SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER:
03/2017
PUBLICATION DATE:
31/01/2017

A process evaluation of the Essential Skills for those Serving sentences in the Community (ESSC) pilot

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

 Digital ISBN: 978-1-4734-8379-8

A process evaluation of the Essential Skills for those Serving sentences in the Community (ESSC) pilot

Evelyn Hichens / Carney Green
Daniel Murray / Carney Green
Dr Paul Gray / MMU
Dr Hannah Smithson / MMU
Richard McHugh / MMU

For further information, please contact:
Sara James
Knowledge and Analytical Services
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
Tel: 029 2082 6812
Email: sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Table of contents

List of tables

List of figures

Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
ACE	Adult Community Education
BKSB	Basic and Key Skill Builder
CEUs	Credit Equivalent Units
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company
CSCS	Construction Skills Certification Scheme
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DOB	Date of Birth
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EOI	Expression of Interest
ESP	Employability Skills Programme
ESSC	Essential Skills for those Serving sentences in the Community
ETE	Education, Training & Employment
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
IOM	Integrated Offender Management
LLWR	Life Long Learning Record
MMU	Manchester Metropolitan University
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDelius	National Delius
NI	National Insurance
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPS	National Probation Service
NTfW	National Training Federation for Wales
OASys	Offender Assessment System
OCN	Open College Network
OLASS	Offenders' Learning and Skills Service
PPOs	Prolific and other Priority Offenders'
SfEW	Skills for Employment Wales
WBL	Work Based Learning
WEST	Wales Essential Skills Toolkit
WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Committee

1. Introduction

1.1 The way offenders are managed in the community in Wales has changed since the UK Government's (2013) publication of Transforming rehabilitation: A Strategy for Reform[1], principally through the opening up of the market to a range of rehabilitation providers. From 2014 the existing National Probation Service (NPS) Wales, was tasked with managing offenders identified as posing a high risk of serious harm, and the newly created Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) Wales, became responsible for offenders posing a medium to low risk of serious harm to the public. Alongside these changes, there were also developments in the way Essential Skills for offenders were delivered in the community. Between 2009 and March 2015, Essential Skills training for offenders under statutory supervision in the community, either on a community order or on a post-custody licence, was funded by the Welsh Government under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). This arrangement also applied to Essential Skills training for offenders serving prison sentences. NOMS commissioned the Wales Probation Trust to manage delivery of the provision and they in turn subcontracted to Essential Skills providers who delivered the assessment and learning in probation offices across Wales under contract to the Trust.

1.2 This changed in April 2015, when the Welsh Government launched the Essential Skills for those serving sentences in the community (ESSC) Pilot. At that point, the Welsh Government began directly commissioning the Essential Skills provision and contract with the network of Work Based Learning (WBL) providers. The WBL network is made up of organisations who have been awarded contracts to deliver Apprenticeships, Traineeships and Jobs Growth Wales programmes, as part of its Work Ready Strand for those 18 or over, unemployed and receiving benefits from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Evaluation objectives

1.3 The purpose of this evaluation was to understand the operation of the new approach to delivering Essential Skills training to offenders in the community, and to provide recommendations, based on robust evidence (gathered through quantitative and qualitative research, and a review of best practice elsewhere), to inform future Welsh Government employability skills provision.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transforming-rehabilitation-a-strategy-for-reform.

1.4 The research aimed to:

- provide evidence on best practice
- set out how the project operated in practice, and whether this was as planned
- explore and understand changes in participation rates, and,
- inform longer term decisions regarding the best delivery model.

Evaluation timescales

1.5 The evaluation began in March 2016. Key areas of research, and their corresponding timescales, are provided in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Evaluation timescales

Key evaluation stages	Timescales
Theory of change review	March and April 2016
Literature review of best practice	March and April 2016
Qualitative research (one-to-one) interviews and online survey of offender managers and training providers	May and June 2016
Review and analysis of management data	June and July 2016

Source: Carney Green, 2016

1.6 Details of the research methodology are provided in Section 3.

Structure of the report

1.7 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Section 2: Key findings and recommendations
- Section 3: Methodology
- Section 4: Qualitative research findings
- Section 5: Quantitative research findings

2. Key findings and recommendations

Best practice

2.1 There are relatively few examples of evaluations of schemes delivering Essential Skills training to offenders. Despite this, the literature review highlighted a number of factors relating to best practice. Those most relevant to the ESSC pilot and the delivery of future provision included:

- the importance of delivering bespoke and tailored provision for each client;
- the need to use robust and appropriate assessment tools; and
- for Essential Skills to be part of a holistic package of support for offenders.

2.2 The qualitative research for this evaluation revealed that some elements of best practice identified from the literature review were happening across Wales under the pilot. There were examples of trainers tailoring provision to offenders and as part of the contract, service providers were required to use the Wales Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST) or an equivalent Welsh Government-approved tool to assess the needs of offenders.

2.3 The qualitative fieldwork also identified examples of a variety of approaches across Wales to deliver Essential Skills in order to meet the needs of offenders with Essential Skills needs. Practices identified as particularly effective included:

- initial communication sessions where delivery providers informed offender managers of the Essential Skills offer;
- development of relationships between trainers and offender managers from the outset – this was an important enabler in building trust, and helped to improve the speed at which the pilot was implemented;
- arranging Essential Skills appointments for learners on the same days that they were required to visit National Probation Service (NPS) or Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) offices to access other support services in order to limit the number of journeys that they needed to make;
- changing the examining/awarding body to allow individual units rather than full qualifications to be delivered;
- rapport developed between trainers and learners;
- the delivery of women-only sessions;

- changes in the time sessions were run; and
- the creation of bespoke and tailored learning materials.

Implementation and delivery

2.4 The pilot required trainers to support learners to work towards, and where possible achieve, Entry Level 1 to Level 2 in: communication, application of number, and ICT; and Entry Level 3 to Level 2 in employability skills[2]. Analysis of data collected by Welsh Government from training providers, however, showed that 40 per cent of learning activities were not qualifications-focused.

2.5 In most cases, Essential Skills training was delivered within NPS/CRC offices. Two providers delivered training from Work Based Learning (WBL) provider centres.

2.6 The evaluation highlighted numerous challenges with the implementation of the pilot; these were often related to the involvement of new delivery providers. This resulted in delays to the provision starting, as it took time for the new offer to be communicated between delivery providers and offender managers, and for procedures to be put in place.

2.7 Generally, communication was not viewed to be effective. For example, the evaluation found that NPS/CRC offender managers did not have a clear understanding of the pilot's eligibility criteria, and there was confusion amongst them about the geographical availability of Essential Skills provision, and therefore where offenders could be referred.

2.8 It was also evident that there were disparities between what offender managers expected delivery to involve (e.g. in relation to one-to-one or group sessions), what some recalled from the time when delivery was under the management of the Wales Probation Trust, and what providers planned to deliver.

2.9 NPS/CRC offender managers felt that they had not had the opportunity to feed into the specification for the pilot, nor the opportunity for involvement in the implementation plan for Essential Skills, which could have helped improve understanding regarding what providers planned to deliver and what offender managers felt most suited their clients. This concern was felt most strongly in relation to the NPS high-risk clients. In addition, providers were reported to have

[2] Entry Level qualifications are at a lower level than Level 1 qualifications. A Level 1 qualification is equivalent to NVQ Level 1 or a GCSE D-G; a Level 2 qualification is equivalent to NVQ Level 2 or a GCSE A*-C; a Level 3 qualification is equivalent to NVQ Level 3 or A-level. More detail is provided on the Qualifications Wales website at: http://qualificationswales.org/qualifications/entry-level-qualification/?lang=en.

limited prior experience of working with offenders, and this resulted in providers being un-prepared to offer an approach which met the specific needs of the learners.

2.10 The financial model was viewed as a factor which constrained what providers could deliver; the delivery of one-to-one sessions or smaller group sessions was viewed as not/less financially viable than larger group sessions.

2.11 Delivering Essential Skills at NPS/CRC offices was viewed as appropriate, particularly when planned along with other support provision in order to minimise the number of trips an offender had to make to the office. However, the geographic location of provision and distance required to travel for some offenders was viewed as a barrier to engagement, and accessibility was therefore not seen as universal. Some NPS/CRC offices did not have any provision in-house, and where it was available in-house there were examples of provision petering out over the course of the pilot. This contrasted with what the Welsh Government expected providers to deliver, as it was made clear that provision should be available in each probation office within their delivery region.

Participation rates

2.12 The quantitative data analysis showed a reduction (44 per cent) in the number of learning activities commenced during the pilot, compared to the previous year (2014/15). The data also demonstrated high variance between the number of learners who started learning activities with each delivery provider (ranging from 1 to 91) within the current pilot.

2.13 The key reasons identified from stakeholder feedback for lower recorded participation in the ESSC pilot compared to the Wales Probation Trust managed programme were:

- NPS and CRC were still going through internal organisational change during the implementation of the ESSC pilot.
- A chronological gap in provision, between the training managed by the Wales Probation Trust and delivery of the pilot as overseen by the Welsh Government, left offender managers wary of the new provision and removed the possibility of a seamless transition to Essential Skills provision.
- There did not seem to be a clear process for delivery providers supporting NPS high risk clients. NPS offender managers said they therefore did not

feel confident referring this cohort to the provision. The finding, from the quantitative analysis, that those commencing learning activities tended to be less prolific offenders, with shorter offending histories (and therefore less likely to be managed by NPS) supports this.

- Four NPS/CRC business/team managers reported that their offender managers did not feel that a group setting was always suitable for their clients, and asked for one-to-one sessions to be delivered, but reported that in most cases this need was unable to be met by providers. The provider specification did not state whether the provision was to be delivered in a group or one-to-one setting.
- The financial contract for delivery providers meant they were only paid for learners with whom they directly engaged. Therefore, in order to maximise their financial return, it was better for them to deliver to larger groups. This meant that provision was less likely to be available in smaller NPS/CRC offices.
- Almost a third of survey respondents were unsure how the Welsh Language needs of learners were identified in order to inform the delivery of Essential Skills, and therefore were unsure whether the Welsh Language needs of the client group were being met.

2.14 Whilst the provider contract stated that the NPS, CRC and WBL providers would seek to develop consistent working practices to ensure there was agreement on a Wales-wide basis on the sharing of appropriate information on offenders, the most frequently cited weakness of the pilot by survey respondents was a lack of communication.

2.15 The data analysis found that of the learning activities delivered by providers, less than 50 per cent were completed (46 per cent), with the same proportion of learners withdrawing from their learning activities (as completing them). Females with an Essential Skills need were more likely than males to commence ESSC provision. However, they were less likely than males to complete all the learning activities they started, and were more likely not to complete any learning activities. The main barriers to this client group participating in Essential Skills identified by stakeholders included: they felt that did not feel they needed it or lacked motivation; they did not want to work in a group setting; they led a chaotic lifestyle; childcare and carer responsibilities; and finding employment.

2.16 The qualitative research found that stakeholders were critical of the suitability of the pilot's eligibility criteria. The criteria were seen to be too constraining, e.g. those in employment (who could be on zero-hour contracts) and some overseas nationals were ineligible although stakeholders felt that within these groups, a high proportion had an Essential Skills need.

2.17 The data records for the pilot did not include details of referrals to Essential Skills provision. It was therefore not possible for this analysis to identify where offenders had been referred to ESSC provision, but had not been offered training, or had not taken it up. This is an important gap in the data. Analysis of NOMS National Delius (NDelius) revealed that there were nearly 2,700 offenders serving sentences in the community with an Essential Skills need, yet the number commencing ESSC provision during the pilot period represented less than one tenth of this number. There could be many reasons why those with an Essential Skills need did not receive provision. Without details about whether these offenders had been deemed suitable for provision, or had been referred, it is not possible to infer the relative contributions of low referral rates, low take up or other factors, to the low rate of provision.

Recommendations

2.18 Based on the key findings discussed above, a number of recommendations for the future delivery of Essential Skills to offenders have been developed:

1. The evaluation revealed evidence that in some areas, Essential Skills were delivered alongside other types of support for offenders. This practice should be extended such that ESSC is considered holistically as part of the wider package of support which is made available to offenders via NPS/CRC offender managers. Support should be sequenced around the prioritisation of offender needs and therefore emphasis should be placed on the appropriate timeliness of referrals. This should be led and coordinated by the offender manager.

2. When designing the specification for the new, Welsh Government All-Age Employability Programme, a panel of NPS and CRC business/team managers and offender manager representatives should be created, with the aim of informing the specification to ensure that lessons are learnt from previous delivery and the provision meets the needs of their clients.

3. The evaluation revealed some examples where delivery providers awarded contracts under the pilot, were already familiar with work with offenders. For future programmes, delivery providers should either have prior experience of delivering Essential Skills training to offenders, or should be clearly informed of the needs of this group prior to tendering for the work (this could be in the form of a workshop with representation from offender managers). By delivery providers gaining an in-depth understanding of the needs of the cohort (e.g. data showed the cohort to be of a very low skill level, with the highest qualification for three quarters of those that started a learning activities to be Pre-Entry Level), it should result in more effective delivery approaches which meet their needs.
4. For future programmes, where possible, there should be a period of overlap whereby the new providers are appointed to deliver ESSC whilst the previous provision is still being delivered. This would allow a business/team manager lead-in period, where delivery providers could work with, and build relationships with, office managers to plan delivery and agree information sharing protocols.
5. The practice of allowing flexibility in the provision of ESSC, revealed in places through this study, should be encouraged wherever possible, to enable support to be tailored to the individual or the needs of specific groups (e.g. the delivery of women-only sessions).
6. Future programmes need a clear and robust approach for identifying the Welsh language needs of learners and ensure that provision is available through the medium of Welsh so the needs of Welsh speaking learners are met.
7. To review the eligibility requirement around employment. Although those not in employment should be prioritised, the ESSC eligibility criteria did not consider the type of job the individual was undertaking, or type of contract they held (i.e. it could be a zero-hour contract). Essential Skills training could enable an individual to progress within the employment market or gain a more permanent role.
8. The same assessment tools should be used by NPS/CRC offender managers, and more effective monitoring arrangements need to be put in place to review data inputted and ensure that these are provided to trainers within set timescales. This should be supported by joint working between

NPS/CRC and the Welsh Government to agree assessment and referral processes for future programmes.

9. For future programmes, the funding mechanisms for the delivery of Essential Skills should be reviewed, to increase the accessibility of ESSC across Wales and within regions. The design of contracts should not discourage providers from making provision in numerous and more convenient locations (for learners), or from engaging with smaller groups.

10. Future programmes should explore the possibility of trainers having greater involvement in the referral and retention processes. If their payment is triggered by the number of beneficiaries to whom they deliver Essential Skills training, they should have a greater level of involvement in supporting engagement and retention.

11. Building on the good practice identified in some areas, where trainers and learners were able to develop a rapport, future programmes delivering ESSC should encourage delivery providers to provide drop-in taster sessions for offenders in NPS/CRC offices. This would enable providers to be involved at an earlier stage and have some responsibility regarding the number of offender referrals, rather than being the sole responsibility of offender managers. This could help to ensure that the Essential Skills offer is clear to offenders and could help to improve offender motivation (a barrier to take up, that the study identified).

12. Feedback tools and processes for NPS/CRC offender managers and delivery providers, needs to be improved for future programmes. Whilst there were examples of good practice, the processes in the ESSC pilot programme were not consistent across the regions, and were not efficient. For future provision, the possibility of an online tool being developed for trainers to record feedback should be explored. It would be beneficial if the information recorded could be synchronised with NDelius, so that the same information does not have to be recorded twice.

13. At the strategic level, improvement is required around the reporting and monitoring mechanisms from providers to NPS/CRC and from NPS/CRC to the Welsh Government, in order to offer greater accountability. Currently only numbers of enrolments are recorded within the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) and the number of referrals is not centrally collated. Therefore, analysis cannot show how many referrals were made or how

many resulted in an enrolment. It would be beneficial for recording referrals to be a contractual requirement of offender managers. This would provide NPS and CRC management staff with greater oversight on how the project is being delivered, as well as providing strategic stakeholders the opportunity to review how well the Essential Skills policy is working.

3. Methodology

3.1 This report is the final output of the process evaluation. The research is based on a literature review, qualitative information gathered from interviews and an online survey and quantitative data from analysis of anonymised administrative records for offenders whose records indicated an Essential Skills need and actual training recipient enrolments. Offenders' views and the impact on their employment/offending outcomes were out of scope and not explored. The following sections describe the methodological approach to the evaluation.

Approach

3.2 The scope of the research was to assess how successfully the new approach to delivering ESSC was implemented and delivered. The evaluation was not intended to quantify the impact of the pilot's activities and outcomes.

