

# Evaluation of the Careers & Enterprise CEF18 Part B Fund for disadvantaged groups Final Report

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# Executive Summary

The Careers & Enterprise Fund 2018 – Part B aimed to test innovative approaches to career guidance and preparing for the world of work with young people from disadvantaged groups. This included young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Looked After Children (LAC) / Care Leavers and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities.

Funding was also available for activity to increase employers' capacity to engage with and support young people with SEND. This funding aimed to improve employer confidence in working with these groups and create more employer encounters and workplace experiences.

The Fund ran from January 2019 to March 2021. A total of 20 provider organisations were awarded funding to deliver careers and enterprise projects over this period. They encompassed a variety of activities including outdoor learning and team-based tasks, careers fairs, personalised careers guidance and career planning, social action projects, workplace visits and work experience, peer learning, mentoring and careers information workshops for young people and families. The individual projects were delivered by a range of organisations including local authorities, education & training providers, national and local charities as well as social enterprises.

The fund was evaluated by the Institute for Employment Studies and the National Institute for Economic and Social Research. The aims of the evaluation were to assess the extent to which the funded projects were effective in achieving the goals of the fund. It also aimed to generate learning about how the projects met the goals of the fund and to identify the main facilitators and challenges to effective delivery. The evaluation incorporated two rounds of interviews with providers, in-depth case study research with a selection of projects, as well as an analysis of management information and narrative reports submitted by providers to The Careers & Enterprise Company on a quarterly basis.

The main learning points from the Fund evaluation are presented below.



<sup>1</sup> The funding was targeted at 11-18 year olds across the three identified disadvantaged groups. This included all Year 13 students or 19-25 year olds with a current education, health and care plan in place.

## Recruiting young people to careers and enterprise programmes

Providers approaches to identifying and recruiting young people to their programmes varied depending on the groups they were targeting:

- For those projects focused primarily on young people with SEND, participants were commonly identified and recruited to the project via schools and colleges. These approaches were generally seen to be successful. Education providers were motivated to engage with the project as it supported them to meet their statutory duty to provide career guidance to pupils that require specialist support.
- Recruitment for projects focused primarily on LAC and young people from GRT communities often had to take place outside of mainstream educational settings due to lower rates of attendance among these groups.
- In the case of LAC, some providers approached virtual schools to identify young people who could benefit from the project. This could present challenges as providers found that the resources, capacity, structures and modes of working of virtual schools differed between areas. This could lead to difficulties in communication and recruitment delays where providers did not have pre-existing knowledge of these arrangements.
- For young people from GRT communities, face-to-face visits to these community settings were seen to be the most effective means of recruitment. Providers emphasised that it was essential these visits were facilitated by an individual that was familiar and had pre-existing links with families in the area.
- Common examples included GRT officers or Voluntary and Community Sector liaison/outreach workers who had been working with the community

for several years. Without these relationships of trust, providers were clear that parents/carers would be reluctant for their child to engage in any external project, especially if it was taking place off-site.

## Effective approaches to support young person engagement

- Across all projects, young people's engagement was supported where the project delivered a set of experiences or support that is currently missing or absent from their life, which they could see value in.
- Providers used different strategies to introduce the project to young people, including emphasising that it offered them a chance to up-skill, earn a living and develop independence. In a few cases providers offered paid work experience to incentivise participation and prize draws linked to completing activities.
- Where providers encountered difficulties in engaging young people, the value of the activities to their personal development was not clear. For example, some projects targeted towards GRT communities struggled to engage older age cohorts in their work (i.e. 16-18 year olds). In some cases, the young people they were targeting had already started work in a family business. In others, providers found higher than expected levels of engagement in further education and training among the communities they were looking to support.
- In these cases, providers redesigned their projects to be delivered to younger age groups within GRT communities or changed the focus from work experience to personal guidance where a paid work placement was not appealing.
- For projects supporting LAC, providers reported that participants could experience anxiety or apprehension about engaging with a new support organisation. To overcome this issue, some

providers sought to identify a trusted adult in the young person's life to mediate on their behalf, help introduce the project and broker their involvement.

- Maintaining young peoples' engagement with the project throughout delivery was also crucial to successful implementation. For all the target groups, providers emphasised the need to be flexible and adaptable in their support model to ensure it was responsive to participant needs.
- Common adaptations cited included altering the timing and intensity of activities if participants struggled to absorb the content of career information sessions, for instance. Where projects were less practically orientated and focused more on information delivery, interactive elements were also utilised to help maintain participants' attention. This included team building exercises, quizzes, answering mock interview questions and role play.

## Effective approaches to support employer engagement

- In relation to recruiting employers to offer encounters for young people and workplace experiences, focussing on businesses who are 'disability confident' or have a strong CSR ethos was seen to work well.
- Employers vary in the time and resources they can commit and so offering a menu of options around how they can contribute to careers provision is likely to be more effective than requiring a minimum input or being highly prescriptive.
- Employers could be hesitant to support delivery despite recognising its social value, due to a lack of confidence and experience in engaging with young people with SEND. Where providers were able to offer free disability awareness training to employers, this was seen to be an effective means of overcoming this initial hesitancy and building confidence.
- Support for employers was also required from providers once they began to engage with young people with SEND to set expectations and provide reassurance about their approach. Where employers were engaged in mentorship, for instance, providers gave examples of what successful interactions would look like and what would represent progress for young people with varying levels of need.

## Perceived outcomes for young people

The Fund evaluation identified a range of perceived outcomes that the project activities were successful in achieving. The emphasis on these outcomes differed by target group, reflecting their different starting points and needs in the context of these projects.

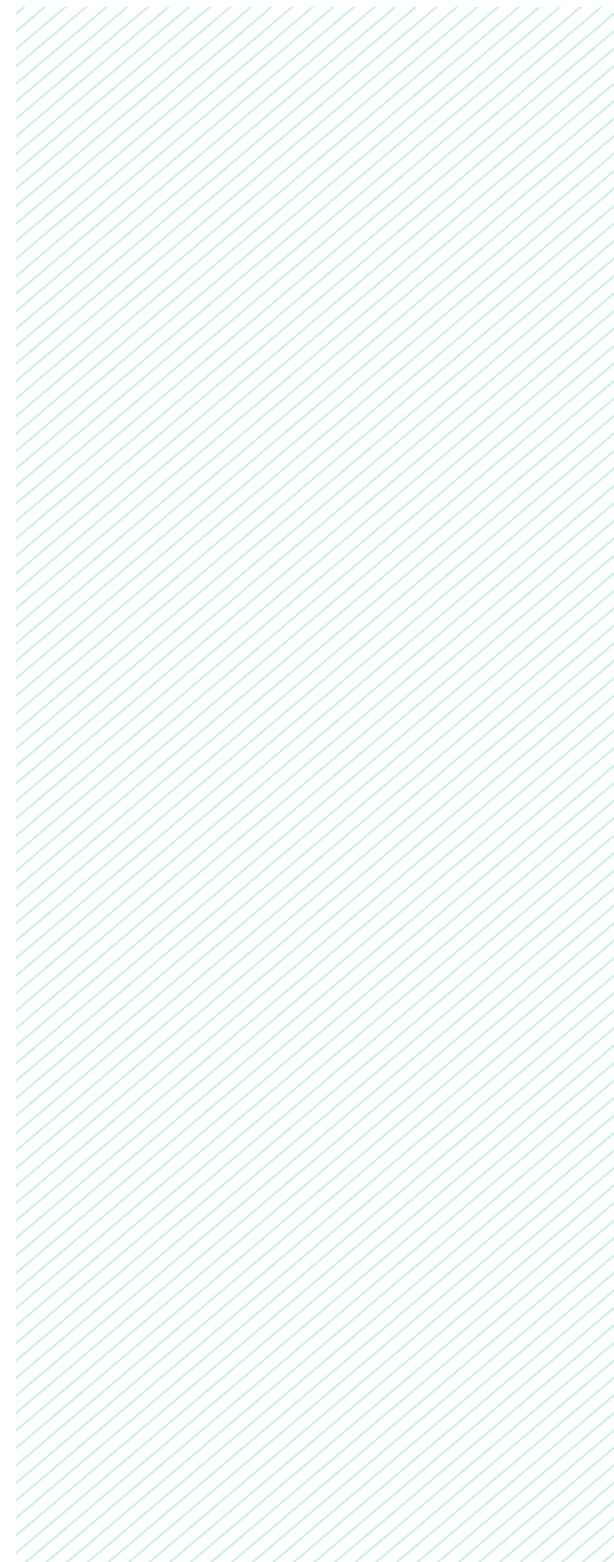
- Overall, projects supporting young people with SEND had a greater focus and more reported success in developing career plans and planning later transitions into further education or employment.
- In contrast, projects supporting GRT communities in general focused more on developing the foundational skills and behaviours that would be required in the workplace, as well as broadening the range of options that young people believed were available to them. To some extent this was reflective of the younger age groups targeted as part of these projects, as well as the greater work needed in gaining parental support for any later transitions.
- Similarly for projects focusing on LAC, participants could have high levels of social anxiety, find it difficult to express their views and opinions and have a say in the shape and direction of their lives. Providers were therefore focused on helping young people develop these core social and emotional skills and develop a degree of self-reliance. This in turn would help participants to start to make their own informed choices about which career and education and training pathways they might pursue, before planning any individual transitions.
- The most widely reported positive outcome across all projects was increased confidence and self-esteem. Most often, these outcomes were encouraged via regular group work on a shared task. The tasks generally centred on a project of wider community or social value, such as delivering a live performance, a presentation, designing a playground or designing a digital app.
- In all cases young people were encouraged to collaborate, share their views, and adopt discrete roles and responsibilities in relation to the project they were designing and completing. This approach encouraged participants to engage, speak up and gain confidence in their peer interactions as their contributions were positively received. Providers reported that young people's experiences on the project were therefore distinct from their everyday experiences in so far as they felt that they were listened to and that their views were valued.
- This type of approach was used across all 3 target groups. However, in the case of LAC, providers also sought to pair these activities with 1-2-1 mentorship. Mentors were present during the group-based activities as well. This helped ensure young people felt they were in a safe and supportive environment, with a familiar adult present, and could express their opinions without prejudice.
- A secondary, perceived outcome for LAC from engaging in these group-based projects was greater motivation to do well in education. Providers noted that through the completion of a weekly task, young people became familiar with meeting a regular commitment and making progress. Providers observed that this sense of commitment could transfer into their behaviour in school and cited a few instances where pupils' attendance had improved since engaging with the project.
- Employer encounters also provided opportunities for young people to develop their self-confidence, particularly where providers were able to facilitate workplace visits. Providers working with young people with SEND, for instance, noted that participants were used to being discriminated against in their daily lives and expected to face the same issues within the workplace. However, the positive exposure they had with employers who were friendly and respectful challenged these expectations and improved their confidence in interacting with these groups.



- The development of employability skills was another commonly reported outcome, particularly for projects supporting young people with SEND, which generally had a stronger employment related focus. Providers found that many young people could be unfamiliar with these concepts and terminology (e.g. 'skill', 'quality', 'strength', 'task', 'job-ready'). They noted that these ideas were better introduced and made explicit through practical activities and events, such as the group-based projects described previously, which gave young people a chance to apply these concepts to real world situations and make them more memorable.
- The projects delivered through the Fund were also seen to be successful in raising the career aspirations of the young people involved. Again, these outcomes were more commonly reported among projects supporting young people with SEND, due to their greater focus on planning later transitions. This outcome could be achieved through various activities: through myth busting exercises around roles available to young people with SEND; the presentation of role models with similar needs; via personal guidance interviews where providers highlighted how a young person's existing skills and interests could be pursued as a career; and workplace visits where the range of roles available in large organisations was highlighted.
- For projects focused on young people from GRT communities, these outcomes could be achieved via the group-based, practical activities they were tasked with completing. Where projects involved elements of construction, for instance, some participants subsequently expressed an interest in working outdoors and using tools in their future employment.
- For projects supporting LAC, as noted, their focus was developing participants' self-confidence and encouraging them to express their views and opinions. The development of career aspirations as part of these projects was therefore not always explicit, but was seen as a secondary, later outcome of this foundational work. In one instance, however, it was observed that groups sessions facilitated by a care leaver who had progressed into further education and then employment was an effective means of highlighting to participants that these options were open to them.
- Finally, several projects were also seen to increase participants knowledge of potential careers, pathways to employment (such as education and training courses) and sources of information, advice and guidance (IAG). These reported outcomes were most often facilitated through personal guidance interviews and the development of a careers plan, which encouraged young people to research potential options. Providers also sought to provide reassurances as part of this process, such as explaining the differences in attending college compared to school for those with negative experiences of mainstream education.
- For GRT focused projects, delivering this information via pop-up events hosted within these communities was identified as a successful approach. Where providers attempted to arrange visits to local FE colleges or host a presentation at their own premises, they could have low levels of attendance. However, delivery within the community was seen as an effective means of overcoming these logistical difficulties and ensuring the activity had greater reach. One provider that utilised this approach noted that several young people from the community subsequently enrolled at a local college that delivered one of the talks.

## Perceived outcomes for employers

- Both providers and employers spoke extensively about how their exposure to young people with SEND had positively challenged their presumptions regarding participants' skills, capabilities and behaviours.
- Several employers commented that they had now learned the importance of looking past a 'label' and treating each young person as an individual with their own set of needs and abilities.
- Some organisations stated that they hoped their increased confidence and knowledge in working with these groups would enable them to look at their recruitment processes and ensure they are inclusive in future.



# 1 | Introduction

The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) appointed the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and the National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR) to evaluate the Careers & Enterprise Fund 2018 (CEF18) Part B. The Fund supports the delivery of the Government's careers strategy, launched in 2017. It was designed to test effective practice in delivering career guidance activities with disadvantaged groups. The career guidance activities that were tested were aligned with the Gatsby Foundation's 8 Good Career Guidance benchmarks.

The evaluation was designed to capture lessons about the implementation of the programme for the CEC as fund managers, and wider partners, stakeholders and grant recipients. It also aimed to assess the 'evidence of promise' of funded projects in raising aspirations for young people, increasing their awareness of different routes and developing career plans. Finally, the evaluation sought to understand which models of delivering career guidance were effective in contributing towards the achievement of these outcomes. This report summarises the key findings from the evaluation.

## 1.1 Background

The Fund aimed to test innovative approaches to understand how to most effectively support young people from disadvantaged groups. This included young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Looked After Children (LAC) / Care Leavers and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities.<sup>3</sup> The funding was targeted at 11-18 year olds across the three identified disadvantaged groups. This included all Year 13 students or 19-25 year olds with a current education, health and care plan in place.

A total of £1.7 million was made available to fund new activity to support young people in these groups. The funding was targeted at projects that would:

- Develop innovative ways to reach and provide career guidance to disadvantaged young people
- Link with organisations that support these communities to provide tailored support, where appropriate, and increase the engagement of these communities with education and training providers (Children in care/care leavers and GRT only)
- Broaden aspirations of both the young people and their parents/carers
- Increase awareness (of parents/carers and young people) of technical routes/post 16 options and the life benefits of continuing in education, training and employment
- Develop career plans outlining routes into the world of work
- Increased self-efficacy and confidence among young people

<sup>2</sup><https://www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk/the-benchmarks>

<sup>3</sup> These target groups are not mutually exclusive. However, for the purposes of allocating funding and agreeing targets with providers as part of the Fund each group was treated as an exclusive category. In practice, some providers ran projects with more than one target group, while others focused on supporting particular subgroups within these broad categories such as Irish Traveller communities or deaf young people.

As part of the Fund, £200,000 was available specifically for activity that increased employer engagement and support for young people with SEND. This funding aimed to improve employer confidence in working with these groups and create more employer encounters and workplace experiences.<sup>4</sup>

The Fund was initially due to run from January 2019 to September 2020. However, this was later extended to March 2021 due to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. A total of 20 providers were awarded funding to deliver innovative careers and enterprise programmes over this period. They encompassed a variety of careers activities including outdoor learning, personal job coaching, careers fairs, social action projects, communications projects, work experience, peer learning, mentoring and family workshops. The individual projects were delivered by a range of organisations including local authorities, education & training providers, national and local charities as well as social enterprises. All projects were within scope of the evaluation.

### 1.1.1 Careers programmes for young people outside of mainstream provision

In late 2020, providers were invited to submit proposals for additional funding to deliver careers related learning for young people with SEND, LAC, and GRT communities currently being educated outside of mainstream schools and special schools. Four providers from the original Career & Enterprise Fund were awarded funding to deliver these projects, all of which targeted young people with SEND. The aim of this work was to trial new approaches and reach young people who have had more disrupted educational experiences, which may have worsened over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. This included young people who are electively home educated or settings providing alternative provision (e.g. Pupil Referral Units). Due to

the social distancing restrictions introduced as a result of the pandemic, some of these projects intended to deliver activities remotely with the support of local intermediaries working directly with young people or entirely online. This funding ran from November 2020-March 2021 and was also included in the scope of this evaluation.

## 1.2 Aims and methodology

The aims of the evaluation were to assess the extent to which the funded projects were effective in achieving the goals of the fund. Importantly, the evaluation also aimed to generate learning about how projects met the goals of the fund and to identify the main facilitators and challenges to effective delivery.

The 5 main evaluation activities were:

- **Developing a Theory of Change.** CEC facilitated a provider workshop in July 2019 to carry out initial work on the programme's Theory of Change. The evaluation team built on this work by reviewing the project applications and the outputs from the workshop to produce a final draft Theory of Change, which detailed the intended outcomes and how they would be achieved through the programme delivery for each of the three disadvantaged groups.
- **Two waves of provider interviews.** Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with key staff in provider organisations in September to October 2019 and May to September 2020. The first set of interviews aimed to check the draft theory of change provided an accurate representation of the intended delivery model and outcomes of the projects. Consequently, interviews covered the aims of the project and planned design and delivery, as well as experiences of initial set-up and recruitment and early delivery, including any adaptations made. Findings

<sup>4</sup>Activities that were delivered as part of this stream of funding are referred to as SEND 2 projects throughout the report. SEND 1 projects meanwhile were delivered using the £1.7 million fund. Four providers drew on both streams of funding to deliver different strands of activity.

from these interviews were used to refine and finalise the Theory of Change, in collaboration with CEC and providers.

The second set of interviews focussed on experiences of delivery, perceived outcomes and impacts of the project on young people, parents and employers, and lessons learned. These interviews took place during a period of significant disruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic. They therefore included a focus on barriers and changes to delivery resulting from the pandemic and were conducted over a longer timeframe than originally planned.

- **Five in-depth case studies.** The experience of project implementation from the perspective of other key stakeholders was explored via case study research with five projects. Three case studies were of projects working with young people with SEND, while one was with GRT young people and another with young people who were looked after or care leavers. The Covid-19 pandemic affected the completion of the case studies and a more limited amount of evidence was collected as a result.

The case study providers are referred to by name throughout the report and include: Derbyshire Virtual School (LAC project); Dynamic Training (SEND 2 project); Amaze (SEND 1 project); National Deaf Children's Society (SEND 1 project); and Clifton Learning Partnership (GRT Project). Across the case studies, a total of 35 individuals participated. This included a mix of delivery staff, young people and their parents/carers, as well as employers and teachers where they were directly engaged in delivery.

- **Document review and Future Skills data analysis.** Funded projects submitted narrative reports to CEC each quarter and these were reviewed as part of the evaluation. The narrative reports included qualitative information on each project's development. This included providers' progress on managing the project, their delivery schedule, the outcomes they had

achieved, key learning points, and their support needs and support they could offer to other providers going forward. The evaluation team used the reports to tailor provider and case study interviews to ensure they were focussed on relevant issues. Funded projects were also asked, where feasible, to use the CEC's self-assessment tool that measures learning outcomes from careers guidance. It was originally intended that analysis of this survey data would be included in the evaluation. However, projects that used the tool adapted it to meet the needs of the young people they worked with, which meant standardised data was not available for analysis as planned.

- **Analysis of management information.** In addition to the narrative reports, funded projects were required to submit quantitative data each quarter documenting the demographic characteristics of individual participants. This management information also recorded whether participants completed the intended programme of activities and, where relevant, if they did so with a career plan or career goal in mind. The analysis of management information was completed between January-March 2021 using the latest available data submitted by providers. All available datasets were merged and cleaned, removing duplicate and invalid entries. A simple, descriptive analysis of this categorical data was subsequently completed.

### 1.2.1 Evaluation of careers programmes for young people outside of mainstream provision

In addition to these main evaluation activities, several semi-structured interviews were also completed from February-March 2021 with stakeholders involved in the delivery of the additional projects targeted at young people outside of the mainstream education system. In total, 12 interviews were completed with a mix of delivery staff, teachers and parents. Where possible, feedback was also sought from young people in receipt of support. Interviews were completed with 5 young people engaged in two of the four funded projects.

## 1.3 Limitations

The challenges of conducting fieldwork over the period March-September 2020 meant that fewer project stakeholders participated in the case study research than intended. Consequently, the evaluation drew mostly on information and evidence provided by project delivery staff themselves, with relatively limited triangulation of experiences and views from employers, teachers, young people, parents and carers.

