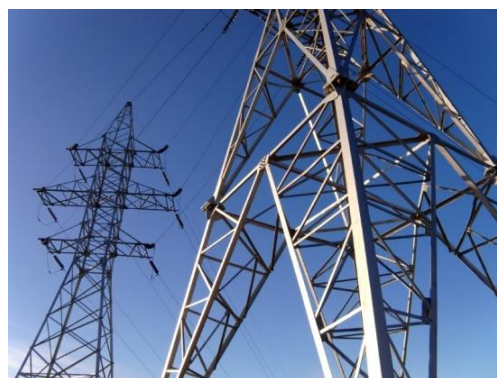


West London Working

West London Working Evaluation

Building Employability Pathways



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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 West London Working (WLW) is one of 15 City Strategy Pathfinders launched by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in April 2007. Building Employability Pathways was one of thirteen work packages undertaken by WLW.
- 1.2 Building Employability Pathways' objectives were to:
 - Build on and expand current work with large learning providers on employability pathways
 - Develop and integrate clear employment routeways for all learners on vocational courses
 - Join up providers to create cohesive progression for learners into employment
- 1.3 The primary set of activities centred on a pilot called Pathways for Parents that operated in West London Further Education Colleges and Adult Education Institutes (Large Learning Providers – LLPs). The LLPs undertook a range of activities to embed employability pathways for parent learners. These activities were identified through targeting gaps in the LLPs' existing employability offer with support from Cambridge Policy Consultants (CPC). The activities included: one to one sessions with learners, employability workshops, training for staff on employability issues, and making connections between the LLPs and job brokerage and employability providers. Unlike previous attempts at integration of employment and skills in LLPs, the Pathways for Parents pilot sought to build upon existing activity and strengthen referral pathways between LLPs and providers of job brokerage and employability services.
- 1.4 In addition, a series of workshops for 18-24 year old college leavers called 'Playing to Win' were being delivered at the time of writing. These workshops focused on interview skills and understanding what employers are looking for.
- 1.5 Targets were set for employment and qualification outcomes, as well as for referrals to providers of employability support. Job outcomes were disappointing despite the fact that they were almost certainly under-reported due to the LLP's difficulty in tracking the destinations of their learners. However, outward referrals over-achieved their targets and in more generally embedding and building upon good practice, the work package has achieved what it set out to do. While not all of the activities that LLPs undertook will be sustainable in a context of funding reductions, Building Employability Pathways funding did act as a catalyst for action, some of which was low cost and readily integrated into work that the LLPs already do.
- 1.6 The work package's key strength was this role as a catalyst for further action. This meant that work funded through Building Employability Pathways was less likely than previous initiatives to stand apart from existing college functions and finish when the funding ran out. The number of sustainable activities is testament to this. The work package's key weakness was the lack of engagement from LLPs in the early period and delays to delivery. This meant that the best (and sometimes only) activity by the LLPs happened in a limited amount of time, sometimes in periods when college staff were particularly short of capacity.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.7 West London Working (WLW) is one of 15 City Strategy Pathfinders launched by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in April 2007. It brings together the partners responsible for employment and skills to tackle the high and persistent number of West London residents not in employment. DWP is due to cease its funding support for City Strategy Pathfinders in March 2011.
- 2.8 WLW covers the Boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, and Hounslow. Its vision is ‘to transform the coherence and effectiveness of the existing structure of services in West London to deliver a sustainable increase in the number of residents in employment and a reduction in child poverty.’ The LDA is the accountable body for West London Working.
- 2.9 The stated purpose of the evaluation as a whole is to assess the achievements arising from WLW and “most importantly to gain a good understanding of what has worked well in the course of achieving the benefits and what has worked less well.”
- 2.10 Building Employability Pathways is one of thirteen work packages undertaken by WLW. This report evaluates the delivery of Building Employability Pathways. It is one of a series of reports. The other reports in this series are as follows.
- Work Package 1: Investment and Target Group
 - Work Package 2: Employability Performance Rating
 - Work Package 4: Directory of Employment Services
 - The Meta Evaluation. This report is intended to bring work package evaluations together, and to reach other, broader conclusions.
 - West London Working 2006-2011 Final Report. This report is intended to be read by a wide audience, and will address the performance of the programme as a whole.
 - Each of these reports is intended to work as a stand-alone document, and so reports may share some text on methodology and approach.
- 2.11 The Building Employability Pathways Final Report by Cambridge Policy Consultants covers much detail of the activity of the Pathways for Parents pilot. This report does not seek to duplicate material from that report, but to build upon it, and the two should be read in conjunction. The Building Employability Pathways Final Report is published on the Building Employability Pathways and the Evaluations Page of www.westlondonworking.org.uk (<http://www.westlondonworking.org.uk/index.php?miid=1671>).

Evaluation approach

The methodology we used

Review of Documentation

- 2.12 Documents relating to Building Employability Pathways, including specifications for colleges/institutes and the Building Employability Pathways Final Report were analysed to determine the scope of activities and assess the overall performance of Building

Employability Pathways' activities. This helped to answer the evaluation's key questions regarding the process of developing the Building Employability Pathways work package, changes from the original concept, what worked well and what could have been improved in implementing Building Employability Pathways, and the impact of Building Employability Pathways on colleges and adult education institutes' ways of working. These enabled us to establish the nature of the interventions, their aims and objectives, the service offer from Building Employability Pathways, organisational linkages, and achievements and impacts.

Interviews

- 2.13 These initial findings were then tested and developed further through interviews with key individuals and stakeholders. These include the West London Working Project Manager, the Cambridge Policy Consultants (CPC) Project Manager, a representative of each of the eight participating Further Education Colleges / Adult Education Institutes, and two members of the Skills Funding Agency who were members of the Building Employability Pathways Project Board. Overall we conducted 12 interviews. Some interviews were conducted face to face and others by telephone.

Survey of Participating Learners

- 2.14 We also sought to gain an understanding of the experience of Building Employability Pathways' participants, if and how the project has assisted them either into employment or towards employment, what aspects of the project have worked well for them and what could be improved. We aimed to obtain the views of 70 (of the 729 participating learners) primarily through the use of a short online survey. However, we experienced some difficulties with getting email addresses from colleges for individuals who had taken part in some form of employability training, and had to survey a large proportion of learners over the phone. This meant that unfortunately we were unable to survey 70 as we had originally planned, finishing instead on a total of 47 learners. We feel that some key messages have emerged from this sample of 47 which compliment the other research that we have undertaken with stakeholders and in reviewing documentation. However, it is important to note that it is a relatively small sample that we are basing our findings on, so they should be considered in this context. Additionally, to help avoid generalisations, we will report numbers (not percentages) when discussing findings from the learner survey.

