

**London Councils Poverty Programme – GOLD
Project Final Evaluation**

For Projects funded by London Councils ESF Programme 2016-2020

Organisation name: Paddington Development Trust (PDT)

Project ID: 8233

Priority:

Period covered by report:

Project delivery starts date: September 2016

Project delivery end date: June 2019

Evaluation conducted by Siobhán Crozier 07831 214352 siobhan@siobhancrozier.london	Project manager: Jessica Pickard Paddington Development Trust Date Final Project Evaluation signed off:
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For London Councils use only:

Date Final Project Evaluation approved by London Councils:

*Please note that this Final Project Evaluation must be conducted by an external organisation. All procurement requirements for securing the external evaluator and completing this Final Project Evaluation must be adhered to.

Evaluation template:

Project Aims and Activities

Please describe the aims of your project, how it contributed to the borough/s objectives and its activities.

Please state how your project contributed to The London 2014-2020 ESIF Strategy¹

The shape of the GOLD project, its aims and ambitions, largely reflects the priorities laid down in the *European Structural and Investment Funds and Sustainable Urban Development Strategy for London (2014-2020)*. This policy document sets guidelines for the allocation and use of the £745 million that was awarded to the London LEP to drive development and growth in the capital. These investments were in turn channelled to the GLA to manage. Subsequently, as part of its work, the GLA appointed London Councils to manage the Poverty Project Priority 3 – Tackling Poverty Through Employment, of which GOLD is one element.

While a large part of the ESIF strategy for London is about business growth and supporting technological development, there is also a focus on unemployment and low skills in the workforce, both of which are described as brakes on economic development, as well as limitations, of course, on the personal wellbeing of a large number of London's residents. The report notes for example that while London is a massive financial hub – in fact 'the powerhouse of the economy accounting for one fifth of the UK's total output' – London still houses the 20 most deprived boroughs in England and demonstrates higher than average unemployment when compared to the rest of the UK:

"Juxtaposed with highly successful, agile and profitable labour markets are significant pockets of deprivation, worklessness and economic under-performance. The residents of many London boroughs do not possess the skills or opportunities to share in the successes of local markets."

The report goes on to note that 17% of London's children are living in families in poverty which rises to 36% after taking housing costs into account. (This is compared to UK-wide data at 18% and 28% respectively, the latter figure indicating the impact of London's expensive housing). The ESIF report goes on to make clear links between these indicators of poverty to the twin facts that London has higher levels of worklessness than the rest of the UK and insufficient levels of skills which lead to unemployment. Consequently, one of the four key goals in the ESIF strategy

¹<https://lep.london/publication/european-funding-strategy-2014-20>

was to develop activity that enhanced levels of skills and employment in the London population.

This is the background picture which gives rise to GOLD's main goals (and paid outcomes) for its participants: entry into employment and entry into training.

The strategy goes on to analyse in greater depth where, both geographically and demographically, unemployment and low skills lie in the distribution of London's population. It makes a distinction between 'unemployed' people (those who are on benefits and seeking to work) and 'economically inactive' people who may be on some benefits or not but who are not available or not looking for work. The latter group pose a particular concern:

"To the end of May 2013, there were 1.3 million economically inactive people in London comprising 23.4% of the working age population compared with 22.5% in the UK as a whole. Students make up the greatest proportion of the economically inactive group (30.3%), followed by those looking after the family or home (30.1%), long-term sick (16.9%), other (11.2%) and retired (8.9%)."

Again, this kind of data explains the emphasis in GOLD on the two forms of unemployment, with 65% economically inactive and 35% unemployed. The stress on finding potential participants who were economically inactive had a significant effect on the workings of the GOLD project as it created the need for employment advisers to work in locations where groups like non-working mothers could be engaged.

Other target groups are also identified in the ESIF strategy: Funding will support groups with particularly high levels of worklessness including disabled people, women, BAME groups, lone parents and disadvantaged families or workless households.

In another section the report describes the inequities faced by older people seeking work. Data like this provides the background justification for the target groups identified for the GOLD project. These references are picked up at different points in this evaluation report.

Finally, the ESIF report also gave indications of what are considered to be the best ways of remedying some of these inequities through employment and skills programme, focussing on the role that can be played by those organisations already working in the community, including third sector organisations and charities:

Successful delivery of the ESIF will be achieved through effective partnership working with government, London Councils (representing London boroughs), the business, education, voluntary & community sectors across London, match-funding providers; and the eventual grant recipients of ESF and ERDF.

Funding will support groups with particularly high levels of worklessness including disabled people, women, BAME groups, lone parents and disadvantaged families or workless households.

Initial aims:

In June 2016 Paddington Development Trust submitted a tender, which was successful, to manage an employment and skills contract for London Councils (ESF) Poverty Programme in Central London. This was to deliver services in Barnet, Harrow, Haringey, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster.

PDT is a charity, formed in 1998, which was set up to address the needs of people in Paddington, North Westminster. While it still focuses on this neighbourhood for some of its work, PDT's reach has grown and at the time of the awarding of the GOLD contract it managed and delivered some programmes across the whole of London. These had included Westminster Works, a programme allocated £4 million of ESF funding and managed by London Councils. In this programme PDT and its partners had exceeded the targets they had been set and so confidence was high for the new programme which they decided to call GOLD.

The original aim was that seven partners, including Mind and St Mungo's, would work with employers, training providers, childcare providers and other agencies to create a far-reaching programme to find and help long term unemployed and economically inactive participants into jobs and training. It was anticipated that at least 65% would be economically inactive, and the rest long-term unemployed. The partnership committed itself to delivering Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), work placements, volunteering and employment opportunities.

It is worth noting that at the start of the tendering process in 2016, bidders for the work were advised that the ESF funding had not been guaranteed and that those applying did so at their own risk. At that stage too it was stated that successful projects would be co-financed by ESF and London Councils. This is significant given later developments.

In their bid for the work PDT undertook to help residents in the target boroughs to move towards – or into – work. As a means to achieve this, funding triggers were set by London Councils (LC) at six hours worth of IAG or twelve hours for more challenged groups like homeless people. Trained advisers were to work with individuals to design a personalised programme of IAG leading to employment or training options, thus creating pathways that took into account the person's skill and other needs and barriers – for example if they were facing difficult health issues or other barriers such as childcare responsibilities.

At the beginning of the programme London Councils agreed targets with PDT. The project aimed to recruit a total of 741 people including parents with long-term, work-limiting health conditions – 7%; people with mental health needs – 9%; people from BAME groups with low labour market participation rates – 40%; women facing barriers to employment – 37%; people recovering from drug and/or alcohol addiction or misuse – 7%; and homeless people – 7%.

The bid also offered job brokerage, employer help through extra guidance, work placements, volunteering experience, ESOL, employability and vocational skills development, and other support to raise self-confidence and improve self-esteem. Targets were also set for the numbers who would enter further training after being on the project and for those who would sustain their employment for six months or longer. These goals shifted somewhat during the programme and their final levels of achievement are reflected in the figures on page 42.

Alongside these targets the GOLD project aimed to provide highly supportive and more specialised IAG for those with particular needs from particular agencies such as Mind (mental health challenges) and St Mungo's (homelessness).

Participant Feedback

- This section presents the views of your ESF Project participants on the support they have received and the impact of participation (in your project) on their employability and personal development.
- Please provide summary information about any feedback received from participants. This may include feedback from training evaluation and participant focus groups/meetings, from case studies and any other participant evaluation methods (including monitoring questionnaires, reports, participant feedback templates, leavers forms).

During the project a number of different strategies were used to elicit participant feedback. Mainly this came in the form of case studies compiled en route for various reports. Some of these are quoted here. Two videos were also made, one (an hour long) consisted of one to one interviews with staff made at a staff conference and later edited by a PDT volunteer who is a professional video maker. The other is a short video in which two GOLD clients who also did placements and then were employed by PDT were asked for their views. Although they were grateful to PDT it was stressed they were free to offer any opinions! A third person quoted here also moved from being a PDT client to being a PDT worker and she was interviewed separately. Finally the author of this report, interviewed some clients towards the end of their programme.

There are many other examples of staff feedback under the different questions in this report.

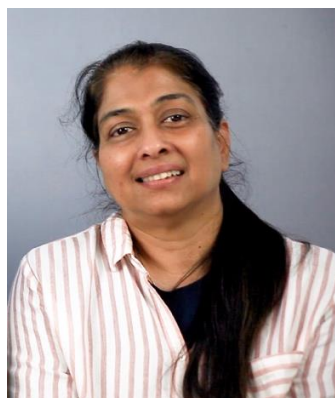
PDT is proud of its record in growing its own staff, a process through which the work placements it creates can turn into longer or shorter-term jobs.

“The effects on the right person can be really profound,” says head of employment services at PDT, Jessica Pickard. “Scholastica worked here with us and then got a job in the NHS. Nasima is now a valued paid admin worker at PDT for over a year, and similarly FJ, who is much happier now that she is working and developing her skills. As we have got to know these three women it has become so clear that each has really useful attributes to offer an employer.”

Historically there has been a criticism in some quarters that 'preferential recruitment' of this sort is an interference in the job market. However, Jessica's assessment is that people who have lost confidence or been out of work for quite a while are much better able to show their skills through having a period of employment in a supportive organisation that understands the needs of such employees. “This works better than years of straight advice and guidance for many of those distant from the labour market.”

This model of 'growing your own staff' was praised in PDT's Matrix report as one of six plus factors in the organisation's employment work.

Scholastica Rebello



Scholastica now works in the NHS

I'd been looking for work for over three years. I thought I'd passed all the interviews, even the written tests were very good but they'd just send a letter, saying I'm rejected, rejected. I was told, we can't employ you at this time. It's very disheartening. It made me lose my confidence.

Basically, I've got a lot of experience in this field, and I consider myself to be good, also. But I was rejected every time, which demotivated me very badly. Even now, I've been able to build my confidence, but before this, I was totally lost. It actually made me feel, I'm no good any more.

We were introduced to the employment advisers, after which, I'm very happy here. They've been helping with all my work, my CV, sending me for training courses, even on a personal level, motivating me. It has helped me a lot.

Nasima Amin



Nasima works part time at PDT

In my role as project support assistant, I support employment advisers with arranging bookings with clients, registrations. I phone up clients, look at claims, do general admin duties, it varies from one week to next.

Before, I was raising my kids, then trying to find a job. It's very hard, especially if you've been out of the labour force, it's hard to get back. You send CVs and application forms but you don't hear back, so it's very hard to know whether it's right or if you're doing something wrong.

I went to a job fair and PDT was there. One of the support assistants arranged the appointment and that's how I ended up in PDT. They're wonderful, really helpful, especially my employment adviser, she's helped with my CV, interview techniques, building my confidence and motivating me; she's very good at that.

I've been a mother at home, trying the job centre, finding it useless. You need someone to support and guide you along the way. When you go to an agency, they don't support clients like PDT does. My employment Adviser gave me mock interviews, she helped my confidence. I feel it's a very good project.

FJ (Funmi Jagun), administrator at PDT

I had experience of working in an office but technology moves on. I got to know about PDT through a voluntary role at a community centre. As project support

assistants, we get involved in emailing inviting people to engage with the programme.

When people come through the door, the fact they've made the effort – I know what it's like to have the experience of stepping out of your zone, we're very hospitable, to get them registered and see an adviser. We're welcoming. When the adviser is doing an assessment with that candidate, I give them the jobs bulletin, to let them know we've got live vacancies.

Every aspect of assistance is supported by us, the tasks involved in running those programmes, admin, clerical support, anything and everything, checking emails, producing reports from systems we use here at PDT. We could be entering details on spreadsheets, doing telephone surveys, helping to construct presentations, sending out written invites, keeping track of clients and compiling minutes. Management are very good at making it simpler for us, step by step.

Because of my experience of registering on GOLD, I have empathy towards the project, I understand importance of paperwork. You're happy to have someone to support your journey back to work. I knew there was lots of paper but I was glad to have someone reaching out a hand to help me. I had reached the end of the rope in looking for a job, so I appreciated finding an organisation that could mediate my way back into work.

Yvonne Wilson, Equi-Vision Services

Junior's journey

Junior's adviser, Yvonne Wilson, describes the pathway taken by one of her clients:

The beauty of the GOLD is that there is a large degree of flexibility in deciding how to help clients. It's very rare that two people would have the same needs. For people who are economically inactive, it's about building confidence, for some it's about finding what skills they have or what they need. It can be about being in the workplace, for several we did childcare training and most of them have got into jobs.

Junior is disabled and has been able to transform his circumstances through working with us on GOLD. He registered over a year ago, has been on training and is now running his own business. His brand is officially trademarked and he has built up business connections in Japan and Australia. His whole attitude to life has gone from one to nine since he started on the project with us.

Building pathways for unemployed or economically inactive people is about gaining confidence at the initial meeting, so Junior could trust us to talk about what he faced, several health as well as drug and alcohol issues. He's a very creative

person and he understood that we weren't sending him for conventional jobs. He designs clothing for people who are blind, using braille.

We helped him sort a business plan for his products and to make contact with suppliers. He went to meetings and did training, he also studied nail art so visually impaired people can create ideas for their own designs. We helped him find the links he needed to help his business progress. The job centre lady recognised that he now believes in himself, he's able to market himself. And he's also dealing with his personal issues.

To engage people, we approach schools and job centres, word of mouth was especially effective on GOLD – once you've got contacts, the project sells itself. Contact through schools was valuable as parents would bring others [who are outside the school community]. People who aren't registered and are economically inactive were coming along.

Elta, Equi-Vision client

"Elta is such a lovely lady who had no confidence," Yvonne says. "She'd studied nursing in her home country, but had never worked as a nurse here. As I was helping her to build her profile CV, finding out what she'd done before and what experience she had, I realised this was a woman who should just be back at work.

"She got one-to-one interview training, we worked on application forms, now Elta does everything herself and she's brought a lot of clients to us as well. She has been offered two jobs in hospitals. It has been a complete transformation for her, she has been a housewife, her husband was saying, you won't get a job. Now she's saying, you're going to have to cook as well because I'm working! I'm so happy we've been able to support her in moving on.

"The services clients need along their journey to employment have included work on their CV, application forms, confidence and motivational skills – we have to work on this continuously – computer skills, all the job brokerage stuff. You can't teach personality, you can only get them to bring out the best part of themselves. We keep in touch, talk to clients after interviews, tell them how to get feedback. It's really a constant journey until you know that person is ready to go it alone."

"My role is as a healthcare assistant in Middlesex hospital, I will be starting in late September," Elta says. "Helping people with sickness and illness to sustain full health is what I most like about my work. Prior to this I was a stay at home mother. The difference Equi-Vision has made to me is that now I can support my family, even more than I did before, by getting a job.

