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Evaluation of the Inspire to Work Programme: East Wales

Interim Report

July 2022

Wavehill: social and economic research

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List of abbreviations

BGCBC	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
CfW+	Communities for Work Plus
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESF	European Social Fund
EW	East Wales region
I2W	Inspire to Work
NCC	Newport City Council
PLASC	Pupil Level Annual School Census
RCT	Rhondda Cynon Taf
WWV	West Wales and the Valleys region

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- Punctuation
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Contents

Contents iii

Table of tables iii

1. Introduction 1

2. Methodology 3

3. Governance and Service Delivery Model 5

4. Performance 11

5. Journey ..... 181~~8~~

6. Cross-cutting themes 30

7. Emerging Findings 32

Appendix 1 ..... 353~~5~~

Table of tables

Table 2.1: No. of I2W participants per JB who took part in an interview about their experiences of the programme 4
Table 4.1: Profile Targets for I2W EW at end of Quarter 20, March 2022 11
Table 4.2: Current Progress against profile targets for I2W EW at end of Quarter 20, March 2022 12
Table 4.3: Current Progress against profile targets for participants in each JB at end of Quarter 20, March 2022 12
Table 4.4: Performance of each JB against Profile Targets at end of Quarter 20, March 2022, in percentages 13
Table 4.5: Claimant count for 16-24 year olds in EW in March each year from 2017 to 2022. 13
Table 4.6: Outcomes for each JB at the end of March 2022 (Q20), compared to their profile 14
Table 4.7: The previous economic status of participants before joining I2W, by proportion of participants in each JB 16
Table 4.8: Participants' existing qualification level prior to joining I2W, by proportion of participants in each JB 17
Table 4.9: Participants of a Black and Minority Ethnic Background, by proportion of participants in each JB 17
Table 6.1: Welsh language ability of I2W EW Participants 31

Table of Figures

Figure 1.1: Inspire to Work East Wales Joint Beneficiaries 1
Figure 3.1: Overview of Governance Groups in EW 5
Figure 3.2: Roles of Governance Groups 6
Figure 3.3: Barriers to Employability Addressed by I2W in EW 7
Figure 3.4: I2W EW Delivery Model 9
Figure 5.1: Thinking about the programme, how do you think you benefited? ..... 25~~26~~
Figure 5.2: Do you feel more confident about getting and holding down a job now than before you had the support?' ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**~~27~~

Executive summary

To be completed on agreement of the draft report

1. Introduction

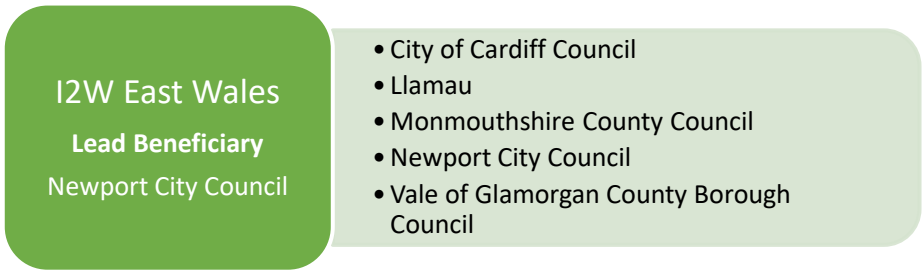
The Inspire to Work programme (I2W) is intended to support young people living in south-east Wales who are aged 16-24 years old, and are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). The programme is funded through the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) in the form of European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF). Through the European Social Fund (ESF), these are designed to support people in Wales to upskill them, get them back into employment, or become engaged with the labour market. The Welsh 2014-2020 ESF programmes each comprise three priority axes. The third Priority axis focusses on Youth Employment and Attainment with the aim 'to invest in our young people to create a vibrant and responsive workforce with the skills needed to respond to the needs of a challenging knowledge-based economy'.

Under the I2W banner the programme is delivered in two parts of south-east Wales – in the West Wales and the Valleys region (WWV) and in East Wales (EW). This report focuses on the programme in EW.

Operations are managed by a lead beneficiary who is responsible for co-ordinating activity and running the operation. I2W EW is led by Newport City Council. The five Joint Beneficiaries (JBs) include four local authorities, City of Cardiff Council, Newport City Council, Monmouthshire County Council and the Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council, as well as the charity, Llamau[1], whose mission is to end homelessness for young people and women. Each of the local authorities has responsibility within their own borders, while both Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council and Llamau operate within the Vale of Glamorgan's boundaries. More recently, Llamau have also begun to undertake operations within Cardiff as well.

The programme's outcomes focus on the number of 16-24 year old NEETs who enter employment, enter education or training and increase the number of qualifications gained by participants, as part of a pathway to sustainable employment.

Figure 1.1: Inspire to Work East Wales Joint Beneficiaries



[1] Llamau

1.1 Evaluation

In January 2021, Newport City Council (NCC) and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC), commissioned Wavehill, on behalf of two Regional Operations and the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO), to provide a critical assessment of European Social Fund (ESF) Regional Approaches to providing support for young people, aged 16-24, NEETs.

This interim report focuses on the EW region.

The evaluation will examine issues associated with:

- The planning, implementation, and management of the five Joint Beneficiaries in the East Wales region and the associated monitoring systems used to manage and monitor operational performance.
- The effectiveness of delivery and suitability of the interventions offered to the needs of the participants.
- Assessing the short and medium term outcomes of the operation and its ability to help participants to re-engage with education, training and employment opportunities.

The final report will include specific focus upon the following topics:

- Reviewing any significant variations in outcomes by different demographic groups, particularly those from black and minority ethnic, disabled and LGBTQ+ backgrounds.
- The contribution of the operations to the cross-cutting themes set out by WEFO associated with Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming, Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion.

2. Methodology

In this chapter, we explain the work that has been carried out to uncover findings relating to I2W. These includes analysis of the monitoring data, interviews with members of the managerial and delivery teams at the five JBs within EW and interviews with young people who had participated in the I2W programme in EW.

2.1 Data Collection

Data was collected in the following manner.

2.1.1 Monitoring Data

Monitoring data is collected by the EW regional operation through the CEMP reporting system. This allows reports to be generated showing progress.

For the purposes of this interim evaluation, we have considered the progress of the EW region compared with profile targets for outputs (the number of NEET participants in the scheme, by gender) and by outcomes (the number of young people who have gained a qualification upon leaving the scheme, have entered education or training upon leaving the scheme, and those who have entered employment upon leaving the scheme).

We have also considered economic data which has been collected, so that we can compare the participant cohort across the JBs in the region.

2.1.2 Interviews with Management and Delivery Teams

As part of this interim evaluation, we have interviewed members of the management team and the delivery teams in each of the JBs on the Microsoft Teams Platform, using a series of semi-structured interviews which lasted approximately one hour each. This consisted of five managerial team interviews and seven interviews with delivery team members, conducted by our consultants. Where appropriate, joint interviews were conducted, so this is a total of eighteen participants across the five JBs. Management team interviews were conducted in December 2021 and January 2022. Delivery team interviews took place in April 2022. All of those who participated in these interviews were currently engaged in I2W at the time of the interview, except for two participants whose involvement with the programme was historical and were no longer employed for I2W, but working elsewhere within their local authority.

2.1.3 Interviews with I2W Participants

In order to better understand experiences of the I2W programme, our Research Team conducted a series of telephone interviews (approximately fifteen minutes each) with participants, using scripted questions. JBs were requested to provide participant contact details so that we could agree consent and conduct interviews Varying numbers of participant contact details were provided. 46 interviews were completed, as shown in the below table, which includes the number of individuals from each JB that we attempted to contact. All individuals were telephoned on three occasions, assuming that the number was valid and recognised, and also sent an e-mail asking them to participate in the interview.

Table 2.1: No. of I2W participants per JB who took part in an interview about their experiences of the programme

	Successful Interviews	Attempted contacts
Cardiff	33	98
Llamau	2	5
Newport	3	5
Monmouthshire	4	8
Vale of Glamorgan	4	8

The majority of these participants joined the scheme in 2021 or later, so they provide a current position on how the operation is progressing, but limited information on 'historical' engagement. This has made it difficult to triangulate experiences relating to service delivery during the early stages of the pandemic in 2020.

3. Governance and Service Delivery Model

The EW regional operations aims to support 2,041 participants. Delivery in EW has been extended until 30th September 2022 with a three month closedown period until 31st December 2022.

3.1 Governance

I2W EW is managed via a three-tier structure as illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: Overview of I2W Governance Structure

Figure 3.2 below summarises the specific roles of these groups.

