/mentors. - Training partners.	- Assessment of skill level. - Development of personal action plans. - Provision of community-based learning providing formal qualifications, work specific and essential skills. - Provision of CV writing/re-writing. - Provision of interview skills. - Access to work clubs. - Access to volunteer opportunities.	- 4883 participants engaged in the process. - 3541 participants gaining essential skills or technical or job-specific qualification upon leaving. - CCT targets addressed.	- Increased workplace confidence. - Improved interview skills and confidence. - Increased confidence and engagement in reluctant learners. - Higher proportion of workers holding qualifications. - Participants moving onto gain higher level qualifications.	- Greater employment mobility in the 5 LA's. - Improved employment resilience. - Improved salary potential. - Improved workplace productivity. - Reduction of skills gap vacancies.

APPENDIX C: WORKING SKILLS FOR ADULTS 2 ASSESSMENT TOOL

Participant ID		Name			Date	

FOUNDATION MENU

		Please circle the statement that most applies to you.			

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Socialisation

FL-PD-S1	Working with Others	I find it easy working with other people	I get along well with most people at work	I find it difficult working with other people	I don't want to work with other people
FL-PD-S2	Support	I have lots of people I can rely on for support	I have a few people I can rely on for support	I have someone I can rely on for support	I have no one who will support me
FL-PD-S3	New People	I enjoy meeting new people	I am comfortable meeting new people	I feel anxious meeting new people	I avoid meeting new people
FL-PD-S4	Comfort Zone	I enjoy being out of my comfort zone	I sometimes enjoy trying new things	I am reluctant to try something new	I never want to try anything new

Working Skills for Adults 2 is part financed by the European Social Fund

Version 4 October 2017

FOUNDATION MENU

		Please circle the statement that most applies to you.			

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Expectations

FL-PD-E1	Enjoy Job	I really enjoy my current job	I enjoy my current job most of the time	I enjoy my current job some of the time	I do not enjoy my current job
FL-PD-E2	Capability	I am completely confident I know what I am capable of achieving	I am unsure I know what I am capable of achieving	I need support to achieve what I am capable of	I don't know what I am capable of achieving
FL-PD-E3	Responsibility	I would like to take on more responsibility in my work	I am happy with my current level of responsibility in my job	I would like less responsibility in my work	In my workplace I would prefer to leave responsibility to someone else
FL-PD-E4	Expectations	I can achieve more and exceed people's expectations	I can achieve what people expect of me	I struggle to meet people's expectations	I don't know what people expect me to achieve

Participation

FL-PD-P1	Meetings	I feel confident speaking during meetings	I feel nervous but will speak during meetings	I am comfortable attending meetings if I don't have to speak	Attending meetings makes me feel uncomfortable
FL-PD-P2	Team Work	I really enjoy working as part of a team	I sometimes enjoy working as part of a team	I will work as part of a team if I have to	I prefer working by myself
FL-PD-P3	Decision Making	I am happy to make decisions in my workplace	I will make decisions in work if I need to	I am uncomfortable making decisions	I never make a decision in my workplace
FL-PD-P4	Concentration	I find it easy to concentrate for long periods	I can concentrate for shorter periods of time	My concentration varies depending on the situation	I really struggle to concentrate at work

		Please circle the statement that most applies to you.			
COMMUNITY SUPPORT					
Transport					
FL-CS-T1	Comfortable	I always find using my own / public transport straight forward	Most of the time I find using my own / public transport straight forward	I sometimes find using my own / public transport straight forward	I don't find using my own / public transport straight forward
FL-CS-T2	Options	I know what my transport options to get to work are	I think I know what my transport options to get to work are	I am unsure what my transport options to get to work are	I don't know what my transport options to get to work are
FL-CS-T3	Affordable	I can afford my own transport (car, motorbike etc.)	I can afford public transport	I struggle with the cost of transport	The cost of transport is a big problem for me
FL-CS-T4	Independent Travel	I can travel independently to work in all locations	I can travel independently to work in most locations	I can sometimes travel independently depending on my work hours and / or its location	I rely on others to get to work
Caring Responsibilities					
FL-CS-C1	Affect Career Options	I don't have any childcare / caring responsibilities	My childcare / caring options don't currently affect my career options	My childcare / caring responsibilities affect some of my career options	My childcare / caring responsibilities severely restrict my career options
FL-CS-C2	Caring Help	I don't need any help with childcare / caring responsibilities	I know who can help with my childcare / caring responsibilities	I think I know who can help with my childcare / caring responsibilities	I don't know who can help with my childcare / caring responsibilities
FL-CS-C3	Trust Professionals	I don't have any childcare / caring responsibilities	I trust professionals to help with my responsibilities	I think I would trust professional to help with my responsibilities	I am unsure I would trust professional with my responsibilities
FL-CS-C4	Affordable	I don't have any childcare / caring responsibilities	I can afford the cost of care / childcare	I struggle with the cost of care / childcare	I cannot afford the cost of care / childcare

