London ESF Youth Programme
2014-2020 Phase 1 Evaluation

Final Report, December 2018

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ABOUT TSIP

The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP) is a socially-focused consultancy. We work across sectors and combine capabilities in strategy consulting, service design and evaluation. We support clients at every stage of the journey towards delivering social impact – from understanding what is needed, to designing, piloting and scaling up solutions, through to evaluating the results and using lessons learnt to improve future work. Our strategic theme for 2018-2021 is the future of work. We are passionate about increasing meaningful high-quality employment opportunities and keen to work with others who share this commitment.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from an evaluation of the first phase of the London European Social Fund (ESF) Youth Programme 2014-2020 (the Programme), with delivery occurring between April 2016 and March 2019. This report was written in late 2018, while some projects were still underway. It presents a snapshot of the results achieved and lessons learnt to that point.

The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP) conducted the evaluation. The evaluation was commissioned by the Greater London Authority (GLA)’s European Programme Management Unit (EPMU).

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The Programme was designed to support young Londoners, aged 15-24 who were either not in education, employment or training (NEET), or at risk of becoming NEET, into sustainable employment, education or training (EET). The Programme involves seven strands of activity, aimed at different cohorts of young people and working with employers and schools. Five of the programme strands are intended to work together, with providers referring young people between strands in order to access targeted support.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

The ESF London Youth Programme is helping thousands of young Londoners develop crucial life skills, knowledge and the resilience needed to progress their career journeys. 11,530 have already successfully progressed into EET with more expected to achieve this goal before this phase of the Programme comes to an end. The ambitious programme involves dozens of providers and sub-contractors and includes innovative collaborative elements, which have challenged delivery organisations to work differently but is leading to positive outcomes. Providers have been generally supportive of the programme and are proud of the work that it has enabled them to achieve.

The Programme is undoubtedly having a life-changing impact for many young Londoners, enabling them to secure and sustain a progression into employment, education or training, putting them on the path to a more prosperous future.

The evaluation has been conducted with the following six aims, with a summary of our conclusions below.

1. Understanding how well the programme as a whole and the different strands have performed

The programme has been successful so far in supporting most participants (53%) into EET. As of October 2018, a total of 11,530 young people had progressed into EET, of which so far 4,944 (43%) have sustained their destination for at least 26 weeks. These numbers are likely to increase as the programme continues. As can be seen in the table below, some of the strands have been more successful than others, with the targeted strand for 16 to 18-year-olds standing out as achieving particularly well on sustained EET.
2. Understanding how well the collaborative aspect of the youth programme design, including the interdependent strands, has worked in practice.

The programme was designed to be collaborative, with the different strands and providers working together to support young Londoners into a sustained EET outcome. However providers made fewer referrals than anticipated. This was partly due to the payment model and partly due to the competitive culture that exists in the sector with delivery partners not being clear on the advantages of inter-strand collaboration built into the programme design. Strategic partners and delivery organisations found the technical support workshops useful and a positive way of tackling shared problems, but aspects of communication and sharing best practice could be improved.

3. Examining the design, commissioning process and payment models for the programme.

The division of most strands into four sub-regional contracts was generally viewed as a good way of offering localised support whilst maintaining contracts on a scale that deliver good value for money. Despite intentions to have small, local organisations involved, prime contracts were mostly won by larger national organisations; small providers were more likely to be involved in supply chains as sub-contractors. In some ways this offers a good compromise combining the quality assurance and infrastructure of large organisations with the local knowledge and innovative approaches of smaller ones, although there are questions about whether this offers the best value for money. It was suggested that more could be done to ensure that contracts are awarded to those with the partnerships and local knowledge in place.

Despite some reservations, the payment by results approach was generally viewed as the best payment model for this type of programme, incentivising the intended outcomes for providers. However, many pointed out that the approach works better for larger organisations with fewer concerns about cash flow, and that for smaller organisations a larger upfront payment to cover running costs would be favoured. The result metrics and unit costs were mostly viewed as reasonable, although some felt that softer outcomes and long-term impact weren’t being captured. Delivery partners reported that the data collection was very onerous and that a better system could allow the data to be collected and shared without using up as much time and resource by the delivery partners.

4. Identifying best practice and lessons at programme and individual strand level, that could be used in designing any future provision.
Providers had different ways of working but in terms of good delivery practice, the most effective approach they have found is to use skilled advisors, have strong local partnerships and to work flexibly with the young person. Ultimately the most successful approaches are ones that create a strong and trusting relationship with the participant, and different participants will need different types of support to create that bond.

5. Exploring participants’ views and experiences

Participants we heard from typically enjoyed the programme and found it helpful in improving their confidence, skills, prospects of getting a job, knowledge of options available to them, and motivation to take next steps. Participants particularly found the personal support and relationship with their mentors to have been highlights of the programme as well as improved soft skills and progression opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings we have made some high-level recommendations both for the imminent second phase of this programme and for funding youth unemployment in London beyond ESF. The practicalities and details of these recommendations are given in the final section of this report, however a few key recommendations are summarised here:

For Phase 2 of the ESF London Youth programme we would recommend:

- Designing the programme around independent strands, each capable of meeting young people’s needs via referral pathways and partnerships within contracts rather than between them
- Interviewing providers at procurement stage and considering their values-alignment and evidence of local resources

For future programmes beyond 2020, we would recommend:

- Building on the strengths of the GLA in designing future funds, leveraging the Mayor’s influencing power and drawing on access to localised data to focus support on areas of greatest need
- For the hardest to reach young people, longer timelines are needed and alternative funding mechanisms to enable longer term programmes should be considered
- Consider awarding funding directly to employers in order to build their capacity and demand to employ young people. Employer engagement is frequently challenging for third sector providers – working directly with employers may be a more promising route to influencing behaviour and achieving outcomes.
INTRODUCTION

Background to London’s ESF Youth Programme

The European Social Fund (ESF; the Fund) is a European Union (EU) fund set up to reduce disparities between the levels of social and economic development across the EU. The fund aims to increase labour market participation, promote social inclusion and develop the skills of the future and existing workforce.

ESF in London is managed by the GLA’s European Programme Management Unit (EPMU). The EPMU work closely with the London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP) who are responsible for the strategic direction of ESF in London.

The London ESF Youth Programme was designed by LEAP in partnership with the lead strategic body for education and skills for young people in London, the Young People’s Education and Skills (YPES) Board. The youth programme was procured on the LEAP’s behalf by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), who provide match funding and manage the project contracts.

This is how the ESF Opt-in model works, allowing local partners, in this case the (LEAP) to lead the process of designing the programmes, whilst procurement is managed by a national Co-Financing Organisation, in this case the ESFA. This approach presents opportunities for local partners to design provision to meet local needs, there are also constraints and compromises that need to be made. For example, the LEAP had no control over the procurement process or when procurement would be launched.

Drawing on insights from the previous 2007-2013 ESF programming period, the development phase for the 2014-2020 programme took place during 2014 and 2015. LEAP, through the GLA, London Councils and other local partners, developed a range of ESF provision to meet local needs. In developing these programmes, LEAP looked to learn lessons from the 2007-2013 London ESF programme and applied these lessons to programme design. LEAP convened several task and finish groups, each bringing together a range of stakeholders, including boroughs, voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, providers, researchers, CFOs and others to input into the design process for each strand of ESF activity.

Overview of London ESF Youth Programme (2014-2020)

The current Youth Programme was designed with the objective of supporting interventions to move young people aged 15-24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) or are at risk of NEET, into sustainable employment, education or training (EET). Throughout the development process a fundamental principle was that the London ESF Youth Programme should be seen as a single programme made up of co-dependent strands, designed to complement existing provision and support participants to achieve their learning and employment potential. It was therefore envisaged that during the delivery phase each strand will work collaboratively to achieve the overall programme objectives.

Delivery of the first phase of the programme started in April 2016 and will continue through to March 2019.
Programme strands and contracting

Phase 1 of London’s ESF Programme 2014-2020 involves seven different strands of activity. Of these, five are intended to work together – with the option for participants to be referred to other strands to access targeted support. Two strands are independent.

1) NEET outreach

The aim of the outreach strand is to identify and locate young Londoners who are NEET but not currently claiming Jobseekers’ Allowance. This strand aims to support their successful progression into EET by conducting an initial assessment of their needs and referring them to a relevant provider in the Targeted NEET, Careers Guidance or Youth Talent strands.

2) Targeted NEET

The targeted NEET strand aims to offer intensive and specialised support to help groups with specific needs. The targeted groups are as follows, each requiring different support to address their barriers to full participation in education, training or employment:

a) Young people who are NEET aged 16-18, whose background suggests they require additional support to access and sustain EET
b) Young people who are NEET and also have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD)
c) Young people who are NEET and also have mental health difficulties, drug/alcohol abuse issues or are homeless
d) Young people who are NEET and come from a black or minority ethnic group (BAME)
e) Young people who are NEET and who face barriers to employment (migrants, care leavers, teenage parents/parents to be, lone parents, young carers and work programme leavers)

3) Careers Guidance

This strand uses specialist providers to offer face-to-face careers guidance. The aim of the strand is to help young people to articulate their goals, source suitable employment and take responsibility for their progression.

4) Youth Talent

This strand acts as a gateway for employers to offer traineeships, work placements, internships, employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young Londoners referred from other strands.

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1 A more detailed explanation of each strand, the rationale for the activities and a more thorough explanation of design of the programme can be found on the GLA and LEAP websites:
https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/funding/european-social-fund
https://lep.london/content_page/youth-programmes.
https://tinyurl.com/ProposedESF

2 Including refugees/migrants, children in care/care leavers, homeless young people (including those in temporary accommodation and sofa-surfers), travellers (including Gypsy Roma), those with mental health difficulties, those with drug/alcohol abuse issues, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, lone parents, teenage parents and parents to be, young carers, work programme leavers.
5) **Careers Clusters**

This strand supports schools and further education colleges to design a high-quality careers offer and a business-informed curriculum. Some clusters are place-based, others are sector-based.³

6) **Preventative NEET**

This strand, run separately from the others, works with young people who are in EET but have been identified as at-risk of becoming NEET by their learning institution or local authority. The strand supports young people to remain in EET.

7) **Gangs prevention**

The aim of this strand is to support young people who have been excluded from school and are at risk of becoming involved in gang-related activity. The strand aims to provide intensive support for these vulnerable young Londoners, enabling them to make the transition from a place where they have been excluded from school to sustained education, employment and training (EET) outcomes. This programme is also run separately from the other strands.

