

## Project Final Evaluation Template

For Projects funded by London Councils ESF Programme 2016-2020

Organisation name: London Training and Employment Network (LTEN)

Project ID: 8228

Priority: 2 Poverty Programme (P2)

Period covered by report: 1.9.2016 – 30.8.2019

Project delivery starts date: 1.9.2016

Project delivery end date: 30.6.2019

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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:

This template has been set up to guide your external independent evaluator through the process of evaluating your London Councils ESF project and producing a report.

Projects will be required to submit a Final Project Evaluation conducted by someone external to your organisation.

Use information collected throughout the duration of your project, including obtaining information from project partners – please ensure that you have adequate systems in place to allow this to happen. Suggested systems include:

- Collecting participant feedback after courses and workshops
- Using “distance travelled” methodology to capture soft outcomes (distance travelled refers to progress that a participant makes towards greater employability without necessarily achieving employment)
- Recording all contact and activity with participants at the time
- Collecting partner feedback
- Taking minutes at partnership and steering group meetings

Other ways of collecting information for your evaluation include (but are not limited to):

- Steering group minutes
- Participant focus groups
- Participant feedback forms
- Monitoring questionnaires and reports
- Partnership meeting minutes
- Reporting database
- Staff surveys
- Success stories
- Other evaluation processes
- Case studies

Your evaluation should consider all aspects of the project fully, exploring lessons learnt.

## 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 Strategy<sup>1</sup>**

**Aims:** Aims related to activities in the Steps into Work project were delivered as planned in the application. The Steps into Work project aimed to equip 771 long-term unemployed (35%) and economically inactive (65%) people aged 19+ with skills and competences necessary to enter, remain and progress in work. The project targeted those living in the most deprived wards of the London Boroughs of Wandsworth, Kingston Upon Thames, Merton, Sutton, Croydon and Lambeth. Steps into Work aimed to recruit people furthest away from the labour market, for example, a wide range of BAME communities, parents with long-term work limiting health conditions, lone parents, women and especially those facing barriers to work, homeless people and people with disability or long-term health condition, including mental illness and those recovering from drug/alcohol misuse. The project partnership was comprised of experienced organisations specialising from within these aims and target groups.

This was to ensure 254 participants entered into work and 155 were then sustained in employment for 26 weeks. Other projected outcomes included 154 participating in at least 30 hours work placement and 154 progressing into further education. This was a huge target group with desperate needs and challenges that were all accommodated under one intervention package by this flexible and innovative project.

The project end date was originally anticipated as September 2018 but was extended to June 2019 due to the ongoing programme management problems the partnership had been experiencing

Numbers quoted above correspond to numbers given in the project application. At the time of writing this report the final numbers cannot be verified because the final LC reconciliation is still being challenged by the Lead partner.

**Activities:** Activities were customised and designed for Steps into Work collaboratively between partners and in-house of each organisation depending on their specialisms. Activities were planned to provide an integrated and flexible package of support that could be tailored to individual participant's needs. This included specific and generic barriers that prevent entry to the labour market. Packages of support incorporated:

- Thorough individual diagnostic needs assessments
- Work-focussed action planning on an individual basis
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) by trained advisers
- Coaching individuals and in groups
- Employability and occupational skills training to meet employers' and work requirements
- Job search training and assistance and information about the labour market
- Wrap around support to help participants overcome other barriers such as childcare, housing, drug and alcohol abuse, health issues.
- Links and facilitated introductions to employers
- In-work support
- Monitoring progress, updating support needs and developing new interventions where necessary.

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

### **Contributions to the London 2014 – 2020 ESIF Strategy:**

The project has contributed to ESIF strategy by supporting the LEAP (Local Economic Action Partnership for London) also the LEP (London Enterprise Partnership or Panel) by supporting the economic growth plans to create jobs and support business growth and to raise skills levels and employment opportunities.

Steps into Work has also contributed to the ESIF strategy by furthering the aims of individual borough economic development and growth plans. For example, London Borough of Wandsworth is working to 'regenerate areas of deprivation' - which the project targeted; Merton aspires to 'become a location of choice with a highly skilled workforce – in which the project assisted; Sutton, pledges to 'work to improve the skills and employment prospects of all our residents', while Croydon asserts that the economic development plan 'is about providing opportunities for people to become economically active through securing employment or becoming self-employed. Lambeth is planning 'strategies based on an underlying objective to tackling barriers to employment and equipping (residents) with basic skills.

All partners and their organisations that were engaged on the project are specialists in specific target groups within cohorts of participants who are furthest from the labour market. LTEN, lead partner, is experienced in leading and managing multi-partner employment projects. Through direct outreach into deprived neighbourhoods in the targeted boroughs, the Steps into Work project will have materially contributed to the ESIF strategy by engaging and upskilling 771 long-term unemployed (LTU) and economically inactive (EI) people from a range of backgrounds and at various levels of educational attainment.

## **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).

The majority of participant feedback has been submitted to London Councils (LC) through the regular reporting process, although there is concern amongst the partners because, at the start, they collected feedback after each intervention. However, LC asked them to only complete the feedback forms when there was an eligible hard outcome. If there was no evidenced outcome there was no feedback. This means LC will only publish feedback from a limited group of participants, so hundreds of participants are without a voice.

The evaluator sought brief feedback summaries from the six partners on topics not previously sent to LC:

*1 We had 100% satisfied participants because the project model enabled us to deliver what they needed. Our main participant group was BAME people aged over 25 and on Benefits. Their primary need was either written and spoken English and/or job-related*

*English - this was an important barrier to seeking employment. Overwhelmingly, our participants wanted the project to continue.*

*2 One of our participants said, the course 'totally inspired me to move forward with my business idea today!' and another added, 'I found the sessions both informative and inspiring. I came away with the confidence and realisation that being a full-time mum for the last 9 years has equipped me with many valuable skills that employers are looking for.'*

*3 Our participants were those who had felt deprived of work because they lacked certain skills and/or knowledge about job search requirements. They had no confidence in themselves to start seeking work. Steps into Work made them excited to be taking ownership of their lives and career directions.*

*4 Most of the Steps participants were unaware of it being a separate project apart from ID requirements and the bureaucracy. They were happy to be meeting someone on the project regularly and happy to be progressing even if took a long time - even coming into the project office is a massive step for most and takes us a lot of time and encouragement to make it happen. Some come because they are forced to by the Job Centre or Prison Service and this wastes everybody's time if they are not really seeking work. It makes them very stressed. Once the right participants start working with the right project adviser, they have more confidence.*

*5 All our participants were really happy to be supported as an ongoing option and many were in a hostel for homeless people waiting to be released from prison. The Steps adviser worked in the hostel a lot and conducted individual sessions or small groups and then workshops for larger groups. They were surprised it took so long to learn about the job search process and get into work. They had anticipated they would get into work in a shorter time.*

*6 We focus on a safe environment and empowerment through all our projects. Many Steps participants engaged in Teaching Assistant courses and Learning Assistant courses for Special Educational Needs. They had an 85% pass rate and now some are employed in schools and others have a qualification to assist their job search.*

## 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 Partner Organisations:**

**LTEN** (London Training and Employment Network) – lead partner, is a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier organisation with offices in Islington and Lambeth. LTEN specialises in Project Management, delivers complex labour market projects and assists partner organisations to raise funds and to grow.

