

# Evaluation of Skill Build

## Refine or Refocus?

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**National Council for Education and Training for Wales  
ELWa**

**Evaluation of Skill Build  
“Refine or Refocus?”**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Context and Background

1. In January 2005, York Consulting Limited (YCL) in partnership with MRUK Research Wales, was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of Skill Build and Skill Build+, two of the five strands of work based learning funded by the National Council for Education and Training for Wales (ELWa).
2. People of any age who are unemployed and meet the eligibility criteria can start Skill Build and Skill Build+. Eligibility must be endorsed by the local Careers Wales or Jobcentre Plus offices. From August 2005, the entry criteria for Skill Build+ will be extended to encompass employed learners provided they are following either:
  - Entry levels 1, 2 and/or 3 in the Certificates of Adult Numeracy / and or Literacy and/or;
  - Level 1 Key Skills in Communication or Application of Number.
3. The programmes are aimed at people who are regarded to be either vocationally unfocussed, or in need of support to be able to access employment, education or training. The widening of the eligibility criteria is based on the need to bridge a gap in provision which existed for learners, over the age of 16, who were unable to access basic / key skills learning at Level 1 through ELWa's WBL programmes.
4. It is intended that the programme will last no more than 13 weeks, although this can be shortened or extended at the discretion of Careers Companies or Jobcentre Plus.
5. Prior to August 2004, the programmes were structured as **Skillbuild youth** (16-18) and **Skillbuild adult** (25+). The changes implemented extended the entitlement of the programmes to the 19-24 cohort, and separated the two programmes into a preparatory level programme (Skill Build) and a level one programme (Skill Build+) to people of all ages, if they meet the eligibility criteria.
6. Although the evaluation was commissioned after the changes had been made, the data analysed and the issues reported by stakeholders are in line with the old structure of the programme.

7. The content of the programme and approach to delivery was not significantly affected by the changes made. As such, the issues presented are relevant to both the new and old structure and are more appropriately addressed under the old programme names:
  - **Skillbuild youth**<sup>1</sup>;
  - **Skillbuild adult**<sup>2</sup>.
8. Where the report refers to general issues with affect both programmes, these are referred to as the **Skill Build programmes**.
9. The project brief was to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Skill Build programmes<sup>3</sup> in meeting their aims. However, in doing so, consideration was also given to the role of the programmes in relation to the major reforms currently underway for 14-19 education including work based learning and Apprenticeships, and programmes aimed at the unemployed managed by Jobcentre Plus. Apprenticeships are a key part of the Skills Strategy and the suggested reforms for 14-19 year olds recently proposed to the Government for England and Wales. In addition, services for unemployed adults are being developed to improve the progression from Welfare to Work, with major revisions underway and planned for the development of New Deal.

#### Interpretation Issues

10. The reader should be aware of some interpretation issues with the data presented in the report. The research involved a telephone survey with a representative sample of 404 learners that had started the programme between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005. The feedback from this was very positive in terms of levels of satisfaction with the training. However, it should be recognised that some of the learners, particularly those with chaotic lives, may have moved on from the telephone number they gave to the training provider and as such, the survey may not be wholly representative of the full range of learners undertaking the programme.
11. The case studies involved focus groups with learners and ex-participants of the programme. These provided a much more mixed response in terms of satisfaction with the programme, as the process allowed researchers to

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<sup>1</sup> Skillbuild youth encompasses preparatory training for the entry level part of the programme, and Level 1 skills learning for those undertaking training to Level 1

<sup>2</sup> Skillbuild adult encompasses employability training for the entry level part of the programme, and occupational skills for those undertaking training from Level 1 to Level 3

<sup>3</sup> This refers to the preparatory and Level 1 skills learning programmes and employability and occupational skills programmes

explore some of the issues arising. These views have been used to illustrate some of the issues with the structure and operation of the programme.

### **Policy Context and Programme Data**

12. Trends in participation in training indicate that over the four years between 1999/00 and 2002/03, the proportion of young people starting Skillbuild youth increased from 6,800 to 9,900, an increase of 3,100. The level of adult engagement in the programme reduced from 6,700 to 4,600<sup>4</sup>.
13. A total of 9,075 programme starts were recorded on the databases, 74% of which were under the preparatory training programme delivered to young people aged 16-18. Of the total cohort, 59% of starts were male, and 41% were female. Over half of the provision was delivered in South East Wales<sup>5</sup>. Delivery was undertaken by a total of 89 providers across Wales, some of which operate in more than one region. One provider accounted for more than 10% of total delivery, with over three quarters of all delivery being undertaken by just one third of providers

### **The Skill Build Programmes: Overview**

14. The aim of the project was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Skill Build programmes against their stated aims and objectives, making recommendations for the future development of the programme. However, the evaluation was commissioned following a review undertaken by Estyn, between November 2001 and July 2002 and came to the conclusion that:

*“Where the Skillbuild (youth) programme works well, young people benefit from good, continuous support from work placements and training providers. These young people achieve outcomes, grow in confidence and leave the programme prepared for work or with sufficient skills to progress to other training programmes.”<sup>6</sup>*

15. The review also concluded that not enough was known about those who left early, and why they had done so. In addition, evidence illustrated that a number of learners are repeat entrants to the programme, with instances of learners entering the programme five or more times and not progressing into further learning or employment.

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<sup>4</sup> Higher Education, Further Education and Training Statistics, 2002/03, ELWa

<sup>5</sup> This data was used for designing the sample for the learners survey

<sup>6</sup> A Survey of the Effectiveness of Skillbuild in Progression of Participants into Skillseekers, FE or Employment. Estyn, 2003.

16. As such, the key focus of the evaluation was to understand:
- who the programme does work for, and in what circumstances; and
  - which learners are not achieving successful outcomes from the programme and why?
17. Skillbuild youth is aimed at learners aged 16 to 18 who are not engaged in any other form of education, employment or training. The purpose of the programme is to support young people who are not able to access mainstream education, to develop a range of skills that will help them to access higher levels of training in the first instance, and where this is not possible, develop skills in order that they are work ready.
18. For the programme to be considered effective, it must equip young people with relevant qualifications, and work experience in options they are interested in and will support them to progress.
19. The existence of the 'Guarantee' means that all young people aged 16-18 are entitled to a place in some form of education or training. As such, the programme is open to a wide range of learners, from those who have decided to leave mainstream education and are considered 'able', but are uncertain of the vocational route to take, to those who have left school with few or no qualifications, have significant basic skills problems and may also have a whole range of personal and social problems which impact on their ability to progress.
20. What should be recognised is that for unemployed young people age 16-18, in many instances Skillbuild youth may be the only possible option. If they are in a transition period between education and employment, the programme can act as a stop gap between the two, or if they are unable to access an employed work based learning opportunity, Skillbuild youth may be the only other thing available. Because of this, there is a wide range of learners undertaking the programme.
21. Skillbuild youth allows a provider the opportunity to tailor a programme of learning to meet an individual's needs. ELWa is not prescriptive as to what is delivered on each programme. Most Skillbuild youth programmes will involve a work placement although the formats of these can vary significantly. Other basic components of programmes offer learners motivational training and basic and key skills tuition.

### Survey of Learners

22. The Estyn review concluded that where Skillbuild youth works well, young people benefit from good continuous support from providers. However, not enough is known about those that leave the programme early. As such, MRUK Research Wales undertook a survey with a representative sample of 404 learners<sup>7</sup>. The aim was to gain an understanding of learners' general levels of satisfaction with the programme.
23. Of the 404 learners interviewed 89% indicated that they had only been on the programme once, with 10% having started more than once and 1% that did not know.
24. Learners were asked what they thought they'd get out of the programme. Over 40% thought they would get a job, 10% thought they would get a better idea of the job they would like to do, and just over a third expecting to get a certificate. Only 14% viewed it as a route into further training.
25. These results suggest that for the majority of learners, the aims of the programme in terms of preparation for further vocational learning do match the expectations of the learners, and that a large proportion of learners apparently regard it as a step into work.
26. Around nine out of ten learners were very or fairly satisfied with the training provider, the programme developed and the approach to monitoring progression. In terms of completions, 72% of learners completed the course and 6% were still doing it. Reasons for leaving included:
- 5% left for personal reasons;
  - 4% did not enjoy it;
  - 3% got a job.
27. Learners were asked what they did after completing the course. The most frequent response was that they got a job – at 32% with 17% of learners indicating that they had not yet progressed onto further learning or employment (9% were looking for employment, 4% did 'nothing', 2% were looking for another course, 2% were claiming benefit). The other most common destinations were:
- got onto another course– 26%;

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<sup>7</sup> A representative sample of 404 learners were interviewed – sampling criteria was programme type (adult / youth) gender, region and start date.



- don't know – 8%;
  - level one programme – 5%;
  - repeated the programme - 2%.
28. Finally, learners were asked if they would recommend the Skill Build programme to their friends. 89% indicated that they would.
29. These findings indicate that learners of all ages are generally very satisfied with the delivery they receive. However, many do not expect to progress from the programme into further learning, and employment is often their preferred option.
30. As such it appears that providers are generally meeting learners' expectations. However, questions are raised as to the 'effectiveness' of the programme for many of these learners, if preparation for further learning is the desired outcome. In many instances, the Skill Build programmes appear to be a stop gap to employment. Whilst this is a short term benefit for the young people as they receive a payment for the period they are in training and increase their confidence levels, the longer term value to the tax payer could be questioned, as it is likely that learners are moving into low skilled, low paid work.

### **Issues Influencing Effective Delivery – Young People**

#### **Regional Issues**

##### Availability of appropriate provision

31. A key issue concerning the effectiveness of the programme is the extent to which provision is able to meet the range of learner needs in terms of both vocational options to be explored, and ability to deal with a mix of learners. As such, in any local area, the provision must be accessible and relevant to those it aims to support. However, where only a small number of providers operate in sizeable rural areas, the question arises as to whether the full range of options can be achieved, with low numbers of learners entering the programme. Feedback from the ex-learners indicated that if their interests cannot be met by a provider, it is more likely that learners will either drop out, or not progress beyond the end of the programme to further training.
32. However, questions have also been raised as to the value of having a large number of providers in a relatively small area, if they do not offer alternative options or specialisms. The availability of a number of similar providers can lead to learners dipping into provision and moving on if they aren't

immediately satisfied. As such, in more urban areas, the issues associated with learner 'recycling' are thought to be much more apparent.

33. As well as being able to offer appropriate vocational placements and educational support for learners, providers are also required to be able to respond to a range of learners' personal and social needs. This can involve working in partnership with support agencies and statutory services, depending on the needs of the learner. Some providers are well geared up for this, and able to provide an holistic programme of support. However, a more common occurrence is that providers will not have structured support arrangements with partner agencies, and will try to meet most learners' needs independently.
34. In cases where learners clearly have much more acute support issues than being 'vocationally unfocused' the full range of learner needs cannot be met under the current programme structure. This often includes the most disadvantaged, such as young offenders, pregnant teenagers or care leavers, where appropriate and effective interventions are particularly crucial.
35. This prompts the question as to whether the aims of the programme are matched with the full range of learner needs, and if not, what else is available? In most instances, Skillbuild youth is the main programme for the NEET group to be referred onto.

#### Employer engagement and competition for placements

36. Central to the success of the delivery of Skillbuild youth is that providers have access to a range of employers that are prepared to offer placements and progression routes. Providers in more urban areas indicated that they did not tend to have significant problems securing placements.
37. However, this was not always the case in rural areas, or where the employment market was predominantly made up of SMEs. More fundamental in some areas was the extent to which these placements offered by employers could translate into an FMA / MA. This was a particular issue in Mid Glamorgan, where some stakeholders were of the view that the programme acts as a barrier to developing the base of framework placements.
38. The guidance for Skillbuild youth indicates that the programme is aimed at those who are vocationally unfocussed, and require support to be able to access mainstream education. However, there are other groups of young people for whom no other provision is available. The most obvious of these

is young people who have much more significant support needs. However, in some regions learners are referred onto Skillbuild youth because they can't find a framework placement. The areas where this arose as an issue were Mid Glamorgan and Mid Wales. This highlights a fundamental gap in provision.

#### Availability of alternative provision

39. Most stakeholders acknowledged that some alternative arrangements were required to be able to support 16-18 year olds that were not training ready, as Skillbuild youth is not designed to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged. At the other end of the spectrum, some stakeholders raised concerns about the potential for learners' development to be restricted through engagement with the programme. In Mid Glamorgan and rural areas, the indication was that a number of learners were being put on Skillbuild youth, because there were very few FMA / MAs available.

#### **Provider/Process Issues**

40. The Skill Build programmes have deliberately been designed to be flexible in nature to allow providers to be able to respond to the range of learner needs. However, how they do this, who they do it with, and what they aim to achieve is of particular importance. The flexibility allowed has led to the development of a range of different approaches to delivering the programme. Some providers regard it predominantly as a programme to develop vocational skills, whilst others structure it as a programme of holistic development. Both approaches have their place. However, this results in learners having significantly different experiences of the programme, even if they have common needs.

#### Endorsement and referral

41. Variations exist in the process of referral from Careers Wales Companies. Data is not always transferred quickly enough, there are differences in the level of depth of information covered in the endorsement form, and for some learners, and particularly for learners with more complex needs, a much longer period of assessment is required before determining how they can progress.

### Delivery mechanisms

42. There are significant variations in the approach to delivery, with some providers almost operating a process driven programme, whilst others are totally flexible in their approach and lay minimal focus on the vocational aspect of the programme if necessary. Some providers are very outcome focused (qualifications) in how they deliver the programme, whilst others deliver an holistic programme of support. In many instances, delivery tends to mean flexibility for the provider, with the learner having to fit around their overall operational structure.

### Links with partner agencies

43. Most providers indicate that they do work with partners but this tends to be on an ad hoc basis, rather than embedding the support they can provide within delivery. Providers often try to address all the needs of the learner themselves, but the extent to which this will benefit them in the long term is questioned.

### Qualifications and outcomes

44. Due to the nature of the funding arrangements, many providers lay emphasis on learners undertaking and achieving qualifications. Whilst learners see this as positive in terms of achievement, it should not be the focus of a programme for all learners.

### Progression and 're-starters'

45. Over two-thirds of all learners interviewed completed the course, and a significant proportion did move on.
46. However, the extent to which these are sustained before moving into employment is not clear. The programme clearly does work for some learners in providing them with experience of the world of work, but many quickly move into employment which is likely to be low paid and low skilled.
47. 10% of learners interviewed, restarted the programme, of which, half did so on more than one occasion. Whilst this is not particularly reliable data, in terms of numbers, it does provide an indication of the level of recycling. The focus groups with learners suggested that this level was higher – perhaps closer to two or three in ten, but this is only anecdotal evidence.

## **Programme Issues**

### Impact of funding arrangements

48. The funding arrangements for the programme include a start payment, on programme payment, outcomes (qualification) payment and payment for progression to other learning. This has led to many providers laying too much emphasis on learners achieving qualifications when this is not necessarily what they need at that stage in their life. The funding arrangements require a major review, in line with the developments being implemented under the National Planning and Funding System, where the money follows the learner. The current process does not recognise the additional work that providers undertake with a number of learners, and the monthly profiling leads to uncertainties in planning.

### Management of quality with providers

49. A number of stakeholders and providers indicated that a key reason for the variations in the delivery of programme was a result of ELWa's more hands off role in quality assurance. Providers indicated that they did not have enough opportunity to share practice and consider approaches to delivering in partnership. There was also a feeling that the programme lacked strategic direction, and was no longer matched with the needs of learners or employers.

### Content of progression routes

50. Some concerns were raised about the extent to which learners were being referred to Skillbuild youth to address basic skills needs or other personal and social issues, because progression routes (i.e. FMAs/MAs) did not provide adequate support to learners.

### Developments in 14-19 education

51. Comments were also raised about the extent to which the introduction of the EMA would impact on work based learning in terms of 'parity of esteem'. If learners did not regard the programme as a viable alternative, a number of learners may be encouraged to stay in mainstream education, rather than benefiting from other provision which would closer match their needs.
52. Other concerns were raised about the introduction of the programme to the 14-16 cohort, particularly if it was not regarded to be successfully meeting the needs of 16-18 year olds. The principle of earlier intervention for those at

risk of becoming disengaged was felt to be appropriate, but the extent to which this could successfully be implemented under current arrangements was questioned.

### **Issues Influencing Effective Delivery – Adults**

53. A number of issues are reported on delivery for young people are also applicable to adults. However, the programme for adults is predominantly based around activity in-centre, and therefore does not face the same problems in terms of accessing employer placements.
54. Fewer issues were raised with the delivery of the adult programme in general, and the messages from the focus groups tended to more accurately reflect the views from the learners survey presented in Section 3.

### **Regional Issues**

55. The number of placements funded for adults is much smaller than for young people, and accounts for around 26% of total delivery of the Skill Build programmes. This is a consequence of the number of people that are eligible for, and demand the programme. Section 3 highlighted that numbers entering the programmes are falling every year.
56. As a consequence of this, delivery is spread across a smaller number of providers, particularly in North and Mid Wales. This does cause issues in terms of access to appropriate provision, and in many cases learners have to travel fairly significant distances. However, evidence from the case studies indicates that adult learners tended to regard this as less of an issue than young people, because they are either used to travelling for work, and / or have their own methods of transportation.

### **Process and Provider Issues**

57. Adults are referred to the programme from Jobcentre Plus when it is felt they would benefit from involvement in a training programme to support them back into employment. Adults must have been unemployed for four full calendar weeks before they can access the programme. Jobcentre Plus' key concern with programme is how it fits with other programmes for the unemployed, such as New Deal. Advisors dealing with clients need to be fully aware of any changes made to the eligibility criteria and structure of the programme, to ensure they are able to accurately advise clients. This has not always worked effectively in the past.

58. A further issue articulated by Jobcentre Plus relates to quality assurance over the provider base. Concerns were expressed regarding their role in reviewing providers as they currently have limited access to information about the outcomes from the delivery, and the overall quality of the services provided to their clients. A more joined up approach to awarding contracts, reviewing quality, and involvement with developments is required to ensure Jobcentre Plus advisors have a clear view of the potential benefits to their clients.

#### Delivery Mechanisms

59. A significant proportion of adults who are referred to Skillbuild adult do so to undertake training in IT skills. However, providers also undertake activity to include the development of a range of other softer skills, including interviewing techniques, confidence building etc. Providers indicated that the majority of learners who access the Skillbuild adult programme are generally regarded to be much more work focussed than young people.

60. However, in some instances, providers indicated that in some cases, the needs of adult learners were even more acute than the young people, due to people having developed 'coping strategies' over the years. For these learners, providers were required to invest a significant amount of time and support for the learner, much of which was not recognised through the funding mechanism.

#### **Programme Issues**

61. Some providers indicated that the range of qualifications funded by ELWa for the adult programme is not flexible enough for the learners' employment needs. Providers recognise that the programme is not specifically employment focussed; however, this does not always match the learners' expectations.

62. In addition to this, providers made comments about the recent changes which ceased payment for placing learners in employment at the end of the training. The majority of providers visited felt that the priority of most adult learners was to enter employment, and this was not being supported by the programme.

63. A strategic level concern with the adult programme relates to a disparity in the ultimate aims of Jobcentre Plus and ELWa; the former focusing on employment as the ultimate outcome, with the latter having a 'training first' ethos. The issues with the adult programme in terms of operation and

delivery are not as acute as for young people. The key issue here is how does it, and where should it fit strategically?