		Please circle the statement that most applies to you.			
COMMUNITY SUPPORT					
Benefits					
FL-CS-B1	Benefits	I completely understand Tax Credits and other benefits	I understand most Tax Credits and other benefits	I understand a little bit about Tax Credits and other benefits	I don't understand Tax Credits and other benefits
FL-CS-B2	Hours of Work	I am content with my number of contracted work hours	I would like to work a few more contracted hours	I would like to increase my contracted hours considerably	I would like to decrease my contracted work hours
FL-CS-B3	Salary	I am happy with my current salary	My current salary is adequate	I would like to increase my current salary slightly	I need to increase my current salary
FL-CS-B4	Temporary Contract	I would be happy to take work on a temporary contract	I think I would take work on a temporary contract	I am undecided whether I would work on a temporary contract	I would not consider a temporary contract of employment

		Please circle the statement that most applies to you.			
EMPLOYMENT SKILLS					
Literacy					
FL-ES-L1	Writing	I am very comfortable at writing things down	I am comfortable at writing most things down	Sometimes I find it difficult to write things down	I find it difficult to write things down
FL-ES-L2	Spelling	I know I am good at spelling	I think I am good at spelling	I am unsure how good my spelling is	I struggle with my spelling
FL-ES-L3	Forms	I am able to complete and fill in forms accurately and quickly	I can complete and fill in forms	I sometimes find it difficult to complete and fill in forms	I cannot complete and fill in forms
FL-ES-L4	Reading	I know I read very well	I think I read well	I cannot read very well	I cannot read
Numeracy					
FL-ES-N1	Using Numbers	I am very confident at using numbers in my work	Most of the time I am confident using numbers in my work	Sometimes I am confident using numbers in my work	I am not confident at using numbers in my work
FL-ES-N2	Mental Arithmetic	I can do the majority of sums in my head	I can do most sums in my head	I struggle doing sums in my head	I cannot do sums in my head
FL-ES-N3	Checking Accuracy	I know I can check my own work for accuracy	I think I can check my own work for accuracy	I need help sometimes checking my work for accuracy	I cannot check my own work for accuracy
FL-ES-N4	Money Management	I am always able to handle and manage money	I am able to handle and manage money in most situations	I sometimes struggle to handle and manage money	I am unable to handle and manage money

		Please circle the statement that most applies to you.			
EMPLOYMENT SKILLS					
IT					
FL-ES-I1	Modern Technology	I enjoy using modern technology and own items such as a smartphone, digital camera or tablet	I am fairly comfortable using modern technology	I will use modern technology if I have to	I avoid using modern technology
FL-ES-I2	Computer	I own a computer	I have access to a friend's / relative's computer when I need one	I know where I can access a computer in a public place	I don't have any access to a computer
FL-ES-I3	Internet	I have access to the internet in my own home	I have access to a friend's / relative's internet when I need to use it	I know where I can access the internet in a public place	I don't have any access to the internet
FL-ES-I4	IT Equipment	At work I use IT equipment every day	In my job I use IT equipment quite frequently	In my job I use IT equipment occasionally	I never have to use IT equipment at work

WORK FOCUSED MENU

		Please circle the statement that most applies to you.			

