



Evaluation of Change Grow Live (CGL) Achieving Change through Employment Project in West Wales and the Valleys

Final Report

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Glossary

Acronym	Definition
ACE	Achieving Change through Employment
ALW	Adult Learning Wales
CCT	Cross Cutting Themes
CFW	Communities for Work
CFW+	Communities for Work Plus
CGL	Change Grow Live
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
ECDL	European Computer Driving Licence
EI	Economically Inactive
ESF	European Social Fund
ESOL	English to Speakers of Other Languages
FAN	Friend and Neighbours (Charity)
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IT	Information Technology
JCP	Job Centre Plus
LGBTQ	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and queer/questioning
LTU	Long Term Unemployment
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PaCE	Parents Childcare and Employment
SEWREC	South East Wales Racial Equality Council
SOVA	Supporting Others Through Volunteer Action
WEFO	Welsh European Funding Office
WW&V	West Wales and the Valleys

Key definitions

People are defined as economically inactive (EI) if they are aged 16-64 and who are not involved in the labour market, because they are neither working nor actively seeking employment.¹ It therefore includes students, early retirees and the long-term sick.

People are defined as unemployed if they are aged 16-64 and like the economically inactive are not involved in the labour market, but who unlike the economically inactive, are actively seeking employment.²

People are defined as long-term unemployed (LTU) if they have been unemployed for 12 months or more.

¹ The Office for National Statistics defines the economically inactive as 'People not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks'. ([ONS, 2022](#)).

² The Office for National Statistics (using the International Labour Organisation definition) defines people as unemployed if they are 'without a job, have been actively seeking work in the past four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks' or are 'out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start it in the next two weeks'. ([ONS, 2022](#)).

Executive Summary

Project Background

The Change, Grow, Live (CGL) Achieving Change through Employment (ACE) project “supports disadvantaged people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups or a Migrant background aged 25+ into employment³”. It aims to achieve this through ‘one to one’ support, which includes:

- accessing short training courses leading to both accredited and non-accredited outcomes e.g. First Aid, Food Hygiene, Health and Safety and IT training, such as the ECDL or Word/Excel training;
- job searching, CV and application form support;
- job interview preparation;
- work placement and volunteering opportunities;
- developing communication skills⁴.

The project is supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) through the Welsh Government. It began in December 2016 and is due to end in August 2022. It covers the West Wales and the Valleys (WW&V) region⁵ and, up until August 2021, was delivered in partnership with a similar project that covered East Wales⁶.

Aims of the evaluation

The evaluation aims to assess whether the project is achieving its objectives; this includes providing:

- indicators of quality and impact;
- explanations behind the operation’s successes and shortcomings; and

³ As specified in the project’s Business Plan Addendum, August 2019.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ This region includes the local authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen, Swansea.

⁶ This region includes the local authorities of Cardiff, Flintshire, Powys, Monmouthshire, Newport, Vale of Glamorgan and Wrexham.

- an understanding of what would have happened without the intervention.

Methodology

The evaluators, People and Work have, since 2017, taken a formative approach to the evaluation which has helped to develop this final summative report. The evaluation has been able to draw on robust data in assessing the achievement of the evaluative aims and objectives, which include:

- data produced by the project, including 21 progress reports (December 2016 to May 2022) and analyses of a participant database (April 2022);
- interviews with 11 staff members⁷, 14 participants, five stakeholders and two volunteers;
- a feedback questionnaire for project participants (n=31) and stakeholders (n=22), and the participants impact star (n=119) all produced by CGL and analysed by CGL and People and Work; and
- desk-based data to provide context to the project's findings⁸.

In addition, this report draws upon six previous reports, including three interim evaluation reports (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021) and the final evaluation of the East Wales region of the project (Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021).

Achievement of objectives

The project is on target to achieve its planned engagements and results for Economically Inactive (EI) and Long-Term Unemployment (LTU) participants from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. So far, this has included:

- employment gained for 51 EI and 42 LTU participants⁹;

⁷ Four of these staff members were interviewed on three different occasions throughout the project's lifetime.

⁸This included quantitative data collected via StatsWales to compare numbers of project participants with certain characteristics (gender and Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups) with the national average and studies to support comments made by staff and search for comparable studies to compare the cost effectiveness of the project.

⁹ Final target 49 for EI and 50 for LTU.

- qualifications¹⁰ and work-related certificates achieved for 156 EI and 134 LTU participants¹¹;
- volunteering and work placements for 66 EI and 58 LTU participants¹²; and
- job search skills for 102 EI participants¹³.

Separate to the targets above. The project has also already met its volunteering targets by engaging with 115 people to volunteer on the project (these were not participants) to help deliver the project, which provided these volunteers with valuable experience and significantly widened the support available to participants.

Findings

Engagements

A key strength of the project is how the management team adapted to meet the challenges it faced; for example, the project has been through two periods of significant restructuring; the first established the role of an outreach worker to specifically engage EI participants (an area of underperformance at the time) and a marketing manager role to improve engagement; the second simplified the project structure and improved its delivery and results. The project reacted well to the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic presented, especially in developing its online marketing. In addition, the project recruited a more ethnically diverse delivery team as the work progressed¹⁴, which in turn helped increase participant engagement.

Twenty-two different organisations made referrals to ACE and referrals were the most common route to engagement (58 per cent). Job Centre Plus (JCP) was the most active referrer, with most people they referred being in the LTU cohort. Self-referrals made up 42 per cent of referrals, many drawn in by the

¹⁰Most of these qualifications were between level 1-3 (9 per cent below level 1, 22 per cent level 1, 40 per cent level 2, 20 per cent level 3, 5 per cent level 4, 5 per cent level 6 and 1 per cent level 7).

¹¹ Final target 153 for EI and 126 for LTU.

¹² Final target for EI 61 and 63 for LTU.

¹³ Final target for EI 85.

¹⁴ Although efforts were made to recruit from this group at the start of the project.

online marketing promotion of the project, mainly through social media platforms and word of mouth from other participants. Staff also promoted the project in community-based settings. The proportion of self-referrers who were EI was higher than amongst those referred from organisations.

The factors that helped motivate referrals included:

- lack of direct competition from other employment support projects;
- unmet demand; and
- the training offer of the project.

Volunteers helped participants with job search and employability support. The recruitment of volunteers benefitted from the establishment of the Volunteer Coordinator¹⁵ role in 2019, the COVID-19 furlough scheme that provided more time for people to volunteer, and improved access to remote working following COVID-19, which helped with the management of volunteers due to the improved communication systems.

Results

Participants felt the project had helped them to overcome complex barriers to employment, including lack of communication skills and social exclusion¹⁶ which contributed to their being unable to achieve goals, such as qualifications and employment. Participants reported a high level of satisfaction with the delivery of the project, rating it, on average, 4.6 out of 5 (5 being the most satisfied).

The success of the project interventions was attributed to the quality of the support by staff and the wide range of support the project could offer¹⁷ under a

¹⁵ To focus on recruiting volunteers and generate match funding volunteer hours.

¹⁶ The impact star assessment of participants had shown a 19 per cent improvement in communication skills and 16 per cent improvement in the feeling of 'social inclusion'.

¹⁷ I.e. addressing basic situational needs (signposting to services such as food banks and health care); improving English language skills; building confidence and / or other soft skills; participating in work-related training (such as food safety and security courses) and/ or participating in volunteering; and help with producing a CV and with job searching.

flexible delivery model which could cater to each individual's needs. This is supported by the fact that the majority (70 per cent) of participants that gained employment did so solely with the support of project staff and did not have to rely on external training provision (although some training was provided internally through staff).

Participants interviewed for the project greatly valued the personal support provided by case workers through regular meetings and communications (e.g., email and text) and felt the project catered for their specific needs and the barriers they faced (see case studies 1-4 and para 4.10), including periods when participants felt more isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. In line with this, both participants and staff identified that the trust built between them, for example through informal conversations, was key to enabling interventions such as training to work effectively.

Participants' English language skills were supported through help to enrol on English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, conversational practice with the project volunteers and opportunities to practice language skills, including access to charities that organise social events.

The project management provided clear guidelines and parameters for staff which were essential in a geographically spread project that relied on a small number of staff who had little face to face contact with other staff members. Moreover, the administrative and quality assurance systems effectively supported the delivery of the project.

Return on investment

Although the costs of the project were a little higher than anticipated, studies show the likely cost benefits in terms of health through helping people gain employment ([Public Health England, 2017](#); [Schneider et al., 2010](#)) and upon salaries through acquiring or improving qualifications, is likely to more than offset the costs ([BIS, 2009](#); [Dorsett et al., 2010](#); [Schuller, 2017](#)). Moreover, the project was able to support more refugees than was originally planned.

Refugees in general experience greater barriers to employment than those born in the UK or migrants, such as EU nationals who have come to Wales in search of work ([Welsh Government, 2020; Nicholl et al., 2016](#)).

What would have happened without the intervention?

Throughout the project's lifetime, participants and staff made a direct link between the project intervention (support given) and the outcomes that participants had gained, most notably in terms of employment. There was reported to be no other available provision that offered bespoke employment support to Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups and / or refugees throughout the WW&V region. Moreover, (with the exception of Swansea local authority area) the dispersed population of the Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups within this region had made it more problematic for other employment support initiatives to engage with these groups, highlighting the importance of this project in these areas.

Cross Cutting Themes

The project has been very active in delivering activities associated with the Cross Cutting Themes (CCT) for Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) funded work. The project was particularly strong in terms of sustainable development. Through its community engagements and online marketing approach, ACE succeeded in engaging more women than men. In addition, a higher proportion of older participants (in comparison with the working population) were engaged, through marketing methods and links with an organisation that worked with older people. Although steps were taken to promote gender mainstreaming, such as sharing non-traditional employment options with men and women, impacting upon this theme proved more difficult.

On-going challenge and sustainability

As previously stated, the project had worked well with other organisations to obtain referrals. However, despite specific activities to engage with other

charities that worked with Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups¹⁸ the relationship with these had not developed as strongly as hoped, in terms of improving referrals, sharing expertise and provision. Staff suggested this could be due to CGL not being a charity that was readily identifiable as one that supports Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.

Despite the on-going challenges of COVID-19 in 2022, the project performance improved, with more participants gaining employment than any other project year¹⁹. This was attributed to the improvements made as the project learned from its experiences and its raised profile as it became more established in communities. Unfortunately, despite efforts (funding bids) the project has not yet been able to secure further funding to build on or sustain the success of the project. Encouragingly, there was an indication that a participant volunteer peer support group established by the project was likely to continue to provide support after this project is completed.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of the report, given the success and demand for the project shown in this report and its fit with the Welsh Government's employability and skills plan ([Welsh Government, 2022](#)) (see section 1) CGL should consider implementing the recommendations below²⁰:

- **Recommendation 1:** the project has succeeded in showing that there is a need for targeted and tailored employment support for people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in Wales. The time and resources invested through ACE in building a successful approach will be lost if the work stops.