The diagram below illustrates how the strands and the referral processes work together, with the arrows showing the possible referral pathways between programme strands.

![Diagram of ESF Youth programme strands and intended referral pathways](image)

*Figure 2: ESF Youth programme strands and intended referral pathways. (Preventative NEET and Gangs prevention strands do not refer to other strands)*

All seven strands of the Programme are delivered across London. Each project contract is for delivery of one strand in one of four London sub-regions – with the exception of Gangs Prevention, for which there was one pan-London contract; and the Career Clusters which had

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³ Details of each cluster can be found here: [https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/education-and-youth/preparing-young-people-workplace/careers-clusters](https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/education-and-youth/preparing-young-people-workplace/careers-clusters)
twelve individual contracts. By dividing contracts across London sub-regions, the Programme designers hoped to encourage more localised support and enable smaller place-based organisations to play a more prominent role in Programme delivery.

The Programme operates on a payment-by-results basis, meaning that delivery partners are paid according to the outputs and results they achieve, as detailed in claims forms and evidenced. Based on feedback from providers, the Programme was designed with a limited set of ‘results’ for each strand in order to avoid overly complicated payment models and outputs not suitable for all participants. At the start of the Fund, each delivery organisation agreed monthly performance targets for their contract with the ESFA, which were used to forecast how much funding would be awarded to whom, and when (a performance and spending ‘profile’). Organisations are eligible to receive payments when they begin supporting a young person, when a young person progresses into education, employment or training, and once that destination has been sustained for at least 26 weeks. Payments are weighted towards the ultimate goal of sustained education, employment or training. In some strands, organisations are able to claim additional funding for work with young people considered harder to reach or with additional support needs.

Changes to the programme design

Between the original LEAP / YPES programme design and the end of the procurement process, there were some deviations from the original programme design and planned rollout. Specifically:

- The original design was for three-year contracts, however the ESFA initially procured organisations for 18 months, starting in mid-2016. These contracts were later extended by six months, and most of the contracts have been extended by a further nine months to March 2019.
- Invitations to tender were sent out later than intended
- Contract awards were made later than intended
- An intended independent evaluation of the Gangs Prevention strand didn’t come to fruition
• In some cases, planned payments linked to good delivery practices were scrapped in favour of a simpler set of payment triggers.

These changes led to delivery challenges that were not foreseen at the design stage.

The main implication of the shorter contracts was that the initial contracts allowed only a short period for project delivery, once set-up and wind-down periods are accounted for. The shorter delivery timelines made it more challenging to realise the vision of an interconnected programme, given the time required for different providers to establish trust and effective working relationships. Given the wind-down periods, the contract extensions did not ensure the degree of continuity of provision that may have been expected – ultimately the Programme was stop-start. This was exacerbated by the fact that the decision to extend contracts happened relatively late, such that some partners had already started winding down operations. There was a feeling that momentum was lost.

“We’ve lost quite a bit of performance because we didn’t have confirmation of contract extensions earlier in the year. Even when we were told it would continue, contracts didn’t come through for 2-3 months. We were delivering without a contract. That’s a lot of business risk and we were unsure whether to continue...We lost people throughout that time. I would say that there need to be tighter timescales” – prime provider

“We had a very large gap between funding rounds, to the point where we lost virtually all of our infrastructure” - prime provider

The lack of evaluation of the Gang Prevention strand meant that the long-term impact of the strand on preventing or reducing criminality and reoffending, amongst other things, is not well understood.

Finally, the changes to the payment model increased delivery risk – reducing the financial incentives for providers to provide consistent support or to make referrals between strands.

This evaluation takes at its starting point that the Programme was not delivered exactly as designed – with implications for its effectiveness. The analysis that follows focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of the programme as delivered.
ABOUT THE EVALUATION

The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP) were commissioned by the EPMU to conduct an evaluation of the first phase of London’s ESF Youth Programme (2014-2020).

The evaluation aims were to:

- Understand how well the programme as a whole and the different strands have performed
- Understand how well the collaborative aspect of the youth programme design, including the interdependent strands has worked in practice
- Examine the design, commissioning process and payment models for the programme.
- Identify best practice and lessons at programme and individual strand level, that could be used in designing any future provision
- Explore participants’ views and experiences
- Make recommendations for the remainder of the ESF Youth Programme (2014-2020) and any ESF successor funding

The findings in this report are based on a review of the contract specifications, quarterly programme performance reports, programme information exchange event minutes, end of contract evaluation reports, detailed interviews with strategic partners, individuals and organisations responsible for the design and the management of the programme as well as a range of delivery providers and external stakeholders (see full list in Appendix 1), and an online survey to current and previous participants with over 100 responses (described in Appendix 1).

About this report

The findings in this report are divided into three sections:

- The Process section looks at the design and delivery of the programme, exploring how different aspects of the design played out in practice, where those design decisions worked well, and recommendations for future programmes.

- The Good Delivery Practice section reports findings from providers, partners and participants about best frontline delivery practice in supporting young people into EET.

- The Impact section brings together funded projects’ latest results data (as submitted to the ESFA in October 2018) and compares it with the original profiles to give a sense of how well the Programme succeeded in achieving its aims.

Finally, the conclusion brings together some overarching messages from the evaluation and recommendations for going forward.
FINDINGS

PROCESS

This section considers the design and delivery of the Fund and the way in which this affected its effectiveness and young people’s experiences of the Programme. The findings are organised around the following four main features of the Programme, which seem to have been particularly influential:

- Contract size and geography
- Funding mechanism and outcomes
- Interconnected strands
- Collaboration and communication

Although these Programme features are discussed separately, in many cases it is the interaction between several aspects that is impactful. These potential interaction effects are also considered.

Contract size and geography

The programme strands were each contracted separately in the four London sub-regions. The intention of dividing the city into these smaller regions was to ensure more localised support with better integration with local services, as well as providing contracts on a more manageable scale. The programme designers had expressed a hope that dividing London into four sub-regions would encourage smaller providers to play a bigger role in delivering the work, rather than large national organisations that weren’t necessarily familiar with the local context nor had partnerships in place.

In the end, the prime contracts ended up being won mainly by large national organisations, with only four of the 37 contracts being won by local organisations (all of whom are colleges). In total, the programme involves only 10 prime providers. For two of the strands all four subregions were contracted to the same provider and for a further four strands, three out of the four subregions were awarded to a single provider.

Some interviewees suggested that the size and scope of the contracts, which each covered at least seven boroughs, while more manageable than all of London, were nevertheless unrealistically large for smaller place-based organisations.

The failure to procure many small, local organisations is believed to have negatively impacted delivery, since the larger national organisations lacked local knowledge and partnerships.

“Big contracts get you big providers, some of whom I don’t believe understood London and had the partnerships in place but were good at writing bids... the reality is when they get on the ground the relationships are not there. So they’re not [even] starting on step one... so no wonder the relationships took a long time to establish and deliver.” - strategic partner

Larger contracts offer the advantage of fewer contracts to manage, and hence fewer providers – who could therefore get to know each other more easily than many providers. Larger contracts may also offer economies of scale. The larger providers who are able to take on work at that scale

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4 Excluding those involved in the twelve careers clusters contracts
are more likely to have established management systems, that may make for an easier contract management process.

On the other hand, it was noted that if contracts were offered on a pan-London scale, then contracts would have to be more prescriptive to ensure that provision was spread evenly across the city. However, the size of the sub-regions was still fairly large, which meant that this could be a concern, and building in targets by borough might have been more effective.

Ultimately, even where large national providers were awarded the contract, the delivery work tended to be delivered by local subcontractors.

“...national organisations have admin capability to deal with contracts and paperwork which is good. As long as local organisations have capacity and capability small local organisations are fine, but do need strong lead partners to hold it all together” - external LEP manager

This arrangement generally worked well, although it is questionable whether having an additional layer of contract management truly offered value for money.

Large organisations and smaller local organisations each have their own advantages when delivering work of this nature. However, the size and scope of the contracts in this Programme may not be ideal for either. To attract truly small, local organisations, might require even smaller contract options.

Alternatively, large contracts with national delivery providers can work, but more checks should be made to ensure that they have the necessary partnerships and local knowledge in place.

“It’s time consuming, but on some of these you might say you want to interview providers and ask for examples, e.g.: ‘How’s that going to work in Croydon? Who you going to work with? Who have you been working with recently and in which department?’ So that you get a better sense of can they do what they say they can do.” - strategic partner

**Funding mechanism and outcomes**

As described in the Introduction, the Programme uses a payment by results approach, meaning that delivery partners are paid according to the results achieved.

The payment by results approach provides some flexibility for delivery organisations to achieve outcomes creatively and to adapt their support offer to individuals’ needs. Delivery organisations are strongly incentivised to reach the target outcomes in order to receive payment.

Most interviewees believed that using a payment by results approach led to better results, compared to if the funding had been allocated another way, by encouraging delivery partners to focus on the intended impact. Respondents believed that weighting payments towards the ultimate goal was particularly effective.

“**What we have seen when you look at the numbers is, it does drive behaviour. You do get more people going into jobs and apprenticeships, and you do get more sustained [outcomes].**” – strategic partner

“I really like how this programme is set out. I’ve worked on a lot of programmes. I think the mechanisms are in place to incentivise the right behaviours. It’s very comprehensive.” – prime contractor

However, there can also be a negative side to this incentivisation.

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5 We spoke to an ESF project manager from another local enterprise partnership (LEP) to gain an external perspective
“...it tends to force perverse behaviours, trying to specify the correct results then becomes absolutely critical. It can force people to do things which they probably wouldn’t do, you spend more time into what the result will be e.g. job search activity rather than giving them the skills that will be necessary in the job.” – strategic partner

The strategic partners generally felt that the ‘result’ metrics used to capture performance were the right ones and incentivised the right behaviours.⁶ Although the number of results were intentionally limited to avoid overcomplicating the payment model (having taken on board lessons from the previous ESF programme), there was recognition that these metrics were not comprehensive. This meant both that the ‘Results’ measures did not always tell the full story of the Programme, and that delivery organisations were unable to claim for progress that occurred between payment milestones.

Some organisations would have liked to be able to claim payments for intermediate outcomes, between engagement and entry into EET. Sometimes they felt that they had helped young people make significant progress (e.g. by engaging them in volunteering or increasing their skills) but that the progress wasn’t recognised through the existing metrics. This was particularly true for organisations supporting young people who needed high levels of support over extended periods to prepare for EET – such as those with additional needs or challenging personal circumstances.