### **Key Issues and Recommendations**

#### Young People

64. Skillbuild youth aims to provide learners with the skills and abilities to progress on to further learning opportunities, and progress in the workplace. Where provision is tailored to the individual's needs, provides them with relevant qualifications and work placements, it is successful, and a proportion of learners do move onto further learning opportunities. The learners survey illustrated that of those interviewed, satisfaction levels with providers and outcomes from the programme were high.
65. However, the survey also illustrated that in many cases, the learners' expectations of what they would get out of the programme, were not matching its primary aim - progression into higher levels of learning. Over 40% of all learners thought that the programme would lead to a job, but only 14% thought it would lead them to further learning. As such, the indication is that a significant proportion of learners are undertaking the programme as a stop gap to employment.
66. The explanation for this lies in the existence of the Guarantee, and, in the absence of any other available appropriate provision, it appears that a proportion of learners are undertaking Skillbuild youth, without significant benefit to them – at least for the longer term. The survey indicated that many learners move into employment from the programme (around one in three) and the programme is likely to have supported this transition. However, it is likely that this employment is low skilled, low paid employment.
67. At the other end of the spectrum, it should be recognised that the programme does not meet the need of those who are most disadvantaged. Skillbuild youth predominantly focuses on developing skills to support employability, but for some young people, a range of additional support needs are the primary concern. The structure of the programme does not provide for the level of intensive support.



### Adults

68. For adults undertaking the programme, the issues are more strategic in nature, and relate to how the programme fits with other provision for the unemployed. Concerns were raised about how Jobcentre Plus can effectively keep up to date with how providers are delivering the programme, and what their role in quality assuring the provision they refer clients to. Despite this, most learners indicated that they were benefiting from involvement in the programmes and progressing onto employment.
69. The report has highlighted that in many cases, the fundamental question is not, "how effective is the programme at meeting its aims and objectives?" but to "what extent do the aims of the programme meet learner needs?" In many instances, it has been illustrated that it is the aims and structure of the programme that are the key problem. The programme lays emphasis on 'vocational focus' however, for many young people, this is too narrow to be effective.
70. As such, the recommendations which follow represent a fundamental shift in the aims, objectives and approach to delivering the programme. The recommendations are structured in terms of:
- Strategic approach and national management;
  - Programme design;
  - Operational management and delivery
71. It is recognised that many of these will incur additional costs, however, the scale of these cannot be anticipated at this point. The recommendations made here apply to both Skill Build and Skill Build+, for both young people and adults, and take into account the changes made in August 2004 which changed the programme to be available to all ages.

### Recommendations

#### Strategic approach and national management

72. **R1** – The programme **requires refocusing in order that providers can truly deliver flexible programmes, tailored to the needs of learners, which value the development of soft skills** through a range of learning activities, which are more than classroom or work based. The focus on qualification outcomes does not always benefit the learner, and whilst they

should remain an integral part of the programme<sup>8</sup>, should not inhibit the learning experience.

73. **R2** - From a strategic perspective, there is a need to **refine the aims and objectives of the programme**, bearing in mind the range of learners the programme is currently delivered to. The current programme lays emphasis on the need to develop vocational focus or level one skills. However, this does not recognise the needs of a significant proportion of learners. Whilst this may be the ultimate aim, it should not restrict the scope of skills that can be developed under the programme.
74. **R3** - **From a national perspective, there is a requirement for a stronger level of direction** in the development and management of the programme. A greater level of partnership working is required to ensure the needs of all client groups are met. The development of a two tier structure, headed up by a Programme Board of national stakeholders (comprised of partners such as Careers Wales, YOTs, Jobcentre Plus) would secure stronger commitment to the programme and improvements in partnership working. An Advisory Group comprised of providers and other operational staff could report to the Programme Board, ensuring the programme was developed in response to learners' needs.
75. **R4** - Additionally at national level, consideration should be given to the **initiatives aimed at the development and sharing of good practice** to ensure providers are working towards common goals and aims. Calls have been made for the introduction of professional development initiatives, and the development of schemes of work to support programme delivery would allow greater consistency in quality. Providers should also be recognised for the good practice which has already been developed, and be integral to the process of review and programme development.

#### Programme design

76. **R5** - The current programme is split into Skill Build and Skill Build+ with the result that many learners leave the programme before reaching level one. The time-bound nature of the programme means that the programme is too short for some learners, and too long for others. **Consideration should be given to merging the two programmes and removing the time limit**, to allow more seamless progression to the next level. In addition, a greater level of flexibility should be allowed in terms of re-engaging a learner if personal circumstances lead to interruptions in the programme.

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<sup>8</sup> Whilst qualifications should be available from the NQF, other should also be considered.

77. **R6** - To meet this end, **further development of the funding mechanism** is required, to remove the current level of incentive from providers to focus on the delivery of qualifications. It is questionable whether soft outcomes can effectively be measured – for many learners, it is the journey that should be valued. In light of the developments with the National Planning and Funding System, the recommendation is that the funding may be used more effectively if it follows the learner.
78. **R7** – Any developments in design should not be undertaken as a stand alone activity. The development **of any future programme should consider the development of Apprenticeships and have clear links and progression routes into them.** Equally, Apprenticeships should clearly develop the skills built in feeder programmes, recognising and addressing the gaps that they remain.
79. **R8** - A **review of the eligibility criteria** is also required, with due consideration given to the range of alternatives available for 16-18 year olds. The developments in 14-19 education, in particular Apprenticeships, should be the context for this review.
80. **R9** - Consideration should be given to a **longer period of assessment**, depending on the scale of a learner's needs, to determine how the learning programme should develop. This should then be agreed with the appropriate agencies before being implemented.

#### Operational management and delivery

81. The current programme is intended to be flexible in terms of tailoring a programme to learners' needs. Whilst this is possible, in many instances, flexibility means selection from a fairly limited range of qualifications, short programmes and placements, within a time bound period.
82. **R10** - Consideration should be given to the **development of provider networks** in areas where there are issues meeting the full range of learner needs. However, the approach to this should be focused on the learner, rather than the provider's needs.
83. **R11** - To ensure the experience is maximised, a **greater level of partnership working** should be developed, to be able to efficiently expand the range of activities that can be undertaken in a programme. Delivery should be broadened to include the voluntary and community sector, particularly in Communities First wards where partnerships are already

established. In addition, providers should be encouraged to forge strategic links with local support agencies to support with more complex issues.

84. **R12 – The role of employers should remain a fundamental part of the programme.** However, how providers can be supported to develop the appropriate mix of placements requires review. Flexibility may be required in the funding to be able to negotiate with employers, if a long term outcome for the learner can be secured.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January 2005, York Consulting Limited (YCL) in partnership with MRUK Research Wales, was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of Skill Build and Skill Build+, two of the five strands of work based learning funded by the National Council for Education and Training for Wales (ELWa).
- 1.2 Work based learning accounts for 20% of ELWa's total budget. Two thirds of this is directed at funding frameworks for employed individuals under the following three programmes:
- Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (FMAs);
  - Modern Apprenticeships (MAs);
  - Modern Skills Diplomas (MSDs).
- 1.3 One third of the work based learning budget is focused on providing training for the unemployed under the programmes **Skill Build and Skill Build+**. People of any age who are unemployed and meet the eligibility criteria can start the programmes. Eligibility must be endorsed by the local Careers Wales or Jobcentre Plus offices. From August 2005, the entry criteria for Skill Build+ will be extended to encompass employed learners provided they are following either:
- Entry levels 1, 2 and/or 3 in the Certificates of Adult Numeracy / and or Literacy and/or;
  - Level 1 Key Skills in Communication or Application of Number.
- 1.4 The programmes are aimed at people who are regarded to be either vocationally unfocussed, or in need of support to be able to access employment, education or training. The widening of the eligibility criteria is based on the need to bridge a gap in provision which existed for learners, over the age of 16, who were unable to access basic / key skills learning at level 1 through ELWa's WBL programmes.
- 1.5 Prior to August 2004, the programmes were structured as **Skillbuild youth** (16-18) and **Skillbuild adult** (25+). The changes implemented separated the two programmes into a preparatory level programme (Skill Build) and a level one programme (Skill Build+) to people of all ages, if they met the eligibility criteria.

1.6 Although the evaluation was commissioned after the changes had been made, the data analysed and the issues reported by stakeholders are in line with the old structure of the programme. The content of the programme and approach to delivery was not affected by the changes made. As such, the issues presented are relevant to both the new and old structure and are more appropriately addressed under the old programme names:

- **Skillbuild youth**<sup>9</sup>;
- **Skillbuild adult**<sup>10</sup>.

1.7 Where the report refers to general issues with affect both programmes, these are referred to as **the Skill Build programmes**.

### **Aims of the programme**

1.8 The Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the evaluation outlines the purpose of the programme.

*“Skillbuild (youth) and employability courses cater for learners who are not able, for a variety of reasons, to access mainstream learning. Learners on these courses usually require additional support in order to enable them to become job ready or to progress to higher levels of learning. Providers are funded at a higher rate for delivery of these programmes therefore it is expected that support arrangements are in place to cover a range of learner needs.”<sup>11</sup>*

1.9 To enter the programme, young people are endorsed and referred by one of the six Careers Wales companies. Adults who are eligible and aged 19 and above are referred by Jobcentre Plus.

1.10 Learners can either progress onto, or be directly referred onto skills learning or occupational skills training when they are vocationally focused, but not able to access higher level training or employment<sup>12</sup>. Both elements of the Skill Build programmes are intended to last for 13 weeks, although these can be shortened or extended at the discretion of Careers Companies or Jobcentre Plus.

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<sup>9</sup> Skillbuild youth encompasses preparatory training for the entry level part of the programme, and Level 1 skills learning for those undertaking training to Level 1

<sup>10</sup> Skillbuild adult encompasses employability training for the entry level part of the programme, and occupational skills for those undertaking training from Level 1 to Level 3

<sup>11</sup> ELWa – Specification, T13/04/05 – final evaluation of Skill Build

<sup>12</sup> These programmes prepare people for training or work in a particular vocational area

1.11 The ITT sets out the aims of the programmes. They are to:

- “provide the breadth, range and flexibility of competence based skills and knowledge required by those in employment to enhance their employability, and career progression;
- enable participants not in employment the opportunity to acquire the appropriate skills and work experience to improve their employability; and
- provide employers with a workforce, which has the skills and knowledge that business requires to compete in the global economy.”

### **Context and scope of the Evaluation**

1.12 The evaluation was commissioned following a review of Skillbuild youth published by Estyn in 2003, which questioned the extent to which the programme represented value for money. Evidence from the review illustrated that a number of learners are repeat entrants to the programme, particularly those aged 16-18.

1.13 The year 2003/04 saw approximately 10,500 starts on the youth and adult programmes compared to 11,980 in 2002/03. The number of corresponding outcomes (and therefore funding to providers) in the same period increased dramatically. However, this did not result in a proportionate increase in reported progressions.

1.14 The project title, “Evaluation of Skill Build: Refine or Refocus?” implies an assumption that the current Skill Build programmes are not operating as effectively as might be expected. The ITT sets out a number of key current and future issues to be addressed by the evaluation project. These are:

- how effective is the programme in meeting its stated aims and objectives?
- what are the regional differences in delivery, management, operation and expectations?
- what gaps in provision exist?
- does the programme meet learner needs?



- does the programme meet the strategic objectives of ELWa, Sector Skills Councils (SSC's) and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)?
- what are the trends in participation?
- what are the policy issues for ELWa?
- should ELWa now measure progression?
- what are the recommendations for future delivery?

## **Methodology**

1.15 The methodology sought to consult a wide range of stakeholders, including training providers, Careers Wales companies, Jobcentre Plus, Young Offending Teams (YOTs), ELWa, WAG, Estyn, the LSC, employers, learners and ex-learners that had dropped out of the programme.

1.16 A review of contextual information was undertaken, including relevant literature and policy documents relating to work based learning in England and Wales. In addition, the project included an analysis of Management Information (MI) of learners who had been on the programme between 1st April 2004 and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

1.17 Five case studies were undertaken, two in the South East and one in each of the other three regions. Each case study involved visits to four providers, focus groups with a minimum of one group of learners and one group of non-learners, and visits or telephone consultations with employers. Other stakeholders were generally interviewed over the telephone, and a work shop was undertaken with representatives from each of the six Careers Wales companies.

1.18 A telephone survey of 404 learners was also undertaken, which included a representative sample of learners from the Management Information analysed. The aim of this was to gain feedback on learners' impressions of the programme, impact and outcomes from involvement, and where they had progressed to following completion or drop out.

## Interpretation Issues

- 1.19 Before looking at the evidence in more detail, it is important to highlight some issues regarding the interpretation of the findings from the learners survey, and the case studies.
- 1.20 The feedback from the survey of learners was overwhelmingly positive, focusing on general levels of satisfaction with the programme and outcomes achieved. The survey was undertaken with a representative sample of learners from across the regions, and almost one full year of delivery. It should be noted, that as the survey was undertaken over the telephone, there could have been an element of selecting learners who had more stable lifestyles, particularly with regards to young people, as it is likely that some would have moved on from the contact details they provided a year previously.
- 1.21 The feedback from the focus groups was much more mixed in nature, with a split emerging in terms of overall satisfaction which tended to correlate with satisfaction with a particular provider. The focus groups aimed to get underneath some of the issues associated with delivery, and specifically picked up some ex-learners that had less than favourable experiences. This was because the evaluation was undertaken from an established view that the programme did not result in successful outcomes for a range of learners.
- 1.22 The focus of the case studies and the evaluation in general was on how the programme operates, and what issues impact upon successful delivery. The issues presented in the report have been explored with a range of stakeholders, and have been established as genuine influencing success factors for the programme. The learner survey indicates that the majority of learners are happy with the programme. However, both providers and other stakeholders raised a range of issues which impact upon the successful delivery of the programmes. As such, whilst the learners survey was an interesting part of the research, the findings from this do not discount the evidence from the case studies.

## Structure of the report

1.23 The remainder of the report will detail the findings from the consultation process undertaken between February and May 2005. The project title, "Refine or Refocus" demands that recommendations for the future shape of provision be made. The report is therefore structured as follows:

- **Section 2** outlines the policy context and provides relevant programme data;
- **Section 3** consider the issues associated with 'programme effectiveness', and presents the headline findings from the learners' survey
- **Section 4** examines the issues which impact on delivery of Skillbuild youth;
- **Section 5** highlights the issue which impact upon Skillbuild adult;
- **Section 6** outlines the development of E2E in England and touches on developments in programmes for adults;
- **Section 7** presents the key issues and recommendations.

## 2 POLICY CONTEXT AND PROGRAMME DATA

### Policy Context

- 2.1 The project brief was to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Skill Build programmes<sup>13</sup> in meeting their aims. However, in doing so, consideration was also given to the role of the programmes in relation to the major reforms currently underway for 14-19 education including work based learning and Apprenticeships, and programmes aimed at the unemployed managed by Jobcentre Plus. Apprenticeships are a key part of the Skills Strategy and the suggested reforms for 14-19 year olds recently proposed to the Government for England and Wales. In addition, services for unemployed adults are being developed to improve the progression from Welfare to Work, with major revisions underway and planned for the development of New Deal.
- 2.2 These changes have come about partly as a result of in-depth studies that have highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of current systems. In addition, the changing nature of the population and labour market trends mean that the needs of both learners and employers have changed considerably in the last 10 years. The “End-to-End” review of Apprenticeships<sup>14</sup> undertaken in 2002 by the LSC and DfES in England concluded that Apprenticeships should begin from age 14, and for those in “pre-employment” training in particular, the focus should be more on achievement and value added.
- 2.3 The End to End review concluded that there was no suitable programme for many young people who are not in training or employment. The underlying principle of proposals (resulting in the development of the E2E programme in England) is that assistance aims to support young people into Apprenticeships. However, for those with low levels of attainment, behavioural or social problems or with little innate ability to achieve (at least in the short term) the new demands of Apprenticeships (key skills and technical certificates) may present added barriers to progression.

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<sup>13</sup> This refers to the preparatory and Level 1 skills learning programmes and employability and occupational skills programmes

<sup>14</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> Century Apprenticeships: End to End Review of the Delivery of Modern Apprenticeships. DfES and the LSC, 2002.

2.4 The Review also concluded that because of the lack of specificity in the nature of need and outcomes appropriate to this group, this had inhibited the development of specialist providers and staff able to effectively support the client group. To address these weaknesses, the development of E2E in England has sought to:

- develop a programme that includes support such as life-skills training, focus on basic skills and exposure to real work environments;
- regular assessment in partnership with the Connexions service;
- selection of providers that can demonstrate their ability to work with the client group;
- opportunity to accredit (albeit small steps in) progress;
- networking and training for specialist providers and staff;
- funding models based on ‘reasonable cost’, measuring inputs and outputs and benchmarking providers over time, so that payment models are developed to accurately reflect costs;
- a ‘training first’ ethos, seeking to support progression into Apprenticeship. However, for the estimated 10% of young people for whom this is not seen as a realistic outcome, a focus on placing in “settled” employment.

2.5 These issues were considered in the context of the evaluation.

## **Programme Data**

2.6 Trends in participation in training indicate that over the four years between 1999/00 and 2002/03 years, the proportion of young people starting Skillbuild youth increased from 6,800 to 9,900, an increase of 3,100. The level of adult engagement in the programme reduced from 6,700 to 4,600<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Higher Education, Further Education and Training Statistics, 2002/03, ELWa

<b>Table 2.1</b>				
<b>Skill Build Programme Information (1999-2003)</b>				
<b>Number of Starts</b>				
	<b>1999-2000</b>	<b>2000-01</b>	<b>2002-02</b>	<b>2002-03</b>
Skillbuild youth (prep and level one <sup>16</sup> )	6,800	7,800	8,600	9,900
Skillbuild adult (employability)	5,600	5,800	2,100	2,000
Skillbuild adult (level one and above)	4,100	3,400	2,800	2,600
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,500</b>	<b>14,000</b>	<b>13,500</b>	<b>14,500</b>
<b>Number of Starts as a Proportion of Total Delivery</b>				
	<b>1999-2000</b>	<b>2000-01</b>	<b>2002-02</b>	<b>2002-03</b>
Skillbuild youth (prep and level one <sup>17</sup> )	50%	56%	64%	68%
Skillbuild adult (employability)	19%	20%	16%	14%
Skillbuild adult (level one and above)	30%	24%	21%	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Higher Education, Further Education and Training Statistics, 2002/03, ELWa

2.7 To understand the current volume and profile of delivery, data from the LLWR and National Training Database was analysed for the period between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 and 28th February 2005<sup>18</sup>. **Table 2.2** illustrates the total number of starts for each element of the programme.

<b>Table 2.2</b>	
<b>Skill Build Programme Management Information</b>	
<b>Number of Starts (April 04 to Feb 05)</b>	
<b>Programme Type</b>	
Skillbuild youth (preparatory)	5,550
Skillbuild youth (level one)	1,524
<b>Total Youth</b>	<b>6,744</b>
Skillbuild adult (employability)	1,208
Skillbuild adult (level one and above)	1,123
<b>Total Adult</b>	<b>2,331</b>
<b>Total number of starts</b>	<b>9,075</b>

Source: Data from NTD (April to July 04) Database and LLWR (August 04 to February 05)

<sup>16</sup> Data not available for the separate programmes

<sup>17</sup> Data not available for the separate programmes

<sup>18</sup> ELWa changed its Management Information system for collecting information on individual learners in August 2004 from the National Training Database to the LLWR. Information from these two databases has been combined.