Similar challenges were encountered when completing fieldwork as part of the evaluation of the additional projects with young people outside mainstream provision. The national lockdown in January 2021 affected providers' ability to recruit young people to the project and deliver the support as intended. Consequently, in some cases delivery was delayed and/or delivered at a reduced scale, which had a knock-on impact on the ability of the evaluation team to complete the intended range of stakeholder interviews in the timeframe required and adequately assess whether these projects achieved their intended outcomes.

Further, for the main evaluation, as the Future Skills survey was adapted to accommodate a range of participant needs, the insights presented into effective ways of delivering career guidance programmes for disadvantaged groups draw largely on stakeholder perceptions as opposed to quantitative outcome measures.

The management information collected by providers was modified during project delivery to capture one additional outcome measure to partly address this gap (i.e. whether participants completed the project with a career plan or goal). This data was able to provide some insight into the reach of the projects and the outcomes achieved. However, due to the disruptive impact of Covid-19 of the delivery of funded activities - causing providers to halt delivery completely, revise their targets, or extend programme delivery (in some cases beyond the timeline of this evaluation) - at the time of analysis a large volume of data was missing, which limited insights into the full and final reach of the programme.

Future programmes of this nature would benefit from longer term research activities with project participants to better understand whether and how the funded projects supported young people's later transitions into further education and employment. The inclusion of a counterfactual or comparison group in this analysis would help establish the difference made by the programme and what outcomes may have occurred in the absence of this support.

## 1.4 Report structure

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 discusses the intended activities and outcomes of the projects

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the number of young people that took part in the funded activities and their main demographic characteristics.

Chapter 4 summarises findings about initial set-up of the projects

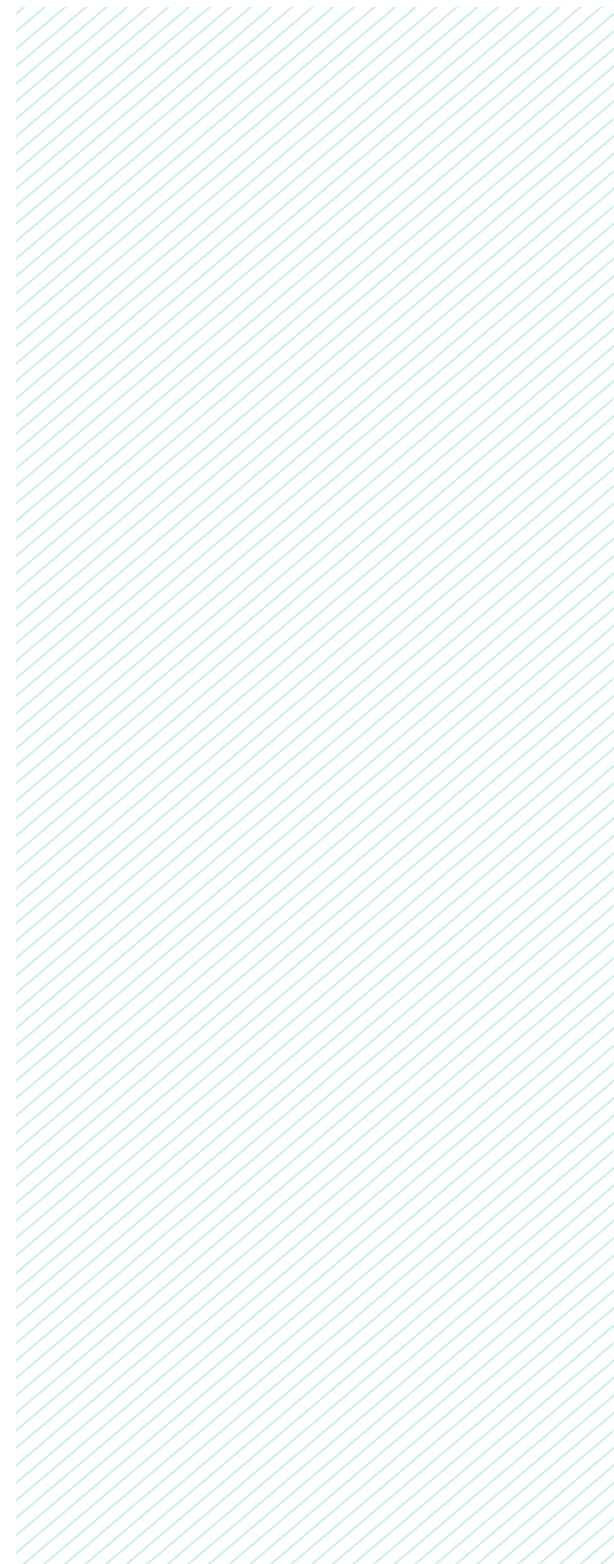
Chapter 5 assesses providers' experiences of project delivery

Chapter 6 examines the recorded and perceived outcomes of the projects for young people and parents/carers

Chapter 7 presents points of learning from the evaluation for providing effective careers support for disadvantaged young people.

This chapter provides an overview of the funded projects in terms of: the delivery models and main project activities providers intended to complete; the intended outcomes of these activities; and the common, key design features that providers assumed would facilitate participant engagement.

It draws on an initial review of the providers' fund applications and in-depth follow up interviews with providers to gather further detail on the intended delivery model and learn more about how the proposed activities were intended to lead to the intended project outcomes.



# 2 | Intended activities and outcomes of funded projects

## 2.1 Activities

The main activities delivered as part of the Fund, identified through the review of programme applications and first wave of provider interviews, are categorised below.

These activities were always delivered as part of a package, in combination with one another, and were not always mutually exclusive. For instance, employability skills could be learnt through the completion of enterprise activities, while careers information could be delivered via career talks by employers. Further, some providers ordered their activities in such a way to support a young person's linear development and progression through the project. For instance, work with an employer mentor could precede work-related experiences for a young person. This provided the mentor with an opportunity to first establish a relationship of trust with the young person, work with them to highlight their existing skills and competencies and build their confidence towards engaging with the world of work.

Based on this categorisation, there were no clear differences between the packages of activity for each of the groups targeted by the Fund. Any variation appeared to be in how the activities were delivered, or the emphasis or importance placed on certain activities over others.

A brief description of each of the projects that received funding and their intended activities with the 3 main targets groups is set out below.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 2.1: Funded programme activities**

Source: The Careers & Enterprise Fund Part B 2018 programme applications; Wave 1 provider interviews

Activities
• Personal guidance
• Outdoor learning and practical activities
• Employability, key skills and vocational training / preparation
• Delivery of careers information
• Career talks by employers
• Employer coaching / mentoring
• Enterprise activities
• Social action projects
• Workplace visits
• Work experience / Volunteering
• FE / HE encounters
• Teacher training / CPD (i.e. cultural awareness)
• Family/Carer IAG workshops and support
• Employer workshops, toolkits and training (i.e. disability awareness, cultural awareness)
• Communications workshops

<sup>5</sup>This table provides a brief description of providers' original delivery plans. As set out within this report, the nature of these activities could change over the course of delivery to better accommodate the needs of the target population or in response to external factors, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.



## 2.2 Intended outcomes

The main short to medium term outcomes that providers hoped their project activities would contribute towards are outlined below. Short to medium term outcomes were loosely defined as the outcomes providers expected to achieve during and in the months immediately following young people's engagement in the project. These are presented separately for each of the groups of stakeholders targeted by the Fund.

**Table 2.2: Overview of funded projects**

<u>Provider organisation</u>	<u>Project description</u>
<b>Clifton Learning Partnership</b>	Provides transition/employability skills development through outdoor learning to Roma young people
<b>CSW Group Ltd</b>	Supported work experience for young people with SEND with personal job coach support
<b>Darlington Borough Council</b>	Varied programme including careers fairs, pop up events, and networking events supporting GRT young people
<b>Dynamic Training UK Ltd</b>	A borough wide joined up approach delivered in Ealing to support young people with SEND into work experience
<b>Endeavour</b>	Employability skills and raising aspirations for 200 Roma young people and young people with SEND in Sheffield
<b>Evolve SI Limited</b>	Working with LAC in the evenings/weekends/holidays to undertake leadership/social action projects
<b>I CAN</b>	Aims to target learners with communication difficulties through 'Talk about Talk Secondary' programme. The interventions help students to develop the skills they need to co-deliver a workshop about communication to an audience of local employers
<b>Inspira</b>	Bespoke mentoring programme for young people with SEND. Provides individual guidance, transition planning and support and close liaison with family and other relevant services

<b>Leonard Cheshire Disability</b>	'Journey to Work' programme which combines provides supported internships alongside a volunteering programme to boost life and work-related skills to young people with SEND
<b>London Borough of Ealing</b>	2 x 12 week pathway programmes for young people aged 16-18 from Irish traveller and Roma communities
<b>National Deaf Children's Society</b>	Careers information workshops and guidance interviews for deaf young people alongside a training programme for local authorities to better support deaf young people
<b>North Somerset Council</b>	Raising aspirations, 1-2-1 and peer support for LAC/Care Leavers in North Somerset
<b>Plymouth City Council</b>	5 part programme which includes training staff, an employability passport for young people with SEND in Years 9 - 11, a programme of work related learning and experience in hospitality for young people with SEND, careers fairs for students and families and a programme of work experience in the construction industry for young people with SEND
<b>Pure Innovations Ltd</b>	Sessions designed for small groups of young people with SEND, which will involve preparing a portfolio of learning, meeting with stakeholders like agencies, employers and previous SEND learners to share their experiences
<b>The White Room</b>	10 day programme across two terms to provide young people with SEND with employment routes into the Creative and Digital Industries workforce
<b>Adviza Partnership</b>	Providing career guidance to young people with SEND and LAC / Care Leavers via 1-2-1 and group sessions
<b>Ahead Partnership</b>	Provides employability and transition skills for young people with SEND and autistic students. The programmes are tailored to meet the unique requirements of each young person
<b>Amaze</b>	Targeting young people with SEND aged 14-25 and their families to provide work ready skills, to help to boost confidence and to increase awareness about employment, further education, training and volunteering which will then aim to increase the aspirations of the young people. Programme includes social interactions, IAG support and training courses
<b>Derbyshire Virtual School</b>	60 week creative mentoring and enterprise programme for 30 young people Years 9 to 13 who are LAC or Care Leavers at risk of NEET
<b>Hertfordshire County Council</b>	20 month programme aimed at young people in years 8-11 from the Traveller community to provide professional IAG, work experience placement with 1:1 mentoring and further support, which is expected to last between 6 and 12 months

**Table 2.3: Anticipated programme outcomes**

Outcomes for young people and parents/carers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising career aspirations (exposure to workplaces/settings/vocations not previously considered)</li> <li>• Confidence building/developing self-efficacy</li> <li>• Better knowledge of potential careers, pathways to employment and sources of IAG</li> <li>• Motivation to do well in education/see value to career path</li> <li>• Individual career plan / clear idea of next steps after programme has ended</li> <li>• Developing agency/empowered to make decisions around learning and employment (identifying best career option)</li> </ul>
Outcomes for young people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater familiarity with world of work/workplaces and better awareness of employer expectations</li> <li>• Better access to work-based learning opportunities</li> <li>• Improvement in job-search skills (documenting evidence, awareness of resources)</li> <li>• Improvements in employability and other key skills (i.e. English and maths)</li> </ul>
Outcomes for employers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better information to support job matching / shaping</li> <li>• Better awareness of support needs of target groups and how they can accommodate these</li> <li>• Increased knowledge and capacity to offer work opportunities to these groups</li> </ul>
Outcomes for educators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased confidence to support/provide young people with access to work-based learning opportunities / appropriate careers guidance / opportunities for skill development</li> <li>• Increased understanding of cultural community</li> <li>• Better knowledge of the employment opportunities that are available for target groups</li> </ul>

The first set of outcomes for young people and their parents/carers are presented together. Many providers noted that for the groups of young people targeted by the Fund, parents/carers are key figures in deciding what activities their child/foster child will engage in and shaping and influencing their potential career path. They could be very protective of their child/foster child and uncomfortable with the idea of them engaging in an activity they are not familiar with or which takes them out of their local community. As a result, several of the funded projects recognised that a key part of their work was to simultaneously raise the career aspirations of parents/carers for their child/foster child and improve their knowledge of potential pathways to employment so that they could enable and support positive transitions into further education or training, for instance.

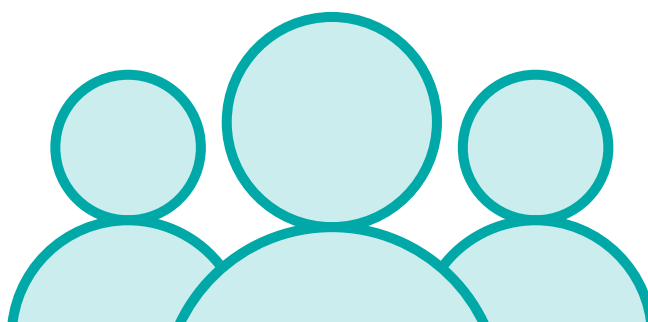
This first set of outcomes presented in Table 3 was also seen to be achieved in combination rather than in isolation from one another, with one outcome supporting the achievement of others. For instance, developing better knowledge of potential careers and pathways to employment was seen to support young people's motivation to do well in education by highlighting its role in gaining labour market entry and supporting the achievement of their career ambitions. Reflecting the aims of the Fund, many providers also specified that they wanted participants to leave their project with a careers plan developed following a 1-2-1 personal guidance session, which is also reflected in this set of outcomes.

The next set of outcomes presented in Table 3 are mainly relevant to the young people targeted by the Fund and relate to gaining greater exposure to employers and the world-of-work as well as acquiring key skills required in their search for employment.

The subsequent sets of outcomes listed for employers and educators meanwhile relate to improving their ability to work with the target groups of young people. This includes developing their understanding of the needs of these groups and building their skills and confidence to work with them to support their professional development. These gains in turn would increase their capacity to offer suitable opportunities to these groups, from opportunities for skill development to gainful employment.

In combination, all of these short to medium term outcomes were seen to potentially contribute towards the longer-term goals for these groups of raising educational attainment; increasing their rates of transition to positive post-16 destinations; closing the disability and disadvantage employment gaps; and increasing their labour market participation.

Providers were keen to make clear that all of these outcomes would in some respects be determined by the local context in which they operated. For instance, employer encounter and work experience opportunities as well as individual career plans would necessarily need to match the structure of the local labour market in order to be achievable.



## 2.3 Key features of project design

Within the first wave of interviews, providers were asked to specify how the packages of activities they were delivering had been designed in such a way as to produce the intended outcomes. When discussing how the target outcomes would be achieved for young people as well as their parents/carers, providers commonly spoke about how the project activities would attract a young person's engagement and interest. From this initial wave of conversations with providers, a provisional list of common principles for effective engagement across all of the target groups was developed. These were presented to providers at a workshop event in November 2019 where they were further refined following their feedback. The finalised list is presented and discussed in greater detail below. They specified that their projects would:

- **Address a recognised need:** Providers were intending to deliver a set of experiences or support that are currently missing or absent from a young person's life. For instance, in the case of the projects focused on LAC, some providers specified that they were attempting to provide careers advice that young people not in care may receive from parental figures. For young people with SEND, the providers were intending to give these groups early exposure to employers, workplaces and workplace experiences, which is typically absent at this point in their lives. Finally, for young people from GRT communities, the activity was viewed as giving these groups an insight and information into post-16 options, which they may not normally receive due to disrupted educational experiences.
- **Be tailored to young people's circumstances, interests and strengths:** Providers spoke about tailoring in different respects. At a practical level, this was to do with ensuring that young people had the means of engaging in the proposed activities. This involved considerations about their geographical spread and the need to travel to events where these were not facilitated by their school/college, and whether they had the necessary IT equipment if activities were partly delivered online. Some providers also discussed ensuring their projects brought in technologies or topics that participants are familiar with and care about to support their motivation. In a similar way, providers also emphasised the importance of providing participants with opportunities to engage in tasks that highlighted their latent skills and strengths, which help improve their confidence and feelings of self-worth. Finally, providers aiming to give young people exposure to the world of work discussed the importance of undertaking initial assessments and vocational profiling with them to ensure that any workplace experiences they arranged were suited to young people's interests and needs.

- **Build a relationship of trust and gain the support of parents/carers or other trusted adults:** This was a necessary and vital step in gaining permission and support for young people to engage in the activities. Providers recognised that parents/carers need assurances that their child will be in a safe and supportive educational environment, and that the experience will not damage their confidence. Providers also spoke about the need to broaden parent/carer views on what their child can do, and providing them with relevant information and resources so that they feel enabled to support the process of exploring their child's options. In the case of LAC it was recognised that parental figures may be absent, and so in these cases providers said they tried to gain the support of another trusted adult (such as a teacher or personal adviser) who could assist in encouraging the young person to engage in the project activities.
- **Be activity-led and interactive:** Some providers spoke of the need for interactive sessions that encourage participants to move around and be physically active. They noted that the target groups of young people find it difficult to sit through a careers talk or presentation if these opportunities are not built in, and that this was an important means to ensure participants maintained good attention and took information on board. Some providers also designed their projects to include outdoor practical activities or more creative activities to incentivise young people to sign up. In these cases, projects tended to avoid directly advertising a focus on getting young people ready for employment in case this was off-putting. Providers reported that for some of the groups they were hoping to reach - who were distant from the labour market in terms of age and/or level of preparedness - the world of work would seem very far removed from their daily lives.
- **Present information in an inclusive and accessible format:** Providers discussed altering project materials to ensure content is accessible for speakers of other languages, as well as for those with different communication needs or individuals who need information in alternative formats. In the latter cases, this included providing materials in braille or large text for blind or partially blind participants, as well as making materials more visual and altering ambiguous wording for young people with learning disabilities. Providers also highlighted the need to alter the frequency, structure and length of the project or of discrete activities within to ensure the information presented is accessible to young people. Examples included extending the overall duration of the project to give more time to cover the same amount of content; shortening the length of sessions that involved talking and listening so that they were more easily digestible for the young people; and providing more opportunities for breaks, reflection and chances to ask questions to make the activities less intensive.
- **Facilitate activities in small groups:** Providers observed that small group sessions will give participants more of an opportunity to develop a positive connection with the facilitator. They also noted that being in small groups will help promote greater group cohesion, and ensure the environments feel safe, collaborative and encouraging.
- **Lead to tangible and practical outcomes:** Several providers felt that it was important the activities young people engage in - for instance, as part of a social enterprise project - have a clear, tangible purpose. Provided the topic of the project is of interest and/or has direct relevance to the young person's life, having a clear end-point and something to work towards was considered valuable in ensuring participants remained motivated and saw the project through to the end.

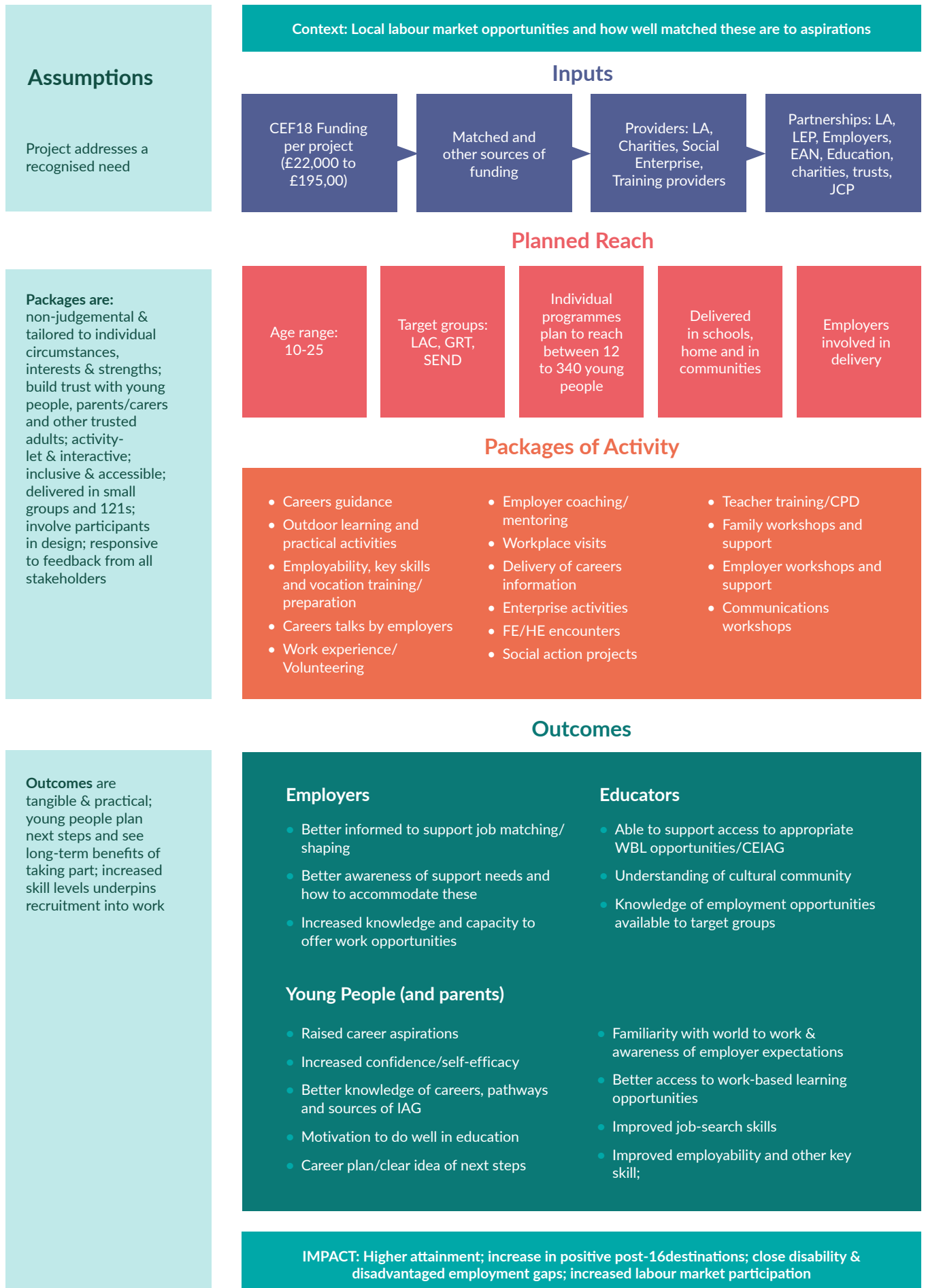
- **Be responsive to young people's and other stakeholder feedback:** Providers stressed the importance of being responsive to participant and stakeholder feedback, and altering their project design to take account of these needs. As discussed, this could include altering the format or intensity of activities if participants do not seem to be engaging or are struggling to pay attention. A few providers noted that it is counter-productive to stick to a rigid format as this does not produce as good outcomes for these groups of young people.