**Centrepont**, was written into the bid at the planning stages as they have expertise in working with homeless people since 1969. Centrepont recruited for the Lambeth area and has links with other homeless organisations that referred people to the project.

**High Trees**, is a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> tier community organisation on the boundary of Lambeth and

Wandsworth. They focussed on people over 50 and those with ESOL needs from the local community. High Trees joined Steps in May 2018.

**Skillsland Ltd**, was written into the bid at the planning stages and works from a number of hubs in South London. Skillsland specialises in employability and life-skills training and works predominantly with BAME groups.

**Status Employment**, was written into the bid at the planning stages as their specialism is to work across the Croydon borough assisting those with mental health problems to find and retain paid employment.

**STORM** in Battersea was established in 2004 to serve the community, they were written into the bid at the planning stages as their specialisms include assisting lone parents and women to find employment.

**Successful Mums** based in Bromley, joined Steps in March 2018 and focuses on helping mums to return to work, change their career or start a business to suit their work-life balance.

**The following 4 partners** were originally written into the bid because of their expertise in working across a number of target groups and across a number of south London boroughs.

**Breaking Barriers** (Wandsworth, Sutton) - have high job outcomes rates whilst working with refugees, but pulled out of the programme as they found the constant changes in LC requirements and the delay in payments too much.

**Latin American Women Rights Service** (Lambeth) work with women who face a number of barriers to employment, such as domestic violence, lone parenting and ESOL needs. They pulled out of the programme as the delay in payments and many changes impacted on their limited resources.

**HCT** (Wandsworth & Merton) have expertise in working with and finding work for BAME groups in the transport industry. They struggled to stay on board throughout and experienced high changeover in staff who could not keep up with or respond accurately to the many programme changes.

**Refugee Action Kingston** (Kingston & Sutton) specialises in working with refugees, but pulled out of the programme as they found changeover and sickness in staff made it difficult to respond to constant programme changes. Delay in payments also impacted on their limited resources.

#### **The effectiveness of the partnership in delivering the required services:**

The evaluator attended partner meetings in order to assess effectiveness of the partnership. Meetings were somewhat marred by inevitably protracted discussions about London Councils' disorganised project management (described in more detail below). However, despite late payments and changes to requirements after the project had started, the partnership was highly successful in reaching the intended target groups and achieving a large number of anticipated outcomes and outputs. It was also largely successful in overcoming the challenges of working with London Councils. However, this caused three of the original partners to resign from the partnership, with a fourth struggling to submit anything before the project ended, which meant new partners had to be found quickly.

The evaluator has interpreted 'effective service delivery' as the meeting of targets and also the delivery of a quality service. The success of the partnership in delivering effectively is ascribed to several elements:

- The Step into Work model is flexible and content can be tailored to individual challenges and needs. This meant that the varied backgrounds and needs of LTU and EI participants could be met efficiently.
- The project partnership organisations were all 'niche' – meaning they each had significant



experience of working with and overcoming the challenges of specific target groups e.g. mums returning to work; homeless people; those with disability and mental health issues; those at a distance from the labour market and so on. This wealth of specialist experience meant customised services were delivered to achieve outputs and new services and/or ways of delivering were developed to meet individual cases.

- According to partners, LTEN as lead, was 'tireless' in supporting, chasing up, meticulously checking paperwork and helping out in partner offices or in delivering to achieve targets where necessary. This approach is due to LTEN's long experience of project management as a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier (or prime) organisation.

- Most partners attended the majority of meetings. They appreciated the opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other; this also contributed to effective delivery.

### **Brief case studies, not already submitted to London Councils, showing effectiveness of the partnership in delivering services**

Participants enrolled on the project with qualifications and work experience from other countries were impatient to get back to work quickly. However, it takes many hours of pre-work preparation and upskilling for the UK labour market before they can seek meaningful employment. This may include ESOL or work-specific English tuition, for example:

A 36-year-old lawyer from Syria had difficulty continuing his career in the UK. After progressing through several stages of Steps into Work and gaining skills and knowledge, he was recruited by a legal firm as a volunteer with a view to learning about the environment and vocabulary and becoming a legal assistant. He then plans to re-qualify at university when he can afford it. Once re-qualified, there are many career options open to him; he hopes to find work in the legal profession and/or with a Human Rights organisation or the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Three women from Turkey and Syria similarly went through several stages of Steps into Work; the delivery organisation also provided ESOL for them although this was not a London Councils' eligible paid target. They are all now volunteering as TA's teaching assistants) in local schools with a view to qualifying on the job and seeking a paid post.

A London woman who likes to make her own jewellery wanted to start a business. She needed the Steps into Work project to acquire basic skills and understanding. She has now been referred to an organisation that supports business start-up with the small amount of funding needed to get going and the relevant training.

After some time on the Steps project, a participant decided to use his own experience of mental health problems to help others. He volunteered in the partner's mental health workshops while studying for six months towards a HERAS qualification. He gained the qualification and is still volunteering while seeking paid work.

A Steps adviser assisted a participant to avoid being sanctioned by the Job Centre (JCP). His JCP adviser accused him of lying when they did not receive each other's emails – particularly when the participant had been asked to upload and send, for example, a CV or job application. The Steps adviser called the JCP and watched him sending an email while she was talking to the JCP. Later, a glitch was found in the JCP system.

A single mum of 25 and with no qualifications hadn't been in education since school. The Steps adviser worked to improve confidence and she passed a TA course and then took the complementary courses for SEN and dyslexia awareness. Her confidence has grown; she is 'hungry for learning'

### **Working relationships between lead partner and sub-partners.**

All partners are very positive about the relationship between the Lead and themselves. Just one partner (who only started delivery last year), had not fully appreciated the difficulties that LC were causing the Lead and blamed LTEN for late payments and changes in reporting and recording requirements. When the situation was clarified, the partner thought LTEN could have done more to continually inform partners and/or negotiate with LC. However, it seems that LTEN informed partners regularly through emails, partner meetings, phone calls and visits but some partners realised that not all LTEN's messages were circulated throughout their organisations.

When questioned about the working relationship, partners said:  
LTEN were 'very good'; 'really positive' and very supportive; they kept us up to date with loads of information, emails and regular meetings';

With reference to the workload, partners said, 'how do they cope with all that paperwork? They did a great job'; 'especially when it came to the ever-changing goal posts'; 'LTEN always tried to explain and to communicate directly with us'; 'they were very very helpful – sent blank charts, helped us fill them in, trained our new staff'; 'no failures of the project are down to LTEN'.

One partner said, because of the pressure LC kept putting on LTEN – changes to criteria, paperwork, deadlines, late payments - it did put pressure on the relationship because we would contact LTEN to complain. It caused tension. But, in general, LTEN were so understanding and helpful'. In general, very helpful.

Every partner said, 'we would definitely work with them again - without doubt we would be very happy to work with them again'.

#### **Working together within the partnership:**

When interviewed for the report, all partners recognised that working as a team to share ideas and referrals can strengthen a project but, some partners stated that opportunities for this were limited because each organisation was so specialist and the client groups were very different. Also, this type of work is 'relentless' and there is little extra time beyond delivering the project at individual level – especially with the additional pressure of the LC changes and sudden requests. However, there was a good working relationship in partner meetings where experiences were shared, issues discussed and ideas generated.