¹⁸ For example, through attending events, direct emails/phone calls and the stakeholder survey.

¹⁹ In 2021, 24 employment results, highest than any other year; for example the second highest year was 16 employment results.

²⁰ Some of these recommendations mirror those in the evaluation of the East Wales part of the project (Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021); this is because it was delivered with the WW&V region for most of the project's lifetime, and hence had similar strengths and challenges.

Therefore, CGL should continue to explore further funding options²¹ to continue to effectively tackle the need identified in this report.

- **Recommendation 2:** to ensure some legacy from the work, CGL should share best practice and lessons learned from the project with relevant partners and stakeholders. This could be delivered via a bespoke training programme and should include sharing information on:
 - known gaps in provision for Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in WW&V, especially within the rural areas;
 - successful approaches to engaging and supporting refugees.

- **Recommendation 3:** future CGL projects should build on skills developed during this project around:
 - the engagement and support approach provided to participants;
 - remote working, including how the project communicates internally and markets its projects to stakeholders and potential clients;
 - fostering and building on partnerships with organisations established during the delivery of this project.

²¹The project has tried to access funding from the [Community Renewal Fund](#) and the [Active Inclusion Fund](#). Other options could include charitable trusts, other [Future Prosperity Fund](#) projects (Community Renewal Funds have links to this source of funding) and core public sector funding (given its fit with Welsh Government policies).

1. Introduction

Project context

- 1.1. The Change, Grow, Live (CGL) Achieving Change through Employment (ACE) project “supports disadvantaged people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups or a Migrant background aged 25+ into employment²²”. It aims to achieve this through ‘one to one’ support, which includes:
- accessing short training courses leading to both accredited and non-accredited outcomes e.g. First Aid, Food Hygiene, Health and Safety, Information Technology (IT) training such as the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), Word/Excel training;
 - job searching, Curriculum Vitae (CV) and application form support;
 - job interview preparation;
 - work placement and volunteering opportunities;
 - developing communication skills²³.
- 1.2. The project fits well with the aims of the Welsh Government’s employability and skills plan ([Welsh Government, 2022](#)), that includes:
- **Tackling economic inequality** by “targeting those under-represented in the labour market, those in and out of work with long term health conditions, to find work and progress in employment” (p.13).
 - **Fair Work for all**, that includes work to “support and encourage employers to create high quality employment, improve the offer to workers, champion fair employment practices, ensure the social value of investment and encourage the public sector to embed the priorities in workforce planning” (p.13).
 - **Learning for Life**, to “ensure educational inequalities narrow and standards rise, participation in the skills system is widened for disabled

²² As specified in the project’s Business Plan Addendum, August 2019.

²³ Ibid.

people and ethnic minority groups, whilst tackling low qualifications and increasing the mobility of workers” (p.13).

1.3. As highlighted in the first interim evaluation (Bowen and Holtom, 2018)²⁴ demand for the project’s offer came from three key groups:

- people from many (although not all) Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups who, on average, have high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity compared to white Welsh/British people ([Welsh Government, 2021](#)).
- European economic migrants, whose employment rates are generally higher than other population groups, in part as people from this group have typically migrated in search of work and are often willing to accept ‘poor work’ and to move in search of work ([Nicholl et al, 2016](#)). Consequently, they also tend to be closer to the labour market than other groups. However, even for this group, barriers such as low skills, including low English language skills, difficulties having overseas qualifications recognised and a lack of understanding of the Welsh labour market, can make it difficult for people to find work (ibid.).
- refugees, who typically experience multiple barriers to employment, despite wanting to work, and consequently high unemployment rates ([Welsh Government, 2020](#)).

1.4. The project is supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) through the Welsh Government. It began in March 2016 and, following an extension to the project in 2019, it is due to end in August 2022.

The evaluation

1.5. The evaluation’s **aims** are to assess whether the project is achieving its objectives; this includes providing:

- indicators of quality and impact;

²⁴ Although references have been updated.

- explanations behind the operation's successes and shortcomings; and
- an understanding of what would have happened without the intervention.

1.6. The **objectives** of the evaluation include:

- an evaluation of whether the operation achieved its objectives in line with its agreed Business Plan;
- an evaluation of the efficiency of operation activity in meeting objectives;
- the impact of any external factors on the operation;
- providing recommendations to address any issues found;
- understanding of what would have happened without the intervention;
- undertaking an evaluation of the chain of participant record keeping and evidence collection processes from frontline delivery to data submission to WEFO;
- evaluating the effectiveness of operation marketing and publicity initiatives;
- evaluating the effectiveness of leadership, including quality assurance and communication methods employed by the lead sponsor;
- assessing how the operation has performed against the delivery of CCT aims, objectives and commitments, as well as CCT operation-related indicators, including what worked well/what did not work, problems identified and how these were addressed;
- assessing how, and to what extent, the operation has used and promoted the Welsh language and/or provided opportunities for participants to use and develop their Welsh language skills;
- assessing how the operation supported participants with low English language ability to increase their English language ability/skills;
- assessing how the operation has contributed to the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015;
- examining the operation delivery and outcomes in light of the present social-economic environment in Wales;
- identifying improvements and/or gaps in service delivery.

This report

- 1.7. This is the sixth report from the evaluation that covered the West Wales and the Valleys (WW&V) region. It follows the evaluation plan in January 2018, an emerging findings report in March 2018, an interim report in September 2018, a second interim report in June 2020 a third interim report in February 2021. All the previous reports also evaluated the East Wales region of the project and a final evaluation specifically for East Wales was produced in September 2021. This is the final report for West Wales and the Valleys.
- 1.8. The term **stakeholder** in this report refers to partner and / or potential partner organisations, such as public sector bodies and charities that are active in the field of employment and / or the representation of minority or disadvantaged groups.
- 1.9. In terms of achievement of engagement and results targets, the project allows a 15 per cent variation. Therefore, if the engagement levels are within 85 per cent to 115 per cent of the target, then the targets are deemed to have been met.

2. Methodology

Introduction

- 2.1. This report draws upon five key sources of data:
- data produced by the project, including 21 progress reports (December 2016 to May 2022);
 - analysis of the participant database (April 2022);
 - interviews with 11 staff members²⁵, 14 participants, five stakeholders²⁶ and two volunteers;
 - a feedback questionnaire for project participants (n=31) and stakeholders²⁷ (n=22), both produced by CGL and analysed by CGL and People and Work;
 - the impact star which measured soft and employment related skills and were delivered by project staff to participants (n=119); and
 - desk-based data to provide context to the project's findings²⁸.
- 2.2. The evaluation also draws from findings from the three interim evaluation reports (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021) and the final evaluation of the East Wales region of the project (Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021)²⁹.

Quality of the data

- 2.3. The evaluation draws upon a strong mix of quantitative and qualitative data from different comparable data sources. This includes interviews with the

²⁵ Four of these staff members were interviewed on three different occasions throughout the project's lifetime.

²⁶ Partners and / or potential partners.

²⁷ Partners and / or potential partners.

²⁸ This included quantitative data collected via StatsWales to compare numbers of project participants with certain characteristics (gender, age and Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups) with the national average; studies to support comments made by staff and search for comparable studies to compare the cost effectiveness of the project.

²⁹ Given that the East Wales region part of the project was delivered together with the WW&V region for most of the project's lifetime, this report does draw upon some findings from this final report where relevant e.g. around administration, staff structures and CCTs.

majority of project staff, including those in managerial positions³⁰ and frontline staff³¹. A purposive sample of participants had either been interviewed or completed a project feedback questionnaire. These data, in line with the results from the impact star (skills assessment) and project outcome data provided valuable insights into the experiences of the project participants and its impact upon them. Similarly, interviews with a purposive sample of partners³² and the partner or potential partner (stakeholders) feedback questionnaire provided insights into engagement processes and barriers. The greatest area of weakness for the evaluation was the low number of volunteers interviewed. Notwithstanding this, overall the evaluation has robust data to respond to the evaluative aims and objectives.

³⁰ For the final fieldwork stage this included Programme Manager, Marketing Manager and Volunteer Co-ordinator. At previous stages this also included interviews with the then Area Manager of [SOVA](#), the Monitoring and Compliance Manager and Senior Case Officers.

³¹ For the final fieldwork stage this included interviews with case officers and at previous stages mentors and outreach workers (who are no longer active due to restructuring).

³² From the public and third sector.

3. Findings: project engagements

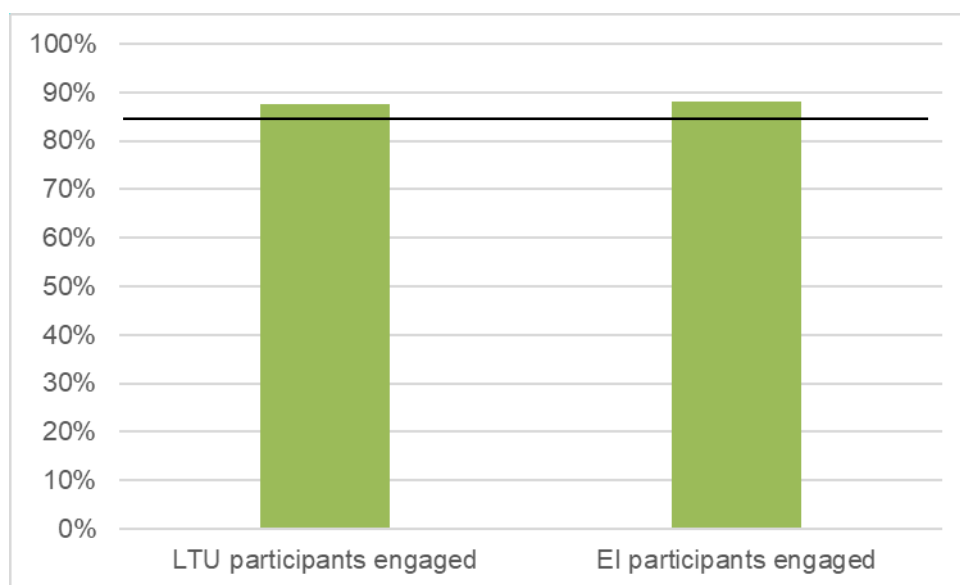
Introduction

- 3.1. This section reports on the engagements in WW&V in relation to long term unemployed (LTU) participants and economically inactive (EI) participants and the recruitment of volunteers, providing an indication of the impact of the project. It draws upon views of staff, stakeholders and participants to reflect on the engagement process.
- 3.2. In terms of achievement of engagement targets, the project allows a 15 per cent variation. Therefore, if the engagement levels are within 85 per cent to 115 per cent of the target, then the targets are deemed to have been met.