3 WHAT, WHERE, WHO AND HOW: THE SERVICE OFFER

Introduction

3.15 This section provides the basic information on Building Employability Pathways.

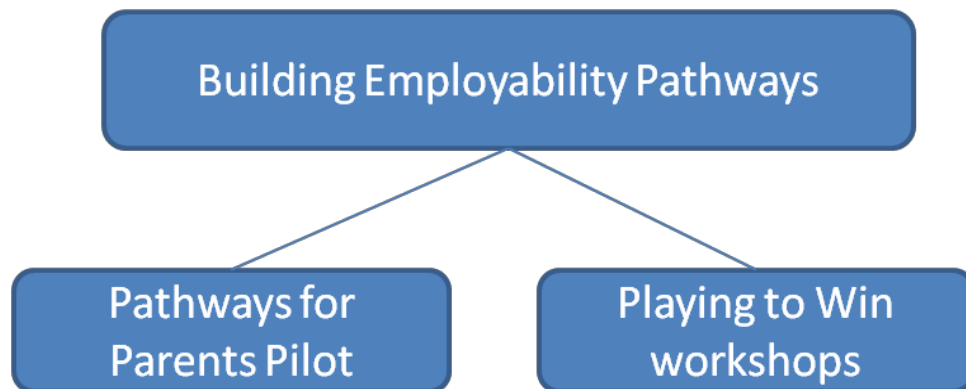
What was the nature of activities?

3.16 The primary set of activities centred on a pilot called Pathways for Parents that operated in West London Further Education Colleges and Adult Education Institutes (Large Learning Providers – LLPs). The LLPs undertook a range of activities to embed employability pathways for parent learners. These activities were identified through targeting gaps in the LLPs' existing employability offer with support from Cambridge Policy Consultants (CPC). The activities included: one to one sessions with learners, employability workshops, training for staff on employability issues, and making connections between the LLPs and job brokerage and employability providers. Unlike previous attempts at integration of employment and skills in LLPs, the Pathways for Parents pilot sought to build upon existing activity and strengthen referral pathways between LLPs and providers of job brokerage and employability services.

3.17 In addition, a series of workshops for 18-24 year old college leavers called 'Playing to Win' were being delivered at the time of writing. These workshops focused on interview skills and understanding what employers are looking for. The format of the workshops was as follows:

- The attendees acted as an employer looking to fill a position. They looked at the job description and CV's from potential candidates, selected two which were most suitable for the job, then prepared questions and interviewed candidates for the position. They then selected a candidate and gave the reasons why they were right for the job.
- Facilitators worked with the attendees and acted as the potential candidates at interview and were on hand to offer advice and support throughout the day.
- At the end of each session the attendees reflected on what they had learned and took part in a mock interview.
- A Market Place of providers and colleges was available for the young people to browse and explore the opportunities on offer to them.
- A number of work experience placements were available to 'win' for each workshop and attendees who performed particularly well were nominated for them.
- The events were hosted by David McQueen, a motivational speaker and television presenter, who offered advice and motivation and encouraged the young people to fully participate.

Figure 3.1 Activities in the Building Employability Pathways work package



What were the objectives for this work package?

3.18 The work package's objectives were to:

- Build on and expand current work with large learning providers on employability pathways
- Develop and integrate clear employment routeways for all learners on vocational courses
- Join up providers to create cohesive progression for learners into employment

3.19 The pilot aimed to accelerate cultural change in LLPs to integrate employment and skills.

What was the method of delivery?

3.20 The work package was delivered through two sets of activity. The Pathways for Parents pilot and the Playing to Win workshops.

What were the organisational linkages made by the work package?

3.21 Building Employability Pathways led to a number of organisational linkages. CPC gave advice and assistance to the LLPs in delivering the Pathways for Parents pilot. LLPs were brought together regularly to discuss progress on the pilot as well as to create linkages with other organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, job brokers and Next Step. For more detail on these linkages see the Building Employability Pathways final report.¹

¹ Cambridge Policy Consultants (2010) *Building Employability Pathways for Parents in Large Learning Providers: Final Report*, <http://www.westlondonworking.org.uk/download.php?src=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.intomedia.org.uk%2FCMS%2Fdatastore%2Ffiles%2F1263%2Ffiles%2F1119.DOC&fn=110110+BEP+Final+Report.DOC>, p45.

Where was the work package delivered?

- 3.22 The pilot was delivered in eight Adult Education Institutes and Further Education Colleges in West London. These were:
- Hillingdon Adult Education
 - Uxbridge College
 - Brent Adult and Community Education Service (BACES)
 - College of North West London
 - Harrow College
 - Stanmore College
 - West Thames College
 - Ealing Adult Education
- 3.23 Hillingdon Adult Education and Uxbridge College delivered the project in partnership as did BACES and the College of North West London.
- 3.24 The first Playing to Win workshop was held at the Wembley Plaza Hotel, with further workshops planned at other locations in West London. These workshops were for college leavers from all West London colleges including those not listed above.

What were the project timescales?

- 3.25 Calls for expressions of interest from the LLPs were issued in September 2008. Planning between LLPs and CPC occurred between January and March 2009 and delivery began in some LLPs in April 2009. Due to delays caused, for example, by Ofsted inspections and restructuring, some LLPs began delivery as late as January to March 2010. Delivery continued until July 2010 although, as we shall see, some activities were sustainable and continued beyond this date. Full details of the project timescales can be found in the final report.²

Who has been involved in delivering the intervention?

- 3.26 A range of LLP staff were engaged in delivering the Pathways for Parents pilot. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) staff and course tutors delivered one to one sessions and workshops to learners, other staff were often responsible for making changes to Management Information systems, and staff in management roles for raising employability issues at senior management team meetings. Further details of this can be found in the final report.³ Prospects Ltd were delivering the Playing to Win workshops.

² *Ibid*, p14.

³ *Ibid*, p41.

How much has been spent on the intervention?

- 3.27 The table below shows the breakdown of the costs associated with the Building Employability Pathways work package.