"I felt a boost in my confidence as I could now have a job and start work to do what I liked best, helping those who need it. I am strong willed, even when faced with difficult tasks.

"My close friend introduced me to the GOLD project, which has allowed me to gain more strength to look for a job. The most helpful part for me, was learning to be

better at communicating with others. It worked for me as it also gave me confidence to come outside of my own skin. The project was well-structured and everything was excellent.”

Thia, Urban Partnership Group

Thia was interested in becoming a careers adviser and decided to look for relevant work experience. She enrolled on the GOLD programme and undertook work experience with Gosia, the careers adviser at Masbro Centre, Urban Partnership Group. During the placement Thia was involved in tasks such as shadowing IAG sessions, producing posters and reports, conducting research and recruiting members of the local community for Into Work Support Club.

Thia also learned practical skills in making job applications, writing statements, improved interview skills and developed her CV. She moved on to work part-time at Primark and completed several personal development courses, including a leadership programme and a public speaking course.

She is now busy searching for graduate jobs while still working in Primark. Thia says: “For anybody looking to gain skills and improve their employment prospects, Masbro Centre is a great place. I gained so much experience in a short space of time and was part of a very friendly, helpful and diverse team.”

The placement at Masbro enabled Thia to gain understanding and experience of working in the role of a careers adviser and she now plans to pursue a postgraduate course in careers guidance at university.

PDT employment adviser, introduces her client, Anne:

Anne had taught for 20 years but took three years to recover after having a stroke. Her husband’s health was also in decline. When she was well enough to work, she found the education department wouldn’t employ her.

Anne had no IT training but got a job in a college, supporting a charity that helped people with their needs while in work. Since having the stroke and coping with her husband’s health, finding this job was everything for Anne. She’s now at a supervisory level but not too long ago, she’d never have guessed she’d be where she is now.

Sibert Barbour, PDT employment adviser, speaks about his work in a new borough:

We’d never worked in Haringey before and a partner pulled out, so I went to children’s centres run by the council I spoke to job centre staff. The Engine Room [community centre] at Hale Village hosted us for a half day once a week, same with the job centre and Broadwaters Children’s Centre. The job centre controlled my diary; at the children’s centre and the Engine Room I controlled the diary, as I

need to book people nearest to where they live, making the service accessible to the clients.

At the Engine Room, I could take people who didn't want to see me in the job centre. Broadwaters Children's Centre referred lone parents, mothers referred fathers to me – she's working, he's not coming to see me, he's not working. I had to say, talk to him first!

I started working with a woman from job centre, we started working together, as there are certain things DWP does, which we can't do but could get resources for the client. I can give her clothing, you fund the travel because they don't get paid until after a month. We took our training to the community, took our computers and trainer into the job centre.

Partnerships

Essential to the Project's effective delivery was the management of working relationships between the lead partner and sub-partners.

How effective was the partnership at delivering the required services. (Please include any feedback on the project/project delivery/ the partnership arrangement). This information may also be available within partnership meeting minutes.

The original partnership for GOLD consisted of seven partners: PDT; Equi-Vision; Get Set; Urban Partnership Group (UPG); six branches of MIND (one in each borough); Saint Mungo's; and CITE (Withdrew before the start of the project)

The partnership was put together specifically to work with London Councils on the Poverty Project although all but St Mungo's and the MIND branches had worked together on the 'Poverty Pilot', an LC managed forerunner to GOLD.

Project managers report that the pilot project partnership worked well and that was a reason to continue with this tried and tested group. Another advantage was that the partnership had a depth of experience in relevant areas. The only exception was Barnet, where there was no history and Haringey. "We were confident in the base of our partnership,' says head of employment services at PDT Jessica Pickard. "We knew each other well and respected each other's work. Another great advantage was that the original partners knew how to operate the Hanlon database and so we hoped record keeping would be simple."

During the bidding period, partnerships were advised by London Councils to ensure they had expertise in helping homeless people. For this reason PDT held meetings with St Mungo's and a senior officer of MIND since mental health and homelessness are often connected, explaining the aims of the project, how the partnership worked, how outputs were achieved and paid and so on. The patterns

of output related payment were new to the two organisations who were more used to working on donations and grants and, once the project started, it took some time for the new partners to grasp the implications. They were unused to the delays in payment and also very unused to the amount of paperwork that was required as evidence of enrolment and IAG. Nonetheless this was beginning to settle down in the first months, as managers reported.

However after six months...the paperwork was changed and, as part of this process, 66% of PDT's claim on behalf of its partners was rejected (see later in this report). At this stage St Mungo's and five of the six branches of MIND (all bar Westminster) withdrew. The reasons they gave was that it was just not worth their continuing; that the project had taken an enormous amount of staff time and that their challenged clients were upset with all the paperwork required. Again, these issues are commented on at various points in this report. "It was such a shame," says Jessica Pickard. "The other partners stuck with us because they knew us well enough to believe these issues were not of PDT's making. The new partners had no basis for making that judgement. Some of the MIND staff were really cross. I got a number of angry emails from them implying we had misled them and we did not know what we were doing. I don't blame London Councils for changing the paperwork, if it was indeed necessary, but the effect was to drive away our new partners and we needed their specialist services."

PDT managers report putting a lot of time into trying to convince the partners to stay and they believe London Councils also made similar efforts since these organisations were also withdrawing from the Poverty Pilot in other parts of London. However, they did not succeed. "I think the only reason we kept a smaller but firm partnership," says Jessica, "was that they already knew us. I have heard other partnerships lost more partners at the same stage."

From that point on, the remaining partners continued to work together and to meet at least every three months in the Project Steering Group. However, it was not without tensions. These arose mainly when it came to rejected paperwork and late payments. "We have had tears and people shouting at us," says Ola Badamosi Programme Manager at PDT. "But we came through in the end. I think it is a kind of general argument for establishing longer term partnerships than just project by project. Personally, I am very grateful to our remaining partners for sticking with it given the many difficulties we faced along the way."

The GOLD project also created other partnerships during the course of the programme, for example with particular Job Centres and Children's Centre. These are commented on at various stages in this document.

We asked one of the partners, Equi-Vision, for their views on the effectiveness of the partnership.

Yvonne Wilson, director of Equi-Vision Services

“GOLD has been a good project in terms of what we did but in terms of management, it left a lot to be desired. PDT have bent over backwards in supporting us. It all could have been better if the team from London Councils understood our clients. They could stop changing the goalposts, if they knew what they wanted from the beginning.

“A serious problem has been the amount of time it takes to get our money. This project really could have broken me as a business, if not for PDT, I’d be closing shop, as it has a major effect on a small business. Businesses like us do it for the love of what they do, I couldn’t do anything else, as I love seeing the transformation of these people. If the grassroots organisations aren’t there, it will cause a complete breakdown and the effect will be catastrophic.

“I really want to thank PDT, I don’t know how they’ve been able to keep it together. Without them, many of us would not be here. Their dedication to us as organisations has been paramount to our survival.”

In terms of changing goal posts, Yolande Burgess, director of strategy at London Councils, states: “We have the contract with the GLA to deliver ESF and that’s how the targets are set. Within the specification that we wanted to meet for London, there were also targets that we had to meet around ESF, principally long-term unemployed and economically inactive, so the splits around ethnicity, gender, disability, they are all targets within what we’re required to meet around ESF. I had discovered that our projects had been non-complaint and faced a massive fine, which meant we needed to completely change it so that it reflected the ESF requirements.”

Project Strengths/Areas of Improvement/Added Value

This section should summarise your views on what you feel are the:

- Project strengths
- Main project challenges
- Areas of improvement: from the perspective of the project staff, sub-partners and participants, what improvements do they believe should have been made, if any?
- Added value (how do you feel your project has added value to the ESF Programme and objectives)

Main project strengths or challenges:

In their bid for the work, the partnership made clear that one of their strengths was the amount and quality of in-house training that could be offered to clients. It was accepted that this was part of the overall contract to support clients in this way. However, a number of those interviewed felt the amount of training available while clients were on the programme meant it was an additional strength but also that conflicts in the definition of training had been a challenge.

Training in the Project

Training is of course a vital element in many individuals' pathways to getting a job, an important stepping stone for gaining new skills or having those you have accredited. The definitions of 'training' for a project funded through these sources is quite clear: there is training *within* the project and training *after* the project. However in reality the lines between these two activities has proved difficult for some parts of the GOLD partnership.

The first element, training in the project, is to be funded through general income to the delivery organisation and is not categorised as an output. Normally this kind of

training is part of the provision applicants included as part of their package in their initial bid for funding. They may, for example, have offered to include ESOL in the group of services for which they were seeking funding through LC/SSF. This category also includes any training that the person receives while they are on the programme whether it is offered by the provider in the partnership in house or through any other a delivery organisation itself or a college or other provider. The second – training after leaving or ‘referral to training’ - should happen after the person has been exited from the project having been helped to access further learning by their time on it. This is a paid output – a successful end to their time on GOLD.

In funding terms, this makes total sense. Getting someone ready for training can be a big piece of work. Advisers in Gold report working at length with clients on issues of confidence or on the removal of barriers like not knowing how to apply to a college or the common belief that ‘training is only for youngsters’ or, often, just not knowing what training was available, what it cost, where it was and whether it was right for the person’s chosen path.

However, the difficulties with this definitions for the project staff stemmed from the fact that many clients needed a lot of training before they could be job ready and that most of them did not want to be ‘exited’ as they wanted to stay on the programme to have help to look for a job. It is also the case that once a client is ‘exited’ (as they must be if the delivery organisation wishes to claim the funding for their successful entry into training) they cannot technically go on receiving services from the project like adviser time nor are they allowed to access to childcare support through it. The result of this ‘structural’ conflict of interest between funding rules and what the programmes advisers see as the natural sequencing of training to job meant that a number of clients who could have been claimed as a successful ‘referral to training’ were kept on programme instead, thus resulting in a diminution of outputs and income. It appears to be a standard strategy in this and other programmes for advisers not to exit clients to training in the hope they achieve the (higher paid as well as more desired) outcome of job entry. However, in the process of retaining a number are lost or drop off and end up being claimed as neither.

It was not clear to the delivery partners interviewed for this evaluation why the outputs were structured in this way and a number suggested it would be better if both training and job could be paid outputs (even if at lower value) rather than being alternatives.

Having said that there was a large amount of on programme training – it seems a lot more than might be expected for a ‘non paid’ activity. Some of this was training that had been promised to the funders as part of the package of GOLD but much of it was additional to that and offered by agencies external to the partners – i.e. it could have been claimed for had the person exited. Much of it too was paid for by the GOLD partners and set up especially for GOLD clients. In fact there seems to be a lot of variety in this item with some partners spending a lot of (unclaimable) money on training and others much less so. On some occasions the partner could claim the training costs from the beneficiary budget.

UPG staff estimated that between 70 and 80 per cent of their clients accessed some form of on programme training.

It is worth reporting here on some of the kinds of training that were delivered in house during GOLD as both an example of need but also an illustration of the variety put in place. Many of these were delivered multiple times and a lot of these topics were not ones included in the Project's original tender:

Accredited and unaccredited training run for GOLD clients:

ESOL,

Functional Skills

English and Maths levels E1, E2, E3 and L1 & 2 (2 at GCSE grade C level).

Functional skills maths and IT from entry levels to L2.

Parent's Job Club, unaccredited 4-6 sessions x 2 hours for parents preparing for employment. With free creche if available. Run several times per year, depending on the need / cohort. Included confidence building, motivation, identification of transferable skills, childcare and funding for childcare, job profiles, flexible / part time working, CVs, job search, interview skills.

IntoWork Club, unaccredited 4-6 sessions x 2 hours for users preparing for employment. Run several times per year, depending on the need / cohort.

Included confidence building and motivation, CV workshops, job search, interview skills, application writing, networking for job search.

Mental Health First Aid, accredited by Mental Health FA England.

ESOL for health, unaccredited.

Community Money Mentors accredited entry level 3 course 10 weeks.

Core Volunteer training, unaccredited.

Radio production course, unaccredited

Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities Facilitator course.

Safeguarding level 1 and 3, accredited.

Food Safety & First Aid accredited.

Mindfulness – unaccredited.

Various courses organised by Community Champions and open to Gold users:

Award in Understanding Health Improvement L2 accredited by Royal Society for

Public Health; Award in Understanding Behaviour Change L2 accredited by RSPH;

Birth and Beyond Community Support Programme (NCT accredited),

Breastfeeding Supporter (NCT accredited)

How to be an effective team member at work and the benefits

What is Customer services

Good Communication skills in work

Interview techniques

CV and Application writing techniques

Health and Safety in the work place

Time management

How to set goals on short-medium term

Hidden job market

Moving on Moving UP. Motivation

Monitoring systems: working with partners

One of the ways in which PDT and its partners kept in constant touch was through the regular monitoring of data to be submitted for verification to London Councils. Given some of the later disagreements about data and the way it was Quality Assessed, staff at PDT see their monitoring system with partners and its associated database (Hanlon) as an important element in managing the programme.

Here The support team at PDT, talks through the systems used within that monitoring system and its various impacts on the partnership.

We had worked with London Councils beforehand and so it was natural for PDT to set up the monitoring processes up for the GOLD programme to mirror those very systems. This was a basic system of: partner submission; partner amendments; collation by PDT (lead partner); submission to London Councils; amendment; invoice and payment. PDT implemented this London Councils reflective system for both itself and its delivery partners in order to try to create a seamless, error free process for partners to submit and claim on this output related payment project. The process has many levels of scrutiny and submission, but it begins with the delivery partners.

Working on claims with partners

Partners are given a deadline of 5th of every month to submit any new claims for the month prior. This has varied a few times since the start of delivery, however, as the programme continued, PDT made sure to keep this date as fixed as possible. London Councils initially requested that claims were to be submitted quarterly however having this foresight into how programmes were previously processed, PDT implemented this submission date for partners. This was to help eliminate the chaos that could potentially arise around submission and allow PDT enough time to check, request partner amendments if needed, collate and forward a submission to London Councils as a full claim. For each new claim for the month/quarter, each partner is asked to upload and send to PDT for checking: - New enrolments, IAG (both 6 and 12 hours) - Job starts - Training/Volunteering - Work Placements. Partners scan and upload each individual client record into the corresponding output folder on Dropbox for the correct month and quarter that they are claiming for. Partners are then required to let their dedicated PDT Monitoring Officer from the support team know what they are submitting for the month via email. They must also confirm that their claim for the month – on both the secure PDT Partner Dropbox and the PDT internal database, Hanlon – has total figures (numbers of clients) that correspond for each month. This is essentially the first level of checking. PDT support team constantly liaise with partners, to ensure that the client information that has been uploaded and the client information data entered on to Hanlon is indeed correct. If these figures do not match PDT asks for them to be checked and again matched before the next level of monitoring begins. Note that this is step is vital to PDT'S monitoring. It enables quantitative reports to be collected from the Hanlon database to ensure that we have every single piece of evidence for every client output that each partner wishes to claim.