Progress on targets

- 3.3. Graph 1 shows that in April 2022, with four months to go, the project was on target in terms of the engagement of LTU and EI participants. Initially the project struggled to engage EI participants and was marginally underachieving its engagement of LTU participants (Bowen and Holtom, 2018). Following interventions to improve the engagement of EI (see para 3.17), engagement levels improved considerably (i.e. from 37 per cent of target in June 2018 to 79 per cent by February 2020) and after a decrease in recruitment during the initial COVID-19 period (Pells and Bowen, 2021) engagement for LTU improved; for example, the average monthly rate of recruitment was 5 participants per month between March 2020 – April 2021 (first year of COVID-19) and this increased to 5.5 between March 2021 – April 2022 (10 per cent increase) as the project adapted to the pandemic and restrictions eased a little (although still in place).

Graph 1: Percentage of the final engagement targets achieved for LTU and EI participants by April 2022



Source: CGL ACE database updated April 2022

Strengths of engagements

- 3.4. Project data showed a considerable proportion (42 per cent) of referrals to the project were self-referrals and staff commented that these self-referrals were more likely to be from EI participants (Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021). This had been achieved through a successful online marketing system, community engagement and word of mouth, as described below.

Online marketing and logistics

- 3.5. During the fieldwork for this report staff highlighted that the project had increased its advertising through social media, in particular through Facebook and Twitter. This resulted in more people viewing the project's website³³ and this started to translate into live enquiries when CGL redesigned the website so that people did not need to enter information on eligibility but simply

³³ As reported in the project's progress report in January 2022 there were 1,798 visits to their website, far higher than any other month.

provided contact details to get a call back. Moreover, as highlighted by a staff member, most participants now reached the project via mobile phone and the websites had been re-designed to cater for this.

- 3.6. The Marketing Manager developed a small online marketing team from existing staff who were used to using online social media. This team was able to promote the project on a social media platform each day and thereby grow a digital network across social platforms and link into other organisations where there was a complementary fit. Staff commented that this improved the marketing project without committing the resources that would usually be spent on comparable campaigns, such as paying for online advertising or the production and delivery of pamphlets and posters.

Word of mouth and community engagement

- 3.7. Apart from the restrictive periods caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project had success in recruiting participants through community engagement and word of mouth (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020).
- 3.8. Staff commented that these routes were particularly important for recruiting EI participants. Women, it was reported, could be reached by visiting places such as markets, school gates, libraries, places of worship, community centres or ESOL courses (Bowen and Pells, 2020). Although leaflets had been distributed to some these areas, staff commented that recruitment was more effective when face to face contact was made. This was said to be most effective if staff could attend these places at regular periods so that people became more aware of what they were offering and how to get hold of them (ibid.).
- 3.9. Participant interviews showed it was common for them to tell friends within their communities about the opportunities provided by the project (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020). Staff identified that maintaining a strong relationship with existing participants helped to encourage word of mouth recruitment via the participant (Ibid).

3.10. As COVID-19 restrictions eased, face to face and community contact was re-introduced. Nevertheless, as highlighted above (para 3.5), online marketing had continued.

Partners and networks

3.11. Notwithstanding some challenges in working with other organisations (see para 4.23), project data showed that 58 per cent of all referrals to the project came from other organisations (22 organisations in total), most notably from:

- Job Centre Plus (JCP) (23 per cent of referrals); and
- the [British Red Cross](#) (11 per cent of referrals)

and to a lesser extent from charities such as:

- [Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team](#) (5 per cent of referrals); and
- [Centre for African Entrepreneurship](#) (4 per cent of referrals)

and a few from publicly funded organisations such as:

- local authorities (3 per cent); and
- other ESF projects such as [Communities for Work](#) (3 per cent) and [Workways+](#) (1 per cent)

3.12. The referrals from JCP were particularly helpful in recruiting LTU participants (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020). In contrast, EI participant engagement relied more on community engagement which could take longer to establish (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021), and the more effective marketing systems developed later in the project's lifetime.

3.13. Staff commented that it was important to continually work to maintain the relationship with JCP and other organisations as staff turnover in larger organisations such as JCP can be high. Moreover, there are other ESF funded projects offering skills and employment support (see para 5.5), which organisations that refer to this project also consider, and understanding the

differences between these initiatives can be challenging for staff in these organisations (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020).

- 3.14. Staff felt that ACE having wider eligibility criteria than some other organisations (Bowen and Pells, 2020) helped them with recruitment from JCP; for example, a staff member said:

‘The job centre were sceptical of us at first. I think as lots of projects have come to them and said they can help get people into jobs, but then have eligibility criteria which mean that they are always refusing people. But now the job centre have seen that we are able to take people.’

- 3.15. In addition, stakeholders in the stakeholder feedback questionnaire (see para 2.1) were asked how they made referrals, they reported that the referral mechanism was straightforward; for example, via email or an online referral, and easy to complete. Moreover, some of these stakeholders said they were able to just send the potential participant directly to the project case workers.

Training

- 3.16. Staff interviewed for this and previous reports (Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021) identified that being able to offer training helped to engage participants³⁴ (in terms of self-referrals and referrals from partners). Not all employment support initiatives could offer training directly from their project budgets and being able to do this helped in terms of the flexibility of the training offer (in terms of course choice and duration).

Adapting to challenges

- 3.17. A key strength of the project was how it adapted to the challenges that it faced, including:
- improving the recruitment of EI participants by re-structuring between September 2019 – January 2020 with the establishment of outreach

³⁴ Notwithstanding, there was a brief period in which the project was not able to offer training from its budget (Oct 2019 – Feb 2020) which meant training during this period was sourced via local authorities, housing associations and Adult Learning Wales (ALW).

workers within a hub system whose role was specifically around engaging EI participants within community-based settings³⁵ (Pells and Bowen, 2021);

- reacting flexibly and effectively to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic by, for example, producing a strategy³⁶ around online marketing, conducting volunteering interviews and training online, establishing 'digital champions'³⁷ and encouraging participants to access the [Better Futures Fund](#) to gain internet access (Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021; Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021);
- developing the ethnic diversity of the project staff³⁸, which was reported by staff in interviews for this report to have helped with the participant recruitment process;
- when funding for the East Wales area of the project ended, staff in interviews for this report explained how the project was re-structured (in August 2021 from the hub system described in the first bullet point) and streamlined by discontinuing the hubs and the outreach workers roles (which had been hampered by COVID-19) and included the establishment of a simpler management system with the Programme Manager and a seconded Case Officer Manager managing all staff, which, facilitated by the experienced staff in place at that point, had proved effective³⁹.

3.18. Furthermore, the project actively sought the feedback of stakeholders through a survey which was able to advise the project on how to improve recruitment (see appendix 2 for key results) and it is reasonable to assume that this also contributed to sustaining the awareness of the project amongst stakeholders.

³⁵ This also included the establishment of north and south hubs and a Volunteer Coordinator role (in each hub) to specifically focus on recruiting volunteers, the simplifying of the Case Officer's role to focus on producing outcomes, and the establishment of a Marketing Manager. This improved the communication system and the employment outcomes were more geographically spread and less reliant on one certain area, as it was in earlier stages of the project.

³⁶ Matthews, H. (unpublished, 2020) Change Grow Live ACE COVID 19 Exit Strategy.

³⁷ I.e. Designated staff and volunteers who helped participants to improve their digital competence.

³⁸ Although efforts were made to recruit from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups at the start of the project.

³⁹ For example, employment results were at their highest in 2021 despite the on-going challenges of COVID-19.

Challenges and opportunities to engagements

Covid-19

- 3.19. As referred to above, COVID-19 was a challenge for the project. During the fieldwork for this report staff commented on how key partner organisations, most notably JCP, took time to adapt to remote working and therefore referrals were very low for the initial year of the pandemic. In addition, as highlighted in previous reports (Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021):
- there was a lack of community engagement due to reduced opportunities for face-to-face contact;
 - there were issues with IT literacy and data access amongst some participants; and
 - the particular vulnerabilities of some Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups to the virus ([ONS, 2020](#)) made it more challenging to work with these groups.
- 3.20. However, COVID-19 had a positive effect in pushing CGL and subsequently the project to further develop its remote systems of working, not only in terms of marketing and training but in terms of how staff communicate. As one staff member described it for the fieldwork for this report, it meant that a relatively small project (in terms of staff numbers) was better able to operate over a wide geographical range, something which the project had struggled with before this development, given the distances between staff members.

Periods of uncertainty and change

- 3.21. As reported (Bowen and Pells, 2020) there was a period of uncertainty (i.e., November 2018 – September 2019) where staff were unsure whether the project would continue or not (as this was dependent upon agreeing a re-profiling and extension). This resulted in some staff seeking work elsewhere. Moreover, staff reported in the fieldwork for this report that because the project was entering its final period (finishing by August 2022) and had not secured funding for a similar project, they were, by early spring 2022, considering their positions. In addition, marketing the project for the final

phase was difficult as the project could not guarantee the long-term support it had provided in its earlier stages.

- 3.22. As previously reported (Bowen and Pells, 2020), the Supporting Others Through Volunteer Action (SOVA) (the charity that initially delivered the project) [merger with CGL](#) improved the stability of the project, mirroring findings from studies that indicate mergers can save money and help charities in difficulties to survive ([Copps, 2009](#)). This stability was important given the folding of SOVA's project partner, the South East Wales Racial Equality Council (SEWREC). Nevertheless, it also meant that CGL had set systems and protocols which did not always fit with what was expected by the project funder's (WEFO's) requirements) and management had to try and navigate two systems to make them work. This meant that recruitment of new staff for new roles created in the first restructuring, took longer than anticipated (i.e., from September 2019 to January 2020).

Relationship with other charities

- 3.23. Despite some referrals from charities (see para 3.11), staff reported for the fieldwork for this report that it had struggled to establish strong links with certain charities that worked with Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. Staff commented on how they had tried to engage with these organisations on many occasions; for example, through attending events, direct emails/phone calls and the stakeholder survey. Nevertheless, relationships with these organisations had not developed as strongly as staff would have hoped, in terms of improving referrals, sharing expertise and provision. Staff suggested this could be due to CGL not being a charity that was readily identifiable as one that supports Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.