Theory of change

3.3 As a first step in evaluation fieldwork activities, a theory of change review was undertaken. This involved a review of documentation about the pilot and consultation with key stakeholders involved in its development and delivery. It included engagement with representatives from the Welsh Government, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), CRC, and NPS. These discussions informed the evaluation team's understanding of: the background to developing the pilot; its rationale; the different activities and outcomes required to achieve the programme's long term goals; indicators of success and best practice; and what was expected to change and to what degree. The details of this theory of change guided the creation of the fieldwork tools for the remainder of the evaluation.

3.4 The findings from the theory of change review can be found in Section 4.

Secondary research

3.5 A short review of contemporary specialist UK and international literature relating to best practice in delivering Essential Skills training to offenders serving sentences in the community was undertaken. A full list of search terms utilised can be found in Annex A. A summary of the key findings is presented in Section 1, with the full review provided in Annex B.

Review of and analysis of management data

3.6 Since the Welsh Government took direct control of the ESSC provision in April 2015, the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)[3] has been used to record the Essential Skills training that has been subsequently delivered under the pilot. The LLWR dataset that was provided to the evaluation team contained data relating to 237 individuals that commenced learning activities between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016 across all of Wales. As well as containing data at the individual level, the LLWR dataset also contained data at a learning activity level. Between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016, a total of 447 learning activities were started by the 237 learners.

3.7 This evaluation also compared the records of offenders where a potential need for an Essential Skills intervention was identified but, for various reasons, they were not recorded as having enrolled on ESSC provision. This involved comparing learner records from the LLWR dataset to all NPS Wales and Wales CRC cases that had a current Probation Order (as of 23/06/16) where any of the following eight variables - three from the Offender Assessment System (OASys[4]) and five from NDelius - were identified. Annex C sets out details of the data extraction and matching procedures.

- Problems with reading (OASys)
- Problems with writing (OASys)
- Problems with numeracy (OASys)
- Learning difficulties and/or disability (NDelius)
- Reading/literacy concerns (NDelius)
- Numeracy concerns (NDelius)
- Language/communication concerns (NDelius)
- Skills screening concerns (NDelius)

3.8 223 of the learners in the LLWR dataset were identified in the NOMS NDelius dataset. The characteristics of these 223 learners were compared with the

[3] The Lifelong Learning Wales database is a live administrative dataset held by the Welsh Government. It is used to manage and monitor the provision of publicly funded post-16 learning. Post-16 learning providers are required to regularly submit data on learners in Wales via the LLWR.
[4] OASys is an assessment tool used by NOMS to assess the likelihood of the risk of reoffending and the risk of serious harm.

characteristics of the 2,698 offenders in the NOMS NDelius dataset that, despite exhibiting a potential need for Essential Skills provision, were not recorded as having enrolled on ESSC provision.

3.9 These two datasets - the LLWR dataset and the NOMS NDelius dataset - enabled the evaluation team to a) profile the ESSC provision upon which offenders were enrolled in 2015-16, and look at how those that were enrolled on courses 'performed' (in terms of completions, qualifications gained etc.), and b) investigate if there were any differences between those that were recorded as having enrolled on ESSC provision and those that were not, despite exhibiting a potential need for an Essential Skills intervention. However, due to numbers of enrolled learners being so low, and in the light of the finding from the qualitative research - that offenders managers had not fully understood or made use of the provision - it was felt that to finding from an analysis of the relationship between offender characteristics and likelihood of commencing provision, would not be reliable or informative

Qualitative research

3.10 The qualitative research consisted of two elements, one-to-one interviews and an online survey. A summary of these approaches is provided below, with supplementary information (fieldwork tools) available in Annex D.

One-to-one interviews

3.11 In Wales, the NPS and CRC both operate across five delivery areas, whilst the ESSC pilot was split into seven regions. Six delivery providers were contracted to deliver the provision. Table 3.1 matches NPS and CRC delivery areas to the ESSC pilot regions, and highlights the delivery provider covering each ESSC region.

Table 3.1: ESSC pilot region and corresponding NPS/CRC delivery region with delivery providers

NPS/CRC delivery region	ESSC pilot delivery region	Delivery provider
North Wales	Region 1(Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy) Region 2 (Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham)	Grwp Llandrillo Menai
Dyfed Powys	Region 4 (South West and Mid Wales – Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Powys)	Cambrian Training
South Wales 1	Region 7 (South East Wales and Valleys – Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff)	Cardiff and Vale College
South Wales 2	Region 3 (South West and Mid Wales – Swansea and Neath Port Talbot) Region 6 (South East Wales and Valleys – Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda, Cynon, Taff, Bridgend)	T2 Group (Also known as Marr Corporation) Skills Academy Wales (Pembrokeshire College)
Gwent	Region 5 (South East Wales and Valleys – Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Newport, Monmouthshire)	Torfaen Training

Source: Carney Green, 2016
This table is based on background documents provided to the evaluation research team.

3.12 NPS/CRC delivery region business/team managers were invited to take part in one-to-one telephone interviews[5], as was a representative from each delivery provider[6]. The number of completed interviews by the stakeholder group and NPS/CRC delivery region is shown in Table 3.2. For the rest of the report, we will refer to the stakeholders that we spoke to via the one-to-one interviews as follows – NPS business/team managers, CRC business/team managers, and delivery leads.

Table 3.2: Interviews completed by region

Region	Total number of interviews
North Wales	3
Dyfed Powys	3
South Wales 1	3
South Wales 2	3
Gwent	2
Total number of interviews	**13**[7]

Source: Carney Green, 2016

[5] NPS and CRC leads for Wales helped to identify the business/team manager/most appropriate person to speak to for each region.
[6] The evaluation team was not able to interview one of the six delivery provider representatives.
[7] 14 stakeholder groups were represented, but 13 interviews were completed as one CRC business/team manager covered 2 regions.

3.13 Prior to the interview taking place, interviewees were provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the evaluation, and the discussions were informed by a semi-structured topic guide (see Annex D for both tools).

Online survey

3.14 In addition to the one-to-one interviews, an online survey was created for completion by offender managers and Essential Skills trainers (referred to as 'trainers') in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the operational delivery of the pilot.

3.15 The survey was reviewed by the evaluation steering group and two offender managers, one from NPS and one from CRC. Their feedback informed the redrafting of the survey before it was officially launched.

3.16 One lead manager for NPS and one for CRC Wales were identified to support the distribution of the survey. On 31 May 2016, prior to the survey going live, these leads sent an information sheet[8] outlining the purpose of the evaluation and the online survey to their regional managers and asked that they distributed it to their offender managers. This same approach was used to distribute the links to the online survey when it went live on the 10 June, 2016[9]. Each regional business/team manager was asked to report on the number of offender managers to whom the survey link was sent (Table 3.3).

3.17 A limitation of this approach was that it relied on stakeholders sending out the information rather than the researchers directly sending the links to offender managers. There was not a centralised contact database accessible to the evaluation research team to enable direct links to be sent.

Table 3.3: Survey distribution numbers – offender managers

	North Wales	Dyfed Powys	South Wales 1	South Wales 2	Gwent	Total
NPS	49	23	52	83	30	237
CRC	40	29	45	85	30	229
Total	89	52	97	168	60	466

Source: Carney Green, 2016

This table was based on responses from regional business/team managers from NPS and CRC

3.18 Delivery leads were asked in interview to provide contact details for those responsible for delivering the ESSC provision. The evaluation team were provided

[8] The information sheet was available in Welsh and English.
[9] The online survey was available in Welsh and English.

with contact details for 12 trainers[10]. Each trainer was directly sent the information sheet and the link to the online survey (with the same timescales as for the offender managers). Of the 12, nine trainers were successfully contacted. Three of the contacts no longer had active email accounts[11].

3.19 The initial deadline for responses was the 20 June 2016. However, by this date the response rate was low and therefore it was decided for the deadline to be extended to the 24 June, and subsequently the 5 July. Reminders were sent out on the 20 June and 30 June, informing offender managers and trainers that the deadline had been extended.

3.20 The total number of responses received was 43, representing a 9.2 per cent response rate. Informal discussions with stakeholders highlighted that the likely reason for this low response rate was the poor awareness of the pilot by offender managers. Therefore, although offender managers were encouraged to complete the survey, even if they had not been involved in the pilot, this did not always occur. Care should be taken when interpreting the findings of a survey which had such a poor response rate. The findings cannot be assumed to be representative of all offender managers and trainers.

3.21 Of the 43 responses, ten stated that they had not had any involvement in the pilot. A breakdown of responses by stakeholder group is shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Total number of responses by stakeholder group

Stakeholder group	Number of responses
NPS Office Manager	1
NPS Offender Managers	12
CRC Offender Managers	18
Trainers	12

Source: An evaluation of the ESSC pilot survey
Carney Green, 2016

Base = all (43) survey respondents,
This table is based on the responses to two questions in the survey – *Please tick which title most accurately represents your position (options: office manager, offender manager, delivery trainer, or other);* and *Please can you state the organisation you work for and describe your specific role?*

3.22 Most regions were represented in the survey responses, with the possible exception of Region 6. A total of 14 respondents stated unknown when they were asked what

[10] Delivery provider leads were not able to provide contact details for all tutors involved in the delivery of provision as they had moved on to other organisations and they were unable to provide their contact details.
[11] The research team tried to make further contact with these tutors through phone calls and additional contact with delivery provider leads.

region they operated from, and therefore some of these respondents may have been based in Region 6. However, we cannot be certain of this as nearly one third of respondents did not provide a region.

4. Qualitative research findings

4.1 This chapter draws on evidence from:

- Literature review of best practice;
- Theory of change interviews;
- One-to-one interviews with NPS and CRC business/team managers[12], and delivery leads[13]; and
- A survey of NPS/CRC offender managers and trainers.

Best practice for delivery Essential Skills training to offenders serving sentences in the community

4.2 In order to inform the future delivery of Essential Skills training to offenders in the community and to identify areas of best practice to triangulate with the evaluation findings, a review of contemporary specialist UK and international literature was undertaken. Section 4.3 below presents a short summary of this review, with the full assessment provided in Annex B. Further details on the process for undertaking the review can be found in Section 3, Methodology.

4.3 Although the review revealed limited examples of evaluations of similar schemes, a number of factors relating to best practice and the delivery of Essential Skills were identified, including:

- There is a need to deliver an integrated and client centred (bespoke) approach (Clinks, 2014a; Employability Scotland, 2012; Wilson, 2014; Canton, Hine and Welford, 2011).
- The importance of utilising robust and appropriate assessment tools in establishing baseline needs, setting targets across the client group, and ensuring ongoing review (Employability Scotland, 2012; Canton *et al*, 2011; Molnar and Hopkins, 2006), as well as utilising the same assessment tool across organisations (Employability Scotland, 2012).
- A holistic support offer has been seen to generate positive outcomes, for example alongside skills and employment support it is beneficial to include supplementary support in the areas of: substance use; housing; self-

[12] CRC and NPS leads will hereafter be referred to as 'leads' unless a distinction is required between the two organisations.
[13] Delivery providers will hereafter be referred to as 'providers'.

esteem; family support; accessing documentation and identification; and debt management (Clinks, 2014; Wilson, 2014).

- There is a need to 'sequence' support – other issues must be addressed first in order to support positive employment outcomes (Big Lottery Fund (Arrivo Consulting), 2013).
- A holistic partnership enables organisations to collaboratively focus their efforts in the provision of employment and training opportunities, and this has been seen as integral to positive outcomes (Clinks, 2014a; Halsey, Martin, and White, 2006).
- It is important that strong working relationships between employers and the public sector are developed to support ex-offender employability (Clinks, 2014a; A Fairer Chance, 2011; Canton, Hine and Welford, 2011).
- Social enterprise can be used as a means to transcend employability barriers for ex-offenders (Clinks, 2014a). It is also seen as means to meet both economic and social objectives (*ibid*).
- For offenders to have the choice whether they engage in Essential Skills provision (Canton, Hine and Welford, 2011). Mandation is likely to heighten resistance to engagement, and therefore offender managers should utilise creative approaches to achieve client buy-in as an alternative to mandation.

Theory of change review

4.4 The following section presents a summary of the findings from the theory of change review. All findings within this section are based upon documentation about the pilot and consultation with senior stakeholders involved in its development and delivery. The review demonstrates the changes in the way Essential Skills were delivered to offenders in the community through the ESSC pilot.

Skills and employment policy

4.5 Skills is a key policy area devolved to the Welsh Government. Level 2 Essential Skills attainment for all adults is a key skills aspiration for the Government as outlined in its policy on skills, and its skills implementation plan[14].

[14] Welsh Government (2014) Policy statement on skills, available: http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/140129-policy-statement-on-skills-en.pdf; Welsh Government (2014)

Background to the ESSC pilot

4.6 As set out in paragraph 1.1, prior to the ESSC pilot, NOMS was contracted through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) Agreement to provide Essential Skills provision up to and including Level 2 to offenders under supervision in the community. It was delivered at the NPS offices by external providers across all of Wales, drawn from an approved provider list within each locality. NOMS finished managing the contract on 31 March 2015, and on the 1 April 2015 the Welsh Government directly commissioned the Essential Skills provision and contracted with the Work Based Learning (WBL) network, as part of the Work Ready Strand[15].

4.7 The delivery of the pilot began on 1 April 2015 and was originally intended to run until August 2016. However, it was decided that the pilot would finish at the end of March 2016, in line with the end of the Work Ready Programme (end of the WBL contracts for that delivery cycle) with provision to be incorporated into a new adult employability programme from September 2016.

4.8 Six providers from the WBL framework were commissioned to:

- Deliver Essential Skills to offenders serving their sentences in the community up to Level 2 within all NPS and CRC offices throughout Wales; and
- Conduct an assessment of offenders referred using a Welsh Government approved assessment tool, following screening by NPS/CRC.

4.9 The Essential Skills Wales suite of qualifications provides a single ladder of progression, spanning six levels (Entry levels 1,2, and 3 and Levels 1,2,3)[16] and comprising qualifications in:

- Essential Application of Number Skills (Entry 1 to Level 3)
- Essential Communication Skills (Entry 1 to Level 3)
- Essential Digital Literacy Skills (Entry 1 to Level 3)
- Essential Employability Skills (Entry 3 to Level 3)

4.10 The Essential Skills Wales qualifications are intended for use in a range of settings. They focus on the practical application of these skills, especially learners' capacity

---

Skills Implementation Plan, available: http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/140714-skills-implementation-plan-en.pdf.

[15] The Work Ready programme supported people aged 18 or over who were unemployed and receiving benefits from the DWP. It focused on supporting people get into work or onto further learning.

[16] ESSC provision was only intended to be up to L2.

to transfer their knowledge and understanding between contexts and purposes. Providers had access to a database called the Database of Approved Qualifications in Wales (DAQW)[17] which listed all appropriate qualifications under the Work Ready strand which they were allowed to use.

4.11 As part of the Essential Skills Wales suite of qualifications, Essential Skills for Work and Life qualifications were also offered to learners. The strength of these Essential Skills for Work and Life qualifications is their flexibility, as learners can choose combinations of units in communication, numeracy and (more recently) digital literacy at different levels to build qualifications of different sizes. These are ideal qualifications for those prisoners serving short sentences or for those on remand.

4.12 Providers' payment was based on the number of hours recorded delivering learning activities to learners. A formula was used to calculate the number of Credit Equivalent Units (CEUs) fundable for each learning activity based on the hours entered. One CEU was fundable for every six hours recorded (e.g. if 24 hours was recorded then four CEUs would be fundable). In addition, a centre-based[18] uplift of 1.3 was fundable for the centre-based delivery. Attainments were funded at ten per cent of the base CEU value (excluding any uplift).

4.13 Offenders that are under the supervision of NPS or CRC have an offender manager who has a statutory responsibility to ensure that they comply with the requirements of their sentence. This involves monitoring progress against an agreed sentence plan. Where a need was identified, Essential Skills should have been part of the sentence plan but it should not have been mandatory for individuals to engage in this element. The Welsh Government does not subscribe to mandation in any form where it results in a sanction.

4.14 Senior stakeholders consulted described that, other than the management of the contract, they envisaged the delivery approach to be similar to that delivered under the management of NOMS. However, a few changes in delivery were noted:

- It was intended that provision would be delivered in NPS and CRC offices, as previously. However, the Welsh Government and NOMS agreed for some activities to be delivered in other sanctioned buildings (this was agreed on a case-by-case basis).

[17] The Database of Approved Qualifications in Wales (DAQW) was replaced by a new system: Qualifications in Wales (QiW) in April 2016.

[18] 'Centre-based hours are when a trainer is present to provide specific guidance, lectures, tutorials or supervised study towards the learning activity. It may include group-based activity outside the learning centre.

- Although group work was encouraged, providers in different areas used various approaches (a mixture of one-to-one and group work sessions).