All partners have access to Hanlon and they are responsible for inputting client information onto the database. All levels of achievement and activity (including basic initial enrolment details) can be included on this system. Partners must make sure to 'tag' their own clients, according to achievement allowing PDT to keep track of partner performance as both individual staff and as a partnership. The only information that is not required are the detailed IAG session reports. This qualitative information is captured by the Employment Advisers mostly at face to face sessions however the *hours* of IAG are indeed reported on.

Due to its specific capabilities, the Hanlon database allows PDT to run a report at any point, using definite filters and therefore to know exactly which client is being claimed, by which partner, for what output or result and what month within the programme it has been claimed for (amongst other records). The reports are the basis of which PDT collates the numbers and clients for submission. The database was set up at the beginning of the programme and its use has been consistent throughout the delivery.

The next step in a claim process is vital. This is complete checking of client records. Each individual client submitted by a partner is checked by the PDT support team for accuracy. Every scan of an individual client's completed paperwork is checked against the London Councils eligibility criteria. Partners are constantly reminded to check this *before* it is uploaded, especially taking into consideration the ongoing changes in eligibility criteria. However, PDT go through another level of checking to ensure compliance. If there are amendments or queries these get sent back to the partner for correction, with another deadline set by PDT in order for data to be submitted for the current claim. Again, to reiterate, the initial submission to PDT date on the 5th of the month is so that PDT has enough time to do this comfortably, taking into consideration any hurdles the employment advisers may face in amending a client record. For example, a Third-Party Verification or a referral letter may need to be completed again by the verifier if it doesn't meet any compliance guidance.

Database issues

Following these three levels of checking, there was a stage where claims were then to be uploaded onto the London Councils' database. This database was only received eight months into the project, so it wasn't used initially, although at the beginning of delivery PDT were informed that it would be needed to be used to report claims. This database was a replica of the enrolment form and the complete client information should have been entered. However, when it eventually became available for use there were several issues with its functionality (See later section).

The end of the monitoring cycle

The penultimate process before a claim goes through to London Councils for verification is where PDT collates all partners' claims for the relevant reporting quarter. This includes PDT's own delivery claim. The head of programmes and support staff collate all the client enrolments, achievements, outcomes and paperwork. The hard copies/scans are then scanned onto London Councils'

Webform Platform. This platform was to serve the same purpose as some of the in-house processes at PDT – i.e. collecting, collating and being able to report on lead partner claims. The results finally get sent as a new claim to London Councils.

PDT also backs up the claim on a CD. This is sent via private courier to London Councils. PDT then awaits feedback from London Councils so any further amendments that may have been missed at the various levels of checks by partners and PDT can be corrected. This feedback is sent to the partners to again adjust in order for them to be paid for their full claim. This is known as a 'client re-submission'. The specified normal time for the turnaround of information has never been confirmed, although it was assumed it would take roughly six weeks. In reality this has been different with every claim and this has caused difficulty with PDT for several reasons.

Partners have been extremely patient and have responded well when amendments needed to be made. They have also been as understanding as possible with the consistent change in information. As the GOLD Programme is paid-by-results, partners would obviously be keen to make any requested changes swiftly, in order for them to be resubmitted for checking and paid for in the next quarter. The delays and many issues around the returns process has meant that there are results across the partnership that have been claimed although haven't been paid for. Anything that is returned, in most cases has the potential to be corrected and resubmitted however PDT has never felt able to feel they were entirely on top of where things were in this process. We often felt there had been a gap in correlating what has been sent off for claim and what has been paid for by London Councils.

Towards the end of deliv on GOLD, London Councils requested claims were made monthly in order to reduce the size of the QA task each time. I think, however this gave partners and PDT a shorter window to go through all the claim processes and ensure accuracy.

Ife Olonade, PDT training and partnership co-ordinator

For a year and a half, I've been looking after Equi-Vision, checking their claims, finding any errors, sending back and getting them to resubmit. Also, I've been advising on how best to gather information and check eligibility, to follow the criteria.

A lot of different activities worked really well. Working with external employers and getting them to volunteer their time, mock interviews are always the most popular activity. Some employers haven't done much mock interviewing before and clients are familiar with PDT staff and advisers; they're in a comfortable environment, so their confidence is different in dealing with a stranger. They get really good feedback and constructive criticism.

One successful activity was when they took images from magazines and newspapers, both clients and volunteers had to pick an image that represented how they currently felt – a gloomy day in London, stuck in rut and can't move.

Someone in employment can pick the same ad – feeling they're in the wrong job or things are not good at home; they are sharing experiences and breaking down barriers. Having a job is great but won't solve all your problems, you have to look after the other things in your life. The working parent of three young kids knows that it's possible to hold down a job but needs an adjustment, while the unemployed parent thinks it's impossible to go out to work.

The thing that didn't work was when, for the first time, we let employers decide how to run an employability workshop – we usually run it with them. That was probably the one that had the most challenging clients. They shared tips on CVs, applications, dos and don'ts at interview, but it lacked the interaction between clients and the hands-on, group interaction. PDT staff could have made a world of difference, they would have handled any issues, there and then.

Getting people here is not always easy, it might not be a straightforward journey, they might not be familiar with this part of London and Paddington station can be overwhelming. We try to make all workshops run in school-friendly hours and always have refreshments. Trying to run courses in different boroughs can be difficult, finding the best centre and accessible training centres. Employers tend to be in Westminster and can find it difficult to go out to Barnet.

The GOLD target group were long-term unemployed and harder to reach people, but it could have worked better if there were also groups who weren't quite as far from the labour market, more of a mix with shorter-term unemployed and maybe even people in work and looking for a change of job. It could have included people who are on a zero hours contract but haven't had any work for a year but this ruled them out. These technicalities made it harder to deliver.

One positive thing from GOLD is that we'd never been in Haringey but worked well there. The way the poverty programme runs, based on need in different boroughs, they're addressing the needs.

Staff team meeting

Staff were asked to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the GOLD programme. This meeting reflected mainly the views of staff on the ground. The team picked out a number of areas they found challenging. First there was a feeling that the targets for the programme were too high in relation to the nature of the target group. The discussion also concentrated on the nature of the economy that surrounds unemployed people. While many want to change their lives, for some the decision to stay 'below the radar' and to continue on benefits is understandable. There is only a small gap between wages for a 16-hour job in an entry level role and the benefits you can receive if not working. The advisers group reported that it was hard to persuade clients to make the leap off benefits and into work that might be equally 'paid' and which might not be secure. There was a considerable reluctance to take part-time work for this reason, even if there was a

good chance of this leading to a promotion. Staff reported finding it hard to have a conversation about how being in any work could lead to better opportunities. There was a strong and understandable imperative in the client group about what would happen if they went into work today and not what might be the advantage in six months' time. For the same reasons zero-hours contracts were a big turn off in terms of applying for particular jobs. An example was given – Lords Cricket Ground offered the programme first access to jobs in stewarding, bar work, kitchen work and other roles that supported cricket match days. These were entry-level jobs, very local for some clients with very flexible hours and good long-term promotion projects, including to full-time work. However, they were also seasonal roles and it proved impossible to persuade all but a tiny handful of clients to apply.

The session with the staff also included a discussion about what the group called 'the pedestal principle'. This is a belief they encountered with some clients that those people who were in decent jobs were in some hard to define way different from them or even better than them or certainly luckier than them. These beliefs represented a barrier to believing things could change. A further aspect of the discussion focussed on an unwillingness by some at JCP to encourage volunteering (as opposed to job application/entry). This was a frustration to some advisers as it is accepted that volunteering is a very effective way for some to get jobs. Other advisers reported that, while this difficulty was present in general at JCPs, if the adviser had a good relationship with particular officers and could explain why, in individual cases, a volunteering placement would help the person move towards a job, then the regulations were more flexible.

Discussion at the Steering group

Members of the GOLD Steering Group were asked what was good or bad about the GOLD Programme. This discussion reflected mainly the views of those in management positions.

Under the positives, it was particularly appreciated that the programme encouraged working with men as well as women. Some other programmes specify women only meaning in some cases partners had to turn away men seeking help or work with them unpaid, which they did but this is only possible in a limited number of cases. Staff also praised the range of cohorts encouraged to join GOLD which included long term unemployed; single parents; the homeless. They said the range of barriers this made evident forced advisers into a holistic response and this was not always the case on other programmes.

Some felt they had been pushed to be more innovative and some of the managers present said that the shape of the programme had made it necessary to challenge some of its funding criteria leading to, for example, extra funding coming for very necessary advice and guidance with this cohort (Towards the end of the

programme there was a reweighting of payments putting more emphasis on IAG). Also appreciated was the way the outputs were structured - for example partners could generate income through giving advice, finding part time or full-time work for clients: 'it can reward the whole journey'. This was in contrast for example to the Work Programme which rewards only sustained jobs, which, it was felt, undervalued other important parts of 'the journey'.

One participant felt the difficulties faced by the programme had illustrated the strengths in the partnership. While newer partners had dropped out early, all elements of previous partnerships had stayed in. This was described using words like 'trust' and 'resilience' and is perhaps another argument in favour of longer-term contracts or the avoidance of 'just for the contract' partnership formation. There was praise for the focus on long term unemployed. Participants in the discussion spoke about clients who had been unemployed for 20 years and, as one person put it, 'had become invisible at the bottom of the pile'. Working with this client group had created a need for new materials and approaches. For example, one adviser had devised a six-hour course called Moving On, Moving up, which dealt with motivation in an imaginative ways starting by asking participants to name people they admired and why. This started career planning on a positive note. The adviser developed this as a successful model with good participant (anonymous) evaluations before offering it to other advisers.

Others liked the breadth of the new work which created new relationships in boroughs previously not worked with. This had led to the creation of a helpful 'signposting guide', a very long list of other organisations that could help with issues like benefits, mental health support, housing. Those who worked extensively at JCPs felt the breadth of the programme had been welcome in a culture that housed lots of external providers but where few concentrated on the whole client journey, rather the outside partners tended to be just for 'training' or 'job brokerage' or 'CV advice'.

The GOLD approach encouraged the programme to offer a range of services within an individualised package. One person felt the programme had thrown a light on the importance of in-work support after the person had found a job - an element she felt was often overlooked.

A number commented on how the need to demonstrate 'IAG hours' had led to new approaches like Moving on Moving Up but also sessions with employers like Costa and QBE where employers had come in to help with the advising. The same impetus led to a very successful recruitment fair for would be volunteers. As one participant put it: 'It's a challenging project so we keep having to come up with new solutions'.

Games and simulations

Occasionally the programme manager at PDT most responsible for evaluation would seek evaluative comments through games, role play or simulations. One such was a game of 'snakes and ladders' at a staff conference in December 2018. Players were asked to add clues to a classic game of snakes and ladders indicating, in the context of GOLD, what factors sent them up the ladder and which sent them down the snakes. It was deliberately playful but allowed those most closely involved in delivering the project to express a balance of views. It also allowed for cross team collaboration in teams when the game was eventually played. Cross team work at levels 'below' the Steering Group did not happen in this project, and this was expressed as a regret at this conference. The reasons given to the evaluator for this absence centred entirely on a lack of time for these kind of activities due to 'firefighting' with evidence issues and also the wide geographical spread of the programme across six (and later seven) boroughs.

Snakes:

Snakes included 'constantly changing paperwork' (several); 'killing trees'; asking clients to re-sign new paperwork; waiting too long for evidence checks from London Councils (several); loss of trust in the programme; not getting paid on time; clients not providing the evidence needed (several); client being put off by paperwork; need for wet signatures apparently in contradiction to national guidance; feeling misunderstood by funders; clients failing to turn up for job interviews; clients leaving a hard fought for job after a few days; clients who are very difficult indeed to motivate; when PDT's Hanlon system went down for two days.

Ladders:

Clients showing improved confidence; clients having clearer goals; clients being better off financially; witnessing improved mental health; clients learning how to use a job search site; positive outcomes from work placements; improved self-esteem; sessions where there is a good turnout; clients making progress with basic IT; clients going on into further training; in work support that kept the client in a job; 'the feel good factor of helping people'; clients who bring you the evidence you need; when someone gains a first ever job; when the job someone finds is ideal for them; the PDT programme that offered well incentivised work placements; working in a good network of partners.

Perhaps these lists would not have varied in any employment project however what is striking here is that virtually all the positives are around successful or rewarding engagements with individual clients while the negatives are mainly around frustration with paperwork and monitoring processes.

Partnerships with employers

This section should sum up the views/comments/feedback from a sample of employers who have provided work placements, volunteering opportunities or employment to your ESF participants.

The tendering phase

The specification documents for this programme made it clear that partnerships with employers were expected to both help the clients get jobs but also to respond to the 'needs of employers'. Section One of the tender for example went under the heading 'Needs and Barriers of the Target Group and Employers'. The PDT partnership addressed both goals in their tender, stressing previous successful work carried out with employers including on the BAME Poverty Pilot. One partner in particular, Get Set, was welcomed again into the new partnership on the basis of their impressive track record in getting unemployed people into entry level jobs through long standing partnerships with large London employers in areas like hospitality and health. Over time, Get Set had persuaded its employer partners to abandon the 'CV plus interview' formula and instead, for disadvantaged clients, to focus on work trials and other activities that showed the clients positive employability 'behaviours' rather than their work history. The success of this strategy is highlighted in the evaluation of the BAME Pilot. It is significant therefore, and indicative of the argument that follows here, that this organisation has since made a significant change in the focus of its work, partly due to its experiences on the GOLD programme (see later) as well as in response to external priorities in the welfare to work sector.

In response to the relevant questions, PDT's bid writers emphasised in their tender potential or existing links with employers who could offer entry level jobs. Relationships were mentioned for example in Westfields shopping centre; with Esprit, Gap and other West End retailers; via Westminster Council's employer engagement arm called (then) Recruit London; with large catering companies like ESS Aramark or those providing school dinners; with housing organisations and charities. The tender for GOLD also emphasised new opportunities in boroughs undergoing large regeneration projects, for example in entry level construction roles (see case study...). It is clear from the language in the tender that the bidders saw this link with employers as a potentially lively and productive one, but also as a two way street:

"We start with a recognition that (employers) are busy people who know their business best. Training works better if employers, or supervisors, participate in its design. Employer confidence increases if organisations submit good clients not those needing interview experience. On occasions partners can offer employers useful advice – for example about funding to make adjustments for disabled workers".