Recruitment and the role of volunteers

- 3.24. Overall, staff interviewed for this report commented that they were satisfied with the number of people who volunteered on the project. This included 115 volunteers that had accessed training to enable them to volunteer on the project and 40 of these who had become active case workers. This meant that

the project was able to meet its in-kind match funding targets which is calculated by applying WEFO specified equivalent monetary rates to a volunteer hour⁴⁰.

3.25. As previously reported, the project struggled in the early years with recruiting volunteers (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020) but this improved when the role of the Volunteer Coordinator⁴¹ was established in late 2019 (Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021). Moreover, staff interviewed for this report commented on how the increased online provision of the project had made it easier to retain volunteers as they could offer their support and access training and supervision online, which was less demanding on their time than face to face interactions.

3.26. However, as commented by staff interviewed for this report, despite an improvement in the number of volunteers, there remained the issue of volunteers not spending enough time with participants (although the volunteers did benefit from training and supervisions with staff). Some staff were also wary of using volunteers for certain tasks in case it was seen as a way of replacing paid job roles. After the recent re-structuring in 2021 (see para 3.17) this balance was addressed and the existing volunteers at the time were able to spend more time supporting participants with, for example, their English language and job search skills.

⁴⁰ Equivalent to approximately 3 per cent of total project expenditure.

⁴¹ To focus on recruiting volunteers and generate match funding volunteer hours.

4. Findings: project results

Introduction

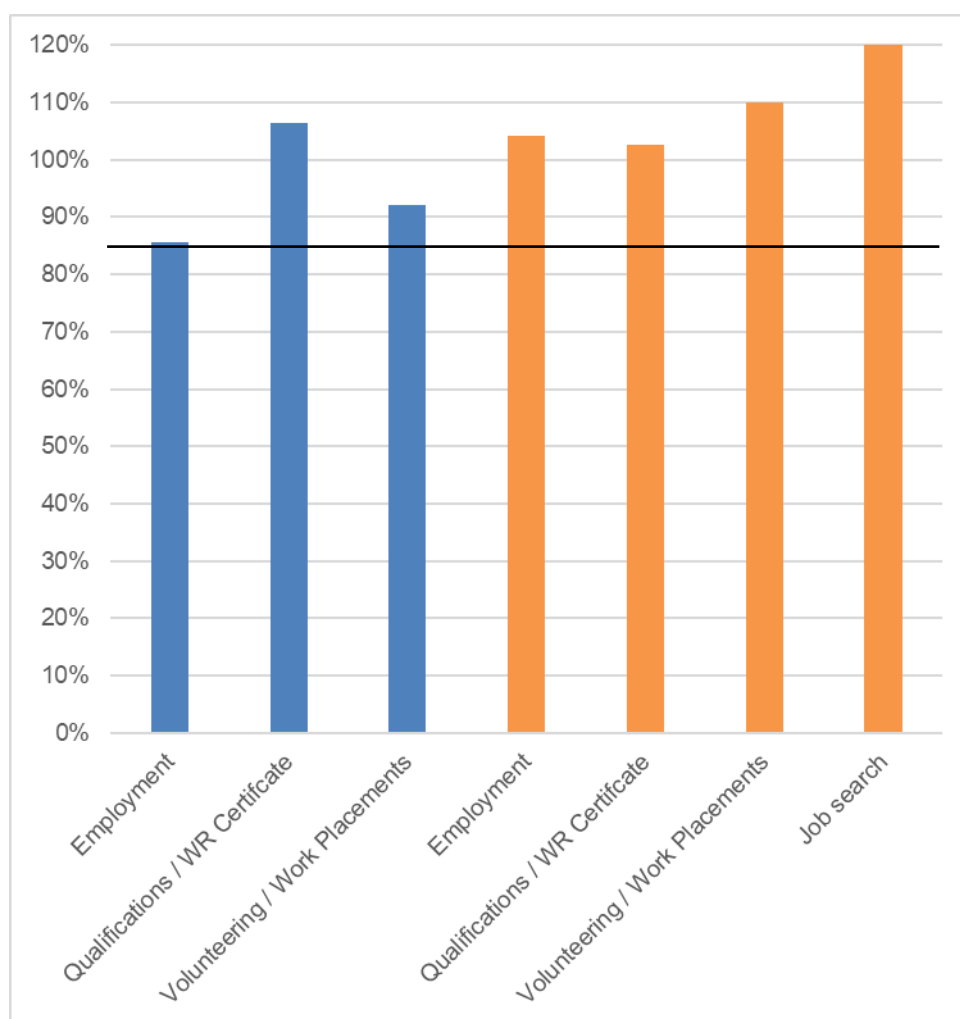
- 4.1. This section reports on the performance (outputs and results) of LTU participants and EI participants and draws upon the views of staff, participants and stakeholders to reflect the strengths and challenges of the project's delivery model, including management, record keeping and quality assurance.
- 4.2. It also summarises findings around the cost effectiveness of the project.
- 4.3. In terms of achievement of engagement and results targets, the project allows a 15 per cent variation. Therefore, if the engagement levels are within 85 per cent to 115 per cent of the target, then the targets are deemed to have been met.

Progress on Outputs and Results

- 4.4. Graph 2 shows that the project is on target in terms of its performance; this includes:
- Employment results - 86 per cent for LTU and 104 per cent for EI.
 - Qualifications and work-related certificates - 106 per cent for LTU and 103 per cent for EI.
 - Volunteering and work placements - 92 per cent for LTU and 110 per cent for EI.
 - Job searches results – 120 per cent for EI⁴².

⁴² This is not an expected result for LTU participants.

Graph 2: Percentage of the result targets achieved for LTU (blue bars) and EI (orange bars) participants by April 2022

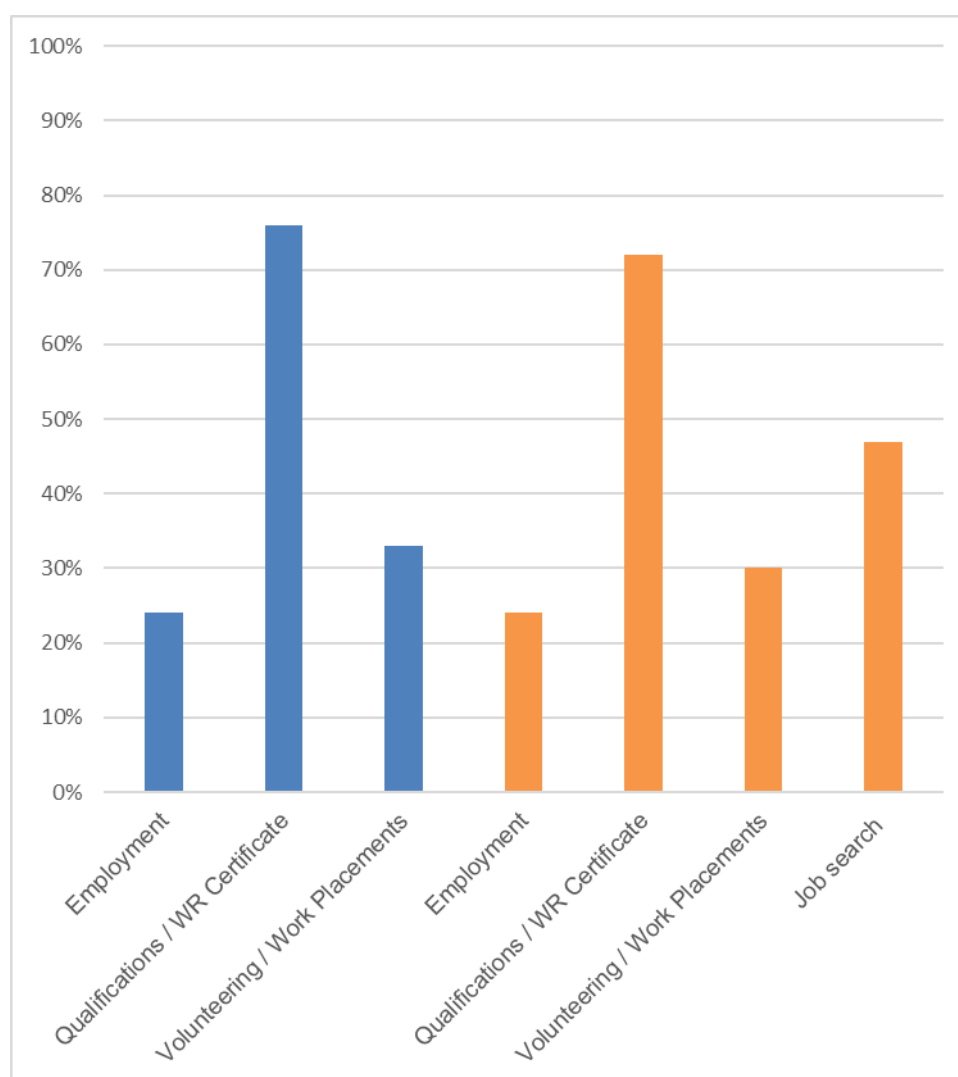


Source: CGL ACE database updated April 2022

- 4.5. Initially, except for the achievement of qualifications amongst LTU participants, the project struggled to meet its result targets (Bowen and Holtom, 2018). Despite some improvement, this pattern generally remained for LTU participants until 2021. However, the project results amongst EI participants improved considerably and were on target by February 2020 (Bowen and Pells, 2020). It was at the later stages of the project that results improved for LTU participants, and the project was also able to overcome the challenge of COVID-19 during this period (see section 3).

- 4.6. The conversion rate for the project from engagement to result is higher than expected, with 84 per cent of engagements achieving at least one result (see graph 3 for a breakdown of the conversion rates). For all but one of the results, the percentage of targets achieved (graph 2) is consistently higher than the percentage of engagements achieved (graph 1). During the production of this report there are no directly comparable published studies with which to compare in terms of this conversion rate. However, employment results amongst ACE participants was 24 per cent, which is similar to the 26 per cent achieved amongst EI and LTU participants on the Communities for Work project (M Brennan 2022, personal communication, 2 August).
- 4.7. Graph 3 below shows the percentage of participants engaged, who achieved each result, showing that the conversion into qualifications and work related certificates were particularly high (over 70 per cent).

Graph 3: Percentage of participants who achieved each result for LTU (blue bars) and EI (orange bars) participants by April 2022



Source: CGL ACE database updated April 2022

Strength of the project support

The role of staff

- 4.8. Analysis by the project highlighted the importance of the role of the staff (typically case officers) in delivering results; for example, only 30 per cent of participants who had gained employment had accessed training external to the project, the remaining 70 per cent had gained employment through the direct support of staff only. Although staff did provide some training themselves, mainly regarding CV, job interview and job search workshops,

the lower-than-expected levels of training needed was highlighted by staff as a surprise. Indeed, only £50 per participant was spent on external training. However, having the ability to offer training was described as important to the engagement process (see section 3).