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Motivation

WF-PD-M1	Decision Making	I would like to take on more decisions in my work	I am happy taking decisions in my job	I would like to make less decisions in my work	In my workplace I would prefer to leave making decisions to someone else
WF-PD-M2	Move Forward	I know what I want and I am ready to move forward in my life	I think I know how to move forward with my life	I am unsure how to move forward with my life	I don't know how to move forward with my life
WF-PD-M3	Influence Changes	I know I can influence changes in my workplace	I think I may be able to influence changes in my workplace	I am unsure whether I can influence changes in my workplace	I don't believe I can influence changes in my workplace
WF-PD-M4	Inspire and Help	I am able to inspire and help others	I think I could inspire and help others	I am unsure whether I could inspire and help others	I am unable to inspire and help others

Vision

WF-PD-V1	Comfortable with Change	I am very comfortable with change	I am fairly comfortable with change	I am unsure how I feel about change	I am very uncomfortable with change
WF-PD-V2	Ambition	I know where I want to be over the next few years	I know where I want to be this time next year	I am unsure where I want to be this time next year	I have no idea where I want to be this time next year
WF-PD-V3	Planning	I am very good at planning	I am comfortable with planning	I struggle with planning	I don't know where to begin planning
WF-PD-V4	Set Goals	I set myself goals and achieve all of them	I set myself goals and achieve some of them	I struggle to set goals and normally don't achieve them	I don't know how to set goals

WORK FOCUSED MENU

		Please circle the statement that most applies to you.			

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Local Economy

WF-CS-E1	Skills to Progress	I have the skills I need to progress	I think I have the skills I need to progress	I am unsure I have the skills I need to progress	I don't have any of the skills I need to progress
WF-CS-E2	Adapt and Grow	I am able to adapt and grow in my career	I think I am able to adapt and grow in my career	I am unsure if I am able to adapt and grow in my career	I cannot adapt and grow in my career
WF-CS-E3	Career Opportunities	There are many career opportunities for me in my local area	There are some career opportunities for me in my local area	I am unsure how many career opportunities for me in my local area	There are no career opportunities for me in my local area
WF-CS-E4	Jobs Advertised	I see many jobs advertised that I think I can do	I see some jobs advertised that I think I can do	I see jobs advertised but I am unsure if I can do them	I never see jobs advertised that I think I can do

Society

WF-CS-S1	Job Satisfaction	My current job is always challenging and rewarding	Most of the time my current job is challenging and rewarding	Occasionally my current job is challenging and rewarding	I don't find my current job rewarding
WF-CS-S2	Encouraged to Progress	I am encouraged to progress by all my friends, family and colleagues	I am encouraged by some people to progress	I have someone encouraging me to progress	I have no one encouraging me to progress
WF-CS-S3	Positive Role Model	I am a positive role model in my workplace	I think I could be a positive role model in my workplace	I am unsure how to be a positive role model in my workplace	I don't believe I can be a positive role in my workplace
WF-CS-S4	Deserve Opportunity	I deserve the opportunity to further my career	I think I deserve the opportunity to further my career	I am unsure whether I deserve the opportunity to further my career	I don't deserve the opportunity to further my career

		Please circle the statement that most applies to you.			
EMPLOYMENT SKILLS					
Work Specific					
WF-ES-W1	Careers Options	My skills give me plenty of career options	My skills give me a limited number of career options	My skills give me another career option	I don't feel my skills give me any career options
WF-ES-W2	Capability	I know which jobs I am capable of doing	I know some of the jobs I am capable of doing	I think I know another job I am capable of doing	I don't know any other jobs I am capable of doing
WF-ES-W3	Work Specific Qualifications	I have 4 or more work specific qualifications	I have 2 to 3 work specific qualifications	I have a work specific qualification	I have no work specific qualifications
WF-ES-W4	Proven Work History	I have several years work history in a certain sector / industry	I have up to a year of work history in a certain sector / industry	I have a short period of work history in a certain sector / industry	I have very little or no work experience in a certain sector / industry
High Level					
WF-ES-L1	Transferrable Skills	I know I have a large amount of transferable skills	I believe I have a number of transferable skills	I am unsure if I have transferable skills	I have no transferable skills
WF-ES-L2	Higher Level Qualification	I know I am capable of achieving a higher level qualification	I am fairly confident I can achieve a higher level qualification	I am unsure whether I can achieve a higher level qualification	I don't believe I can achieve a higher level qualification
WF-ES-L3	Develop Skills	I know I can develop my skills further	I think I can develop my skills further	I am unsure whether I can develop my skills further	I cannot develop my skills further
WF-ES-L4	Increase Earnings	I know I can increase my earnings by upskilling	I am fairly confident I can increase my earnings by upskilling	I am unsure whether I can increase my earnings by upskilling	I cannot increase my earnings by upskilling

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JOB BROKERAGE MENU

		Please circle the statement that most applies to you.			