“In the case of care kids, you can’t progress them into a job because they’re not even ready. And yet you put so much work and effort into them, the pressure is on the people to get them into work when they’re not ready to go to work. In some cases, it’s unrealistic. I think there should be other ways of measuring progress and success, because getting someone into a job doesn’t measure success in totality anyway, because a lot of people fall out of a job anyway.” – subcontractor

Some providers also contended that the payment by results approach disincentivised providers from working with young people with high support needs, where the cost of progressing them to the result isn't financially profitable.

“Current system encourages people to take people off programme if they are going to need a lot of work to achieve outcomes” – subcontractor

For the Gang Prevention strand, it was felt that the results didn’t reflect the aim of the Programme well, which meant that the it was difficult to demonstrate the effectiveness of that strand.

“[In the gangs prevention strand the] goal is to get people out of gang involvement, or being a victim. [But the] outputs were about movement from where you are to going into EET. There was no KPI around reducing involvement in gangs.” – prime delivery provider

The interviewees also commented that the metrics don’t always take into account the starting position of the young person; although having targeted strands and strict eligibility criteria was intended to prevent delivery partners going after ‘easy targets’, within the eligibility criteria some young people were nearer the labour market and others further away and often both were rewarded equally.

“[The current] ESF [programme] doesn’t take into account where they [the young people] start from. [We] do need to be accountable, but [it’s] not the same for everyone... For some young people, doing volunteering for a couple of days is great progress... Particularly with mental health and special

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⁶ Though it is worth noting, that several of the strategic partners we spoke to were involved in the strategic design of the programme and removed from the detail of the actual contract performance metrics.
educational needs... If we are going to support those really entrenched, can’t really treat them like everyone else as they really need so much extra support” – local authority subcontractor

Running Costs

One of the features of the payment by results approach is that payments are only made once the outcomes have been achieved and evidenced. This can be difficult model for smaller organisations, who struggle to cover running costs while waiting for payment. Since the largest payments are associated with sustained outcomes, which are only evident long after work with that young person has come to an end, in some strands delivery organisations sometimes had to wait for over a year from the time they had invested their resources in the young person to be paid.

Targets and unit costs for each strand were bespoke, with, for example, projects for those with more complex needs having higher unit costs and lower progression targets. Most of the delivery partners felt that the unit costs were reasonably set and accurately reflected the amount of work required to help young people achieve the desired outcomes, although they would have preferred more upfront payments for cash flow reasons. Many of the strategic partners agreed it made sense to offer an upfront payment to help delivery partners, especially smaller ones, cover running costs.

Data Collection

For the delivery partners to be paid for their results, all their outcomes need to be evidenced in accordance with ESF regulations.

Many delivery partners commented on the disproportionate burden of data collection required to evidence their outcomes, which they believed used up considerable resources to the detriment of the delivery and discouraged smaller organisations from being involved.

“Paperwork was a nightmare. It took us quite a few appointments to get paperwork completed” – local authority subcontractor

Providers also noted that there are specific data collection requirements which were problematic.7

- Many of the forms asked for the same information again
- Young people were required to get physical (“wet”) signatures from employers, whereas many companies use stamps or digital signatures
- Paperwork had to be completed by hand so young people couldn’t submit their evidence online (and if there was a mistake, they had to start again)

Several providers also found the guidance on the data collection to be confusing and subcontractors said that they were given changing advice from the prime contractor.

“Sometimes we were only meeting [with the young people] to get paperwork completed and not to deliver any activity. Things kept changing, prime gave us training but then it changed. [We] ended up giving up on young people because the paperwork was complicated or couldn’t be completed” - subcontractor

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7 It’s possible that in some cases the prime provider added extra restrictions on data collection from their subcontractors
Providers are undermined

Some of the delivery providers we spoke to felt that the extent of data collection reflected a lack of trust that the funding agency has in the providers.

“[There] needs to be safeguards, but there’s too much scrutiny. Not enough trust of providers who’ve been brought into to do this work. There must be another way of doing checks and balances” – local authority subcontractor

Young people are scared off

Delivery providers pointed out that the burden of data collection falls on the young person, particularly at the outset of the Programme, and can intimidate them, deterring them from continuing to engage.

“Need to think about the operational aspect, what actually happens when a young person has to fill out upwards of 15 pieces of paper, plus initial assessment, it’s very stressful for the learner. There have been people who have refused to take them, or they’ve started and dropped out at that point because they’re worried about failing. No way to start a programme. Starts [the programme] on a heavy point. In future [I would suggest] less paperwork, less duplication - some of the forms are asking for more or less the same things” – prime contractor

Interestingly, the majority of programme participants we surveyed (58%) reported that the paperwork and administration of the programme was easy or very easy, with the largest proportion of young people saying that it was neither easy nor difficult.  

This is perhaps surprising given the feedback from delivery organisations that paperwork is burdensome for young people.  

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8 For more information on the participant survey see Participant Experience section.
9 It is worth bearing in mind, however, that those young people who find administration and form-filling to be easy, may also be more likely to have elected to participate in the online survey – the responses to this question are unlikely to be entirely representative!
Many of those who found the process easy (or not difficult) attributed this to the personal support of their case workers or mentors, which may mean that the burden was mostly falling on the delivery organisations themselves.

“I was told step by step how to complete paperwork”

“My mentor explained exactly what I needed to complete”

“An advisor went through it with me”

Of those who found it difficult, the hassle of travel and arranging to come in was a common theme.

“The paperwork was ok because I wasn’t filling it but the amount of time I had to come back and sign my names was stupid. Young people do not have proper signature all of the time. Me and some other had to keep coming back and saying it was our signature”

Soft outcomes

Programme participants, delivery providers and strategic partners all pointed to broader benefits of the Programme that are not captured by the set of results delivery organisations can claim for.

Several of the strategic partners felt that the success metrics recorded for the Programme don’t adequately capture the full story by missing out on these soft outcomes achieved by the young people. The strategic partners acknowledged that these metrics are more difficult to capture and measure objectively but felt that they were crucial for telling the full story of the Programme.

“It would be really lovely if the ESF [programme] could come up with a number of things that were recorded that showed people’s journeys, even if they didn’t get the harder outcomes and outputs in terms of staying and getting sustained jobs ... it might be things like not having offended, or things like improved confidence... Something like that, where you could see the progress someone had made even if there wasn’t an actual [EET outcome]” – strategic partner
A few providers do already look at changes to soft outcomes for some of the people they work with, and other providers have said this is something they would like to do – in particular for young people who fail to progress into EET, they would like to still be able to demonstrate the impact that their support has had.

Some of the suggested outcomes to measure include:

- Increased confidence
- Improved life management
- Improved wellbeing
- Improved resilience
- Improved relationships
- Reduced offending
- Changing attitudes to work and education
- New skills

When we asked participants about what they found most helpful about the programme, ten people focussed on these softer outcomes that they had gained through the programmes, such as confidence and motivation.

The best/most helpful part of the programme is...

“How it helped relieve my anxiety”

“The advice given and helping me to improve my confidence and motivation”

“Where I’m at now and all the confidence it gave me”

Measuring soft outcomes doesn’t necessarily need to be associated with a financial reward. Providers could be encouraged (or required) to record and share soft outcome metrics which will enable the Youth Programme to capture the broader journey of its participants. Some providers have suggested that codesigning a common tool for measuring soft outcomes across different strands would enable easier comparisons and referrals between strands.

A provider also noted that there is already some relevant data being collected (for example the Gangs Prevention strand is interested in data being collected by schools such as attendance, improved behaviour) and having a more flexible approach to measuring success could provide a more rounded picture of the Programme’s impact without increasing burden on the delivery providers.

“I wouldn’t do the usual approach which is to throw in standardised KPIs, but something loose to work with the school and utilise the data that they use. Don’t give them more work! Leave a bit of flexibility in the system.” – prime delivery provider

Digital solutions

Several providers recommended that having a digital solution to cut down on the paperwork involved in submitting payment claims would save them time and resources, and also support collaboration and referrals between strands (see later).
“[Would be good] if there was a CMS [customer management system] where info could be shared more freely...if there was a centralised copy of the Individualised Learner Record in one place where young person could be flagged – to indicate this person has completed this, ready to move on to that. Is there any capacity [to refer] … takes out of the human resource time.” – prime contractor

For future programmes of this nature, it might make sense for delivery providers, external stakeholders and the contract managing agency to codevelop a data collection template and process, preferably digital which would make it easier for organisations to collect the correct data and share necessary information with the relevant parties.

Long term and broader impact

A strategic partner suggested that the metrics are focussed on recording short term results rather than long term impact. The Programme measures sustained outcomes for up to six months, but there is no official record of what happens to the other participants that never progress to one of the recognised outcomes or where all the participants end up several years down the line. One partner suggested that it would be helpful to set up the Programme to record ‘destination measures’, similar to those used by the Department for Education to understand where school leavers end up.

“For all the people that didn’t get into work, what happened to them? Because it’s not like money wasn’t spent on them...and it’s all well and good that we might have had sustainment for 26 out of 32 weeks, but are they still there 52 weeks later?...[The] metrics are designed around outcomes and outputs - that doesn’t measure impact, and I still don’t think we’re good enough at getting to impact...I get anxious that...we get to the end of the programme and we go “fantastic we’ve hit all our targets" – [but actually] we’ve entirely missed the point..." – strategic partner

Furthermore, providers noted that there is a broader impact of the Programme on families, communities and neighbourhoods from reduced demand on services to increased community cohesion and prosperity.

Measuring the long-term impact doesn’t necessarily need to be a complicated data gathering exercise; better integration with the Department for Education’s (DfE) National Client Caseload Information System (NCCIS) and other national databases could allow long term impact to be measured over many years and offer better assessment of which approaches work better.

Interconnected strands

One of the unique aspects of the ESF Youth Programme design is how strands are meant to work together. The programme was designed with five of the strands being interconnected through a referral system, whereby a provider referred the young person to the next provider to gain additional specialist support (see Overview of strands in the Introduction).

A young person might be engaged through the ‘Outreach’ strand, then given specialist support by a ‘Targeted strand’ – the combination of that support would help young people move into EET.

The intention of this approach was that each provider, within a strand, would be able to focus on its specialist area, and that this would lead to a better service for the young person by ensuring they had a specialist supporting them at each stage.