Participants' views

4.9. Participants in their responses to the project questionnaire described how helpful the staff were, communicating regularly, helping to motivate them, support their emotional needs and helping in practical ways that included:

- building and/or improving their CV, job application skills, interview skills and job search skills;
- help with life skills and soft skills;
- careers advice;
- supporting a sense of well-being;
- developing English language skills and confidence;
- access to qualifications and work-related certificates; and
- help to gain employment and voluntary work.

4.10. Comments within the survey highlighted the holistic and bespoke support provided to participants, for example (also see case studies 1-4):

'I think ACE is excellent at assisting their participants to build a new life here. Starting a new life in a new place involves more than getting a job. It also includes learning how to speak in English, finding people to talk with (to ask questions and get answers, to talk with about who you are and the life you've lived so far), navigating the extensive legal processes that migrants need to go through and knowing where to go for things and services you need. The ACE community offers that to participants. This is very important, especially now when COVID-19 restrictions have isolated so many of us. I think the ACE program has provided exceptional psychosocial support for participants and helped us navigate these changing times explaining lockdowns, changes in laws and government services and restrictions. The support of my case worker and participants (in the ([Friend and Neighbours](#) (FAN) meetings) has been exceedingly positive for my mental health during this time.

Last but definitely not least ACE has recruited great staff who are dedicated, empathic, proactive, kind, very helpful and knowledgeable. I am so grateful for my case worker.'

'They are really interested in helping you according to your needs, and they stay focused on your goals (short or long term). I believe that the Case Officer is prepared to do what is best for you. Good communication and great service.'

'The employees I met (my case worker and her manager) were really supportive and understanding, they made my journey easier. I think having regular meetings with case workers is great, it helps to be in touch with them and gives a chance to share your concerns, plans or interest without any delay.'

Case Study 1. Example of support resulting in a work placement.

Abeni (not her real name) is a refugee from Africa. She had a low level of education, with her education in Africa ending after primary school. She was a volunteer at a charity and learning English prior to hearing about the project. Abeni had been volunteering for three years and joined the project as she needed to earn money and wanted to work as a teaching assistant to fit in around childcare responsibilities. Abeni had heard bad experiences from friends who had been bullied at work and she was very anxious and fearful about what working in the UK would be like as a refugee. Abeni met her mentor every week. She was supported to access a teaching assistant course and her mentor supported her with interviews to gain a placement. The mentor encouraged her to keep trying and after contacting ten schools she got a placement. Abeni said that she would not have got the work placement without the support of the project as the school knew of the project and trusted it. She said she would never have had the confidence to do the course or get a placement by herself.

Source: fieldwork notes People and Work 2018

- 4.11. As highlighted in previous reports (Bowen and Holtom, 2018, Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021) the support provided by the project enabled many participants to overcome barriers. Results from the impact star show how the ability of participants to overcome barriers was heightened by

the support they were given, showing an improvement under all four key barriers. For example:

- 'Employment skills' baseline average score was 5.6 and increased to 7.5;
- 'Skills and training' baseline average score was 5.6 and increased to 7.3;
- 'Communication skills' baseline average score was 6.2 and increased to 7.4; and
- 'Social inclusion skills' baseline average score was 7.3 and increased to 8.6.

Moreover, feedback from participants in the project questionnaire rated their satisfaction with the project an average 4.6 out of 5 (5 being the most satisfied) and stakeholders rated their satisfaction with the project as 4.3 out of 5 (5 being the happiest).

Staff views

- 4.12. The feedback from staff broadly supported comments by participants; for example, staff described the process of building up trust between themselves and the participants through organised but informal conversations and this helped to facilitate the steps participants needed to take towards achieving outcomes. As reported in the 2020 interim report (Bowen and Pells, 2020) typical intervention steps included:

- addressing basic situational needs (signposting to services, such as food banks and health care);
- improving English language skills;
- building confidence and / or other soft skills;
- participating in work-related training (such as food safety and security courses) and/ or participating in volunteering; and
- helping to produce a CV and job searching.

Case Study 2: Example of support resulting in work experience, qualifications and employment

Barsha (not her real name) lacked confidence and had no qualifications. She wanted to become a teaching assistant but did not know how and she also doubted her ability to become one. She met with a case officer within a female only group setting with other participants at a local library. The sessions were initially used to practice English conversations and build the social confidence of the participants. Following this the sessions were used to teach IT skills and CV writing.

The project then helped her to get a volunteering placement at a school twice a week by facilitating her Discovery and Barring Service (DBS) check and introducing her to the headteacher. The case worker then enrolled her on the local council website so that she could start to apply for paid employment at a school. In addition, she successfully completed a Food Safety level 2 Certificate, First Aid for Children course and a Preparation for Work ACE course which included interview skills and mock interviews.

Following all this training Barsha was offered a job with a local agency and started working four days a week as a teaching assistant. She was happy with what she had achieved as initially, despite her ambition, she did not think it was possible. Furthermore, she enjoyed working as a teaching assistant.

Source: based upon information from 2022 progress report.

- 4.13. Staff interviewed for this report and previous reports (Bowen and Holtom, 2018, Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021) felt the project's delivery model was flexible enough to cater for the individual needs of participants and that they as staff were experienced and skilled enough to work effectively with participants.
- 4.14. Staff in the fieldwork for this report and previous reports (Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021) appreciate the ability of the project to take a person-centred approach to the needs of the participants; for example, as one staff member commented:

'We are lucky with this project as we have time to work with the people, listen to them and cater to their specific needs. I base what we do on what the individual wants and needs, it's not a one-size fits all approach.'

Case Study 3: Example of specialist support improving short term and potential long term outcomes

Rose (not her real name) is a single parent. She used to work as an interpreter before developing a permanent health condition. She had got to the point that she felt able to work again. In Rose's own words:

"So when I went to the old employers I used to work for and they told me they would use me, but I needed a qualification in interpreting now as the law had changed. I felt very deflated. Then I saw the Facebook post for ACE. I saw the post on Tuesday and got in touch and then on Wednesday I saw the Case Officer and then on Friday we did the paperwork and I was accepted and enrolled on the course!"

Rose described how she could never have afforded to pay for a qualification herself, meaning she could never have returned to her profession without the support of ACE. She was also extremely pleased with the quality of the course, which was an online class. Rose needed help with her CV and was put in touch with the Marketing Manager: she described the help she got:

"He helped me to develop a business strategy and a marketing strategy – to look at which companies to approach – to look at rates of pay and where to position myself as an interpreter. He has given me lots of homework to do. I am going to improve my LinkedIn profile and plan to create a list of clients to contact, and to offer my services to, and what websites to go to and register as a sole trader. He helped me to look at what career to go for, to look at my competencies – he felt I should focus on medical fields as I have experience of working there for a few years and I know the medical phrases so I have that vocabulary already."

This specialist support has enabled Rose not just to return to her old employer, but instead to expand her horizons, and develop her career and earning potential. Rose was extremely happy with this support. Furthermore, ACE provided Rose with the equipment that she needed to work but could not afford herself.

Source: (Bowen and Pells, 2020)

English language skills

- 4.15. In the fieldwork for this report staff stated that the project had used the opportunity of lockdown to build up their resources to help people with their English. The project had built up links with the charity FAN who help participants with conversational English, and Reach, an organisation for Black, Asian and minority ethnic women, who offer ESOL and other support, such as social events like coffee mornings. Following COVID-19 the project had access to ESOL online and this had made English language support available to more participants, for example those with childcare responsibilities who could not attend an in-person class. These classes were not certified but it was stated that many participants did not need a certificate but did need to learn English. Staff commented that building up these alternative supports was important as long waiting lists for in-person certified ESOL classes had built up over lockdown.
- 4.16. As stated in previous reports (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020) the project used volunteers to help the English language skills of participants and this support had continued throughout the project's lifetime; for example, as a staff member commented:
- 'One of the most important elements of support is help to improve clients' English language skills. The project will help them enrol in an ESOL course and pair them with a volunteer with whom they can practice and who can help them with practical things like letter writing... the project's unique support by volunteer mentors is very effective in developing clients' language skills.'
- 4.17. Notwithstanding the English language support provided, as previously highlighted (Bowen and Holtom, 2018), at the initial stages of the project some

participants' English language skills were too poor to access what the project could offer effectively (resulting in a lower than planned outcome per participant ratio for the project). This resulted in the project having to be more realistic regarding the levels of English fluency amongst the participants it could support. The project would then signpost those with poor English to other provision and offer them project support once they had improved.

Management

4.18. As highlighted in para 3.17, the project had adapted well to the challenges it faced and these changes were mainly driven by the management team who, to their credit, had taken bold decisions in restructuring the project on two occasions and oversaw the challenges and opportunities created by COVID-19 successfully. These decisions meant that although the project had been largely below its result targets (Bowen and Holtom, 2018) it was on target by April 2022 (see graph 2).

4.19. In the fieldwork for this report staff praised how the project was managed; for example, staff commented:

'Management have been brilliant – they are the best team that I have worked with. XXX is my line manager and she has been amazing. She has been very involved from the start – even with some questions which are not her job, but she has still been happy to answer them.'

'They [management] are first class. I don't have a background in the third sector. It's been a real contrast for me from the private sector. I have done a lot of work with Total Quality Management. I really admire the management. Leadership, organisation and teamwork and culture. It has been first class. I can't say enough how good they are. Especially given the uncertainty and difficulties As a team they are remarkable – cohesive, collaborative, despite all of the challenges.'

4.20. This was supported by feedback from staff in a previous report (Bowen and Pells, 2020) who reported on aspects of management which they experienced and valued:

- approachability;
- clarity;
- being listened to; and
- creating an environment to promote teamwork.

4.21. Management staff reflected on the importance of providing clear guidelines on what was expected from staff members, especially given that most frontline staff spend most of their working time without contact with other staff members; for example, although the flexibility and range of interventions the project could provide was a strength, it was important that staff understood how much time they should designate to different tasks, otherwise, as experienced at the initial stages of the project (when it was below target), some staff dedicated too much time to activities which do not yield results for participants. Once the management team recognised this, steps were taken to provide clearer guidance⁴³ (Bowen and Holtom, 2018).

