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Process Evaluation of the Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) Project

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Title: Process Evaluation of the Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE)
Project

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

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
PACE	Parents, Childcare and Employment
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
ESF	European Social Fund
PaCE Adviser	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
LMS	Labour Market System
CF	Communities First
IB	Incapacity Benefit
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
TPAP	Tackling Poverty Action Plan
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
DfE	The Department for Education
FIS	Family Information Services
GW2	Genesis Cymru Wales 2
ESICC	Employment Services in Integrated Children's Centres
WLGA	Welsh Government Local Government Association
WCVA	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
WEFO	Welsh European Funding Office
CCTs	Cross-Cutting Themes

1. [Executive] Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 In January 2016, the Welsh Government commissioned Wavehill to undertake a process evaluation of the Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) project. PaCE aims to assist out of work parents into training or employment where childcare is their main barrier to doing so. PaCE was launched in October 2015 for parents aged 25 and over. The project was subsequently extended to parents aged 16-24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).
- 1.2 PaCE aims to assist 7,884 economically inactive and unemployed parents¹, supporting lone parents, parents from a workless household or assisting a (potential) second earner within a working household. The project aims to support at least 1,577 parents into sustainable employment, thereby reducing the number of children living in workless households.

The Evaluation

- 1.3 The evaluation was commissioned with a process emphasis and the aim of providing insight into:
- the way in which PaCE has been established
 - the project design (and specifically the collaboration between Welsh Government, DWP, and the local authorities)
 - how well PaCE is being administered
 - how effectively it is identifying and engaging with the intended recipients
 - how the project is helping participants to overcome barriers to work, to acquire job-relevant skills, and to take up job-relevant opportunities.
- 1.4 The research involved:
- desk research reviewing the strategic and policy context within which the PaCE project operates

¹ Parents over the age of 25 are only eligible for PaCE if they are classed as economically inactive. Parents aged 16 to 24 are eligible if they are not engaged in employment, education or training (NEET) and can be economically inactive or unemployed

- a series of stakeholder interviews during February and March 2016 with those involved in the design, management and delivery of the PaCE project
- a telephone survey of 60 participants of the PaCE project (during March 2016).

The PaCE Project

- 1.5 PaCE is delivered through 43 PaCE Advisers, employed by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) with each local authority having access to a PaCE Adviser. The support offered through PaCE Advisers is aimed at parents living outside of Communities First Areas. Approaches to engagement typically use existing support infrastructure including Flying Start settings, Family Information Services and Families First services.
- 1.6 Parents voluntarily engage with the project, receiving support that is individual to their needs (identified through initial one-to-one discussion). Personal Action Plans, formulated as a result of the discussion, set out the agreed support required.
- 1.7 The support includes; solutions to overcoming childcare barriers, identifying the best solutions for parents who are not work-ready and who require work experience or training, and providing support for accessing sustainable employment to those who are work-ready. Advisers provide mentoring support when participants are in training or on work experience to ensure they remain on track to achieve their goals.
- 1.8 PaCE Advisers establish whether eligible parents require financial assistance to help them overcome barriers to employment which include childcare, travel and/or training costs, or whether advice, information or guidance is most appropriate.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Project Design and Development

- 1.9 The design of the project has drawn heavily on previous experience, replicating the most successful elements of prior initiatives, and revising the model of service delivery where lessons had been learned. Local authorities aided the design process; while some were concerned about the shift (from previous initiatives) of delivery staff from local authority employed community engagement staff to DWP employed PaCE Advisers, it was recognised that the shift in approach offers a more efficient route of provision.

- 1.10 The project has strengthened the relationship between the Welsh Government and the DWP. Partner engagement with local authority representatives has also been an important element of the service, although there is a concern amongst some that the frequency of this engagement had fallen in the months leading up to the research. A decline in engagement and a lack of guidance had led to some local authorities being unclear about their role and responsibilities in relation to PaCE.

Recommendation 1: To produce a formal agreement, such as a memorandum of understanding, which sets out the roles and responsibilities of key partners (particularly local authorities) involved in the delivery of PaCE.

Implementation

- 1.11 The project was launched in two phases; Phase 1 operated in Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion prior to its national roll-out (phase 2). Phase 1 areas were chosen as those local authorities already worked together and were looking to adopt a similar approach. The project initially operated without a full complement of staff, clear guidance for delivery staff or elements of the service model in place.
- 1.12 The rollout of key elements of PaCE (in particular the provision of PaCE funded training) took longer than expected, impacting on the initial delivery of outcomes. This has left the project behind profile in terms of the number of participants engaged and the number of job entries achieved.
- 1.13 The initial lack of funded training - as well as other elements key to the programme's offer - has affected project delivery, with marketing and promotion largely avoided until this provision could be established. Advisers expressed concerns that the lack of promotion materials might impact perceptions of the programme as legitimate.
- 1.14 Misunderstandings were also evident amongst PaCE Advisers, particularly in relation to the application of childcare support and the understanding of the latest benefits legislation. Whilst PaCE Advisers who were newly recruited by the DWP for this project were given intensive training, they desired a project-specific induction process and asked for additional guidance on the training provision available in their area.

Recommendation 2: Deliver a project-specific induction process to all PaCE Advisers.

Recommendation 3: Develop a frequently asked questions sheet to be used as a working document throughout the remainder of the project.

Recommendation 4: Consider introducing a buddying/mentoring system to enable PaCE Advisers to share learning with each other and to raise awareness of the training offer available locally to staff.

Recommendation 5: Undertake marketing and promotion using clear and succinct materials, targeting potential partner service providers and participants, to reflect the fact that PaCE is now fully operational.

Service Integration

- 1.15 Most PaCE Advisers have successfully integrated into the wider family services within each community. Targeting the support outside Communities First Cluster areas has been welcomed by partners, with most identifying this as a gap in service provision. Some areas show mutually beneficial relationships between Family Support settings and PaCE services. This is particularly important when considering that PaCE's target participants often have multiple barriers that typically warrant support beyond that which PaCE Advisers can deliver alone.
- 1.16 The partnership approach has worked particularly well where PaCE Advisers are hot-desking within family settings and are attending/securing positions on key networks of family service providers. In some locations, however, the facilities available for hot-desking or meeting clients are either inappropriately located (e.g. wholly within Communities First Cluster areas) or are simply inappropriate to allow for service delivery, particularly within rural areas. Furthermore, the parents attending family centres typically only change with school terms and these potential routes to the market can be quickly exhausted if attendees are relatively low in number. Consequently, Flying Start centres and other playgroups are less prominent routes to participants and service delivery than anticipated within the business plan.
- 1.17 Conversely, local Jobcentres are proving particularly fruitful routes to recruitment of PaCE participants, with some PaCE Advisers identifying that almost their entire caseload has been recruited through the Jobcentres. The Jobcentres and resources accessible to PaCE Advisers within the Jobcentres provide a useful means for the identification and engagement of eligible participants.

- 1.18 The Jobcentres are currently a fundamental element of PaCE. However, the project is designed on community outreach provision, working closely with partners to reach parents who may otherwise be unwilling to engage. It is unlikely that this cohort will be found within the Jobcentres. With a reliance on Jobcentres, there is also a heightened danger that PaCE may simply be seen by potential participants as an extension of service provision typically offered through the Jobcentres.

Recommendation 6: Undertake close monitoring of referral routes to identify trends and patterns in referrals.

Recommendation 7: Explore additional mechanisms (and share where successful) to engage Flying Start centres and other family-based settings to increase the diversity of referral/engagement routes for the PaCE project.

Recommendation 8: Where there is evidence that service delivery is more challenging in rural areas, explore through discussion with key rural groups, including the Local Action Groups delivering the Rural Development Programme.

Service Delivery Approach

- 1.19 The flexible, person-led approach is welcomed by all stakeholders and participants, which is helped by the lack of defined structure for PaCE. It is important that this flexibility is maintained to allow PaCE Advisers to react to situations and opportunities that arise in the geographical area that they serve. Furthermore, the various resources which PaCE Advisers can draw on are also welcomed, although the extent of demand for them is currently unclear. This is because the lack of PaCE training provision is likely to have restricted levels of demand for childcare provision. As a result, it is unclear whether the available budgets associated with this funding will be fully utilised.

Recommendation 9: Maintain the flexibility of operation afforded to the PaCE Advisers in delivering their services.

Delivery of Outcomes

- 1.20 When considering outcomes, it is important to recognise that PaCE is typically engaging with people who are some distance from the labour market and, prior to engagement with PaCE, are unlikely to be actively seeking employment.
- 1.21 These factors mean that securing sustainable employment outcomes for 20 per cent of participants (the target for PaCE) is a challenge. However, the PaCE model draws

heavily upon lessons learnt from recent employability interventions, thereby increasing the chances of meeting this target. Given the distance from the labour market of some participants, mechanisms to effectively measure distance travelled (which are likely to include measures of self-confidence, self-belief and aspirations) could provide additional means to measure the benefits derived from the support.

- 1.22 It is notable that target allocation to PaCE Advisers does not take into account location. A variety of challenges have been identified for PaCE service delivery that are associated with rural areas and/or those areas that suffer from poor infrastructure.

Recommendation 10: Introduce robust monitoring of customers' journeys and employment outcomes to identify any locational patterns in service delivery and achievement of outcomes.

Recommendation 11: Commission the summative evaluation as soon as it is feasible to capture participant journeys and distance travelled and to provide timely recommendations for PaCE.

Monitoring

- 1.23 Projects delivered as part of the 2014–2020 European Structural Funds programme should clearly evidence expenditure and activity to ensure compliant and appropriate use of public and European resources. This places an administrative burden on service providers and there is some confusion amongst PaCE Advisers as to what they should be collecting and how it should be collected.
- 1.24 At the time of the research, a review of data capture systems identified gaps in the information recorded and spot checks are now being implemented in response to this issue.

Recommendation 12: Incorporate examples of eligible/ineligible evidence in internal guidance/frequently asked questions documentation.

Performance

- 1.25 The delays in implementing PaCE, combined with a lack of tools/offers to enable the delivery of PaCE, have left the project behind profile in terms of engagement numbers and job entries.
- 1.26 PaCE Advisers were concerned that the target set for helping parents into employment is challenging. It is difficult to determine the scale of challenges, as, at the time of the research PaCE was not fully operational. Furthermore, the availability of suitable opportunities, which is beyond the control of the project, will affect the deliverability of this target.

Recommendation 13: Review project profiling six months after the project has been fully operational to identify whether a re-profiling of targets is necessary.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 In January 2016, the Welsh Government commissioned Wavehill to undertake a process evaluation of the Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE) project. PaCE aims to assist out of work parents into training or employment where childcare is their main barrier to doing so. PaCE was launched in October 2015 for parents aged 25 and over. Implementation of the project took place over two phases with Phase 1 commencing in July 2015 across three local authorities (Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion), and Phase 2 across the rest of Wales from November 2015. The project subsequently received approval by the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) for extension to parents aged 16–24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) in April 2016².
- 2.2 The total cost of the whole operation (over 25 and 16-24) is £13.5 million for 2015–18. Of this, £5 million is being funded by the Welsh Government and the remaining £8.5 million is being funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).
- 2.3 Over the life of its operation, PaCE aims to assist 7,884 economically inactive and unemployed parents³, supporting lone parents, parents from a workless household or assisting a (potential) second earner within a working household. In supporting these groups, the project aims to increase the number of parents in work (with a target of at least 1,577 parents supported into sustainable employment), thereby reducing the number of children living in workless households. In addition, it is anticipated that many more parents will complete volunteering, training or work experience, which will help them to increase their chances of moving into work.

² The approvals were retrospective to October 2015

³ Parents over the age of 25 are only eligible for PaCE if they are classed as economically inactive. Parents aged 16 to 24 are eligible if they are not engaged in employment, education or training (NEET) and can be economically inactive or unemployed

- 2.4 The support is aimed at parents residing in areas outside of the designated Communities First Areas⁴ and the approach to engagement typically seeks to utilise existing support infrastructure for groups including Flying Start settings, Family Information Services, and Families First⁵ provision. Each local authority⁶ has access to a PaCE Adviser, who is recruited and employed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). PaCE Advisers work with community-based family support teams to offer additional services to help break down childcare barriers to enable inactive parents to prepare for and move into work.
- 2.5 The model adopted for PaCE is heavily focussed on outreach, with PaCE Advisers expected to spend the majority of their time within communities. Parents voluntarily engage with the project and the support provided to parents through PaCE aims to be individualised to their needs, which may include providing funds to pay for childcare (whilst parents access training or work experience opportunities), transport to and from training/interviews, or to fund training provision.

Aims of the Evaluation

- 2.6 The evaluation has been commissioned with a process emphasis and the aim of providing insight into:
- the way in which PaCE has been established
 - the project design (and specifically the collaboration between Welsh Government, DWP, and the local authorities)
 - how well PaCE is being administered
 - how effectively it is identifying and engaging with the intended recipients
 - how the project is helping participants to overcome barriers to work, to acquire job-relevant skills, and to take up job-relevant opportunities.

⁴ There are 52 Communities First Areas (Clusters) throughout Wales, representing around 24 per cent of the total population.

⁵ Details on Families First, Flying Start and Communities First can be found in the following section.

⁶ Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil do not have a dedicated Adviser however services can be delivered by PaCE staff based in neighbouring authorities.

2.7 To deliver the above, the evaluation has focussed on:

- the implementation of the project
- the interactions between delivery staff and the recipients of support through the PaCE project, and the interactions between the various delivery bodies (Welsh Government, DWP, and local authorities)
- the level of understanding about the goals of the project
- the monitoring systems associated with PaCE.

In delivering against these aims and objectives, the research provides recommendations for informing future project development.

Structure of this Report

2.8 The structure of the remainder of this report is as follows.

- Section 2 describes the methods used in undertaking the evaluation.
- Section 3 reviews the historical and current policy context for PaCE.
- Section 4 explores the rationale that underpins PaCE and its design.
- Section 5 presents feedback from stakeholders, PaCE Advisers and local authorities on the progress of PaCE. It explores in detail the processes applied in delivering the project, and considers the extent to which its implementation reflects the original model and theory of change.
- Section 6 presents feedback from participants on their background, their reasons and routes to engagement, and their perceptions of support received through PaCE.
- Section 7 summarises the findings and suggests a series of recommendations.

3. Methodological Approach

- 3.1 A process evaluation places its emphasis on understanding **how** a policy intervention is being delivered and what factors have helped or hindered its effectiveness.⁷ A variety of methods have been applied through the evaluation, as outlined below.

Desk Research

- 3.2 Desk-based research has formed a major element of the process evaluation to understand the strategic and policy context in which the PaCE project operates. The desk-based research has enabled a review of the context and the rationale for investing in PaCE, alongside the associated logic underpinning the operational model of the project (the theory of change that explores this logic is available in Section 4).

Scoping Interviews

- 3.3 Semi-structured scoping interviews were undertaken with six key stakeholders during February 2016 by telephone. These included Welsh Government and DWP staff involved in the design and management of the project and two local authority representatives involved in the roll-out of Phase 1 of PaCE. These interviews aimed to explore the context within which the initial development of the model took place, the assumptions made in the project's design, the early stages of implementation, and the current perspective on the project's operation. (A copy of the discussion guide used to frame the scoping interviews can be found in Annex A).

