

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 06 December 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	The Principles of a Regional Approach to Employability
Purpose of Report:	To seek approval to adopt the Framework for Employability.
Report Owner:	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration
Responsible Officer:	Paula Ham, Director of Learning and Skills
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	David Davies, Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing Morwen Hudson, Head of Standards and Provision Martin Dacey, Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing Phil Southard, Culture and Community Learning Manager Phil Chappell, Operational Manager, Regeneration Marcus Goldsworthy, Head of Regeneration and Planning
Policy Framework:	The recommendations of this report are within existing policy framework and budget; and is a matter for Executive decision.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authorities across the Cardiff Capital Region have successfully delivered employability for two decades. These projects have supported tens of thousands of residents into employment, into better paid employment or into further learning, have helped our young NEET residents and have been a key pillar for early intervention and prevention. The 2019 Cardiff Capital Region Employment and Skills plan highlights the value and importance that employers place on 'employability' and the key role that it plays in helping residents into the jobs of the future. In light of the recovery from the Covid pandemic, this is more important than ever. Consequently, the Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) Local Authority Cluster Group have been working collaboratively to produce a new Regional Framework to guide how employability activities are delivered in the region in future. 	

- The Framework, attached at Appendix B, considers the current employability landscape, the lessons from current projects and the upcoming changes in the policy landscape and labour market. The Framework concludes with the following key principles which are set out in more detail in this report:
 - Subsidiarity works
 - Local knowledge is crucial
 - The need for a trusted brand
 - Prevention over profitability
 - Continuity of provision is valuable and cost effective
 - Shared regional learning adds value
 - Simplified project costs have been effective
 - An “employability” journey not a “project” journey has the greatest impact
 - One framework doesn’t necessarily mean a single project
 - Employability should not just be seeking jobs; it should be seeking sustainable jobs.
- This Framework has been approved by the Regional Skills Partnership and Regional Business Council.
- With the ending of European Social Fund funding in 2022, this framework will form the basis of regional applications for post-EU funding for employability.

Recommendations

1. That Members endorse the principle of a locally delivered, regionally coordinated approach to employability post-EU.
2. That Members approve the Framework for Future Employability in the Cardiff Capital Region as shown in Appendix B.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure Members endorse the establishment of strategic working relationships across the Cardiff Capital Region involving all 10 Local Authorities to develop the future proofing of employability provision.
2. As 1 above.

1. Background

- 1.1 All 10 local authorities in the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) currently deliver employability activity to support our residents into employment or to help them progress to more sustainable or better paid employment.
- 1.2 At its core, employability is about removing or minimising an individual's barriers to finding, maintaining or progressing in sustainable employment whatever that barrier may be. Depending on the individual, this could be any combination of skills (general or occupationally specific), it could be job readiness/awareness, or it could be the availability of support.
- 1.3 Employability activities target the individual, but they also impact on families, communities, employers and the economy. From an employer's perspective, staff with the right skills, knowledge and attitude can "hit the ground running" and can introduce new thinking on products and processes adding significant value for the company. At a macro-economic scale, employability projects can help prepare the workforce to move from lower demand to higher demand (or higher value) occupations.
- 1.4 Additionally, employability projects have impacts beyond the economy. This includes the positive, preventative impact that they have on both physical and mental population health which in turn can help to manage demand for other public services (e.g., social care, primary healthcare etc.).
- 1.5 Since 2014, across the CCR, this has supported over 50,000 residents to secure a qualification and has helped almost 15,000 long-term unemployed into employment. The case studies, included in Appendix B (p5), show the impact of these projects on individual lives.
- 1.6 For the last two rounds of EU funding (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) the employability projects run by Local Authorities, Welsh Government, Further Education (FE) and the third sector have largely been funded from the European Social Fund (ESF).

- 1.7 The ESF programme was split between “West Wales and the Valleys” (Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, RCT and Torfaen) and “East Wales” (Cardiff, Monmouthshire, Newport, Vale of Glamorgan). This meant that two sub-regional suites of projects had to be developed.
- 1.8 The ESF funding was also allocated to individual objectives. This meant that different employability projects had to be created for long-term unemployment, short-term unemployment, NEET, in-work poverty and support for those with work-limiting health conditions or disabilities.
- 1.9 This has led to over 15 separate projects operating concurrently in different areas within the CCR. These are summarized in Appendix B (p6).
- 1.10 With the UK now having left the EU, ESF funding will no longer be available for these projects from Autumn/Winter 2022 (or Autumn 2023 for certain projects). It is not yet known whether the UK Government’s replacement for EU funds (Shared Prosperity Fund) will support employability activity or whether this will continue to be separated into objective-led projects. Nor is the amount or delivery mechanism known at this stage.
- 1.11 Therefore, in advance of any funding bids to Shared Prosperity Fund, the 10 CCR Local Authorities have sought to create a single, clear, consistent framework for future employability projects in the region based on a shared vision, shared principles and common tools.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

The Proposed Framework: A Shared Regional Vision

- 2.1 In 2019, the CCR Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) adopted an Employment and Skills Plan. This sets a clear vision of the future skills needs of the City Region and the activities that regional partners need to deliver to achieve this.
- 2.2 Employability features strongly. The value and importance that employers place on ‘employability’ skills is clearly reflected. So too is the need to help individuals address their personal barriers to employment to avoid communities being “left behind” in a very competitive labour market. With the impact of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic now being felt in the economy and labour market, employability is more important than ever.
- 2.3 To build on this, the employability leads from the 10 local authorities have produced a Framework for Future Employability in the CCR to shape a shared vision for an employability service which is:
 - Responsive enough to rapidly changing employability trends / priorities.
 - Flexible enough to still address individual barriers.
 - Still aligned to local circumstances and still delivered by local teams.
 - Engaged with industry to support people into more sustainable roles.
 - With a particular focus on the following challenges:

- Poverty arising from unemployment, under employment and unsustainable employment
- Early Interventions for young people at risk of NEET
- Barriers to high quality sustainable employment faced by adults
- Priority Industry Engagement

2.4 Building on an assessment of “what works well” based on the key principles noted below in 2.5, it is proposed that the regional framework is delivered by officer teams working within each of the 10 individual local authorities, and that this forms the basis of regional funding bid for employability into the Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Proposed Framework: Shared Principles

2.5 The proposed employability framework is based on the following shared principles which reflect on the lessons learnt from 20 years of employability projects:

Subsidiarity works: Local Authority delivered projects have great penetration into their target communities. Local Authority employability teams have been embedded in communities for over 20 years and so have a strong understanding of residents’ barriers, good networks with local support organisations, and are delivered by experienced, well-established (and well-known) practitioners. Local Authority delivered projects have developed good knowledge of local labour markets, and good relations with local and regional employers built over many years. Collectively we have networks of thousands of employers who engage employability as part of their recruitment. As a result, local authority teams have been able to select those activities which best work for the participants and businesses in their respective local area.

A trusted brand: Local authority delivered projects are trusted by participants. Without trust, it is impossible to engage those furthest from the labour market. They are also trusted by local employers because of the positive impact that they have had on local recruitment and upskilling.

Prevention over profitability: Local Authority led delivery has been motivated by tackling the root causes of participants barriers, however complex and however long that intervention takes. They have been successful at working as part of a wider Early Intervention & Prevention coalition of support agencies, employer networks and early intervention teams (e.g. money advice, benefits, foodbanks, ESOL provision, volunteering agencies, adult learning, children’s services, education welfare, housing and health & wellbeing advisory services) to help participants.

Continuity of provision is valuable and cost-effective: Under current EU programmes Local Authority employability teams employ support workers, counsellors and employment liaison officers. Many have developed networks in their local area over 20 years. Collectively there are hundreds of years of experience and local knowledge that would be lost if employability projects were to end. In a profession that relies on building long-term 1:1 relationships with clients, the loss of this expertise could take decades to recover. Add to this the

financial cost of decommissioning existing services (office costs, redundancy costs, re-branding) and it is clear that continuity between projects significantly improves the short and long-term cost-effectiveness for the region

Shared learning adds value: Over the past two decades strong networks have emerged between employability projects, training providers, higher and further education institutions, the voluntary sector and the business community. Local Authority led provision is effective at working in partnership to deliver in areas where partners' have greater expertise, experience of knowledge.