Pilot rationale

4.15 Policy on skills and employment in Wales highlights a need to increase skill levels of the unemployed and employed. Transforming Rehabilitation[19] and the reform of probation offered an opportunity for the Welsh Government to also explore changes in the delivery of Essential Skills to offenders. This provided the opportunity to pilot a new approach; exploring whether the delivery of Essential Skills to offenders effectively sat within existing Welsh Government delivery structures; and to understand how it could be integrated into the Welsh Government's wider adult skills programme (which is available to all non-employed adults).

4.16 The Welsh Government wants to ensure that delivery of Essential Skills to offenders is aligned with the strategic approach for skills and employment in Wales, since skills policy is a devolved function. As described previously, the Welsh Government sought to operate innovative and cost effective delivery models. The ESSC pilot effectively offered a more direct approach to the Welsh Government's management of the contract, and directly commissioning services through its WBL framework, rather than the contract being managed by NOMS.

4.17 By directly commissioning services through the WBL framework, provision for offenders managed in the community became more aligned with the Welsh Government's general skills provision for adults. This sought to create a more consistent approach to the delivery of learning for non-employed individuals across Wales, which would, in principle, offer the potential to deliver a more streamlined and joined-up approach to accessing Essential Skills and progression.

Eligibility/referrals

4.18 The target group for the pilot was non-employed offenders, who required Essential Skills support up to and including Level 2, serving sentences in the community under the supervision of the NPS or CRC. To be eligible, individuals had to be aged 18 years or over, and resident in Wales. It was NPS/CRC's role to refer offenders who required Essential Skills support up to and including Level 2, to providers.

4.19 NPS/CRC were to undertake an initial assessment of offender support needs, which covered skills and employment, as part of the Offender Assessment System

[19] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transforming-rehabilitation-a-strategy-for-reform (see paragraph 1.1).

(OASys)[20]. If the system flagged that that an offender may have an Essential Skills need then the NPS/CRC offender managers would determine an Essential Skills need and confirm eligibility for learning. Offender managers were then required to complete an Essential Skills referral form. This was devised and signed off by the Welsh Government and NOMS, and was in place prior to the commencement of the pilot in April 2015.

4.20 Once referred to the provision, the trainers were then required to undertake a full Essential Skills assessment using the Wales Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST) or an equivalent Welsh Government-approved tool to determine an individuals' skill level and development need. Following initial assessment, all offenders should have been issued with an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). The learner should then be assessed and progress reviewed as necessary to ensure the learner was progressing towards the required achievement.

4.21 Consultation with senior stakeholders highlighted that there was variation in how Essential Skills needs were identified and assessed. For example, one respondent described how they originally used a screening tool, however they subsequently became aware that trainers either did not require or use it, and therefore they also ceased using it.

4.22 Although engagement with Essential Skills provision is not mandatory for offenders it was expected that the availability of Essential Skills provision would be flagged at court and encouraged as part of the offender's sentence or as part of their licence conditions on release from custody.

Engagement

4.23 Delivery providers were given flexibility in the delivery of Essential Skills providing approval was sought from the Welsh Government via the AskWBL enquiry line. Pending risk assessment from NPS/CRC and approval, flexible methods of delivery would be approved e.g. delivery in a gym environment.

4.24 Wales was divided into seven delivery regions. The Expression of Interest (EOI) letter sent out to providers outlined how providers should ensure that Essential Skills was delivered within each probation office.

4.25 Originally it was intended that Essential Skills would be delivered in groups. One senior stakeholder spoke of how teaching offenders in a group helped to create a

[20] OASys is an assessment tool used by the NOMS to assess the likelihood of the risk of reoffending and the risk of serious harm.

more effective learning environment, where offenders could learn to behave appropriately with one another and with a tutor in a class situation. It was also found to be more financially efficient.

4.26 Provision was available to leaners as long as they were under the supervision of CRC or NPS in Wales. If, once the supervision had finished, the individual required additional learning support, they would be referred by the trainer to mainstream Essential Skills provision in the community.

Vision for successful delivery

4.27 Senior stakeholder consultees were asked to describe what 'success' would look like in terms of the delivery of the ESSC pilot. Responses are summarised below:

- A robust set of outcomes whereby offenders achieved Essential Skills qualifications and moved a step closer to gaining employment.
- It would support the seamless progression onto other skills programme, particularly as part of the rationale was to align it with the wider skills provision delivered by the Welsh Government.
- Ultimately, the goal was for the pilot to contribute towards a reduction in reoffending.

4.28 The ideal scenario would be offenders successfully completing their community sentence or licence period and being employment-ready.

4.29 Senior stakeholder consultees felt that the following factors needed to be implemented in order for success to be achieved:

- For NPS/CRC and the delivery providers to have a clear understanding of the pilot and what it was trying to achieve.
- For clear processes to be in place from the outset.
- For there to be clear referral mechanisms.
- The need for clear understanding around mandation.
- For the delivery providers to have good relationships with external mainstream training providers, particularly to support signposting activities.

Performance monitoring

4.30 Performance was measured against:

- Percentage of all leavers achieving qualifications/units of qualifications (target: 50% of all participants).
- Percentage of leavers who progress into employment (20%).
- Percentage of leavers who progress into further learning (20%).

4.31 Each provider had to comply with the recording and supporting evidence requirements specified for the Work Ready programme. However, one senior stakeholder consultee described that, although there were targets, performance against these did not affect providers' overall outcome performance (e.g. the delivery of the existing adult skills programme, apprenticeships and traineeships). This decision was made as providers were reluctant to take on the contract if it could affect their overall performance linked to payment.

4.32 In order to monitor the progression of offenders, delivery providers were required to contact them at three months (after they had finished engaging with Essential Skills training) to find out their destination (e.g. further training, employment etc.).

4.33 The provider statement of arrangement for the contract stated that the NPS, CRC and WBL providers would seek to develop consistent working practices to ensure there was agreement on a Wales-wide basis on the sharing of appropriate information on offenders, with particular regard to:

- Processes to receive referral information at each location.
- Support whilst engaged in learning.
- Feedback of information to Offender Managers (e.g. attendance and qualifications gained).
- Client destinations.
- Information and signposting.

4.34 Strategically, the pilot was monitored through attendance from key representatives from NPS/CRC and NOMS at the National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW) Essential Skills Meetings with other WBL providers. NTfW also held separate meetings for just the Essential Skills in the Community providers, CRC NPS and NOMS and the Welsh Government.

Survey and interview findings

4.35 The section below presents the findings from the one-to-one interviews with CRC and NPS business/team managers and delivery leads and the online survey of offender managers and trainers. It covers: stakeholders' understanding of the pilot's background and rationale; implementation; eligibility and referrals; delivery; and monitoring, reporting and information sharing.

ESSC background and rationale

4.36 Whilst the stakeholders understood that the pilot was focused on the delivery of Essential Skills, with some mention of its links to desistance, their responses indicated that they did not have a clear or detailed understanding of the pilot's rationale. Some stakeholders indicated they did not know why the management of the provision had changed, and had subsequently resulted in new providers (in most cases) delivering Essential Skills.

> 'Well it isn't broken, why are you changing it? Why are you fixing it when it's working for us now?'
>
> CRC business/team manager

4.37 In contrast, the survey findings showed that, although some respondents were unsure of the rationale and aims of the pilot, operational staff appeared to have a greater level of understanding of its rationale. Survey respondents referred to Essential Skills provision being focused on the delivery of literacy, numeracy, and ICT tuition (three of the learning areas specified in the delivery contract as set out paragraph 4.9), although the latter was less frequently mentioned. A high proportion of respondents (16) referred to the importance of improving Essential Skills in order to support offenders finding employment in the future.

4.38 A number of stakeholders said that the main priority for offender managers was to prevent reoffending and ensure the safety of the public. As Essential Skills training was seen as one of a number of potential contributing factors/activities to reducing reoffending, its importance was recognised (other factors stated by business/team managers included finding employment and further training opportunities).

4.39 There was not a clear consensus from the business/team managers on whether the pilot should be incorporated into the wider adult employability skills provision. However, they recognised that the needs of offenders tended to differ from the wider population, and these requirements would need to be met if incorporated.

Implementation

4.40 As the pilot was launched, the contract for the Essential Skills provision was freshly let by the Welsh Government. Most of the providers that were contracted had not previously delivered Essential Skills provision for offenders. However, in Dyfed Powys, the newly-commissioned providers subcontracted the ESSC delivery to the organisations that had previously delivered the contract.

4.41 The majority of the stakeholders mentioned that the initial implementation period was very lengthy, and felt that this resulted in a gap in provision. Business/team managers described how this gap was detrimental to the pilot moving forward, as it resulted in offender managers feeling let down and being sceptical of the new provision. This was referred to as *'missing the boat'* by one business/team manager, who identified this delay as one of the contributing factors to low referral numbers (see *eligibility and referrals*). In Dyfed Powys, where the delivery was sub-contracted back to the previous providers, the implementation timescales were seen to be shorter.

4.42 The business/team managers and delivery leads identified a number of factors contributing to the delay in delivery. These included:

- the time required to communicate the new Essential Skills offer between providers, office managers and offender managers;
- Wi-Fi provision not being available in NPS/CRC offices, as some providers had planned to used internet-based learning materials; and
- a disconnect between what providers had been commissioned to deliver and what offender managers wanted/felt was required to meet the needs of their clients.

4.43 The latter factor seemed to be the most significant barrier, and resulted in offender managers being wary of referring their offenders to the provision.

4.44 In most cases, the stakeholders interviewed spoke of how delivery providers had planned to offer group sessions, however, the business/team managers described how offender managers did not feel this was always appropriate for their clients (particularly for those with a very low level of literacy and numeracy, and some NPS clients, referring specifically to those that were classified as high risk). Although stakeholders in North Wales described how there was some one-to-one provision in their region, for the most part, both business/team managers and delivery providers

commented that one-to-one provision was not obtainable due to the delivery contract's funding mechanisms, which resulted in this approach not being financially viable. The funding scheme used was also highlighted as a weaknesses of the pilot, identified by five survey respondents (four were trainers).

4.45 There were also some references made - by two business/team managers (one NPS and one CRC) and two delivery leads – to the unsuitability of launching a pilot during a period of organisational change, referring to the replacement of the Wales Probation Trust, which originally managed the delivery of Essential Skills in the community, with NPS and CRC.

> 'I think timing of this project wasn't great.'
>
> NPS business/team manager

> 'I think the main challenge was, it wasn't really a priority for the Probation Service… They kind of said that, at the time, they were going through these massive changes.'
>
> Delivery lead

4.46 The geographic availability of provision was directly referred to as being 'sporadic' and 'fractured' by two stakeholders. There were some references to providers pulling out due to the financial challenges, with one provider stating that *'it never got off the ground'*. This was reported by stakeholders to have led to confusion for offender managers regarding what was available and what services they could refer their clients to, and was identified as a reason for a lower number of starts compared to previous years (see Section 5).

4.47 In interview, stakeholders gave mixed opinions on the effectiveness of the communication by the Welsh Government and delivery providers at the implementation stage. Respondents to the survey were negative: a lack of communication, clarity and understanding of the offer (nine respondents) were the most frequently cited weaknesses of the pilot.

4.48 Despite these challenges, one delivery lead described how they hosted workshops for offender managers to inform them of the Essential Skills provision and what it involved; the delivery lead found these to be effective in communicating the offer and building relationships with offender managers. Almost all delivery leads highlighted that trainers developing relationships with offender managers from the

outset was an important enabler in building trust, and helping to reduce the gap in provision timescales.

Eligibility and referrals

4.49 Linked to the largely poor communication around the changes in Essential Skills provision, survey respondents from NPS and CRC did not generally appear to have a clear understanding of the pilot's eligibility criteria, with a high proportion stating they were unaware of the criteria (this tended to be offender managers that had indicated that they had no involvement with the pilot).

4.50 The general consensus from stakeholders in interview was one of concern regarding the suitability of the eligibility criteria, as they were viewed to be too constraining. For example, one delivery lead did not feel it was appropriate for offenders in employment to be ineligible for the provision, as it meant that offenders holding zero hour contracts or working part time (and therefore having infrequent levels of employment) would be classed as ineligible. An NPS business/team manager felt that overseas nationals should be eligible for provision, as a high proportion of this group had Essential Skills needs[21]. This business/team manager also stated that offenders needed a National Insurance (NI) number, but that not all offenders had one.

4.51 Survey respondents referred to screening tools (with some specifically citing First Move, as identified in the theory of change, and Basic and Key Skill Builder (BKSB[22]), questionnaires and assessments when asked how they assessed the Essential Skills needs of offenders. However, when asked in interview about the effectiveness of the initial assessment process there were mixed responses from lead stakeholders regarding how this process had been undertaken by offender managers; some indicated these tools were not always successful (i.e. did not identify suitable offenders, or resulted in eligible offenders not being referred) or screening did not even take place. This was reiterated through the survey findings; when asked whether they thought eligible participants were effectively identified, 25 out of 43 respondents said no[23]. Three trainers felt this was partly due to the referral being the responsibility of the offender manager, without any involvement from the

[21]The Welsh Government WBL contracts, through which this pilot was delivered, operate under strict eligibility criteria, complying with ESF rules which restrict access to people who are "an ineligible overseas national and those in part or full time employment".

[22] BKSB Initial Assessment is a fully interactive and self-marking assessment that allows the delivery provider to determine a learner's current level of ability from Pre-Entry to Level 2.

[23] When asked 'Do you think that eligible participants are effectively identified?' 9 respondents answered 'Yes', 25 respondents said 'No' , and 9 respondents did not provide an answer.

trainers. Other reasons cited by survey respondents included: Essential Skills being viewed as a low priority/not viewed seriously (two CRC offender managers); and offender managers being constrained by large caseloads and work pressures (CRC offender manager).

> 'Initial identification relies on the offender manager: / (i) knowing what service we were offering / (ii) knowing the skill levels of the offenders they were working with - the initial skills checker (that we didn't see being used anyway!)'
>
> Trainer (survey respondent)

4.52 During the one-to-one interviews, all NPS leads spoke of concerns that the needs of their clients were not fully considered during the development of the Essential Skills pilot.

> 'It didn't' feel like that had really been thought through, in terms of our clientele.'
>
> NPS business/team manager

> 'The previous delivery was so much better; this delivery has been, basically, appalling, non-existent, it hasn't been fit-for-purpose at all, so we can't engage.'
>
> NPS business/team manager

4.53 Stakeholders were not sure whether the Welsh language needs of the client group were met. For example, one delivery lead described how they did not have Welsh speaking tutors and therefore would not have been able to respond to this need if required.

4.54 Similarly, 12 survey respondents did not provide a response or were unsure how Welsh Language requirements were identified when asked. However, there were some references to offender Welsh language needs being identified by survey respondents: at induction (four respondents), on their referral form (three respondents), within the offender's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) (two respondents), by the tutor (two respondents), and on NDelius (two respondents).

4.55 23 of the survey respondents referred to the use of the Joint NPS and CRC Essential Skills referral form. The majority of survey respondents described how the referral forms were submitted to the delivery tutors via email or a paper copy.

Enrolment

4.56 Although individuals may have been identified as having an Essential Skills need by offender managers, NPS/CRC described how this did not always result in an enrolment, as the individual offenders may have decided not to engage. Survey respondents were asked to provide reasons why eligible offenders may not have wished to receive Essential Skills training. Reasons most commonly provided included: they did not feel they needed it or lacked motivation (12 respondents); they did not want to work in a group setting (five respondents); they led a chaotic lifestyle (five respondents); and they had issues around confidence/fear of taking part (four respondents)[24]. Business/team managers and delivery leads also referred to offenders having negative experiences of education, as well as attendance being voluntary (and therefore could not be enforced).

4.57 One delivery lead described how they had been able to offer some taster sessions to offenders before they committed to enrolling onto the training. They felt that more taster sessions could have helped to increase enrolment numbers, as they helped to illustrate to the offenders the importance of Essential Skills and what they could gain by taking part. However, the lead described how this would have been more viable if there had been more money available in the delivery contract.

4.58 When asked what happened if eligible offenders did not want to receive training, the trainers and offender managers described how they were signposted to other support services (11 survey respondents), and were continually reoffered the provision throughout their community order (seven survey respondents).

4.59 16 survey respondents said they were unsure how the level of engagement/attendance of the pilot compared to the previous contract delivered under NOMS. Survey respondents identified the biggest barrier to engagement as lack of transportation or cost of transportation to the delivery location (eight respondents), particularly for those living in rural areas. An NPS business/team manager described how offender managers and trainers would try to overcome this barrier by limiting the number of times the offender had to travel to the office per week, for example organising other support meetings on the same day as the Essential Skills provision. They also described how the reimbursement of travel expenses helped to overcome barriers. However, a different NPS business/team manager spoke of how the process of reimbursement involved direct payment into

[24] Based on coded answers – respondents were able to provide more than one reason.

an offender's bank account. This was not viewed to be a suitable approach, as not all offenders had access to a bank account.