## 2.4 Theory of Change

The preceding information on the planned projects, including the packages of activities providers were ready to deliver, the anticipated short-medium term outcomes of their work and key design features are all summarised in Figure 2.1 below. This model was used as part of the evaluation to assess whether delivery progressed as planned, and to uncover whether there were additional models of support or outcomes not initially discussed that the Fund also supported.



**Figure 2.1: Overview of the Careers & Enterprise Fund Part B 2018 funded projects**





# 3 | Reach of the Fund

The following chapter presents quantitative data on the planned and actual reach of the Fund, drawing on an analysis of management information compiled by providers. It outlines the demographic characteristics of the young people that participated in the funded activities as well as whether they had previously received any careers guidance.

## 3.1 Overall reach

According to their original delivery plans, providers intended to deliver discrete careers and enterprise activities to 3,383 participants in total. At the time of analysis of the latest management information in February 2021, the Fund had reached 1,535 participants. As outlined, the main contributing factors to this shortfall were the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on delivery. This caused providers to halt delivery completely, revise their targets, or extend programme delivery (in some cases beyond the timeline of this evaluation).

The main demographic characteristics of participants are set out below. This includes a breakdown of participants gender, ethnicity and age, as well as whether or not they had received any careers guidance prior to these projects.

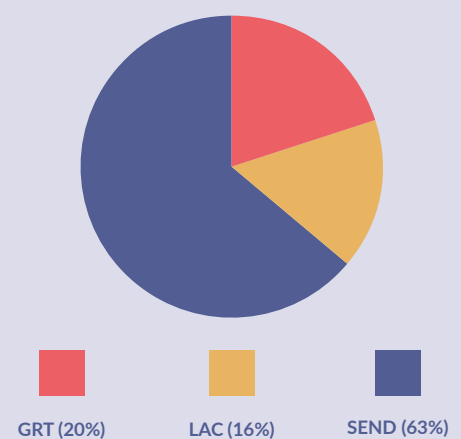
## 3.2 Participation in Programme by demographic characteristics

The projects delivered as part of Career & Enterprise Fund were nominally targeted at one of three groups of young people: young people with SEND, GRT communities and LAC. The analysis presented below is largely based on providers' definition of the main target group their projects were aimed towards, although it should be borne in mind that these categories are not mutually exclusive.

As shown in Figure 5.1, the majority of participants took part in programmes targeted at young people with SEND (63 per cent). In comparison, one in five young people (308) were in GRT targeted programmes, and 16 per cent (253) were in LAC targeted programmes.

Outside of these main categories, providers were able to record areas of overlap in participants' demographic characteristics. This showed that a high proportion of participants in GRT focused projects (62 per cent) also had a SEND, while a fifth of participants in LAC projects were also categorised as SEND or had a mild learning disability.

Figure 5.1  
Main target groups

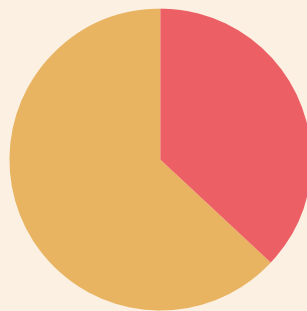


Source: Careers & Enterprise Fund Part B 2018 Management Information

In terms of the gender of participants, as shown in Figure 5.2, 63 per cent (933) of the young people that took part in careers activities were male, while 37 per cent (559) participants were female.<sup>6</sup> Breaking this down further by main target group, Figure 5.3 shows that projects targeted at young people with SEND had the highest rates of male participation (68 per cent of all participants) compared to GRT and LAC projects, which both had a more even gender split.

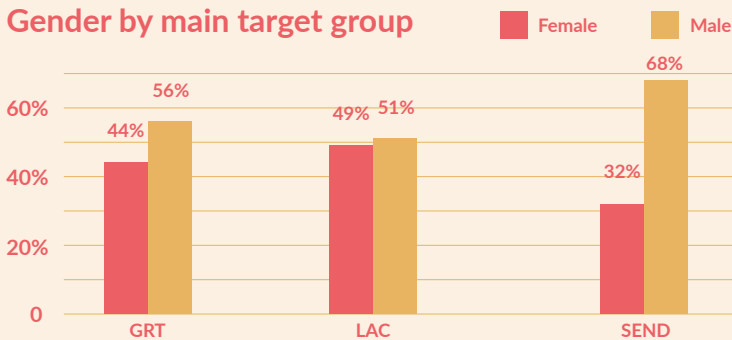
**Figure 5.2**  
**Participation by Gender**

Female (37%)  
Male (63%)



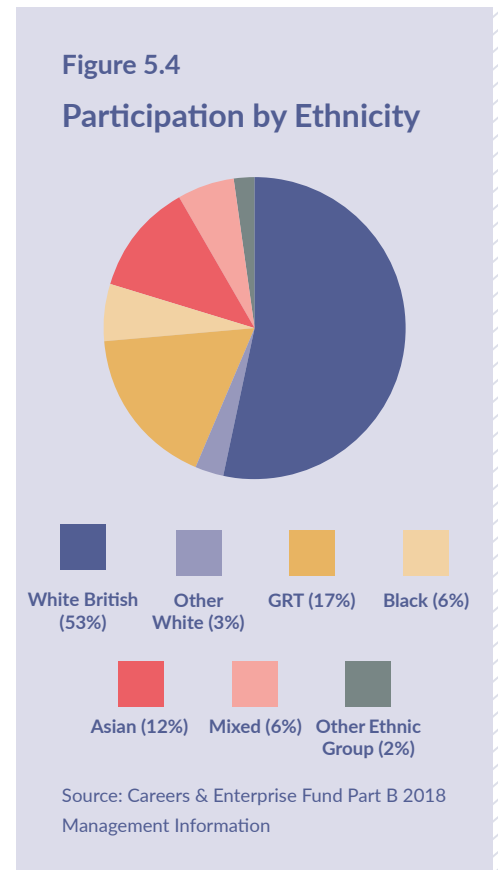
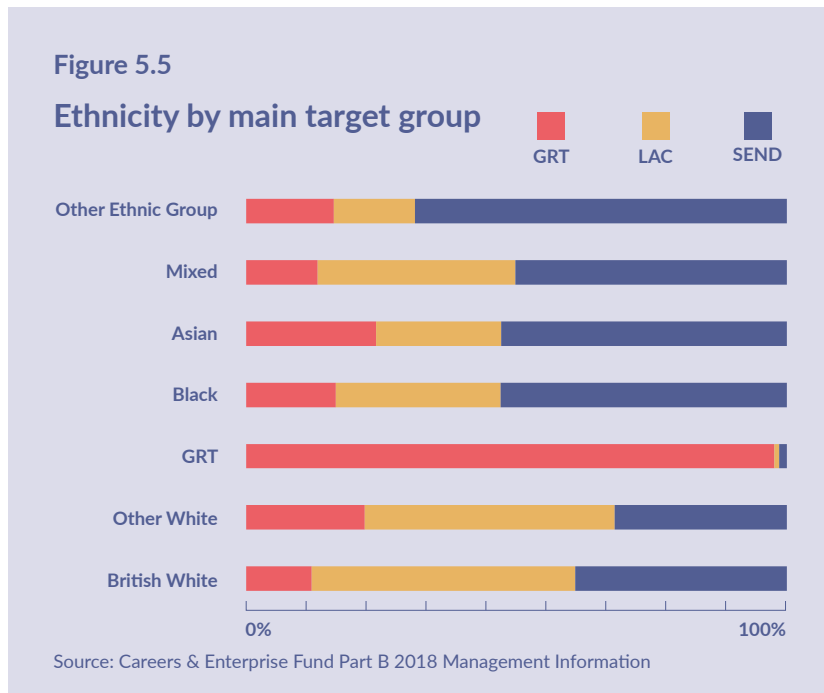
Source: Careers & Enterprise Fund Part B 2018 Management Information

**Figure 5.3**  
**Gender by main target group**



Source: Careers & Enterprise Fund Part B 2018 Management Information

<sup>6</sup>40 participants were not included in this analysis as their data was missing. Further, one participant preferred not to provide their gender, while two recorded their gender as "other". As these alternate categories represented less than 1% of all cases it was not possible to include them as part of the overall figures.



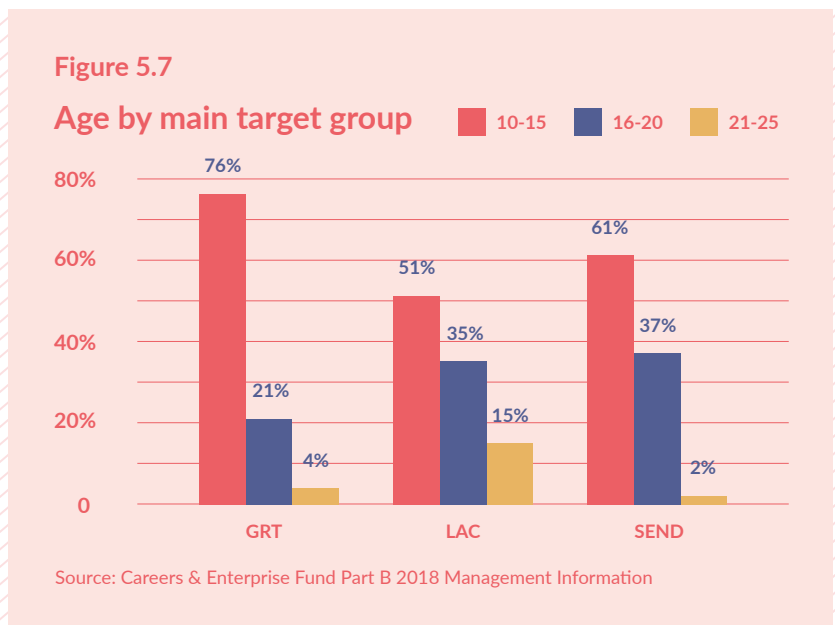
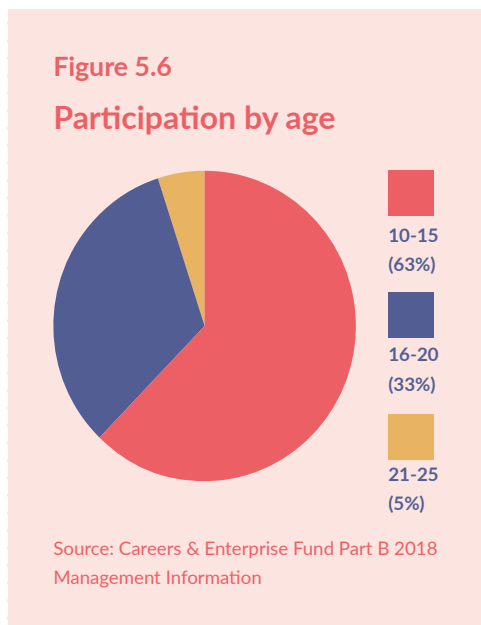
With regards to ethnicity, Figure 5.4 shows that just over half of participants identified as White British.<sup>7</sup> The second and third largest ethnic minority groups that participated projects were those from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller (17 per cent) or Asian (12 per cent) backgrounds.

Figure 5.5 provides a breakdown of ethnicity by main target group. It shows that projects targeted at young people with SEND worked with slightly more ethnically diverse populations than those projects focused on LAC. Overall, 38 per cent of participants in SEND projects were from minority ethnic groups, compared with 23 per cent in LAC projects. It is also worth noting that some participants in projects targeted at GRT communities described their ethnic identity in a variety of ways, which did not always match this initial broad categorisation by providers.

<sup>7</sup>317 participants are not included in this analysis as their data was missing or the participant refused to provide their ethnicity.

In terms of age, the majority of project participants were between the ages of 10-15 years (63 per cent), while two-thirds were aged between 16-20 years.<sup>8</sup> Only 5 per cent of participants were in the oldest age bracket of 21-25 years. Across the whole sample, participants' average age when they joined their programme was 15 years old.

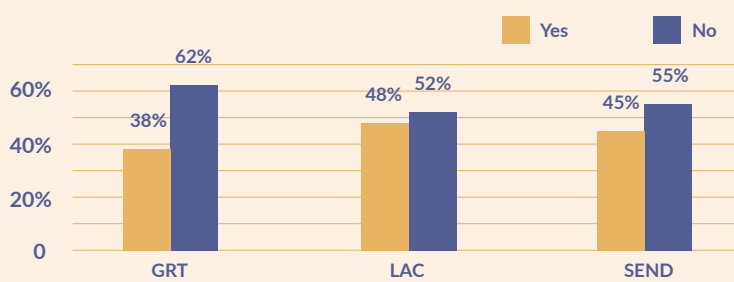
Disaggregating these figures by main target group, Figure 5.7 shows across all three types of programme, the majority of participants were in the youngest age category (10-15 years). However, this was more prevalent among GRT projects where almost four-fifths of participants (76 per cent) were between these age ranges. For SEND and LAC projects, the proportions were 61 per cent and 51 per cent, respectively.



<sup>8</sup>340 participants are not included in this analysis as their data is missing.

**Figure 5.9**

**Prior careers guidance by main target group**



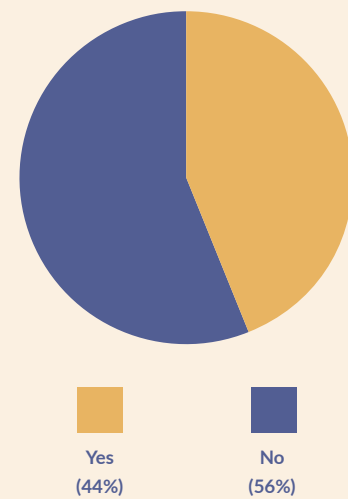
Source: Careers & Enterprise Fund Part B 2018 Management Information

As well as their main demographic characteristics, providers were able to record whether participants had received any previous careers guidance before taking part in the programme. This information was recorded to get a sense of participants' starting points. As Figure 5.8 shows, just over half of participants (56 per cent) had not received any previous careers guidance.<sup>9</sup>

Looking at these findings by target group, Figure 5.9 shows that it was more common for participants in GRT programmes to not have received any prior careers guidance before taking part in the funded activities (62 per cent), compared to 55 per cent in SEND and 52 per cent in LAC focused projects.

**Figure 5.8**

**Did participants receive any careers guidance before taking part in the programme**



Source: Careers & Enterprise Fund Part B 2018 Management Information

<sup>9</sup>Data on 121 participants was missing or invalid in response to this question.

# 4 | Initial set-up

This chapter reports on how the projects were set up and launched. It covers establishing and securing commitments from partners and building staff resources to start delivery. This is followed by an assessment of early experiences of recruiting and engaging employers, education settings, young people and parents/carers.

The chapter also explores any early adaptations to the delivery model made by providers and reasons for this. The information presented is based on the review of programme applications and telephone interviews conducted with grant recipients between September and December 2019. The interviews took place 9-12 months after the launch of the Fund, which gave providers a chance to look back and reflect on the initial stages of project planning, set-up and delivery.

## 4.1 Establishing partnerships

Providers delivered distinct programmes of activity, often in partnership with Local Enterprise Partnerships, local authorities, charities, trusts and foundations, schools and virtual schools. In some cases, academic partners provided expert guidance and external evaluations.

For most providers, establishing partnerships was a straightforward process. Local authorities, for example, were experienced in procuring services and had a process in place to secure commitments from partners and in some instances providers had pre-existing partnerships resulting from similar projects in the past.

When asked about their experiences of setting up partnerships, interviewees explained that partnerships were formed to complement each others' experience and expertise and/or to gain access to partner networks to support recruitment of key stakeholders. The Yorkshire Young Ecologists project, for example, has been delivered by Clifton Learning Partnership (CLP) in collaboration with Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust (SRWT). The two organisations have

an established partnership, having worked together to deliver an ongoing four year programme called 'Natural Neighbours', providing afterschool and outdoor learning. The two partners explained that the reason they have worked so well together on the current project is the complementarity of their knowledge and skills: CLP had a strong link with the Roma community, while SRWT had experience in delivering outdoor learning activities.

Where providers had planned to build partnerships with schools and employers after the grant was awarded, there were sometimes challenges. Providers perceived that staffing and workload issues within schools and employers were the main challenges, and could result in them withdrawing support at short notice. This led to, for example, instances of young people not being able to take part in workplace experiences as planned. A couple of providers explained that to overcome such challenges they encouraged senior leaders within schools to sign a memorandum of understanding, which set out the roles and responsibilities of both sides in terms of project delivery. Interviewees explained that this strategy ensured schools saw the project as a formal partnership, which required an active contribution from the school rather than an expectation that the provider was just delivering a service to the school.

In the first wave of interviews providers generally explained that they did not link with other CEC activities or networks, such as the Enterprise Adviser Network, but would welcome the opportunity to do so in the future to better coordinate with the offer in the local area.

## 4.2 Staffing

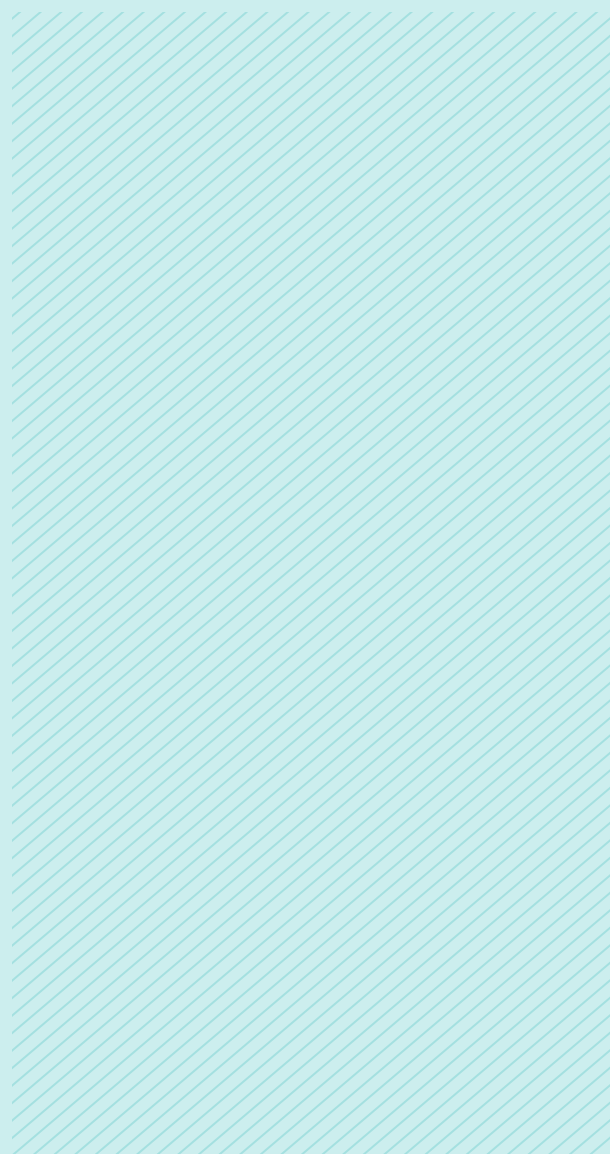
Providers' experience of ensuring staff were in place for project delivery varied considerably. Some providers already had the necessary staff in employment to begin the project. In these cases, grant holders organised meetings to present the project to staff and to discuss the practicalities of delivery and task allocations. In some cases it was noted that this hand over process could be time consuming and introduce delays into the delivery timetable.

For other providers, the process of building staff resource involved external recruitment. While recruiting additional staff was often a straightforward process, some providers encountered difficulties. This tended to be the case more for providers working with GRT and young people with SEND.