The project development phase:

While there were some successful links with Employers during GOLD, the main impression from interviews carried out during this evaluation were that they were significantly less numerous and less effective than hoped for or than those which helped the Pilot Project succeed. Managers gave a number of reasons for this:

1. The clients were significantly less employable overall than the group targeted by the pilot (BAME). The emphasis on mental health; long term unemployment; and homelessness created a client group with high levels of prevocational and personal development needs. Two interviewees mentioned anxiety about putting applicants forward to their trusted employer network if they could not guarantee the client would appear employable to the interviewer. One adviser talked about clients not turning up for interviews due to under confidence, another about applicants raising unreasonable expectations during the interview like needing particular days off for visiting relatives or to start work at a different time to other people. Advisers describe a necessarily longer than usual period of development work with people – in some cases over a year and, as a result, a need to put their efforts at the employability end of the journey rather than the employment end.
2. There were high levels of beginner ESOL need meaning a consideration of work had to be delayed.
3. Organisations felt forced to look inwards (at repeat paperwork, regulation changes, the need to add layers of additional evidence) rather than think developmentally and in an outward looking way. 'There simply was no time or head space left for developing those kinds of external links', said one manager.
4. The need to recruit high numbers of economically inactive clients tended again to put the emphasis on activity at the start of the employment journey – i.e. recruitment.

There were however some successes in terms of employer engagement. For example PDT hosted a day during which Costa Coffee sent three employees to carry out interviews. Selected clients attended from across the partnership and the organisers were impressed with their appearance, attitude and punctuality. However the day, which absorbed a lot of organisation time and client travel expense, led only two job offers. The main barriers, as reported by the Costa workers were: not good enough English; an inability to understand the needs of a service industry; a reluctance to travel to coffee shops outside their immediate area.

Rachid Rouzaqui – employer partnership delivers change



Sibert and Rachid on-site

Rachid Rouzaqui was unemployed, lacking opportunities and very fed up. Now he has a job he loves, new qualifications and has been promoted with a pay rise. He holds the post of trainee site manager, working on a prestigious Grade I-listed building.

"I only found occasional seasonal work and zero-hours contracts. I was in a bad place and I didn't know what to do. I was getting very frustrated," says Rachid.

His personal adviser at PDT Employment, Sibert Barbour, contacted him with a phone call that would change everything for Rachid. Sibert worked on PDT's GOLD programme which helps people in west and central London find jobs and he had called Rachid to tell him about an opportunity to try out as a labourer on the redevelopment of St Mary Magdalene's Church in Westminster. Not only was this a potential local job, it was also a high skills project to save a famous building, with the chance to learn about conservation. The project would involve building a new learning centre to a challenging modern design; Rachid was eager to help out and develop his own skills in the process.

The opportunity was not advertised to the general public because the building company Lengard had signed an agreement with PDT that some jobs on the regeneration project would be set aside for local unemployed people. "It sounds simple, but it wasn't really," says Lucy Foster, PDT's Community Heritage programme manager. "It relied on really flexible cooperation between PDT's Mary Mag's rebuilding project, PDT's employment advisers and the building company Lengard. Just to make this one job happen took hours of meetings! But Lengard were fantastic, nothing was too much trouble, and we are all so pleased with the result."

In fact, since Rachid was promoted, another PDT client has taken his place as labourer, and that role is going well too.

"Sibert and I had a great relationship," says Rachid. "He gave me a lot of one on one time and helped update my CV. He treated me like an individual and not a number."

Further strategies for employer engagement

About half way through the programme PDT, responding to low levels of job entry across the partnership, changed one middle manager's job title to include

employer 'opportunities' development – ie not necessarily jobs but the chance for long term unemployed people to meet employers and absorb a sense of their needs and expectations. This produced some successes. For example, there is a report of a successful day with QBE – a finance firm - and some excellent post experience reports from both clients and employers. Twelve QBE workers attended, including some very senior ones, and engaged in a day of work with a group of 30 clients.

The day started with all participants, employers or unemployed, choosing a photo from a large pile of images to represent how they were feeling about work. This 'levelled the playing field' since the employers could also express some negative feelings. The day went on to include one-to-one interview practice, humorously 'bad' example interviews during which unemployed clients critiqued the poor interview skills of the role-playing finance managers and a moving exercise in which participants felt able to express their lack of confidence about getting a decent job and the degree to which they believed employers did not want 'people like them'.

One adviser commented on this: "I do come sometimes come across examples where I can see the person in front of me genuinely believes people in a decent job are somehow different to them, 'above' them naturally in some sort of unspecified way. This a very self-limiting belief but also really hard to address."

One, often successful, strategy in encouraging more confidence and knowledge about the world of work lies in work placements whereby the unemployed person can absorb the work culture and meet 'ordinary' workers. This happened in GOLD, leading to a number of jobs. However, most of these placements happened within the protective environment of the participating charities in the partnership which meant numbers were limited. "I think longish, carefully defined and supported work placements are a fantastic way to help long-term unemployed clients into work. I have seen it again and again," said one manager whose company now includes three ex-GOLD clients in permanent roles. 'But they are time consuming for the people managing the experience and our staff found it hard to lift their heads from the paperwork in this project.'

One apparent advantage for the GOLD project – the existence of a free jobs brokerage service in central London called Recruit London – did not lead to any jobs. The West End retail stores involved in the scheme tended to want young, attractive salespeople with high confidence and excellent social skills.

It is, of course, sometimes easier for projects to focus on the clients than to seek outside opportunities. For some Welfare to Work staff, this is where their comfort zone lies. It is also not unusual for companies to over-promise on employer engagement. However, the evidence here seems to suggest that there had been more emphasis on employer engagement in the pilot project, where BAME clients did not need to be long-term unemployed to engage and the result was a level of over achievement against job targets.

Ola Badamosi, programme manager at PDT said: "I don't think we foresaw the impact the change of target groups between the pilot programme and GOLD would

have. We just could not work with employers or clients in the same ways. In the pilot, the BAME clients certainly faced barriers but they did not need the lengthy and intense development that the long-term unemployed clients needed in the subsequent programme. In retrospect I wish someone would have challenged the carry-over of the level of outputs expected with this much harder group.”

Recently project funders have tended to focus on the hardest to help. This is understandable since that is where the greatest need lies. Also, the upturn in employment levels across the UK (albeit partly made up of zero hours jobs) has drawn the more employable into jobs. But there are knock-on effects on employment work and some of these were evident in GOLD and the other Poverty Programme projects in London, all of which underachieved in job entry numbers. Even though the expectations in the specification were quite clear, projects have found it impossible to reach them.

Get Set, the company that used to specialise in employer engagement, has now turned its attention towards the issue of how to get very disadvantaged clients motivated and ready for work. “It’s not so much about opening up new opportunities now,” says Thomas Harley, CEO of Get Set. “We struggled to get people into work on GOLD even with our long-term employer links. We have had to take a step back. It’s now about getting people ready to take opportunities. I think that’s harder actually.”

As a result Get Set has moved some of its workforce away from advice work and into the commissioning and making of motivational videos to help advisers support those who are very far from work.

Additional Target Group

The London Boroughs that fund the Poverty Programme were keen to make stronger links between funding targeted at tackling unemployment and homelessness, reflecting the interdependence of these two areas. With this in mind we, London Councils, funded organisations to work with homeless participants. The suggested strategic partners were projects funded under Priority 1 (Combatting Homelessness) of the London Councils Grants Scheme. Please summarise:

- How effective was partnership working Main challenges
- What could have been done differently
- Please also feedback on the support your project provided to participants recovering from drug and/or alcohol addiction or misuse.

Technically, the project underachieved in enrolling homeless participants (target 44, 29 achieved). This evaluation has already noted the impact of the withdrawal of St Mungos from the partnership. It is recorded that St Mungos at the time of withdrawal had started working with 18 homeless people but these never contributed to the final data. In addition, the data for three more homeless clients was first approved but at reconciliation stage disapproved but PDT is unable to say why.

It is hard to assess the impact the change in the partnership had on the programme since the withdrawal happened before the partnership had had a chance to embed and draw lessons from its new partners. Having said that, a number of advisers in the existing partnership had previous experience of working with homeless clients. It is however a tricky area requiring specialist knowledge. For example if a homeless client who has a place at a hostel gets a job, they are in danger of losing their hostel place and their problems may start all over again.

Definitions:

In the early days there were several debates and some disagreements with funders about how to enrol homeless people. Particularly challenging in this

respect was the need, on the enrolment form, to indicate the person's address before they could be regarded as eligible for help from the programme. For some time, this seemed an impenetrable Catch 22.

By 2018, the rules were relaxed somewhat and partners could enrol some clients without an address provided they could submit a convincing narrative explanations as to why they didn't get the preferred evidence.

One adviser's approach

Paul Tumwine was one of the advisers who specialised in helping homeless people after St Mungos withdrew. Here he describes his approach and also tells the story of one particular client.

"I started on this work in October 2017. My first step was to get embedded in a homeless charity: Homeless Action in Barnet. They were pleased to get the help and referred clients to me. The guidance referred to '12 hours IAG' but it often took more to help people.

There were often linked issues: divorce; drugs or alcohol; poor motivation; a lack of general structure in the person's life so they were not used for example to making and keeping appointments with me. There were also mental health needs in some cases and of course the need for housing. I spent a fair bit of time helping at the JCP – I went there often to talk to staff about particular clients and their UC claims.

Then I would do a better off calculation, some supported job search and CV writing. There were often motivation issues that took time to resolve. There were also issues of debt management so 'just finding a job' was never the whole answer. I had clients who were in hostels but some were sleeping rough or sleeping on buses, sofa surfing or sleeping in a church. Few had bank accounts and they didn't often have proper ID. I enrolled 15 and helped six into a job (NB some of these enrolments and jobs were later rejected at QA stage). It was rewarding work. The jobs included warehouse work, a cashier, a job at a cinema, a job in construction at Spurs.

There were issues with the funding about the ID problems and the lack of addresses. These were taken up by PDT's managers.

The main thing is you have to listen to really understand the customer's circumstances. You have to get masses of detail about where they are at. Each one is individual. Then do small steps. e.g. a group session about goal setting. It's a steering process but you have to really listen to capture all the details to give the best levels of support. It's not just a job. I would say - it's about YOU trying to improve your life. You have to address and identify the barriers and must help them get secure accommodation, must understand what going in to work will do for you. People do not think like this on drugs and drink. Also, you need to offer value: I will pay for your travel, lunch, interview clothes. You are putting money into them.

Many suffered mental health problems, isolation, having no friends, people came to Homeless Action Barnet for showers and food and then back to their sheds. They came for company as well especially Romanian and Polish people had friendship networks at the centre.

Jonathan's story

PDT adviser Paul engaged with Jonathan at Harrow JCP in January 2018. He was homeless for over a year, having lived in Thailand since 1991. He was a builder by trade, so he worked as a labourer for that time trying to make a living but found it hard as work was rarely available. Jonathan arrived back to the UK in February 2017, after being deported by the government, to find that things had changed. He was immediately homeless with no friends and family to support him.

When he met with Paul, Jonathan had multiple barriers including homelessness, no employability skills, his confidence and motivation were extremely low as he didn't know how to begin his life. He was staying in a winter night shelter in Harrow and his time at the shelter was soon coming to an end.

Paul carried out a long assessment of Jonathan's barriers, detailed in an action plan, which both agreed. Paul began with inviting Jonathan to the Moving on, Moving up session and an interview techniques workshop. Jonathan said he found the session very informative as he had never been through this before and found both sessions very useful towards his progression, which raised his confidence and motivation to change his life.

Paul then researched into accommodation for Jonathan and found a charity called Trinity who could help him out. An application form was completed with Jonathan for housing benefits through the council and an interview took place with both Harrow Council and Trinity – his application was accepted and one month later Jonathan was offered a room in a shared accommodation.

Paul then referred Jonathan to a CSCS course – he attended for two weeks and passed with flying colours. Shortly after this, Jonathan then had an interview with LDD Group a building contractor in London, which his adviser had arranged for him. They then offered him the job which he started in May 2018.

Jonathan said he thought that he would never get this far so soon, he now can get his life back on track and he is grateful for all the support he has been given on the GOLD project.

Yvonne Wilson of Equi-Vision said: “While the project benefited GOLD clients, the structure and evidence required made it so hard – demonstrating proof of address and evidence, as many could not provide the required evidence.”

Yvonne commented it was a challenge to keep in regular contact, given the vulnerable individuals targeted by the project: “Dependent on whether the client was sofa surfing or sleeping rough.”

“Referrals to other agencies were lengthy. A number of homeless clients have multiple barriers, so we had to deal with each issue individually.”

One client had drug and alcohol related issues, he also experienced depression. Yvonne said: “We had to send him to multiple services. He had no proof of ID, so getting a job was harder for him. We were setting constant targets to ensure he was sober for a number of weeks. This man was capable of working, however, personal hygiene was an ongoing issue. Once we had him settled into a routine, we did get him a job which lasted a short while; his housing still had a major impact on him getting to work. He now has a full-time job and a young child on the way. However, this has taken two years.”

“The GOLD project reporting was a hinderance,” said Yvonne. “We only needed to record 12 hours of IAGs. The scope of the work was remote, involving phone calls or setting up meetings. Getting paperwork signed within deadlines was an absolute nightmare. Expecting the client to come in to sign was very difficult, especially as they needed money for travelling. While we could pay fares but we could not guarantee they would bring receipts.

Gosia Banach of UPG describes her work with homeless participants

We connected with people through walk-ins at the Masbro Centre or they were signposted by external services, such as Edward Woods Community Kitchen or Health Champions outreach team.

Difficulties: these participants were extremely vulnerable with complex needs, meaning that they needed very intensive support on many levels, from getting an ID, advice on benefits, housing or other support services such as food banks, hostels, community kitchens, mental health services, substance misuse and health in general – access to a GP. On the top of this, we provided regular IAG, CV writing, job search, access to interview clothes, confidence building and job brokerage.

The support for each homeless person we worked with was way over 12 hours due to the reasons outlined above. Additionally, they didn't have access to computers and often didn't even have an email account, or couldn't access an old account, so we had to provide that.

It would be more effective to have a specialist organisation with expertise in supporting homeless people such as St Mungo's to support these clients. We often felt that we didn't have relevant resources or specialist services in-house that St Mungo's could provide to support them.