Partners generally saw it as an innovative and ambitious concept and some of the providers noted the benefit of enabling young people to avoid being too dependent on a single provider. The approach is yielding a few referrals and there are some cases of good collaboration between partners reported, although the general feeling from strategic and delivery partners is that the
referral system has not worked well. The following sections reflect some perceptions of why the referral approach hasn’t worked as well as intended.

**Lack of clarity**

Some of the strategic partners felt that the full concept behind the programme design and the practicalities of how and when referrals should happen wasn’t always clear to the providers. For example, the original intention was that once referred, the young person could continue working with both providers, however many of the providers we spoke to weren’t clear about this.

The referral system was specified in the contract and explained at the technical support events, but many providers resorted to their usual model of end-to-end provision.

“There were too many uncertainties at the start of this project, especially because of the referrals to different strands. The primes often weren’t sure of what could be done. It made it very difficult for the delivery partners to do their work. Everyone was very nervous – if we do this, can we get paid? ... It wasn’t very clear how payments would work if referrals were made.” - provider

Some also felt that having so many strands and providers contributed to the fact that most people involved in the Programme don’t understand the full design and who the relevant referral destination should be.

“It’s lack of knowledge and understanding about what there is in detail, rather than a conscious reluctance [to refer] ... You’ve got similarities of programme that when you do the headline summaries, it misses out some of the nuances and it’s very difficult to get that across” - strategic partner

**Competitive culture**

Interviewees agreed that most delivery organisations aren’t used to working together, posing a key challenge to implementation of the interconnected approach.

“Somehow the old style of providers not wanting to let their own learners out of their own sight never quite ended. I think it’s old habits...” - prime provider

In some cases, there were also very practical concerns – if they referred a young person to another organisation, that would mean risking losing the referral route (and their source of income) which they had used to find that young person too.

Several delivery partners did mention that they when did they refer young people, it was to another organisation they knew, working with the same prime provider, indicating that the approach has potential to work, once more trust has been built between providers.

 “[We referred to organisations] also subcontracting under [the same prime]. You knew that they were going to do a good job – you don’t want to send someone somewhere and they’re rubbish” - subcontractor

**Payment approach**

Providers didn’t feel that the payment by results approach incentivised referrals and there were payments available to them to offer activities which were in theory beyond the scope of their contract. In particular, the Outreach strand was rewarded for progressing their young people directly into EET rather than referring them to a specialised strand.

“We are getting paid for outcomes to get the young person into something [EET] so why would we pass them on?” - local authority subcontractor
During the programme, some changes and clarifications have been made which reward the outreach providers for progressing the young person to a targeted strand, (as originally intended by the LEAP). However, there are limitations on prime contractors being able to draw down referral payments for referring between their contracts, which means that providers who have won several contracts in the same sub-region aren’t rewarded for making referrals.

**Administrative burden**

Many of the providers pointed to the administrative burden as a disincentive to referring young people. In particular, providers understood that the young person would have to repeat the full set of paperwork with the second organisation which was off-putting.

"When I’ve spoken to some of the projects, they’ve been quite open... 'How can I tell this 15-year-old that they’ve got to do that whole three-hour process again with another partner because it’s ESF? I can’t!'" - strategic partner

"An issue that came up a lot was around paperwork. The referral documents... it would have been a lot easier if they could have used existing documents from the referring provider..." - local authority provider

**Lack of need**

Some of the providers simply didn’t refer because they didn’t think that it ever made sense to refer when they had the same resources and could offer the same support. As most of the contracts were awarded to large providers, they often have the facilities to provide all the support offered through all of the strands.

"If you have a young person ready to be referred, then 75 - 80% of the work is done. Once they’re coming in to talk to you and they’re engaged you’re almost there - So you aren’t going to refer them on at that point. The referrals should be there for when things go wrong. The idea that a provider would work with someone, get them almost job ready and then send them off to someone else, that was never going to work, and I don’t think it did." - local authority subcontractor

This is particularly true for Careers Guidance, where several organisations felt they had their own specialists and saw no advantage to the young person in referring them to another organisation.

"We did work with the provider in the Careers Guidance strand, but we had our own team in house who could deliver similar guidance – so why would we pass them on?” – local authority subcontractor

**Not in the interests of the young person**

Several of the providers also said that they had invested time into building relationships with the young person and they feared the young person, especially vulnerable ones, would drop out if they had to establish a new relationship with another organisation.

"Particularly when you’re working with more vulnerable young people, there is always the risk that you will lose a young person if you move them too much between partners.” – strategic partner

"We actually found it [referrals] extremely complex, not just on information sharing but also the fact that young people didn’t want to start working with another advisor, see another professional and go over their whole life story, yet again, and that was one of our major issues" - prime provider

As discussed later, building a strong trusting relationship with the young person has been found to be key to successfully progressing them in to NEET. Involving too many organisations could be seen as fundamentally detrimental to building those relationships and a barrier to the young person’s progress.
Participant perspective

We asked participants if they had been referred between different partners in the programme. Of 89 young people who answered the survey questions on referrals, 29 (33%) said they had been referred once or more than once; 48 (54%) said that they had not been referred at all and 12 (13%) weren’t sure.\(^{10}\)

Those young people who had not been referred, or didn’t know whether they had, mostly (46%) didn’t feel that they would benefit from additional sources of support; 33% weren’t sure; and only 21% said that they would in fact find that helpful, though this proportion may be different if young people had a better sense of the range of options available.

Would you find it helpful to receive any extra support? (Not instead of your current support, but as well as what you’re currently doing)

![Diagram showing the percentage of young people who said they not referred, who would find it helpful to receive extra support.](image)

Figure 5: Percentage of young people who said they not referred, who would find it helpful to receive extra support.

Of those who said they would find it helpful, a few specified why: some had additional skills or courses they wanted to be able to have, while others felt they needed further advice or support than was currently being offered to them.

“\textit{I want to be a music producer, so help with that would be great}”

“\textit{Financial advice savings etc”}

“\textit{Support on how to fully complete the course. Even though I’m 3 months over the deadline}”

Young people who had been referred mostly found it a useful experience:

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\(^{10}\) Note, many participants weren’t aware of the nature of the inter-strand programme and wouldn’t know to distinguish between being referred between programme strands and being referred from an external agency.
How useful did you find it, to receive support from more than one organisation?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of young people who found it useful to receive additional support.]

Figure 3: Percentage of young people who found it useful to receive additional support.

Explanations of why participants found being referred useful ranged from success in getting the young person into a job, to providing additional support and practical advice. Ten participants (34%) said that they found no downside to being referred;

“They got me a placement now I have a secure job”

“I got a lot more support with having more than one organisation”

“It is useful to receive a lot of help and advice when searching for employment”

The interconnected strands concept was novel and ambitious. It is likely to have worked better with a small number of local providers who each had a clear niche specialism. If this concept were to be repeated, referrals should be limited to only referring to truly specialist providers adding something that the previous provider cannot (e.g. severe addiction or mental health support).

To be successful, a similar interconnected programme would need a lot more clarity around the referral process, with a clear financial reward structure attached, and a better data sharing infrastructure (and ideally a digital platform) in place, with service level agreements in place at the commencement of the contract.

**Collaboration and communication**

Programme information exchange workshops, organised by London Councils and part funded by ESF Technical Assistance, have been held regularly throughout the Programme, bringing together providers and strategic partners to identify issues, share ideas and foster working relationships. The prime providers have also met separately at regular intervals to discuss common issues together with the ESFA.

Providers were also asked to share information with external stakeholders such as local authorities as part of their contract requirements. Sharing information with external stakeholders was intended to be a mechanism through which the Programme could complement and integrate with existing support available to NEET young Londoners.

The aim of the ‘technical support’ meetings is to encourage the sharing of ideas and to reinforce the collaborative nature of the programme. The workshops have proved to be a very popular concept - the strategic partners and the providers we spoke to felt that they were good idea and not something they see often.
"The workshops that were put on for the providers to better understand each other and to facilitate that working relationship, I think was good...it was the first time I’ve seen that done, and I think it was a good way of doing it, to foster good relationships between providers, and to get people understanding... I don’t think that there’s more that that team could’ve done." - strategic partner

Some of the delivery partners told us how they witnessed the impact of these meetings, with discussions around best practice quickly resulting in meaningful changes to programme delivery.

"I was involved in meetings which were really helpful because you could see how other people were doing it – I did get a lot from that. Some of the partners were delivering in a very short timeframe. I didn’t want to do that, we deliver over 6 weeks because it’s very effective. I was able to share my theory on that, and some people actually extended the lengths of their programme based on what I said." - subcontractor

The workshops have been successful in fostering relationships, providers used the networking opportunities to get to know other providers, and providers told us these relationships were useful for later discussing issues and sharing advice.

Although the workshops were meant to focus on sharing ideas, coming up with better ways to support young people and fostering relationships, ultimately many of the workshops ended up dealing with administrative issues. Part of the reason for this may be due to the type of people who attended these workshops being programme managers, who deal with administrative aspects rather than those working directly with the young people.

The prime providers' meetings also focussed on practical administrative issues. Some providers told us that they didn’t feel that these meetings achieved as much as they had hoped, but were worth attending.

Subcontractors

The scale of the Programme meant that much of the delivery was offered through subcontractors and the prime providers had the responsibility of passing on any communications from the ESFA to their subcontractors.

Some prime providers performed this role well, however in many cases subcontractors were left feeling isolated from the rest of the programme. As a result of this hierarchy, subcontractors weren’t always fully informed on any guidance being issued and were often left unaware of the work being offered by other providers through the Programme, hampering any collaboration.

Future programmes of this nature would benefit from a central communication portal where all providers and subcontractors can interact and communicate effectively across the programme without having to go through the hierarchy.

Data collection and sharing

Sharing of data with external partners, especially local authorities, has been inconsistent. In some cases, the local authorities are acting as subcontractors in which case there was a much smoother flow of information within the contracted organisations. In other cases, the local authorities were less involved, and there was a lack of data exchange which both providers and local authorities found to be frustrating.

"[As a local authority] I did get a list of young people who were involved in ESF, but for that to be useful [we] need a bit more information, e.g. not just that they are in further education – [we] want to know
course and level. Would be good to getting more detail, so can look at impact, and feed into the department for education systems” – local authority subcontractor

Providers also would have benefitted from sharing more information with each other - some organisations found that they would start supporting a young person only to discover that they couldn’t claim any payments as a payment had already been made for progressing the young person into EET.