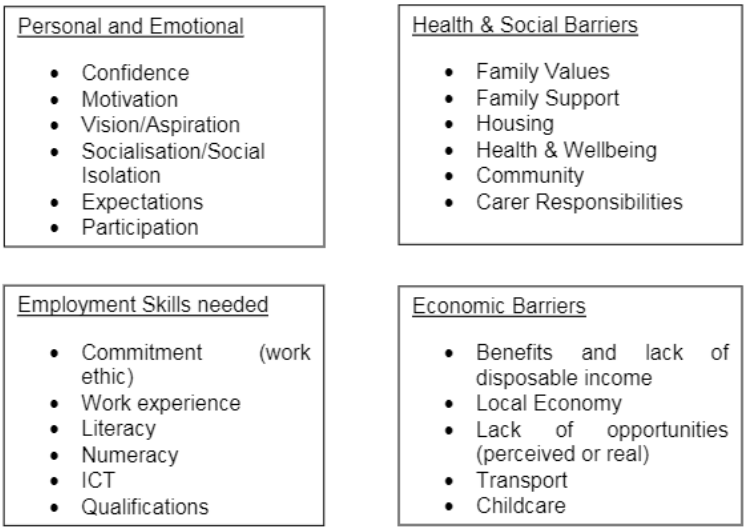
Figure 3.2: Roles of Governance Groups

Regional Strategic Coordination Group	• To discuss operational issues at regional level • Engagement with regional stakeholders • To consider opportunities for joint working i.e. possible strategic regional procurement framework for both operations • To look at strategic delivery of operations across the region.
Operation Working/ Steering Group	• To update on operation progress at regional level. • Reporting to partners on progress against targets • Identifying and addressing areas of concern • Central monitoring • Central evaluation • Engagement with regional stakeholders
Local Steering Group	• Local issues • Engagement with local stakeholders • Progress against outputs • Progress against delivery profile

3.2 Service Delivery Model

As set out in the I2W business plan, this section explains the model used by I2W EW to work with participants. Having recognised the barriers to employability that the young people face, the programme uses a series of activities to support young people towards employment, education and training.

Figure 3.3: Barriers to Employability Addressed by I2W in EW



The EW Operation uses multi-agency delivery approach supplemented by options to procure further specialist support where explicit needs for such support are identified.

The EW Business Plan 2016 highlights that delivery emphasises a person-centred approach facilitated by one to one work on skills, qualifications, and work experience to enable participants to address their own barriers to be more confident and motivated to enter sustainable employment and further learning.

The delivery model is built around five activities that are not prescribed but are intended to be used in line with the level of need of individual participants, whilst also acknowledging that for 16-18 year olds there may be different support needs related to their transition from school to more vocational related support.

The five activities include:

- **Activity 1: Referral Process**

Participant's resident in non-Communities First areas are targeted by the Operation. It is expected that participants are referred onto the project through Careers Wales, Job Centre Plus, Schools Youth Service, and Transition Workers. Upon referral, initial assessment (Literacy and numeracy, social emotional well –being) activity is undertaken by I2W staff to determine participant needs and programme of provision tailored to the needs of participants.

Any participants who are NEET on engagement with the programme, and if they fit the eligibility criteria are able to join the programme. In addition, outreach work is undertaken to

identify those young people 18+ that are not in receipt of JSA through community groups, organisations and key members of the community, as well as through the use of social media.

- **Activity 2: Pre-employability Programme**

Once eligibility has been confirmed, the EW model provides opportunities for participants to engage in three different interlinked assessment and development activities:

1) **Whole Person Assessment** - All individuals undertake a whole person assessment which not only looks at their NEET status and related topics but covers their whole wellbeing. Upon assessment, a worker is allocated to work with individuals on a one-to-one mentoring basis, offering support, advice and guidance.

2) **Personal Social Development** - For those identified as having a personal or social development need (i.e. confidence, communication, lack of maturity, inappropriate behaviour) a programme of support is put in place, delivering elements of provision such as literacy and numeracy, digital literacy, confidence building, This is delivered through the operation and procured within the funding allocation.

3) **Provide work focused support for 16-24 year olds** - this support aims to enable participants to overcome the barriers which prevent them from entering and sustaining long term employment and to challenge traditional assumptions and stereotypes and raise participation levels in occupations and sectors where a particular gender or recognised equality groups are under-represented.

- **Activity 3: Employability**

This activity targets those who are job ready, either those on direct entry to I2W, or those who have benefitted from Activity 2 delivery. The operation provides employability support through partners and alternative operations a package of interventions including CV writing, job search support, interview techniques and work specific qualifications, i.e. CSCS, Level 2 in Health and Safety in the work place, Manual Handling and First Aid, and job brokerage supporting young people to access and sustain employment. Work placements are also available through the employability package that engages with local employers, local employment partnerships to gather Labour Market Intelligence ensuring the package is a demand led programme.

- **Activity 4: Entrepreneurship Programme**

This programme of activity targets those that want to set up their own business and offers participants the practical skills and knowledge to become self-employed. This programme has access to Local Business Forums for specialist expertise and support, whilst also aiming to meet the demands of Labour Market Intelligence.

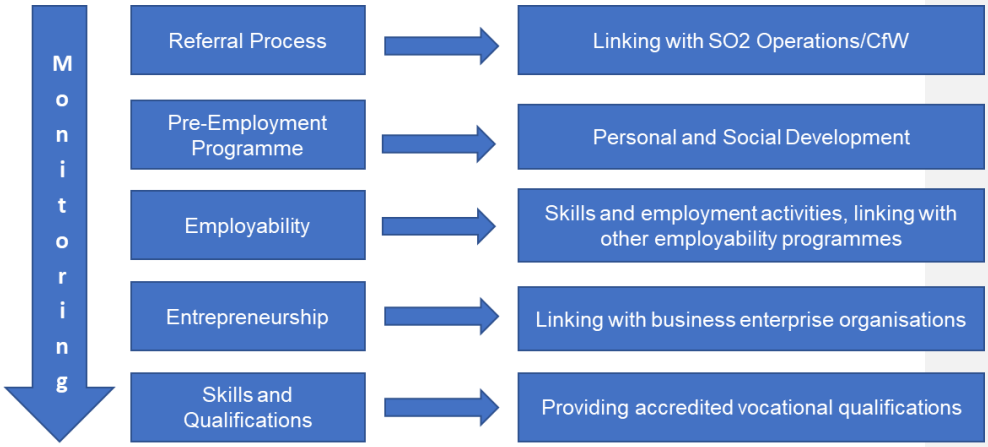
- **Activity 5: Skills and Qualification Support**

For participants with low skills or qualifications, a curriculum of learning is available to meet their need allowing progression and support, including a range of qualifications and awards to supplement and enhance mainstream curriculum.

Participants seeking to progress into further learning on completion are offered course advice and guidance, taster sessions in appropriate subject areas and on-going mentoring until they have settled into their destination, whether this is FE, HE or Work Based Learning.

Detail of how the delivery model is organised is shown in Figure 3.4 below:

Figure 3.4: I2W EW Delivery Model



Source: I2W EW Business Plan

3.3 Changes to the Business Plan since Inception

There have been some changes to the delivery model since the business plan was first agreed in 2016. These changes have included:

- Monmouthshire County Council absorbing original Joint Beneficiary, Melin Homes, delivery element into their own delivery to maintain the numbers of young people NEET supported when Melin Homes decided to withdraw from the programmes. Melin Homes were providing direct employment support work to individuals in their social housing through their Melin Works employability programme.
- Extension of delivery from 31st January 2020 to 31st December 2022 with accompanying increases in funding operation indicators, targets and CCT case level indicators.
- A recasting of the delivery responsibilities for I2W in the Vale of Glamorgan (Llamau and Vale of Glamorgan Council). Llamau will engage with NEET young people furthest away from the labour market who face multiple barriers and will require the intensive support and interventions provided by Llamau's I2W project workers. Vale of Glamorgan Council will engage with NEET Young People closer to the labour market. Llamau's targets will be reduced and the Vale of Glamorgan's increased to reflect their work with individuals closer to the labour market.
- Are there other changes which should be highlighted here (Newport and VoG numbers?)

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3.4 Monitoring Systems

In I2W EW, all JBs report monitoring data to a central electronic monitoring system CEMP, developed by Regional Lead Newport City Council, backed up by locally held paper copies of all information, with some, scanning this information into their systems. Data is held centrally by the lead beneficiary with local access for each joint beneficiary. These systems all offer a degree of sophistication and the ability to provide analysis at the Joint Beneficiary level (in addition to the entire Regional Operation). This allows for reports to be drawn up utilising regional and JB data.