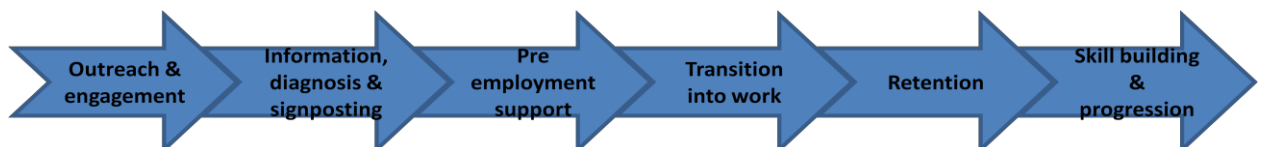
| Element of work package | Cost |
|---|------------------------|
| Grants to LLPs | £100,000 (8 x £12,500) |
| Consultancy Support to Cambridge Policy Consultants | £92,400 |
| Playing to Win delivery to Prospects Ltd. | £30,000 |
| TOTAL | £222,400 |

Source: WLW (January 2011)

- 3.28 £100,000 was funded from the Learning and Skills Council (now Skills Funding Agency) and £122,400 was funded through the Department for Work and Pensions' Deprived Area Fund.

How (if at all) does the intervention link to other WLW activities and objectives?

- 3.29 Building Employability Pathways linked to West London Working's key challenge of disjointed employer engagement and the lack of personalised customer focused provision with few referrals between providers and no system that can track or support an individual's progress through the employability routeway. The pilot led LLPs to look at their employability offer to learners throughout their journey:



- 3.30 This helped to address both gaps in support for individuals through the employability routeway and developed referral pathways between LLPs and other providers.

What was the context of the work package?

Local context: what were the baseline conditions?

- 3.31 As the final report makes clear, learning providers were already developing approaches to the integration of employability and skills services, though these did not span the complete re-integration agenda. Given that funding for LLPs does not depend on employment outcomes, tracking of learner destinations is not carried out, so there is no baseline for

employment outcomes. Detail of the baseline level of employability activity in each LLP can be found in the final report.⁴

Strategic context: what was the strategic context for the interventions and how has this changed?

- 3.32 The strategic context of Building Employability Pathways is well covered in the final report,⁵ but it is worthwhile at this juncture to highlight two particular elements: that much work had already been done on integration of employment and skills with LLPs and the impact of the recession.
- 3.33 Integration of employment and skills had been a policy priority for some time prior to the development of Building Employability Pathways. Initiatives in LLPs, such as Employability Demonstration Pilots, preceded Building Employability Pathways, and helped to inform its development. Initial plans for Building Employability Pathways were on a similar scale to Employability Demonstration Pilots (approximately £100,000 per college), but it was felt that there was a danger in funding on that scale for work to stand alone and to cease when funding ended. The decision to set funding at a far more modest level was informed by these previous initiatives to integrate employment and skills. This history of mixed results in activities to integrate employment and skills also led to a degree of apprehension from stakeholders, who questioned how Building Employability Pathways could make a tangible difference in a way that previous initiatives had not. Nonetheless, it was felt by West London Working that the large number of workless adults in Adult and Further education in West London necessitated action.
- 3.34 Building Employability Pathways was significantly impacted by the recession and responses to the recession. The Response to Redundancy and Six-Month Offer programmes led to improved links between the LLPs and Jobcentre Plus. The Response to Redundancy programme sought to fill gaps in Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding to enable redundant workers or those facing redundancy to access accredited learning. Providers tendering for the work had to demonstrate good working relationships with Jobcentre Plus (JCP). The Six-Month Offer, available to those who had been claiming Jobseeker's Allowance for six months, included college-based courses to customers who would benefit from upskilling or reskilling to expand their employment opportunities.
- 3.35 Perhaps just as significantly, in addition to greater engagement with JCP, the recession focused LLPs on the importance of employability in their offer to learners and led to an improved engagement with the Pathways for Parents pilot.
- 3.36 The sustainability of activities developed through Building Employability Pathways depends to a great degree on the future strategic context. Currently funding for LLPs does not take into account employment outcomes, but if this were to be the case in the future, it is likely that employability initiatives and referral pathways would be further developed. If, however,

⁴ *Ibid*, p15.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp6-21 and especially pp20-21.

funding structures do not change and overall levels of funding fall, the sustainability of the initiatives is questionable.

4 DEFINING WHAT THE WORK PACKAGE AIMED TO ACHIEVE, AND HOW

Introduction

4.37 In this section, Building Employability Pathways' objectives are explored. In this project, there are three ways of specifying project objectives. These are:

- the vision statement
- outputs
- outcomes.

4.38 We deal with each in turn below.

4.39 We then turn to examine how the work package was intended to achieve its objectives. We set out the project's "logic model" (also known as a "theory of change") to do this.

The Vision statement

4.40 The vision is the overarching aspiration for the project. The vision for the Building Employability Pathways work package is:

4.41 **"Building employability pathways to support West London residents move from learning into sustainable employment."**

4.42 Adult learners in Adult and Further Education colleges represented a significant group of workless individuals in West London and the Building Employability Pathways work package aspired to build pathways for them into employment.

Target outputs

| | Ealing Adult Education | Brent | West Thames College | Stanmore College | Harrow | Hillingdon Partnership | Total |
|---|------------------------|-------|---------------------|------------------|--------|------------------------|--------------|
| Starts on Pathways for Parents | 100 | 200 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 200 | 800 100% |
| Referrals received from progression pathway providers | 50 | 100 | 30 | 50 | 50 | 100 | 380 47.5% |
| Learners receiving an individual employability plan | 100 | 200 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 200 | 800 100% |
| Referred onto progression pathways providers that give support to secure work | 50 | 100 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 100 | 400 50% |

Source: West London Working MIS, January 2011

Target outcomes

| | Ealing Adult Education | Brent | West Thames College | Stanmore College | Harrow | Hillingdon Partnership | Total |
|--|------------------------|-------|---------------------|------------------|--------|------------------------|------------|
| Completing a qualification | 75 | 150 | 75 | 75 | 75 | 150 | 600 75% |
| Participating in work experience or a work trial | 50 | 100 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 100 | 400 50% |
| Gaining employment | 30 | 60 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 60 | 240 30% |

Source: West London Working MIS, January 2011

- 4.43 Target outputs and outcomes were set in each LLP's contract. While this enabled the LLPs to focus on tangible outcomes, the primary aim was to get LLPs to think about how employability would fit into their offer to learners in the future.

What was the project logic model ("theory of change")?

- 4.44 The logic model describes contextual conditions and rationale, evidence underlying the rationale for the programme, and links inputs to programme activities, outputs, outcomes and longer-term impacts.
- 4.45 We have explained each of these factors in the previous section of this report.

What was the rationale for the project?