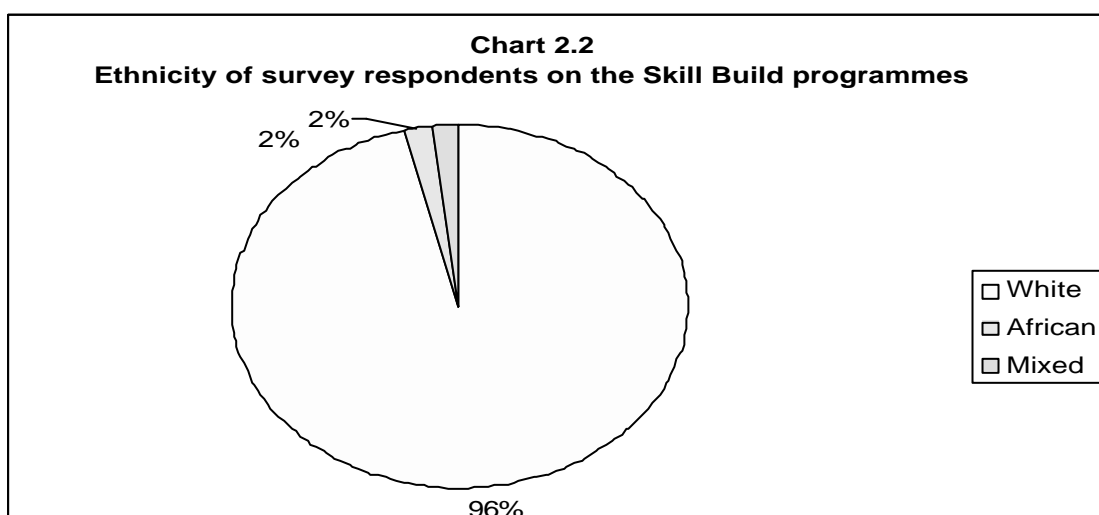
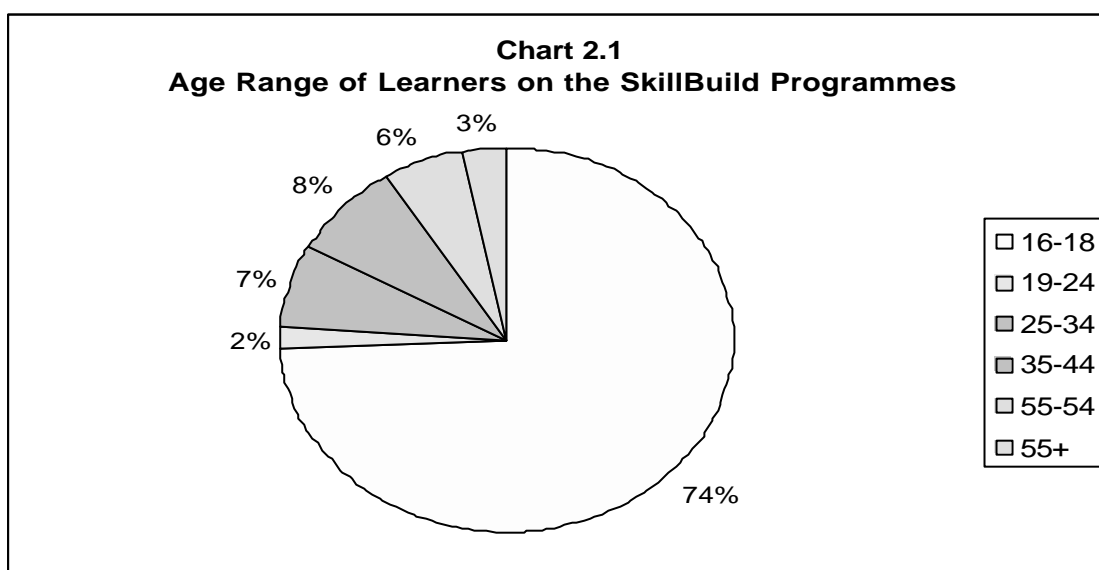
- 2.8 The profile of data reported on people starting the Skill Build programmes is reported in **Table 2.3**.

<b>Table 2.3 Skill Build Programmes Management Information Profile of Starts</b>	
<b>Programme Type</b>	
	<b>%</b>
Skillbuild youth (preparatory)	58
Skillbuild youth (level one)	17
Skillbuild adult (employability)	16
Skillbuild adult (level one and above)	12
<b>Age</b>	
	<b>%</b>
16-18	75
19-24	2
25-34	7
35-44	8
55-54	6
55+	3
<b>Gender</b>	
	<b>%</b>
Male	59
Female	41
<b>Region</b>	
	<b>%</b>
Mid Wales	6
North Wales	13
South East Wales	55
South West Wales	26
<b>Start Date</b>	
	<b>%</b>
April 2004	7
May 2004	10
June 2004	10
July 2004	10
August 2004	10
September 2004	10
October 2004	10
November 2004	10
December 2004	5
January 2005	11
February 2005	5

Source: Analysis of data from NTD (April to July 04) Database and LLWR (August 04 to February 05)

2.9 A total of 9,075 programme starts were recorded on the databases, 74% of which were under the preparatory training programme delivered to young people aged 16-18. Of the total cohort, 59% of starts were male, and 41% were female. Over half of the provision was delivered in South East Wales<sup>19</sup>.

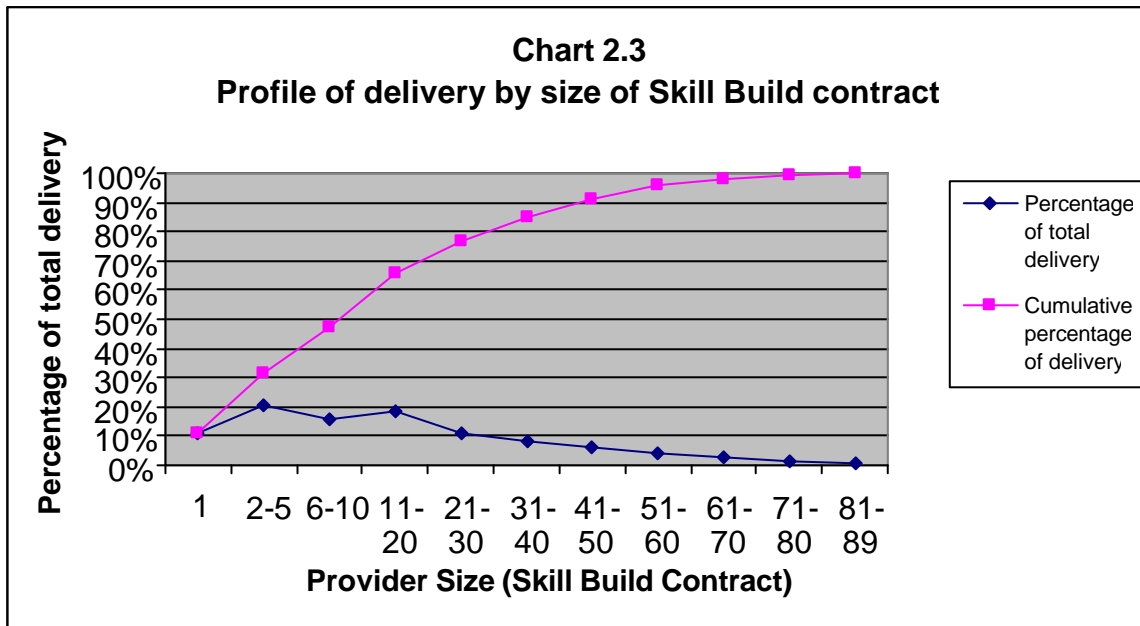
2.10 **Chart 2.1** illustrates the age range of people undertaking the Skill Build programmes, and **Chart 2.2** illustrates the ethnicity of the learners who responded to the survey. These illustrate that the majority of learners and survey respondents were white and aged 16-18.



<sup>19</sup> This data was used for designing the sample for the learners survey



2.11 Delivery was undertaken by a total of 89 providers across Wales, some of which operate in more than one region. One provider accounted for more than 10% of total delivery, with over three quarters of all delivery being undertaken by just one third of providers. **Chart 2.3** profiles the delivery by the size of the contracts awarded to providers.



2.12 This illustrates that the majority of provision is undertaken by a few large providers, all of which are situated in South East Wales, although they may also deliver in other parts of the country. There are also a large number of providers who have relatively small Skill Build programme contracts in comparison. The issues associated with provider size were considered in the case studies.

### 3 SKILL BUILD: OVERVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

3.1 The aim of the project was to evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes under the Skill Build banner against their stated aims and objectives, making recommendations for the future development of the programme. The evaluation was commissioned following a review undertaken by Estyn, between November 2001 and July 2002 and came to the conclusion that:

*“Where the Skillbuild (youth) programme works well, young people benefit from good, continuous support from work placements and training providers. These young people achieve outcomes, grow in confidence and leave the programme prepared for work or with sufficient skills to progress to other training programmes.”<sup>20</sup>*

3.2 The review also concluded that not enough was known about those who left early, and why they had done so. In addition, evidence illustrated that a number of learners were repeat entrants to the programme, with instances of learners entering the programme five or more times and not progressing into further learning or employment.

3.3 As such, the key focus of the evaluation was to understand:

- who the programme does work for, and in what circumstances; and
- which learners are not achieving successful outcomes from the programme and why?

3.4 The learners survey, undertaken by MRUK Research Wales, focused on understanding general levels of satisfaction with the programme, what activities had been undertaken, outcomes achieved and the impact of involvement. However the main focus of the evaluation undertaken through case studies and national consultations was to understand the key issues which impact on delivery of the programme. These issues were explored in detail through the consultations with strategic stakeholders, providers, learners, employers and indeed those who had dropped out of the programme.

3.5 This remainder of this section will clarify what we understand in terms of:

- defining ‘effectiveness’;

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<sup>20</sup> A Survey of the Effectiveness of Skillbuild in Progression of Participants into Skillseekers, FE or Employment. Estyn, 2003.

- who undertakes the programme;
- how the Skill Build programmes are delivered;
- findings from the learners survey.

## **Defining Effectiveness**

### **Young People**

- 3.6 Skillbuild youth is aimed at learners aged 16 to 18 who are not engaged in any other form of education, employment or training. The purpose of the programme is to support vocationally unfocussed young people, or those who are not able to access mainstream education, to develop a range of skills that will help them to access higher levels of training in the first instance, and where this is not possible, develop skills in order that they are work ready.
- 3.7 For the programme to be considered effective, it must equip young people with relevant qualifications, and work experience in options they are interested in and will support them to progress. If literacy or numeracy needs are identified, the programme should address these, although these alone should not act as a barrier to progression onto level one or framework qualifications. Where learners have other support needs providers should also make efforts to address these. The ultimate aim is that learners move on from the programme to a positive outcome, namely further training.

### **Adults**

- 3.8 The principles of the programme for adults are the same as for young people, but delivery tends to be more centre based, focusing on developing skills and gaining qualifications which would support an individual back into employment. The development of IT and basic skills are common features of the programme.
- 3.9 The Skillbuild adult programme differs from programmes offered under New Deal, as it is underpinned by an ethos of training, rather than employment first. Providers are not funded to find learners employment opportunities – the focus is on skill development.

## Who undertakes the programme?

### Young People

- 3.10 The existence of the 'Guarantee' means that all young people aged 16-18 are entitled to a place in some form of education or training. As such, the programme is open to a wide range of young people not in education, employment or training, from those who have decided to leave mainstream education and are considered 'able', but are uncertain of the vocational route to take, to those who have left school with few or no qualifications, have significant basic skills problems and may also have a whole range of personal and social problems which impact on their ability to progress.
- 3.11 Many learners are referred onto the programme shortly after leaving school, or dropping out of college. Other learners who leave school and enter employment may take up Skillbuild youth if the employment opportunity is not successful.
- 3.12 Some learners will use Skillbuild youth to support their choices for progression into FE over the summer holidays. Others use it as a step into work via a supported work placement if they have been unsuccessful at securing employment themselves, and others still may go on the placement before progressing onto higher levels of learning. Some learners go on the programme as they receive £45 per week for being involved. However, this is not felt to be a common reason.
- 3.13 What should be recognised is that for unemployed young people age 16-18, in many instances Skillbuild youth may be the only option open to them. If they are in a transition period between education and employment, Skillbuild youth can act as a stop gap between the two, or if they are unable to access an employed work based learning opportunity, it may be the only other thing available. Because of this, there is a wide range of learners undertaking the programme.

## Adults

- 3.14 Adults (aged 19+) can be referred onto the programme from Jobcentre Plus, if they have been unemployed for more than four consecutive calendar weeks and meet the eligibility criteria. Learners undertaking the programme receive a supplement to their Jobseekers Allowance, and are reimbursed for any expenses incurred.
- 3.15 The adult programme also supports a wide range of learners, from those who have long histories of unemployment coupled with complex personal and social issues, to those who have recently been made redundant and want to develop specific skills, such as IT to support progression into employment opportunities.

## How Skill Build is delivered

- 3.16 The Skill Build programmes allow a provider the opportunity to tailor a programme of learning to meet an individual's needs. ELWa is not prescriptive as to what is delivered on each programme. Most Skillbuild youth programmes will involve a work placement although the formats of these can vary significantly. Adults undertaking the programme are more likely to undertake centre based activities.
- 3.17 Other basic components of the Skill Build programmes (for both young people and adults) include motivational training and support with developing communication skills, interview techniques and basic and key skills tuition. Examples of generic qualifications that people can undertake whilst on the programme include:
- Certificate of Adult Literacy- Entry Level and Level 1;
  - Certificate of Adult Numeracy - Entry Level and Level 1;
  - Key Skills - Level 1 and 2 in 6 areas;
  - Pacific Institute - a 3-5 day motivational course;
  - CLAIT - a basic I.T course;
  - City and Guilds Profile of achievement - a confidence building qualification;

- ASDAN award (The ASDAN qualifications and awards are used to provide opportunities for students 14-19 to develop personal, social and active citizenship skills, work-related skills, key skills and wider key skills).

3.18 Some providers develop their programmes to deliver ‘themed’ provision, particularly for young people. These courses are often run in non-traditional environments. Examples are:

- army/navy preparation – run in conjunction with the forces;
- Prince’s Trust Volunteers – 12 week programme of self development;
- Sports Experience – run from leisure centres;
- young parents – courses based around childcare;
- music and DJ skills.

3.19 Providers may offer additional qualifications to support entry into the vocational area they are interested in, i.e. undertaking ECDL, food hygiene courses, health and safety etc. Some providers will also fund learners, particularly adults, through employment focused qualifications, such as fork lift truck driving, HGV licence etc. These are not covered by the ELWa’s funding system, and are paid for by the provider.

3.20 Providers are also expected to have links with partner organisations that can provide specialist support including agencies dealing with substance misuse, homelessness, sex education, health and budgeting.

3.21 The extent to which the provider tailors the programme to individual needs is largely dependent on local factors such as:

- size of the contract;
- ability to run courses to groups of learners;
- location of provider and trends in referrals;
- training provider ethos;
- vocational focus v. supportive focus.

3.22 These issues are explored further in **Sections 4 and Section 5**.

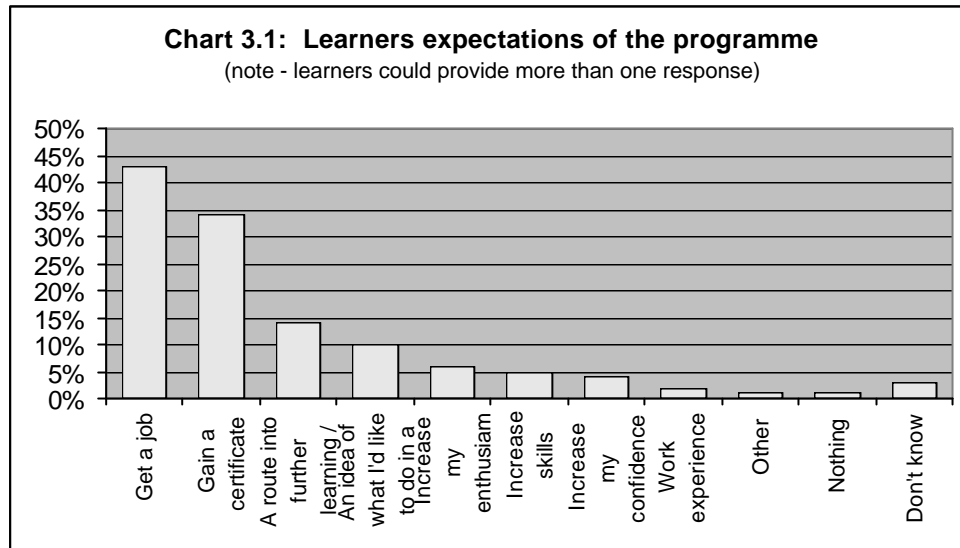
## Findings from the learners survey

- 3.23 The Estyn review concluded that where Skillbuild youth works well, young people benefit from good continuous support from providers. However, not enough is known about those that leave the programme early. As such, MRUK Research Wales undertook a survey with a representative sample of 404 learners<sup>21</sup> who were registered on ELWa's databases between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005. The aim was to gain an understanding of learners' general levels of satisfaction with the programme. This section will present the headline findings from the survey, which will be explored in more detail in later sections<sup>22</sup>.
- 3.24 Of the 404 learners interviewed who had undertaken learning under the Skill Build programmes, 89% indicated they had only been on the programme once, with 10% having started more than once and 1% that did not know.
- 3.25 Of those that restarted the programme (41) the following responses were received about how many times they had been re-referred:
- once – 20 (49% of restarters)
  - twice – 16 (37% of restarters)
  - three times – 1 (2% of restarters)
  - four times – 2 (7% of restarters)
  - five or more times – 2 (5% of restarters)
- 3.26 All learners were asked what they thought they would get out of the programme. The results presented in **Figure 3.1** illustrate that over 40% thought they would get a job, 10% thought they would get a better idea of the job they would like to do, and just over a third expecting to get a certificate. **Only 14% viewed it as a route into further training.**
- 3.27 These results indicate that for the majority of learners, the aims of the programme in terms of **preparation for further vocational learning** do not match the expectations of the vast majority of learners. A significant proportion of learners seem to regard the programme as a step into work.

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<sup>21</sup> A representative sample of 404 learners were interviewed – sampling criteria was programme undertaken, gender, region, and start date.

<sup>22</sup> Each of the questions was analysed by the sub-groups of learners undertaking the different elements of the programme (i.e. the sampling criteria). Unless stated, no statistically significant variation was found in the responses



3.28 Learners were also asked to indicate how satisfied they were with the training provider they were sent to. **Table 3.1** illustrates that almost nine out of ten learners were very or fairly satisfied with the training provider, the programme developed and the approach to monitoring progression.

	Training Provider	Programme Developed	Approach to monitoring of progression
Very satisfied	48%	49%	46%
Fairly satisfied	39%	41%	41%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	6%	5%	8%
Fairly dissatisfied	5%	3%	2%
Very dissatisfied	1%	1%	1%
Don't know	1%	1%	1%

3.29 In terms of the single most important benefit from the programme, 40% of learners indicated that the main benefit was improved levels of confidence. The other three main outcomes were:

- improved qualifications – 21%;
- it helped me find a job – 14%;
- I have a better idea of jobs I might enjoy – 10%.



3.30 In terms of completions, 72% of learners completed the course and 6% were still doing it. Other reasons for leaving included:

- 5% left for personal reasons;
- 4% did not enjoy it;
- 3% got a job.

3.31 Learners were asked what they did after completing the course. The most frequent response was that they got a job – at 32% with 17% of learners indicating that they had not yet progressed onto further learning or employment (9% were looking for employment, 4% did ‘nothing’, 2% were looking for another course, 2% were claiming benefit). The other most common destinations were:

- got onto another course– 26%;
- don’t know – 8%;
- level one programme – 5%;
- repeated the programme - 2%.