Interviewees reported that finding applicants with the essential skills and experience necessary to work with the target group, the short time allocated to the recruitment process and the short-term contracts offered were the main problems encountered. Some providers had not anticipated the difficulties associated with short-term contracts, which could be unattractive and further limit the pool of applicants. Others had not factored in how long the processing of DBS checks would take. For some, the difficulties in recruiting staff caused minor delays to the start of the project. In other cases, the impact was more on the capability and quality of staff and grant holders had to provide extra training and closely monitor staff performance. Recruiting qualified careers advisers to work on the project was also reported as a challenge.

One provider working with young people with SEND, which could not recruit staff with the necessary skills and experience, re-organised its internal staffing structure by moving staff from other programmes to the project to enable delivery timelines to be met.

Those providers who recruited new staff and found the process easy explained that this was either undertaken as part of their annual recruitment process or that they were easily able to find the required skills within the local labour market. Derbyshire Virtual School for example explained that for them recruiting mentors has been a straightforward process. They explained that within the creative industry, which is a key industry in their area, staff typically work on project-level contracts. This meant that there was a supply of suitable applicants who were passionate, motivated and available to start work as their existing project contracts had come to an end.



## 4.3 Resources and facilities

Many providers relied on their own venues, facilities and equipment to deliver their project. Resources developed by providers included information and marketing material like videos, slide presentations, music as well as tools for activities, which providers either adapted or created for the purpose of the project.

Many providers explained that they did not encounter any difficulties with this process. This was attributed to their prior experience of delivering similar projects and because they could work flexibly to adapt resources and delivery structures to make them suitable for the target group.

Others reported that the process of developing resources took longer than anticipated. This was the case, for example, for providers delivering in a new area for the first time. Providers reported challenges in developing their knowledge of what local provision was available to support the career guidance they would deliver to young people and their parents/carers. They explained that often information about the local support offer is inconsistent and collating information took longer than expected.

Where grant holders planned to use public facilities but had not secured an agreement with the local authority in advance, the process was reported to be lengthy. Clifton Learning Partnership for example explained that they had originally intended to improve the green space within their community and had planned to deliver the project in a public space. However, because they could not reach agreement with the local authority on which green spaces they could use, they had to adapt and change to deliver the project on their own premises instead.

## 4.4 Contracts and administration

While many grant holders were on track with delivery at the time of the first wave of interviews, some experienced delays during this initial set-up phase. As well as the issues discussed above, additional challenges that were highlighted including delays in receiving a contract from CEC, which set out their funding allocation and agreed milestones. In a few cases, providers also reported that the templates for administrative information required by CEC in relation to impact, outcomes, and the planned payments as well as the templates used to provide updates and feedback were not available at the start. This meant that in some cases they had to backfill information that they had recorded on their own systems, which took up additional staff time and resource.

## 4.5 Early experiences of engaging stakeholders

### 4.5.1 Recruiting and engaging with young people and parents/carers

Many providers were directly responsible for the recruitment of young people, while some received referrals from schools, colleges or local authorities. General strategies used by providers to recruit young people included using existing contacts with families, newsletters, drop-in sessions (in the case of care leavers) or social media posts.

Providers recruited and engaged with GRT young people through schools or using their existing links, through word of mouth or through home visits where they introduced the project to parents/carers. Strategies used included showing them case studies of other participants well known by the community completing activities and participating in the project to help build the trust, or recruiting a member of the



local GRT community to help explain the project. The latter strategy helped overcome language barriers and was reassuring to parents/carers. Providers explained that many of those responsible for recruitment had pre-existing links with the local Roma or Traveller community, had been working with them and offering support for several years, and were well known and trusted. This direct face-to-face contact in the community via a trusted and known individual was seen to be of the main success factor for engaging GRT young people in projects.

Providers working with young people with SEND explained that they offered a flexible approach and modified resources and engagement strategies depending on the young person's specific needs. Strategies used included inviting them to attend an initial face-to-face appointment with a careers professional, allowing them to bring along a parent, partner or sibling for emotional support as well as giving them the choice of whether they prefer to discuss with a male or female careers adviser. Having a young person with SEND responsible for engaging young people was also reported as a successful strategy. Young people felt reassured that they would be treated well and would have a positive experience as part of the project.

To recruit LAC participants virtual schools used videos, emails and leaflets. In a few cases, providers working with LAC young people explained that receiving referrals from virtual schools and engaging with young participants through them was a challenge. This was reported to be because each Virtual School has a different operational structure and they often had limited resources.

Introductory events were organised by schools or providers to present the project to parents/carers and young people. To make the project appealing to young people, providers used different strategies including emphasising that it offered them a chance to up-skill,

earn a living and develop independence. In a few cases providers offered paid work experience to incentivise participation and prize draws linked to completing particular activities. To explain the project to parents/carers, providers prepared marketing material in a simple, accessible visual format to allow those with low levels of literacy or who spoke English as an additional language to understand them.

Some providers realised early in their projects that their recruitment strategies were not able to generate the volume of referrals expected. This was particularly evident for providers working with GRT communities and LAC. In the case of the Yorkshire Young Ecologists project for example, the project manager explained that recruiting the target number of 60 young people has been a challenge as although young people indicated they were interested, they commonly did not turn up to sessions. This was also partially attributed to the project taking place during the summer holidays. The project manager also explained that the political uncertainty over the UK's exit from the EU made some Roma families more flexible with their plans and produced more mobility, which ultimately impacted on young people's attendance. Other providers working with GRT young people faced similar challenges and explained that those who disengaged did so because of a change in family circumstances due to a move, marriage or pregnancy. It was reported that in a few cases, young people were not interested in the offer because they were already working or because they could not see the benefit of the project.

In the case of providers working with LAC, the delay in receiving information from virtual schools and in communicating with LAC was reported as the main cause of the initial, poor take up. Interviewees explained that often participants disengaged because they moved out of the local area, which is common among this group. Interviewees also reported that LAC are reluctant to engage in projects that label or

treat them as a distinct group as they do not want to be considered different. Additionally, in cases where young people are living in a children's home, they can lack support and encouragement that LAC with foster parents may receive to sign up to the project, which providers reported can help in highlighting the potential benefits.

Providers reported that LAC experienced anxiety and apprehension about participating in project activities, which could affect attendance even after they had agreed to take part. However, once they had established a trusting relationship with the staff, young people became more engaged. In some cases, engagement and commitment of foster carers was reported as an issue. This was associated with the timing of the activities which were often run during school holidays, which meant that foster parents had to balance family holidays and facilitate their child's attendance, which was not always practical or convenient.

Providers working with young people with SEND noticed that in some cases there was a perception among young people that the project was not suitable for them or that they did not need the support. High levels of anxiety and the specificity of the young person's needs or disabilities were also reported as barriers to engagement. Anxiety could be a particular issue in settings where support was delivered 1-2-1 or in a group where participants did not know one another. Parents/carers accompanying young people to these activities was identified as one way of encouraging them to attend, at least during the initial stages of the project as they got to know staff members and other participants. For those providers working with peer groups in school/college settings, completing activities as part of these social networks was also seen as a means of reducing young people's anxieties about taking part.

### Programmes for young people outside of mainstream provision

In contrast to the projects delivered as part of the original tranche of funding, the additional projects focusing on young people in elective home education or alternative provision made greater use of third-party networks to support recruitment. This included local authority contacts, relevant teacher associations, community groups and local health services who were in many cases trusted gatekeepers and intermediaries for these communities.

Where delivery organisations were looking to deliver support to young people in alternative provision, such as pupil referral units, in almost all cases they had pre-existing relationships with these settings. Delivery staff noted that they would have been unable to deliver their work within the four-month timescales required without this pre-existing engagement, familiarity with their organisation as well as the support of senior leaders in these settings.

However, despite these pre-existing relationships and extensive referral networks, all projects still encountered some difficulties with recruitment and engagement due to external factors and/or the remote nature of delivery. For instance, where delivery was due to take place in alternative provider settings, recruitment was significantly affected by rising rates of Covid-19 infection and the stay at home order as part of the third national lockdown in January 2021. Some of these projects were reliant and had trained staff in these settings to deliver and support their work. In the context of a national lockdown, providers spoke of these staff having to be redeployed to conduct home visits and perform safeguarding duties for pupils, which left them with no time to deliver the project. Others were required to shield due to underlying health conditions or were unable to work during this time due to caring commitments. This reduced the capacity of staff to recruit pupils and deliver the project. As a result, delivery was reduced to a very small number of settings

and a handful of pupils who continued to attend school in person due to their home circumstances.

Where delivery was due to take place remotely, either because the project was targeted at electively home educated pupils or was unable to take place face to face due to the national lockdown, providers had mixed experiences with online engagement. Generally, participation online was lower than anticipated. A few young people across the projects were clearly reticent to join and contribute online meetings while appearing on camera. While providers did not always explore the exact reasons for this reluctance to engage, some feedback suggested that those that have anxiety disorders could find the experience more challenging especially where meetings were being held in a group rather than on an individual basis.

## 4.5.2 Recruiting and engaging with employers

### Identifying employers

Where employer engagement was necessary for project delivery, providers generally assumed responsibility for their recruitment. However, one provider working with young people with SEND asked schools to source employers to participate in the project. This strategy was reported as beneficial for schools as it allowed them to develop their own employer networks. These networks could be used to deliver the same project to subsequent cohorts of students within the school and ensure the project work was sustained in the long-term.

Many providers had a well-established network of employers with whom they had worked in the past and could use these contacts to start recruitment. However, many also sought to establish new relationships to accommodate and match young people's preferences.

To identify employers, providers working with young people with SEND often targeted 'disability confident businesses', as they explained they tend to have a natural desire to work with these groups.<sup>10</sup> Another strategy mentioned was to approach local businesses that worked with community groups as these organisations often have a clear corporate social responsibility strategy. Businesses that mention inclusiveness in their company policies were also reported as a good starting point in the selection of employers. Providers noted that smaller organisations were worth targeting as they were more likely to feel the benefits a young person with SEND can bring to their organisation.

<sup>10</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign>

## Recruitment and messaging

When asked specifically about recruitment strategies used to encourage employers to participate, many providers explained that they prepared an information pack to be shared with employers. The pack contained information on what the project involves, or in the case of young people with SEND, more detailed information about their specific needs as well as case studies and success stories. In some cases, providers working with GRT communities offered free cultural awareness training, using the occasion to present the project and gain employers' buy-in.

Regular communication with employers appeared to be a successful engagement practice. A provider working with young people with SEND explained that they called employers and explained the project exploring employers' interests and availability. The discussion allowed them to explain the different needs the young people had and discuss how these could be accommodated in the workplace.

The recruitment of employers was driven and to some extent constrained by the local delivery context. One provider working with LAC explained that because participants were widely spread across London, they worked with national employers to support participants locally as they have a presence in most parts of the city.

When asked about messages used to encourage employers' participation, many interviewees explained that they used a flexible approach. Key messages included supporting the wider community, supporting the needs of young people and also reaching out to new groups of people for the industry. Providers working with young people with SEND also mentioned reassuring employers that they do not necessarily have to have experience of working with these groups.

## Motivations to take part

When asked about employers' motivations for taking part in the project, providers explained that many were driven by their social mission and by the willingness to give disadvantaged young people a chance to succeed.

Employers wanting to increase the diversity of their workforce and to promote equality, while recognising their current lack of knowledge, was a commonly mentioned motivation for taking part. One employer interviewed as part of a case study, explained that they were attracted to the training offer because they felt they lacked knowledge and capability around disability in the workplace. Similarly, many providers working with GRT and LAC young people reported that businesses requested more information and training as they felt they needed to know more about the culture and needs of these particular groups.

For some employers engaging in the project was perceived as an opportunity to identify suitable candidates for apprenticeships and see how they worked in the business beforehand.

Providers also mentioned that employers were motivated by the benefits that young people could bring to their organisations.



### Barriers to participation

Reasons given by providers for employers not engaging or withdrawing from the project later on were:

- Lack of time and capacity due to being a small business
- Concerns around health and safety, particularly when asked to work with younger children
- A view that they did not have suitable premises to enable participation
- Rigid recruitment processes that prohibited recruiting people without certain qualifications where providers were seeking apprenticeship or traineeship opportunities

In a few cases, providers noted that while many employers could not provide the adequate resources to offer a workplace experience, they were keen to contribute in some other way, such as visiting a school or college to give a talk.

### 4.5.3 Recruiting and engaging with schools/ colleges

While many providers had well-established links with schools and colleges and a history of working with them on various projects, others had to build new links by approaching schools and explaining the offer and exploring interests.

The criteria used to select schools varied between providers. Some selected schools in more deprived areas that were more in need of support with their work experience provision. In other cases priority was given to: the schools' capacity to deliver the tasks (where some contribution from educators was required); flexibility in the timetable which enabled them to take students out of lessons for the purpose of the project; willingness to accommodate researchers coming in to deliver testing where providers had their own evaluation processes in place and having existing links with employers.

To promote their projects to educational settings, providers attended different events organised by schools and colleges. In one case a provider explained that they approached special schools and put forward a targeted, bespoke programme, which would best meet the needs of their pupils.

When asked about the motivations of schools to take part in the project, providers explained that because schools all have a statutory duty to provide careers advice and guidance to pupils, the offer of additional funded provision with innovative elements, was recognised as beneficial by all schools. Providers reported that schools saw the benefit of the project in adding value to their curriculum and to their learners' school experience. Interviewees explained that schools' lack of resources and knowledge often represent a barrier to employer engagement and all schools approached welcomed the extra help.

In the case of providers working with LAC, they explained that many LAC struggle in mainstream educational settings. Schools are therefore keen to be supported as they are often unable to meet the needs of these young people with regards to the provision of career guidance and workplace experiences.

In some instances, schools were motivated by feedback from other schools and colleges involved in similar projects.

In instances where schools were reluctant to take part, this was reported by providers to be due to issues around timetabling or needing extra reassurance about the provider's experience of working with young people with SEND. As with employers, lack of time and capacity were also factors, particularly when the level of commitment requested from schools was particularly high.

## 4.6 Early adaptations to delivery model and reasons for this

The evaluation found that many providers had to adapt the delivery model at an early stage. Adaptations were made at different points and often happened because of a mismatch between what providers thought they could deliver at the outset and what was ultimately feasible due to the circumstances. Feedback received from young people participating in activities, early reflections on lack of take up or engagement, and the piloting of workshops or events led to providers modifying the delivery model at an early stage.

A range of adaptations were implemented and centred around the following themes or issues:

- **Timing:** Providers modified the timing of activities based on the attendance and on feedback they received during the initial phases of delivery. Shortening the length of some activities and workshops, to make them less intensive, was a strategy used to encourage parents/carers to sign up and to help maintain participants' engagement and attention. In some cases, providers extended the overall duration of the project allowing more time to cover the same amount of content. Interviewees explained that this strategy provided participants with more opportunities for breaks, reflection and opportunities to ask questions.
- **Format of activities:** Interviewees explained that they learnt about effective models of delivery as their projects progressed. Many providers redesigned and adapted activities to make them more interactive and engaging. Practical activities on topics young people were familiar with were often preferred by GRT and SEND participants. Informative meetings with GRT parents/carers were re-designed to be more informal and flexible in response to poor attendance at more formal, prearranged sessions. In the case of those working with young people with SEND, flexibility was offered to those signing up for work placements as in

some cases, due to health and wellbeing issues, some students struggled to engage for a full working day and extra support was provided.

- **Additional support:** A few providers realised that due to the high needs of participants, extra support was needed on a 1-2-1 basis, especially when conducting safety-critical tasks. Providers reported that activities have become more inclusive as a result and participants benefitted more from the sessions by being able to effectively engage with them.
- **Nature of activities:** Changes were made to the types of activities on offer to avoid duplication. One provider working with GRT young people for example explained that during the early stage of delivery they realised that it was not appropriate for all young people to participate in work experience. This was either because they were already working for the family business, or they already had done work experience in the past and could not see the value of repeating this experience. The provider decided to offer separate enrichment activities, which facilitated employer encounters instead. In other cases, providers decided to signpost young people to other events happening locally, instead of duplicating work that was already taking place. By doing so they were integrating their offers with local provision, rather than working in isolation, and were thereby broadening and enriching young people's experiences.
- **Design and format of material:** Many providers explained that they decided to adapt materials, making them more visual, altering ambiguous wording, using illustrations when developing vocational profiles, using Widget symbols to make them easier to access, or using large text to accommodate the needs of visually impaired participants. They also modified language depending on specific needs. The types of adaptations were generally made over the course of delivery as participant profiles were more varied than anticipated.
- **Adapting the mode of data collection and making it more accessible:** Providers collecting data for their own evaluation activities explained that they adapted and modified evaluation tools to facilitate data collection. To reduce complexity, providers adapted survey tools, for instance, and asked participants to respond using a 3 point instead of 5 point scale. If data collection through survey was considered unsuitable, providers embedded it in project delivery, for instance, in group activities where participants were asked to rate their preferences and views at the beginning and end of a session.

This chapter covers providers' experiences of delivery following the initial set-up phase. Providers were asked for feedback on the most successful elements of their approach. It also details on-going challenges in delivery, and how providers attempted to overcome these difficulties.

For those providers who were still engaged in delivery during the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK and nationwide lockdown in March 2020, the issues providers encountered from this point onwards as a result of government guidelines and public health measures are detailed.



# 5 | Experiences of delivery

1-2-1 interactions. Similarly, other providers were able to adapt in situations in which young people felt unable to engage in group activities due to high levels of social anxiety, instead offering them more hours of 1-2-1 support, ensuring they received the same amount of support as those participating in group activities.

For young people with SEND, some providers also

## Case study

### Dynamic Training

The young people said they liked activities that were a bit different to what they would do in the classroom as opposed to just listening to a presentation, such as having the opportunity to respond to mock interview questions. Educators said they recommend to facilitators not to stand and talk for too long but to keep it short, visual and interactive. They also suggest role play as the young people always respond well to that. Another thing that works is humour and banter. One of the employers who was interviewed, who had taken part in two skill share events, said they introduced more interactive elements to the second event after seeing how well the young people responded to it in presentations from other employers.

highlighted the importance of communicating clearly the nature of the activity, its purpose as well as the potential outcomes from taking part to support effective engagement. One example was provided of explaining to the young people that some activities were designed so they could be part of a celebration event at the end of the programme, where skills would be demonstrated to friends and family. Other providers noted the importance of identifying opportunities

which young people related to and which were relevant to their specific needs. This included, for example, finding opportunities relevant to the young person's interests and within organisations that had experience of working with young people with similar needs. In relation to work experience placements, providers placed significant emphasis on pre-placement work with young people, and it was considered key to developing young people's understanding of aspects such as time management and employer expectations.

Some providers noted the success of the learning itself, based on approaches and strategies used. One provider focused on the use of experiential, strength-based learning in the delivery of a series of enterprise activities. They considered this to be crucial in motivating young people to participate, by highlighting and building on their latent skills.

## Employer engagement

Many providers noted the success of various aspects of employer support they were able to offer, namely the level of support and tailoring available from providers, employer toolkits and disability training.

Providers offered support to employer mentors, managed mentors' expectations of working with young people with SEND and provided examples of successful interactions. They noted that for young people with SEND who have speech, language and communication needs (some were non-verbal), a mentor gaining a smile from a young person during a conversation could be a positive outcome that represented progress. Providers offered employers exercises to complete if they were struggling with conversations and ways of identifying common interests with young people with significant learning difficulties.

The development of employer toolkits was also highlighted as another area of success by providers. Toolkits typically included information on the needs of particular groups of young people, what to avoid in the workplace and tips on effective communication. They



## 5.1 Success factors

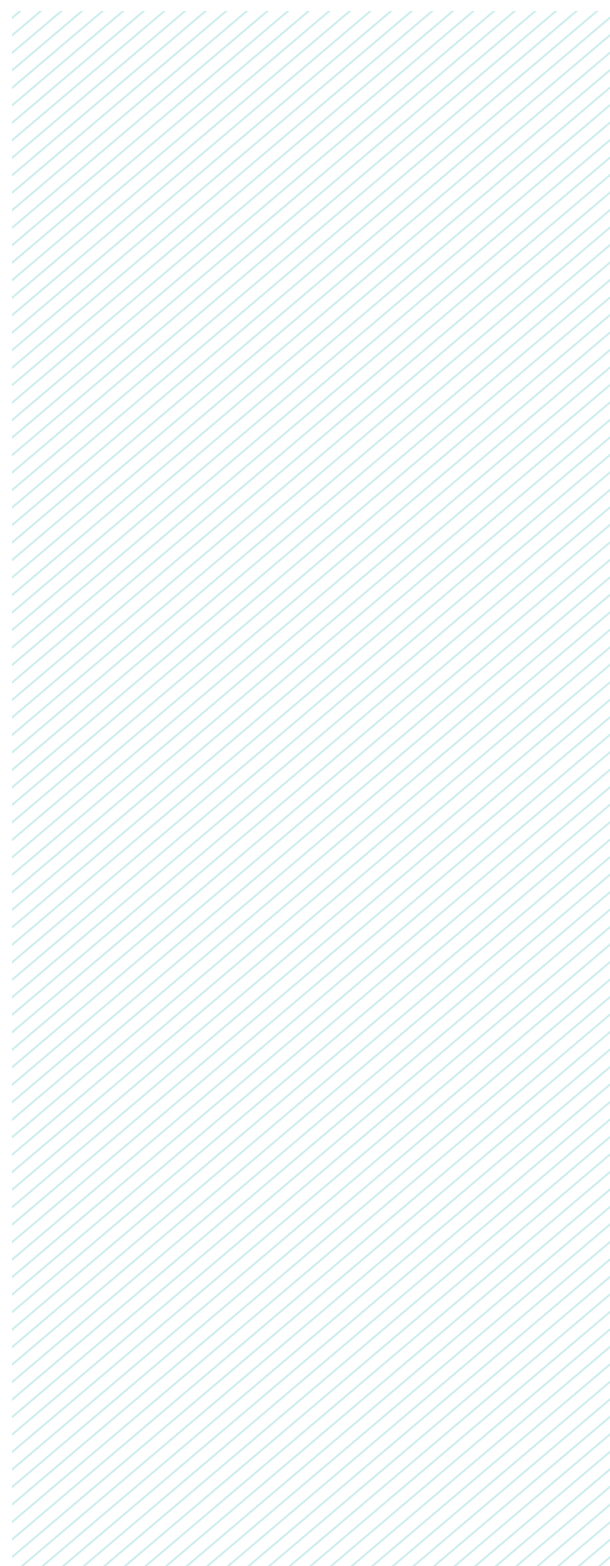
Providers were asked to identify the elements of their approach that had been most successful over the course of project delivery. Across all projects, a common theme that arose was providers' ability to offer flexible, responsive and personalised packages of support to project participants.