Decades of progress towards real change: Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, regional qualifications levels were rising, unemployment was low. Youth employability teams were able to implement a 10-year preventative approach (through successive projects like Prevent, Lift and Inspire) which is benefitting a generation of young people. As a result of intervention, NEET figures were amongst their lowest ever.

Simplified Costs has reduced bureaucracy: During the 2014-2020 ESF programme, the EU introduced a model of simplified costs called "FR40" which has had a significant and positive impact on efficiency. FR40 essentially pays 40% of the total staffing costs to the provider to create a fund that can be used for all other non-staffing costs. This allows for the creation of a flexible barriers and training fund that can be tailored to the individual project participants. Local Authorities can now design interventions around a participant's needs and not around a pre-conceived list of compliant purchases.

Assess participants for their "employability" journey, not their "project" journey: Currently a participant is assessed when they enter each project. Each uses a different approach to determine eligibility and to assess what support to provide to a participant. To some extent this is necessary – the questions asked of a 16 year old will be different from those asked of a 30 or 50 year old. But there should be more commonality between and coordination of assessment tools so that a client can seamlessly move in and out of support at key stages in their employability journey.

Flexible outcomes: Whilst FR40 has made project delivery more flexible, the current ESF-funded programmes are still rigid in their outcomes. The Covid-19 pandemic has again highlighted the need for employability to adapt quickly to changing labour market conditions and priorities (e.g. the flexibility to switch from economic inactivity to unemployment; from long-term unemployment to short-term unemployment; or from unemployment to under-employment). The end of EU funding requirements means that apprenticeships, further learning and volunteering (as steppingstones to employment) could all become more acceptable progression outcomes. Moreover, flexible outcomes can be better aligned to the regional labour market and demography.

One Framework, but not necessarily one Project: Some projects (particularly C4W/+) are wider than just employability. Others (particularly the Inspire 2 Achieve reduction of risk of NEET project) require specialist interventions. Whilst these interact with an employability project, they may also sit alongside rather than within it. They are, however, part of the overall employability approach.

Not just a job, but a sustainable job: closer alignment with industry: There is substantial change taking place in the economic base of the CCR, accelerated by Covid-19. The employability 'skills' needed to work in this emerging economy are also likely to evolve. With the adoption of a regional Employment and Skills Plan, and cluster groups in priority sectors, we face a unique opportunity to improve the alignment between our project design and the demands of industry in the local area whilst supporting our participants into fair, long-term employment. Analysis has already commenced with Data Cymru and the Regional Skills Partnerships on entry level opportunities within the priority sectors.

The Proposed Framework: Common Tools & Approaches

2.6 Delivery of the Framework for Future Employability in the CCR relies on the use of common tools / approaches, particularly at 5 key transition points:

- The interface with Pre-16 NEET prevention activity
- Recruitment and engagement of participants
- Triage and caseworker allocation: understanding the goal and the support available.
- Client assessment process: assessing barriers and what a participant can do
- The menu of support and intervention: co-designing and delivering the interventions

2.7 Having a common approach and toolkit is designed to simplify the experience for both residents and employers.

Next Steps

2.8 To test this new approach, all 10 Local Authorities have submitted and have been successful in a joint bid, led by Torfaen, to the UK Government Community Renewal Fund. This will test key aspects including:

- Mobile & digital outreach (recruitment & engagement)
- Shared Triage trial (understanding the goal)
- Aligning employability to the CCR's priority industries (assessing the barriers)
- Try before you qualify (co-designing and delivering the interventions)

2.9 Concurrently, further work will be undertaken in autumn 2021 to co-produce the detail of each shared tool / approach through a series of workshops led by LA Employability leads and inviting NEETs leads and other employability partners from the Regional Skills Partnership (Working Wales, third sector groups, Department for Work and Pensions, TUC and WG Skills and Employability team).

2.10 This will allow officers to commence preparatory work for a regional submission to the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund once details of the fund are issued.

2.11 Prior to submission, any regional application will be presented to the Regional Skills Partnership, Regional Business Council and Office of the City Deal for consideration.

Risks

- 2.12** As the priorities for the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) have not yet been announced, there is a risk that the proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR will not align to these priorities.
- 2.13** To mitigate this risk, officers have carefully reviewed the priorities within the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) which is seen as a precursor to SPF.
- 2.14** Other regional / national entities deliver employability activity and there is a risk for mis-alignment / duplication. This includes the recent procurement by the Department of Work and Pensions of providers to deliver the Restart project – an employability project which was established in the context of the UK Government’s Plan for Jobs post Covid which supports Universal Credit claimants who have been out of work for 12-18 months. It is unclear at present how long the Restart project will operate.
- 2.15** To mitigate this risk, officers have started engagement with other employability agencies operating in the region, including Welsh Government (Skills & Employability), DWP, Working Wales and the third sector. All are supportive of the concepts set out in the proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR and are keen to work with the local authorities on the detail which will lead to any future SPF funding bid. Officers are working closely with the DWP to minimise competition for participants between current LA and DWP projects.
- 2.16** It is not yet clear whether the same level of financial resource as is currently available from the ESF will be made available from the SPF.
- 2.17** At this stage, the proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR is not a funding application, it is a strategic document setting out the principles of how employability activity should be delivered within the region and what it should seek to achieve. Any funding application(s) will need to be scaled to the resources available.
- 2.18** Without certainty on the timescales for a funding decision from the SPF, there is a risk that funding from the ESF may end before replacement funding is in place. This will have implications for staffing levels.
- 2.19** At this stage, the proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR is seeking to agree the principles of how employability activity should be delivered. The implications for any gaps in provision would be considered as part of any subsequent applications for funding once more detail is released on post-EU funding streams.

Consultation

- 2.20** The proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR has been presented to both the Regional Skills Partnership and Regional Business Council.
- 2.21** The proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR has been endorsed by the 10 Local Authority Directors with responsibility for Economy / Skills / Regeneration.

- 2.22** Initial discussions have been held with DWP, Working Wales and Welsh Government (Skills & Employability)

Wider Impact Assessment

- 2.23** A full impact assessment is included in Appendix A.

Action to be taken following decision

- 2.24** LA Employability Lead Officers will continue to engage with other regional employability partners to develop the detailed tools and approaches that would form part of any funding application.
- 2.25** Once an announcement is made on the priorities and bidding process for Shared Prosperity Fund, LA Employability Lead Officers will work with partners to prepare a funding bid for regional employability.
- 2.26** Any draft bid will be brought back to the RSP, Regional Business Council and Local Authority Cabinets for consideration prior to submission.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (“the 2015 Act”) requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.
- 3.2** The Council has committed as part of the Corporate Plan 2020-2025 to achieving a vision of ‘Working Together for a Brighter Future’. This plan is reflective of the Welsh Government’s Well-being of Future Generations Act and is comprised of four Well-being objectives to deliver this vision:
- Objective 1 - To work with and for our communities
 - Objective 2 - To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth
 - Objective 3 - To support people at home and in their community
 - Objective 4 - To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment
- 3.3** There are actions and objectives within the Corporate Plan that this Regional Approach to employability directly contributes towards. Particularly Objective 2 ‘work as part of the Cardiff Capital Region to progress planning and transport initiatives and promote sustainable economic growth and employment’ and ‘work with education, training providers, businesses and other agencies to provide a range of advice, support and training opportunities which improve people’s skills and readiness for work’.
- 3.4** The Five Ways of working are embedded within the Regional Approach to employability.
- Looking long term – this Regional Approach to services would aid all people including young people to engage/reengage in education, training and employment

opportunities and therefore mitigating the negative impacts of unemployment, benefit dependency and potential escalation to higher need service.

- Taking an integrated approach, the Regional Approach links many of the wellbeing goals and objectives by contributing towards people's ability to improve their economic, social and mental wellbeing and the well documented longer-term benefits to engagement including becoming more physically active and improving their ability to become more productive citizens,
- Collaborating with others by ensuring the Regional Approach to employability compliments and builds on existing provision, continues to work closely with both internal and external partners, building a consistent community focussed model of delivery. Working as a region would also give service users a consistent offer of support in all 10 authorities avoiding a confused patchwork of employability-based projects designed around postcodes and artificial boundaries.
- Involving those people and partners within the community in the consultation and integration of new services and regularly taking on board their views and comments, especially of service users in its further development.
- Prevention by providing a consistent and early offer for all people, aiding a return to education, employment and or training, therefore improving each individual's economic, social and mental wellbeing and the documented longer term associated benefits.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** There are no immediate resource considerations beyond officer time to advance the concept of developing work across the CCR. This could develop should future funding proposals be successful.
- 4.2** Initial legal considerations would be through the development of a shared document such as a memorandum of understanding. This would advance should future funding be successful.