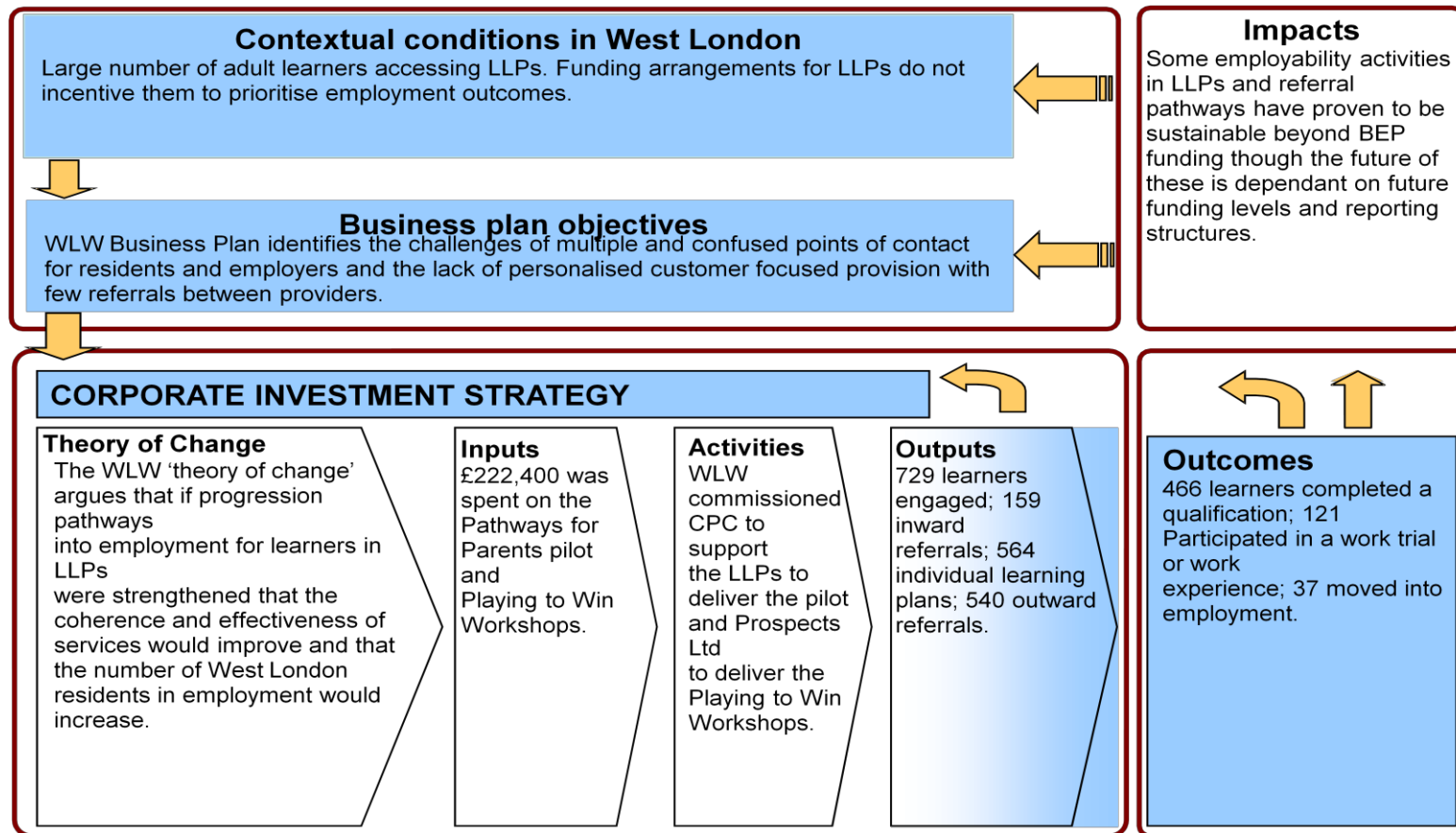
- 4.46 At the start of the pilot approximately 38,000 adult learners a year were passing through Adult and Further Education Colleges in West London.⁶ This was a key group needing support if the City Strategy Pathfinder was to achieve its objectives. As discussed above, funding arrangements do not incentivise LLPs to prioritise employment outcomes, and so improving pathways for learners into work is a significant challenge.

What were the key drivers behind the demand for the project that supported its rationale?

- 4.47 Integration of employment and skills has long been a policy objective and links clearly to West London Working's identified challenges of disjointed employer engagement and lack of personalised customer focused provision with few referrals between providers. Unlike previous attempts to integrate employment and skills in LLPs, the work package aimed to encourage LLPs to engage better with job brokerage organisations and to build referral relationships with providers of employability services.

⁶ Learning and Skills Council, *Learning and Skills Council London West Annual Plan 2007/08*, http://www.ealingcvs.org.uk/documents/learning_and_skills_council_london_west_annual_plan_2007-08.pdf

Figure 4.1 – Work Package Logic Model



5 HAS THE WORK PACKAGE DELIVERED WHAT WAS HOPED?

Introduction

5.48 This section is organised around a series of questions and has drawn on a wide range of information. These sources include the summation of historically collated data, and stakeholder interviews undertaken specifically for the evaluation.

What have been the outputs achieved against targets?

| | Ealing Adult Education | Brent | West Thames College | Stanmore College | Harrow | Hillingdon Partnership | Total | % of Target |
|---|------------------------|-------|---------------------|------------------|--------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Starts on Pathways for Parents | 97 | 207 | 50 | 83 | 57 | 235 | 729 100% | 91% |
| Referrals received from progression pathway providers | 39 | 38 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 75 | 159 22% | 42% |
| Learners receiving an individual employability plan | 22 | 207 | 36 | 83 | 38 | 178 | 564 77% | 71% |
| Referred onto progression pathways providers that give support to secure work | 97 | 207 | 36 | 69 | 41 | 90 | 540 74% | 135% |

Source: WLW MIS, January 2011

5.49 The output data shows that the Pathways for Parents pilot performed well in terms of starts and outward referrals, fairly well in terms of employability plan delivery but less well in terms of inward referrals. It is particularly encouraging that the pilot overachieved in terms of outward referrals, given that this links clearly with the rationale of the work package.