3.32 Learners were asked if they would recommend the relevant Skill Build programme to their friends. 89% indicated that they would. These findings suggest that learners are generally very satisfied with the delivery they receive.

3.33 As such it appears that providers are predominantly meeting learners’ expectations. However, questions are raised as to the ‘effectiveness’ of the programme for many of these learners, particularly young people, if preparation for further learning is the desired outcome.

3.34 In addition, almost one in five learners (17%) indicated that they had not progressed onto a positive outcome, with a further 8% that did not know. It is likely that within this cohort there are a proportion of learners with more significant support needs. Questions are raised as to how effective the programme is for them in progression to a positive outcome.

## 4 ISSUES INFLUENCING DELIVERY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- 4.1 The results from the survey in **Section 3** illustrated that all learners have high levels of satisfaction with the programmes under the Skill Build banner in general. However, their expectations of what the programme would achieve did not generally match the programme aims. In over 40% of cases, learners expected the programme would lead to employment, with only 14% regarding it as a route into further training.
- 4.2 The evidence from the case studies identified a range of issues with the delivery of the programme, which were generally aligned with whether the programme was delivered to young people or adults. The feedback from the focus groups and case studies was much more mixed than the learners survey, with the split in terms of overall satisfaction tending to correlate to satisfaction with the provider.
- 4.3 The focus groups aimed to get underneath some of the issues associated with delivery, and specifically picked up some ex-learners that had less than favourable experiences. This was because the evaluation was undertaken from an established view that the programme did not result in successful outcomes for a range of learners.
- 4.4 **Section 4** explores a range of issues which impact upon the effectiveness of the programmes for **young people**. These are presented under the following headings:
- regional issues;
  - process and provider issues;
  - programme issues.

### Regional Issues

- 4.5 **Section 2** identified that the profile of delivery of the Skill Build programmes varies significantly across Wales. Provision is heavily weighted to the South East (in line with population) with a small number of large providers delivering the majority of provision. In the more rural areas of North West, Mid and West Wales, providers are much more dispersed and tend to have much smaller contracts. These factors, with examples of how they have influenced delivery of the programme are explored in more detail under the following themes:

- availability of appropriate provision;
- employer engagement and competition for placements;
- availability of alternative appropriate options.

### **Availability of appropriate provision**

- 4.6 A key issue concerning the effectiveness of the programme is the extent to which provision is able to meet the range of learner needs in terms of both vocational options to be explored, and ability to deal with a mix of learners. As such, in any local area, the Skillbuild youth provision must be accessible and relevant to those it aims to support. However, where only a small number of providers operate in sizeable rural areas, the question arises as to whether the full range of options can be achieved, with low levels of learners entering the programme.

### Vocational focus

- 4.7 The most common reason for a Careers Advisor to refer a learner onto Skillbuild youth is because they are vocationally unfocused, with the aim that following completion of the programme, they will have chosen a particular work based learning route to progress onto. The provider they are referred to must therefore be able to offer learners work tasters in a range of vocational options that are matched both with their preferences, and also the demands of the local labour market.
- 4.8 However, in rural areas, or where young people are not prepared or able to travel, distance to the provider or placement is likely to be the primary consideration when selecting an appropriate provider, rather than the vocational options they provide. This is highlighted by the evidence from the learners survey.
- 4.9 **Table 4.1** provides young people's responses to why they were referred to a specific provider. This illustrates that in the South East, around one in four learners go to a provider because it is the nearest one to them. However, in North Wales, this is the primary concern of around one in three and in Mid Wales almost half of all learners undertaking Skillbuild youth.

**Table 4.1**  
**Reasons learners were placed with a particular provider**  
**(n=317)**

	North Wales	Mid Wales	South East Wales	South West Wales	Average
It was the only provider near where I live	38%	44%	26%	32%	35%
I wanted to go there	26%	28%	28%	29%	28%
They could offer me the placement I wanted	18%	22%	27%	28%	24%
Don't know	9%	6%	16%	7%	9%
Advised by Careers Wales/JC+	6%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Recommended by friend	3%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Other	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%
There were no FMAs so I had to do Skillbuild	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%

4.10 In more rural areas, it is not feasible for a provider to be able to deliver the full range of vocational options demanded, and faced with learners that may have unrealistic expectations; the ability to appropriately 'match' learners with vocational options and placements diminishes. Some comments from the case studies highlighted this issue.

*"Learners have to get up early and travel up to 40 miles – if they're not interested in what's on offer, they won't turn up."*

*"Can the needs of all young people be met in a large rural area?"*

4.11 However, other stakeholders have questioned this view.

*"It's not down to the rurality – it's down to the training provider, as in some rural areas providers are more successful than others." (Careers Wales Advisor)*

*"It is possible to manage the expectations of learners. If nine learners want to become a plumber, but there's only a one man band working in the town, they can see that they can't all go on placement. It's how you deal with it that's important." (Provider, Mid Wales)*

4.12 One Careers Advisor highlighted another problem faced in placing learners in appropriate provision.

*"In Holyhead, there are lots of young people that could be on the programme, but there aren't any centres. It's not cost effective to have a centre that the kids don't want to go to – they want to do it where they live." (Careers Advisor)*

*"If a person has been kicked out of a provider due to bad behaviour, it can be very difficult to find them alternative provision as there aren't the places available, and some providers won't take them on!" (Careers Advisor)*

- 4.13 Feedback from the ex-learners indicated that if their interests cannot be met by a provider, it is more likely that learners will either drop out, or not progress beyond the end of the programme to further training. Therefore appropriate and reasonable choice is crucial to learners being able to follow routes of interest to them. Some of the comments made by ex-learners regarding the availability of suitable placements were:

*Three learners in Mid Wales had wanted to go on placement with a mechanic, but had spent several weeks, working in the provider's workshop. "All we did was change tyres for six weeks. There was never a placement available so we all gave up" (ex-Skillbuild youth participant, Mid Wales)*

*"I've been waiting to go on placement for six weeks. I'm not interested in the things they've got to offer. I could get myself a job in Morrison's if I wanted one. I want to be a childminder."(Ex-Skillbuild youth participant, Gwent)*

*"I asked to do childcare, but they put me on IT." (ex-Skillbuild youth participant, North West)*

- 4.14 Providers acknowledged that it was not always possible to find suitable work placements for young people.

*"We move everyone into a placement within two weeks of them joining us. They don't want to stay in centre learning; they want to be out there, working. However, we don't do all vocational routes, so if they're not happy and we can't provide a suitable alternative, we may lose them. We try our best but young people often have unrealistic expectations which can't always be met." (Provider, SE Wales).*

*"We sometimes struggle getting and keeping good placements. It's a difficult balancing act." (Provider, North Wales)*

- 4.15 Conversely, in other more densely populated areas, a number of providers can be operating in the same 'catchment area', all offering similar options in terms of vocational routes. Where this is the case, providers are often competing for placements with the same employers.

*"We've had increasing difficulty finding placements because there are five providers all operating here. I can't understand the point." (Provider, SE Wales).*

*"I was at one provider and worked in Woolworth's and then went to another provider and ended up in the same shop. I was interested in sports retail but neither could get me that sort of placement. I wish they'd tell you up front." (Learner, SE Wales)*

- 4.16 The location of the providers is therefore crucial in terms of the extent to which they are matched with demand for provision, and having an appropriate level of vocational routes available. Several stakeholders have indicated that this detailed level of analysis has not been achieved, and a range of disparities in terms of provision have arisen.
- 4.17 However, questions have also been raised as to the value of having a large number of providers in a relatively small area, if they do not offer alternative options or specialisms. The availability of a number of similar providers can lead to learners dipping into provision and moving on if they aren't immediately satisfied. As such, in more urban areas, the issues associated with learner 'recycling' are thought to be much more apparent.

#### Support for other needs

- 4.18 As well as being able to offer appropriate vocational placements and educational support for learners, providers are also required to be able to respond to a range of learners' personal and social needs. This can involve working in partnership with support agencies and statutory services, depending on the needs of the learner. Some providers are well geared up for this, and able to provide an holistic programme of support.
- 4.19 One provider interviewed had developed a programme of learning for learners with more complex needs, and started to deliver Skillbuild youth on a peripatetic basis. Learning had been taken to Communities First wards, and taking advantage of the resources and partnership working in place, programmes of support had been developed, relevant to the local community and labour market. Learners were engaged from families that had long histories of unemployment, and delivery was tailored to try to address some of the issues arising. This method of delivery proved to be particularly effective, with 80% of learners moving into jobs, training or Further Education immediately after the programme<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> From a total of 71 leavers from the programme 28% had gone into jobs, 15% into further training and 37% into FE.

- 4.20 However, a more common occurrence is that providers will not have structured support arrangements with partner agencies, and will try to meet most learners' needs independently. In most cases where learners clearly have much more acute support issues than being 'vocationally unfocused' the full range of learner needs cannot be met under the current programme structure. This often includes the most disadvantaged, such as young offenders, pregnant teenagers or care leavers, where appropriate and effective interventions are particularly crucial.
- 4.21 This prompts the question as to whether the aims of the programme are matched with the full range of learner needs, and if not, what else is available? In most instances, Skillbuild youth is the main programme for the NEET group to be referred onto.

### **Employer engagement and competition for placements**

- 4.22 Central to the success of the delivery of Skillbuild youth, is that providers have access to a range of employers that are prepared to offer placements and progression routes. Providers in more urban areas indicated that they did not tend to have significant problems securing placements, but nevertheless, were constantly working to source new opportunities. The providers interviewed indicated that most employers who were willing to accept learners appreciated that it was not always going to be easy, but that the benefits generally outweighed the costs.

*"We have to support kids across the ability range, because we need employees across the ability range. We use the programme as a sort of screening tool. We get a free period to trial them out and if they're suitable, we can offer them a job and possibly a trainee place. It works both ways." (Employer, Mid Wales)*

- 4.23 However, this was not always the case in rural areas, or where the employment market was predominantly made up of SMEs.

*"We struggle getting placements for a number of vocational routes. We don't have negotiating power with small companies, and they don't want to take on 16 year olds if they're trying to run their own business." (Provider, North Wales)*

- 4.24 More fundamental in some areas however, was the extent to which these placements offered by employers could translate into an FMA / MA or job outcome. This was a particular issue in Mid Glamorgan, where some stakeholders were of the view that the programme acts as a barrier to developing the base of framework placements.

*"In this area, we have a relatively high proportion of people leaving school at sixteen. Some employers have wised up to this, and they restrict employment opportunities to people under eighteen, knowing that they can get free labour through the dearth of provision of Skillbuild youth. There's no work based training available for youngsters here, and so many people are chasing the same placements, that employers can exploit the situation. Employers will take youngsters on if they're free but won't progress them if they need to pay for it."* (Careers Wales stakeholder)

4.25 This was exemplified by the experience of one young girl.

*"I started on prep wanting to do retail, then I did admin and then I did hairdressing. I really liked hairdressing, and then went on to complete my level one in this, got all my certificates and that, and then my employer said they couldn't offer me a job because they couldn't afford to pay my wages. I've looked for other hairdressing jobs now I've got experience, but nobody will train me. What a waste of time that was."* (Learner, SE Wales)

4.26 The existence of Skillbuild youth should be recognised as a potential influencing factor in the availability of appropriate placements for work based learning in general. Consideration should be given to allowing greater levels of flexibility to be able to charge employers for placements where they are felt to be taking excessive advantage of the system, and funding allocated where providers need greater powers of negotiation to secure relevant placements that could lead to an employed training place.

#### **Availability of alternative appropriate options**

4.27 The guidance for Skillbuild youth indicates that the programme is aimed at those who are vocationally unfocussed, and require support to be able to access mainstream education. However, Careers Wales stakeholders, providers and national consultees indicated that a number of young people are referred to the programme who have more complex needs than the programme guidance provides for, but for whom no other training provision is available, including young offenders, care leavers etc.

4.28 Most stakeholders acknowledged that some alternative arrangements were required to be able to support 16-18 year olds that were not training ready, as the programmes are not designed to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged.



4.29 Some stakeholders have observed that Skillbuild youth does little more for some learners than meet the requirements of the Guarantee. However, this does not necessarily equate with meeting learner need.

*“Skillbuild (youth) is seen as the only provision to meet the Guarantee, but some people need more than a guaranteed place” (National Stakeholder)*

*“Skillbuild (youth) is used as a means of moving young people off the register, they are always looking for ways to move them, but they are not always ready” (National Stakeholder)*

4.30 At the other end of the spectrum, some stakeholders raised concerns about the potential for learners’ development to be restricted through engagement with the programme. In Mid Glamorgan and some rural areas, the indication was that a number of learners were being put on Skillbuild youth, because there were very few FMA / MAs available. Referral onto the programme to determine the path they wanted to follow was recognised as viable. However, with nowhere to progress to, Skillbuild youth was felt to be little more than a ‘holding pen’.

4.31 In addition to this, concerns were raised that able learners were being demotivated as providers were taking advantage of the situation, and requiring learners to complete preparatory training and level one skills learning before they would progress them onto a framework placement. Indeed, ex-learners in some of the focus groups indicated they had left the programme because it was too easy.

*“In one class they made me count to ten. It was insulting, as bad as school. In fact I think it was worse.” (Ex-learner Mid Wales)*

*“I said I wanted to do an NVQ in child care and was put on Skillbuild . I’ve done two placements and they said if I do another 13 weeks on level one they’ll be able to find me a job with training. It takes so long.” (Learner SE Wales)*

4.32 In some instances, it was felt that providers were cherry picking the best learners to minimise the risk in selecting learners to complete frameworks.

*“They cherry pick, and pick those that are likely to move onto another of their programmes, and those young people that offer quick outcomes. If they won’t take on the more challenging youngsters then it defeats the objective of Skillbuild youth” (Careers Advisor).*

4.33 Most providers acknowledged this was possible, but that in the vast majority of instances, learners that felt they weren't being challenged would simply leave if other options were available. These issues however were not felt to be problematic in all areas of Wales, and arose when there was competition for placements.

### **Process and Provider Issues**

4.34 A number of contextual issues have been raised which impact on the effectiveness of the programme in meeting the needs of learners. However, there are also a range of other factors which have an impact on the quality of the learning programme received.

4.35 Skillbuild youth has deliberately been designed to be flexible in nature to allow providers to be able to respond to the range of learner needs. However, how they do this, who they do it with, and what they aim to achieve is of particular importance. The flexibility allowed has led to the development of a range of different approaches to delivering the programme. Some providers regard it predominantly as a programme to develop vocational skills, whilst others structure it as a programme of holistic development. Both approaches have their place. However, this results in learners having significantly different experiences of the programme, even if they have common needs.

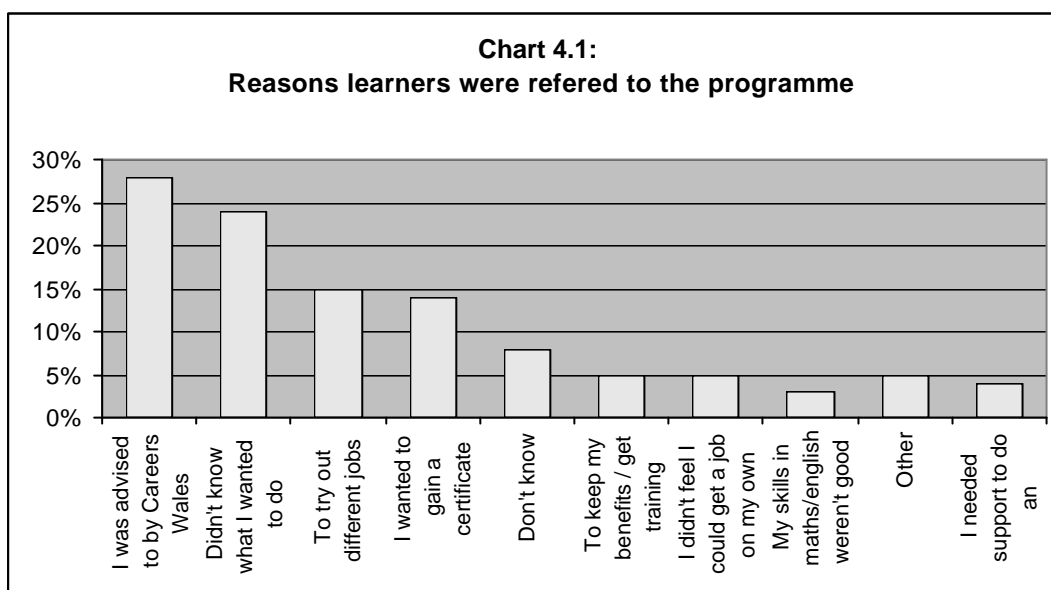
4.36 This section highlights a number of issues with the operation of the programme. Whilst they are by no means reflective of all providers or processes, they do require consideration in the review of the programme, in considering how effectively the programme meets learner need. These are presented here under the following headings:

- endorsement and referral;
- delivery mechanisms;
- links with partner agencies;
- qualifications and outcomes;
- progression and 're-starters'.

### Endorsement and referral

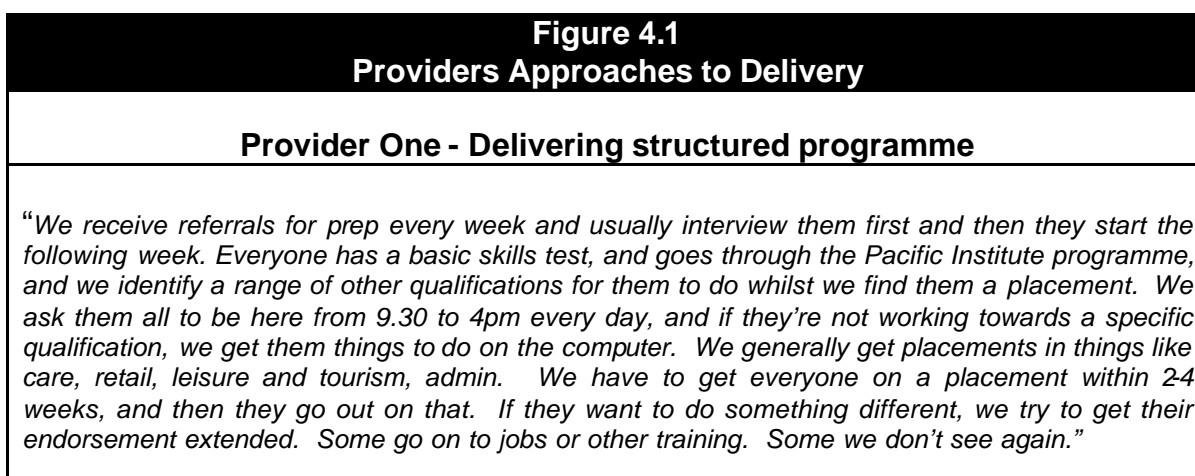
- 4.37 Young people are referred to a provider following an interview and endorsement from a Careers Wales advisor. This endorsement outlines the learning requirements of the young person and is subsequently used by the learner and provider to develop an individual learning plan (ILP) tailored to specific needs. Any personal, behavioural or social problems relevant to the provider should also be included, and signed off by the learner.
- 4.38 However, in some instances, issues arise with the speed in which information is transferred to the provider, and the depth of information contained in the document. In addition, some learners are referred who have not yet received a National Insurance number. These issues can cause problems with providers being able to embark on a programme of delivery with a learner.
- 4.39 In addition to this, providers indicated that in some instances the Careers Wales interview is not always sufficiently detailed to be able to uncover the full range of issues for the learner. Some providers have indicated that learners with more complex needs require a much longer assessment period which would be better undertaken by the provider in agreement with Careers Wales before the endorsement is signed off.
- 4.40 A further concern raised by providers was that in some instances, the endorsement process can act as a barrier to getting a learner onto an appropriate programme, and does not recognise the different ways in which young people may enter learning. If a learner approaches a provider requesting provision, they must then obtain an endorsement from Careers Wales, which can slow down the process of engagement. Whilst it is generally agreed that Careers Wales should be the main point of referral, a greater level of flexibility may be required in the process, including referral from other agencies.
- 4.41 A further issue to consider with the referral process, and effectiveness of the programme is the extent to which learners are aware what the programme aims are. The learners survey asked respondents to indicate why they were referred to Skillbuild youth. **Chart 4.1** illustrates that over 25% of young people were referred because they were advised to by Careers Wales, with a further 24% indicating that it was because they did not know what they wanted to do.