4.60 Other barriers to enrolment/attendance that were cited by survey respondents included: childcare and carer responsibilities (seven respondents); finding employment (five respondents); and health problems (four respondents). To overcome barriers to engagement, the majority of survey respondents referred to the importance of the offender manager encouraging and conducting motivational activities.

Delivery of Essential Skills

4.61 The Essential Skills offer, as described by business/team managers and delivery leads, appeared to differ throughout Wales, although respondents (to both one-to-one interviews and the survey) most commonly referred to the provision of numeracy and literacy skills training. Contractually, delivery providers could deliver a suite of qualifications covering communication skills, application of number, digital literacy skills, and employability skills. However, business/team managers and delivery leads also spoke of additional activities being delivered, including: citizenship, health and safety training, Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card training; and craft-based workshops.

4.62 Delivery leads referred to the importance of meeting the needs of offenders. For example, one delivery lead referred to tailoring the learning materials to the specific interests of offenders to keep them engaged. This included creating bespoke worksheets and activities around learners' hobbies or jobs that they had shown interest in pursuing. There was also an example of active citizenship through charity-focused activities; one provider organised for learners to create a Marie Curie daffodil craft wall. Learners had to follow instructions on how to create the daffodils whilst also learning about ways of helping other people. The wall was in reception where visitors could donate to charity.

4.63 Two NPS business/team managers also spoke of how the providers in their region delivered women-only drop-in sessions and found this to be effective. The women received support from each other and the provision was delivered in an *"informal and friendly atmosphere"*. This, combined with taking into account childcare commitments and school holidays when organising the schedule, was said to have helped reduce barriers to engagement.

4.64 The rapport that the tutor developed with the learners was identified as an important factor for effective practice, with the strength of delivery seen to be dependent on individual tutors, rather than the approach of delivery organisations as a whole.

4.65 Most respondents described how the pilot delivered group/classroom-based activities, with only a limited number of respondents mentioning that trainers had facilitated one-to-one sessions. It was not always deemed appropriate for learners to attend group sessions due to their offending needs, and therefore one-to-one sessions were requested by offender managers. However, it was explained that this need was not met on most occasions.

4.66 The majority of survey respondents said provision was delivered from joint NPS/CRC offices (22 respondents). However, the geographic provision across Wales was described by one CRC business/team manager as *'fractured'* and by stakeholders in interview as not consistent across the regions. This differed from what was set out in the tender documentation for providers which stated that they should ensure that Essential Skills is delivered within each probation office.

4.67 A stakeholder in Dyfed Powys described how, compared to the other regions, it had a small caseload but covered over 50 per cent of the geographic area of Wales. Lots of the region is rural, and due to small caseloads it was not financially viable for the providers to deliver out of all offices. As a result, the provision was not accessible for all offenders.

4.68 Stakeholders commented that the inconsistent geographic provision of Essential Skills training was due to the funding mechanisms used for the pilot, and this was identified as a major barrier to delivery by NPS/CRC leads. Providers were paid based on the number of learning hours delivered to offenders, as well as learner completion/achievements. Therefore, providers were seen as being financially 'penalised' for poor or irregular learner attendance. One of the delivery leads expressed the view that a main weakness of the pilot was that the trainers were not involved in referring offenders to the provision, this being the role of the offender managers. Stakeholders reported feeling that small caseloads and poor engagement led to providers pulling out as it was not financially viable to provide a service, or focusing on delivering provision in offices with larger caseloads.

4.69 The providers contracted to deliver the provision were from the Work Based Learning (WBL) network, as part of the Work Ready Strand (see theory of change review). One delivery lead described how the learners engaged with ESSC were

completely different to the learners they were used to supporting. This respondent cited ESSC learners as being less likely to be able to work, having less or no experience of work, and being of a lower Essential Skills level, which resulted in providers having to adjust their delivery approach. One delivery lead said that they also changed the examining body they were planning on using/had used previously when delivering the WBL contract, such that (as described in the theory of change review) they were able to choose combinations of units in communication, numeracy, and digital literacy to build qualifications of different sizes[25].

4.70 The same delivery lead described how delivering units, rather than full qualifications was seen to be less overwhelming for some offenders with a very low level of Essential Skills ability. Another delivery lead described how they were not getting regular attendance from learners, and therefore delivered employability units, which could be completed in fewer sessions than an Essential Skills qualification.

4.71 Other examining boards used by providers, as noted in the survey, were City and Guilds Qualifications, Open College Network (OCN), and Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC).

4.72 Comments on the issue of mandation also highlighted the need for better organisational understanding, and further emphasised that some providers lacked a clear understanding of the cohort. Some delivery leads described how they wanted Essential Skills training to be mandatory. An NPS business/team manager referred to this, reporting that a trainer had said:

> 'Well if they've booked in for one of my sessions, I want them to be enforced if they don't attend," and we were going, "Well it doesn't work like that. You can't enforce if it's a voluntary attending." …I don't think they really understood probation, some of the new providers coming on board.'
>
> NPS business/team manager

4.73 As described in the implementation section, a gap in delivery prior to the launch of the pilot was detrimental to its success moving forward, as reported by respondents. Two business/team managers (one NPS and one CRC) said that they were concerned that since the pilot finished in March 2016, they are now in a similar position with no provision for their offenders.

[25] The Agoriad examining awarding body allows bite- sized units (each taking six hours to complete) to be delivered, rather than full qualifications.

> ‘What concerns me more than anything is the fact that the pilot ended on the 31st of March. I'm aware that we'll be having some new arrangements but they still haven't started. So from the offender perspective, they've had no Essential Skills input since the 31st of March and they're constantly saying, "When's it coming back?" and I'm unable to tell them what's going to happen next.’
>
> CRC business/team manager

Monitoring, reporting and information sharing between trainers and offender managers

4.74 Stakeholders reported being invited to attend bi-monthly NTfW monitoring meetings. These meetings were led by the Welsh Government. Stakeholders described how the meetings provided an opportunity to discuss referrals, share best practice, highlight any challenges and identify how these could be overcome.

4.75 The most frequently cited weakness of the pilot by survey respondents was a lack of communication (seven respondents). They referred specifically to feedback from trainers on learners’ progress to offender managers, and what Essential Skills and training provision the offenders had received in the secure estate. Overall, it did not seem that there was a clear process for information sharing.

4.76 The survey found that information between trainers and offender managers tended to be shared via email, paper-based progress reports, and direct face-to-face communication (identified as a benefit of trainers, primarily, delivering Essential Skills provision in joint NPS/CRC offices). It was acknowledged by stakeholders that information sharing between offender managers and delivery providers could be improved.

4.77 One trainer’s survey response highlighted difficulties experienced in electronically forwarding statistical information due to the firewall systems used by the probation service, and hence communication was typically paper-based or through face-to-face contact. Reference was also made to some providers not having secure email accounts. This meant that communication methods were inefficient in terms of time taken, as the same details had to be inputted/shared twice – first in paper form by the trainer and then again by an offender manager or member of the NPS/CRC administration team onto NDelius.

> ‘Paperwork was time consuming; a digital tool would have been a preferred solution.’
>
> Survey respondent, delivery tutor

4.78 Information shared between trainers and offender managers, as noted by survey respondents, tended to be about attendance, progress and level of engagement. Trainers were also said to have provided feedback on behaviour and attitude. A barrier to engagement identified by some trainers was their inability to contact offenders and encourage attendance, as they were not provided with contact details. Trainers therefore had to rely on offender managers undertaking this task. Trainers described how it was important to maintain engagement with offender managers to ensure that the Essential Skills provision remained on their radar.

4.79 The majority of respondents[26] commented that it was the offender manager's role to review progress and attendance, and encourage engagement. For NPS, business/team managers also specifically spoke of offender managers continuing to monitor risk.

'Your role was to encourage, support and motivate.'

NPS business/team manager

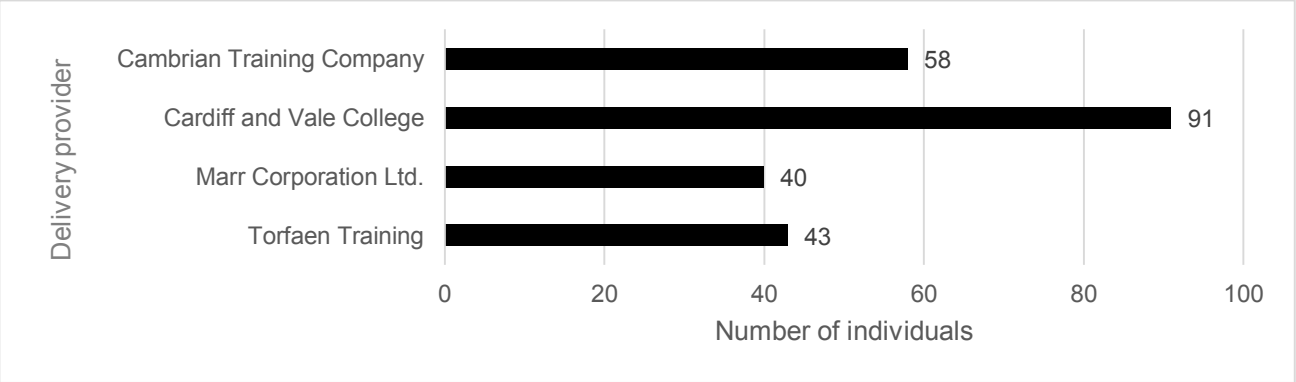
5. Quantitative research findings

5.1 Since the Welsh Government took direct control of the ESSC provision in April 2015, the LLWR database has been used by providers to record their provision of Essential Skills training. What follows is an analysis of records on all individuals who commenced and completed learning activities between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016.

Individual Learners

5.2 In the year 2015-2016, a total of 237 individuals commenced learning activities (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Number of individuals who started learning activities with each delivery provider (2015-16)[27]



Source: MMU, 2016, LLWR data

N = 237 (chart excludes two providers)

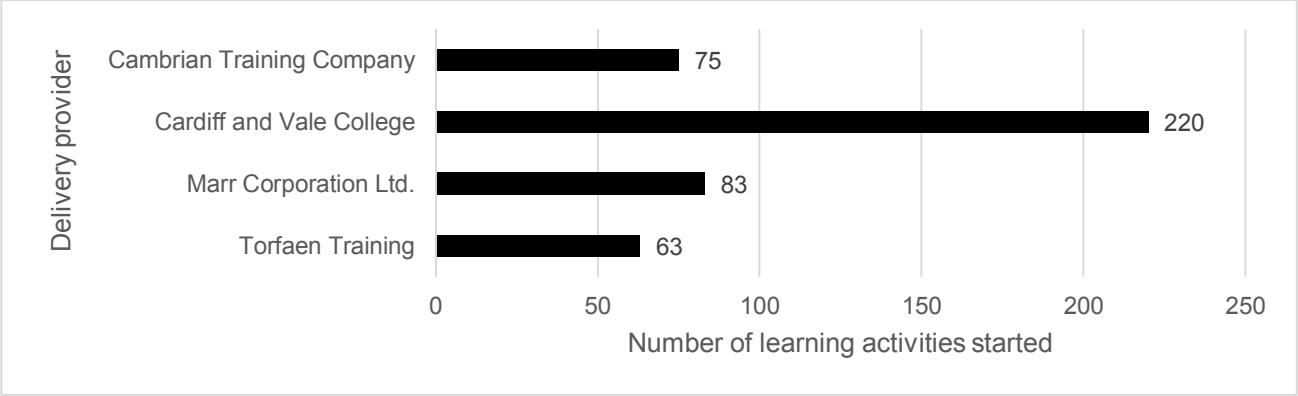
5.3 The numbers of individuals who started learning activities delivered by Grwp Llandrillo Menai, which covered the six North Wales local authority areas, and Pembrokeshire College, which covered Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda, Cynon, Taff, and Bridgend were five or fewer in each case, and therefore too small to include in the figure. This would indicate that were very few learners in nine of the 22 Welsh local authority areas.

5.4 Cardiff and Vale College, covering the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff had the highest number of starters (38 per cent), followed by Cambrian Training Company, covering Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Powys (25 per cent) and Torfaen Training (18 per cent).

[27] The number of individuals who started learning activities with Grwp Llandrillo Menai (WBL) and Pembrokeshire College was too small to report (≤ 5).

5.5 These 237 individuals started 447 separate learning activities. When compared to previous years, a strong trend showing an annual reduction of between one third and one half in the number of learning activities started is evident. For example, the number of activities that were started in 2014-15 was 800. In 2013-14, this figure was 1,502[28], and in 2012-13 it was 2,331[29]. Figure 5.2 shows the number of learning activities started with each training provider across the different providers (see Figure 5.2). Cardiff and Vale College, and Marr Corporation Ltd., had more recorded starts on learning activities per learner (averaging 2.42 and 2.08 respectively) than the other providers.

Figure 5.2: Number of learning activities started with each delivery provider[30]



Source: MMU, 2016, LLWR data

N = 447 (chart excludes two providers)

5.6 As was the case with the numbers of learners, the number of learning activities started with Grwp Llandrillo Menai (WBL) which delivered within the sixth North Wales local authority areas and Pembrokeshire College, which delivered within Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda, Cynon, Taff and Bridgend, were five or less, and therefore too small to show in the figure. This would confirm that there was very little provision in nine of the 22 Welsh local authority areas

5.7 A full list of the learning activities offered by the providers can be found in Annex E. Forty per cent of the activities delivered by providers, whilst in the area of employability and therefore appropriate, were not qualification focused[31].

[28] Probation contracted provision.
[29] Probation contracted provision.
[30] The number of learning activities started with Grwp Llandrillo Menai (WBL) and Pembrokeshire College was too small to report (≤ 5).
[31] 'Completing and Using a Curriculum Vitae', 'Speaking and Listening', and 'Soft Skills' were classed as not leading to a specific qualification. These three activities accounted for 181 of the 447 activities.

Engagement and completion

5.8 Of the 447 learning activities that were started, there were:

- 206 learner completions[32] (46 per cent)
- 208 learner withdrawals (47 per cent)
- 26 provider withdrawals (six per cent)
- 7 transferred onto a new learning activity (two per cent)[33]

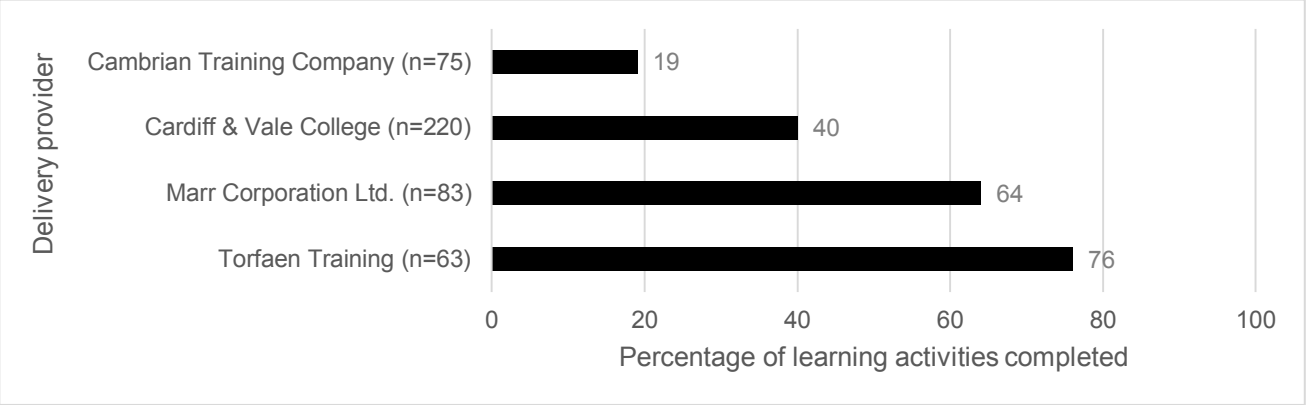
Of the 208 activities from which the learner withdrew:

- For 37 of the activities (18 per cent), the reason for withdrawal was recorded as personal;
- For 30 of the activities (14 per cent), the reason was failure before end of learning programme;
- For 23 of the activities (11 per cent) the learner withdrew for health reasons;
- For six of the activities (three per cent) the learner left to go into employment;
- For 41 of the learning activities (20 per cent), the reason was other; and
- For 71 of the activities (34 per cent), the reason was unknown.

5.9 In terms of the proportion of learning activities that were completed, Figure 5.3 shows that Torfaen Training and the Marr Corporation Ltd. had the highest percentage of completions (76 per cent and 64 per cent respectively). Only 19 per cent of the activities provided by Cambrian Training Company were completed (Figures F.1 and F.2 in Annex F show completion rates by level and by method of delivery).