### 5.1.1 SEND

Feedback from providers indicated that, in line with the Theory of Change, a key success factor in the delivery of projects for young people with SEND had been their ability to be flexible and provide individualised support. This enabled them to modify aspects of delivery and adapt to participants' support needs. Some providers responded to behavioural issues which emerged during delivery – for instance, in the delivery of careers talks – by ensuring activities were interactive and held participants' attention.

One provider was proactive in using interactive resources and also had alternatives planned in case activities did not go as planned. Where activities were delivered by school staff rather than provider staff, schools were encouraged to offer flexibility in the structure and content of sessions to ensure sufficient adaptation to meet young people's needs. For example, in one instance, Teaching Assistants who delivered group workshops were encouraged to cut content if a young person was feeling overwhelmed with the amount of information being provided.

Regularity of sessions and activities was also flexible. Providers personalised the delivery model to every individual, ensuring the length and frequency of sessions was manageable from participants' perspective. Providers also adapted the mode of delivery where appropriate. A few noted the success of delivering group sessions rather than 1-2-1 sessions. It was felt that group sessions could help reduce the anxiety of some participants who felt pressured in



were considered by providers to prepare employers and were viewed as important in ensuring the employer encounter progressed smoothly. Employers were seen to benefit from having as much information as possible about the young people and their needs prior to any engagement. Providers highlighted disability awareness training offered to employers as another important contributor in helping them to feel confident about engaging and interacting with young people with SEND. The training generally helped employers to overcome any initial hesitancy they had about delivery, and employers were then able to build their confidence further through direct engagement with young people.

The ability of providers to match young people to suitable employer mentors was also identified as a success factor. Some providers discussed hosting induction sessions between mentors and groups of young people with SEND in schools and colleges and making pairings based on observed interactions in these settings and who the mentors seemed to connect with.

### 5.1.2 GRT

For programmes targeting young people within Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities, the ability to be flexible and to reorient or adapt activities in line with the needs or behaviours of the young people was again highlighted as a key success factor in delivery. Providers spoke of altering the timing, format and intensity of activities to ensure the experiences were enjoyable and to maintain participants' attention. The case study with Clifton Learning Partnership highlighted one such adaptation, where they changed the time when participants were given meals to help maintain their engagement. They found that providing food for the young people at the beginning of each session (which was delivered after school) was not suitable, as it would lead to disengagement and lack of concentration. They instead changed the meal time so it took place at the end of the session, which helped keep the young people alert and gave them something to look forward to.

### 5.1.3 LAC

For providers offering support to Looked After Children, the main success factors reported were the ability to be flexible and adapt to the needs of participants, and successfully using strategies to continually engage young people, and to build their confidence and communication skills.

In terms of adaptability and engagement, in one instance, a provider offered an increased number of mentoring sessions, to respond to individuals who needed more intensive support and inputs. This adaptation resulted in increased levels of participation and higher completion rates. Other providers drew upon existing relationships in schools to ensure the continued engagement of young people. Some providers liaised with personal advisers supporting young people with the transition from leaving care, in order to learn more about the young person's needs and to support their participation.

Another significant success factor was the combination of 1-2-1 mentoring and group work. Project managers, creative mentors and foster parents noted the mentoring helped young people to build their confidence and communication skills in an unpressured environment with a familiar individual. This then enabled them to take part in group activities. This included, for example, enterprise projects that allowed the young people to practice their group work and communication skills, and form relationships with other young people in a safe, supported environment. It was therefore the combination of the two elements that many of the interviewees said had been important in supporting participants' development as part of the programme.

## 5.2 Challenges encountered and changes in approach

Across all projects the recruitment and engagement of key stakeholders were often highlighted as the main challenges providers faced during delivery. In the case of the SEND projects, engaging employers and making sure they met their agreed commitments was a consistent challenge. For GRT and LAC projects, maintaining the engagement of young people themselves was more of a difficulty. In general, SEND projects struggled less with this aspect as they often recruited participants via intermediaries such as schools and colleges.

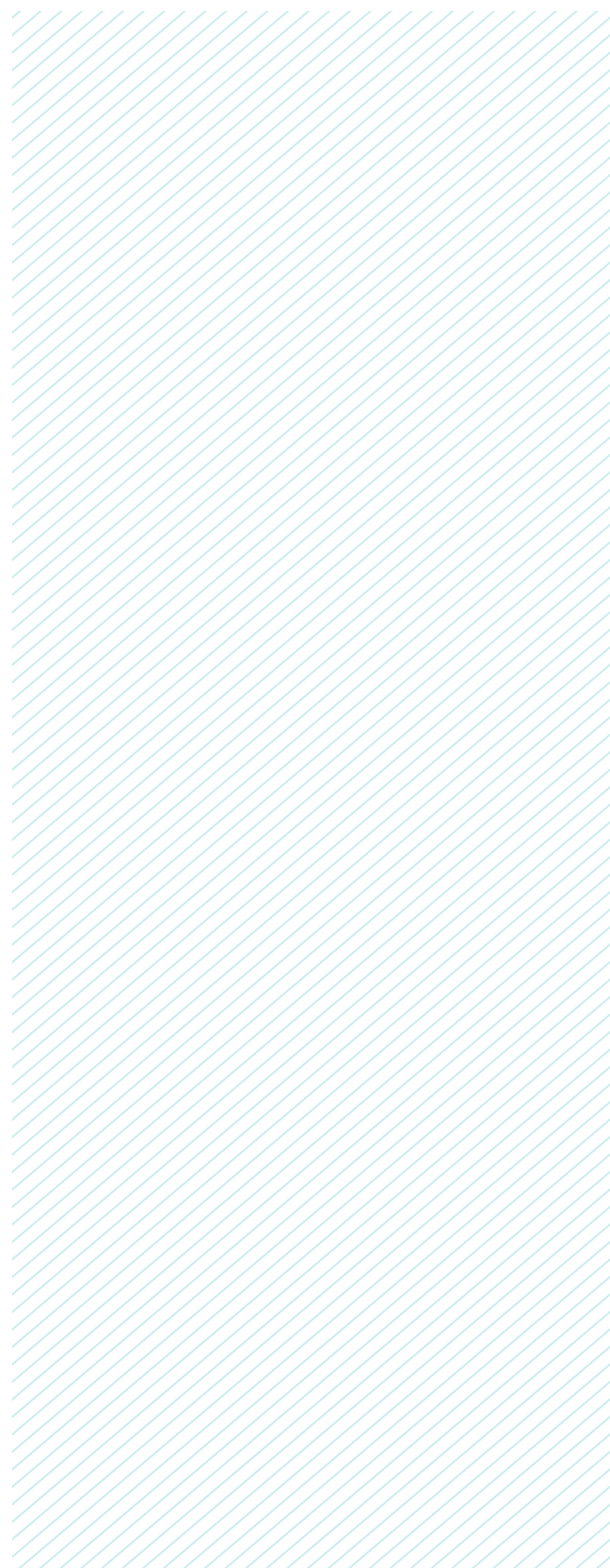
### 5.2.1 SEND

#### School and parent/carer engagement

Issues surrounding the continued engagement of schools and parents/carers have also occurred. Some providers, for instance, had experiences of schools dropping out of employer-facing activities at short notice, which in turn damaged relationships with employers as they had committed time and resources to the activities. These incidences highlighted the difficulties faced by schools in organising external activities within a busy school schedule, particularly when Ofsted inspections are upcoming. Several providers also commented on staff turnover within partner schools, which could delay the start of project activity while the transfer of responsibilities to colleagues was arranged.

Providers also noted delays in gaining consent forms from parents/carers of young people and in communicating the purpose and importance of these documents. These difficulties were accentuated where providers were not in direct contact with parents/carers and were in contact via schools.

Where providers experienced few issues with school/college engagement, this was again attributed to the



extensiveness of their network and the strength of their pre-existing relationships with these institutions having worked with them to deliver careers education provision in the past. This enabled providers to gain buy-in for the project more easily from educational institutions, and quickly replace schools and participants where they had to withdraw unexpectedly from the project.

### Young person engagement

Providers delivering projects to young people with SEND identified several challenges over the course of their projects. These mainly centred on how to ensure that the project was accessible to all participants and how best to engage employers in project delivery.

In line with the Theory of Change, providers reported that they were responsive to requirements of individual participants and quick to adapt delivery to ensure the project was accessible to their needs. For example, one provider made changes in response to baseline data and participant self-assessments which indicated that they did not feel they were building teamwork skills as a result of the project, despite it including team-based exercises and group work. After speaking with participants, the provider realised students were not always aware of what teamwork constituted and so felt unable to pinpoint when they were learning particular skills. As a result, the project was altered to include activities overtly teaching the concept of teamwork and encouraging its practice.

Similarly, another case study provider (Dynamic Training) found it challenging to gather feedback from participants. Many of the young people engaged struggled with literacy and so it was difficult to obtain written feedback. Instead, the project manager captured verbal feedback through videoing participants and asking for feedback from employers and teachers.

Another provider supported an employer to make physical adaptations to their workspace within a retail

### Case study

#### National Deaf Children's Society

The provider noted that one of the biggest challenges is the lack of information provided by the teachers in relation to the needs of their deaf students and their aspirations for the future. The teachers are asked for this information before the workshop, but it is not always forthcoming. They recognised that this is challenging to provide, especially when deaf young people attend from different schools. However, it makes delivery a little more challenging, as the workshop has to be adapted throughout to account for any careers they are interested in. If they were able to receive this information prior to the workshop the provider noted that it would help shape delivery from being generic to more specific and informative for those attending.

environment when assigning an individual requiring wheelchair access for work experience there. They adapted the physical environment, moving furniture and re-arranging the shop floor, ensuring the kitchen was accessible and facilities could be used by the participant.

However, providers could find it particularly challenging to be adaptive to young people's needs and careers interests where they were engaging with them as part of a standalone event. An example of this was provided in the case study with the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS). The provider facilitated a careers workshop for deaf young people, which provided an opportunity to meet their peers, learn what support is available to assist in their journeys through education and work, their options for the future, their rights in the workplace and to own and take pride in their deafness. In facilitating this workshop, the provider noted that information on the needs and interests of attendees was not always provided by participating schools, which affected their ability to sufficiently tailor delivery and make the workshops more meaningful for participants.

### Employer engagement

Several providers encountered challenges with finding employers who could match the level of commitment required by the project and/or in ensuring they followed through on activities they initially agreed to support. These issues were encountered across SEND 1 and SEND 2 projects but were particularly acute among the latter due to the high level of employer commitment some of these projects required.

One case study provider, Dynamic Training, found a lot of variation in the type of activity and hours that the employers were able to offer. The project was delivered in small group settings and aimed to achieve a high level of employer contact for participants (approximately 12 hours for each of the 200 participants), which proved difficult to meet. In response, the provider altered the delivery model, engaging more employers in a

more limited range of activity in order to secure more agreements. The provider also increased the size of the groups attending each session to meet the agreed number of contact hours, although they were aware this is likely to have had a negative impact on the quality of participant experiences (as reflected in the Theory of Change).

In another instance, the provider experienced one of the main contracted employers withdrawing from the project at short notice. They had committed to delivering many different activities, including career talks to participants, but no longer had the capacity to fulfil these commitments due to staff turnover. To ensure that this employer was not lost from the project completely, the project manager prepared the slide packs and materials to be used in career talks instead, to ease the burden on the employer. This meant all the employer had to do was attend the event and present with minimal preparation. This approach required a lot of additional work from the provider, including preparing the presentations and doing background research about the employer concerned. This in turn put pressure on the project timeline and was not ideal given that the main purpose of the workshops was for young people to be informed by the employer's perspective.

Similarly, providers who attempted to engage with industries that are very reactive to local and seasonal demand, such as hospitality, found meeting milestones to be difficult. On a couple of occasions providers reported that they received cancellations from employers when they had a last-minute function booking, which meant they were unable to volunteer staff time for the project. Some providers thought employers were prepared to renege on some of their commitments as they could not always see the direct benefit to the business of participating. Where providers encountered fewer issues with employers meeting their agreed commitments, these appeared to be due to the provider having a pre-existing relationship with these organisations.

Another issue encountered in terms of maintaining employer engagement related to their experiences of working with young people with SEND. One case study provider, Dynamic Training, engaged employers in delivering workshops and careers talks. The project offered training to all employers involved. In most cases the training was successful in instilling confidence in employers that they could support encounters with the workplace for young people. However, they had a small number of employers who facilitated one session and were hesitant to commit to further events because they found it challenging to adapt to and accommodate young people's communication needs, despite receiving prior coaching from the provider.

### 5.2.2 GRT

For providers offering programmes to young people from GRT communities, the main challenges encountered centred on the recruitment and engagement of young people. One provider intended to target 16-18-year olds from the Irish Traveller and Roma communities. During their initial work on engaging these communities they found lower than expected levels of interest in the project, which included paid work experience. Among the Irish Traveller community, many of the young men they attempted to engage were already working with their fathers as part of the family business. In addition, they found higher than anticipated levels of engagement in further education or employment among the Roma community between these ages. As a result, the provider struggled to engage both of these groups in the project because the young people they approached could not see the need or value of the 12-week course. Instead, the provider decided to attempt to deliver the course to a younger cohort. As these younger groups were still at school, the provider found that parents/carers were more likely to recognise that their children struggled academically, and that the project (which included additional support with English and maths) might be beneficial.

Another provider encountered similar issues in their project that included a work experience placement. This was mostly due to schools not admitting students out of school to attend work experience, and similarly to the previous provider, some young people from the Irish Traveller community were not interested in the programme as they were already in paid employment with their families. In response to these issues, the provider planned to alter the support and discontinue with the work experience elements, instead deciding to focus on delivering personal guidance and tracking and following up on agreed actions.

### 5.2.3 LAC

For projects targeting children who are looked after, the main barrier to delivery reported by providers was that of maintaining young people's engagement. Most providers reported that social anxiety is a common issue among this group. This meant that many were hesitant to engage in any 'new' experiences, which in turn affected how able they felt to attend meetings with project mentors or work placements. For other providers, carer communication and involvement created a barrier to young people's engagement. Examples were provided of young people who lived in a children's home where staff worked different shift patterns, which created a barrier to effective communication about the project. A foster parent additionally described a situation where the young person in her care was strongly influenced by the adults in her life, and she stopped engaging when the adults told her she did not need to attend the project sessions.

Providers noted the importance of building trusting relationships with young people in these instances and adapting the support they provided to ensure young people felt comfortable and confident enough to engage. For example, if a young person felt overwhelmed at the prospect of attending organised meetings, providers ensured that young people had the option to rearrange meetings. Further, some providers



offered a chaperone to young people who were due to attend placements if they were nervous about visiting a workplace independently and the provider felt there was a risk they would not turn up. This strategy also helped to prevent students from becoming NEET, as providers could support young people to ensure they were attending placements arranged as part of their college course.

The same provider initially encountered challenges in reaching the target young people. They assumed schools would have consistent relationships with students and parents/carers and expected to build on these, but this was not the case. Young people were resistant to the programme because of previous negative experiences of careers education. In response to this barrier, the provider approached a teaching assistant in the school who had a good relationship with pupils, which proved successful in engaging young people in the school. After this change was made maintaining engagement among the young people was positive.

Another strategy adopted by providers involved encouraging the young people to create a community within the project, and share their experiences of college, training, and work with each other to create supportive resources for other care leavers. An additional benefit of creating this supportive community was that the positive aspects of the project were shared by word-of-mouth, which in turn encouraged other young people who had previously declined the support to enquire again about the offer.

## 5.3 Challenges encountered due to Covid-19

Several providers continued with delivery following the introduction of the first nationwide lockdown in March 2020. During the second wave of research, providers were asked how the Covid-19 pandemic and the public health measures that were subsequently introduced (including the temporary closure of education settings) affected their delivery plans.

Most providers were initially unable to continue with face-to-face delivery. As a result, several providers switched to online modes of delivery, or paused their project until schools and colleges reopened and face-to-face delivery could resume. A small number of providers prematurely ended their project as they were unable to change their delivery model or had subsequent difficulties engaging the target groups.

### 5.3.1 SEND

For multiple providers supporting young people with SEND, face-to-face delivery was halted and events cancelled due to Covid-19 and the associated public health measures and government guidelines put in place. Some providers were able to continue with their work during the nationwide lockdown by moving delivery online, but others were unable to because the delivery model was not suited to a remote learning environment.

For providers who continued with remote delivery, they discussed using video conferencing software to complete 1-2-1 personal guidance interviews and group workshops with young people and parents/carers. One provider described how the switch to online delivery appeared to better suit the needs of participants, many of whom had ASD and high levels of social anxiety.

Providers also adapted employer encounters to continue virtually, in addition to online disability

awareness training for employers. For example, one provider was planning to offer short videos made by employers discussing their workplace and their role. Young people would be provided with a worksheet to complete after watching the video, encouraging them to reflect on what they had learnt. It was hoped that this would help to still provide a degree of personalisation. The provider noted they were still developing ideas about how they could make participants' experience of watching these videos more interactive, such as setting them challenges to complete. They also intended to provide virtual tours

### Case study

#### Amaze

The provider noted higher levels of engagement since the programme started being delivered remotely. They highlighted how most of the young people they engage with are familiar with online technologies and this format negates the need for them to travel, visit the Amaze offices and interact with strangers, which they may lack confidence in doing. Sometimes in the workshop sessions with parents/carers, the young people may decide not to appear on screen, but this can be more comfortable for them and they can just listen to the content and ask questions whenever they like.

They have also been able to deliver group information workshops on post-16 options as 1-2-1 sessions or in smaller groups and tailor the content to the needs of the young person, which has made them more effective. This more individualised approach has been supported through savings the provider has made in terms of travel and venue costs, as well as staff time needed to set-up and clear down the room as part of each workshop.

of workplaces, 1-2-1 personal guidance interviews for each participant and host an online careers fair.

Providers that were been unable to progress further in delivery had either delayed the continuation of the programme or prematurely ended it. One provider was hoping schools would reopen in September and they would then be in a position to deliver the programme and facilitate employer workshops face-to-face, in keeping with the original delivery model. They did not feel it was appropriate to deliver the project online due to accessibility concerns: the project was focused on assisting young people with speech, language and communication needs to articulate these requirements and identify strategies to help improve and practice their communication. The provider did not believe it would be possible to deliver on these aims in an online format without the planned accompanying, tailored support from teaching assistants who knew participants.

For another provider, the decision was made to end the programme due to Covid-19. This decision was made based upon the fact that the provider considered the programme to have too many parts and be too complex to move to remote delivery with only three months remaining for delivery.

Lastly, providers expressed concerns about employer engagement and specifically the challenges they now faced in providing meaningful employer encounters and workplace opportunities to participants. This was due both to the public health risks that any type of face-to-face activity carried but also due to the disruption to business activity caused by the pandemic and the financial pressures some organisations were facing, which reduced their ability to participate in activities that were not part of their daily role.