“One of the things that has been difficult is that it’s been difficult to check if that individual is on a different programme...We’ve probably been caught out a few times. And for us that could be anything from £5-7k, so it’s not a trivial amount.” - prime contractor

In general, there are many different partners involved in this programme, all with different responsibilities and perspectives, so communication between them is recognised as being key to ensure that the programme runs smoothly. The technical support workshops are a good idea and could be kept more on focus by inviting more frontline support workers to contribute and providing another complimentary forum, ideally online, for discussing administrative issues.

It would be beneficial for programmes like this to have more involvement and coordination with local authorities, who have the knowledge and partnerships in place to help providers identify and progress NEET young Londoners. The local authorities, the DWP and other external stakeholders would also benefit from detailed information on programme activities and outcomes. Future programmes should co-develop a secure data sharing template and process between all stakeholders and have agreements in place from the outset.
GOOD DELIVERY PRACTICE

In this section we look at the learnings and insights that strategic advisors and delivery partners shared regarding what works well in supporting young people into EET, as well as feedback and comments from young people.

Building trust and strong relationships with young people

Both strategic and delivery partners felt that building a strong trusting relationship with each young person was key to helping them engage fully with the programme, progress and sustain their EET outcome.

"It's about that relationship and trust that workers have built...it takes a higher level of skill for an advisor, project advisors/mentors, to engage with individuals, build trust, provide that relationship that makes the individual feel that they are able to not only join the programme but achieve in it continually, reach an outcome, and then sustain that outcome." -strategic partner

"Building a relationship with the young people allows you to access them. [It] means they then seek you out rather than you chasing after them... so when they face issues or change course or are on the cusp of dropping out they would seek us out and ask for our advice”- subcontractor

"[The best providers] really understand each learner. Really great to show learner that trust is built, [and] form real relationships. [I've] seen the way they interact, akin to a maternal and paternal relationship, very endearing. [But that] doesn't work for all learners – they understand the differences between people who need it and don't.” – prime provider

This was also the most common factor that young people highlighted as helpful about the programme. Many participants developed a strong relationship with their advisor/mentor and delivery organisation and 33 of the survey respondents identified this personal support as being the best part of the programme, including several who mentioned a particular advisor they had worked with.

The best/most helpful part of the programme is...

"The way my mentor motivated me to set goals"

"Talking to someone who knows what I’m going through"

"The one to [one] mentoring support that I received"

On the other hand, those that didn’t bond well with their advisors, really felt that this impacted their experience of the programme. In total 16 people highlighted the poor support as the worst part of the programme.

The worst/least helpful part of the programme is...

"No support. No help. No communication. Too many different tutors. Lessons were not planned to actually teach anything”

"The lack of effort from the person I was assigned to”

"I cried in the middle of the office, the mentor [made] me feel really bad"

"Everything that was offered wasn’t really offered to a great standard. It felt like they were trying to rush on all aspects without listening to me"
Offering holistic and flexible support

Several of the delivery partners spoke of the need to engage holistically with the young person to truly understand the full scope of the issues affecting their lives and in then offering a bespoke package of support which addresses each of the barriers holding them back.

“What really works is to have bespoke, personalised learning programmes. Through the initial assessment, the resilience compass, and career guidance, we are able to assess holistically a whole young person’s needs.” – prime provider

“Getting [young people] into EET or to sign up is just [about] being flexible and having the flexibility in the way that we work with them holistically... they didn’t have just an issue of being NEET, but had a lot of other issues going on whether mental health, substance misuse, homelessness... we’re like a community hub. So, we may have a young person coming in with NEET or housing issues, but we were able to address all of their needs...the majority of people we were working with had complex issues” – subcontractor

Having highly qualified, skilled advisors

Providers suggested that utilising high skilled and experienced providers made a big difference, and one pointed out that there are unfair perceptions about the skill level required.

“[There is a] perception that for NEET [support] anyone willing to talk to a young person can do it. In fact, when it comes to NEET young people [it] takes an equal if not higher level of skill and training [than teaching]. It’s not fair to the young people or the people on the ground... [advisors] need really [to have] strong guidance and counselling skills.” - local authority subcontractor

“[It takes] experts in understanding what the barriers might be e.g. social phobia, mental difficulty... they are experts know how best to create [a constructive] environment for the young person.” - prime provider

Localised expertise

Several of the providers noted the advantages in having providers that are familiar and have relationships with partners in the local area.

Contractors that know the area

Strategic partners felt that those delivery partners with an established presence and history of working in the local area (such as local authorities), have been able to use their experience and knowledge of local issues, referral paths and structures to get going with delivery rather than spending time establishing themselves and getting to know the area. Furthermore, it was felt that these particular subcontractors offered a more sustainable support offer given they would remain embedded in the area following the end of the contract.

“In terms of sustainability, we were then able to support the young person after the project. If somebody went through the project and then found themselves NEET again, we can support them. We can go back to the work that was done”. – local authority subcontractor

“The really big benefit of doing these things regionally is that you can do things that are more innovative. You can just be more responsive to what you feel the needs are in your area” – strategic partner
Prime delivery partners noted the importance of having local authorities as part of the delivery supply chain and highly recommended that any future programmes work more closely with local authorities, employers and educational establishments from the outset.

**Relationships with employers**

Strategic partners also reported that providers that had established relationships with employers were the most successful in transitioning the young people into jobs and sustaining them there.

“The most successful programmes are those which have got the best links with employers.” - strategic partners

**Practical tips for working with young people**

The Programme offered a flexible approach allowing delivery partners to use the methods they found most effective in achieving the Programme goals. Delivery partners reported that they had found the following approaches particularly effective:

**Group sessions**

Two providers reported that group activities with young people facing similar issues can be very effective in encouraging the group as a whole to progress.

“We try to encourage group activity for this particular age group to encourage peer support and success selling between the peers; one person will do something in one way and it works well and they then effectively sell it to the rest of the group by themselves. We’ve found that works really well.” – prime provider (in house)

Programme participants also commented on the social aspect of the programme, with ten people describing their highlight as meeting other people who found themselves in a similar situation.

The best/most helpful part of the programme is...

“Meeting my now best friend”

“Communicating with other young people”

“Made new friends”

On the other hand, two delivery providers cautioned that group sessions aren’t appropriate for everyone and having flexible approaches (as noted above) is important.

**Incentivising the young people**

Several of the delivery partners found that offering small financial incentives to the young people is an effective way to increase engagement from the young people – in particular it was found to be an effective method of encouraging young people to do things perceived as more beneficial to the provider than the young person, such as collecting evidence (particularly given the amount of paperwork required).

“We offered vouchers as a way to encourage engagement, we have used [this approach in the past] in the past: £10 on sign up, £20 on [providing] progression evidence. Another set towards the end of sustainment. [It] encouraged people to turn in their evidence which was necessary [and they] responded well to that.” - subcontractor
Other providers were concerned that giving money directly to participants wasn’t considered acceptable and would have wanted an explicit budget for participation incentivisation so that they could be sure that the commissioning authority was happy with this use of money.

There are also non-financial methods of incentivisation, such as award ceremonies or celebration days for participants that completed courses or traineeships which providers found to be helpful encouragement.

**Building resilience**

Providers and partners noted that many participants went through ups and downs on their journey to sustainable EET (and beyond), and that it is important to focus on not just the hard skills (such as CV writing, job applications) but building resilience, so that the young people are able to continue when faced with rejection or difficulties.

“Resilience building that lies at the heart of it. [It’s] more about them taking the initiative, saying ‘I’m stronger as a result of what I’m experiencing, and I’m going to be strong mentally or physically to overcome challenges to ensure I succeed in what I’m achieving’”. - prime provider

**Taking the young person on journey**

Providers also emphasised the importance of working around the young person not just in terms of approach, but also finding their preferred way of being supported, whether that’s about finding the best time of day to engage with them, the best location/setting to meet with them or the best method to maintain the relationship (e.g. by also engaging the parents or carers)

“For this age group, [we found] lunch time onwards is the best time for young people to get good attendance and engage fully." - (in house) provider

However, the providers noted that it is also important to challenge the young person and take them on a journey towards more conventional working habits.

“It’s a challenge of meeting their needs and being flexible but also challenging them to adapt to a more typical workday they’re are likely to encounter later in life. The best approach is building the relationship and showing commitment and then challenging their thinking so [for example] moving their sessions into the morning later down the line.” - prime provider

Some of the participants similarly commented that making them get up in the morning was the most helpful aspect of the programme.

**Participant perspectives**

We asked the participants which aspects of the Programme they have found most and least helpful. The young people had a wide range of experiences, in addition to the points already

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11 This section combines analysis of the responses to the following four open questions:
- What about the programme was most helpful to you?
- What was best about the programme?
- What about the programme was least helpful to you?
- What was the worst part of programme?
discussed about building trust and soft outcomes they mainly focussed on the practical skills and qualifications they gained from the programme.\textsuperscript{12}

Many participants (32\%) reported that they found the practical skills and advice such as writing, work experience, or interview preparation most helpful.

The best/most helpful part of the programme is...

“Training sessions and explaining the job process”

“Goals and the tasks set for job-seeking, mock interviews and cv feedback”

“Learning about the requirements of different jobs and knowing how being employed felt”

Another seventeen participants (15\%) reported the successful achievement of a qualification or progression outcome as being their programme highlight.

The best/most helpful part of the programme is...

“Helped me gain a qualification”

“I got an apprentice[ship] and I had help and support with everything applying and interview pre[paration] and work placements”

“Helping me return to education and realise I’m not alone in my situation”

Conversely, fourteen people (12\%) that weren’t successful in obtaining the positive progression they wanted, related that this was the worst part of the programme.

The worst/least helpful part of the programme is...

“I didn’t get any interviews”

“I’m still unemployed”

“Trying to find a job that suits my skills. All the jobs that were offered didn’t suit my skillset”

\textsuperscript{12} Seventeen young people reported that there was “nothing” good about the programme, and seven that “everything” was the worst about it; on the other hand, 34 young people said that “nothing” was least helpful or worst in the programme.
IMPACT

This section considers the impact of the Programme in terms of supporting young people to progress, or remain in EET. The main focus is on performance data and achievement of outcomes against the initial programme targets based on data collated by the ESFA. In addition, data from the participant survey and qualitative feedback from delivery providers and strategic partners give a more rounded view of the impact of the Programme so far.