Employment

- 4.3** Approximately 10 staff are at risk of redundancy due to being employed within the Councils ESF funded projects (Inspire to work I2W, Inspire to achieve I2A and Communities for Work CfW). All these staff are currently employed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and could potentially be protected should future funding be secured.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.4** The Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix A) highlights the positive impact of a regional approach to employability and will ensure all people have equal access

to an employability service regardless of where they live, their age, race, language of choice, gender and abilities.

5. Background Papers

None.

Equality Impact Assessment

Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

Please click on headings to find general guidance or section guidance with an example.

You will find supporting information in appendices at the end of the guidance.

When you start to assess your proposal, arrange to meet Tim Greaves, Equality Co-ordinator, for specific guidance. Send the completed form to him for a final check and so that he can publish it on our Vale of Glamorgan equality web pages.

Please also contact Tim Greaves if you need this equality impact assessment form in a different format.

1. What are you assessing?

Establishing the Principles of a Regional Framework for Employability post-EU

2. Who is responsible?

Name	Mark Davies	Job Title	Prevention and Partnership Manager
Team	ALN and Wellbeing Team	Directorate	Learning and Skills

3. When is the assessment being carried out?

Date of start of assessment	September 2021
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4. Describe the proposal?

What is the purpose of the proposal?

Local Authorities across the Cardiff Capital Region have successfully delivered employability for two decades. These projects have supported tens of thousands of residents into employment, into better paid employment or into further learning, have helped our young NEET residents and have been a key pillar for early intervention and prevention.

Equality Impact Assessment

Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

The 2019 Cardiff Capital Region Employment and Skills plan highlights the value and importance that employers place on 'employability' and the key role that it plays in helping residents into the jobs of the future. In light of the recovery from the Covid pandemic, this is more important than ever.

Consequently, the Regional Skills Partnership Local Authority Cluster Group have been working collaboratively to produce a new Regional Framework to guide how employability activities are delivered in the region in future.

Why do you need to put it in place?

With the ending of European Social Fund funding in 2022, this framework will form the basis of regional applications for post-EU funding for employability.

Do we need to commit significant resources to it (such as money or staff time)?

Resources committed will be in the form of staff time. It is envisaged this investment of time will attract substantial financial income to the region.

What are the intended outcomes of the proposal?

The intended outcome is to help any Vale of Glamorgan resident into better paid employment or into further learning, help our young NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) residents and become a key pillar for early intervention and prevention.

Who does the proposal affect?

Note: If the proposal affects lesbian, gay, homosexual, or transgender people, ensure you explicitly include same-sex couples and use gender neutral language.

The proposal is targeted at all/any Vale of Glamorgan residents and employer and/or project.

Will the proposal affect how other organisations work?

Equality Impact Assessment

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The proposal will influence any employer, provider or contractor employed/commissioned within its future developments by ensuring they meet the Vale of Glamorgan Councils equality standards.

Will the proposal affect how you deliver services?

This report on Principles (and any future projects developed from these principles) will affect how local employability services are delivered. The Principles will guide any future projects/services to think about taking the needs of service users into account and treating them with respect and understanding.

Will the proposal impact on other policies or practices?

Employability is a broad and cross cutting issue and will impact on innumerable other policies or practices, these could include employer recruitment, job creation, project developments, community developments etc. As this report is focussed on agreeing to the concept of shared principles it is too wide to identify specific areas it will impact upon and it will be an underpinning part of any future employability development.

Can you change the proposal so that it further promotes equality of opportunity and fosters good relations?

As it encompasses all Vale of Glamorgan residents and is drafted at a regional level the principles will encourage more specific equality promotion/monitoring as service delivery is developed.

How will you achieve the proposed changes?

Changes will be developed in line with future proposals for project delivery.

Who will deliver the proposal?

All 10 Local Authorities within the Cardiff Capital Region, along with any project/programme established within or through this partnership.

How will you know whether you have achieved the proposal's purpose?

Longer term funding to replace the withdrawn European Social Fund funds will be replaced and employability work secured to aid all residents within the Cardiff Capital

Equality Impact Assessment

Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

Region. Within this equality monitoring, complaints, engagement and other types of feedback would be monitored and considered by the Cardiff Capital Region.

5. What evidence are you using?

The Gunning Principles, established from past court cases, can be helpful in ensuring we apply fairness in engagement and consultation:

Principle 1: Consultation must take place when the proposals are still at a formative stage. You must not have already made up your mind.

Principle 2: Sufficient reasons must be put forward to allow for intelligent consideration and response. Have people been given the information and opportunity to influence?

Principle 3: Adequate time must be given for consideration and response. Is the consultation long enough bearing in mind the circumstances?

Principle 4: The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account when finalising the decision.

Have you complied with the duty to engage as described above and are you sufficiently informed to proceed?

Yes		No	
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Engagement (with internal and external stakeholders)

Consider communities of interest or place (where people are grouped together because of specific characteristics or where they live).

Equality Impact Assessment

Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

Please include engagement with internal networks where appropriate – GLAM and Ethnic Minority Network.

The report is based on the Principles of working together and Engagement has been undertaken at a senior overarching CCR level (see below).

- The proposed Framework for Future Employability in the Cardiff Capital Region has been presented to both the Regional Skills Partnership and Regional Business Council.
- The proposed Framework for Future Employability in the Cardiff Capital Region has been endorsed by the 10 Local Authority Directors with responsibility for Economy / Skills / Regeneration.
- Initial discussions have been held with Department for Work and Pensions, Working Wales and Welsh Government (Skills & Employability)

The working as a Cardiff Capital Region has also been agreed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council senior management team and the report this Equality Impact Assessment is attached to will ensure this agreement is noted and seeks Cabinet endorsement to continue to take this concept forward.

It is further envisaged that any future programme/project development would involve more internal consultation and engage the views of local residents, service users in both person and via data collected from existing projects/programmes. This information would be used to establish and continually develop projects.

Consultation (with internal and external stakeholders)

Consider communities of interest or place (where people are grouped together because of specific characteristics or where they live).

Please include consultation with internal networks where appropriate – GLAM and Ethnic Minority Network.

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It has also been agreed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council senior management team and the report this Equality Impact Assessment is attached to will ensure this agreement is noted and seeks Cabinet endorsement to continue to take this concept forward.

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National data and research

Including Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Is Wales Fairer 2018' Report, its Measurement Framework, the Future Generations Report 2020, Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, Census.

- The proposal strongly supports the **Prosperous Wales** wellbeing goal:
- *Delivering employability support to local residents will lead to improved labour market positions for those in employment*
- *Delivering employability support to local residents will lead to employment, and increased income for those who are currently seeking work*
- *Delivering employability support to local residents will lead to improved productivity and growth for companies in the region.*

The proposal strongly supports the **Resilient Wales** wellbeing goal:

- *employability programmes support community and social resilience within communities and encourage greater levels of community interaction.*

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- *Employability programmes focus on building sustainable employment within communities, reducing inequalities between communities.*

The proposal strongly supports the Healthier Wales wellbeing goal:

- Employability programmes support people back into employment. Employment is widely seen as a positive wider determinant of health.
- Employability programmes also support people with work-limiting health conditions to enter and progress in employment.
- Employability programmes help to raise income levels, lifting residents and their families out of poverty. This is widely seen as a positive wider determinant of health.

The proposal also supports the **More Equal Wales** wellbeing goal:

- *Employability programmes focus on building sustainable employment within communities, reducing inequalities between communities.*
- *Employability programmes help people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances. For example, programmes provide specific support to those in deprived communities, those with work-limiting health conditions, and those for whom English is a second language.*

Local data and research

Including Vale of Glamorgan Council's Community Impact Assessment.