4. Performance

In this chapter, we examine the performance of the East Wales region as a whole so far in the programme, and also each of the Joint Beneficiaries against their profile targets. This includes outputs, which include young people's participation in I2W, by gender, and by outcome, which includes the number of participants who achieved a qualification, employment or undertook further training or education following the programme.

4.1 Programme progress towards targets

The I2W programme is expected to demonstrate it progress and performance in terms of:

Outputs

- Numbers of NEET participants joining the programme, total and by gender

Outcomes/Results

- Number of NEET participants (16-24 years of age) gaining a qualification upon leaving
- Number of NEET participants (16-24 years of age) entering education/training upon leaving
- Number of NEET participants (16-24 years of age) entering employment upon leaving.

4.1.1 EW Output and Outcome Targets

The profile targets for the end of March 2022 (Quarter 2), and end of programme targets for EW are set out in table 4.1 below

Table 4.1: Profile Targets for I2W EW at end of Quarter 20, March 2022

	Targets at end of programme	Targets at March 2022
Outputs		
Total NEET Participants	2,041	1,806
Males	1,069	948
Females	972	858
Outcomes/Results		
Participants gaining qualifications upon leaving	445	388
Participants in education/training upon leaving	240	206
Participants entering employment upon leaving	574	511

Source: I2W Monitoring Reports, March 2022.

4.1.2 Performance of East Wales

Table 4.2 shows the current performance of East Wales, as a whole, compared to the profiled target at the end of March 2022.

Table 4.2: Current Progress against profile targets for I2W EW at end of Quarter 20, March 2022

Performance	East Wales			
Outputs	Target	Actual	Variance	Percentage
Participants 16-24 yrs	1806	1561	-245	86%
Male	948	1005	57	106%
Female	858	556	-302	65%
Outcomes/Results				
Gaining Qualifications upon leaving	388	375	-13	97%
In education/training upon leaving	206	197	-9	96%
Entering employment upon leaving	511	576	65	113%

Source: I2W, March 2022 (Quarter 20)

Table 4.3, below, shows the performance of each JB against the profile target of participants, and the variance in numbers. As can be seen, the Vale of Glamorgan is performing above expectations from the target profile, but others are below their target. With the exception of Llamau, the remaining JBs have recruited relatively similar numbers of participants, despite the variation in targets that have been set.

Table 4.3: Current Progress against profile targets for participants in each JB at end of Quarter 20, March 2022

	Target	Actual	Variance	Percentage
Cardiff	452	401	-51	89%
Llamau	103	75	-28	73%
Monmouthshire	409	344	-65	84%
Newport	605	416	-189	69%
Vale of Glamorgan	237	325	88	137%

Source: I2W, March 2022 (Quarter 20)

4.2 Analysis of Outputs

At the end of Quarter 20, the I2W EW region was at 86% of its target number of profile participants. This is because, while there is a greater than target number of male participants (106%), the number of female participants is substantially lower than target (only 65%). There will be further discussion about the number of male and female participants later in this section.

Table 4.4, below, shows the performance of each JB at the end of Quarter 20 compared to their target to date. This is shown in percentage format for ease of comparison across of JBs.

Table 4.4: Performance of each JB against Profile Targets at end of Quarter 20, March 2022, in percentages

Local Authority	Cardiff	Llamau	Mons	Newport	VoG
Outputs					
Participants 16-24 yrs	89%	73%	84%	69%	137%
Male	117%	66%	95%	84%	171%
Female	58%	81%	71%	53%	93%

Source: I2W, March 2022 (Quarter 20)

The Vale of Glamorgan is an outlier, having recruited substantially greater numbers of participants than their profiled target at this point in the programme (137%). This is predominantly because of the large number of male participants, compared with the target (171%). Although not meeting their profiled target for female participants, the Vale of Glamorgan was also closer to the target than other JBs, achieving 93%.

All other joint beneficiaries are below their target for participants. Of the other local authorities, Newport is well below the 15% tolerance level, achieving only 69%, and Monmouthshire on the cusp, at 84%. Newport had similar targets for male and female participants, but has so far only half of the target number of females (53%). Cardiff also performs poorly for female participant targets (58%), but has performed better than intended for male participants (117%).

Llamau, which is recognised as dealing with participants who are furthest from the labour market, is below its targets, at 73%. Unlike the other Joint Beneficiaries, Llamau is closer to target with female participants (81%), than male participants (66%). This perhaps reflects the specific focused engagement work that Llamau carry out with women as a charity. That may lead to a higher female participant recruitment rate than other JBs.

The profile target is that 47.5% of participants would be female, and 52.5% would be male. At the end of Quarter 20, the actual participant proportions were 35.6% female and 64.4% male.

Analysis of the claimant count of young people during the lifetime of the programme, data collected by DWP and published on NOMISweb, shows that the number of active claimants across the fourlocal authorities included in the I2W EW region is larger for men than for women. This is displayed in table 4.5 below:

Table 4.5: Claimant count for 16-24 year olds in EW in March each year from 2017 to 2022

	Total EW	Male	Female
March 2017	2,430	1,585 (65%)	855 (35%)
March 2018	2,250	1,445 (64%)	805 (36%)
March 2019	2,840	1,740 (61%)	1,100 (39%)

March 2020	3,080	1,940 (63%)	1,145 (37%)
March 2021	6,230	3,925 (63%)	2,305 (37%)
March 2022	3,505	2,200 (63%)	1,300 (37%)

Source: NOMISweb, ONS Crown Copyright, accessed July 2022

The claimant count can be used as a proxy of the proportions of young people who are engaging and in search of work. As the claimant count for this age group shows a greater proportion of males engaging with the process, it is not a surprise that this is more closely aligned with I2W engagement than the overall population profile might suggest.

4.3. Analysis of Outcomes/Results

Overall, the programme is above or close to its profiled Quarter 20 targets for participant outcomes. These outcomes are the number of actual participants who have gained qualifications upon leaving the programme, enter education or training upon leaving, or entered employment upon leaving. This is despite being under the targets for actual participants in the programme, therefore representing a higher than anticipated conversion rate of participants to outcomes.

Table 4.6: Outcomes for each JB at the end of March 2022 (Q20), compared to their profile

Local Authority	Cardiff	Llamau	Mons	Newport	VoG
Gaining Qualifications upon leaving	58%	103%	67%	62%	406%
In education/training upon leaving	105%	124%	69%	93%	245%
Entering employment upon leaving	109%	48%	125%	69%	222%

Source: I2W, March 2022 (Quarter 20)

The strongest performing indicator is that of 'entering employment upon leaving'. That is currently running at 113% of the profile target. The other two indicators, 'gaining qualifications upon leaving' and being 'in education/training upon leaving' are very slightly below the profile target (97% and 96% respectively).

4.3.1 Entering Employment Upon Leaving

There have been fluctuations within the labour market in the years since the programme began, not least as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw substantial disruption and an increase in unemployment amongst young people. At the time of writing, the labour market is considered to be relatively accessible and there are entry-level vacancies available for young people. The number of individual participants who have entered employment upon leaving is now greater at the end of Quarter 20 (576 individuals) than the overall programme target (574). As there is still several months of the programme to run, this target has clearly been met and will exceed programme targets.

In terms of entering employment upon leaving, the Vale of Glamorgan is well above target (225%), as is Monmouthshire (125%) and Cardiff (109%). Newport is the only local authority JB which is below target, at 69%. Llamau, whose participant cohort is furthest from the labour market, is below target at 48%.

Comparing the target number of participants at Quarter 20 with the target number of participants aiming to enter employment, Cardiff has the greatest anticipated conversion rate, at 34.7% of participants, more than a third, presumably reflecting the easier access to the labour market within the city compared to other JBs. Llamau has the lowest anticipated conversion rate, at 20.3%, around one in five participants, with the remaining JBs around the 25-27% mark. Although this already reflects that Llamau participants are likely to be further from the labour market than the average I2W participant, performance so far suggests that this target was ambitious considering the cohort likely to be recruited at Llamau.

4.3.2 Gaining Qualifications upon Leaving

The number of young people gaining qualifications after leaving the programme is at 97% of the profile target at the end of Quarter 20. So far, 375 people have achieved qualifications, compared to a target of 388. The final programme target for EW is 445.

Vale of Glamorgan is also the leading JB in meeting targets for gaining qualifications upon leaving (406%). Of the other JBs, only Llamau has reached the target, perhaps reflecting the nature of their cohort and a greater likelihood of following non-employment pathways .