Stakeholder Interviews – Implementation

- 3.4 In March 2016, following the scoping interviews and desk research, interviews were undertaken with stakeholders involved in the management and delivery of PaCE. The interviews were conducted primarily on a one-to-one basis (two staff members with similar roles were interviewed concurrently) with 14 PaCE Advisers and DWP management staff.

⁷ HM Treasury. (2011) *The Magenta Book: Guidance for Evaluation*

- 3.5 The interviews were semi-structured and undertaken by telephone. The interviews explored the approach taken in the delivery of the PaCE project. This was to identify the extent to which the model identified in the business plan is reflective of the approach adopted in each area. The interviews also explored the extent to which the service aligns with existing service provision and the approach to gathering of monitoring information. A copy of the discussion guide can be found in Annex A.
- 3.6 A further 22 local authority representatives were also interviewed by telephone on a one-to-one basis. These interviews sought to explore views on the approach to implementation and delivery of the PaCE project in each local authority area, the extent to which PaCE is considered to align with existing services offered in each area, and their perspective on how, if at all, PaCE could be improved. (Again, a copy of the discussion guide can be found in Annex A and a list of stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation is presented in Annex A).

Participant Research

- 3.7 A telephone survey of 60 participants in the PaCE project was also undertaken. The interviews were qualitative in nature to enable an exploration of participant backgrounds, their route to engagement, and their journey through the PaCE service. This approach offered the ability to capture richness of information through conversation and the ability to probe some of the responses further. However, the disadvantage with this approach is there is potential for interview bias (as the research is reliant upon interviewer notes and interpretations).
- 3.8 Participant contact details were secured via the Welsh Government from the DWP Labour Market System (LMS) database, with participants consenting to participate as part of the enrolment in the project. Participants were then also asked for their consent to participate in the survey on initial contact with the interviewer.
- 3.9 The Welsh Government requested a spread of participants from across each of the PaCE Advisers (of two or three participants per PaCE Adviser) and therefore a purposive sample to obtain a geographical spread of participants from each area. A minimum quota of one participant from each local authority was applied with the participants randomly chosen from within each local authority area.

3.10 The sampling approach led to the receipt of 89 participants for the team to seek to interview, with the research team therefore securing a response rate of 67 per cent (60 participants). Participants were asked how they became aware of and engaged in PaCE, the support they had received throughout the project, and their perspectives on the usefulness of this support. (A copy of the survey can be found in Annex A).

4. Policy Context

4.1 This section explores the historical and existing policy pertinent to the PaCE project. It also reviews several specific policy interventions where the experience of those interventions has been influential in the design of PaCE.

UK Policy

- 4.2 Reducing unemployment and economic inactivity has remained a key policy objective for successive governments in Wales and throughout the UK. The policy response has been broad and has included a number of positive activation policies (interventions where training or job-related support is typically provided) to reduce the prevalence of unemployment and economic inactivity. These have included area-based initiatives, such as Communities First in Wales⁸, Social Inclusion Partnerships in Scotland⁹, and the New Deal for Communities¹⁰ and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund¹¹ in England. Since 2008, UK Government policy has come full circle, shifting focus from positive activation towards negative activation policies, which typically include benefit reductions and a threat of sanctions. This approach has included replacing Incapacity Benefit (IB) with Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and reducing the age of the youngest child after which lone parents are required to seek work.
- 4.3 Welfare policy in Wales is not a devolved competence and is the responsibility of the UK Government through the DWP. It has been, and continues to be, subject to significant reforms, including the expectation that parents claiming benefits look for work when their youngest child turns three.

⁸ <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitiesfirst/?lang=en> – accessed on 14th June 2016

⁹ ODS Consulting. (2006) *An overview of the Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) programme*. Communities Scotland

¹⁰ The national evaluation of the New Deal for Communities can be found at <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/ndc/> (accessed on 14th June 2016).

¹¹ Amion Consulting. (2010) *Evaluation of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: Final Report*. Department for Communities and Local Government (2010)

Welsh Government Policy

- 4.4 In Wales, the Child Poverty Strategy and the Welsh Government's Tackling Poverty Action Plan (TPAP) are particularly pertinent to the PaCE project.
- 4.5 Tackling worklessness is closely aligned with the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy, which has three strategic objectives.
- To reduce the number of families living in workless households, as children living in workless households are particularly at risk of living in poverty.
 - To increase the skills of parents and young people living in low-income households so that they can secure well-paid employment and in-work progression, as in-work poverty is a growing issue.
 - To reduce the inequalities which exist in the health, education and economic outcomes of children and families by improving the outcomes of the poorest. Preventing poverty is fundamental to our long-term vision of supporting low-income households.¹²
- 4.6 The broader TPAP highlights its commitment to tackling poverty with actions centred on three key areas:
- poverty
 - helping people into work
 - improving the lives of people living in poverty.¹³
- 4.7 The TPAP references the flagship programmes of Communities First, Families First, Flying Start and Jobs Growth Wales as being important mechanisms to deliver its tackling poverty outcomes. PaCE is designed to build on the infrastructure of these programmes, particularly the Families First and Flying Start programmes, to contribute to their aim (amongst a series of other aims) of reducing the number of workless households.

¹² Welsh Government Tackling Poverty Action Plan <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/tackling-poverty/?lang=en> [Accessed on 14th June 2016]

¹³ Ibid.,

Families First

- 4.8 Families First promotes the development of effective multi-agency systems of support for families, particularly those living in poverty. The programme places a clear emphasis on early intervention and prevention and on bringing organisations together to work with the whole family to help stop problems from escalating towards crisis.
- 4.9 The progress of Families First is currently monitored under four outcome areas, with PaCE closely aligned to the first.
- Working-age people in low-income families gain, and progress within, employment.
 - Children, young people and families in or at risk of poverty achieve their potential.
 - Children, young people and families are healthy and enjoy well-being.
 - Families are confident, nurturing, resilient and safe.
- 4.10 Services commissioned through Families First should focus on delivering at least one of these outcomes, with the programme as a whole delivering them all.
- 4.11 Families First is delivered by local authorities. Each local authority is required to develop an action plan setting out how the programme will be delivered in their local area. Each local authority needs to outline their approach and how they will evidence progress against the four outcome areas described above. To inform the estimation of progress, a series of key population indicators have been identified. The following Families First indicator further illustrates alignment with PaCE and provides justification for collaborative working between the two interventions:
- the proportion of children living in families in receipt of out-of-work (means-tested) benefits or in receipt of tax credits where their reported income is less than 60 per cent of the median income.¹⁴

¹⁴ Welsh Government Families First Overview <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/parenting-support-guidance/help/families-first/outcomes/?lang=en> [Accessed on 15th June 2016]

Flying Start

- 4.12 Flying Start is an early years programme for families with children under four years of age living in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales. There are four key elements to Flying Start:
- free, high-quality part-time childcare for 2–3-year-olds
 - an enhanced health visiting service
 - access to parenting support
 - speech, language and communication support.
- 4.13 PaCE is designed to build on the support infrastructure offered through Flying Start, specifically where Flying Start provision is available outside of the Communities First areas where PaCE will deliver its services. This includes utilising Flying Start settings as key locations for engaging and supporting participants and working with Flying Start staff to identify suitable childcare provision for these participants (if required).

Key Previous Policy Interventions (Lessons Learnt)

- 4.14 Several former policy interventions were particularly influential in the design of PaCE. Their influence on the design of PaCE is discussed in detail within Section 3.

Genesis Cymru Wales 2

- 4.15 Genesis Cymru Wales 2 (GW2) was a programme operating throughout Wales, supported by the European Social Fund (ESF). It launched in October 2008 with a planned operation until June 2014 with the aim of increasing employment and economic activity amongst key target groups, namely NEETs, older participants and female lone parents in particular.
- 4.16 Whilst the programme aimed to increase employment and economic activity, an independent evaluation found that it had focussed predominantly on participant engagement and the removal of barriers towards employment. Relatively few (nine per cent of) participants moved into employment as an exit outcome from the programme. Several contextual issues are likely to have influenced this performance¹⁵; however, a key factor was the misinterpretation amongst GW2 staff

¹⁵ The economic recession, the introduction of the Work Programme, which significantly narrowed the eligible customer base, and the inability to share employment outcomes with other funding activities were commonly identified as contextual constraints on the performance of ESF projects during the 2007–2013 Structural Funds.

and more widely that GW2 was essentially a continuation of Genesis Wales, a preceding programme focussed on the removal of barriers to employment faced by female lone parents. This confusion was largely due to the transfer of staff and participants from Genesis Wales to GW2. Poor communication of the desired shift in emphasis failed to overcome this misunderstanding.¹⁶

- 4.17 The governance structure for the programme was slow to be established and inconsistent, and monitoring of the programme was particularly patchy, partly a result of the programme being widely dispersed and all 22 local authorities reporting directly to the Welsh Government. The evaluation highlighted a lack of consistency in terms of how programme eligibility criteria and outcomes had been communicated and interpreted.¹⁷
- 4.18 GW2 was, however, seen as a successful engagement project helping participants, particularly those unlikely to have come into contact with mainstream employment support services, to take their first steps towards re-engaging with the labour market.¹⁸ Nevertheless a phased closure of GW2 took place in 2013.

Employment Services in Integrated Children's Centres (ESICC)

- 4.19 The Welsh Government piloted the introduction of JCP-led advisory services into Integrated Children's Centres between 2010 and 2012. Parent Employment Advisers were tasked with working closely with Communities First Partnerships to reach those furthest from the labour market. An evaluation of the programme in 2012 identified the following findings:
- Strong relationships had been established between Jobcentre Plus (JCP), Integrated Children's Centres (ICC) and Communities First (CF) which underpinned effective joint working.
 - The addition of JCP provision to the support networks established by Communities First and ICC approaches was appreciated by participants.
 - The pilot did reach out and engage 'hard to reach' parents (although this varied between areas).

¹⁶ Evaluation of Genesis Cymru Wales 2, SQW on behalf of Welsh Government (2014)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

- Helping parents to develop a sense of control over their own careers, as well as confidence in their abilities, appeared to be instrumental and a critical element of the offer.
- Being located in the community meant that JCP staff gained increased understanding of the needs of local people and could adapt their offer accordingly.
- Challenges were encountered with access to marketing materials, IT facilities and private space in which to conduct interviews within the ICC or CF.
- It would also be useful to encourage Parent Employment Advisers to provide in-work support.
- Parent Employment Advisers who were also formally involved at the community level — sitting on ICC or CF boards, for example — reported particular benefits in terms of sharing information or establishing partnerships to tackle local issues.¹⁹

4.20 The success of this delivery model made it highly influential in the design of PaCE (explored in the following section). The pilot continued and has subsequently been incorporated within Communities for Work project areas.

Key Current Policy Interventions

4.21 Several current policy interventions were also particularly influential in the design of PaCE, as discussed below.

Lift

4.22 The Lift Programme reflects the commitment in the Welsh Government's Tackling Poverty Action Plan²⁰ to provide 5,000 training and employment opportunities to people living in workless households by the end of 2017.

¹⁹ Institute for Employment Studies. (2012) *Evaluation of Jobcentre Plus Advisory Services in Integrated Children's Centres in Communities First Areas*. Welsh Government

²⁰ Welsh Government (2014), *Building Resilient Communities: Taking Forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan Annual Report 2014*, Welsh Government

- 4.23 The Programme operates in nine delivery areas based in 12 Communities First (CF) Clusters²¹ across Wales. The first Lift delivery area became operational in January 2014 whilst the programme was formally launched in March 2014 with the Programme planned to continue until March 2018. The Programme is core funded by the Welsh Government and costs around £1.1 million per year.
- 4.24 In each delivery area, small teams of mentors have been recruited to engage working-age adults living in long-term workless households (where no one living in the household has worked for at least six months). Eligible participants access the programme voluntarily, with the mentors assessing a participant's aspirations for employment, training or education and helping them to develop personal development (action) plans to structure their move towards work. Suitable training and employment opportunities are then sourced.
- 4.25 At a local level, mentors identify training and employment opportunities. At a national level, Welsh Government departments, public bodies and others have been invited to expand their pool of employment and training opportunities that may be suitable locally for long-term workless people. These include Local Health Boards, Registered Social Landlords, and opportunities within existing Education and Skills Programmes.
- 4.26 The Lift Programme is ahead of projections for the delivery of outcomes at this stage, with 3,622 training and employment opportunities provided, including 720 people supported into employment.²²

Communities for Work

- 4.27 Communities for Work (CfW) has also secured ESF support and is co-sponsored by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). It is of larger scope and scale than PaCE but closely aligned in terms of policy and approach. The programme specifically targets people who are long term (over 12 months) unemployed, economically inactive and young people who are NEET. Participants must reside in a Communities First (CF) Cluster.

²¹ There are 52 Clusters in total covering the most deprived communities (10 per cent) in Wales.

²² Up to 31st July 2016

- 4.28 The programme is being delivered in CF areas only and is operating as a community based employment service. The programme is delivered by Employment Advisers (employed by JCP but integrated into CfW teams) and Employment Mentors (employed by the relevant CF Lead Delivery Body). There are two types of both advisors and mentors: Parent Employment Advisors (mirroring PaCE advisors), Community Employment Advisors (based on the previous Want 2 Work model), Adult Mentors (for those aged 25 or over) and Youth Mentors (for young adults under the age of 25). The mentors identify the barriers that individuals face in getting into work, agree an action plan, provide support, and offer actions and activities to help them to find work or full-time education (seen as a step towards work).
- 4.29 Individuals who participate in CfW can either be engaged through the Communities First Programme, can apply independently to join CfW, or be referred by various statutory and third-sector bodies. Participation is purely voluntary.
- 4.30 The programme also incorporates a triage process to support effective team working and case management. The triage process supports the key principles of the CfW operation by strengthening the provision to individuals by ensuring:
- a comprehensive assessment of people’s needs and barriers to employment
 - a person centred, keyworker model with the needs of individuals at its heart
 - a co-ordinated response to the needs of individuals
 - a well-defined, strongly linked network of partners
 - tailored, individually planned pathways into employment
 - participants have the support they need from all available partners
 - that caseload meetings are coordinated and there is a managed process between advisers and mentors.
- 4.31 Each Local Delivery Team, supported by a Triage Support Worker, has arrangements in place to deliver the triage process with regular triage meetings established to co-ordinate CfW at a local level.

5. The Design of the PaCE Project

Introduction

- 5.1 This section explores the theoretical design of the PaCE project and presents the theory of change. It also explores the rationale for a policy intervention of this nature.