Partners said: 'the partnership as such was useful to a degree – but we were all under such pressure the benefit was not as strong as it could have been'; 'it was disruptive and distressing when people dropped out and new partners came in'; 'we would like to work with them all again'; 'we could meet each other properly at meetings, we all had too much to say querying submissions, what we were getting paid, and *if* we were going to be paid'.

On the positive side, partners said, 'we are working with a couple of the partners since the project ended – we didn't have time before;' and, 'it was good to share experiences and confirm that the extreme frustration was general – not rare!'

## **Project Strengths/Areas of Improvement/Added Value**

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

- Project strengths
- Main project challenges (include how many participants enrolled on the project and how



many participants disengaged)

- 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)

### **Project Strengths:**

During partner meetings, the evaluator observed that, at the delivery organisation/participant level, the project was working extremely well; it was dynamic, successful in recruiting and assisting participants, and sufficiently flexible and energetic to address problems as they occurred - such as the need to improve achievement of target numbers. In speaking to partners for this final evaluation, all were clear that the adaptable delivery model for Steps into Work was its greatest strength as it enabled the partnership to work with a diverse range of target groups spread across a number of London boroughs. As far as can be ascertained, it is a unique, innovative and economical approach to respond to so many issues within one delivery framework and one large project. That is, dealing with long-term unemployed and/or economically inactive people with additional challenges such as mental health problems, homelessness, drug and alcohol misuse, refugees, those on Employment and Support Allowance for health reasons (ESA). Feedback from partners indicates that the partnership mix of experience and expertise, with the multi-faceted approach to delivery and support, evoked community interest from participants, other organisations and key workers.

Partners noted that, 'the project model provided the strength because it enabled delivery of what was needed' and 'the package suited the client group very well and facilitated what they (clients and organisation) wanted to achieve'. One partner called the project 'rare' because two thirds of their participants were long term economically inactive but not on Benefits because they were being supported by a high earning working partner. They were all returning to work but needed tailored assistance, information and upskilling for the current labour market. Steps into Work, unusually, meant that people not on Benefits could be helped back into work. Project partners said they would be keen to deliver a similar model again – either from their own organisation or in partnership.

### **Other project strengths highlighted were:**

- It was mutually beneficial to meet, and be able to effectively assist, participants with very high needs
- It provided the opportunity for continuing personalised support
- It enabled new experiences for some partners including the 'payment by results'
- Bizarrely, the continual LC changes and changing demands, enabled one partner to identify areas of their own paperwork and systems that could be improved.
- The highly specialised demands of the project itself suggested topics for CPD, for example, employment advisers needed to update on vocational profiles
- One partner, had been offering a similar package of support to their own target group but had not been part of such a large partnership before it broadened their horizons.
- It became a strength when LC accepted that homeless people don't always have the required ID documents. Homeless self-declaration was accepted by LC.

### **Suggested areas of improvement:**

Partners made the following suggestions when asked to suggest areas of improvement:

- The fact that there was little opportunity to make relationships with the other partners was seen as a loss that could be improved in another project that was not suffering

from the pressure outlined above

- Projects would be improved if regulations were not changed half way and if clear guidance for completing paperwork was given at the start and not changed – ‘clarity from the get go’.
- Steps was described as ‘paper-heavy’ and ‘anti-environmental policies’ – an improvement could be for programme managers to think digital and online
- LC required copies of documents such as passports. It was suggested that this was seen by participants (and some partners) as a data protection/GDPR issue which could be improved.
- Try to improve practices so as not to confuse or alienate participants, for example, the driving licence was no longer accepted as valid ID but was not immediately removed from the enrolment form that participants worked with.
- Simplify evidence requirements
- Improve LTEN's working lives and make things easier for them. They have been a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier organisation for a long time. They check meticulously. Any minor errors on the claims could be corrected on the subsequent claim – not allowed to hold up payments.
- Improve the programme manager's understanding of the target group/s and assist Leads and partners to find ways of providing realistic evidence, for example, once people have a job they may not want an employer to know they have been assisted into it, they are not interested in providing information – they then become ineligible and cannot be counted as an outcome.

### **Main challenges**

The LC methods of working and managing the programme which constitute the main challenges highlighted by every member of the partnership, are described under ‘main challenges’ in the ‘Additional Target Group’ section and also near the end of the report in ‘Working with London Councils’. The evaluator asked partners to identify challenges not connected to LC for the points below. They said:

- Getting evidence from employers because they either don't want to engage or they are busy and ignore requests. Participants hesitate to ask employers or don't want to provide payslips so they often stop answering partners' communications – they lose contact and disappear. ‘Halfway through the project we made them sign a formal undertaking to say they would obtain evidence from employers as part of the Learner Agreement. Otherwise all the time we had spent on assisting them into work was wasted and much of it not counted’.
- If making progress with a client, it is challenging to tell them that their time on the project has finished because they have exhausted the options. ‘We organised a weekly group job club so they could continue accessing support but another challenge was finding the funding for that’.
- Partners noted that Steps was very ‘paperwork heavy’ which created organisational challenges and the consequent making project resources stretch to providing the time and support that participants needed. With so much paperwork, some partners said it was sometimes a challenge to monitor individual progress.
- Participants noted and reacted negatively to the programme name ‘Poverty Programme’ being clearly visible on official paperwork
- The original paperwork became invalid and had to be done again; it looked very unprofessional to keep going back to participants to ask for more or different items.
- Getting evidence which was then rejected by LC was a challenge. ‘We could be working for weeks and then LC rejects the evidence which often caused clients to give up. They were all vulnerable, they just want support - especially people referred through other support services, for example if they are on Benefits, they have

already been checked and checked again so this should be valid evidence', or, if referred, for example, by their psychiatrist, they are in the system, they are not just a random person'. Similarly, a referral from JCP should be enough to identify the person with a few simple verification processes – JCP/DWP checks are stringent and valid.

- ID requirements can be a challenge in certain circumstances, for example, a British woman with no passport who has been married and then recently divorced may have no relevant documents and the name is different on earlier documents such as birth certificate. Some people from certain cultures or religions don't have the confidence to ask for their documents which may be in the name of their husband. They don't like being constantly asked and it was reported that some broke down in tears because they were being questioned. For many, it can bring memories of repressive regimes and/or traumatic events. These are challenges.
- People were scared of the amount of paperwork; scared they would lose Benefits and they asked why so much evidence was needed; they thought they were being checked up on.
- Homeless participants may not turn up to appointments or may not stay on the project; 'the challenge is to spend as much time with them as possible on first day to complete a CV etc because they may never come back- even if they are keen to get on'. This was a similar problem with a number of those with mental health problems too.
- It is a challenge when people have been out of education for a long time. It can be difficult to keep them on a course and they may have 'behaviour problems' such as talking when the trainer is talking.