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Confidence

JB-PD-C1	New Things	I like to try new things	I will try new things when I am encouraged to	I dislike trying new things	I fear anything new
JB-PD-C2	Opinions	I can voice my opinions confidently	I can voice my opinions when I am prompted or have strong feelings	I will only voice my opinions if they are in agreement with those already stated	I will not speak out in public
JB-PD-C3	Problem Solving	I am happy that I can solve any work problems	I am able to solve most work problems	I will attempt to solve work problems with support	I do not feel able to deal with work problems
JB-PD-C4	Decision Making	I am confident making decisions in my job	I will make decisions in my job if I feel supported	I am not happy making decisions in my job	I do not feel able to make decisions in my job

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Opportunity

JB-CS-O1	Job Opportunities	I am very aware of the job opportunities available to me	I have some idea of the job opportunities available to me	I know there are job opportunities available to me	I do not know of any job opportunities for me
JB-CS-O2	Locality	I am happy to consider job opportunities outside of my local area	I would consider job opportunities outside of my local area	I am unable to consider job opportunities outside of my local area	I would not consider job opportunities outside of local area
JB-CS-O3	Skills	My skills are in high demand	I have some skills that are in high demand	There is limited demand for my skills	I do not have any skills that are in demand
JB-CS-O4	Own Business	I would be happy to start my own business	I would need support to start my own business	I would need support to run my own business	I would be unable to run my own business

JOB BROKERAGE MENU

		Please circle the statement that most applies to you.		

EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

Experience

JB-ES-E1	Work Experience	I have significant recent work experience in the job that interests me.	I have limited recent work experience in the job that interests me	I have no recent work experience in the job that interests me	I have no work experience in the job that interests me
JB-ES-E2	CV	My CV accurately records my work history and skills	I have a CV that is up to date but needs improving	I have a CV but it is out of date and/or incomplete	I do not have a CV
JB-ES-E3	Job Applications	I am happy to apply for jobs independently	I would benefit from someone reviewing my job application	I need support to apply for jobs	I do not feel able to apply for jobs
JB-ES-E4	Interviews	I am confident in interview situations	I need help to prepare for interviews	I need support to attend interviews	I do not feel able to attend interviews

Working Skills for Adults

Aneurin leisure
Improving community life

CAERPHILLY
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
CAERFFILI

MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL

TORFAEN
COUNTY
BOROUGH

BWRDEISTREF
SIROL
TORFAEN

UNDEB EWROPEAIDD
EUROPEAN UNION

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Cronfa Gymdeithasol Ewrop
European Social Fund

Sgiliau Gwaith i Oedolion

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COMMENTS

Signed by Participant …………..……………………………………… Date………………..……..

Signed by Case Worker …………………..………………………….… Date ………………………

| Barriers Summary	Moderate	High		
Foundation Menu				
Work Focused Menu				
Job Brokerage Level			Assessment evaluated by:	