Rationale

- 5.2 The government's concern with parental unemployment stems, in part, from the understanding that prolonged periods of unemployment and economic inactivity are associated with a range of adverse outcomes, both for parents themselves and their families. Long-term unemployment and economic inactivity have significant implications, and can potentially lead to sharp increases in material deprivation, deteriorating mental and physical well-being, poorer social support networks, and greater social exclusion.
- 5.3 At an individual level, there is a significant body of evidence to suggest that there are long-term negative effects of unemployment on subjective and objective well-being. Protracted periods of economic inactivity can contribute to higher levels of stress and depression, which can, in turn, reduce the likelihood of a person finding and sustaining employment.²³ Unemployment is also correlated with low levels of self-efficacy, the confidence in a person's own ability to achieve certain outcomes. A lack of self-efficacy can lead to an unemployed person resigning to their situation, fostering the idea that they will never get a job.
- 5.4 The Office for National Statistics reports that 15.8 per cent of households in Wales with dependent children are workless (equivalent to 87,000 households), meaning that no member of the household is in paid employment²⁴. The most common reason stated for the lack of employment amongst these households is looking after the family; 30 per cent of two-adult households and 42 per cent of lone-parent households gave this as the main reason for them being workless.²⁵

²³ Crowther et al. (2000) 'Helping people with severe mental illness to obtain work: systematic review', BMJ: **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**

²⁴ ONS, (2016), *Working and Workless Households, October to December 2015*, Labour Force Survey Household Datasets Office of National Statistics

²⁵ ONS, (2011), *Families and Households in England and Wales 2011*. Office of National Statistics

- 5.5 The National Survey of Wales found that approximately half (49 per cent) of households with dependent children need to regularly arrange childcare for their children, and half of the parents with children aged 0 to 4 years who use formal childcare find it difficult to afford.²⁶ The Department for Education (DfE) found that 17 per cent of parents of children under the age of 15 reported that their childcare arrangements had made it difficult, or impossible, to undertake paid work.²⁷
- 5.6 Lone-parent families are particularly vulnerable, and are more likely to experience child poverty regardless of whether they are in or out of work. Across the UK, for example, 43 per cent of children in lone-parent families live in poverty after housing costs have been taken into account. In contrast, 22 per cent of children in couple families live in poverty after housing costs.²⁸

Impact on Children

- 5.7 There is a considerable body of research that explores the relationship between parental unemployment and its impact on children's outcomes, including cognitive development, educational attainment, and transitions into adulthood. Research has identified a range of familial and environmental risk factors that can serve to undermine child development. This includes levels of stress experienced by the primary caregiver as a result of unemployment, household material deprivation, and the lack of access to good-quality provision, including childcare.²⁹
- 5.8 Children in workless households are at greater risk of experiencing a range of adverse developmental outcomes. This is especially important for very young children, where their early experiences deeply affect their physical, cognitive, emotional and social development.³⁰ Material deprivation, for example, can negatively impact on the nutritional intake of young children. Children who go hungry are more likely to suffer from poor concentration, low self-esteem, and fatigue, which can affect outcomes in other areas, especially learning.³¹

²⁶ Welsh Government. (2015). *National Survey for Wales, 2014-2015*. UK Data Service

²⁷ Ipsos MORI (2013) *Parents' Views and Experiences of Childcare, Research Report*. Department of Education

²⁸ Graham H. and McQuaid R. (2014) *Exploring the impacts of the UK government's welfare reforms on lone parents moving into work – literature review*. Glasgow Centre for Population Health

²⁹ Gershoff et al. (2007) 'Income is not Enough: Incorporating Material Hardship Into Models of Income Associations With Parenting and Child Development' in *Child Development*, 78:1, pp. 70:95

³⁰ Secombe (2004) "Beating the Odds" Versus "Changing the Odds": Poverty, Resilience, and Family Policy' in *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64:2, pp. 384-394

³¹ Bridgeman et al. (1998) *New Findings on Poverty and Child Health and Nutrition: Summary of a Research Briefing*, National Academy Press, Washington DC.

- 5.9 The compromised development trajectories of children may also have a profound influence on the adults that they will become. Research drawing on data from the Millennium Cohort Study, for example, found that parental worklessness was significantly associated with poorer academic attainment amongst their children. This resulted in children spending, on average, 11 per cent more time out of work from leaving full-time education to the age of 23 than those children growing up in employed households.³²

Individual-Level Constraints

- 5.10 Parents often express the conscious choice to focus on their caregiving responsibilities. Detailed qualitative research has highlighted the fact that many parents justify their decision to stay at home in order to provide the care and support that they feel their children need to develop emotionally and educationally. Staying at home is also sometimes presented as being out of parents' control in cases where children have considerable needs, such as looking after children with disabilities or conduct problems. Some parents express their decision in terms of responding to cultural expectations about the role of mothers, or of looking after the household. These factors are not always perceived by parents as a barrier to work, or as a constraint to engaging in the labour market. Rather, their decisions were often accepted as part and parcel of being a good parent. The research also found that parents' attitudes towards work were often positive. The prevailing view across both lone- and two-parent households was that it was important to work because of the personal benefits it provides and the positive example it sets to children. The key decision was **when**, rather than **if**, it was appropriate to return to work.³³ However, perceptions such as low pay and a lack of secure employment opportunities available to parents can limit the appeal of employment as a route to greater financial security.

³² Schoon et al. (2012) *Intergenerational transmission of worklessness: Evidence from the Millennium Cohort and the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England*. Department for Education

³³ See Bashir et al. (2011) *Families and work: Revisiting barriers to employment*, Department for Work and Pensions.

5.11 Beyond attitudes towards parenting and work, there are further individual-level factors that can shape engagement. For example, an individual may lack the skills, qualifications, experience or confidence for the jobs that are available. It can be more difficult for parents to address these issues. Parents may face a very specific set of circumstances and constraints that can undermine their ability to engage in education or training provision. Research has consistently identified common barriers faced by many prospective parents, including the way in which education and training courses are provided, and the financial support available to allow them to study.³⁴ Financial hardship is a common feature among student parents, as their caring responsibilities often mean that they are unable to take on paid employment to supplement their income.

Structural Barriers

5.12 Beyond individual-level factors, there are also broader contextual or structural factors that may influence parents' engagement with the labour market. This includes local resources available to parents, such as flexible and secure employment opportunities within easy reach, as well as the availability of good-quality, affordable childcare within the communities in which they live. In the absence of informal support networks, including the wider family, parents may need to rely solely on childcare provision locally. This can limit access to part-time work or study opportunities in order to fit around nursery times. Availability, accessibility and cost remain critical issues, especially around periods of transition. There are often time lags between gaining employment and receiving a first pay cheque, which can hinder parents' access to childcare opportunities.

Parental Employment Outcomes

5.13 Intuitively, the availability of affordable childcare should increase the potential for parents, and particularly lone parents who bear the weight of childcare responsibilities, to participate in paid employment. If childcare is not available or if the costs of childcare outweigh the gains from employment, a family member will need to care for the child.

³⁴ For a comprehensive summary of the individual barriers facing young parents, see Dench et al. (2007) *Young Mothers Not in Learning: a Qualitative Study of Barriers and Attitudes*, IES Report 439, London: Institute for Employment Studies: <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/439.pdf>

- 5.14 This intuition to some extent seems to be borne out when looking at international data. A 2008 paper comparing Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Denmark and the UK found that the availability of childcare significantly increases the probability of maternal employment³⁵ (Del Boca et al, 2008). This effect is greater for women with lower qualifications who are less likely to work than those with higher qualifications. Enhancements to existing childcare provision (in isolation of associated employment support) however estimate diminishing returns with recent research in Wales forecasting a minimal positive effect (0.1 percentage point increase in maternal employment with a slight reduction in poverty levels³⁶) were the Welsh Government to offer 20 additional hours of free childcare to three-four year olds.³⁷
- 5.15 The availability of high quality part-time work also increases the probability of employment, but part-time work in general, which may be characterised by insecure and temporary contracts, decreases the probability of maternal employment.

Theory of Change and Logic Model for PaCE

- 5.16 The evidence outlined in the rationale, combined with the policy context, evidence and experience of recent policy interventions from the previous section, has heavily influenced the underlying theory or logic associated with the PaCE project. This has been summarised within the logic model presented overleaf.
- 5.17 A logic model is a graphical depiction of an intervention (be it a programme or project) and is useful for succinctly describing its key components and interacting relationships. The key components typically comprise the project's inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts³⁸.
- 5.18 A theory of change seeks to describe and illustrate how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context, and, in this case, in response to a policy intervention (PaCE). It identifies a series of goals associated with the desired change and then maps the activities, the assumptions and the associated causal processes that theoretically would lead to the achievement of the identified goals.

³⁵ Del Boca, D., Pasqua, S. and Pronzato, C. (2008) *Motherhood and Market Work Decisions in Institutional Context: a European perspective*, Dondena Working Paper No 11

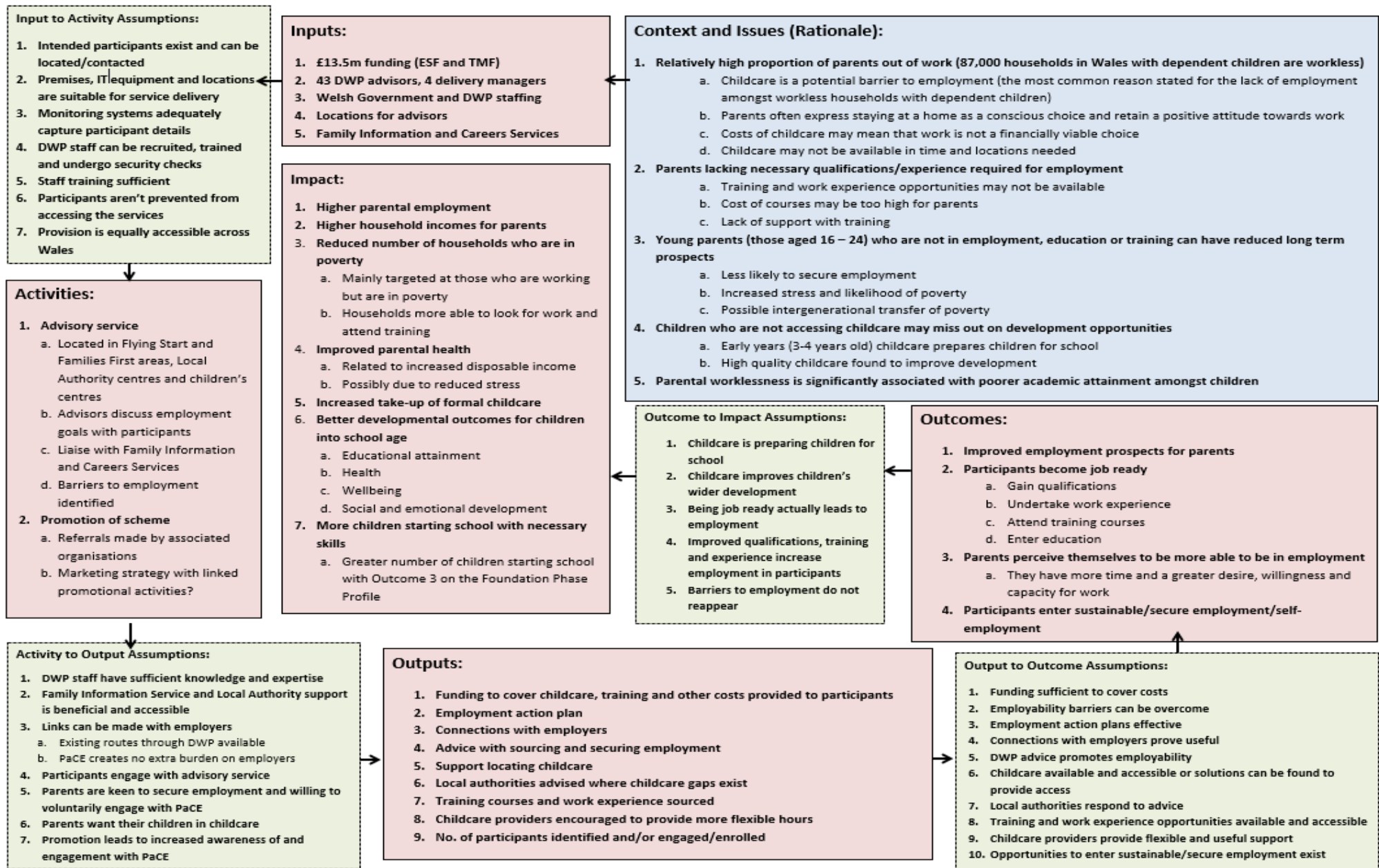
³⁶ Where the "work requirement" approach is applied to the offer of 20 additional hours (i.e. that the lone parent or both parents in a couple must earn the equivalent of at least 16 hours a week at the National Living Wage

³⁷ Frontier Economics (2016) *Childcare Policy Options for Wales*, Public Policy Institute for Wales

³⁸ HM Treasury. (2011) *The Magenta Book: Guidance for Evaluation*

- 5.19 For the purposes of this report, the logic model and the theory of change have been combined into a single illustration.³⁹
- 5.20 Within the evaluation, particular focus is placed on testing the veracity of the assumptions that underpin the theory of change. As a process evaluation, emphasis is placed on exploring **how** an intervention is delivered and the input, activity and output (alongside the causal processes associated with the transition from one stage to the next) are the primary focal areas of the theory of change for this research.
- 5.21 The next section explores the findings arising from the research undertaken, and tests the assumptions identified in the theory of change.

³⁹ Welsh Government (adapted by Wavehill)



Project Design

- 5.22 The consideration of the design of the PaCE project has been drawn from a combination of desk-based research and the findings of interviews with those involved in the design of the project.
- 5.23 As outlined in the previous section, experience of previous policy interventions (including GW2 and ESICC) heavily influenced the design of PaCE.
- The need for a streamlined governance structure that operates at a regional level as opposed to a local authority level.
 - The importance of outreach provision in target communities for both the engagement of target groups and for understanding their needs.
 - Ensuring that support is individualised to parent needs with bespoke interventions, including, where necessary, the provision of funds to pay for childcare, transport and other identified barriers and training provision.
 - The need for advisers to work closely with key partnerships, Local Authority Family Information Services (FIS), and other key organisations within their respective communities to ensure the effective integration of service provision and to promote referrals to and from PaCE.
 - The need for clarity of messages about the aims of the support.
- 5.24 During the development of PaCE, Welsh Government officials engaged with local authorities working on a similar initiative in west Wales. The aspirations for both initiatives were similar; however the plans in west Wales incorporated additional staffing resources to link the Families First and Flying Start services to the PaCE Advisers. It was reported that not all local authorities felt that this was needed and, therefore, this additional element was excluded from the design of PaCE. A workshop was held in February 2015 with those local authorities who were designing a similar initiative, with a view to drawing on their experience in the design of PaCE and, in doing so, to inform how PaCE could operate across the three local authority areas (phase 1).

- 5.25 The project expects to deliver the ESF programme-related engagement and employment outcomes set out in table 5.1 (outcomes for the project identified within the logic model). It is notable that the conversion rate of participant engagement into employment is similar to that targeted (but ultimately not achieved) for GW2. A number of elements of the model have changed from that established through GW2 with different funding, staffing and staffing structures, referral sources (predominantly targeting those already engaged with other services such as Families First and Flying Start) and a greater clarity of message to participants to ensure they understand that PaCE is about preparing for and moving into work. Collectively this depicts a tangible shift in approach that draws closely on lessons learnt and best practice from previous initiatives, thereby increasing the chances of meeting the outcome targets described in table 5.1.
- 5.26 The conversion rate in the table below calculates the proportion of those engaged (Input 1) who are expected to achieve one of the outcomes listed in the table. Outcomes 2, 3, 4 and 6 are all exit outcomes which can be captured within 4 weeks of the participant exiting PaCE.