### 5.3.2 GRT

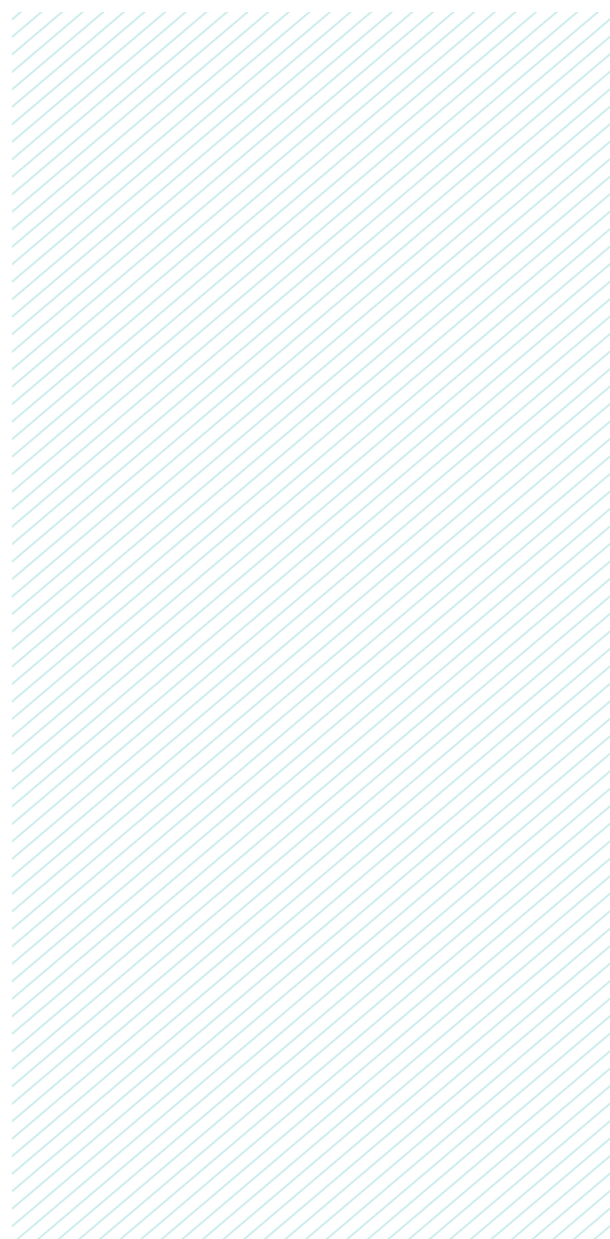
Providers delivering programmes aimed at young people from GRT communities also encountered significant issues with engaging participants as a result of Covid-19. Initially, activities and events planned by providers were cancelled due to the nationwide lockdown. Some providers decided to stop or delay delivery at that point, while others sought to move provision online.

Providers continuing with online delivery noted that they experienced a significant decline in levels of engagement from the community. This was partly attributed to a lack of access to IT equipment in their home environments, which was particularly acute during the school closures. However, some young people continued to engage, and providers reported that they were able to achieve some of the initial outputs planned as part of the project. This was achieved by offering alternatives to the work experience, such as virtual employer talks explaining the workplace and the roles within the organisation.

Providers who stopped delivery completely, highlighted issues with participant recruitment and engagement. They stated that local GRT communities had become more apprehensive about their children engaging with any external providers or services due to Covid-19 risks. Some providers also noted that sections of these communities had moved out of the area in search of better employment opportunities as their income levels had been adversely affected by the pandemic.

### 5.3.3 LAC

Providers delivering projects for LAC, which were continuing with delivery at the time of the nationwide lockdown, needed to translate the programme into an online format. Initially, some providers encountered resistance from carers to online engagement which delayed the delivery of the project. Over time however, it was reported that more carers had become accustomed to online delivery and their reluctance to participate had diminished.



### 5.3.4 Programmes for young people outside of mainstream provision

The additional funded projects aimed at young people outside of mainstream provision were designed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing social distancing restrictions. As a result, providers either designed the entire project to be delivered online, or in most cases were delivering the project through local intermediaries who would be able to have face-to-face engagement with participants. However, with the onset of the third wave of Covid-19 infections and subsequent national lockdown in January 2021, many providers' original plans were disrupted with some having to temporarily change their mode of delivery to accommodate the stay at home order.

In most cases, providers looked to deliver sessions that were originally designed to take place face-to-face over video conferencing software. The activities that were due to take place included 1-2-1 careers guidance interviews as well as group discussions of work produced following online tutorials (e.g. in digital skills). As noted, this had mixed success, and some young people did not want to join and contribute to an online meeting, particularly where participants had anxiety disorders. Some feedback from delivery staff suggested this could be context dependant.

For instance, those projects looking to engage young people on an individual basis appeared to have fewer issues with ensuring participants felt comfortable in attending online meetings. As well as being less daunting, individual meetings allowed a greater degree of tailoring to young people's circumstances and needs. Delivery staff also spoke of shortening the length of online meetings to make them less burdensome, which again could be easier on an individual basis. Finally, where providers were directly engaging with young people, being distinct from teaching staff and making clear that they were not contacting them about schoolwork but rather what they wanted to do after school was another valuable strategy in supporting participants' engagement with the project.

In some cases, providers arranged for young people to have employer and college encounters online. This provided an opportunity for participants to learn more and ask questions about particular occupations, the skills needed for certain roles, as well as the different training pathways to these positions. In general, these online encounters were seen to work well, although delivery staff did comment that in exploring college provision and seeing if it was suitable for their needs, there was no substitute for an in-person visit and seeing first-hand the physical college environment and facilities.

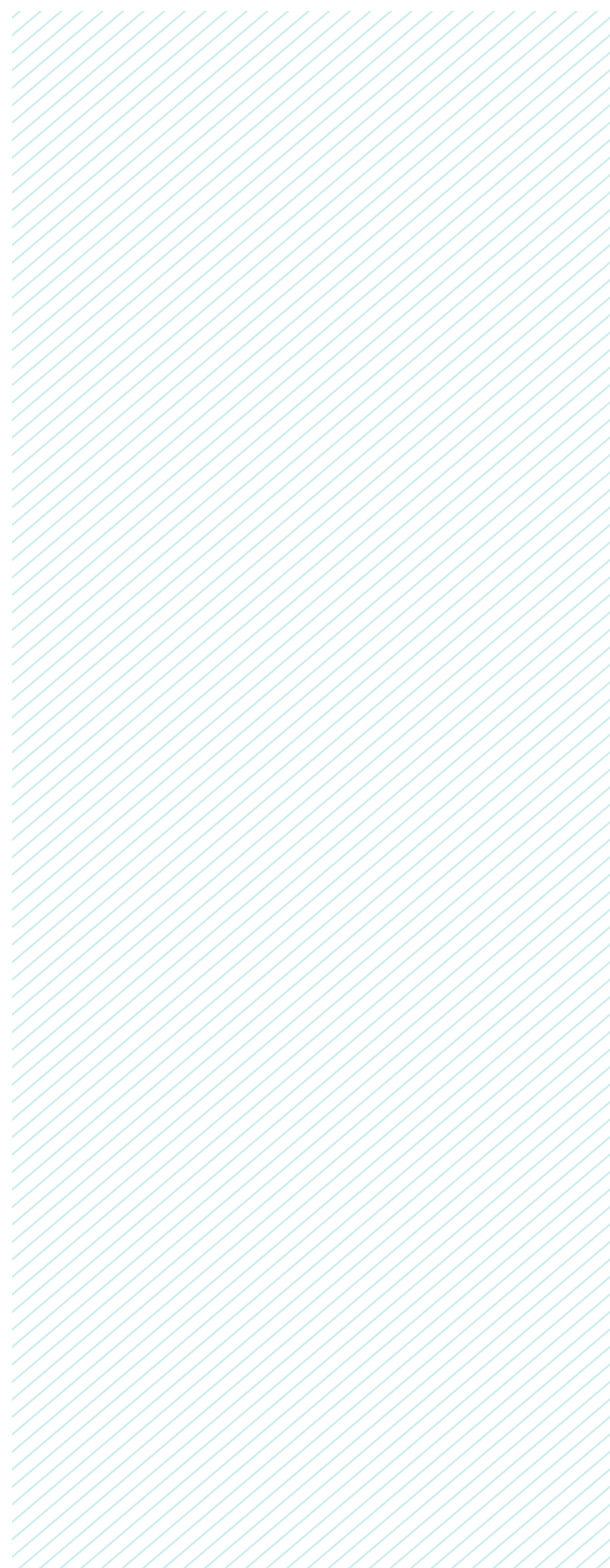
As noted, some providers designed their project specifically for online delivery. In these cases, providers transferred elements of their original funded project, which had been delivered face-to-face, to an online mode. Examples included redesigning a 1-day workshop into a series of 4, hour-long online sessions. As the workshops were intended to be delivered to a group, the sessions include team-based activities that young people could complete to help practice work-related skills.

For instance, when hosting the workshops face-to-face, the provider had a 'build a giraffe' activity that helped young people with their leadership as well as negotiation skills by encouraging them to come to an agreement with others about how the giraffe should be designed. To adapt this activity for an online setting, the provider described starting from the basis of what skills the activity aimed to teach and working up from there. For an online mode, the activity was altered and participants were asked to imagine that they were NASA space engineers. In preparation, each young person was asked to select 3 items from their home that they wanted to send into space. As part of the group sessions, they were then tasked with collectively agreeing, out of all the items collected, which 5 they wanted to send in the spaceship. The provider believed this modified version of the activity was successful

in still being engaging for participants while giving them the opportunity to practice the same skills as previously.

A few providers were unable to adapt their delivery model to an online mode. This was attributed to some pupils not having the necessary equipment to engage in online, interactive sessions (i.e. a working camera and microphone) as well as a general level of poor attendance for any online sessions teachers attempted to host in these settings. In these cases, delivery moved forward with a handful of pupils who continued to attend these educational settings in-person due to their home circumstances. While this significantly reduced the scale of delivery, providers noted it did provide more opportunities for personalising the content of the sessions.

For instance, one project was focused on helping young people with speech, language and communications needs to better understand and describe these needs to others, particularly prospective employers. As teaching staff delivering the sessions could work with pupils on a more individual level, this allowed time to contextualise the discussions in terms of pupils' future career interests and work through examples that are applicable to these settings. According to the provider, they believe this has helped to support pupil engagement in the project, as they can see the relevance to their future career.



# 6 | Perceived outcomes of the Fund

The following chapter presents quantitative data on outcomes achieved by the Fund. It draws on the analysis of management information compiled by providers, and sets out rates of completion for the main target groups and whether they left the project with a career plan or goal in mind.

It also present qualitative findings on the perceived outcomes of project activity on young people, parents/ carers and employers, from the perspective of providers as well as the stakeholders themselves. The full range of expected outcomes for each of these groups is set out in Table 3.

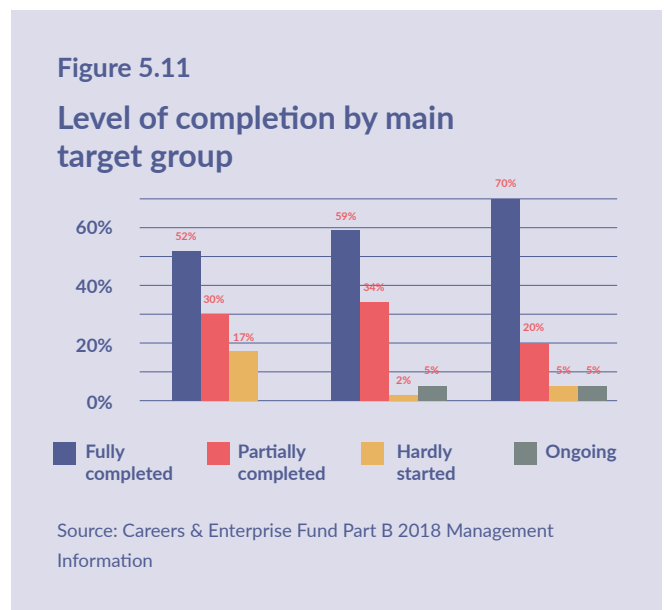
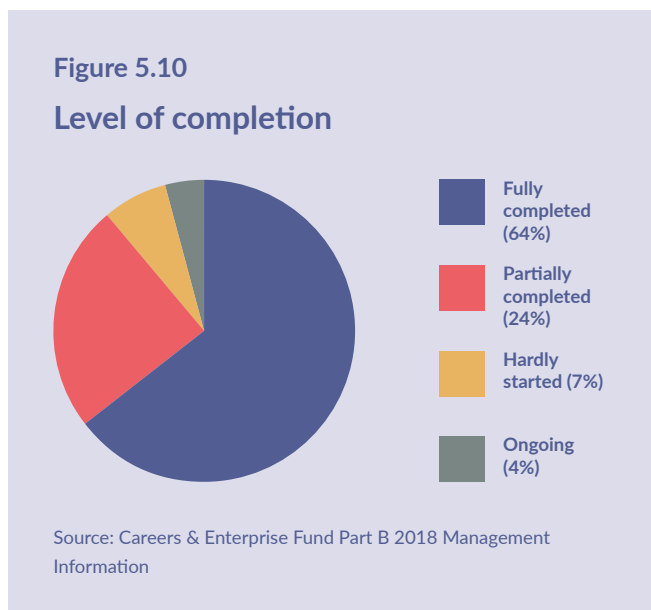
This chapter also considers the contextual factors that providers and other stakeholders feel have affected the outcomes their projects were able to achieve; any additional delivery costs their projects incurred to support the achievement of the target outcomes; providers' reflections on what adaptations would be needed for future delivery to enhance their project's effectiveness; as well as their plans for sustaining the project and its associated outcomes beyond the Careers & Enterprise funding period.

## 6.1.1 Rates of completion and outcomes achieved

The MI data included some indication of rates of completion as well as how many participants left the programme with a careers plan or clear career goal in mind. However, due to a large number of missing data entries at the time of analysis, it was not possible to draw robust conclusions about whether the programme as a whole was successful in meeting its intended outcomes on a numerical level.

### Level of completion

Among those participants for whom completion data was available (1,239 participants), almost two-thirds of young people (64 per cent) fully completed the intended programme of delivery<sup>11</sup>. Almost a quarter of respondents (24 per cent) meanwhile partially completed the intended programme, while a small number (7 per cent) hardly started.



<sup>11</sup>Completion data was missing, incomplete or invalid for 296 participants (19 per cent of all cases).

Breaking these figures down by target group, Figure 5.11 shows that, proportionally, young people participating in SEND projects had the highest rates of completion (70 per cent) compared to those taking part in projects focused on LAC (59 per cent) and GRT communities (52 per cent). GRT focused projects had the highest rate of non-completion, with 47 per cent of participant either partially completing or hardly starting the programme. While all projects encountered difficulties with continued engagement, many GRT projects took place in community settings rather than via educational providers, which may have made these challenges even more acute.

For participants who did not complete the intended programme of careers activities, providers were able to provide the reason why they dropped out. Out of 391 cases, 203 valid answers were provided. The most common reasons for participant non-completion included:

- Participants disengaging with the programme entirely (49).
- Participants not attending or only attending some of the planned activities (41).
- Participants leaving the programme early following the introduction of national lockdown restrictions (19).
- Personal circumstances leading participants to leave the programme (17).<sup>12</sup>

### Achievement of career plans

Over half of the projects (13 out of 20) aimed to provide participants with a formal written careers plan after completing the intended activities. This was more common for projects that included 1-2-1 support, for instance, in the form of personal guidance interviews. Other projects aimed to support the development of career plans and goals in a less structured way. Overall, providers originally planned to achieve written careers plans for 1,075 participants. At the time of analysis, 330 young people had left the project with a careers plan or goal in mind. Again, this shortfall is partly explained by the impact of Covid-19 and subsequent disruption to providers' delivery plans and schedules.

<sup>12</sup>Some of the specific reasons underlying this disengagement among each of the target groups are set out in Sections 3.5, 4.1 and 4.3.

## 6.2 Perceived outcomes for young people and parents/carers

### 6.2.1 SEND

According to providers, the projects targeted at young people with SEND achieved the full range of intended outcomes set out in the Theory of Change. However, individual projects had different areas of emphasis depending on the level of need among the target population and the nature of the activities undertaken with them.

#### Greater agency/independence

A few projects where young people were supported more extensively on a 1-2-1 basis spoke about how they had encouraged participants, over the course of the project, to take on a greater degree of agency with regards to their search for further education options or employment. Some providers spoke of how this was achieved by setting clear limits of what work they were prepared to do in terms of researching potential options and making applications. They would discuss with the young person, for instance, what best practice looks like in terms of how to set out a job application and what information to include, or would signpost to relevant resources to help them think through their post-16 options, but would leave it to the participant to carry out these agreed actions in between sessions.

Parents who were involved in these types of activities spoke of how having regular 1-2-1 sessions interspersed with periods of agreed activity provided a degree of motivation to the young person to make progress in thinking about their next steps. They were accountable to the provider for their work between sessions and did not want to be in a position where they did not have anything to discuss at their next

However, the extent to which providers pursued this approach and its success was mediated by young people's level of need. One parent, who's child had Autistic Spectrum Disorder and severe

anxiety, discussed how they had to provide additional motivation for their child at home and had to have an active role in facilitating the completion of the agreed actions. This included bringing up on their computer the relevant information they had been signposted to and discussing it with their child. The young person in question fed back that they valued having the opportunity to talk through this information with their parent and adviser. They noted that it would have felt overwhelming otherwise and they would have been unable to make sense of it without this guidance.

In other cases, providers spoke about how even getting the young person to attend a 1-2-1 session on their own, without their parent accompanying them, was a marked improvement and demonstrated growing independence.

#### Confidence and self-efficacy

A widespread outcome realised throughout the projects targeted at young people with SEND was increased confidence. This had been achieved or was evident in changes in how participants communicated with different stakeholders over the course of the project. There were several mechanisms by which these outcomes could be achieved.

Projects where participants completed enterprise activities via group work saw these outcomes as a result of the engaging, structured social interactions they facilitated. For example, young people were encouraged to collaborate, share their views, and adopt discrete roles and responsibilities in relation to the enterprise project they were tasked with designing and completing. As noted, an experiential learning approach was seen to be important in encouraging young people to contribute towards this exercise. It provided them with a fun, practical task to complete, which in some cases focused on a topic/issue or incorporated technologies that had direct relevance to these young people's lives.

According to providers, these two approaches in combination encouraged young people to engage, speak up and gain confidence in their peer interactions as their contributions were positively received. In this sense, young people's experiences on the project were distinct from their normal day-to-day experiences in so far as they felt that they were listened to and that their views were valued. In one case a provider noted that a participant with ASD who had been selectively mute while in school started communicating with others again as a result of these experiences.

A caveat to the use of this approach was that it was less successful with young people who had significant behavioural problems. One provider noted that one of the groups they engaged in the project were pupils from a Pupil Referral Unit. In this instance, participants found collaboration challenging and could not agree on a shared focus for the enterprise project.

Several SEND 2 projects also reported improvements in participants' confidence (evidenced through improvements in their communication skills) via direct positive encounters with employers and exposure to workplaces. Providers attributed these changes to young people being taken out of their 'sheltered' everyday schedule, which provided a greater sense of independence, and being spoken to and valued as an adult in their interactions with employers.

One provider noted that young people in their group were used to being discriminated against in their daily lives and expected to face the same issues within the workplace. As it happened, the positive exposure they had with employers who were friendly and respectful improved their confidence in interacting with these groups. A few providers noted that this was evident in young people being more verbal and animated during workplace visits or careers talks by employers, asking more questions and speaking in front on a group.

A small number of projects were focused on supporting young people who had recognised speech, language and communication needs and assisting them to

develop and implement strategies to support their communication with others. This involved helping participants develop a better awareness of their own needs and the types of the accommodations they require others to make so they can communicate effectively with them. Again, the project facilitated this through experiential learning where participants worked together to prepare and deliver a workshop for employers on this topic.

In this example, the gains in confidence among young people came from finding ways to express their communication needs to others and putting strategies into action that helped with their self-expression: elements that were integral to the task they were assigned. The provider noted that this included young people encouraging each other to speak in informal interactions, as well as thinking of a way for a participant to introduce themselves in the employer workshop where they lacked confidence (i.e. facing and introducing themselves to one other young person, but making sure the whole group can hear).

### Employability skills

Employability skills were another key outcome observed by providers and other stakeholders as part of their respective projects. In some instances, educators who had been involved in helping to facilitate the projects observed that participants had developed a better understanding of key concepts such as 'skill', 'quality', 'strength', 'task' and 'job-ready'. In these cases, the concepts had been introduced via events and practical enterprise activities, which educators believed made them more memorable for the young people. They recalled examples where participants had mentioned these concepts in the classroom, outside of the project related activities they were engaged in.

Other providers felt that participants had developed a good sense of employers' expectations through direct exposure to workplaces. There was some suggestion that older participants who were nearer to entering the



labour market gained more from these experiences. This was linked to levels of maturity as well as the topic of employment having more relevance to their daily lives.



**“I really enjoyed the visit to [the] airport today. I learnt about the different job roles and some of the skills that I would need to work within retail. I also learnt about apprenticeships and will speak to my teacher at school to find out more about this”**

**“I visited [a] supermarket today and even though I don’t want to work in a supermarket, I was presently surprised just how many different roles there are. I had not previously thought about the roles within payroll or admin before or even a managerial role. They have apprenticeship schemes for junior managers which sounds great”**

**“I really didn’t realise just how many jobs they are in the NHS. My mum wants me to be a doctor, but after today’s workshop I would love to be a sports doctor, as I love sports. Even if I don’t become a doctor, there are so many other jobs that I could do”**

Young person feedback

### Raising aspirations

There were a few clear examples where, in view of providers, participants left the project with a distinct, changed view of what careers were accessible to them. Examples were provided of these outcomes being achieved through a variety of different mechanisms including group workshops, 1-2-1 careers interviews, workplace visits and work placements.

