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Evaluation of Communities for Work

Stage 2: Process and Outputs Evaluation Report

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Evaluation of Communities for Work: Process and Outputs Evaluation Report

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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
ALMP	Active Labour Market Provision
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CAD	Computer Aided Design
CEA	Community Employment Adviser
CF	Communities First
CfW	Communities for Work
CSCS	Construction Skills Certification Scheme
CVC	Community Voluntary Council
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EBS	Electronic Booking System
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
ESF	European Social Fund
EW	East Wales
FSF	Flexible Support Fund
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
JSA	Job Seekers Allowance
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
LDB	Lead Delivery Body
MAPPA	Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
PEA	Parent Employment Adviser
SIA	Security Industry Authority
ToC	Theory of Change
WEFO	Wales European Funding Office
WRAG	Work-Related Activity Group
WWV	West Wales and the Valleys
YEPF	Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

1. Introduction

1.1 In September 2016, the Welsh Government appointed OB3, Dateb, People and Work and the Institute for Employment Studies to undertake an evaluation of its Communities for Work (CfW) programme, an active labour market provision (ALMP) supported by the European Social Fund (ESF).

1.2 The aims of the evaluation are:

- to elucidate the theory of change for CfW and develop the logic model underpinning the programme
- to assess how the programme has been set up and how it is being operated
- to provide an indication of the programme's overall effectiveness.

1.3 The evaluation is being undertaken in three stages between October 2016 and January 2018. The Stage 1 report setting out a theory of change and logic model for CfW was published in March 2017. This is the second report, and draws upon the theory of change in assessing how the programme has been set up and is being implemented.

Method

1.4 This phase of the evaluation programme (which was undertaken between January and May 2017) followed on from the work done to develop a theory of change and logic model for CfW. It encompassed seven main elements of work:

- devising questions to be added to the ESF Participant Survey questionnaire (in preparation for Stage 3: the evaluation of programme outcomes)
- undertaking an on-line survey of CfW front line delivery staff
- conducting face to face interviews with:
 - four Welsh Government account managers
 - three Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) District Operations Managers

- 18 key contacts with who have operational oversight of the programme from a Lead Delivery Body (LDB) perspective
- 15 DWP delivery managers who have operational oversight of the programme from a DWP perspective in each of the clusters
- undertaking a package of qualitative fieldwork in 19 out of 52 Communities First (CF) cluster areas. One cluster was selected from each relevant local authority area, with consideration also given to the type of organisations involved in the programme’s delivery. The sample cannot be considered representative, but provides an indication of the programme’s implementation across different parts of Wales. Within each selected cluster, the fieldwork undertaken included:
 - interviews with 19 CF cluster managers
 - group or individual interviews with CfW front line delivery teams, generally comprising triage workers, DWP advisers, adult mentors and youth mentors. In all, 122 individuals contributed to this element of the fieldwork
 - telephone discussions with 10 training providers
 - telephone/face-to-face discussions with 10 referral agencies and/or third sector bodies that have engaged with CfW
 - telephone interviews with 14 employers who have engaged with CfW
 - one-to-one interviews with 115 programme participants
 - reviewing a random sample of 163 participant portfolios¹
 - reviewing cluster progress reports for each of the 19 clusters
 - drafting internal ‘cluster and participant case study papers’ which triangulated the evidence gathered from the various individuals interviewed and participant portfolios reviewed
- synthesising the findings of the fieldwork undertaken
- reviewing the database of participants

¹ Additional portfolios were reviewed on-site during visits to some clusters

- preparing and peer reviewing this Stage 2 Process and Outputs Evaluation report.

1.5 The questionnaire used for the on-line survey of front line staff was approved by the Welsh Government's Survey Approval team. The survey instrument was piloted with a sub-sample of relevant CfW staff before the survey was fully launched.

1.6 The survey involved inviting 262 individuals to complete an on-line questionnaire. Responses were received from staff in all but two clusters and from staff in at least one cluster across all local authority areas. The sample outcomes achieved are set out in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1: Front line delivery staff surveyed and responses received

	Numbers surveyed	Responses received	Response rate
Cluster managers	29	20	69%
Triage workers	44	31	70%
Community employment advisers	52	32	62%
Parent employment advisers	49	22	45%
Youth mentors	46	31	67%
Adult mentors	42	25	60%
Overall	262	161	61%

1.7 The response rate among DWP advisers, at an average of 53 per cent, was lower than that among other categories of front line delivery staff, at an average of 66 per cent. Overall, however, the responses received to the survey represented a broad coverage of the different types of delivery staff across most clusters and across all local authority areas.

Structure of this report

1.8 This report is presented in six chapters as follows:

- chapter one: this introduction to the report
- chapter two: an introduction to CfW: the programme's aims, intended delivery model, staffing structures, targets and budgets
- chapter three: our findings in relation to the establishment of CfW and the resources and arrangements put in place to underpin the programme's delivery
- chapter four: our findings in relation to the approach taken to implementing CfW, drawing upon the 'levers for change' identified in the Stage 1: theory of change and logic model report
- chapter five: the progress made thus far in implementing the CfW programme in terms of the numbers of participants enrolled and the outcomes achieved
- chapter six: our conclusions and recommendations at this interim stage.

2. Introduction to Communities for Work

2.1 In this chapter, we provide an introduction to Communities for Work and set out the way in which the programme operates. The chapter is presented in four sections as follows:

- Communities for Work and the agencies involved in its delivery
- Intended delivery model
- Staffing structure and key roles in service delivery
- Programme targets and budgets.

Communities for Work and the Agencies Involved in its Delivery

2.2 Communities for Work (CfW) is a Welsh Government sponsored labour market intervention designed to increase the employability and employment of those furthest away from the labour market. The programme targets three distinct groups of participants:

- long-term unemployed people aged 25 and over
- economically inactive people aged 25 and over
- young people aged 16-25 not in employment, education or training (NEET).

2.3 Each of these target groups is further broken down as follows:

- those with low or no skills
- those with work limiting health conditions (including substance abuse)
- those from Black and Ethnic Minority groups
- those with care or childcare responsibilities
- those from workless households.

2.4 People over 54 years of age make up a further sub-group of the economically inactive target group.

- 2.5 CfW is focused upon individuals living in the 52 Communities First clusters, which between them represent the 10% most deprived communities in Wales, as defined by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2011².
- 2.6 CfW is funded under the 2014-20 European Social Fund (ESF) Programmes for East Wales (EW) and West Wales and the Valleys (WWV), under two separate priorities:
- Priority Axis 1: ‘tackling poverty through sustainable employment’. More precisely, CfW seeks to address Specific Objective 1.1 within the EW Programme and Specific Objective 1.2 within the WWV Programme, both of which aim ‘to increase the employability of economically inactive and long term unemployed people aged 25 and over who have complex barriers to employment’³
 - Priority 3: ‘youth employment’ in the EW Programme and ‘youth employment and attainment’ in the WWV Programme. More specifically, CfW seeks to address Specific Objective 3.1 in both programmes, which aims ‘to reduce the number of 16-24 year olds who are not in employment, education or training (NEET)’⁴.
- 2.7 CfW is also intended to address the ESF cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming; sustainable development; and tackling poverty and social exclusion.
- 2.8 The Welsh Government is the ‘lead beneficiary’ for CfW whilst the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is a co-sponsor. CfW currently operates alongside the Communities First programme as well as other provision targeted at those who are not in employment, including the DWP’s Work Programme^{5 6} and the Welsh Government’s Lift and PaCE⁷ programmes.

² WIMD was revised in 2014

³ Welsh Government, Operational Programme for the European Social Fund in East Wales, p.95

⁴ Welsh Government, Operational Programme for the European Social Fund in East Wales, p.95

⁵ Work Programme participants are not eligible to participate in CfW

⁶ Referrals to the Work Programme ceased in April 2017

⁷ Which operates outside CF Clusters and specifically targets parents whose main barrier to employment is childcare

2.9 Services are delivered at a local level by teams made up of ‘seconded’ DWP Advisers and by staff employed by 19⁸ LDBs.

Intended Delivery Model

2.10 CfW is intended to engage and support those furthest from the labour market ‘to increase employability, to address barriers to labour market participation [and] to access sustainable employment’⁹. The programme was designed to work alongside existing support provision in the communities where target individuals live.

2.11 It was envisaged that CfW would provide a holistic and seamless service from engagement to employment, recognising that the nature and length of support required to move into employment will vary from one individual to another, depending upon their needs and their distance from the labour market upon joining.

2.12 Key elements of CfW are:

- the location of staff in community settings
- an assessment of the barriers to employment faced by individuals and their related support needs
- personalised advice and support provided by specialist staff, as agreed in an action plan which forms part of a participant portfolio
- liaison with other support agencies where those agencies can help to address individuals’ needs
- training designed to develop clients’ skills, build their confidence and prepare them for the workplace
- funding to help overcome barriers to training and work.

⁸ It had been envisaged that the Cooperative Group would act as LDB for two cluster areas, but it has indicated that it is no longer in a position to do so. In one local authority area, two separate LDBs serve different clusters

⁹ West Wales and the Valleys P1 Business Plan V1.0

- 2.13 CfW staff are located in community settings such as Communities First premises, Integrated Children’s Centres or community centres. This has been ‘designed in’ purposively and is expected to reduce barriers to involvement as participants feel confident in accessing these settings.
- 2.14 Figure 2.1 below provides an overview of the journey which participants are expected to take through CfW, whilst the paragraphs that follow discuss the elements of this journey in more detail.
- 2.15 It is envisaged that individuals will be referred to CfW by Jobcentre Plus (JCP), employment support providers such as Careers Wales, Communities First teams and third sector organisations such as Credit Unions and Citizens Advice Bureaux. It is also expected that JCP CfW staff will be able to access the JCP IT systems to identify benefits claimants who might gain from participation in the programme¹⁰.
- 2.16 CfW front line staff are also expected to also play a proactive role in identifying and engaging with prospective participants by working alongside partner organisations, being co-located with community services and attending community events and jobs fairs to promote the programme in person¹¹.
- 2.17 The CfW business plans refer to ‘a marketing strategy [that] will be launched to promote the CfW “brand” and to advertise the support available through the operation’¹². The document also notes that ‘newsletters’ will be used as a tool to ‘keep partnerships and stakeholders updated’¹³.
- 2.18 Prospective participants are expected to go through a ‘triage process’ which involves ‘a first level eligibility check and light touch diagnostic assessment to determine the level of need and therefore the most appropriate level of support’¹⁴. It was originally envisaged that this assessment process would be undertaken by triage workers¹⁵, though subsequent Operational Guidance

¹⁰ P3EW Business Plan, p.16 and Priority 3 Business Case, Annexe 4: CfW Participant Journey, p.2

¹¹ CfW Annexe 4: CfW Priority 3 – Participant Journey, p.2

¹² CfW EWP3 Business Case V1: Annexe 4: Participant Journey, p.1-2

¹³ CfW EWP3 Business Case V1: Annexe 4: Participant Journey, p.1-2

¹⁴ CFW – Operational Guidance 1.0 Issued to LDB and DWP, p.8

¹⁵ WWV Business Plan P1 1.0, p.32

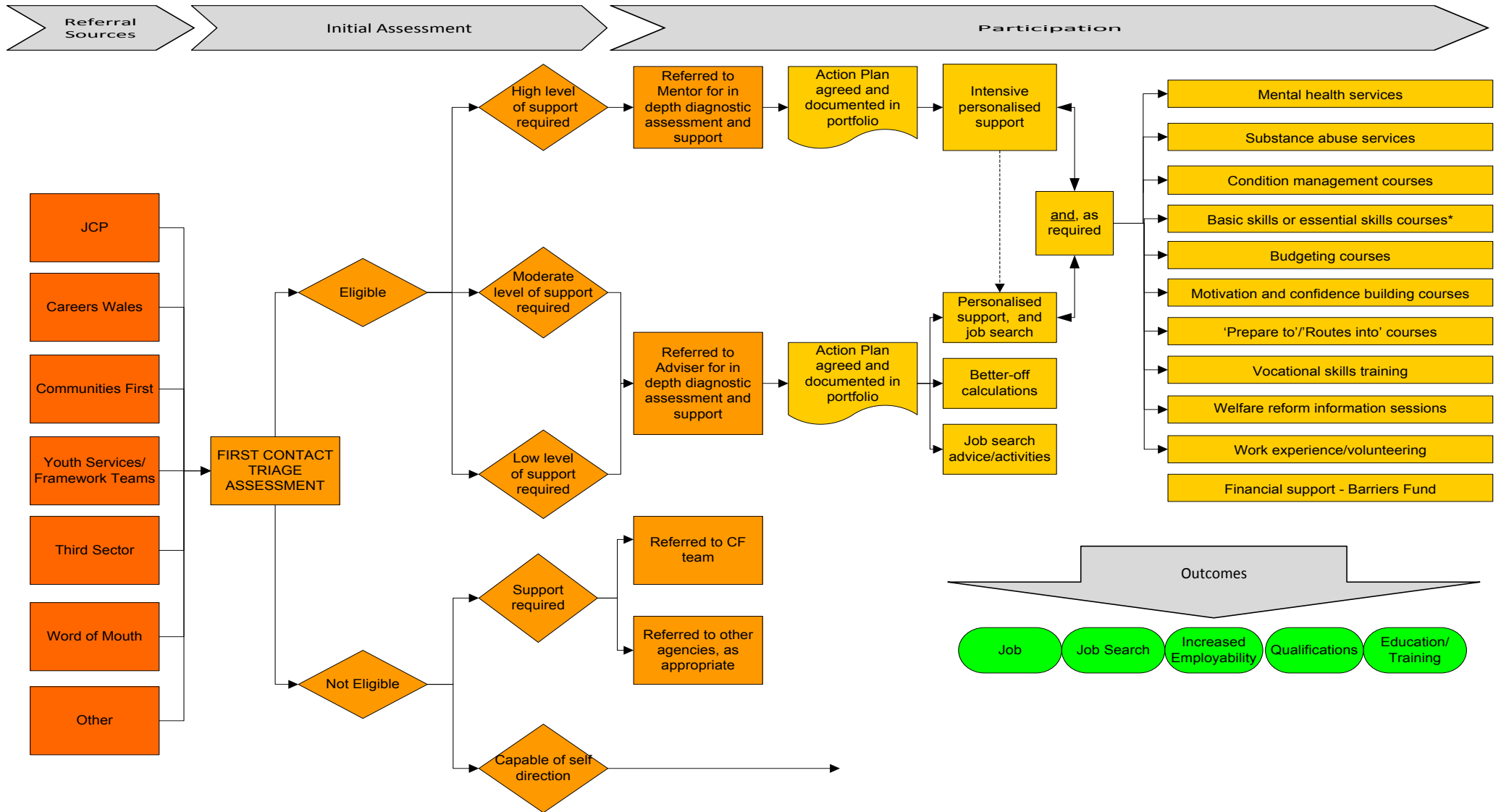
expands upon the process to indicate that this can be done by advisers, mentors or triage workers¹⁶.

- 2.19 A key purpose of the assessment process is to determine whether individual clients are likely to be:
- 0-6 months away from work
 - 6-12 months away from work
 - 12+ months away from work¹⁷.
- 2.20 This categorisation is intended to determine the depth of support required and whether clients should be assigned to an adviser or a mentor. The intention is that those deemed to be up to 12 months away from employment and, therefore requiring a low or moderate level of support, are assigned to an adviser. Those judged to be more than 12 months away from work and, therefore, requiring a high level of support, are referred to a mentor.
- 2.21 Advisers and mentors manage their own caseloads, and are responsible for leading regular interventions with participants. They conduct 'in-depth diagnostic assessments' determining needs and barriers in detail and design support to address these, documented within participant portfolios and agreed with participants.
- 2.22 Advisers offer work-related support including 'better off calculations', referral to short training courses, job search and CV/application support.
- 2.23 Mentors focus on more complex barriers which may require referral to specialist intervention e.g. for personal issues (anger management, substance misuse), housing, mental health or other barriers. Accordingly, the duration of mentor support is generally intended to last longer than adviser support.

¹⁶ CFW – Operational Guidance 1.0 Issued to LDB and DWP, p.15

¹⁷ During the drafting process for this report, policymakers emphasised that some of these systems were still in development

Figure 2.1: Participant journey



* Basic skills or essential skills include reading, writing, communication, numeracy and computer skills

- 2.24 Participants are able to access existing flexible training programmes delivered locally through mainstream sources and/or CF. In addition, where nothing appropriate is available through existing or mainstream sources, participants, via their mentor or advisor, are able to request procured and centrally managed training programmes delivered by a provider retained by the Welsh Government specifically to deliver training to CfW participants.
- 2.25 A barriers fund is available to help participants overcome final barriers to employment by enabling the purchase of, for example, interview clothing or tools to start work or to meet travel costs or short-term childcare costs.
- 2.26 A participant completes the programme once they have become employed, have entered full-time education, or decide that they no longer wish to participate. There is also an option for advisers or mentors to terminate a participant's programme if, for example, their barriers are considered so great so as to be insurmountable within CfW support. However, the length of time over which advisers and mentors are able to work with participants is not prescribed: rather it is determined by the individual's needs and willingness to engage constructively.

Staffing Structure and Key Roles in Service Delivery

- 2.27 In total, CfW employs some 250 front-line staff as well as staff in administrative, governance and management roles.
- 2.28 Front line, client facing staff fall into three categories:
- Triage workers
 - Community and parent employment advisers
 - Adult and youth mentors.
- 2.29 Triage workers are employed by LDBs and are responsible for supporting advisers and mentors. It was originally envisaged that triage workers' role would entail:

- controlling 'first contact by undertaking first stage ESF eligibility checks and low level skills assessments to determine level of need'¹⁸
- allocating clients to advisers and mentors, depending upon their level of need, or referring them to other interventions where CfW is not deemed the most appropriate programme for the individual
- providing ongoing case management support, including coordinating case-load meetings where the needs of participants are discussed
- 'ensuring the critical relationship with Communities First and wider partners is maintained and built upon'¹⁹. CfW business plans would suggest that these relationships include those with Regional Learning Partnership and Youth Engagement and Progression Framework teams²⁰
- providing 'administrative support for monitoring' and providing 'performance management information reports and other monitoring requirements to ensure all Welsh Government and ESF monitoring is accurate and compliant and updating records'²¹.

2.30 Community employment advisers (CEA) and parent employment advisers (PEA) are employed by the DWP and are responsible for supporting individuals deemed to be 0-12 months away from employment. It was originally envisaged that their role would entail:

- 'undertaking 2nd stage ESF eligibility checks, accessing [the] DWP benefit enquiry systems for proof of eligibility'²²
- Conducting 'diagnostic interviews to determine barriers to training or employment'
- carrying out 'better off' calculations and advising individuals on entitlements to in and out of work benefits

¹⁸ West Wales and the Valleys Business Plan P1 1.0, p.32

¹⁹ CFW – Operational Guidance 1.0 Issued to LDB and DWP, p.8

²⁰ East Wales Priority 3 Business Plan p.17

²¹ CFW – Operational Guidance 1.0 Issued to LDB and DWP, p.8

²² West Wales and the Valleys P1 Business Plan V1.0, p33

- matching clients' aspirations to local labour market opportunities/ 'providing a reality check of participants' aspirations against local labour market opportunities'²³
- advising individuals on job search, writing a Curriculum Vitae and interview techniques
- identifying training opportunities that will help move individuals closer to work readiness
- accessing Barriers Fund resources to help tackle financial barriers preventing participants from accessing training or employment opportunities
- providing work brokerage.

2.31 Youth and adult Mentors are employed by LDBs and are responsible for working with individuals deemed to have more complex barriers to work and to be more than 12 months from employment. It was envisaged that their role would entail:

- conducting more in-depth diagnostic assessments of the barriers to work faced by individual clients
- working with individuals to develop a personal action plan
- providing intensive mentoring support to individuals, liaising with external agencies where necessary
- identifying training opportunities that will help move individuals closer to work readiness
- accessing Barriers Fund resources to help tackle financial barriers preventing participants from accessing training or employment opportunities
- maintaining "light touch" dialogue with participants post employment to pre-empt difficulties and to ensure that employment is maintained'²⁴.

²³ East Wales Priority 3 Business Plan p.7

²⁴ East Wales Priority 3 Business Plan p.6

Programme Targets and Budgets

- 2.32 CfW was launched in May 2015, with the intention that the programme would run until at least March 2018. In January 2017, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children announced that CfW would continue until March 2020.
- 2.33 Tables 2.1 and 2.2 summarise the primary outcome targets agreed for Priority 1 and Priority 3 respectively over the programme's five year life period.

Table 2.1: Priority 1 Primary Outcome Targets 2015-2020

Priority 1 Primary Outcome Targets	East Wales ²⁵	West Wales and Valleys ²⁶	All Wales
	2015-20	2015-20	2015-20
Economically Inactive (aged 25 and over), not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment.			
1 Participants	7,540	22,355	29,895
2 Outcome: entering employment including self-employment upon leaving	1,317	3,900	5,217
3 Outcome: engaged in job search upon leaving	533	1,588	2,121
4 Outcome: gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving	1,318	3,906	5,224
5 Outcome: increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity	1,487	4,400	5,887
Long-term unemployed (aged 25 and over), not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment			
6 Participants	3,772	11,177	14,949
7 Outcome: entering employment including self-employment upon leaving	649	1,919	2,568
8 Outcome: gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving	608	1,807	2,415
9 Outcome: increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity	701	2,077	2,778
Total (aged 25 and over), not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment.			
1 Participants	11,312	33,532	44,844
2 Outcome: entering employment including self-employment upon leaving	1,966	5,819	7,785
3 Outcome: engaged in job search upon leaving	533	1,588	2,121
4 Outcome: gaining a qualification or work relevant certification upon leaving.	1,926	5,713	7,639
5 Outcome: increasing employability through completing work experience placement or volunteering opportunity	2,188	6,477	8,665

²⁵ CfW Operational Extension Business Case v2.0, p21

²⁶ CfW Operational Extension Business Case v2.0, pp.22

Table 2.2: Priority 3 Primary Outcome Targets 2015-20

Priority 3 Primary Outcome Targets	East Wales	West Wales and Valleys	All Wales
16-24 year old NEETs			
1 Participants	1,758	5,679	7,437
2 Outcome: gaining qualifications upon leaving.	343	1,102	1,445
3 Outcome: in education or training upon leaving.	169	917	1,086
4 Outcome: entering employment upon leaving.	503	1,582	2,085

2.34 The tables show 17% of participants aged 25 and over are expected to enter employment or self-employment upon leaving CfW. These expectations are the same for long term unemployed participants and those who had been economically inactive.

2.35 Some 28% of 16-24 year old participants NEET are expected to enter employment upon leaving. In addition, 15 per cent of all 16-24 year old NEETs are expected to progress into education or training. It is notable, however, that a smaller proportion of participants from East Wales (10 per cent) than participants from West Wales and the Valleys (16 per cent) are expected to progress into education or training.

2.36 Tables 2.3 and 2.4 set out the budgets agreed for Priority 1 and Priority 3 respectively over the life of the CfW programme.

Table 2.3: Priority 1 Costs and Sources of Funds 2015-20

Priority 1	East Wales	West Wales and Valleys	All Wales
Costs			
Total operation Cost	£12,798,075	£38,584,486	£51,382,561
Source of funds			
Welsh Government	£5,915,059	£12,438,480	£18,353,539
Department for Work and Pensions	£483,978	£1,451,935	£1,935,913
ESF	£6,399,038	£24,694,071	£31,093,109
Intervention Rate ²⁷	50%	64%	60%
Cost per participant	£1,311	£1,151	£1,146
Planned cost per participant progressing into employment	£6,510	£6,631	£6,600

Table 2.4: Priority 3 Costs and Sources of Funds 2015-20

Priority 3	East Wales	West Wales and Valleys	All Wales
Costs			
Total operation Cost	£4,871,978	£14,741,289	£19,613,267
Ffynhonnell y cyllid			
Welsh Government	£2,314,994	£4,943,880	£7,258,874
Department for Work and Pensions	£120,995	£362,984	£483,979
ESF	£2,435,989	£9,434,425	£11,870,414
Intervention Rate	50%	£14,741,289.00	60%
Cost per participant	£2,771	£2,596	£2,637
Cost per participant progressing into employment	£9,656	£9,318	£9,407

²⁷ This relates to the ESF contribution to the net eligible costs of the programme, expressed as a percentage

3. Establishment of the programme

3.1 In this chapter we consider the establishment of CfW and the resources and arrangements put in place to underpin the programme's delivery. The chapter is presented in seven sections as follows:

- Programme development and launch
- Operational guidance
- Participant portfolio
- Data sharing agreements
- Monitoring
- Staff skills
- Resourcing.