### **Value added to the ESF programme and objectives**

The Steps into Work project added value by delivering dynamic quality services to a large number of long-term unemployed people and by assisting them to make significant progress in varied ways and degrees. Project partners also found ways to add resources and activities to the project to increase impact and improve the outcomes of their participants. Moreover, the project model itself should be seen as added value and should be included in the ESF and London repertoire of project models to be disseminated and replicated by others. Examples of added value are:

- The model perfectly matched client group and enabled them to identify, develop and use transferable skills. All partners found this despite the very different client groups.
- 'Because of the project, lasting contacts were made with other organisations that were not part of the partnership; this has created a firm base of local contacts for going forward which will strength the localities we work in'.
- 'We made links with a community organisation that provided cooked lunches for our Steps participants and we offered skills training. Our participants loved the lunches and the chance to relax and socialise'.
- 'We built relationships with the Steps participants and used the project as a route into other projects. This way we can work with them for longer when they need more than 6 hours support'.
- 'The Steps enrolment process meant we found clients that didn't fit into project and the result is that we have set up a job club that will continue'.
- 'We added the Skills to Succeed online course to our Steps project and paid the registration fee out of other funding. This really suited our clients'.
- 'We provide a safe environment for women with a nursery and on-site counselling. This made it possible for many participants to enrol on the Steps project who would not otherwise have been able to. They can also use our computers during the week.'

The Lead identified a range of value added such as:

- The significant upskilling and the number of hard and soft outcomes.
- Working with so many professionals – experts.
- All partners becoming upskilled through contact with the target groups because it was a very specialised project.

**The evaluator also asked, ‘What have you learned?’**

Inevitably, the continual challenges posed by LC, overshadowed project events and some of the learning is connected with this. Partners said:

- ‘In many ways, Steps was a dreadful experience so we have made some resolutions such as, we must clarify funding rules on a project before we start and request the funder to certify these in writing. We are so much more wary and now much more sceptical of entering into any funding arrangements without official confirmation.
- ‘We lost funding for 60 learners who were enrolled on Steps and with whom we had spent considerable time. This was because the ID requirements changed and self-declarations had to be supported with a TPV – for this huge number of learners at a long distance from the labour market – or anywhere else – it was impossible to obtain valid TPV’s unless, for example, they went back to school after years’. We have learned to check all these requirements at the beginning of the project and get the funder’s signature.
- ‘We have discovered the need to work with other grass roots organisations; it has given us immense strength and opportunities and knowledge about different communities. We have also been working with churches and community organisations and will continue’.
- ‘Word of mouth brought many new participants and this was because participants discovered the project really supported them and helped them move on. We told them to bring friends and relations – and they did! We will do this again’.
- ‘This was our first payment by results contract and we learned a lot about how to approach it next time especially the tension between balancing the needs of participants with meeting targets. Also, we will be more careful about what targets we agree to and will require more detailed explanation of the processes required to achieve the outcome’.
- ‘There is a large disparity between participants in levels of understanding and carrying out different tasks. This meant we were learning how to address individual needs within more generic services’.
- ‘We learned new ways of planning to move forward and organising group activities to address general issues’
- ‘We learnt a lot about project management, the pitfalls, remedial action, managing delays and substantial changes’

## 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.

Partners had little feedback from employers to contribute to this section and in view of comments already made and below, the evaluator did not approach employers directly. Partners said:

- 'We were not building up a network of employers. We skilled up the women and then they went off and managed their job search process. They had all been employed before and many were career women who had taken a long break. They worked with us to bring their knowledge of the labour market up to date and could then continue with one-to-one support and a coach. They did not want to share pay slips or tell employers they had been on a Poverty Programme project. Sometimes this meant they would tell us they had found work but they didn't disclose any further information'.
- We didn't succeed in obtaining any feedback, mostly because the employers didn't have time or didn't see the point. It was embarrassing for us and our participant to keep asking. Participants need a long time to learn workplace and job-related skills, we could seek feedback if we went into the workplace, but often clients did not appreciate it'.
- 'it was very difficult. One homeless client became employed and was still in work after 26 weeks but the client didn't respond to us and we didn't like to ask the employer as we didn't know what the situation was. We didn't want to make the employer suspicious. Another employer and client were really pleased and helpful but it still didn't result in valid feedback no matter how many times we asked. They were based in Wolverhampton so it wasn't feasible to visit.

## 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.

### How effective was partnership working?

The partnership worked well initially, however, partnership working became difficult as the programme went on due to the errors, constant changes and unpredictable project management from London Councils. This meant that partners became focussed on the negatives and LTEN, the Lead, had less time to work on developing the partnership and on the more positive aspects of the project. For example, about six months after the project started, London Councils made huge changes to paperwork and eligibility criteria this included bringing in Third Party Verifications (TPV's) forms and the copying and storing of ID documentation. These were discussed and the partnership responded robustly, even so, they lost many clients over that period which meant they had spent time and money that now could never be recouped.



Other, continuing, changes were not always discussed with LTEN first – the project manager said it felt as though these changes were being ‘slipped in under the radar’; no notice was given and sometimes another Lead might pass on the news. This meant LTEN felt they were often ‘fire-fighting’ as a result of London Council’s management style. They could not always plan in advance to minimise damage, including mitigating partners’ negative experiences or putting resources in place to soften the impact. LTEN said ‘This was very difficult to deal with particularly as lack of funds/late payments and long turnaround of the feedback of submissions throughout the project rested heavily on all our decision making and had a significant effect on the partners’.

Under these circumstances, the Lead found that maintaining the good relationship with the original partners was very testing, even though they understood the problems had not been caused by the Lead’s management. New partners did not understand historic issues which took partnership development backwards at times. In fact, one partner in particular blamed the Lead for bad management and at another point, they became locked in a dispute over the late reconciliation and final payments, which were on hold until LC completed the reconciliation process.

### **Main challenges:**

Challenges not connected with those created by London Councils (LC) have been described in the section dealing with ‘Project strengths and areas of improvement’ above.

The evaluator has been asked by the Lead and partners to specify the major challenges caused by LC because it had such a great impact on their work and well-being. Also stressed for small not-for-profit organisations, disruptions in cash-flow can be catastrophic and this caused extra hardship on many occasions resulting in staff being paid late and reputable organisations near collapse.

### **Money issues:**

#### *Advance payments*

The Lead was instructed by LC to give all partners 10% of an advance payment at the beginning of the project. The Lead explained that this was not how they usually operated. However, LC insisted, and against their better judgement, LTEN gave all partners the payment before having ‘tested’ their ability to deliver within the project. LTEN then struggled to reclaim these payments from partners who dropped out, but where partners have not had submissions approved, it may be impossible to reclaim. LTEN should not have to bear this cost.

#### *Irregular payments:*

Payments on claims were often late, for example, the February 2019 QA was not processed until May 2019 and payment had not been received on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019. Also, LC would hold up the whole payment while sorting out relatively few paperwork queries. When payments were late or less than anticipated because evidence was deemed insufficient, LTEN or the partners had to find the money to make good as far as was possible.

Partner’s viewpoints: ‘Please make payments on time. We have always worked with funders who stuck to a payment schedule which meant we could budget’. and, ‘LC changed the monetary value of starts and outcomes - at one point we were not sure how much was being paid for certain starts - waiting for LC (but the start rate went up which was very welcome).