The Public Service Board Education and Economy report and its Health and Communities Report highlight the benefits of employability all of which are well documented within innumerable other national and local reports and research, taking forward the whole concept of the long term benefits to individuals, families, communities and Wales in any individual's engagement in active work and/or employment.

Equality Impact Assessment

Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

6. How robust is the evidence?

Does it show what the impact will be (positive and negative)?

Positive and sound

What are the gaps?

Research highlights there are many gaps that need to be addressed including, but not limited to those with disabilities, health conditions, young people, social isolation, those with transport restrictions, those who have left the labour market, long term unemployed, older people, woman/girls etc, these are issues that individual projects to be developed under this Cardiff Capital Region Principles would seek to address.

What will you do about this?

These are issues that individual projects to be developed under this Cardiff Capital Region Principles would seek to address either specifically or as part of wider developments.

What monitoring data will you collect?

Monitoring data would be influenced by any funder of any bid that is successful. As a minimum the current European Social Fund based data covering age, race, gender and such like would continue to be collected.

How often will you analyse and report on this?

This data would be influenced by any funder, but it would be envisaged that they would be analysed on a quarterly basis and reported annually as part of both local and regional reporting.

Where will you publish monitoring data and reports?

This would be influenced by any future funder but also would form part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council reporting processes on equalities.

7. Impact

Is there an impact?

Equality Impact Assessment

Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

YES

If there is no impact, what is the justification for thinking this? Provide evidence.

If there is likely to be an impact, what is it?

SHOW IF YOUR ACTIVITY WILL AFFECT PEOPLE OR GROUPS OF PEOPLE WITH PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPLAIN WHAT WILL BE DONE TO MAXIMISE ANY POSITIVE IMPACTS OR MINIMISE ANY NEGATIVE IMPACTS ...			
Protected characteristics	Will your project / activity have any positive impacts on those with a protected characteristic?	Will your project / activity have any negative impacts on those with a protected characteristic?	Is there any way to maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impacts?
Age	Yes: The framework has scope for employability programmes that focus on particular age ranges (for example Pre-16)		
Disability	Yes: The framework has scope for employability programmes that focus on work limiting health conditions		
Gender	Yes: The framework has scope for employability programmes that focus on reducing the gender stereotyping within key sectors		
Gender reassignment	Yes: Employability programmes help to address any perceived barriers that might impact on a participants route into employment. Programmes have provided advice and support previously to residents who are transitioning		
Marriage and civil partnership			

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Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Yes: Employability programmes help to address any perceived barriers that might impact on a participants route into employment. Programmes have provided advice and support previously to young mothers and pregnant young people to help with their transition into employment.</p>		
Race			
Religion or belief			
Sexual orientation			

Socio-economic considerations

Socio-economic disadvantage can be disproportionate in both communities of interest and communities of place, there are several other vulnerable groups that this project will seek to support into employment. These include:

- People who are homeless or at risk of housing exclusion, hostel and supported accommodation residents.
- Carers
- Prison leavers
- Those who are digitally excluded.
- People who live in Socio-Economically deprived communities with a poorer or worsening labour market position. This includes those living in rural communities and those living in areas that fall in the lower percentiles on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Welsh language

Equality Impact Assessment

Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

How does your proposal ensure that you are working in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011), to ensure the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language, and that every opportunity is taken to promote the Welsh language (beyond providing services bilingually) and increase opportunities to use and learn the language in the community?

The overarching principles will actively promote the Welsh language and fully comply with the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011, Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 and/or subsequent legislation. Future projects would:

- All project beneficiaries will be offered support in the language of their choice.
- All project paperwork will be available in Welsh and English.
- All publicity and marketing will be bilingual.

Human rights

How do you know?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

Noted in the boxes above

What can be done to promote a positive impact?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

What can be done to lessen the risk of a negative impact?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

Equality Impact Assessment

Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

Is there a need for more favourable treatment to achieve equal outcomes? (Disability only)

Will the impact be positive, negative or neutral?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

8. Monitoring ongoing impact

Date you will monitor progress and outcomes

Quarterly as a minimum and combined data annually for projects established under these principles

Measures and outcomes that you will monitor

Date you will review implemented proposal and its impact

Equality Impact Assessment

Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

9. Further action as a result of this equality impact assessment

Possible Outcomes	Say which applies
No major change	Yes
Adjust the policy	
Continue the policy	
Stop and remove the policy	

10. Outcomes and Actions

<p>Recommend actions to senior management team</p> <p>None</p>
<p>Outcome following formal consideration of proposal by senior management team</p>

11. Important Note

Where you have identified impacts, you must detail this in your Cabinet report when seeking approval for your proposal.

12. Publication

Where will you publish your approved proposal and equality impact assessment?

In addition to anywhere you intend to publish your approved proposal and equality impact assessment, you must send a copy to Tim Greaves, Equality Co-ordinator, to publish on the equality pages of the Vale of Glamorgan website.

Equality Impact Assessment

Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

13. Authorisation

Approved by (name)	David Davies
Job Title (senior manager)	Head of Service
Date of approval	November 2021
Date of review	

Shaping Employability to Achieve the Vision of the CCR Employment & Skills Plan

A Discussion Paper from the RSP Cluster Group

In 2019 the Cardiff Capital Regional Skills Partnership adopted its **Employment and Skills Plan**. This sets a clear vision of the future skills needs of the City Region and the activities that regional partners need to deliver to achieve this.

Employability features strongly. The value and importance that employers place on 'employability' skills is clearly reflected. So too is the need to help individuals address their personal barriers to employment to avoid communities being "left behind" in a very competitive labour market. With the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic now being felt in the economy and labour market, employability is more important now than ever.

There is recognition too of the important role and impact of Local Authority employability projects. With expertise built up over 20 years, the projects epitomise the benefits of subsidiarity and devolution. They are delivered as close as possible to the citizen. They are flexible making them highly responsive to local labour market changes. They are focussed on the personal needs of the client and not the need to generate profit. They create a long-term relationship with thousands of clients, helping people into work, to remain in work, and to progress into better paid work at various stages in their lives. They work together, solving problems in partnership with each other and with other early intervention and prevention services. They are respected and trusted by residents.

The end of EU funding is an opportunity to learn lessons: to remove some of the artificial barriers, constraints and bureaucracy. It is an opportunity to shape a new long-term local authority-led employability programme. But with EU funding ending in 2022, there is a need to do so quickly.

In this context, this discussion paper considers:

- The lessons learnt from employability delivery during the EU programmes
- The achievements and impact of locally-led employability programmes
- CCR labour market challenges and the "new context" for future employability

And concludes with the principles of a future employability approach:

- Local Authority-led delivery using...
- ... a common approach to "**pre-assessment & engagement**" and...
- ... a common "**Triage system**" and...
- ... a common "**Assessment Toolkit**" and ...
- ... a common but flexible "**menu of support & interventions**"

What is Employability?

At its core, employability is about removing an individual's barriers to finding, maintaining or progressing in sustainable employment whatever that barrier may be. This could be **skills** (general or occupationally specific), it could be **job readiness/awareness**, or it could be the availability of **support**.

Employability programmes *target* the individual but they *impact* on families, communities, employers and the economy too. From an employer's perspective, staff with the right skills, knowledge and attitude can "hit the ground running" and can introduce new thinking on products and processes adding significant value for the company. At a macro-economic scale, employability programmes can help prepare the workforce to move from lower demand to higher demand (or higher value) occupations.

Consequently, employability programmes have a positive impact on various economic policy objectives including:

- Early intervention & prevention
- Child poverty
- Young people at risk of becoming NEET
- Preparation for work and long-term unemployment
- Youth unemployment
- Short-term unemployment
- Economic integration of refugees (e.g. REACH)
- Under-employment and work-limiting health conditions
- Maximising income, in-work poverty & progression
- Workforce development and employee retention
- Preparation for entry into RSP priority sectors



With such wide impacts, employability is well-reflected in several national strategies and policy documents:

- **CCR Industrial and Economic Growth Plan:** *"We must... target our most deprived and isolated communities and support regenerative growth... GVA per capita remains low, like other regions in the UK. Participation rates - the proportion of the population that is economically-active - could be higher"*
- **UK Industrial Strategy:** *"We need to narrow disparities between communities in skills and education and remove barriers faced by workers from underrepresented groups in realising their potential."*
- **WG Employability Plan:** *"It is one of the prime responsibilities of Government to educate, train and prepare people for the world of work and to remove barriers which prevent people from accessing work so that they can make a contribution to society."*

"We are creating a new service, the Employment Advice Gateway, to provide employment-related advice and guidance to people in Wales... Careers Wales will be given an enhanced role to operate the Employment Advice Gateway"

- **WG Programme for Government:** *“Low skill levels are the single biggest barrier to building the Welsh economy we want, and often the biggest barrier for individuals in securing meaningful work. It is critical we tailor skills support to individuals’ needs, while addressing other barriers such as poor health, transport and caring responsibilities to drive up prosperity levels for all.”*

We will deliver the Young Persons Guarantee, giving everyone under 25 the offer of work, education, training, or self-employment.”