The success of the Vale distorts the wider EW figure, which is running at 97% of the target. The remaining local authority JB are running at 58% (Cardiff), 71% (Mons) and 62% (Newport) respectively, all of which are below the tolerance threshold.

4.3.3 Entering education or training upon leaving

So far, 197 individuals have entered education or training upon leaving I2W EW, compared to a target of 206 at the end of Quarter 20. This is at 96% of the target. At the end of the programme, the aim is 240 individuals. Targets for this area were reprofiled after it was determined that participants who go to work-based learning would not be counted towards this figure, as those programmes are also funded through ESF.

Compared to the other outcome categories, there is a closer relationship across JBs with targets for being in education/training upon leaving. The Vale of Glamorgan is again well above the target set (245%), while Llamau is at 124%, Cardiff at 105%, Newport at 93%, while Monmouthshire is lower, at 69%. The stronger performance of Llamau relative to their employment outcomes may again reflect upon their cohort, and the greater likelihood of going into education or training as they are furthest from the labour market.

4.4 Participation in I2W by characteristic

The EW Regional Office provided data upon participation by characteristic, at regional and JB level.

Here we highlight some of the data which illustrates the differences between participants at JB level, in order to understand any differences between the backgrounds of the individuals with whom they are working.

This data shows that the cohort for Llamau is quite different to those for the remaining JBs.

As shown in Table 4.7, there is an average of 18% of participants who were economically inactive before entering I2W. The percentage of participants at Llamau is substantially higher, at 63%. This is compared to 2% of the Vale of Glamorgan local authority JB cohort. 17%-23% of those at the remaining three local authority JBs. This relationship between the smaller percentage of participants at the Vale of Glamorgan and larger percentage at Llamau is to be expected, given the decision to identify those further from the labour market in the Vale of Glamorgan county area and refer them to Llamau.

Table 4.7: The previous economic status of participants before joining I2W, by proportion of participants in each JB

	Individuals	Percentage	Cardiff	Llamau	Mons	Newport	VoG
Economically inactive (excluding full time education or training)	281	18%	20%	63%	23%	17%	2%
Long-term unemployed	425	27%	35%	16%	22%	17%	39%
Short-term unemployed	855	55%	45%	21%	55%	66%	58%
Total	1561	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	99%

Source: I2W, March 2022.

More than half of the Llamau participants (52%) have been affected by homelessness or housing exclusion, compared to between 5% and 8% of participants from the local authority JBs.

Similarly, 25% of Llamau participants have a work-limiting health condition and 21% have a disability, compared to 9% and 8% of the total participants. Cardiff recorded a surprisingly small number of participants with a disability, only 2% of their total cohort.

Although the number of young people who had been affected by redundancy before entering I2W was quite small, only 3.3% of the total, the number of participants at Llamau (1.3%) was smaller than the local authority JBs.

Table 4.8 shows the existing qualification level of participants before joining I2W. Unlike other data, there is substantial variation between JBs. Almost a quarter of participants are reported as having no qualifications. It is unclear whether this means that they have no qualifications or whether the data has not been collected. Of those participants for whom data exists, the most common qualification level is CFQW Level 2. Nearly a third of participants are at this level, with around a sixth holding either CFQW Level 1 or Level 3. A smaller number, just under 6%, have a CFQW Level 4 or above.

Table 4.8: Participants' existing qualification level prior to joining I2W, by proportion of participants in each JB

Existing Qualification Level	Individuals	Percentage	Cardiff	Llamau	Mons	Newport	VoG
Below CQFW level 1	101	6.5%	1.2%	20.0%	0.9%	12.0%	8.6%
CQFW level 1	243	15.6%	8.2%	20.0%	13.1%	17.5%	23.7%
CQFW level 2	511	32.7%	46.9%	20.0%	41.0%	18.5%	27.7%
CQFW level 3	256	16.4%	19.7%	2.7%	25.0%	9.4%	15.4%
CQFW level 4-7	91	5.8%	11.0%	1.3%	6.7%	1.9%	4.6%
None	359	23.0%	13.0%	36.0%	13.4%	40.6%	20.0%
Total	1,561	100.0%	100.0%	100%	100.1%	99.9%	100%

Source: I2W, March 2022.

Table 4.9 shows the percentage of participants per JB who are from a Black and Minority Ethnic background. The overall number is approximately 16%, but this masks substantial variation between JBs. In Cardiff, more than a third of participants were reported as being from a black and minority ethnic background, 35.7%, but this was only 10.6% in Newport and 4% or lower in Llamau, Vale of Glamorgan JB and Monmouthshire.

According to StatsWales[2], the wider population of each of the local authorities, at December 2021, is 15.8% in Cardiff, 12.5% in Newport, 4.6% in the Vale of Glamorgan and 3.9% in Monmouthshire. However, data from the 2020-21 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)[3], which is closer in age range to the 16-24 year old cohort than the general population profile, shows 35% of pupils in Cardiff from a non-white ethnic background, 27% of pupils of school pupils in Newport, 12% in the Vale of Glamorgan and 6.5% in Monmouthshire. A further complicating factor is the geographical eligibility criterion for I2W which means that they are not necessarily representative of the local authority area as a whole.

In short, though, it would appear that participants from Cardiff are comparable with young people in the wider community, but that other JBs, particularly Newport, have fewer black and minority ethnic background participants than might be anticipated.

Table 4.9: Participants of a Black and Minority Ethnic Background, by proportion of participants in each JB

Black and Minority Ethnic Background	Individuals	Percentage	Cardiff	Llamau	Mons	Newport	VoG
Yes	245	15.7%	35.7%	4.0%	1.7%	10.6%	3.7%
No	1220	78.2%	61.8%	84.0%	93.6%	70.0%	91.1%
Refused	96	6.1%	2.5%	12.0%	4.7%	19.5%	5.2%
Total	1561	100%	100%	100%	100%	100.1%	100%

Source: I2W, March 2022.

The final report will consider the relationship between characteristics and participant outcomes.

[2] Ethnicity by area and ethnic group (gov.wales)
[3] Number of pupils aged 5 or over by local authority, region and ethnicity (gov.wales)

5. Journey

5.1 Introduction

As previously explained in the methodology section, interviews were held with eighteen members of the management and delivery staff at the I2W EW JBs, and with 46 participants from across the region.

In this section, we have used the information provided by the interviews to follow and triangulate the journey of young people on I2W alongside issues raised by management and delivery staff.

5.2 Process and Delivery

5.2.1 Referral Pathways

It is important to understand how young people enter the I2W programme so that we can be assured that the processes for recruitment are operating as intended, and that those most appropriate and eligible for the programme are able to access the support they need.

The JBs reported a range of methods through which referrals were made from other organisations. These primarily included from Job Centre Plus (JCP), from Careers Wales, and self-referrals, which can include walk-ins at various hub centres within the community, such as in Cardiff and Newport, where individuals can access council-run services and present there with their aims and intentions. The offer is often promoted on local authority websites.

These common pathways were confirmed by the young people in our participant interviews, where we asked them how they had first heard about the I2W programme.

Five common methods were given as to how they had first heard about the programme.

Nineteen participants (19/46, 41%) said that they had been referred by JobCentrePlus, with a further six describing 'Universal Credit' (6/46, 13%) as being where they had first heard of the programme.

Seven participants (7/46, 15%) said that information had come through friends or family, some of whom were searching for jobs themselves or who had seen adverts on social media, while five said that they had come across the programme through outreach work, e.g. finding a stall at a jobsfair or seeing them at a hub or the central library.

Six participants (6/46, 13%) said that they had first heard about the programme through some form of existing support provision, including youth workers or counsellors.

Explaining the pathways to the programme, management and delivery team members at the local authorities said that they have a triage system in which potential participants are allocated to the most appropriate local project, depending upon their needs and eligibility criterion. This can include age, postcode (as I2W does not operate in postcode areas covered

by Communities 4 Work) and their NEET status. In this way, the I2W participants have been through a screening process to ensure that, as individuals, they are appropriate for the programme.

One JB explained their process as follows:

> "We have a gateway referral form for new entrants which collects personal details. e.g. the Central Library team will collect details, there'll be a phone call or email to work out which support is needed, that's not always employment support in the first place." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

Another JB explained that their triage system was a relatively new innovation, starting from December 2020, and that JCP had been the source of many of their referrals.