#### *Reconciliation of payments*

LTEN states that, 'reconciliation of payments claimed against evidence submitted and submissions approved and not-approved has been ongoing for months and backwards and forwards for over a year. We hoped LC would complete this by July 2019 but the final reconciliation was not finalised until September. At one point, two members of staff spent two weeks working solidly on the data and information sent back to us from LC. We had not expected this so had not budgeted for it. While we waited for the outcome, partners asked for their final payment, but we could not pay them until the reconciliation was finalised.' Even at the end of the project, the Lead checked through the outcomes agreed by LC for a final time and discovered errors. LTEN said they have spent a number of weeks reconciling and still the figures don't tally. LTEN also stated that if they had the opportunity to challenge the final numbers they would, they still feel that some submissions should have been paid as they feel they have provided adequate evidence, but they remain unpaid and this will affect individual partners.

A partner's viewpoint:

'There was such a difference between what was submitted and what was accepted. We had to tell participants that we can't work with them until they bring the right documents. This is very off-putting for some. It damages a fragile relationship' and, 'waiting for expected payments and not knowing how much it will be really puts pressure on the organisation'.

#### **Changes:**

A constant challenge was the changes made to the evidence needed to accompany claims for example, some of the project target groups are absolutely limited in the ID documents they can be expected to produce (e.g. refugees). In a project specifically funded to seek out and work with these groups, a more adaptive approach to evidence needs to be embedded from the start. In addition to the difficulties in enrolling and retaining potential clients with limited ID, the evidence required was changed by LC no longer admitting driving licences more than 2 years old, then more than 1 year old. LTEN said that 'managing this was very challenging' particularly as it was bought in so late and not rectified on the enrolment form until September 2018.

A partner's viewpoint:

'Please stop changing forms – have everything ready at the start and run with it', and 'it makes us look very unprofessional if paperwork has to be changed, it's embarrassing and sometimes JCP advisers become suspicious'. 'We do understand fraud but there must be a better way of doing it and setting up before the project starts. 'How can they change evidence requirements half way through a project?'

#### **Evidence discounted:**

In the final few claims submissions, LC requested new evidence to show that clients had been supported into work. They seemed to require evidence of very recent support and disregarded all the help that had been given before - which was within the 6/12 hours support the client needed to learn to work independently to look for work. This led to lengthy disputes over whether or not the job could be claimed and held up payments. At the end of the project (June 2019), the partnership was still awaiting the outcome of these disputes. Some Third Party Verifications (TPV's) were also challenged because, the Lead maintained, for example, that a dentist or optician should be able to sign a TPV as they check benefits in order to take a patient on for NHS treatment or not. They also keep ongoing records of previous appointments showing employment status of patients and which benefits they receive. In the final reconciliation process, LTEN were told 'we would not be paid for these clients, which of course will have to be passed on to the individual partners' involved.

A partner's viewpoint:

*'When a participant's signature was in the wrong place, they were often made to do a whole new form'. 'It got to the point where so much evidence was challenged or outright rejected that we wondered if LC had an ulterior motive in holding on to the money'.*

#### **Lack of a Database:**

LC did not provide a comprehensive database on which to store our monthly submissions, this would have allowed us to organise all information in a standard way across the programme – despite similar databases having been used on similar programmes in the past and being widely available. The Lead, with many years' experience of successfully managing large projects and partnerships, found that not having a programme database made reporting very difficult and inefficient. LC initially promised each month that a database was forthcoming and this meant LTEN did not make alternative long-term plans for collecting and recording information because they were continually in a state of waiting. This created a situation where they had no accurate figures and could not assess at times whether achievement of targets was ahead or behind. They had to carry out manual counts and felt they appeared quite incompetent to partners. This was exacerbated by the slow turnaround of data and lengthy reconciliations from LC. Final reconciliation at LC continued until well after the end of the project (June) and still seems to contain errors. The numbers in this report are based on figures that are still being challenged by the Lead.

A partner's viewpoint:

*'LC talked about a new system coming but it never did'.*

#### **Impact on participants**

Some problems were so great that partners saw participants disengage and drop out of the project entirely. Particular issues cited by partners were: participants having to produce different evidence on successive visits; not being able to use driving licences as ID and not having access to any other ID; project staff taken off advising to do paperwork resulting in not enough staff to deal with participants' issues. As a result of the challenges, some partners had ongoing staffing problems and high changeover in staff; this meant extra staff training being repeated and it impacted on the staff/cost of LTEN.

A partner's viewpoint:

*'When we asked for more ID or there was more or different paperwork to complete, participants regarded us as the tax officer or an immigration officer. It is very damaging to the relationship with the learner'. 'Participants left the project because they couldn't cope with the changing demands'*

#### **Client Surveys**

At project start, participant feedback forms were used regularly to evaluate response to activities. However, LC suddenly asked the partners to only collect and submit client surveys when they achieved an outcome (FE/Job) and the survey became part of a leavers form. The knock-on effect of this is that only those surveys are then put on the LC/GLA Employment Performance Ratings (EPR) database. The rest of the clients 'have no say' as they do not submit anything. Yet, many of those who do not submit anything get the most support even though they may never go into FE or employment.

An example of this is a client LTEN has been working with since November 2018, she was very far from the labour market and faced significant challenges. With support, she obtained work twice, but then left after a couple of days saying the job was too hard or it was not for her – but she is moving nearer to achieving. She has needed constant (almost daily) support but seems to self-destruct just as her life is becoming better, so has not

progressed substantially although making discernible improvement. She has now complained of being raped, but will not go to her GP or accept community counselling support for fear that she will be put on anti-depressants. LTEN will introduce her to a community group that may be able to help, but they will still need to attend at least the first meeting with her and introduce her. This participant and partner will not have the opportunity to comment – together with the others who get support as they have not achieved an FE or job.

These participants are obviously people for whom the project was designed and funded for, as the support she has received is helping her. Yet, she is not an outcome, and therefore not entered on the EPR (LC rating database). This method is clearly not fair to the project partners and the majority of clients' views will never be told or officially recorded.

The Lead cites a statement from the interim report which shows how important it is to take this into account at this time:

*'After Brexit and the loss of European funding, all small organisations seeking funds will need to be able to demonstrate quality delivery, substantial impact on beneficiaries and value for money. That is, high level efficiency and effectiveness in an increasingly competitive, fund-seeking context. This means that hard evidence of the quality of projects, efficiency, effectiveness and viability is of significant importance for the future of each Steps partner'.*

#### **LC not understanding the Target Groups:**

Partners felt that LC did not fully understand the target groups that the project was specifically designed for and made awkward or unrealistic suggestions, for example:

- Demanding that participants bring all their eligibility documents to their first meeting or they could not be enrolled. This showed no understanding that the project was working with the hardest to reach of the LTU/EI groups, some had been unemployed for 10, 15, 20, even 30 years. It took a lot of encouragement for them to come through the door; many were unorganised, did not plan on a daily basis, could not find documents, had never kept a diary. These were basic pre-outcome skills they needed to learn.
- LC did not understand that many of those who were mentally ill needed more than 6 hours support and should have been included in the 12 hours support allocated to the Homeless/drug/ alcohol category. Even 12 hours was often not enough for an individual case as they needed support in so many different areas.
- For those affected by drugs and/or alcohol there was the added problem of some not attending as regularly as LC felt they should. They were often disorganised, got appointments mixed up, some were depressed, had anxiety and went missing for a number of days or weeks, some did not answer phones or emails. This was explained by the Lead but not taken on board by LC, in the Lead's words, ' they failed to understand and demanded more and more new evidence to highlight this'.