4.22. Staff interviewed for this report felt that a smaller management team (in terms of numbers of staff in management roles) and more remote management (less face to face contact with staff) had benefitted the project. At the beginning of the project, staff had the view that there were too many managers compared to frontline staff. Over time, better IT and associated remote working practices made it easier for managers to manage more staff using fewer resources and time. These changes also benefitted communication and sharing between staff and volunteers; for example, during the pandemic participants in the south were able to work with volunteers based in the north when there were a shortage of volunteers in the south due to illness.

Challenges and opportunities to producing outputs and results

⁴³ E.g., project management issued a guideline on how Case Officers should allocate their time. This included 40 per cent on participant duties, 40 per cent on volunteering duties and 20 per cent doing administration (Bowen and Holtom, 2018).

- 4.23. As highlighted in previous reports (Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021) COVID-19 presented challenges in achieving targets, in addition to the challenges to engagements (see section 3). Most notably participants were impacted by:
- reduced or closed training provision from training providers as they adapted to the pandemic;
 - the challenge of being supported online (e.g., practising their English skills with volunteers was deemed more effective face to face than online); and
 - increased isolation, leading to greater support needs.
- 4.24. Notwithstanding this, in the fieldwork for this report, staff commented that the time spent working at home and online had provided them with the opportunity to research and access resources which they had not had time to do previously; this included training packages and information around CCTs which was then used after restrictions had eased.
- 4.25. Staff commented⁴⁴ that during the pandemic the project had a higher number of participants from skilled professional backgrounds who, on the whole (not in all circumstances), need less support in order to achieve employment. The barriers for this group were often quickly tackled; for example, staff helping participants to access the [Discretionary Assistance Fund](#) to pay for assessments (usually in terms of English language standards for certain fields) to have their qualifications recognised in the UK. In addition, there was a growth in the number of participants who wanted to start their own business, contributing to a greater diversity in the type of work people were seeking through the project.

Administrative and quality assurance systems

- 4.26. As reported in previous reports (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020; Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021) administrative and related quality

⁴⁴ Although professional backgrounds of participants are not recorded, this is based on the interpretation of staff.

assurance mechanisms were effective in supporting project delivery (see appendix 1). This was aided by the use of CRiS (a data input system) which staff reported as effective. On the whole, staff were satisfied with the administrative systems and the related support they were given by other staff. However, some staff throughout the project's lifetime had struggled with the quantity of expected administrative tasks⁴⁵ for the project.

- 4.27. During the COVID-19 pandemic, as reported in the 2021 interim report (Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021), WEFO produced a Frequently Asked Questions document link and flexibility was shown around proving eligibility , such as the collection of participants' signatures, which staff found useful.
- 4.28. As highlighted in the methodology (section 2) the project collected and analysed data on the broader impact of the work (such as soft skills)⁴⁶, which provided additional insights on the difference the work was making, how the project was perceived and what could be improved. Overall, expected data submissions, such as progress reports to WEFO and information requested by the evaluators, such as the results of participants with different characteristics, were produced on time.

Cost effectiveness and value for money

Costs

- 4.29. The cost per participant supported⁴⁷ was a little higher than expected (i.e., £5,002 per participant, compared to the expected £4,572 per participant). This was partly attributed by staff to the higher proportion of refugees engaged by the project than originally anticipated (although exact target figures for refugees were not stated within the project business plan). Refugees typically face more complex barriers to employment and were, therefore, further from

⁴⁵For example, the participants' eligibility consent forms, equal opportunities forms and results declarations (see appendix 1 for further examples).

⁴⁶ Feedback questionnaire for project participants and stakeholders and the participants' impact star.

⁴⁷ This includes all costs such as staff salaries and accommodation costs, in addition to costs directly associated with supporting the participant, such as training.

the labour market than other participants, requiring more support, which increased total expenditure. These results are supported by research that shows that barriers to employment are generally higher amongst refugees than people born in the UK or other groups of migrants, such as EU nationals, who have come to Wales in search of work ([Welsh Government, 2020](#); [Holtom et al., 2013](#)).

- 4.30. The evaluation found no directly comparable published studies in which the cost per participant could be compared.

Likely financial benefits

- 4.31. Staff stated that they were satisfied with the higher than anticipated costs of the project, because the value of the benefits provided to the participants were high and the project was, therefore, likely to provide a high rate of return on the investment made.
- 4.32. Studies that have calculated the financial savings of employment to the individual, society and exchequer and also the benefits in terms of participant mental health, support the assessment of project staff (see e.g. [Public Health England, 2017](#); [Schneider et al., 2010](#)); for example, the Public Health England study (p.10) shows how, on average, a range of support measures that result in people returning to work provide a net financial benefit per person (minus the costs of the support): for the individual (£3,500), society (£23,100) and the exchequer (£12,000). Although details on the costs of, and type of, support are not published and hence cannot be used to directly compare with this project, it does suggest that the costs of the project would be more than covered by the benefit to society and the exchequer.
- 4.33. Studies ([BIS, 2009](#); [Dorsett et al., 2010](#); [Schuller, 2017](#)) identify that qualifications increase people's earnings during their lifetime⁴⁸; for example, the difference between the medium salary of an individual with no

⁴⁸290 qualifications and work-related certificates have been achieved by April 2022.

qualifications compared to that with a level two qualification is £2,912 a year ([ONS, 2018](#))⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ 12 participants who had no qualifications gained a level 2 or above qualification with the support of the project, potentially resulting in a combined £34,944 salary increase for every year of employment.

5. An estimation of what would have happened without the intervention

Introduction

- 5.1. This section offers an estimation of what is likely to have happened to participants in the absence of the project i.e., the counterfactual. However, this is only an estimation, based on assessing the link between the project intervention and its results and the likelihood of participants being able to gain similar support and results elsewhere ([English Partnerships, 2008](#)). It does not provide a causal link⁵⁰ between the project interventions and its results, as this is beyond the scope of the evaluation.

The relationship between support and results

- 5.2. As reported throughout the project's lifetime (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2021; Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021) participants and staff made a direct link between the support provided and the results achieved; for example, in the participant questionnaire and interviews, participants stated (also see case studies 1-4 and para 4.10):

'ACE kindly provided both financial and mentoring help which led me to get my professional registration and a job offer.'

'I can't see how I would have got the work without them [ACE staff] I didn't have a clue when I joined.'

'If it were not for ACE, I would not have got my work placement, the school know the project and trust them, so they let me volunteer knowing that I come from this project. [Case Officer] had to come and sign for me. With the [Case Officer] I have someone behind me – I didn't have the confidence to do this on my own.'

⁵⁰ "A causal relationship is when one variable causes a change in another variable. These types of relationships are investigated by experimental research in order to determine if changes in one variable actually result in changes in another variable" ([Verywellmind, 2020](#)).

- 5.3. The evidence indicates that without support provided by the project, many of the outcomes would not have been achieved, at least not within the timeframe in which they were achieved.

Access to support

- 5.4. As reported (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Holtom, 2020) participants stated that public services, like JCP, were not fully catering for their needs. Furthermore, at least 20 services and charities, including Job Centres, were referring people to ACE (see section 3) which indicates that they were identifying a need that their own service or charity could not meet.
- 5.5. Partners and staff reported that there was no direct competition with the project and that it was 'leading the way' in terms of engaging, working with and supporting ethnic minorities into work. As reported in previous evaluations (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021), although there were projects that support all people to access employment and improve their employability, such as [Communities for Work](#) (CFW), [CFW+](#) and [Parents Childcare and Employment](#) (PaCE) they do not specifically target or adapt their services to the needs of people from Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups. This project also worked with many refugees (40 per cent of all participants were refugees). The [ReStart](#) programme does specifically support refugees in Wales, but it focuses only on urban areas (i.e. Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham). The East Wales part of the project was active in some areas that have a relatively high concentration of Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups within their populations (e.g. Cardiff and Newport)⁵¹ but the West Wales and the Valleys programme is a more bespoke approach, engaging people from Black, Asian minority ethnic groups in areas (with the exception of Swansea) where there are limited numbers within the population, and consequently few, if any, targeted services.

⁵¹ ([StatsWales, 2021](#)).

6. Findings: Cross Cutting Themes

Introduction

6.1. This section assesses the project's activities concerning the Cross Cutting Themes (CCT) and the associated Case Level Indicators. The CCT include:

- equal opportunities, including promoting gender mainstreaming and the use of the Welsh language⁵²;
- sustainable development⁵³; and
- tackling poverty and social exclusion.

6.2. The Case Level Indicators include:

- positive action measures regarding women;
- positive action measures regarding people aged over 54;
- occupational segregation activity;
- resource efficiency measures;
- development of an organisational travel and sustainable transport initiative;
- local supply chain development;
- developing an eco-code;
- peer support activity;
- community skill building activity;
- developing / engaging CCT champions; and
- activity supporting CCT indicators (in Priorities/Objectives where the indicators are not present).

⁵² "Actions appropriate for this priority could include: new approaches which enable organisations to innovate and work together in a region to ensure public services are accessible and equitable to all. Support for activity which builds the capacity and capability of the workforce. Actions to ensure that new regional ways of working as they are put in place promote equality of opportunity for staff and inclusive workplaces. Taking opportunities to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language within new regional ways of working, in service delivery and developing capacity" ([WG, 2019, p.4](#)).

⁵³ "Actions appropriate for this priority could include: encouraging sustainable transport solutions, promoting resource efficiency, including energy efficiency and waste management (including recycling) in the delivery and implementation of operations, supporting the sharing of resources and use of local supply chains" ([WG, 2019, p.3](#)).

- 6.3. In addition, an estimation of the project's impact on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is set out.

Overview

- 6.4. Overall, the project has been very active in delivering activities associated with the CCT. Most activities undertaken were in relation to the sustainable development theme, spurred on by their Sustainability Champion. The project had succeeded in engaging more women than men and more older participants (in comparison with the working population). Despite steps taken to promote gender mainstreaming, making an impact upon this theme has proved difficult.
- 6.5. Encouragingly, staff interviewed for this report spoke of lessons that they had learned from this project in terms of tackling social exclusion and sustainability that they would use for future projects within CGL and / or in their future careers and that a volunteer peer support group established by the project was likely to continue after the project finishes.

How well were Cross Cutting Themes delivered?

Equal Opportunities, Gender Mainstreaming

Occupational segregation

- 6.6. As previously reported (Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021) and for the fieldwork for this report, staff provided examples of women and men who had work experience or applied for or gained employment in non-traditional roles in terms of their gender. This included courses in construction for women, and men who had gone into care work. Staff commented that a range of career options and courses were shown to participants; however overall, participants tended to want to work in traditional roles (ibid.). Staff interviewed for this report also commented that many female participants felt more comfortable working in environments where mainly women worked and that the project had to respond to this request.