What have been the outcomes achieved against targets?

| | Ealing Adult Education | Brent | West Thames College | Stanmore College | Harrow | Hillingdon Partnership | Total | % of Target |
|--|------------------------|-------|---------------------|------------------|--------|------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Completing a qualification | 68 | 99 | 36 | 18 | 27 | 218 | 466 64% | 78% |
| Participating in work experience or a work trial | 31 | 57 | 0 | 9 | 23 | 1 | 121 17% | 30% |
| Gaining employment | 12 | 9 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 37 5% | 15% |

Source: WLW MIS, January 2011

- 5.50 In the learner survey, the majority of the 47 respondents were female (40) and were aged between 35-49 (25). A further 15 respondents were aged between 25-34. A large proportion of respondents were Asian/ Asian British (19) and this was followed by a proportion who reported that they were 'mixed/ other'. Only 8 respondents reported their ethnicity as White British. Only one respondent reported having a disability. Most respondents reported having children (41), with a majority reporting that their youngest was between 6 and 11 years old. This was closely followed by a proportion who stated that their youngest was between 0-5 years of age (15). Only one respondent reported that their youngest child was 18+.
- 5.51 Respondents had attended a range of colleges who were involved with the BEP initiative including, BACES, CNWL, Harrow, Hillingdon, Stanmore and Uxbridge. The majority of respondents reported that they had undertaken some kind of work in the past, be it full, part time or voluntary. Surprisingly perhaps, full time work was the most common form of employment that the group had engaged with (19), and nearly a quarter had been employed part-time in the past. Nearly one quarter of the respondents (11) reported that they had not worked in the UK in the past.
- 5.52 Both employment and work placement outcomes were significantly less than their targets. As discussed above, LLPs did not have systems in place to track learner destinations and so the employment outcomes may well be better than the outcome figure suggests. Findings from the learner survey support this suggestion, as 14 out of the 47 surveyed report that they have indeed moved into employment. This suggests that a percentage of nearly 30 per cent have found work since completing their college courses, moving much closer to the outcome targets. Additionally, the survey shows us that since completing their courses, 26 of the respondents had applied for jobs and around half of these 26 had attended interviews.
- 5.53 For those who had not moved into employment, the majority (21) said that they were looking for work, and 7 were planning to move into work at a later stage. Overall, these results show that whilst only a proportion have actually moved into work, many others are

taking positive and tangible forward in terms of moving into the labour market, which is very encouraging. Only 4 respondents had moved on to further study. These figures reinforce the fact that many adults on Adult and Further Education are doing so to improve their employment prospects and value employability training.

- 5.54 Perhaps unsurprisingly, qualification outcomes were significantly better than employment outcomes, given that this is seen as the core business of LLPs and is the basis upon which they receive funding. While the disparity between qualification and employment outcomes may not, in reality, be as great as the outcome figures suggest, it does point to the potential improvement that requiring LLPs to report on employment outcomes may lead to.

How has the project expenditure performed against targets?

- 5.55 The money allocated to this work package was spent according to plan, and it was acknowledged that the funding given to each LLP was relatively small at £12,500 each.

Was the project well run and managed?

- 5.56 LLPs reported that their interactions with West London Working staff were helpful and supportive. They also valued the support that was available from the consultants, though they sometimes felt that there was a lack of clarity about the objectives of this support. One common criticism was that the information provided at the start of the project was unclear. As discussed below, involving LLPs at an earlier stage of development could have improved this. Some LLPs felt that the administration required by contract managers was onerous given the amount of funding that they received.

What was the process of developing the Building Employability Pathways work package?

- 5.57 The Building Employability Pathways work package was developed by West London Working's staff, staff from the (then) Learning and Skills Council London West, and the Building Employability Pathways Project Board, who included members from the Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus. Previous initiatives at integration of employment and skills in Adult and Further Education colleges were examined in order to see how Building Employability Pathways could build upon this work and learn lessons from it. These plans were then fed through to the WLW Implementation Group.

Were changes made from the initial concept? Why?

- 5.58 The initial concept built upon the Employability Demonstration Pilots. These were large scale pilots aiming to integrate employment and skills in large further education colleges across London over a two year period from March 2007. WLW felt that funding the Pathways for Parents pilot at this level may mean that staff would be employed for the duration of the funding and the work would cease when the funding finished. The model finally chosen meant that work would have to build on existing activity with existing staff and that the activity would not be 'siloes'.

What could have been improved during the development?

- 5.59 WLW staff felt that LLPs could have been engaged earlier in the work package development in order both to inform the project design as well as to build relationships. This was echoed by the LLPs who felt that the information that they received in the early stages of engagement was unclear. For example, a deputy principal of an LLP said that
- 'There was originally a lack of clarity as to what they were trying to achieve from the outset. Agendas changed as the time period moved on.'*

Was there any duplication of provision?

- 5.60 It does not appear that there was any duplication of provision resulting from the Pathways for Parents Pilot. The relatively small amount of funding that each LLP received meant that they could not begin new activities that would potentially duplicate existing provision, but instead had to build upon what they were already doing. In addition, the work from CPC in helping the LLPs to identify their employability baseline and areas in which their employability offer was lacking led the LLPs to focus their activity in areas that did not duplicate provision.

What has worked well and not so well?

- 5.61 There was significant delay in the set up of the pilot in some LLPs. This was partly due to confusion and miscommunication between LLPs, CPC and WLW in the set up stage of the pilots, but also because of factors such as Ofsted inspections, audits and restructuring in a number of LLPs. It appears that many LLPs were not clear about the initial brief and the proposals that they submitted to WLW were not similar to the activities that were eventually agreed upon. For some, this made the start of the pilot confusing and may have hampered engagement with CPC. For example, a staff member with responsibility for the pilot at one of the LLPs said:

'The information received upfront was unclear, partly as there were two layers of contractors/sub-contractors below West London Working. There was no action plan and the initial meeting was difficult as there was a mismatch of expectations.'

However, not all LLPs felt that this was the case, another said:

'We got a nice clear brief and a contract that we signed with West London Working, and a consultant came and talked with us soon afterwards, so we had a clear idea of what the challenge was.'

Those LLPs with late starts sometimes felt that they could have achieved more if they had got started more quickly. When asked what could have been done to improve the project, a partnership manager at one of the LLPs said:

'We could have been faster out of the blocks, so we had to deliver it in a short period, but that was partly due to staffing changes at our end.'