> "JCP is the leading [source of referrals], mainly other agencies working with young people, but with triage it is starting to change a bit. Our project will come to an end in December, triage is helpful in helping us paln for next steps" (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

These local triage systems provide an additional layer of complexity in understanding the young person's journey, as many young people may not have heard of I2W prior to the local triage, for example in Cardiff, where that is not the brand name used, and it is unclear whether triage decisions may affect the participation rates for the I2W programme.

5.2.2 Participant eligibility

As part of the process to access I2W services, individuals are required to prove their eligibility for the programme, e.g. by providing a birth certificate or National Insurance number to show that they are eligible for work in the UK. Issues around proving participant eligibility were frequently raised by management and delivery team members during interviews, and a common cause of concern. They expressed frustration that time was being spent on paperwork and that this caused delays in commencing work with young people,, in turn, reducing young people's trust and willingness to participate.

In discussing lessons learnt from the programme, one management and delivery team staff member said:

> "[We] Need to be hot on paperwork and ID. That was one of the first lessons we learnt, keeping on top of that and eligibility. That can be difficult for young people, they might not have a birth certificate for example." (Management and delivery team interview)

Another JB said that the programme should:

> "Loosen eligibility criterion. It can be difficult to prove people are unemployed if they're not claiming UC. We spend lots of time chasing information to prove eligibility rather than helping them. Sometimes they don't have ID, we have to buy it for them." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

The reasons for the paperwork were clearly understood by the management and delivery team members with whom we spoke, but there was a feeling that paperwork requirements to prove eligibility for the programme mitigated against the cohort for whom the support was intended.

It was suggested that those furthest from the labour market and most in need of support from the programme were those least likely to be able to easily access documentation to show they met the eligibility criteria, and most likely to opt out of accessing support. It was unclear from the interviews whether delivery team members believed that individuals stopped engaging with the programme because of issues relating to paperwork administration, but it was felt to be an obstacle that prevented early activity with individuals and delayed progress.

Another eligibility query was raised by a JB about participation in different ESF programmes. One JB explained that participants were forced to choose between which form of support they wanted because they could only follow one support route due to the nature of the funding. They said:

> "We have had reoccuring issues with WCVA funded organisations which is ESF money meaning that we cant work with the same young people. There are some very awkward conversations where the young person has to pick and choose which service they want support form. They shouldnt have to pick." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

Delivery team members expressed a hope that future programmes would be less onerous in their initial eligibility criteria requirements so that support could be more promptly provided to this cohort.

5.2.3 Vale of Glamorgan area

As previously noted, there was a different pathway in the Vale of Glamorgan area, where there were two JBs, the Vale of Glamorgan local authority and Llamau, operating within the same geographical area.

Following the business case for the extension of I2W until 2022, the intended approach was that the Vale of Glamorgan Council would deal with young people in the area who were closest to the labour market while Llamau would deal with those in harder to reach categories.

There were conflicting opinions on the success of this partnership approach. It was felt that Llamau were reliant upon referrals from the Vale of Glamorgan Council, and these referrals had not come forward in the anticipated volume to meet the targets set for Llamau. Llamau were therefore required to recruit their own participants, and had, more recently, extended their provision into the Cardiff area, where they also operate as a charity. It was also unclear whether the clarification of the roles of both partners had resolved the operational matters regarding the relationship and Llamau's access to potential participants.

5.2.4 Delivery

Management and delivery teams at the JBs were asked to explain how they undertake their initial approach to participants.

Their commonly provided responses focused on engagement with participants and determining how they would best be supported. They explained that action planning or some form of goal setting formed part of early engagement with participants, and that this progress was monitored during their time with the programme. This was done using the CEMP system, but also locally held paper files.

One JB said that the engagement process was very 'learner-led', explaining that:

> "We take all the info from the forms and partneship meetings. We form risk assessments in the first instance and then it is learner led, there is a q&a induction process and then we used the WEST assessment process and the goals and targets are developed which we assess every 4-5 weeks which is also tied to core curriculum too." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

A second JB said that they focused on what the participants were looking to achieve. They explained that:

> "We do an action plan based on what they want to do and then look at how we can achieve that. It also then upskills them. We have a lot of employability generic courses e.g. health and safety and hygiene." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

Participants were asked to talk about the support that they had received. Mostly, this was directly related to the support requested, which included help with earning qualifications and employability skills.

In addition to common themes about working on jobsearch outcomes or practicing interviews, a number of respondents talked about the additionality of support e.g. in purchasing clothes, laptops or bus tickets to get to work.

This aligned with comments from the delivery team interviews in which the flexibility of I2W was highlighted as an advantage to this programme, compared with their experience of other programmes. This included the ability to re-engage with participants who left the programme early for their own personal reasons.

> "Flexibility works well, e.g. the number of hours of engagement per week, or x amounts of provision. We can tailor qualifications to individuals and their needs. Some could disengage and go into crisis and then return back." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

When asked to describe the best parts of the support they received through I2W, participants often referred to improvements in personal self-esteem and support from the mentor. One participant explained that the best parts were:

> "Being more qualified, being able to say I have a new skill, the personal interaction, because the meetings were really good, they were really chilled and there was a personal connection, it felt like she cared." (I2W participant interview)

Many comments referred to the improvement in employability skills gained as a result of I2W participation, Another participant said of their mentor:.

> "Her hands on approach to helping with my CV, she took time to go over it and mark it like a teacher, because if she's just told me what to do with it I'd have forgotten." (I2W participant interview)

Another participant explained the support they'd received in generating a mock interview scenario which allowed them to practice the real situation, praising their mentor for:

> "Creating that environment of a typical interview and going over it and over it so when it comes to the real thing I know I am prepared for it." (I2W participant interview)

I2W participants were generally positive when asked about any elements of the programme that they did not like. A large majority of participants (42/46) raised no issues.

Of the small numbers who registered any dissatisfaction, one suggested that they would have preferred their sessions be held twice a week, rather than once a week.

Other issues included 'filling in forms', 'the first person I was with wasn't very helpful' and the complaint that 'He [the mentor] literally took ages to get back to me when I messaged him'.

5.2.5 Impact of COVID-19

The period in which I2W has been operational includes the time of the pandemic, from March 2020 onwards. This had substantial impacts upon the ability of the scheme to operate in its anticipated manner whilst Welsh Government introduced restrictions to prevent spread of the disease.

According to management and delivery staff, the impact of COVID-19 upon the scheme was felt through a sharp reduction in referrals at the onset of the pandemic in March 2020. It was explained that it was more difficult to achieve referrals in the early part of this period because many of the usual referral organisations or methods were not available.

One JB explains:

> "Before Covid, referrals were mainly walk-ins as we were in the library and lots of community spaces. They'd walk in and we would work out the eligibility, but it was always busy." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

The I2W delivery teams were also relocated into other services at the onset of the pandemic, to ensure that support could be provided to vulnerable people within their geographical area, returning to their teams and regular work during Summer 2020 as the nature of the pandemic became clear.

During this period, ordinary face-to-face meetings were not allowed and I2W JBs made the move online, engaging with participants in a virtual manner.

In management and delivery team interviews, it was explained that the COVID-19 pandemic also exposed the vulnerable nature of the young people already participating in the scheme. Although most clearly highlighted by Llamau, there were similar stories across all JBs of young people in need of pastoral support in the pandemic, and the impression given is of a support network for young people during this time, rather than the normal intended function of I2W in supporting young people into employment, education or training.

One member of a JB management and delivery team explained that:

> "We had to work remotely and change our curriculum. It became more wellbeing focused and became focused on making sure we heard from participants." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

Another JB management and delivery team interviewee said that:

> "When lockdown came in, our learners didn't have wifi, phones or both. Being able to engage with them wasn't easy and a lot suffer with ill health so when we were able to meet with them, they weren't very well. A lot had deteriorating mental health and wellbeing and that is the picture across Wales." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

Only a small number of the I2W participants in our survey were engaging with the programme during the COVID-19 period.

Six of the 46 participants said that their support had been disrupted by COVID-19. This reflects that most respondents to the survey (39/46) joined the programme in 2021 or later, by which time a 'new normal' of working had been established across the JBs, with a return to face to face meetings or sufficient technology experience and availability to hold virtual meetings online.