In the case of group workshops, one provider (NDCS) completed a ‘myth busting’ exercise where they attempted to challenge participants’ perceptions of what roles were accessible for deaf children and young people. After getting young people to feedback their initial impressions, they would counter these presumptions with real-life case studies of deaf role models they could aspire to. The provider noted that participants were very positive about this activity and fed back that they had not realised these types of careers options were open to them. These case studies also highlighted the pathways that participants could follow to access these careers, and the qualifications and personal attributes they would need.

Others talked about how, through individual career conversations, they were able to highlight that a young person’s pre-existing interests at home (e.g. gaming) could be studied at college, which many were not aware of. This process also involved highlighting to the young person the existing strengths and competencies they had, which were valuable to this career path, further reinforcing its viability as a potential option.

Some providers commented that workplace visits or careers talks/workshops had also helped broaden participant ideas about what roles are available in different organisations and the training pathways that can support entry into these positions. Examples were given of visits to airports and supermarkets and talks by healthcare providers, where young people had the chance to observe and learn more about some of the back-office functions that support these businesses.



In terms of work placements, providers noted similar effects with young people learning more about particular occupations and the types of roles that businesses support. These were seen to be most beneficial when they were tailored to a young person's pre-existing interests. Providers were able to more easily facilitate this where they had developed extensive networks with a broad range of employers across different sectors. In the case of these projects, work placements were seen to help extend and refine

young person's pre-existing aspirations by providing a more comprehensive view of what certain occupations entail and helping to clarify what aspects of the role they do and do not enjoy.

### **Better knowledge of potential careers, pathways to employment and sources of IAG**

Building on the above work, providers described delivering personal guidance interviews or mentoring

#### **Case study**

##### **National Deaf Children's Society**

The careers advisers would contact participant's Sensory Support Worker (SSW) prior to the interview to check whether there were any communication needs they should be aware of. The interviews themselves would last between 45-50 minutes. They would begin by contextualising the discussion: explaining to the young person that it was part of the same support package as the workshop and asking whether they recalled being part of this session.

The individual interviews would cover where the participant is now (predicted grades for GCSEs, what subjects they enjoy, what work experience they are planning to get). They would then look forward to the participants future education and consider what options would be appropriate, what they should consider in making these choices, and where they should go for further information on funding and what these courses/placements would entail. These choices would be tied to participant's careers aspirations. The advisers noted that all of

the young people could volunteer ideas on these, but in some cases they needed to do a bit more research on what they needed to do to get a job in this area and develop a better understanding of what this pathway would entail.

They would finish the interview by drawing up a short careers action plan of what they agreed the participant and adviser would do following the meeting and moving forward in helping to consider post-16 options. The adviser would generally email this to the participant following the meeting with supporting information to assist with their research of further education and careers options. So they did not overwhelm the participant with information, they also have a general signposting section at the bottom of the action plan that refers participants to further support and resources that will support them to think about their further choices when they are ready.

The adviser would also include their contact details and encourage the participant to get in touch if they had any further questions or required more ad-hoc advice around what was discussed.



**“I really felt that it opened my horizons to other options”**

Young person feedback

sessions to help develop participants' aspirations into an agreed careers plan. This typically set out next steps in terms of researching the entry criteria for specific roles and considering potential post-16 options, which would help in fulfilling these requirements.

Some providers were able to point to the direct impacts of this work, such as college enrolments or securing apprenticeship placements for participants. An example of the structure of these personal guidance interviews was provided by the NDCS case study.

These interviews were typically delivered 4-6 weeks after the careers information workshops:

Some young people who had negative experiences of mainstream education fed back that in their approach careers advisers also tried to reassure participants about what it would be like to undertake further education and training. For instance, one young person stated that their adviser made clear the differences between attending a Further Education College and school: they would need to attend for fewer days, were able to wear their own clothes and there would be a more relaxed relationship between teachers and students. Other providers noted that the young people they were working with were motivated to undertake an internship or longer-term work placement after gaining work experience as part of the project, which had led them to feel more comfortable in a work setting.

Finally, a few projects also focused on providing participants with further information on their rights as disabled people in the workplace and in educational settings, and what support is available to help ensure that these settings are accessible and accommodate their needs. Feedback from young people engaged in these projects demonstrated that they were successful in raising awareness of these support schemes, including Disabled Students' Allowance and Access to Work, and the differences between these schemes, which many had not previously heard of.

Many also stated that they were more likely to apply for support in future because of this information. In this way, providers involved in delivery reflected that they felt the project had developed participants' independence by giving them the resources needed and confidence ask for help when it is needed.

The staff directly involved in the delivery of these projects felt that an important contributor to these outcomes was having this information delivered by a disabled facilitator. This allowed the facilitator to share their own experiences, for instance, of going to University and explain what support they received and why they received it. They noted that some participants could be unclear about why multiple forms of communication support may be needed when attending lectures, for example, and so this provided an opportunity to make clear its purpose from the perspective of the person needing that support.



**“[I learnt that] deaf people have a right to education and employment.”**

Young person feedback

## 6.2.2 GRT

Providers and other stakeholders involved in the projects targeting GRT communities described achieving a similar range of outcomes as those engaged in SEND projects. However, overall, there was less emphasis on developing greater independence in their career decision making, and fewer examples of providers engaging in the work of planning individual transitions into further education and training or employment for these groups.

Some providers categorised their work as a first step in supporting future transitions. Their focus was on developing the foundational skills and behaviours that would be required in the workplace, as well as broadening the range of options that young people believed were available to them. Further work would be needed with these communities to support any individual career planning, and this in turn would require a greater level of parental engagement and buy-in in some instances in order to be successful. In a few cases, this focus was further supported by the fact that the projects had only been able to engage younger participants from among these communities as some older cohorts had already moved into employment.

### Confidence and self-efficacy

One area where some of the projects were seen to make significant gains was around the confidence and self-efficacy of participants. As with some of the SEND projects, this was again supported by giving young people a collective, project-based task which they were motivated to complete, encouraging them to assume a set of responsibilities in delivering the project, and creating a positive, collaborative environment in which they were treated with mutual respect.

An example of this was evident in the case study of Clifton Learning Partnership's project, which engaged young people from the local Roma community in designing a playground. The provider as well as participants explained how being able to contribute

towards a group exercise and having that contribution positively recognised by their peers had led to confidence gains for one young person with SEND.

Similar to the outcomes achieved for the projects that focused solely on young people with SEND, this example shows that gains in confidence were particularly evident where participants had positive, inclusive experiences, which contrasted sharply with how they were used to being treated in their daily lives.

### Case study

#### Clifton Learning Partnership

The provider described how the project had allowed one young person with SEND to better understand his competencies and capabilities, and improve his relationship with his peers. He had become the mascot of the group due to his commitment and enthusiasm, and his hard work was celebrated and recognised in the final event. His self-confidence had grown and he is now keen to find a job and to work for the community centre.

The parent of the same young boy noticed how he was enthusiastic about the activities. His mother felt that the son appreciated to be respected and treated equally by peers, while in all other aspects of his life he is generally treated differently because of his complex needs.

## Employability skills

Employability skills were again taught and embedded through practical experiences. Again, as with some of the SEND projects, providers focused on introducing young people to key concepts through the nature of the activities they completed. One provider, for instance, which encouraged group work among participants, noted that young people were learning how to work with one another as part of a team and what it meant to undertake a shared task. In addition, they became familiar with the structure of a working day by taking regular breaks, and were introduced to the concept of a reference when seeking employment: they were told that they could ask the provider for a reference based on the work they had done as part of this project.

Giving participants a clear set of commitments and/or an incentive to attend the activities each day, which provided an approximation of the world of work, was also viewed as effective in getting young people to exhibit desirable workplace behaviours. In the case of group, project-based activities, the incentive came from developing a project that would have value to the wider community and having responsibilities to one another for helping to complete the project. Other examples given of incentives to attend project activities included the provision of paid work placements. This was seen to be particularly important where providers had a limited range of placement options and could not match these experiences to participants' career interests. In both cases, providers noted that young people responded positively to these incentives and turned up to the activities on time, wearing appropriate clothing and demonstrated a mature level of behaviour.

## Raising aspirations

Some providers noted that their project had been successful in raising the aspirations of participants. In contrast to the SEND projects, there were fewer cases where this resulted from direct exposure to employers and workplaces. The examples provided instead resulted from participants engagement in practical



**“I am going to get a job in the gardens”**

**“I want to be a builder”**

Young person feedback

group activities, which they enjoyed and wanted to pursue further. For example, in the case of Clifton Learning Partnership, the provider as well as several of the participants expressed an interest in working in construction or as a gardener following the completion of the project:

The provider attributed these gains to their positive experiences of planning and designing the playground, using tools and working outdoors.



“Thank you for sharing me all about you and your lifestyles and how you got to university, I really learned that you can do anything if you really try. I wouldn’t really want to go but now I know that travellers do go and learn”

“Thanks for coming. I find out that you can live at home or in a dorm and I learned that you can do anything”

Young person feedback

### **Better knowledge of potential careers, pathways to employment and sources of IAG**

A few providers reported that they were able to broaden participants awareness of potential careers and pathways to employment through their projects. In the case of one provider, they arranged pop-up events at an Irish traveller site, which included talks by local colleges and Universities as well as employers. By delivering this information within the community, the provider noted that more young people received it than would otherwise be the case. The approach was seen to be successful as several young people from the traveller site subsequently enrolled at the college that delivered one of the talks. Feedback obtained by providers on-site also showed that some young people found the talks useful in learning about how to get into University, the types of study options available and that these options were open to people from the traveller community:

Other providers who attempted to arrange trips to local colleges and universities for the select number of young people who agreed to be part of the

project encountered some logistical difficulties in arranging these activities; a range of issues came up in participants’ personal lives meaning they could no longer attend.

Some providers adopted a similar approach to pass careers information onto parents. They found that formal events held at the provider site were poorly attended, and home visits and informal conversations were a more effective way of ensuring they received this information and getting them thinking about their child’s transition.

### **6.2.3 LAC**

The outcomes emphasised by providers and other stakeholders involved in projects for LAC centred on the social and behavioural changes they had observed among participants. This included developing agency, greater confidence and self-efficacy and an increased motivation to do well at school.

As with the GRT projects, overall there was less focus on planning individual career transitions. Participants could have high levels of social anxiety, find it difficult to express their views and opinions and have a say in the shape and direction of their lives. The projects were therefore focused on helping young people develop these core social and emotional skills and develop a degree of self-reliance. This in turn would help participants to start to make their own informed choices about which career and post-16 options they would like to pursue.

Commenting on which groups their projects worked best for, providers noted that younger participants in care can find it more difficult to engage in this type of careers support. Generally, their lives are more disrupted, and they have a more complex range of needs that need to be met before they can give priority to a careers-focused project.

### Greater agency/independence

Some of the LAC projects were perceived to have helped young people in developing their sense of agency. This was observed in participants' ability to openly express their views and opinions. In some cases, projects involved a creative enterprise activity, which participants were supported to contribute towards. According to providers, this provided a pretext for the young people to become more familiar with determining and expressing their preferences on how the activity should be delivered in a safe and supported context. These views were validated by mentors supporting the project and were received without judgement, which encouraged participants to continue to share their opinions. Young people participating in the Derbyshire Virtual School project supported this feedback, stating that the provider had created a safe environment in which to express their feelings.

### Confidence and self-efficacy

Improvements in confidence and self-efficacy were one of the primary outcomes reportedly achieved by the LAC projects. As with the projects focused on other target groups, these gains could be achieved in a number of ways. In several cases participants received a high-level of 1-2-1 support from a project mentor. After having met the young person several times, finding out their skills and interests, and developing a relationship of trust, mentors could support participants to attend external events such as college open days or work placements. In some cases this involved chaperoning the young person so they had the encouragement and confidence to attend. Having the opportunity to engage in these experiences in a supported way was seen to be valuable in encouraging participants to engage in similar activities in future, possibly independently.

Other projects had seen improvements in young people's self-confidence through group activities. As with the SEND and GRT projects, providers worked to establish a positive, collaborative environment where



**“Thank you so much for everything you have done for me I really do appreciate it all you’ve boosted my confidence and semi-prepared [me] for the future”**

Young person feedback

participants could work together on a shared task, which they were engaged with and enjoyed completing. By facilitating this way of working, where participants treated one another and received their views with mutual respect, young people were seen to develop their confidence in group situations through exposure and positive reinforcement.

### Case study

#### Derbyshire Virtual School

The project has made the young people feel more confident and less shy in group situations. One young person was described by her foster parent as having gone “from being placid to the point of worry to walking to a room with confidence”.

Young people who were interviewed agreed that they had become more confident and more skilled in group situation. They said performing in front of other people on the enterprise projects had helped them develop their confidence. Working in groups had also taught them to interact with different kinds of people and to be non-judgemental.

One example of this was provided in the case study of Derbyshire Virtual School, where participants were supported to work with one another on creative enterprise activities.

### Motivation to do well in education

Motivation to do well in education was seen to be another potential outcome for the LAC projects. In some instances, providers noted that through the completion of project-based work, which participants engaged with on a weekly basis, young people became familiar with meeting a regular commitment and making progress; something that they had often struggled with in mainstream educational settings. Again, an example of this was provided by Derbyshire Virtual School's creative enterprise projects:

Provider staff as well as foster parents both felt that this sense of commitment had transferred into the behaviour of some participants at school. A few cases were mentioned where young people's attendance had improved during their engagement with the project.

In other cases providers were working with young people directly and providing mentorship in educational settings. This enabled them to engage participants' teachers directly in their work and help them to consider alternative ways to deliver provision in class to better meet the young person's needs.

### Case study

#### Derbyshire Virtual School

One member of the project team noted that working on the same activities week to week, as part of the enterprise project, had allowed the young people develop their perseverance. Young people in care often have disrupted lives so being committed to finishing something they have started can be an issue. Working on the same thing every week allowed them to see their progress and persevere. In addition, the prospect of sharing the work with the public gave them a clear focus and encouraged them to work hard.

### Raising careers aspirations

Some providers spoke of how the projects had raised participants' awareness of the range of possibilities available to them. As noted, this was partly seen to be a secondary outcome of young people gaining confidence and learning to express their views and opinions, which was a necessary precondition for expressing career preferences and engaging in external events where they could learn more about potential pathways.



In some cases, however, these outcomes were perceived to have been achieved in a more direct way. One example of this was via a group session facilitated by a care leaver, who had progressed onto further education and into employment. According to the provider, by hearing this young person's story, participants were able to see that these options were open to them and that it was possible to go to college and find a job despite their challenging circumstances.

#### 6.2.4 Parents and carers

As set out in the Theory of Change, some providers expected several of the project outcomes for young people to also be achieved for their parents and carers. Given the level of control and influence these individuals have over their dependant's early life choices, this was seen an important facilitator in any future positive transitions.

However, in the second wave interviews, providers in many cases were not able to speak in detail about the difference the project had made to parents and carers in these areas. In practice, they were not hugely engaged in the delivery of project activities, particularly in cases where participants had been recruited and the project had been delivered via schools and colleges. Where parental engagement had been sought, it was usually in the initial stages of the project. This was where providers were seeking consent for their child to participate and were trying to understand more about their child's needs and requirements as well as at the end of the project during celebration or graduation events.

Several providers acknowledged that the effectiveness of their projects could have been enhanced if they had involved parents and carers in more aspects of delivery. Many providers spoke of the fixed ideas that parents and carers had of what their child could achieve in education and employment and how their life trajectories would take shape. Challenging these expectations was seen to be crucial in ensuring a

broad(er) range of options were considered by child and parent before key transition points.

In spite of this limited engagement, feedback from parents and carers was sought as part of the case study research. This provided a few examples of the direct gains they had seen in projects where they had a greater level of involvement in delivery.

#### Better knowledge of potential careers, pathways to employment and sources of IAG

Some providers that had delivered workshops for parents and carers on their child's post-16 options noted that these sessions had been useful in making clear that there are other qualification options aside from A-levels. They set out the range of options available to young people - including traineeships, apprenticeships and BTECs - which parents and carers may not have been made aware of via their child's school careers guidance service. The sessions also highlighted what additional support was available to their child as part of this provision given their Special Educational Needs. The parents interviewed confirmed that it was useful to receive this information and that it had broadened their knowledge of what provision was available for their child after the age of 16.



### Changes in how parents/carers communicate with their child about careers

One outcome noted as part of the Amaze case study that did not explicitly feature as part of the Theory of Change was changes in how parents broached the subject of careers with their child. One parent who was interviewed stated that as their child had ASD and high-levels of anxiety, they also attended all of the 1-2-1 personal guidance sessions Amaze had arranged for them. They observed how Amaze staff spoke with and engaged with their child, which they tried to replicate so that they could have constructive conversations about their next steps in terms of education and training.

#### Case study

##### Amaze

The parent noticed how Amaze staff spoke with their child 'on a level'; they have tried to model that style of interaction when discussing similar topics with them. They commented that they noticed that they usually spoke to their child as a mother (i.e. directive and concerned), but by modelling the language and approach of Amaze staff they were able to broach these topics in a far more neutral way. This had the effect of making them approachable.

## 6.3 Perceived outcomes for employers

Several outcomes were observed for employers where these groups were engaged in project delivery. They were most prominent among the SEND 2 projects that overall had achieved a greater level of employer engagement. The outcomes centred on two main areas: changes in perceptions of the target groups and changes in practices.

### Change in perceptions of target group

Both providers and employers spoke extensively about how their exposure to young people with SEND had significantly challenged their presumptions regarding participants skills, capabilities and behaviours as well as levels of need in a positive way. This was particularly evident for the SEND 2 projects, where employers admitted that they had preconceptions about how certain disabilities would manifest in their encounters with young people.

Several providers and employers noted that after having met project participants, they were now aware that these assumptions were incorrect and that all disabilities encompass a broad spectrum of conditions. As a result, several employers commented that they learned the importance of looking past a 'label' and treating each young person as an individual with their own set of needs and abilities.

Feedback from employers involved in Dynamic Training's SEND 2 project, which involved disability awareness training, summarised these points well.

## Case Study

### Dynamic Training

The project manager has received a lot of positive feedback from employers about how the programme has changed their perspective and how on a personal level they have been pleased to see how much they can contribute. This indicates that the project has been successful in meeting its aim of raising awareness among employers about young people with SEND's ability to work.

One employer who offered work experience as part of the project said the experience had been a positive one. It had been educational for her personally to see the different levels of needs and abilities among the young people. She already had a good level of understanding of different disabilities but still gained more knowledge from working directly with participants. In particular, she felt she learnt more about how to communicate with young people with different conditions and also about hidden disabilities. She also learnt to not make assumptions. She was told in advance about the young person's disability and on many occasions her pre-conceptions were changed once she started working with them.

### Changes in practices

In several cases, providers and employers highlighted how the outcomes achieved above had contributed towards changes in employer practices. These were mainly focused on how employers communicate with young people with SEND.

Employers who had attended workshops delivered by young people with speech, language and communication needs, which were focused on how



**“I've learnt the importance of using clear language – instructional language, to avoid ambiguous language, the use of workbooks, structured time-lines. I now feel better able to support individuals with autism. I feel I now have a good use of better techniques”.**

Employer feedback

employers could meet these needs in the workplace were reportedly very positive about their experience. They fed back that they intended to make some of the suggested accommodations, such as giving young people more time to provide a response. Employers involved in other projects that included SEND awareness training and the provision of work placements for young people reported similar gains based on their experience:

Other employers who had been involved in the delivery of careers talks, for instance, also stated that the opportunity to talk to young people with SEND had been valuable as it allowed them to test what young people think of the organisation and think about how they can best present what they do.

Some organisations stated that they hoped their increased confidence and knowledge of disabilities would enable them to look at their recruitment processes and ensure they are inclusive:



“Before joining the [...] programme, we had not even contemplated employing a more diverse group of people, namely those with disabilities. Taking part in this programme has made us realise just how capable many young people with a disability are. It’s also given us the skills and confidence needed to employ more people with disabilities. I hope that following this programme we will be able to look at our recruitment processes and ensure that we are definitely more inclusive in the future.”

Employer feedback



## 6.4 Facilitators and inhibitors of outcomes

Providers were asked to identify and discuss the broader contextual factors that had affected the outcomes their projects were able to achieve. In their answers, providers focused in many cases on the local labour market in which they were operating as well as their experiences of working with employers as part of these projects. Employers interviewed as part of the case studies also fed back on where they felt the outcomes they were able to achieve were inhibited or enabled by the structure of delivery.

### 6.4.1 Local labour market context

Several providers who engaged employers as part of their project noted that at the time at which they started delivery, the buoyancy and diversity of the local labour market had supported the outcomes they were trying to achieve. For example, a few providers operating in the North West of England noted that the region was a growing hub of economic activity. This enabled providers to find opportunities in large companies, which generally had more capacity to support the necessary project activities, such as workplace visits. This local labour market context also meant that providers were able to source opportunities across a varied range of industries: from STEM to retail and hospitality.