The Lead explained that because LC did not fully understand the participants' status and entitlement, they rejected some submissions. It was very frustrating for the partners, and time-consuming for LTEN, to have to explain this within feedback to claims to LC. The Lead also had to go back and forth to each partner for extra evidence and accumulate and scan it to explain to LC every time - this further delayed payment. It also meant that partners felt that LC was casting further suspicion on their target groups and was now 'being trained by the partnership', for example, in how to understand various immigration status/terms that applied to the participants. Although the final figures have now been given, there are still a number of these participants unpaid which will affect the individual partner's final payments.

A partner's viewpoint:

*'There seemed to be a lack of understanding and flexibility'.*

### **Impact on the credibility of the Lead and partner organisations**

In many ways, the issues brought about by LC impacts on the credibility of the Lead and are long-lasting with detrimental effect. All the partner organisations were very experienced and professional and poor performance reflects badly on LTEN and the partnership. For example, partners' track records show that they do not usually lose clients; they achieve targets or even exceed targets; they keep good records. LTEN realised that when new partners were brought in after the project had started, it was difficult to explain the ever-changing history of paperwork and evidence required and that as the Lead they just looked inefficient. Also, at the end of the project, it looked as though partners had underperformed because participants were still rated as on the project and had no outcomes. All partners said they had put so much into the project, but their overall score will be low because the published figures are 'incorrect'; it would be clearer if LC stated publicly that it only counts leavers with outcomes.

A partner's viewpoint:

*'We look unprofessional and as though we don't know what we are doing'.*

### **Other issues:**

- Issues with Job Centre Plus (JCP) which LC could/should have resolved but continued to be challenging, for example, JCP advisers who referred clients to the project would not sign LC documentation which is a nonsense but LC for whatever reason could not resolve this.
- When the Lead asked LC how many hours constitutes an FE outcome, we were told they would be judged on a 'case by case basis'
- A jobsearch outcome for those Economically Inactive was introduced very late (2018) into the programme. This was after a number of meetings with LC/Leads and then all Leads, their partners and LC. However, when introduced LTEN were unable to claim any of these outcomes and other Leads only claimed a few, as LC did not listen to the evidence requirements suggested and introduced something else which was unobtainable by the target group.
- Partners were told that the project end date was 28<sup>th</sup> June. LC required everything to be submitted including the evaluation – despite the fact that June figures were not available for the report.
- Many of the problems outlined in the interim report remain the same at the end of the project.

A partner's viewpoint:

*'Some issues raised with LC were never clarified' and 'we asked for diversity reports but it never happened'. 'we were told ESOL didn't count as an outcome.'*

### **What could have been done differently:**

- The programme could have been set up thoroughly and effectively before the start and then managed efficiently. This would have included delaying the start date and extending the end date further to ensure that the paperwork be correct and standardised, compliant and agreed; a fit-for-purpose database; agreement on eligibility and evidence requirements (based on knowledge of the target groups) a realistic approach to payments and understanding of the needs of small NFP organisations.



- LC could have improved their knowledge of the issues the target groups face, for example, refugee status and terminology (e.g. NTL (No Time Limit) and issues the mentally ill face; also expected life-styles and 'behaviours' of each group (LTU, EI, ESA) such as not turning up, drop-out rates, disorganisation and so on. Then learn just how the experienced organisations assist specific target groups and the work that goes into it. This would have led to improvements such as extending the 12 hours of support to those with mental health.
- It could have considerably improved many aspects of the programme if Lead partners had met with LC regularly and if LC had acted upon issues raised in the interim report. This would have led to LC using a planned process to implement decisions and understanding the impact of the decisions they made, particularly on
  - resources - both staff and finance and on small partners
  - the relationships Leads have with partners and the wider community
  - the impact of the client surveys (and lack of surveys) and the impact of EPR results that will be seen by everyone including funding agencies.

**Please also feedback on the support your project provided to participants recovering from drug and/or alcohol addiction or misuse:**

The project worked with Centrepont, Shelter and Thames Reach - specialist organisations that were set up to assist homeless people; they referred clients to Steps into Work. Centrepont was a partner from the beginning of the project, but Shelter and Thames Reach became referral partners in 2018. Many of their clients were homeless but also suffer from drug and/or alcohol addiction or abuse but the Steps into Work project was only appropriate for some of those in recovery who could be assisted to work towards changing their situation.

For those affected by drugs and/or alcohol there was the problem mentioned above of some not attending as regularly as they should, being disorganised, not well presented, some hygiene issues, an offending back ground and most had never had any work preparation. However, the referral agents, Shelter and Thames Reach, expected participants they referred to go straight into jobs and often suggested areas they felt we could easily find work for their clients such as catering and construction.

Partners who did work with participants in recovery had the following feedback:

- Participants at Hestia were in danger of re-offending but were more likely to be recalled to prison or young offenders because they had breached conditions
- X would promise every time but not appear; when he appeared, he was so grateful
- Someone got a job through the Job Centre, then changed jobs, we needed to show 6 months sustainment and had done so much work to help him, but he now felt he was OK and wasn't interested any more. On the other hand, The Job Centre could confirm the clients' position, but wouldn't, so we could not claim this as an outcome even though we know he is still in employment.
- Some participants just need a bit of help and then they don't want to explain to employers who we are.
- We worked with two women in recovery; one volunteered with us and then went on to another organisation. The other is working in our community café.

## 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

For many of the Steps target groups with multiple disadvantages and additional specific challenges such as homelessness, mental health issues, ESOL needs and so on, the so-called soft outcomes, are a more significant and life-changing achievement than the hard outcomes associated with output targets. On the Steps project, 'soft' outcomes were more properly described as life-skills, work-place skills and transferable skills. These outcomes are not incidental but are the result of hours of work. The project partners' input is based on long experience and tried and tested methods and materials while, simultaneously being ready to develop new approaches and materials where appropriate. Steps partners were justifiably proud of the soft outcomes they and 100% of their participants achieved.

Partners said:

- '93% said their confidence had noticeably improved as a result. The others had not felt they needed a boost in confidence but had joined Steps for other reasons'.
- '100% felt more able to socialise and communicate in English; they felt more able to participate in the local community. They had learned to feel comfortable in the training environment and wanted the project to continue. These are big steps for our target group'.
- 'Some participants with mental health challenges have been learning how to disclose to an employer. Some start work but don't last because their needs affect their pattern of work but the employer doesn't know, for example, not able to work in the morning. If this is disclosed at the beginning in an application, the employer can make reasonable adjustment - it is a disability that the employer should ask about in the interview. It requires a lot of soft and hard skills from the participant to manage that whole process'.
- 'We have to disregard the 6 – 12 hours and do as much as is needed. Our clients need the soft skills before they can learn the hard, for example, they don't have access to computers or Internet in prison so they have to build up confidence to switch on a computer – this can take some time'.
- 'The majority came away more confident and more able to manage their own life'.