Table 5.1: Expected Outcomes for PaCE over the First Three Years⁴⁰

Indicator	Conversion Rate*	Number
Output		
1. Total engagements.	n/a	7,884
Outcome		
2. Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) and unemployed or economically inactive (aged 16-24), not in education or training, who have complex barriers to employment, entering employment (including self-employment) upon leaving.	20%	1,577
3. Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment, engaged in job search upon leaving.	25%	1,611
4. Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) and unemployed or economically inactive (aged 16-24), not in education or training, who have complex barriers to employment, gaining a qualification or work-relevant certification upon leaving.	25%	1,971
5. Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) who have complex barriers to employment, increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity.	30%	1,933
6. Unemployed or economically inactive (aged 16-24), not in education or training, into education or training upon leaving	30%	432

Indicator	Conversion	Number ⁴¹
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⁴⁰ PaCE (Parents, Childcare & Employment) West Wales and the Valley Business Plan, version 1.2, Welsh Government (July 2015)

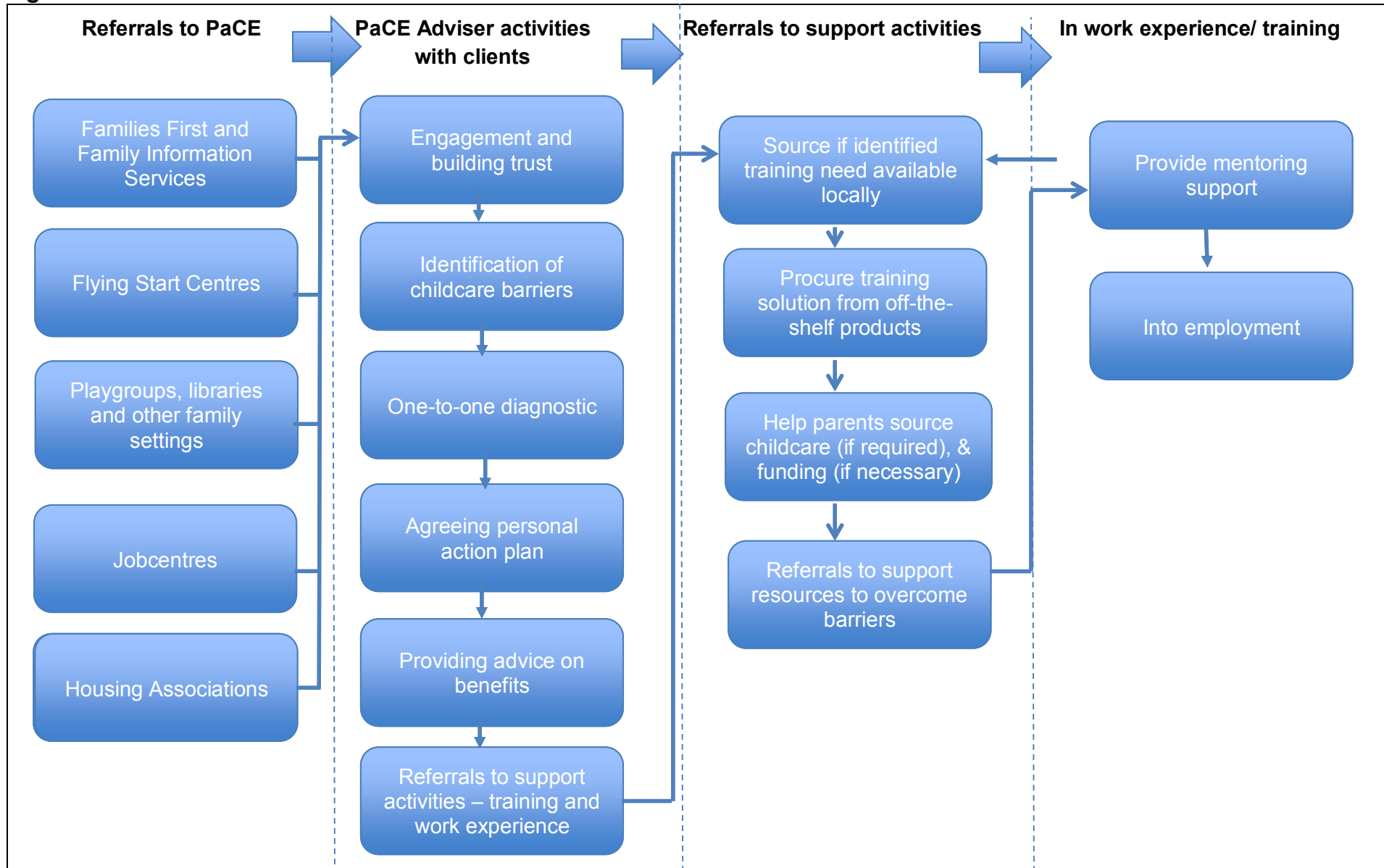
	Rate*	
Longer Term Outcome (administered through WEFO's Participant Survey)		
7. Economically inactive (aged 25 and over) and unemployed or economically inactive (aged 16-24), not in education or training, who have complex barriers to employment (including self-employment) 6 months after leaving.	25%	1,971

*The percentage of total engagements achieving this outcome.

- 5.27 Some outcomes are mutually exclusive, for example a job entry outcome (outcome 2) cannot be claimed with outcome 3 (job search upon leaving) for the same participant. However, the achievement of a qualification (outcome 4), a completed work placement (outcome 5) and a job entry (outcome 2) can all be claimed for one participant as this could reflect a typical customer journey.
- 5.28 Outcome 7 is administered by WEFO and will be captured (and analysed) through a separately commissioned ESF Participants Survey. It is not therefore something that PaCE will directly capture.
- 5.29 An associated overview of the key processes involved in the delivery of PaCE are illustrated by the graphic below. The process map is comprehensive in its theory; however, implementation elements of these processes are being used at a local level to varying degrees. The extent to which these processes are being fulfilled is explored later within this section.

⁴¹ These targets relate to West Wales and the Valleys and the Over 25 cohort only.

Figure 5.1 Process Overview – PaCE



Governance/Staffing Structure

Project Management

- 5.30 Within the Welsh Government, PaCE is managed by the Senior Operations Manager and supported by the three PaCE Account Managers, who each have a geographical region of responsibility. The Account Managers oversee the administration and operation of PaCE in each geographic area and form part of the monitoring team. An additional post provides administrative support to the team whilst the project also benefits from a dedicated Governance and Finance team.
- 5.31 Stakeholders generally welcomed the model of governance provided by the Welsh Government, although some were confused as to the role of Account Managers and how they differed from the Operational Managers and PaCE Advisers described below.
- 5.32 Within the DWP, the PaCE team is comprised of a Finance and Compliance Team that ensures DWP complies with the Welsh Government and ESF audit requirements. There are four full-time equivalent Delivery Managers who directly line manage the PaCE Advisers. The Delivery Managers have geographical areas of responsibility and are also tasked with building partnerships with local stakeholders.

Strategic Board

- 5.33 The PaCE project is overseen by a Strategic Board (which also act as the board for CfW). It is chaired alternately by the Deputy Director of the Communities Division and the Deputy Director of the Childcare and Play Division in the Welsh Government, with other senior representatives from other Welsh Government Departments, DWP, Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

PaCE Advisers

- 5.34 The DWP was responsible for the employment of 43 Parent Employment Advisers (PaCE Advisers) for PaCE. The geographical distribution of PaCE Advisers was informed by several indicators.
- The proportion of the population in each local authority area that reside outside of Communities First Clusters.
 - The numbers of lone parents residing in each local authority area.⁴²
 - The geography of a local authority area – specifically in relation to the density of population and the transport infrastructure.
- 5.35 The prevalence of Communities First Clusters in Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent and the limited population residing outside of these areas led to the decision that these areas could be served by PaCE Advisers of neighbouring authority areas.
- 5.36 It was expected that half of the PaCE Advisers appointed to PaCE would be externally recruited by the DWP, with the remainder internally transferred from within the DWP. However, over 80 per cent of PaCE Advisers have been externally recruited to the project, which has necessitated a greater demand on training than anticipated. The generic adviser routeway training was refined and tailored to meet the needs of the newly appointed PaCE advisers retaining a skills-based intensive approach whilst enabling a slight reduction in course length.
- 5.37 The recruitment process coincided with a UK-wide restriction on DWP recruitment, thereby necessitating the submission of a business case to the minister to justify the recruitment exercise, leading to delays in appointment. The recruitment process itself was staggered by the DWP, influenced in part by the phasing approach to the delivery of PaCE. Recruitment of PaCE Advisers continued into January 2016 and by May 2016, a small number of PaCE Adviser posts remained unfilled. This delay influenced the roll-out of Phase 2, which was planned for October 2015 but ultimately commenced in February 2016.

⁴² With additional estimates of the number of economically inactive lone parents and the number of economically inactive people that are carers for the home or family

5.38 Previous evaluations of similar policy interventions to PaCE had identified the importance associated with PaCE Advisers being based (or having the ability to base themselves) within the communities they serve. It was felt that this approach to delivery enabled the provision of services in familiar accessible settings distinct from government buildings. It was therefore expected that most PaCE Advisers would be based in Flying Start areas, utilising Families First, Family Information Services, and other family-based provision. There was a deliberate move to avoid locating PaCE Advisers within Jobcentres to emphasise that the PaCE offer is distinct from mainstream welfare provision.

PaCE Adviser Role

5.39 The business plan attributes the following functions to the PaCE Advisers' role:

- Offering specialist advice and guidance through initial one-to-one diagnostics and identifying how to address the participants' needs and complex barriers to employment.
- Agreeing Individual Personalised Action Plans.
- Scoping and sourcing solutions to overcoming childcare barriers according to the needs of the parent and their child to facilitate their route into work.
- Providing advice on benefits through "Better-off Calculations".
- Providing support for accessing sustainable employment, aligning skills and matching aspirations to labour market opportunities.
- Identifying the best solutions for those parents that are not work-ready and who require training.
- Providing a coordination service to access, source and organise childcare, work experience and skills provision in accordance with the agreed Individual Personal Action Plans.
- Providing mentoring to those who start work experience and training to ensure that participants remain on track to achieve their goals.
- Fostering partnership working with key workers, including Family Support Teams (including Family Information Services) and programmes such as Flying Start and Families First, to aid referral processes.

- Coordinating and collating all paperwork for the ESF audit trail.⁴³

5.40 There remains some nervousness, particularly amongst local authority representatives, that the PaCE Advisers may not be able to offer the level of mentoring that they perceive the client groups may require. This nervousness is particularly evident amongst those stakeholders who had direct experience of GW2 and felt that the emphasis on mentoring was a critical aspect of that model.

Dedicated Funding

5.41 The PaCE Advisers also have access to three forms of dedicated provision to assist them in delivering support and overcoming participant barriers.

- PaCE training provision for participants, procured by the Welsh Government, for training provision that is not freely available.
- Funding (approved by PaCE Account Managers) to meet the costs of childcare provision (a 'childcare barriers fund') whilst a participant attends training and/or work experience opportunities.
- A barriers fund which provides financial support to overcome barriers to employment, which could include:
 - funding for clothing for interviews or work
 - tools (carpentry equipment for example) to start work
 - travel costs to/from training or work.⁴⁴

Local Authorities

5.42 Local authorities are identified as key delivery partners within the business plan, influencing the operational approach of PaCE within their geographical area and acting as a key referral route to PaCE Advisers. Local Authority Family Information Services are also tasked with identifying which childcare providers offer a flexible service, ensuring that the participant parent is informed of that provision.

⁴³ Adapted from Welsh Government (July 2015) *PaCE (Parents, Childcare & Employment) West Wales and the Valleys Business Plan, version 1.2*, [Unpublished].

⁴⁴ Ibid.

5.43 The business plan also outlines that the role of local authorities would include:

- suggesting how and where the PaCE Advisers could be based and integrated in or around Flying Start areas and with Families First provision
- helping the PaCE Adviser to become integrated in the community-based/family support teams (based on the ESICC model)
- offering accommodation space for PaCE Advisers to meet participants
- helping the PaCE Adviser to understand the local childcare provision and help identify childcare solutions for parents with childcare barriers
- meeting regularly with the DWP and Welsh Government at a local and regional level to share best practice and review progress.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Ibid.

6. Findings

6.1 This section summarises the experience of PaCE since it launched in 2015. It presents the findings of the primary research with the various stakeholders (DWP, Welsh Government, local authority representatives, and PaCE Advisers) engaged in the research and describes:

- the launch of the project
- the locations where the project is being delivered
- the nature of interaction between the various staff managing and delivery PaCE
- the marketing and promotion of PaCE
- the activities and processes associated with delivering PaCE.

Project Implementation – Project Launch

6.2 Phase 1 of PaCE commenced in July 2015. At the time some of the key elements likely to underpin the success of the project were not in place, including:

- **processes for administering the Barrier Fund**
- **processes for administering the Childcare Barriers Fund** – the lack of an internal process for the award of childcare funding limited the extent to which the Welsh Government was able to approve applications (DWP provided resources for the fund between July 2015 and February 2016). The Welsh Government childcare funding process was approved and launched in February 2016
- **PaCE Training Provision** to fund bespoke training provision for participants, where free provision was not available, took longer than expected to procure. The PaCE training provision became available in April 2016; however, prior to this date, PaCE Advisers had to rely on existing free training provision only.

6.3 This led to some stakeholders describing the project as “an aeroplane built in flight”. For these reasons, and due to the fact that the project initially commenced in three local authorities, the PaCE project’s launch was low-key in nature.

Location

- 6.4 Not all PaCE Advisers have been able to secure desk space within their communities. In some areas the facilities were either full, inappropriate (being of temporary construction) or of insufficient scale to lend themselves to the provision of desk space (either with a permanent desk or for hot-desking) for PaCE Advisers. Flying Start centres are also primarily based in Communities First areas and some partners felt that this could heighten the potential for confusion amongst participants and partner service providers (with parents who reside within Communities First Cluster areas being eligible for Communities for Work instead of PaCE).
- 6.5 Within the Phase 1 areas DWP Operations Managers reported that PaCE Advisers had tended to base themselves within a Jobcentre for at least two days per week to deal with the administrative requirements and to identify potential referrals from colleagues at the centres. The remainder of the week was typically spent engaging with participants via Families First services, in Flying Start centres or in community settings such as community cafes.
- 6.6 While the community setting environments offer advantages, in that they are 'comfortable' and established spaces, some PaCE Advisers and PaCE Adviser Managers reported that the pool of potential participants in these settings is somewhat limited, with a relatively static group of parents within family centres when compared to the churn of individuals passing through the Jobcentre. In several cases, PaCE staff have arrangements with the Jobcentre that allow them to identify and meet with all clients who are eligible for PaCE, which reported to be an effective mechanism for reaching a wide number of participants and can enable a 'warm handover' from Work Coaches within the centre.
- 6.7 Other locations are also used by PaCE Advisers to engage with parents, such as libraries, schools, play groups, or within voluntary service settings such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. Delivery staff from these areas still report that the Jobcentre is a key route to engaging participants.
- 6.8 A further challenge reported by PaCE Advisers is the IT infrastructure in community settings. There are security restrictions that mean that they are typically unable to access DWP systems in a remote location and securing a good broadband connection or even a mobile phone signal can be problematic in some (particularly rural) locations.

Staff Interaction – Governance and Management

DWP and Welsh Government

- 6.9 At a strategic level, Welsh Government and DWP representatives believed PaCE provided further opportunity and evidence of a strengthening relationship between the two organisations (generally local authority representatives and PaCE Advisers did not offer views on the relationship between the DWP and Welsh Government). Several reported that the relationship is likely to have been aided by the background of the Welsh Government project manager at PaCE, who was previously a DWP employee and, consequently, has strong links with key staff there and has direct experience of DWP systems and processes.