Six participants is not a sufficient number to establish particular themes about how COVID-19 affected participants. However, problems identified as a result of COVID-19 included:

> "At the time it was starting to ease up a bit but there were more phone calls rather than face to face." (I2W participant interview)

> "Just through when she [mentor]]had problems getting to the library when we were in lockdown." (I2W participant interview)

> "Obviously there's not a lot of jobs going now and when it was lockdown I couldn't see [mentor] and we both had to isolate." (I2W participant interview)

5.2.6 Digital working

One of the challenges of moving to greater digital provision, noted by a management and delivery team interview was the ability of less technologically au fait members of staff having to learn new skills in order to keep up with the needs of the role. They said:

> "For lots of young people, the support is moving to digital, but lots of the staff don't have the skills to deliver future programmes. If they don't have the skills then the young people will lose faith in them. The staff need better training or included within the job spec that they have the digital skills to deal with young people - nobody wants an older mentor who can't do the digital work." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

Although this was only mentioned in one interview, there are wider implications for ensuring that delivery staff are well trained in the latest technology so that this does not become a problem, particularly with newer digital forms of working.

5.2.7 Benefits of I2W participation

The JB management and delivery team interviewees were asked how young people benefited from participation in I2W.

Most commonly, responses focused on investment and support in the young people, changing their attitudes and raising their ambitions. One said:

> "It's an improved pastoral experience. At its best, it's about changing perceptions about what might be possible, including a step into work and getting a qualification." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

This was echoed by a second JB who talked about the barriers fund and the ability to provide additional financial support to young people to help them in their jobsearch. They said:

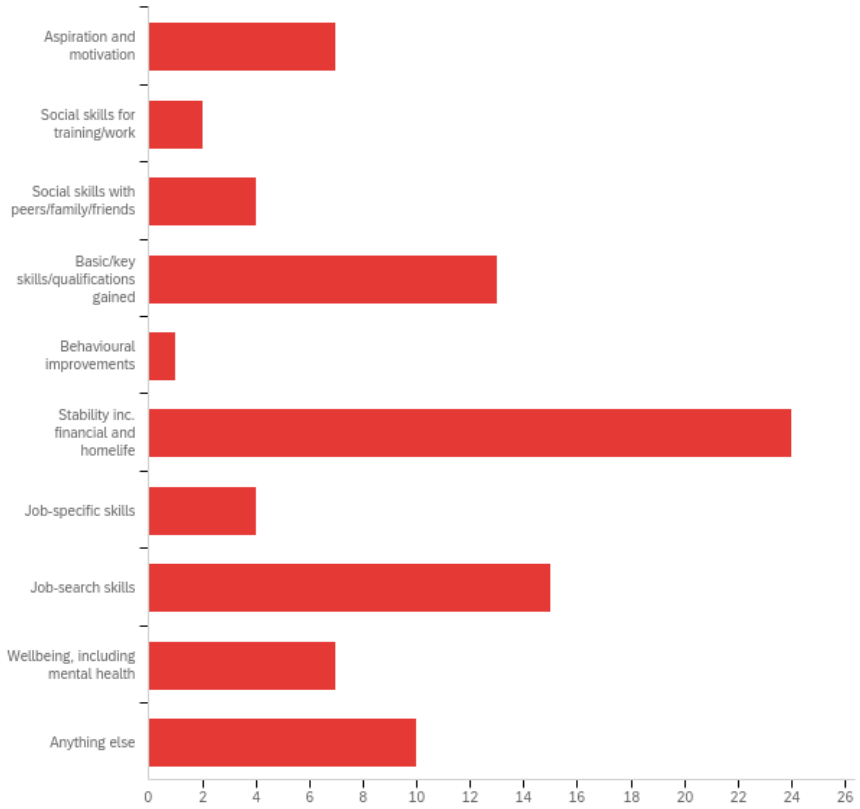
> "Financially investing in people has been important. Often in community work, you're the resource and you have to try and find things on the cheap. We get to spend money on people and that creates a buy-in if they're able to come and see you and you're opening doors for them, with financial help, like a pay as you go phone. It sets them up for success and they like that you're doing them a favour." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

A third JB said that the benefits for their participants were more to do with wellbeing than with employment opportunities, due to the nature of their cohort. They said:

> "We offer support for their wellbeing. We offer a nurturing and safe environment for our young people. We are aiming to get them to a point that they have enough accreditation, which will be a low level progression." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

Participants were asked to consider how they had benefited from taking part in I2W. They were able to give multiple answers, and so the numbers do not necessarily tally with the number of respondents. The results are shown in the following graph.

Figure 5.1: Thinking about the programme, how do you think you benefited?



Thinking about the programme, how do you think you benefited?
Base: I2W interview participants. N=46 participants, allowed to select multiple options

The most common responses related to stability, including financial and homelife, which was an answer given by 24 of the 46 participants (52%). This illustrates the wider benefits of the programme, beyond its short-term aims of getting young people into education, employment or training.

Employability goals also scored highly, with fifteen (33%) highlighting job-search skills and thirteen (28%) noting their qualifications gained.

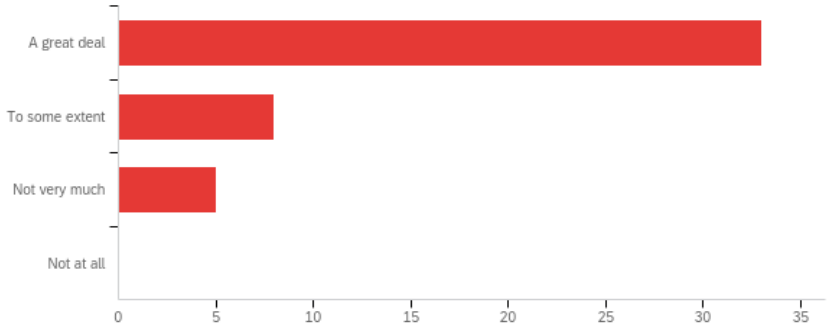
Of those who answered 'anything else', eight referred directly to increased confidence as a result of the programme, something which is picked up in the subsequent question.

5.2.8 Participants' confidence

Participants were asked whether or not they felt more confident now about getting and holding down a job than before they were supported by Inspire to Work.

The graph below shows the findings of this question.

Figure 5.2: Do you feel more confident about getting and holding down a job now than before you had the support?'



Base: I2W interview participants. N=46. 'Do you feel more confident about getting and holding down a job now than before you had the support?'.

33 of the 46 participants (72%) said that they felt 'a great deal' more confident, 8 participants (17%) said that they felt 'to some extent' more confident, and the remaining five (11%) said that they are 'not very much' more confident following the support from the programme. No participant said that they were 'not at all' more confident following support.

It is a good outcome that such a large percentage of participants now feel more confident about getting and holding down a job following the support from Inspire to Work.

5.2.9 Attitudes towards Education and Training

I2W participants were asked whether the support they'd received changed how they feel about education and training in any way.

25 of the 46 respondents said that the support they'd received changed how they feel about education and training, while 16 said that it had not. 5 said that they didn't know.

This question led to a range of responses. In most cases, this was a positive outcome as a response to the programme, while some others (8/46) noted that they already thought that education and training was important, saying e.g. "I've always thought it was a good thing anyway."

> "It's made me think I do possibly want to go back and do a course on what I'm doing now, I'm a TA now and teaching is now something I'd be really interested in doing after working in a primary school." (I2W participant interview)

Some participants reflected upon the difference in environment between school and college and how this has impacted upon them.

> "Because they've actually put me in a college and I'm enjoying it." (I2W participant interview)

> "I went to college for 2 years after school and didn't really learn a lot and in school I was getting kicked out all the time but now I've done courses and got level 3's which will help me in the future." (I2W participant interview)

> "Definitely at the age I am it's more needed, I wasn't really interested when I was younger, it's made me more hopeful and more confident." (I2W participant interview)

As always, it's worth noting the different procedures in place in the various JBss. One participant reflects upon his journey by comparing previous education with that provided directly by his JB.

> "The education and training I had previously wasn't as good as it was in Llamau, they were extremely helpful." (I2W participant interview)

I2W participants were asked whether or not they would recommend the programme to other young people. This is considered a proxy for whether or not they found participation successful and beneficial to them. All 46 participants said that they would recommend the project to others. This shows a positive response from those who participated in the interviews.

Most respondents gave a straightforward 'Yes' answer.

> "Definitely yes for the experience, having a stepping stone like Inspire to Work really makes a difference." (I2W participant interview)

Others explained how they had been supported, and the impact upon them, e.g. that they had achieved a security badge which helped them into employment, or the pastoral support provided which helped them to be in a more stable situation than before they started with I2W.