- **WG: Regional Framework in Wales After Brexit:** *[What works] “Unemployed participants on EU-funded employability projects are 46 per cent more likely to find work over twelve months than non-participants. Economically inactive participants are 84 per cent more likely to find work than similar economically inactive people who have not benefited from this support”*
- **WG: A More Equal Wales: Preparing for the commencement of the Socio-economic duty.** *Socio-economic disadvantage leads to inequality of outcome including lower paid work and poorer skills and attainment.*
- **WG: Wellbeing of Future Generations Act:** *“Applying the well-being goals can help tackle poverty as it helps you identify where the main determinants of poverty exist, how they work together and what opportunities there might be.”*
- **One Million Welsh Speakers:** *“The evidence received suggests that there is a demand for a bilingual workforce to meet business and customer needs; this can be addressed by developing the linguistic skills and confidence to meet the requirements of businesses.” “Employers in the Childcare sector were the most likely of all sectors to consider Welsh language skills important. 84 per cent considered such skills important, and 42 per cent ‘very important’.*
- **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework:** *“The recently published Tackling Poverty plan clearly identifies that reducing the number of young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) will have a long-term impact on the lives of not just today’s young people, but generations to come. The cost of not addressing this issue is not just economic, but impacts on levels of unemployment, under employment, crime, well-being, substance misuse, premature death and early motherhood.”*

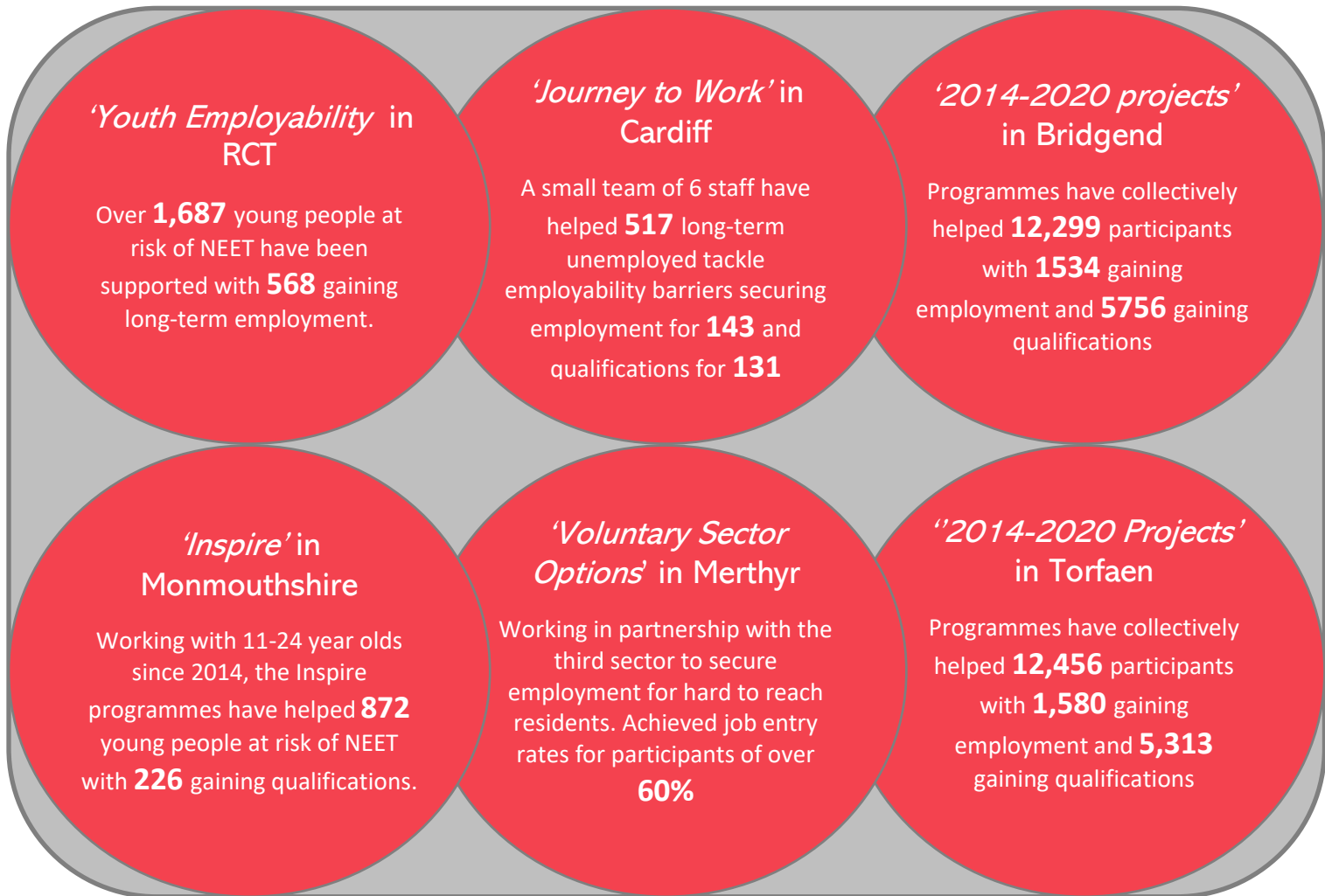
What have Employability Programmes Achieved?

It is well-established that reducing unemployment and economic inactivity, improving skills levels and equipping workers with the ambition to progress in their careers is one of the principal drivers of regional productivity growth. Employability programmes in the Cardiff City Region have helped thousands of people to improve their skills, gain new qualifications and enter / progress in employment.

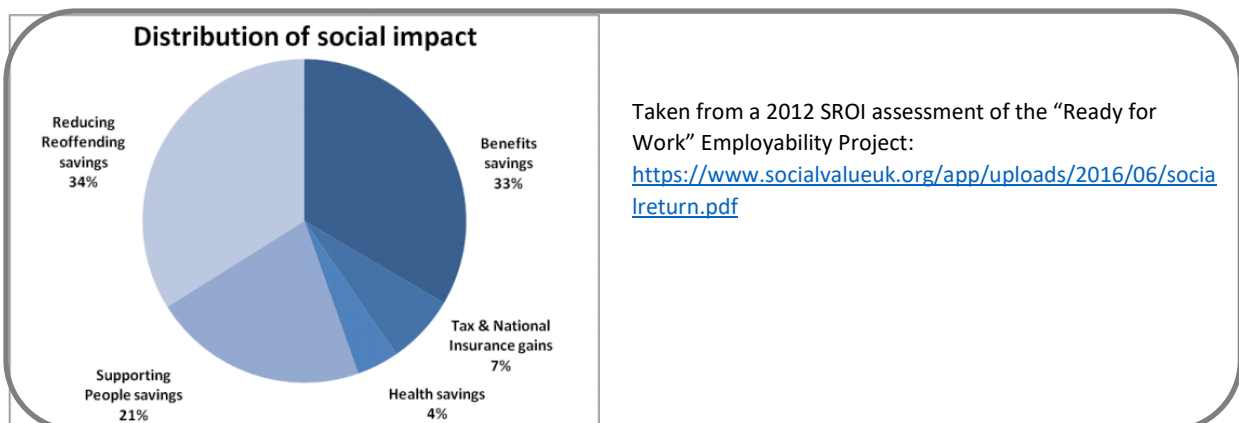
‘2014-2020 Structural Funds’ in the CCR

The projects supported **14,522** long-term unemployed into employment and **51,127** to gain qualifications

For over 20 years local authority led programmes have had success in deprived communities; success working in partnership with the third and private sectors; success working with young people and with vulnerable adults. Highlights include



But the statistics do not show the full impact of these interventions. It is well-established that employability programmes have a high social return on investment. A 2012 evaluation of employability programmes showed cashable impacts across various government departments:



Closer to home, a 2019 **social return on investment** study for RCT showed a net social impact of £2,080,078 on the £405,000 Inspire to Work project alone. A social return on investment of £5.10 for every £1 spent.