Programme development and launch

3.2 CfW was developed by the Welsh Government in close cooperation with the DWP. The programme was very much seen as a means of addressing both organisations' ambition to 'reduce poverty through work' and add to mainstream DWP (JCP) services by reaching out and taking 'a holistic', 'person centred' approach to supporting people who do not normally come into contact with those services or who might need more support than mainstream services are able to provide.

3.3 The programme was specifically designed to 'build upon the Communities First platform' whilst drawing upon lessons learnt from the implementation of initiatives such as the DWP's Want to Work and the Welsh Government's Lift programme. Stakeholders very clearly regarded CfW as 'an employment programme' which capitalises upon Communities First's reputation and accessible infrastructure to connect with those who mainstream services do not reach. Indeed, a number of LDB representatives pointed to a growing emphasis upon 'employability' within Communities First over the last two or so years and noted that 'job outcomes' were seen as something central to CF in their areas. This meant that for some LDBs, CfW had seemed a natural, complementary extension to CF.

- 3.4 The development of CfW broke new ground in that it brought together diverse organisations in ways and on a scale not previously seen. At the highest level, CfW brought the Welsh Government and the non-devolved DWP together in a way that was considered innovative and ‘unique’ across the UK and that allowed the leverage of a significant level of ESF support. At an operational level, CfW was seen as a means of bringing together teams with different but complementary skillsets in order to provide holistic, client centred services.
- 3.5 Programme development was led by a senior official within the Welsh Government, alongside two senior operations managers who were seconded to the Welsh Government from the DWP. Stakeholders with a strategic overview of the programme felt that this arrangement proved invaluable in terms of ensuring that lessons learnt from the implementation of Want to Work were taken on board in the design of CfW and that the arrangements put in place would fit in with DWP systems and processes, as well as meeting the requirements of the Welsh Government and WEFO.
- 3.6 The two individuals seconded from the DWP to the Welsh Government continue to work as part of the CfW management team and have line management responsibility for account managers who, in turn, act as the interface between the Welsh Government and CfW delivery teams in each cluster.
- 3.7 Strategic stakeholders involved in CfW’s development recognised that setting up a programme involving such a diverse range of organisations (‘with a lot of moving parts’) would present ‘challenges’ along the way, not least in terms of managing different world-views, integrating teams and melding cultures. Whilst considerable progress has been made, there have been problems at various levels and the integration of staff from different organisations into a one programme team continues to be an area of focus for programme managers. This is discussed further in later sections of this report.
- 3.8 It was intended that the CfW programme would be rolled out on an incremental basis, with CfW advisers being appointed between April and October 2015 and the LDB elements of the programme being ‘piloted’ in four

CF clusters from June 2015. It was envisaged that the programme would be fully operational from April 2016²⁸.

3.9 In practice, however, the programme took longer to implement than envisaged. A number of CfW advisers²⁹ had been appointed by October 2015, and most were in post by March 2016. It took longer than envisaged for LDBs to prepare themselves operationally to adopt the programme, with the majority appointing front line staff during the second and third quarters of 2016. By April 2017, LDBs were involved in delivering the CfW programme in 48 CfW clusters across Wales. An LDB serving four areas, having initially expressed interest, concluded that it was not in a position to take on the delivery of CfW. The Welsh Government has now found alternative arrangements for these clusters and these are currently being put in place, though CfW Advisers have been active in all the areas since the programme's early days.

3.10 The delay in implementing CfW was thought by those interviewed to be attributable to several factors including:

- the time taken for the DWP to recruit new advisers where former Want to Work advisers were not transferred over to CfW
- a lack of clarity about aspects of WEFO's requirements and the time taken to resolve State Aid considerations
- reluctance on the part of some LDBs to adopt certain terms of the agreement, for example 'secondment letters' which local authorities were expected to issue to staff employed in LDB roles
- the time taken for some LDBs to recruit triage offices and mentors once they had confirmed participation in the programme and agreed on conditions
- uncertainty surrounding the future of CF following an announcement by the Welsh Government Communities Secretary in October 2016 that he was 'minded to phase out' the programme³⁰, albeit that the final decision

²⁸ West Wales and the Valleys P1 Business Plan v1.0, p.40

²⁹ Many of whom previously worked in DWP advisory roles, primarily within the DWP's Want to Work programme, but also in other roles such as Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment Advisers and Working Links Lone Parent Advisers

³⁰ National Assembly for Wales, The Record of Proceedings 11/10/2016, 14:29

was not announced until February 2017³¹. We return later to the relationship between CfW and the CF programme.

- 3.11 CfW is, nevertheless, now fully operational in all but four clusters, albeit that some are still at the early stages of implementation.
- 3.12 On reflection, those involved in the management and delivery of CfW thought that a 'mobilisation phase' should have been built into the programme. However, it was recognised that certain factors made the launch of the programme more pressing, not least the need to re-deploy a number of DWP advisers who had previously worked on the Want to Work programme³², thus retaining expertise built up over several years. Policy makers were also eager to get the programme rolling as soon as possible within the 2014-20 European Structural Fund programming period.

Operational Guidance

- 3.13 In December 2015, the Welsh Government CfW team issued Operational Guidance for the CfW programme. The Guidance was updated in April 2016, at about the time when LDBs first became involved in the implementation of CfW.
- 3.14 The 57 page Operational Guidance document contains sections relating to:
- CfW's objectives and the roles of advisers, mentors and triage support workers
 - eligibility criteria, the enrolment process and evidence requirements
 - an outline of the triage process
 - the participant portfolio
 - evidence requirements in relation to outcomes
 - the Barriers Fund
 - training provision
 - the process for exiting participants

³¹ National Assembly for Wales, The Record of Proceedings 14/02/2017, 15:17

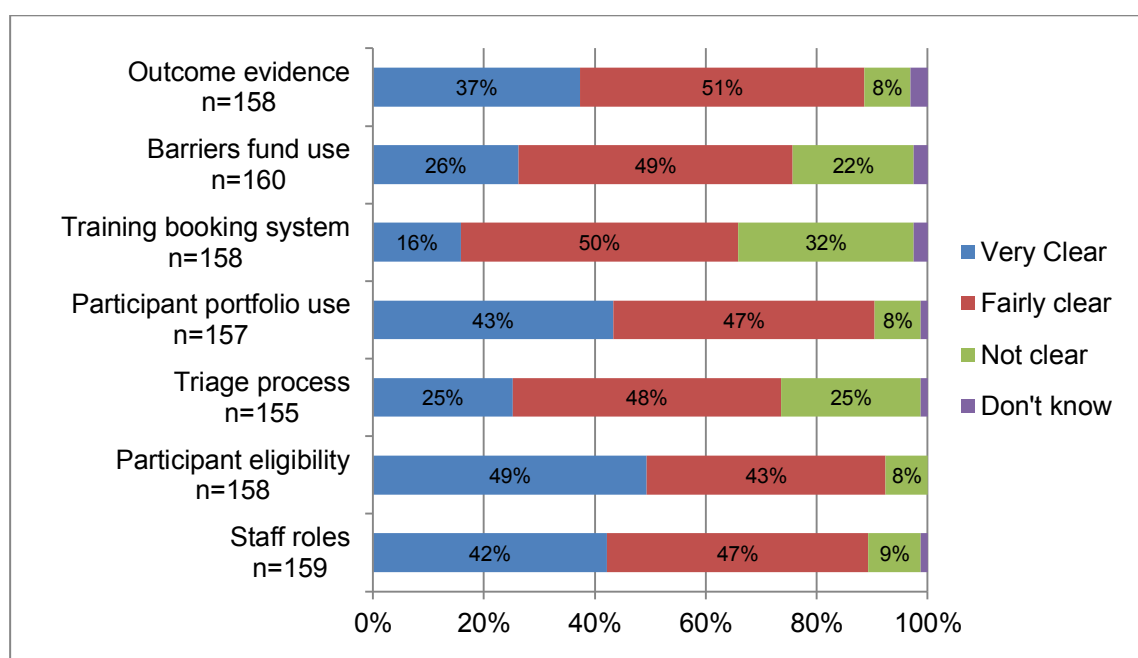
³² Want to Work was funded under the 2007-13 European Structural Fund programmes and came to a close in June 2015

- monitoring arrangements
 - marketing and publicity.
- 3.15 The document also provides standardised programme documents in a series of 14 annexes.
- 3.16 It was generally felt that the Operational Guidance issued for CfW is clear and comprehensive. The document was said to provide a ‘useful overall flavour’ of the programme and was described as a useful reference point. Some contributors felt that the Operational Guidance stood out among programme guidance documents issued by the Welsh Government. Front line delivery staff variously described the Operational Guidance as ‘useful’ and a ‘handy’ document and a ‘bible’ for the programme, though many believed there to be some room for improvement and some were frustrated by the number³³ of revisions to the guidance³⁴.
- 3.17 Figure 3.1 below shows survey respondents’ perceptions of the clarity with which the Operational Guidance sets out particular aspects of the programme
- 3.18 89 per cent (142) of survey respondents to our survey thought that the Operational Guidance is very or fairly clear in setting out the roles of CfW employment advisers, mentors and triage workers. Of the nine per cent (15) of respondents who did not feel that the Operational Guidance was clear about the roles of CfW staff, almost half (7) said that the descriptions given of the roles do not match how things are done in practice, with individual respondents noting that ‘each cluster has interpreted the guidance in a different way’ and that arrangements have evolved since CfW was launched.

³³ Two revisions have been issued since 2015, as well as six e-mail notifications of changes

³⁴ Though the evaluators understand some of these are driven by revisions to WEFO ESF guidance

Figure 3.1: Perceived clarity of Operational Guidance



3.19 When asked how the Operational Guidance might be improved, a number called for it to ‘be more clear with roles and what is expected from each team member’. In particular, survey respondents and those interviewed face to face called for greater clarity surrounding the purpose of the triage worker’s role and how the role should be carried out. They also called for more obvious demarcation between the roles of advisers and mentors, particularly in terms of the nature of participants with which each should be working. The nature of outcomes which respondents argued are appropriate to each role is discussed later in this report, but in arguing for greater clarity about the roles of advisers and mentors, one respondent suggested that advisers should be responsible for ‘interview skills, updating CVs, employer engagement, knowledge of labour market trends, [providing access to] guaranteed interview slots from JCP, work trials opportunities’. Mentors, it was suggested, should be responsible for helping clients address ‘barriers, intensive mentoring support, pre-employment training (holistic approach), CV’s, training, soft skills, work experience and volunteering opportunities, job searching skills’ and ensuring ‘regular attendance’.

3.20 Ninety per cent of survey respondents (146) felt that the Operational Guidance sets out participants’ eligibility criteria very or fairly clearly. Of the seven per cent (12) that thought the Operational Guidance is not clear about

participant eligibility criteria, over half (7) said that the document does not give sufficient information whilst slightly fewer (5) said that relevant information can be difficult to find.

- 3.21 Survey respondents and those interviewed during our fieldwork suggested that greater clarity is needed within the Guidance surrounding ‘the definition of economic[ally] inactive’ and ‘the evidence required’ to ‘demonstrate eligibility if someone is economically inactive’. It was also said that the Guidance needs to be updated to cater for the implications of welfare reform, including the ‘eligibility of Universal Credit claimants’ and the ‘long term unemployed claiming ESA, who have been re-assessed and claiming JSA’³⁵.
- 3.22 On an allied point, a small number of contributors referred to an independently developed DWP eligibility checklist which they found very useful, but which did not form part of the Operational Guidance. The implication was that such a checklist could form a useful addition to the guidance.
- 3.23 A number of contributors called for the relaxation of eligibility criteria, both in terms of allowing people living just outside Communities First clusters access to CfW (possibly using ‘fuzzy postcode boundaries’ as is done within the Communities First programme) and in terms of opening the programme up to individuals who do not necessarily meet the 12 month plus unemployed criterion³⁶. Contributors seemed to be driven by two separate considerations in making these suggestions: first it was felt that the strict use of Communities First postcodes to determine eligibility excludes deserving people who live ‘on the other side of a street’ from the programme, or as one contributor noted, people living in a ‘homeless hostel in our area [that] is not in a Communities First post code’. Similarly, some interviewees pointed to people who they felt they could help, but who for example, had not been unemployed for long enough. Secondly, it was thought that relaxing eligibility criteria would help CW teams to meet engagement targets, with some being candid that they have struggled to engage the numbers required. In some cases, this seemed to owe something to the preferential allocation of clients to other programmes (e.g. Lift). It is perhaps worth noting in this regard, that the power to relax

³⁵ Welsh Government requires guidance in this regard from WEFO

³⁶ It is understood that the introduction of the Employability Grant will address some of these points

eligibility criteria rests with WEFO rather than the CfW team within the Welsh Government.

- 3.24 Twenty four per cent of survey respondents (39) believed that the Operational Guidance is very clear about the how the triage process is expected to work, whilst 47 per cent (75) said that it was fairly clear. Twenty four per cent of respondents (39) did not think that the Operational Guidance is clear about how the triage process should work, however. Of those, a small majority (23) said that it does not give sufficient information, which possibly reinforces the point made previously that 'each cluster has interpreted the guidance in a different way'. We return to this point later in this report.
- 3.25 Eighty nine per cent of survey respondents (142) said that the Operational Guidance sets out how the participant portfolio should be used very or fairly clearly. Eight per cent of respondents (13) did not feel that the Operational Guidance is clear about the use of the participant portfolio, with the majority of those (9) saying that the Guidance does not provide sufficient information. Our face to face discussions with front line staff suggested that most think the guidance on the use of portfolios is fine, with some saying that the document itself is fairly self-explanatory.
- 3.26 Asked what could be done to improve the Guidance on how the participant portfolio should be used, several survey respondents called for more direction on 'minimum standards for [the record of] conversations' and for 'explicit examples' to be given 'of what is required in the portfolio', including how to record sensitive information about 'first meetings and barriers'.
- 3.27 Nevertheless, it was suggested by front line staff and managers contributing to our fieldwork that there is a degree of inconsistency in the approach taken to completing and managing portfolios, with the implication that mentors in some areas are considerably more thorough than advisers. This may owe something to mentors working with clients who face more complex barriers to employment and generally spending more time with those clients over a longer period.
- 3.28 Whilst 49 per cent of survey respondents (79) felt that the Operational Guidance was fairly clear about the system for booking participants onto

training, only 16 per cent (25) said that it was very clear. Thirty one per cent of respondents (50) felt that the guidance was unclear with 20 of those saying that it gives no or insufficient information. Survey respondents who said that the Guidance is not clear called for 'more information' to be made available surrounding provision available from the designated CfW training provider and 'how to use and refer into' such provision. It was acknowledged, however, that the 'procured training provider [was] not in place when guidelines [were] issued' and the 'electronic booking system was not available'. The designated provider's role in the delivery of training and the Electronic Booking System put in place are discussed in more detail in the next chapter of this report.

- 3.29 Twenty six per cent of survey respondents (42) said that the Operational Guidance sets out very clearly what the Barriers Fund can and cannot be used for and 49 per cent (79) said that it did so fairly clearly. Some 22 per cent of respondents (35) did not feel that the Operational Guidance is clear about the possible uses of the Barriers Fund, with 14 of those saying that it does not give sufficient information and a similar proportion saying that the information given can be difficult to understand.
- 3.30 When asked how the Operational Guidance might be improved, a small number (five) of survey respondents suggested that it might be useful to set out 'lists of things that can and cannot be bought with the Barriers Fund' and 'maximum spend on a barriers application'. The Barriers Fund is discussed in more detail in the next chapter of this report.
- 3.31 Almost 37 per cent of respondents (59) said that the Operational Guidance sets out outcome evidence requirements for CfW very clearly whilst a further 50 per cent (81) said that it does so fairly clearly. Of the eight percent (13) that did not think that outcome evidence requirements are set out clearly, roughly a third each felt that the Guidance document does not give sufficient information, that relevant information can be difficult to find and that the information given is difficult to understand. Individual respondents noted that there have been 'conflicting messages about evidence requirements as the project has evolved' and that the Guidance is 'not specific enough [about] all the evidence that is required'.

- 3.32 Whilst some front line delivery staff felt that ‘too many changes have been made’ to the Operational Guidance, there was a broad recognition that it needs to be ‘a living document’ which is updated as the CfW programme matures and evolves and as ‘CfW staff seek clarity on certain points’.
- Although respondents argued that revisions need to be kept to a minimum, it was suggested that the Guidance could do with being ‘overhauled as the operation has been active now for over a year’. It was also suggested that there might be some merit in involving or at least consulting practitioners in making any further revisions to the Guidance.
- 3.33 Six survey respondents said that an ‘online searchable version’ of the Operational Guidance would be helpful. It was also suggested that a ‘FAQ’ section might be added ‘so that as questions are asked, it can be updated’.
- 3.34 Survey respondents and contributors to our fieldwork seemed divided as to the level of detail needed in the Operational Guidance. Some felt that ‘the guidance is too vague’ in places, which allows room for ‘different interpretations’ and for practices to evolve in different ways from one cluster to another. Some also commented that ‘interpretations of the guidance differ’ between CfW staff employed by the DWP and by LDBs. Others described the Guidance as a ‘huge’ and ‘long winded’ document containing a ‘vast amount of information to digest’ and argued that it should be ‘simplified and condensed’. A handful of front line staff said that they tended to refer to ‘desk aids’ in preference to the full Operational Guidance because they found them more accessible and some called for more ‘desk aids/aide memoires’ to be added to the Guidance.
- 3.35 Allied to this, it was suggested that the Operational Guidance might be improved by the addition of ‘step by step guides’, supported by ‘work flow diagrams’ where appropriate. Several respondents also called for ‘templates of good practice’ showing, for example, what a ‘gold standard’ Barriers Fund application or participant portfolio might look like: as one respondent put it, ‘if you want consistent portfolios, an example of a good one could be included’.
- 3.36 A small number of survey respondents suggested that ‘guidance relating to marketing’ could be improved upon, including guidance surrounding the use of

social media, the appearance of CfW 'logos' in marketing materials and how marketing budgets devolved to LDBs can (rather than cannot) be spent. It was also noted that it would be useful if the Guidance was explicit about the 'Welsh Government's central role in marketing and promoting the programme across all the clusters'.

3.37 Finally, some survey respondents suggested that 'training sessions' might be held 'on how to use the guidance'. Such sessions, it was felt, would help reduce the chances of the Guidance being interpreted in different ways.

3.38 Fifty eight per cent of survey respondents (94) said that they had sought clarification about something in the Operational Guidance from the Welsh Government. Thirty eight per cent of these (36) had found the clarification received very helpful and 47 per cent (44) had found it fairly helpful.

Participant Portfolio

3.39 The participant portfolio is a standard form designed to capture:

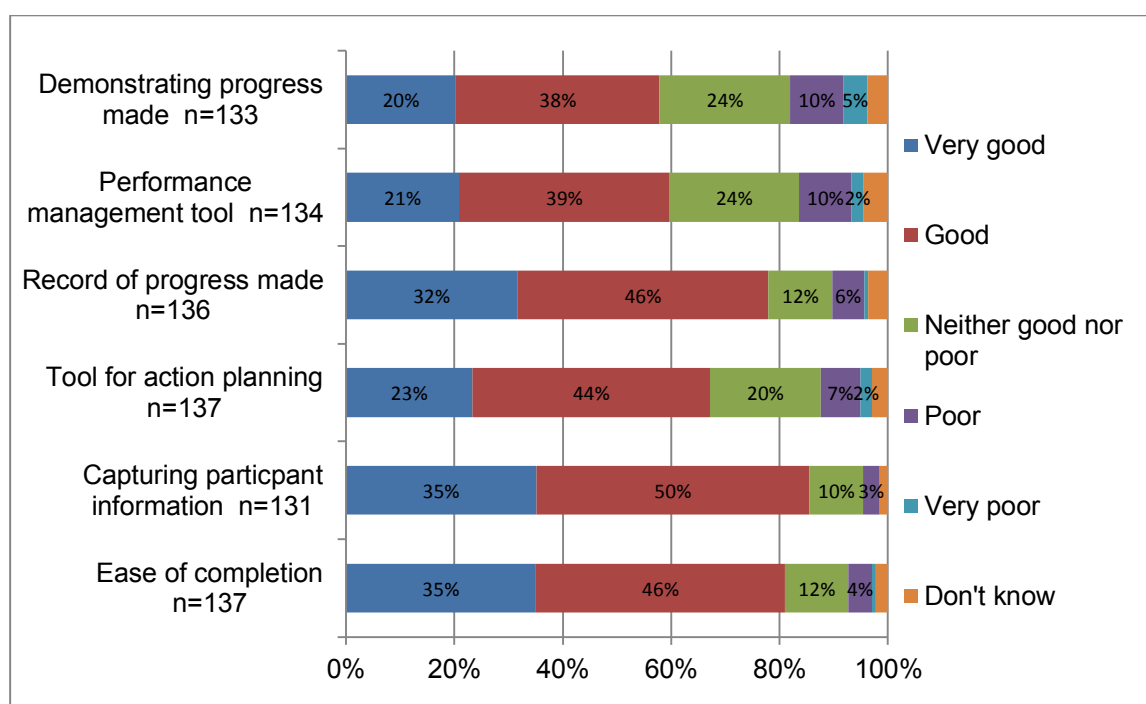
- participants personal details i.e. name, address, telephone numbers, e-mail address, national insurance number and date of birth
- information about any health conditions or disability that affects participants' day to day activities
- participants' employment history
- details of participants' qualifications or courses which they have attended
- information about participants' interests and hobbies
- whether or not participants are able to drive, have access to a car or to public transport
- details of any licences held e.g. fork lift truck or light goods vehicle driving licences
- details of participants' job goals and aspirations i.e. the type of work, the pay level, location and employment pattern.

3.40 The portfolio document then provides for details of 'conversations and consultations' between the participant and adviser or mentor to be recorded. This section of the portfolio aims to capture the date of activity, the time spent

in conversation and the details of discussions that take place. Space is provided for both the participant and adviser/mentor to sign the portfolio to confirm that the notes made of conversations are accurate.

- 3.41 The portfolio document also provides the capture of details surrounding:
- monies spent in assisting the participant, along with an explanation of the reasons for any expenditure
 - any training undertaken, including details of qualifications or work relevant certifications achieved
 - details of job outcomes achieved, including the name and address of the employer name and the date upon which employment starts
 - a summary of the outcomes achieved by participants e.g. qualifications gained, entering education, completing work experience or volunteering placements, undertaking job search upon leaving, entering employment, etc.
- 3.42 Our survey of front line delivery staff explored their perceptions of the participant portfolio in terms of its ease of completion and its usefulness as a tool for capturing participants' personal information, action planning, recording and demonstrating progress and for managing performance.
- 3.43 Figure 3.2 shows that 81 per cent of front line delivery staff responding to our survey (111) said that they found the participant portfolio very good or good in terms of ease of completion, though triage workers and advisers were somewhat more enthusiastic than mentors, with 86 per cent (69) saying that they found it easy to complete compared to 68 per cent of mentors (37). Eighty five per cent of respondents (112) also said that they found the participant portfolio very good or good in terms of its usefulness as a tool for capturing relevant personal information about participants. Again, triage workers seemed rather more convinced of the portfolio's utility as a data capture tool, with 93 per cent (26) saying that it was very good or good compared to 79 per cent of advisers (41) and 74 per cent of mentors (40).

Figure 3.2: Perceived utility of participant portfolio



3.44 Sixty seven per cent of respondents (92) said that the portfolio was very good or good in terms of its usefulness as a tool for action planning with participants. Mentors (at 53 per cent) were slightly less positive than triage workers and advisers about the usefulness of the portfolio as a tool for action planning.

3.45 Seventy eight per cent of respondents (106) said that it was a very good or good means of recording progress made by participants. Allied to this, 58 per cent of respondents (77) said that the portfolio was a very good or good means of helping clients see the progress they are making. It is perhaps telling, however, that advisers and mentors, who are the primary users of portfolios when working with clients, were rather less convinced (at 51 per cent and 47 per cent respectively) of the merits of the portfolio in helping clients see the progress they are making than triage workers (at 75 per cent).

3.46 Some 60 per cent of respondents (80) thought the portfolio a very good or good performance management tool. Triage workers were most positive about the usefulness of portfolios as a performance management tool, with 71 per cent saying that it was very good or good. Mentors were rather more

ambivalent, with 34 per cent saying that portfolios were neither good nor poor management tools.