> "There should be a lot more people doing it because it's very helpful. I was struggling finding jobs before, I was applying for 5 jobs a day with no luck and when I did this and passed my security badge I got a job straight away." (I2W participant interview)

> "The support was really good and it was brilliant just having someone there for you who was like a friend who motivated you when you didn't feel like doing much and

> taught you things like budgeting and how to put your name down on the housing list, things that you don't learn in school." (I2W participant interview)

Respondents were asked, within the same question, whether they had already made any sort of recommendation to people that they know. Half of them, 23 (50%), said that they had spoken about the programme with other people, e.g. "I recommended it to my cousin and all the young people I have conversations with I advise to go to the Hub". (I2W participant interview)

5.2.10 Exiting the Service

Management and delivery team participants were generally satisfied with the exit process of young people leaving I2W.

When asked about most common outcomes when leaving the service, one JB said:

> "Jobs. We also have significant success in trasitioning into the FE college. We have good informal links through the [delivery team] workers that college is a good place to aim for." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

A second JB focused on maintaining contact to ensure success of the young person's next steps, saying:

> "When they leave the project, we try to keep in touch for a month or so. If anybody comes back for a second time then they go into the CfW+ project [Communities for Work Plus]. We make it clear that it's a safety net, not a failure." (Management and Delivery Team Interview).

A third JB talks about the challenges of their cohort:

> "The majority exit into further education or WBL provision. A small proportion enter employment. A lot of our young people arent ready by the time we finish with them, they need higher qualifications or another 6 monhts experience before moving on." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

Alongside the completion of the I2W programme, issues were raised during interviews around registering participant outcomes.

Management and delivery teams noted that there was only a short four-week window for which participants were able to be claimed as an outcome following their completion of the programme.

Complaints about this noted that, once starting new employment, it was difficult for I2W staff to secure appropriate confirmation of their new status, e.g. a wage slip or letter from their employer, once the young person had disengaged from the programme.

Similar to issues about eligibility as young people enter the programme, staff felt that the amount of time and effort required to prove the young person's outcome was disproportionate, and could be better invested in the programme.

This was balanced by the recognition that programme outcomes needed to be evidenced in order to show effectiveness of the work undertaken.

5.2.11 Key risks for future provision

Looking towards the end of the programme, management and delivery team staff identified risks associated with programme closure and with the future support provision for young people once this programme concludes.

> "I am fearful of the gap that ESF monies will leave and the lack of communication from Westminster is a concern. It does showcase how multiple local authorities and organisations can work together.." (Management and Delivery Team Interview).

Staffing was also recognized as a challenge as the programme reaches closure, in regards to retention of staff until the end and that any replacement would, by necessity, be short-term.

6. Cross-cutting Themes

6.1 Cross-cutting themes

Participants were asked how they engaged with WEFO's cross-cutting themes of Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming, Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion, and the Welsh language.

The final report will consider these matters in depth, including an analysis of monitoring reports on the Cross-Cutting Themes.

6.2 Tackling Poverty

Many felt that tackling poverty was at the heart of the programme, as, although participants were not from Communities First postcode areas, NEET prevention was an integral part of the programme, with potential economic benefits for individuals resulting from successful engagement with I2W through employment or improved employability outcomes.

It was broadly considered that the service was demand-led and so eligible participants were treated equally upon arrival, and given the same opportunities within the programme, whatever their background.

In terms of sustainable development, interviewees noted the increase in digital working, which reduced travel, but also stressed that there was a need for face-to-face contact with individuals as part of the process.

Llamau explained that they included the cross-cutting themes as an integral part of their offer to young people. Study topics change on a weekly basis, and are taught as discrete blocks to ensure that new starters are not penalized by falling behind existing participants. They incorporate different elements of the cross-cutting themes within the teaching materials.

> "We deal with cross-cutting themes as part of the curriculum. They're embedded within the curriculum on topics such as equality and diversity. Agored Cymru have a qualification on environmental awareness. 'World in Work' covers all of the cross-cutting themes, based on the workplace. We look at topical issues too, such as coercive control and healthy relationships, and update. This wasn't anything new to us." (Management and Delivery Team Interview)

Llamau also explained that they had given a presentation on how to embed the cross-cutting themes within other strands of work so that they weren't in silos or box-ticking exercises.

6.3 Welsh language

With regards to the availability of services in Welsh, management and delivery team participants said that application forms etc. were available in the Welsh language, and the service was promoted bilingually on websites etc. However, a number also noted both that

they had no Welsh speaker on the team, so were unsure how such a service would operate. Others noted that they had not received any requests to provide a service in Welsh.

Participants were asked about their Welsh language skills. These have been collated in Table 6.1 below. It has been confirmed that no services in the programme have been delivered in Welsh to participants.

Table 6.1: Welsh language ability of I2W EW Participants

	Yes	No	Total
Understand Welsh	100 (6.4%)	1461 (93.6%)	1561
Speak Welsh	76 (4.9%)	1485 (95.1%)	1561
Read Welsh	81 (5.2%)	1480 (94.8%)	1561
Write Welsh	76 (4.9%)	1485 (95.1%)	1561

Source: Information provided by I2W EW at end of Q20, March 2022

7. Emerging Findings

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we draw together the findings from the monitoring data, management and delivery team interviews and with young people who participanted in I2W.

At this point of the project, with only a limited amount of time remaining, the recommendations presented here should be taken into consideration when designing future projects aimed at supporting this cohort of young people.

7.2 Summary of Findings

Overall, interviews with management and delivery team members of I2W JBs were satisfied with process and outputs of the project, while participants in our interviews were happy with their experience of engaging with I2W.

7.2.1 Referrals and Engagement

At the end of Quarter 20, I2W has recruited fewer participants than the programme target profile. This is because, while there has been a larger number of male participants than profile, there have been fewer female participants. However, the proportion of male to female participants in I2W is largely in line with external indicators, for example, the claimant count for 16-24 year olds in the EW area.

The outcomes for I2W are broadly in line with the target profile at this point in time. The number of participants who have gained employment following I2W is higher than the profile target, while the numbers who have gained a qualification or have entered education or training are slightly below the target, but within tolerance levels.

Analysis of participant characteristics show that, compared with participants from the local authority JBs, the cohort of participants at Llamau are more likely to have been economically inactive, homeless or at risk of homelessness, or disabled or facing an otherwise work limiting condition.

In the final report, we will consider the outcomes of I2W participation against the characteristics for which data is available.

Recommendation: In the final report, Wavehill will review any significant variations in outcomes by different demographic groups, particularly those from black and minority ethnic, disabled and LGBTQ+ backgrounds, where this data is available.

7.2.2 Eligibility for I2W

Determining eligibility was highlighted as a challenge by delivery team interviewees, impacting upon their ability to engage quickly with young people and creating additional

paperwork. This included the ability to work with young people at the start of the process, which was dependent upon completion and availability of paperwork, and being able to claim young people's success at the conclusion of the programme. Delays in being able to engage with young people at the beginning of the programme, due to the amount of administration, risks losing engagement of participants at a key point in the process and can make further engagement challenging.

Recommendation: Any new programmes to support this cohort of young people should consider the appropriate balance and reasonable checks so that young people are able to access programmes such as I2W, or similar, and that the paperwork is not overly onerous upon staff, whose time could be better utilised in delivering the programme.

7.2.3 The person-centred approach

Delivery teams welcomed the flexibility of the I2W programme to make it 'person-centred'. This was particularly appreciated by those with a youth work background who felt it was a natural progression from work with younger age groups. This was felt to be different to employment-focused work carried out by other agencies or programmes.

Recommendation: The person-centred approach to engagement with NEET young people should be continued. This allows young people to make informed decisions as to their future.

7.2.4 COVID-19

It was recognised that COVID-19 impacted strongly upon I2W delivery during 2020 and into 2021. There was a fall in the number of referrals and reduced ability to engage with young people during this period. Despite this, staff worked hard to maintain the delivery of the programme. It is reported that there was now a 'new normal' of hybrid working to provide support for participants unable or unwilling to travel or attend in person. It is unclear whether this method of working will continue since pandemic working conditions have been unwound.

Recommendation: Future programmes should continue to provide as wide a range of services as possible through both face-to-face and digital means. Evaluation should consider the effectiveness of these approaches and suitability for different client bases.

7.2.5 Outcome Monitoring

The cohort of young people eligible for I2W are 16-24 year old NEETs. Within this group there is a range of individuals, some of whom are closer to the labour market than others. Each JB has a different conversion rate of participants entering the labour market, with Cardiff the highest anticipated rates and Llamau the lowest. However, considering the harder to reach group with whom Llamau specialise, it still appears that the conversion rate for participants at Llamau is challenging, and is reflecting in their current performance of participants entering employment compared to their target profile at this point in the programme.

Recommendation: That the conversion rate for Llamau participants entering employment is reviewed before the end of this programme, and that the challenges of engaging with groups furthest from the labour market is recognised within future target setting.