“RCT I2W: A social return on investment of £5.10 for every £1.00 spent”

Nor do they show the impact on individuals:

Monmouthshire Inspires to Achieve

In Spring 2016, Monmouthshire Inspire to Achieve (I2A) was asked to intervene to support a year 9 boy (“X”) who was not attending school. He had a turbulent family background, no contact with his dad and had recently seen his older sister sectioned under the Mental Health Act leading a severe decline in his own mental health. “X” withdrew from all facets of life and was becoming increasingly violent. His school attendance fell to 30% with 56% unauthorised absence. At this point I2A was asked to intervene.

“X” continued to work towards core subjects in school whilst receiving pastoral support for his emotional needs and employability skills support from I2A. Through intense 1:1 support, “X” and his case worker have developed a trusting and effective relationship which has identified his barriers to employment and has significantly reduced his anxiety and improved his confidence. He is now close to completing a BTEC L2 Qualification in Work Skills (ahead of his peers) and his attendance has increased to almost 90% (a 200% increase). He now has the ambition to progress into a career in advertising and design.

Torfaen Bridges into Work helps land Dream Job

In Winter 2020, Torfaen Bridges into Work (BiW2) supported Andrew Wilkinson into his dream job. Andrew was paralysed from the chest down following a road traffic accident 18 years ago. Prior to his accident he worked as a full-time scaffolder. Considered as long term unemployed and having no formal qualifications, he contacted BiW2, where he received support from Employment Mentors who helped him to build his confidence, develop his CV, complete online qualification and ultimately to secure a job as an assistive technologist at Rookwood Hospital – the hospital that provided him with treatment following his accident.

How employability has been delivered in CCR

The project-based nature of EU structural funding led to a plethora of employability programmes, each based on the principles above, but targeting a different **clientele**, **geography**, or **employability outcome** and using slightly different models, assessment tools and interventions.

To add to the complexity, there are many wider programmes that have an employability component, including: DWP Restart, DWP Kickstart, and Communities 4 Work+. This is alongside the Working Wales service that provides an independent careers information, advice, coaching and signposting service that incorporates referrals to the full breadth of employability and other provision

Summary of Recent EU-Funded Employability Programmes

	Clientele	Geography	Outcome
Bridges into Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployed • Age 25+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BGCBC, TCBC, CCBC, BCBC, MTCBC • Non-CF* areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity
Working Skills for Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Employment • Age 16+ • QCF2 or lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BGCBC, TCBC, CCBC, BCBC, MTCBC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In work poverty / career progression
Nurture, Equip, Thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Employment • Age 16+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BGCBC, TCBC, CCBC, BCBC, MTCBC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underemployment & Work limiting health conditions • Workforce development
Journey 2 Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployed • Age 25+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCC, NCC, MCC • Non-CF areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity
Skills @ Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Employment • Age 16+ • QCF2 or lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCC, NCC, MCC • Non-CF areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In work poverty / career progression
Building Resilience, Prosperity & Wellbeing (SWAW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Employment • Returning to Work • WLHC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCTCBC • Non-CF* & CF areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Underemployment & Work limiting health conditions
Communities 4 Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 16+ • AND QCF2 or lower; OR • WLHC; OR • BME; OR • Jobless Household 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR • CF areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity
PACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economically Inactive • Parents • AND NEET 16-24 OR 25+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-CF • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity
ReAct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redundant less than 3 months • <16+ hours /week since redundancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term unemployment • Careers advisory role
Traineeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 16-17 • NEET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Unemployment • Careers advisory role
Active Inclusion Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 25+ AND • 54+ econ. inactive; • OR BAME & long-term unemployed; OR • Carer & econ. inactive; • OR QCF2 or lower; • OR WLHC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity • Underemployment & Work limiting health conditions
Upskilling at Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees QCF2 or lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing priority sectors • Career progression
Inspire to Achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 11-16 • At risk of NEET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR (East & West projects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At risk of NEET • Careers advisory role
Inspire to Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 16-24 • NEET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR (East & West projects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Unemployment

*CF – Communities First

Each employability project relies on staff resource to deliver or procure the appropriate mix of interventions that address their participants' barriers and achieve the project outcome. In some cases this involves specialist referrals to other programmes. These staffing roles / interventions / specialist referrals are summarised below:

Staff Resource	Interventions / Activities	Specialist Referrals
Design & Deliver Qualifications (e.g. Agored)		Specialist referral: Prison leavers
Employer Liaison Officers	Delivery of courses via accredited centres (e.g. Pearsons, Highfields)	Specialist referral: Learning difficulties
Financial Inclusion Officers		Specialist referral: LAC
Counsellors	Volunteering	Specialist referral: work limiting health condition
Health & Wellbeing Support	Work Placements	
Post-16 Youth Worker Support	Job Prep / Employment Support	
Pre-16 Youth Support Workers	FE Referrals	
	Barriers Fund	

Lessons Learnt from the EU Programmes

What has Worked Well?

- **Subsidiarity works:** Local Authority delivered projects have great penetration into their target communities. LA employability teams have been embedded in communities for over 20 years and so have a strong understanding of residents' barriers, good networks with local support organisations, and are delivered by well-established (and well-known) practitioners.
- **Local knowledge is crucial:** Local Authority delivered projects have developed good knowledge of local labour markets, and good relations with local and regional employers built over many years. Collectively we have networks of thousands of employers who engage employability as part of their recruitment. Importantly, Local Authorities also have a strong understanding of the emerging employment opportunities in their local area.
- **A trusted brand:** Local authority delivered projects are trusted by participants. Without trust, it is impossible to engage those furthest from the labour market.
- **Prevention over profitability:** Local Authority led delivery has been motivated by tackling the root causes of participants barriers, however complex and however long that intervention takes. They have been successful at working as part of a wider Early Intervention & Prevention coalition of support agencies, employer networks and early intervention teams (e.g. money advice, benefits, foodbanks, ESOL provision, volunteering agencies, adult learning, children's services, education welfare, housing and health & wellbeing advisory services) to help participants.

- **Continuity of provision is valuable *and* cost-effective:** Under current EU programmes Local Authority employability teams employ 100s of support workers, counsellors and employment liaison officers. Many have developed networks in their local area over 20 years. Collectively there are hundreds of years of experience and local knowledge that would be lost if employability programmes were to end. In a profession that relies on building long-term 1:1 relationships with clients, the loss of this expertise could take decades to recover. Add to this the financial cost of decommissioning existing services (office costs, redundancy costs, re-branding) and it is clear that continuity between programmes significantly improves the short and long-term cost-effectiveness for the region
- **Shared learning adds value:** Over the past two decades strong networks have emerged between employability programmes, training providers, higher and further education institutions, the voluntary sector and the business community. Local Authority led provision is effective at working in partnership to deliver in areas where partners' have greater expertise, experience of knowledge.
- **Decades of progress towards real change:** Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, regional qualifications levels were rising, unemployment was low. Youth employability teams were able to implement a 10-year preventative approach (through successive programmes like Prevent, Lift and Inspire) which is benefitting a generation of young people. As a result of intervention, NEET figures were amongst their lowest ever.
- **Simplified Costs has reduced bureaucracy:** The FR40 simplified costs model used during the 2014-2020 programmes has had a significant impact on efficiency. This essentially creates a barriers and training fund for project participants. Local Authorities can now design interventions around a participant's needs and not around a pre-conceived list of compliant purchases.

What could be improved?