- 3.47 Asked how the portfolio might be improved, survey respondents and staff interviewed during our fieldwork pointed to the need for a 'barriers section' to capture information about issues which might hinder clients from progressing towards or into work. At present, barriers which individuals face are recorded in various sections of the portfolios, including the 'health/disability' and 'job goals and aspirations' sections as well as in the 'records of consultations and conversations'.
- 3.48 This means that it is not always easy to get a sense of the problems which individual clients face (without reading the whole portfolio) and, therefore, to understand why particular activities are being undertaken.
- 3.49 It was argued that the addition of a specific section to note barriers would make it easier for CfW staff to broach sensitive issues with clients and reduce the risk that advisers or mentors start working with clients in ignorance of particular problems. As one respondent put it, 'if there was a form that asks the question outright the customer won't feel as if they are being judged and we can just tell them the questions are part of the process which can help us assess what support we need to have in place'. Some respondents argued for a 'tick-list' of potential barriers such as 'health conditions', 'alcohol/drug dependency', difficult 'living situations', caring responsibilities, 'debt', 'criminal records', 'basic skills' deficits and a lack of 'confidence'. It was thought that such a tick-list would help 'prompt conversations that are difficult to start' and act as a 'reminder' as staff 'don't always think of asking those questions'. Two clusters had introduced additional pages to the portfolio document specifically to capture potential barriers e.g. mental or physical health problems, substance misuse issues, childcare responsibilities etc. One of these clusters used the information collected about barriers alongside information about other aspects of participants' lives e.g. skills levels, aspirations and goals, home life etc. to come up with 'Work Star'³⁷ profiles for clients. The intention is

³⁷ Work Star is one of a set of a suite of Outcomes Stars, which are tools designed to measure service recipients' progress towards certain goals. These trademarked tools are owned by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Limited and are available to use under licence

to repeat the work star profiling exercise at certain points during participants' journeys through the programme to demonstrate progress. The other cluster had also introduced a second page for setting out a 'plan to overcome barriers', including 'target dates' and intended 'outcomes'.

- 3.50 It is perhaps worth noting that the systematic collection of information about the barriers faced by individual participants could, over time, help build up a profile of participants across the programme.
- 3.51 It was clear from our review of portfolios that some barriers only come to light as participants work with advisers and mentors. This means that any barriers section to the portfolio would need to be capable of being updated as a clearer picture of participants' individual situation emerges. This would need to be borne in mind, if profiles of barriers are used to measure 'progress', as some clusters plan to do, by using 'work stars'.
- 3.52 Several contributors said that the utility of the participant portfolio would be improved through the addition of an 'action plan' or 'goal setting' section. Whilst it was acknowledged that the existing 'job goals and aspirations' section may allow clients' ambitions to be noted, it does not really encourage discussion or the recording of how these ambitions might be realised. It was thought that an action plan would be useful in setting out modest but important 'short term/long term' steps agreed in order to overcome barriers and in progressing clients towards employment. Again, contributors suggested that a standardised 'tick list' of potential actions such as 'UJ account created', 'up to date CV' prepared, 'training completed' or 'interview attended' might be useful, though it would also be necessary to allow room for more personalised actions to be noted and 'for barriers identified ... [to] be marked off when addressed'. Any action plan document would need to be sufficiently flexible to allow long and short term goals to evolve as, according to front line staff, CfW clients have a tendency to change their minds. Alongside action plan documents, it was suggested that it would be useful to issue clients with a brief note, possibly in postcard style, of two or three actions that they have agreed to undertake before the next meeting. This was seen as a means of increasing participants' sense of reciprocal duty and ownership of the process.

- 3.53 Contributors argued that action plans would provide a tool for monitoring the progress made by participants and, crucially, would allow participants to see for themselves the progress they had made. A small number of survey respondents called for the use of tools such as 'a progress star', 'a Rickter Assessment' or 'a 1-10 scale' 'as a means of 'graphically or pictorially displaying progress in various areas i.e. confidence/training level/thoughts and feelings' as part of an ongoing process of diagnosis, action planning and review. It was thought that a 'visual' representation of progress would be helpful in allowing participants 'to see at a glance the progress they are making rather than reading the written word about themselves'.
- 3.54 A number of front line delivery staff called for an 'electronic version' of the participant portfolio. A paper based system was seen as archaic by some and several front line delivery staff said that filling forms manually and writing long-hand notes of discussions with clients is very time consuming. It was argued that individual mentors/advisers' handwriting 'may be challenging for some participants to read' (particularly those with literacy issues or visual impairments) and that hand-written portfolios 'can become quite messy quite quickly'. It was also argued that 'it would be easier and quicker to type client notes', that electronic files would take less time to organise and manage and that it would be valuable to have an online back-up of portfolios. As one contributor put it, 'it doesn't look great with corrections on it and you always have to go back to read the notes to check the outcomes, rather than it being on the computer and easy to find'.
- 3.55 Other arguments put forward in favour of electronic portfolios included that they would do away with the need to scan quite so many documents, that they would remove the risk associated with outreach workers carrying around documents containing sensitive personal information and that they could feed into a database of participants and thus allow sophisticated analysis of client characteristics, progression and achievement to be undertaken.
- 3.56 Having said this, it was acknowledged that hand writing notes in portfolios is more personal than 'tapping away' at a computer when working with clients and some valued having something 'physical' or tangible to work with. Contributors also noted that problems in accessing the internet in some

community locations (and, in the case of advisers, many CF premises), mean it will always be necessary to have resort to paper versions of portfolio documentation.

3.57 At a more functional level, it was suggested that the participant portfolio might be improved by:

- adding a box for capturing participants' courtesy titles, particularly given that this is required for the CfW database of participants
- removing the need to 'duplicate' information captured in the enrolment form and the participant portfolio
- making some sections bigger to accommodate individual advisers/mentors' handwriting as well as the volume of information that needs to be captured in particular sections e.g. 'qualifications/ courses attended'
- adding tick-lists of barriers commonly faced by participants (see above) and short to medium term outcomes that participants typically need to achieve (see above) whilst also allowing for more individual barriers and outcomes to be identified. It was argued that tick lists would bring about greater 'standardisation' in the completion of portfolios
- adding a 'diary section which some participants might complete and reflect upon'
- bringing all the necessary documentation together within 'just one booklet' without 'having loads of different annexes and text stencils'.

3.58 Contributors also called for an example of a 'perfect portfolio' for each category of client to be made available, so that front line staff have a better idea of what they should strive to replicate.

3.59 Finally, whilst some individuals recognised the value of participants signing the record of conversations and consultations at the end of each meeting, many found this practice burdensome³⁸. One contributor argued that it is questionable whether participants actually read the notes written in reality, in some cases, because they have reading difficulties.

³⁸ It was noted that this is currently a WEFO requirement

Data sharing agreements

- 3.60 Data about participants and the outcomes they achieve are reported in a standardised spreadsheet supplied by WEFO. Each LDB and the DWP is required to complete and submit the spreadsheet to the Welsh Government on a quarterly basis. The Welsh Government then collates the data submitted and removes duplicate records, using the national insurance number as a unique identifier for each participant recorded.
- 3.61 The Operational Guidance makes it clear that ‘all staff should ensure that they are aware and conform to their own organisations’ processes and practices regarding Data Protection at all times’³⁹. In relation to evidence required to demonstrate eligibility for CfW support, the Operational Guidance makes it clear that ‘due to Data Protection regulations’ requests for ‘screen prints’ setting out participants’ personal details (name, address, National Insurance number, date of birth, benefits being claimed, duration of unemployment) ‘must come direct from the participant and the information can only be provided directly to the participant’⁴⁰.
- 3.62 It is clear that not being able to gain access to DWP client records has been a source of much frustration for triage workers and mentors and several felt that advisers in their clusters have been less than helpful in using DWP records to identify individuals who might benefit from CfW support. Indeed, some triage workers and mentors felt that advisers in their areas had been intentionally obstructive, failing even to hand over information that they were at liberty to disclose. Having said this, it was clear that the inability to share client information openly within CfW teams was a source of irritation to advisers and delivery managers too.
- 3.63 Front line staff responding to our survey pointed to the need for a central CfW database, bringing together information from DWP and LDB systems. It was thought that this would help to bring about consistency in the approach taken by triage workers, mentors and advisers as well as increasing uniformity in the way participant portfolios are completed and managed. It was also thought

³⁹ Welsh Government, (2016) Communities for Work Operational Guidance V1.0, p.16

⁴⁰ Welsh Government, (2016) Communities for Work Operational Guidance V1.0, p.21

that such a database would help the process of managing clients' journeys as well as streamlining programme management.

Monitoring arrangements

- 3.64 The Operational Guidance states that the objectives of monitoring are to 'measure the programme's effectiveness' in meeting Priority 1 and Priority 3 goals and to 'ensure expenditure is made in accordance with the programme's business plan and in compliance with European and Welsh Government regulations'⁴¹.
- 3.65 Primary responsibility for monitoring the programme's implementation rests with four Welsh Government account managers, each of whom have oversight of specific clusters. The account managers' role involves making 'regular visits' to clusters to meet 'both LDB and JCP staff so that a comprehensive understanding of delivery at a local level can be gained'⁴². Account managers are also responsible for inspecting records 'to ensure that the systems for undertaking eligibility and due diligence checks are sufficiently robust' and for monitoring 'performance against targets'.
- 3.66 The Guidance expressly notes that the 'monitoring activity at individual cluster level will have a stronger focus on the relationship and performance management of the Local Delivery Teams'⁴³. In addition to this, the Operational Guidance states that 'DWP delivery managers will be responsible for undertaking monitoring checks for their advisers within the Local Delivery Teams'⁴⁴.
- 3.67 Most LDB managers interviewed said that they had a good relationship with their Welsh Government account manager. Account Managers were said to be responsive and helpful, with one contributor commenting that there is 'no question too small'. In the same vein, over 44 per cent of front line staff responding to our survey (70) said that they found Welsh Government account managers very helpful and almost 39 per cent (62) said that they found them fairly helpful. The few respondents who said that Account

⁴¹ Welsh Government, (2016) Communities for Work Operational Guidance V1.0, p.50

⁴² Welsh Government, (2016) Communities for Work Operational Guidance V1.0, p.51

⁴³ Welsh Government, (2016) Communities for Work Operational Guidance V1.0, p.51, item 3

⁴⁴ Welsh Government, (2016) Communities for Work Operational Guidance V1.0, p.51, item 7

Managers were not helpful attributed this to inconsistency in the advice or information given and finding it difficult to get hold of the relevant Account Manager when needed.

- 3.68 Contributors were also complimentary about the support received from Welsh Government compliance and 'claims' staff, describing them as 'very approachable' and open to change where that is practicable.
- 3.69 The level of contact which LDB managers had with Account Managers varied, however, with a number commenting that the frequency with which they met declined over time. This was attributed to the need for Account Manager input declining as the programme bedded down in their areas and to Account Managers' workload increasing as the programme was rolled out to more and more clusters.
- 3.70 A small number of contributors argued that there needs to be more clarity as to the nature of the Account Manager's role, with particular reference to the extent to which they should (or should not) become involved in the 'operational side of things' within clusters. It was also suggested that the extent of Account Managers' authority to make decisions might be insufficient, leading to delays as they refer matters back to their line managers.

Staff skills

- 3.71 Previous research has highlighted the importance of 'skilled, committed personal advisers' able to 'research and source opportunities', to 'challenge expectations' and to develop 'realistic action plans' with clients in order to move them towards being work ready⁴⁵. In establishing CfW, the Welsh Government issued sample job descriptions/specifications which set out the kinds of experience, knowledge and skills that would be required by triage workers and by youth and adult mentors. Similarly, the DWP prepared a standardised, competency based role specification for advisers.
- 3.72 The sample job specification for triage workers has a primarily administrative focus, with the emphasis on communicating with customers and stakeholders, customer service, organising and managing performance.

⁴⁵ Tusting, K., Barton, D. (2007), Programmes for unemployed people since the 1970s: the changing place of literacy, language and numeracy, National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy

- 3.73 The emphasis within mentors' job specifications is upon issues such as understanding the needs of target client groups, understanding employment and benefit issues (including the implications of welfare reform), working collaboratively with colleagues and with statutory and third sector support agencies, engaging and working with hard to reach groups, developing action plans and, of course supporting and mentoring. Similar themes are woven through adviser's role specifications, though these are presented in a different format.
- 3.74 In advertising posts locally, LDBs have largely adopted the sample job specifications issued by the Welsh Government, albeit tailored somewhat to suit local circumstances and to fit with organisational standards. It might, therefore, be assumed (as was the case within the theory of change) that the triage workers and mentors employed have the experience, skills and knowledge referred to above. Similarly, advisers can be expected to have the competencies outlined in the DWP's standard role specification.
- 3.75 Each of the sample job specifications issued by the Welsh Government notes working 'as an integrated team with the Youth Mentor, Community Employment and Parent Employment Adviser, Triage Support worker and wider CF Cluster team' as one of the post holders' main tasks. In the same vein, the DWP adviser role specification notes among the adviser's responsibilities 'work[ing] closely with [CfW] Mentors and Triage person to ensure that the customer is being advised/mentored by the most appropriate person'. It also notes that advisers are expected to 'make positive contributions at team and triage meetings and [to] show willingness to support colleagues', as well as to 'work collaboratively with team colleagues to maximise the team and Cluster's effectiveness to support customers'. The adviser role specification identifies 'evidence of team-working' as a measure of the individual's performance, alongside 'job outcome targets'.
- 3.76 Respondents to our survey of front line delivery staff were asked to select up to five skills areas which they felt are most important in enabling them to do their jobs well. Figure 3.3 shows that the two skills areas considered most important were the ability to communicate effectively with clients (with 86 per cent of respondents [139] selecting this option) and the ability to understand

the barriers to employment which clients face (with 69 per cent [111] selecting this option). Forty eight per cent of respondents (77) identified the ability to help individuals set realistic personal goals and develop action plans as a key skill for CfW staff and 37 per cent (60) thought the ability to challenge and motivate clients as one of the most important skills.

3.77 Some 45 percent of respondents (72) thought it important that CfW staff have a good knowledge of local support services and 32 per cent (51) identified the ability to collaborate across organisational divides (to access support for clients) as an important skill.

Figure 3.3: Skills considered most important to CfW staff in doing their jobs well (n=161)



3.78 Given the nature of their role, as set out in the sample job specification, it is not surprising that in general, triage workers were considerably more likely than other front line delivery staff, to identify organisation and administration skills as among the most important skills for them (at 56 per cent compared to 20 per cent). They were also more likely to identify a knowledge of support services (at 67 per cent compared to 45 per cent) and working under one's own initiative (at 41 per cent compared to 31 per cent) as something of particular importance to their role. Given that their role is to support advisers and mentors in working with clients, it is perhaps surprising that over 22 per

cent of triage workers (6) considered the ability to help individuals set realistic personal goals/develop action plans as one of the five most important skills for doing their job.

3.79 Notwithstanding this last point, however, these survey findings would suggest that the job specifications used for recruiting staff for the programme captured the essence of the skillset which those actually doing the jobs believe they require. Moreover, our discussions with cluster teams, by and large, confirmed that the right people had been appointed to the various roles. In this context, several contributors said that the skills required by advisers, adult mentors and youth mentors are very similar, differing in emphasis rather than substance. When asked which skills they felt important to these roles (without being prompted by options as was the case during our survey), contributors referred the kinds of skills discussed above, but also talked extensively about the importance of soft skills and personal attributes, such as:

- interpersonal skills: approachability, empathy, the ability to build rapport, the ability to gain clients' trust, patience, being non-judgmental
- communication skills: active listening, the ability to speak to people at their own levels, the appropriate use of language, the ability to maintain a dialogue, the ability to give constructive feedback
- resilience: tenacity, flexibility, having a 'thick skin', being strong, being self motivated
- creativity: having a fresh approach, being solution focused, being instinctive, being resourceful
- integrity: a genuine desire to help clients, honesty
- being inspiring: persuading, encouraging, 'nudging', motivating, instilling confidence, coaching and mentoring
- being a team player: networking with a range of stakeholders to find solutions, sharing
- being organised: managing own time, being able to multi-task, attention to detail.

- 3.80 It is also worth noting that several contributors said that having previously worked in a youth work environment was invaluable experience for youth mentors, not least because it equips them with the understanding, skills and language to engage young people in a non-judgmental and credible way. It was said that adult mentors need 'life experience' to give them the 'understanding of people's lives' necessary to do their jobs well. Some thought that experience of community work also helped mentors in that it affords them an understanding of local networks and how they work.
- 3.81 Whilst it was thought that the appointed people to CfW front line teams generally have the right skills and attributes, that is not to say that they possess all the skills and knowledge needed and survey respondents were invited to select up to five skills or knowledge areas in which they would most value training or the opportunity for further personal development.
- 3.82 Figure 3.4 shows that the respondents would most value training that would enhance their knowledge rather than their skills per se, with 57 per cent (92) saying that they would find it useful to develop their understanding of welfare benefits and 32 per cent (52) saying that they would like to know more about local labour markets. One individual noted that 'local labour market information is crucial and this should be provided by Welsh Government more regularly about sectors that are increasing/decreasing job opportunities'. Only one respondent referred specifically to 'Regional Learning Partnerships' in this regard suggesting that awareness of these partnerships as a source of labour market information amongst delivery staff is limited. Nevertheless, a large majority (86 per cent [121]) of respondents said that they were very well or fairly well informed about the skills and qualities which employers look for in their employees, with only 11 per cent (15) saying that they did not feel particularly well informed in this respect.

Figure 3.4: Skills/knowledge areas in which CfW staff would most value training (n=161)



3.83 Roughly a fifth of respondents identified training in three soft skill areas as something they would appreciate, with 21 per cent (34) saying that they would like training in reflective practice techniques, 19 per cent (30) saying that they would like training in mentoring skills and 18 per cent (29) saying that they would find training on assessing clients' support needs useful.

3.84 Some 17 per cent (28) of respondents identified Welsh language skills, digital/IT skills and diversity and cultural awareness as areas in which they would value training. Individual respondents pointed to specific IT applications which they would like to learn more about, for example 'TRIM; Egress and Iproc'⁴⁶.

3.85 It was clear from our face to face discussions with CfW teams that front line staff already receive a fair amount of training, although it would seem that advisers receive rather more training than mentors and triage workers. This is because advisers are able to access the DWP's training 'route way' which comprises a range of skills development opportunities, many (though not all) of which are of relevance to CfW e.g. 'managing challenging behaviours',

⁴⁶ These are digital document management and secure data transfer systems

‘working with people with a health condition or disability’ and ‘customer engagement’. Indeed, some contributors suggested that elements of the DWP training ‘route way’ might usefully be extended to LDB staff. One individual suggested that route-way titles might form the basis of ‘some joint training’ partly to bring about a common understanding of how CfW should work and partly to engender a feeling of belonging to the same team among cluster staff.

3.86 Our discussions with cluster teams also highlighted the desire for information relating to welfare benefits (including the implications of on-going reforms) and to local labour markets. Contributors also said that they would like to understand better the landscape of services that are available in their areas. Other areas in which CfW staff said that would appreciate training were:

- mental health and suicide awareness
- drug and alcohol misuse awareness
- recognising signs of domestic abuse
- recognising signs of conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia etc
- the basics of money/debt advice
- counselling skills, though a handful of contributors said that they were already undertaking training of this ilk, including courses leading to formal qualifications e.g. Diploma in Advice and Guidance Level 4
- mindfulness⁴⁷.

3.87 A number of contributors also said that they would value training in aspects of the CfW programme’s management and administration. Specific references were made to training that would deal with:

- how the triage process should work
- how to use programme documentation including ‘portfolios’ and ‘action plans’
- how to case manage clients

⁴⁷ Mindfulness is a technique for thinking about what is happening in their lives and by so doing, to deal with life’s pressures more effectively

- how to use digital media to engage and communicate with clients
- how to market CfW including via digital media
- how to deal with data
- how to manage performance.

Resourcing

- 3.88 A scoping exercise was carried out to identify the level of need within clusters and, thus, to inform the allocation of resources. In the event, however, similar levels of resources were allocated to the majority of clusters. This simplified the programme design, but means that all areas have the same size teams and the same targets, even though the populations they serve differ in size and need.
- 3.89 Our research thus far has not suggested that the overall level of resource allocated to any clusters was inadequate. This may be attributable to the take-up of CfW services in most areas having been lower than anticipated. However, staff working in some clusters, serving what they felt were 'harder' areas, due to factors such as rurality and/or the weaknesses of local labour markets, felt that it was unfair that they had the same targets as other areas which they felt did not face these challenges.
- 3.90 Contributors have, however, noted that the budgets allocated (on the basis of 'simplified costs') are not in all cases considered sufficient to meet CfW staff's accommodation costs.

4. The approach taken to implementing CfW

4.1 The Stage 1 Evaluation Report set out a theory of change and logic model for CfW and identified a number of 'levers' designed to bring about the changes necessary for the programme's intended outcomes to be realised. This chapter draws upon the theory of change set out in the Stage 1 Report and considers in turn each lever for change identified along with the assumptions which led to their adoption. The chapter is presented in ten sections as follows:

- CfW's alignment with Communities First
- Referral
- Trusted, less formal settings
- Holistic and integrated service
- Integration of CfW teams
- Triage and Caseloading
- Action planning and advisory support
- Referrals to training
- Barriers Fund
- Programme exit.

CfW's alignment with Communities First

4.2 It was envisaged that CfW would build upon the foundations laid by CF, capitalising upon an existing infrastructure⁴⁸ and tapping into established relationships⁴⁹ to provide holistic packages of support that meet the needs of individual participants. CF was also seen as a means of giving a 'softer front' to what is essentially an employment programme intended to deliver hard outcomes. It was also envisaged that 'detailed Community Involvement Plans' developed by CF clusters, along 'with a supporting budget from Welsh

⁴⁸ 'CfW will have access to community based premises for staff at no cost' - CfW WWV P1 Business Plan v1.0, p.49

⁴⁹ 'CF teams are a well-established brand within communities' - CfW WWV P1 Business Plan v1.0, p.49

Government⁵⁰, would provide CfW with a springboard for engaging target participants.

- 4.3 Our research would suggest some variation in the degree to which CfW is aligned with day to day service delivery in CF clusters. To achieve alignment, CfW requires the integration of three parts: DWP staff (advisers and delivery managers), LDB CfW staff (triage workers and mentors) and LDB CF staff (such as cluster managers, employment, training and financial inclusion officers). In general, our fieldwork would suggest that integration of LDB CfW and CF staff has been good, enabling alignment of their work. However, as we discuss further below, integration of DWP staff has often been weaker, which means that alignment of CfW as a whole has been weaker.
- 4.4 Just over a third (35 per cent) of respondents to our survey of delivery staff (56) said that CfW was an integral part of Communities First and a further 36 per cent (58) said that it was something separate from but closely aligned to Communities First. Just under 19 per cent of respondents (30) said that CfW was separate from and only partly aligned with Communities First whilst nine per cent of respondents said that the two programmes operate completely separately. Respondents employed by LDBs (cluster managers, triage workers and mentors) were considerably more likely (at 79 per cent) to consider CfW an integral part or something closely aligned with Communities First than advisers employed by the DWP (at 53 per cent). This split in views was very much evident from our fieldwork too, albeit that discussions with front line staff suggest that DWP delivery managers and advisers' views differ from one cluster to another.
- 4.5 Open and honest communication emerged as a recurring theme by contributors when invited to identify factors which facilitate close working between CfW front line staff and CF teams. Contributors noted that effective communication was enabled by:
- Co-location: 'being based in the same offices enables close working links' and 'sharing space has fermented close connections'

⁵⁰ West Wales and the Valleys P1 Business Plan v1.0, p.49

- A mutual focus on clients' best interests: 'working as a team to help the customer, not working to own individual targets' and 'work closely together which ensures best outcomes for our clients'
- Regular joint meetings, including via the triage process: 'the CfW team are involved in all CF team meetings and CF is involved in the CfW triage meetings' and it is 'part of the day to day working ... CF, CfW and Lift all form part of the triage process and share information about participants'
- Cross referral between the two programmes (CF and CfW): 'we refer to their programme and they refer to ours' and 'open referrals and willingness to share client information if it is felt that either of the projects [is] better placed to offer support'
- Easy access to training and other support available via CF: 'Communities First have excellent training opportunities for our participants', 'our training in house is provided by CF and the clients like that' and 'using the ... training and financial support elements of the CF program is crucial to the success of the CfW program'
- Established relationships with Communities First staff, some CfW staff having previously worked for Communities First: 'CfW staff previously worked for the CF team' and 'mentors used to be employed by CF and so there were existing working relationships with operational staff which has helped'
- Leadership and management, both in structural terms and in terms of the ethos conveyed by managers: 'line management comes from the Cluster Manager for both programmes' and 'good leadership from [LDB and DWP] line managers'

4.6 It is not surprising, perhaps, that factors which respondents thought prevent close working between CfW and Communities First teams were often the converse of those that were thought to engender cooperation:

- A focus on meeting targets, which can give rise to competition between the two programmes, at the expense of clients' best interests: targets 'are causing conflict because CfW mentors and advisers have

engagement and job outcome targets and so do Communities First', 'a reluctance to share participants due to the target driven nature of both programmes', 'there has been an underlying feeling that both CfW and CF are competing for the same client base' and 'targets for outcomes can be problematic, as both teams are under pressure to achieve outcomes from the same customer pool'

- A perceived overlap in the services provided in some Communities First clusters: 'what Communities First provide has been no more or no less than what I offer as an adult mentor'⁵¹, 'we work quite closely, but I feel the 1-1 coaching programme overlap[s] with our mentoring offer' and 'we're all fishing in the same pond'
- Being located in different places: 'we are not housed with Communities First staff [and] this cause[s] major concerns with communication' and 'working in different locations, communication is sometimes lost'.