[32] A 'completed' activity, may or may not have involved attainment of a qualification.
[33] Other reasons for withdrawal included: Unknown reason for leaving (n=71); Failure before end of learning programme (n=30); and Other (n=41). The actual reasons for withdrawal were not specified.

Figure 5.3 Proportion of learning activities completed by offenders, by delivery provider [34]



Source: MMU, 2016, LLWR data

N = 447 (chart excludes two providers)

5.10 Nearly two fifths (38 per cent) of the 237 individuals that commenced learning activities started just one learning activity. Just under half (44 per cent) started two activities; 12 per cent started three; five per cent started four; and only three individuals (one per cent) started five.

5.11 Of the 237 individuals that started learning activities, just under half (49 per cent) completed *at least one* activity. The remainder (51 per cent) withdrew from all of their activities and did not complete any learning activities. Figure F.3 in Annex F shows the proportion of learning activities completed, by the number of activities started. It shows that of the 44 learners who started three or more activities only two learners failed to complete any activities. In contrast, of the 193 learners who started one or two activities, nearly two thirds (119) learners failed to complete any activities.

Beneficiary characteristics

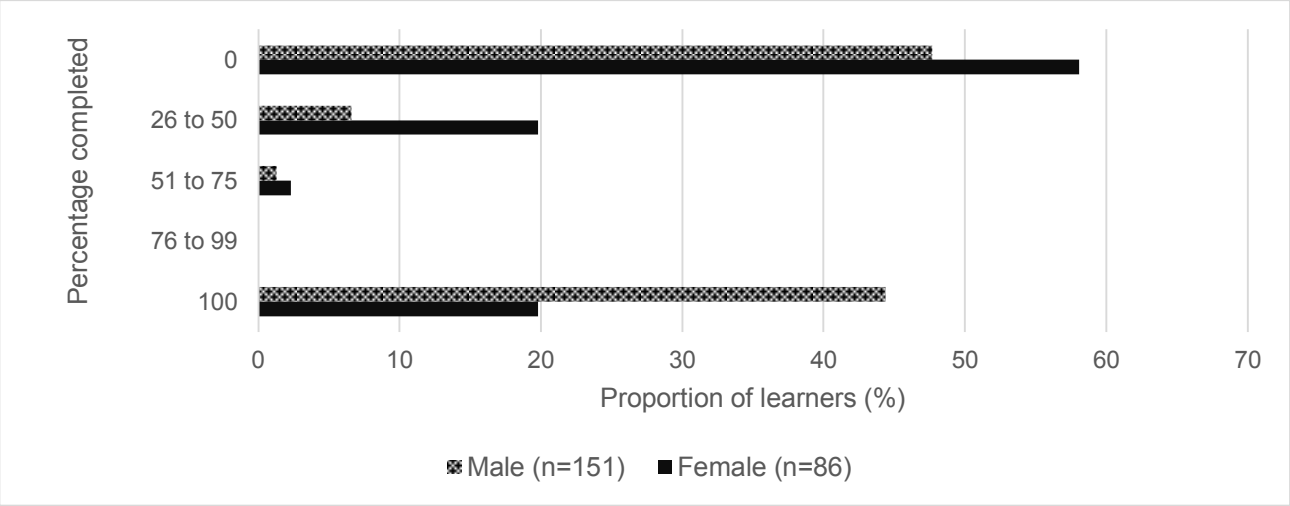
5.12 Due to the fact that numbers of learners recorded was so low, particularly in some areas, and the reasons for these low numbers being multiple and complex, it was felt that it would not appropriate to draw any conclusions from patterns in relation to beneficiary characteristics and the likelihood of different groups accessing the provision. The volume of learners was simply too small for summary figures about

[34] The number of learning activities started with Grwp Llandrillo Menai (WBL) and Pembrokeshire College was too small to report (≤ 5).

these characteristics to reveal any more than a description of the learner population under the pilot.

5.13 In terms of gender, nearly two thirds of those who commenced learning activities were male; the remainder were female. As shown in Figure 5.4, females were less likely than males to complete all the learning activities they started (males just over two fifths, females one fifth), and more likely to not complete any learning activities (just below half of males; and just under three fifths of females). This is despite the previous highest qualification (i.e. prior to starting the learning programme) for males and females being broadly in line (e.g. Pre-Entry Level - just under four fifths for both males and females.).

Figure 5.4: Proportion of learning activities completed: gender



Source: MMU, 2016, LLWR data

N = 237

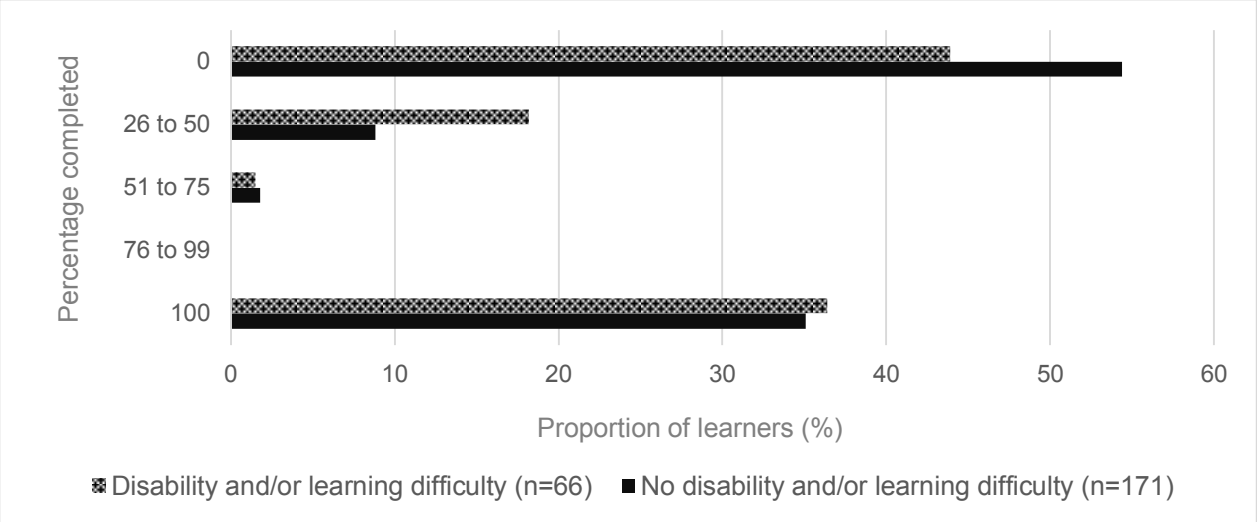
5.14 The mean age of learners was 32 years, with just over two thirds aged between 21 and 43 years. It found that the youngest learners were more likely to complete all the learning activities they started).

5.15 When examining previous highest level of qualification, over three quarters (78 per cent) had a highest qualification at Pre-Entry Level. Four learners (two per cent) had an Entry Level qualification; 15 (six per cent) had a Level 1 qualification; 25 (11 per cent) had a Level 2 and seven learners (three per cent) had a Level 3 qualification. Only one learner had a Level 4 qualification (equivalent to HE Certificate or HNC).

5.16 Just over a quarter (28 per cent) of learners were recorded in the LLWR as having a disability or learning difficulty[35]. Details of the primary need[36] of these learners were recorded: 18 learners (just over a quarter) had 'physical and/or medical difficulties'; 15 (just under a quarter) had 'Dyslexia'; 13 (a fifth) had 'behavioural, emotional and social difficulties'; six (just under a tenth) had 'moderate learning difficulties'; and six (just under a tenth) had 'general learning difficulties'[37].

5.17 As shown in Figure 5.5, a greater proportion of learners with a disability and/or learning difficulty completed the learning activities they had started (just under three fifths, compared with less than half of learners without a disability and/or learning difficulty). They were also more likely than those without a disability and/or learning difficulty to start two or more learning activities (71 per cent compared to 59 per cent). Notably, the previous qualification level (i.e. prior to starting the learning programme) of those with a disability and/or learning difficulty tended to be lower than those without (Entry Level or below - nearly nine tenths of those with a disability and/or learning difficulty, compared to three quarters of those without a disability and/or learning difficulty).

Figure 5.5: Proportion of learning activities completed: learners with and without a disability and/or learning difficulty



N = 237

Source: MMU, 2016, LLWR data

[35] Records about disabilities and learning disabilities within the LLWR are as determined by the learner, except where they are not able to determine this information, and parents, carers or advocates provide the information. More details about how disabilities and learning difficulties are recorded in the LLWR is available here. http://gov.Wales/docs/dcells/publications/141218-recording-of-learners-learning-difficulties.pdf. It is important to note that both LLWR and NDelius hold a record of whether an offender has a learning difficulty, but the information is collected in different ways in each system and is not comparable.

[36] A learner may have had a combination of these needs, however only the primary need was recorded.

[37] SPLD – Dyspraxia=1; SPLD – ADHD=2; Severe learning difficulties=1; Visual impairment=2; Hearing impairment=1; Speech, language and communication difficulties=1.

Identifying eligible beneficiaries

5.18 To add context to the fact that numbers of learners fell during the pilot, and to the comments from stakeholders that there were less referrals to the provision, the evaluation sought to explore the extent to which the Essential Skills provision was effectively targeted towards eligible offenders, and, the extent to which there were groups or individuals who should have received provision and did not. Unfortunately, as no central records are kept about offenders who are suitable or eligible for referral to Essential Skills provision, or who are actually referred, it was not possible to compare records about learners with records about eligible/referred offenders.

5.19 As outlined in the methodology (see Section 3), the evaluation therefore attempted to better understand the gap between the identification of need and the take-up of the programme by comparing all those learners identified in the LLWR dataset as having commenced learning activities, with offenders whose records within the NOMS NDelius dataset indicated that they may have a need for an Essential Skills intervention. The intention was to help understand the rate of take-up amongst offenders that may potentially be eligible for ESSC pilot learning activities. It should be recognised, however, that some offenders with an Essential Skills need, may not have been appropriate for referral to the ESSC provision as:

- They may have been already employed – meaning they were not eligible;
- They may have completed training already (without achieving qualifications) and would not benefit from further training; and/or,
- They may not have been ready for training - they may have been receiving support with other problems they were tackling, which may have been more urgent than Essential Skills.

5.20 Annex C sets out details of how data on learners and other offenders were retrieved and matched for the study. 223 of the 237 learners in the LLWR dataset were identified in the NOMS NDelius dataset. The characteristics of these 223 learners were compared with the characteristics of the 2,698 offenders in the NOMS NDelius dataset that, despite exhibiting a potential need for Essential Skills provision, had not undertaken ESSC pilot provision.

5.21 Table 5.1 compares numbers of offenders with an Essential Skills need with the number of offenders enrolling/starting Essential Skills training in each ESSC delivery area. It shows clearly that numbers in receipt of provision were very small in some areas, when compared with numbers with a potential need.

Table 5.1: Number of offenders with an Essential Skills need compared to the number of offenders enrolling/starting Essential Skills training in each ESSC delivery area

Region	Number of offenders with a recorded Essential Skills needs	Number of offenders receiving training
Region 1(Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy)	214	*
Region 2 (Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham)	314	6
Region 3 (South West and Mid Wales – Swansea and Neath Port Talbot)	344	35
Region 4 (South West and Mid Wales – Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Powys)	245	46
Region 5 (South East Wales and Valleys – Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Newport, Monmouthshire)	552	45
Region 6 (South East Wales and Valleys – Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda, Cynon, Taff, Bridgend)	425	*
Region 7 (South East Wales and Valleys – Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff)	604	86
Total	2698	223

Source: Carney Green, 2016

* The number of offenders receiving training in these areas was too small to report (≤ 5).

Reference section

Arrivo Consulting Limited (2013) *Review of projects working with ex-offenders.* The Big Lottery Fund https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/-/media/Files/Research%20Documents/er_learning_exoffenders_final.pdf

Bouffard, J., Mackenzie, D. & Hickman, L. (2000), 'Effectiveness of Vocational Education and Employment Programs for Adult Offenders: A Methodology-Based Analysis of the Literature'. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, vol. 31, issue 1-2, 2000. pages 1-41 http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J076v31n01_01

Bounceback Project (2016, *Welcome to Bounceback!* http://bouncebackproject.com/ [accessed 02.09.2016]

Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset & Wiltshire CRC (2016), Employment, Training and Education. http://bgswcrc.co.uk/content/view/ete-skills [Accessed 01.09.2016]

Brown, J., D. (2004) 'Managing the Transition from Institution to Community: A Canadian Parole Officer Perspective on the Needs of Newly Released Federal Offenders', *Western Criminology Review* 5(2), 97-107

Buck, M., L. (2000) *Getting Back to Work: Employment programmes for Ex-Offenders*, New York. Public / Private Ventures (ERIC)

Canton, R., Hine, J. and Welford, J. (2011*) Outside Chances: Offender Learning in the Community* Leicester de Montford University https://www.researchonline.org.uk/sds/search/go.do%3Bjsessionid=2521E1A1EF21F41A9763166AD52171EC?action=addToReadingList&docFlag=true&ref=B19219

Changing Paths (2016), *About Us*, http://www.changingpaths.co.uk/about-us/ [accessed 02.09.2016]

Clinks (2014a) *Providing Employment And Training Opportunities For Offenders: Growing Sustainable Work Integration Social Enterprises: A Report Of Learning From this Programme,* Home Office / Clinks https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/305974/Providing_employment_training_opportunities_for_offenders.pdf

Clinks (2014b) *Providing Employment And Training Opportunities For Offenders* http://www.clinks.org/resources-case-studies/providing-employment-and-training-opportunities-offenders#cs [accessed 01.09.2016]

Employability Scotland (2012) Promoting Employability for Ex-offenders http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/media/119186/ex-offenders_good_practice_guide.pdf [38]

European Union European Social Fund (2015) *Work Programme Provider Guidance: Mandation.* https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/505310/wp-pg-chapter-3a.pdf

Foster, R., Small, L., Foster, S., Skrine, O., Hunter, G. & Turnbull, P. (2013), *Evaluation of the Employment and Reoffending Pilot: Lessons learnt from the planning and early implementation phase,* London: MoJ. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/265287/employment-reoffending-pilot.pdf

Grantham, D., Andrewartha, D. & Shaw, A. (2014) *YSS ESS, Second Quarter Report, July-September 2014* http://yss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Enhanced-Support-for-Supervision-6-month-report-September2014.pdf

Halsey, K., Martin, K. and White, R. (2006) *The Implementation of OLASS: An assessment of its impact one year on,* National Foundation for Educational Research, DfES Publications http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/6561/1/RR810.pdf

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (2006), *'Working to Make Amends': An Inspection of the Delivery of Enhanced Community Punishment and Unpaid Work by the National Probation Service*, London: Home Office.

[38] The full report is no longer available. The link here is to an abstract.

Lavelle and McPherson (2004) 'Variables Affecting Successful Reintegration as Perceived by Offenders and Professionals', *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* Volume 40, Issue 1-2

Learning Skills Council (2011), NE; Offender Mentoring Project http://www.mandbf.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/LSC-Offender-Mentoring-Pilot-Project-Report.pdf

Leukefeld, C., Staton, M. and Webster, M. (2003) 'An Employment Intervention for Drug-Abusing Offenders' *Federal Probation* 27

London Borough of Islington IOM (2015) *Draft Specification 2015-2017 for the provision of a Community Reintegration Service (CReS) for Integrated Offender Management clients* http://www.islington.gov.uk/publicrecords/library/Procurement/Information/Forms/2014-2015/%282014-11-20%29-1415-200-Specification-for-upload-market-test-stage.pdf

London Community Rehabilitation Company (2016), *Employment and Skills for Offenders*, http://www.londoncrc.org.uk/what-we-do/employment-and-skills-for-offenders/ [Accessed 01.09.2013]

McEvoy, K. (2008) *Enhancing Employability in Prison and Beyond: A Review of Literature* Queen's University Belfast. NIACRO

McIvor, G. (2002), *What Works in Community Service?* – Criminal Justice Social Work Briefing Paper, 6. Criminal Justice Social Work Development Centre for Scotland. http://rms.stir.ac.uk/converis-stirling/publication/11870

Ministry of Justice (2013), *Transforming Rehabilitation: A revolution in the way we manage offenders*, Consultation CP1/2013, London: The Stationery Office.

Molnar, H. and Hopkins, R. (2006) *Evaluation of the Offender Education and Training in Adult Community Education (ACE) Initiative For Corrections Victoria* MC Media &Associates Pty. Ltd. http://www.corrections.vic.gov.au/utility/publications+manuals+and+statistics/evaluation+of+the+offender+education+and+training+in+adult+community+education+initiative+-+pdf

Rex, S., Gelsthorpe, L., Roberts, C. & Jordan, P. (2004*), What's Promising in Community Service: Evaluation of Seven Pathfinder Projects*. London: Home Office.