- **Assess participants for their "employability" journey, not their "project" journey:** Currently a participant is assessed when they enter each project. Each uses a different approach to determine eligibility and to assess what support to provide to a participant. To some extent this is necessary – the questions asked of an 11 or 16 year-old will be different from those asked of a 30 or 50 year old. But there should be more commonality between and coordination of assessment tools so that a client can move seamlessly in and out of support at key stages in their employability journey.
- **Flexible outcomes:** Whilst FR40 has made project delivery more flexible, the current ESF-funded programmes are still rigid in their outcomes. The Covid-19 pandemic has again highlighted the need for employability to adapt quickly to changing labour market conditions and priorities (e.g. the flexibility to switch from economic inactivity to unemployment; from long-term unemployment to short-term unemployment; or from unemployment to under-employment). The end of EU funding requirements means that apprenticeships, further learning and volunteering could all become more acceptable progression outcomes.
- **One Framework, but not necessarily one Programme:** Some programmes (particularly C4W/+) are wider than just employability. Others (particularly the Inspire 2 Achieve reduction of risk of NEET programme) require specialist interventions. Whilst these interact with an employability programme, they may also sit alongside rather than within it.

- **Hide ‘even more’ of the wiring:** Each project currently has strong brand identity amongst their clients, but the sheer number of brands can create confusion. There are examples of good practice in “hiding the wiring” (creating a seamless experience for a participant) within individual local authorities, but as a region there are still too many brands for employability alone (let alone complementary national programmes like Communities 4 Work/+, Jobs Growth Wales or Restart). There should be a clearer brand hierarchy, fewer brands, and a more consistent and universally accepted approach to triage across all employability interventions in the CCR.
- **Closer alignment with industry:** We want to move from projects which focus on ‘how do I support an individual into a job’ to ‘how do I support an individual into a *sustainable* job’ There is substantial change taking place in the economic base of the CCR, accelerated by Covid-19. The employability ‘skills’ needed to work in this emerging economy are also likely to evolve. With the adoption of a regional Employment and Skills Plan, and cluster groups in priority sectors, we face a unique opportunity to improve the alignment between our programme design and the demands of industry. There are some good innovative ideas:
 - E-learning modules for employability staff so that they are better placed to understand and therefore direct support towards priority sectors.
 - “Try before you qualify” model, supporting employability candidates into the workplace in priority sector roles before they make a decision on which qualification route to pursue.

The Future Context for Employability

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the scale of the employability challenge. Structural changes are taking place in the economy at a rate not seen for decades with some well-established sectors declining rapidly.

The following represent opportunities / threats to the delivery of employability support:

- **Brexit:** The impact of Brexit on the industrial base of the CCR remains uncertain. Pre-departure assessments highlighted a high risk to the South Wales economy with its relatively high proportions of manufacturing employment and personal/financial services. Brexit impacts do not yet appear to be impacting on the labour market, but any decline in manufacturing employment will impact on the number of opportunities for employability clients.
- **Retail & Customer Service:** Even before Covid-19 restrictions the retail sector was transitioning away from bricks and mortar premises in town and city centres. Retail is one of the most popular and accessible routes from our employability programmes and any decline in retail employment will impact on opportunities for employability clients. The shift online (accelerated by Covid-19) will create other opportunities – in delivery and warehousing occupations in particular – but the propensity of these workplaces to cluster near to major transport routes will impact on the accessibility of any vacancies to employability clients. This is a particularly acute risk for young people at risk of becoming NEET.
- **Automation and Industry 4.0:** The CCR Industrial Strategy recognises a regional strength in advanced manufacturing and seeks to promote growth and innovation within key manufacturing sub-sectors (including medical devices and diagnostics, compound semi-conductors and transport engineering). The extent to which automation will reduce employment in South Wales’ largely SME manufacturers is unclear, but there is clearly a need to prepare employability programmes for the impact of a reduced number of lower-skilled occupations within these sectors. This will require better employability pathways, improved perceptions of the sector amongst clients and a stronger link between employability and technical skills.

- **Human Foundational Economy:** The Human Foundational Economy includes several priority sectors for the CCR RSP and has continued potential as a strong source of vacancies for employability clients. But there is a risk that these roles may perpetuate a low-wage economy and a need for employability programmes to engage with the sector to promote fair work, improve job security, improve the reputation of the sector and stimulate progression opportunities.
- **Covid-19: labour market tightening:** The Covid-19 pandemic has forced many businesses to either cease trading temporarily or adjust their business model. Schemes like the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) and relief funds have to date limited the number of redundancies, but there remain risks to the labour market as this support is gradually withdrawn. At the peak of the pandemic, the ratio between claimants and vacancies rose substantially, and further such peaks may be seen. Any tightening of the labour market is likely to reduce opportunities for employability clients. In addition, employability teams are likely to be working with a more diverse range of clients, many of whom may not have previously been unemployed and may need to reskill / upskill. The extent to which demand on employability services will increase post Covid is, as yet, unknown
- **Covid-19: The psychological barriers:** Research conducted with children and young people by the Children’s Commissioners Office shows that young people’s emotional and psychological wellbeing has been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is highly likely to ‘present’ as an additional barrier to employment amongst the most vulnerable and may affect their ability to achieve their potential in education and/or to sustain employment.

An Employability Framework Fit for the Future

The priorities for future delivery

Reflecting on the context, on what has worked well, and on the lessons from earlier programmes, any future employability approach for the CCR should:

- Use a single long-term employability “model” which can rapidly respond to changeable policy priorities, but is flexible enough to cater to individual barriers and needs.....
- as the basis for designing common programmes together and with our partners across the region which address our three principal employability themes: “flexible employability support”; “anti-poverty interventions” and “early intervention for young people at risk of becoming NEET”
- which would include a common triage process, a “single front door” that ‘hides the wiring’, and common participant assessment tools
- and which would be delivered by teams in each of the 10 LAs with the flexibility to directly deliver, procure or refer participants onto a range of approved interventions
- funded through the Levelling Up Programme or other similar funds.....
- alongside activity to work with the RSP cluster groups to design pre-employment pathways for priority sectors.
-with the aim to give the region the direction, stability and maturity to collectively engage with or bid for other emerging contracts (e.g. Kickstart, CAEHS, Jobs Growth Wales+, apprenticeship programmes).....

The Pre-Assessment Process

The pre assessment engagement process is about reaching out to individuals, supporting them into regular activity and positive routines, and helping them to connect with others.

Many economically inactive and unemployed individuals are not actively engaged with employability services. This may be because they are not interested in working, have had poor experiences of employability services in the past, or are unaware of the range of services available.

To overcome this lack of engagement, a number of mechanisms will be used to reach out to individuals and engage them in employability services. These include:

- Pro-active marketing.
- Effective location of services
- Community outreach workers
- Partnership working with community organisations.
- Co-location of services.
- Adopting area-based approach and client group-based approach

Upon engagement, Triage officers will begin the Triage process to identify the most suitable provision for the client.

The Triage Process

A triage process is an integral feature of employability programmes to successfully refer a client to the project which can best support the skills, needs and circumstances of the client and for which the client is eligible. Under the proposed framework, all 10 authorities, and partner organisations, will design a common, collective, consistent approach to triage.

In practice the client or referral body completes, with the client's agreement, an expression of interest which is sent to a Triage Officer. The Triage Officer must fully understand all the provision in the area, what that provision can achieve for the client and then assesses the details of the client that have been provided. If there are areas which need further clarification the Triage Officer would contact the client to ask for more details. When the Triage Officer is confident they have that level of detail which allows them to make a sound judgment they refer to the most suitable provision for the client in that locality.