### 6.4.2 Securing employer commitments

Some providers delivering SEND 2 projects recognised the challenges in getting agreements from employers to provide work experience for participants. They reported that having young person with SEND in the workplace can involve complicated logistics as well as paperwork and risk assessments. As a result, these commitments could be difficult to secure.

One alternative option that some providers pursued was to arrange workplace visits for groups of participants. These 'one-off' engagements were easier to arrange and ensured that a larger number of young people could benefit from the experience. A few providers also noted that some of the young people they work with did not yet have the confidence to undertake work experience and visit workplaces independently in the absence of peer support or intensive preparatory work on the part of the provider. As such, in the short-term, workplace visits were the preferred option in terms of exposing young people to the world of work and building their confidence in these settings.

### 6.4.3 Inflexibility in approach

Some providers encountered challenges in delivery and the outcomes they felt able to achieve where employers were not responsive to feedback and the input from participants, which many providers had modelled their approach on. One example of this was provided by an enterprise project for LAC, where participants were encouraged to think creatively and were not explicitly made to work within a set structure. The provider commented that one employer they worked (who was familiar with providing training courses) with was used to a more traditional curriculum delivery model. As a result, the provider was not able to provide as many opportunities as they would have liked for participants to help shape the nature of the project, make it relevant to their interests and express themselves creatively, which was key in keeping participants engaged and helping to develop their self-confidence.

### 6.4.4 More time for 1-2-1 engagement

Feedback from employers acquired as part of the SEND 2 case study with Dynamic Training indicated that they felt the project outcomes would have been enhanced if they had more time for individual discussions with participants. The provider delivered were a 'speed-dating' event where several employers had the opportunity to ask young people mock interview questions in a time-limited format. However, one employer reported that they did not feel that the time allocation was sufficient to offer personalised feedback to participants.

### 6.4.5 Supportive delivery team

An aspect of delivery that employers felt worked well and supported the outcomes they were able to achieve was the support they received from the delivery team. Again, in the case of Dynamic Training, employers were briefed about the needs of students in advance, which they found helpful in terms of their preparatory work and ensuring they could sufficiently tailor delivery. One employer who presented at a skill share event said that the project manager reviewed the material they wanted to present to ensure it was pitched at the right level for participants.

## 6.5 Additional delivery costs

Providers were asked to consider whether there had been any additional delivery costs that they had not initially budgeted for as part of their funding allocations. This question was asked to better understand the true costs of delivery in relation to each project. Providers responses were varied. Some of the additional costs cited stemmed from issues encountered over the course of delivery, while others were put down to oversights when putting together the original budget. The range of provider responses is detailed below:

- **Higher costs associated with outreach and engagement:** Some providers, particularly those engaged in GRT and LAC projects, noted that they spent more time than anticipated in generating referrals and/or securing agreement from families for

their child to participate. In the case of GRT projects, a few providers noted that parents had safeguarding concerns around their child engaging in any external activity. As a result, a lot of staff time went into building relationships of trust with parents and providing assurances that their child would be looked after.

- **Travel costs:** Several providers noted that they did not budget for staff travel time and expenses associated with project delivery. These costs were particularly acute where staff were travelling to different schools in a given area and/or where the staff hired to work on the project lived outside of the region. In contrast, as noted in previous chapters, some providers saved money on travel costs as a result of switching to an online delivery model following the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. These savings allowed staff to spend more time offering

### Case study

#### Amaze

As part of the provider's 1-2-1 support sessions with a careers adviser they inform participants about their rights in the workplace (e.g. their right to request reasonable adjustments, funding available through the Access to Work scheme) and how the young person should approach the disclosure of their condition if they chose to do this. However, because the careers adviser are not funded to provide support at job interviews or in the workplace around these issues, young people sometimes are not comfortable making these disclosures and drop-out of their course/placement when their needs are not met and they face a lack of understanding on their employers part.

Amaze have since developed a visual disclosure guide for participants to try and support this process once they realised it was an issue and to

remind them of these rights. However, ideally they would like funding for them to do some direct advocacy with employers on behalf of these young people to support the disclosure of their condition, identify and support the implementation of any reasonable adjustments that are necessary, and help employers to develop a better understanding of young people's needs and circumstances. In the longer-term, this work could possibly support the adaption of more roles to young people with SEND through job carving for instance.

The provider commented that this is one of the only realistic options in terms of achieving better employment outcomes for these groups. They noted that young people with SEND require an EHCP to access a supported internship and supported employment opportunities are quite limited in some local areas.

personal guidance interviews to participants and their parents.

- **Cost of organising workplace visits:** A few providers commented that the staff time required to conduct risks assessments for workplace visits and its associated costs were higher than they initially anticipated.
- **Administrative costs:** A few providers noted that they did not budget for the quarterly reporting requirements that have been required as a condition of receiving funding. They stated that these requirements have changed over the course of the project, with additional data/information being requested. Providers commented that had they been aware of the extent of these requirements prior to submitting their proposal, they would have increased the size of their budget to take account of these costs.
- **Payment by results funding model and Covid-19:** Some providers stated that the use of a payment by results funding model meant that the full costs of delivery were not covered when they encountered unexpected challenges, such as the public health measures put in place in response to Covid-19. In light of these events, providers noted that either delivery had to halt or they were not able to reach the original targets they agreed. This meant they faced the prospect of not receiving their full funding allocation, despite their full staffing costs still needing to be covered. In some cases, providers covered these costs through contingency funding. In others, they managed to agree with CEC that they could draw down the full amount, although a lot of staff time reportedly went into securing this agreement.

## 6.6 Adaptations to improve future effectiveness

Reflecting on their overall experiences of delivery to-date, providers were asked what adaptations to their delivery model would be needed in future to enhance their project's effectiveness. Again, providers responses were diverse and reflected the specific issues they encountered over the course of delivery. They included:

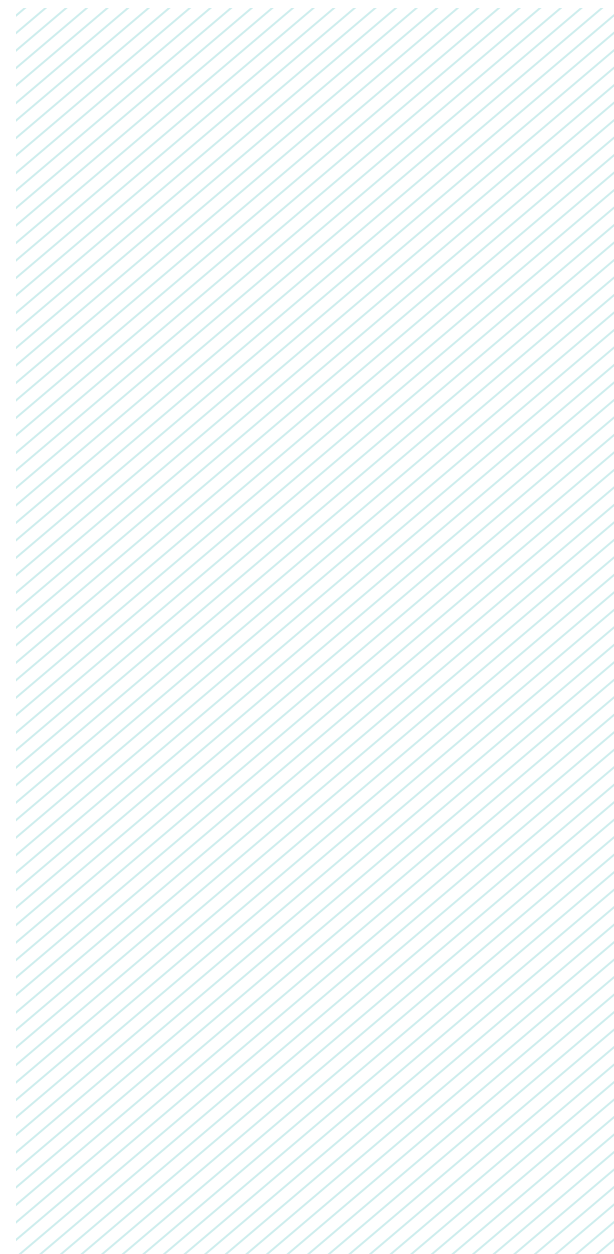
- **Linking creative or experiential forms of learning with action planning:** These approaches were seen to be effective at motivating young people to participate in the project, developing their self-confidence and improving their employability skills. However, some providers recognised that these projects did not always specifically focus on directly supporting participants to plan their subsequent transitions into further education, training or employment. They noted that future projects of this nature would need to consider ways to bridge this gap and bring elements of action planning into delivery.
- **More time to support outreach and recruitment:** Several providers noted how long it took to develop effective referral routes for the project (i.e. establishing partnerships with local schools and colleges) and/or successfully secure employer commitments. If they were delivering the project again, these providers stated that they would factor in more time for this early engagement activity.
- **Change in target group:** A few providers commented that if they were to deliver the project again they would perhaps focus on engaging younger age groups from relevant communities. Some felt that they had engaged groups who were too close to a transition point (i.e. Years 10-11) and that they were therefore not in a position to influence important factors such as their GCSE subject choices, which would affect their later education, training and employment trajectories. As noted, older age groups from the Roma community could also be challenging to engage

as some had already moved into employment. Targeting younger Roma participants who are still in mainstream education was therefore suggested as a more effective means of providing support at a point where there is an apparent need: for instance, to help support their academic achievement.

- **More intensive support model:** Several providers noted that some of the young people they were working with required more intensive models of support to produce the expected outcomes. Providers delivering projects for LAC discussed extending the length of any future intervention to enable more progress for this group. In the first instance, many LAC need support with their social and emotional development before they are ready to consider possible transitions. In this way, some providers said it would be helpful to introduce a more therapeutic element of support for LAC to support their overall wellbeing, which in the long-term could lead to more positive outcomes. Other providers delivering 1-2-1 support sessions as part SEND projects commented that their funded delivery model was not sufficient to support those with more complex needs. They noted that these young people needed a more intensive, 5-day model of support structured, for instance, around outdoor learning activities, which can help build their self-confidence as well as other latent skills.
- **Follow-up sessions to promote recall in online delivery:** Providers that moved to online delivery noted that participants' recollection of what was covered in previous sessions could be poor. This made them question whether all the information participants received would be available to them when they needed it in future. To help address this issue, one provider noted that if they were to run these sessions again, they intended to host an additional workshop 4 weeks after the main intervention was complete. This 'work readiness' workshop would give participants a chance put into

practice what they have learnt by working through practical scenarios (such as mock interviews) and help reinforce their learning.

- **Extend support beyond young people's transitions:** Some providers noted that they were not able to sustain all of the outcomes they were able to achieve as they had no funding to continue to support participants when they moved into further education, training or employment. The case study with Amaze highlighted this issue in the context of their project:





- **Broader eligibility:** Some providers working with young people with SEND noted that, as part of their contract for the Fund, they were unable to work with young people aged 19 and over who did not have an Education Health and Care Plan. They felt this was restrictive and would have liked to offer support to this group as part of this project to enhance its effectiveness.



## 6.7 Sustainability

Providers were asked to comment on the extent to which their projects incorporated sustainability and could be delivered beyond the end of the Careers & Enterprise funding period. At the time of the research, some providers were still looking for additional sources of funding to continue their work. Others had their plans put on hold as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, which either disrupted the process of establishing relationships with new project partners or closed off certain avenues of funding that providers planned to pursue.

A few projects, however, had managed to secure funding from large employers, local authorities or charitable foundations to continue their work in the 2020/2021 academic year. Some organisations were planning to work with several of the same project participants and deliver a more intensive intervention, which was more explicitly focused on developing their readiness for employment. For instance, one provider that completed a social action project with young people with SEND as part of the Fund noted that they have secured funding to deliver their own supported internship programme from September 2020.

To reduce the burden on employers, the provider intended to create their own agency and hire participants to work there on a temporary basis over a 30-week period. Interns would be set real life briefs set by employers, receive employer mentoring, work on collaborative industry projects with their peers and develop a portfolio of work that they can use in job interviews. They will receive some technical skills training, and some will complete discrete apprenticeship standard units. The provider described this as an intermediate labour market intervention, which they hope will provide participants with the skills and experience they require to support their transitions into further education or work.



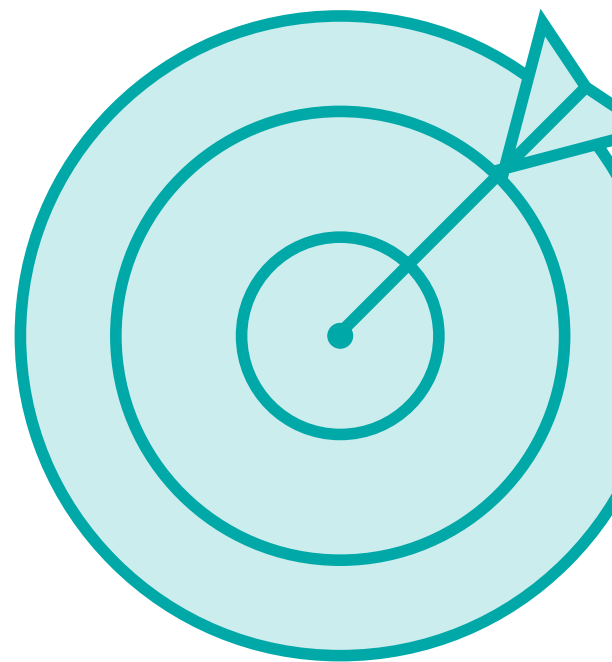
Other SEND providers who had secured additional funding to provide personalised guidance interviews commented that they expected their work from September onwards to initially be quite reactive. They anticipated that there would be some young people for whom they had secured a positive outcome (such as enrolling at a local college) who they would need to support to find an alternative option. Due to Covid-19, the learning or work environment they expected to be entering may need to change significantly. At the time of the research, the provider commented that information was also not initially forthcoming on what changes would need to be implemented in these settings due to general uncertainty about how spread of the virus would develop and what measures it was feasible to put in place to support students/employees returning. For young people with conditions such as ASD, who the provider noted generally needed a sense of routine and did not deal well with uncertainty, this experience could be enormously disruptive and cause them to drop-out of college or leave their place of work.

A few providers meanwhile had incorporated sustainability into their project delivery by developing resources and toolkits that could be used by local stakeholders to deliver future iterations of the project. In the case of NDCS, the provider had developed a toolkit that could be used by Sensory Support Workers in local authorities. While the provider had the resource required to promote this toolkit beyond the Careers & Enterprise funding period, they commented however that the ability of local authority staff to engage with this material and deliver the project locally was potentially challenging given the limited finances of local government.

Several providers working directly with schools noted that they hoped these institutions would continue to deliver the project to future cohorts of students. Some providers had trained local specialists, such as speech and language therapists, to facilitate future project delivery with the schools they work with. This would

mean that schools did not have to buy-in any additional services. Other projects had trained teachers to deliver the project to pupils, with support and assistance from the provider team. They hoped this would provide schools with the skills and confidence to deliver the project again under their own volition, again without needing to secure the services of an external provider.

Where providers had actively brokered relationships between schools/colleges and employers as part of the project - for instance, via careers talks and events as well as employer mentoring - they hoped these relationships would be sustained, and educational institutions could invite the same employers to repeat these activities in subsequent years.



# 7 | Learning from the Fund

## 7.1 Initial set up

- The Fund selection and grant award process was generally successful in identifying providers with appropriate previous experience of working with the target groups. Providers demonstrated the ability to draw on this prior experience to design packages of support for young people. This suggests similar selection criteria could be used in future funding programmes.
- Grant-funded projects often experience challenges recruiting staff to posts with short-term contracts. The difficulties appear to be exacerbated when staff with specialist skills and experience in working with particular disadvantaged groups are required. Future funding programmes focussed on disadvantaged young people should consider this when deciding on the duration of projects. If timeframes cannot be extended, priority should be given to providers with staff already in post.
- Strong partnership working between a range of stakeholders is required to provide effective careers information, advice and guidance. Where grant holders do not have existing relationships with partner organisations, it can take time to build these links. This can delay providers' ability to start delivering their projects and working directly with young people. Consequently, at the point of commissioning, it is useful to be clear about whether one of the aims of the funding is to stimulate new partnerships or whether the priority is immediate delivery of careers provision. If the latter, then providers with existing partnerships should be prioritised.

## 7.2 Engaging disadvantaged young people

- For parents and young people from GRT communities, face-to-face approaches within the community from a trusted person were most effective. This could be either an established local authority or Voluntary and Community Sector liaison/outreach worker with existing relationships with the community or a member of the community recruited to support the project. This approach helped to overcome language barriers that can impede engagement. Further, informal interactions rather than formal meetings in public venues appeared to be more effective in gaining trust. Future initiatives focussing on GRT young people should use these types of approaches.
- For young people with SEND, a highly flexible approach to engagement was required. This involved flexibility to be accompanied by parents/relatives, friends or professionals at initial information sessions (and subsequent support sessions) and choice over the format of sessions.
- Virtual schools are key stakeholders in relation to young people who are looked after and it is likely that projects for LAC after will need to work in partnership with them. Experiences from the funded projects suggest that the resources, capacity, structures and modes of working of virtual schools vary between areas. Projects should ideally have existing knowledge of the virtual school in their locality.
- There are additional challenges when trying to engage young people who are looked after and from GRT communities in projects over the summer holidays. Foster carers may be juggling other commitments that make it difficult to facilitate the young person's access, while many GRT young people may be working or more itinerant over the summer. Future projects should factor this in and either avoid key activity over the summer or build in more time.

- Providers receiving funding used the initial stages of projects to adapt their delivery models and planned activities based on early experiences and feedback. This enabled them to tailor and flex project activities to better meet the needs of young people for the remainder of project delivery. The capability to work in this responsive, agile manner could usefully inform future selection and monitoring of funded providers.

### 7.3 Employer engagement

- In relation to recruiting employers to offer encounters with the world of work, including work experience specifically for young people with SEND, focussing on those who are 'disability confident' businesses or have a strong CSR ethos works well.
- Employers vary in the time and resources they can commit and so offering a menu of options around how they can contribute to careers provision is likely to be more effective than requiring a minimum input or being highly prescriptive.
- Employers need to be given detailed information to raise awareness, enable informed choice and provide reassurances. The Fund providers reported that there was an appetite among many employers to support disadvantaged young people but that employers also felt ill-informed about their needs and backgrounds. This could act as a barrier to them contributing to careers provision and so information and training was required to overcome this.
- Messages focused on contributing to the local community, helping young people, widening the talent pool from which they recruit and opportunities to 'try out' a candidate before offering an apprenticeship, can be persuasive and useful in engaging employers in activities for disadvantaged young people.

### 7.4 Working effectively with schools

- Pressures within the school context may affect a school's ability to lead and facilitate employer encounters. When support is focussed on disadvantaged young people, there may be additional steps that need to be taken by schools too, which can be an extra demand on resources and time. To help overcome this, a clear Memorandum of Understanding stating the roles and responsibilities of all parties (employers, schools and providers) can help to secure commitment and ensure senior leaders are willing to help create the time required for effective participation.



## 7.5 Delivery of careers provision

- The ability to offer flexible, responsive and personalised packages of support to project participants was a key success factor. Flexibility was offered in relation to intensity of activities, timings, duration, amount of content covered in sessions, group size and levels of interaction, for example.
- Obtaining and responding to feedback from young people on the support they have received is likely to help to improve and refine careers provision to better meet their needs. Providers should consider using verbal feedback (e.g. videos and group discussions) rather than relying on written mechanisms to facilitate the participation of disadvantaged young people whose literacy levels may be lower.
- Projects that aimed to work with young people aged 16-18 from GRT communities struggled to work with this group effectively and on an ongoing basis. They found it difficult to 'sell' the benefit of projects particularly young people were often already working alongside family members. Experience from the Fund indicates value in early intervention approaches for young people from these communities to influence attitudes and behaviours at a younger age.
- For all the disadvantaged groups in scope of the Fund, investing time and resources in a careers professional who can build a trusting relationship with young people and their parents is necessary to be able to provide effective support. Over time, this can help to overcome barriers such as concerns that careers support will be inappropriate or have a negative impact.
- There appears to be particular value for disadvantaged groups in approaches that build in peer interaction and peer-led support. The findings from the Fund evaluation show that these approaches can lead to improvements in young people's self-confidence and communication skills where providers facilitate a safe and respectful group working environment.
- Undertaking a collective, project-based task can also help develop young people's employability skills through team working, becoming familiar with meeting a regular commitment, and developing a sense of shared responsibility. These approaches were particularly effective where they were participant-led and focused on topics that were of relevance and interest to young people.
- A strengths-based approach focussed on helping young people to understand their skills and interest is helpful to both build confidence/motivation and also to inform future decision-making in relation to careers.
- In relation to work experience for young people with SEND, ongoing support for and communication with employers is required to keep employers engaged and to give them the reassurances they need, as well as to ensure a positive experience for the young person.
- The Covid-19 pandemic necessitated a move to online modes for many providers. Providers reported that for young people with high levels of social anxiety this can have many benefits and help to provide effective support with greater levels of personalisation. Conversely, online approaches are not always well-suited to the needs of GRT communities or for activities that require group interaction and engagement.

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