4.7 As noted above, advisers seconded from the DWP were less likely to perceive the CfW and CF programmes to be closely aligned. This was echoed in the tone of comments made by some advisers, who described Communities First staff as 'suspicious' of them and 'hostile' towards them. There was a strong suggestion that CF staff work more readily with triage workers and mentors (employed by LDBs) than they do advisers (employed by the DWP) because 'they see them as part of the same team ... JCP CfW advisers seem to be seen as competition'. One adviser commented that 'it's never been a brilliant relationship ... we're seen as interlopers who are taking over from them'. It is very possible that this kind of dissonance owes something to advisers often being based in different locations from CF teams whilst triage workers and mentors, as LDB employees, are provided with desk space at CF premises. The cultural and institutional differences between DWP and LDBs may also be important.

4.8 A number of contributors observed that CfW was 'seen as a threat to CF' and that this had undermined the integration of the two programmes. As one respondent put it, 'difficulties have arisen in recent months due to the announcement that CF is being phased out' and another said that the 'CF

⁵¹ It should be noted that the CF programme does not offer a mentoring service per se

prosperous [sic] team thought that CfW had been put in place to take their jobs', thus fuelling a feeling of mistrust. It was also said that 'CfW [staff] are starting to regard Communities First as a dead programme because of the messages regarding its demise', a view which is arguably reinforced by some local authorities 'allowing CF employees to immediately access the redeployment programme' leading to a reduction in staffing levels.

4.9 Almost regardless of their views about the extent of alignment between the CF and CfW programmes, contributors were concerned about the consequences for CfW of CF being scaled back. Individuals expressed concern about:

- the potential erosion of connections built up over the years, both with target groups and with referral agencies
- the loss of premises which have become known as the 'go to' places by service users
- the loss of training provision delivered or funded by CF staff. As will be discussed later, CF training provision was held in very high regard by front line staff
- the loss of the range of support services CF offers, such as financial inclusion advice and support
- the loss of a referral route into CfW. Whilst CF was not seen as a primary source of referrals key in all clusters, just under a half (48 per cent) of survey respondents thought that the alignment of CfW with Communities First makes it much more likely that target individuals will engage with CfW and a further 21 per cent said that the programmes' alignment made it a little more likely.

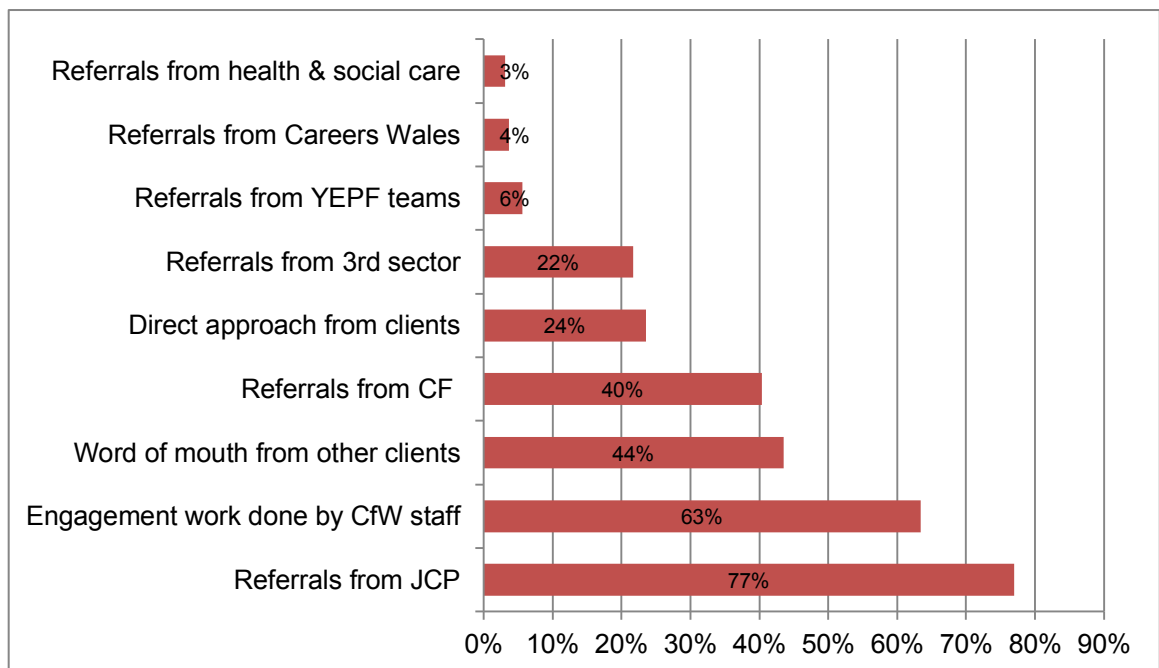
Referral

4.10 It was envisaged that individuals would be referred to CfW by an array of agencies (e.g. JCP, CF, Careers Wales, CAB etc.), thus extending the programme's reach to a wide range of potential participants, including those who are traditionally hardest to reach. In addition to this, CfW staff were expected to play a proactive, outreach role in identifying and engaging with prospective participants by working alongside partner organisations and

attending community events and jobs fairs to promote the programme in person.

4.11 Respondents to our survey of front line staff were asked to identify the three routes by which the clients they work with most commonly come to be involved in CfW. Figure 4.1 below shows that JCP was the source of referrals most commonly identified, followed by engagement work done by CfW staff and word of mouth from other people who had been supported.

Figure 4.1: Proportion of respondents identifying each source of client engagement (n=161)



4.12 Survey responses suggest a clear distinction between the routes by which clients come to engage with advisers and mentors. JCP was identified as one of the three most common sources of client referral by all advisers responding to the survey (52), whereas only 61 per cent of mentors (33) said the same. Seventy two per cent of mentors (75) identified engagement work done in community settings as one of the three most common routes by which clients were recruited, compared to 49 percent of advisers. Referrals from Communities First was said to be among the three most common sources of referrals by 44 percent of mentors, compared to just 12 per cent of advisers. Similar proportions of advisers and mentors considered word of mouth from other people who have been supported by CfW to be among the three most common routes by which clients become involved with the programme.

- 4.13 Our fieldwork in selected clusters also pointed to this division, whereby the majority of advisers' clients tended to be referred by JCP whilst mentors' clients came from a wider range of sources (including, but not limited to JCP). The fieldwork also suggested a further distinction between referral routes for adult and youth mentors, with many of the young people on the programme being referred via structures linked to the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework to track young people identified as either at risk of, or who have disengaged from education, training or employment.
- 4.14 Advisers in some clusters were candid that they are largely dependent on JCP for referrals. The referral of clients from JCP to advisers seems to be attributable to a few factors:
- Advisers, given they are employed by DWP are more likely to attend JCP offices and are, therefore, able to remind work coaches of CfW's existence on a regular basis
 - advisers in some clusters attend JCP offices one or more days a week and are able to engage with potential participants whilst on the premises
 - advisers have access to DWP databases and are able to identify individuals eligible for CfW who might be targeted⁵², either by leaving notes in relevant work coaches' electronic diaries, to encourage them to recommend the programme to potential participants, or by inviting participants directly, by for example, issuing 'voluntary appointment letters'⁵³ to prospective participants, outlining the nature of the service available to them.
- 4.15 It was estimated that as few as 10 per cent of those to whom voluntary appointment letters were sent engaged with CfW as a result, and only a small proportion of those who responded continued with the programme beyond an initial meeting.
- 4.16 In some clusters, triage workers also base themselves at JCP offices on a regular basis as a means of engaging prospective participants, including

⁵² Not all advisers have licences which allow them to access data about Universal Credit claimants, which could have ramifications for CfW as the Universal Credit is rolled out over the next two years

⁵³ These are letters telling prospective participants about CfW and inviting them to a meeting with an adviser. It is made clear that attendance is entirely voluntary and individuals' entitlement to benefits will not be effected should they choose not to attend

those referred by work coaches. This approach seemed to meet with different degrees of success from one cluster to another, largely reflecting the quality of triage workers' relationships with work coaches. Indeed, previous research has shown that the quality of referrals depended on programme staff's relationships with key referral agencies and that this can vary dramatically from one area to another⁵⁴. It is also notable in this context that access to DWP databases to identify benefits claimants who might gain from participation in the programme is limited to advisers (who are employed by DWP) as data protection restrictions prevent the wider team from having access to these systems.

- 4.17 A number of contributors noted that levels of awareness and understanding of the CfW programme is variable among work coaches and this can lead to few or inappropriate referrals being made. In part, this was said to be attributable to staff turnover within JCP, but was also thought to owe something to the large number of initiatives (many of which ESF funded) targeting the same groups as CfW, among them, ADTRACK⁵⁵, Active Inclusion Fund projects⁵⁶, Bridges2Work⁵⁷, Lift⁵⁸ and Opus⁵⁹. In most clusters, considerable effort has been put into ensuring that JCP staff are well briefed about CfW, with CfW staff attending JCP communications meetings on a regular basis. However, previous research has also pointed to the importance of clear guidance to ensure that referrals are suitable⁶⁰.
- 4.18 Our fieldwork also pointed to the importance of engagement work done by CfW staff in raising the profile of the programme and in recruiting participants. In some clusters, this engagement work essentially built upon engagement

⁵⁴ Welsh Government (2016), Evaluation of the Lift Programme, Phase 2 - Implementation Study

⁵⁵ An ESF project sponsored by Coleg Menai and targeted at 16-24 year olds who are NEET living outside CF areas. ADTRACK will so offer similar services to CfW, but will include the additional dimension of a Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH) workers to address the high levels of depression and anxiety among young people

⁵⁶ An ESF intervention managed by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action. Active Inclusion Fund projects aim to reduce economic inactivity in Wales and improve the employability of disadvantaged people furthest from the labour market

⁵⁷ An ESF project centred on five local authority areas (Torfaen, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil), which aims to improve the skills of and provide a boost into work to economically inactive and long term unemployed people aged over 25 living in CF areas

⁵⁸ A Welsh Government sponsored project which aims to provide training and employment opportunities for people living in workless households

⁵⁹ An ESF funded project sponsored by the North Wales Economic Ambitions Board and targeted at long term unemployed and economically inactive people aged 25+

⁶⁰ Welsh Government (2016), Evaluation of Jobs Growth Wales: Final Report

strategies developed under the auspices of the wider CF programme. Engagement work ranged from dropping leaflets through letterboxes in target communities to having a presence at community/ roadshow events, recruitment fairs, Integrated Family Centres, Flying Start Centres and job/work clubs.

- 4.19 Contributors also spoke of the importance of word of mouth referrals by individuals who had themselves valued CfW support or who were acquainted with advisers or mentors from previous roles. Examples included:
- an adviser saying that she has ‘worked in this area for a considerable number of years and a lot of people know me and what I do ... people come to see me’
 - an adviser ‘working with one whole family’ as a result of a domino effect of referrals
 - a youth mentor who had previously worked with a community and environment charity who claimed that clients with whom he had previously worked signed up with CfW ‘because they trusted me’
 - a youth mentor who had been recommended to friends by a former client noting that ‘unemployed youngsters hang out together every day’ and are ‘more open than adults about support they’re receiving’.
- 4.20 Crucially, word of mouth was thought to be becoming an increasingly important source of referrals, as CfW gathers pace and programme staff start to build a profile and reputation in communities.
- 4.21 It is clear that word of mouth referrals are the product of advisers and mentors having a visible presence and a good reputation in the community. In the same vein, it was clear that being known and respected by representatives of other organisations working with the same groups as CfW was important to such organisations referring prospective clients to the programme. To this end, CfW teams have actively sought to engage with key partnerships and organisations in their areas, for example, Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) partnerships (or equivalents), Careers Wales, teams/ organisations around the family (including health visitors), social housing

providers, the Probation Service/youth justice system and general practitioners.

- 4.22 These efforts have led to varying degrees of success in terms of referrals to CfW. In some clusters, YEPF partnership intervention/data sharing protocols seemed effective, in that that they facilitated the referral of young people who are, or are in danger of becoming NEET on to youth mentors (along with other services). This was particularly the case where youth mentors were already known and trusted by members of YEPF partnerships. In reality, however, CfW staff's engagement with partner organisations has, as might be expected in the programme's early days, been as much about raising awareness of CfW as it has about recruiting. It remains to be seen whether awareness will, as envisaged in the theory of change underlying CfW, translate into referrals, particularly among hard to reach groups.
- 4.23 More broadly, efforts to 'market' CfW have been fairly limited. Whilst there has been fairly widespread use of CfW 'banners' at events, more limited use has been made of centrally produced (and generic) posters and leaflets. Some clusters have developed their own marketing materials in-house, including separate posters and leaflets aimed at young people and adults in one cluster. On the whole, however, contributors felt that marketing materials developed at both the national and local levels have been 'pretty basic' and 'bland' in nature.
- 4.24 At a local level, it is clear that there has been considerable confusion about what can be done with the resources available, driven in part by LDBs incorrectly perceiving local marketing budgets (delegated to them) as part of their 'simplified costs' award rather than a separate budget. An example of this was a LDB which had bought branded t-shirts for triage workers and mentors to wear at community events refusing to meet the costs of similar t-shirts for advisers. In the same vein, advisers in one cluster spoke of the LDB's apparent reluctance to purchase business cards for them corresponding to those bought for triage workers and mentors.
- 4.25 Allied to this, a number of contributors felt that CfW operates very much under the radar at present because too little has been done to create a distinct CfW 'brand'. Some front line staff called for branded materials to be made

available, such as ‘balloons’ or ‘pens’ that could be handed out at community events or ‘mugs’ that could be given to representatives of partner organisations as ‘reminders’ of CfW’s existence.

- 4.26 It was also argued that the Welsh Government needs to play a bigger part in raising awareness of CfW and creating a unified, consistent brand for the programme. Contributors argued for a CfW web-site where ‘good news stories’ can be promoted and for a social media presence at a national and local level via Twitter and Facebook.

Trusted, less formal settings

- 4.27 A key feature of the design of the CfW programme is that services are delivered in less formal settings which are accessible and well used for a broad range of activities within the communities where target participants live, for example, community centres, Integrated Children’s Centres and Communities First premises. Another design feature of CfW is that front line staff are not branded as belonging to JCP or any other organisation, thus, mitigating the chances of their being perceived as ‘officials’.
- 4.28 These design features very much drew on previous research⁶¹ which found that embedding programmes in local communities can act as a major strength in engaging those who are hardest to reach. Previous research also pointed to the importance of working with young people who are NEET and those not engaging with employment support in an informal, friendly and approachable way.
- 4.29 As was intended, CfW staff work from a range of community based settings such as ‘hubs’ or ‘one stop shops’, CF premises, community centres, community houses, Integrated Children’s Centres, Flying Start premises, libraries, Jobcentres and, occasionally, local cafes. In many cases, delivery teams work to timetables whereby they attend particular outreach venues on specific days. In a handful of cases, CfW staff visited participants in their homes, for example, where individuals suffered with anxiety issues and needed help to develop the confidence to venture into a community setting.

⁶¹ Please see the Stage 1 CfW Theory of Change report for further information:
<http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2017/170412-evaluation-communities-work-stage-1-en.pdf>

- 4.30 Programme delivery staff and stakeholders were adamant that being located in the communities where target participants live is vital in that it is more convenient for participants to attend a centre on their doorstep, particularly where they have care responsibilities or disabilities. Furthermore, community facilities are often familiar to target individuals (with some accessing them for other purposes) and the atmosphere in these settings tends to be 'more relaxed' and 'less official' than at locations such as JCP offices, thus rendering individuals 'more open' to engaging with support services. Being based in community settings also allows CfW staff to become known and trusted within the communities they serve. In this context, it was clear that working in community settings allowed advisers (some of whom had worked for the DWP for several years before being seconded onto CfW) to distance themselves from JCP, which is regarded with suspicion by some target individuals. As one adviser put it, 'the same people will come to the job centre, but it will be a very different conversation ... they pull back and worry about what they say ... here they're much more open'. Another noted that clients' 'biggest fear is that they'll have their benefits suspended' if they disclose too much information to JCP staff.
- 4.31 These views were echoed by CfW participants who spoke of the convenience of being able to 'walk down the road' to meet advisers/mentors or being able to do so at Integrated Family Centres adjacent to schools, 'after dropping the kids off'. Others mentioned being able to 'pop in for a chat' with CfW staff located on the doorstep, with some adding that they rarely leave their immediate localities. Participants also spoke of the 'personal', 'friendly and approachable' ways in which they were dealt with and of the 'flexibility' shown by CfW staff. This was contrasted by some participants with their experiences of JCP work coaches, who were described as 'strict' and said to have too little time and to be far less understanding of individuals' situations.
- 4.32 As well as being accessible in person, it was clearly important that CfW staff are also accessible by phone, text or e-mail, particularly to young people.
- 4.33 Whilst extensive use is made of community facilities in all areas, there were marked differences in the degree of access which CfW staff had to premises in these communities and in the perceived attractiveness and suitability of the

facilities available. In some areas, CfW teams had allocated desk space and access to private rooms within modern 'hubs' from which a range of services (e.g. housing, debt advice, libraries, job-clubs etc.) and other, parallel interventions (e.g. Lift, Workways, Into Work etc.) are delivered. In other areas, the facilities available were less suitable, either in terms of their location and accessibility to the community (with a good level of 'footfall' seen as key), their appropriateness for working with clients or the sufficiency of the space within buildings. A lack of space in CF premises in particular meant that CfW teams in some clusters were fragmented, with triage workers and mentors being based in different locations from advisers.

- 4.34 A recurring theme among front line staff was the lack of private spaces within community venues to hold confidential discussions with clients. As one mentor put it, 'we do not have a designated room or area that is free from others where we can have a chat without being overheard ... I deal mainly with people who may have mental health issues or issues in their past that need to be discussed in order to support them and get barriers addressed as soon as possible'. Advisers and mentors spoke of meeting clients 'in the corridor' because of the absence of dedicated interview rooms. Participants also referred to the absence of private space, with one saying that 'it would be better if it was in a little room ... to be private ... I don't want the whole street knowing my business'.
- 4.35 Another area of frustration for front line staff was the patchiness of internet access in many community locations (including via Wi-Fi) and, for advisers, the absence of secure lines at CF premises preventing them from accessing the DWP intranet when working away from JCP offices. Indeed, an inability to access DWP client information had made it difficult to provide a seamless service at job clubs run in some CF premises.
- 4.36 A matter of particular concern to several contributors was the risk that as the CF programme is wound down, CfW teams will be deprived of access to established service delivery locations in target communities. Indeed, in one cluster, the CF team already works from the local authority's headquarters rather than from dedicated premises in the community, which means that CfW staff have found themselves searching for venues to meet clients in the

community and sometimes using premises that lack the footfall seen in community hubs or CF premises elsewhere. In other clusters, plans are afoot to close CF premises which have hitherto been used as bases by CfW staff.

Holistic and integrated support

- 4.37 A key influence on the design of CfW was research that pointed to the importance of 'holistic packages of support', often involving multi-agency effort, in developing individuals' employability skills and in moving them towards employment. It was assumed that CfW teams would be able to capitalise upon services offered by local support agencies, taking advantage of CF teams' connections with such organisations where necessary, to meet participants' needs.
- 4.38 Our fieldwork would suggest that CfW teams do engage partner agencies to help participants in addressing particular barriers to work, but the extent to which this happens varies from one cluster to another and also between individual members of CfW teams. In many cases, the engagement that has taken place has been facilitated through links already established by CF, although our survey of front line staff would suggest that CfW staff generally also feel knowledgeable about support services available locally. The overwhelming majority of respondents said that they felt very or fairly well informed about mental health and substance abuse services in their areas (at 89 per cent [124] and 84 per cent [117] respectively). Eighty two per cent of respondents (114) felt very or fairly well informed about Flying Start Services and 100 per cent of youth mentors responding to the survey said that they were very or fairly well informed about Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) arrangements in their areas. Awareness of Credit Unions was a little lower among survey respondents, with 65 per cent (91) saying that they were very or fairly well informed about the services they provide.
- 4.39 Examples of the kinds of support agencies to which CfW staff had referred participants included social services, mental health organisations, drug and alcohol misuse agencies, disability support agencies (e.g. Scope), housing and homelessness support services (e.g. Shelter), furniture schemes, Women's Aid, family information services, welfare advice services, CAB, food banks, learning providers and CF.

- 4.40 Contributors saw the relationship between CfW and support agencies as ‘symbiotic’ in that referrals take place both ways and in that each complements the services offered by the other. As one adviser put it, ‘we walk alongside the organisations and add more support as they do to us’. Nevertheless, as outlined above, at present the number of referrals from other support services to CfW (rather than referrals from CfW to support services) remains lower than hoped.
- 4.41 On the whole, front line staff found support services in their areas accessible, with 77 per cent of respondents (108) saying that they found mental health organisations very or fairly accessible and 73 per cent (102) saying the same of substance abuse organisations. Our face to face discussions with front line staff suggested that in some areas, accessing mental health services can be more difficult, simply because of the very high levels of demand upon services and the consequent prioritisation of those services upon the most severe cases.
- 4.42 As well as support agencies, CfW operates alongside a number of other interventions, the ambitions of which overlap with those of CfW. Notable among these is the Welsh Government’s Lift programme, which aims to support individuals living in workless households into employment. Lift is running in 12 of the CF clusters⁶² where CfW is also delivered, though it is due to close at the end of 2017.
- 4.43 Our fieldwork would suggest that the CfW and Lift programmes are generally managed by the same individual within clusters, that CfW and Lift teams are usually co-located and that the triage process introduced as a feature of the CfW programme has also been extended to include Lift. Indeed, the Operational Guidance makes clear that the ‘role of triage is pivotal to the success of the partnership network ensuring participants receive appropriate support dependant on their need and circumstance. Triage will provide strong links between Communities for Work, Communities First and other key partners and stakeholders (e.g. LIFT, Flying Start, Families First and Youth

⁶² Tredegar and Ebbw Vale clusters (Blaenau Gwent), Caerphilly Basin and Upper Rhymney Valley clusters (Caerphilly), Cardiff East cluster, Carmarthenshire, Flintshire, Isle of Anglesey, Afan cluster (Neath Port Talbot), Taf cluster (Rhondda Cynon Taf), Swansea North West cluster

Engagement & Progression Coordinators)⁶³. Managers were eager to ensure that the programmes operate as seamlessly as possible, with one noting that the ‘individual is neither interested nor cares where the funding comes from ... they just want employment support’.

- 4.44 Despite this, however, it was felt that there is an element of duplication between CfW and Lift and this has led to frustration among front line delivery staff, with individuals noting that ‘Lift is in competition with us’. In some areas, this owed much to a perception that there simply ‘isn’t enough demand’ for CfW, let alone Lift as well⁶⁴, and it was notable that front line staff’s attitudes towards Lift were far more positive in one cluster where recruitment onto both programmes had been less challenging.
- 4.45 Although restricted to individuals from workless households, it was felt that Lift offered advantages over CfW. For example, Lift mentors have access to a flexible ‘barriers fund’, are able to buy-in training from the wider market, rather than being restricted to a centrally procured provider, and are able to offer clients interviews with NHS employers. Some CfW delivery staff were under the impression that, as a matter of policy, Lift took precedence over CfW in terms of referral and recruitment, though this was refuted by programme managers.
- 4.46 Whilst Lift is generally integrated with the CF and CfW architecture (in those clusters where Lift has been running), overlaps in terms of target participants and insufficient differentiation between Lift and CfW has clearly led to competition at the point of delivery. A number of front line staff expressed concerns about other initiatives, some ESF funded, including ones ‘coming out of the woodwork’ of late. Examples mentioned include the WCVA’s Active Inclusion Wales and Inspire to Work. One contributor captured a wider mood by saying ‘we all have separate outcomes ... there are projects out there that should refer to us and vice versa, but we don’t ... no one wants to lose their job outcomes ... but is that the right thing to do for the client?’