4.42 This indicates that many learners did not ask to be referred to the programme, and therefore it is not something that young people actively demand. As such, consideration should be given to how the programme is marketed to young people in Years 10 and 11. Under current arrangements, the programme is something that young people seemingly end up in, rather than it being a positive choice.



### Delivery mechanisms

4.43 Through the consultation process, significant variations were observed with how providers deliver Skillbuild youth. These variations were observed across different regions, and providers of varying size. **Figure 4.1** illustrates the range in terms of style of provision.



**Figure 4.1**  
**Providers Approaches to Delivery**  
**Provider Two - Delivering flexible programme**

*“There’s no set path here for learners, we build up their ILP over the course of the first week and take it from there. We tend to get a lot of the learners with fairly significant social problems, and work in partnership with a range of agencies, YOTs etc, to support them. Many of our learners will undertake the ASDAN award, but this tends to be to support them develop life skills that they can use such as job searches, CV development, career research. We also do work on wider issues such as healthy lifestyles to promote healthy eating, exercise and safe sex. The idea is to give them the skills to be independent, not just get them a job. In terms of other qualifications and placements, this depends very much on the learner. Most learners will go on a couple of fairly short placements, somewhere up to three weeks, and if they want to stay on, we move them up to the level one. We monitor them very closely to ensure that when in centre they are always doing something purposeful. We send them out on activities to the job centre, or to the benefits office so they learn how to make use of the services available to them. We want to support them into adulthood, not with just finding work but becoming independent.”*

4.44 The style of provision delivered by most providers consulted sat somewhere between these two extremes, although larger providers tended to operate a more process driven programme, with structured activities scheduled each week. This has benefits for those that require this level of support, but may not be appropriate for learners with more complex needs, or who just want to try a few work placements.

4.45 A number of providers consulted aimed to get learners on a placement within about a month. Some providers offered short tasters of around two to three days, whilst learners in other centres may experience a number of different options whilst on programme. Others still may go straight onto a placement and stay on it for the duration of the thirteen weeks.

4.46 In terms of providing learners with an experience that will lead to them becoming vocationally focussed, a range of shorter placements may be most appropriate. However, if learners actually require some support to become work ready, then the routine of working in the same place for an extended period of time may be of most relevance.

4.47 Central to the success of placements is that learners have some interest in the route being explored. If learners are deemed to have significant issues which prevent them from being work ready, the programme may be more effective if they have the flexibility to grow in confidence in centre. This may require a longer period of endorsement, but could ultimately benefit the learner. The experiences of learners at one centre illustrate this mixed approach to work placements.

*"I've been at the centre eight weeks and haven't been on placement yet. That's fine by me. I don't want to go on one yet but am working towards it." (Learner, SE Wales)*

*"I've been on IT placements and have decided to change to retail. I don't want to work in an office. I've got another placement in a few weeks." (Learner, SE Wales)*

*"I've been on Skillbuild a few times before. At this provider, they've put me in a job where I work 10 til 4. They knew I wouldn't turn up at 9am." (Learner, SE Wales)*

#### Professional Development

4.48 A number of issues were raised with regards to the abilities of staff to deal with the full range of issues that learners present. Staff often have to deal with learners with a range of personal, behavioural and social issues, and in many cases may not undergo any form of formal training. Providers are generally confident in their staff's abilities to deal with all types of learners, however, suggestions were made regarding the requirement for a national professional development programme, which trains staff to deal with issues such as anger management.

4.49 A further issue with the delivery of the programme, is the extent to which staff are qualified to teach basic skills. With the introduction of the new qualifications framework and the Basic Skill Quality Mark, providers should be able to effectively demonstrate how they are developing their delivery of basic skills, including staff undertaking the appropriate qualifications. Some providers were clearly embedding this as a strategic priority whereas others were just starting to consider the issue.

### Links with partner agencies

- 4.50 When applying to deliver the programme, providers are required to demonstrate that they have links with partner agencies that can support a range of learner needs. All providers consulted indicated that they did work with partners, although few seemed to have formal arrangements for doing this.
- 4.51 Responses to learners' needs tend to be on an ad hoc basis, rather than having structured links. Most providers indicated that they endeavoured to respond to the range of learner issues themselves, despite not being funded to do so. Whilst this demonstrates a commitment to the learner, it does not make most effective use of specialist skills, nor recognise how the learner will be supported beyond the life of the programme. This is a fundamental gap in the structure of provision.

### Qualifications and outcomes

- 4.52 The Estyn review questioned the extent to which the increased investment in funding for Skillbuild youth since the introduction of Section 96 qualifications represented value for money, when this had not seemingly resulted in a proportionate increase in progressions from the programme.
- 4.53 Consultations with providers and learners indicated that in many cases, delivery of the programme had become outcome focused, in order that providers could generate funding to deliver the programme. The extent to which this impacted on the quality of delivery varied. Some providers were clearly delivering qualifications which supported the individual's progression as a whole.

*"I wasn't ready to go on a placement, others were. I stayed in the centre and did some key skills work and loads of other one to one stuff which really built my confidence. I'm really proud of the qualifications, and they'll help me in work."  
(Learner, SE Wales)*

- 4.54 However, in some instances, learners and providers indicated that they had undertaken qualifications to the detriment of their learning experience.

*"Young people would rather go to an employer than to the centre, however when they go the employer, few complete the qualifications and we lose out on funding, so it's better to keep them centre based."  
(Provider, North Wales)*

*"I had a really good placement, and then the provider asked me to come back to the centre for a couple of weeks to do some qualifications. I did, but the provider didn't tell my employer and he thought I'd been skiving so wouldn't let me back. I lost the placement and can't get another one as good. (Learner, SE Wales)"*

4.55 Learners were asked to specify which of the qualifications undertaken were likely to be of most use to them. **Table 4.2** illustrates that whilst 28% significantly valued the key skills, 21% did not think any of the qualifications would be of use.

Key skills certificate	28%
None of them	20%
Don't know	16%
Other <sup>24</sup>	12%
NVQ level 1	13%
Basic skills certificate	5%
Pacific Institute award	3%
City and Guilds Profile of Achievement	3%

4.56 These results indicate that significant emphasis is placed on learners working towards and achieving qualifications. However, learners do not appear to be clear on why they are undertaking them and how they might benefit from them in the future.

4.57 Learners were asked how they felt about the experience, and what the most important aspect was. Increasing levels of confidence are clearly the most significant outcome for learners. These are presented in **Table 4.3**.

More confident	44%
It helped me improve my qualifications	16%
It helped me find a job	14%
I have a better idea of jobs I might enjoy doing	11%
More enthusiastic about attending training/work	6%

<sup>24</sup> includes ASDAN and CLAIT 2% each



Table 4.3 What was the most important aspect of the training? (n=317)	
Don't know	5%
Nothing	4%
Changed my ideas about education/training	1%

### Progression and 'Re-starters'

4.58 The data analysed by Estyn in 2002 indicated that between 2001 and 2002 the destinations of 45% of learners was unknown. As such, there were serious concerns about learners being 'recycled' between providers. The learners survey therefore sought to identify what proportion of learners completed the programme, what happened to them following completion, and what proportion of learners were re-entering the system. The results for both young people and adults were presented in **Section 3** with 72% of learners completing the programme.

4.59 The results for young people who had been on Skillbuild youth more than once were analysed. 12% (38<sup>25</sup>) of young people who had been on the programme indicated that they had. These learners were asked how many times they had restarted the programme. The responses were as follows:

- once – 19 (50% of restarters, 6% of total young people cohort);
- twice – 14 (38% of restarters, 5% of total young people cohort);
- three times – 1 (3% of restarters, 0% of total young people cohort);
- four times – 3 (6% of restarters, 1% of total young people cohort);
- five times – 1 (3% of restarters, 0% of total young people cohort);

4.60 The learners were asked the reasons why they re-started Skillbuild youth. **Table 4.4** displays the results. The most common reasons were related to the work placement or the training course being too easy. Learners were more positive about their latest experience, with just one in ten saying their most recent experience was worse.

Table 4.4 Reasons for restarting Skillbuild youth (n=38)										
	1st time		2nd time		3rd time		4th time		5th time	
I didn't like work placement	8	21%	5	26%	1	100%	2	66%	1	100%

<sup>25</sup> Out of 317

**Table 4.4**  
**Reasons for restarting Skillbuild youth**  
**(n=38)**

	1st time		2nd time		3rd time		4th time		5th time	
I found training course too easy	9	24%	7	37%			1	33%		
Other	5	13%	1	5%						
I didn't know what else to do	5	13%	1	5%						
I was told to by Careers Wales/Jobcentre Plus	3	8%	2	11%						
Don't know	3	8%	3	16%						
I found training course too hard	2	5%								
There was nothing else available	1	3%								
Wanted to do a different course	2	5%								
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>		<b>19</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>1</b>	

4.61 However, the focus groups undertaken in centres in urban areas in particular, suggested a higher level of learners were restarting the programme. In each of the focus groups undertaken in Gwent, Cardiff and the Vale and Rhondda Cynon Taff approximately three in ten learners had been involved in programmes before. Reasons given were:

*"It was boring in the last provider, we used to just sit on computers all day – and weren't told to do anything. It's better here because we're given a lot to do."*  
(Learner, SE Wales)

*"I left because the provider didn't get me a placement."* (Learner, SE Wales))

## Programme Issues

4.62 A range of issues of have also been highlighted with how the programme is funded and managed by ELWa, and in terms of where it fits in relation to work based learning programmes. These issues are explored under the following headings.

- impact of funding arrangements;
- management of quality with providers;
- content of progression routes;
- developments in 14-19 education.

### Impact of Funding Arrangements

4.63 Most providers indicated that the funding arrangements had a significant impact on the nature and style of delivery, and that in many cases, much of the value of delivery was not recognised or funded. Providers are allocated a contract for the number of 'starts' which is profiled across the financial year. The programme is funded at a higher rate than other work based learning programmes, recognising the need for more intensive support. Funding for the programme is structured as follows:

- on programme start;
- on programme payment (monthly);
- qualification outcomes;
- progression outcomes (to further learning).

### Profile of demand

4.64 Some concerns were raised with how providers are able to manage the profiling of their contract, when they were reliant on Careers Wales for referrals to the programme. Most providers indicated that the busiest time of year was in the period July to mid-October, with many learners taking up the programme after they had first left school, or if they were early leavers from college. A second peak was generally observed after the Christmas holidays, with the period after Easter generally being the quietest. However, these fluctuations made it difficult for providers to plan properly, and a flat rate of funding based on the average number of starts would allow more consistent planning, rather than having to quickly respond to peaks in demand.

### On programme payments

4.65 Some providers raised issues with the equity of the on-programme payment, suggesting that it was not an equitable way to fund delivery, particularly for harder to reach learners, who may make significant progress during their time with a provider, despite leaving early.

*"We can take a learner on, work with them for almost two months, develop their confidence and all sorts of work to develop skills but if they don't complete the accreditation, and leave before the Friday of the second month, all we receive is the start payment. The payment doesn't recognise distance travelled."  
(Provider, SE Wales)*

### Outcome payments

4.66 Payment for the qualification outcomes results in many providers putting learners through a 'process' driven model, rather than being able to sufficiently tailor the programme to their needs. Many providers will support a range of unfunded qualifications if they feel this will benefit the learner, or fudge the system to ensure they receive appropriate levels of remuneration. Providers are not recognised for the effort they put into addressing the social and personal issues of learners which can take up significant amounts of time.

*"Let me give you an example from yesterday. One of our learners didn't turn up in the morning, and so we called his hostel to see where he was. He eventually came in half way through the morning, being chased by a group of lads, who spent the rest of the day waiting outside for him. We had to call the police, talk to him, work out what had happened and eventually smuggle him out the back – we don't get paid for our time." (Provider, SE Wales)*

*"We had a girl last week who turned up for her placement with her hair crawling with nits. The employer sent her back to us, and we had to go out and get the kit, and spend ages sorting out her hair. We're not social workers, but we often act like them." (Provider, SE Wales)*

4.67 In addition to this, changes have recently been made to the funding system which mean that job outcomes are no longer funded. This is clearly to reflect ELWa's role in learning, rather than moving people into potentially low skilled work. But for many, no other options are available, and a proportion of young people clearly want to move into paid employment, whether they will be further trained or not. If this is not the aim of Skillbuild youth, a significant proportion of learners currently being referred are 'unsuitable' for the programme.

4.68 Changes due to come into effect from August 2005 with the National Planning and Funding System will result in the funding following the learner, and the amount received more closely reflecting individual needs. However, the current funding mechanism does not provide flexibility to use the money in the most appropriate way necessary for the learner (i.e. if this means to secure a placement with a provider who otherwise would not be able to support an apprentice).

4.69 In addition to this, the programme needs to lay greater emphasis on the achievement of distance travelled, rather than relying on qualifications for an indication of success. This would require a longer period of assessment and clearer definition of the outcomes to be achieved, in agreement with the learner, provider and Careers Wales.

### **Management of quality with providers**

4.70 A number of stakeholders and providers indicated that a key reason for the variations in the delivery of programme was a result of the reduced role of ELWa in managing the quality of the provision. Quality management was regarded as something of a paper based exercise, particularly in areas where large numbers of providers were operating.

*“We used to have regular visits from the Provider Management team, looking at what we were doing, making us aware of how we sat within the range of other providers operating around here. It kept you looking outwards rather than downwards. It’s very difficult to look above the paper work and see what’s going on around you if you’re not asked to. This has impacted upon the extent to which we learn from each other and share good practice.” (Provider, SE Wales)*

4.71 Providers and other stakeholders indicated that they felt the programme did not feel as if it had significant strategic direction within ELWa, and consequently, the programme had not evolved with the changing needs of learners.

### **Content of progression routes**

4.72 Some concerns were raised about the extent to which learners were being referred to, or receiving extended programmes of Skillbuild youth to address basic skills needs or other personal and social issues, because progression routes (i.e. FMAs/MAs) did not provide adequate support to learners. Some providers made comments which partially confirm this view.

*“How can we address fundamental basic skills problems in 13 weeks?”*

*“We’re asked to do in 13 weeks what education hasn’t done in eleven years”*

4.73 However, rather than learners being held back, most providers felt that the learners would not be able to cope with a framework placement, and needed more intensive support. The view that progression routes did not provide sufficient flexibility to be able to support learners mixed needs was generally supported, and many providers indicated that this was a major cause of learners not completing frameworks.

#### **Developments in 14-19 education**

4.74 Comments were also raised about the extent to which the introduction of the EMA would impact on work based learning in terms of 'parity of esteem'. If learners did not regard the programme as a viable alternative, the concern was that many would be encouraged to stay in mainstream education, rather than benefiting from other provision which would more closely meet their needs.

4.75 Other concerns were raised about considerations to introduce the programme to the 14-16 cohort, particularly if it was not effectively meeting the needs of 16-18 year olds. The principle of earlier intervention for those at risk of becoming disengaged was felt to be appropriate, but the extent to which this could successfully be implemented under current arrangements was questioned.

4.76 Fundamentally, a range of stakeholders indicated that any developments to the programme, would have to be made in the context of the wider 14-19 agenda, particularly if the aim was for it to effectively progress learners onto Apprenticeships or other further learning.

## 5 ISSUES INFLUENCING DELIVERY FOR ADULTS

- 5.1 A number of issues are reported in **Section 4** relating to availability of provision and funding arrangements are also applicable to adults. However, the programme for adults is predominantly based around activity in-centre, and therefore does not face the same problems in terms of accessing employer placements.
- 5.2 Fewer issues were raised with the delivery of the adult programme in general, and the messages from the focus groups tended to more accurately reflect the views from the learners survey presented in **Section 3**. Nevertheless, a number of strategic and operational issues were raised through the case studies, which are presented under the following headings:
- regional issues;
  - process and provider issues;
  - programme issues.

### Regional Issues

- 5.3 The number of placements funded for adults is much smaller than for young people, and accounts for around 26% of total delivery of the Skill Build programmes. This is a consequence of the number of people that are eligible for, and demand the programme. Section 3 highlighted that numbers entering the programmes are falling every year.
- 5.4 As a consequence of this, delivery is spread across a smaller number of providers, particularly in North and Mid Wales. This does cause issues in terms of access to appropriate provision, and in many cases learners have to travel fairly significant distances.
- 5.5 However, evidence from the case studies indicates that adult learners tended to regard this as less of an issue than young people, because they are either used to travelling for work, and / or have their own methods of transportation.

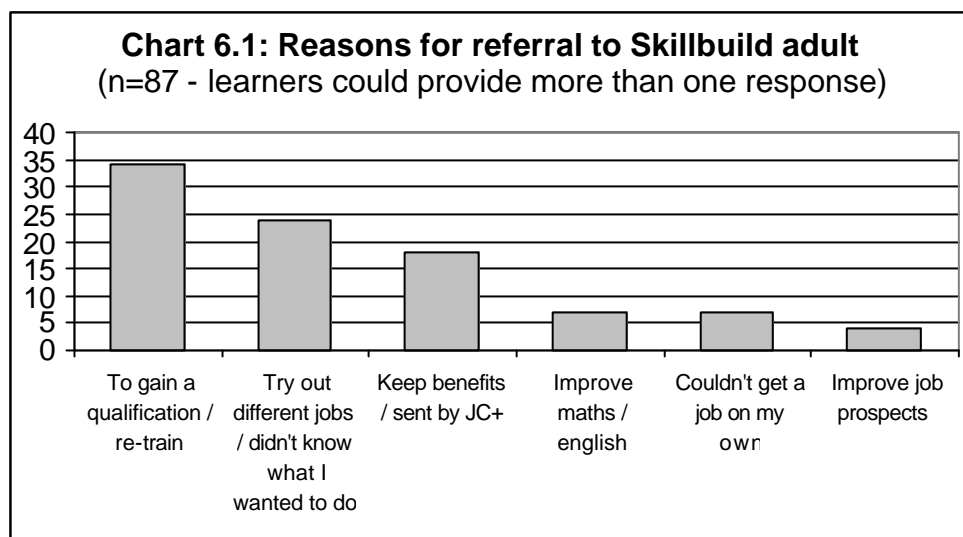
*"I travel a forty mile round trip to come here. But my petrol is paid, and its worth it because I think this will improve my chances of getting a job. You have to be prepared to out the effort in." (adult learner, South East Wales)*

- 5.6 Nevertheless, allocation of provision should be undertaken following a close assessment of the needs of both the region and the local area.

## Process and Provider Issues

### Referral

- 5.7 Adults are referred to the programme from Jobcentre Plus when it is felt they would benefit from involvement in a training programme to support them back into employment. Adults must have been unemployed for four full calendar weeks before they can access the programme, and cannot be referred if they are eligible for other support due to redundancy such as ELWa's ReAct programme. Adults are generally endorsed for a period of thirteen weeks, although significant extensions can be awarded (up to 48 weeks) if the learner has basic skills needs.
- 5.8 **Chart 6.1** illustrates reasons why adult learners were referred to the programme. Around four in ten indicated that it was to gain a qualification or re-train.