APPENDIX D: LOCAL AUTHORITY PERFORMACE BREAKDOWNS

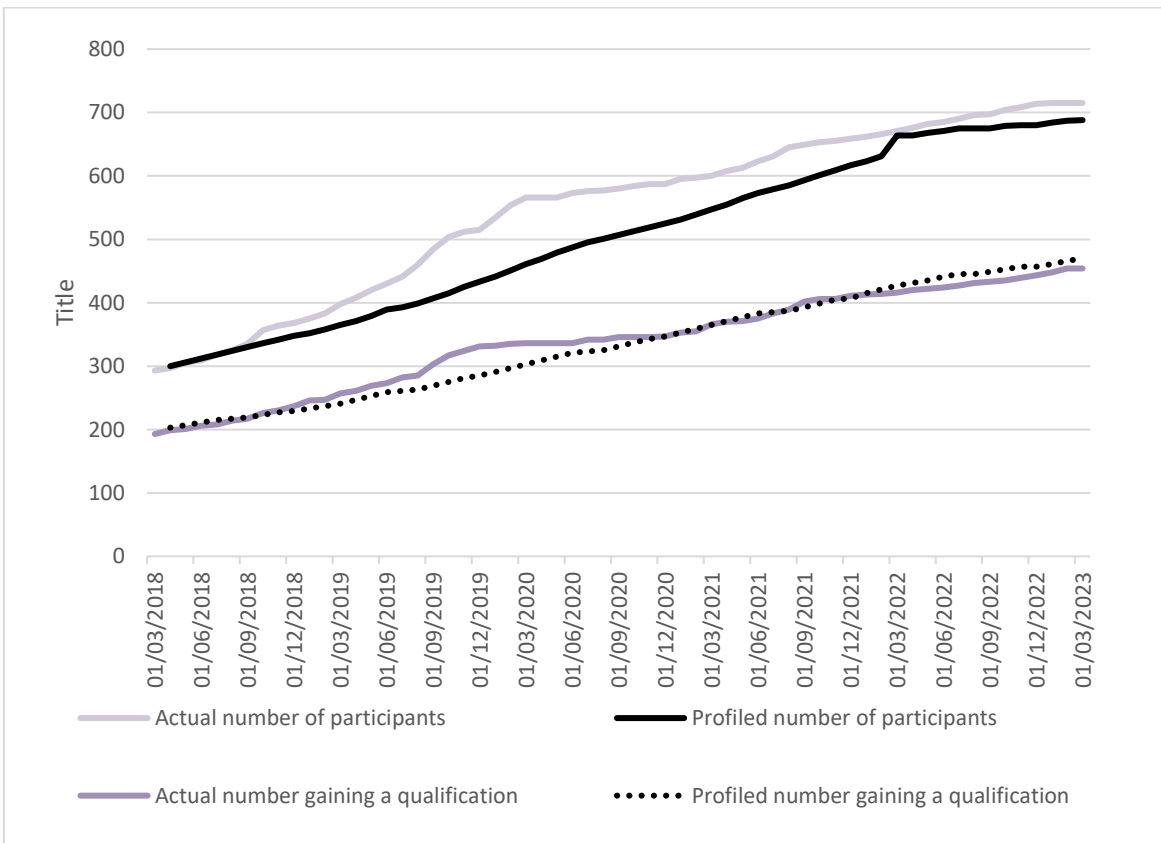**Figure A Torfaen performance against profiled targets until March 2023**
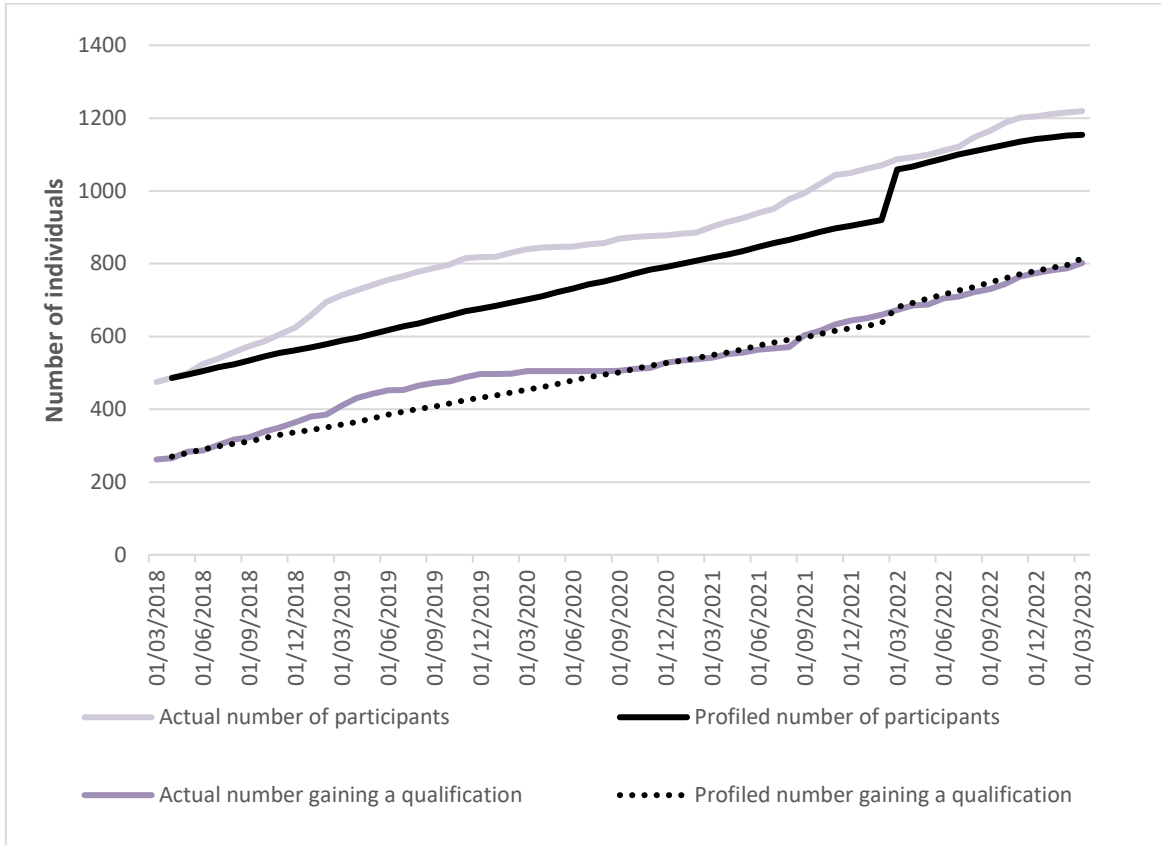
Source: Participant reports 2018 -2023 from Torfaen central management team