We had some success and some failures in working with homeless people:

1. We supported a client with mental health through ESA appeal and tribunal. This person was at risk of becoming homeless due to benefit changes i.e. ESA being stopped and at risk of eviction. We helped him with tribunal appeal which reinstated ESA. We also supported him with food bank vouchers. We found him a volunteer work placement in gardening where he still volunteers; he also became a befriender for an older person – this improved his own mental health. He started an IT course with UPG but didn't complete. We helped him to get small gardening / painting jobs in the neighbourhood but the employers would not do paperwork so we can't claim that for GOLD. We accompanied him recently at a follow-up work capability assessment which went well.
2. We supported an ex-offender, with mental health and substance misuse issues, in finding a job. This person was advised and signposted regarding many other issues including: housing; criminal record disclosure; benefits; access to hostels; food bank vouchers; access to local mental health services, such as Mind and NHS's Back on Track. We provided intensive job search support and secured several job interviews, we referred him to Suited and Booted for interview clothes, we also provided mobile phone to enable job search. Unfortunately, due to addictions and being on the streets or sofa-surfing in an abusive household, this person failed to get employment. We liaised with StreetLink of St Mungo's to get the individual referred to a hostel many times, but without success. He then went to Scotland, as he had distant family there and hoped they would support him. We know that he is now in prison charged with a robbery. Before he left, he came back to thank us for all the support provided, he really appreciated what we did. If we had access to a hostel that would accept him at the time he needed it, he would be working now.
3. We had some success as well, one of GOLD participants who was in temporary accommodation is now working and secured permanent accommodation. She completed work experience with us that helped her to

get her first job; she also studied English and maths at Masbro, as when we first met her she didn't speak English. This was another complex needs case, and we have supported this person for over two years, way over 12 hours.

In summary I would say that what can be done is limited in few hours of support on GOLD, even if for homeless clients, it's 12 hours. These people need ongoing intensive support, and if we only provided 12 hours there would be very little, if any, progress.

Soft Outcomes

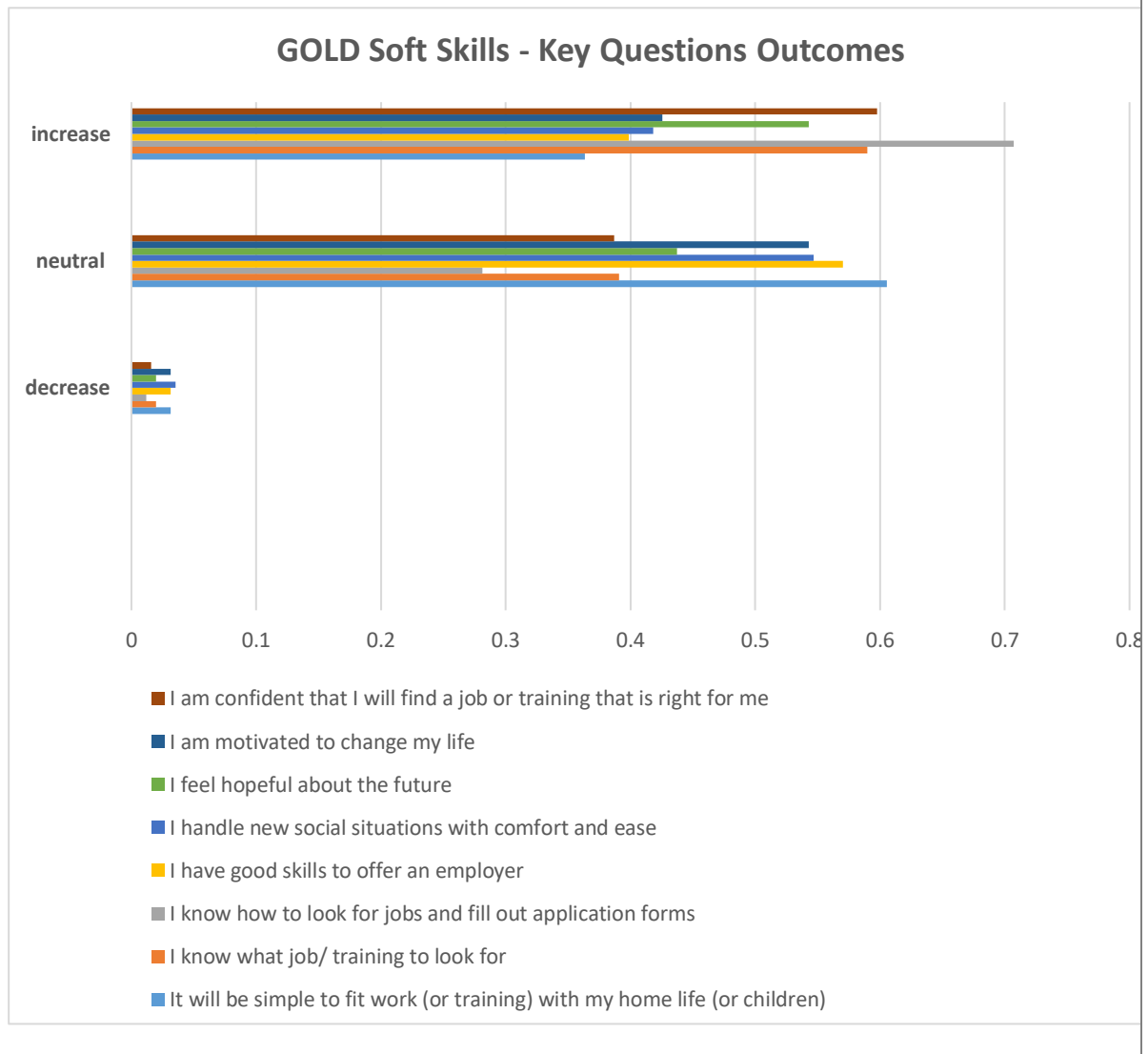
In this section please note any soft outcomes achieved. Soft Outcomes are outcomes from training, support or guidance interventions, which unlike hard outcomes (such as qualifications and jobs), cannot be measured directly or tangibly. Soft outcomes may include achievements relating to:

- Interpersonal skills, for example: social skills and coping with authority
- Organisational skills, such as: personal organisation, the ability to order and prioritise
- Analytical skills, such as: the ability to exercise judgement, managing time or problem solving,
- Personal skills, for example: insight, motivation, confidence, reliability and health awareness

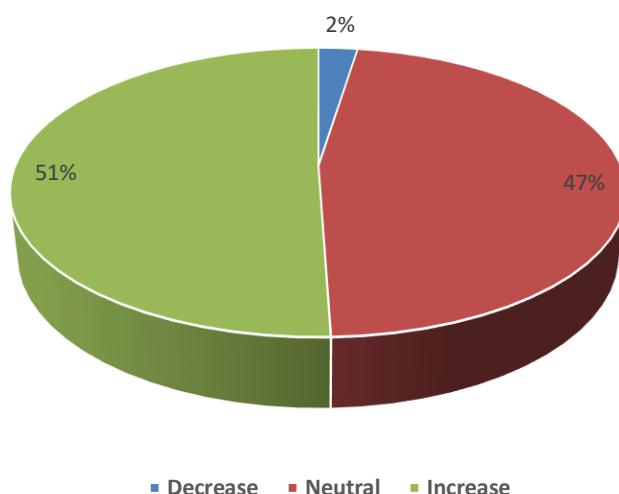
From the case studies that precede this section it is clear that progress is often only achieved when the adviser can help the individual develop their 'soft skills'. These are the hard-to-measure developments in attitude, confidence and motivation. To assess these PDT used an adapted version of the Outcome Star and results are analysed below. In general, advisers had mixed views about this exercise. Many felt it was useful in structuring a conversation with the client, others felt it was a bit of a paperwork imposition after what may have been a more subtle IAG session than this method can reflect. Most managers did however feel it was important to have some measurement of soft skills development as this is the key to personal readiness to move on in life.

GOLD Outcome Stars Results

See tables below ...



GOLD Soft Skills Outcomes - Total values



Actual Values per Key Questions

The results are based on 256 interviewees, before and after at least six hours of individual advice and guidance.

I am confident that I will find a job or training that is right for me

39% of the clients declared a slight growth in their level of confidence regarding the suitability of training or job they could find, while 39% kept their initial level of confidence, with 20% signalling a high level of confidence on this.

Two per cent registered a slight decrease in their level of confidence in finding a suitable job for themselves.

Overall, 60% registered an increase in their level of confidence in finding a suitable job or training for them.

I am motivated to change my life

More than half of the participants, 54%, kept their initial levels of motivation when it came to changing their lives. In contrast, 30% showed a slight increase while 12% signalled a higher increase in their initial level of motivation.

Overall, 43% of the interviews showed an increased level of motivation in changing their life with 3% signalling a slight decrease.

I feel hopeful about the future

33% of the participants expressed a slight increase in their hopes for the future which added up to another 21% of the interviews who showed high levels of hope when thinking about their future.

44% of the participants kept their initial feeling on this, while 2% registered a slow decrease.

Overall, more than half of the participants (54%) expressed an increase feeling of hopefulness when talking about their future.

I handle new social situations with comfort and ease

While 55% of the participants maintained their initial feeling regarding their levels of comfort and ease when handling new social situations, 28% registered a slight increase, adding up to 14% clients who showed higher levels of comfort in managing new social interactions.

Overall, 42% of the participants seem to be feeling more at ease when facing new social situations, while 4% expressed a slight decrease on this aspect.

I have good skills to offer an employer

Fifty seven per cent kept their initial view when talking about the way they felt about the skills they could offer to an employer, with 30% showing a slight increase and 10% expressing higher level of confidence about their skills. Overall, 40% of the participants signalled an increased confidence about the skills they could offer to an employer, with 3% showing a slight decrease.

I know how to look for jobs and fill out application forms

Forty two per cent of the participants expressed a slight increase in their knowledge on how to look for jobs and fill out application forms, with another 29% expressing even higher levels when it came to their confidence about this aspect. Twenty eight per cent of the participants maintained their initials answers, only one per cent expressed a slight decrease. Overall, 71% of the participants showed an increased level of knowledge when looking and applying for jobs.

I know what job or training to look for

Thirty eight per cent of the participants registered a slight increase in feeling confident about knowing what jobs or training to look for, with 21% showing an even higher level of increased confidence. At the same time, 39% of the participants kept the initial level of confidence about the type of job or training opportunities they wanted to apply for. Overall, more than half of the participants (59%) showed an increased level of awareness about the type of work or training they were willing to undertake, while 2% signalled a slight decrease.

It will be simple to fit work (or training) with my home life (or children)

More than half of the interviewees (61%) maintained their initial answers, while 24% showed an increased level of confidence about the possibility to fit work or training with their home life. Another 12% of the clients expressed even higher levels of positivity. Overall, 36% of the interviewees signalled a positive view on being able to fit work with their home life, while 3% expressed a slight decrease in this.

Interpreting the results

The use of outcome stars across the almost three years of delivering GOLD has helped us gain an insight into an area of soft skills development which is otherwise challenging to measure. Clients were asked to score these items about themselves at the beginning of their entry into the programme as a correlation to their individual needs assessment and again, after at least six hours of working with their advisers. This has allowed us to monitor any possible changes in our clients' personal and professional lives, positive or negative, that could help us improve both the service as a whole and the way we relate to each individual.

The key areas we have been trying to look into related to how confident clients are about finding a suitable job or training, how motivated and hopeful they are about their future, as well as how aware they are about the possible skills they can offer to an employer or what they would expect from an employer. Moreover, as we have become increasingly aware throughout delivering this project, one of the biggest challenges for our clients seemed to consistently refer to balancing personal (family life) and professional (work and career), so we also looked at how they felt about this after starting to work with us.

Overall, 51% showed steady positive growth across the eight key personal and professional areas of life that we have been trying to measure.

One of the most positive outcomes refers to clients feeling confident to look and apply for jobs by themselves after having benefited from an adviser's support. As an employment service provider, this makes us confident that once equipped with the right tools, knowledge and understanding, long-term unemployed or economically inactive participants could gain independence and become more proactive in searching for jobs or training opportunities. As a result, 71% of participants expressed increased levels of know-how and proactivity in seeking jobs or training after engaging with the service.

In addition, 60% of clients showed an increased assurance in being able to find a job or training suitable to their needs after starting to work with an advisor. At the same time, 59% of the participants expressed a high level of confidence about knowing what type of job or training they wanted to look for. We consider that these two items represent key positive changes in our clients' attitude and knowledge toward employment: knowing what type of work is suitable to their needs as well as knowing exactly what type of jobs they want to look for could indicate an increase not only in job applications and employment, but also in sustainability when it comes to employment. In our experience, clients who, during the service, discovered how they could best correlate their skills with a certain job or career were more inclined to keep a position and willing to advance in that field.

Another highly positive change refers to the way our clients viewed their future: 54% declared feeling hopeful when talking about their future, with 43% feeling motivated to start making changes in their lives. These are pleasant shifts in their attitude and, we hope, a positive indicator of their future engagement with job searching and employment in general.

An average of 47% of our participants maintained their initial answers throughout the eight aspects we were trying to measure. This might indicate a consistent attitude toward their expectations from themselves and the service. At the same time, we noticed three items with high levels of neutrality in their answers. The highest one (61%) showed how the participants felt about fitting work or training with their home life, taking into consideration that a large portion of our clients were parents or single parents. In this case it looks like the personal aspects and family life might require an extra type of support along with the employment service offered by the job advisers.

The other two items with high levels of neutrality on behalf of the participants described how comfortable they felt about handling new social situations (55%) as well as how they perceived their own employment skills (57%). This informs us about some of the key areas the job advisers and the service as a whole might want to explore and invest in during the future guidance hours with unemployed or economically inactive clients. It looks like clients tend to gain a faster understanding and confidence when it comes to the actual job searching and application, but it becomes more challenging when having to deal with underlying issues like self-esteem, the way they perceive themselves and the new social contexts they are exposed to. This might directly impact the way they interact with potential employers.

As previously mentioned, one of the most challenging aspects for most of our clients seem to be connected to balancing their personal and professional life and fitting their work in their family life. Although the stars showed only a very slight drop (3%) in how they viewed this aspect of their life, 61% kept with their initial answer on this point. Nevertheless, we have noticed that the results are starting to show a positive shift in their attitude on this aspect, with a slight increase of 36% in their confidence. It is important to outline that these soft skills have been measured after only six hours of the clients' interaction with their advisers and in the vast majority of cases the clients work with their adviser for much longer than that. That being said, the balancing of life and family is not an area where it is easy for this project to intervene, although we can help with advice, because of all the known barriers that face parents going to work.

Last but not least, the final reports showed a 2% decrease throughout the eight items that we investigated. Some clients feel they should produce positive outcome star scores in order to show the adviser at an early meeting that they are job-ready, so they tend to start by ticking the highest scores. As they progress into the programme, they gain more confidence, become more comfortable in the relationship with their adviser and tend to be more realistic while revising their initial scores on the outcome star. So, while from a quantitative point of view this decrease in their confidence level might have a negative connotation, sometimes, this can represent a positive threshold shift for both the advisers and the clients signalling a more honest relationship and maybe enable more realistic setting of future goals.