- 5.9 Jobcentre Plus' key concern with programme is how it fits with other programmes for the unemployed, such as New Deal. Advisors dealing with clients need to be fully aware of any changes made to the eligibility criteria and structure of the programme, to ensure they are able to accurately advise clients. This has not always worked effectively in the past.



5.10 A further issue articulated by Jobcentre Plus relates to quality assurance over the provider base. Concerns were expressed regarding their role in reviewing providers as they currently have limited access to information about the outcomes from the delivery, and the overall quality of the services provided to their clients. A more joined up approach to awarding contracts, reviewing quality, and involvement with developments is required to ensure Jobcentre Plus advisors have a clear view of the potential benefits to their clients.

### Delivery Mechanisms

5.11 A significant proportion of adults who are referred to Skillbuild adult do so to undertake training in IT skills. However, providers also undertake activity to include the development of a range of other softer skills, including interviewing techniques, confidence building etc. Learners were asked to specify which of the qualifications undertaken were likely to be of most use to them. **Table 6.1** illustrates that 32 (37%) learners significantly valued the key skills and IT qualifications, and 9 (10%) of learners achieved a Level 1, 2 or 3 qualification. However almost a quarter thought none of the qualifications would be of use.

<b>Table 6.1</b> <b>Of the qualifications or certificates achieved, which will be most useful to you?"</b> <b>(n=87)</b>	
None of them	21
Key skills certificate	17
CLAIT / ECDL	15
NVQ level 1/2/3	9
Don't know	8
Other	8
City and Guilds Profile of Achievement	7
Basic skills certificate	2

5.12 Providers indicated that the majority of learners who access the Skillbuild adult programme are generally regarded to be much more work focussed than young people.

- 5.13 Adults can progress onto occupational training from Skillbuild adult and take further relevant qualifications if they are re-endorsed by Jobcentre Plus. The programme for adults can go up as far as NVQ Level 2 or 3 if the provider can accommodate this, and the clients' advisor will endorse them.
- 5.14 However, providers also indicated that in some cases, the needs of adult learners were even more acute than the young people, due to people having developed 'coping strategies' over the years. For these learners, providers were required to invest a significant amount of time and support for the learner, much of which was not recognised through the funding mechanism.
- 5.15 This raises the issue of professional development for staff working with the clients. If people have a range of personal and social issues which impact on their ability to progress, staff need to be sufficiently well prepared to be able to cope with these. This is a key issue for ELWa at the national level.

## Programme Issues

### Impact of Funding Arrangements

- 5.16 Some providers have indicated that the range of qualifications funded by ELWa for the adult programme is not flexible enough for the learners' employment needs. Providers recognise that the programme is not specifically employment focussed; however, this does not always match the learners' expectations.

*"We end up delivering a lot of other qualifications and taking the hit for the learner. Things like fork lift truck driving – they're not funded but it might be just what the learner needs. We often pay ourselves if that's the case."*

- 5.17 In addition to this, providers made comments about the recent changes which ceased payment for placing learners in employment at the end of the training. The majority of providers visited felt that the priority of most adult learners was to enter employment, and this was not being supported by the programme.

### Strategic Issues

5.18 A strategic level concern with the adult programme relates to a disparity in the ultimate aims of Jobcentre Plus and ELWa; the former focusing on employment as the ultimate outcome, with the latter having a 'training first' ethos.

5.19 Providers delivering Skillbuild adult are not required to prioritise job outcomes, and there is no tracking of job entries by providers. In addition, whilst Jobcentre Plus imposes sanctions on the payment of benefits if learners do not comply, this is not as rigorously adhered to through ELWa's processes. This is a key issue for Jobcentre Plus. As one national stakeholder commented,

*"ELWa and Jobcentre Plus have shadows of the same goals". (National Stakeholder)*

5.20 The issues with the adult programme in terms of operation and delivery are not as acute as for young people. The key issue here is how does it, and where should it fit strategically?

## **6 DEVELOPMENTS IN ENGLAND**

6.1 This section presents a review of developments in England under the following headings:

- Development for Young People: E2E.
- Developments for Adults.

### **DEVELOPMENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: E2E**

6.2 In order to understand how similar programmes in England had developed, a review of the E2E programme, recently introduced in England was undertaken. This process included a review of publicly available documentation available on the LSC and LSDA websites, drew on the findings from the evaluation undertaken by GHK, and involved consultations with representatives responsible for the programme at Learning and Skills Council National Office (LSCNO). The section is structured as follows:

- Aim of the Programme;
- Eligibility Criteria for Access to the Programme;
- Structure and Content of the Programme;
- Expected Progress and Outcomes;
- Actual Progress and Outcomes;
- Cost;
- Issues with Delivery – Successes and Areas for Development.

### **Aim of the Programme**

#### **Background**

6.3 Entry to Employment (E2E) is a learning programme for young people who are not yet ready or able to enter an Apprenticeship programme, further education or employment. The programme was piloted in 11 pathfinder areas during 2002/03 and rolled out nationally in August 2003.

6.4 On the recommendation of the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, E2E replaced Life Skills and Preparatory Training at NVQ Learning Level 1 for 16-18 year olds. There are now over 60,000 young people and 500 learning providers involved in the programme, which is managed and funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

- 6.5 The LSC works closely with the Department for Education and Skills, Connexions and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the development of the E2E programme.
- 6.6 The roots of E2E lie in the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, chaired by Sir John Cassells, which suggested the phasing out of 'Other Training', including training aimed at those undertaking some kind of preparatory training for entry to the labour market or Apprenticeships. The Committee's Report 'Modern Apprenticeships: The Way to Work' concluded that programmes aimed at preparing young people for employment needed a clearer identity.
- 6.7 The response to the recommendations of the Advisory Committee was the development of E2E which took a much more focused perspective of its important objectives, especially related to its target client groups. E2E incorporates the best aspects of previous initiatives in creating a programme that is a dedicated rather than a residual programme aimed at providing tailored, high quality and flexible programmes that are not time bound.
- 6.8 E2E programmes are designed to address skills gaps in literacy, numeracy and IT, so ensuring young people are equipped for employment (with training) or further education. E2E programmes also teach softer skills such as motivation, confidence and self-esteem, and are particularly aimed at disengaged young people who might otherwise go into low-paid unskilled work or onto benefits.

### **The Key Issue at Age 17**

- 6.9 The proportion of 16 to 18 year olds that are not in education, employment or training at the end of 2003 was nine per cent, or 177,000 individuals, according to the DfES statistical first release SFR 18.
- 6.10 Another statistical first release, SFR03 also showed that the number of 16 to 18 year olds studying at Level 1 and Entry Levels – the target group for E2E programmes - was up by 16.7 per cent between 2002 and 2003.

6.11 The Five-year strategy records that at age 16, 84 per cent of young people remain in formal education or work-based learning. But at 17, this falls to 75 per cent and by 18 to just 52 per cent. The UK is ranked 27th out of 30 countries for participation at age 17.

### **Policy Context**

6.12 The DfES Skills Strategy indicates that unless the UK dramatically drives up the level of skills in its workforce, it will lose out in a global market that increasingly demands high-level vocational and technological skills. At the other end of the scale, the UK also suffers from a shortage of foundation skills in literacy, numeracy and IT. Numerous government initiatives are addressing this shortage for the different age cohorts within the workforce. The intention was that Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes would target 16-18 year olds who were disengaged or at risk of 'dropping out'. Programmes would end with the young person moving onto a transition programme for employment (with training) or further education.

6.13 The Skills Strategy was preceded in 2002 by the Success for All agenda, which looked at root-and-branch reform of the post-16 education and training sector. This aimed to meet the needs of employers and learners, while improving the spread and flexibility of provision and raising standards within institutions.

6.14 This itself had been informed by the earlier Cassells Report<sup>26</sup>, which recognised the centrality of the young person in planning, delivering and reviewing a coherent and innovative work-based programme that would provide opportunities for young people to progress to Level 2.

6.15 Therefore E2E is a step (and challenging) change in delivering work-based learning at Level 1 aimed at increasing the learner focus, flexibility and quality of provision, creating smoother transition and progression, and making this standard of delivery more consistent across all areas. It involves much greater co-operation and co-ordination between organisations involved in managing and delivering E2E.

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<sup>26</sup> Modern Apprenticeships: the way to work. DfES, 2001

- 6.16 In particular, institutions will need to encourage students for whom it is appropriate to consider vocational training, such as Apprenticeships. E2E can act as a preparatory Apprenticeship programme for learners who will go into Apprenticeships once they are equipped with the essential foundation skills to help them study and achieve.
- 6.17 Prior to and as preparation for national establishment, 11 Pathfinders operated across the country with at least one in each GO region. The Pathfinders sought to advise and inform the national introduction of E2E.<sup>27</sup>

### **Distinctiveness of E2E**

- 6.18 **Flexibility** – E2E aims to provide much greater flexibility in meeting the needs of individual learners. The programme is not time bound or specified in terms of guided learning hours or attendance, other than meeting the minimum requirements and is not qualification driven (although qualifications are a significant incentive for some young people). Learning programmes have been developed from a range of options to suit the needs of the individual learner. Appropriate awards and qualifications can be selected according to how they might benefit individual learners.
- 6.19 **Smoother transition and progression** – By bringing together Life Skills, Preparatory Training and NVQ Learning at Level 1 provision into one programme, there are greater opportunities for smoother transition and onward progression. The provision of aftercare services within E2E once the learner has completed their programme also ensures successful onward progression.
- 6.20 **Partnership Working** – More explicit clarification of roles and responsibilities between partners and the development of more effective working relationships, in particular providers and their local Connexions Service, should result in an improved service for learners. E2E is based on the ethos of partnership working.

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<sup>27</sup> The 11 Pathfinders were in the following LLSC areas: Bedfordshire and Luton, Birmingham and Solihull, Derbyshire, Greater Manchester, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, London North, Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, North Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Tyne and Wear, and West of England.

## Eligibility Criteria for Access to the Programme

- 6.21 Young people aged 16 – 18 years in England who are not participating in any form of post-16 learning can be admitted to E2E, only if that is an appropriate option which will enable them to progress to further learning and/or a job. Young people under the Extended Guarantee can also participate in E2E. Older young people can be admitted at local LSC discretion, provided the young person is not eligible for New Deal and their programme of learning can be completed by their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- 6.22 Because E2E programmes are targeted at disengaged young people, they are an important factor in the social inclusion agenda. It is increasingly recognised that although the UK's unemployment rate is low, there remains a static proportion of people who are 'economically inactive', usually in areas of multiple deprivation.
- 6.23 For example, Bridging the Gap, a report by the Social Exclusion Unit, has shown that young people who do not achieve in school are often those who also face other factors that disadvantage them, such as poverty, an unstable family background, a history of offending or drug and/or health problems.
- 6.24 These young people are the proper target of E2E programmes, which it is hoped will break the cycle of deprivation and low-skilled, low-paid work.

## Structure and Content of the Programme

- 6.25 This is a suite of documents providing information for stakeholders guidance for providers offering Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes. It comprises:
- E2E Framework – This defines the ethos of E2E and sets out the design principles and learning objectives that need to be adopted. The framework was published in April 2002 and is now available as part of the E2E Prospectus. The Prospectus covers the E2E framework and also contains information on the learning cycle for E2E, approaches to monitoring and evaluation, first steps in establishing and implementing E2E and case study material from the pathfinders as well as emerging exemplars of good practice;



- E2E Entitlement Curriculum – This explains which learning aims are accredited for E2E programmes, and also explains how non-accredited outcomes can be recognised;
- E2E Pre-Apprenticeship Offer – This document explains the Pre-Apprenticeship programmes that were introduced in May 2004 as part of the re-launch of Apprenticeships. Take-up from E2E programmes is expected to be significant;
- E2E Passport. Revised in March 2004 – This is now a mandatory document for all E2E learners. The E2E passport supports the processes of referral, assessment, planning and recording and reviewing learning.

### **Programme Duration**

- 6.26 E2E is not time-bound, but is based on the needs of each individual. It is recognised that there can be no 'quick-fix' for many of the young people who will enter E2E. Some individuals may need relatively short periods of time to prepare for entry to an Apprenticeship, employment, or further vocational learning opportunities. Others with more complex personal and social needs will require much longer periods before they are ready to enter and sustain suitable training and employment.
- 6.27 The LSC does not want to replicate the situation of the Life Skills programme where it was seen, wrongly in many areas, as a fixed length programme.
- 6.28 Management information suggests that the average duration for E2E participants is 22 weeks, although there are isolated examples of participants attending for 52 weeks.
- 6.29 Although this is dependent on the needs of each individual learner, it is envisaged that learners will attend somewhere between 16 and 40 hours per week. It is realised from Life Skills that it is not always easy to manage a situation where different learners are attending different hours. However, to successfully offer a programme, which is responsive to the needs of individuals, careful and flexible coordination is required by providers. Therefore, in exceptional circumstances, attendance for 8-16 hours may be agreed by the local LSC.

## Referral

6.30 Staff from local Connexions Services will advise young people about E2E opportunities within their local area as part of normal careers guidance activities during years 10 and 11 and as they make their post-16 choices. Connexions staff play a major role in referring young people to E2E although young people can be referred informally from other agencies such as social services or youth offending teams. Work-based learning providers can also identify young people who may benefit from E2E learning programmes.

## Contracting Models

6.31 There are two main contracting models, which have developed to manage the delivery, design and development of E2E in the 47 Local LSC areas:

- direct delivery (model 1) – this is where a Local LSC contracts directly with E2E providers to deliver most of the curriculum offer;
- subcontract (model 2) – where the Local LSC contracts with one or more lead providers who then contract with other providers to deliver most elements of the programme.

6.32 Operational guidance about contracting principles has been circulated to Local LSCs<sup>28</sup>. The guidance laid down principles for the management of E2E (stressing responsibility for the learner, value for money, quality etc.). It also recommended that Connexions Partnerships should not act as lead providers primarily as this may compromise their main role of providing independent information, advice and guidance.

6.33 Whilst there is a preference for the direct delivery model nationally, it is felt that either model 1 or 2 is acceptable as long as the key principles are adhered to. In some areas where there is a direct delivery model, it appears no different in structure to other areas operating a subcontract model.

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<sup>28</sup> See 'Entry to Employment (E2E) – Internal Contracting Principles – April 2003', LSC NO.

6.34 An important concern is the amount of 'top slicing', especially where there are long contracting chains. This is where organisations take an administration and management charge in return for providing services, if several organisations do this it necessarily diminishes the resources available at the point of delivery. This is felt to occur more in subcontracting models than in direct delivery because there is an additional management and administrative level. However, in some areas (for example, rural areas) direct delivery models can also have long subcontracting chains, especially where delivery is divided up into geographical areas and providers are responsible for particular areas.

### **Needs Identification**

6.35 There is an intensive period of initial assessment within E2E in order to identify clearly the learning and support needs of each young person. This might last between two and eight weeks depending on the needs of the individual learner.

6.36 The arrangements for meeting each young person's learning and support needs are set out in the E2E Passport. Building upon previously identified good practice in the Learning Gateway, it is intended that individual learners have one overall plan, which different partners may contribute to and not a multitude of plans, which make it difficult for the young person to manage.

### **Learning Programme Structure**

6.38 All learners will undertake learning in three interdependent core areas:

- Basic and Key Skills;
- vocational development;
- personal and social development.

6.39 The extent of learning required within each will be dictated by the learner's needs and introduced at the appropriate point. For example learners with complex emotional and social needs may not be ready to undertake vocational learning until these needs have begun to be addressed.

- 6.40 Each core area is supported by a range of learning options supported by schemes of work at different levels from which the learner is able to select appropriate options.
- 6.41 Learning takes place in a range of settings, which stimulate learners to learn. Consideration is given to learners' preferred learning styles and interests in order that creative learning solutions can be developed. Learning takes places in a range of in-door and out-door settings using a range of different methods. This includes class room type activities, one-to-one coaching, group activities, discussions, projects presentations from speakers, on-line e-learning, open learning, work placements and experience, external visits, outward bound activities, volunteering etc.
- 6.42 Ideally, all young people will, wherever possible, work towards some form of qualification, recognising the fact that acquiring a qualification can be a powerful motivator to continue learning for many young people. However, within E2E there is flexibility in the range of qualifications which learners can acquire. Some may be ready to undertake qualifications from the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), whereas for others it may be more appropriate for them to undertake short courses, which lead to appropriate certification such as first aid courses, CLAIT, ECDL, or the City and Guilds Profile of Achievement.
- 6.43 As within the Learning Gateway local support agencies play a very valuable role in the provision of a holistic service for young people. Some may simultaneously be working with a young person engaged on E2E and will want to be made aware of the support being provided and vice versa. In other instances, providers may want to refer young people to local support agencies to deal with issues such as drug or alcohol dependency, sexual health issues, child abuse etc.
- 6.44 In the main, those providers that previously offered Life Skills, Preparatory Training and NVQ Learning at Level 1 have formed the basis of provision for E2E. The report of the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee highlighted the key role of specialist providers in developing and delivering E2E and the voluntary and community sector have been heavily involved in development and refinement work across E2E.

## **Expected Progress and Outcomes**

- 6.45 The aim is for young people to develop their motivation and confidence, personal effectiveness, Basic and/or Key Skills and acquire vocational knowledge, skills and understanding through sampling a range of work and learning contexts.
- 6.46 There is no requirement for all aspects of the E2E 'curriculum' to be accredited or involve specific types of assessment. Some of the most valuable learning outcomes can be gained through learning experiences in non-formal educational settings, such as youth work, the Millennium Volunteer programme or through ventures such as the Prince's Trust or Youthtrain. The E2E entitlement curriculum emphasises the need for fit-for-purpose programmes balanced with the opportunity to work towards national standards where appropriate and when the learner is ready.
- 6.47 The LSC has made it clear that E2E provision is not qualification-driven. Although it specifies accredited outcomes, the E2E entitlement curriculum recognises that the needs of a significant number of E2E learners may not be met through approved qualifications.
- 6.48 The Entry to Employment (E2E) initiative is one of several that support the Government's targets for participation in education, training and employment by young people aged 16 to 18 in England. For example:
- by 2010, 90 per cent of young people, by the age of 22, to have participated in full-time education or training leading to higher education or skilled employment;
  - by 2003/04, 175,000 young people to start Apprenticeships;
  - by 2004/05, 28 per cent of young people to have started an Apprenticeship.

## **Actual Progress and Outcomes**

- 6.49 There were approximately 50,000 young people engaged in the E2E programme by December 2003 and this figure has increased to 60,087 by December 2004.

6.50 One measure of success is to identify the proportion of E2E participants that have progressed to a work-based learning, FE or employment outcome.

- by December 2003, the proportion of E2E participants that had progressed to an employment outcome was 16%. This proportion had increased to 23% by December 2004;
- the percentage of participants that have returned to Further Education has risen from 10% in December 2003 to 15% in December 2004;
- the proportion of participants engaging in work-based learning has more than doubled from 5% in December 2004 to 11% in December 2004.

### **Issues with Delivery – Successes and Areas for Development**

6.51 The successes, key issues, strengths and recommendations are taken from the final report on the **Evaluation of the Initial Phase of the National Establishment of E2E** undertaken by GHK Consulting and published in May 2004.

#### **Successes**

6.52 The main success of E2E is that it is generally viewed as an innovative, flexible programme meeting the needs of a challenging cohort of young people. It has also been developed in a relatively short period of time against a backdrop of organisational restructuring.