As the CPC final report suggested, thought should be given to the timetable of future initiatives to make best use of periods when LLP staff have most capacity. In some LLPs the pilot activity was concentrated in periods when IAG staff were busy helping learners

- with university applications and the pilot could have worked more effectively if the timetable had been different.
- 5.62 Some LLPs felt that the administration involved in the project was disproportionate to the funding involved. For example
- 'The volume of accountability and paperwork and project reports that was associated with it was particularly onerous for the size of the project, it was disproportional.'*
- 5.63 However, given the often pressing priorities of the LLPs, such as restructuring and inspections, the contracts were seen by CPC as essential to the project's success and worked to focus the LLPs on delivering the project within the timeframe set in the contracts.
- 5.64 The combination of limited funding and working with the LLPs to find appropriate activities that were missing from their existing employability offer worked well in making the pilots a catalyst for further action. This approach could be replicated in future initiatives. One LLP, for example, has been able to use the funding and support of the Pathways for Parents pilot to extend their employability offer to all of their learners while maintaining an increased focus on adult and parent learners. In practice this has meant a revamped ESOL for parent course, a focus on career pathways (including work experience and volunteering) for young learners and maintenance of referral relationships with providers of job brokerage services.
- 5.65 The top three activities that respondents of the learner survey reported involvement with were:
- Having face-to-face sessions with tutors to talk about preparing for work
 - Making plans to help think about what they need to do to move into work after finishing their course
 - Attending a course or workshop to help with CVs and/or application forms
- 5.66 Only 7 respondents reported getting work experience through their college only 2 were referred to organisations that help with advice on for example housing or benefits. As the LLPs developed very different packages of support for learners within their institutions, it will not be the case that learners were offered the full variety of activities listed. Additionally, 7 respondents reported that they did not take part in any activities and were unclear or unsure of their level of involvement.
- 5.67 The majority of respondents (36) were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the things that were offered to them whilst at college to help think about and prepare for the world of work. Respondents also largely felt that the support offered to them was either very or mostly satisfactory (26), easy to understand (32), well run (30) and relevant (31).
- 5.68 As a result of their employability work, most respondents felt that they had a better idea of what they would like to do in the future in terms of moving into employment (35). Twenty-seven respondents felt that since their course has finished, they now had a better idea of where to look for jobs, however the results for having a better understanding of where to

get support to look for jobs were less encouraging, with 8 saying that they did not feel at all that they had improved knowledge in this area.

- 5.69 There were high levels of confidence reported for updating and completing CVs and application forms. Respondents reported lower levels of confidence for applying for jobs and attending interviews, so it's possible that some of the training that was delivered through the BEP pilot didn't emphasise these aspects of employability.

What has happened since the completion of the Pilot?

- 5.70 Some of the LLPs reported that their activities were not sustainable and would end when the Building Employability Pathways funding was finished. For example, a senior member of staff at one of the Adult Education Institutes said:

'We hope to work more with outside agencies but with funding cuts - maybe not. We can't really keep it going because funding overall is being cut and it's not possible to expand in any areas.'

- 5.71 Most LLPs, however, were taking at least some elements forward. As discussed in the Final Report, Adult Education Institutes operated with significantly less excess capacity than Further Education colleges and employability activities were likely to be less sustainable there. Nonetheless, examples of sustainable activities from the pilot were found in Adult Education institutes during our interviews. For example, one Adult Education institute had developed the relationship with Ingeus that had formed during the pilot, and Ingeus staff were now providing employability workshops for the institute's learners. They acknowledged that they had no capacity to deliver these themselves and so felt that the partnership was beneficial to the institute and its learners. The staff member responsible for the pilot in that institution said:

'There's no resource for in-house employability, so partnership is the way forward.'

- 5.72 Overall, the range of sustainable activities ranged from resource intensive activities such as one to one sessions and workshops through to those that required relatively little resource such as employability remaining an item on senior management team meeting agendas and ongoing referrals to external providers. For example, a director at one of the Further Education colleges said:

'We are currently looking at adding adult employability advice to a job description of someone within the college, it will only be a part of what they do, but that would help to sustain the momentum we built up last year.'

- 5.73 Many LLPs felt that the sustainability of activities would depend upon funding levels available in the future. In addition, as discussed in the CPC Final Report, the organisational demands of restructuring and inspections can mean that it is difficult for LLPs to focus on anything but the most pressing demands. For example, one member of staff from a LLP said:

'We have had a restructure and we are about to restructure again. I can't say how things are going to pan out because there have been more pressing issues.'

- 5.74 As discussed, findings from the learner survey reveal that 14 out of the 47 surveyed have moved into employment since completing their college course. Additionally, the survey shows us that since completing their courses, 26 of the respondents had applied for jobs and around half of these 26 had attended interviews. For those who had not moved into employment, the majority (21) said that they were looking for work, and 7 were planning to move into work at a later stage. These are positive results which suggest that learners who took part in the pilot have been taking steps to move closer to the labour market since completing their courses. Only 4 respondents had moved on to further study. These figures reinforce the fact that many adults on Adult and Further Education are doing so to improve their employment prospects and value employability training

Has the intervention resulted in a change in the original situation identified in the rationale?

- 5.75 The drivers behind the rationale of poorly integrated employment and skills provision are large and systemic and could not reasonably be changed by a package of work of the scale of Building Employability Pathways. Nonetheless, on a micro-level greater integration is occurring in most of the participating LLPs. In particular, outward referrals to job brokers and employability skills providers that performed well in the pilot are continuing in most LLPs.

Has the logic model's "theory of change" been proven - or refuted?

- 5.76 To some extent the logic model's 'theory of change' has been proven. That is, that improving pathways into employment for learners in LLPs has led to some improvement in the effectiveness of services, as referral pathways between LLPs and employability providers have improved. The lack of learner destination tracking by LLPs does not allow us to test whether employment outcomes improved.

6 EVALUATING THE STRATEGIC ADDED VALUE ACHIEVED

Introduction

- 6.77 In this section, we examine the extent to which Strategic Added Value (SAV) has been delivered by the work package.
- 6.78 Originally, the idea was created in order to better evaluate the contribution made by Regional Development Agencies, but it is the case that the concept applies equally well to the City Strategy Pathfinders.

What is Strategic Added Value (SAV)?

- 6.79 Strategic Added Value (SAV) has been defined as the “non work package activities that do not produce traditional outputs” such as the ‘catalytic’ and ‘influencing’ role.
- 6.80 The idea of Strategic Added Value is to ensure that there is a way of capturing the benefits of strategic programmes such as City Strategy Pathfinders that go beyond the immediately obvious outputs and outcomes. This recognises that the contribution of City Strategy Pathfinders can come through their work package and programme spend but also through their influence on partners and stakeholders’ behaviour and performance.

How we evaluated SAV

- 6.81 Table 6.1 shows the five different categories of SAV and shows the types of evidence that we looked for in order to investigate whether WLW generating this form of added value in this work package.