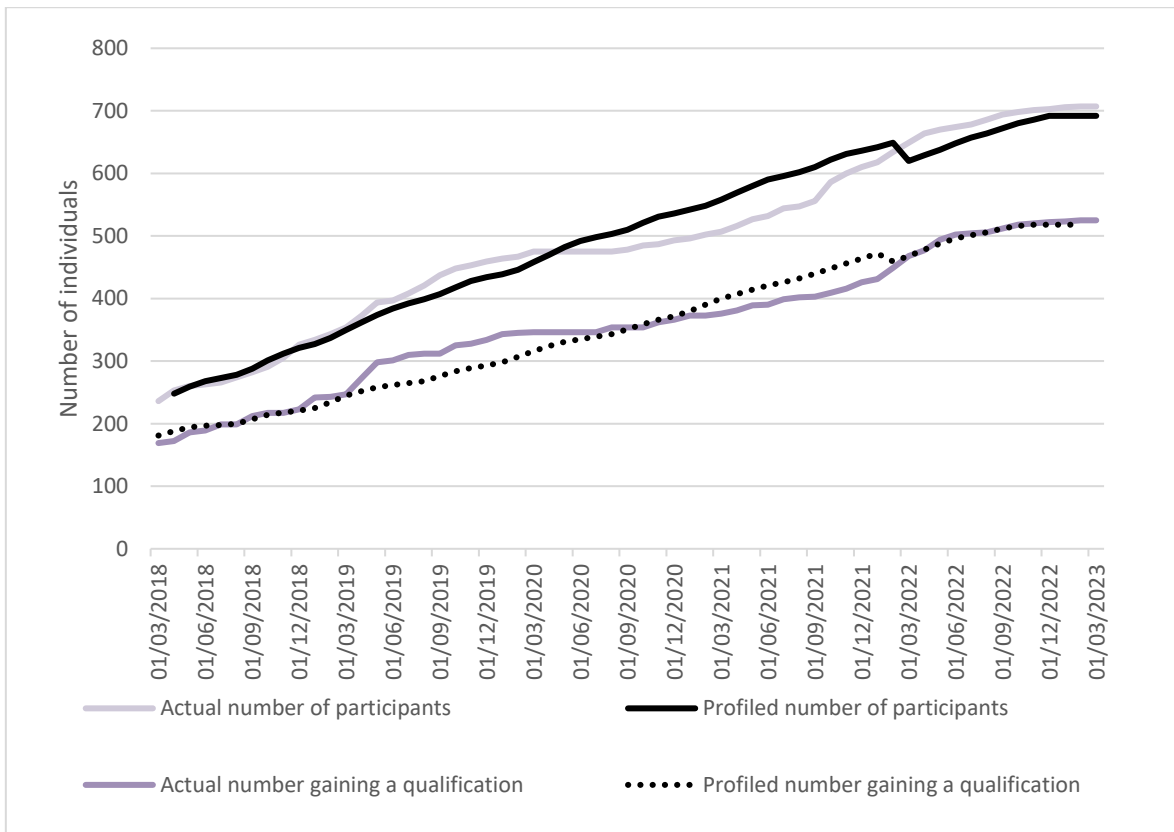**Figure B Bridgend performance against profiled targets until March 2023**
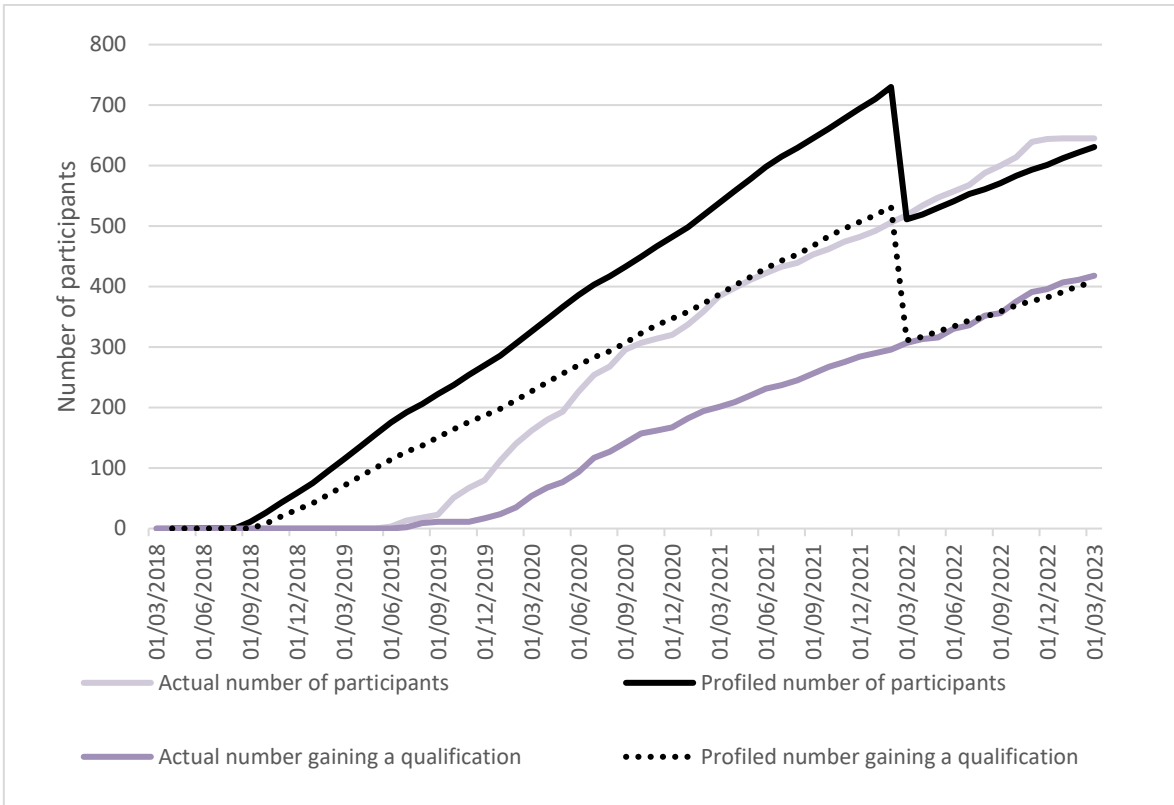
Source: Participant reports 2018 -2023 from Torfaen central management team

Figure C Caerphilly performance against profiled targets until March 2023

Source: Participant reports 2018 -2023 from Torfaen central management team

Figure D Life Leisure Trust performance against profiled targets until March 2023

Source: Participant reports 2018 -2023 from Torfaen central management team

Figure E Merthyr Tydfil performance against profiled targets until March 2023

Legend:
- Actual number of participants
- Profiled number of participants
- Actual number gaining a qualification
- Profiled number gaining a qualification

Y-axis: N7umbers of individuals

Source: Participant reports 2018 -2023 from Torfaen central management team