#### **Current key issues**

6.53 Despite the problems being experienced by key partners (especially Local LSCs and Connexions), and the relatively short timescale to deliver a more complex, larger and comprehensive programme, there are only a few areas where stakeholders had concerns over E2E:

- **basic and key skills** provision which is generally perceived to be a concern in learning generally and is the subject of other national initiatives e.g. the Skills for Life Quality Initiative;

- nature of the **E2E cohort** with some providers 'taking all-comers' which differs from the view taken at a national level and by Local LSC programme managers. One local E2E co-ordinator estimated that inappropriate referrals constituted about 15% of all referrals (most of whom were denied entry to the programme). This may suggest that the guidance on the appropriate cohort for E2E is either not getting through or is being ignored by some agencies. An important reason could be the lack of alternative provision for some groups of young people and so there is an imperative to accommodate them within E2E;
- allied to issues associated with the E2E cohort and lack of alternative provision, there is an associated impact on the numbers participating with E2E. This can affect **the nature of the programme** (some respondents mentioned that having too wide a range of learners on E2E discourages other learners for whom E2E is appropriate);
- the role of **Connexions** was also raised, though probably not as frequently as during the Pathfinder stage. This is in part due to the fact that local partnerships are working and that partners are able to raise and discuss issues;
- a key issue appears to be the **variation** in experiences of national and local respondents, which suggests that there are large differences in the quality of provision. One local co-ordinator said that positive progression rates in their area ranged from 20% to 60% amongst individual providers. This may be due to 'teething problems' or may imply that greater resources are needed to support providers and other agencies. Another reason for this variation in delivery may be due to the fact that the provider pool is not that great. Some respondents said that smaller providers were put off delivering E2E because of its complexity (the analysis of the ILR undertaken during the Pathfinder evaluation found that VCS organisations were less likely to deliver E2E than other Level 1 programmes). This was especially an issue in rural areas.

### Current key strengths

6.54 The key strengths identified by national and local stakeholders include:

- developing **flexible and innovative programmes**, which met the needs of a challenging group of learners;

- participation, retention and **achievement rates** were also perceived to have improved;
- the breadth of **partnerships**, especially the range of organisations involved in the delivery of E2E;
- there is a feeling that E2E was **adequately resourced** and better resourced than its predecessors, although it attracted larger numbers of learners with more learning and support needs;
- **personal, social skills development and learner support** was viewed as a key strength of previous programmes but was better structured and more innovative under E2E.

6.55 National partners were also satisfied with referral and recruitment mechanisms, and vocational skills. Local partners were pleased with the operational management of the programme and accreditation. The type of contracting model employed at the local level was felt to be effective irrespective of which type (Model 1 or 2) was deployed.

### Recommendations

6.56 The organisation commissioned to evaluate E2E, GHK Consulting, identified some areas which require further development:

- the variation in delivery needs to be more closely monitored through regular MI reports in order to identify areas of strength and areas for development. At the moment there is only anecdotal evidence about which areas are performing better than others;
- there is a need to develop mechanisms for identifying the performance of key partners in E2E, especially Connexions, because they impinge so crucially on important aspects of the programme;
- there is also a demand to better identify and disseminate good practice;
- Basic Skills provision also needs to be more closely monitored and supported, as this is the aspect that caused respondents most concern;



- other areas of the learning cycle that received mixed views were initial assessment and reviewing learner progress. Some of the issues are common to both of these elements, such as, the involvement of Connexions PAs, the paperwork, variable quality and linking into learning plans. These areas should be the focus of further support;
- staff development was given much emphasis in the case study areas and there are a range of national initiatives. However, more is still needed as the success of E2E will depend largely on the skills of staff that are working and supporting the learners. Staff are also working with a more complex programme and with a more challenging group of learners than under previous Level 1 provision;
- support for local areas needs to be better targeted. Many of those who attended regional events benefited from them but the events had to cover a lot of ground. Also not all respondents were able to attend these events (e.g. because of travel distances or workloads) so mechanisms need to be developed to meet the support needs of these people. Local partners also felt that LSC NO guidance and other documents need to be differentiated so people could see what was most relevant to them.

## **DEVELOPMENTS FOR ADULTS**

6.57 A central aim of the Skills Strategy set out in the White Paper '21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills', is that unskilled or low skilled adults can get the employability skills they need for sustained and productive employment. The White Paper set out key steps for achieving this challenging objective. The principal ethos is that the developments are not a set of disconnected initiatives. Individuals and employers need to see a coherent package, with a clear offer - not a series of 'bits' they then have to join up for themselves.

6.58 The offer currently being trialed in the North East and South east of England consists of:

- an entitlement to free tuition for a first full Level 2 qualification;
- Adult Learning Grant – for adults on low incomes studying full time for a first full Level 2, and for young adults on low incomes aged 19-30 studying full time for a first full Level 3;
- in many areas, help for improving skills at work – through Employer Training Pilots; and

- free Information and advice, covering the courses and qualifications within the entitlement.

6.59 The new Apprenticeships structure comprises of:

- Young Apprenticeships for 14-16 year olds;
- Pre-Apprenticeships – based on the Entry to Employment programme (up to level 1);
- Apprenticeships (at level 2);
- Advanced Apprenticeships (at level 3);
- Apprenticeships for adults – lifting the age limit of 25.

## 7 KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 This section presents the key issues arising from the evaluation of the Skill Build programmes and presents recommendations for its development.

### Key Issues

#### Young People

- 7.2 Skillbuild youth aims to provide learners with the skills and abilities to progress on to further learning opportunities, and progress in the workplace. Where provision is tailored to the individual's needs, provides them with relevant qualifications and work placements, it is successful, and a proportion of learners do move onto further learning opportunities. The learners survey illustrated that of those interviewed, satisfaction levels with providers and outcomes from the programme were high.
- 7.3 However, the survey also illustrated that in many cases, the learners' expectations of what they would get out of the programme, were not matching its primary aim - progression into higher levels of learning. Over 40% of all learners thought that the programme would lead to a job, but only 14% thought it would lead them to further learning. As such, the indication is that a significant proportion of learners are undertaking the programme as a stop gap to employment.
- 7.4 The explanation for this lies in the existence of the Guarantee, and, in the absence of any other available appropriate provision, it appears that a proportion of learners are undertaking Skillbuild youth, without significant benefit to them – at least for the longer term. The survey indicated that many learners move into employment from the programme (around one in three) and the programme is likely to have supported this transition. However, it is likely that this employment is low skilled, low paid employment.

- 7.5 The guidance for Skillbuild youth indicates that the programme is aimed at those who are vocationally unfocussed, and require support to be able to access mainstream education. However, a number of young people are referred to the programme who have more complex needs than the programme guidance provides for, but for whom no other training provision is available, including young offenders, care leavers etc.
- 7.6 In addition to this, a range of issues were identified with the management and operation of the programme, with the result that the needs of some learners – often those most in need of support - are not met. As the programme is intended to be aimed at the most disadvantaged, this is a significant issue.

#### Adults

- 7.7 For adults undertaking the programme, the issues are more strategic in nature, and relate to how the programme fits with other provision for the unemployed. Concerns were raised about how Jobcentre Plus can effectively keep up to date with how providers are delivering the programme, and their role in quality assuring the provision they refer clients to. Despite this, most learners indicated that they were benefiting from involvement in the programmes and progressing onto employment.
- 7.8 **Table 7.1** highlights the issues with the management and operation of the programme, which were reported as impacting on its successful delivery. Many of the issues reported are of relevance to both adults and young people, although it was identified that in many instances, the concern was most relevant to adults. These apply to both the entry level and level one programme.
- 7.9 The report has highlighted that in many cases, the fundamental question is not, “how effective is the programme at meeting its aims and objectives?” but to “what extent do the aims of the programme meet learner needs?” In many instances, it has been illustrated that it is the aims and structure of the programme that are the key problem. The programme lays emphasis on ‘vocational focus’ however, for many young people, this is too narrow to be effective.

7.10 As such, the recommendations which follow represent a fundamental shift in the aims, objectives and approach to delivering the programme. The recommendations are structured in terms of:

- Strategic approach and national management;
- Programme design;
- Operational management and delivery

7.11 It is recognised that many of these will incur additional costs; however, the scale of these cannot be anticipated at this point. The recommendations made here apply to both Skill Build and Skill Build+, for both young people and adults, and take into account the changes made in August 2004 which changed the programme to be available to all ages.

**Table 7.1  
Skill Build - Issues**

Theme	Which Programme	Issues	Outcome
<b>Strategic</b>			
Awareness	Young people Skill Build and Skill Build+	Learners are not generally aware of the programme prior to Careers Wales interview	The programme is often not 'chosen' by learners – needs to be recognised as a valid option in Yrs. 10/11
Eligibility criteria	Young people Skill Build and Skill Build+	Have been expanded over recent years	Careers Wales and providers identified that the eligibility criteria were now relatively meaningless – anyone NEET 16-18 year old can be referred
Endorsement process	Young people and adults. Skill Build and Skill Build+	Only allows referral from Careers Wales /Jobcentre Plus. The endorsement not sufficiently rigorous for some learners	Referral of learners and the relevant information can be slowed down by bureaucracy. Providers don't have sufficient information to determine appropriate programme for the learner.
	Adults Skill Build and Skill Build+	Conflict between ultimate goals of Jobcentre Plus and ELWa	Confusion around eligibility for endorsement to adult programmes
Availability of appropriate provision	Young people and adults Skill Build and Skill Build+	Provision does not always meet the needs of the learners (i.e. rural areas / vocational) and / or there may not be any alternative to the programme	Learners are not provided with appropriate vocational placements, have to travel too far for a programme. Learners referred to the programme that should be on higher / lower levels
Funding	Young People and adults Skill Build and Skill Build+	Outcome focused	Providers incentivised to deliver outcome based programme. No recognition of development of soft outcomes
Quality	Young People and adults Skill Build and Skill Build+	Providers not encouraged to share good practice, ELWa have little direct influence over providers. Lack of guidance at national level	Variations in quality in delivery. Providers not encouraged to share good practice

**Table 7.1  
Skill Build - Issues**

Theme	Which Programme	Issues	Outcome
<b>Operational</b>			
Endorsement process	Young People and adults Skill Build and Skill Build+	Variations in quality of information / speed in which transferred	Providers lack appropriate information
Delivery	Young People and adults Skill Build and Skill Build+	Flexibility leads to variations in quality, and providers often introduce own structure – so learner does not benefit from flexibility.	Learners needs not met – choice is restricted to the main options delivered by the provider / placements. Limited focus on the development of soft outcomes for any extended period of time
	Young People Skill Build and Skill Build+	Engagement of employers – difficult in rural areas, and for SMEs	Learners don't always experience relevant, good quality placements
	Young People and adults Skill Build and Skill Build+	Time bound	Programme is often structured to last 13 weeks - too long for some, not enough for others
	Young People and adults Skill Build and Skill Build+	Little strategic partner engagement	Providers try to meet learner needs but can't for the long term
	Young People and adults Skill Build and Skill Build+	Staff training	Variations in staff abilities, not always equipped with necessary skills for client group
Progression	Young People and adults Skill Build and Skill Build+	Not sufficiently monitored	Little understanding of progress. Too many 're-starts'. Availability of options

## Recommendations

### Strategic approach and national management

- 7.12 **R1** – The programme requires **refocusing in order that providers can truly deliver flexible programmes**, tailored to the needs of learners, which value the development of soft skills through a range of learning activities, which are more than classroom or work based. The focus on qualification outcomes does not always benefit the learner, and whilst they should remain an integral part of the programme<sup>29</sup>, should not inhibit the learning experience.
- 7.13 **R2** - From a strategic perspective, there is a need to **refine the aims and objectives of the programme**, bearing in mind the range of learners the programme is currently delivered to. The current programme lays emphasis on the need to develop vocational focus or level one skills. However, this does not recognise the needs of a significant proportion of learners. Whilst this may be the ultimate aim, it should not restrict the scope of skills that can be developed under the programme.
- 7.14 **R3** - **From a national perspective, there is a requirement for a stronger level of direction** in the development and management of the programme. A greater level of partnership working is required to ensure the needs of all client groups are met. The development of a two tier structure, headed up by a Programme Board of national stakeholders (comprised of partners such as Careers Wales, YOTs, Jobcentre Plus) would secure stronger commitment to the programme and improvements in partnership working. An Advisory Group comprised of providers and other operational staff could report to the Programme Board, ensuring the programme was developed in response to learners' needs.

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<sup>29</sup> Whilst qualifications should be available from the NQF, other should also be considered.



7.15 **R4** - Additionally at national level, consideration should be given to the **initiatives aimed at the development and sharing of good practice** to ensure providers are working towards common goals and aims. Calls have been made for the introduction of professional development initiatives, and the development of schemes of work to support programme delivery would allow greater consistency in quality. Providers should also be recognised for the good practice which has already been developed, and be integral to the process of review and programme development.

#### Programme design

7.16 **R5** - The current programme is split into Skill Build and Skill Build+ with the result that many learners leave the programme before reaching level one. The time-bound nature of the programme means that the programme is too short for some learners, and too long for others. **Consideration should be given to merging the two programmes and removing the time limit**, to allow more seamless progression to the next level. In addition, a greater level of flexibility should be allowed in terms of re-engaging a learner if personal circumstances lead to interruptions in the programme.

7.17 **R6** - To meet this end, **further development of the funding mechanism** is required, to remove the current level of incentive from providers to focus on the delivery of qualifications. It is questionable whether soft outcomes can effectively be measured – for many learners, it is the journey that should be valued. In light of the developments with the National Planning and Funding System, the recommendation is that the funding may be used more effectively if it follows the learner.

7.18 **R7 – Any developments in design should not be undertaken as a stand alone activity.** The development of any future programme should consider the development of Apprenticeships and have clear links and progression routes into them. Equally, Apprenticeships should clearly develop the skills built in feeder programmes, recognising and addressing the gaps that they remain.

7.19 **R8** - A **review of the eligibility criteria** is also required, with due consideration given to the range of alternatives available for 16-18 year olds. The developments in 14-19 education, in particular Apprenticeships, should be the context for this review.

- 7.20 **R9** - Consideration should be given to a **longer period of assessment**, depending on the scale of a learner's needs, to determine how the learning programme should develop. This should then be agreed with the appropriate agencies before being implemented.

#### Operational management and delivery

- 7.21 The current programme is intended to be flexible in terms of tailoring a programme to learners' needs. Whilst this is possible, in many instances, flexibility means selection from a fairly limited range of qualifications, short programmes and placements, within a time bound period.
- 7.22 **R10** - Consideration should be given to the **development of provider networks** in areas where there are issues meeting the full range of learner needs. However, the approach to this should be focused on the learner, rather than the provider's needs.
- 7.23 **R11** - To ensure the experience is maximised, a **greater level of partnership working** should be developed, to be able to efficiently expand the range of activities that can be undertaken in a programme. Delivery should be broadened to include the voluntary and community sector, particularly in Communities First wards where partnerships are already established. In addition, providers should be encouraged to forge strategic links with local support agencies to support with more complex issues.
- 7.24 **R12** – The **role of employers should remain a fundamental part of the programme**. However, how providers can be supported to develop the appropriate mix of placements requires review. Flexibility may be required in the funding to be able to negotiate with employers, if a long term outcome for the learner can be secured.



**ANNEX A  
OTHER INFLUENCING POLICY  
DEVELOPMENTS**

## Other Influencing Policy Developments<sup>30</sup>

This Section considers the wider policy context in Wales, and the key changes that are likely to exert an influence on the development of the Skill Build and Skill Build+. A number of specific areas of future policy change should be considered. These are as follows:

- Modern Apprenticeship Reform;
- ELWa Merger with the Welsh Assembly Government;
- Wales – a Better Country;
- 14-19 Learning Pathways;
- National Planning and Funding Framework for Post-16 Learning;
- Credit & Qualifications Framework for Wales.

### Modern Apprenticeship Reform

The Apprenticeship system in England and Wales is being reformed. The key elements are:

- the introduction of a 'Young Apprenticeships' scheme for 14-16 year olds, providing high quality opportunities for motivated pupils in the workplace learning a trade;
- a 'Pre-Apprenticeship' offer, based around the 'Entry to Employment' programme for young people that have potential but are not yet ready or able to enter an Apprenticeship or maybe currently disengaged from learning;
- 'Apprenticeships' at level 2 (replacing the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship);
- 'Advanced Apprenticeships' (equal to 2 good A Levels or Level 3 qualification and replacing the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship); and
- opening up of 'Apprenticeships' to adults by scrapping the arbitrary 25 year old age limit.

### ELWa Merger with the Welsh Assembly Government

As part of a longer term corporate strategy by the Welsh Assembly Government, ELWa's responsibilities for planning and funding post-16 learning will transfer to the Assembly Government. There is also a process of reorganisation of the ELWa staffing structure to reflect a greater focus on working with communities, businesses, colleges and schools. This will create efficiency cost savings in the longer term of 15%. The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, Jane

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<sup>30</sup> A Programme Evaluation Framework for Work Based Learning: Key Issues Paper, Ecotec

Davidson, intends to ensure a continuity of the work carried out by ELWa. She describes this continuity as:

*“recognition of the strategic importance of the work being undertaken by ELWa.”*

Specific initiatives to achieve this continuity include:

- The new Planning and Funding Framework;
- Collaboration and innovation;
- A Quality Framework;
- Workforce Development; and
- The Credit and Qualifications Framework.

### **‘Wales – a Better Country’**

The ‘*Wales – a Better Country*’ Strategy sets out the Welsh Assembly Government’s strategic agenda for the four-year term (2003 – 2007). It includes four priority outcomes:

- Helping more people into jobs – ELWa’s role is regarded as ‘an important contribution’;
- Improving health – no role for ELWa is specified;
- Developing strong and safe communities – ELWa’s role is ‘supporting’; and
- Creating better jobs and skills – ELWa has the ‘lead role’.

The implication of this is that education and learning is to be anchored more clearly to “the new public services agenda, which focuses on services that are developed co-operatively, and reflect the different needs of communities across Wales.”

### **14-19 Learning Pathways**

The Assembly’s *14-19 Learning Pathways* is a further key strategy which aims to “*enhance and extend the learning experiences of all young people, and prepare them for the world of work.*” This includes a range of measures such as the enhancement of work related and vocational experience, gaining the support of employers and SSCs for WBL, extra targeted support for disadvantaged groups, and Extending Entitlement – a ‘14-19 Learning Core’ of Key Skills, Basic Skills and Welsh language skills.

### **National Planning and Funding Framework for Post-16 Learning (Wales)**

In aiming to raise achievement and increase participation in learning, whilst achieving value for money, ELWa has created a unified framework to integrate planning, commissioning and resourcing of all publicly funded training. The case

for creating this framework had a number of reasons, including: duplication in activities and funding at the provider level; excessive competition; 'inherited' funding quotas, rather than based on projected demand or responsiveness to learner or employer needs and lacked a clear formula basis; post code lottery; lack of choice in specific subjects and Welsh language options; and a lack of parity between academic and vocational routes. Key elements to the Framework are:

- an integrated model of provision to encourage collaboration between providers, including four pilot geographical pathfinders, four sectoral pathfinders and a new Common Investment Fund to help facilitate collaboration;
- a new quality framework;
- a review of key areas of provision to improve responsiveness, including a review of Services to Business, a Workplace Learning Review and a review of ACL;
- the regional and local agenda;
- new funding model including: Learning provision; Learning Network Investment;
- learner commissioned provision; and support for learners. This will also involve the
- introduction of a new series of Credit Equivalence Units (CEUs) as currency for the
- 'Learning provision' stream. Although there is a transitional 'dual funding period', ultimately there are plans to move towards a 'level playing field' for all post-16 provision. The key challenge is how to achieve this i.e. harmonised rate for the same type of learning and without destabilising existing networks and opportunities.