Programme performance to date

Through to October 2018, the Programme has supported a total of 11,530 young people into EET, of which 4,944 (43%) have sustained their destination for at least 26 weeks.13 Across the Programme, with the exclusion of the Career Clusters and Preventative NEET strands, the conversion to EET rate stands at 53%. This compares favourably with the ESF operational programme target of 43% conversion from NEET to EET for young people.

Although it is difficult to compare between different programmes, as design and eligibility criteria are different, the overall NEET to EET conversion also marks an improvement on the previous iteration of London’s ESF programme (2007-2013) where overall NEET to EET conversion stood at 49% and an average of 34% of participants achieved a sustained EET for six months.14

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>NEET Outreach</th>
<th>Targeted NEET Ages 16-18</th>
<th>Targeted NEET LDD</th>
<th>Targeted NEET Mental health difficulties etc</th>
<th>Targeted NEET BAME</th>
<th>Targeted NEET Disadvantaged groups</th>
<th>Careers Guidance</th>
<th>Youth Talent</th>
<th>Careers clusters</th>
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![Figure 6: Summary of strand performance (*sustained figures were measured differently for preventative NEET – see below)](image-url)

In the following section, the results of each strand compared with the intended target results will be used as a measure of success. It is important to note that the contracts undertook re-profiling, reduction and growth exercises; this changed the volume of the deliverables and hence the value during the life of the contract.15 Therefore these results don’t necessarily demonstrate quality of delivery or contract management, but rather how well each strand performed as part of the whole Programme as it was originally designed. Final targets are also included to show the full scope of the Programme. Furthermore, most contracts have been extended to March 2019 so the results, particularly for six-month sustainment, are likely to continue to increase. Contracts that have come to an end are indicated with bold italics in the tables below.

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13 Not including the preventative NEET sustained figures, which were measured differently. Note some providers have also highlighted delays in processing their claims, so there may be more ‘results’ yet to be registered.
14 [https://lep.london/sites/default/files/20160824%20ESF%202007-13%20Final%20report.pdf](https://lep.london/sites/default/files/20160824%20ESF%202007-13%20Final%20report.pdf)
15 Although volume of deliverables and the total value of contracts changed, unit costs were unchanged.
The results presented below for each strand show the performance against:

- **Volume of starters** (number of young people signed up in total and by area) in grey;

- **Delivery targets** (from the original contract specification) in green;

- **Total conversion** (percentage of starters who achieved a progression into EET, and percentage who sustained the outcome for 6 month), in blue.

Each target has been given a RAG rating to reflect how well actual delivery performed against the initial specification:

- **RED** where actual performance was less than 60% of the original target;

- **AMBER** where performance was between 60% and 85% of the original target;

- **GREEN** where actual performance was more than 85% of the original target.

### Individual strand performance

#### 1) NEET outreach

This strand was delivered through two prime providers and subcontracted through a further 34 delivery partners.\(^\text{16}\) As seen in the data table, the volume of participants on this strand exceeded the original target, suggesting that accessing these young people was possible. Indeed, the volume of starters had already reached 120% of the original target by August 2017 almost a year before the end of the initial contract. Of the starters, 72% progressed into EET - close to the conversion target of 75%. Most of these young people progressed directly into education\(^\text{17}\) and 40% of the original cohort maintained an EET destination for 26 weeks. These results are positive and in line with original contract.

Providers used a number of avenues to source participants: hosting and attending youth events; working with local authorities, schools and colleges; and advertising at community centres and charities. Many providers particularly worked over the summer months to identify school leavers with no progression plans.

Two of the strategic partners said they felt the outreach strand had been particularly effective and should be repeated in the next iteration of the programme.

"*Some of the outreach activities did work particularly well, and I think the intention that will be built on to the new work that we'll be commissioning in the future*. – strategic partner

---

\(^{16}\) Note, prime providers added and removed subcontractors through the life of the programme, the numbers of subcontractors reported here and below are the numbers found in the programme prospectus compiled by the providers in 2017. [http://mycareerlondon.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ESFLondonYouthProspectus-Jan17.pdf](http://mycareerlondon.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ESFLondonYouthProspectus-Jan17.pdf). Prime providers here and in the other strands also delivered some of the activities in house.

\(^{17}\) This number includes a few referrals to other strands which were included in the same payment milestone.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Initial target (in contract specification)</th>
<th>Actual (October 2018)</th>
<th>Final Target (for contract end)</th>
<th>RAG rating % change relative to initial target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starters</td>
<td>5,356</td>
<td>7,476</td>
<td>8,056</td>
<td>140%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area: Central</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: North &amp; East</td>
<td>911</td>
<td>1,434</td>
<td>1,361</td>
<td>157%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: South</td>
<td>2,196</td>
<td>2,777</td>
<td>3,439</td>
<td>126%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: West</td>
<td>1,285</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>1,812</td>
<td>140%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conversion and sustained EET</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion EET</td>
<td>2,196</td>
<td>1,285</td>
<td>1,284</td>
<td>140%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion and sustained EET</td>
<td>1,285</td>
<td>1,284</td>
<td>1,284</td>
<td>140%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Targeted NEET

The Targeted strands generally performed well, achieving volumes of participants in line with the initial targets though conversion rates, are, to date, a little lower than intended. Some of the strategic partners we spoke to felt that targeted support is the most effective method of progressing NEET to EET and that the targeted strands perhaps weren’t specialized enough.

“the way the Targeted NEET was designed it was covering... a lot of different groups, and I think maybe that was one of the things that didn’t work as well because actually you probably need something a bit more niche and a bit more focussed on each of those groups... because although there are overlaps, homelessness and substance abuse and offending, they quite often go together – but at the same time, if you like there might be a primary reason that needs dealing with for a young person, so it actually might be the homelessness that is the problem, so if you can sort that out for the young person, actually, that’s the support they need because that’s what stopped them moving forward” – strategic partner

The results for each of the targeted strands are as follows:

**Targeted: Ages 16-18**

This Targeted strand was delivered through two prime providers and subcontracted through a further 17 delivery partners. The strand successfully secured far more than the intended volume of young people, the numbers suggest that the original target could have been more ambitious, for example in the North and East sub-region, over 160% of the target was reached. 65% of the starters successfully moved into an EET progression in line with the intended conversion rate. Most of the young people that progressed went into education (81%), with very few progressing to employment or apprenticeships. Providers reflected that it was generally difficult to find employers willing to take on employees in this age bracket, and apprenticeships generally suffered from low numbers (see later).

Of the original cohort, 49% were able to progress and sustain a progression into EET, considerably better than the intended target of 38%, which may reflect the fact that education destinations are easier to sustain.
Targeted: Learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD)

This strand was contracted to three prime providers, and subcontracted through a further 17 delivery partners. Providers in this strand commented on difficulties in recruiting numbers to this strand and issues with potential referrals not meeting the eligibility criteria, although overall the number of starters is in line with original targets. 33% of participants made it to an EET destination and overall 40% of those that progressed were sustained. This strand has a broader age range than some of the other strands, which translated to a different profile of progression outcomes, with 40% of progressions into employment or apprenticeships. Amongst the 19-24 age bracket, which were recorded as a separate outcome, 46% of those who progressed into employment or apprenticeships were sustained.

It is interesting to note that there was considerable variation between contracts in this strand; for example, one provider progressed 80 young people into traineeship while another only achieved three. This may suggest that in this strand some of the delivery providers were more successful at establishing relationships with employers than others, or had more pre-existing relationships.
Targeted: Mental health difficulties, or drug/alcohol abuse issues, or who are homeless

This targeted strand was contracted to two prime providers and largely delivered in-house with only a couple of subcontractors. The strand achieved a good volume of participants, although providers commented that they had to work hard to identify suitable candidates and maintain continued engagement: many of the participants had multiple complex barriers, which meant that even conducting quarterly reviews proved a challenge (which only 42% of starters achieved).

The conversion rate to EET, mainly into employment, was 33%, below the target of 40%. Some providers felt that this particular cohort were very far removed from the labour market and the range of progression outputs was beyond the scope of most of the participants. In particular participants did not want to re-engage with education due to previous negative experiences.

Sustained progression also proved difficult: 30% of those who progressed able to sustain their position, equivalent to only 10% of the total cohort. This is despite the relatively intensive level of in-work support from some providers such as weekly calls, providers felt that closer employer engagement to help them deal with employees who face multiple complex issues would be helpful in increasing sustainment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Initial target (in contract specification)</th>
<th>Actual (October 2018)</th>
<th>Final Target (for contract end)</th>
<th>RAG rating % change relative to initial target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starters</td>
<td>1821</td>
<td>1816</td>
<td>2051</td>
<td>![Green] 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: Central</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>![Green] 131%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: North &amp; East</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>![Green] 87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: South</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>![Green] 82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: West</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>![Green] 101%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. To provide bespoke support to a minimum of 1821 young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 16-24 who are NEET</td>
<td>1821</td>
<td>1816</td>
<td>2051</td>
<td>![Green] 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To enable a minimum of 739 (40%) participants to move into an EET destination ...with at least 437 of those who are aged 19-24 moving into a job or an apprenticeship. equivalent to 30%</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>![Green] 82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>437</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>![Green] 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>![Green] 84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>![Green] 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>![Green] 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>![Green] 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traineeship</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>![Green] 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To enable a minimum of 397 (22%) participants to sustain an EET destination for at least 26 weeks out of 32 ...at least 213 (19-24 year olds) of which are expected to achieve a sustained job or apprenticeship</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>![Green] 61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>![Green] 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>213</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>![Green] 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion EET</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>![Green] 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion and sustained EET</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>![Green] 60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Targeted: Black and minority ethnic groups (BAME)

The targeted BAME strand was delivered through the same prime provider across all four sub-regions and delivered largely in-house with only one subcontractor. The strand achieved high volumes of participants and a conversion of 34% into employment (including apprenticeships), close to the original target of 40%. Around 17% of those that progressed went into apprenticeships; those young people also had a better sustainment rate (58%) than those that progressed into employment (31%) so far, which may suggest that apprenticeships are better set up to support young Londoner’s from this background. In the employment outcome, only twelve participants were recorded as working 35 hours a week or more and earning the London living wage, far below the intended target, suggesting the quality of work being found may not be very high.
Targeted: Other groups who face barriers to employment (migrants, care leavers, teenage parents/parents to be, lone parents, young carers, and work programme leavers)