⁶³ Welsh Government, Operational Guidance, p.9

⁶⁴ The evaluators have not referred to labour force/unemployment statistics to determine the legitimacy of such claims

4.47 It is notable, however, that CfW front line staff also spoke of working with interventions operating outside CF clusters, including Bridges2Work⁶⁵, PaCE⁶⁶, Opus⁶⁷, Workways and ADTRACK⁶⁸. These were seen as programmes to which individuals who are not eligible for CfW might be referred.

Integration of CfW team

4.48 The CfW programme is managed and implemented by representatives from the Welsh Government, DWP and LDBs. In designing the programme, it was assumed that staff from these different organisations could ‘work together effectively to deliver a seamless service’⁶⁹.

4.49 It was, however, recognised that it would be ‘quite a big challenge’ to bring together the ethos of LDBs on the one hand, and the DWP on the other. Some stakeholders felt that the magnitude of the task of reconciling ‘cultural differences’ between front line staff coming from LDB and DWP’s very different traditions may have been underestimated at the programme design stage and that more attention might have been given to how CfW teams could be brought together to form a coherent whole. Indeed, one senior stakeholder noted that it ‘is still a focus of our work to make sure we run a single programme’.

4.50 Our fieldwork uncovered examples of close cooperation between CfW staff employed by LDBs and DWP, with one DWP delivery manager noting that his staff spend more time with their LDB ‘foster team’ than they do with him. Others spoke of striving for a ‘one team’ approach whilst also conceding that achieving total integration is difficult given that staff come from fairly different traditions and that they are still required to adhere to their employing organisations’ policies and procedures.

4.51 When asked what enables CfW team members to work well together, a recurrent theme among contributors was the importance of open and honest

⁶⁵ Which targets economically inactive and long term unemployed individuals living outside CF areas in Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Torfaen

⁶⁶ Which targets economically inactive parents aged 25+ outside CF areas across Wales

⁶⁷ An ESF funded project sponsored by the North Wales Economic Ambitions Board and targeted at long term unemployed and economically inactive people aged 25+

⁶⁸ Which targets 16-24 year olds who are NEET living outside CF areas in north west Wales.

ADTRACK will offer similar services to CfW, but will include the additional dimension of a Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH) workers to address the high levels of depression and anxiety among young people

⁶⁹ CfW overarching theory of change model

communication in creating 'trust' and engendering a 'feeling of being one team'. Key to this were 'keeping in touch daily', 'setting time aside to be together as a team' and involving the whole team in various meetings.

4.52 Echoing some of the factors that were said to facilitate close working between CfW and CF teams, contributors thought that effective communication and team working were also enabled by:

- Co-location: 'sharing office space' and 'working alongside each other in outreach venues'. It was thought that 'being based in different venues' and 'advisers [being, in some instances] based mainly at JCP', away from LDB staff, hindered team working (and as noted above, IT problems and restricted access to the DWP intranet outside DWP premises, have made this difficult in some areas)
- A mutual focus on clients' best interests: 'putting our participants first' and having 'similar values' in relation to helping clients move forward
- Leadership and management: a 'one team approach, which needs to be made clear from the top level', 'clear communication between [LDB] managers and DWP delivery managers helps to bring the teams together' and managers allowing front line staff the 'freedom to work together'. Some respondents felt that it can be unhelpful to 'have two managers managing one team', when those individuals do not speak with one voice.
- Respect for each other's skills and attributes, with advisers being seen by mentors in some areas as experts in welfare benefits, mentors seen by advisers as being skilled at engaging more challenging clients and having good links with support agencies in the community, and triage workers seen by both advisers and mentors as fair in the allocation of participants

4.53 Our fieldwork also suggests that co-operation and integration was easier when the numbers of referrals was high, meaning that advisers and mentors did not feel they were (in effect) competing with each other for clients.

4.54 Contributors noted that 'clarity on job roles' and 'effective systems to follow' were also helpful in engendering 'trust that each person will do their job'. In relation to the triage process in some areas, there was evidence of mistrust between LDB staff (trriage workers and mentors) on the one hand, and

advisers employed by the DWP, on the other. We discuss the triage process in more detail in the next section of this chapter (Triage and Caseloading).

- 4.55 One of the main factors making it difficult for CfW team members to work well together was that fact that LDBs and the DWP have 'separate targets' for participant engagement and, more crucially, for outcomes. As one contributor noted, 'individual targets for mentors and advisers create an unhealthy atmosphere where staff don't always act in the best interest of their clients, but in the best interest of their personal target. This is a natural human reaction for workers who are used to being measured on performance, but it has a negative effect on team performance'. In the same vein, a youth mentor was candid that she does not refer clients onward to advisers because 'I want the outcomes for myself ... I know that's not right, but...'. It was argued repeatedly that the parties have 'struggled to work together within a model that encourages them not to ... that encourages everyone to guard their clients in order to meet targets'.
- 4.56 Several contributors argued that this situation could be overcome by the allocation of 'cluster targets' on the basis that 'a team target would engender a team ethic'. Indeed, Welsh Government managers, whilst not actually setting unified cluster targets⁷⁰, have encouraged cluster teams to think in terms of 'pooled resources' and 'team targets' rather than individual ones. A delivery model developed by one cluster places the emphasis firmly upon whole team working and whole team targets and, whilst the model has yet to be tested in earnest, other clusters are showing considerable interest in the approach taken. Having said this, however, it was clear that individual targets are pretty deeply ingrained in individual advisers and mentors' minds and some contributors were genuinely worried that their apparently poor performance in relation to targets would be judged negatively.
- 4.57 Another approach which contributors thought might address the divisive influence of targets would be to focus job outcome targets on advisers and to allocate 'referral targets' to mentors. One contributor said that if 'job targets were removed for mentors it would change the entire dynamic and really help us work together fully to deliver outcomes' and another captured a wider

⁷⁰ Engagement and outcome targets are enshrined in the contracts issued by the Welsh Government, reflecting the targets agreed with WEFO for each component of the programme

mood by suggesting that ‘mentors should be measured on engagements, qualifications and referrals to advisers ... and advisers should be measured on engagements and job outcomes’.

First contact triage and case-loading

- 4.58 The first contact triage process involves an early assessment of individuals’ distance from the labour market, and thus, support needs. It is intended to allow clients to be referred to advisers, mentors or other programmes, as appropriate, and to ensure a balanced caseload between CfW advisers and mentors. It was anticipated at the programme design stage that triage workers would ‘control first contact by undertaking first stage ESF eligibility checks and low level vocational skills assessments’⁷¹ before referring participants on, as appropriate. However, the Operational Guidance is somewhat more nuanced in that it does not identify who should undertake such eligibility checks and needs assessments, the implication being that they might be undertaken by triage workers, advisers or mentors, though the intention remains that individuals will be referred onwards to the most appropriate form of support.
- 4.59 It was clear that there is a degree of confusion surrounding the role of the triage worker in particular, with one contributor reflecting the views of many when they said that ‘the triage process is still not clear ... we are told that triage is a process and not a person and yet we employ triage workers’. In this context, it is probably worth reiterating the point made in the previous chapter of this report that just under a quarter (24 per cent) of delivery staff responding to our survey did not think that the Operational Guidance is clear about how the triage process should work.
- 4.60 Typically, the first contact triage process involves:
- making first contact, and beginning the engagement process by, for example, explaining what the programme offers and selling it to potential participants. A number of contributors described triage workers as the ‘public face’ of CfW

⁷¹ West Wales and the Valleys Priority 1, p.32

- establishing individuals' eligibility for CfW (including checking that they reside in CF areas), gathering necessary evidence of eligibility and making copies of documents for retention
- completing relevant paperwork (with annex 12⁷² being mentioned repeatedly)
- assessing individuals' situations and needs, in some clusters using instruments developed especially to introduce consistency to the process of assessing how far an individual is from the labour market, and to minimise the risk of subjectivity in decisions about allocations to mentors and advisers or other programmes like Lift
- in some cases, compiling additional notes to pre-brief advisers and mentors.

4.61 Our fieldwork in 19 selected clusters would suggest that triage is approached in a slightly different way in each one, with marked variations in the extent to which triage workers, advisers and mentors are involved in the first contact triage process, that is, conducting eligibility checks and initial needs assessments with clients and assigning them to the most appropriate form of support.

4.62 Only in one of the clusters we visited do all participants go through an eligibility check and initial assessment with the triage worker. Here, a model has been developed that focuses on a participant's five step journey into sustainable employment. Alongside this model, whole team targets have been adopted in place of individual outcome targets for advisers and mentors, with the intention of removing unhelpful competition and encouraging advisers and mentors to work together and to play their part, as appropriate, in each client's journey towards employment.

4.63 Key to the development of this model has been close cooperation between the DWP and LDB managers with oversight of CfW. Whilst their being 'on the same page' has been crucial to front line delivery staff engaging with the model, individuals were candid that established ways of working were very much ingrained and that it will take time for the model to bed down fully.

⁷² Annex 12 to the Operational Guidance is the client referral form confirming eligibility for CfW

- 4.64 The principle that the triage workers should be a 'single point of entry' into CfW was an aspiration in other clusters too, though practice did not always follow principle and advisers or mentors (but more commonly advisers) also 'triaged' some clients. Indeed, delivery staff in two clusters where triage workers and mentors have only recently been appointed, whilst eager to adopt the best of the delivery model discussed above, also thought it important that the approach adopted allows some flexibility in terms of who undertakes the first contact triage process. Exponents of a single gateway to the programme believed that such an approach helps minimise the 'risk of confusion', avoids the risk of duplication (i.e. clients inadvertently working with mentors and advisers simultaneously) and creates a sense of fairness among advisers and mentors.
- 4.65 In other clusters triage workers, advisers and mentors get involved to varying degrees in assessing individuals' eligibility and support needs. This was an intentional feature of the programme in some cluster areas, particularly where triage workers, advisers and mentors regularly worked in separate places or on an outreach basis. The intention in these situations was that clients should be dealt with as simply and swiftly as possible, without the need for several stages of referral (e.g. a client might be referred directly from an adviser who triages them to a mentor, rather than being referred by the adviser to a triage worker and then on to a mentor). In some clusters local agreements had been reached, for example that all clients aged 16-24 would be referred directly to and triaged by youth mentors.
- 4.66 A small number of clusters seemed to operate what might be described as parallel triage systems that owe more to evolution than to intentional design. In such cases, triage workers, advisers and mentors each tend to assess the eligibility and support needs of clients with whom they come into contact (much as described above), but with the allocation of clients to particular forms of support taking a rather less 'client centred' flavour. Most commonly this involved:
- triage workers favouring mentors over advisers in referring clients onwards

- advisers retaining for themselves clients (including individuals referred by JCP) who might be better served by mentors.

4.67 In the clusters where parallel approaches were evident, it was clear that the relationships between advisers (DWP) on the one hand and triage workers and mentors (LDB), on the other were less than ideal. The reasons for this varied from one cluster to another, but often boiled down to ‘personalities’. Indeed, there had been a change in attitude towards the triage process in two clusters where staff had been replaced.

4.68 Other factors which were thought to stand in the way of transparent and consistent approaches to first contact triage were:

- limited numbers of participants coming forward for CfW and advisers and mentors, therefore, ‘protecting their leads’ in order to reach individual targets. As one contributor explained, triage meetings might involve two mentors, two advisers and a CF employment officer, despite there only being two eligible clients to allocate
- triage workers were sometimes the last to be appointed within CfW delivery teams, which meant that mentors and, more particularly, advisers had grown accustomed to triaging their own clients
- referral agencies (not least JCP) continue to refer clients directly to advisers, even following the appointment of triage workers
- DWP data protection protocols preventing potential clients’ details being shared with CfW team members other than advisers.

4.69 Indeed, several contributors argued that the triage worker should be employed by the DWP rather than LDBs, thus making it possible for them to:

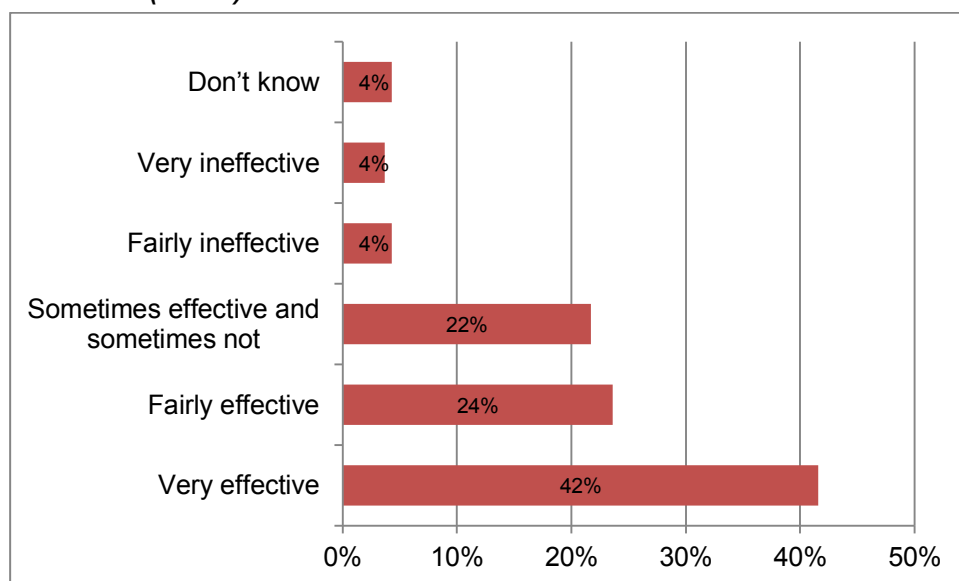
- access DWP databases to identify prospective participants
- access DWP databases for eligibility information
- access DWP Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) information and dangerous customer lists
- interact more easily with JCP advisers/work coaches to source referrals.

4.70 The triage process also involves regular (generally fortnightly, as required in the operational guidance) meetings between CfW staff, CF staff and where relevant, representatives of other support programmes such as Lift and local ESF interventions. Like first contact triage arrangements, the nature of triage meetings varies from one cluster to the next, though issues that are typically discussed include:

- the allocation of newly recruited participants to advisers and mentors. In many clusters, decisions about allocations are made before, but are reported upon in these meeting. In some instances discussions at triage meetings can lead to the reallocation of newly recruited participants between advisers and mentors
- the size of individual team members' caseloads
- the transfer of participants between team members
- training needed for participants, including consideration of the potential for group training
- performance against engagement and outcome targets, though in a number of clusters, there seemed to be a degree of suspicion that colleagues are not always entirely candid or clear about their achievements
- engagement plans.

4.71 Overall, 42 per cent of survey respondents (67) said that the triage process, regardless of how it is undertaken, is very effective in allocating individuals to the optimal form of support for them and a further 24 per cent (38) said that it was fairly effective.

Figure 4.2: Proportion of respondents saying that the triage process is effective (n=160)



- 4.72 Triage workers were the most enthusiastic, with 89 per cent saying that the process is very or fairly effective. Almost three quarters (74 per cent) of the mentors who responded found the process very or fairly effective. Advisers were rather more reserved in their judgement of the process, with just over two fifths (42 per cent) saying that it was very or fairly effective. Advisers were slightly more likely than triage workers and mentors to say that the process is sometimes effective and sometimes not so effective and considerably more likely to find the triage process ineffective (at 19 percent of advisers compared to 4 percent of mentors). This may reflect the perception amongst advisers in some areas that triage workers favour mentors, as well as the evolution of parallel DWP and LDB processes (noted above) and the difficulties establishing how far someone is from work through a short initial assessment.
- 4.73 By way of illustrating the effectiveness of the triage process in a wider context, one contributor noted that CfW is not a generic support service and if it is not felt that a client has a realistic prospect of a job outcome, they are referred to other interventions.
- 4.74 The allocation of clients to advisers and mentors is an art and not a science and in one cluster, arrangements have been put in place for participants inappropriately assigned to advisers or mentors to be 're-triaged' and reallocated. Rather less formal arrangements exist in other clusters whereby participants are referred by mentors to advisers or vice versa, usually

following discussion of their cases at triage meetings or as a result of discussion between relevant advisers and mentors.

- 4.75 Table 4.1 below shows the average number of clients that the different categories of CfW staff responding to our survey said that they were working with at the time. It also shows the range between the smallest and largest case-loads for each category of staff.

Table 4.1: Numbers of clients with which CfW staff work

Staff Category	Average	Range
Adult Mentor <small>n=25</small>	25	10-57
Youth Mentor <small>n=32</small>	17	4-31
CEA <small>n=32</small>	25	5-47
PEA <small>n=22</small>	21	10-45

- 4.76 Across the board, the caseloads of longer serving staff members tended to be slightly higher than those of individuals who were newer to their jobs. As previously noted a number of advisers and mentors interviewed during our fieldwork were genuinely worried that their performance would be assessed negatively because of the low numbers of participants on their books.
- 4.77 It was argued by one cluster manager that ‘the balance of mentors to advisers is wrong given the complexity of issues faced by clients’. The implication here was that there needs to be more mentors to work more intensively with people who have complex barriers over longer periods of time.

Action planning and advisory support

- 4.78 Advisers and mentors are expected to build upon the initial assessment by looking in more depth at the needs of clients allocated to them. They are then expected to develop ‘action plans’ for each participant ‘to provide structure and focus’ to participants’ efforts to move closer to the labour market⁷³.

In depth diagnostic assessment and action planning

- 4.79 Advisers and mentors’ early conversations with clients tend to be guided by the participant portfolio in that the document spurs conversations about individuals’ work history, qualifications, health conditions, interests and job

⁷³Welsh Government (2015), Business Plan 2014-2020: Communities4Work East Wales Priority 1, P.34

goals and aspirations. Both advisers and mentors were clear that the process of getting to the bottom of barriers faced by participants takes time, with several contributors saying that it takes two or three meetings to build rapport and gain the trust of individual clients: even then, some issues ‘don’t surface’ until some time later. Contributors spoke of having ‘conversations about life’ with clients, rather than exploring barriers head on.

- 4.80 Advisers and mentors often make a point of stressing that participation in CfW is voluntary and to distance themselves and the programme from JCP work coaches. It was said that this helps put clients at ease and, thus more likely to talk about ‘real barriers’ to work.
- 4.81 The Stage 1 Theory of Change report pointed to individuals facing direct (attitudinal or psychological) barriers and indirect (practical) barriers⁷⁴. Often, individuals face multiple and sometimes interconnecting barriers, with front line delivery staff noting that ‘there’s a lot going on’ in clients’ lives. These different barriers have been shown often to be cumulative, for example having work-limiting health conditions, having caring responsibilities and having little or no experience of sustained employment. The Theory of Change underpinning CfW assumed that the barriers faced by programme participants could be identified and tackled through the various forms of support on offer.
- 4.82 Our fieldwork confirmed that participants face many of the barriers anticipated in the CfW business plans though it was clear that the barriers are often more nuanced and interwoven than the business plans would suggest. The kinds of barriers that our discussions with delivery staff and participants, as well as our review of a selection of participant portfolios would suggest that participants commonly face are:

⁷⁴ Welsh Government (2017), Evaluation of Communities for Work: Stage 1: Theory of change and logic model

Direct barriers:

- mental health issues: ranging from low level to complex issues (sometimes stemming from adverse childhood experiences). The words 'depression' and 'anxiety' were mentioned repeatedly by CfW staff and participants
- lack of confidence/self-esteem, and for example, it was observed that a long period of worklessness, with repeated failures to secure work, could be very demotivating and could undermine people's self-confidence and self esteem
- entrenched worklessness and benefits dependency: some participants had clearly been 'through the system a lot' and some seemed 'comfortable' with their situations. Indeed, it was argued that some clients only engage with CfW because their JCP work coaches have referred them to the programme
- unrealistic expectations: with individuals wanting 'rich employment' and being reluctant to take on 'bad jobs' on low pay
- lack of hope and aspirations: particularly among young people.

Indirect barriers:

- a lack of effective job search and job application skills
- drug and alcohol misuse: with many young people using 'legal highs' as well as illicit drugs
- physical disabilities and low level health issues: such as 'lumber back pain', 'progressive arthritis', 'dizziness and balance problems'
- lack of basic and essential skills: often related to conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia etc as well as additional learning needs
- lack of qualifications
- childcare responsibilities: especially among lone parents. Some participants were clearly reluctant to use childcare providers (regardless of cost) - 'I'm not leaving my child with anyone else'

- transport barriers: including a lack of personal transport, poor public transport links (especially at times that fit in with shift patterns) and the prohibitive cost of public transport. Advisers and mentors also pointed to a reluctance among clients to travel far from home
- housing issues and homelessness: particularly among young people, with some 'sofa-surfing' and others living in hostels
- a lack of identification documentation: particularly among young people who are not living at home.

4.83 A number of other barriers were identified, but these were less common e.g. criminal records (some for serious offenses that markedly constrain the individual's work options), domestic abuse, debt and money problems, poor personal hygiene and others.

4.84 The sheer range and complexity of the barriers faced by many participants suggests that the programme is reaching those it was intended to help. However, our review of portfolios suggests that a small number of participants had no realistic prospect of finding paid employment in the short to medium term. These included an individual with complicated physical health issues who had been clear that she did not feel well enough to work and individuals who, by their own admission, had engaged with the CfW programme because 'the dole' had sent them, but had no real intention of looking for work. In one cluster, it seemed that the adult mentor had done more to help clients apply for 'Carers Allowance' so that they could look after vulnerable relatives than to encourage them to think about working. Whilst exceptions, these cases point to the fallibility of the triage and the diagnosis processes in that such individuals would probably be better served by other forms of support than CfW.

4.85 Whilst advisers and mentors generally take a very similar approach to assessing participants' needs, the conversations which advisers have with clients tend to have a rather more functional flavour and to be more obviously focused on moving clients towards employment. For example, advisers tend to discuss things such as Universal JobMatch early on and, crucially, to undertake 'better off calculations' with clients. Indeed, better off calculations were seen as a valuable tool in engaging individuals with the CfW

programme. It was said that many individuals are unaware that they would be better off in work and that 'often it's quite a large gap ... £200-£300 better off a month'. Our discussions with participants, particularly single mothers, pointed to the persuasive effects of better off calculations. For example, one participant said that despite wanting to work she had been 'afraid to chance it' because she had never been clear how her benefits might be affected or whether the costs of childcare might outweigh any additional earnings. In essence, she like other participants interviewed, perceived that the risk (not just to herself, but also to her children) of potentially compromising her earnings/benefits entitlements was too great to take the step into work, without the reassurance which the adviser was able to give her. Whilst our fieldwork was too limited to draw any firm conclusion, there was some suggestion from participants and front-line staff that recent changes to the Child Tax Credit may be encouraging some non-working mothers whose youngest child is approaching five years of age to engage with the programme.

- 4.86 Mentors do not generally undertake better off calculations for their clients (though a few do), reflecting the fact that mentors' clients tend to be some distance from the labour market when they first engage with CfW. Furthermore, few mentors have the knowledge of the benefits system necessary to undertake better off calculations reliably.
- 4.87 As noted in the previous chapter, there is no specific section within the participant portfolio to note barriers (though one cluster has developed its own paperwork to include a list of potential barriers as an aide memoir or prompt for discussion). This means that it is not always easy to get a sense of the problems which individual clients face (without reading the whole portfolio) and, therefore, to understand why particular activities are being undertaken.
- 4.88 The CfW business plans refer to the development of 'action plans ...to provide structure and focus' to the activities undertaken by/for participants, though as noted in the previous chapter, the participant portfolio does not include an 'action plan' section per se.
- 4.89 In reality, action planning is a fluid process, starting not so much with the barriers which clients face, but with their interests. Early actions typically

involve taking 'small steps' such as developing or updating a CV or going on short courses delivered locally. This step by step approach is intended to reassure participants that they can manage and to allow them to feel that they can move forward. Advisers and mentors noted that they 'don't push' participants during these early stages as they could easily be overwhelmed. Furthermore, barriers still emerge during the early stages of engagement and it is, therefore, important to maintain as much flexibility as possible. Several contributors pointed out that there is little point in defining 'action plans' too tightly because 'life happens' and people 'change their minds all the time'. Mentors also spoke of the fragility of client engagement, with some participants agreeing to particular courses of action, but 'disappearing when the time comes ... simply not turning up ... changing their phone numbers'. It is notable in this context that evidence from the evaluation of the Want to Work programme suggests that advisers did not develop formal action plans for the hardest-to-help claimants for similar reasons to these. This would support our earlier observation that any action planning documents (forming part of the participant portfolio) needs to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate participants' varying and variable situations.