- 6.7. As reported before (Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021) in terms of challenging occupational segregation, activities during the project's lifetime included the impact star and action plans, which are gender-neutral, (e.g. focusing on the same type of opportunities for women and men) and staff workshops shared information around occupational segregation.

Women

- 6.8. On the whole more women were engaged than men (57 per cent were women) and analyses of engagement characteristics identified that three quarters of all EI participants were women. Staff interviewed for this report commented that women were more likely to self-refer and engage through community and online activities and these were typically the more common routes for EI engagements. As reported previously (Bowen and Pells, 2021), recruitment of LTU participants was more reliant on referrals from other organisations and the majority of LTU participants were men; engagement data shows that as little as 36 per cent of LTU participants were women. Staff interviewed for this report commented that they were reliant on third party contacts to refer LTU people to the project and so had little scope for gender targeting if the referral agency was not doing this; however, this does raise questions regarding whether there are enough Black, Asian and minority ethnic women being engaged by employment support organisations within Wales.
- 6.9. Staff commented that throughout the project's lifetime the publicity used to promote ACE used images of women more often than men (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021). Also, all but one frontline staff (who had face to face contact with participants) for the project in WW&V had always been women and it was these staff members who were engaging EI participants within communities.
- 6.10. In terms of employment and qualifications, female participant achievements were similar to men, with around a quarter achieving employment results and three-quarters qualification results. However, women performed considerably

better in terms of job search results (32 per cent compared with 18 per cent of men) and marginally better in volunteering placements⁵⁴. While there was no specific evidence collected regarding this difference, female participants who were interviewed in the evaluation (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021) and those responding to project participant questionnaires were very positive about the quality of the project interventions.

Older people

- 6.11. People aged over 54 made up 8 per cent of the participants engaged and this is higher than the percentage of people within this age range in Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in the UK, which is around 5 per cent ([Gov.UK, 2020](#)), indicating that the project has done relatively well in terms of engaging this group. As shown in progress reports and stated by staff, throughout the project's lifetime there were examples of positive measures being adopted towards older people, including the production of marketing materials aimed at older people, consulting with [Age Cymru](#) and examples of older participants who had gained valuable work experience, such as a participant aged over 60 who gained a work placement as a receptionist after retiring early from a career in nursing due to health issues.
- 6.12. There were insufficient numbers of older people to report on the percentage of those who achieved results⁵⁵. However, staff interviewed for this report commented that, on the whole, health issues tended to be a common barrier amongst older participants and that this made it more problematic to find employment, limited as they were to jobs that did not involve physical exertion.

Welsh language

- 6.13. Staff commented that a few participants had accessed Welsh language courses and also that being able to show they were learning the language was

⁵⁴ 30 per cent of women achieved this compared with 28 per cent of men.

⁵⁵ Reporting on the percentage who achieved results amongst only 32 participants could be misleading i.e. as the number is low.

useful for job applications (Pells and Bowen, 2020). In accordance with the expectations of WEFO the project produced Welsh language publicity material and the level of fluency in Welsh is recorded for all participants and volunteers. However, there was a lack of demand to access the service in Welsh⁵⁶. As reported (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021), there were examples of raising awareness of the Welsh language and culture, such as explaining the meaning of Welsh street names and traditional Welsh myths.

Case Study 4. Example of peer support.

The project has many volunteers who have been trained, provided references and completed [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) (DBS) checks. In Swansea two volunteers established a weekly group at the local [Waterfront Museum](#) where they held informal English conversation classes. The library at the museum allowed the group to use the museum's artefacts as subjects for conversation. Volunteers reported that these meetings really helped the ACE participants to practice their English and gain confidence. Moreover, it led to participants being able to support each other and share their experiences. This led to other activities in which the group become involved in community activities, such as a litter pick on Swansea beach, and volunteers commented that this made them feel closer to their local community. These activities also benefited the volunteers as it added to their CVs to improve their applications for employment.

Source: based upon case study in the CGL progress report (2022)

Sustainable development⁵⁷

- 6.14. The project established a Sustainability Champion, who has facilitated the process of delivering activities associated with the related Case Level

⁵⁶ Only one participant chose to access Welsh language provision, and this was 'partial provision'.

⁵⁷ This includes the Case Level Indicators of resources efficiency measures; development of an organisational travel and sustainable transport initiatives; local supply chain development and developing an eco-code.

Indicators throughout the project's lifetime (as shown in progress reports and stated by staff⁵⁸); this included promoting relevant information through:

- establishment of an eco-code that advises on eco-friendly practices to staff and volunteers;
- sustainable travel and resource efficiency themes that are covered in volunteers' supervision and training;
- a newsletter regarding sustainable practices for staff and volunteers;
- around a third of all staff are vegan and are encouraged to share recipe ideas with each other and staff members who have an interest in veganism⁵⁹; and
- pre-COVID-19, sustainable public travel and walking was encouraged; for example, a list of public transport options was provided to staff.

Reported tangible activities included:

- use of local supply chains, such as sourcing training locally and participants signposted to local ESOL providers. The project also used [SelltoWales](#) to source the external evaluation and other services;
- standard household recycling practices, such as hard plastics, cardboard, paper, food and tea bags recycling bins were introduced in offices;
- DVD and book swap practices amongst staff and a donation scheme for staff to pass on items to participants who need them;
- during COVID-19, increased working online reduced travel and the use of paper and printing resources and this continued as restrictions eased; and
- during COVID-19 using long lasting sanitiser to avoid wasteful reapplying.

6.15. In 2021 the project's office re-located to the [Swansea Environmental Centre](#), providing a more sustainable office space where, for example, the electricity for the building comes from solar panels. Moreover, surplus from the rent for

⁵⁸ (Bowen and Holtom, 2018; Bowen and Pells, 2020; Pells and Bowen, 2021; Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021)

⁵⁹ Veganism is known to have less of a negative environmental impact than a diet that includes meat and food produced by animals ([Godfrey et al., 2018](#)).

the building contributes towards promoting community awareness of environmental issues in Wales. In addition, staff interviewed for this report reflected on how working in the centre had increased their awareness of environmental issues and inspired them to consider developing bids for environmental initiatives through CGL.

Tackling poverty and social exclusion

- 6.16. Data from Wales shows that Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups experience labour market inequalities, which includes a lack of access to work ([Power, 2020](#)). Consequently, the project employment and qualification results (see section 4) amongst this group are likely to have contributed to tackling poverty and social exclusion.
- 6.17. Staff interviewed for this report stated that the project has increased their awareness around the benefits of diversity and the barriers which people from ethnic minority groups can face. They reflected that the lessons they learned from this project would be taken forward into their new roles (some within CGL and others in new organisations within Wales or elsewhere in the United Kingdom).

Peer support

- 6.18. As described in case study 4, volunteers had helped establish a peer support group which staff said was likely to carry on after the project finishes. There were also examples of where project activities were delivered to groups of participants who went on to support each other and organise coffee meetings between participants. Although, as would be expected, activity reduced following the COVID-19 pandemic (Pells and Bowen, 2021,) online peer support activity was established, including a women's conversation group.

Community skills building

- 6.19. As highlighted in interim reports (Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021; Bowen and Pells, 2021) and in progress reports, the project had undertaken activities which were likely to contribute to community skills building; these included:

- supporting participants⁶⁰ to set up their own businesses based in local communities;
- supporting access to local community services such as health services and food banks;
- use of local libraries, community centres and cafés when meeting project staff;
- providing information to participants around accessing funds for digital inclusion; and
- most volunteering and work experiences being located locally.

CCT champions

- 6.20. The project had established a CCT champion for the project, in addition to other champions to raise awareness and contribute to training relevant to CCT. This included a Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTQ) Champion, Disability Champion and a Sustainability Champion.

Activity supporting CCT indicators

- 6.21. At the initial stages of the project (Bowen and Holtom, 2018) a staff member who had successfully worked with the Gypsy and Traveller community shared her experiences with other staff members on the project and provided advice on how to engage and support them.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 6.22. Table 1 below provides an indication of the project's contribution to the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Table 1. Showing the relative contribution of the project to the well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (Green – strong, Amber – medium, Red – weak)

⁶⁰E.g., produce a business plan, sign post them to self-employment support agencies, register with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, learn about public liability insurance and online marketing.

Well-being goals	Key contributions
A prosperous Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing employment and qualifications levels amongst participants is likely to increase productivity.
A resilient Wales and globally responsible Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable development activities of the project are likely to have helped although this was not the main focus of the project.
A healthier Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants entering employment can make important contributions to health and well-being (What Works Wellbeing, 2017a). - Increasing participants' skills can also make important contributions to health and well-being (What Works Wellbeing, 2017b). - Project focused on participants' well-being during COVID-19 lockdowns
A more equal Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project directly supports Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities who are at a higher risk of poverty and/or social exclusion (JRF, 2020).
A Wales of cohesive communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By reducing poverty and social exclusion, the project is likely to have made a worthwhile contribution to promoting community cohesion.
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Despite bilingual promotion and offer of support, very few Welsh speakers engaged. However, Welsh cultural awareness had been raised amongst some participants and a few had engaged in Welsh lessons.

7. Conclusions

Has the operation achieved its objectives?

- 7.1. By April 2022 the project was on target to achieve its planned engagements and results for EI and LTU participants from the Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups; to this point, this included:
- employment gained for 51 EI and 42 LTU participants⁶¹;
 - qualifications⁶² and work-related certificates achieved for 156 EI and 134 LTU participants⁶³;
 - volunteering and work placements for 66 EI and 58 LTU participants⁶⁴; and
 - job search skills for 102 EI participants⁶⁵.
- 7.2. In addition, 115 people had volunteered on the project (who were not participants) had accessed training and 40 of these had become active case workers within the project. This provided volunteers with valuable experience and significantly widened the support available to participants. Volunteer time was counted as match funding for the project.
- 7.3. The performance of the project improved considerably over its lifetime. Initially the project was below target in terms of engaging EI participants and in helping to achieve employment amongst EI and LTU participants. However, it is now on target (see para 7.1).

Explanations of successes in terms of engagements

- 7.4. A key strength of the project was how the management team adapted to meet the challenges it faced; for example, the project went through two periods of

⁶¹ Final target 49 for EI and 50 for LTU.

⁶² Most of these qualifications were between level 1-3 (9 per cent below level 1, 22 per cent level 1, 40 per cent level 2, 20 per cent level 3, 5 per cent level 4, 5 per cent level 6 and 1 per cent level 7).

⁶³ Final target 153 for EI and 126 for LTU.