Table 6.1 Strategic added value

| SAV category | Example SAV outputs |
|--|---|
| Strategic leadership & catalyst: Articulating and communicating London’s development needs, opportunities and solutions to partners and stakeholders in the region and elsewhere; | Creating confidence in the prospects for economic growth and in the capacity of partners and stakeholders to realise the potential for growth and improved regional performance; |
| Strategic influence: Carrying out or stimulating activity that defines the distinctive roles of partners, gets them to commit to shared strategic objectives and to behave and allocate their funds accordingly. | Generating cross-regional partnerships of mutual benefit to the growth prospects of each participating region; Achieving alignment and inter-locking of the priorities and investment plans of partners with the RES and with other partners; |
| Leverage: Providing financial and other incentives to mobilise partner and stakeholder resources – equipment, people as well as funding | Levered funding and other resources from partners and stakeholders in support of RES objectives |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Synergy: Using organisational capacity, knowledge and expertise to improve information exchange and knowledge transfer and coordination and/or integration of the design and delivery of interventions between partners;</p> | <p>Reduced duplication of service provision from regional partners – e.g. in business development support</p> |
| <p>Engagement: Setting up the mechanisms and incentives for more effective and deliberative engagement of stakeholders in the design and delivery of regional and sub-regional priorities and programmes.</p> | <p>Scaling up of projects and programmes to beneficial levels that achieve scale economies and provide for critical mass in securing benefits;</p> |

Source: Quoted p20 DTI document *England's Regional Development Agencies: Developing A Methodology And Evaluation Framework*; Adapted from the Guidance Note on SAV prepared by SEEDA for the RDA' Performance Management Group and from the ECOTEC Scoping Study for *emda* (2004)

Findings on SAV

Strategic leadership & catalyst

- 6.82 In most LLPs, Senior Management Teams were supportive and engaged with the Building Employability Pathways initiative. In some LLPs, those responsible for the pilot were members of Senior Management Teams, and so were readily able to raise the profile of the pilot as well as any issues that needed consideration or agreement from senior staff. In those LLPs where the pilot was not led by senior staff, there seemed to be good connections with senior staff, and those leading the pilot had used the appropriate channels to profile their employability work at a higher level.

'I presented a paper to our college management team. Therefore all the heads of department knew what was going on and how they could help, and the senior managers were very much on board from the beginning.'

- 6.83 As discussed above the impact of the recession had a significant impact on the pilot. In particular, Response to Redundancy and the Six-Month Offer raised the importance of employability within LLPs and improved connections with external agencies, in particular Jobcentre Plus.
- 6.84 Additionally, staff leading the pilot and CPC managed to engage other staff within LLPs about employability, sometimes overcoming initial resistance. In many cases, other staff and tutors of the pilot cohort were engaged in the initiative at an early stage through training sessions or away days facilitated by CPC. IAG staff reported that training sessions had been provided to staff to support them in delivering for example 1-2-1 sessions, or employability workshops. Where staff managed to overcome constraints on their time and energy, this approach worked well. In addition, several LLPs described how progress on the pilot and the employability activities that had been devised and delivered were communicated to the entire LLP body through news items in college papers and on Visual Learning Environments (VLE).

Strategic influence

- 6.85 For some of the LLPs, the employability offer given to learners that had been driven by Building Employability Pathways had been incorporated into high level strategic objectives to raise the profile of employability throughout the college, ensure that the issue was raised regularly, and to check that work was progressing in line with targets. For one LLP, employability was already part of their Operational Plan, but Building Employability Pathways had served to further embed its importance.

Leverage

- 6.86 As previously mentioned, LLPs were allocated £12,500 each to deliver their employability packages to their cohort. It does not appear to be the case that they were able to lever any additional funding. One exception was a Further Education College that had been able to attract a small amount of funding from their Local Authority for a small number of learners to undertake a 4 year BTEC Travel and Tourism course.

Synergy

- 6.87 The pilot was able to pull together the employability support and activities that were already available in LLPs and to begin to address gaps in the employability offers of LLPs. The pilot also connected LLPs to providers, leading to improved coordination of employability services for many learners in the pilot. Whilst some LLPs had yet to engage with employability in depth before the pilot, others had already begun to position employability support as essential, and were significantly further along than others. Though some LLPs felt that the focus on the discrete group of adult parent learners was limiting, it does appear to have helped LLPs to understand their barriers and support needs. For some LLPs, this was a group that had not been considered as closely before, and because the initiative was flexible in its application, LLPs could decide how best to deliver support in line with the structures and activities that were already in place, to ensure that there was no duplication in provision. If anything, LLPs commented that the 'seedcorn' funding enabled them to broaden their offer to more learners. For example, one member of staff at a Further Education college said

'We built employability into the activities of our tutors, of our advice and guidance team, and the college in a way that has not been done with adults before.'

- 6.88 Where LLPs were not already delivering much employability support, duplication was not an issue. Some of these LLPs felt that synergy had been achieved through meaningful partnerships with other organisations and providers. As discussed above, one LLP explained that they would not have the resources to offer employability support directly after the pilot but had developed a partnership with Ingeus, and would continue to signpost learners on to get the support that they needed. The majority of LLPs acknowledged that the emphasis on employability was probably here to stay, and that partnerships with employability providers would help them to streamline and coordinate delivery. Even those LLPs with greater internal capacity acknowledged that partnerships will also matter more if funding levels fall and LLPs are not able to devote the time and resources to deliver these services directly.

Engagement

- 6.89 Through a series of meetings facilitated by CPC, connections were made between LLPs and providers of job brokerage and employability services. As discussed above, many of these referral pathways appear to be sustainable. One senior member of staff from a Further Education college, for example, said that one of the most important outcomes of the pilot was the connections that emerged between the college and other organisations. He said:

'We've also developed links with local organisations – it's very valuable to be able to signpost people to the right support.'

7 EVALUATING VALUE FOR MONEY

Introduction

- 7.1 In this section, we evaluate the extent to which the work package represented value for money.
- 7.2 We have not undertaken a formal evaluation of value for money, due to the poor quality of quantitative output data as a result of the inability of LLPs to track learner destinations. This makes it difficult to compare outcomes against cost and spending information. However, we can evaluate value for money more qualitatively.

Did the project represent value for money?