Personalised support

4.90 In practice, the action planning process tends to meld with the provision of on-going personalised support to participants. The nature of the support provided varies, depending upon individuals' needs and, indeed, each adviser or mentor's personal styles. On the whole, however, advisers tend to focus more closely upon job preparation and job-search with activities typically revolving around:

- developing/improving/updating CVs
- sourcing employability/employment related training
- organising voluntary work placements
- liaising with JCP employer advisers to identify potential work experience opportunities

- organising work experience opportunities and monitoring participants' progress whilst undertaking placements. Work experience placements were seen by some advisers as a means of facilitating job offers
- setting clients up on Universal Jobmatch (if they are not already registered) and familiarising them with the system
- undertaking job-search activity alongside clients, not only to help find jobs, but also to help participants to develop job search skills – 'it's not that [clients] don't want to [undertake job search] ... but they haven't got the knowledge ... or confidence'
- sourcing information on potential work opportunities
- encouraging clients to attend job fairs and/or job clubs
- helping clients to apply for jobs, including drafting job applications and covering letters. It was noted that few participants have the skills to prepare good job applications and that they seldom devote enough time to doing so
- encouraging participants to register with employment agencies
- preparing clients for interviews. In one cluster, CfW staff had a reciprocal arrangements with officers delivering the Lift programme locally, whereby Lift staff conducted mock interviews with CfW clients and vice versa
- where necessary, contacting employers to see what is happening with job offers
- accompanying or transporting clients to interviews, though advisers generally seek to encourage clients to find their own ways to interviews.

4.91 The support provided by advisers is intended to help build participants' confidence, to motivate them to look for work and to equip them with the skills needed to find work. Generally, advisers seek to meet with clients weekly or fortnightly, though our review of portfolios suggested that the frequency of meetings can extend to a month, particularly whilst participants undertake training or work search activity. Some advisers seek to maintain momentum by keeping in touch with participants between face to face meetings, mainly by text.

- 4.92 Several of the participants we interviewed contrasted the approach taken by CfW advisers to that of JCP work coaches, with individuals saying: I don't like the job centre...I think the people here are more friendly... people in the job centre don't care ... [you're] just another person', the adviser is 'easy to talk to, not like the JCP ... she's not strict, she's pleasant ... I'm dyslexic and she explains things in a way that I can understand. She treats me like a real person' and, in the JCP the focus is 'just on getting a job ... as in any job', whereas CfW also helps participants access training and 'better yourself and build your skills'. Whilst clients clearly found advisers more sympathetic than work coaches, some clearly worked together behind the scenes to help move things forward for clients e.g. by accessing the JCP FSF.
- 4.93 In supporting participants, mentors often also start with developing or updating individuals' CVs, though this is done with subtly different intentions from advisers. Rather than preparing clients to search for work, the purpose of focusing on CVs is to help participants see that they have something to offer as well as highlighting opportunities for development
- 4.94 It was clear that mentors generally (though not exclusively) work with individuals who are further away from the labour market and who have more complex needs. The focus of mentors' work tends to be upon building clients' resilience and skills through:
- spending time with clients one to one, discussing challenges and exploring means of mitigating them
 - helping clients deal with immediate problems such as bills from a housing association or letters from the DWP
 - encouraging participants to participate in training designed to develop self-esteem and confidence
 - encouraging participants to engage in basic skills training
 - arranging volunteering opportunities for clients, often in concert with local Community Voluntary Councils (CVCs). Volunteering was seen by front line delivery staff as an important means of addressing social anxiety, developing skills, building confidence and providing something to include on a CV

- accompanying participants to training or volunteering opportunities
- driving participants to test centres e.g. to sit CSCS tests.

4.95 On the whole, mentors also make rather more use than advisers of external agencies to support their clients, particularly:

- mental health support organisations, though it is notable that several contributors noted that mental health services (including specialist youth mental health services) are oversubscribed in their areas
- health providers, including general practitioners, for mental health support, condition/pain management programmes and, increasingly, social prescription programmes
- drug and alcohol misuse agencies. Again, contributors spoke of long waiting lists, in one case, five weeks from referral to the initial assessment and a further wait after that before the first appointment
- environmental and wildlife organisations (as providers of volunteering placement opportunities)
- Women's Aid
- homelessness and housing organisations
- Citizens' Advice Bureau and welfare rights organisations
- services for people with learning disabilities
- foodbanks
- counselling services e.g. Cruse Bereavement
- local churches, youth clubs etc for youth support.

4.96 In this context, it is worth reiterating that support agencies of this nature also refer clients to CfW.

4.97 On the whole, mentors sought to meet participants weekly or fortnightly, though our review of portfolios would suggest that the frequency and regularity of meetings changes over time. It was also quite clear from the portfolios that clients frequently cancel or fail to turn up for appointments and some 'go off the radar' for periods at a time. It was also clear that mentors,

and particularly so youth mentors, make significant use of text messages and social media (Facebook) to keep in touch with clients and to remind them of forthcoming appointments or training courses. Some youth mentors also communicate with parents and grandparents in order to reach clients.

- 4.98 CfW was designed to allow advisers and mentors to work with participants over a sustained period, thus providing the continuity of support which previous research has shown is an important factor in helping individuals progress into employment. It was clear from our interviews with participants that they valued continuity of support and that this helped to develop high levels of trust between clients and their advisers or mentors. Individuals were overwhelmingly positive about their advisers/mentors, describing them as 'friendly and approachable' and commenting variously that: 'I was sceptical at first, but my adviser has really helped', 'he's very flexible and he understands my situation, he's very kind', 'I know he's got my best interest at heart and he's not setting me up to fail' and 'he's given me a boost and motivated me to look for work to be honest'.
- 4.99 Crucially, participants did not feel that they were being 'pushed' into jobs before they were ready or into jobs that they did not think were suitable, with one participant noting, for example, that her mentor 'has her targets but she won't push you by saying you'll lose your benefits' and another noting that 'they don't push you to do any job, they try get you something you want'. Delivery staff noted in this regard that 'there's no point pushing them into things if they're not ready ... they don't progress from A to B and then C ... you've got to work at their pace, be on their side, be their advocate'. However, many of the advisers and mentors we spoke to were preoccupied with targets and there may well be a risk that in order to achieve theirs, individual advisers and mentors may encourage individuals to take jobs that are not sustainable in the longer term.
- 4.100 A number of contributors were under the impression mentors were expected to refer clients on to advisers for job search support, as they approach work readiness. However, most mentors seemed disinclined to hand-on clients whose trust they had gained and who seemed to be progressing with their support, for fear of the participant losing momentum as a result of being

handed over to someone unfamiliar. Having said this, most mentors were only appointed during the second and third quarters of 2016 and, given that their clients are (in theory at least) deemed 12 months or more away from the labour market, it may be too soon to expect many referrals to have taken place.

- 4.101 There were, however, examples of clients being referred from advisers to mentors, usually clients who needed higher levels of support (e.g. to deal with direct barriers to employment), but who had been working with advisers. Sometimes, the barriers only became apparent as advisers worked with participants, but in a number of cases, these were clients who had been working with advisers prior to the appointment of mentors.

Training

- 4.102 A lack of skills or relevant qualifications were identified in the CfW business plans as barriers to employment. On this basis, various kinds of training are open to CfW participants as a means of increasing their skills and employability. Training is delivered by mainstream providers (e.g. local colleges and training providers), Communities First and a training provider/managing agent procured by the Welsh Government to deliver courses specifically to meet the needs of CfW participants.
- 4.103 A clear headline message from our fieldwork is that CF is perceived by front line delivery staff as a fundamentally important source of training for CfW participants across Wales. Indeed, it is the main source of training in most clusters, being described as ‘the first port of call’ by many front line delivery staff, though mentors were a little more likely to say this than advisers. Some use is also made of Adult and Community Learning and other local provision, including courses delivered at local Jobcentres. It was clear that the assumption made at the programme development stage that ‘CF teams were very networked into the services that were available in their areas’ was a fair one to have made.
- 4.104 The training sourced from CF is generally of short duration – ‘bite sized’, is delivered very locally and much of it has a strong focus on basic employability skills e.g. First Aid, Food Hygiene, Health and Safety and Manual Handling. It was argued that courses of this nature help to build participants’ confidence

and motivation as well as providing them with basic certification required for many roles. Essential skills training was also a feature of the provision sourced via CF, with titles such as a 'Taste of English' or a 'Taste of Maths' being used as well as 'literacy', 'numeracy' and 'ICT'.

- 4.105 Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) and Security Industry Authority (SIA) training formed an important element of the provision delivered under the CF banner in most clusters, with some offering a 'rolling' programme of such courses⁷⁵. It was clear from our review of portfolios and our discussions with participants that this kind of training was predominantly undertaken by men, though CfW staff were open to the potential value of construction and security industry certification for women too. In some clusters, CF offered 'introduction to' or 'getting into' courses designed to provide participants with a taste of and the 'fundamental' skills required to work in sectors such as hair and beauty, healthcare, hospitality and retail⁷⁶.
- 4.106 Alongside more vocationally focused provision, courses designed to build participants' confidence and motivation were delivered in most clusters, with the Pacific Institute's 'STEPS' training seen as a particularly effective approach with young people (aged 16-24). Indeed, one CfW mentor, herself an accredited STEPS practitioner, used STEPS techniques on a one to one basis, to help participants recognise the things that are holding them back and to set goals for changing their lives.
- 4.107 Mainstream training, such as that delivered by local authority adult continuing education departments and further education colleges, was also used by CfW teams, but to a far lesser extent than provision delivered under the CF banner. Indeed, mainstream providers worked closely with CF in some areas, with courses promoted by CF and sometimes delivered in CF or JCP premises. In essence, the dividing line between CF and local mainstream provision was hard to distinguish in some areas.
- 4.108 Our survey of front line staff explored their views of training provision for participants in their areas. Specifically, questions were asked about the availability, relevance, quality and effectiveness of particular types of training.

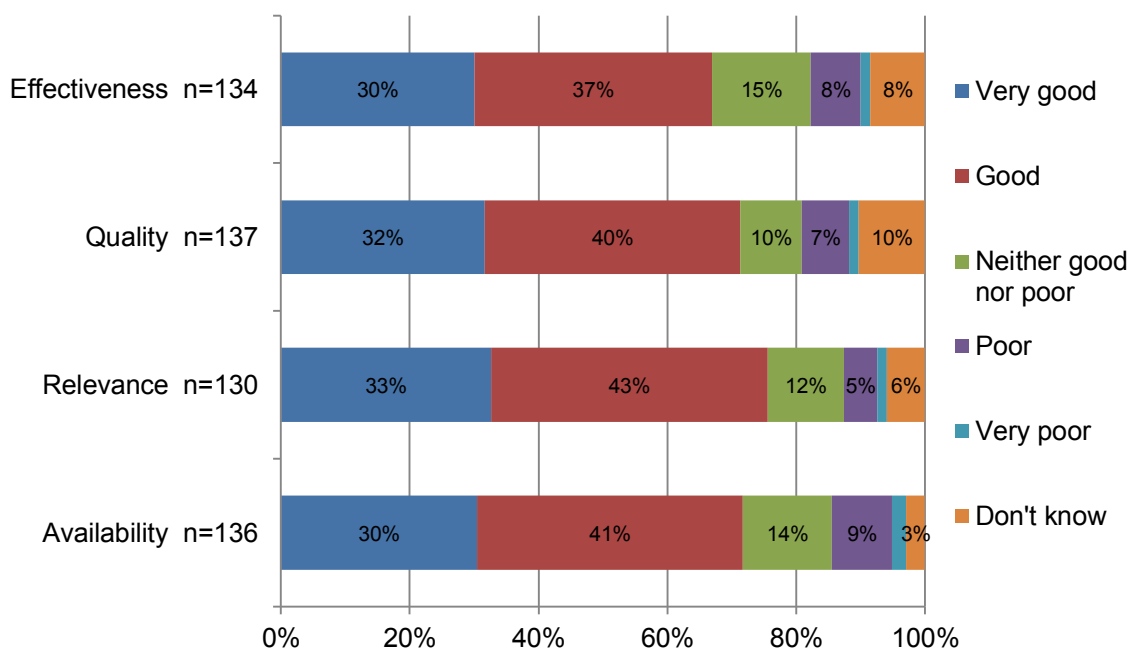
⁷⁵ This kind of training is also offered by the designated CfW training provider

⁷⁶ Again, these kinds of courses are also offered by the designated CfW training provider

4.109 Figure 4.2 shows survey respondents' views of the availability, relevance, quality and effectiveness of CF and mainstream training provision in their areas. It shows that 71 per cent of respondents (99) found CF and mainstream provision very or fairly easy to source and that 73 percent (102) found it very or fairly relevant to participants' needs. This was very much echoed during our fieldwork, with front line delivery staff noting that 'it's good that it's [available] on the doorstep', in 'manageable' amounts. It was also said that the training strikes an appropriate balance in terms of addressing participants' needs whilst also maintaining focus on local labour market opportunities.

4.110 Based mainly on feedback from clients, 69 per cent of CfW staff responding to our survey (97) felt that CF and mainstream training is of very or fairly good quality, and this again was echoed by CfW staff interviewed during our fieldwork. Youth mentors were more likely than other front line staff to say that the quality of CF and mainstream provision is of poor or very poor quality, though the majority of youth mentors holding this view worked in clusters within a single local authority area.

Figure 4.3 Survey respondents' views of the availability, relevance, quality and effectiveness of training delivered by Communities First and mainstream providers



- 4.111 Survey respondents were a little more subdued about the effectiveness of CF and mainstream training in preparing participants for employment, with 62 per cent (87) saying that the training is very or fairly effective. Twenty two per cent of respondents (31) offered neutral responses to the question, saying that the training is neither good nor poor or that they did not know how effective it is. This possibly reflects the fact that the survey was undertaken at a fairly early stage in the CfW programme's life and that it is too soon to for the effects of training upon many participants to have become apparent.
- 4.112 The 119 participants interviewed were overwhelmingly complimentary about the accessibility, relevance and quality of the training which they had undertaken. Several of those interviewed felt a sense of achievement in having completed courses or gained 'certificates' in areas such as basic First Aid, Health and Safety or Manual Handling. Individuals also believed that the training they had undertaken increased their chances of getting a job: 'I'm just waiting for my [SIA] card ... then I won't have to search for many jobs ... this bloke's already said that once I've got the card, he'll see if he has a job for me'.
- 4.113 There was widespread concern among CfW staff that the closure of the CF programme could have serious implications for the availability of accessible, fairly low level employment related training in their areas. Indeed, some noted that there has already been a reduction in the volume of provision available in their areas. Concern was also expressed about the future viability of small, local training providers which relied to a degree upon CF business.
- 4.114 A single provider has been contracted by the Welsh Government to deliver training where suitable provision is not available locally via mainstream sources or CF. The contract, which came into effect in April 2016, requires the training provider retained to use sub-contractors to deliver at least 60% of the training provided. This means that the training provider retained holds 'call-off' type contracts with over 80 mainstream and specialist providers across Wales, including some of those which deliver training under the CF banner. As lead contractor, the provider retained by the Welsh Government is required to ensure the quality of provision delivered by its sub-contractors.

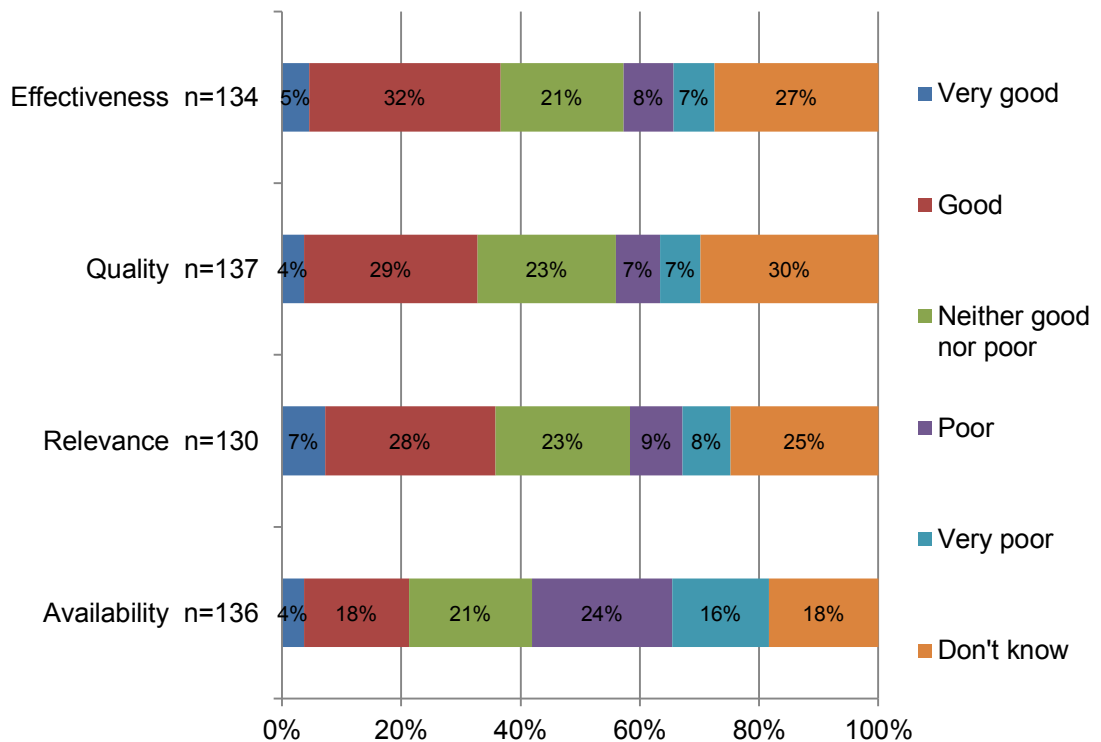
- 4.115 The terms of the Welsh Government contract also required the provider retained to put in place an electronic booking system (EBS) which would allow front line staff to view the kinds of courses on offer, to book participants onto specific provision and to see the progress made or qualifications achieved by participants. It was intended that the EBS would link to the database of participants compiled by LDBs and the DWP and collated by the Welsh Government, thus enabling data to be generated that will allow judgements to be made about the effects and effectiveness of training undertaken in terms of participants' progression in the labour market.
- 4.116 It took considerably longer than initially anticipated for the EBS to be fully functional, not least because of the need to 'go through IT health checks'. Although a functioning prototype system was in place by September 2016, the system was not fully launched until April 2017. Even at that point, the system remains a 'work in progress' and there was more to do in terms of presenting the EBS to front line CfW staff⁷⁷ and setting staff up as system users, each with their own individual log-in.
- 4.117 In the interim 12 month period, the retained training provider operated a manual system for booking participants onto courses. The volume of training requests received proved overwhelming, however, and despite taking on additional staff, the provider's manual system proved inadequate for the task. Several contributors said that they got the impression that the provider had struggled to cope with the level of demand it faced.
- 4.118 There was a degree of overlap in the titles delivered by the training provider retained by the Welsh Government and those delivered by CF, though local CfW staff have total discretion in the training they request. For example, the designated CfW training provider delivered courses in generic employability skills such as First Aid and Manual Handling as well as in sector specific titles such as CSCS and SIA. It also delivered more specialised provision such as Computer Aided Design (CAD), book-keeping, Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) driver training and boat skippering, sometimes on a small group or one to one basis. In addition to this, the training provider has delivered 'vocational related

⁷⁷ As well as PaCE staff: the contract between the Welsh Government and the retained provider covers training for participants in both the CfW and PaCE programmes

packages' whereby participants are guaranteed interviews upon the completion of training, thanks to the engagement of larger employers.

4.119 Whilst, the training provider retained by the Welsh Government had taken in excess of 2,300 course bookings for over 1,800 individuals by May 2017, not all of the CfW delivery staff that we spoke to during our fieldwork had engaged with it, generally because they were able to source the training needed by their clients locally. This was also evident from the proportion of respondents to our survey of CfW staff who selected the 'don't know' option in response to questions about the availability, relevance, quality and effectiveness of the training provided by the designated provider, as shown in Figure 4.3 below. It is also possible that those opting for the neutral response 'neither good nor poor' had too little experience of using the designated provider to commit either way.

Figure 4.4: Survey respondents' views of the availability, range, relevance, quality and effectiveness of vocational group training delivered by the training provider retained by the Welsh Government



4.120 Twenty one per cent of respondents (29) felt that the training they sought for participants was readily available⁷⁸ whilst 39 per cent (54) found the availability of courses poor⁷⁹. This was very much echoed in our discussions with CfW staff who made two key points relating to the availability of courses:

- first, it was said that there have been long delays between training requests being submitted and courses being run. Interviewees spoke of long delays and participants being 'left hanging'. Waiting times of up to 'nine months' were mentioned and some contributors spoke of participants just 'taking any old job' rather than waiting for training that would potentially enable them to enter more sustainable employment.
- second, it was argued that participants are offered courses in places inaccessible to them, both because of the distances involved in getting to particular locations and because of the time at which individuals were expected to get to those locations. One adviser spoke of a client needing to leave his home town 'on the 6.27am train' to get to a course on time. Having said this, however, some contributors accepted that participants will need to travel some distance from their homes in order to secure employment in the fields in which they are interested, so travelling for training might well represent the first step on the journey towards employment.

4.121 In organising provision, the provider retained by the Welsh Government faces the challenge of balancing the need to offer courses as quickly and locally as possible with the need to bring together sufficiently large groups of participants to render courses viable for itself or for the providers it sub-contracts. It was acknowledged that this is particularly the case in less populous areas such as north west Wales. Some cluster teams recognised this and had attempted to pull together groups of participants requiring the same or similar training. Indeed, one contributor speculated that pulling together groups from the same community might make participants more likely to attend training, first because they would feel more comfortable being among familiar faces and, second because they would feel compelled to

⁷⁸ This equated to 35% of those who responded either good or poor

⁷⁹ This equated to 65% of those who responded either good or poor

attend rather than letting down people they know. Indeed this practice is encouraged by Welsh Government.

- 4.122 Thirty five per cent (49) of survey respondents felt that the training delivered by the provider retained by the Welsh Government was relevant to participants' needs⁸⁰, with 17 per cent (23) saying that it was not relevant⁸¹.
- 4.123 Thirty two per cent (44) of respondents felt that the retained provider's training was of good quality⁸², though 14 per cent (19) said that it was poor⁸³. Although few of the participants we met had undertaken training delivered by the retained provider, those that had seemed to think it had been of good quality, with one individual describing his experience as 'fantastic'.
- 4.124 Several contributors spoke of problems in communicating with the provider retained by the Welsh Government, with specific complaints relating to the organisation not returning calls, not responding to requests for particular types of training, writing to participants but not keeping CfW teams in the loop and losing paperwork. A handful of contributors also noted that certificates were not always issued to participants in a timely fashion, which caused problems where those certificates were prerequisites for particular jobs. In relation to this final point, it should be noted that these delays may be attributable in part at least, to the time taken by awarding bodies to issue certificates.
- 4.125 The perceived shortcomings in the service of the training provider's retained by the Welsh Government during its first year of involvement with the programme has led to 'frustrations' on the part of front line staff and even bred reticence among those who have not yet used the organisation's services because they have heard bad reports 'from others. Nevertheless, contributors were generally 'hopeful' that things will improve as the EBS is fully rolled out and any remaining glitches are fixed. The training provider retained has embarked on a series of regional events designed to present the EBS and also to hear from front line users how the system might be improved and what kinds of provision might be needed in their areas.

⁸⁰ This equated to 68% of those who responded either good or poor

⁸¹ This equated to 32% of those who responded either good or poor

⁸² This equated to 70% of those who responded either good or poor

⁸³ This equated to 30% of those who responded either good or poor

- 4.126 Thirty six per cent of survey respondents (51) said that they had experienced difficulty in sourcing appropriate training via CF, mainstream providers or the designated CfW provider, though there was no clear pattern to the types of training that they found difficult to arrange. Indeed, many of the titles suggested corresponded to courses delivered by either or both CF and the provider retained by the Welsh Government, suggesting that the difficulties they were referring to related to the location or timing of provision.
- 4.127 As mentioned above, there was widespread concern among CfW staff about the future availability of accessible training in their areas, given the closure of the CF programme. This concern was compounded for some by negative experiences of engaging with the training provider retained by the Welsh Government. A number of contributors argued for CfW teams to be allocated budgets which would allow them to buy in training as and when needed, along the lines of the model adopted for the Lift programme. Indeed, some argued that this could result in cost savings as it would cut out the ‘middle man’, in the shape of the training provider retained by the Welsh Government. It is perhaps worth noting in this context that the Welsh Government’s decision to procure CfW training centrally was driven by the need to comply with ESF regulations.
- 4.128 Other CfW staff, though far fewer, recognised the potential benefits of a centrally procured model in terms of ensuring consistency across clusters and in terms of the potential which the EBS offers for monitoring the nature and volume of the training being delivered and for linking participants’ progress to training undertaken.