Local Authority Partners

- 6.10 Local authority representatives (particularly those involved in Phase 1 of the project) welcomed their engagement and involvement in the design of PaCE. However, it was a consistently held view that the frequency of communication had dropped since the launch of PaCE and led to some local authorities being unclear as to their roles and responsibilities within the project.
- 6.11 One representative suggested that a more formal agreement, such as a memorandum of understanding⁴⁶, would aid the understanding of their role as a partner. The desk research identified that this was proposed within the project Business Plan.

PaCE Advisers

- 6.12 PaCE Advisers described mostly positive relationships with their line managers, who are readily available by phone and are kept informed of the whereabouts of their staff on a daily basis.
- 6.13 The DWP Operations Managers typically offer a rapid response to any queries from PaCE Advisers, which was widely welcomed as this had a minimal impact on service delivery, although some PaCE Advisers felt that where a query was passed on to the Welsh Government it was unlikely to elicit such a rapid response, which could, at times, delay service provision.

⁴⁶ A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a formal agreement between two or more parties. Companies and organisations can use MOUs to establish official partnerships. MOUs are not legally binding but they carry a degree of seriousness and mutual respect.

Staff interaction – Service Delivery

The Alignment of Service Provision

- 6.14 Respondents from most local authority areas report that PaCE is well aligned with existing provision and is serving to fill existing gaps in service provision. The fact that Communities First Clusters are ineligible for PaCE has aided this avoidance of service duplication or overlap, with the majority of non-Communities First areas considered by local authority representatives to have a gap in provision of this nature. The process of referral remains a concern in a minority of local authority areas, with one local authority representative suggesting that an illustrative process model may help to overcome the issue.
- 6.15 Relationships between PaCE Advisers, Families First teams, and other providers are also strengthening in most areas, with increasingly frequent communication as local areas become familiar with the PaCE Adviser. The majority of PaCE Advisers are comfortable in receiving referrals from other programmes and referring individuals to other programmes in cases where they do not meet PaCE criteria.
- 6.16 Communication and effective networking are widely seen by PaCE Advisers as essential to filling in the gaps in current provision without duplicating existing services. For example, in some areas, PaCE Advisers have shadowed Family Information Services personnel in their meetings to build networks and partnerships. In other areas, Health Visitors have introduced PaCE Advisers to parents and childcare staff to heighten awareness and referral numbers.

“The PaCE advisers, when they first started, shadowed our outreach officers at different settings, like baby groups, toddler groups, etc., and got to know the crucial intermediaries and all those people out in the community, so they were able to tell people about PaCE. Also, because they were with FIS outreach workers who are already known in the community, I think this helped them get an ‘in’ straight away.”

[Local authority representative]

6.17 PaCE Advisers also felt that the flexibility of the operational model has had a positive effect on networking activities: *“It’s the fluidity between the organisations that has made it easier for us to engage with relevant applicants... Networking works really well.”*

“The outreach and networking we have done [has worked best for engagement of participants]. Because there has been no structure in place and a general lack of referrals, we have just had to get ourselves out there.” [PaCE Adviser]

6.18 Some locations where the most positive perspectives (from local authority representatives) were offered on service alignment described the introduction of a triage model. In these areas, Family Information Services undertook the triage, referring to PaCE if childcare appeared to be the main barrier or referring to other service provision if the barriers centred on other issues, including housing, domestic violence, schooling, etc.

Understanding of PaCE

6.19 PaCE Advisers describe PaCE as an employability project specifically for parents whose main barrier to work is childcare. The scheme is widely viewed as a *“stepping stone to employment”* by PaCE Advisers and, consequently, there are some concerns amongst the Advisers about the deliverability of the job entry outcomes (discussed in greater depth later within this section). This perspective closely reflects the synopsis of the project outlined by Welsh Government:

“The Operation will help economically inactive parents...into sustainable work, where childcare is their main barrier. The operation aims to provide solutions to overcome their childcare barriers to enable the parent to prepare for and access employment opportunities. Parents will receive individualised help via a Parent Employment Adviser in their local community.”⁴⁷

6.20 PaCE Advisers also emphasised the voluntary nature of the project as a positive element of the PaCE model, as it sets it apart from Jobcentre provision or other mandatory programmes where non-participation can affect participants’ benefits.

⁴⁷ Welsh Government (2015) *Logic Table for Proposed EU Operations – Parents, Childcare and Employment (PaCE), Synopsis*, [unpublished]. A similar statement has been provided for the Under 25’s through the Priority 3 Funding.

- 6.21 Some PaCE Advisers expressed frustration at what they have perceived to be “*poor internal guidance*” associated with PaCE processes (although it is understood that an Operational Guidance document was provided to staff) and a lack of initial structure. This is believed to have had ramifications for PaCE Advisers’ understanding of the project, which, coupled with the low-key launch and lack of market/promotional materials, is widely perceived to have undermined levels of understanding amongst the local authorities.
- 6.22 Whilst PaCE Advisers have participated in an extensive programme of training as part of their recruitment, a desire for an induction prior to commencing project delivery has emerged as a theme from consultations with PaCE Advisers. Furthermore, PaCE Advisers have raised concerns that colleagues may not be fully cognisant of current benefits legislation, with associated discrepancies in the PaCE Advisers’ understanding of the intended purpose of the childcare budget. It is felt that standardised training on legislation would be well received within an induction.
- 6.23 PaCE Advisers also requested training, or guidance, on locally available training provision for participants. This was considered particularly useful, given the initial absence of a training budget, as a better understanding of local availability would help to maximise the potential to broker an appropriate training solution for participants from existing provision within their local area.

Marketing and Promotion of PaCE

- 6.24 PaCE was intentionally launched “softly” because a full model was not in place. Since its launch, limited marketing at the time of the research had resulted in local authority representatives, PaCE Advisers and DWP managers reporting low levels of awareness and some misunderstanding of the project.
- 6.25 A majority of PaCE Advisers and local authority representatives interviewed reported concerns about the quality and variety of marketing and promotional materials. At the time of the research, the promotional materials available to advisers were widely felt to be not fit for purpose. In some instances, advisers, without access to printers, have had to rely on electronic versions, or make photocopies. A lack of material has led to some advisers devising their own, and those who have created their own are reporting greater success in engaging referrals than they previously had achieved. However, with a lack of central control of marketing materials, there is an increased risk of mixed messages.

“Marketing is very poor. Black-and-white photocopies – doesn’t look professional. Marketing has been cold, DWP corporate and aggressive-looking... We don’t want people tying us to the Jobcentre and thinking they can’t trust us for fear of being mandated.” [PaCE Adviser]

- 6.26 The lack of sufficient promotional material may also have had an influence on the level of engagement via the Jobcentre. Some PaCE Advisers expressed concerns that the lack of promotional material, compounded by the scheme’s absence online, is affecting their legitimacy in the eyes of the public. The materials that PaCE Advisers most commonly requested — branded business cards and pop-up stands for fairs — reflect these concerns: *“...they need to see we’re legitimate... it’s a bit suspicious, especially as we’re not online and so can’t be checked.”*

Referral and Engagement of Participants

- 6.27 Patterns of engagement vary, depending on location. Most PaCE Advisers reported relying heavily upon referrals via Jobcentre work coaches, with the caseload of some PaCE Advisers being almost entirely made up of those referred from the local Jobcentre. This is reflected by the responses of participants interviewed for the evaluation (see Section 6). The resources offered by Jobcentres are used in various ways to guide the volume and eligibility of referrals. Some advisers use the Jobcentre’s LMS system to identify potential, eligible clients for the service, whilst others review Work Coach diaries to identify eligible candidates for support, and to provide rapid ‘better-off in work’ calculations.
- 6.28 PaCE has been promoted to Work Coaches within Jobcentres and PaCE Advisers receive referrals through them, despite the majority of PaCE Advisers avoiding targeting potential clients within Jobcentres: *“I never approach them [potential participants] in the Jobcentre; we’re encouraged to go out into the community... although I do get referrals from them.”* Quality (with regard to eligibility) and quantity of referrals often depend on how strong the ties are with an adviser’s local Jobcentre.

6.29 Most areas are also drawing effectively on Flying Start, Family Information Services and Families First as a route to engagement (as anticipated within the operational model), particularly so within urban areas where the volume of attendees within Flying Start centres is of a sufficient scale. Equally, some PaCE Advisers are managing to engage with other family settings (playgroups, libraries, etc.); however, these again are more readily accessible in urban areas where the groups tend to benefit from a larger volume and higher rate of churn than those in rural areas. Consequently, the values assigned to these routes to recruitment and engagement vary significantly from one geographical area to the next.

“The biggest challenge is the fact that we are so rural, so I am not able to see as many potential clients...The other day, I met someone in [place name removed], which is 1 hour away, then I drove to [place name removed], which is a two-hour drive, to meet another client, and then had to drive back to [first place] again in the afternoon because another referral had come in! Also, if a client is further away than 40 miles and a pool car is not available, then I have to hire a car.” [PaCE Adviser]

6.30 At the time of the research, PaCE Advisers reported receiving mostly appropriate (eligible) referrals, but some had experienced larger volumes of ineligible referrals prior to this. To limit the number of ineligible referrals received, advisers took steps to raise awareness amongst referral organisations of the eligibility criteria. For example, one PaCE Adviser gave presentations to partner organisations on eligibility criteria, while another phoned up referrers after being sent an ineligible individual to re-emphasise the conditions. Neither had received inappropriate referrals since.

6.31 PaCE Advisers reported wide variations in the nature/situation of eligible participants. Participants entering the project were at different stages with regard to ‘work-readiness’ and their own immediate aspirations and goals. A flexible responsive offer tailored to individual needs and led by the client is critical in this regard, and the flexibility of PaCE to respond to these needs is widely welcomed.

- 6.32 PaCE is ‘sold’ cautiously to potential participants; offers are likely to be described in low-key terms first, with PaCE Advisers placing the emphasis on its voluntary, tailored, one-to-one approach delivered at the client’s pace. In order to stress the differences between this approach and that of JCP, some PaCE Advisers adopt informal dress and tone when engaging with clients.

Barriers to Enrolment and Engagement

- 6.33 Whilst PaCE is focussed on engaging out of work parents with childcare as their main barrier to work-related training or employment, the majority of PaCE Advisers consulted felt that participants were also constrained by other barriers to accessing the labour market. For example, a large proportion of PaCE participants have never worked because they have been raising children; for this reason, they cite a lack of employability skills and behaviours, qualifications and training, and work experience, which puts them at a greater distance from the job market.
- 6.34 Nearly all PaCE Advisers mentioned participants’ lack of confidence and low self-belief, alongside a suite of wider factors, such as poor mental health, emotional difficulties or a chaotic family life. The lack of confidence identified has prioritised building trust with PaCE Advisers to enable the development of productive relationships.
- 6.35 Other issues identified by PaCE Advisers include poor IT skills, such as the inability of some to use email, the lack of soft skills and negative attitudes towards employment. Multiple barriers exist that childcare funding alone cannot address, thereby justifying the provision of additional resources for training and to overcome other situational barriers.

Financial Support – Childcare

- 6.36 While PaCE Advisers identified funding for childcare as the unique selling point of the project, at the time of the research, only three advisers out of the 14 interviewed had accessed the budget.
- 6.37 Advisers widely perceive accessing the PaCE-designated childcare funding as a ‘last resort’, having been encouraged through project guidance to access other sources of funding first. The lack of funding for training within the early stages of PaCE is also likely to have curtailed levels of demand: “*One of the most obvious reasons you might want childcare would be for training but we are nine months in and we still haven’t had the budget.*”

6.38 There is confusion amongst PaCE Advisers as to how participants qualify for childcare funding. The PaCE childcare budget is intended for parents needing childcare while accessing training or employment opportunities, as opposed to a regular arrangement for those in sustained employment. However, not all PaCE Advisers demonstrated a full understanding of how funding is allocated. For example:

“We will at some point use it. I think when I’m working with someone who’s got into work or are in a regular thing that’s when the childcare budget kicks in.” [PaCE Adviser]

6.39 One adviser suggested that the confusion may lie in poor marketing:

“I think it’s a bit misleading in the way the [project] is advertised... on the flyer it says, ‘Are you a parent out of work? Childcare stopping you accessing work or training?’ I think it’s misleading because we can’t actually pay for childcare for when they go to work.” [PaCE Adviser]

6.40 The project budget for childcare funding is significant (with £7.2m allocated to childcare provision). Whilst it is difficult to judge levels of demand, based on these findings it would appear unlikely that the entire allocated resource will be used within the lifetime of the project without changes to the delivery of PaCE.

6.41 Other factors influencing demand for the budget would, once again, appear to relate to rurality, with PaCE Advisers in rural areas in particular identifying virtually non-existent evening or weekend provision. More widely, the utilisation of childcare provision would often be ad hoc and short-term. Some childcare providers are unable to offer this level of flexibility.

“The ad hoc nature of when childcare is needed can be a problem. We’re coming across some nurseries who need the children to be attending more regularly than a one-off.” [PaCE Adviser]

Financial Support – Procured Training and Barrier Fund

- 6.42 Flexible resources are available (described as a “barrier fund”) to purchase specific items, e.g.:
- suitable clothing for job interviews or to start employment
 - transport to training or employment opportunities
 - essential tools to start work.
- 6.43 In addition, where PaCE Advisers are unable to identify appropriate training for participants in their locality which is free, they can refer participants to ACT training who have been awarded a contract to deliver training to PaCE and CfW participants.
- 6.44 As outlined earlier within this section, there were delays in the implementation of these elements.
- 6.45 The lack of a PaCE training offer (it was subsequently launched in April 2016) was also perceived by stakeholders and PaCE Advisers to have impacted on the delivery of PaCE. PaCE Advisers have been reliant upon identifying existing provision that is free and accessible to the participant.
- 6.46 Perceptions of the availability of training provision varied widely; some advisers cited access to a variety of free provision, while others felt that there was nothing available to offer participants. This was typically reflective of the rurality of a location with rural areas most often concerned about insufficient accessible training provision. To address this, some PaCE Advisers have forged links with local colleges to see whether tailored short courses can be offered.

Identifying Suitable Employment and Volunteering Opportunities

- 6.47 Despite the close links that PaCE Advisers have with local Jobcentres, sourcing sustainable employment opportunities for participating parents is widely viewed by PaCE Advisers as a challenge. Opportunities identified by PaCE Advisers are often deemed to be inappropriate due to the seasonality of work, the use of zero-hour contracts (which leave some parents unable to meet the threshold of 16 hours a week for Income Support), or difficult shift patterns to work around childcare. There is also a perceived general lack of employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas.

- 6.48 PaCE Advisers are generally positive about the availability and variety of volunteering opportunities; however, they note that encouraging participants to engage can sometimes present difficulties due to the perceived lack of tangible return (in terms of wages or qualifications). Advisers are also enthusiastic about the merits of volunteering itself. PaCE Advisers often identify volunteering vacancies through their ties established in the community.
- 6.49 Opportunities for work experience vary by region, and more so than with volunteering. PaCE Advisers who perceived work experience as readily available tended to receive notification of opportunities through their Jobcentre ties.