The final Targeted strand was delivered through two prime providers and subcontracted through eight delivery partners. The strand achieved volumes in excess of the original targets and with conversion rates of 55%, lower than the 65% target. This strand was particularly effective with job and apprenticeship outcomes; 72% of all those that progressed into EET, achieved an employment or apprenticeship outcome, much higher than the 45% target, to date 45% of those have been sustained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Initial target (in contract specification)</th>
<th>Actual (October 2018)</th>
<th>Final Target (for contract end)</th>
<th>RAG rating % change relative to initial target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starters</td>
<td>1587</td>
<td>1638</td>
<td>2034</td>
<td>103%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: Central</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>108%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: North &amp; East</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>119%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: South</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: West</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. To support 1587 participants to start on the service through referrals from a range of sources, such as Jobcentre Plus (JCP), local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations, outreach and the ESF NEET Outreach Programme</td>
<td>1587</td>
<td>1638</td>
<td>2034</td>
<td>103%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To support 635 participants gain employment or apprenticeship</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...of which around 128 will be apprenticeships</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To support 305 participants sustain their employment or apprenticeship</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...of which 61 will be sustained apprenticeships</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To support 143 participants who sustain their employment and earn a weekly wage equivalent to being paid the London Living Wage for 35 hours a week or more.</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conversion EET | 40% | 34% | 40% | 84% |
| Conversion and sustained EET | 19% | 12% | 19% | 62% |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Initial target (in contract specification)</th>
<th>Actual (October 2018)</th>
<th>Final Target (for contract end)</th>
<th>RAG rating % change relative to initial target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starters</td>
<td>1,742</td>
<td>2276</td>
<td>2498</td>
<td>131%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: Central</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>106%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: North &amp; East</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>146%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: South</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>127%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: West</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>135%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. To provide bespoke support to a minimum of 1742 young people aged 18-24 who are migrants (from specific disadvantaged groups), care leavers, carers, teenage and/or lone parents and parents to be, or Work Programme leavers, and who are also NEET, to help them move into an education, training or employment (EET) destination</td>
<td>1742</td>
<td>2276</td>
<td>2498</td>
<td>131%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To enable a minimum of 1132 participants to move into an EET destination ...with at least 509 starters (45%) moving into a job or an apprenticeship, equivalent to 45%</td>
<td>1132</td>
<td>1249</td>
<td>1624</td>
<td>110%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Employment</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>1127</td>
<td>176%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Education</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Apprenticeship</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>405</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Traineeship</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>337</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To enable a minimum of 551 participants to sustain an EET destination for at least 26 weeks out of 32, ...679 of those participants moving into a job or apprenticeship should be sustained.</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...equivalent to 60%</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>472</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion EET</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion and sustained EET</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3) Careers guidance

This strand was contracted to the same prime provider in all subregions and subcontracted through a further six delivery partners. The strand aimed to offer face-to-face careers guidance to those referred on from other strands. This strand saw few inter-strand referrals in the programme and achieved only 12% of the intended volume of starters. Of the participants the providers did manage to recruit, only 46% (614 people) progressed to an EET destination, lower than the 60% target and a lower conversion than some of the other strands. Sustained figures were not recorded for this strand.

Apprenticeship numbers were particularly low, meeting only 3% of the intended target. This was a common feature across many of the strands and reflected issues with apprenticeships nationwide – the low pay rate and relatively high barrier to entry meant that this option wasn’t appealing or achievable for many of the young people in this programme.

"Apprenticeships [are] just not an attractive option for the NEET population at this moment in time because of how employers use the apprenticeship minimum wage...less than £3 per hour...There’s a tough expectation, some organisations for apprenticeship programmes have really detailed and tough assessment processes, which a lot of the participants who we are engaging with, the client area is just not able to meet”

Many of the delivery providers we spoke to who were also delivering on other strands felt there was no need to refer their participants to the Careers Guidance strand, as they had this expertise available in house.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Initial target (in contract specification)</th>
<th>Actual (October 2018)</th>
<th>Final Target (for contract end)</th>
<th>RAG rating % change relative to initial target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starters</td>
<td>11,087</td>
<td>1328</td>
<td>1383</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: Central</td>
<td>1,887</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: North &amp; East</td>
<td>4,564</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: South</td>
<td>2,678</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: West</td>
<td>1,958</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11,087 young people engaged in the programme</td>
<td>11087</td>
<td>1328</td>
<td>1383</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4659</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traineeship</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion EET</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Youth talent

This strand was set up to act as a gateway for employers to offer traineeships, work placements, internships, employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young Londoners referred from other strands.

The strand was contracted to two prime providers, who further subcontracted to 15 delivery partners. As one of the downstream strands, the volume of starters was strongly impacted by low referrals from other strands. Amongst those that were recruited, many were given opportunities to interact with employers although these were largely through work placements or paid internships, and only 42% actually progressed to an EET destination. This strand, which focussed on employer engagement and brokerage, didn’t have targets for sustained progressions.
### Conversion to EET (not including work placements/internships)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Initial target (in contract specification)</th>
<th>Actual (October 2018)</th>
<th>Final Target (for contract end)</th>
<th>RAG rating % change relative to initial target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starters</td>
<td>15,002</td>
<td>4621</td>
<td>3957</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: Central</td>
<td>3,974</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: North &amp; East</td>
<td>5,871</td>
<td>2147</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: South</td>
<td>2,188</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: West</td>
<td>2,969</td>
<td>1347</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to create 8,997 opportunities in these businesses for young people, of which</td>
<td>8,997</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>5733</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traineeship</td>
<td>1,797</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>2170</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work placement/internships</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>2171</td>
<td>4122</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion to EET (not including work placements/internships)</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>145%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5) Careers clusters

This strand aimed to set up clusters of schools and higher education institutions (HEI), to work together to create ‘business informed curricula’. The clusters were either place based – established around a specific geography, or sector based.

A total of nine providers established and managed the twelve clusters. Feedback from delivery providers indicates that this strand has worked well, with schools and businesses both enthusiastic about its potential, and many positive partnerships created resulting in work placements.

This strand was structured differently, the results show that the twelve clusters were established well and successfully engaged with schools and partners.

### 6) Preventative NEET

This strand, different to some of the others, worked with young people who were in an EET destination, but had been identified as at-risk of becoming NEET by their learning institution or local authority. The strand aimed to work with the young people to support their pathway into a positive further education, training or learning outcome and sustain it. This programme remained separate from the other strands and wasn’t intended to make referrals to the other strands.

The strand was contracted to a single prime provider across the four London regions, who subcontracted to a further 16 delivery partners. Overall the preventative NEET strand was successful in engaging the volume of starters and had actually achieved 120% of the initial target by August 2017. Over 83% of participants successfully achieved the bespoke goals they had created with their support workers, and 69% of the total starters actually stayed within EET for three months after completing their goal, (so far) close to the 70% target. Overall this figure is slightly lower than the 75% achieved for the preventative NEET projects in the previous iteration of the ESF programme (2007 – 2013), although the criteria and measures of success will have changed, so results aren’t directly comparable.

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There were mixed feelings from the strategic partners about the preventative NEET strand. Three of the strategic partners felt that this strand was particularly impactful and that it was better value for money to invest in keeping young people in EET than supporting NEET individuals to reengage.

“The best projects for impact and value for money... that’s probably the pre-NEET programme. You’re getting to them early, you’re stopping them from becoming NEET.” – strategic partner

On the other hand, two strategic partners had reservations about the preventative NEET strand, and felt that it was overvalued and hard to demonstrate that it was working with the young people that really needed it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Initial target (in contract specification)</th>
<th>Actual (October 2018)</th>
<th>Final Target (for contract end)</th>
<th>RAG rating % change relative to initial target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starters</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>6334</td>
<td>7499</td>
<td>![127%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: Central</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>1277</td>
<td>1276</td>
<td>![150%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: North &amp; East</td>
<td>2,049</td>
<td>2398</td>
<td>3073</td>
<td>![117%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: South</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1436</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>![120%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area: West</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1223</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>![136%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. To work closely with each of the Local Authorities and learning institutions in each of the functional economic areas to identify 5,000 learners who are at each of the functional economic areas to identify 5,000 learners who are at risk of becoming NEET.</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>6334</td>
<td>7499</td>
<td>![127%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To support 4,000 vulnerable young people who start on the Service through sustained engagement, transition and progression through the creation of individual support packages appropriate to their particular needs.</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>5273</td>
<td>5999</td>
<td>![132%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equivalent to 80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To provide a range of activities which retain a minimum 3,516 young people in education, employment and training. To provide continued support to each of these learners after they secure a positive destination for a period of 13 weeks. (3 months)</td>
<td>3516</td>
<td>4355</td>
<td>5269</td>
<td>![124%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained and sustained in EET</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>![98%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7) Gangs prevention

The aim of this strand was to support young people who have been excluded from school and are at risk of becoming involved in gang related activity. As a standalone strand, this programme was offered on a single contract and run by a single provider across London offering a far more intensive support model than the other strands.

The provider successfully recruited the targeted number of participants within a few months, working with pupil referral units and other referral routes and successfully supported many of them into EET. The provider found working with parents and other stakeholders, and responding quickly to changing circumstances (including increased violence in London) to be effective in success in this programme. The strand successfully recruited a large number of participants and succeeded in progressing 55% of them to EET destinations, so far a third of which have sustained that destination.
Overall, the different strands of the programme each had their own struggles and successes, and some of the strands proved more successful than others in meeting targets. In general, the targeted strands have performed well, and the downstream strands have been less successful in meeting targets.

**Participant perceived impact**

We asked programme participants about how much they felt the programme had helped them across five outcomes areas (their confidence, their skills, their prospects of getting a job, their knowledge of options available to them, and their motivation to take next steps) on a five-point scale from 'not at all helpful' to 'extremely helpful'.

Participants gave very similar ratings across the five outcomes areas with the average response equivalent to between 'somewhat helpful' and 'very helpful' for each outcome as seen in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Job prospects</th>
<th>Knowledge of options</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean value</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Mean responses to the question "How much do you feel like the programme helped you with ...?" (1 = not at all helpful; 2 = not so helpful; 3 = somewhat helpful; 4 = very helpful; 5 = extremely helpful)

There was a fair amount of variation in the responses; for example whilst 20% of respondents found the programme 'not at all' helpful with motivation, over 60% found the programme to be 'very' or 'extremely' helpful, (see Figure 7). This spread of responses is to be expected for a programme working through so many different delivery partners, demographic groups and different interventions.
How much participants felt they were helped across different areas

Figure 7: Graph showing percentage of young people who felt they were helped to different extents across outcome areas
CONCLUSIONS

The ESF London Youth programme has already helped thousands of young people into employment, education and training and provided thousands more with the skills, resilience and knowledge needed to develop in their careers. Whilst some aspects of the programme haven’t worked as well as intended, providers are generally supportive of its design and proud of the work that it has enabled them to achieve.