- 7.3 As discussed above, the total amount spent on Building Employability Pathways was £222,400. This includes £100,000 in grants to Colleges/Adult Education (£12,500 each); £92,400 Consultancy Support to Cambridge Policy Consultants (inc of VAT); and £30,000 to Prospects Ltd for the Young People Playing to Win Events (inc of VAT).
- 7.4 The 'seedcorn' money that was afforded to the LLPs was fairly modest at £12,500 per institution. Different LLPs decided to spend this money in different ways, and this depended on the gaps in their existing employability provision. Some LLPs ring-fenced the Building Employability Pathways funding, for example to part-fund an additional member of staff to aid delivery. For most however, it seemed that they had understood that the money was not designed to fully fund the initiative as a discrete project but rather that the funding was intended to spark and encourage further development of employability activity and referral pathways.
- 7.5 All LLPs reported that they found the funding useful. For some LLPs (particularly Adult Education Institutes), the money was crucial to the delivery of support, and without further funds, it was acknowledged that a significant proportion of the work that was being delivered through the pilot might fall away.
- 'The impact of the funding was crucial. We were short of capacity and expertise, and we were able to buy someone in who was able to give us maybe 50 days time'*
- 7.6 Some of these institutions felt that the funding limited them in delivering what they wanted to. It was also highlighted that staff expected to deliver some of the initiatives were already under a lot of pressure to deliver educational outcomes as a priority, and found it hard to take on the extra employability work without additional resources. These institutions had, although regrettably, found it more difficult to sustain employability work post-funding. In a context of limited resources, initiatives such as employability support that do not attract funding are vulnerable, as they are considered less important in than achieving educational outcomes.
- 7.7 In other LLPs, however, the 'catalyst effect' was evident. For example, one LLP had embedded employability into their organisational restructure and incorporated employability into one of the IAG advisor's job description. In this instance, the injection of a small sum of money has had, and will hopefully continue to have, positive and long term

effects on the importance that is placed on employability. In these cases, Building Employability Pathways has clearly represented good value for money.

8 SUMMARISING THE LESSONS LEARNT AND DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

8.8 In this section, we draw some overall conclusions from our evaluation.

Has this work package achieved what it set out to?

8.9 The work package aimed to improve pathways into employment for learners in Adult Education Institutes and Further Education Colleges in West London. It aimed to do this through embedding and building upon work the LLPs were already doing to provide employability support for their learners. Job outcomes were disappointing despite the fact that they were almost certainly under-reported due to the LLP's difficulty in tracking the destinations of their learners. In more generally embedding and building upon good practice, the work package has achieved what it set out to do. While not all of the activities that LLPs undertook will be sustainable in a context of funding reductions, Building Employability Pathways funding did act as a catalyst for action, some of which was low cost and readily integrated into work that the LLPs already do.

Has this work package contributed to the overall objectives of WLW?

8.10 Building Employability Pathways has gone some way to addressing WLW objectives in tackling the: Lack of personalised customer focused provision with few referrals between providers and the lack of systems that can track or support an individual's progress through the routeway. It has done this through increasing the number and referrals between LLPs and providers and encouraging LLPs to address gaps in their support learners through the employability routeway.

What are the intermediate and longer-term impacts?

8.11 In the intermediate term, many of the participating LLPs will have a greater focus on employability, and more frequent referrals to other providers as a result of Building Employability Pathways. Longer term impacts are less certain and much will depend on changes that would provide funding incentives to LLPs on the basis of employment outcomes. In addition the high degree of churn in the job brokerage sector and need for resource to maintain partnerships may be a challenge.

8.12 Findings from the survey suggest that overall respondents felt that they were better prepared for the world of work since finishing their college course, with 33 reporting this as being very much so or mostly. An encouraging percentage of nearly 30 had moved into employment, and others had taken positive steps forward in their journey to employment, or reported that their ability to search and compete for jobs had been improved.

Were the work package's objectives and rationale still relevant at the end of the project?

- 8.13 Integration of employment and skills and developing better pathways into employment for learners have been well recognised aspirations for some time. The changing context in which Building Employability Pathways operated made the objectives and rationale more important rather than less. An initiative of the scale of Building Employability Pathways was not going to 'solve' the issues of disjointed employment and skills provision, but does provide some learning for future initiatives.

What were the work package's strengths and weaknesses?

- 8.14 The work package's key strength was that it acted as a catalyst to build upon work that LLPs were already doing. This meant that work funded through Building Employability Pathways was less likely than previous initiatives to stand apart from existing college functions and finish when the funding ran out. The number of sustainable activities is testament to this. The work package's key weakness was the lack of engagement from LLPs in the early period and delays to delivery. This meant that the best (and sometimes only) activity by the LLPs happened in a limited amount of time, sometimes in periods when college staff were particularly short of capacity.

Which approaches /activities have worked well?

- 8.15 The development of referral pathways between the LLPs and providers of job brokerage and employability providers worked particularly well. It was encouraging to see that even the learning providers with the least internal capacity to carry on with activities from the pilot were maintaining referral relationships. Outward referrals were the one target that was overachieved by the pilot.

Which approaches /activities have worked less well?

- 8.16 Early planning sessions between the LLPs and CPC were less productive than they could have been with a degree of 'crossed-wires' reported by the LLPs. This probably contributed to the lack of early engagement with some LLPs and delayed starts to delivery.

What should the work package have done more of?

- 8.17 West London Working should have placed greater emphasis on engaging directly with LLPs in the early part of the project. Involving LLPs in the development of the initiative may have both increased engagement and led to a more appropriate timetable of activities.

How durable are the work package's achievements over the medium and long term?

- 8.18 In the medium term, many of the work package's achievements may be sustainable, particularly those that are low cost and low maintenance for the LLPs. The long term durability of Building Employability Pathway's achievements may depend on funding arrangements for Adult Education Institutes and Further Education Colleges. If overall levels of funding decrease, LLPs will be looking to minimise activities for which there is not

a clear business case. Employability activities may suffer in that context. If, however, funding arrangements are reformed to take into account learner destinations and employment outcomes, it is likely that work put in place through Building Employability pathways will be sustainable and, indeed, built upon.

Are there any lessons that inform future approaches in this area?

- 8.19 The approach taken to give seedcorn funding that would act as a catalyst for greater employability activity combined with support to identify gaps in the LLPs' employability offers and the emphasis on partnership work and referral pathways has been very successful. This meant that, as hoped, work funded through Building Employability Pathways was not 'siloed' and led to a number of sustainable initiatives.
- 8.20 The lack of early engagement from some LLPs points to the importance of engagement with LLPs in project design as well as the need for clear communication about project aims and objectives. The contracts given to each LLP were also useful in gaining momentum towards the end of the project timescale.
- 8.21 The lessons learned from Building Employability Pathways has already been fed into a subsequent approach, in the development of the Community Scorecard for London colleges by the London Skills and Employment Board. The scorecards will show college performance on a number of indicators, including engagement with employers and learner success. It has been recommended that these include employment outcomes, where this is possible.