Barriers fund

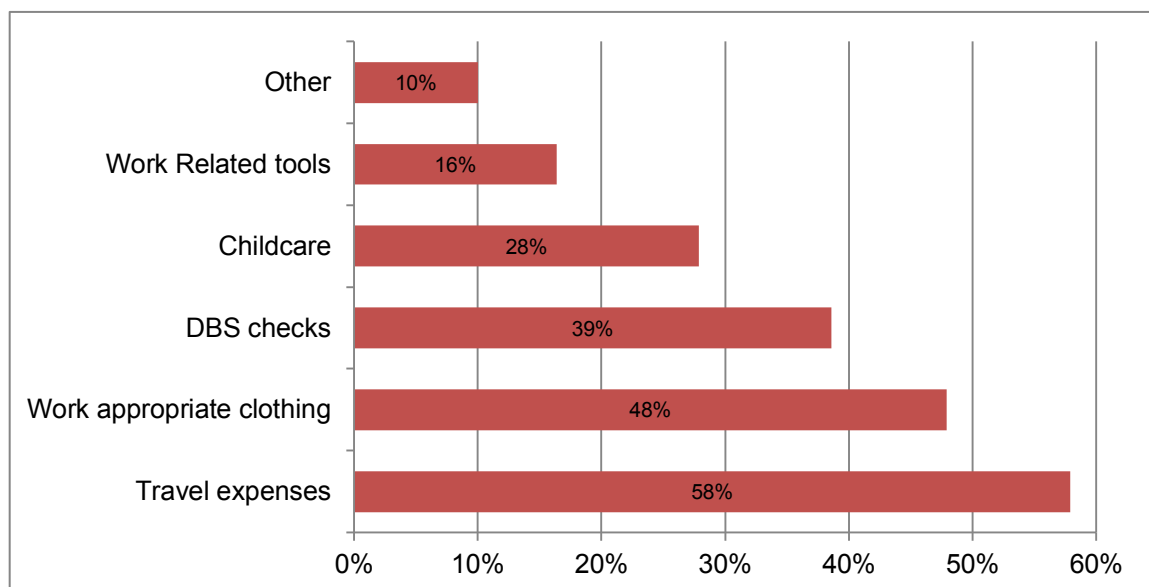
- 4.129 The Barriers Fund was introduced to help support participants to purchase essential items, without which they would be unable to take up a job or participate in an agreed activity. It is intended as a fund of last resort and CfW staff are expected to look to other potential sources e.g. CF or JCP’s FCF before applying to the CfW Barriers Fund.
- 4.130 In order to access Barriers Fund monies on behalf of clients, CfW staff are required to set out why the funding is needed (‘the rationale’), demonstrate that all other options have been exhausted and provide three quotes for items

to be purchased. Funding applications are then approved (or not) by their local line manager and form part the portfolio evidence

4.131 Figure 4.4 shows that travel expenses were the most common use to which respondents to our survey of front line staff said the Barriers Fund is put, with 58 per cent of respondents saying that they had used it to help clients meet such costs. Almost half (48 per cent) of respondents said that they had used the Barriers Fund to help clients buy work appropriate clothing and over a third said that the Fund had been used to meet the costs of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, which are a prerequisite for those working in childcare or healthcare settings, for example. It is notable in this context that the JCP's Financial Contingency Fund (FCF) cannot be used to pay for DBS checks.

4.132 Just over a quarter of respondents said that they had accessed the Barriers Fund to help clients meet the cost of childcare whilst undertaking training or when going for interview and 16 per cent said that they had used the Fund to help clients buy work related tools.

Figure 4.5: Expenses which the Barriers Fund is used to meet (n=123)



4.133 Other costs which the Barriers Fund has been used to meet included the cost of Security Industry Authority (SIA) and Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards. A small number of respondents noted that they had found it difficult to access the Barriers Fund to pay for driving lessons for

clients, albeit that the Operational Guidance is clear that ‘driving lessons may be purchased when private transport is the only viable means of securing and sustaining employment’⁸⁴. It was argued that the inability to drive can be a major barrier to employment for people living outside towns and cities or for people looking to work in settings which offer shift work and learning to drive, therefore, represents a legitimate cost of moving closer to employment.

- 4.134 Twenty one per cent of respondents (30) said that the Barriers Fund is essential in helping most participants move closer to employment, 40 per cent (56) said that it was essential only to some participants. A further 19 per cent (27) thought that the Barriers Fund is fairly important to participants. The participants we interviewed who had benefitted from Barriers Fund support, though few in number, said that it had been invaluable to them. For example a young person who had been helped to buy suitable clothing for a work placement said that it had been helpful in enabling him to ‘fit in’ whilst a homeless young man said that he ‘couldn’t do [his CSCS] exam without [the] photo ID’ which the Barriers Fund had enabled him to acquire.
- 4.135 Twelve per cent of respondents (17) said that they had not yet accessed the Barriers Fund on behalf of their clients. Our discussions with advisers and mentors would suggest that this owed something to their accessing the funding needed by their clients from CF, JCP and, indeed, other sources, as was the intention when the programme was designed. It was clear that advisers in particular see JCP as the ‘first port of call’ when looking for funding to help clients.
- 4.136 A recurring theme during our fieldwork was the bureaucracy and complexity of the Barriers Fund process with several contributors saying that ‘the process is so complicated’. In particular, contributors thought that the volume of paperwork required to make the case and demonstrate that all other avenues have been exhausted as well as obtaining three quotes is often disproportionate to the value of the applications being submitted. One contributor added that the prospect of being interrogated about the rationale for an application was another reason for avoiding the Barriers Fund. One

⁸⁴ Welsh Government, CfW Operational Guidance, p.42

contributor who has yet to access the Barriers Fund said that 'it scares me ... an eight page application form and having to prove so many things'.

4.137 Contributors also felt that there is little logic in the Barriers Fund to only being available to meet some costs retrospectively, requiring participants that can ill afford it, to meet things such as travel expenses up front. Contributors suggested that a 'petty cash fund' should be made available to help meet some costs up-front⁸⁵.

4.138 A number of contributors called for the simplification of the Barriers Fund application processes and a substantial improvement in the turn-around time for applications. Some referred to the relative simplicity of the Lift barriers fund and suggested that might be a model to follow⁸⁶. Indeed, it is notable in this context that the evaluation of the Lift programme found that its barriers fund was highly responsive, and able to react to barriers as they emerged⁸⁷. Individual contributors also called for greater clarity surrounding precisely what can and cannot be supported via the Barriers Fund, albeit that the Operational Guidance already sets this out in some detail. One individual suggested that the Welsh Government could usefully publish the criteria it uses where applications are referred to it, possibly using a decision chart of some kind to allow front line staff to get a better understanding of the logic applied.

Programme exit

4.139 CfW participants exit the programme once employed. Within the design of CfW there is no intention to provide in-work support on any more formal basis than crisis support potentially on demand.

4.140 Participants are also able to exit the programme of their own volition, if they do not feel that it is suitable for them. Also programme staff are able to exit individuals who fail to engage with the programme or who they believe are unlikely to progress any further with CfW support. Some advisers employ a soft 'three strikes and you're out' policy, in that clients who do not turn up for

⁸⁵ It should be noted that some LDBs do operate 'petty cash' systems and we came across examples of such funds being used to meet participants costs in the short term

⁸⁶ It should be noted that CfW is subject to conditions attaching to the use of ESF monies, whereas Lift is not

⁸⁷ Welsh Government (2016c), *Evaluation of the Lift Programme, Phase 2 - Implementation Study: The Structural Form and Operational Practice of Lift*

three appointments are exited automatically, though there is some flexibility around that approach

4.141 As previously noted, it was quite clear from the portfolios that clients frequently cancel or fail to turn up for appointments and some 'go off the radar' for periods at a time. Such clients are regarded as 'dormant' by some mentors and kept open within their caseloads, although they do not actively engage with the programme. This suggests that some mentors' caseloads might seem larger than they are in reality.

4.142 Keeping 'dormant' clients on their books does not seem to be causing mentors any problems at the moment because few have as many clients as they would like. However, the situation could change if engagements were to step up.

5. Initial outputs and outcomes

- 5.1 In this chapter we consider the progress made in implementing the CfW programme thus far in terms of the numbers of participants enrolled and the outcomes achieved by those participants. In presenting this chapter, however, we emphasise that the focus of this phase of our work has been upon processes underpinning CfW and that only limited consideration has been given to the programme's performance.
- 5.2 It is also worth recalling that it has taken rather longer than originally expected to roll out the programme, with LDBs generally appointing triage workers and mentors from mid 2016 and arrangements yet to be made in relation to triage workers and mentors in two clusters.
- 5.3 This chapter is presented in three sections as follows:
- outputs
 - outcomes
 - soft outcomes.

Outputs

- 5.4 Table 5.1 shows the numbers of participants engaged with the CfW programme in both East Wales and West Wales and the Valleys, distinguishing between participants recruited under Priority 1 (individuals who are economically inactive or long term unemployed) and Priority 3 (young people who are NEET).
- 5.5 The table shows that delivery to date is broadly in line with profile across all three target participant groups. However, these profiles were only set in late 2016, taking into account actual delivery up to that point. In reality, the numbers of participants enrolled to date across both priorities fall some way short of the numbers necessary to achieve the programme's overall engagement targets⁸⁸, assuming a straight line recruitment profile across the programme's five year life-span. Whilst it would seem reasonable to expect recruitment levels to build up as CfW gathers momentum, it seems that meeting the programme's overall output targets is likely to prove challenging.

⁸⁸ i.e. 29,895 individuals who are economically inactive, 14,949 long term unemployed people and 7,437 young people who are NEET

Table 5.1: Engagements to February 2017 as recorded in CfW programme database^{89 90 91}

	East Wales		West Wales and Valleys		All Wales		% Profile Achieved	% 2020 Target Achieved
	Profile	Actual	Profile	Actual	Profile	Actual		
Economically Inactive	640	598	2,073	1,932	2,713	2,530	93%	8%
Long Term Unemployed	347	393	1,077	1,112	1,424	1,505	106%	10%
Total Priority 1 Participants	987	991	3,150	3,044	4,137	4,035	98%	9%
Young People NEET	348	384	1,674	1,895	2,022	2,279	113%	31%
Total P1 and P3 Participants	1,335	1,375	4,824	4,939	6,159	6,314	103%	12%

5.6 Nevertheless, contributors thought that recruitment onto CfW could well increase in the wake of welfare reforms which came into force from April 2017, most notably the introduction of a two child limit for Child Tax Credit claims and limiting ESA payments to JSA rates for new claimants placed in the Work-Related Activity Group (WRAG). It was also thought that the closure of the Work Programme from April 2017 and the Lift programme at the end of 2017 could lead to more people being referred to CfW. Indeed, competition for clients from other programmes and projects (including ones part funded by ESF) was a recurring theme during our fieldwork and something that was thought to affect the recruitment of young people who are NEET in particular.

5.7 Contributors also hoped that as the CfW programme becomes more established and better known by partner organisations, it should also become a more obvious point of referral for the groups targeted. On the other hand, however the flow of clients into CfW might be adversely affected by the closure of CF though again this may increase the numbers seeking its support.

⁸⁹ CfW Monitoring Information Pack, 10 April 2017, pp. 9-10

⁹⁰ Separate and slightly more up to date figures, based on cluster management information returns, are available. The figures in this table are, however, those reported to WEFO

⁹¹ CfW Operational Extension Business Case V2.0, p.24

Variation in performance across clusters

5.8 As shown in Figures 5.1 to 5.3, across the sample of clusters we visited, recruitment patterns varied significantly, though none had reached their profile figures in respect of economically inactive participants and only two (of 19) had done so in respect of long term unemployed individuals. Ten clusters had reached or exceeded their engagement profiles in respect of young people who are NEET, with four doing so by a considerable margin.

Figure 5.1: Numbers of economically inactive participants engaged by cluster

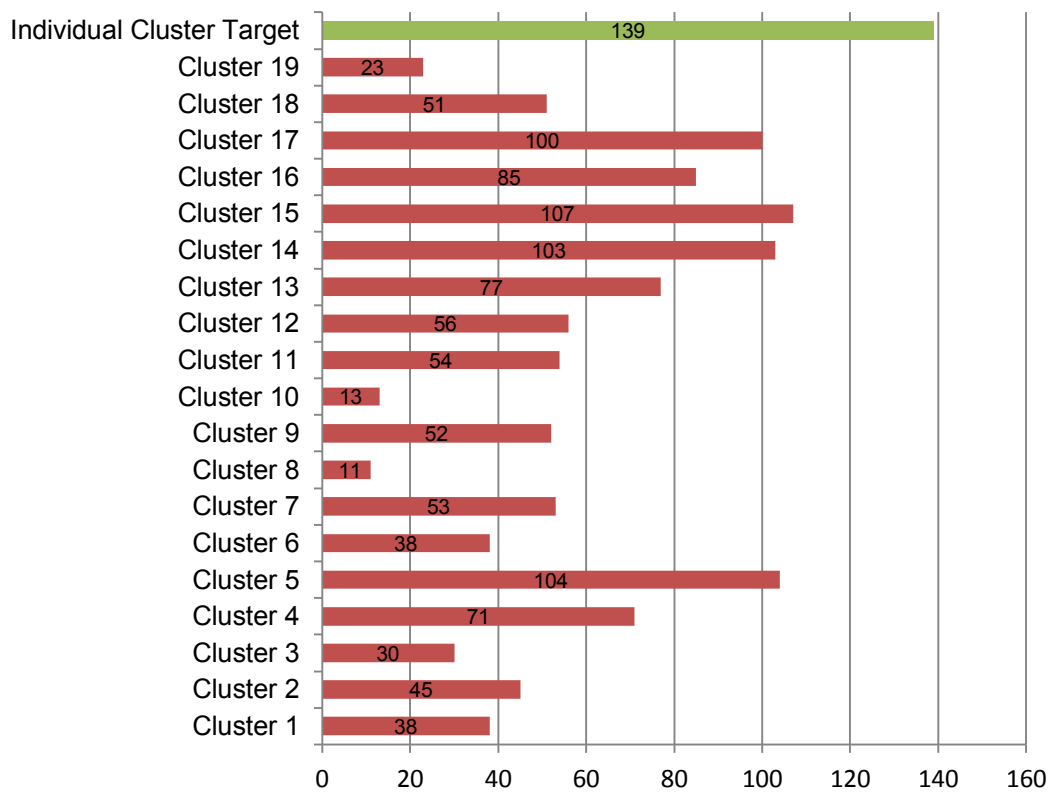


Figure 5.2: Numbers of long term unemployed participants engaged by cluster

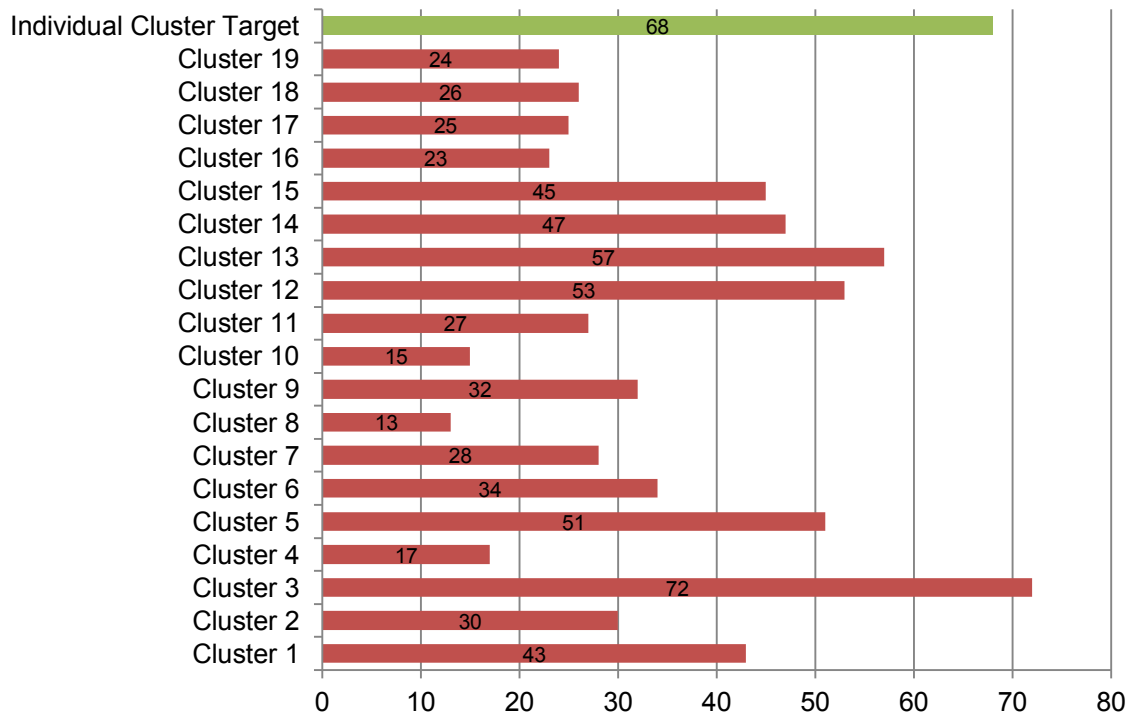
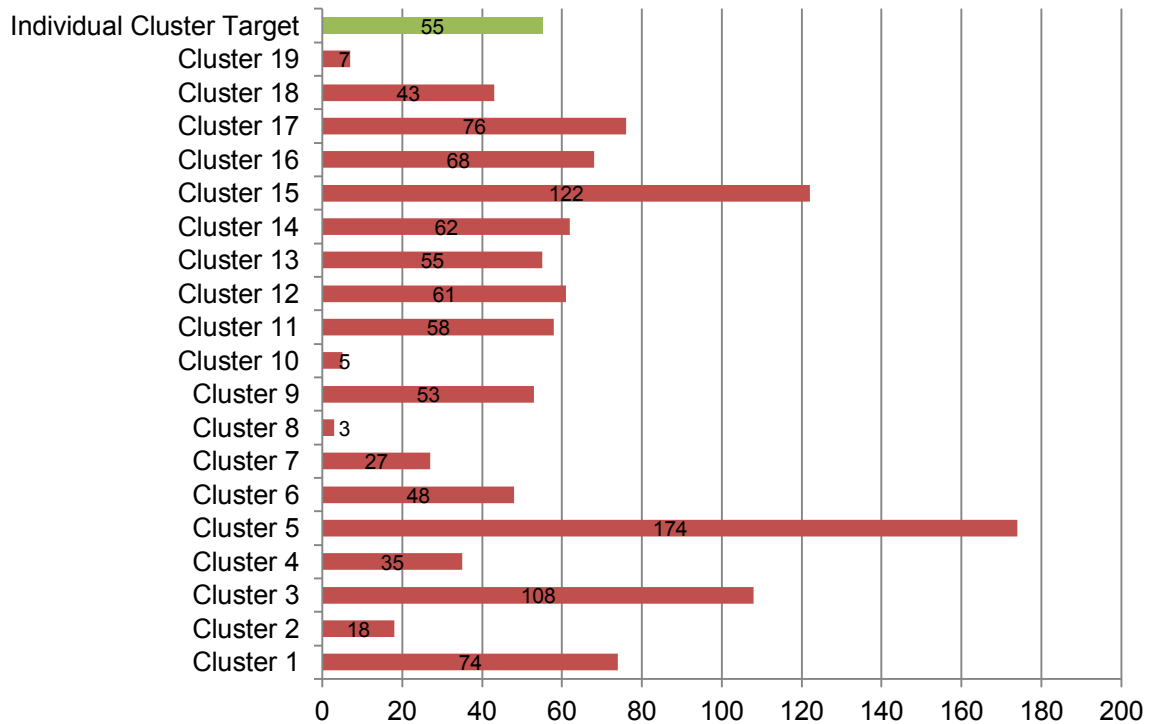


Figure 5.3: Numbers of young people not in employment, education or training engaged by cluster



- 5.9 Whilst it is difficult to generalise given the level of variance across clusters, it did seem that recruitment was stronger where youth mentors had established relationships with relevant organisations and partnerships e.g. YEPFs.
- 5.10 As noted in chapter three, JCP represents a key source of referrals onto CfW and this was particularly the case during the programme's early days, prior to the appointment of front line staff within LDBs. However, it was noted by several contributors that only a limited proportion of individuals referred to CfW by JCP end up engaging with the programme. In contrast, individuals referred from organisations around the family, whilst considerably fewer in number, were more likely to engage with the programme.
- 5.11 Several contributors said that it has been difficult to engage participants from BME groups, generally because of small BME populations within their clusters. Having said this, however, there was no evidence that particular action had been taken in any of the clusters we visited to specifically determine the size of or to target BME groups.

Outcomes

- 5.12 As noted in the theory of change, the achievement of outcome targets is dependent on the achievement of output targets, that is, being able to attract and engage the requisite number of individuals in order that the ratio of hard outcomes in respect of employment can emerge. As one mentor put it, 'provided an adequate flow of clients come through the door ... some of them will progress into work'.
- 5.13 Table 5.2 shows the numbers of job outcomes achieved in respect of participants in both East Wales and West Wales and the Valleys, again distinguishing between participants recruited under Priority 1 (individuals who are economically inactive or long term unemployed) and Priority 3 (young people who are NEET).

Table 5.2: Job outcomes achieved to February 2017 as recorded in CfW programme database^{92 93}

	East Wales		West Wales and Valleys		All Wales			
	Profile	Actual	Profile	Actual	Profile	Actual	% Profile Achieved	% 2020 Target Achieved
Economically Inactive	170	142	360	389	530	531	100%	10%
Long Term Unemployed	82	71	128	154	210	225	107%	9%
Total Priority 1 Participants	252	213	488	543	740	756	102%	10%
Young People NEET	37	79	402	538	439	617	141%	30%
Total P1 and P3 Participants	289	292	890	1,081	1,179	1,373	116%	14%

5.14 The table shows that achievement to date in relation to Priority 1 participants is broadly in line with profiles, though the achievement in relation to Priority 3 is considerably higher than the profiled level. Once more, however, profiles were only set in late 2016, taking into account actual delivery up to that point. As was the case in respect of outputs, the outcomes achieved across Priority 1 fall some way short of the numbers necessary to achieve the programme's overall job outcome targets⁹⁴, assuming a straight line recruitment profile across the programme's five year life-span.

5.15 Because these profiles are essentially based on actual delivery up to the end of the second quarter of 2016/17, they bear no relation to the outcome targets set for individual advisers and mentors. However, outcome targets were of paramount concern to CfW front line teams and several alluded to the

⁹² CfW Monitoring Information Pack, 10 April 2017, pp. 9-10

⁹³ Separate and slightly more up to date figures, based on cluster management information returns, are available. The figures in this table are, however, those reported to WEFO

⁹⁴ i.e. 5,217 individuals who are economically inactive, 2,568 long term unemployed people and 1,445 young people who are NEET

illogicality of setting job outcome targets during the programme's early days. They argued that CfW is targeted at people considered to be at least six months away from work (and at least 12 months in the case of mentor clients) and it, therefore made no sense to expect many, if any job outcomes to be delivered during 2015 or 2016. Indeed, staff in those clusters where mentors have only recently been appointed, or have yet to be appointed, argued that no job outcome targets should be set in respect of those deemed 12 months or more away from the labour market until 2018.

- 5.16 Several front line delivery staff noted that a greater proportion than anticipated of adults (Priority 1 participants) recruited in their clusters have presented with very complex needs and are, therefore, likely to need more intensive support over a longer period of time. This was attributed in part to benefits reforms, with individuals 'who've been signed off work for a very long time' now being assessed as 'fit for work'. The vulnerability of this group could clearly have implications for the numbers of job outcomes delivered.
- 5.17 Despite this, however, the proportion of Priority 1 participants who have already progressed into employment is greater than the 17 per cent expected, with 21 per cent of economically inactive participants progressing into employment and 19 per cent of long term unemployed recruits doing so. The proportion of 16-24 year old participants who are NEET progressing into employment is very much in line with expectations at 27 per cent (compared to 28 per cent).
- 5.18 In the programme's early days, staff were required to source copies of former participants' payslips or DWP confirmation that they were not claiming benefits, in order to evidence job outcomes. Front line staff argued that 'getting evidence of job outcomes isn't easy' in that it could feel 'intrusive' to ask former participants for copies of their payslips and that they were reluctant to keep 'harassing' DWP staff for written confirmation of former participants' benefits status. However, more recently the operational guidance has been updated to allow participants to sign a 'self-declaration' form to confirm movement into employment, in line with WEFO's current evidence requirements.