“[It] was a fantastic programme to run; [we] supported 180 young people [and were] referred to by lots of internal services in the local authority. [It was] really positive to have the extra resource and we achieved fabulous outcomes.” – local authority subcontractor

For some participants the Programme undoubtedly is making a life-changing impact, enabling them to secure and sustain a progression which may ultimately progress to a fruitful career.

“I’m just grateful it was available” – programme participant

Overall, it’s clear that for many of the young people, participation in the Programme offered a range of hard and soft skill and opportunities for progression. Although some people have frustrations about some features, most participants enjoy it and feel they benefit from taking part in the programme.

Through the evaluation the following tensions were exposed which are worth considering in the design of future of funding programmes:

a) Contract size plays a large role in determining the nature of delivery organisations – with large contracts attracting large organisations and vice versa. Smaller and larger delivery organisations bring their own strengths to programme delivery and it is worth considering their relative merits when deciding contract size. Larger organisations are more likely to have strong contract management processes in place, to be able to offer varied support, and to have established ways of working. Working with larger organisations has the advantage of reducing the number of contracts to manage – enabling more resources to be allocated to delivery relative to administration. On the other hand, smaller and more local organisations are likely to have strong community relationships. They may be able to provide more specialised, tailored or flexible support to meet young people’s needs. Contracting to large organisations who subcontract to smaller, local organisations is one way to get the best of both worlds, although this can complicate accountability and the added layer of management can divert funds from frontline delivery.

b) Another trade-off to consider is the balance between being overly prescriptive and leaving space for flexibility with higher risk; requiring evidence that providers are focussing on the hard to reach versus lightening the evidence gathering burden but risking the providers going after easy targets. It has been suggested that this tension can be managed by working with providers who demonstrate genuine commitment to the issue (assessed through interviews) who can be trusted to work with the most difficult young people, even if they can’t evidence it; in return, the burden of evidence collection could be lightened.

c) Finally, there is a tension between depth and breadth of impact. There are clearly many groups of young Londoners in need of additional support to progress or remain in EET. With limited funding, a decision needs to be made about whether support should be focussed on those furthest from progressing, but at the risk of not doing enough for those who just need a little help.
RECOMMENDATIONS
For Phase 2 the ESF Youth Programme, 2014-2020

Based on our evaluation of the first round of the ESF Youth Programme, 2014-2020, our key recommendations for Phase 2 of the programme are as follows:

1) Design the programme around independent strands, capable of meeting young people’s needs via referral pathways and partnerships within contracts rather than between them.

Many of those we spoke to for this evaluation were supportive of the idea of an integrated programme and believed in the potential for cross-strand referrals. However, there was relative consensus that getting referrals between independent providers to work well would require incentives and time for these organisations to get to know each other’s work, build relationships and trust. It is not realistic to expect this trust to be built in time for Phase 2 of the programme. However, encouraging providers to partner with others who can provide specialist support provides a more viable route to ensuring young people are able to access a holistic offer. We recommend that the GLA actively encourage partnership working and support prime providers to be able to refer to or sub-contract specialist organisations on a rolling basis, if needed, to meet individual support needs.

2) Maintain the sub-regional contract split, while sense-checking providers’ coverage within their London region

There were competing views as to the value of dividing contracts to cover large London regions – some would have a favoured London-wide contracts, others much smaller regional contracts. Ultimately, the contract size and scope offered a compromise between the benefits of larger contracts in terms of simplifying procurement and management, and of smaller contracts in terms of encouraging localized provision and regional coverage. Over Phase 1, prime providers were able to sub-contract to local organisations to support them in delivering across their region. Phase 2 will likely attract many of the same prime providers as Phase 1. We see value in enabling these organisations to maintain ways of working and build on existing partnerships. While doing so, we recommend that commissioners (CFOs) sense-check providers’ ability to deliver comprehensively across their region at procurement stage, and monitor this throughout the contract, in order to ensure even coverage.

3) Interview providers at procurement stage and consider values-alignment in determining contract awards

Payment by results contracts can provide perverse incentives – unintentionally encouraging providers towards young people whose support needs are easier to meet, and for whom they can therefore achieve results and payments more easily. One way to mitigate this risk is to be prescriptive around the target participant profile, with related checks and financial penalties or incentives. However, this kind of mitigation has several downsides – signaling a lack of trust in providers, constraining their ability to support young people with hidden needs and requiring additional paperwork and admin time to confirm eligibility, to the detriment of programme delivery. An alternative approach is to select providers (in a fair, transparent and objective way) whose values and ways of working mean that they are unlikely to be tempted towards easy wins. We recommend interviewing providers at procurement stage in order to sense-check their commitment to working with those in greatest need, and asking for specific assurances around their selection processes to ensure inclusive support. This additional vetting at procurement stage
should mitigate the risk of cream skimming to some extent, and therefore reduce the need to be prescriptive around and audit participant profiles.

4) Improve communication systems

A programme of this size and complexity relies on a smooth flow of information between contract managers and frontline delivery; between prime providers and subcontractors; and with internal and external stakeholders. We would recommend investing in an online portal where prime providers and subcontractors can communicate with one another and with the contract managing organisation, resolving administrative issues more directly and sharing insights and best practice on an ongoing basis. We would also recommend codesigning data sharing templates and processes with external relevant stakeholders and ensuring agreements are in place from the outset.

For future youth EET support, beyond 2020

Through our evaluation of Phase 1 of the ESF Youth Programme, 2014-2020, we have heard several recurring messages about how youth EET support should be structured in order to maximise results. We have also considered the strengths and limitations of the LEAP, and the GLA as its accountable body, in meeting young Londoners’ support needs.

Key assets that we think the LEAP and GLA could leverage for future youth EET support include the Mayor’s influencing power, their London-wide view of education and employment data, relationships with local authorities and employers, and role as a conduit for central government funding. We recognize that the GLA’s ability to support youth employment is constrained by funding availability, a lack of direct control over schooling and curricula and a need to complete programmes within political election cycles.

At this point, future funding beyond the ESF is uncertain. Given this context, we have come up with ideas for the LEAP and GLA’s future role, that do not require ESF successor funding. We have also developed recommendations for how to best structure and administer any ESF successor funding in London.

The GLA’s future role in youth EET support

Given the strengths highlighted above, there are several ways that the LEAP and GLA could support young Londoners into EET, even without ESF successor funding. We recommend the following options as the GLA charts its future role beyond the ESF.

1) Draw on access to data to identify support needs. Partner with local authorities and draw on the Mayor’s influencing power to direct other funders (including trusts and foundations) towards where support is really needed

2) Use relationships with business to influence hiring practices and employment support. Help to disseminate good practice for employers engaging with young people facing barriers to employment.

3) Draw on the newly devolved Adult Education Budget to support young Londoners 19+ into EET

Recommendations for future EET funding

If the LEAP and GLA is in a position to fund future EET programmes for young people, we recommend that they:

1) Pursue mechanisms to establish longer-term programmes beyond political cycles. Consider allocating funding to independent grantmakers who are able to work to longer timelines in order
to give providers sufficient time to establish partnerships, engage ‘hard to reach’ young people and develop their skills from a low baseline

2) Evaluate programmes more thoroughly and from the outset in order to develop a fuller understanding of outcomes achieved, capture good practices and explain variation in results. Include a comparison group in future evaluations in order to benchmark entry and continuation rates into EET, for young people with different characteristics, as a reference point for assessing programme success.

3) Consider alternatives and extensions to Payment by Results, such as grant funding for core costs with bonus payments linked to results or evidence of good delivery practices, in order to achieve better value for money and enable smaller organisations to play a bigger role in delivery.

4) Consider awarding funding directly to employers in order to build their capacity and demand to employ young people. This could take the form of match-funding for employer-led training programmes or subsidies for employing young people facing barriers to employment. Employer engagement is frequently challenging for third sector providers – working directly with employers may be a more promising route to influencing behavior.
Who we spoke to

Strategic and external partners

- Tawhid Qureshi, former ESF Programme Manager, EPMU
- Laure Farret, ESF Programme Manager, EPMU
- Rita Chircop, Senior Programme Manager – EPMU
- Yolande Burgess, Strategy Director, YPES, London Councils
- Peter O’Brien, Regional Commissioning Manager, YPES, London Councils
- Mary Vine-Morris, Area Director (London), Association of Colleges London Region (and formerly, London Councils)
- Julie Sexton, Senior Manager - Programme Delivery GLA (CFO)
- Sarah Wilkins, Senior Education and Youth Manager GLA
- Tara Oliver, ESF Delivery Manager, ESFA
- Anne Mason, 14-19 Manager, Achieving for Children
- Derek Harvey, Group Partnership Manager, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Gerald Ahern, Partnership Manager, DWP
- Drew Gallon, GLA
- Michelle Barrett, GLA
- Douglas Russell, GLA
- Claudia Riley-Hards, GLA
- Claire Witz, Coast to Capital LEP

Providers

- Donna Lawson, Catch 22
- Nanette Higgins, Prospects
- Danielle Aliberti, Reed in partnership
- Andrew Grant, Reed in partnership
- Graham Clarke, Skills Training UK
- Marcia Pires, South Thames College
- Graham Parry, Groundwork
- Ian Tully, SEETEC
- Mo Reffas, Prevista
- Miriam Hatter, Camden Local Authority
- Alison Bunker, LBBD Local Authority
- Kes Charles, Playback studio
- Zara Sweet, P3 charity
- Cherise Rhoden, EPIC CIC
- Nathan Damson, Cultural Capital
- Shak Habib, Vista Training Solutions
- Marcia Wootton, West London Skills Training
- Cletus Rodrigo, NXG

About the survey

An online survey was distributed to young people who had, or were still, taking part on the programme, via the delivery organisations they had worked with. In total 113 young people responded to the survey across different age groups, London regions, strands and delivery providers. 65% of respondents were current participants and the rest had completed the programme.