Project Achievements

Target Groups. Output and results

Please complete **Table 1** with the profiled number of target groups and actual number of target groups supported. Additionally London Councils is required to particularly report on how the ESF target groups below were supported through project activities. Therefore, please explain how the project has addressed barriers faced by the following target groups:

Please provide information under the following headings:

- **Disabled people** including those with mental health needs (e.g. adaptations to buildings, equipment, websites, software, transport provision, innovative recruitment procedures, extra efforts to consult with community-based disability groups, etc.)
- **Lone parents**
- **Older people** (50 years and over)
- **Ethnic minorities** including women from ethnic groups with low labour market participation rates (examples of activities to actively promote equality for people from ethnic minorities and provide access to provision for people from ethnic minorities)
- **Women** (e.g. training for women to enter non-traditional occupations)

Disabled participants

The figures show a significant under achievement in the area of supporting disabled clients.

It is worth a comparison here to the levels of BAME enrolment that fulfilled the brief with no apparent extra effort on the part of the delivery partners as did the gender split (assuming high achievement was required for women). This pattern has been common across PDT's employment programmes for a number of years. "Our projects always do well on BAME numbers and on enrolling a very good percentage of women" says Jessica Pickard. So it's worth investigating why this is not the case for disabled participants".

The answer seems to lie largely, but perhaps not exclusively, with the definitions of 'disability' held by the funders versus those held by the general public. For many people the concept of disability evokes images of physical restriction, perhaps of people who are wheelchair dependent whereas for funders it includes any category of physical or mental disadvantage which might stand in the way of a person accessing work. So, advisers report, they have clients who report mental health difficulties such as severe depression but, when asked, do not regard

themselves as 'disabled' in any way. The same is true of conditions like asthma; migraines; dyslexia etc. It is also the case that the term 'disabled' still carry negative stereotypical connotations for many people in a way that 'ethnic minority' has largely ceased to do.

One partial solution has been found by a PDT partner on a different project and will be adopted by the PDT partnership in the future. This is rather than ask the question about disability (or as well as) to present the enrollee with a list of possible conditions to tick including recurrent back pain, epilepsy, Asperger syndrome, visual impairment, or mental health difficulty. The experience of those using this checklist is that people will declare these more hidden 'disabilities' and often do themselves see them as barriers to work.

In conclusion, given the comments above, it seems quite hard to assess how many genuinely disabled people were enrolled and supported by the project.

Lone parents

The project overachieved slightly on its goal to enrol Lone Parents, although, perhaps unsurprisingly, most of these were female. This outcome was largely achieved through four means. One was the location of advisers in Children's Centres. These were almost entirely new arrangements that were set up specifically for GOLD and a good example of targeting activity to support particular groups. The other reason was that some organisations were working out of established community centres which often have a high percentage of female users. As well as this there is an increasing pressure on parents to find work when their children reach school age and parents need to show they are looking for work. Finally it is known women are less reluctant to seek employment help than men and this affects the numbers of lone parents likely to be seen in the client group.

All parents face challenges in sustaining employment, potentially a more acute issue for lone parents. In its Outcome Stars survey, PDT found that 61% of participants felt it a challenge to fit work or training around their home life, taking into consideration that a large portion of clients were parents or lone parents. In this case it looks like the personal aspects and family life might require an extra type of support along with the employment service offered by the job advisers.

Older people – 50 years plus

The project significantly over-achieved in enrolling older people. Older people are under-represented in employment. In both London and the UK only around 10% of the over-65s are employed. Due to the progressive impact of less generous pensions and the abolition of compulsory retirement ages, this rate is expected to rise over time. We know older people who are made redundant find it appreciably more difficult than younger adults to find another job, and in particular a job at a comparable level. The BIS/DWP (2010), Second Survey of Employers' Policies, Practices and Preferences Relating to Age identified how age played a role in all areas of employment (recruitment, pay and other benefits, development and leaving).

The project workers had no real explanation for the success in enrolling older people. Again, they seem a group who are more willing to seek help.

Ethnic minorities including women from ethnic groups with low labour market participation rates.

The target for enrolling ethnic minority clients was over achieved.

Women

The project over-achieved against target on female enrolment and this is not unusual for this kind of work. The possible reasons for this are discussed above under 'single parents'.

Table 1: Target Groups Supported:

Target group	Profile		Actual	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Total number of participants enrolled	378	363	471	294
Long-term unemployed participants	132	127	302	256
Economically inactive participants	246	236	169	38
Women	378	???	465	???
Older people (50 years and over)	68	65	130	119
Ethnic minorities	227	218	415	225
Disabled (Self-declared)	83	80	34	32
Lone Parents	60	59	125	13
Number of Young People Aged 19-24 (if applicable)	N/A	N/A	7	5
Number of Participants who are carers supported (if applicable)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 2: Ethnic Minority Groups Supported:

		Number (Profiled)	Number (Actual)
Asian/Asian British	Indian	N/A	36
	Pakistani	N/A	23
	Bangladeshi	N/A	32
	Chinese	N/A	11
	Other	N/A	27
Black/Black British	African	N/A	152
	Caribbean	N/A	105
	Somali	N/A	0
	Other	N/A	13
White	English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	N/A	124
	Irish	N/A	15
	Gypsy or Irish traveller	N/A	0
	Other	N/A	81
Mixed	White and Black Caribbean	N/A	11
	White and Black African	N/A	10
	White and Asian	N/A	1
	Other	N/A	8
Other	Arab	N/A	42
	Other	N/A	74

Table 3: Performance Table: Outputs and Results:

Output/result	Profiled	Actual	Difference	Variance
Enrolled	741	765	-24	103%
Long term unemployed participants	259	560	-301	216%
Economically inactive participants	482	205	277	43%
6+ hours of support (IAG, job-search, mentoring, training, 1-2-1)	666	741	-75	111%
12+ hours of support	44	29	15	66%
Completing Work or Volunteering placement	148	49	99	33%
Gaining basic skills	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Achieving vocational qualifications	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Support towards achieving a Level 2 (or below) qualification	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Progression into education or training or specified accredited support service within 4 weeks of leaving the project	148	88	60	59%
Economically inactive participants in employment/ job search within 4 weeks of leaving the project	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gaining Employment/apprenticeship within 4 weeks of leaving	222	165	57	74%
Gaining Employment within 4 weeks of leaving the project (those recovering from drug and/or alcohol addiction, homeless)	22	5	17	23%
Employment sustained for 26 weeks	141	69	72	49%
Employment sustained for 26 weeks (those recovering from drug and/or alcohol addiction, homeless)	9	1	8	11%
Submission of final evaluation report	1	1	0	100%

(Please add any additional rows for outputs and results for your project, as required)

Borough spread

The Poverty Programme is a Pan London Programme divided into six borough clusters. Please complete **Table 4** to show how well your project achieved against your profiled Borough starts.

Table 4: Performance Table: Borough starts: Project 4

Borough	Starts	Achieved
Westminster	126	182
Kensington and Chelsea	77	99
Barnet	189	78
Harrow	114	118
Haringey	143	42
Hammersmith and Fulham	92	168
Brent	0	9
Camden	0	2
Ealing	0	61
Hillingdon	0	3
Hounslow	0	3
Total	741	765

The West London boroughs were added late in the programme when Citizens Trust withdrew from the Poverty Programme

Programme Manager Feedback

This section presents the views of your ESF Programme Manager.²

Yolande Burgess, Strategy Director, London Councils

Before the project

What was this new work designed to achieve?

We were asked to commission projects that tackled poverty through unemployment.

The key target audiences were long-term unemployed and those who were economically inactive. Particularly the economically inactive – single parents, ex-offenders, those who were recovering from drug and alcohol misuse, or indeed still battling, people who were homeless – genuinely those who were furthest from the labour market. It's a programme that wants to see people in jobs at the end of it. But equally so, fairly unusually, things like work experience was paid for, partly in recognition that some people will start on a journey but you won't get them into work and we need to factor in the costs of that. Education as an outcome was built in.

A bit more context – on the pan-London grants programme, Priority 1 is Tackling Homelessness, Priority 2 is Combatting Sexual and Domestic Violence, Priority 3 is Tackling Poverty through Employment. Another aspect of the project is to make sure there were interrelationships between Priorities 1, 2 and 3.

How did London Councils select the lead partners?

It was an open bid arrangement – organisations made applications and advised us of the partners they wanted to work with, relating to the specification that was put out, such as contractors like St Mungo's working on homelessness. The bidders would have come with their partnerships in tow.

What were you looking for in selecting the partnerships?

Was it based on previous success; ability to cover homelessness/alcohol/spread of their work geographically and in terms of their ability to hit particular target groups?

Say we want to purchase a service through the ESF grants programme, we identify target groups, in this instance long-term unemployed economically inactive, then highlight some priority groups – single parents, people with disabilities. Those who are furthest from the labour market and therefore, likely to be in financial difficulties because of that – how can they better their own position through employment.

At the start

² Note to the evaluator: Feedback from the Programme Manager can take place via the telephone or face to face.

Could you talk about the changes in the way things were funded, as I understand London Councils was no longer a co-financer. What was the impact of this – did it mean you had less clout to challenge the funders?

London Councils was a co-financer for the old ESF programme, for the 2014-2020 round of ESF, London Councils was no longer a co-financer, it was a direct bid organisation, a bit like us being the prime deliverer. From a funding agreement perspective, we're the lead partner, so it's literally like we are a delivery organisation. I think some people think there are more flexibilities than there really are when you're a co-financer. But there are certain things you can do slightly differently. As a direct bid organisation, you've got no flexibility.

Why and in what ways did the paperwork and eligibility criteria change within some months of the start? What impact did this have?

It had significant impact. For a start, one of the key issues I identified straight away was that nobody in the team had realised that we were using the ILO definition of economically inactive – the International Labour Organisation definition of economically active is, you're not available to start work immediately or within the next two weeks and you haven't been seeking work within the last four weeks. So if someone will say, of course I can't start work, I've got childcare to sort out, they're economically inactive. There was significant misinterpretation of that and people thought it was the DWP rules for economically inactive, they thought you could include short-term unemployed people who were on JSA, so we uncovered significant non-compliance. That was the tip of the iceberg.

PDT would say they lost significant numbers of outputs. You visited the various partnerships at this stage, which was appreciated. Did this have an impact?

When we'd uncovered some of this, I went out with a colleague to the lead partners' sub-partner meetings and made it really clear, this isn't them tying you up in knots, this is the way it has to operate, this is the guidance, this is what you need to do. I effected some changes in the team to try and help with this, I brought in quality assurance administrators to try and help people understand what it was that we needed them to do.

In fairness to PDT and all the partners in Priority 3, they did go through an extraordinarily difficult moment in time. And they had been told things that were incorrect. They stayed the course. We've tried to weather the storm – we've not always agreed – but we're still here. I've sat in front of grants committee meetings to say, some of those early efforts were nothing short of heroic, to try turn the programme around.

One of the first things I sorted out when I came in was to pay people. When I first came in, I hadn't realised that none of them had been paid for four months, which is why I had to move really fast to get a payment system in place. By the time I came in, most of them hadn't had any money, apart from their advance.

They say it also caused a breakdown in trust with their partners, who believed they had the funds but were withholding it. Driving licences were not being accepted as proof of identity, people with residency permits were being asked for evidence that they had to provide in their dossier to get the residence permit.

I have to follow the guidelines. [We might disagree] but we signed a funding agreement and so did [the bidders]. Certainly, the compliance regime for ESF in this round is significantly more burdensome. But if somebody has gone through UK residency and has got their documents from the Home Office, we can accept that.

As a direct bid organisation, the penalties are severe in terms of audit. If an auditor comes in and does a Section 125, looks at a sample and identifies a 5% error rate, in actual value is £100 – but they apply the 5% against the entire contract, so it's 5% of £10 million. So, the actual penalties are really severe, we have been, under my direction, down the line in terms of compliance.

We have also pushed back against the GLA, we asked them to look at these groups of individuals and how they come into a programme like this, they're not going to be long-term unemployed. We used the example of how the prison service operates with the Job Centre, for someone who has had a fairly lengthy custodial sentence. Job Centre advisers go into the prison four to six weeks before they are released to do their paperwork for Universal Credit. The day they walk out the door, they are unemployed. Technically, they are actually economically inactive because they haven't worked for years, the best they've done is work within the prison. The vast majority with long custodial sentences are homeless or have very volatile housing, up to 60 or 70% of the prison population, particularly men, have significant literacy and numeracy issues, their skills are going to be out-of-date. All of that implies they are economically inactive, but the guidance clearly states if an individual is in receipt of JSA because they are mandated to be available and actively seeking work, they are therefore unemployed, so they're not eligible.

Demonstrating a perversity in the system helped us get some short-term targets, so we've used that with the projects to say, if somebody has been cycling in and out of really horrible employment, they just need a bit more support to help them stabilise their employment. Or the initial assessment and needs analysis demonstrates this person has significant needs and is going to need [additional] help.

The actual outcome for ESF is moving someone into employment or job search. We tried to separate that out to give organisations the opportunity to do more into job search rather than employment, because it's about moving people who are furthest from the labour market. It's just so difficult to prove it, we tried everything and I know the projects were really disappointed about that as well. We genuinely tried to make something work in a better way but we just couldn't get it to work. The easiest way to prove it, perversely, would be somebody who is economically inactive and then ends up on Jobseekers' Allowance. That's easy to prove but proving it any other way just turned into this gargantuan battle to the point at

which, we had a S125 audit, they've got a job to do. But I was trying to point out to them was, this is a project that is supposed to reach out to individuals who are furthest from the labour market. We've got a set of rules here that are hindering our ability to do that, to prove the added value an organisation has given to somebody, in terms of moving them forward.

Were there changes in staff and structure at London Councils at this stage? People have identified a culture shift, they describe as being from project management – including reports, case studies, interest in qualitative issues as well as data – to data scrutiny alone with a really anxious stress on issues of eligibility. Interviewees have said they felt some of it was beyond the bounds - trying to 'catch people out', 'hostile environment', 'felt distrusted', even that they felt they were being asked to be the border force. Is that unfair?

It's not unfair but it's not entirely accurate. The fact that it moved from a team that was interested in qualitative data and case studies – actually, I moved in to find a team that wasn't doing very much at all – which is why most of that team is no longer here. We have moved over to significantly much more focus on compliance but at the time I came in, the GLA was ready to take back these contracts because it was a totally non-compliant programme and we were at risk of having to pay massive penalties.

I'm neither happy nor unhappy about it – but we have a compliance-based programme. While we have a very compliance-driven programme, the sort of conversations I have in front of [London Councils] grants committee – also include the fact that, I'm showing you a set of numbers, which looks a bit disastrous, when those numbers are people who were far from the labour market and have been supported and given quality interventions by partners like PDT, [who have worked] to make sure that people are closer to the labour market or actually in jobs. What is being delivered is quality.

How were quality issues managed – was there anyone at London Councils who was looking at the 'added value' of the GOLD project? They are saying qualitative reports were not asked for – was this a policy shift – or was London Councils not staffed for this?

Quarterly reports are asked for, we ask for case studies, we ask for added value. I think what you're hearing is that all they are feeling is the compliance.