Monitoring

- 6.50 Significant monitoring and administrative requirements are associated with the delivery of PaCE by those involved in its management and delivery. An initial review of monitoring undertaken by the Welsh Government identified some gaps in the evidence collated and collected, and illustrated the need for regular reviews of data capture processes.
- 6.51 Despite the provision of operational guidance⁴⁸, amongst PaCE Advisers there was some confusion as to what evidence is required and how they should be entering this into the monitoring system. This suggests the need for additional training and guidance on monitoring processes.

“I’ve found it difficult to get a clear-cut answer with regards to providing evidence... knowing exactly what’s expected and if the information provided is OK to claim an output.” [PaCE Adviser]

- 6.52 Obtaining supporting evidence from participants presents difficulties; some PaCE Advisers feel that asking for evidence in general is enough to discourage potential clients from engaging by failing to take into account the time and technological constraints that they might face.

“I’ll explain that I need them to bring ID but guaranteed 50 per cent of them will turn up without it... Sometimes getting out of the house is a bigger thing than remembering to bring something with them, so it can be a bit of an issue.” [PaCE Adviser]

⁴⁸ Parents, Childcare and Employment Programme, Operational Guidance Version 2 (May 2016)

6.53 The difficulties in obtaining supporting evidence from participants are compounded by the stringency of evidence requirements in order to claim an output — one adviser described this as “[having to] jump through hoops to prove outcomes”. This was particularly challenging when attempting to obtain the necessary evidence from an employer: “We were told initially to get evidence from the employer, but a lot of employers don’t like dealing with DWP once they’ve taken someone on.”⁴⁹ Requirements were perceived by PaCE Advisers as unclear and complex.

“For the first person they wouldn’t accept certain things, such as an email confirmation that they’d started their job. We provided a payslip but because it didn’t have a date we couldn’t use that and they didn’t have a written contract. Because of this we haven’t been able to count this person as an outcome despite the fact that they’ve found employment.” [PaCE Adviser]

Performance

6.54 Whilst the project has been operating for nine months it has adopted a phased approach (with Phase 1 commencing in July 2015 and Phase 2 in October 2015). It does not yet have a full complement of PaCE Advisers but has now secured all elements of the service package. This has acted as a constraint on service delivery and the targets associated with PaCE are widely seen as particularly challenging, given the lack of full training provision available.

6.55 The majority of PaCE Advisers feel that the target of six enrolments per month is too high. There are also particular concerns in relation to the expected rate of conversion of participants’ employment outcomes and the associated requirements to meet these. There is a sense that the focus on job targets fails to acknowledge the distance from the labour market of PaCE participants and the associated distance that may be travelled towards employment without an employment outcome being achieved. An associated fear is that targets may influence behaviour, leading to participants being rushed into potentially inappropriate employment.

⁴⁹ WEFO has now confirmed that self-declaration of employment outcomes is sufficient

- 6.56 The difficulties in proving outcomes heighten the perceived challenges of meeting the targets, and some PaCE Advisers feel that the project success/conversion rate is not being accurately represented as a result: *“I think across Wales there have been around 200 people we haven’t been able to count as outcomes because of lack of evidence.”*
- 6.57 Table 6.1. below provides an overview of the number of participants engaged and the number who have secured an entry into employment as an outcome of support. It illustrates that job entries are behind the expected level (less than a quarter of the profiled job entries by August 2016 had been secured). Progress to August 2016 is dominated by the West Wales and Valleys programme area, which is likely to partly reflect the Phase 1 area being entirely within west Wales and the Valleys.

Table 6.1: PaCE Outcomes by Geography – August 2016

Area	Job Entries			Engagements Actual		
	Target	Achieved	Variation	Target	Achieved	Variation
East Wales	172	13	-92%	906	149	-84%
West Wales & Valleys	353	104	-71%	1,926	911	-53%
Total	525	117	-78%	2,832	1,060	-63%

Source: PaCE Management Information – Welsh Government

Contribution to Cross-Cutting Themes

- 6.58 Every EU-funded project must embed activity into its delivery, which focuses on equal opportunities, sustainable development, and tackling poverty. These are known as cross-cutting themes (CCTs).

Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming

- 6.59 PaCE is required to report against the following indicators for this theme:
- positive action measures – women
 - occupational segregation activity
 - childcare provision.
- 6.60 With regard to equal opportunities, PaCE supports parents, irrespective of gender, ethnic background, and disability or any other protected characteristic group. This has been aided through building upon existing infrastructure (Family Information Services, Families First and Flying Start) to enable communication with all groups.

- 6.61 However, the project is operating within a field where gender stereotyping exists, e.g. in relation to the idea amongst some audiences that men are the household breadwinners and that their working hours are not conducive to playing a full part in family life.⁵⁰ Consequently, PaCE has sought to make explicit reference to men and women and mothers and fathers. Using the term “parents” in this regard is deemed insufficient, as it is perceived as often being interpreted to mean mothers and men may feel that the policies are not intended for them.⁵¹
- 6.62 In service delivery, PaCE Advisers work with partner organisations and families to reach fathers and encourage both employers and participants to overcome implicit stereotypical biases when matching candidates with roles (e.g. one PaCE Adviser described how they had supported a female participant in signing up to a lorry driving course, a vocation stereotypically associated with males).
- 6.63 In addition, all promotional material is offered bilingually; however, at the time of the research, one concern was raised that no Welsh language capability existed amongst PaCE Advisers in one local authority area where the Welsh language is prominent, which raised concerns in terms of the ability to engage with participants. Where services were requested in the Welsh language, the provision would be offered through PaCE Advisers with Welsh language capability, from neighbouring local authority areas.

Sustainable Development

- 6.64 PaCE is required to report against the following indicator for this theme:
- development of an organisation travel plan and sustainable transport initiatives.
- 6.65 PaCE seeks to encourage e-learning and the use of alternative forms of transport to help reduce energy consumption, travel and waste. However, PaCE Advisers were unable to offer tangible examples of having applied this approach in practice. The project has also built capacity amongst the PaCE Advisers recruited and appointed to the project.

⁵⁰ Welsh Government (July 2015) *PaCE (Parents, Childcare & Employment) West Wales and the Valleys Business Plan, version 1.2*, [Unpublished].

⁵¹ Ibid.

Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion

- 6.66 PaCE is required to report against the following indicator for this theme:
- mentoring
 - volunteering schemes.
- 6.67 Tackling poverty and social exclusion is central to PaCE. Workless parents are more likely to be in households of poverty, particularly lone-parent families (with lone parents expected to make up 70 per cent of the participants in PaCE). Across the UK, for example, 43 per cent of children in lone-parent families live in poverty after housing costs are taken into account.⁵²
- 6.68 There is an expectation that activities delivered through PaCE will lead to reductions in poverty, and that building confidence and re-engaging in mainstream education and employment should bring about greater social inclusion. Intergenerational factors are also apparent, with children in workless households at greater risk of experiencing a range of adverse developmental outcomes. This is especially important for very young children, where their early experiences deeply affect their physical, cognitive, emotional and social development.⁵³
- 6.69 Changes in employment status or earnings are the main causes of movements into or out of poverty⁵⁴ (although levels of in-work poverty have risen over the past 10 years).⁵⁵ Being out of work considerably increases the chances of experiencing material deprivation. This includes going without essentials such as money for leisure activities, adequate housing, and suitable clothing. Unemployment also increases the risk of fuel poverty, the inability to heat or light a home. For many, this also means living without access to normal social activities, such as going to the cinema, which can exacerbate social exclusion. A lack of employment is itself viewed as a form of social exclusion, and prolonged worklessness can contribute to increased isolation and a reduction in social support.⁵⁶

⁵² Graham H. and McQuaid R. (2014) *Exploring the impacts of the UK government's welfare reforms on lone parents moving into work – literature review*. Glasgow Centre for Population.

⁵³ Seccombe (2004) "Beating the Odds" Versus "Changing the Odds": Poverty, Resilience, and Family Policy' in *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64:2, pp. 384-394

⁵⁴ Pantazis (2006) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain: The Millennium Survey*. Bristol, The Policy Press

⁵⁵ Institute for Fiscal Studies (2016) *Living standards, poverty and inequality 2016*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

⁵⁶ Tinson, A. et al. (2013) *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Wales*, New Policy Institute

- 6.70 Full-time carers commonly describe feelings of social isolation⁵⁷. Providing the resource to enable participation and usage of childcare provision has the potential to lead to greater community participation.
- 6.71 The barrier fund offers a direct route to overcoming barriers to employment, including the provision of bus passes, clothing for interviews, and tools to start work. It also has the ability to overcome barriers to social inclusion through the procured training provision. Furthermore, the ultimate goal of helping an economically inactive parent into work can provide additional income to households, significantly improving the chances of a family being lifted out of poverty.

⁵⁷ Wavehill (2015) *Evaluation of the Life Skills Project*, Big Lottery Fund.

7. Participant Experience

Introduction

7.1 Following the receipt of contact details for 89 participants in the PaCE project, 60 participants undertook interviews, representing a response rate of 67 per cent.

Research Findings

7.2 Of the 60 participants interviewed, 57 were female. The distribution of respondents from Phase 1 and Phase 2 is outlined in Table 7.1. The distribution is not representative of the total participants in the project due to the purposive sampling technique applied (see section 2 for further detail). As of April 2016, 59 per cent of participants engaged in PaCE were from the Phase 1 area (compared to 32 per cent of the respondents to the survey).

Table 7.1: Number of Participants Interviewed from Each Phase

Area	<i>n</i>
Phase 1 (Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire)	19
Phase 2 (all other authority areas)	41

7.3 Respondents were asked when they had last been in paid employment. Almost half of the respondents had been out of work for at least three years or had never worked and, therefore, were considered some distance from the labour market (and thus may require long-term intensive support to move them towards, and ultimately into, employment), whilst only five respondents reported that they had been in paid employment in the previous six months.

Case Study

A number of those receiving support from PaCE have been out of work for a long time, as was the case with Angharad⁵⁸. Angharad had been out of work for more than 14 years to care for her children. Angharad reported having lost confidence from not working for so long and was seeking support to go back into employment.

Angharad was referred to PaCE in her '6 months Back to Work' interview with the Jobcentre and has been involved in the project since the beginning of 2016, receiving different types of support. Angharad needed childcare support for her 15-year-old son who has Down's syndrome and the PaCE adviser was looking into this for her at the time of the interview. Angharad identified a lack of confidence as a barrier preventing her from going back to work.

Case Study

Kelly⁵⁹ had never been employed, having *fallen pregnant* at a young age. Kelly believed it was the right time to look for work/go back to education, as her son was about to begin full-time education and became aware of PaCE through a support worker.

Kelly had received support to update her CV and received advice on where to look for employment opportunities, e.g. different websites, etc. She identified a lack of confidence as a barrier preventing her from going back to work. She was satisfied with the support received thus far, reporting: *'It has made me more confident in myself to go out and work and to be independent and able to look for opportunities myself.'*

- 7.4 Respondents were asked about their situations prior to enrolment with PaCE. Many responses centred around unemployment or referred to the care of their children. This is consistent with literature which identified that parents often express the decision to prioritise their caregiving responsibilities over paid employment as a conscious choice. Other responses included having recently finished education or training, or inactivity due to long-term sickness or caring responsibilities.
- 7.5 Interviewed participants had only recently engaged with the project, with the majority of respondents having engaged with the project less than three months prior to the interview taking place. Illustrating that for many, their experience with PaCE to date has been limited.

⁵⁸ A pseudonym has been used to protect the support recipient's identity.

⁵⁹ A pseudonym has been used to protect the support recipient's identity.

Awareness of and engagement with PaCE

- 7.6 When asked how they became aware of PaCE, the importance of the local Jobcentre was evident from the responses, with the majority stating that they had been referred by an adviser at a Jobcentre, typically after or whilst attending the Jobcentre for their Back to Work interview.

“It was through the Jobcentre. I had to have an interview regarding income support and getting back to work and then I had a ‘phone call from a lady called xxx who asked if I might be interested in the project and it would happen at the same time I had the interview at the Jobcentre.” [Participant]

“I was at the Jobcentre for the Back to Work interview and was telling them that I needed flexibility and possibly become self-employed and they told me about [PaCE Adviser], who was in the Jobcentre at that time.” [Participant]

- 7.7 Other responses varied widely, and awareness through playgroup involvement, approaches from delivery staff, Family Information Services, Flying Start and Families First representatives, and word-of-mouth were all frequently mentioned.

“My little girl goes to a playgroup in... and a lady came in to talk to us to see if anyone was looking to get back to work and said she could help.” [Participant]

- 7.8 Participants were asked where they had met with the adviser for the first time. For the majority this was at the location where they were referred to PaCE. For most respondents, this was at Jobcentres, while the remainder were at some form of family centre. This indicates that those who became aware of the scheme through Jobcentres often went on to meet with a PaCE Adviser there. Appointments at local libraries and home visits were also mentioned on several occasions.

Case Study

Heulwen⁶⁰, 24, had been out of work since finishing her part-time role in 2013 and had found job opportunities difficult to come by. She had been receiving support from the Jobcentre for three years but without any success. They kept putting her up for jobs in the care sector, despite it not being the right fit for her: *'I would have hated that and would not have stuck to it.'* Heulwen was therefore referred to PaCE in January 2016 and, according to Heulwen, *'Adviser X⁶¹ has been fab, really fab, to think he's managed to sort this out for me so quickly'*.

The adviser informed Heulwen of the options available to her and, following a productive discussion, suggested a vocational course that would be a good fit for her: *'I jumped at it and he started the ball rolling.'* At the time of the interview, Heulwen had met with her adviser a couple of times and the application was nearly ready to go pending a DBS disclosure. The adviser also supported Heulwen with other things. For instance, the nursery that her son attends wanted a payment for a month in advance and the PaCE adviser was able to address the issue on her behalf. Childcare funding has also been made available for Heulwen for the period during which she will be attending her course, which she felt would be incredibly useful.

This support intervention has been very positive for Heulwen and her excitement and praise for the support were evident in the interview conducted with her:

'I am so excited; it is the first time I've looked forward to doing something for me. Adviser X has been really fab... when he came up with this I couldn't believe it; he has been an absolute godsend. On this course I am going to get experience and a chance to apply for jobs. I'm over the moon. I'm so excited, I can't believe my luck.'

- 7.9 There was a range of motivational reasons for enrolling on PaCE. Notably, how PaCE could play a role in helping to secure employment and overcome childcare barriers.

⁶⁰ A pseudonym has been used to protect the support recipient's identity.

⁶¹ This has been anonymised to protect the support provider's identity.