Tomorrow's People (2016), *Tomorrow's People - Getting Out To Work Project* https://www.livewellliverpool.info/Services/2000/Tomorrow-s-People [accessed 02.01.2016]

Wilson, E. (2014), *On behalf of opportunities Fife: A Review of Ex-Offender Employability in Fife*, Apex Scotland. http://www.fifevoluntaryaction.org.uk/downloads/ApexEx-Offender.pdf

YSS (2016) What We Do: Employability http://yss.org.uk/yss-central/what-we-do/employability/ [accessed 02.09.2016]

Annex A: Literature review of best practice search terms

A.1 The search terms used to inform the best practice review included:

- Essential Skills adult offenders
- Essential Skills adult offenders community (mandatory)
- Employment skills training offenders (mandatory)
- Employment skills training offenders
- Offender employment specialist training (mandatory)
- Job training for ex-offenders
- Ex-offenders employment programmes
- Evaluation offender employability (mandatory)

Annex B: Literature review of best practice– Detailed findings

B1. This annex presents a short overview of contemporary specialist UK and international literature relating to best practice in delivering essential skills training to offenders serving sentences in the community. This review of the literature and best practice examples provides a summary of contemporary thinking within the field.

B2. There was very little literature focusing on offenders serving sentences within the community that returned from the search, with the most common return focusing on prison or resettlement projects. Also common across the search results were projects taking a wider, more 'social capital'-based approach to promoting employability rather than being exclusively devoted to the delivery of training. The importance of supporting offenders in developing their social capital as key to employability was frequently emphasised. Many of these projects were delivered by the voluntary sector, sometimes, but not always in partnership with statutory criminal justice services. Least common across the search results were returns relating to more specific terms such as 'employability/training within community sentences'. Likewise, there was very little search return relating to evaluation of such initiatives. The literature covering practice examples is drawn from a broad spectrum of projects and activities, from across the U.K. as well as a small number of international examples.

Reports

B3. *A Home Office commissioned report (Clinks, 2014a[39])* from Clinks and Social Firms UK sets out to 'to explore and assess the role of social enterprises in enabling both adult and young offenders to access training and employment opportunities' and thereby overcome barriers to employment. More than half of the projects reviewed were delivered in partnership with criminal justice organisations.

B4. In most cases, while short-term reduction in re-offending by participants was observed, data to demonstrate longer-term impact was not available (many of the projects were at an early stage of operation). However, the report does identify 'a range of useful insights and key learning' from the case studies. The value of offering basic skills and employability skills training while developing good work-related behaviours such as timekeeping and reliable attendance is one of these, but alongside others such as:

- The importance of helping people to address other obstacles to employability such as accommodation, debt management, low self-esteem and the securing of identity documents and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks;

[39] And cf Clinks (2014b) for a full account of all 20 case studies

- Identifying a realistic market for employment opportunities for the target group, and brokering and liaison with employers to address negative perceptions of offenders / ex-offenders;
- Developing a staged process, beginning with activities to build confidence and self-esteem and subsequently developing a pathway; from training to work experience/volunteering, to paid work placements, to brokered employment; and
- Creating opportunities in which participants can develop social capital – allowing them to put something back into the community and thereby develop a sense of self-worth.

B5. *Employability Scotland's (2012) report* on good practice in the promotion of employability amongst ex-offenders also offers several case study examples. Across these studies, the report cites a number of contributing factors to positive outcomes, which echo key factors highlighted in the Clinks (2014a) report, notably the value of a holistic, fully integrated and client-centred approach, and of mutually-driven partnership approaches across public, private and voluntary sector collaborations.

B6. This report also sets out the value of utilising robust and appropriate assessment tools such as an 'Employment Readiness Scale'[40] to establish baseline needs and targets across the client group. Such methods allowed for the identification of a standardised starting point and a shared mechanism for gauging progress, the lack of which had hitherto inhibited partnership support. It is worth noting that the client groups of two of the projects considered in this report (in Fife[41] and Midlothian[42]) included offenders serving Community Payback Orders and therefore activities delivered through these projects were mandatory.

B7. A report for the *Big Lottery Fund* (Arrivo Consulting, 2013) reviewed projects working with ex-offenders (one of them – 'Transition to Employment' run by a charity based in Ayr focused specifically on worklessness in the community). At the time of the current review for this report, the project had been running for less than twelve months and was therefore at an early stage for evaluation (and no information about impacts was available). Against a projected 50 clients per year, the project was claiming some success, with seven clients who had 'moved into positive destinations': three into work, two to college, and two into voluntary opportunities; another was investigating self-employment. This project works with offenders on Community Payback referred by criminal justice workers. It focuses on

[40] A scale utilised in Fife, whereby clients produce a snapshot of their employability and personal attributes, thereby identifying their support needs and being explicitly placed at the centre of the process.
[41] Fife: Employment Readiness Scale – involved the provision of community-based employability support.
[42] Midlothian Training Services (MTS) – involved offenders working on a series of landscaping projects. Also had access to a range of employability services including a weekly Workclub, job search support and core skills training (including IT).

employment and job-seeking skills, is delivered one-to-one and, as with projects discussed above, in the context of support across a range of issues. This is emphasised by the project as a key to success, along with 'the investment of time in developing a trust-based relationship between the worker and each client' so as to be able to identify and respond to the needs of the individual. The report also emphasises the need to ensure that support is 'appropriately sequenced', suggesting that employment is often not a realistic short-term goal until other issues and needs have been addressed.

B8. An evaluation report *for the Ministry of Justice* (Foster *et al*, 2013), on the early stages of their employment and reoffending pilot identifies some worthwhile lessons. This pilot gave 'Day One' mandatory access to the '*Work Programme'* for all prison leavers claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.,. Whilst dealing with prison leavers and hence not the same target group as the initiative covered in the current report, it is worthy of note that establishing a dedicated governance structure was felt to help ensure effective delivery of co-commissioned services between the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and DWP; that providers were more successful when they had more information about their clients; and that it was important for staff managing offenders (in this case prison staff) to build relationships with service providers in the community.

B9. Wilson (2014) carried out a review of ex-offender employability in Fife, which had the core focus of assessing service user needs, aspirations, barriers to employability progressions and experiences. This review also, importantly, aimed to explore the effectiveness of delivery models of service provision across the geographic spread (op cit). In *A review of ex-offender employability in Fife* (Wilson, 2014) Wilson supports holistic and person-centred approaches, bespoke provision appropriate to age and gender, confidence building, personal development, employment-specific capacity building and peer mentoring. She does however acknowledge, McEvoy's (2008) literature review of effective practice (*Enhancing Employability in Prison and Beyond*) work, which suggests the lack of firm evidence for the effectiveness of such approaches. However, despite McEvoy's (2008) indication of a deficit in firm evidence on this and his discussion of the political history of the What Works lineage of practice and policy, he does refer to the European Offenders Employment Forum research (EOEF, 2002 cited in McEvoy, 2008). The EOEF research highlighted in its findings several themes for best practice, with the one most relevant to the present review being the importance of individualised and flexible delivery (EOEF, 2002 cited in McEvoy, 2008). This was cited as being of significance to the success of projects working with offenders and ex-offenders within employability provision (op cit).

B10. Canton *et al* (2011) in a research report exploring the learning and skills needs of offenders in the community, stress the importance of robust initial assessment and ongoing review, whilst also highlighting the fact that the majority of respondents

attributed particular value to having choice in engaging with the provision. The authors argue that a mandatory element within the provision would have significantly increased resistance to engagement. On this basis, they recommend that offender managers (or other providers) should utilise creative approaches to achieve client buy-in, even within the context of mandatory court orders. As with other evidence cited above, this report also refers to the value of bespoke provision and well-established and meaningful partnerships between the criminal justice system and employers.

Individual Projects

B11. *The Offender Education and Training in Adult Community Education (ACE) Initiative* was a pilot run from late 2004 to December 2006 in Victoria, Australia and evaluated by Molnar & Hopkins (2006). Adult Community Education (ACE) organisations worked in partnership with Community Correctional Services; 279 offenders were referred during the evaluation period with the ACEs charged with getting at least half of them to complete 200 hours training; as well as progression into further education or employment. Provision included links to a range of vocationally accredited courses[43]. As in previously highlighted initiatives, assessment played a key part: ACE organisations were required to comprehensively assess each offender and develop an individual training plan reflecting their education, training and employment goals. Molnar & Hopkins (*ibid*) pronounced the results of the pilot as being 'very reasonable'. During the evaluation period:

- 279 offenders were referred of whom 229 attended an assessment; of these 147(64%) were enrolled and/or had completed their training at the time of the evaluation53 outcomes were recorded (200 hours study, further education or employment). Of those enrolled or who had completed their engagement, 36 per cent had completed 200 hours of training.[44]

B12. It was identified that:

'the capacity of ACE organisations to design training and personal development programs to meet the needs of individual offenders was a key feature of the pilot and some good models of practice emerged. The high levels of engagement between offenders and ACE Providers were indicated through the majority of offenders involved undertaking this training on a voluntary basis, even if it did not contribute towards Community Work Hours. The majority of offenders interviewed

[43] The nature of which varied in different places but included for example Horticulture, IT, motor mechanics, food hygiene, aged care and beauty services; different areas prioritised different levels of qualification.
[44] Data on what further study or employment was secured was not available.

for the evaluation referred to the friendly and relaxed learning environments and found this very positive. They said the training had given them more confidence; that they were able to focus better; and that they could now seek employment or further study in areas of interest to them.'

B13. The following 'most effective elements' of the models used were identified:

- Effective coordination liaison and information exchange within and between participating organisations;
- The provision of good quality vocational advice to offenders on relevant training/employment opportunities and personal development services
- The inclusion of vocationally accredited courses
- Courses which equip offenders with multiple skills to improve their employment options
- Creatively integrating literacy and numeracy skills into vocational training
- Ensuring that offenders can move quickly through each stage (referral to enrolment) Flexible teaching delivery including one-on-one, after hours and on-the–job;
- Effective liaison with job networks and/or employment agencies

B14. *Enhanced Support for Supervision (Warwickshire & West Mercia):* delivered by YSS, a charitable organisation working with vulnerable groups, this project works with probation clients across a range of areas of need, including Education, Training & Employment (ETE). In a quarterly review report for the project the delivery staff describe this area of work as follows (Grantham *et al*, 2014):

*"*Offenders who are motivated to address their ETE needs are offered the opportunity to attend a weekly Job Club to look at their specific ETE requirements as well as developing collaborative goal-setting support plans, and looking at securing jobs they enjoy. Offenders are supported around gaining work related qualifications and employability skills. Work related mentoring can also be offered. Offenders are encouraged to build positive trusting relationships with skilled, empathetic and flexible keyworkers and volunteers.'

B15. They record a total of 191 ETE outcomes against 341 referrals to the overall scheme (how many participated or were expected to participate in the ETE part is not specified, nor whether more than one outcome can be reported for a single individual) as follows[45]:

'6 secured full time employment; 4 secured part time employment; 8 secured and attended job interviews; 1 started a work placement; 3 passed their CSCS test; 13 are revising for their CSCS tests with their Keyworkers; 6 attended a vocational training course'.

B16. They report:

'a 48% improvement on cases closed[46] for those individuals who initially had significant Education issues identified at the Initial Needs Review and a 27% improvement on cases closed for those individuals who initially had significant Employment issues identified at the Initial Needs Review.' (*ibid*).

B17. Whether participation in ETE activities is compulsory is not stated, however the stress on motivation would imply not.

Delivery of employment and skills training

B18. The importance of employment and skills for employment is long acknowledged within work with offenders, but the search revealed little in the way of definitive accounts/evaluations of employment skills interventions within the community. A number of community rehabilitation companies (CRCs) make reference to their efforts in this area. The London CRC (2016) for example describes in general terms on its website[47] its collaborative work with a range of training providers and Further Education colleges in order to equip clients with the skills required to gain employment opportunities; reference is made to offering their clients key numeracy and literacy skills, as well as nationally recognised qualifications within an industry relevant field of their choice, and also to liaison with employers in order to identify best match employment positions for their clients. Similarly, the Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset & Wiltshire CRC (2016) website[48] identifies practice in

[45] This is quarterly data for the project and is a summary of consolidated data collected across Worcester, Kidderminster, Redditch, Shropshire, Telford & Herefordshire.
[46] Case closed refers to meeting needs under the seven reducing re-offending pathways – accommodation; alcohol; drugs; health; education; employment; finance; children, family and relationships; and attitude, thinking and behaviour.
[47] http://www.londoncrc.org.uk/what-we-do/employment-and-skills-for-offenders/.
[48] http://bgswcrc.co.uk/content/view/ete-skills.

this area including key skills, job specific training and working closely with employers as well as the National Careers Service; it also notes that all of the Bristol CRC staff are qualified careers advisers. As with other literature cited earlier, Bristol CRC describe their provision in holistic terms from the range of relevant peripheral (or as described above, 'sequenced') needs that are worked through with clients in pursuit of building employability. More information about, for example, rates of participation and qualification is not offered.

B19. Again, in establishing a community reintegration service for IOM clients the London Borough of Islington (2015) make reference to the importance of linking in various forms of social capital development including employability, but do not specify how their project goes about this.

B20. The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) has now been running for 11 years with the aim of integrating offender education in prison and beyond with mainstream academic and vocational provision. The most recent evaluation of its implementation (Halsey *et al*, 2006), based on interviews with 51 representatives of different agencies in three selected regions) identifies improvements in assessment, partnership working and provision in custody but less progress in provision in the community. Where progress was indicated by interviewed staff it tended to be connected to the approach of new providers (e.g. training for staff, tailored courses for offenders). A lack of progress meanwhile was said to be related to a lack of funding for community provision, mainstream colleges failing to engage offenders (e.g. inflexibility regarding commencement dates for courses) and no extension of contractual requirements for community provision. Twenty of fifty-one interviewees did conclude that provision in the community had a stronger focus on employability since OLASS (this was slightly less than the comparative view for progress in prisons).

Requirements to participate

B21. A question which arises in respect of employability initiatives with offenders relates to whether or not it is helpful to require their participation. European Social Fund guidance sanctions such a requirement (European Union European Social Fund, 2015) where the activity being 'mandated' is within the parameters of the law and policy and is deemed reasonable to the individual's circumstance, and where the individual understands the consequences of failure to comply.

B22. Some writers express caution regarding the use of mandation. (Gendreau and Cullen, 1996 cited in Brown, 2004) for example pointing out the need for a decrease in structure of parole, suggesting that while there is evidence for positive outcomes resulting from increased structure and supervision there remains a question over the merit of 'invasive' interventions. Buck's (2000) research meanwhile identified that voluntary participants in employment programmes are more likely to experience positive outcomes than those required to participate (Buck, 2000). The Australian

ACE programme (*ibid*), as indicated above, cites a high degree of voluntary participation as a positive indicator for the programme.

B23. However, compulsion is to a greater or lesser extent a feature of many offender employability schemes. The ACE programme, at least one of the Worcester projects and Scottish initiatives which included offenders serving Community Payback above (*ibid*) included mandated clients; this was also the case in the Community Service Pathfinder (Rex *et al*, 2004) and Enhanced Community Punishment (HMIP, 2006) projects in England & Wales, the former being described as 'promising' (Rex *et al*) where it focused on skills accreditation (as well as pro-social modelling[49]). Other elements such as a re-integrative approach to sentence delivery have been identified as contributing to what was positive in this model (McIver, 2002) but the indication is that mandation does not have to be inimical to an effective approach in this area. Given a degree of motivation on the part of the offender, compliance with mandatory reporting can contribute to successful outcomes (Lavelle and McPherson, 2004), while Leukefeld *et al* (2003) regard mandatory employment within drugs court trials as positive for clients using drugs.

B24. A point from Canton *et al*'s work (2011) mentioned above is worth reiterating in this context. They assert that a mandatory element in this kind of provision generates resistance to engagement. However, accepting that compulsion will at times be an element in criminal justice employability initiatives they recommend that offender managers (or other providers in instances) should utilise creative approaches to achieve client buy-in, even within the context of mandatory court orders.

Other Initiatives

B25. The search produced information on a range of other projects operating in the area of promoting employability / employment skills with offenders, though without any clear evidence for the value or impact of their approach. As such, whilst these examples cannot be regarded as being identified as 'best practice', they provide a snapshot of contemporary and relevant approaches and may be read as indicative of current trends in delivery, albeit with the cautionary note that these approaches have generally not been subjected to rigorous evaluation. These examples included:

- Mentoring Projects in North East England (Learning Skills Council, 2011) and in Liverpool (Tomorrow's People, 2016) seeking to use mentoring to improve life skills and employability prospects for offenders and ex-offenders. The evaluation of the North East project (*ibid*) sets out some positive outcomes for participating individuals and indications that it is positively received with the qualification that 'offender mentoring is seen to be most effective when it is provided as part of a

[49] The purpose of pro-social modelling is to change client behaviour by demonstrating and reinforcing positive social behaviours.

network of support'. It offers more of a supporting than a training role however and the evaluation does not set out an unequivocal link between support and employability outcomes.