In the geographical area of the Vale of Glamorgan, there has been a division of participants between the Vale of Glamorgan JB and Llamau, with the cohort at Llamau being further from the labour market, based on their previous economic inactivity, while the Vale of Glamorgan JB engage with those closest to employment.

Broadly, this has led to over-performance of the Vale of Glamorgan JB, with greater challenges for Llamau in recruiting sufficient numbers and converting participants to employment. Although there were formal changes in the relationship as part of the re-profile in early 2020, reflections from Llamau suggest that this has been less successful for them as an organisation.

Recommendation: The final report should consider the success or otherwise of this approach of triaging participants within the same geographical area, subject to their distance from the labour market. Future programmes should consider whether it is better to have a single independent lead in a geographical area, or focus on how to ensure better co-operation between partners and avoid competition for participants within the same programme.

7.2.6 Cross-cutting Themes

In the final report, we will consider the contribution of the operations to the cross-cutting themes set out by WEFO associated with Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming, Sustainable Development and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion.

We will do this using data from quarterly progress reports and further consider participants outcomes against the demographic data which has been collected, including ethnicity.

Appendix 1

- Discussion Guide for Management and Delivery Team Interviews
- Participant Discussion Guide, 16-24 year olds Questions for I2W participants

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Evaluation of ESF Regional Approaches to Support Young People NEET in Wales – Inspire to Work

Discussion Guide

This document

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this evaluation.

This is a guide for the discussion that we would like to undertake with you. We would be grateful if you can find a few minutes to read it in advance of the discussion. It includes some background information about the evaluation and a list of questions that we would like to discuss with you. This discussion guide is however exactly that - a *guide* to the issues that we would like to discuss during the meeting. We would, of course, be happy to discuss any other issues which you feel are relevant.

Some background

The aim of this evaluation is to provide a critical assessment of the two regional approaches to supporting young people NEET in East Wales (EW) and West Wales and the Valleys (WWV). The evaluation will explore issues to do with the planning, implementation, and management of the regional operation teams, including the effectiveness of the two operations, and the suitability of the interventions offered to the needs of the participants.

In addition, we will provide an assessment of the short and medium-term outcomes of the operation and, if possible, the longer-term impact of the operations for the participants (and any demographic patterns associated with impact) and their employment or engagement within education.

Any comments that you make will be confidential and the information you provide will only be used for the purposes of this evaluation. Comments that you make will not be attributed to you unless we have your explicit permission to do so. It is also important to note that the team undertaking the evaluation *do not* work for the Welsh Government, WEFO or any of the organisations that are involved in the delivery or funding of this project. This is an *independent* evaluation.

Questions for discussion

1. As an introduction, please provide an outline of your role and responsibilities associated with the development and delivery of your Inspire to Work project, including the length of time that you have been in this role and/or involved in the project?

2. What do you think is the most important/critical part of your job role to achieve success with the young people you support through Inspire to Work? How long do you spend each week working on I2W projects?

Design

3. Could you tell me how Inspire to Work is promoted in your local area?

4. Were there other, similar, projects in your area, and how did this impact upon recruitment to your programme?

5. Thinking about initial engagement with participants,
   a. What are the typical referral routes that lead to you engaging with participants?
   b. What approach is taken to undertake initial assessment of need of participants?
   c. How are potential interventions/support identified?
   d. Are there any particular challenges you face in identifying or engaging participants?
   e. In what ways, if any, could this process be improved?

6. Does action planning or some form of goal setting form part of your early engagement with participants?
   a. If so, to what extent does this remain central to the monitoring of participants over time?
   b. Is the monitoring consistent for each participant?
   c. Could the action planning/ goal setting be improved in any way?

COVID Impacts

7. Thinking back to the initial outbreak of the Covid-19 and subsequent lockdowns, how did you adjust your delivery model (if at all) in response?
   a. What challenges, if any, did you face in making this adjustment?
   b. How effective was this approach in maintaining contact with participants?

8. What impact, if any, did COVID-19 have on:
   a. Identifying project participants
   b. Engaging project participants
   c. Referral volumes to the programme/project
   d. Outcomes participants have been able to achieve
   e. Progression routes for participants

9. How, if at all, has COVID-19 affected the issues that young people are presenting with?

a. Did I2W provision have to change at all to meet participants' needs during the pandemic? If so, how?

Delivery Model and Progress

10. Reflecting on the processes that you have outlined above, what aspects of the delivery model are working well, and which could be improved? How would you do that?

11. Are there any other aspects of the delivery model (that you haven't already mentioned) which could be improved?

12. When a participant has been referred to other provision, how is their progress monitored?
    a. Could the measuring of progress be improved in anyway?

13. How does a participant typically 'exit' from the support offered by Inspire to Work?

14. To the best of your knowledge, are there any common barriers which participants face which prevent them from securing employment or returning to mainstream education? How, if at all, can these barriers be addressed?

15. As you may know, all ESF-funded programmes must address the cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities, sustainable development, tackling poverty and include the promotion of Welsh Language. Can you provide any examples of how the Cross-Cutting Themes have been promoted?

Monitoring Systems

16. How is monitoring data captured for your project?

17. How comprehensive do you consider the monitoring information to be?
    a. Has the capture of monitoring information posed any challenges to you? If so, how have these challenges been overcome?

Outcomes and Performance

18. Overall, how do you feel you are delivering against key targets for Inspire to Work?
    a. What do you consider to be its key strengths or reasons it is having success?
    b. What have been the key challenges or reasons it is facing performance difficulties?
    c. Are there any participant achievements/outcomes from the project that are not being recorded?

19. What would you say are the key impacts the support offered through Inspire to Work has had on the participants?
    a. Can you provide any specific examples of these?

Reflections and Wrap up

20. Thinking about your experience of Inspire to Work so far, what lessons have you learnt from the delivery of the project?

21. What changes, if any, would you make to improve the project? Are there any gaps that you've identified?

22. What approaches would you consider most appropriate for engaging young people participating in Inspire to Work in your area as part of the evaluation?

23. Looking to the future, what do you consider to be the key risks that may impact on the success of the operation?

24. Is there anything else we should be aware of, or something that you would like to add? Or would you like to raise an issue that we have not discussed?

Thank you for your time. *Diolch yn fawr am eich amser*.

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Inspire to Work Participant Discussion Guide
16-24 year olds

One to one interview

First of all, thank you for helping us with this work. Wavehill, the company I work for, have been asked to see how well the project has done – what has worked and what could be done better.

Please note, the information you provide will be completely confidential. We will use the information you provide to help us write a report about the project. You will not be named in any project reports **and we will ensure that it is impossible for anyone to identify you from the information we include in the reports.**

It is also important to note that the team undertaking the evaluation do not work for any of the organisations that are involved in the delivery or funding of this programme, we are an independent organisation.

If you want to know more about the project and want to know what we will do with the information you can check what is called a Privacy Notice. ***(interviewer to provide the link/a copy of the privacy notice if requested)***

Questions

Interviewer

A) Date of interview:
B) Name of Joint Beneficiary:

1. Could you please tell me your name and how old you are?

Name:

2. Can you remember **when** you first became involved with the project?

3. Can you remember **how** you first heard about the project, and how you became involved with it?

4. When you joined the project what did you want it to help/support you with?

5. Can you tell me a bit about the support you've received from the project? What kind of help have you had or activities do you do?

6. Has the support you received through the project been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic? Yes/No

   a. (if yes) in what ways?

7. What do you think is good about the *project or support*?

   a. What would you describe as the best parts of the support you have received/the activities you have done?

8. Were there any parts of the project you didn't/don't enjoy?

9. Thinking about the programme, how do you feel you benefitted? [Open answer- code below]

Unprompted - Interviewer: ask as an open question also try to identify (where appropriate) which element of support they are referring to. The responses will then be coded within the below:

- Aspiration and motivation
- Social skills for training/work
- Social skills with peers/family/friends
- Basic/key skills/qualifications gained
- Behavioural improvements
- Stability inc. financial and homelife
- Job-specific skills
- Job-search skills
- Wellbeing, including mental health

- Anything else

10. Do you feel more confident about getting and holding down a job now than before you had the support? *[A great deal/ To some extent/Not very much/ Not at all]*

11. Has the support you've received changed how you feel about education or training in any way? *[Yes/No/Don't know]*
    a. Why do you say that?

12. Tell me how you think the project could be better?

13. Would you recommend this project to other young people? Have you done so already?

14. Is there anything else you would like to say about the project?

Thank you for your time

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social and economic research

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