The Lead partner added that evidence of soft outcomes would have been recorded on the original surveys but those were discontinued by LC. Failure to maintain the surveys meant that important data was not captured all the way through the project. It has felt like a 'hard slog' for LTEN as it seemed they 'had to fight LC all the way through to get things done and this meant they needed to support experienced partners constantly. The Interim Report also refers to this and it shows how partners and LTEN needed to preserve their own 'soft' skills to keep themselves and the project going.

#### **Final thoughts from partners and feelings about outcomes:**

The evaluator asked partners if they had any final thoughts for the report. Some did and

said:

- 'It was unnecessarily bureaucratic – we had lots of evidence that we had worked with them and got them into employment. Excessive bureaucracy and quibbling detracted from the essence of what we do'.
- 'LTEN needs more support from a programme manager so LTEN has time to offer support to the partnership that is not connected with the demands of the funder. This is why some of the partners left – we all wanted to succeed and wanted our participants to leave with something tangible'.
- 'Reiterate- participants did not like it called the Poverty Programme'.
- 'Positives! We did get helpful funding to deliver a great project; we re-evaluated how we keep our records and we made useful new contacts'.

### How did you feel about your outcomes overall?

Partners responded and are numbered 1 – 6 as before.

1 *We were pleased to have recruited so many economically inactive women and happy with the number we assisted into employment. We were not able to evidence some of the outcomes because of LC requirements – so outcomes were actually higher than we could demonstrate in LC terms. We have been waiting for £25k worth of claims – 2 months after the project closed and some of those claims date back 9 months. At this point, if some of our paperwork is not accepted then it will be out of our control. We will have lost revenue as staff have been paid. Small niche organisations can't stand this financial pressure.*

2 *We were pleased considering all the problems, but we could have done more if the project had not ended so soon. We were not expecting it to end now but were expecting an extension that was under consideration but finally declined by LC.*

3 *We didn't meet our targets and this is not typical of us. Disappointing. However, we did some brilliant work and there was a tangible difference in the people we worked with. For us it was a learning experience and very interesting.*

4 *If we had, had less paperwork we could have achieved more. The changing LC requirements restricted our recruitment because we were anxious about outcomes and how long participants would stay. The process felt as though it was all about hard outcomes rather than soft. We would love to have got more outcomes and been paid for more outcomes.*

5 *We were not able to evidence all our outcomes. Steps will take some of our participants 300 hours and someone else 3,000 hours.*

6 *Our employment outcomes were not good. People leave suddenly and we didn't have the evidence even if they have got a job.*

## 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** (examples of activities to promote participation in employment by lone parents)
- **Older people** (50 years and over. Examples of activities to promote access to provision by older people, actions taken to retain older people in employment and/or re-engage them in the labour market)
- **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)

In **Table 2** complete figures for the profiled number of ethnic minority groups and actual number of ethnic minority groups supported. As well as providing figures for the number of ethnic minorities supported, include how these groups were engaged, and what specific barriers they faced. It may be that your project found it difficult to engage with a particular target group, if so please tell us why you were not able to engage or it was not appropriate to do so.

Please complete **Table 3** to show how well you met your profiled outputs and results.

### Target groups – Outputs and results

All partners work with all the target groups over time and so contributed to the equality target numbers. However, as seen earlier, each partner had specific specialisms and largely contributed to the volume of participants in one target group. For example, STORM working with lone parents while Status Employment has long experience in Mental Health and Disability.

As the statistical data LTEN received at the end of August from LC was, in their words, 'incorrect and unfinished', they have carried out their own manual count for the targets listed below. This means they do not match the 'final' LC reconciliation figures and that LTEN will continue to challenge the official results and produce further proof.

### Disabled people including those with mental health needs:

Target/Profiled	Actuals	Number of participants
31%	31%	153

All partners have premises or access to venues that are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant and are equipped with appropriate equipment, for example, ramps, lifts and teaching equipment including special clocks, keyboards and induction loops. Specific interventions included:

- Status Employment developed flexible delivery that allowed access to the Psychological Therapy Service (PTS) so customised employment support was linked to short term 'Talking Therapy' from the NHS PTS.
- Flexible job training and volunteer opportunities
- Participants with mental health issues were trained to manage disclosure to a

future employer at the job application stage as it is regarded as a disability. This means the employer should encourage the candidate talk about their practical workplace needs in the interview. This can assist the employer to make reasonable adjustment e.g. starting and finishing work later. If disclosure is made at the beginning the employer is forewarned and the employee supported.

### Lone parents

Target/Profiled	Actuals	Number of participants
16%	25%	123

STORM Family Service recruited a high number of lone parents and many of these were from BAME communities. Crucially, STORM provides a nursery; this can be free as it is eligible for the government's benefits of 15-30 hours free childcare or, can cost as little as £5 per day, depending on circumstances. STORM also offered tailored counselling for lone parents and provides a range of supportive courses for social or training purposes, for example, Teaching Assistant qualification or art groups.

### Older People (50 years and over)

Target/Profiled	Actuals	Number of participants
18%	28.5%	141

High Trees Community Development Trust specifically designed and ran employment programmes for those 50+ who are unemployed and those looking to change careers. Staff at LTEN also attended training for those participants which helped to target where and how to engage them and supported the designing of activities. Specific interventions were:

- Targeting clubs and activities where people aged 50+ meet or visit e.g. community clubs, doctor's surgeries or school gates.
- Developing activities similar to those for younger participants but bearing in mind possible skills deficits e.g. in technology or the current labour market.
- Developing workshops to improve confidence in specific areas particular to each participant and assisting them to identify the situations in which they lack confidence.

### Ethnic Minorities

Target/Profiled	Actuals	Number of participants
60%	61.5%	304

The mix of partners were chosen for their delivery experience and specialisms in working with all the target groups listed. Therefore, the partnership's multi-faceted approach ensured that each partner engaged and served a cross section of equality target groups. This was particularly so for BAME groups. However, Skillsland operates in areas of particularly high densities of BAME communities and engaged with them by local visiting community centres and churches/religious venues. They also developed reciprocal relationships with BAME organisations such as one mentioned earlier in the report where Skillsland services under another project, were exchanged for access to a community café and a cooked lunch for Steps participants. Partners also encouraged participants to bring 'plates to share' of their own foods.

### Women

All partners have long experience of working with women and some have previously



delivered courses and support interventions for women only projects or groups. On the Steps project, Successful Mums targeted women but did not offer specific training for non-traditional occupations. Many of their participants were returning to careers after a long break and some had been in non-traditional occupations and this interested other women the met. The Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) focuses on recruiting BAME women with barriers to employment and designing programmes to overcome the challenges – sadly they had to drop out of the project due to cash flow problems. Before the left, they registered disapproval that there was not an ethnicity category for Latin American women on the LC forms.

#### Other

RAK and Breaking Barriers had originally been chosen to bring their long experience of working with Refugees /BAME, the latter also had high job outcomes rates with refugees, but both also dropped out of the project. The loss of experienced partners to the programme could have proved detrimental to the achievement of targets if LTEN had not taken remedial action quickly; they addressed the loss of 4 partners and also recruited new partners with similar specialisms in equality categories to continue attracting substantial numbers in BAME groups, women, lone parents, and those with mental health issues.

#### Table 1: Target Groups Supported:

##### Reason for incomplete tables below

The tables below only contain the *profiled* figures for Steps into Work.