- Bounceback project (London): a social enterprise (and charity) working with prisoners 'through the gate' to provide training and employment opportunities, including longer-term opportunities to work with the organisation through their social enterprise arm. Whilst Bounceback solely offer vocational-orientated training and accreditation, specifically focused on the construction industries, their work is of relevance in that participation is voluntary. Interestingly, Bounceback simultaneously offer training within the secure estate (HMP Brixton) as well as in the community. Both points of entry are eligible for progression to employment within the social enterprise branch of the organisation. Bounceback work in partnership with other organisations such as Shelter and Novus across the two points of entry. Whilst there is no substantive evaluative evidence available on success from the project, Bounceback indicate that as a relatively small organisation they still achieve very tangible outcomes in relation to employment and employability through the vocational training and its direct link to the social enterprise arm of the organisation (Bounceback Project, 2016).
- Changing Paths: provides training, supported mentoring, work experience and ultimately facilitates full-time jobs primarily in catering and construction for offenders, ex-offenders and the long-term unemployed (Changing Paths, 2016) Good Stuff Furniture: delivered by YSS requires attendance. It is a 'specified activity requirement to meet the needs of women offenders, in Worcester' (compulsion in this case will be at least in part to be able to offer a credible requirement to the court). This includes skills training (in furniture restoration), work experience and additional sessions covering elements such as employment, training and education (information advice and guidance) with an emphasis on self-employment and enterprise where appropriate, physical health & nutrition, emotional well-being, finance & debt, and relationships (including parenting). 'This takes into account the social, economic and family context of women's lives particularly parenting and care responsibilities and addresses the underlying causes of offending behaviour'.

Summary of Literature

B26. This literature review utilised a broad range of search terms of specific relevance to the objectives of the overall project. Although the search terms were broad in relation to the specific focus of the research project a limited number of examples of literature returned that had the aim of evaluating delivery of essential skills training to (ex)offenders. However, the literature review did highlight several significant factors relating to best practice, both within a national and international context. The best practice themes of most relevance to the ESSC pilot and future provision included:

- Individualised or bespoke delivery of provision for each client
- The importance of utilising robust and appropriate assessment tools
- Utilising an holistic approach to delivery of essential skills

Annex C: Retrieval and matching of data on ESSC provision recipients and non-recipients

C1. This annex provides further detail of how the NOMS in Wales Performance & Quality Team generated the required datasets using LLWR and NOMS NDelius Data.

NOMS NDelius Data

C2. To identify potential cases that indicated a need for an Essential Skills Intervention, all NPS Wales and Wales CRC Cases with a current Probation Order (as at 23/06/16) were first selected.

C3. NOMS then used a fairly wide scope to capture as many potential cases as possible, where any of the following variables were identified:

- Problems with reading (OASys)
- Problems with writing (OASys)
- Problems with numeracy (OASys)
- Learning difficulties and/or disability (NDelius)
- Reading/literacy concerns (NDelius)
- Numeracy concerns (NDelius)
- Language/communication concerns (NDelius)
- Skills screening concerns (NDelius)

C4. 2,921 cases were selected in this way. 223 of these were also in the LLWR dataset, recorded as having started ESSC pilot learning activities. 2,698 were not in the LLWR.

Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)

C5. The original LLWR file for matching contained three data tabs – RawData, DistinctLearners, and DistinctProgrammes. The data used for the data matching process was from the DistinctLearners tab which contained Surname, Forename, Date of Birth (DOB), and Gender variables. Records for a total of 237 learners were listed in the DistinctLearners tab. This data was transferred to an Access database for matching. The matching process used a combination of the following routines to link data to NDelius:

- Match on Forename and Surname using a combination of SOUNDEX and NYSIIS fuzzy matching algorithms.
- Fuzzy date of birth match accounting for transposed dates/typographical errors.

C6. A match was achieved for 223 of the 237 learners[50].

C7. Once the matching process was successfully completed a Matching Type and CRN (NDelius Case Reference Number) was attached to the original dataset. The CRN was the key field to enable onward linkages to NDelius/OASys data objects.

C8. This dataset was then transferred into a final Access database with link to NOMS's core NDelius and OASys data sources (exported on a daily basis). An update query was created to generate a Linking ID for each case (made up of a sequential number, first 2 digits of the DOB, 1st letter of Surname and 1st letter of forename) e.g. 1804HB. This was applied to the dataset and also to other data contained in the LLWR spreadsheet (Raw Data and Distinct Programmes). The additional data items were included as required.

[50] Reasons for a match failure are likely to include incorrect or poorly spelt names, or wrong/estimated dates of birth in one or both datasets.

Annex D: Fieldwork Tools

D1. The tools included in this Annex are:

- The information sheet used for one-to-one interviews with NPS, CRC and provider leads
- The research consent form
- The semi-structured interview topic guide for the one-to-one interviews with NPS, CRC and provider leads
- The information sheet used for the online survey with NPS and CRC offender managers and trainers
- The online survey questions for NPS and CRC offender managers and trainers

Information sheet (used for one-to-one interviews)

Introduction

Carney Green and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) have been commissioned to deliver a process evaluation of the Essential Skills for those serving sentences in the community (ESSC) pilot on behalf of the Welsh Government.

The evaluation team will consult with NPS regional leads, CRC regional leads, NPS and CRC office managers, delivery provider leads, and offender managers, as well reviewing data on eligible offenders and those engaged with the pilot.

The purpose of our discussion is to explore your experience and understanding of the pilot. Your responses will be anonymous and treated in the strictest confidence. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you can change your mind at any time.

The information you provide will be used, alongside that from the other research participants, to assess the success of the new approach to delivering Essential Skills training to offenders in the community, and to provide recommendations to inform the future provision of this service through the new adult employability programme in Wales. The results of the process evaluation will be provided in a report for the Welsh Government, which may be published.

Please read the information sheet below. There is a consent form to be filled in if you agree to participate in the research.

Title of Research Project	A process evaluation of the Essential Skills for those serving sentences in the community (ESSC) pilot
Research Team	The pilot is being evaluated by a team of independent researchers from Carney Green and Manchester Metropolitan University on behalf of the Welsh Government.
Name of Researcher conducting today's interview.	To be inputted
Researcher's contact details	To be inputted
Evaluation Project Manager	Evelyn Hichens, Carney Green evelyn.hichens@carneygreen.com 07494 449840
MMU Evaluation Lead	Hannah Smithson, MMU h.l.smithson@mmu.ac.uk, 0161 2473442
Name and contact details of Welsh Government contact	Sara James sara.James@Wales.gsi.gov.uk, 029 2082 6812

Aims of this research	The evaluation team aims to explore implementation of the pilot approach, assess the success of the new approach, and provide recommendations in order to inform the future provision of this service.
What will the outcomes of the evaluation be?	The evaluation team will write a report for the Welsh Government. The report will help the Welsh Government to better understand the implementation of the pilot and capture learning which can be used to inform the future provision of this service.
Why do you want me as a participant?	You have been chosen to participate because you are a stakeholder who is involved in the delivery of the pilot.
What will this involve?	1 interview lasting between 45 minutes and one hour. The interview will be conducted via telephone at a time and date convenient to you.
How will my data be recorded?	With your permission, interviews will be recorded using a digital Dictaphone and transcribed. The interview recording will be deleted after transcription. If permission is not given to digitally record the interview, permission will be sought for hand written notes to be taken. Notes taken during interviews will be typed up and the handwritten notes destroyed.
How will my data be stored?	Your data will be stored securely in line with the Data Protection Act. This means all digital recordings, transcripts and typed notes from interviews will be electronically stored within encrypted and firewalled computer systems. Access will be restricted to members of the research team. Only members of the research team will access your data. Your data will be securely kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act, for a period of up to two years after completion of the project in case of any queries or challenges that may arise. After that time it will be securely destroyed.
Will this be confidential?	Yes. Your responses will be anonymous. When we report our findings we will not directly identify individuals. This means that we won't use any of your personal details in our report.
What if I change my mind?	Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to answer any question. You can also withdraw from the research at any point during the interview and within two weeks of participating. After this time your responses will be inputted for analysis. If you wish to withdraw, please contact the evaluation project manager Evelyn Hichens using the contact details above.

Consent Form – one copy for research and one copy for participant

Title of project: a process evaluation of the Essential Skills for those serving sentences in the community (ESSC) pilot.

Name of Researcher: _____

Name of Participant: _____

Statements	**Yes?**	**No?**
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study.		
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.		
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to not answer questions during interview and to withdraw from the study at any point during the interview and within two weeks of participating without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.		
I understand that my data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act.		
I consent for the interview to be digitally recorded.		
I consent for handwritten notes of the interview to be taken.		
I consent to take part in the study		

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of person taking consent (researcher)	Date	Signature

Semi-structured interview guide

This is semi-structured interview topic guide. It will be used to guide the discussion. As it is semi-structured not all questions will be directly asked or relevant to each consultee.

Carney Green and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) have been commissioned to deliver a process evaluation of the Essential Skills for those serving sentences in the community (ESSC) pilot on behalf of the Welsh Government.

The aim of the process evaluation is to assess the success of the new approach, and to provide recommendations, based on robust evidence (gathered through secondary data analysis, and interviews and an online survey with stakeholders, and a review of best practice elsewhere), to inform the future provision of this service through the new adult employability programme in Wales.

The evaluation team has already undertaken interviews with key stakeholders involved in the development and delivery of the pilot. These discussions have resulted in a clear understanding of the development of the pilot and its rationale; its long term vision and the activities and outcomes required to achieve this.

The evaluation team is now in the process of conducting one-to-one telephone discussions with those involved in the delivery of the pilot (including representatives from the delivery organisations, NPS and CRC).

The purpose of these discussions are to explore your experiences and understanding of the pilot to date. The discussion will take between 45 minutes and one hour. Your responses will be anonymous and treated in the strictest confidence. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to answer any question. You can also withdraw from the research at any point during the interview and within two weeks of participating. After this time your responses will be inputted for analysis. If you wish to withdraw, please contact the Evaluation Team Project Manager Evelyn Hichens using the contact details on the information sheet.

The information you provide will be used, alongside the other research participants, to inform the Welsh Government about how the pilot has operated in practice, explore reasons for changes in the participation rate in Essential Skills, and to provide evidence to the Welsh Government on best practice mechanisms for delivering this provision.

Are you happy for the discussion to be recorded to assist the process of analysing the responses? All responses will be confidential and you will not be personally identified in the report. All data will be securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act and only members of the research team will be able to access your data. The information will be

kept for up to two years after completion of the project in case of any queries or challenges that may arise. After that time, it will be securely destroyed.

Do you have any questions about the research or your participation?

Complete separate consent form before starting the interview

and check participant is willing to proceed

Background

1. Please can you state the organisation you work for and describe your specific role? How long have you worked in this position for?
2. Please can you describe your understanding of the rationale for the pilot and its objectives?
3. What was NPS/CRC/delivery provider/respondent's role in the delivery of the pilot? Please can you provide a short description of your involvement/role related to the ESSC pilot?
4. Do you feel that ESSC should be incorporated into the wider adult employability skills provision as delivered by Welsh Government? Please explain your reasoning.

Implementation

5. Were you previously involved in the delivery of Essential Skills for those serving sentences in the community? – If so how did the pilot approach differ from what was previously delivered under the management of NOMS?
6. How long did it take for the new approach to be established and begin delivery? (The contract began in April 2015, how long was it until systems were in place and delivery began?)
7. How were the changes communicated to partner agencies? Was the rationale of the new approaches clearly communicated? Was sufficient information provided?
8. Were there any challenges in the initial implementation of the new approach to delivering Essential Skills? How were these challenges addressed/overcome?
9. What approach was taken to deliver the Essential Skills training? Where was the training delivered? If delivered in-house, how often were delivering providers based in CRC/NPS offices? Were eligible offenders

10. Were there any key successes in the initial implementation of the new approach? Please identify examples (e.g. partnership working, flexibility of approach, innovative ways to engage offenders).

11. What are the key strengths and weaknesses in the design of the pilot? How does this compare to the key strengths and weaknesses of the previous approach?

Eligibility and referral

12. What is your understanding of the eligibility criteria for offenders to be referred onto the programme? Have these changed over the lifetime of the programme?

13. Please can you describe how the referral process to delivery providers has happened in practice? What information was given to delivery providers? Is the Joint NPS and CRC Essential Skills Referral Form used?

14. For the delivery providers - Did the assessment process used by NPS and CRC successfully identify eligible participants? Please describe reason for answer.

15. How were the Welsh language requirements of the ESSC pilot client group identified, recorded and addressed? Is this done at the referral stage? (both in communication with clients and in the delivery of Essential Skills training through the medium of Welsh or bilingually)

16. In practice, what was the process for assessing the Essential Skills needs of offenders? What tools are used? (Have any new tools been used/developed as part of this pilot) At what point is skill need assessed?

17. What were the reasons for eligible offenders not accepting the training? What happens if eligible offenders do not want to receive training through the pilot? Are they re-offered the training at a later stage? Are they signposted to alternative provision? Are there any intrinsic/extrinsic barriers preventing their engagement?

18. Was the geographical location of training offered via the training providers sufficient and appropriate to enable participation by the ESSC pilot client group? Did this prevent any eligible offenders from engaging?

19. Have there been any cases where it has not been appropriate/suitable to refer an eligible offender to the pilot's delivery providers? Explain what the reasons were. What happened?

20. How were ESSC pilot participants supported to take-up their offer of Essential Skills training? What role did NPS/CRC and the delivery providers take in supporting this?

Delivery of Essential Skills

Please could you base the following answers on a typical case, and highlight the extent to which other cases have followed a similar pattern.

21. How did the delivery provider assess an individuals' skill level and development need? What tools were used? (e.g. WEST or other Welsh Government approved tool)

22. What information was inputted to the Individual Learning Plan (ILP)? How is the ILP used during the individuals' engagement with the pilot?

23. What activities, Essential Skills or other, were ESSC eligible offenders offered? What accredited qualifications are offered?

24. What involvement/role did CRC/NPS have with the offender regarding their Essential Skills training once they had been referred to the delivery organisation?

25. How was engagement monitored once eligible offenders enrolled with the provider? What role do NPS/CRC have regarding this?

26. What were the key strengths and weaknesses in the delivery of the pilot?

27. Are there any areas of delivery that you identify to be particularly effective practice? Please provide examples and explanations.

Offender engagement

28. How would you describe offender engagement once they been enrolled on the training programme? How was attendance reviewed? What mechanisms were in place to encourage attendance once the individual is enrolled on the pilot? Explore barriers to engagement intrinsic and extrinsic (e.g. domestic circumstances, access to transport).

29. How did the level of engagement with Essential Skills compare with that during the previous contract delivered under NOMS? Initial investigations have indicated lower engagement rates since this pilot? Is there anything that could be done/have been done to increase referral rates?

30. Are strategies put in place for offenders when they complete their engagement with the pilot? At what point do they finish on the programme? (e.g. once they have completed their community order or licence, or once they have completed a qualification) What skills provision have offenders been signposted to?

Monitoring and reporting

31. What monitoring and reporting arrangements were put in place/ used for the delivery of the contract? What information systems are used to record referrals and retrieve monitoring information from? What are the monitoring and reporting requirements for CRC/NPS? What details are monitored and recorded? What are the monitoring and

reporting timescales? How effectively have the monitoring and reporting requirements been met? Has a consistent approach been used?

32. Do you attend meetings where Essential Skills training in general, or the progress and engagement of offenders in particular, is discussed? Who attend these? How often do the meetings take place? What is the aim of the meetings? (e.g. provide an update of availability routes, discuss referrals, agree support for clients identified at risk of disengaging, identify good practice and challenges) How effective have the meetings been?

33. What information is shared between WCRC, NPS and Work Based Learning Providers (e.g. referral information, support whilst engaged in learning, feedback on attendance and qualifications gained, client destinations, and information and signposting)? What systems and processes are in place to share this information? What feedback is provided to offender managers (e.g. do delivery providers share information on behaviour and attitude?) How is negative behaviour reported?

34. Have there been any challenges regarding sharing information? How have these challenges been overcome?

Online survey information sheet

This is the information sheet sent to offender managers and trainers about the online survey

---

An evaluation of the Essential Skills for those serving sentences in the community (ESSC) pilot

Survey for operational staff – Information Sheet

Introduction

In April 2015, the Welsh Government launched a pilot programme called Essential Skills for those Serving Sentences in the Community (ESSC). The programme ran until April 2016, providing in-house Essential Skills training up to and including Level 2 for those over the age of 18. The programme was primarily delivered at NPS and CRC offices across Wales. Prior to the launch of the programme, six new training providers were contracted by the Welsh Government to deliver the adult skills training.