During the project

It seems there were phases where achievement picked up a bit. Why was this?

We've got a 70/30 split for economically inactive to long-term unemployed; we've never met that and haven't pushed it. [We asked the partners to do what they can], irrespective of whether clients are long-term unemployed or economically inactive, the point is, they are working with people who are vulnerable, furthest from the labour market, and they are supporting them.

From a financial perspective, we completely revised the payment model, which helped a bit in terms of pulling money in per participant earlier on, it simply enabled organisations to be more flexible about how they enrolled people.

When we talked to the partnership about extending the programme, it was clear, we are not really extending anything, we are simply stretching it. There's no more money, no more targets, that's got resource implications for all of us, that was a joint agreement with the partnership.

The project was never where it should be, in terms of what it was achieving. Why was this and what did London Councils do to address it? Also, the payment structure changed, which made it easier to achieve. And the time period for the work was extended, things that people saw as helpful and the introduction of 'transition to job search' criteria that never worked.

It was combinations of things, changing the payment model, extending the programme – definitely, trying to see where we had any room [for flexibility] at all – not very much, really. There never was going to be a silver bullet, it was just trying to do different things. Even separating out into job search and into employment [transition to job search], I bitterly regret that we didn't pull it off – but I don't regret trying.

Why do you think some partnerships do better than others?

I think some partnerships are probably more embedded in their communities, some are bigger than others and had a bit more reach. Particularly because we're talking about partners delivering in a programme that was already very difficult, it genuinely comes down to, who are they reaching? Some things I look at on a quarterly basis are where is everybody in terms of equalities measures, the whole partnerships are wiping the floor, this is really good stuff. In terms of people who are homeless, people with disabilities, the BAME communities, single parents, jobless families – absolutely beating the targets, so all of the partners are demonstrating they're doing what they were asked to do in reaching people that are furthest from the labour market. I see this through the data but it tells me these are individuals who need the most help.

It's been such a difficult journey for everybody, they've all made heroic efforts to try and rescue the programme, nobody didn't do that. There were some minor differences in that organisations were genuinely far better embedded in their local communities, they probably had programmes that they were delivering for some time, that always makes it a bit easier, because of word of mouth.

PDT has certainly done a significant job in trying to catch up with the numbers but they are one of the bigger partners.

*As we're aware, a number of complaints were made:
To you in a meeting with all lead partners*

To the chief executive of London Councils which led to a meeting attended by a trustee of PDT and a representative of the GLA.

To some London Councils (Redbridge and Westminster) who were co-funding the work. Eventually to the chair of the grants committee in a letter from all lead partners. You'll know the nature of the complaints: no database; long delays; shifting rules about data; rules that did not correspond to ESF guidance and went beyond it; data that was accepted and then later rejected; what's been described to me as 'punitive and capricious monitoring'.

Can you talk through those a bit? Did these meetings have any impact?

They were never shifting rules. In terms of the response from the chair of the grants committee, there were always going to be things we agree to differ on. This was definitely one.

It's untrue that it went beyond ESF rules. One of the reasons why I asked for a member of the GLA to be in the meeting, I asked the officer from the GLA, following an internal inspection we'd had, a Section 125 audit, are we doing anything that is above ESF rules? We were accused of gold-plating but I can pick the guidance up and show chapter and verse. While it's not a comfortable place to be, that was my job, to protect this [ESF rules].

It was coming up to Christmas, we'd done some quality assurance and I was already having serious concerns internally about our database. Somebody sends us a submission, we value up the submission, it might be worth £35,000 if the whole lot was approved. We do quality assurance and we go back and say £20,000 is fully approved, we've queried £5,000 but we'll pay it because they're simple things to deal with. But these are query-rejected and [we told the partners] to resolve them and bring it back.

Through various means and actually, it was PDT that initially highlighted it and said we don't understand why you're saying the value of our submission is X, we think it's Y, and then after the third phone call, I wrote back to all the partners and said we are accepting the value you're giving us for the submission because it's just before Christmas and will pay everything without quality-assuring it. That does mean that later on, it might then be rejected, as we didn't do the quality assurance. As those were quite big submissions, we've still had that discussion with several organisations and had to remind them, that was in the submission we simply paid, because it was just before Christmas.

And also, in fairness to them, I'm not going to say we haven't made mistakes, sometimes, it's genuinely been an error.

People have described to me staff in tears; huge levels of anger and frustration; working in an environment of hostility and combat; feeling got at and unsupported; clients upset at redoing paperwork; people dropping out as a result. Masses of time wasted chasing extra evidence. They experienced it as a culture of looking for things to use to dismiss evidence that should have been acceptable; things feeling out of control; emails not being answered.

Remember I've worked across an entire partnership – that's one or two members of staff, with one or two partners.

They had the rules, they knew what was eligible and what wasn't, if it wasn't eligible we'd have to tell them. I'm not disagreeing – is this difficult when you're working with a sensitive client group? Absolutely it is – but these are the rules, unfortunately, that's the compliance regime we've had to work with. They are on the frontline and they really feel it. So, I get that they're absolutely frustrated with it. But we can't draw down ESF if they don't have the right paperwork.

Were the complainants just being a pain or did they have a point? These complaints were quite formal and accompanied by documented evidence. Were they taken seriously? Did anything change as a result?

Of course, they had a point but unfortunately, we had a point too. That was the challenge. I spent the first year [acknowledging] mistakes I hadn't made but that was also my job. Yes, they were told something else but unfortunately, now it looks like this. Some things changed – but everything that people asked for? No, that they didn't get.

How has this project worked from London Councils' point of view? Painful? Unrewarding? Overly labour intensive? Did you allocate more staff to speed things up?

I couldn't allocate more staff, we had to run the project at a third of the original staff because we'd spent so much money running a non-compliant programme, that when I picked it up, we already had a staffing deficit, so had to reconfigure what we did with a smaller team. I know that financially, this has not [been successful] for our partners, but it hasn't for us either.

What learning has there been – what would London Councils do differently next time?

Set it up properly. Explain that if partners want this funding agreement, they have to do all of these things; they need to understand, they can't come to us and say can we change this.

With more recent rounds, we do workshops at the point at which the specifications go out, so we talk about compliance then, during pre-agreement meetings, they get a compliance pack, we then do a compliance workshops, quality assurance staff go out when the first set of enrolments take place. They work with staff in projects and explain, when they've got the client, just ask them the question now, don't say, we think that will do and then find two weeks later, we're saying, it won't do because that's not what it says on guidance. That certainly helps.

Yes, it's been painful but it's difficult to say unrewarding because all experience is learning – and therefore, good! But the bit that we were never going to be able to fix is that it wasn't set up properly, and the way a thing starts is critical and

incredibly important. And yes, our partners feel really burnt by that – and I completely get why, I totally understand.

What good things have come out of the work?

I've been working with a group of organisations to develop the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and I can tell them what not to do. ESF just happens to be a very compliance driven type of approach. Would I want to do more heavily compliant-based type of programme activity? No, I'd want something that allows more flexibility, gives people the opportunities to do the work they need to do in a slightly less compliance-based manner.

But equally so, it's public money and we have to be accountable for it. But I think we can be accountable for it in different ways.

Towards the End

Was any innovative practice reported or useful examples of good practice?

Some of the work particularly through the more specialist sub-partners, about how they've worked with individuals who have just been released from prison, some of the innovative work has been happening across the priorities. Where Priority 3 partners have identified individuals who are at risk of losing their home, [they have been able to] immediately put them in contact with the Priority 1 partner, helping them to stabilise their leasehold and support them in talking to their landlord.

It's about people doing their jobs in a way that gets the right results, it sometimes does require them to move their head five degrees. A lot of this is about getting the basics really right – very robust, strong partnership working, understanding who the partners are, how people can help, thinking about how you can create a team around the individual, not being competitive when it comes to a particular individual. All of those things, I've seen in the programme.

What will happen to the underspend?

The underspend is about a million pounds, the grants committee will decide what to do. The ESF part will never have been drawn down, so that sits with ESF at the GLA. The match-funding element goes back to the [London Councils] grants committee for a determination on what they want to do with it.

How do you think GOLD fared in terms of results compared to other unemployment programmes managed by London Councils?

Probably slightly better compared to other Priority 3 partners and again, it's a combination of size, reach, [PDT] is an organisation that has been very embedded in Westminster for an incredibly long time, so they've got those community links in a strong and powerful way.

Redbridge CVS delivered two projects; one did better than the other, possibly because they had a better presence in that part of Redbridge.

And I will say PDT don't give up. It's a quality you have to have, as an organisation that delivers these kind of projects, you just have to be very dogged and very determined – and that, they are!

One of the partners pulled out, it is not correct that they pulled out because of what they were doing with us. I asked directly the chair and chief executive of Citizens' Trust, are you pulling because of what's been going on with the project, and they said it was not, it was genuinely a change of tack.

After this, I had a conversation with Jessica (PDT) about going into other boroughs, hopefully, it has helped PDT to get a presence in those boroughs.

PDT is also an organisation that while they've got a strong presence in Westminster in the area where they sit, they have worked in other boroughs over the years, their reach was just better than some other organisations.

Has there been any impact on relations with the boroughs or with community delivery partners?

I won't say that we've not had problems in terms of partnership, not just with the agencies we work with directly but with their sub-partners as well. I'm sure that some of them have simply seen us as the devil in this. And we just have to live that. It's also my job to protect the reputation of this organisation. But I'm not going to say, we did this perfectly, we didn't get anything wrong. We did things wrong and it had an impact and for that, I am truly sorry because that was clearly never the intention. But unfortunately, that happened.

Do you think that because of what you uncovered in terms of compliance, is that regime going to be the way forward?

Not as far as I'm concerned. We've got a programme until the end of 2020, the Treasury has underwritten ESF until the end of 2023, that's a good thing because people have contractual arrangements and they need to know they have some surety, irrespective of what happens in terms of exiting the EU.

We have to be accountable – but we can build accountability into systems in a different way. Match-funding is important, it's about matching commitment, not just matching money.

London Councils has some of the most sophisticated governance. We are a membership organisation for 32 local authorities and the City of London, with responsibility for thousands of statutory requirements. We have two different types of internal audit, we have two types of external audit, we're open to scrutiny by central government.

So, if [organisations are] making an application for funding, don't give [them] new governance arrangements – trust ours. Immediately that takes out a massive piece of bureaucracy, for us as a grantee and for the grantor. Also, we then don't have pass that bureaucracy on to anybody else who gets grants to deliver provision. We

can take different approaches to things. This is not an issue around with ESF, it's a broader comment. Particularly with setting up something new, let's do the hard work of people getting their heads out of confusing outputs with outcomes and outcomes with impacts. Don't measure it just because you can measure, measure it because that's what needs to be measured. And then help us think how we actually do build in impact measures that we go back to after the lifetime of a project and after the lifetime of the funding. Let's do the difficult stuff and then let's not make it difficult for people to deliver.

Working with London Councils

This section should detail how effective you feel your partnership with London Councils was.

Most of what follows is taken from a report submitted on this question by PDT. In some cases these points are answered or addressed in the interview with Yolande Burgess, director of strategy at London Councils, which follows. One of Yolande's main points, that needs to be taken into account in reading what follows, is that the projects were set up with incorrect guidance on compliance with ESF rules in the first place:

"After the previous ESF programme the massive evaluation that was undertaken revealed a significant amount of fraud, so we've now got this compliance-heavy programme. If we set it up properly and [organisations delivering projects] know what they can and can't do, they've got to have systems and processes in place. The challenge here was we had a group of organisations that were told one thing, that should have been doing another. This was a group of organisations that were delivering in previous rounds, they knew the people here, they didn't think there was any change at all. Then four months later, amid delivery, they were asked to [make significant changes], and that was always going to be the challenge. That left all of us in the situation where some of this was never going to be quite resolved." (Yolande Burgess)

PDT has submitted a written report to the evaluator as a base for this question:

In May 2018, PDT put forward a long paper to London Councils for consideration at a meeting between LC, PDT and a representative from the GLA. It summarises issues that the project managers and delivery organisations were finding difficult and as such represents the clearest account of the lead partners' difficulties in this work. The document is 24 pages long and the main issues are summarised here.

The paper started by giving background about the current partnership, pointing out that previous employment projects managed and delivered by the same or very similar partner groups had achieved all their targets and in many cases, over-achieved them, being awarded, as a result, extra targets and associated payments. The examples included the BAME pilot programme – the forerunner of GOLD.

The long paper goes on to state that previous contract submissions with London Councils, usually quarterly, had received rejection rates (ie elements the funders felt that they could not pay that were sent back to be corrected) of less than five per cent of each claim and this was the norm for previous work also in other contracts. However, with GOLD, rejection rates were running at between 30 and 60 per cent. The paper argues that this had had a negative impact on morale in the partnership, PDT's income, that of its partners, and their reputations. Despite a number of attempts to resolve these issues, significant barriers to effective working still existed. It then lists the issues it would like to see addressed at the meeting.

Long delays in processing claims

The paper cites long delays in processing claims – between six to eight weeks. In that period PDT and its partners would keep delivering the project without knowing the errors on the previous claim. This meant that, by the time corrections could be made, the relevant clients had often left the programme or were unwilling to do new paperwork. It gives some examples:

Nov 2017 submitted claim – feedback still not received by May 2018

Feb 2018 submitted claims – feedback received in 14/04/2018 and in this feedback, the LC references ‘issues’ in the Nov claim that had not yet been returned meaning the issues, now very old, could not be addressed.

“We have continuously asked for feedback and our partners continuously ask us for feedback, so they can put right any errors before the client has moved on. In many cases this late or missing feedback has led to significant levels of lost outputs.” (PDT Support Team). Interviews between the evaluator and delivery staff suggests they did not know the cause of the delays other than that they had been told LC had established four separate levels of checking and rechecking.

The support team at PDT, says: “In previous projects, we worked with London Councils’ officer on programmes, we knew things they were looking out for as the programme for PDT includes managing the work of the other partners. With GOLD we had time to set up systems, we were well-prepared before delivery. Our system is slightly different, we take in the partner’s work, it goes through us to London Councils, so there’s an adviser, support person and overall lead, we made sure we had enough levels of checking before we submitted anything. We check and check again then it gets submitted.

“The whole climate has changed, how we work. In the employment team, I liked before that it was always positive, the approach was holistic in dealing with clients. That’s what kept us being successful. The challenges we faced with GOLD shifted that. The nature of the team is that people at their heart want to do what’s right by the client, as successfully and smoothly as possible. We keep that at the forefront, yes, we need to achieve targets – but are we doing right by the clients? In GOLD, we lost a bit of that, it became more about numbers, the smaller things, not so much about having an impact on the client’s journey.”

PDT employment adviser “London Councils wasted so much time, messing around, so that it hasn’t had the desired effect on the client group. It ends up preventing the very citizens we need to reach, by putting more blocks in front of them.”