### **Credit & Qualifications Framework for Wales**

A three-year implementation plan has been set in place for CQFW, as part of a joint arrangement with England. There are four frameworks to be covered including:

- Framework for Higher Education;
- National Qualifications Framework;
- External – Non-accredited learning; and
- Welsh Assembly Government Initiatives.

**ANNEX B**  
**RESEARCH METHOD AND TOPIC GUIDES**



## **Research Method and Topic Guides**

- Consultations with:
  - Careers Wales
  - Jobcentre Plus
  - Welsh Assembly Government
  - Estyn
  - ELWa national policy staff
  
- Review of Management Information from LLWR, NTD and ELWa website
  
- Telephone survey of 404 learners who Started the programme between 1<sup>st</sup> April 04 and 28<sup>th</sup> February 05, sampled according to:
  - Programme 'type' (Skill Build / Skill Build+)
  - Age
  - Region provider based in
  - Month learner started the programme
  
- Five case studies (one in each region and two in the South East)
  - Visits to four providers (19 visited in total – one late drop out) – interviews with provider management and delivery staff;
  - Focus groups with a total of 64 learners (47 young people and 17 adults);
  - Focus groups with 36 non-participants (36 young people);
  - Telephone interviews with eight employers;
  - Interviews with other stakeholders including Careers Wales Advisors and ELWa regional staff.

**Skill Build / Skill Build+ Review**  
**‘Refine or Refocus’**  
**Topic Guide 1: Learning Provision Managers**

The **aim** of the stakeholder consultations is to:

- map similarities/differences in the supporting infrastructure for the programmes in the 4 regions of Wales (providers, programme profile, gateways etc);
- establish linkages and implications of wider policy such as social inclusion, 14-19, basic skills, workforce development/SEAP;
- establish perspectives on the current Skill Build/Skill Build+ programmes, policy, delivery model, funding and contracting.

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**Process**

1. Call contact to introduce the evaluation/review. Explain that:

YCL are undertaking an evaluation/review of the Skill Build/Skill Build+ programmes. As the first phase of activity, we are consulting with key ELWa/other strategic staff to understand the issues associated with delivering the programmes in each region, and in the context of wider policy issues.

2. Book appointment for in-depth interview (approx 1 hour) before **18<sup>th</sup> March**.
3. Discuss the case study selection for providers. Ask them to review the email I sent to them and then confirm which providers they think it would be useful to visit by **5<sup>th</sup> March** (bearing in mind the selection criteria).

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**Topic Guide 1: Learning Provision Managers**

**Background Information**

1. Establish interviewees role in relation to Skill Build / Skill Build+.
  - What is their relationship with regard to Careers Wales / JC+ / support and monitoring of providers? Probe for details of how Skill Build providers are contracted. What do they have to be able to demonstrate / offer to be able to deliver Skill Build/Skill Build+. Why do some providers concentrate on youth element? What monitoring/support does ELWa provide to providers?

**Regional/Delivery Issues**

2. What is the scale of the Skill Build/Skill Build+ programme in the region?
  - Obtain an impression of the trends of delivery in the region, i.e. number of providers, types of delivery (any particular focus on vocational areas), accessibility of delivery, quality of providers, numbers of learners (nt- all this is approximate – explain that we are undertaking an assessment of MI but this is to gain their perceptions of delivery).
3. What are the issues with the structure of delivery of Skill Build/Skill Build+ in the region?

- Any issues associated around competition between providers, lack of range of providers, rurality / location of providers, availability of other programmes.
4. What is involved in the assessment process undertaken by Careers Wales/Job Centre Plus. How does “Youth Gateway” fit with this?
    - What is involved in the endorsement process and how are learners’ needs assessed. How does this vary for Skill Build/Skill Build+. What are the other options available to a learner on a regional/local basis if Skill Build isn’t suitable. How is the information used to ‘match’ learners with a provider? Why do variances in the assessment process vary? What impact does this have on the provider/learner? How does the ‘Guarantee’ impact on uptake of the programme?
  5. How does the programme fit with availability and delivery of other WBL programmes in the region; i.e. FMAs, MAs and availability of these in the region?
    - Is delivery affected by issues associated with the funding or availability of other programmes? I.e. are employers more likely to take learners from other programmes as a result of funding implications?

### **Policy Implications**

6. What are the interviewees perspectives on the how the funding / contracting arrangements impact on the delivery of Skill Build/Skill Build+?
  - What impact does the structure of funding have on the success of Skill Build (13 weeks), Skill Build+ (no time limit)? How are ‘outcomes’ recognised/paid for?
7. What are the linkages and implications of Skill Build/Skill Build+ in terms of the wider policy such as social inclusion, the 14-19 learning pathways agenda, basic skills, workforce development/Skills and Education Action Plan?
  - How does Skill Build fit within the 14-19 learning pathways agenda? To what extent is Skill Build recognised within the Basic Skills Strategy? How does it fit with the wider issues associated with workforce development for all ages?
8. What are interviewees expectations of the future programme and recommendations for developing Skill Build/Skill Build+?
  - What are the key issues which require review to improve the outcomes? Who does the programme work for? Who does it not work for? How can learners’ needs be more effectively met? How can outcomes be more effectively recognised and developed? Is there a need to redesign the programme to meet the needs of the most vulnerable/disadvantaged? What are the implications for funding this?
9. Are you aware of other programmes that are similar to Skill Build aimed at the same client group but supported by other funding (e.g. European) that could help inform policy development? How are they similar/different and what are the key successes factors of these?

**Skill Build / Skill Build+ Review**  
**‘Refine or Refocus’**  
**Topic Guide 2: Other ELWa Stakeholders**

The **aim** of the stakeholder consultations is to:

- 8 map similarities/differences in the supporting infrastructure for the programmes in the 4 regions of Wales (providers, programme profile, gateways etc);
- 9 establish linkages and implications of wider policy such as social inclusion, 14-19, basic skills, workforce development/SEAP;
- 10 establish perspectives on the current Skill Build/Skill Build+ programmes, policy, delivery model, funding and contracting.

1. Call contact to introduce the evaluation/review. Explain that:

YCL are undertaking an evaluation/review of the Skill Build/Skill Build+ programmes. As the first phase of activity, we are consulting with key ELWa/other strategic staff to understand the issues associated with delivering the programmes in each region, and in the context of wider policy issues.

2. Book appointment for in-depth interview (approx 1 hour) before **18<sup>th</sup> March**.

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### **Background Information**

3. Establish interviewees role in relation to Skill Build / Skill Build+.
  - What is their role with regard to Skill Build/ Skill Build+? How does Skill Build/Skill Build+ fit within their remit?

### **Policy Implications**

4. What are the interviewees perspectives on the how the funding / contracting arrangements impact on the delivery of Skill Build/Skill Build+? (not applicable to all)
  - What impact does the structure of funding have on the success of Skill Build (13 weeks), Skill Build+ (no time limit)? How are ‘outcomes’ recognised/paid for?
5. What are the linkages and implications of Skill Build/Skill Build+ in terms of the wider policy such as social inclusion, the 14-19 learning pathways agenda, basic skills, workforce development/Skills and Education Action Plan? (not applicable to all)
  - How does Skill Build fit within the 14-19 learning pathways agenda? To what extent is Skill Build recognised within the Basic Skills Strategy? How does it fit with the wider issues associated with workforce development for all ages?
6. What are interviewees expectations of the future programme and recommendations for developing Skill Build/Skill Build+?

- What are the key issues which require review to improve the outcomes? Who does the programme work for? Who does it not work for? How can learners' needs be more effectively met? How can outcomes be more effectively recognised and developed? Is there a need to redesign the programme to meet the needs of the most vulnerable/disadvantaged? What are the implications for funding this?
7. Are you aware of other programmes that are similar to Skill Build aimed at the same client group but supported by other funding (e.g. European) that could help inform policy development? How are they similar/different and what are the key successes factors of these?

**Skill Build / Skill Build+ Review:  
'Refine or Refocus'  
Topic Guide 3: Stakeholder Consultations**

The aim of the stakeholder consultations is to:

- establish linkages and implications of wider policy such as social inclusion, 14-19, basic skills, workforce development/SEAP;
- establish perspectives on the current Skill Build/Skill Build+ programmes, policy, delivery model, funding and contracting.

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**Process**

1. Call contact to introduce the evaluation/review. Explain that:

YCL are undertaking an evaluation/review of the Skill Build/Skill Build+ programmes. As the first phase of activity, we are consulting with key strategic staff in relevant organisations to understand the issues associated with the wider policy context of the Skill Build / Skill Build+ programme.

2. Book appointment for in-depth interview (approx 45mins) before **18<sup>th</sup> March**.

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**Background Information**

3. Establish interviewees role in relation to Skill Build / Skill Build+.
  - How does Skill Build/ Skill Build+ fit within their responsibilities?
4. What do they perceive the key issues to be with the current Skill Build/Skill Build+ programme in terms of appropriateness for the client group?
  - Who should Skill Build be aimed at? What issues impact on the providers' ability to meet the needs of learners? What issues with the structure of the programme prevent a higher number of successful outcomes? (nt-Consider issues associated with referral and assessment, the guarantee, the flexibility and suitability of providers, employment opportunities, additional support etc.)

**For JC+ Only**

5. How does Skill Build/Skill Build+ fit with programmes offered by JC+ for unemployed adults? What other programmes are available for the same client group, and why would an individual be referred to Skill Build?
  - What are the similarities/differences to the two programmes? How is funding / delivery of the programme similar/different to JC+ programmes? How does Skill Build/Skill Build+ for adults compare in terms of successful outcomes to New Deal? Why is this? What are the key structural differences that are better / worse for the client group? How is the programme perceived by JC+ generally?

**For WAG/Estyn Only**

6. What are the linkages and implications of Skill Build/Skill Build+ in terms of the wider policy such as social inclusion, the 14-19 learning pathways agenda, basic skills, workforce development/Skills and Education Action Plan?

- How does Skill Build fit within the 14-19 learning pathways agenda? To what extent is Skill Build recognised within the Basic Skills Strategy? How does it fit with the wider issues associated with workforce development for all ages? How does it fit with the social inclusion agenda?
7. Are you aware of other programmes that are similar to Skill Build aimed at the same client group but supported by other funding (e.g. European) that could help inform policy development? How are they similar/different and what are the key successes factors of these?
8. What are interviewee's expectations of the future programme and recommendations for developing Skill Build/Skill Build+?
- What are the key issues which require review to improve the outcomes? Who does the programme work for? Who does it not work for? How can learners' needs be more effectively met? How can outcomes be more effectively recognised and developed? Is there a need to redesign the programme to meet the needs of the most vulnerable/disadvantaged? What are the implications for funding this?

**Skill Build / Skill Build+ Review**  
**‘Refine or Refocus’**  
**Topic Guide 4: Careers Wales**

The **aim** of the stakeholder consultations is to:

- 11 map similarities/differences in the supporting infrastructure for the programmes in the 4 regions of Wales (providers, programme profile, gateways etc);
- 12 establish linkages and implications of wider policy such as social inclusion, 14-19, basic skills, workforce development/SEAP;
- 13 establish perspectives on the current Skill Build/Skill Build+ programmes, policy, delivery model, funding and contracting.

1. Call contact to introduce the evaluation/review. Explain that:

YCL are undertaking an evaluation/review of the Skill Build/Skill Build+ programmes. As the first phase of activity, we are consulting with key ELWa/other strategic staff to understand the issues associated with delivering the programmes in each region, and in the context of wider policy issues.

2. Book appointment for telephone interview (approx 0.5 hour) before **18<sup>th</sup> March**.

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### **Background Information**

3. Establish Careers Wales role in relation to Skill Build / Skill Build+.
  - What is their role with regard to Skill Build/ Skill Build+? How does Skill Build/Skill Build+ fit within their remit?
4. Obtain feedback on the referral and assessment process?
  - What is involved in the assessment process? What would they be looking for if referring to Skill Build / Skill Build+? What other options do they have if Skill Build is not appropriate for the young person? What are the key issues associated with the referral and assessment process? How are young people dealt with when they have been through the Skill Build/ Skill Build+ programme one or more times, but have not progressed to further training or employment?
5. What key issues impact on the young people achieving successful outcomes from the programme? How could they be better addressed?
  - Why does the Skill Build / Skill Build+ programme not result in a higher proportion of successful outcomes? How do Careers Wales view the quality of provision in their area? What issues are reported to them by young people with delivery? How could the programme be shaped differently to more closely meet the needs of young people?

### **Policy Implications**

6. What are the interviewees perspectives on the how the funding / contracting arrangements impact on the delivery of Skill Build/Skill Build+?
  - What impact does the structure of funding have on the success of Skill Build (13 weeks), Skill Build+ (no time limit)? How are ‘outcomes’ recognised/paid for?



7. What are the linkages and implications of Skill Build/Skill Build+ in terms of the wider policy such as social inclusion, the 14-19 learning pathways agenda, basic skills, workforce development/Skills and Education Action Plan?
  - How does Skill Build fit within the 14-19 learning pathways agenda? To what extent is Skill Build recognised within the Basic Skills Strategy? How does it fit with the wider issues associated with workforce development for all ages?
8. What are interviewees expectations of the future programme and recommendations for developing Skill Build/Skill Build+?
  - What are the key issues which require review to improve the outcomes? Who does the programme work for? Who does it not work for? How can learners' needs be more effectively met? How can outcomes be more effectively recognised and developed? Is there a need to redesign the programme to meet the needs of the most vulnerable/disadvantaged? What are the implications for funding this?
9. Is interviewee aware of other programmes that are similar to Skill Build aimed at the same client group but supported by other funding (e.g. European) that could help inform policy development? How are they similar/different and what are the key successes factors of these?

**Skill Build / Skill Build+ Review**  
**‘Refine or Refocus’**  
**Topic Guide 4: Careers Wales**

The **aim** of the stakeholder consultations is to:

- 14 map similarities/differences in the supporting infrastructure for the programmes in the 4 regions of Wales (providers, programme profile, gateways etc);
- 15 establish linkages and implications of wider policy such as social inclusion, 14-19, basic skills, workforce development/SEAP;
- 16 establish perspectives on the current Skill Build/Skill Build+ programmes, policy, delivery model, funding and contracting.

1. Call contact to introduce the evaluation/review. Explain that:

YCL are undertaking an evaluation/review of the Skill Build/Skill Build+ programmes. As the first phase of activity, we are consulting with key ELWa/other strategic staff to understand the issues associated with delivering the programmes in each region, and in the context of wider policy issues.

2. Book appointment for telephone interview (approx 0.5 hour) before **18<sup>th</sup> March**.

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## **Focus Group Topic Guide: Skill Build Learners** **20-30 minutes**

**Aim:** to understand learners' experiences of Skill Build. Why are they on the programme? What do they feel about the process and experiences they gain? What outcomes do they expect to achieve? What is good about the programme? Why? What's bad about the programme? Why?

**Introduction:** Hello, my name is xxxx from York Consulting and I've been asked to come here today to find out your views on the Skill Build programme, (or you might know it as prep training / NVQ1 / skills learning). The people that fund the programme are thinking about making some changes to how its run and we'd like to get your feedback on your experiences.

I'm going to ask you some questions in a minute and I'd like you to be totally honest in your answers? But I'm going to start by asking you to think about a few very straight forward questions.

I'll just hand out a piece of paper which has 6 questions on, and I'd like you to consider each of these, and mark on the scale whether your answer is yes, no or somewhere in between.

### **The questions are:**

- Did you want to do prep training?
- Do you enjoy prep training?
- How far does your learning programme meet your needs?
- Do you think you will move onto other training after prep?
- Do you think you will move onto a job after prep?
- Would you recommend prep to your friends?

Firstly, can I ask, do you all know each other? Can I ask you to introduce yourself to me and just say a little bit about how long you've been on the programme and why you're on it.

Allow time for introductions

Ask as a group to discuss their answers on the sheets.

Develop into group discussion.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Was (prep training / NVQ1) something you wanted to do? What did you know about it before you started? Is this the first time you've been on the programme? What did you expect to get out of it? How long did you have to wait to get on a programme?
2. Can you explain what you thought about the assessment process:
  - a. with Careers Wales/JC+ (if applicable)
  - b. with provider
3. Was it worthwhile? Have you done this type of thing before?
4. Were you involved in drawing up your learning plan? How? What sorts of things did you want to do? Was the provider able to meet the things that you wanted to do?
5. What sorts of things have you done whilst you've been on the programme? (Prompt have you done work placements / basic skills courses / motivational training) Have you worked with people from different organisations? Who? How worthwhile do you think each of these activities have been?
6. What skills do you think you've got out of doing (prep/NVQ1) training? Do you think you're ready to progress onto further training / job? Do you want to progress onto further training / job?
7. What's the best / worst thing about the programme?
8. Where do you think you'll go from here?
9. Would you recommend it to your friends? Why?

## **Focus Group Topic Guide: Skill Build Learners** **20-30 minutes**

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**Introduction:** Hello, my name is xxxx from York Consulting and I've been asked to come here today to find out your views on the Skill Build programme, (or you might know it as prep training / NVQ1 / skills learning). The people that fund the programme are thinking about making some changes to how its run and we'd like to get your feedback on your experiences.

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I'll just hand out a piece of paper which has 6 questions on, and I'd like you to consider each of these, and mark on the scale whether your answer is yes, no or somewhere in between.

### **The questions are:**

- Did you want to do prep training?
- Do you enjoy prep training?
- How far does your learning programme meet your needs?
- Do you think you will move onto other training after prep?
- Do you think you will move onto a job after prep?
- Would you recommend prep to your friends?

Firstly, can I ask, do you all know each other? Can I ask you to introduce yourself to me and just say a little bit about how long you've been on the programme and why you're on it.

Allow time for introductions

Ask as a group to discuss their answers on the sheets.

Develop into group discussion.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Was (prep training / NVQ1) something you wanted to do? What did you know about it before you started? Is this the first time you've been on the programme? What did you expect to get out of it? How long did you have to wait to get on a programme?
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6. What skills do you think you've got out of doing (prep/NVQ1) training? Do you think you're ready to progress onto further training / job? Do you want to progress onto further training / job?
7. What's the best / worst thing about the programme?
8. Where do you think you'll go from here?
9. Would you recommend it to your friends? Why?

**Employer Topic Guide**  
**30 minute face to face/telephone interview**

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**Aim:** to understand employers perception of the Skill Build programme, and how it fits with other work based learning programmes / New Deal.

1. Do you currently support providers with the delivery of Skill Build / prep training? How many providers do you work with? What sorts of work placements / tasters etc. do you offer?
2. What is your motivation for providing placements to young people on this programme? How does it fit with other training programmes you support for young people, i.e. FMAs / MAs. How does it fit with developing the skills you need for your business? What are these?
3. What benefit do the young people get from their placements with you? How do you benefit? What skills do they learn?
4. How effective are providers at managing their relationship with you and ensuring that each others needs are met?
5. How successful do you think the programme is at enabling young people to develop their skills to become 'work ready' or vocationally focused? Do many of the young people progress onto employment with you? Why? Why not?
6. What are the financial implications of supporting Skill Build learners? How does this compliment / conflict with other programmes (i.e. FMAs / MAs / New Deal etc.)
7. What is your overall view of the Skill Build programme? How would you like to see it change in the future? How could providers get more employers to become involved with providing placements for the programmes?