Carney Green and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) have been commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the pilot programme on behalf of the Welsh Government, to assess the success of the new approach to delivering Essential Skills training to offenders in the community. The research report will provide recommendations to inform the future provision of this service.

Participation

We want to ensure that our evaluation enables all roles involved in ESSC to have the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation. We have undertaken interviews with key stakeholders involved in the development and delivery of the pilot, and with NPS and CRC regional leads, and delivery providers. We are also carrying out a literature review and will be analysing anonymised administrative records for eligible and actual training recipients, in order to provide a detailed understanding of the pilot and its effectiveness.

An additional and key part of the evaluation is an anonymous online survey, for completion by offender managers from NPS and CRC, and operational staff providing Essential Skills training.

The survey will open in early June for approximately 10 days. A link to the survey will be sent to respondents by senior staff within either Wales CRC, the NPS or the Welsh Government, via office/business managers or via our training organisation contacts.

We want to encourage as many offender managers and trainers as possible to complete the survey, offender managers do not need to have referred offenders onto the ESSC provision, and do not need to have experience of offenders being engaged in the skills provision. It is important to us to hear from a broad range of offender managers and trainers, from all areas of Wales, in order to provide an evidence-based account of the success of the pilot which will inform future provision, and get a comprehensive understanding of its operation and effectiveness.

Contact details

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact either Evelyn Hichens (Evaluation Project Manager, Carney Green - evelyn.hichens@carneygreen.com), Hannah Smithson (MMU Evaluation Lead - h.l.smithson@mmu.ac.uk), or Sara James, Social Research and Information Division, Welsh Government (Sara.James@Wales.gsi.gov.uk).

Online survey

An evaluation of the Essential Skills for those serving sentences in the community (ESSC) pilot

Information about the study

Introduction

In April 2015, the Welsh Government launched a pilot programme called Essential Skills for those Serving Sentences in the Community (ESSC). The programme ran until April 2016, providing in-house Essential Skills training up to and including Level 2 for those over the age of 18. The programme was primarily delivered at NPS and CRC offices across Wales. Prior to the launch of the programme, six new training providers were contracted by the Welsh Government to deliver the adult skills training.

Carney Green and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) have been commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the pilot programme on behalf of the Welsh Government.

Please read the following information carefully before you start the survey.

Aim of the survey

The purpose of this survey is to explore your experience and understanding of the ESSC Programme. The information you provide will be used, alongside that from the other research participants, and from other information gathered through the research, to assess the success of the new approach to delivering Essential Skills training to offenders in the community. The research report will provide recommendations to inform the future provision of this service.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Your responses to the survey will be kept completely confidential. The whole survey is completely anonymous (no personal identifiers are requested) but to ensure we fully understand the perspectives of respondents, we are requesting information about your job role and the organisation you work for. When the research is complete, anonymised data will be passed to the Welsh Government for their use in quality assurance.

Freedom to withdraw

Your participation in the survey is completely voluntary: you are free to stop at any time. However, we would really appreciate it if you could complete the survey. It will only take about 10-15 minutes of your time. Fuller responses will improve the accuracy of findings and their influence in shaping better services.

Contact details

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact either Evelyn Hichens (Evaluation Project Manager, Carney Green - evelyn.hichens@carneygreen.com) or Hannah Smithson (MMU Evaluation Lead - h.l.smithson@mmu.ac.uk).

Background

1. Please tick which title most accurately represents your position

Office manager	
Offender manager	
Delivery tutor	
Other (please state)	

2. Please can you state what region you operate from? (e.g. North Wales (Region 1), North Wales (Region 2), South West & Mid Wales (Region 3), South West and Mid Wales (Region 4), South East Wales & Valleys (Region 5), South East Wales & Valleys (Region 6), South East Wales & Valleys (Region 7), or Other (please specify below)

3. Please can you state the organisation you work for and describe your specific role?

4. Please state your understanding of the rationale for the ESSC programme? (i.e. your understanding of its objectives?)]

5. Please provide a short description of your involvement in the delivery of the ESSC programme? (e.g. assessing the eligibility of offenders for Essential Skills, and/or delivering Essential Skills training to offenders)

6. If applicable, what do you think are the key strengths in the design of the ESSC programme (later questions explore your views on the operation of the pilot)?

7. If applicable, what do you think are the key weaknesses in the design of the ESSC programme?

Eligibility and referral

8. What is your understanding of the eligibility criteria for offenders to be referred onto the ESSC programme? Did these change over the lifetime of the programme?

9. Do you think that eligible participants are effectively identified?

Yes	
No	

Please explain your answer

10. What was the process for assessing the Essential Skills needs of offenders?

11. What tools were used for the assessment of skills?

12. At what stage in their community sentence was an offender's skill needs assessed?

13. Please can you describe the process by which offenders were referred to delivery providers?

14. Did you use the Joint NPS and CRC Essential Skills Referral Form?

Yes	
No	

15. Please explain your answer

16. How were the Welsh language requirements of the ESSC Programme client group identified, recorded and addressed?

17. What were the reasons for eligible offenders not wishing to receive ESSC training?

18. What happened if eligible offenders did not want to receive the offer of training? Were they re-offered the training at a later stage? Were they signposted to alternative provision?

Delivery of Essential Skills

19. How was the Essential Skills training delivered?

20. Where was the training delivered? (in a CRC/NPS office, a specific venue for training or other?)

21. What activities, Essential Skills or other, were ESSC-eligible offenders offered?

22. What accredited qualifications were offered?

23. What involvement/role did the CRC/NPS have with the offender regarding their Essential Skills training once they had been referred to the delivery organisation?

24. How effectively was offender engagement/attendance measured once they have enrolled on the ESSC programme?

25. What mechanisms were in place to encourage engagement/attendance once the individual was enrolled on the ESSC programme?

26. Please set out details of any barriers to engagement/attendance once an offender accepted a referral on to the ESSC programme (e.g. domestic circumstances, access to transport etc.).

27. How did the level of engagement/attendance with Essential Skills, delivered through the programme since it commenced in April 2015, compare to the previous contract delivered under NOMS?

Monitoring and reporting

28. What monitoring and reporting arrangements were used for the delivery of the contract? What details were monitored and recorded?

29. How effectively have the monitoring and reporting requirements been met?

30. What information was shared between Wales CRC, Wales NPS and training providers (e.g. referral information, support whilst engaged in learning, feedback on attendance and qualifications gained, client destinations, and information and signposting etc.)?

31. What systems and processes were in place to share information?

32. What feedback was provided to offender managers (e.g. do training providers share information on behaviour and attitude)?

33. Have there been any challenges regarding sharing information? How have these challenges been overcome?

Thank you for your time

Annex E: Learning activities offered by level

Learning activity	Delivery provider			
	Cambrian Training Company	Cardiff & Vale College	Marr Corporation Ltd.	Torfaen Training
Completing and Using a Curriculum Vitae	0	35	0	43
Speaking and Listening, Providing and Receiving Information	0	7	0	0
Traineeship Core - Soft Skills	0	92	0	0
City & Guilds Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 1)	0	0	4	0
City & Guilds Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 1)	0	0	6	0
Functional Skills qualification in English at Entry 1	2	0	0	0
WJEC Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 1)	0	4	0	0
WJEC Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 1)	0	7	0	0
City & Guilds Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 2)	0	0	3	0
City & Guilds Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 2)	0	0	6	2
WJEC Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 2)	0	6	0	0
WJEC Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 2)	0	12	0	0
Agored Cymru Entry Level Extended Certificate in Essential Skills for Work and Life (Entry 3)	52	0	0	0
City & Guilds Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 3)	4	0	6	0
City & Guilds Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 3)	0	0	12	2
Functional Skills qualification in Mathematics at Entry 3	1	0	0	0
WJEC Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 3)	0	16	0	0
WJEC Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Communication (Entry 3)	0	21	0	0
City & Guilds Level 1 Essential Application of Number Skills	0	0	4	0
City & Guilds Level 1 Essential Communication Skills	0	0	3	0
City & Guilds Level 1 Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number	1	0	8	0
City & Guilds Level 1 Essential Skills Wales in Communication	3	0	7	13
City & Guilds Level 1 Essential Skills Wales in Information and Communication Technology	0	0	8	0
Pearson Edexcel Level 1 Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number	5	0	0	0
Pearson Edexcel Level 1 Essential Skills Wales in Communication	4	0	0	0

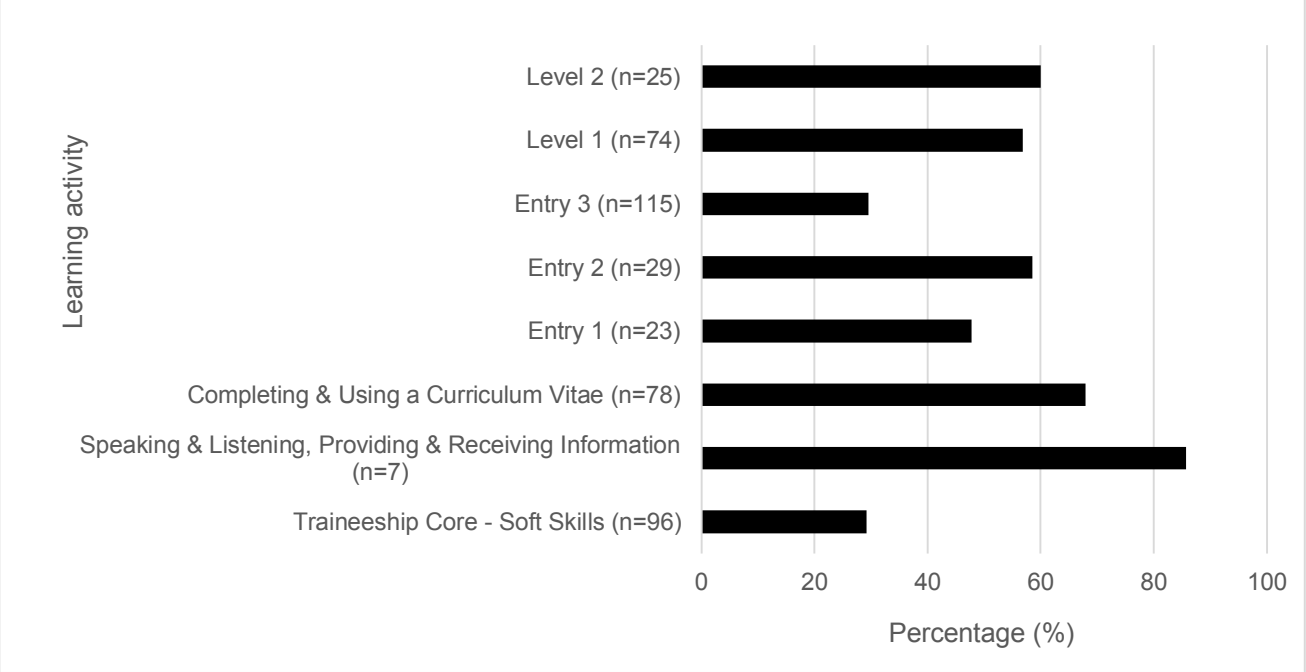
	Cambrian Training Company	Cardiff & Vale College	Marr Corporation Ltd.	Torfaen Training
Pearson Edexcel Level 1 Essential Skills Wales in Information & Communication Technology	1	0	0	0
WJEC Level 1 Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number	0	1	0	0
WJEC Level 1 Essential Skills Wales in Communication	0	14	0	0
City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Application of Number Skills	0	0	1	0
City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Communication Skills	0	0	1	0
City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number	0	0	8	0
City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Skills Wales in Communication	0	0	4	3
City & Guilds Level 2 Essential Skills Wales in Information and Communication Technology	0	0	2	0
Pearson Edexcel Level 2 Essential Skills Wales in Communication	1	0	0	0
WJEC Level 2 Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number	0	3	0	0
WJEC Level 2 Essential Skills Wales in Communication	0	2	0	0
Total	***75***	***220***	***83***	***63***

Annex F: Supplementary quantitative data analysis

Completions by level and by method of delivery

F1. Figures F.1 and F.2 show that those activities (see Annex E) most commonly completed were the Pre-Entry Level activities 'Completing and Using a Curriculum Vitae' (n=53, just over two thirds) and 'Speaking and Listening, Providing and Receiving Information' (n=6, over four fifths). The 'Soft Skills' (n=28, just over a quarter) and Entry Level 3 (n=34, three tenths) activities were the least likely to be completed. While those activities delivered via a work-based provider centre (n=40, just under three quarters) and a classroom (n=61, two thirds) were most likely to be completed, those delivered by distance learning were least likely to be completed (n=14, just under a fifth).

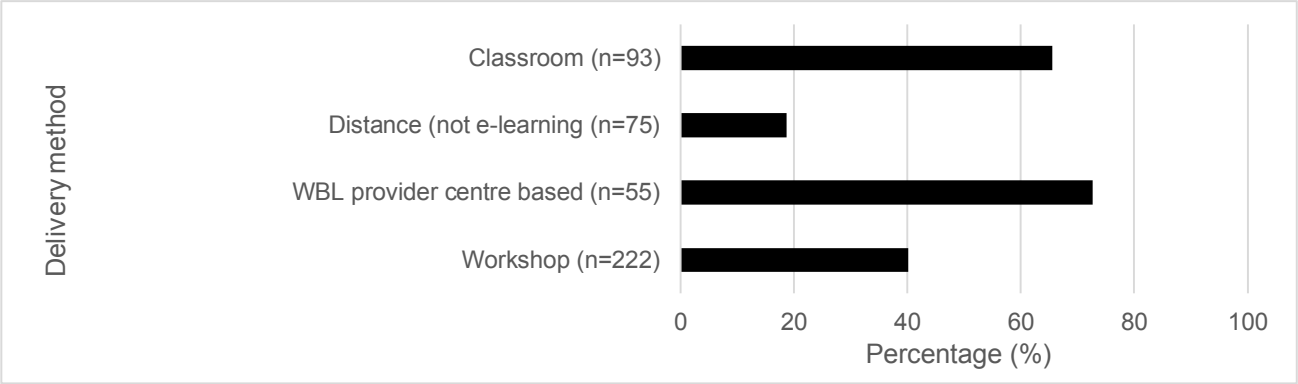
Figure F.1: Learning activity levels: Proportion of each level completed



Source: MMU, 2016, LLWR data

N = 447

Figure F.2: Delivery methods[51]: Proportion of activities completed

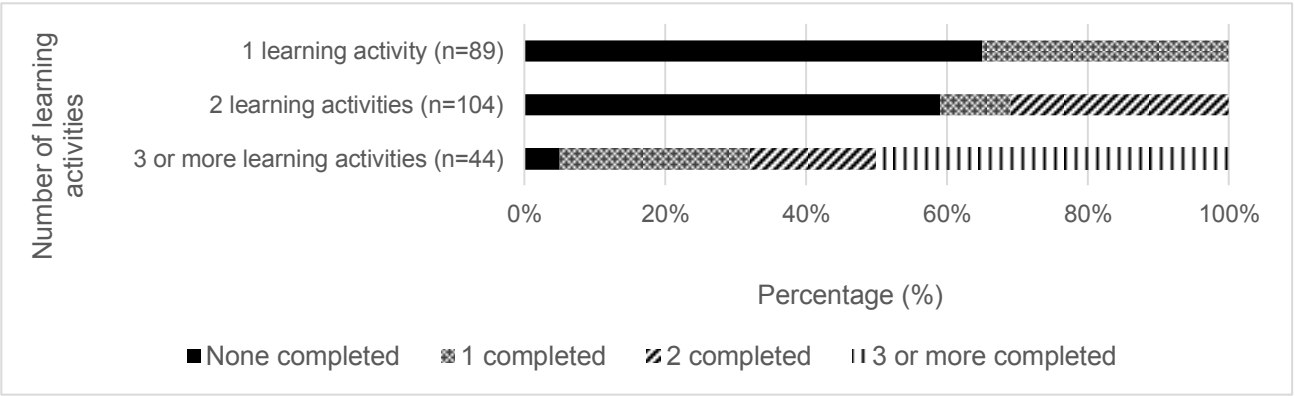


Source: MMU, 2016, LLWR data

N = 447

F2. Figure F.3 shows that of all those learners who started only one learning activity, around two thirds (65 per cent) did not complete their activity. Among those that started two learning activities, the proportion of those that did not complete a single activity reduces slightly to 59 per cent. Of the 44 learners who started three or more activities only two learners failed to complete any activities. In contrast, of the 193 learners who started one or two activities, 119 learners failed to complete any activities. This may be an indication that more able learners start more activities, and as such, they are more likely to complete more of their activities.

Figure F.3: Proportion of learning activities completed



Source: MMU, 2016, LLWR data

N = 237

[51] The number of activities delivered via 'mixed-workplace and Work Based Learning (WBL) provider centre based' was too small to report (≤ 5).