5.19 Given the nature of the clients targeted by CfW, there was a widespread feeling among front line staff that greater value should be attached to the achievement of intermediary or second tier outcomes by participants and that these should be monitored along the way, rather than simply when participants exit the programme. Whilst the intermediary outcomes contributors had in mind generally reflected those already monitored upon participants' exit from CfW (i.e. qualifications gained, volunteering undertaken, work placements undertaken or young people progressing into education or training), it was also thought that recognition should be given to clients progressing into work of less than 16 hours a week⁹⁵. It was argued that taking a job for a few hours a week can represent 'a massive step' for an individual who has been out of work for several years and that the marginal gain of working a few hours more to someone on low pay is too small to justify the risk of compromising their benefits entitlement, at least in the short run.

Soft Outcomes

5.20 Contributors were generally very clear that CfW 'is about job outcomes' albeit that other outcomes (i.e. those referred to as intermediary or second tier outcomes) are also monitored upon clients' exit from the programme CfW.

5.21 Nevertheless, front line staff, and more particularly those employed by LDBs, believed that there might be some merit in capturing softer outcomes in order to demonstrate the programme's effects upon participants as they progress through CfW. Examples of the kinds of soft outcomes that it was suggested might be monitored included 'people making new friends', people 'looking after themselves better ...like personal hygiene and presentation', changes in participants' sense of 'self-worth', improvements in individuals' levels of 'confidence' and parent's impressions of changes in younger participants. In reality, however, such indicators would be difficult to measure and open to a high degree of subjectivity.

⁹⁵ WEFO requires that former participants work for a minimum of 16 hours a week in order to count as a job outcome

- 5.22 Where self-evaluation tools such as 'work stars' had been adopted, it was thought that these might provide useful evidence of soft outcomes, but their use was confined to a handful of clusters and even to individual practitioners within those clusters.
- 5.23 It was thought that the 'case studies' prepared by front line staff capture many of these kinds of outcomes, but it was acknowledged they do not do so in any systematic way. Furthermore, it was perceived that case studies are generally intended as tools for capturing 'good news stories' rather than genuine attempts to understand the effects of the programme.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 The purpose of this second phase of evaluation has been to assess how the CfW programme has been set up and how it is being operated. The report has focused on the establishment of the programme, its operational success and initial outcomes, highlighting the key assumptions that informed the design of CfW, as set out in the Stage 1 theory of change report.

6.2 We have noted a number of issues worthy of further consideration in previous chapters and it is not our intention to re-visit those in detail here. Rather we focus upon key areas from the research, as follows:

- the opportunities created by the decision to build upon the existing CF and JCP infrastructure and to integrate DWP and LDB staff and the challenges that presents
- participant engagement
- the triage process and triage worker
- support from advisers and mentors
- training and the barriers fund
- management and implementation of the programme
- CfW staff skills
- outcomes and prospects for the programme.

The benefits and challenges of integration

6.3 CfW seeks to address the ambitions of both the Welsh Government and DWP to reduce poverty through work and represents a significant investment for both organisations. It breaks new ground in that it straddles devolved and non-devolved government departments and brings together diverse organisations in ways and on a scale not previously seen. Whilst this presents challenges in terms of integrating teams and melding cultures, the case for the approach taken was strong, informed by research into what works in reaching and supporting those most removed from the labour market.

- 6.4 The programme sought to build upon the CF platform, capitalising upon an existing infrastructure which offered visibility, knowledge and connections within local communities. It was also envisaged that experienced advisers involved in the delivery of front line services under the DWP's Want to Work programme would move into roles within CfW, thus bringing their knowledge, skills and contacts to bear from the outset. Capitalising upon an existing infrastructure and workforce was intended to facilitate the rapid mobilisation of services, minimise costs and maximise the reach and effectiveness of the CfW programme. However, bringing staff employed by the DWP and LDBs together to deliver services, alongside CF inevitably added a layer of complexity to the CfW programme and led to some on-going operational challenges, which we discuss below.
- 6.5 Despite the challenges, the existing CF and DWP/JCP infrastructure has proven invaluable to CfW. Our fieldwork demonstrates that CF has offered many (but not all) of the community settings from which advisers and mentors work, settings which are accessible to target client groups, visible and trusted. CF also offers access to services such as training and financial advice that complement the support CfW is able to offer clients. JCP is the key source of referrals to the programme and offers access to local labour market intelligence, opportunities such as work trials, and financial support through the Flexible Support Fund.
- 6.6 In the best cases, DWP CfW staff (delivery managers and advisers), LDB CfW staff (triage workers and mentors) and CF staff (cluster managers, employability officers financial inclusion officers etc.) work well with each other and with key partners such as JCP and specialist support services (e.g. drug and alcohol misuse services). Where teams are well integrated, advisers and DWP delivery managers provide a key link (or bridge) to JCP services. By the same token, mentors, triage workers and cluster managers provide a key link to CF and other support services, enabling a holistic response.
- 6.7 However, in general advisers do not make as much use of CF premises or wider CF support services as triage workers and mentors, not least because, as LDB employees, triage workers and mentors tend to be more closely integrated within CF teams. Other factors which prevent DWP staff from

making use of CF and other community venues are difficult in finding space (private rooms in particular) and the absence of secure lines that would allow remote access to the DWP's intranet, diary system and client databases. Conversely, in general, mentors and triage workers do not make as much use of JCP premises as advisers do. As a consequence, in some areas, while LDB CfW staff and CF staff are well integrated, DWP CfW staff, in effect, work in parallel rather than as part of a single team.

- 6.8 These are key issues since our fieldwork pointed to the importance of joined up working across services like JCP, CF and CfW in facilitating the delivery of genuinely holistic, person centred services. Co-location of DWP and LDB CfW staff, and in the case of 'Hubs', other support services, is frequently an important element of this, although it does not of itself guarantee integration.

Recommendation 1

The Welsh Government and DWP need to work together to ensure that advisers are able to work alongside triage workers and mentors in community settings and that their access to the DWP intranet is not inhibited whilst working in these settings. This should be a key consideration in finalising arrangements for the appointment of triage workers and mentors in the four areas where the programme has yet to be fully implemented.

Where co-location is not possible, due for example to a lack of suitable space, cluster managers and DWP delivery managers should maximise opportunities for advisers, mentors and triage workers to work together, through or example, joint training, triage meetings and joint work at job clubs.

- 6.9 Given the synergies between CF and CfW, the announcement in late 2016 that CF would be phased out represents an important challenge for CfW. Consideration will need to be given to the potential effects of the loss of: premises in community settings (a visible presence); complementary services provided under the CF banner (most notably, training, but also services such as housing and debt advice services); links with the wider support community; the referrals which it was assumed would flow from CF teams and of any negative impacts upon the CfW 'brand' which may be associated or sometimes confused with CF.

Recommendation 2

CfW programme managers should work with the Welsh Government to explore the anticipated impact of the closure of CF upon CfW. CfW programme managers should consider and develop contingency plans, taking account of the Employability Grant to deal with the possible impact of the closure of CF.

- 6.10 The allocation of separate targets to advisers and mentors was a consistent source of frustration in clusters, and was felt in some areas to create unhealthy competition between advisers and mentors, undermining efforts to integrate DWP and LDB staff into one team. It was clearly affecting the behaviour of front line staff, an issue we discuss below in the context of triage, although this was not necessarily obvious to clients. There was evidence that the Welsh Government's encouragement to adopt cluster level targets was getting through in some areas, but particularly where the numbers of engagements were low, advisers, mentors, DWP delivery managers and, perhaps to a lesser degree, cluster managers, were often very concerned about whether they would hit 'their' targets or not.

Recommendation 3

Welsh Government and the DWP should continue to encourage the adoption of cluster targets. Account, cluster and delivery managers should ensure that all CfW teams understand their targets and the impact of the delayed start and re-profiling upon project targets.

- 6.11 It was suggested that it would be helpful if different targets were set for advisers and mentors, such as engagement and training targets for mentors and job outcome targets for advisers. However, it is not clear if this would be workable, as for example, many mentors continue working with participants until they enter employment and are often reluctant to hand over participants to advisers. It could also dilute mentors' focus upon employment and would potentially add to the bureaucracy attached to the programme in terms of data collection.

Participant engagement

- 6.12 CfW is a voluntary programme, and this is seen as one of its key strengths. However, it does mean that its effectiveness depends upon people choosing to engage with the programme. Considerable efforts have been made to engage directly with potential participants, for example, during community events or via targeted leaflet drops and, in some areas, 'hubs' help bring people directly into contact with CfW. However, it is clear that the largest numbers of participants, particularly those aged 25+, are referred by JCP. This is likely to continue to be the case in the wake of welfare reforms (which may encourage more people to consider CfW).
- 6.13 The volume of referrals from JCP is, in some ways, a strength of the programme and represents one of the key benefits of the integrated approach. However, it also means that some of the groups at whom CfW is targeted may not be reached, for example individuals not claiming benefits, who do not routinely engage with JCP.
- 6.14 The numbers of participants engaged thus far are somewhat lower than anticipated⁹⁶, with programme staff pointing to low levels of take-up in some areas and competition from a number of other interventions targeting the same groups. Difficulties in recruiting the numbers envisaged, alongside the allocation of separate engagement and outcome targets to LDB and DWP staff, has also hindered the development of cohesive CfW teams in some clusters, as it fostered competition between advisers and mentors. It also undermined the ability of triage workers to play a full part in referring clients to the most appropriate form of support and in managing caseloads within CfW teams.
- 6.15 If CfW is to reach its ambitious 2020 engagement and outcomes targets there will need to be a sharp increase in the numbers of participants recruited, particularly economically inactive and long term unemployed individuals.

⁹⁶ In terms of cumulative cluster level targets, albeit that delivery is broadly in line with profiles across all three target participant groups

Recommendation 4

DWP delivery managers, LDB managers and front line delivery staff should make a concerted effort to strengthen arrangements for working with local JCP teams and to ensure that clients are referred to the appropriate kind of support within the CfW programme. Consideration should be given to:

- raising, improving and maintaining awareness among JCP work coaches of the existence, nature and value of CfW support and emphasising the role of triage workers as the 'gateway' into the service
- strengthening relationships between CfW staff and JCP work coaches. This could include piloting the employment of triage officers by the DWP in the two areas where the post is not yet established
- putting in place clear arrangements for the hand-over of clients being referred by work coaches to CfW a) to ensure clients' suitability for the service and b) to ensure a smooth transition for clients
- identifying opportunities created by for example the end of the Work Programme and welfare reforms, such as the introduction of Universal Credit, to identify and recruit new participants
- exploring how maximum use could be made of DWP databases, in particular in identifying individuals who will be, or who have recently transitioned from ESA to JSA and parents in receipt of Child Tax Credits whose youngest child is approaching five years of age, who may be both eligible and motivated to engage with CfW
- identifying and then sharing and celebrating examples of how CfW staff are helping work coaches do their jobs more effectively and meet their targets.

This list is not exhaustive and the plans developed will need to reflect local circumstances. However, it will be crucially important that DWP delivery managers and LDB managers demonstrate genuine commitment to seeing through the actions identified.

Recommendation 5

CfW delivery teams should draw up plans for meaningful engagement with other partners and referral sources. Consideration should be given to (among other things):

- raising and maintaining awareness among YEPF partners (including local authorities, Careers Wales, youth justice services and key third sector organisations) as to the existence, nature and value of CfW support for young people and emphasising the role of triage workers as the 'gateway' into the service
- raising and maintaining awareness among support services, such as drug and alcohol misuse and mental health services of the role that employment can play in people's 'recovery', and of the existence, nature and value of CfW support, emphasising the role of triage workers as the 'gateway' into the service
- identifying CfW 'champions' to promote the programme to young people within their communities. These might include previous participants, sports coaches, gym owners, café owners, hairdressers or taxi drivers for example.

Recommendation 6

The Welsh Government should look to develop an internet presence for CfW, to raise the profile of the programme and to give it credibility among referral agencies and potential participants. The example of the Digital Communities Wales web-site in doing this, may be useful here.

- 6.16 Given the difficulties some areas have experienced in recruiting sufficient numbers of participants, there have been calls from some CfW teams to relax the eligibility criteria for the programme. This could run counter to the rationale for the programme, which is aimed at those furthest from the labour market. However, there may be scope to clarify the eligibility criteria, around for example, participants' transitioning from one type of benefit to another (where

there was sometimes some uncertainty) and simplifying the process for establishing eligibility (which was felt to be unduly complex), without undermining the programme's rationale.

Recommendation 7

The Welsh Government should review arrangements for support following the closure of CF to ensure that these address the issues of eligibility. Where opportunities for simplification appear to exist, the Welsh Government should enter into discussion with WEFO to explore whether the eligibility criteria might be relaxed.

The triage process and triage worker

- 6.17 The triage process and triage worker role is seen as one of the most innovative aspects of CfW. Where it works well, triage can play a key role in:
- ensuring that the programme works with the right people by ,for example, establishing eligibility and where appropriate, referring to other programmes
 - integrating the work of advisers and mentors, by ensuring participants are supported by the most appropriate CfW staff member
 - managing caseloads across the team
 - developing and strengthening relationships between CfW and partner organisations, such as JCP, local support services and the training provider retained by the Welsh Government.
- 6.18 However, there is confusion in some areas about the role of the triage worker in the triage process and there is considerable variance in what triage workers are expected to do from one cluster to another.
- 6.19 Clusters generally say that they aspire to the triage worker being the gateway to the programme, but practice does not always reflect the rhetoric. In some cases, this is for justifiable, practical reasons, for example, where advisers and mentors meet prospective clients whilst working in outreach locations. In such circumstances it is more efficient and less confusing for clients to be

triaged there and then by the adviser or mentor, rather being referred on to a triage worker. However, in other cases, the triage role is undermined by competition between advisers and mentors, which encourages them to recruit directly, rather than risk 'losing' a prospective client by referring them to a triage worker.

- 6.20 Whilst accepting that there needs to be the flexibility for advisers and mentors to triage clients in outreach settings, there needs to be a more consistent focus upon triage workers as the gateway into CfW across clusters. To work effectively, the triage process needs to be transparent and front line delivery teams need to work together in an open and collaborative fashion. CfW programme managers have a key part to play in fostering the trust and understanding between front line staff which is necessary for this to come about.

Recommendation 8

DWP delivery managers and LDB managers need to agree and stick to a joint position on triage. Where the triage worker does not triage the majority of participants, Welsh Government account managers should ascertain why and intervene to address any competitive practices that are counterproductive.

- 6.21 The triage worker role is an important and pivotal one. Triage workers need to be of the right calibre to act as the public face of and gateway into CfW, to 'hold the ring' between advisers and mentors and to manage relationships with partners organisations. The evidence from the fieldwork suggests that, in some cases, the individuals appointed to the role may struggle to perform the function fully. This may be attributable to the emphasis put within the sample job description and person specification to the administrative aspects of the role.

Recommendation 9

The Welsh Government and DWP should review the triage worker's role in light of experience, and if appropriate, work with LDB and delivery managers to come up with a revised job description that better captures the nature of the role and the qualities needed to perform it effectively.

Support from advisers and mentors

- 6.22 The support advisers and mentors offer participants is the heart of CfW. Whilst some aspects of the work they do (such as developing participants' job search and application skills, identifying job opportunities and referring people to training and support services) have clear similarities to the services offered by JCP work coaches, CfW advisers and mentors clearly offer something different and additional. Compared to JCP work coaches, CfW advisers and mentors have more time, more flexibility and autonomy about how, when and where they work with participants, and crucially, they are not required to 'police' the welfare system. This enables them to build a relationship of trust with participants and it is clear that advisers and mentors encourage rather than 'push' clients towards employment. Many advisers and mentors clearly enjoyed their work with participants and were proud of the difference they felt they were making. Participants also clearly valued the time and care which they felt they received from advisers and mentors.
- 6.23 CfW is intended to work with those furthest from the labour market. The evidence from fieldwork suggests the project is reaching the right people (as many have significant barriers and complex needs), albeit not in sufficient numbers. The risk here is that mentors in particular get drawn into working with people whose needs are too great and/or who lack the motivation to progress into employment at this point in their lives. This could lead to mentors' caseloads becoming 'clogged up', thus impairing their capacity to take on new participants. Having said this, however, it is too early at this stage to judge if this is happening in reality, given that mentors' clients are expected to be at least 12 months away from being work ready upon joining CfW.

Recommendation 10

CfW managers, DWP delivery managers and triage workers should continue to keep advisers and mentors' caseloads under review, to ensure that people are progressing, and that those who the programme cannot help, are 'exited' appropriately (e.g. by referral to another programme).

Training

- 6.24 Access to training is important for many participants in terms of helping them develop basic and vocational skills, satisfying the entry requirements of particular sectors (most obviously CSCS and SIA cards for the construction and security industries respectively), building self-confidence, self-esteem and giving people ‘something to put on their CV’.
- 6.25 CF is an important and valued source of training for CfW participants in all areas, not least because of the availability of relevant, good quality training provision on participants’ doorsteps. As already noted there are concerns about the impact that the closure of CF may have upon the availability of accessible, fairly low level employment related training in future.
- 6.26 The training procured centrally by the Welsh Government has hitherto been a rather less prominent feature of CfW than was expected, with delays in implementing the EBS impacting upon retained training provider’s ability to deal with the volume of training requests received and leading to a perception that the organisation is unable to offer the range of courses needed sufficiently locally within the timescales expected. CfW staff’s views about the quality of training offered by the provider retained by the Welsh Government were mixed, though it seems likely that perceptions of the training actually delivered may have been tainted in CfW staff’s minds by the provider’s failure to respond as swiftly as needed to requests for training or to communicate with CfW teams regarding courses booked or participants’ progress.
- 6.27 Despite these frustrations, however, there is room for some cautious optimism that the EBS is now sufficiently functional to allow the retained provider to shift its focus onto organising and delivering provision. If the EBS system works efficiently, in principle, the provider should be in a position to absorb unsatisfied demand that may arise as a result of CF training activity being wound down⁹⁷, possibly using the same providers (i.e. that they will be contracted by the retained provider rather than CF). However, there is a risk that in the short to medium term, the provider retained by the Welsh Government will not be able to respond to the level of demand that might

⁹⁷ Notwithstanding that the Employment Grant might support some training activity

arise. There is also a risk that the loss of CF teams will mean that there will be no one to generate demand or bring together groups of sufficient size to make viable the types of courses which CfW clients have hitherto been able to access.

Recommendation 11

The Welsh Government CfW team should assess the impact of the closure of CF upon CfW and plan how to minimise and mitigate the impact upon the availability of local training provision.

Recommendation 12

The Welsh Government should continue to monitor its retained training provider's performance closely, paying particular attention to the effectiveness of the EBS and to the take up of training provision by CfW participants across different parts of Wales.

Recommendation 13

The retained training provider should continue to engage with CfW cluster teams to ensure that front line delivery staff are conversant with the EBS and how it works. The provider should also seek front line staff's feedback about both the EBS the system and the responsiveness, relevance and quality of training offered.

Recommendation 14

In order to ensure the viability of courses, the Welsh Government and DWP could encourage cluster teams to work with nearby clusters to bring together groups of participants for particular courses.

The Barriers Fund

- 6.28 Cluster teams generally look to other sources (most commonly the JCP's FCF and CF budgets) before turning to the Barriers Fund to help support participants to purchase essential items needed to take up a job or participate

in an agreed activity. On the whole, CfW staff understand that the Barriers Fund is a fund of last resort, but some avoid applying for Barriers Fund support because of the bureaucracy which they perceive surrounds the process. As a consequence, the Barriers Fund is used far less than had been anticipated and there is, therefore, likely to be an underspend.

Recommendation 15

The Welsh Government should review the guidance and application process for the Barriers Fund to ensure that the process is as simple, straightforward and swift as possible, whilst also adhering to conditions and criteria attaching to ESF.

Management and implementation of the programme

- 6.29 Whilst CfW is largely up and running by now, it took longer than anticipated to implement the programme. In retrospect, given its scale and complexity, it is clear that a mobilisation phase should have been built into the programme's design.
- 6.30 CfW seems to be well managed by the Welsh Government and DWP, with evidence of good communication at all levels. The Welsh Government account managers are pivotal to communication between the cluster teams and the programme's central management function.
- 6.31 The Operational Guidance and template programme documents issued by the Welsh Government have, by and large, been effective, but aspects of both the Operational Guidance and participant portfolio could do with being refreshed in light of experience and feedback from front line staff.

Recommendation 16

The Welsh Government should review the Operational Guidance with a view to refreshing the document. In doing this, consideration should be given to engaging front line staff in the review process.

Recommendation 17

The Welsh Government should review the participant portfolio, again engaging front line staff in the process to ensure the usability of any refreshed portfolio resources. Consideration should also be given to developing an e-portfolio, possibly incorporating drop-down lists to allow data capture and participants to be profiled over time⁹⁸. It may also be necessary (in order to meet WEFO requirements) to develop an 'activity log' alongside e-portfolios to allow participants to sign to confirm meetings with advisers or mentors.

- 6.32 Despite the guidance and efforts of the Welsh Government and the DWP, CfW has been implemented in very different ways across clusters and a key challenge for this study has been to identify and understand the differences. Whilst the underlying thrust of the programme is broadly similar from one cluster to another, the detail of the models adopted for delivery vary, reflecting differences in existing CF arrangements, the way in which guidance has been interpreted, the previous experience of front line staff and, very often, individual personalities. This makes it difficult to identify the relative effectiveness of particular approaches.

CfW staff skills

- 6.33 It was clear from our fieldwork that front line staff are extremely committed to CfW and bring to the programme a range of relevant skills and experience.
- 6.34 Our survey would suggest that there is a high degree of overlap to the core skills required by the different categories of front line staff and our fieldwork confirmed the importance of interpersonal skills, communications skills, understanding clients' barriers and knowledge of local support services to all CfW client facing roles. Administrative and organisational skills are also central to the triage workers' role.
- 6.35 For youth mentors in particular, previous experience of working in a youth work setting is invaluable.

⁹⁸ Any such electronic resource would need to meet specific security criteria as set out by the European Commission and also conform to DWP, LDB and Welsh Government requirements.

- 6.36 Front line staff receive a reasonable amount of training, though advisers are subject to a more structured programme of training than are triage workers and mentors, via the DWP's route-way.
- 6.37 There is a clear need for training relating to the welfare benefits system, particularly given recent changes to eligibility for key benefits e.g. ESA and JSA, the Universal Credit, the Child Tax Credit and housing benefits for young people aged under 22.
- 6.38 Our fieldwork also suggested a need for training relating to:
- mental health and suicide awareness
 - drug and alcohol misuse awareness
 - recognising signs of conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia etc.
- 6.39 There was also evidence that front line staff would appreciate training or briefings about programme specific things such as how the triage process should work, how programme documentation should be used and how to market CfW locally etc. These kinds of issues might usefully be addressed alongside the issuing of revisions to the Operational Guidance and participant portfolio.

Recommendation 18

The Welsh Government should ensure CfW existing regional staff events continue to provide briefings on welfare benefits and on key aspects of operational practice, focusing on updates to the Operational Guidance and/or revisions to the participant portfolio. Briefings should be delivered to whole cluster teams, including cluster managers, DWP delivery teams, finance officers, triage workers, advisers and mentors so that they come together to receive the same training.

Recommendation 19

The Welsh Government should devise or commission training on themes such as mental health and suicide awareness, drug and alcohol misuse awareness and recognising signs of conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia etc. Where possible, consideration should be given to tying such training in to the DWP's existing route-ways programme. Again, training should be delivered to whole cluster teams in order to ensure a consistent understanding and to help engender a team ethos.

Outcomes and prospects for the programme

- 6.40 Whilst it is too early to predict with any certainty, the data on past and current performance suggest that despite its many strengths, CfW may struggle to deliver the levels of engagements and outcomes agreed with WEFO.
- 6.41 Having said this, engagements may build as, for example, the reputation of the programme grows, CfW teams get properly established and welfare reforms potentially channel more people in CfW's direction. On the other hand, however, the flow of clients into CfW might be adversely affected by the closure of CF.
- 6.42 Despite low numbers of engagements thus far, the ratio of outcomes to engagements has been promising across both Priorities 1 and 3, suggesting that where the programme succeeds in engaging individuals, the support provided helps them move towards and into employment. This is an encouraging indication that the programme can make a real difference to people's lives and the challenge, therefore lies in increasing the numbers of people that CfW reaches.