“I wanted help with childcare so I could get back to work.” [Participant]

“I want to go back to work. I’ve got three kids and the youngest is not full-time school yet. I would need quite a bit of childcare support. I needed to get a CV. I was pregnant when I left college, so I’ve never done one.” [Participant]

“I used to work before I had my daughter and after the maternity leave I was going to go back but the hours were mad and it was difficult to find someone to look after her all that time, so I made a decision to look for something else that would work around my daughter better and the hours would suit better.” [Participant]

7.10 Some enrolled on PaCE without a specific idea of what they wanted to gain from it.

“I just thought I might as well go along and see what it was all about. I didn’t know about it before.” [Participant]

“I didn’t know. I didn’t go with anything in mind. I thought I was too old to go to college but I wanted to find something. Also, I was single and I was worried about money and if they would take money off me.” [Participant]

7.11 Other motivations included gaining work experience, training or qualifications, or simply building self-belief.

“I was hoping for information on training, and help with interviews to get employment and childcare.” [Participant]

“I wanted to build up my confidence, and explore different things and look at what options I have. Childcare was something I was thinking of too.” [Participant]

Case Study

Gemma⁶², 39, is a former teacher who had been out of employment since 2014 (maternity pay paid up to March 2015) prior to enrolling with PaCE in November 2015. Gemma was out of work, having made a *'lifestyle change... to look after my daughter and spend more time together as a family'*. She became aware of the PaCE support through a playgroup that her daughter attended, where a support provider was present to talk to parents about the support available to re-access the employment market. This was something Gemma hadn't expected but jumped at the opportunity: *'I didn't think I could get anything, so it was all a bonus really... brilliant.'*

Following the initial meeting with Adviser X⁶³ at the playgroup, Gemma met with the support provider individually at the local authority premises to discuss things further. She was interested in setting up her own business to work as a maths tutor and the support provider was able to arrange for Gemma to attend a three-day 'start-up your own business' course, which was *'fantastic'*.

Subsequently, further support was provided to establish the start-up, including gaining funding to purchase equipment such as a printer and scanner, *'which is a great help for my business'*. Importantly, Gemma also received financial support for childcare so that she could attend the three-day course: *'I wouldn't have been able to do it otherwise.'*

Although Gemma already had ambitions to develop the start-up before becoming aware of PaCE, the project was a big positive for her, as it gave her the drive to take things forward in earnest: *'Starting up as a tutor was ideal, as I could do it in the evenings from home but I just needed to get it off the ground.'*

- 7.12 Whilst all respondents surveyed had engaged with PaCE, many respondents reported having yet to receive support through the project since enrolment. Some had not received support because they had only recently enrolled on the project. Others cited a change in personal situation, such as a new pregnancy, whilst several were yet to hear back from their PaCE Adviser.

⁶² A pseudonym has been used to protect the support recipient's identity.

⁶³ This has been anonymised to protect the support provider's identity.

Barriers to Work

7.13 Respondents were asked about the main challenges they faced in finding work. Many reported that a lack of affordable childcare (*“Childcare, it is so_expensive”*) or a lack of available childcare that they perceived to be suitable presented their main barrier to securing employment.

“Childcare, when she was little I would have been worried about just leaving her anywhere.” [Participant]

“I suppose childcare is the main problem. I don't like leaving them and I worry about my youngest.” [Participant]

“Childcare, it's really hard being a single parent to work around two children and to be able to get on courses. I have already got a level 2 in beauty and need to find a way to get level 3.” [Participant]

7.14 Many respondents cited more than one barrier to employment, illustrating a greater diversity of need than simply affordable and accessible childcare provision. A prevalence of multiple barriers amongst target groups was identified within the rationale and when these barriers are inter-related they can often amplify distance from the labour market.

7.15 Participants were then asked whether they felt that any of these challenges had been overcome since their enrolment with PaCE. Where challenges had been overcome, respondents most commonly referred to:

- help with a CV
- help in accessing childcare
- help in accessing relevant work experience.

Case Study

Rhiannon⁶⁴ is 25 and started receiving support from PaCE in January 2016. Prior to this, Rhiannon had been caring for her 3-year-old daughter, having last been in paid employment in the summer of 2015. She had separated from her husband and wanted to take care of her daughter herself: *'With all the upheaval, I feel uncomfortable leaving my daughter anywhere.'* Her daughter was in school part-time and, consequentially, Rhiannon was seeking a part-time employment position herself.

The main barriers to Rhiannon going back into employment were two-fold. Firstly, she could only apply for part-time positions, as *'I feel very uncomfortable about leaving my daughter with anyone other than my family'*. Secondly, she needed support to develop a CV. Rhiannon had arranged an interview at the Jobcentre to look for employment opportunities suited to her needs, and was referred to the PaCE project. She received a phone call from the PaCE support provider and arranged to meet at the call centre, where it was agreed that Rhiannon would receive support around CV writing, applying for jobs, and preparing for interviews.

At the time of the interview, the support received by Rhiannon had primarily been about developing a CV, as *'I've never done a CV before'*. She has been in regular contact with the support provider, every three weeks/month, and Rhiannon has also received information and advice around potential courses to attend. Rhiannon summarised her thoughts on the support received to date as follows: *'There is no bad point at all. I'm very happy with Adviser X⁶⁵.'*

- 7.16 Those already in receipt of support were asked whether they had sought financial support for childcare to enable them to receive that support. Very few participants stated that they had sought financial support for childcare. Many of those who hadn't accessed financial support for childcare felt that it was too early in the process to do so. However, some individuals reported, erroneously, that they were ineligible for funding as they had not yet secured employment: *"It's early days yet, but I will be applying for it when I find employment."* This again illustrates the misunderstanding of the role of childcare funding.

⁶⁴ A pseudonym has been used to protect the support recipient's identity.

⁶⁵ This has been anonymised to protect the support provider's identity.

Case Study

Emily⁶⁶ is 31 and had not returned to work since having her daughter. At the time of the interview, she was last in paid employment in 2014. She was unable to return to her previous line of employment because the hours were too difficult to have someone look after her daughter. Consequentially, Emily decided to look for another line of work with more suitable hours which would enable her to work around the needs of her daughter.

Emily was referred to PaCE by the Jobcentre at the beginning of 2016 and met with an adviser to discuss her background, what she'd like to do in future, and childcare issues. PaCE was able to secure childcare funding for Emily to undertake her courses, which was '*really useful*'. Emily identified childcare costs as the main barrier to her returning to work, but the PaCE adviser was able to take care of this issue, clearing Emily's route back to work.

The support provider also found a number of suitable courses for her to undertake. At the time of the interview, Emily had completed one course and was about to undertake another. In summary, Emily stated that PaCE is '*a really good project*'. '*Adviser X⁶⁷ is really helpful and she rings every week or fortnight to see how things are going.*'

- 7.17 The remainder of respondents who said they did not need childcare support either were not presently looking for employment, in receipt of funding from another source, or had a child about to start school, therefore removing the need for childcare. Of these, some had made a conscious choice in focussing on caregiving responsibilities over re-entering the labour market in order to provide the care and support that they felt their children needed to develop emotionally and educationally.

"I'm not working at the moment because I need to be able to pick up my son from school. Last time I worked a lot and my son was in breakfast club and after-school club and the teachers were telling me he was falling asleep in school. It was too long a day for him. My priority is his schooling and being able to look after him." [Participant]

⁶⁶ A pseudonym has been used to protect the support recipient's identity.

⁶⁷ This has been anonymised to protect the support provider's identity.

“I have recently [experienced a life] upheaval. I feel uncomfortable leaving my daughter anywhere. She is at school part-time; she's only 3. I would be no better-off working because I can only work part-time at the moment.” [Participant]

“I'm thinking of going to work in September when my son is in full-time school. I don't think I will need [childcare support].” [Participant]

Participant Evaluation of the PaCE Project

- 7.18 Of the respondents who felt able to provide a view on the support that they had received, the vast majority were positive about their experience.

“It's really good and interesting. I didn't know there was help or support like it. I know you can get some help in the Jobcentre but you have to make an appointment and it is more formal. With [PaCE Adviser] it is laid-back and she is very helpful.” [Participant]

“I am so excited; it is the first time I've looked forward to doing something for me. [PaCE Adviser] has been really fab. The first time I met him I was saying I could do office clerk or something. When he came up with this I couldn't believe it. He has been an absolute godsend.” [Participant]

“I have seen her three times already. She helps me do the things that I find really difficult. She has been absolutely amazing. I had to make a decision in order to progress. I decided to launch my business first and build it up and get clients, so that is what I'm moving ahead with now. I need to go on a course to start own business and set up a website. By the time my youngest will be part-time in school I will have done all this, so there will be no need for childcare.” [Participant]

7.19 Participants were asked whether they had received support in the past to achieve their employability aims from other sources besides PaCE. Participants reported previous support from a wide range of provisions, including Jobcentres, Back to Work schemes, and charitable organisations. Of those that had received previous support, many stated a preference for the support received from PaCE. No participant said that PaCE provided a worse service. However, a majority of respondents had not received previous support which might indicate that PaCE is engaging harder-to-reach individuals. However, it could also be that the scheme is reaching individuals who, as new parents, have only recently qualified for help of this nature.

8. Conclusions

Overview

- 8.1 The lack of a full complement of service provision has undermined the initial performance of the PaCE project. Despite the difficult start, the project has slowly gained momentum, particularly as a result of strengthened partnership working and service integration in each location, and is now considered to be fully operational, nine months after its initial launch.

Reflections on the Theory of Change

- 8.2 Table 8.1 below lists the assumptions that underpin the theory of change and, based on the findings of the research, provides a judgement of their legitimacy. It illustrates areas where activities should be undertaken to ensure that the theory of change (and therefore the outcome of the PaCE project) remain achievable.

Table 8.1: Legitimacy of Assumptions within the Theory of Change

Assumptions	Legitimacy
Input to Activity Assumptions	
1. Intended beneficiaries exist and can be located/contacted	Whilst enrolment numbers are described as challenging, the project has continued to deliver with limited marketing and promotion and this remains a legitimate assumption
2. Premises, IT equipment and locations are suitable for service delivery	Some PaCE advisers have struggled with all of these elements and IT infrastructure needs to be reviewed to enable effective service delivery across all locations
3. Monitoring systems adequately capture beneficiary details	Monitoring systems are adequate to capture beneficiary details; however, there are gaps in the evidence captured and some confusion over evidence requirements
4. DWP staff can be recruited, trained, and undergo security checks	DWP staff have been recruited, trained, and undergone security checks, but it took longer than expected
5. Staff training sufficient	The confusion surrounding benefit legislation suggests that additional training or a project-specific induction is necessary
6. Beneficiaries aren't prevented from accessing the services	There is little evidence of beneficiaries being prevented from accessing the service, although the need to provide supporting evidence has been a barrier for a minority

Assumptions	Legitimacy
Input to Activity Assumptions	
7. Provision is equally accessible across Wales	Whilst provision is available throughout Wales, it is typically more accessible in urban areas than rural areas
Activity to Output Assumptions	
8. DWP staff have sufficient knowledge and expertise	Gaps in knowledge of welfare benefits and also the key elements of the PaCE project are evident amongst PaCE employees
9. Family Information Services and local authority support is beneficial and accessible	Links to the Family Information Services have been made and are highly beneficial to PaCE Advisers
10. Links can be made with employers a. Existing routes through DWP available b. PaCE creates no extra burden on employers	It is too early within the project to make a judgement on this assumption
11. Beneficiaries engage with advisory service	The majority of beneficiaries appear to be willing to engage (or interested in engaging) in the advisory service
12. Parents are keen to secure employment and willing to voluntarily engage with PaCE	A significant portion of parents are keen to secure employment and levels of engagement suggest a willingness to voluntarily engage with PaCE
13. Parents want their children in childcare	Whilst parents commonly cite childcare as a barrier, PaCE Advisors may identify alternative childcare solutions to this barrier and resultantly, there was a low take-up in PaCE childcare funding at the time of the research. It is also acknowledged that the introduction of PaCE training provision (which took place during the research) may increase demand for childcare.
14. Promotion leads to increased awareness of and engagement with PaCE	There is little to suggest that this assumption is unlikely to take place and those PaCE Advisers that have made their own materials have had success; however, more generally, greater promotion is needed to boost levels of awareness

Project Design and Development

- 8.3 The design of the project has drawn heavily on previous experience, identifying and replicating the most successful elements of prior initiatives; reflecting and revising the model of service delivery where lessons had been learnt. Local authorities aided the design process; while some were concerned about the shift (from previous initiatives) of delivery staff from local authority employed community engagement staff to DWP employed PaCE Advisers, it was recognised that the shift in approach offers a more efficient route of provision.
- 8.4 The project has strengthened the strategic relationship between the Welsh Government and the DWP. Partner engagement with local authority representatives has also been an important element of the service, although there is a concern amongst some that the frequency of this engagement at a management and strategic level has fallen in recent months. A decline in engagement and a lack of guidance had led to some local authorities being unclear about their role and responsibilities in relation to PaCE.

Recommendation

1. To produce a formal agreement, such as a memorandum of understanding, which sets out the roles and responsibilities of key partners (particularly local authorities) involved in the delivery of PaCE.

Implementation

- 8.5 The project was launched in two phases and whilst phase 1 was launched in areas already looking to adopt a similar approach, the project initially operated without clear guidance for delivery staff, all staff members, key structures or elements of the service model in place.
- 8.6 The rollout of key elements of PaCE took longer than expected causing unforeseen delay and impacting on the initial delivery of outcomes. This has left the project behind profile in terms of the number of participants engaged and the number of job entries achieved.

- 8.7 The initial lack of funded training - as well as other elements key to the programme's offer - has affected project delivery, with marketing and promotion largely avoided until this provision could be established. Advisers expressed concerns that the lack of promotion materials might impact perceptions of the programme as legitimate.
- 8.8 Misunderstandings are also evident amongst PaCE Advisers, particularly in relation to the application of childcare support and the understanding of the latest benefits legislation. Whilst PaCE Advisers who were newly recruited by the DWP for this project were given intensive training, PaCE Advisers desired a project-specific induction process and asked for additional guidance on the training provision available in their area.

Recommendations

2. Deliver a project-specific induction process is delivered to all PaCE Advisers.
3. Develop a frequently asked questions sheet and use as a working document throughout the remainder of the project.
4. Consider introducing a buddying/mentoring system is considered to enable PaCE Advisers to share learning with each other and to raise awareness of the training offer available locally to staff.
5. Undertake marketing and promotion using clear and succinct materials, targeting potential partner service providers and participants, to reflect the fact that PaCE is now fully operational.

Service Integration

- 8.9 Most PaCE Advisers have successfully integrated into the wider provision of family services within each community. Targeting the support outside Communities First Cluster areas has been widely welcomed by partners, with most identifying this as a gap in service provision. Where the partnership is working effectively, PaCE Advisers are benefitting from referrals from Family Support settings and are reciprocating that relationship. This is particularly important when considering that PaCE's target participants often have multiple barriers or needs that typically warrant support beyond that which PaCE Advisers can deliver alone.

- 8.10 The partnership approach has worked particularly well where PaCE Advisers are hot-desking within family settings and are attending/securing positions on key networks of family service providers. In some locations, however, the facilities available for hot-desking or meeting clients are either inappropriately located (e.g. wholly within Communities First Cluster areas) or are simply inappropriate to allow for service delivery (particularly within rural areas). Furthermore, the profile of parents attending family centres is relatively static (with attendance typically changing with termly intervals) and these potential routes to the market can be quickly exhausted if attendees are relatively low in number. Consequently, Flying Start centres and other playgroups are less prominent routes to service delivery than anticipated within the business plan.
- 8.11 Conversely, local Jobcentres are proving particularly fruitful routes to recruitment of PaCE participants, with some PaCE Advisers identifying that almost their entire caseload of participants have been recruited through the Jobcentres. It is unclear whether challenges engaging partners, locating in communities or a greater familiarity with the systems and processes within Jobcentres, have influenced this reliance on Jobcentre referrals. However, the Jobcentres and resources accessible to PaCE Advisers provide a useful means for the identification and engagement of eligible participants.
- 8.12 The Jobcentres are currently therefore a fundamental element of PaCE. However, the project is designed on community outreach provision, working closely with partners to engage parents who may otherwise be unwilling to engage in these services. It is unlikely that this cohort will be found within the Jobcentres. With a reliance on Jobcentres, there is also a heightened danger that PaCE may simply be seen by potential participants as an extension of service provision typically offered through the Jobcentres.