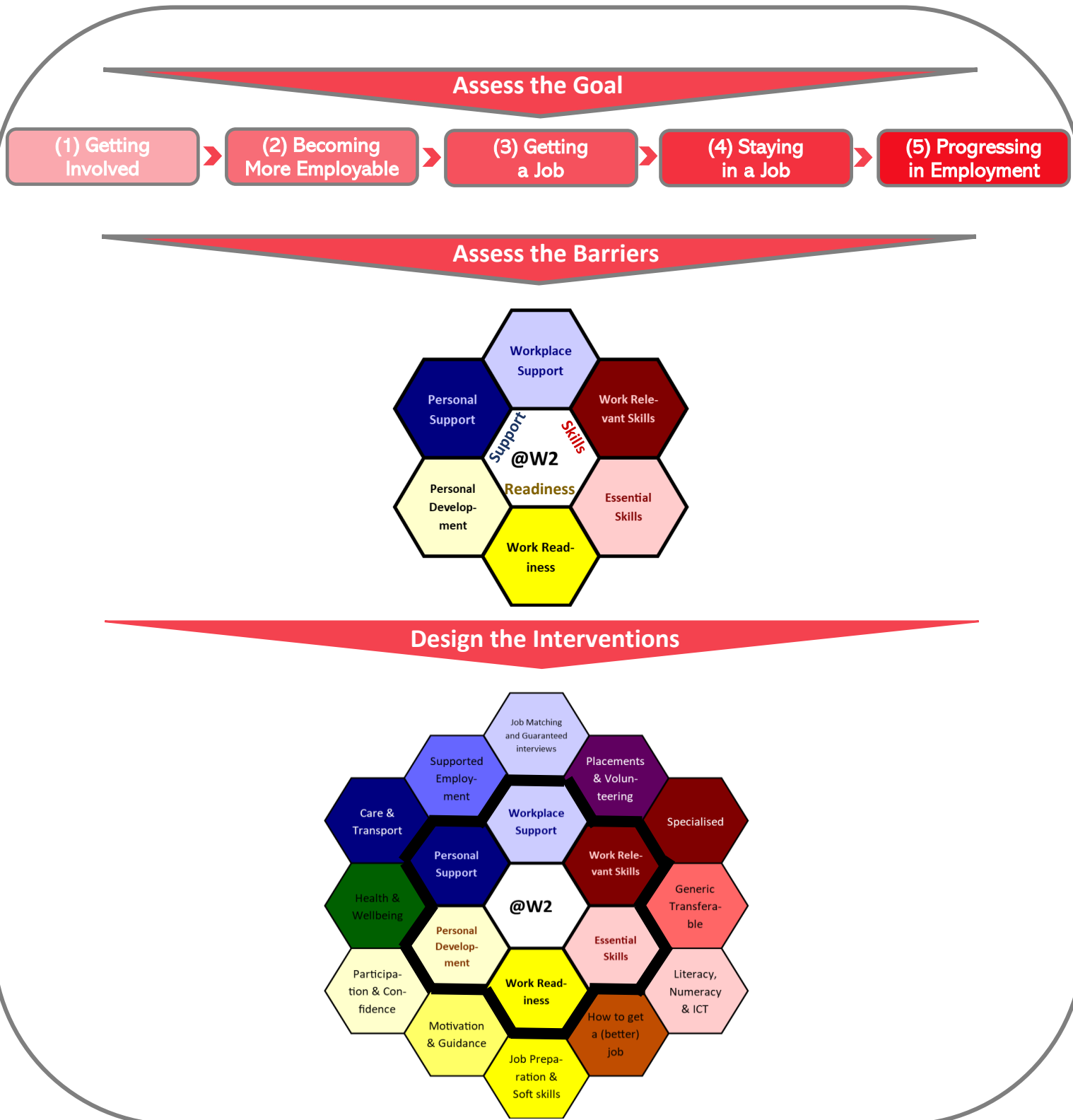
The Triage Officer would notify the referrer that the client had been triaged to the particular project. The receiving agency would be asked to notify Triage when the client is successfully enrolled on the provision. Should the Mentor on that project undertake assessment with that client and determine that the provision is unsuitable for that clients needs they would refer back to the Triage Officer with any new information which would able the Triage Officer to make a new provision.

When clients complete their time on a particular project, for example they get a job, and would leave that project a judgment must be made if there is other provision which could continue to meet the clients needs, for example in work support, a referral back to Triage or at least informing Triage that a referral is made to another project is key so the clients employability journey can be tracked.

Many clients are re-referred to provision and seeing what schemes they have successfully or unsuccessfully completed helps inform Triage Officers when making the next referral and ensures that the client is eligible for that provision.

The Client Assessment Process

The model below provides a comprehensive and complete range of employment and skills interventions coordinated by the RSP. The ability to seamlessly link the client's journey, whatever their age, from their first engagement with employment and skills provision, demonstrates a model of local integration and delivery of services, which maximises benefits for clients. The various stages of the model below allow a client to re-engage at various stages of their employability journey. This section provides further information about the pipeline, and the different stages and interventions within it.



Alignment to Other Provision

An employability programme should not be developed in isolation from the wider skills provision in the CCR to ensure that participants can readily and seamlessly access specialist support, and, importantly, to provide opportunities for participants to progress into more technical skills development activities in priority sectors.

The following conversations should be prioritised during programme design:

- **Communities 4 Work(+):** National anti-poverty programmes have wider objectives which can complement the employability proposals in this discussion paper. In some LAs the projects may be delivered under the same management structures. Discussions should focus on a shared/consistent approach to branding, triage, and assessment.
- **NEET prevention:** Any successor programme to Inspire 2 Achieve will be an important feeder into the employability programme. Discussions should focus on the referral process from Inspire 2 Achieve into the employability programme.
- **RSP Priority Sector Cluster Groups:** Learning the lessons from previous EU programmes, the successor employability framework will need to establish a clear pathway into each sector for employability clients. This will need to consider the requirements of entry level job roles as well as technical skills requirements. This work – looking at starter roles – is now underway jointly between the local authorities and the RSP team.
- **Working Wales & School's Employer Engagement:** The creation of Working Wales and the launch of Jobs Growth Wales+ creates an opportunity to join up “careers & aspirations” workstreams with employability programmes. There are already pockets of good practice focussed on STEM in schools (BGCBC) and coordination of opportunities for young people (Cardiff Commitment).
- **Further Education Provision & Technical Skills:** Upskilling / reskilling is likely to remain an important part of the employability offer and technical skills will play an increasing role in that. Discussions with FE should focus on the assessment/intervention model and how it can act as a seamless feeder into existing/proposed FE provision.
- **Work-based Learning & Specialist Apprenticeship Provision:** The end of EU funding restrictions provides an opportunity to embrace apprenticeships as a progression route from employability programmes. There are opportunities for joint promotion, and the co-design of the assessment/referral process. There are also opportunities to align to local-authority / third-sector led specialist apprenticeship provision like Y Prentis and Aspire. This collaborative programmes brings together education, industry and the local authority to provide skilled opportunities in the advanced manufacturing sector. With its strong industry links and track record of supporting industry with recruitment, training & work placements, the Aspire programme could represent a link from employability provision into technical skills development. Y Prentis can do likewise into construction routes.
- **Public Sector Shared Apprenticeships and InFuSe:** A public sector testbed is likely to stimulate new service provision and new occupational routes in the public sector. This could be a strong source of future opportunities for employability clients and should be considered at an early stage of InFuSe's development.
- **CCR Investment Pipeline:** The CCR City Deal is developing a strong pipeline of upcoming investments in infrastructure (creating opportunities for construction vacancies) and innovation

(creating opportunities for technological vacancies). If a clear “early warning” system could be created to notify employability programmes when an investment proposition looks likely to receive support, it will help the employability teams to begin to prepare the workforce to reskill for these opportunities.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The adoption of a new framework for employability and a commitment from the RSP to seek funding to sustain the teams required to deliver this framework would usher in an exciting new era for employability in the CCR.

Learning lessons from the EU programmes, our proposed framework would create a system based on coordination not competition; a system based on flexibility and responsiveness to structural changes in the regional labour market; a system aligned to the priority sectors with distinct employability pathways into each one.

The case is strong for locally delivered employability. It provides excellent value for money and social return on investment. It is based on over 20 years of experience, and relationships with local communities that would take years to recover if that expertise was lost.

Adopting the proposed framework for employability would give the Regional Skills Partnership a mechanism to:

- Rapidly adapt to changing regional employability priorities in response to structural changes in the economy and labour market (i.e. getting the right mix between short-term unemployed, long-term unemployed, NEETs, under-employment etc).
- Improve the integration of employability with the other elements of the Regional Employment and Skills Plan, like careers and aspiration, technical education and cluster development.

And it would provide direction to local authorities (working with the Cardiff City Deal) to seek funding from the Levelling Up fund to establish a long-term, regionally-minded, locally-delivered employability approach. It would provide a launchpad for further collaboration with other emerging contracts like Kickstart, Jobs Growth Wales+ or other programmes coming from the CAEHRS.

Immediate Next Step

Subject to approval on the principles within this paper from the RSP, the LA cluster group will commence work with partners on an employability project proposal for submission to Shared Prosperity Fund.