⁶⁴ Final target for EI 61 and 63 for LTU.

⁶⁵ Final target for EI 85.

significant restructuring, partly guided by the project evaluation reports, the first of which established the role of an outreach worker to specifically engage EI (an area of underperformance at the time) and a marketing manager role to improve engagement, and the second which simplified the project structure and improved its delivery. The project reacted well to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in terms of its online marketing. In addition, more staff from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups were recruited as the project progressed⁶⁶, which in turn helped to increase participant engagements.

7.5. There were areas of strength in terms of the engagement processes. The majority of referrals (58 per cent) were from other organisations; this included 22 different organisations in total, the highest proportion coming from JCP and the British Red Cross. Referrals from JCP helped with recruiting LTU participants in particular, as they referred mainly from this cohort. Many referrals were self-referrals (42 per cent), coming from the online marketing promotion of the project, mainly through social media platforms. Others came through word of mouth via participants telling people they knew about the project and staff promoting the project in community-based settings. Amongst self-referrals the proportion who were EI was higher compared to those referred from other organisations.

7.6. There were factors that helped motivate referrals, which included:

- lack of direct competition from other employment support projects and the associated wider eligibility criteria of the project (amongst the Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups);
- unmet demand; and
- the training offer of the project, which was flexible to people's needs.

7.7. The recruitment of people who volunteered (who were not participants) benefitted from the establishment of a Volunteer Coordinator⁶⁷ role in 2019

⁶⁶ Although there were efforts to recruit from this group at the start of the project.

⁶⁷ To focus on recruiting volunteers and generate match funding volunteer hours.

and the COVID-19 furlough scheme that provided more time for people to volunteer. Moreover, the increased online provision of the project helped to retain volunteers through, for example, offering online training, which was easier to access than face-to-face training.

Explanations of success in terms of outcomes

- 7.8. Participants felt the project had helped them to overcome complex barriers to employment, such as their “lack of communication skills” and feelings of “social exclusion⁶⁸” which contributed to their being able to achieve goals such as employment or qualifications. Participants rated their satisfaction with the project as 4.6 out of 5 (5 being most satisfied) indicating that the delivery of the project was very effective.
- 7.9. The success of the project interventions was attributed to the quality of the support by staff and the wide range of support the project could offer⁶⁹ within a flexible delivery model which could cater to an individual’s needs. This is supported by the fact that the majority (70 per cent) of participants who gained employment did so solely with the support of project staff and did not have to rely on external training provision (although some training was provided internally through staff). However, staff emphasised the importance of the external training offer for the initial engagement process (see para 7.6).
- 7.10. Participants interviewed for the project greatly valued the personal support provided by case workers through regular meetings and communications (e.g., email and text) and felt the project catered for their specific needs and the barriers they faced (see case studies 1-4 and para 4.10). This included periods when participants felt more isolated during the COVID-19 restrictions. Both participants and staff talked about building up trust between each other

⁶⁸ The impact star assessment of participants had shown a 19 per cent improvement in communication skills and 16 per cent improvement in the feeling of “social inclusion”.

⁶⁹ I.e. addressing basic situational needs (signposting to services, such as, food banks and health care); improving English language skills; building confidence and / or other soft skills; participating in work-related training (such as food safety and security courses) and/ or participating in volunteering; and helping to produce a CV and job searching.

through, for example, informal conversations and this trust was seen as a key for enabling interventions, such as training, to work effectively.

- 7.11. Participants' English language skills were supported through help to enrol in ESOL classes, conversational practice with the project's volunteers and access to charities, such as Friends and Neighbours (FAN), who organise social events.
- 7.12. As previously stated, the project adapted well to challenges (see para 7.4), adapting as the work developed. The project management team were praised by staff for its "approachability" and "clarity". The project provided clear guidelines and parameters for staff which were essential in a geographically spread project that relied on a small number of staff who had little face to face contact with other staff members. Moreover, the administrative and quality assurance systems were effective.

Return on investment

- 7.13. Although the costs of the project were a little higher than anticipated, studies show the likely cost benefits in terms of health through helping people gain employment ([Public Health England, 2017](#); [Schneider et al., 2010](#)) and upon salaries through acquiring or improving qualifications, as likely to more than offset the costs ([BIS, 2009](#); [Dorsett et al., 2010](#); [Schuller, 2017](#)). Moreover, the project was able to support more refugees than originally planned and this group, overall, experience greater barriers to employment than those born in the UK or other groups of migrants, such as EU nationals who have come to Wales in search of work ([Welsh Government, 2020](#); [Nicholl et al., 2016](#)).

What would have happened without the intervention

- 7.14. Throughout the project's lifetime participants and staff made a direct link between the project interventions (support given) and the outcomes for participants, most notably in terms of employment. There was reported to be no comparable programmes offering bespoke employment support to Black, Asian and ethnic minorities communities and / or refugees throughout the

WW&V region. Moreover, (with the exception of Swansea local authority area) the dispersed population of the Black, Asian and minority ethnic community within this region has made it problematic for other employment support initiatives to engage with these groups, highlighting the importance of this project in these areas.

On-going challenge and sustainability

- 7.15. As stated above (see para 7.4), the project had reacted well to the challenges it faced and had met its objectives (see para 7.1). Nevertheless, reflecting on the project, despite specific activities to engage with other organisations that worked with Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups⁷⁰ the relationship with some of these had not developed as strongly as hoped. Staff suggested this could be due to CGL not being a charity that was readily identifiable as one that supports Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.
- 7.16. The pattern of results shows that, despite the on-going challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2022 the project performance improved, with more participants gaining employment than in any other project year⁷¹. This was attributed to the improvements made to the project as the project learned from its experiences and the improved profile of the project as it become more established. Unfortunately, despite efforts (funding bids) the project has not been able to secure further funding yet to build on or sustain the success of the project.

Cross Cutting Themes

- 7.17. The project has been very active in delivering activities associated with the CCT. The project was particularly strong in terms of sustainable development, for example, through promoting sustainable behaviour amongst staff and volunteers. Through its community engagements and online marketing approach the project had succeeded in engaging more women than men. In

⁷⁰ For example, through attending events, direct emails/phone calls and the stakeholder survey.

⁷¹ I.e. 24 in 2021 employment results, highest than any other year; for example the second highest year was 16 employment results.

addition, a high proportion of older participants (in comparison with the working population) were engaged through targeted marketing methods and links with an organisation that works with older people. Although steps were taken to promote gender mainstreaming, such as sharing non-traditional employment options with men and women, impacting upon this theme has proved difficult.

- 7.18. There was also an indication that a participant volunteer peer support group, established by the project, was likely to continue to provide support after the project finishes.

Recommendations

- 7.19. In line with the findings of the report, given the success and demand for the project shown in this report and its fit with the Welsh Government's employability and skills plan ([Welsh Government, 2022](#)) (see section 1) CGL should consider implementing the recommendations below⁷²:

- **Recommendation 1:** the project has succeeded in showing that there is a need for targeted and tailored employment support for people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in Wales. The time and resources invested through ACE in building a successful approach will be lost if the work stops. Therefore, CGL should continue to explore further funding options⁷³ to continue to effectively tackle the need identified in this report.
- **Recommendation 2:** to ensure some legacy from the work, CGL should share best practice and lessons learned from the project with relevant

⁷² Some of these recommendations mirror those in the evaluation of the East Wales part of the project (Bowen and Lloyd-Jones, 2021) because it was delivered with the WW&V region for most of the project's lifetime, and hence had similar strengths and challenges.

⁷³ The project has tried to access funding from the [Community Renewal Fund](#) and the [Active Inclusion Fund](#). Other options could include the charitable trusts, other [Future Prosperity Fund](#) projects (Community Renewal Funds has links to this source of funding) and core public sector funding (given its fit with Welsh Government policies).

partners and stakeholders. This could be delivered via a bespoke training programme and should include sharing information on:

- known gaps in provision for Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in WW&V, especially within the rural areas.
 - successful approaches to engaging and supporting refugees.
-
- **Recommendation 3:** future CGL projects should build on skills developed during this project around:
 - the engagement and support approach provided to participants;
 - remote working, including how the project communicates internally and markets its projects to stakeholders and potential clients;
 - fostering and building on partnerships with organisations established during the delivery of this project

Appendix 1: data collection and guidance tools

Table 2. Showing categorised data collection and guidance tools.

Outcomes measures	Outcomes requirements	Policy related forms	Forms that aid participant recruitment/engagement
Impact Star and Action Plan	Evidence Requirements for Outcomes	Referral Form	Participant Eligibility-Consent Form
Skills Audit	Outcome Evidence Cover Sheet	Equal Opportunities Form	Telephone Assessment Form Script
Soft Outcomes Form	Contact Form Active Job Search Declaration	Consent to Share Information	Paperwork Flowchart
EI Outcome Achievement Flowcharts	Entering Employment Declaration	Photo Publicity Consent Form	Participant Eligibility Checklist
Participant Employment Review Tracker	Entering Self-Employment Declaration	Eco-code	Employer Introduction Letter template
	Placement Details Declaration		DAF v2 application form CGL Frequently Asked Questions

Source: CGL ACE data collection and guidance forms

Appendix 2: Key results from CGL stakeholder and participant questionnaire

Table 3. Response to ‘What do you think ACE could do to recruit more people?’

Response*	Number of times selected
Be better known in local communities	21
Advertising online	12
Have a website for people to go and look at	12
More neighbourhood posters and flyers	10
Be better known at job centres etc.	6
Have more staff from different races and ethnic backgrounds	6
Attend more community events and gatherings	2

Source: CGL questionnaire to participants West Wales and the Valleys in January 2021 (n=31)

**These were options that could be chosen, not opened ended responses.*

Table 4. Response to ‘Which of the following do you think would have made your time with ACE easier?’

Response*	Number of times selected
More examples of what other people like me have done with ACE to give me ideas	12
More information available in other languages besides English and Welsh	11
A website so I could show friends and family what ACE does and how they help	10
More choices of training on offer	7
More contact with my Case Officer	6
An ACE app I could put on my phone	5
Simpler choices of training on offer	2
Having a volunteer to help me	1

Source: CGL questionnaire to WW&V participants in January 2021 (n=31)

**These were options that could be chosen, not opened ended responses.*

Table 5. Response to ‘What can ACE do to support your work more?’

Response	Number of times selected
Refer participants to our project/s	6
Communicate more when our referrals complete outcomes and develop	3
Attend meetings and events	3
Follow us on social media	3
Awareness of how your financial support can help clients	2

Source: CGL questionnaire to stakeholders in January 2021 (n=22)

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