Sibert Barbour, PDT employment adviser: “London Councils indirectly blocked us from the people we needed to engage. A homeless client was turned down because *he has no address* but homeless people are a target of GOLD and will

need a bit more of our time – but they don't accept the homeless person. We reach the people, then barriers are set up in front of us. We do the paperwork, it gets rejected but we can't leave the person hanging, we have to keep the person in positive mode."

Reconciliations:

It is usual in projects that those managing them know exactly where they stand in relation to achieving outputs after each claim has been Quality Assured. In the case of GOLD, PDT did not feel that could ever be established. The programme manager says she asked repeatedly for a reconciliation of where things stood but did not get one. She states that it was impossible to establish a fixed picture at her end with elements of old claims undecided while new ones were being judged (see later points on 'early database issues').

The paper goes on to argue that the delays and lack of a clear reconciliation had the following effects: 1. Severe effects on cash flow. 2. Overall loss of income as people who could have been claimed for move, leave or are reluctant to fill in repeat paperwork: "Many of our clients are anxious about forms and paperwork believing it may affect their benefits. (Tom Acres, Adviser from Westminster Mind)" 3. Not having an overall reconciliation meant there was a danger of 'lost outputs' as the programme managers could not keep track.

Changed judgements on evidence

PDT has accepted a final reconciliation on figures and payments with London Councils but it seems with some reluctance. The evaluator was shown a table (included below) which managers at PDT believe show evidence that was originally accepted by London Councils only to be later rejected. Associated payments are also listed. This chart if accurate represents considerable lost income to the partnership.

It is not possible for the evaluator to confirm or contradict this claim.

Nos	Output	Unit Cost	Total
41	6 hours IAGs	£700.00	£28,700.00
3	12 hours IAGs	£300.00	£900.00
15	Referral to further learning	£350.00	£5,250.00
6	Work placements	£350.00	£2,100.00
15	Jobs	£800.00	£12,000.00
2	Jobs +	£1,200.00	£2,400.00
5	Sustained	£1,200.00	£6,000.00
1	Sustained +	£1,800.00	£1,800.00
Total			£59,150.00

Changing and contradictory advice about evidence

As examples the paper cites:

Wrong enrolment forms.

At the start of GOLD (September 2016) project workers used the first version of enrolment forms received from LC. These corresponded to forms they had used before and did not require a third-party verification to prove the client's eligibility. Almost seven months into the programme (March 2017) LC sent a new version of Employment Forms and asked the partners to redo them not only going forward but also retrospectively, even for the clients who had already completed their six hours of IAG or indeed, had exited the programme, for example, because they had gone into a job. The PDT paper says that LC managers were apologetic about the problems this created, which was appreciated, but many outputs were lost.

"Advisors faced the difficult challenge of trying to 'chase' vulnerable people in many different boroughs to ask them to redo paperwork they had originally completed months before. Many had disappeared or were not willing. Some of our partners were very angry about lost time and income and some blamed PDT for it. At this point we lost some key partners." (Jessica Pickard). This was the point at which Saint Mungo's and six out of seven branches of MIND withdrew from the partnership.

"We had never lost partners before except if they were underperforming in the long term or by mutual agreement. The loss of these two partners (not just by us but by other London leads) took out some of that expertise we needed to address the needs of homeless people and those with mental health challenges. These were new partners whose work had been enlisted specifically for that purpose." (Ola Badamosi).

(In the interview reproduced in the next section, Yolande Burgess explains why LC felt it necessary to change the paperwork at this stage).

"There may have been good reasons for this change but I am not sure why it took seven months to find them. Apart from the significant impact on income, PDT had to take a lot of flak from new partners who assumed we didn't know what we were doing when we asked them to make retrospective changes. We seemed to spend our whole lives apologising and, on occasions, being shouted at." (Jessica Pickard).

Ola Badamosi: "After the first round of changes, smaller partners dropped out. Newer partners left and won't want to work with us again. St Mungo's is big, it was a new partner but dropped out. It caused problems with our partners because they felt PDT didn't get it right".

Change in referral practices

Eight months into the programme there was another change to the project, that PDT asserts was never in the initial contract. In order to be eligible for the

programme, clients now had to provide not only evidence of their employment status, but also evidence for the *amount of time* they had been unemployed or economically inactive. Additionally, economically inactive people could no longer self-declare as had been assumed. The PDT paper argues that these changes were entirely different to the practices for the pilot programme on which GOLD was based, and could in no way have been anticipated. As with the new enrolment form, the changes had to be implemented both retrospectively and going forward for all clients in the programme. Staff were now obliged to find an organisation who would act as a 'third party' who could confirm their status, which was also difficult as the partners were working with vulnerable communities and clients and many of them were not registered with any other organisation. Again, the PDT paper argues, outputs were lost.

Ola Badamosi: "I wouldn't have minded if all of these rules had been told to us at the beginning, we would have done what was expected. Extra things were being thrown in during the project – we had accepted the driving licence as proof of address, then a year in, we're told we couldn't accept it if it's over a year old. This was a complication, because for some people, it's the only thing they could give us – and it's accepted everywhere!"

1. Wrong and wavering guidance on TPV (Third Party Verification) letter

At this point PDT says it was ere provided with a sample referral letter (TPV) from LC. This started to be used this but partners found it over formal and rather unfriendly, so asked permission of LC to rewrite it, submitting the new version in language more likely to encourage organisations to refer clients. This was confirmed by LC as a reasonable change. However, with the next claim claim, over 60 per cent of submissions were rejected, largely on the grounds of 'TPV amended'.

"We agreed with London Councils we could reword the letter, as it didn't make sense. Then it was rejected, as we'd changed the wording, so we had to start collecting again which once more meant lots of extra work and a lot of lost outputs and time." (Ola Badamosi)

TPV dating practices changed

In the same claim, some work was also rejected because the TPV had come *after* the person's enrolment. The feedback on this read:

TPV – Letter has been amended Date of registration omitted from letter – Template signed 27/4/2017, therefore the participant was not eligible at the point of enrolment. Enrolment date now becomes 27/04/2017.

In other words, all work before the TPV was discounted and this included many hours of payable advice and guidance. The new TPV had to include the job title of the person referring, but the exemplar sent by LC had not included these elements as a model. LC said the changes had been communicated but, according to PDT, London Councils could not produce the evidence (dated) that it had been communicated.

On the 8/03/2018 PDT say they were told by LC their advice had changed again and it **was** permissible to have TPVs after the person has enrolled – but this was

too late to save those outputs previously rejected on these grounds. In some confusion, Jessica Pickard sent an email on 12/03 setting out what we now believed to be the position on the dating on the TPV letter and asking for confirmation in writing that this was indeed now correct. There was no reply.

TPV: wrong signatures

In May 2018 some of the missing November 2017 claim was rejected because the signatory on the TPVs had written them on different headed paper to the ones previously accepted. Seven months had gone by between this advice and the submission of data that might itself have been generated several months earlier still.

On 11/04 one third of the partnership's February claim had been rejected because LC were not happy with the TPV signatories. Even if this was a reasonable refusal, the PDT paper argues, it was not reasonable to be told of it six months after the event, since these signatories had been accepted in the past and so it was quite reasonable for partners to assume they would go on being accepted.

At this stage PDT referred the matter, and this whole history, to its Board who had already indicated serious concerns about the progress of this contract, and asked them to take up these matters with LC's chair.

Support Team: "Firstly, it was the verification letters, having to go backwards and forwards. We were all worried it would lose the trust we had built up with clients, having to ask them to re-sign and give information they'd already given us.

"There were really minor changes with enrolment forms, issues with logos, comments that the signature doesn't match on first and last page – when it clearly did. This made it look as if we weren't sure of ourselves as an organisation, we knew the reputation PDT had with its clients – but for the smaller organisations it had a bigger impact. Staff hours were taken away from good work, dealing with small stuff. This all had an effect on staff but we were still determined to bat it all back, like tennis. It gets tedious and tiring but I'm very proud that were able to keep trudging through. We saw people in smaller organisations saying, we just can't do it. And we've really done well considering everything it threw up. We really pulled together."

Yolande Burgess of London Councils recognises this: "They've been brilliant. They've put up with so much and they've continued to deliver. And every single one of them could have pulled out and they didn't. That says something about the calibre of the individuals in the organisations and the actually just the intentions and the values of the organisations themselves."

Support team continues: "Not only was the advice contradictory, in the sense that things that had been acceptable now were not, it became increasingly complex, so one piece of data had to be verified by another and then that one was questioned and required further evidence again and so on. It felt like running a race where someone keeps both moving and raising the hurdles and then disqualifying you for

not having jumped them earlier, even though you didn't have a way of knowing where they were."

Early database issues

At the beginning of the Poverty Programme, LC decided to use a new database; PDT was informed it could have multiple users on the database. When multiple users logged in the database stopped synchronising. Only a quarter of the data was showing up in the database because each person working on it had different versions of it.

The next issue with the database was errors on data entry, reports were inaccurate "We had no way to tell if all our clients were in or not. We couldn't tell if there were 100 or 50 enrolments. PDT's first claim we submitted 100 enrolments, LC said there were only 39. LC gave us a list of the approved projects but no reasons why the rest were not approved and why they were not approved. The second claim was fed back in a different format from the first, These had a **"YES"** for approved and **"NO"** for not approved with but no reason why they were not approved.

"At the beginning there was no mechanism in place to resubmit non approved files. Also, at the beginning, when we started sending claims, we got reports back saying that client files were not sent. PDT always kept records of files sent over to London Councils. We could see the files in our folders our end, but LC was not getting the files. It took till November 2017 for London Councils to realise that their uploading platform had limited capacity for uploads and was losing files when limits were reached. They had just dropped off." (Ola Badamosi)

As time went on, PDT staff report they could resubmit claims, but that it was becoming more difficult to track all the resubmissions for the different periods. "For example, we were still resubmitting information for claims in July – Sept 18 in June 2019".

No workable database

This next issue is simple and has been accepted as a justifiable point by London Councils . The Poverty Pilot projects were promised a database before starting the programme in September 2016. The database came in April 2017, almost eight months into the programme and contained multiple problems in its functioning, for example, it would disallow permissible evidence and rejected attempts at editing. Nor did it allow for the generation of meaningful summaries of the overall state of outputs.

By the end of the programme there was still no workable database, so PDT decided to continue with its own Excel based version and its own in- house database Hanlon. "I am really pleased that we carried on putting everything into Hanlon as it gave us confidence that we knew where we stood, at least according

to us. This was really important when we felt a need to challenge some of the responses after it had been QA'd. On each submission, I was sending a summary of all the clients, copied on a disk and dropped off by courier as a back up system".

No full list of expected project outputs

In November 2017 month, 14 months into the contract, PDT and other London deliverers became aware that there was a 'missing output' called "referral to further job search". London Councils explained that this output could be claimed and balanced against the expected number of other achievements, including job entry targets. Lead partners were pleased to hear of this option as it gave an alternative way to succeed and more flexibility on paid-for outputs. As is accepted by London Councils, (see following interview), this output never became claimable, because of problems at funder level about its definition.

Emails not answered and advice given on the phone only and not in writing

PDT believes it was given contradictory advice on the phone and that, when they challenged a contradiction, the implication was that the original statements had not been made. This is hard to verify but it led to a commitment in the subsequent meeting that all advice would be given in writing. PDT also asserts that important emails seeking clarifications went unanswered. Examples given were an email expressing PDT's understanding of the guidelines for dating of the TPV letter and asking if the interpretation was correct. This was not answered. On 20/11, PDT asked for guidance about enrolling an underage client in specific circumstances. There was no reply. Similarly an email asking for guidance about enrolling a client who had exited prison (ie long term unemployed, therefore, eligible) but who was newly enrolled on JSA (therefore, ineligible). There was no reply.

"We got the impression that really simple enquiries would be answered swiftly but if the answer required more thought or the interpretation of a rule, it was just ignored." (Ola Badamosi).

Agreed actions not followed up on

On the 25th October 2017 London Councils staff (Yolande Burgess and Sam Arnott) met with the lead partners at a meeting requested by PDT on behalf of all London Leads to iron out difficulties. At this meeting a member of PDT staff took minutes and these were later divided into agreed action and 'possible actions' by Yolande Burgess.

Agreed actions included:

1. An extension of the contract by six months to allow catch up time. This happened and was welcome although there were no additional resources to cover staff time.
2. All old paperwork should be resubmitted to see if any previous outputs were salvageable by the changed rules. Partners submitted this – but there was no response.
3. London Councils offered to help participants 'get back' lost partners such as St Mungo's and MIND. It is not known if there was subsequent action on this.

4. Contracts were to be reprofiled by partners and then submitted for London Councils' approval. The reprofiled contracts were submitted but received no response leaving organisations unclear as to what targets they were working to.
5. Two new London Councils quality assurance administrators were promised to speed up the QA processes, people who could also work out in the field with partners. PDT reports getting on well with their allocated QA administrator but some of the things she has 'passed' then went on to be rejected more centrally, so the system of their coming out to work with PDT was dropped.
6. London Councils undertook to talk with Job Centre Plus to help ramp up referrals. PDT is not sure that this ever happened.
7. The possibility of including short-term unemployed clients (out of work less than a year) in the eligible participant group. This was not implemented.

Contradictions with ESF requirements

A number of examples are referenced in the PDT paper, through which they assert that show rulings from London Councils appeared to contradict or go beyond those required by the ESF. These are complex but in summary they included examples where it seemed ESF allowed in-house training to count as an output, which LC did not. The Individual Needs Assessment did not count as time spent with a client for London Councils, but it appeared to for the ESF. PDT also questioned the need to 'turn people away' who had gone on to JSA after years of economic inactivity as they now counted as 'job seekers' (e.g. people coming out of prison). PDT staff questioned whether this could have really been the intention of those who funded the programme and presented more sympathetic quotes from ESF documents on this issue.

Conclusions:

In general, the paper argued that the approaches taken by London Councils amounted to significant levels of over-monitoring and 'wrong' and contradictory monitoring, at the expense of any real governance or guidance. They note that hours could be spent on dealing with microscopic reviews of evidence through multiple and laborious layers of checking and no time at all on case studies, peer meetings, good practice reviews or the content of quarterly reports that were never responded to throughout the programme.

"We don't mind being checked up on and audited and Quality Assured. This is all part of accountability. And of course, sometimes we get things wrong and quite rightly are pulled up on poor evidence. But I would argue that London Councils got the balance entirely wrong in this programme, substituting an almost paranoid level of micro fact checking and inappropriate layer after layer of detective work for any real grasp of what the programme was trying to achieve." (Jessica Pickard)

Submitting your completed evaluation

The evaluation should be submitted electronically to your London Councils Performance Manager. Signed hard copies should only be submitted once the report has been approved.