Recommendations

6. Undertake close monitoring of referral routes to identify trends and patterns in referrals.
7. Building on the success of the ESICC pilot, explore (and where successful, share) additional mechanisms to engage Flying Start centres and other family-based settings to increase the diversity of referral/engagement routes for the PaCE project.
8. Where there is evidence that service delivery is more challenging in rural areas, explore through discussion with key rural groups, including the Local Action Groups delivering the Rural Development Programme.

Service Delivery Approach

8.13 The flexible, person-led approach is widely welcomed by all stakeholders and participants which is helped by the lack of defined structure for PaCE. It is important that this flexibility of operation is maintained to allow PaCE Advisers to react to situations and opportunities that arise for service delivery in the geographical area that they serve. Furthermore, the various resources which PaCE Advisers can draw on are also widely welcomed, although the extent of the demand for them is currently unclear. This is because the lack of PaCE training provision is likely to have restricted levels of demand for childcare provision. As a result, it is unclear as to where the available budgets will be fully utilised.

Recommendation

9. Maintain the flexibility of operation afforded to the PaCE Advisers in delivering their services.

Delivery of Outcomes

8.14 When considering the delivery of outcomes, it is important to recognise that PaCE is typically engaging with people who are some distance from the labour market and, prior to engagement with PaCE, are unlikely to be actively seeking employment.

8.15 Collectively, these factors mean that securing sustainable employment outcomes for 20 per cent of participants (the target for PaCE) will be a challenge. However, the PaCE model draws heavily upon lessons learnt from recent employability interventions thereby increasing the chances of meeting this target. Given the distance from the labour market of some participants, mechanisms to effectively measure distance travelled (which are likely to include measures of self-confidence, self-belief and aspirations) could provide additional means to measure the benefits derived from the support.

8.16 It is also notable that target allocation to PaCE Advisers does not take into account locational characteristics. A variety of challenges have been identified for PaCE service delivery that are associated with rural areas and/or those areas that suffer from poor infrastructure.

Recommendations

10. Introduce robust monitoring of customers' journeys and employment outcomes to identify any locational patterns in service delivery and achievement of outcomes.
11. Commission the summative evaluation as soon as it is feasible to capture participant journeys and distance travelled and to provide timely recommendations for PaCE.

Monitoring

- 8.17 Projects delivered as part of the 2014–2020 European Structural Funds programme need to clearly evidence expenditure and activity to ensure compliant and appropriate use of public and European resources, this places an administrative burden on service providers. However, there is some confusion amongst PaCE Advisers as to what they should be collecting and how it should be collected.
- 8.18 At the time of the research, a review of data capture systems identified gaps in the information recorded and spot checks are now being implemented in response to this issue.

Recommendation

12. Incorporate examples of eligible/ineligible evidence in internal guidance/frequently asked questions documentation.

Performance

- 8.19 The delays in the implementation of PaCE, combined with a lack of tools/offers to enable the delivery of PaCE, have left the project behind profile in terms of engagement numbers and job entries.
- 8.20 PaCE Advisers were concerned that the target set for helping parents into employment is challenging. It is difficult to determine the scale of challenges, as, at the time of the research PaCE was not fully operational. Furthermore, the availability of suitable opportunities, which is beyond the control of the project, will affect the deliverability of this target.

Recommendation

13. Project profiling should be reviewed in six months' time (after the project has been fully operational) to identify whether a re-profiling of targets is necessary.

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Annex A

Scoping Interviews Discussion Guide

Introduction

This guide sets out the issues that we would like to discuss with you with regard to the evaluation of PaCE. This document also briefly describes the background to the evaluation, and the purpose of the interview. We would be grateful if you could take a few moments to familiarise yourself with the guide in advance of the interview.

Background

On behalf of the Welsh Government, Wavehill have been appointed to undertake an independent process evaluation of PaCE. Overall, the evaluation will explore the way that the programme has been set up in each of area, to explore how the project is being administered and the design of the project. It will also seek to identify the project's effectiveness in helping recipients to overcome barriers to work, acquire job-relevant skills and take up relevant job opportunities.

Initial Scoping Interviews

The purpose of this interview is to gather a range of views held by stakeholders tasked with the design and implementation of PaCE. This is so that we may develop an understanding of both the rationale behind the design and the processes that have been applied in the early stages of implementation. The information gained through these interviews will form the foundation of the evaluation, guiding the focus of subsequent investigation into the wider implementation of the programme.

Topics for Discussion

The interview will explore a number of topics, including:

1. **Context**, such as the contribution of your department/team to the programme, and alignment with the aims of other programmes.
2. The **design process**, looking at the rationale behind the programme.
3. The **implementation** of PaCE, including your views on how it is progressing, and any potential risks that could prevent the programme from reaching its stated aims.

A detailed list of questions that may feature in the interview are included below.

Confidentiality

Any comments or feedback that you make within this interview will be treated as confidential. All data will be anonymised and non-attributable across all written material that is produced as a result of this evaluation. The information you provide will only be used for the purposes of this evaluation.

Discussion Guide:

There are a number of questions and topics that we would look to explore during the conversation. Some questions may not be relevant or applicable.

Introduction

1. As an introduction, could you briefly describe your role?
2. How have you been involved in the development and/or initial implementation of PaCE?

Context and Rationale

3. The logic model (overleaf) provides an outline of the context and issues associated with the programme – how did these issues influence the design of PaCE?
4. Are you able to comment on the process by which the model was initially developed?
 - a. If so, could you briefly describe the process?
 - b. In what ways did the experience with the Genesis Programme influence the model?

Implementation

5. What kind of support has been provided in the process of implementing PaCE?
6. Who was the support provided to?
7. Again returning to the logic model - taking each of the Input to Activity Assumptions set out overleaf in turn, which of the assumptions do you feel may be at greatest risk of not being achieved?
 - a. Are there any factors that may undermine the ability for each of these assumptions to be fulfilled?

Programme Management/Governance:

8. Could you briefly describe the management and governance arrangements in place for PaCE
9. Do you think these arrangements are suitable and effective in addressing management and governance issues facing PaCE or could improvements be made (and if so what)?

Programme Delivery

10. From your perspective, how do you feel that the programme is progressing?
11. Returning to the logic model, taking each of the Activity to Output Assumptions set out overleaf in turn, which of the assumptions do you feel may be at greatest risk of not being achieved?
12. Are there any further strategic or operational risks that could prevent the programme from being successful?
13. To your knowledge, to what extent has the model of service provision differed from one delivery area to the next?

Conclusions:

14. Are there any questions that you think are important or valuable for this evaluation to explore?

Do you have anything to add, or would you like to raise an issue that we have not discussed?

Delivery Staff Interviews Discussion Guide

Discussion Guide:

There are a number of questions and topics that we would look to explore during the conversation. Some questions may not be relevant or applicable.

Introduction

1. As an introduction, could you briefly describe your role?
2. What training have you received in order to help you with your role?
3. How useful was this training? Please explain.
4. If you were to describe PaCE to someone who had never heard of it, how would you describe its offer?

Programme Delivery

5. Talk me through the approach to delivering the PaCE programme in your area.
6. Approximately, how many referrals do you receive?
7. Are the referrals you are receiving appropriate for participating in or benefiting from the PaCE programme? Please explain.
8. How useful is the childcare budget?
9. How do you ensure there are sufficient opportunities in your area?
10. How well does the PaCE programme align with other LA provision? [i.e. Families First, Flying Start and Communities For Work]
11. How well has the PaCE brand and the support available been marketed / promoted in your area?
12. From your perspective, how do you feel that the programme is progressing?

Monitoring / evidence:

13. How effective are the monitoring systems that have been implemented in capturing key information?
14. How are you performing against target?
15. Talk me through the kind of evidence you have to provide to claim an output.

Management Arrangements:

16. In your opinion, how well is the programme being managed?
17. Could you briefly describe the management arrangements in place for PaCE?

Cross Cutting Themes

18. Thinking about delivery to date, what specific actions, if any, have you undertaken to help contribute to;
- a. Equal Opportunities & Gender Mainstreaming
 - b. Sustainable Development
 - c. Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion

Reflections

19. Although it is still early days, what lessons do you think can be learnt from the implementation of PaCE to date?
20. What improvements would you like to see in order to refine or improve the programme going forward?

Conclusions:

21. Are there any questions that you think are important or valuable for this evaluation to explore?
22. Do you have anything to add, or would you like to raise an issue that we have not discussed?

Thank you

Local Authority Representatives Discussion Guide

Discussion Guide:

There are a number of questions and topics that we would look to explore during the conversation. Some questions may not be relevant or applicable.

Introduction

1. As an introduction, could you briefly describe your role?
2. How have you been involved in the implementation of PaCE?
3. What do you understand the role of PaCE to be?

Programme Delivery

4. Talk me through the approach to delivering the PaCE programme in your area;
 - a. To your knowledge how are/will participants engaging with the programme
 - b. What has worked well thus far with engagement/enrolment of participants?
 - c. What challenges have been encountered (or what challenges do you foresee) in engaging participants
 - d. Besides childcare, what other challenges are participants likely to face when enrolling onto the PaCE programme?

Implementation

5. What kind of support, advice or guidance has been provided to you/your team to assist in the implementation of PaCE?
6. How well does the PaCE programme align with other LA provision? [i.e. Families First, Flying Start and Communities for Work]
7. How well has the PaCE brand and the support available been marketed / promoted in your area?
8. From your perspective, how do you feel that the programme is progressing?

Programme Management/Governance:

9. Could you briefly describe the management arrangements in place for PaCE?
10. Although it is still early days, what lessons do you think can be learnt from the implementation of PaCE to date?
11. What improvements would you like to see in order to refine or improve the programme going forward?

Conclusions:

12. Are there any questions that you think are important or valuable for this evaluation to explore?
13. Do you have anything to add, or would you like to raise an issue that we have not discussed?

Thank you

PaCE Participant Survey

Some background

Hello – I'm calling from a research company called Wavehill. I am calling on behalf of Welsh Government who have appointed us to undertake an independent evaluation of the PaCE (Parents, Childcare and Employment) project.

We have been given your name as someone who has enrolled with the PaCE programme and we would like to ask you a few short questions about your experience so far. The interviews should take no longer than 5/10minutes depending of course on how much you have to say.

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 that. It is also important to note that the team undertaking the evaluation *do not* work for the Welsh Government or DWP, this is *independent* research.

Are you happy to participate in the interview?

Yes/No (if no end the survey here)

Would you like to undertake the interview in English or Welsh?

English	Welsh
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To be pre-completed by the interviewer:

Local Authority	
Name of participant	
Sex of participant i.e. Male or Female	
Age of participant	
Date of interview	

Survey Questions

1. How did you first become *aware* of the support on offer through the PaCE project?
[Interviewer note: record verbatim and then code]

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Saw a flyer / poster	
Word of mouth	
Referred by an advisor at the Job Centre	
Referred by a worker at a Flying Start centre	
Referred by a Families First worker	
Referred by Family Information Services	
Referred by someone at a childcare provider (please specify which centre and/or which childcare provider)	

2. How long ago did you first become engaged in the project?
3. Talk me through the enrolment process with PaCE?
 - a. Who did you first meet? i.e. PaCE Adviser?
 - b. Where did you meet with the advisor?
 - c. What did you discuss during this first meeting?
4. What support if any, have you received through PaCE to date? (open answer summarising the description of support received, subsequently coded)

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- a. (If in receipt of support through the project) Did you seek financial support for childcare to enable you to participate in the support
 - i. (If yes) How useful was this funding
 - ii. (If no) For what reasons did you not require childcare support?
- b. (if yet to receive support) For what reasons have you not received support yet through the project?

5. Thinking back to when you started with PaCE, what were you hoping to get out of it?
[Interviewer note: record verbatim and then code]

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	Tick
Get you some qualifications?	
Give you some work experience?	
Get some training?	
Get some volunteering opportunities	
Get child care support to enable me to go back to work	
Build my self-confidence?	
Be a stepping-stone into work?	
To set a positive example to my children?	
Other (please specify)	

6. Have you received support in the past to achieve these aims from other places besides PaCE?

Yes	No
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7. If yes,
- a. Who else have you received support from?
 - b. What is the difference between the support from PaCE and the support you have received elsewhere?

8. Thinking about the time *before* you enrolled with PaCE, what were you doing?

	Tick
Volunteering	
Unemployed	
In education / training	
Inactive (e.g. long term sick, unpaid carer)	
Caring for my child/children	
Other, please specify	

9. When was the last time you were in paid employment?

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10. Before you enrolled on the PaCE programme;

- a. what would you say were the main challenges you faced with regard to finding employment? (unprompted and code below)
- b. Have any of these challenges been overcome since enrolling with PaCE?

	Before enrolling with Pace	Overcome since enrolling with PaCE
A lack of qualifications or skills		
Lack of relevant work experience		
Lack of affordable childcare		
Having caring responsibilities		
Transport difficulties		
Only wanting to work part time		
Believing you would not be better off financially in work		
None of the above		
I was not looking to find employment		
Other (please specify)		

11. Is there anything else you want to tell us about your experience with PaCE so far?

Thank you very much!

List of stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation

Organisation	Role
Scoping Interviews	
Welsh Government	Senior Operations Manager
Carmarthenshire County Council	Family Support Service Manager Carmarthen
Ceredigion County Council	Childcare and Family Information Manager
Department of Work & Pensions	West Wales & Valleys
Department of Work & Pensions	Senior Partnership Manager, DWP
Department of Work & Pensions	ESF Communities for Work/PaCE Manager
Delivery Staff	
DWP / Gwynedd	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / Ceredigion	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / Ceredigion	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / RCT	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / Gwynedd	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / Carmarthenshire	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / Conwy	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / Ceredigion	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / Denbighshire	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / RCT	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / Anglesey	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / Pembrokeshire	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / Pembrokeshire	Parent Employment Adviser
DWP / Pembrokeshire	Parent Employment Adviser
Local Authority Interviews	
Anglesey	Supporting Families Unit Manager
Blaenau Gwent	Early Years Childcare & Play Manager
Bridgend	Childcare Team Manager
Caerphilly	Family Information Service Manager
Cardiff	Senior Childcare Business Support Officer
Ceredigion	Flying Start Manager
Conwy	Lets get Working/Team Around the Family Manager
Denbighshire	Families First Project Manager
Flintshire	Family Information Service Manager
Gwynedd	Family Information Service Manager
Merthyr Tydfil	Early Years & Flying Start Co-ordinator
Monmouthshire	Flying Start Manager
Newport	Family Information Service Co-ordinator
Pembrokeshire	Flying Start Manager
RCT	Flying Start Senior Childcare & Premises Manager
Swansea	Families First Co-ordinator
Torfaen	Childcare Manager
Vale of Glamorgan	Children & Young People's Partnership Manager
Wrexham	Family Information Services Manager