LTEN has been unable to give final figures to the evaluator because at 10.9.2019, LC were still not able to provide a final reconciliation that corresponds with the facts.

Specifically, on the final LC reconciliation:

LC gives the number of 'enrolments' as 444

But the number of 'participants supported' as 493

And the equalities statistics received, were missing June 2019 figures. However, the figures are still only based on 246 participants.

Furthermore, LTEN states that LC assured them an updated equality breakdown would be sent but, at 10.9.2019, it has not yet been received. Finally, the figures confirmed by LC are not broken down to correspond with the different ethnicity categories required in Table 2

LTEN therefore disputes the final LC reconciliation.

Target group	Profile		Actual	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Total number of participants enrolled	771			
Long-term unemployed participants	65%			
Economically inactive participants	35%			
Women	51%			
Older people (50 years and over)	18%			
Ethnic minorities	69%			
Disabled (Self-declared)	22%			
Lone Parents	16%			
Number of Young People Aged 19-24 (if applicable)	N/A			
Number of Participants who are carers supported (if applicable)	N/A			

**Table 2: Ethnic Minority Groups Supported:**

		Number (Profiled)	Number (Actual)
<b>Asian/Asian British</b>	Indian		
	Pakistani		
	Bangladeshi		
	Chinese		
	Other		
<b>Black/Black British</b>	African		
	Caribbean		
	Somali		
	Other		
<b>White</b>	English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British		
	Irish		

	Gypsy or Irish traveller		
	Other		
<b>Mixed</b>	White and Black Caribbean		
	White and Black African		
	White and Asian		
	Other		
<b>Other</b>	Arab		
	Other		

**Table 3: Performance Table: Outputs and Results:**

Output/result	Profiled	Actual	Difference	Variance
Enrolled	771			
Long term unemployed participants	65%			
Economically inactive participants	35%			
6+ hours of support (IAG, job-search, mentoring, training, 1-2-1)	697			
12+ hours of support	46			
Completing Work or Volunteering placement	154			
Gaining basic skills	N/A			
Achieving vocational qualifications	N/A			
Support towards achieving a Level 2 (or below) qualification	N/A			
Progression into education or training or specified accredited support service within 4 weeks of leaving the project	154			
Economically inactive participants in employment/ job search within 4 weeks of leaving the project	N/A			
Gaining Employment/apprenticeship within 4 weeks of leaving	231			
Gaining Employment within 4 weeks of leaving the project (those recovering from drug and/or	23			

alcohol addiction, homeless)				
Employment sustained for 26 weeks	146			
Employment sustained for 26 weeks (those recovering from drug and/or alcohol addiction, homeless)	9			
Submission of final evaluation report	1			

(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 2**

Borough	Starts	Achieved
Wandsworth	158	
Kingston upon Thames	78	
Merton	97	
Sutton	95	
Croydon	193	
Lambeth	150	
Total	771	

## Working with London Councils

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

This report has revealed that the partnership with London Councils was totally unsatisfactory on several levels. The issues described above and in the Interim Report do not need to be repeated here. However, looking forward, London Councils has great potential to benefit London as a funding body and programme manager. All the Steps partners are specialists in the needs, challenges and interventions of their own target groups and they also have long experience of operating pan London and within their local communities. For this reason, they would be prepared to work with LC again but with the caveat that LC learns from the mistakes made on this programme. All partners, and the Lead in particular, would be delighted to be asked to discuss the management of future programmes with LC. All the mistakes that impacted on the Steps project could, and should, be rectified for future programmes.

Finally, the Lead expresses extreme disappointment and outrage that so many agreements or expectations raised by LC 'did not happen'. Four of these are:

- The long-awaited database to record and store all project data. LTEN says, 'we had more than one in-depth meeting with LC about a new database to input our monthly submissions data. We were promised we would have the database in a couple of weeks etc, etc, which never happened and is the reason we do not have our figures to hand and cannot draw down reports or see how we were doing with equality figures etc. and this means we have led the project less effectively. LC continually led us to believe we would receive the database until the project end.
- LC led on meetings where all Leads/partners discussed the self-declarations being



extended to other groups and we believed LC were considering this. It did not happen.

- LC led on meetings where all Leads/partners discussed the introduction of the Economically Inactive Jobsearch outcome/evidence needed, we believed LC was considering this. It did not happen and we were unable to claim even one of these outcomes.
- They promised consideration of an extension to the programme which the Leads gave cogent reasons for - but it did not happen.

## Programme Manager Feedback

This section presents the views of your ESF Programme Manager. <sup>2</sup>

The evaluator spoke with the programme manager (Y) at the beginning of September 2019. She paid testimony to the 'heroic' response of the project partners and admitted that staff and participants on 'the front line have been profoundly affected' by the way the programme has been managed. In summary, the programme manager seemed open and willing to discuss the failings and errors that LC was responsible for and she acknowledged LC's accountability. Reasons for the changes and bureaucracy that Steps partners and participants faced were also shared freely.

Some surprising facts emerged which are worth recording here.

- The programme overall has only achieved 50% of the target outcomes. This means that the Steps partners have achieved more than average but also that the LC mistakes have cost the programme, and London, dear.
- The programme was non-compliant when Y was brought in, in 2017 with the task of ensuring compliance - ESF regulations must follow.
- Y disclosed that the programme had been set up wrongly in the first place by LC; some partners assumed the projects would be run as on previous programmes and LC assumed that programme management would be similar to co-financing.

This meant that errors in LC set-up and their published requirements had to be corrected immediately which was the start of grave problems for project partners. Y assured the evaluator that this had been explained to the partners but, it is the evaluator's opinion that the explanations were insufficient, LC was slow to openly accept responsibility before the end of the project and, LC did not check back regularly to ensure that all Leads understood the situation and had as much information as they needed to manage their projects effectively. LC also continued to make changes throughout the programme, not just at the start.

Y acknowledged that from the LC perspective, the mechanics of delivery have been a problem and, also, the ESF/GLA machinery was involved, for example, the objective of separating job search as an outcome was blocked by GLA because of ESF directives, whereas other requests were accepted. Yet, as can be seen in the final words of the Steps Lead partner immediately above, this is another instance where the reason for a decision was not sufficiently explained.

<sup>2</sup> Note to the evaluator: Feedback from the Programme Manager can take place via the telephone or face to face

Y shared that she would be sorrowful if all the partners remembered of Steps was the huge uphill climb although she admitted that a lot of energy had gone into the process. As can be seen above it made a huge impact on partners and they have had an awfully difficult and distressing three years. However, there is some positivity about the project as a whole and on an individual organisation basis the partners have achieved great things. Y said of Steps that the way it is quality assured shows how fantastic it is at the coal face. Of LTEN, Y appreciated their openness – ‘if they were cross, they would tell us’ and ‘in the midst of working with significant challenges – it has been a pleasure to work with LTEN and partners’.

Evaluator’s final word:

It is unlikely that the last sentence above will be reciprocated but, as has been recorded above, all partners are keen to work towards a quality LC programme in the next round. LC should remember that the professionals leading and working with the partner organisations have a huge amount of project management experience and of participant groups requiring specialist knowledge – so have many participants. LC should work with these organisations when setting up the next programme – and listen to them; they should also not disdain the input and feedback from participants.

### **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.***